

WOLLSTONECRAFT MARY

**LETTERS WRITTEN
DURING A SHORT
RESIDENCE IN
SWEDEN, NORWAY,
AND DENMARK**

Mary Wollstonecraft

**Letters Written During a
Short Residence in Sweden,
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INTRODUCTION

Mary Wollstonecraft was born on the 27th of April, 1759. Her father—a quick-tempered and unsettled man, capable of beating wife, or child, or dog—was the son of a manufacturer who made money in Spitalfields, when Spitalfields was prosperous. Her mother was a rigorous Irishwoman, of the Dixons of Ballyshannon. Edward John Wollstonecraft—of whose children, besides Mary, the second child, three sons and two daughters lived to be men and women—in course of the got rid of about ten thousand pounds, which had been left him by his father. He began to get rid of it by farming. Mary Wollstonecraft's first-remembered home was in a farm at Epping. When she was five years old the family moved to another farm, by the Chelmsford Road. When she was between six and seven years old they moved again, to the neighbourhood of Barking. There they remained three years before the next move, which was to a farm near Beverley, in Yorkshire. In Yorkshire they remained six years, and Mary Wollstonecraft had there what education fell to her lot between the ages of ten and sixteen. Edward John Wollstonecraft then gave up farming to venture upon a commercial speculation. This caused him to live for a year and a half at Queen's Row, Hoxton. His daughter Mary was then sixteen; and while at Hoxton she had her education advanced by the friendly care of a deformed clergyman—a Mr. Clare—who lived next door, and stayed so much at home that his one pair of shoes had lasted him for fourteen years.

But Mary Wollstonecraft's chief friend at this time was an accomplished girl only two years older than herself, who maintained her father, mother, and family by skill in drawing. Her name was Frances Blood, and she especially, by her example and direct instruction, drew out her young friend's powers. In 1776, Mary Wollstonecraft's father, a rolling stone, rolled into Wales. Again he was a farmer. Next year again he was a Londoner; and Mary had influence enough to persuade him to choose a house at Walworth, where she would be near to her friend Fanny. Then, however, the conditions of her home life caused her to be often on the point of going away to earn a living for herself. In 1778, when she was nineteen, Mary Wollstonecraft did leave home, to take a situation as companion with a rich tradesman's widow at Bath, of whom it was said that none of her companions could stay with her. Mary Wollstonecraft, nevertheless, stayed two years with the difficult widow, and made herself respected. Her mother's failing health then caused Mary to return to her. The father was then living at Enfield, and trying to save the small remainder of his means by not venturing upon any business at all. The mother died after long suffering, wholly dependent on her daughter Mary's constant care. The mother's last words were often quoted by Mary Wollstonecraft in her own last years of distress—"A little patience, and all will be over."

After the mother's death, Mary Wollstonecraft left home again, to live with her friend, Fanny Blood, who was at Walham Green. In 1782 she went to nurse a married sister through a dangerous illness. The father's need of support next pressed upon her. He had spent not only his own money, but also the little that had been specially reserved for his children. It is said to be the privilege of a passionate man that he always gets what he wants; he gets to be avoided, and they never find a convenient corner of their own who shut themselves out from the kindly fellowship of life.

In 1783 Mary Wollstonecraft—aged twenty-four—with two of her sisters, joined Fanny Blood in setting up a day school at Islington, which was removed in a few months to Newington Green.

Early in 1785 Fanny Blood, far gone in consumption, sailed for Lisbon to marry an Irish surgeon

who was settled there. After her marriage it was evident that she had but a few months to live; Mary Wollstonecraft, deaf to all opposing counsel, then left her school, and, with help of money from a friendly woman, she went out to nurse her, and was by her when she died. Mary Wollstonecraft remembered her loss ten years afterwards in these “Letters from Sweden and Norway,” when she wrote: “The grave has closed over a dear friend, the friend of my youth; still she is present with me, and I hear her soft voice warbling as I stray over the heath.”

Mary Wollstonecraft left Lisbon for England late in December, 1785. When she came back she found Fanny’s poor parents anxious to go back to Ireland; and as she had been often told that she could earn by writing, she wrote a pamphlet of 162 small pages—“Thoughts on the Education of Daughters”—and got ten pounds for it. This she gave to her friend’s parents to enable them to go back to their kindred. In all she did there is clear evidence of an ardent, generous, impulsive nature. One day her friend Fanny Blood had repined at the unhappy surroundings in the home she was maintaining for her father and mother, and longed for a little home of her own to do her work in.

Her friend quietly found rooms, got furniture together, and told her that her little home was ready; she had only to walk into it. Then it seemed strange to Mary Wollstonecraft that Fanny Blood was withheld by thoughts that had not been uppermost in the mood of complaint. She thought her friend irresolute, where she had herself been generously rash. Her end would have been happier had she been helped, as many are, by that calm influence of home in which some knowledge of the world passes from father and mother to son and daughter, without visible teaching and preaching, in easiest companionship of young and old from day to day.

The little payment for her pamphlet on the “Education of Daughters” caused Mary Wollstonecraft to think more seriously of earning by her pen. The pamphlet seems also to have advanced her credit as a teacher. After giving up her day school, she spent some weeks at Eton with the Rev. Mr. Prior, one of the masters there, who recommended her as governess to the daughters of Lord Kingsborough, an Irish viscount, eldest son of the Earl of Kingston. Her way of teaching was by winning love, and she obtained the warm affection of the eldest of her pupils, who became afterwards Countess Mount-Cashel. In the summer of 1787, Lord Kingsborough’s family, including Mary Wollstonecraft, was at Bristol Hot-wells, before going to the Continent. While there, Mary Wollstonecraft wrote her little tale published as “Mary, a Fiction,” wherein there was much based on the memory of her own friendship for Fanny Blood.

The publisher of Mary Wollstonecraft’s “Thoughts on the Education of Daughters” was the same Joseph Johnson who in 1785 was the publisher of Cowper’s “Task.” With her little story written and a little money saved, the resolve to live by her pen could now be carried out. Mary Wollstonecraft, therefore, parted from her friends at Bristol, went to London, saw her publisher, and frankly told him her determination. He met her with fatherly kindness, and received her as a guest in his house while she was making her arrangements. At Michaelmas, 1787, she settled in a house in George Street, on the Surrey side of Blackfriars Bridge. There she produced a little book for children, of “Original Stories from Real Life,” and earned by drudgery for Joseph Johnson. She translated, she abridged, she made a volume of Selections, and she wrote for an “Analytical Review,” which Mr. Johnson founded in the middle of the year 1788. Among the books translated by her was Necker “On the Importance of Religious Opinions.” Among the books abridged by her was Salzmann’s “Elements of Morality.” With all this hard work she lived as sparsely as she could, that she might help her family. She supported her father. That she might enable her sisters to earn their living as teachers, she sent one of them to Paris, and maintained her there for two years; the other she placed in a school near London as parlour-boarder until she was admitted into it as a paid teacher. She placed one brother at Woolwich to qualify for the Navy, and he obtained a lieutenant’s commission. For another brother, articted to an attorney whom he did not like, she obtained a transfer of indentures; and when it became clear that his quarrel was more with law than with the lawyers, she placed him with a farmer before fitting him out for emigration to America. She then sent him, so well prepared

for his work there that he prospered well. She tried even to disentangle her father's affairs; but the confusion in them was beyond her powers of arrangement. Added to all this faithful work, she took upon herself the charge of an orphan child, seven years old, whose mother had been in the number of her friends. That was the life of Mary Wollstonecraft, thirty years old, in 1789, the year of the Fall of the Bastille; the noble life now to be touched in its enthusiasms by the spirit of the Revolution, to be caught in the great storm, shattered, and lost among its wrecks.

To Burke's attack on the French Revolution Mary Wollstonecraft wrote an Answer—one of many answers provoked by it—that attracted much attention. This was followed by her "Vindication of the Rights of Woman," while the air was full of declamation on the "Rights of Man." The claims made in this little book were in advance of the opinion of that day, but they are claims that have in our day been conceded. They are certainly not revolutionary in the opinion of the world that has become a hundred years older since the book was written.

At this the Mary Wollstonecraft had moved to rooms in Store Street, Bedford Square. She was fascinated by Fuseli the painter, and he was a married man. She felt herself to be too strongly drawn towards him, and she went to Paris at the close of the year 1792, to break the spell. She felt lonely and sad, and was not the happier for being in a mansion lent to her, from which the owner was away, and in which she lived surrounded by his servants. Strong womanly instincts were astir within her, and they were not all wise folk who had been drawn around her by her generous enthusiasm for the new hopes of the world, that made it then, as Wordsworth felt, a very heaven to the young.

Four months after she had gone to Paris, Mary Wollstonecraft met at the house of a merchant, with whose wife she had become intimate, an American named Gilbert Imlay. He won her affections.

That was in April, 1793. He had no means, and she had home embarrassments, for which she was unwilling that he should become in any way responsible. A part of the new dream in some minds then was of a love too pure to need or bear the bondage of authority. The mere forced union of marriage ties implied, it was said, a distrust of fidelity. When Gilbert Imlay would have married Mary Wollstonecraft, she herself refused to bind him; she would keep him legally exempt from her responsibilities towards the father, sisters, brothers, whom she was supporting. She took his name and called herself his wife, when the French Convention, indignant at the conduct of the British Government, issue a decree from the effects of which she would escape as the wife of a citizen of the United States. But she did not marry. She witnessed many of the horrors that came of the loosened passions of an untaught populace. A child was born to her—a girl whom she named after the dead friend of her own girlhood. And then she found that she had leant upon a reed. She was neglected; and was at last forsaken. Having sent her to London, Imlay there visited her, to explain himself away. She resolved on suicide, and in dissuading her from that he gave her hope again. He needed somebody who had good judgment, and who cared for his interests, to represent him in some business affairs in Norway. She undertook to act for him, and set out on the voyage only a week after she had determined to destroy herself.

The interest of this book which describes her travel is quickened by a knowledge of the heart-sorrow that underlies it all. Gilbert Imlay had promised to meet her upon her return, and go with her to Switzerland. But the letters she had from him in Sweden and Norway were cold, and she came back to find that she was wholly forsaken for an actress from a strolling company of players. Then she went up the river to drown herself. She paced the road at Putney on an October night, in 1795, in heavy rain, until her clothes were drenched, that she might sink more surely, and then threw herself from the top of Putney Bridge.

She was rescued, and lived on with deadened spirit. In 1796 these "Letters from Sweden and Norway" were published. Early in 1797 she was married to William Godwin. On the 10th of September in the same year, at the age of thirty-eight, Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin died, after the birth of the daughter who lived to become the wife of Shelley. The mother also would have lived, if a womanly feeling, in itself to be respected, had not led her also to unwise departure from the customs

of the world. Peace be to her memory. None but kind thoughts can dwell upon the life of this too faithful disciple of Rousseau.

H. M.

LETTER I

Eleven days of weariness on board a vessel not intended for the accommodation of passengers have so exhausted my spirits, to say nothing of the other causes, with which you are already sufficiently acquainted, that it is with some difficulty I adhere to my determination of giving you my observations, as I travel through new scenes, whilst warmed with the impression they have made on me.

The captain, as I mentioned to you, promised to put me on shore at Arendall or Gothenburg in his way to Elsineur, but contrary winds obliged us to pass both places during the night. In the morning, however, after we had lost sight of the entrance of the latter bay, the vessel was becalmed; and the captain, to oblige me, hanging out a signal for a pilot, bore down towards the shore.

My attention was particularly directed to the lighthouse, and you can scarcely imagine with what anxiety I watched two long hours for a boat to emancipate me; still no one appeared. Every cloud that flitted on the horizon was hailed as a liberator, till approaching nearer, like most of the prospects sketched by hope, it dissolved under the eye into disappointment.

Weary of expectation, I then began to converse with the captain on the subject, and from the tenor of the information my questions drew forth I soon concluded that if I waited for a boat I had little chance of getting on shore at this place. Despotism, as is usually the case, I found had here cramped the industry of man. The pilots being paid by the king, and scantily, they will not run into any danger, or even quit their hovels, if they can possibly avoid it, only to fulfil what is termed their duty. How different is it on the English coast, where, in the most stormy weather, boats immediately hail you, brought out by the expectation of extraordinary profit.

Disliking to sail for Elsineur, and still more to lie at anchor or cruise about the coast for several days, I exerted all my rhetoric to prevail on the captain to let me have the ship's boat, and though I added the most forcible of arguments, I for a long time addressed him in vain.

It is a kind of rule at sea not to send out a boat. The captain was a good-natured man; but men with common minds seldom break through general rules. Prudence is ever the resort of weakness, and they rarely go as far as they may in any undertaking who are determined not to go beyond it on any account. If, however, I had some trouble with the captain, I did not lose much time with the sailors, for they, all alacrity, hoisted out the boat the moment I obtained permission, and promised to row me to the lighthouse.

I did not once allow myself to doubt of obtaining a conveyance from thence round the rocks—and then away for Gothenburg—confinement is so unpleasant.

The day was fine, and I enjoyed the water till, approaching the little island, poor Marguerite, whose timidity always acts as a feeler before her adventuring spirit, began to wonder at our not seeing any inhabitants. I did not listen to her. But when, on landing, the same silence prevailed, I caught the alarm, which was not lessened by the sight of two old men whom we forced out of their wretched hut.

Scarcely human in their appearance, we with difficulty obtained an intelligible reply to our questions, the result of which was that they had no boat, and were not allowed to quit their post on any pretence.

But they informed us that there was at the other side, eight or ten miles over, a pilot's dwelling. Two guineas tempted the sailors to risk the captain's displeasure, and once more embark to row me over.

The weather was pleasant, and the appearance of the shore so grand that I should have enjoyed the two hours it took to reach it, but for the fatigue which was too visible in the countenances of the sailors, who, instead of uttering a complaint, were, with the thoughtless hilarity peculiar to them, joking about the possibility of the captain's taking advantage of a slight westerly breeze, which was springing up, to sail without them. Yet, in spite of their good humour, I could not help growing uneasy when the shore, receding, as it were, as we advanced, seemed to promise no end to their toil.

This anxiety increased when, turning into the most picturesque bay I ever saw, my eyes sought in

vain for the vestige of a human habitation. Before I could determine what step to take in such a dilemma (for I could not bear to think of returning to the ship), the sight of a barge relieved me, and we hastened towards it for information. We were immediately directed to pass some jutting rocks, when we should see a pilot's hut.

There was a solemn silence in this scene which made itself be felt. The sunbeams that played on the ocean, scarcely ruffled by the lightest breeze, contrasted with the huge dark rocks, that looked like the rude materials of creation forming the barrier of unwrought space, forcibly struck me, but I should not have been sorry if the cottage had not appeared equally tranquil. Approaching a retreat where strangers, especially women, so seldom appeared, I wondered that curiosity did not bring the beings who inhabited it to the windows or door. I did not immediately recollect that men who remain so near the brute creation, as only to exert themselves to find the food necessary to sustain life, have little or no imagination to call forth the curiosity necessary to fructify the faint glimmerings of mind which entitle them to rank as lords of the creation. Had they either they could not contentedly remain rooted in the clods they so indolently cultivate.

Whilst the sailors went to seek for the sluggish inhabitants, these conclusions occurred to me; and, recollecting the extreme fondness which the Parisians ever testify for novelty, their very curiosity appeared to me a proof of the progress they had made in refinement. Yes, in the art of living—in the art of escaping from the cares which embarrass the first steps towards the attainment of the pleasures of social life.

The pilots informed the sailors that they were under the direction of a lieutenant retired from the service, who spoke English; adding that they could do nothing without his orders, and even the offer of money could hardly conquer their laziness and prevail on them to accompany us to his dwelling.

They would not go with me alone, which I wanted them to have done, because I wished to dismiss the sailors as soon as possible. Once more we rowed off, they following tardily, till, turning round another bold protuberance of the rocks, we saw a boat making towards us, and soon learnt that it was the lieutenant himself, coming with some earnestness to see who we were.

To save the sailors any further toil, I had my baggage instantly removed into his boat; for, as he could speak English, a previous parley was not necessary, though Marguerite's respect for me could hardly keep her from expressing the fear, strongly marked on her countenance, which my putting ourselves into the power of a strange man excited. He pointed out his cottage; and, drawing near to it, I was not sorry to see a female figure, though I had not, like Marguerite, been thinking of robberies, murders, or the other evil which instantly, as the sailors would have said, runs foul of a woman's imagination.

On entering I was still better pleased to find a clean house, with some degree of rural elegance.

The beds were of muslin, coarse it is true, but dazzlingly white; and the floor was strewed over with little sprigs of juniper (the custom, as I afterwards found, of the country), which formed a contrast with the curtains, and produced an agreeable sensation of freshness, to soften the ardour of noon.

Still nothing was so pleasing as the alacrity of hospitality—all that the house afforded was quickly spread on the whitest linen. Remember, I had just left the vessel, where, without being fastidious, I had continually been disgusted. Fish, milk, butter, and cheese, and, I am sorry to add, brandy, the bane of this country, were spread on the board. After we had dined hospitality made them, with some degree of mystery, bring us some excellent coffee. I did not then know that it was prohibited.

The good man of the house apologised for coming in continually, but declared that he was so glad to speak English he could not stay out. He need not have apologised; I was equally glad of his company. With the wife I could only exchange smiles, and she was employed observing the make of our clothes. My hands, I found, had first led her to discover that I was the lady. I had, of course, my quantum of reverences; for the politeness of the north seems to partake of the coldness of the climate and the rigidity of its iron-sinewed rocks. Amongst the peasantry there is, however, so much of the simplicity of the golden age in this land of flint—so much overflowing of heart and fellow-feeling,

that only benevolence and the honest sympathy of nature diffused smiles over my countenance when they kept me standing, regardless of my fatigue, whilst they dropped courtesy after courtesy.

The situation of this house was beautiful, though chosen for convenience. The master being the officer who commanded all the pilots on the coast, and the person appointed to guard wrecks, it was necessary for him to fix on a spot that would overlook the whole bay. As he had seen some service, he wore, not without a pride I thought becoming, a badge to prove that he had merited well of his country. It was happy, I thought, that he had been paid in honour, for the stipend he received was little more than twelve pounds a year. I do not trouble myself or you with the calculation of Swedish ducats. Thus, my friend, you perceive the necessity of perquisites. This same narrow policy runs through everything. I shall have occasion further to animadvert on it.

Though my host amused me with an account of himself, which gave me aim idea of the manners of the people I was about to visit, I was eager to climb the rocks to view the country, and see whether the honest tars had regained their ship. With the help of the lieutenant's telescope, I saw the vessel under way with a fair though gentle gale. The sea was calm, playful even as the most shallow stream, and on the vast basin I did not see a dark speck to indicate the boat. My conductors were consequently arrived.

Straying further, my eye was attracted by the sight of some heartsease that peeped through the rocks. I caught at it as a good omen, and going to preserve it in a letter that had not conveyed balm to my heart, a cruel remembrance suffused my eyes; but it passed away like an April shower. If you are deep read in Shakespeare, you will recollect that this was the little western flower tinged by love's dart, which "maidens call love in idleness." The gaiety of my babe was unmixed; regardless of omens or sentiments, she found a few wild strawberries more grateful than flowers or fancies.

The lieutenant informed me that this was a commodious bay. Of that I could not judge, though I felt its picturesque beauty. Rocks were piled on rocks, forming a suitable bulwark to the ocean.

"Come no further," they emphatically said, turning their dark sides to the waves to augment the idle roar. The view was sterile; still little patches of earth of the most exquisite verdure, enamelled with the sweetest wild flowers, seemed to promise the goats and a few straggling cows luxurious herbage. How silent and peaceful was the scene! I gazed around with rapture, and felt more of that spontaneous pleasure which gives credibility to our expectation of happiness than I had for a long, long time before. I forgot the horrors I had witnessed in France, which had cast a gloom over all nature, and suffering the enthusiasm of my character—too often, gracious God! damped by the tears of disappointed affection—to be lighted up afresh, care took wing while simple fellow-feeling expanded my heart.

To prolong this enjoyment, I readily assented to the proposal of our host to pay a visit to a family, the master of which spoke English, who was the drollest dog in the country, he added, repeating some of his stories with a hearty laugh.

I walked on, still delighted with the rude beauties of the scene; for the sublime often gave place imperceptibly to the beautiful, dilating the emotions which were painfully concentrated.

When we entered this abode, the largest I had yet seen, I was introduced to a numerous family; but the father, from whom I was led to expect so much entertainment, was absent. The lieutenant consequently was obliged to be the interpreter of our reciprocal compliments. The phrases were awkwardly transmitted, it is true; but looks and gestures were sufficient to make them intelligible and interesting. The girls were all vivacity, and respect for me could scarcely keep them from romping with my host, who, asking for a pinch of snuff, was presented with a box, out of which an artificial mouse, fastened to the bottom, sprang. Though this trick had doubtless been played the out of mind, yet the laughter it excited was not less genuine.

They were overflowing with civility; but, to prevent their almost killing my babe with kindness, I was obliged to shorten my visit; and two or three of the girls accompanied us, bringing with them a part of whatever the house afforded to contribute towards rendering my supper more plentiful; and

plentiful in fact it was, though I with difficulty did honour to some of the dishes, not relishing the quantity of sugar and spices put into everything. At supper my host told me bluntly that I was a woman of observation, for I asked him *men's questions*.

The arrangements for my journey were quickly made. I could only have a car with post-horses, as I did not choose to wait till a carriage could be sent for to Gothenburg. The expense of my journey (about one or two and twenty English miles) I found would not amount to more than eleven or twelve shillings, paying, he assured me, generously. I gave him a guinea and a half. But it was with the greatest difficulty that I could make him take so much—indeed anything—for my lodging and fare. He declared that it was next to robbing me, explaining how much I ought to pay on the road. However, as I was positive, he took the guinea for himself; but, as a condition, insisted on accompanying me, to prevent my meeting with any trouble or imposition on the way.

I then retired to my apartment with regret. The night was so fine that I would gladly have rambled about much longer, yet, recollecting that I must rise very early, I reluctantly went to bed; but my senses had been so awake, and my imagination still continued so busy, that I sought for rest in vain. Rising before six, I scented the sweet morning air; I had long before heard the birds twittering to hail the dawning day, though it could scarcely have been allowed to have departed.

Nothing, in fact, can equal the beauty of the northern summer's evening and night, if night it may be called that only wants the glare of day, the full light which frequently seems so impertinent, for I could write at midnight very well without a candle. I contemplated all Nature at rest; the rocks, even grown darker in their appearance, looked as if they partook of the general repose, and reclined more heavily on their foundation. "What," I exclaimed, "is this active principle which keeps me still awake? Why fly my thoughts abroad, when everything around me appears at home?" My child was sleeping with equal calmness—innocent and sweet as the closing flowers. Some recollections, attached to the idea of home, mingled with reflections respecting the state of society I had been contemplating that evening, made a tear drop on the rosy cheek I had just kissed, and emotions that trembled on the brink of ecstasy and agony gave a poignancy to my sensations which made me feel more alive than usual.

What are these imperious sympathies? How frequently has melancholy and even misanthropy taken possession of me, when the world has disgusted me, and friends have proved unkind. I have then considered myself as a particle broken off from the grand mass of mankind; I was alone, till some involuntary sympathetic emotion, like the attraction of adhesion, made me feel that I was still a part of a mighty whole, from which I could not sever myself—not, perhaps, for the reflection has been carried very far, by snapping the thread of an existence, which loses its charms in proportion as the cruel experience of life stops or poisons the current of the heart. Futurity, what hast thou not to give to those who know that there is such a thing as happiness! I speak not of philosophical contentment, though pain has afforded them the strongest conviction of it.

After our coffee and milk—for the mistress of the house had been roused long before us by her hospitality—my baggage was taken forward in a boat by my host, because the car could not safely have been brought to the house.

The road at first was very rocky and troublesome, but our driver was careful, and the horses accustomed to the frequent and sudden acclivities and descents; so that, not apprehending any danger, I played with my girl, whom I would not leave to Marguerite's care, on account of her timidity.

Stopping at a little inn to bait the horses, I saw the first countenance in Sweden that displeased me, though the man was better dressed than any one who had as yet fallen in my way. An altercation took place between him and my host, the purport of which I could not guess, excepting that I was the occasion of it, be it what it would. The sequel was his leaving the house angrily; and I was immediately informed that he was the custom-house officer. The professional had indeed effaced the national character, for, living as he did within these frank hospitable people, still only the exciseman appeared, the counterpart of some I had met with in England and France. I was unprovided with a

passport, not having entered any great town. At Gothenburg I knew I could immediately obtain one, and only the trouble made me object to the searching my trunks. He blustered for money; but the lieutenant was determined to guard me, according to promise, from imposition.

To avoid being interrogated at the town-gate, and obliged to go in the rain to give an account of myself (merely a form) before we could get the refreshment we stood in need of, he requested us to descend—I might have said step—from our car, and walk into town.

I expected to have found a tolerable inn, but was ushered into a most comfortless one; and, because it was about five o'clock, three or four hours after their dining hour, I could not prevail on them to give me anything warm to eat.

The appearance of the accommodations obliged me to deliver one of my recommendatory letters, and the gentleman to whom it was addressed sent to look out for a lodging for me whilst I partook of his supper. As nothing passed at this supper to characterise the country, I shall here close my letter.

Yours truly.

LETTER II

Gothenburg is a clean airy town, and, having been built by the Dutch, has canals running through each street; and in some of them there are rows of trees that would render it very pleasant were it not for the pavement, which is intolerably bad.

There are several rich commercial houses—Scotch, French, and Swedish; but the Scotch, I believe, have been the most successful. The commerce and commission business with France since the war has been very lucrative, and enriched the merchants I am afraid at the expense of the other inhabitants, by raising the price of the necessaries of life.

As all the men of consequence—I mean men of the largest fortune—are merchants, their principal enjoyment is a relaxation from business at the table, which is spread at, I think, too early an hour (between one and two) for men who have letters to write and accounts to settle after paying due respect to the bottle.

However, when numerous circles are to be brought together, and when neither literature nor public amusements furnish topics for conversation, a good dinner appears to be the only centre to rally round, especially as scandal, the zest of more select parties, can only be whispered. As for politics, I have seldom found it a subject of continual discussion in a country town in any part of the world. The politics of the place, being on a smaller scale, suits better with the size of their faculties; for, generally speaking, the sphere of observation determines the extent of the mind.

The more I see of the world, the more I am convinced that civilisation is a blessing not sufficiently estimated by those who have not traced its progress; for it not only refines our enjoyments, but produces a variety which enables us to retain the primitive delicacy of our sensations. Without the aid of the imagination all the pleasures of the senses must sink into grossness, unless continual novelty serve as a substitute for the imagination, which, being impossible, it was to this weariness, I suppose, that Solomon alluded when he declared that there was nothing new under the sun!—nothing for the common sensations excited by the senses. Yet who will deny that the imagination and understanding have made many, very many discoveries since those days, which only seem harbingers of others still more noble and beneficial? I never met with much imagination amongst people who had not acquired a habit of reflection; and in that state of society in which the judgment and taste are not called forth, and formed by the cultivation of the arts and sciences, little of that delicacy of feeling and thinking is to be found characterised by the word sentiment. The want of scientific pursuits perhaps accounts for the hospitality, as well as for the cordial reception which strangers receive from the inhabitants of small towns.

Hospitality has, I think, been too much praised by travellers as a proof of goodness of heart, when, in my opinion, indiscriminate hospitality is rather a criterion by which you may form a tolerable estimate of the indolence or vacancy of a head; or, in other words, a fondness for social pleasures in which the mind not having its proportion of exercise, the bottle must be pushed about.

These remarks are equally applicable to Dublin, the most hospitable city I ever passed through. But I will try to confine my observations more particularly to Sweden.

It is true I have only had a glance over a small part of it; yet of its present state of manners and acquirements I think I have formed a distinct idea, without having visited the capital—where, in fact, less of a national character is to be found than in the remote parts of the country.

The Swedes pique themselves on their politeness; but far from being the polish of a cultivated mind, it consists merely of tiresome forms and ceremonies. So far, indeed, from entering immediately into your character, and making you feel instantly at your ease, like the well-bred French, their over-acted civility is a continual restraint on all your actions. The sort of superiority which a fortune gives when there is no superiority of education, excepting what consists in the observance of senseless forms, has a contrary effect than what is intended; so that I could not help reckoning the peasantry

the politest people of Sweden, who, only aiming at pleasing you, never think of being admired for their behaviour.

Their tables, like their compliments, seem equally a caricature of the French. The dishes are composed, as well as theirs, of a variety of mixtures to destroy the native taste of the food without being as relishing. Spices and sugar are put into everything, even into the bread; and the only way I can account for their partiality to high-seasoned dishes is the constant use of salted provisions. Necessity obliges them to lay up a store of dried fish and salted meat for the winter; and in summer, fresh meat and fish taste insipid after them. To which may be added the constant use of spirits. Every day, before dinner and supper, even whilst the dishes are cooling on the table, men and women repair to a side-table; and to obtain an appetite eat bread-and-butter, cheese, raw salmon, or anchovies, drinking a glass of brandy. Salt fish or meat then immediately follows, to give a further whet to the stomach.

As the dinner advances, pardon me for taking up a few minutes to describe what, alas! has detained me two or three hours on the stretch observing, dish after dish is changed, in endless rotation, and handed round with solemn pace to each guest; but should you happen not to like the first dishes, which was often my case, it is a gross breach of politeness to ask for part of any other till its turn comes. But have patience, and there will be eating enough. Allow me to run over the acts of a visiting day, not overlooking the interludes.

Prelude a luncheon—then a succession of fish, flesh, and fowl for two hours, during which time the dessert—I was sorry for the strawberries and cream—rests on the table to be impregnated by the fumes of the viands. Coffee immediately follows in the drawing-room, but does not preclude punch, ale, tea and cakes, raw salmon, &c. A supper brings up the rear, not forgetting the introductory luncheon, almost equalling in removes the dinner. A day of this kind you would imagine sufficient; but a to-morrow and a to-morrow—A never-ending, still-beginning feast may be bearable, perhaps, when stern winter frowns, shaking with chilling aspect his hoary locks; but during a summer, sweet as fleeting, let me, my kind strangers, escape sometimes into your fir groves, wander on the margin of your beautiful lakes, or climb your rocks, to view still others in endless perspective, which, piled by more than giant's hand, scale the heavens to intercept its rays, or to receive the parting tinge of lingering day—day that, scarcely softened unto twilight, allows the freshening breeze to wake, and the moon to burst forth in all her glory to glide with solemn elegance through the azure expanse.

The cow's bell has ceased to tinkle the herd to rest; they have all paced across the heath. Is not this the witching time of night? The waters murmur, and fall with more than mortal music, and spirits of peace walk abroad to calm the agitated breast. Eternity is in these moments. Worldly cares melt into the airy stuff that dreams are made of, and reveries, mild and enchanting as the first hopes of love or the recollection of lost enjoyment, carry the hapless wight into futurity, who in bustling life has vainly strove to throw off the grief which lies heavy at the heart. Good night! A crescent hangs out in the vault before, which woos me to stray abroad. It is not a silvery reflection of the sun, but glows with all its golden splendour. Who fears the fallen dew? It only makes the mown grass smell more fragrant. Adieu!

LETTER III

The population of Sweden has been estimated from two millions and a half to three millions; a small number for such an immense tract of country, of which only so much is cultivated—and that in the simplest manner—as is absolutely requisite to supply the necessaries of life; and near the seashore, whence herrings are easily procured, there scarcely appears a vestige of cultivation. The scattered huts that stand shivering on the naked rocks, braving the pitiless elements, are formed of logs of wood rudely hewn; and so little pains are taken with the craggy foundation that nothing like a pathway points out the door.

Gathered into himself by the cold, lowering his visage to avoid the cutting blast, is it surprising that the churlish pleasure of drinking drams takes place of social enjoyments amongst the poor, especially if we take into the account that they mostly live on high-seasoned provision and rye bread?

Hard enough, you may imagine, as it is baked only once a year. The servants also, in most families, eat this kind of bread, and have a different kind of food from their masters, which, in spite of all the arguments I have heard to vindicate the custom, appears to me a remnant of barbarism.

In fact, the situation of the servants in every respect, particularly that of the women, shows how far the Swedes are from having a just conception of rational equality. They are not termed slaves; yet a man may strike a man with impunity because he pays him wages, though these wages are so low that necessity must teach them to pilfer, whilst servility renders them false and boorish. Still the men stand up for the dignity of man by oppressing the women. The most menial, and even laborious offices, are therefore left to these poor drudges. Much of this I have seen. In the winter, I am told, they take the linen down to the river to wash it in the cold water, and though their hands, cut by the ice, are cracked and bleeding, the men, their fellow-servants, will not disgrace their manhood by carrying a tub to lighten their burden.

You will not be surprised to hear that they do not wear shoes or stockings, when I inform you that their wages are seldom more than twenty or thirty shillings per annum. It is the custom, I know, to give them a new year's gift and a present at some other period, but can it all amount to a just indemnity for their labour? The treatment of servants in most countries, I grant, is very unjust, and in England, that boasted land of freedom, it is often extremely tyrannical. I have frequently, with indignation, heard gentlemen declare that they would never allow a servant to answer them; and ladies of the most exquisite sensibility, who were continually exclaiming against the cruelty of the vulgar to the brute creation, have in my presence forgot that their attendants had human feelings as well as forms. I do not know a more agreeable sight than to see servants part of a family. By taking an interest, generally speaking, in their concerns you inspire them with one for yours. We must love our servants, or we shall never be sufficiently attentive to their happiness; and how can those masters be attentive to their happiness who, living above their fortunes, are more anxious to outshine their neighbours than to allow their household the innocent enjoyments they earn?

It is, in fact, much more difficult for servants, who are tantalised by seeing and preparing the dainties of which they are not to partake, to remain honest, than the poor, whose thoughts are not led from their homely fare; so that, though the servants here are commonly thieves, you seldom hear of housebreaking, or robbery on the highway. The country is, perhaps, too thinly inhabited to produce many of that description of thieves termed footpads, or highwaymen. They are usually the spawn of great cities—the effect of the spurious desires generated by wealth, rather than the desperate struggles of poverty to escape from misery.

The enjoyment of the peasantry was drinking brandy and coffee, before the latter was prohibited, and the former not allowed to be privately distilled, the wars carried on by the late king rendering it necessary to increase the revenue, and retain the specie in the country by every possible means.

The taxes before the reign of Charles XII. were inconsiderable. Since then the burden has continually been growing heavier, and the price of provisions has proportionately increased—nay, the advantage accruing from the exportation of corn to France and rye to Germany will probably produce a scarcity in both Sweden and Norway, should not a peace put a stop to it this autumn, for speculations of various kinds have already almost doubled the price.

Such are the effects of war, that it saps the vitals even of the neutral countries, who, obtaining a sudden influx of wealth, appear to be rendered flourishing by the destruction which ravages the hapless nations who are sacrificed to the ambition of their governors. I shall not, however, dwell on the vices, though they be of the most contemptible and embruting cast, to which a sudden accession of fortune gives birth, because I believe it may be delivered as an axiom, that it is only in proportion to the industry necessary to acquire wealth that a nation is really benefited by it.

The prohibition of drinking coffee under a penalty, and the encouragement given to public distilleries, tend to impoverish the poor, who are not affected by the sumptuary laws; for the regent has lately laid very severe restraints on the articles of dress, which the middling class of people found grievous, because it obliged them to throw aside finery that might have lasted them for their lives.

These may be termed vexatious; still the death of the king, by saving them from the consequences his ambition would naturally have entailed on them, may be reckoned a blessing.

Besides, the French Revolution has not only rendered all the crowned heads more cautious, but has so decreased everywhere (excepting amongst themselves) a respect for nobility, that the peasantry have not only lost their blind reverence for their seigniors, but complain in a manly style of oppressions which before they did not think of denominating such, because they were taught to consider themselves as a different order of beings. And, perhaps, the efforts which the aristocrats are making here, as well as in every other part of Europe, to secure their sway, will be the most effectual mode of undermining it, taking into the calculation that the King of Sweden, like most of the potentates of Europe, has continually been augmenting his power by encroaching on the privileges of the nobles.

The well-bred Swedes of the capital are formed on the ancient French model, and they in general speak that language; for they have a knack at acquiring languages with tolerable fluency. This may be reckoned an advantage in some respects; but it prevents the cultivation of their own, and any considerable advance in literary pursuits.

A sensible writer has lately observed (I have not his work by me, therefore cannot quote his exact words), “That the Americans very wisely let the Europeans make their books and fashions for them.” But I cannot coincide with him in this opinion. The reflection necessary to produce a certain number even of tolerable productions augments more than he is aware of the mass of knowledge in the community. Desultory reading is commonly a mere pastime. But we must have an object to refer our reflections to, or they will seldom go below the surface. As in travelling, the keeping of a journal excites to many useful inquiries that would not have been thought of had the traveller only determined to see all he could see, without ever asking himself for what purpose. Besides, the very dabbling in literature furnishes harmless topics of conversation; for the not having such subjects at hand, though they are often insupportably fatiguing, renders the inhabitants of little towns prying and censorious. Idleness, rather than ill-nature, gives birth to scandal, and to the observation of little incidents which narrows the mind. It is frequently only the fear of being talked of which produces that puerile scrupulosity about trifles incompatible with an enlarged plan of usefulness, and with the basis of all moral principles—respect for the virtues which are not merely the virtues of convention.

I am, my friend, more and more convinced that a metropolis, or an abode absolutely solitary, is the best calculated for the improvement of the heart, as well as the understanding; whether we desire to become acquainted with man, nature, or ourselves. Mixing with mankind, we are obliged to examine our prejudices, and often imperceptibly lose, as we analyse them. And in the country, growing intimate with nature, a thousand little circumstances, unseen by vulgar eyes, give birth to

sentiments dear to the imagination, and inquiries which expand the soul, particularly when cultivation has not smoothed into insipidity all its originality of character.

I love the country, yet whenever I see a picturesque situation chosen on which to erect a dwelling I am always afraid of the improvements. It requires uncommon taste to form a whole, and to introduce accommodations and ornaments analogous with the surrounding-scene.

It visited, near Gothenburg, a house with improved land about it, with which I was particularly delighted. It was close to a lake embosomed in pine-clad rocks. In one part of the meadows your eye was directed to the broad expanse, in another you were led into a shade, to see a part of it, in the form of a river, rush amongst the fragments of rocks and roots of trees; nothing seemed forced.

One recess, particularly grand and solemn amongst the towering cliffs, had a rude stone table and seat placed in it, that might have served for a Druid's haunt, whilst a placid stream below enlivened the flowers on its margin, where light-footed elves would gladly have danced their airy rounds.

Here the hand of taste was conspicuous though not obtrusive, and formed a contrast with another abode in the same neighbourhood, on which much money had been lavished; where Italian colonnades were placed to excite the wonder of the rude crags, and a stone staircase, to threaten with destruction a wooden house. Venuses and Apollos condemned to lie hid in snow three parts of the year seemed equally displaced, and called the attention off from the surrounding sublimity, without inspiring any voluptuous sensations. Yet even these abortions of vanity have been useful. Numberless workmen have been employed, and the superintending artist has improved the labourers, whose unskilfulness tormented him, by obliging them to submit to the discipline of rules. Adieu!

Yours affectionately.

LETTER IV

The severity of the long Swedish winter tends to render the people sluggish, for though this season has its peculiar pleasures, too much time is employed to guard against its inclemency. Still as warm clothing is absolutely necessary, the women spin and the men weave, and by these exertions get a fence to keep out the cold. I have rarely passed a knot of cottages without seeing cloth laid out to bleach, and when I entered, always found the women spinning or knitting.

A mistaken tenderness, however, for their children, makes them even in summer load them with flannels, and having a sort of natural antipathy to cold water, the squalid appearance of the poor babes, not to speak of the noxious smell which flannel and rugs retain, seems a reply to a question I had often asked—Why I did not see more children in the villages I passed through? Indeed the children appear to be nipt in the bud, having neither the graces nor charms of their age. And this, I am persuaded, is much more owing to the ignorance of the mothers than to the rudeness of the climate. Rendered feeble by the continual perspiration they are kept in, whilst every pore is absorbing unwholesome moisture, they give them, even at the breast, brandy, salt fish, and every other crude substance which air and exercise enables the parent to digest.

The women of fortune here, as well as everywhere else, have nurses to suckle their children; and the total want of chastity in the lower class of women frequently renders them very unfit for the trust.

You have sometimes remarked to me the difference of the manners of the country girls in England and in America; attributing the reserve of the former to the climate—to the absence of genial suns. But it must be their stars, not the zephyrs, gently stealing on their senses, which here lead frail women astray. Who can look at these rocks, and allow the voluptuousness of nature to be an excuse for gratifying the desires it inspires? We must therefore, find some other cause beside voluptuousness, I believe, to account for the conduct of the Swedish and American country girls; for I am led to conclude, from all the observations I have made, that there is always a mixture of sentiment and imagination in voluptuousness, to which neither of them have much pretension.

The country girls of Ireland and Wales equally feel the first impulse of nature, which, restrained in England by fear or delicacy, proves that society is there in a more advanced state. Besides, as the mind is cultivated, and taste gains ground, the passions become stronger, and rest on something more stable than the casual sympathies of the moment. Health and idleness will always account for promiscuous amours; and in some degree I term every person idle, the exercise of whose mind does not bear some proportion to that of the body.

The Swedish ladies exercise neither sufficiently; of course, grow very fat at an early age; and when they have not this downy appearance, a comfortable idea, you will say, in a cold climate, they are not remarkable for fine forms. They have, however, mostly fine complexions; but indolence makes the lily soon displace the rose. The quantity of coffee, spices, and other things of that kind, with want of care, almost universally spoil their teeth, which contrast but ill with their ruby lips.

The manners of Stockholm are refined, I hear, by the introduction of gallantry; but in the country, romping and coarse freedoms, with coarser allusions, keep the spirits awake. In the article of cleanliness, the women of all descriptions seem very deficient; and their dress shows that vanity is more inherent in women than taste.

The men appear to have paid still less court to the graces. They are a robust, healthy race, distinguished for their common sense and turn for humour, rather than for wit or sentiment. I include not, as you may suppose, in this general character, some of the nobility and officers, who having travelled, are polite and well informed.

I must own to you that the lower class of people here amuse and interest me much more than the middling, with their apish good breeding and prejudices. The sympathy and frankness of heart conspicuous in the peasantry produces even a simple gracefulness of deportment which has frequently

struck me as very picturesque; I have often also been touched by their extreme desire to oblige me, when I could not explain my wants, and by their earnest manner of expressing that desire. There is such a charm in tenderness! It is so delightful to love our fellow-creatures, and meet the honest affections as they break forth. Still, my good friend, I begin to think that I should not like to live continually in the country with people whose minds have such a narrow range. My heart would frequently be interested; but my mind would languish for more companionable society.

The beauties of nature appear to me now even more alluring than in my youth, because my intercourse with the world has formed without vitiating my taste. But, with respect to the inhabitants of the country, my fancy has probably, when disgusted with artificial manners, solaced itself by joining the advantages of cultivation with the interesting sincerity of innocence, forgetting the lassitude that ignorance will naturally produce. I like to see animals sporting, and sympathise in their pains and pleasures. Still I love sometimes to view the human face divine, and trace the soul, as well as the heart, in its varying lineaments.

A journey to the country, which I must shortly make, will enable me to extend my remarks.
—Adieu!

LETTER V

Had I determined to travel in Sweden merely for pleasure, I should probably have chosen the road to Stockholm, though convinced, by repeated observation, that the manners of a people are best discriminated in the country. The inhabitants of the capital are all of the same genus; for the varieties in the species we must, therefore, search where the habitations of men are so separated as to allow the difference of climate to have its natural effect. And with this difference we are, perhaps, most forcibly struck at the first view, just as we form an estimate of the leading traits of a character at the first glance, of which intimacy afterwards makes us almost lose sight.

As my affairs called me to Stromstad (the frontier town of Sweden) in my way to Norway, I was to pass over, I heard, the most uncultivated part of the country. Still I believe that the grand features of Sweden are the same everywhere, and it is only the grand features that admit of description. There is an individuality in every prospect, which remains in the memory as forcibly depicted as the particular features that have arrested our attention; yet we cannot find words to discriminate that individuality so as to enable a stranger to say, this is the face, that the view. We may amuse by setting the imagination to work; but we cannot store the memory with a fact.

As I wish to give you a general idea of this country, I shall continue in my desultory manner to make such observations and reflections as the circumstances draw forth, without losing time, by endeavouring to arrange them.

Travelling in Sweden is very cheap, and even commodious, if you make but the proper arrangements. Here, as in other parts of the Continent, it is necessary to have your own carriage, and to have a servant who can speak the language, if you are unacquainted with it. Sometimes a servant who can drive would be found very useful, which was our case, for I travelled in company with two gentlemen, one of whom had a German servant who drove very well. This was all the party; for not intending to make a long stay, I left my little girl behind me.

As the roads are not much frequented, to avoid waiting three or four hours for horses, we sent, as is the constant custom, an *avant courier* the night before, to order them at every post, and we constantly found them ready. Our first set I jokingly termed requisition horses; but afterwards we had almost always little spirited animals that went on at a round pace.

The roads, making allowance for the ups and downs, are uncommonly good and pleasant. The expense, including the postillions and other incidental things, does not amount to more than a shilling the Swedish mile.

The inns are tolerable; but not liking the rye bread, I found it necessary to furnish myself with some wheaten before I set out. The beds, too, were particularly disagreeable to me. It seemed to me that I was sinking into a grave when I entered them; for, immersed in down placed in a sort of box, I expected to be suffocated before morning. The sleeping between two down beds—they do so even in summer—must be very unwholesome during any season; and I cannot conceive how the people can bear it, especially as the summers are very warm. But warmth they seem not to feel; and, I should think, were afraid of the air, by always keeping their windows shut. In the winter, I am persuaded, I could not exist in rooms thus closed up, with stoves heated in their manner, for they only put wood into them twice a day; and, when the stove is thoroughly heated, they shut the flue, not admitting any air to renew its elasticity, even when the rooms are crowded with company. These stoves are made of earthenware, and often in a form that ornaments an apartment, which is never the case with the heavy iron ones I have seen elsewhere. Stoves may be economical, but I like a fire, a wood one, in preference; and I am convinced that the current of air which it attracts renders this the best mode of warming rooms.

We arrived early the second evening at a little village called Quistram, where we had determined to pass the night, having been informed that we should not afterwards find a tolerable inn until we reached Stromstad.

Advancing towards Quistram, as the sun was beginning to decline, I was particularly impressed by the beauty of the situation. The road was on the declivity of a rocky mountain, slightly covered with a mossy herbage and vagrant firs. At the bottom, a river, straggling amongst the recesses of stone, was hastening forward to the ocean and its grey rocks, of which we had a prospect on the left; whilst on the right it stole peacefully forward into the meadows, losing itself in a thickly-wooded rising ground. As we drew near, the loveliest banks of wild flowers variegated the prospect, and promised to exhale odours to add to the sweetness of the air, the purity of which you could almost see, alas! not smell, for the putrefying herrings, which they use as manure, after the oil has been extracted, spread over the patches of earth, claimed by cultivation, destroyed every other.

It was intolerable, and entered with us into the inn, which was in other respects a charming retreat.

Whilst supper was preparing I crossed the bridge, and strolled by the river, listening to its murmurs. Approaching the bank, the beauty of which had attracted my attention in the carriage, I recognised many of my old acquaintance growing with great luxuriance.

Seated on it, I could not avoid noting an obvious remark. Sweden appeared to me the country in the world most proper to form the botanist and natural historian; every object seemed to remind me of the creation of things, of the first efforts of sportive nature. When a country arrives at a certain state of perfection, it looks as if it were made so; and curiosity is not excited. Besides, in social life too many objects occur for any to be distinctly observed by the generality of mankind; yet a contemplative man, or poet, in the country—I do not mean the country adjacent to cities—feels and sees what would escape vulgar eyes, and draws suitable inferences. This train of reflections might have led me further, in every sense of the word; but I could not escape from the detestable evaporation of the herrings, which poisoned all my pleasure.

After making a tolerable supper—for it is not easy to get fresh provisions on the road—I retired, to be lulled to sleep by the murmuring of a stream, of which I with great difficulty obtained sufficient to perform my daily ablutions.

The last battle between the Danes and Swedes, which gave new life to their ancient enmity, was fought at this place 1788; only seventeen or eighteen were killed, for the great superiority of the Danes and Norwegians obliged the Swedes to submit; but sickness, and a scarcity of provision, proved very fatal to their opponents on their return.

It would be very easy to search for the particulars of this engagement in the publications of the day; but as this manner of filling my pages does not come within my plan, I probably should not have remarked that the battle was fought here, were it not to relate an anecdote which I had from good authority.

I noticed, when I first mentioned this place to you, that we descended a steep before we came to the inn; an immense ridge of rocks stretching out on one side. The inn was sheltered under them; and about a hundred yards from it was a bridge that crossed the river, the murmurs of which I have celebrated; it was not fordable. The Swedish general received orders to stop at the bridge and dispute the passage—a most advantageous post for an army so much inferior in force; but the influence of beauty is not confined to courts. The mistress of the inn was handsome; when I saw her there were still some remains of beauty; and, to preserve her house, the general gave up the only tenable station.

He was afterwards broke for contempt of orders.

Approaching the frontiers, consequently the sea, nature resumed an aspect ruder and ruder, or rather seemed the bones of the world waiting to be clothed with everything necessary to give life and beauty. Still it was sublime.

The clouds caught their hue of the rocks that menaced them. The sun appeared afraid to shine, the birds ceased to sing, and the flowers to bloom; but the eagle fixed his nest high amongst the rocks, and the vulture hovered over this abode of desolation. The farm houses, in which only poverty resided, were formed of logs scarcely keeping off the cold and drifting snow: out of them the inhabitants seldom peeped, and the sports or prattling of children was neither seen or heard. The current of life seemed congealed at the source: all were not frozen, for it was summer, you remember; but everything appeared so dull that I waited to see ice, in order to reconcile me to the absence of gaiety.

The day before, my attention had frequently been attracted by the wild beauties of the country we passed through.

The rocks which tossed their fantastic heads so high were often covered with pines and firs, varied in the most picturesque manner. Little woods filled up the recesses when forests did not darken the scene, and valleys and glens, cleared of the trees, displayed a dazzling verdure which contrasted with the gloom of the shading pines. The eye stole into many a covert where tranquillity seemed to have taken up her abode, and the number of little lakes that continually presented themselves added to the peaceful composure of the scenery. The little cultivation which appeared did not break the enchantment, nor did castles rear their turrets aloft to crush the cottages, and prove that man is more savage than the natives of the woods. I heard of the bears but never saw them stalk forth, which I was sorry for; I wished to have seen one in its wild state. In the winter, I am told, they sometimes catch a stray cow, which is a heavy loss to the owner.

The farms are small. Indeed most of the houses we saw on the road indicated poverty, or rather that the people could just live. Towards the frontiers they grew worse and worse in their appearance, as if not willing to put sterility itself out of countenance. No gardens smiled round the habitations, not a potato or cabbage to eat with the fish drying on a stick near the door. A little grain here and there appeared, the long stalks of which you might almost reckon. The day was gloomy when we passed over this rejected spot, the wind bleak, and winter seemed to be contending with nature, faintly struggling to change the season. Surely, thought I, if the sun ever shines here it cannot warm these stones; moss only cleaves to them, partaking of their hardness, and nothing like vegetable life appears to cheer with hope the heart.

So far from thinking that the primitive inhabitants of the world lived in a southern climate where Paradise spontaneously arose, I am led to infer, from various circumstances, that the first dwelling of man happened to be a spot like this which led him to adore a sun so seldom seen; for this worship, which probably preceded that of demons or demigods, certainly never began in a southern climate, where the continual presence of the sun prevented its being considered as a good; or rather the want of it never being felt, this glorious luminary would carelessly have diffused its blessings without being hailed as a benefactor. Man must therefore have been placed in the north, to tempt him to run after the sun, in order that the different parts of the earth might be peopled. Nor do I wonder that hordes of barbarians always poured out of these regions to seek for milder climes, when nothing like cultivation attached them to the soil, especially when we take into the view that the adventuring spirit, common to man, is naturally stronger and more general during the infancy of society. The conduct of the followers of Mahomet, and the crusaders, will sufficiently corroborate my assertion.

Approaching nearer to Stromstad, the appearance of the town proved to be quite in character with the country we had just passed through. I hesitated to use the word country, yet could not find another; still it would sound absurd to talk of fields of rocks.

The town was built on and under them. Three or four weather-beaten trees were shrinking from the wind, and the grass grew so sparingly that I could not avoid thinking Dr. Johnson's hyperbolic assertion "that the man merited well of his country who made a few blades of grass grow where they never grew before," might here have been uttered with strict propriety. The steeple likewise towered aloft, for what is a church, even amongst the Lutherans, without a steeple? But to prevent mischief

in such an exposed situation, it is wisely placed on a rock at some distance not to endanger the roof of the church.

Rambling about, I saw the door open, and entered, when to my great surprise I found the clergyman reading prayers, with only the clerk attending. I instantly thought of Swift's "Dearly beloved Roger," but on inquiry I learnt that some one had died that morning, and in Sweden it is customary to pray for the dead.

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