

A YANKEE JOURNALIST'S EUROPEAN TOUR, 1835-36

VOLUME THREE — CLASSIC ITALY

by JAMES BROOKS

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Volume Four — Homeward Bound

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## 52. Arrival in Italy

Baveno, (Lago Maggiore),  
September 16, 1835.

What a change but a single day's journey has wrought in everything! What a new world I am in already! New scenes are around me, and a new people, and a new tongue. The Alps are gone, and I am on the plains of Italy. The republican Swiss is away, and the fettered Italian has taken his place. The harsh sounding German no longer grates upon the ear, but the sweet and liquid Italian, murdered as it is by the peasantry here, is yet so soft and so musical, that the people seem to sing rather than talk. *Ja, Meinherr*, a barbarous ejaculation, fit only for an Indian tongue, is now the *Si Signore*, with the *Signore* so trilled out that there is as much of music in the sound as there is of barbarism in the horrid German *Ja*, pronounced as it is, *Yah*. There is a pleasure in the changing of the languages of the people about you, for you feel that you are seeing and hearing something new, but how much that pleasure would be increased if the people only wore different dresses, if some robe took the place of the coat, and some strange covering the place of the hat. This finding of people in the same robes all over the world, is not the thing I like. You feel that all men are alike, when it seems as if they ought to be unlike, particularly when they speak different languages, and cannot even understand each other. The Turk is known by his habit, but who can tell French from American, or Italian, or German, by any outward dress? What an empire in the two worlds that Monarch Fashion has, putting upon us all his servile livery, even shaping our hats and our coats alike, and decorating us with his meanest badges. The autocrat of all Russia has not a dominion of tenth the extent, and even the Turks cannot cut off the beard of the Muslim; but fashion puts every "Christian" in similar habiliments, and he is no "Christian," so thinks the world, who shakes off her yoke—a Turk only, an Indian perhaps, or an infidel at best. It is a fact that a man cannot be "Christian," unless he wears pantaloons, or a woman without a gown; and this is the way Christians are known all over the world! What a step from the sublime to the ridiculous.

I met some strange Englishmen in the hotel where I stopped at the village of Simplon, whence I wrote you last. A huge carriage-load of English people was emptied upon us as we were at dinner. The gentlemen were gentlemen enough, but the *ladies* would swear like drunken sailors, which perhaps was their only fault. "*My God*," "*Oh God*," and "*Good God*," would slip out of their mouths in such thick confusion, that even a short speech would be made a long one by means of the oaths, "*My God, you have not been on the Rigi*," (a famous mountain in Switzerland,) said one. "*Oh God, you are going to Milan*," exclaimed the other. "*God of heaven! will you venture to Rome?*" the first again cried out. "*God preserve you*," she added, "*I was going myself, but God knows, I won't venture into the jaws of the cholera. Oh God, how can you go! Are you mad! Have you no friends to keep you back! They are dying in Italy like sheep. Oh God, what a madman!*" The poor women were in hysterics about the cholera, from which they were flying. They had been to Milan on their way to Rome, but, frightened out of their senses, they were thus flying back, and *swearing* all the way. Oh, Mrs. Trollope,<sup>1</sup> if you had seen such American *ladies* with their servants in a rich carriage, what a treat would you have had in serving them up! How my countrywomen would have suffered! But I will be just and say, though these were English *ladies*, they were not fair examples of the noble if not pretty women who grace by their manners and habits the circles of English society. Our English companions apologized much, and blushed for this bad specimen of their countrywomen, and hoped we would not judge all by such rude pieces of workmanship—and excellent fun we had with them in retaliation for the tit-bits they had been retailing to us, as extracted from Mrs. Trollope, and Mrs. Butler,<sup>2</sup> whose books, by the way, are everywhere on the continent universally read, and as universally condemned.

After our night's rest at the hotel of the Simplon, our luggage again compelled us to abandon the delightful pleasure of walking; and I can assure you that now I find no mode of traveling so really delightful, for I have even ceased to be fatigued by walking, and there is an incident too when I am on foot, with every house I pass by, with every person whom I see, aye with every dog that barks at me. The Englishmen went on foot,

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<sup>1</sup> Frances ["Fanny"] Trollope (1780-1863) — (Mrs. Trollope) English author, published *Domestic Manners of the Americans* (1832)

<sup>2</sup> Mrs. Butler — Married surname of the author Fanny Kemble (1834)

racing like very horses, not dreaming even of fatigue, and challenging us in sport to keep up with them with the best pair of horses we could find. An old, rickety, miserable wagon, with a wagoner who spoke a little of all the languages of the earth, and none intelligibly, was the vehicle we hired to convey us to Domodossola, in Piedmont, within the dominions of the king of Sardinia. Our wagoner accounted for the multiplicity of his languages by stating that if he went over the Simplon, he got where the French was spoken; if he stayed at home the German was the language used; but if he went down the Simplon, only Italian was heard; and thus he was compelled to speak and understand all three. In fact, we ourselves, in twelve hours, after sleeping a night within the time, had passed where all these languages were spoken, and had heard them all. It is one of the strangest things in the world to see merely a ridge of the mountain not only dividing a nation, but the line of a division of languages too: and not infrequently about here, as you pass from valley to valley, or from one side of the mountain just over to the other, you get among a people speaking altogether a different language. I must say here, that it is with pleasure I bid adieu to the German, which I have so long heard on the Rhine and in Switzerland—for the sound of it is so uncouth and the letters are so ugly, that there is no temptation, but that of necessity, to learn words enough to demand even the common necessities of life—while I welcome the Italian as a language that can be understood and spoken in part, even by the traveler when he is making his rapid journeyings.

The sun was not up when we left the hotel of Simplon, and began the descent for Domodossola, between the two mountains that wall up, as it were, the superb road of Napoleon.<sup>3</sup> It was not long before we turned a sharp angle of the road, and suddenly found ourselves shut up within a narrow valley, as we passed through a rocky gallery, the road and the torrent being the only pass-way between the overhanging mountains. We were in the valley of Gondo, a somber and terrible valley cleft by the mountain torrent, which raged and roared at our right, as if in wrath that men should check it. Huge masses of granite in the bed of the torrent told us what terrible messengers the avalanches sometimes shot down from the mountains above—while the rocks hanging almost over

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<sup>3</sup> Napoleon Bonaparte (1769-1821) — French military and political leader

our heads, threatened death and desolation some day or other to some luckless traveler.

The magnificent gallery of Gondo, which powder and the chisel have worked in the solid rock, is 683 French feet in length! Think of that, Romans even, and say if Napoleon has not done as much as you. Nature here appears frightful, and grand too. Glorious is the achievement of man who has tamed it, and subdued it to his use. That such prodigious difficulties could ever be conquered by mortal effort, I never dreamed. The Italian engineer<sup>4</sup> to whom Napoleon entrusted the building of the Italian side, seems to have loved to grapple with difficulties just for the sport of conquering them. With precipice, snow, the torrent, ice, the cliff, the mountain and ravine, and the avalanche too, he waged a war, and he conquered each and all, and made them all keep still; but they are having their revenge slowly now, for the avalanche is rolling rocks to batter down the parapets, and the torrent is sweeping away whatever it can of the ruins. I saw no danger when I passed. There is none now at this, the calm season of the year; but, when the snows are thick upon the mountains, or the thaws drench the rocks, or the torrent overleaps its bed, I can readily see what fearful desolation might be worked. No wonder, then, that there are times when the trembling traveler takes even the bells from his horses so as not to agitate the air, and when his eyes are lifted upwards in painful anxiety, fancying each projecting cliff to be some messenger of death to him and all his family.

The wild valley of Gondo passed—the little village of the same name, and the lugubrious inn of a Valaisian there, the architecture of which corresponds so well with the desolation of the place—the traveler then comes to a town called Isella, which is in Italy, where officers examine his baggage and his passport, and if they choose, give him permission to enter Italy. I was surprised here to mark already the instantaneous change that seemed to come over the characters of the people who are the indispensable nuisances of every European traveler. I mean the hangers-on about the streets and the custom houses and the stables,

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<sup>4</sup> Starke (1828 p.42) names the Italian engineer as Cavaliere Giovanni Fabbroni. The engineer in charge of the French side of the Simplon road project (1801-1805) was Nicolas Céard.

who try to extort a little money by every means in their power. The word, or words, *buona mano*, a phrase difficult to put into English, in so many forms does it show itself, meaning generally a gratuity for servants' fees, here first begins to annoy the traveler—and *buona mano*, I am told, he will hear perpetually, put in every possible attitude all over Italy, even to the southernmost dominions of the Neapolitan king. But the traveler soon learns another word, which is *niente* (nothing,) or yet another, *troppo* (too much,) quite a match for the *buona mano*, and quite enough to drive a bargain with, before he knows an Italian verb. *Niente* and *troppo* are words as indispensable to a traveler in Italy as bread and water, and every man ought to sound them often, before he comes down the Alps. All the ragamuffins he meets with beg—for begging costs nothing, and what is given therefore is a gain. The custom house officers are a miserable collection of half-gentlemanly beggars. The *gens d'armes*<sup>5</sup> are beggars with swords. The police officers who have charge of the passports, are often by authority beggars—not always, though. Two-thirds of the time, but always at the proper time, scream *niente*, with all your might. Then taste not, touch not, and handle not, till you bargain for it. Do not eat without a bargain. Do not sleep without a bargain. Bargain always, and have *troppo* always at your tongue's end—and then, even if you are a Yankee, as I am, the quick-witted rascals will cheat you in the most ingenious manner in the world. Have every bargain in writing, if it is of importance enough, and in French too, unless you read Italian, and then laugh at yourself, to see how an Italian will outwit you. These are indispensable lessons to the traveler who enters Italy.

The valley of Gondo passed, you see I return—the little opening where Isella is out of your sight—another somber grotto cut in the solid rock, cleared—and you come again among enormous masses of black-colored rocks, grandly contrasting with the azure waters, and the white cascade and the laughing verdure of the surrounding hills. All at once, again comes a terrible pass, as fearfully savage as that of Gondo, the brawling torrent leaping down the mountain sides—the river roaring against the parapets of the very road itself—and all this amid the crumbling fragments of dissevered rocks, propped up by masonry alone, frightfully hanging, it seems, in the upper air above you, as if this was the home of

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<sup>5</sup> *gens d'armes* — (Literal translation) *men of arms* (= policemen / gendarmes)

Chaos,<sup>6</sup> as if the gods themselves had given the Italians weapons to beat back the invaders of the North, or to choke up the pathways that led them to their delightful plains. The road here now is in a sad state of ruin, though it is safe enough for carriages when the torrents are not high. The avalanches have beaten down the walls, and the waters have swept away the very foundations of the road in many places. Beautifully constructed bridges are now in ruin. Granite walls are left standing without earth between them. The pillars of rock mark where the road was, but there is no road there now. The storms and the avalanches have often triumphed at last, even over the magnificent labors of the Italian engineer, who fancied he was not only defying them but even defying time.

The truth is, the Italian government are not sorry that the road is going to ruin. They fear the French, and the more they choke up the pass-ways, the safer they feel. Of the mighty fortress that Nature gave the sons of Italy to hold as their defense of the rocky walls, which, armed with cannon, only such godlike intellects as Napoleon could storm, they are making use to keep back every chivalrous crusader of freedom, and to shut out all of light that may, perchance, beam from the more liberal governments on the other side of the Alps. What fortresses they were for Italian valor, if valor Italy had! What awful weapons that God has given them to fight for liberty with! The avalanche would be their ally. The granite rocks would be their thunderbolts of war. Battlements as high as heaven, as firm as earth itself, would be their walls. The storms would aid them. The very torrents would be their friends. Nature herself seems to speak, and to invoke the Italians to rise. The fortresses, she seems to say, are already built, the more than Gibraltars<sup>7</sup> too, that none can seize. But fill them with valorous hearts, and who can storm or take them? But, such an invocation is made in vain. Italy is asleep. The dead cannot hear. Better appeal to the statues of noble ancestors that grace her palaces and her gardens than to blow the trumpet of liberty in such a tomb. Alas, it is but mis-spent enthusiasm to wish a nation freedom, who do not deserve it, for what is deserved by noble men, will almost always be won by noble valor. The Austrian is the braver, and why should not he rule? It is folly to waste our feelings in wishing men well

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<sup>6</sup> Chaos — In Greek mythology, the first thing to exist

<sup>7</sup> The Rock of Gibraltar, guarding the entrance to the Mediterranean, appears an impregnable defensive position.

who will not take the trouble to deserve well; but, as I wrote in a former letter, whenever I am under a despotism, I am a bitter radical, in spite of my better judgment: I want to see everything upset.

At last, the Alps were passed. I was beyond the regions where thousands and thousands of powder had blown out this gigantic road, which is but common to say is a wonder of the world, even rivaling the ancient Roman; and which, by the way, is the most durable memorial Napoleon could have left on earth, of that enterprise and those noble conceptions that so pre-eminently distinguish him above the bloody butchers of his trade. I never shall forget the new sun, the new air, the new sky, the new feeling too that I seemed to have, when the last Alpine rocks were passed; and Italy with its valleys and plains burst upon my view. The air was deliciously warm. The luxurious grapes hung thickly clustering on the vines, more tempting to me than golden fruits could have been. The sublimity and terror of the Simplon pass was changed for villages and vineyards. The amphitheater of hills was studded with villas, and farms, and churches, all up and down their sides, that clung upon them as ornaments of jewels or precious stones. The fronts of the houses were shaded by superb walnut trees, and rich bowers of vines were behind them. The truth is, I was beginning to be weary of precipices and Alpine wildernesses, and Alpine snows and winds, and I was delighted with the change into the golden harvests of Italy, to see the rich fields once more, to feel the genial sun; and then I was elated with that expectation and hope that every traveler has in fancy, but which he so seldom finds in fact, in traveling old countries, that poetry and association have peopled for him with beings that his own research can never find.

Already, even here, but at the gateway of Italy, how often are my classic associations rudely shocked! The country is a paradise, but scores of the people are incarnate devils. Not the least confidence can be put in them—such of them, I mean, as the traveler meets with. To lie and cheat seems their only occupation, unless they vary it with begging. Fancy it may be with me, but I cannot feel even that proper security for life that it is comfortable to feel—not that there is the least danger of robbery, but one dreams that a people so voraciously greedy after small sums of money will hazard the brigand attempt to plunder large sums by force and murder. What a blight all this upon the glorious Italy of my creation! What a damp upon my enthusiasm in wishing it that liberty that only

the highest order of men can have, such as the Americans, or the Englishmen, with valor enough to win it, and with virtue enough and sense enough to preserve it too! How sadly am I already disappointed in even a thousand little things! Ah, how different countries are *in fact* from what they are *on paper*, or from that *beau ideal*<sup>8</sup> that the fancy *paints*! Perhaps you will laugh at these strange inconsistencies of feeling that these my letters display. I know they put me in a somewhat ridiculous position, but my attempt has been from the first to give you the fresh impressions of a traveler from *the New World*, as he journeys from spot to spot in *the Old*—to abandon myself to these impressions, changing my opinions as I see cause to change them and thus, as far as I can, to put the friendly reader in my own place, and make him journey with me. I never dreamed of writing a book of travels—there are thousands perhaps written upon Italy—but as an American is the only man free from European prejudices, and the trammels of associations on this side of the ocean, he may perhaps flatter himself that his thoughts will sometimes flow in a new current, if not new themselves.

To return to the journey. From Brig in Switzerland over the Simplon to Domodossala in Italy, the distance is about fourteen French leagues, all the way a most difficult road to make, but which has been one of the best in the world, probably the best for such a place. Our night's tarry is at Baveno, in an excellent inn upon the Lago Maggiore, a lake, 56 Italian miles in length—an Italian mile is a little longer than an English mile—and six Italian miles in breadth. There is a steamboat upon it which goes to Sesto, toward the southern part of the lake, but the quarantine blocks up Sesto at present, and therefore the traveler must seek another route to Milan. I asked why one was permitted to go to Milan over the lake by the way of Laveno, and not down the lake, by way of Sesto; but when you ask an Italian *why*, he only shakes his head and shrugs his shoulders, and says *it is so*. *Why* is a very unnecessary word this side of the Alps. It is out of fashion. If a thing *is so*, nobody enquires *why*. Only republicans, and people under a limited monarchy with a strong infusion of democracy into it, have any use for the word *why*, especially when it is applied to any of the regulations of the government. If I can get around a quarantine in Italy, no matter how far I go, I am determined to do it, and luckily, with the exception of the Austrian

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<sup>8</sup> beau ideal — perfect type

possessions, the Italian states are so small that they can be run around without going many miles out of our way. To break their quarantines is an adventure a little too perilous, for, but the other day, an Englishman made the attempt to pass the *cordon sanitaire*<sup>9</sup> not far from here, and the consequence was that a soldier broke his arm with a bullet, for which the Englishman undoubtedly ought to be grateful, as the soldier did not take his [life.]

A band of music, as is often the case in Italy, greeted us at our arrival in Baveno, and while we were eating our dinners, gave us the first treat of the Italian music, for which in return they expect from a party only a few cents of our money, or a little handful of Italian *centimes*, a copper coin about the value of a quarter of an American cent. The French mode of reckoning generally prevails here, and hereabout. Napoleon Italian *franc* pieces are very current. I am surprised that they permit that word *liberty* to be on so many of their coins, for are they not afraid that the pleasant sight of it will create treason among their subjects here? The money, by the way, that you have in your pockets as you travel in France, Switzerland, and this part of Italy, curiously recalls the many revolutions of Europe, for you often have the five *franc* piece of the old regime, the piece of the Republic, the piece of the Empire, the piece of the Restoration, and the piece of Louis Philippe all at the same time, sprinkled in with the Italian money of Napoleon and the South-Alpine republics. I should think that these little monetary ghosts of the past would alarm the police, and cause a proscription of such incendiaries, for, do they not know, that there is nothing that a man looks at oftener, or cherishes more than his money, and with “liberty” and “Napoleon” thus running at large in every man’s pocket, are they not fearful that some mischief will be worked?



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<sup>9</sup> *cordon sanitaire* — Quarantine line, restricting the movement of people, to prevent the spread of infectious disease

## 53. Journey to Milan

Milan,  
September 19, 1835.

From Lago Maggiore, it is not a long day's journey to Milan, even in a dull vetturino,<sup>10</sup> which, of all the stupid modes of moving on the Continent, is yet the most stupid I have seen. A diligence<sup>11</sup> or a stage-coach on the Continent goes but an ox-pace, but an Italian vetturino, or in other words, a hired Italian carriage, is duller yet. An American or an Englishman, accustomed to the rapid motion of his own country, cannot endure them; and yet they are here almost the only acceptable mode of journeying. The gaudily, but yet dirtily dressed postilion,<sup>12</sup> mounted on the back of his horse, makes but a sorry figure enough, as he trots his lazy horses along, while the vetturino driver sleeps and snores away his time, dreaming perhaps how he ought to go, instead of going himself. The truth is, the people here are all asleep, as compared with the Americans or English. They have not waked up yet from the torpor of centuries. Of the value of time, they have not even the faintest idea. Our furious enterprise, if they could witness it, would make them think us gods. Think—in Italy, upon all the broad-spread plains of Italy, prairies of hundreds of miles of extent, there is not a railroad yet! Old as it is, famous for ages as it has been, admirably adapted as it is for the power of steam, there is not a steam engine moving over it—while in the United States, among a people of yesterday, the steam engine is not only flying over the plains but mountains, the very Alleghenies themselves! These are the things that make us proud, and which have a right to make us so. These are the contrasts that delight the American in a foreign land, and present to his imagination the brightest visions of his country's coming glory. If they would but let us breathe our breath of life in Italy, if they would give us its rich fields, and its fine sky, the poor

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<sup>10</sup> Vetturino — A coachman. Brooks uses this term, instead of the word "vettura", to denote an Italian four-wheel carriage for hire.

<sup>11</sup> Diligence — (from the French) stagecoach; for a fuller description, see Letters 42 and 99.

<sup>12</sup> Postilion — (per Webster) "One who rides as a guide on the near horse of one of the pairs attached to a coach or post chaise especially without a coachman."

Italians would think the Roman gods, the Jupiters<sup>13</sup> and the Saturns<sup>14</sup> of old, nothing in comparison with us. For, even now, they think the English are the demons of enterprise, while every day we are accomplishing, even in the backwoods of America, what the English, spirited and persevering as they are, would hardly dare to dream of. What a falling back it is, in the feelings of the traveler who has gone six hundred miles in America in three days or less, to find six hundred miles here costing him twelve or fourteen days of travel. He fancies he has fallen back a century or two, and really doubts at times whether he is the man he was when he left America.

Lago Maggiore, though not so famous as the Lake of Como, is one of the most beautifully situated lakes I have ever seen. In company with two Englishmen and two Germans, I embarked with my American companion in a little boat to visit some of the interesting islands of the lake, and then to cross it on our way to Milan. The prettiest island that we saw is *Isola Bella*, on which there is a palace,<sup>15</sup> so richly and yet so tastefully adorned, that you must pardon me if, for once, I worry you with particulars, in order to give you a faint idea of the paradise that men can create this side of the water for themselves to dwell in. This island is built up into ten terraces that are elevated one above the other, the highest of which is one hundred and twenty French feet above the surface of the lake, A Pegasus,<sup>16</sup> placed upon the height of this terrace, gives to the isle the form of a pyramid, when one approaches it from the eastern side. All the isle is covered with little thickets and bowers of orange trees, lemon trees, pomegranates, citrons, laurels, olives, cypresses, vines, jasmines, and myrtles. It is embellished also by fountains, statues—and it abounds in superb pheasants. The orange trees, even those under the Alps, almost flourish as well as in the Floridas or southern Alabama. There, upon the orange trees, loaded with flowers and fruit, you see the vine flourishing at the same time, and the buds of the rose and the jasmine blooming too. The eyes are delighted. All the senses, in fact, are charmed. The perfume of the flowers, the singing of the little birds, the solitudes here, the garden

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<sup>13</sup> Jupiter — In Roman mythology, the god of thunder

<sup>14</sup> Saturn — In Roman mythology, the god of plenty etc.

<sup>15</sup> Isola Bella — The palace and its gardens were built by the Borromeo family, starting in 1671.

<sup>16</sup> Pegasus — In Greek mythology, a winged horse

plats so lovely there, the numerous statues that watch over every varied scene on every terrace, surprise you by the magic that man can impart to the earth. Then go into the palace itself. The hospitable Italian count who owns this fairy residence threw open every door for his servant to conduct us inward, and even left his own apartments to gratify us with a view. And what a palace he has! The mosaic pavement, how new to my unaccustomed eyes! the grottos for the gods and nymphs of the sea, the coral halls in which they dwell, the pebbly floors over which they walk, the beautifully clustered shells where they sleep, the images of marble, and all so like the very life—who can describe this fairy work? All is as the very life. You think the nymphs come from the waters of the lake into this grotto just on its very surface, and the doubtful light makes you fancy you see them there. The upper rooms of the palace are full of paintings and sculpture. Titian<sup>17</sup> is there, and then some landscapes of the famous Chevalier Tempesta, who was exiled here after he had assassinated his wife in order to marry one whom he considered prettier.<sup>18</sup> The paintings however, are not remarkable, when compared with many other Italian galleries—but every room is crowded with them. Fine copies in marble of celebrated antiques are to be seen, among which is a very valuable bust of Achilles.<sup>19</sup> In short, if in my imagination I had done my best to draw a picture of the residence for a man of taste, I could not have fancied one so charming as this. Was it such a villa, think you, that Cicero<sup>20</sup> had at Tusculum, or Horace<sup>21</sup> near Tivoli?<sup>22</sup> If so, no wonder they wrote so charmingly.

I bade adieu with reluctance to this little paradise, after having from its loftiest terrace taken a last view of the islands in the lake and the villas on its borders, seeing a church here, a convent there, and villages all around—while in the distance were the silver tops of the Alps in Switzerland and Piedmont, forming a magnificent background to the little hills which stretched toward the plains of Lombardy. We crossed over to Lavene, and thus came under the sway of the Austrian eagle. Our

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<sup>17</sup> Titian (c.1488-1576) — Italian Renaissance painter; active in Venice

<sup>18</sup> Other sources state that Tempesta was condemned to death, but fled, and was concealed by Count Borromeo at the palace of Isola Bella.

<sup>19</sup> Achilles — In Greek mythology, a hero of the Trojan War

<sup>20</sup> Cicero (106 B.C.-43 B.C.) — Roman philosopher and orator

<sup>21</sup> Horace (65 B.C.-8 B.C.) — Roman poet

<sup>22</sup> Tusculum / Tivoli — See letter 76

luggage went through an examination, and the custom house officer observed that I had "*many books for a traveler*," curiously scrutinizing all to see if I was importing politics in my few French and Italian books, examining well my letters of introduction—on the outside however, only, and then puzzling his brains, much to my amusement, over some of this pot-hook and trammel manuscript of mine, which, if he could read, and be hanged to him, he was a very lucky Italian-Austrian, generally ignorant as they all are of all English, except the common English oath, which they so well know that all the English on the Continent go by the names of "*Monsieur*" or "*Signor G\_d d\_n*." Our passports were examined to see if an Austrian ambassador had given us leave to enter the Austrian dominion—Washington, (the authority whence our passports came, being metamorphosed into *Vashington*, my own Christian name so altered that I did not know it); and then my American companion and myself stared at—well, perhaps to see if Americans are white—we were permitted to put on our hats, and go our way. A *franc* (a piece little less than twenty cents) having then purchased us in the hotel as much bread and eggs as we could eat, and as much wine as we wanted to drink, we trafficked for a vetturino, and anon, were on our way to Milan, intending to visit the celebrated Lake of Como. Here, as to pedestrianism, let me give the traveler other advice than that I gave for Switzerland. Walk but little or none in Italy. Strange as it may seem, if it is not too expensive to walk, riding is cheaper than walking. The vetturinos will carry you long distances for but trifling sums, and then, in a plain country under a warm sun, walking is another thing from what it is among the mountains of Switzerland. More on this topic by and by.

The Lake of Como I did not see, apostrophized as it has been by all the poets, even in the sweet and natural verses of the illustrious Wordsworth. The rich Milanese have their country houses there. No doubt it is pretty—charming even—for Wordsworth writes that it is "*bosomed deep in chesnut groves*,"<sup>23</sup> but beauty is so luxuriantly lavish all around me, that I think the less of it and almost cease to feel its inspiration, as, for example, the lover in his earliest impulses, is maddened by the charms of the maiden, that he thinks but little of when

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<sup>23</sup> William Wordsworth (1770-1850). *Descriptive Sketches: taken during a pedestrian tour among the Alps*

won in wedlock. Beauty familiarized often ceases to be beauty even. So here, there is not enough of ugliness, in the contrast, to make beauty beautiful. The dwelling that would be a palace in Switzerland is but a house here. The garden that would be a fairy creation there, is but a garden here. Lake Maggiore has beauty enough for me, and if Como can be prettier, I think I should not see the preference. I don't blame Virgil<sup>24</sup> for extolling his Italian lakes, if this is a specimen; and, as for Voltaire's<sup>25</sup> preference for his, it probably arose from the fact that he lived the other side of the Alps.<sup>26</sup> But the rain poured down in torrents, and we could not deviate without too much delay, and too much exposure. We let our German friends arrange our travels, for they had a better smattering of Italian than we had got as yet, and they stopped us for the night at Varese, while we looked on and laughed to see them bargain for beds, eatables, candles, and everything, all of which amounted next morning, I found, to but little more than a franc, so skillfully do they understand a traffic in an Italian albergo (inn.) "*You English,*" said they, "*or Americans rather, have to pay well for that tongue you use.*" Everybody knows that the English are rich, and are accustomed to pay well in England, and the Italians and Germans too intend to make them pay as well on the Continent. "*It don't cost us*" they added, "*half as much to travel as it costs you, and we fare better too.*" I laughed, and believed them. Our bill would have been six francs each for the same things, for the idea of trafficking at an inn was a new idea, that never till then came into mind; and, as for trafficking with the skill that the Germans did, Yankee as I am, I am a century behind them. One of our German friends was an advocate, and the other, a theologian. We lost them in Milan where (the last I heard of them) they were lodging for two *francs* a day, while for similar accommodations we were paying six. I throw out all these little things as a hint for future American travelers, for, as I have said before, in a former letter, as far as I can, without weary detail, I intend to give my countrymen an idea of the expenses in Europe, as well as of what there is to see. I hope, someday or other, to hear of hundreds or thousands of young American artists who will be flocking to Florence and Rome to study the works of the great Italian masters of the arts, and as they,

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<sup>24</sup> Virgil (70 B.C.-19 B.C.) — Famous Roman poet

<sup>25</sup> Voltaire, pen-name of François-Marie Arouet (1694-1778) — French satirical writer

<sup>26</sup> For Voltaire's reference to Virgil, see Letter 46

unfortunately, are not often rich, I will show them, if I can, the most economical way of getting there. Consider me in Milan, if you please.



## 54. New Sensations

Milan,  
September 19, 1835.

We entered Milan by the gate of the Simplon. To buy off our luggage from an examination, we paid the begging *gens d'armes* a *franc* or so, and then we went in peace. Our passports were sent to the police, and we, on the receipts given for them, were ordered to present ourselves there within twenty-four hours so as to obtain a "card of security" to remain in the city. Here, for the first time, I learnt that police regulations were serious and meant something. I learnt, too, how mad was my idea hitherto, of an attempt to dodge the police. I know not now which would be the severest loss, the loss of every cent of money, and the letter of credit I have with me, or the loss of my passport. People might believe me, and trust me with a passport, but without a passport I could scarcely move a finger. The Austrian police is so bitterly rigid, that there is no dodging any of its regulations. An American gets along very well, because America is a far-off land, and no American is suspected of working treason here. An Englishman moves easily too. Old England, everlasting shame on the act, assisted, in the person of her Castlereagh,<sup>27</sup> in the infernal partition of the Holy Alliance,<sup>28</sup> that delivered poor Lombardy, bound hand and foot, to the Austrian despot. A Russian moves easiest of all. But a glance at the Russian coat of arms is enough, for as the autocrat permits no Russian to go from his dominions without his signet, it is well known that he permits none to go but those whom traveling cannot or will not change and liberalize. Woe to the poor Frenchman, though, no matter how well his passport is fortified. But sadder still is it for the straying Swiss. Suspicion attends both at every step. The Swiss snuffs of republicanism. That odor is nauseous under a despotism. He lives nearby. He can throw a torch over

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<sup>27</sup> Lord Castlereagh (1769-1822) — Robert Stewart, 2nd Marquis of Londonderry; Irish politician; British Foreign Secretary; leading diplomat at the Congress of Vienna (1814-1815), convened to work out a European peace settlement in the aftermath of Napoleon Bonaparte's defeat.

<sup>28</sup> Holy Alliance — Coalition formed in 1815 by the crowned heads of Russia, Austria and Prussia. Its intention was to stabilize Europe after the disastrous Napoleonic era, which came in the wake of the French Revolution.

the mountains upon the combustible materials below, whenever he chooses. The French is feared, because his revolutionary propensities and his address are well known. His language, too, is current almost everywhere. Again, the people of Italy have not forgotten the days of the Cisalpine Republic,<sup>29</sup> when Napoleon let them loose from the Austrian grip; and then the sweet and splendid despotism that followed, in which Italian art and Italian pride were so deliciously flattered by that most cunning and great of all men. The mild sway, and the insinuating manners of the French, they contrast with the rough and gruff aspect of the Austrian; and no travelers are loved more by the people of northern Italy than the French. Hence, Frenchmen are sometimes stopped on the frontiers, and forbidden to enter. A record is kept, it is said, in Milan, of men distinguished in France for the promulgation of free principles, copies of which, sent to the frontiers, point [to] the persons who cannot put their feet upon Austrian soil. Then the police harass them at the hotels, at the gates of cities, at the offices of passports, with questions innumerable, of "*what is their intention? why they have come? what they want?*" &c. &c., with all the ingenuity that malignity and suspicion often devise.

Yes, for the first time, seriously and fearfully, I find that a passport means something—that it is not a formality—that it is the same thing, to a man journeying, as money or food. I went to the police, therefore, according to order. I lifted up my hat before the manikins of authority. I made the proper obeisances. I waited the due time. Many a poor unfortunate Italian was there made to wait for hours, while we, who spoke English, were readily answered and attended to—why, but because we were supposed to have money in our pockets, and they were but poor Italians? why, but because we are of a free country, and they were the slaves of power? Courtesy to strangers, they will probably call this courtesy—and courtesy it was, if you please, of a nature worth mentioning, as showing the immensity of difference between the individual in a certain class of society here, and the like individual from the United States. The poor vetturino man, to whom time was money—who earned his money by the profitable use of his time, is kept waiting for hours, thrust out of his turn, while a man in a better coat, whose time

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<sup>29</sup> Cisalpine Republic — Created by the French Republic, under Napoleon, in 1797; it comprised several territories of northern Italy, lasting until 1802.

is to be spent in observing such little things as these, who has enough to eat and wear, is ordered to slip into his place, and crowd him out. Little things these are, but Europe is so full of such little things, that while they make it the heaven of the rich and the noble, they make it the hell of the poor. I returned my *carte* of security. The very hour of my intended departure was marked upon my passport when I took it. The hotel keeper had sent his record of his guests to the police. All was right. I escaped without a single question as to the object of my journey. Not so with all the world.

An American, particularly an American of the North, has many new sensations when he comes down into Italy. If he has not seen the rice fields of our own South, or the prairies of the West and South West, the productions and the vast and rich plain of Lombardy will strike him. If he has never seen England, or Holland, the admirable cultivation of the country, to say nothing of the prodigality of its soil, will delight him. Agriculture, probably, is better understood, as a science, in England, Holland and Lombardy, than anywhere else on the globe. The cold and dull soils of England and Holland are worked into gardens with an industry, a science, and a perseverance, of which we know but little or nothing as yet in America—for, by the way, there are thousands of honest farmers with us, who will not as yet see into "the use" of science, or scientific men, so far as tilling of the earth is concerned—while the soil of Lombardy, almost inexhaustibly rich of itself, in a favored climate, was made the garden it is, by the spirit and enterprise of the republicanism of the centuries gone by, before dark despotism shrouded all in terror. The great new sensation, however, that the American has, if he is all unskilled (as I am) in the fine arts, not having as yet seen the Louvre of the Tuileries, nor many of the rich collections of England—is in the new eyes that he seems to have, the new source of pleasure—the flood of light that breaks upon a new intellect which some high power seems to have given him. I love to dwell upon and record these new awakenings of one's powers and one's pleasures, for, as we are all of the same dull earth, the experience of one, which is the experience of thousands, teaches us lessons of distrustfulness as to our own acquisitions, our own fancied powers, or fancied civilization.

I well remember the day when the wealthiest poetry had no life nor soul for me, and the hours of labor it cost me to whip myself into an

admiration of what the world said was fine. I have not forgotten the thrilling delight with which I read, when in college, the pages of a Phillips,<sup>30</sup> and the other ranting orators of the wild Irish school, whom all young men at first love so much, while they sleep over the deeper, and, as they think, duller pages of Burke.<sup>31</sup> I can remember too how little of life I saw, or of feeling I *felt*, when, first entering into some picture gallery of America, I strove with a praiseworthy resolution, even if it were not successful, to have the accustomed throes of enthusiasm of a "man of taste,"—and I can remember, too, the first budding of a faculty which, rude enough, spent itself upon red and garish colors—seeing, as for example, in the beautiful tintured rose, nothing but the red of its petals, or admiring, it may be, more the *rouge* of a constructed face, than the betraying blood that runs thrilling through the cheeks of simple Nature. The day came, however, when I found beauty, passion and eloquence in poetry as well as in prose. I learned anon that the high-mounted grandiloquence of a Phillips was not the rich eloquence of a Burke. As were these and other discoveries, so, in a like manner, I find as I enter Italy, and as I see in the picture galleries of Milan the works of Guercino,<sup>32</sup> Domenichino,<sup>33</sup> Albano,<sup>34</sup> Caravaggio,<sup>35</sup> Paolo Veronese,<sup>36</sup> Titian, Raphael,<sup>37</sup> Leonardo da Vinci,<sup>38</sup> the Carracci,<sup>39</sup> and others, that my eyes are experiencing such a change as my thoughts have often had before. There is a new world of pleasure for me. I have a new sense. The days of boyhood are brought back, and fresh emotions spring up, as when a new thought or a new work struck the yet unfatigued fancy. I consider myself as having made a discovery, not of a new continent, to

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<sup>30</sup> Charles Phillips (1787-1859) — Irish lawyer; an effective orator, espousing the cause of Roman Catholic agitation

<sup>31</sup> Edmund Burke (1729-1797) — Irish statesman and political theorist, argued in favor of a peaceful solution to the quest for independence of Britain's North American colonies.

<sup>32</sup> Guercino (1591-1666) — Italian Baroque painter

<sup>33</sup> Domenichino (1715-1757) — Italian Baroque painter; worked in Venice

<sup>34</sup> Francesco Albani or Albano (1578-1660) — Italian Baroque painter

<sup>35</sup> Caravaggio (1571-1610) — Italian Baroque painter

<sup>36</sup> Paolo [or Paul] Veronese (1528-1588) — Italian Renaissance painter

<sup>37</sup> Raphael (1483-1520) — Italian Renaissance painter

<sup>38</sup> Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519) — Renaissance Italian of diverse interests and abilities

<sup>39</sup> The Carracci — A family of prominent Italian Baroque artists: Annibale (1560-1609), Agostino (1557-1602) and Ludovico (1555-1619)

be sure, such as Columbus found, but a discovery of a new world of intellectual gratification. He who has made a fortune in a single day, in the ecstasies of his acquisition, can know the pleasure. The man who has been blind, and who has gained the use of his eyes, knows what such an acquisition is. I have not been blind, it is true—I have ever seen the earth under me and the sky about me—but he who sees in this earth all that the geologist knows, or in the sky all that the astronomer, also can well sympathize with the man who first begins to know, not to fancy, that genius, poetry, passion, may be written in colors upon the canvas, as well as with letters upon the paper.

All such new sensations are ever teaching the young traveler, as he journeys in new lands, and his attention is aroused by new spectacles, what little uses he has made of the senses God has given him—what advances the great organs of perception have yet to make—what latent faculties he has within him that need but the spark to kindle them. But all such things, bethanks, come in their season, with the due progress of education—and if, as in the era of the Roman republic, it was necessary for the young men of Rome to visit Greece and the East, and to study in the schools of, and to converse with, the philosophers of that day, so it is necessary for the young American to go into Italy—if not to converse with the philosophers, to embody in the magnificent relics of ancient sculpture the images of his classic recollection—to study the triumphal achievements of architecture, and to trace the progress of painting from the dry schools of Giotto<sup>40</sup> and Cimabue<sup>41</sup> to the more perfect studies of Raphael, Correggio,<sup>42</sup> and the Carracci—to say nothing of that elevation of sentiment inspired when, on the very hills and in the very habitations, consecrated as the abiding places of illustrious men, the mind itself receives a new training.

A change, perhaps, comes over all men from all lands; but most of all, I am sure, in the mind of him who comes from a New World, where the principle of **utility**<sup>43</sup> is the great leading principle of all, the governors and the governed, exchanging, as he does here, that principle—losing

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<sup>40</sup> Giotto (1266-1337) — Italian Renaissance painter

<sup>41</sup> Cimabue (1240-1302) — Italian painter, influence by Byzantine models

<sup>42</sup> Correggio (1489-1534) — Italian Renaissance painter

<sup>43</sup> "Utility versus Beauty" is a recurring theme in Brooks' reflections (see Letters 58, 65 and 100)

almost all sight of it, for one more universally dominant—pomp, parade, splendor, beauty—or show, to sum up all in a more expressive word. My first exclamation, "*what is the use!*" "*what a waste of intellect, labor and wealth!*" on seeing some of the rich churches of Italy, the costly collections of mosaics, statues, &c. &c., the huge masses of marble—was but a natural exclamation. I forgot the concentration of wealth here. I forgot the comparatively over-crowded state of the population. I forgot that, when the earth has hands enough to till it and to spare, wealth cannot better employ the surplus people than in erecting altars or embodying images, which, by their association, shall attach one to one's country, and thus universally diffuse a patriotism. I forgot, too, that in elevating the tastes and the aspirations of men by linking them with great actions or illustrious characters, you form models for the mass to imitate, or to think of. Such models and such associations are everything for all people, but most of all for a republican people. Who has not read of the powerful passions into which the Roman people could be wrought, when their orators stood upon the rostrum, and pointed to the temples of the gods in the Roman Forum? Who does not know how much the models of antiquity, and the associations of place, stimulated the Italian republics of the Middle Ages, making Italy, even when overswept by barbarian invaders, the cherished home of freemen, the bright birthplace of a Dante,<sup>44</sup> an apostle of liberty as well as a divine poet, and the renowned spot for the renovation of the arts? He who has visited Bunker Hill<sup>45</sup> from a distance, when young, and for the first time, has felt what the influence of association is. And so has he, who, within the walls of Faneuil Hall,<sup>46</sup> has heard the very foundations quiver, at an allusion to the Hancocks<sup>47</sup> and Otises<sup>48</sup> of other days. Monuments, the arts, temples, statuary, painting—all have their influence in augmenting this strength of patriotic association. A ruin sadly influences it. It is even felt on the barren rock, or the beach. Such are the things for our people

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<sup>44</sup> Dante Alighieri (c.1265-1321) — Italian poet

<sup>45</sup> Bunker Hill — Location in Boston, Mass., of obelisk commemorating an early battle of the American Revolutionary War

<sup>46</sup> Faneuil Hall — Building erected in Boston (Mass.) in 1743, serving as marketplace and meeting hall

<sup>47</sup> John Hancock (1737-1793) — Merchant of Boston, Massachusetts; prominent Patriot of the American Revolution

<sup>48</sup> James Otis Jr. (1725-1783) — Massachusetts lawyer; advocate for Patriot cause that led to the American Revolution

to think of soon, as population and wealth augment. For the day is rapidly hastening, wild as the expression may be considered now, when the rock of Plymouth<sup>49</sup> will make a figure as prominent in history as the Palatine Hill,<sup>50</sup> on which Romulus founded that little colony that in aftertimes ruled a world, from the Highlands of Scotland even to the remotest east.



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<sup>49</sup> Plymouth rock, Massachusetts — Site of arrival of the Mayflower Pilgrims (1620)

<sup>50</sup> The Palatine Hill is the site of the earliest settlement in Ancient Rome. Legend identifies it as the location where the city's founder, Romulus and his twin brother Remus, were suckled by a she-wolf.

## 55. Things in Milan

Milan,  
September 20, 1835.

"*Nothing, after Calais, surprises a man who goes upon the Continent*" said Lord Orford.<sup>51</sup> Calais, I suppose, so upsets all an Englishman's opinions and views, that he grows callous, and wonders at nothing afterwards. His impressions, it was meant to say, were worn out by the intensity of the first impulse. This is my case at present, I fear, with many things. The overpowering admiration that I felt before the Gothic cathedrals of England, I well remember. The intensity of new impressions, for the first day or two, was so exhausting, that at night I felt more weary than if I had walked fifty miles. I look now with admiration, it is true, upon the cathedral of Milan, but with an admiration cooled and tempered; for the novelty of such an august show is gone. If I had seen it when I first landed in England, all dazzling white with marble, as it is—with its countless pinnacles and spires, so delicate, so elegant, so light—with its hosts of saints, emblems, and sculptured stones—with its clustered pillars within, thus towering high in solemn grandeur—the dim and richly-tinted light reflected from the gorgeous windows, playing upon the walls, and throwing their lengthened shadows athwart the marble pavement—if I had met with such a *creation* of marble, when first from the New World, I should have believed that Ariosto<sup>52</sup> had transported me to some fairy spot, to dazzle and delude me with his visions. Think of 4,000 statues, many of high value, adorning a single church! They say that, when all minor figures are counted, the number is 1,100! The work was begun in 1386. Napoleon, when emperor of Italy, ordered its completion.<sup>53</sup>

A cathedral, like that of Milan, is one of those things which a describer can give no idea of by simple letters, and which, when seen in a drawing,

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<sup>51</sup> Horace Walpole (1717-1797) — Earl of Orford; son of British Prime Minister Sir Robert Walpole; writer and antiquarian; politician; said to have written from Italy that "After Calais, nothing surprises me."

<sup>52</sup> Ludovico Ariosto (1474-1533) — Italian epic poet

<sup>53</sup> Modern sources give a figure of around 3,400 statues, with a further 800 or so gargoyles and figures.

is but faintly shadowed forth. Such masses of marble, thus sculptured and fretted, erected for the worship of God, we shall never have in a country like ours, where religion assumes so many forms of service, and divides the wealth of society into so many channels. Four centuries of human labor, now more and now less, spent upon a single building, is an idea not of the New World, which is restless even under the labor of a single year. Again, the day of such prodigies is over. The work of the pyramids was not even within the scope of Roman ambition. St. Paul's could not now be built in London, wealthy as that capital is. St. Peter's cost St. Peter the loss of much of his splendid patrimony, for it is said that the wealth extorted to build it worked the Reformation. The day of such august temples, all over the world, is over. The high-wrought devotion, the peculiar belief, the strict discipline, and wonderful machinery of the Catholic church, could alone pile up marble and stone in such colossal forms. The God of the Catholic priest everywhere dwells in the costliest temples. His altars are the richest, the ceremonies of his worship the most magnificent; and the true-hearted Catholic will snatch the bread from his mouth to endow the church, or to add to the embellishment of its altars. Here, for example, in a subterranean chapel, they have the remains of a man whom they have made a saint—Borromeo<sup>54</sup> is his name, and a saint he deserved to be, if what they say is true of his history—in a sarcophagus of crystal, adorned with silver, with columns of the choicest marbles, crowned with golden capitals, and crimson damask embroidered with gold, while round the sepulcher are a series of *basso rilievi*<sup>55</sup> in solid silver, representing the incidents of his life and his final glory. In this sarcophagus of crystal, more valuable than gold, from the extraordinary size and purity of the crystal—under the golden miter, with its crown of precious stones, the emerald cross, and the embossed crosier, you see—what think you, reader?—why, the face of the grinning skull of a man dead over two hundred years—black—hideous—ghastly! There is about here, somewhere—I did not see it—a *true* nail of the cross. I never search for, nor believe in relics—holy relics, I mean—and probably any old nail, in any old house, is as valuable as this.

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<sup>54</sup> Saint Charles Borromeo (1538-1584) — Archbishop of Milan; canonized in 1610

<sup>55</sup> *basso rilievi* — Plural of *bassorilievo* (= *bas relief*)

I ascended the staircase of four hundred and sixty-eight steps, so as to see, from the top of this cathedral, the spiry fretwork, carving, and sculpture, on the light steeples above. A beggar, asking for *qualche cosa*—*something*, it may be translated—words which the traveler hears so often, from the thickly-crowding beggars, that he soon has them at heart, with all the saints of the calendar, in whose name they beg, strung at the end of the *qualche cosa*—a beggar had his station there, among and under the saints on the steeples, miserably contrasting his own squalid appearance with the grandeur around.

It was Sunday—not the Sunday of New or Old England, with the melancholy regulated step, the stiffer than ordinary air, when every man is unhappy in his new garments, and every woman just the reverse; for, be it known (if it is not known already, and I am to have the honor of discovering the important fact,) men are miserable in new clothes, while women are the reverse. Witness a poor fellow, for example, sweltering under a cloak in a church on a Sunday by a highly-heated stove, when he never needs an outer garment any other day of the week; but, if it was not the Sunday of Old and New England, it was a very good Sunday nevertheless. The shops were closed. All business was suspended. The people were filling the broad aisles of the cathedral. The priests, in their scarlet robes, were officiating in the showy services of their church. Hundreds of both sexes were now on their knees, and now in their chairs. Such as did not like the services, or were not interested in what was going on, walked out, or retired into the corners. All was liberty, to go or to stay, to wander in the street, or on high over the lofty roofs, or around, amid the recesses and aisles. Indeed, I do not know why all this is not right; for, if the priest, or the preacher, administering the high duties of his calling, has not inspiration enough within him—intellect and soul enough of his own—to awe man, or at least to make him stand still, is it the fault of the sinner alone? Men whose speaking ought to be heard, whether in the pulpit or elsewhere, commonly are heard; and he who is not, may conclude that he has nothing to say. Hence, though there is much that is droll, to a Protestant eye, in the religious services of the Catholic churches on the Continent, there is much that is sense also. Hundreds of chairs were arranged in the aisles of the cathedral for persons to sit in, at the intervals when they were not on their knees; and the use of these chairs was sold at so many *centimes* a service—farmed out, as it were, to the droppers-in.

Here at Milan, in and about this cathedral, the traveler begins to notice the increased number of the priests. The different orders begin to attract his attention. The bare-legged, coarse-clad, bonneted, slip-shod Capuchin<sup>56</sup> appears quite often. If the deity loves dirty worshippers, men filthy in their persons, what a high seat in heaven a Capuchin must have! What sort of a man this animal was—of what class of bipeds, I puzzled my brains much with demanding, when my eye first met one among the mountains of Switzerland. It was not a woman, for it had a beard; and it was not a man, for it wore a robe or a gown. It was not a monkey, for it was too big; and it was not a monster, for it was regularly built, like all the rest of us, and of the same materials. What nonsense this is, of unfrocking men thus—metamorphosing them thus—disfiguring them thus! Think of it, ye wigged and robed lawyers and judges, and legislators of England, when ye mock Catholic customs; and think of it, too, ye Protestants of America, when ye place back your hair, and "sanctify" your heads with a horn comb and beef-grease, it may be—making religion of a whine of the voice, and a nasal sing-song—or, what is worse, the regular chant of what is called the better orders of the clergy. The world is alike in foolish fashions, all over, from the Mormons of Missouri<sup>57</sup> to the Capuchins of Italy, and the big-wigged and court-dressed law-givers of Britain.

The Capuchin, perhaps, has the advantage of others in humility; for, as the world associates dirt with humility, and ill, ugly looks, he is dirtier and uglier-looking than all—commonly fat, lusty, and hearty though, by the same rule, without a doubt, that a hog is made fat, wallowing as he does in everything, and browsing among all the garbage he can grub up. The Capuchin, however, of all the orders of the priesthood, does the most good, is the least arrogant, and, what is more, demands but little, and expects but little. Mortification of the body is his maxim. His food, of the coarsest kind, costs but little; and his clothes, of the coarsest fabrics, less still. Hence, too, he is the most popular of the priesthood. The people like him the most, and fear him the least. He costs but little—perhaps the secret of his popularity; for, however true it may be

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<sup>56</sup> Capuchins— Order of Roman Catholic friars, formed 1520, as an offshoot of the Franciscans; its tenets emphasized a primitive way of life

<sup>57</sup> A group of early converts to Mormonism, who had settled in Jackson County, Missouri, around 1831, encountered violent opposition from earlier settlers.

elsewhere in the world, that "*the harvest is great and the laborers are few*,"<sup>58</sup> one soon sees here that, however great the harvest may be, there are laborers enough—priests in abundance—to reap it all, and eat it all, too. Priests and soldiers, the first of the army of heaven (the church militant is the phrase), and the second of the army of "*Heaven's vicegerents*"—"God's anointed kings", and despots, too (one with the missals, beads, and bulls, and the other with bayonets and big-mouthed cannon)—are thickly stationed, thickly crowded, in every nook and corner of Italy. The suction of the church and army is so great upon the male division of society, that labor in the cultivation of the fields seems to be left to the other sex; so that, while one of the armies is preparing the way to heaven, and the other division is upholding "*Heaven's anointed king*," the women—the feeble sufferers of man's oppression—are feeding and clothing them. This overpopulation of idle, eating men, is one of the first things that makes a deep impression upon the traveler on entering Milan. The priests are tolerable, for they are Italians, of the people, and interested in them, educated under the same auspices, and speaking the same language: but the soldiers, the stupid, dull, German-jabbering Austrians, blocking up the entrance of every public building, at every gate of the city, barracked in almost every street, ready to fly to arms, and to let loose death upon the people at the wink of an absolute ruler—who can have patience with them! What a mal-arrangement of the order of things, that a people so high-spirited, quick-witted, with all the elements of genius in their character, should fall thus under the sway of a race so cold, so dull, so utterly unable to comprehend the people they are ruling!

But—of these soldiers anon. I went upon the roof of the cathedral, to see; but the higher you mount in the air, the more you are inclined to think of, than to see, what there is about you. The best view of Milan, and of the surrounding country, is from the highest steeple of the cathedral. The Alps, snow-covered, are on one side: you fancy you can see the Apennines on the other. The lakes are within your view. The beautiful fields about Milan, the canals, the great work of centuries gone by, when the now more advanced parts of Europe were stupefied by the grandeur of such undertakings, works that fell with the decay of Italian liberty and spirit, and which the conqueror Napoleon restored, when he

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<sup>58</sup> *Matthew* 9:35-38

breathed life into sleeping Europe—Lodi, the field of Napoleon's glory in that horrid clangor of arms and bloody slaughter upon its famous bridge—the lively streets of Milan buzzing with a thick population, with its well-built *trottoirs*,<sup>59</sup> its excellent pavements, the numerous steeples of its numerous churches, its palaces and its public buildings—all were in view. The eye, at one broad scope, runs over a country level to the base of the Alps on one side, and quite as level to the Adriatic on the other—marking the garden-like fields, the many country-houses, the well-built roads—till, wearied with the amplitude of the prospects, it turns upon itself, to regard the fairy steeples of the cathedral, and the broad area in its front, dotted with human beings. From such an elevation, the traveler begins to see what Italy is, has been, and might be too.

A lesson in architecture, also, the traveler receives on entering Milan. A new style appeals before him, not as yet broadly marked, but beginning to be striking. The Gothic, and the Grecian or Italian school, seem struggling for preeminence. About the last hold the Gothic has over the Alps, in the plains of Lombardy, is seen in the pointed arches of the cathedral, which is chiefly Gothic, but mingled, however, with the lighter Italian modes of building. The Gothic, it is true, often appears, but always struggling with some other style, amid Corinthian columns, or Roman embellishments, it may be; thus manifesting, in the very style of architecture, in palace and in temple, the contests Italy has waged with Goths and Gauls. For a cool, dull clime, like that of England and the North, the Gothic, as I judge, is the most imposing, and corresponds the best with the character of the people; but, when one goes over the Alps into Italy, the air and the aspect of things and society so change, that one of the first attachments one forms is for the light Italian airy mode of building. As climates change, there is reason that architecture should change too, and the taste and the feelings so insist upon this change, that one is surprised at the facility with which he imbibes new opinions.

There are many churches in Milan, some more and some less distinguished for their architecture, many of which are adorned with frescoes; and, here it is, that fresco painting begins, to the traveler who has come into Italy by the way of the Rhine. In the refectory, or hall, of

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<sup>59</sup> *trottoirs*— (Translation) *sidewalks*

the church of Santa Maria delle Grazie—the churches always belong to the saints—*was* the famous fresco of the *Last Supper* by Leonardo da Vinci; *was*, I say, for it is so ruined by the daubing of other hands, the damp of the walls, the good cheer of the monks, and the quartering of French cavalry within the walls of the convent, that, were it not for the engraving of Raphael Morghen,<sup>60</sup> even the acute eye of the keen critic would have but a few throes over its beauties. La Chiesa (the church) di San Celso is also rich, and remarkable for its columns of *brocatello* marble<sup>61</sup>—for its mosaic pavement wrought into leaves and arabesques—for its dome esteemed a masterpiece in architecture most beautifully painted in fresco, as well as for its chapel of the Virgin, the pillar of whose altar is of silver, with massive silver chandeliers perpetually burning, two sculptured angels supporting over her head a golden crown enriched with diamonds. The marble effigy of the Virgin on that altar, and the infant Jesus in her arms, were once animated, it is *said*, during the performance of evening mass, when the Virgin opened her snow-white arms, and the infant Jesus was a living child! If anybody doubts it, he can read proof enough, in Latin depositions, of the fact. The Virgin, however, is subject to many freaks for, sometime after, in some spasm or other, marble as she is, she tore off the veil that shaded her face. All these stories remind one of the political lies he hears so often in the United States, and I am sure the argument in favor of a lie that does good to the soul is much stronger than the one in favor of a party purpose.

After the cathedral, perhaps the next great *lion* of Milan is the theater of the Scala, which is, in fact, one of the greatest theaters of the present day, the most spacious, it is said, after that of San Carlo at Naples. The exterior is grand, but in the interior the artist has best displayed the triumphs of art. There are six tiers of forty-six boxes in each tier, hung alternately with blue and yellow silk drapery. The pit is magnificently large. In the center is an imperial box, for the emperor or his representatives in Milan, which is a superb open apartment, occupying the place of three boxes, and extending through three tiers in height, resplendent with gilding and surmounted with the imperial crown and cross. The proscenium is decorated with Corinthian columns, and the

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<sup>60</sup> Raffaello Sanzio Morghen (1758-1833) — Italian engraver

<sup>61</sup> Brocatello marble — Coppery-red limestone

vaulted roof is richly painted in compartments. On the proscenium, over the center of the stage, is a clock, whose dial with its transparent figures revolves before a strong light, to indicate the time to all parts of the house. The edifice is faced with arcades, which shelter the company in rainy weather. Above these, a broad terrace with a balustrade leads to the gaming rooms, which are under the protection of the government. Below, a vestibule leads to the lower boxes and pit, where staircases conduct to the upper circles. During the opera, only the stage, the orchestra, and the royal box, by its chandelier, are lit up, so that almost the entire house is in obscurity, exhibiting none of that display of female dress, beauty, and pomp so visible in the theaters of England, America and France; so that all trouble of parade is saved, and a family may enter their box at the opera, listen only to the more favorite airs, and, in the interval, do as they please. Each box having a private room, work, conversation, or cards are common. Suppers are taken there during the epoch of the carnival. The boxes are the great places for visiting—"the exchange" of all the fashion of the city. The theater is the recreation of almost all classes, of the tradesman, the critic, and the politician, as well as of the fashion of the city. The most scrupulous ladies of the highest ranks come alone in their carriages to the opera. Exactly what an exchange is for the merchant, in his way, the theater is for all in the way of visiting, social intercourse, and the like. If commercial bargains are not closed there, social bargains are, and matches are made, flirtations carried on—ogling done to order—sweet looks exchanged—with all the soft low notes of love, and all its consequences in their train, without a doubt. An excellent exchange it is, in its way, and why, for the same reasons that the merchant has his bourse, may not the fashionable, visiting world have theirs, to save them the trouble of promenading a whole town?



## 56. Arts, not Politics

Milan,  
September 21, 1835.

My last letter left me in the theater or opera of Milan, admiring its construction, and remarking upon the other uses to which, as a fashionable exchange, it was devoted, than that of the opera or the ballet. Generally, the fashionables listen but little to the music, or regard but little the spectacle, opening their eyes, and their eyes only, to the favorite parts—turning at other times their backs upon the actors, and loudly chatting in their respective little circles—always awake, however, it is said, to the ballet, always wonder-struck by the "*declamation of the legs*," which some French woman has wittily said the people of Milan only *hear*.<sup>62</sup> But there is no inattention now, for Malibran<sup>63</sup> is on the boards—the wonderful Malibran, whose genius and acquisitions of languages are such that she is equally at home on the stage of London, of Paris, or Madrid, as on that of Milan—a native, as it were, in the four languages, able to pass as one lisping each from her infancy! The magnificent theater was filled in all its lodges, the royal lodge except, and throughout its broad *parterre*<sup>64</sup> or pit. Whenever she appeared or spoke, a general hush, which sounds much like our hiss of disapprobation, ordered all to be still, and all were as still as death. The opera was *Othello*, but all unlike the *Othello* of Shakespeare, except that it was based upon that great tragedy, and then metamorphosed to suit Italian convenience. But if I had never heard of the play, if I had not known one word of the language—and who can tell in what words any opera is written amid the loud outpouring of music, and the chant of the singers?—yet, the mere expression, the mere looks of Malibran's face, were enough to vivify, and make speak the play. In this, the power of the

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<sup>62</sup> The singer Mlle. St Hubert declined an invitation to perform at La Scala, stating "*Je ne chante pas pour des gens qui n'écoutent que le ballet*." [*I don't sing for people who only hear ballet*.] Lady Morgan (Sydney). *Italy* 1:148

<sup>63</sup> María Malibran (1808-1836) — Spanish mezzo-soprano, died prematurely in 1836, at age 28.

<sup>64</sup> *parterre* — (per Webster) "the part of the main floor of a theater that is behind the orchestra" (= the stalls)

actress, superadded to the melody and power of the singer, Malibran so shoots ahead of the little and pretty Grisi,<sup>65</sup> whom many think her rival upon the stage—not that they can really think she is her rival in genius—but that, having often witnessed her excellence in the opera of the *Puritani*,<sup>66</sup> where she so eminently distinguishes herself, they fancy that no one can be like her there, or elsewhere.

The theater, the army, the church! You see with what confusion a letter-writing minstrel must mingle things sacred and profane. But, in Italy, these topics are not so distant nor so discordant as one may imagine. The theater is an engine as important as that of the church or the army. What politics are in England, plays are in Italy. The genius, the spirit, the fermentation of the people, pent up elsewhere, seek vent in and on the theater. The theater becomes one of the great topics of discussion and dispute. As our people applaud the orator who pleases them, the Italian applauds the actor or actress who pleases him. As we divide into parties upon men, they divide into parties upon actors, actresses and plays. In the pit of Milan, I have seen the man, who must have worked hard to earn a seat there, though the entrance is cheap enough compared with our prices, convulsed with enthusiasm, every limb agitated, every muscle in motion, his head swinging in ecstasy, and tears gushing out of his eyes under the pathos of Malibran, where education too, and the finer and more cultivated sentiments seemed to be necessary to appreciate her skillful acting. But the play, the music, and the acting were probably the only things he understood. It may be that he could not read and write. It was joyful to see him leap in his ecstasies, and painful too—joyful from the caricature of passion unaffectedly displayed in a human being, whose muscles were thus played upon, as if the actresses' fingers ran over them, and mournful that a human being should be thus educated, as it were, with soul and body, to appreciate the theater alone, wholly forgetful of the higher destinies of man. Elsewhere, I have seen the house divide into parties upon an actor, one side hissing as loud as a hiss can be hissed, and the other thundering applause, which last side, you well know, always wins the victory—in noise—for man has but one instrument to express disapprobation with, whereas tongue, feet, hands, all one's brute force can express applause.

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<sup>65</sup> (Probably) Giulia Grisi (1811-1869), Italian soprano

<sup>66</sup> *I Puritani* — Opera by Bellini (1835)

Hence, by the way, perhaps, in politics as in the theater—the loudest brawlers are the greatest winners. The louder you scream, the more people will hear you.

I love, in journeying, to mark the different topics that engage the conversation of the people, because thus, I have an insight into their characters, and the influence that political and religious institutions have upon them. It may be fancy in me, but I think I can see in this alone, the great line of demarcation between different institutions of government; for it is government alone that can, at will, modify and quite change the people upon whom it operates, and this notwithstanding the people may be most happy and most prosperous under some despotisms that are of patriarchal character. Among all people, no matter under what form of government they live, there is a disposition to agitate about something. There must be some common topic to engage the attention of the whole people. Government, I think, affects, or directs rather, the characters of these topics. For example, in the United States, where there is not the least trammel upon discussion—except, that of public opinion, which is often as severe and rigid in its mandates, I own, as the censorship, with this difference, however, that a man can have it with pecuniary and personal impunity, if he chooses—in the United States, how broad-spread are all the topics of public discussion! What an infinity of religions we have! and what an infinity of parties too, so complicating a poor devotee often that, for the life of him, without the label of his political owner, he cannot tell to what party he belongs! Discussion with us revels in such an amplitude of space, that we are upsetting and setting-up too every day of our lives the worst with the best, and the best with the worst of principles—striking at what all this Old World reveres, and horrifying the Old World too by the new questions we agitate and settle, so that their wise ones know not whether to call us barbarians or devils; none of them, however, ever fancying that we are as civilized as they are. In England, where are the next freest people of the globe, the freest from the armies, and from the espionage of the police—with a press perfectly free, save the salutary regulations of the law of libel—with us almost as with them—discussion takes almost as broad a range; limited, however, by one tyranny—the tyranny of a severe, bitter, and misery-creating social system, which exhibits this anomaly, that while England is in politics and government the freest of all the European kingdoms, it is in all the

laws of society, with its formalities and regulations, the most absolutely despotic that exists on the face of the globe.

The topics of conversation display this democracy of the government mingled with the despotism of society. An Englishman discusses political questions as an American discusses them, save the few great principles our fatherland has not yet discovered—talking of the conduct of his rulers as we can talk of ours, with the same freedom and the same ease; but I will venture to say, from the experience of almost five hundred instances, that almost the very first impression he will attempt to make upon your attention after a few minutes' acquaintance, is the society in which he moves, or ought to move, or expects to move. The company he keeps is always in his mouth. His great acquaintances, whether he has any or not, are about the first and last things you hear from him. The great society of England, I verily believe, the young men of England love more than their God, for they sacrifice everything of the heart, or the sentiment, risking their lives everywhere, all over the globe, solely it seems to me, to get into it. The love of the titled is with an Englishman, (or an Englishwoman,) a passion, a perfect monomania; and hence he is ever talking of it, for the reasons that I have given—that though he has one government as free as ours, yet he has another, invisible—unknown almost—but terribly powerful, acting without constitutions, or arms, but ever directing all eyes toward the splendor of its throne. The Church of England in England, I solemnly believe, is upheld as the church of the state, by the sole influence that it is *vulgar* to belong to any other; for, as the Church of England is the only fashionable church, there is danger of losing caste if you frequent any other!

The all-absorbing public topics of England, in its circles and its families, are, therefore, **politics** and **society**; the difference from the United States consisting in the second being made a primary topic, while with us it is only a secondary and minor one. In France, where the press is not as free as the English press—where government is of another character—where an army must be strong, and where a police is vigilant over the politics as well as over the morals of the people—but where there is something of an equality in society, in its freedom quite approximating to that of ours—politics are less discussed, or more carefully discussed; while, of society, little or nothing is said, but as it affords pleasure or instruction. The vent that politics allows not, seeks

to discharge itself upon the drama, or the ball, or the dress. The theater there begins to assume an importance and an influence not known in the United States, (for though, as a people, we are more attached, I think, to theatrical spectacles than the English, yet the theaters of our cities are not so much supported by the home population as by the traveling population, that have nowhere else to spend their evenings;) and this importance in France, far above that of the theater in England, becomes all-important when you go over the Alps into Italy. Every stagecoach you enter exhibits the interest people take in the theater—the paroxysms of enthusiasm they have—the fierce war of words and gestures they can wage. You hear them, too, in the vetturinos—at the *cafes*, the *trattorias*,<sup>67</sup> where, as they sip their coffee, or nibble their dinners, you hear them ring, with every mouthful, some discussion upon the drama.

Thus, as I have said before, as our people talk politics, the Italians talk of plays. As we talk of our great men, they talk of their great singers and composers. Bellini<sup>68</sup> is their Webster.<sup>69</sup> Malibran, General Jackson,<sup>70</sup> say—except that the sweet enchantress takes her inspiration from the sparkles of champagne, the wicked say, while not even a "federalist" will accuse "Old Hickory" of anything but smoking too much. Rubini<sup>71</sup> and Tamburini<sup>72</sup> may pass for the Van Burens<sup>73</sup> and Clays<sup>74</sup> of the day; for just as high as such men stand in the estimation of their parties in America, *they* stand with their parties here. They have only transferred greatness, or the estimation of greatness, from the head to the throat or the legs—placing the intellect in a trill, or a pirouette, instead of an oratorical flash or a bolt of logic. The reason of this is, they have nothing else to talk about, or rather are permitted to talk of nothing else. Quick-spirited as they are, lively and impetuous, the mind seeks vent in something. Politics are forbidden; but you can talk of them, if you please,

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<sup>67</sup> *trattoria* — (Translation) *tavern*

<sup>68</sup> Vincenzo Bellini (1801-1835) — Italian opera composer

<sup>69</sup> Daniel Webster (1782-1852) — American politician

<sup>70</sup> Andrew Jackson (1767-1845) — Born in the Carolinas; lawyer; As U.S. army general, defeated British force in 1812 at Battle of New Orleans; 7th President

<sup>71</sup> Giovanni Battista Rubini (1794-1854) — Italian bel canto tenor

<sup>72</sup> Antonio Tamburini (1800-1876) — Italian operatic baritone

<sup>73</sup> Martin van Buren (1782-1862) — United States politician; 8th president of U.S.

<sup>74</sup> Henry Clay (1777-1852) — U.S. politician, senator from Kentucky

if you like an Austrian jail, bread and water, with darkness, or with spiders and rats to play with. As no one fancies such companions when he can find better, all of politics you can get from an Italian is a shrug of the shoulder, or a '*non so*,' (I don't know,) with a twist of the mouth and a wicked grin, which I wonder tyrants have not made treason of ere this, though the king of Prussia has just taken one step toward it, by making whistling penal in the streets of Berlin.

I cannot help sharing the wrongs of this people, who have such fine minds thus misdirected. Fit them—educate them for our form of government—and what a people they would be, with so much intellect, so much fancy, so much of all that characterizes the energy of genius, added to a taste and sense of beauty, which preeminently distinguish what I have seen and heard even of the lower classes. In looking at the nation, and remembering what they have been, marking too the mere physical construction of either sex, I cannot but regret that, amid the numerous emigrants from Europe to our country, there are not less from some quarters and more from this, for a sprinkling of such a population with ours would loosen with us many of the faults of the English character, and impart other feelings that can never distinguish the mere English race.

There are many more things to write of Milan, but, if I stop thus long on the portals of Italy, when shall I get out? This, with all its shows, is but the gateway to the entrance of what was once the mistress, and what has been, centuries after, the lamp that lit up the civilization of the world. When our fatherland<sup>75</sup> was in barbarism, when the Gaul and the Frank were but Goths, Dante sung, and Michelangelo<sup>76</sup> painted, and carved, and built. The classic scholar sees little here as yet, in his thirst for antiquities, to gratify his first burning curiosity to see something of Roman ruins. Milan has been too often razed by devastating armies to leave much of antiquity, yet sixteen columns of the lustrous days of the Roman empire, making part of the baths of Hercules,<sup>77</sup> constructed by Maximian,<sup>78</sup> are to be seen. Some palaces of the moderns are to be seen. The Grand Hospital is a building magnificent and immense. Never did

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<sup>75</sup> Our fatherland — England (Britain)

<sup>76</sup> Michelangelo Buonarroti (1475-1564) — Italian sculptor and painter

<sup>77</sup> Hercules — Greek and Roman mythological hero, famous for his strength

<sup>78</sup> Emperor Maximian (286-305) — Ruler of the western Roman empire

fortune employ the resources of art for an object more praiseworthy, which shows that charity is enthroned on this side of the Alps as well as on the other. The public garden, (you see, even despotisms allow public gardens to their subjects, while the republicans of America take no public gardens to themselves,) is grand and well extended. In its center is a building which serves for public fetes. Near the garden is a beautiful promenade *for the public*, all adorned with trees. The *palais* of the sciences and the fine arts of Brera is one of the most superb edifices in Milan. The library contains one hundred thousand volumes. The observatory, or *specula*,<sup>79</sup> is among the most renowned, and is furnished with the best astronomical instruments. The day I visited this palace it was all thrown open to the public. There never is any difficulty in getting in. It is *for* the public—it is to improve, to elevate, and to gratify the taste of the public. Music was playing in the court. The authorities of the state were there; why? simply to confer upon some humble artists, painters, and sculptors, the medals of reward as a public tribute for the dawnings of genius they had but begun to exhibit. These are lessons that despotism is teaching republicanism—salutary lessons too—for that of which despotism has no fear, it cultivates and patronizes. It is a Macaenas<sup>80</sup> for the arts, but let letters alone, it says, if letters venture upon aught but flattery to my power! As in Greece, as in Rome, as in the republics of Italy in the Middle Ages, as in Venice, Florence, and Genoa above all, it becomes the republicans of America to associate letters with the arts, and thus, even more, (as all history proves) satisfy the cavilers against republicanism that the highest state of intellectual cultivation is compatible with, and in some degree dependent upon, the freedom of the whole people.

I here repeat that, in the progress of my letters, I mean to show the young artists of America the means of entering Italy with the least possible expense—and when that is demonstrated to be nothing in comparison with what Americans generally believe, I hope that funds will be supplied to send as many Americans as there are of English and German and French, to study such paintings as the *Transfiguration* of Raphael, and such pieces of statuary as that of the *Venus de Medici*. Would that Congress could devote some of the surplus funds of the

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<sup>79</sup> *specula* — (Translation) watchtower

<sup>80</sup> Gaius Maecenas (68 B.C.-8 B.C.) — Patron of poets Horace and Virgil. The term "maecenas" is nowadays a synonym for a wealthy patron of the arts.

nation to an object so glorious, which, if it were done, would elevate us more in the eyes of Europeans, and do us more good abroad as a nation, than a series of the most splendid victories. To think that artists will spring up in the United States—spontaneously, as it were, without the study of models, or the instruction of masters—to hope that artists can deck the walls of the Capitol by inspiration, is hazarding a little more upon the virtue of a free government than even I, with all my faith in its miraculous powers, can credit to it.

A few words upon the commerce of Milan, and I am off—"where Venice sat in state, throned on her hundred isles."<sup>81</sup> Milan, remember, is not upon the sea, nor is it upon any river. It is upon a vast plain, like a city built, as it were, amid a prairie of Illinois. One hundred and thirty thousand inhabitants live well within its walls, while the whole surrounding country is thick with towns and villages. Canals dug during the Middle Ages connected it with the Adda and the Tessin. Thus, began its commerce, for in these canals is its veritable wealth, for they serve the city not only in the mechanic arts and in the irrigation of the fields, but for transportation, now that the Alps are passed by the St. Gotthard and the Simplon. I have spoken of irrigation, for this seems to be one great object of the canals of Lombardy, and the science of hydraulics and hydraulic architecture are employed throughout all North Italy with as much intelligence as success.

If any American is here surprised that so large a city, with no navigable waters by steam or wind, can have grown up upon the like of an American prairie ground, and *persisted* in growing up too, after a ruthless destruction by the Ostrogoths, and an entire overthrow and utter desolation by Frederic Barbarossa,<sup>82</sup> let him remember that the patronage of its public men has been directed to those arts, which, while they enlighten the taste, and cultivate the mind, are often turned to purposes of commerce, and make the grand sources of the augmentation of a nation's wealth. Thus, Milan not only traffics in rice, the celebrated Parmesan cheese and silk, but in handkerchiefs, ribbons, velvets, glass, veils all principally worked, and also in all manner of gold and silversmiths' wares, artificial flowers, embroideries and laces—thus

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<sup>81</sup> Byron. *Venice*

<sup>82</sup> Frederick Barbarossa (1122-1190) — Frederick I, Holy Roman Emperor

accumulating wealth out of the little nothings of life, and, to the extent of that production, making the rest of the world its tributary.

I leave Milan this evening, on my way to Venice. Of three modes of traveling—by Vetturino or a hired coach, which is cheap, but stupidly slow—by the Velocipede,<sup>83</sup> which is the Courier, with seats for three persons beside himself—or by Post, which is dearer than all, I have chosen the medium. The gruff keeper of the post books has taken my passport and secured me a seat. Of my passport, I shall see nothing more till the Courier is done with me, for, the Austrian government probably reasons—"*if we trust a stranger with his passport, he may slip into our cities without our knowing that he is there.*" The *promise* is to put you in Venice in twenty-four hours. The *performance* is in thirty, which in Italy is doing exceeding well.

There are many things in and about Milan, but one of the first lessons even an ardent traveler learns in Italy is, that it is impossible, unless you have a life and a fortune to spend, to see even half of the things to be seen in Italy. The most painful sacrifices must be made at every step. Every gallery that you enter, you must inquire only for the objects of art that are remarkable. The towns that you resolve to visit should be renowned by some great event of history, or by the possession of some attracting works, for Italy all over is a study, and a study of years. I thus leave the suburbs of Milan quite unvisited. Even the far-famed iron crown of Lombardy, that Bonaparte put upon his head when he usurped the throne of the Caesars, I have not seen. Let that be for others who have more curiosity about, and respect for, crowns than I have. I would give more, thrice more, for a bit of dirt upon which a true Roman of the days of the republic trod, than for the possession of forty such baubles. Pavia I lose too, and its well-known Certosa, or abbey for Carthusian monks, which the artists of Italy, for four hundred years, were adorning with sculptures, carvings, statuary, works in gold, bronze, ivory, ebony—with accumulations of precious stones, of mosaics, of pictures, of frescoes, and all the wonders of wealth and art, that go to the

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<sup>83</sup> Velocipede — Brooks makes an analogy to this early form of human-powered vehicle, presumably because the Courier is the fastest of the three alternatives mentioned. First patented in 1818, the velocipede also gave its name to a prize-winning English thoroughbred racehorse (career 1827-1829).

perfecting of chapels, choirs, sacristies, altars and mausoleums. But who can see everything? The world is big, and life is short.



## 57. Road to Venice

Venice,  
September 28, 1835.

"Well! well!" as a Yankee says, when he knows not what else to say—"whoorah!" "whoop!" "halloa!" "This beats all nater, all to nothing!" "whip me, if it doesn't!" Downingville<sup>84</sup> is nothing to it, nor any other *ville* upon which I ever laid my eyes, anything to it. The traveler, now and then, even when his senses become quite callous to novelties, will have his spasms,<sup>85</sup> and thus, here, I have one over this Venice—this oddest of all odd cities—this rich pearl of the ocean, that lays upon the bosom of the Adriatic, like some bright gem upon the bosom of some eastern queen. If it were proper to whoop upon paper, I would whoop through a column of periods, for thus alone can I impart an impression of that wild, strange feeling that comes over every man, when, in his gondola, his eyes first discern in the distance the towers, the steeples, the marble piles starting like sea palaces from the ocean—the coral houses, as it were, of the fabled deities of the deep, where Nereids<sup>86</sup> held their court and Tritons<sup>87</sup> worshipped. "Whoop! whoop!" but whooping will not do on paper, even for a North American savage, as half of Europe believe all Americans are. You describe, you must describe, the law says—*lex non scripta*,<sup>88</sup> it is true—according to rule, in well-built periods and with chosen words, the Beckfords<sup>89</sup> or Byrons<sup>90</sup> say. But I am wonder-struck. I am "dumbfounded," as John Bull would have the phrase, I must have a "flare up"—for how can I describe what the best writers of the world have so often described, and a city, too, that artists, the best artists of the world have painted and engraved in almost every variety of view, so

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<sup>84</sup> Downingville — Fictional town in Maine, associated with the character "Captain Jack Downing", whose "letters" appeared in U.S. newspapers during the 1830s

<sup>85</sup> Spasm — Brooks uses this deprecating term to denote excessive excitement ("spasmodic enthusiasms").

<sup>86</sup> The Nereids — In Greek mythology, female water spirits (sea nymphs)

<sup>87</sup> Triton — Mythical Greek god, messenger of the sea

<sup>88</sup> *Lex non scripta* — (translation) *Unwritten law*

<sup>89</sup> William Thomas Beckford (1760-1844) — English novelist; art connoisseur and collector; travel writer

<sup>90</sup> Lord Byron (1788-1824) — George Gordon Byron; British poet; travelled extensively in Europe; lived in Venice

that letters and the arts have struggled to impart the most vivid impressions of its novel and beautiful position? Whoop! whoop! whoop! I *will* whoop, for thus, like a surcharged Mississippi steamer when shivering in every timber under the pressure of her battery of boilers, can I let off in such *puffs* as these the spasms of the entree.<sup>91</sup>

No streets, no horses, no carriages—miles from the mainland, and no bridges to it, men, women and children floating about in gondolas, the hackmen<sup>92</sup> metamorphosed into boatmen, awaiting your pleasure, the gondolas peeping out from under the palaces, the front door opening upon the canal or broad lagoon, the "*how do you do, sirs?*" said in a boat, trading, courting, flirting, done on the water—what a divine land for mermaids and mermen, but how unfit for men and women! You go a-shopping in a gondola, you go to the theater in a gondola, you visit in a gondola; without a gondola, in short, you cannot go far at all. What a magnificent Hôtel des Invalides<sup>93</sup> all Venice might be, what a capacious abiding place for the maimed, the wounded legless! For sure, this is the only place in the world where legs are not necessary, and where they are often as much of an encumbrance as a blessing, unless I except an American stagecoach with nine persons in it. "*How do they live without streets?*" you ask. "*They go by water,*" I answer; and they have little narrow alleys to go here and there in on foot, with some hundreds of bridges over the little canals, under which the gondolas and the boats pass with ease. "*And how do they go without horses?*" you demand. "*Their gondola is their horse and their coach,*" I answer; and with it, and in it, they go where they choose, whether it be on the small canal, or on the broad lagoon that leads to the ocean or to the mainland.

But, go back with me—if you please, before I write further of Venice—to Milan, and then let us see the things upon the road. The highly cultivated and beautiful country is one of the chief things that attract one's attention. But it is not the rich landscape of England, nor her magnificent parks, nevertheless. In all of this, England is unrivalled, to be sure; in rural taste, she is the mistress of the world. But the whole of Lombardy, the suburbs of Milan in particular, have—notwithstanding I

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<sup>91</sup> Entree — The act of entering; arrival

<sup>92</sup> Hackman — Cab driver, taxi driver

<sup>93</sup> Hôtel des Invalides — Large building in Paris, erected 1676, as a retirement home for aged and invalid soldiers

am now accustomed to judge all rural life by my *beau ideal* of an English landscape—much to attract and to gratify the eye. Though not with the vivid aspect of an English country scene, though never so neat and orderly, though never with such beautiful farmhouses so beautifully covered over with flowers, yet, the whole plain of Lombardy, both Austrian and Venetian, from Milan to the shores of the Adriatic, is but a garden—a garden with golden harvests, admirably cultivated by means of canals that at times are permitted to overflow the fields, and now, at this season of the year, covered with the grapes, sweetly clustering upon the branches of the thickly and regularly planted mulberry trees.<sup>94</sup> Hydrostatics, as I have said before, is a science well understood in Lombardy. The ingenious manner in which the waters are distributed for irrigation particularly struck my attention. At first, by good dykes, the people sustain the little rivers in beds enough elevated, and then they draw canals from them, which run in divers directions so as to water the country. When two canals meet, and each is of about the same elevation, in order to keep that elevation as it is, they make one pass upon an aqueduct, and for the other, under the bridge, they work a little pipe in masonry, which, after having received the waters of the under canal, according to the laws that govern fluids in seeking their equilibrium, brings them to their elevation, over the bridge—and thus the traveler often sees the waters of two different canals to cross without mingling, though their waters are nearly of the same height. In the environs of Brescia, which are watered by three different rivers, this waterpower is used to the best advantage, for, while the waters, divided and distributed with intelligence, spread fertility throughout the country, they also turn many mills, and move many forges. The machines to spin the silk, which are very numerous; those to work the cannons, the forges of the cutlers, the hammers to beat the iron and copper, and the sledges or pestles to shell the rice, are all moved by means of waterpower. "*All Brescia*," says an Italian proverb, "*would not give courage to a poltroon*,"<sup>95</sup> for Brescia is renowned for the fabrication of firearms.

I did not stop long at Brescia, just long enough to have a peep at some of the ruins of the Romans which late excavations have been bringing to

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<sup>94</sup> Mulberry trees were cultivated intensively in Lombardy, their leaves serving as feed-stuff for silkworms.

<sup>95</sup> Poltroon — An utter coward

light, and thus, rather to sharpen than to gratify the keen appetite of the traveler for antiques, and antique ruins—an appetite keen enough, I know, when he enters into Italy, but amply gratified and fully glutted, I am told, before he leaves it. The Courier, having disposed of his letters at Brescia, hastened us on. I saw only the outside of the Duomo, or Dome, the name by which they call cathedrals in Italy, which is decorated after the Corinthian order, and lavishly rich, I am told, in statues, bas-reliefs, and other ornaments. The celebrated picture by Paola Veronese, of the *Martyrdom of Sant'Afra*, in the church of that name, I could not see, nor the famous *Woman detected in Adultery*, by Titian—and I mention here, for the purpose of calling the attention of other American travelers to them, and to add that a Courier, though he *goes* slow enough, does not *stop* long enough to enable the traveler to see all that there is to see in the cities. But the Courier is a mode of traveling perfectly safe, as, during the night, an armed man on horseback accompanies him from post to post; and though there is now little or no danger at all in traveling on the plains of Lombardy, yet it may be as well to add, that a countryman of ours in a vetturino, not long since, was stripped of all his money by the *banditti*, not during sunlight to be sure, but at the peep of day, when the vetturinos are compelled to start off upon their slow-going pace. During the sunlight, all is safe, but there are robbers, who will rob, if they dare, when protected, as they fancy, by the darkness of the night—never taking life, however, I believe, only plundering a man of his money and his watch, the first of which is seldom any great loss, for travelers are now wise enough to take only the sum that is necessary to carry them from the bankers of one great city to another.

The old Via Emilia was the road upon which I travelled, the Via Emilia of the ancients, which the Austrians have now made one of the best roads in the world, all macadamized, spaciouly broad, and arched, and studded with stone posts, all regularly numbered, and thus showing the distance from place to place. Beyond Brescia, a famous town (I might as well say here, even under the Romans, with the name of Brixia,) that Attila<sup>96</sup> at last with his Goths conquered and sacked—beyond Brescia, the road passes between hills covered with woods, gardens and villages, which are bounded toward the north by the lofty and sterile Alps, at the

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<sup>96</sup> Attila [the Hun] (c.406-453) — Ruler of the Hunnic Empire, in central and eastern Europe

base of which for miles you seem to be moving. Subsequently, the road passes upon the Ponte San Marco, the Bridge of Saint Mark, for all things in Italy are named after the saints; the difference between them and us only being, that the Italians name after the apostles, and distinguished holy men, and we, after stolen foreign names, and the chief political gods of the day. After the bridge Saint Mark is passed, the traveler comes upon the margin of the ancient Benacus, the lake that Virgil (whose home of Mantua is not far from here) has apostrophized as rising with waves, and resounding with a roar. The lake is now called Lago di Garda, and its turbulent waters, the morning I passed it—even then, as in Virgil's day, "*fluctibus et fremitu assurgens*,"<sup>97</sup> at the slight touch of the then gentler wind—prove that, even to the present day, it retains its old fame. Here I began to feel that I was really on classic ground; and, as I looked at the luxuriant fields, I fancied that it was in them that the Mantuan bard first learnt those lessons of agriculture, which in his *Georgics* he published for the world. Classic ground, indeed it is, for, amid the surrounding Alps, upon the peninsula of the lake called Sirmione, was the villa or the grotto of Catullus,<sup>98</sup> which the poet himself has deliciously described. I took out a pocket edition of Virgil to read, in order to revive old associations—to see if the scenery and the country was such as that which my fancy had pictured to be the lake of Virgil, while a student in a New World, of the existence of which he never dreamed—and as I read, it was not difficult to see where the poet had drawn much of his strong and most beautiful imagery; as, about here, was the broad-spread fields on which the Alpine torrent tumbled when it rushed from the chill icy air of an upper region upon the softening land of the grape and the mulberry, at once uniting the grandeur of the cataract, and the mountain once bristling with forests upon its sides, where the wild boar roamed and ravaged, with the sweetest and most luxurious view that even a painter could fancy. Upwards was the home of the monster—where Pan<sup>99</sup> might hunt his goatskins for Diana;<sup>100</sup> and here Bacchus<sup>101</sup> could hold his revels, and

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<sup>97</sup> *Fluctibus et fremitu assurgens* — (Free translation) *Swelling with the waves and roaring of the sea*

<sup>98</sup> Catullus (c.84 B.C.-c.54 B.C.) — Roman poet

<sup>99</sup> Pan — In Greek mythology, god of nature and rustic music, half-goat half-man, companion of nymphs

<sup>100</sup> Diana — Roman mythological goddess of the hunt etc.

the drunken fauns quaff the foaming bowl. Amid such musings as these, I came suddenly upon the strong Austrian fortress of Peschiera, into which we went over "*the hanging bridge*," and by "*the moated gate*." The Austrian sentinel was pacing in his regular step before the gate, and the white-coated soldiers that march under the Austrian banner were thick in every street and corner. The tune of my musings was changed. Another chord was struck, not so sweet as the last, when I thus beheld the mighty fortress of a nation whom the Italians yet believe to be barbarians, thrown up in the heart of a country so fair, to bridle men of the race and the blood of a Virgil! But the quick whip of our postilion here, cracking loudly over his horse's heads, soon transported us from this scene into the once more charming country, and anon we were in the environs of Verona, another city and fortress of the Austrians, where hundreds of men, like mules, were digging and collecting dirt to add to the strength of the even now redoubtable fortifications. The country we had been traveling is called the Veronese, and is one of the most fertile parts of Italy, abounding in corn, wine, oil, fruit, rice, mulberry trees, &c.; and as this is now about the season of the vintage, the wine seemed to be as plenty and as cheap as the water, whole pipes of it being visible all along the roads on the teams of the farmers, the red streams of which, now, in the towns and villages, they would discharge in huge vats, for the purpose of being stored in the cellars. The fame of this wine even Virgil has chronicled, and if it has not "*the glory*" of the Falernian bumpers, which all the Augustan poets sung, it may be because Horace and Ovid<sup>102</sup> knew less of Rhaetia,<sup>103</sup> and the Rhaetic wine, than of the Falernian grape,<sup>104</sup> that grew on hills by which they were wont to travel when on their way to "*the beautiful Baiae*."<sup>105</sup>



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<sup>101</sup> Bacchus — (also Dionysus) In Greek and Roman mythology, the god of wine and fertility

<sup>102</sup> Ovid (43 B.C.-17 A.D.) — Prominent Roman poet

<sup>103</sup> Rhaetia — Province of the Roman Empire, including part of Lombardy

<sup>104</sup> The Falernian grape was cultivated to the south of Rome.

<sup>105</sup> Baiae — In the Roman era, a thermal spring and coastal resort on the Gulf of Naples

## 58. Things in Venice

Venice,  
September 23, 1835.

Verona is a city of 50,000 souls, upon the Adige—except the Po, the largest of Italian rivers. Famous as a town, even in the Roman republic, in the days of Trajan<sup>106</sup> of the empire, it was thought worthy of having an amphitheater capable of accommodating over 23,000 spectators, an amphitheater composed of large blocks of marble without cement, 464 Paris feet in length and 367 in width, almost perfect, even to the present day, and standing there, and likely to stand for years to come, as a monument of the magnificence of the Roman emperors. The traveler here, for the first time on the route I have taken, sees a sufficiently preserved edifice to judge what Rome was in the days of her triumphs; and though he may have read much, and believed much of her power, yet there is now forced upon him, perhaps for the first time from actual observation, a deep and somewhat degrading sense of the little advances his own age has made, even after the struggle and the light of centuries. The ruins of an edifice thus grand, solely for the amusement of the people, teach him that it is not in this age [that] architecture has won her triumphs, but that the men of more than a thousand years gone by knew as much of the arts as the wisest of his generation, and that, however much science may advance, and however proud civilization may be boasting from its pedestal, yet, in the arts, in taste, in that of the eye and ear, which cannot be made hereditary, it is quite possible that even a wise generation may retrograde instead of advancing.

Every step the American takes in Italy impresses him with such reflections as these, and further convinces him that, while in Utility, the very reigning principle of our country, we are second to none, (if not before all others,) in the elegant, the Beautiful, in all that range of study that the words *beaux arts* define, we are centuries, I was going to say, behind even the little towns of Italy. For example, there are probably, even in this little town of 50,000 inhabitants, more fine buildings, and more fine paintings, more fine sculpture too, than in all America, at least

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<sup>106</sup> Trajan (53-117) — Roman emperor

in America of the North; and the same in a like proportion, perhaps may be said of England, for, not till within the fifty past years have her noblemen and gentry begun to think of collecting anything else with their superfluous wealth than the best butts of excellent wine; though, within fifty years, candor must compel one to say, that they have used their wealth most abundantly to purchase all of the riches of Italy that wealth could purchase. But, if Verona has not treasures enough to make that true which I have said of England, I can put Vicenza, the next city on the road, or throw Padua in, yet the next, and all I have said would, probably, be more than true, for Vicenza was the birthplace of the celebrated architect Palladio,<sup>107</sup> who has adorned it with his finest work.

I had but a running glance at things in Verona, losing a breakfast after an eighteen hour fast to get even that, while the Courier was waiting his appointed hour, and the police was inspecting our passports. The amphitheater of Palladio, with its superb portico or peristyle, adorned with Etruscan inscriptions, and antique *bas-reliefs*, Greek and Roman, attracted our attention. The palaces of the architect Sanmicheli,<sup>108</sup> are also worth a view. The cathedral is Gothic, and in it is one of Titian's best paintings. The church of Saint Zeno,<sup>109</sup> decorated with ancient Gothic ornaments, holds the tomb of Pepin.<sup>110</sup> The cloud of holy paintings that soon thickens upon you, as you advance into Italy, till most irreverently you cry out in disgust against so many holy subjects, here begins to come upon you: *Jesus Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane*, *The Flagellation*, *The Assumption*, a *Christ dead*, *The Annunciation*, *The Baptism of Jesus Christ*, *The Descent from the Cross*, and whole battalions of Saints and Saint-esses, whose very existence, (irreverent man I am,) I never even dreamed of, now gather around us in all the varieties of the painters' colors, and the sculptor's chisel, now gloriously drawn by a Raphael, and now hewn and hacked by some wood-chopper or other, who has had the audacity to take up the trade of a Michelangelo. The Venetian school of painters appears thickly, wherever you turn, not only in the daubings of some bad altarpiece, half-concealed in darkness, but in the bright labors of a Titian or a Tintoretto,<sup>111</sup> and a Paolo Veronese.

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<sup>107</sup> Andrea Palladio (1508-1580) — Italian architect; active in Venice

<sup>108</sup> Michele Sammicheli (1484-1559) — Born in Verona; Venetian architect

<sup>109</sup> Saint Zeno (4th. C. A.D.) — Possibly of North-African origin; resident of Verona

<sup>110</sup> Pepin (773-810) — Son of Charlemagne; King of the Lombards

<sup>111</sup> Tintoretto (1518-1594) — Italian Renaissance painter; active in Venice

The tomb of Juliet, for this, you know, is the land of the loves of Romeo and Juliet, they show, even to this day, in a garden by the walls; a sarcophagus, it is made of Verona marble, with a place for Juliet's head, a socket for her candle, and two holes for the admission of air, but Juliet of course is gone, for, according to the story, it is supposed that she died some 500 years ago.<sup>112</sup>

From Verona to Vicenza, the road, bordered by mulberry trees interlaced with vines now hanging thick with grapes, runs through an agreeable and fertile plain. It coasts along a chain of mountains, not very high, and almost cultivated to the top. The Tridentine Alps, that divide Italy from Germany, are in view. The traveler is on a vast and rich plain that reaches to the Adriatic, and thence even to the base of the Apennines. Vicenza is found upon the side of this plain, a city of about 30,000 inhabitants—and 60 Catholic churches too! Two rivers traverse it—or torrents rather, now dry, and anon desolating everything in their way. Over one of those torrents is a bridge, with a beautiful arch of a single span, adorned with parapets and a marble balustrade, so very neat that travelers pleasantly say, "*Buy a river, or sell your bridge.*"<sup>113</sup> The genius of the great architect, Palladio, has decorated this city with many noble works, for it was his birthplace, and the citizens who were proud of him were fully inspired by his tastes. The Olympic theater, a work of his, was built to give the people an idea of ancient spectacles, but, as the population of Vicenza is not large enough to support the actors necessary for a play, the magnificent room serves only for balls that they give in the time of the two fairs, which are remarkable events in the town. Palaces here, innumerable, I was about to write, but very many I may say, were built by the architect Palladio—palaces of all the orders of architecture I believe, Gothic except, for I remember well that upon Doric columns, Corinthian or Composite would be placed, with all the other interminglings that taste or fancy could suggest. The churches

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<sup>112</sup> The legend of Romeo and Juliet is a continuing tourist attraction. The sarcophagus, traditionally identified as the burial place of Juliet, is now (2017) placed within a crypt of the former monastery of San Francesco al Corso.

<sup>113</sup> McBride, in *Spanish Towns and People*, 1931, mentions an earlier source: "... the Manzanares, a river of such meager proportions that a witty Frenchwoman of the court of Philip II was led to exclaim to the king, apropos of a magnificent bridge with which he had spanned it, '*Why, Your Majesty, don't you either buy a river or sell your bridge?*'"

of Vicenza also are thick with holy paintings, and *Corpora Domini*, "dead" and "living Christ,"—with *Magdalenes*<sup>114</sup> and *Madonnas*<sup>115</sup> or the like, standing upon every altar, and in every gallery.

From Vicenza I passed to Treviso, instead of Padua, which is upon the direct road to Venice, for the Courier with whom I was, was not the Courier for Venice, but for Trieste; and Treviso is on that road. At midnight, I was "dropped" down there at the post office, all alone—not knowing even the name of a hotel, nor aught of the localities of the place; and, all alone as I was, for my companion had parted from me in Milan to go direct by the Venetian Courier, who could take only one of us, I had not the utmost confidence in my own personal security. As the postilion showed me an inn, and the servant of the inn showed me an ordinary-looking chamber, the fear thickened upon me, and I could not but smile at my own heroism as I fortified the door with all the broken chairs and tables I could muster—without the least cause, however, but that suspicion created by loneliness in a strange land, when one knows not where he is, or where he is going, without having any confidence also in the principles of the people among whom he is traveling. But I am alive yet, witness this letter, and after visiting a few of the churches in Treviso the next morning, I set out for Maestre, the point whence one embarks in a gondola for Venice, having made a bargain with a vetturino man, and given him about one third what he asked, the usual quantum of "the beating down" in Italy. The fertility of the country on this road is remarkable enough, but not so remarkable as the palaces and the gardens adorned with marble statues often skillfully sculptured, once the creations of the proud Venetian nobles who here had their country seats, when Venice was the mistress of the sea. The profusion of this sculpture is indeed astonishing, and I could not but think, as I saw these statues as thick as men, of the magnitude of wealth employed, and the prodigies of art and labor necessary to build up and adorn such imperial residences.

Arrived at Maestre over a superb (Austrian) road, I was instantly beset by scores of men in the soft Italian of the Venetian dialect, for permission to take my little luggage to the gondola; but, while I was

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<sup>114</sup> Saint Mary Magdalene — Biblical figure, contemporary of Christ

<sup>115</sup> Madonna — Mary, mother of Jesus Christ

giving my consent to one, two others were fighting over it at my side, while a police officer was lustily interfering with the staff of his office to prevent the further progress of the quarrel. Poorest of miserable creatures, no wonder they fight over a traveler as a Godsend, when but a quarter of our cent is a boon to them of richer value than a diamond found by an American farmer. I carefully stepped into the gondola—the famous gondola of Venice I was in, one of the first dreams of my youth! while the caps of a dozen persons were before me, begging in the name of all the saints that I would give them a little for fixing their hooks upon the gondola, so as to fasten and steady it while I embarked. A few *centimes* quieted them, and off I was paddled, the beggars who *do* do a little good with their hooks in steadying the frail barks, showering down upon me all the blessings of all the saints; which, by the way, I fear will not help me much, as I am a little incredulous of their power, Protestant sinner as I am.

We were five Italian miles from Venice, and these we went on the broad lagoon. The fortifications seem to have been made up out of the sea. The Austrian sentinel was pacing upon their battlements—yes, the Austrian sentinel, even on the barriers of this proud republic! The custom house was upon the water too, and so was the police office, or upon an island built up out of the water, which is quite the same thing. As we passed an altar decorated with an image of our savior, placed high upon a pile driven into the mud of the lagoon, a priest came forth in his boat, and with a long extended contribution-box, such as is seen in our churches, expected the tribute of a Christian to his candles and his painting; and though one can see no particular purpose in burning candles before a painting on such an altar on the sea, yet it is not for a Protestant, whose church has all manner of formulas equally singular, to laugh at the fashion, or to send back the priest without his coppers.

Anon, I was on the grand canal of Venice, and the man of the gondola was pointing out the rich piles of marble that seem to start out from the water on that magnificent street—if street it can be called. The far-famed Rialto<sup>116</sup> next attracted my attention, and as we glided under its arch, beautiful though it is, I could not but mourn over the sudden flight of glorious fancies with which my imagination had ever adorned this

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<sup>116</sup> The Rialto bridge is located in the central area of Venice.

bridge—fancies that stern reality was now dispelling, and shaping into truth. The "*Lion Blanc*,"<sup>117</sup> my *albergo*, is not far from hence, where I was pleasantly lodged, after the usual, and ever-to-be-expected quarrel with my man of the gondola—quarrels which, after a while, the traveler in Italy becomes so habituated to, that at last they amuse, much more than they vex him.



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<sup>117</sup> *Lion Blanc* — (Translation) *White Lion*

## 59. Things and Thoughts in Venice

Venice,  
September 26, 1835.

The traveler, it is said, finds Venice to be one of the most interesting and most beautiful cities of the world, and, certain I am, there are but few cities which history and poetry have invested with a greater charm. Founded, like our republic, by exiles from oppression, who sought an asylum not *over*, but *upon* the very waves of the ocean, it has an interest and a story for all the nations, but above all for an American; and while I have sailed over its little lakes, separated from the sea by banks of sand, (lagoons as they are called,) and visited the little isles that industry and wealth have made to shine on the blue waters, even as the stars glitter in the blue and broad expanse of the heavens, I have thought much of that long and dazzling sway that these republicans of the sea held over the Adriatic and the Mediterranean, when, with their galleys, or their galliots,<sup>118</sup> they chased "*Genoa the proud*"<sup>119</sup> from the deep, or with the "*blind old Dandolo*"<sup>120</sup> <sup>121</sup> filled the Bosphorus,<sup>122</sup> and fell upon the walls of the city of Constantine.<sup>123</sup>

As I saw its once rich palaces crumbling by the water's edge, and traced the print of the foot of desolation as it began to appear—here, even in the courts of the doge,<sup>124</sup> and there, within the walls of St. Mark, even though the Lion stands on his old guard, and the gilded horses of Lysippos<sup>125</sup> are on their ancient foothold—I felt a mournful exultation, when I thought of the past and the present, and linked them with the

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<sup>118</sup> Galliot — Small, fast galley (Mediterranean)

<sup>119</sup> "Genova la superba (rivale di Venezia)" — Nickname given by Petrarch to Genoa in 1358. *Poes. Min. Vol. III, epigrafe III*

<sup>120</sup> Enrico Dandolo (c.1107-1205) — Doge of Venice; led Venetian forces against Constantinople during the Fourth Crusade

<sup>121</sup> Byron. *Childe Harold, Canto IV*

<sup>122</sup> Bosphorus — Strait connecting the Black Sea with the Sea of Marmara

<sup>123</sup> City of Constantine — Constantinople; modern-day Istanbul

<sup>124</sup> Doge — Chief-of-state in Venice during Medieval and Renaissance period

<sup>125</sup> Lysippos (4th Century B.C.) — Greek sculptor; works include the Horses of Saint Mark, Venice

destiny of my own dear country; marking well as I could (as if written with the pen of the specter of death,) the progress of the destroyer of pride and empire, which, from the foundation of the world has been traveling from the East to the West—now, strutting in gold and glory amid the legions of Darius;<sup>126</sup> now, throwing up mountains in pyramids upon the sands of Egypt; anon, briskly blazing even with a consuming luster upon the Grecian peninsula, then streaming forth like a shower of fire from the walls of the eternal city;<sup>127</sup> anon, concentrated in one bright focus upon the isles of Venice, but now daily dying away, while the traveler from the yet farther west, even the land of Goths and Huns, is gazing with admiration upon its splendor, and, impressed and inspired by its taste, transports to his own home, and imparts the enthusiasm kindled there.

Here, after the fall of the Roman Empire, liberty found a refuge upon the waters and made a fortress of the waves; and with the same lordly air that England now strides over the ocean with her mighty fleets, the galleys of Venice glided upon the waves—dictating peace or war from the Pillars of Hercules<sup>128</sup> to the Dardanelles,<sup>129</sup> and even, at one time, the mighty bulwark of civilization, as when it drove back the dark cloud of Turkish barbarism, so fearfully and thickly gathering upon the Adriatic. But, since that day, empire and civilization have taken yet another step, and a little island upon the ocean, now proudly apart from the rest of Europe, has become the mistress of the seas.

A mightier step, too, than even this, empire and civilization are rapidly taking; not over a little stretch of land or sea, as hitherto, but now over one broad ocean, to a continent that a son of one of the republics of the Mediterranean, discovered—there, amid forests, where wilder and more savage barbarians than Huns or Goths roamed in unbridled liberty, building great cities, and rapidly clustering in them the ornaments of civilization, exchanging the lofty pine for the steeple of the church, and the howl and the whoop of the savage for the song of the

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<sup>126</sup> Darius (c.550 B.C.-486 B.C.) — Persian ruler, whose empire stretched from the Balkans to India

<sup>127</sup> Eternal city — Rome

<sup>128</sup> Pillars of Hercules — Promontories flanking the Strait of Gibraltar

<sup>129</sup> Dardanelles — Strait connecting the Mediterranean with the Sea of Marmara (and ultimately the Black Sea), separating Asian Turkey from European Turkey

Christian and the full-swelling notes of the organ, not only to make "*the wilderness blossom like the rose*,"<sup>130</sup> but to plant **men** there, with the souls and the faculties of men regenerated and redeemed from the thralldom of centuries of prejudice and false education.

It is with such reflections as these that I feel a mournful delight in traversing the canals and the bridges of this strange and beautiful city. It needs not the power of the pens of a Petrarch,<sup>131</sup> a Shakespeare,<sup>132</sup> an Otway,<sup>133</sup> a Radcliffe,<sup>134</sup> a Schiller,<sup>135</sup> or a Byron, who has each impressed the image of Venice upon the imagination of almost every man that reads a book, to invest such a city with a charm, particularly in the eye of him who looks sharply upon its existence and its history in the great chain of human events. Say what may be said of the terrible government of the secret Council of Venice,<sup>136</sup> yet, what American traveler can forget that the same suffering principles sought an asylum here, as sought the asylum upon the rock of Plymouth, from which has *gushed*, if not the living water of sacred story, the living water that is to nourish free principles throughout the world.

Who can forget that Venice combated for centuries for the like liberty that we won in a single glorious struggle, and that while that liberty was guarded and preserved, Venice was not only the queen of the seas, but the great workshop of Europe, the wonderful mart of the East, with her hands full of gold, and her arms clutching the spoils of the oldest of empires! Then sprang up those palaces from the water that I see; then, those churches, rich as mines of gold, laden with eastern wealth, thickly clustered upon altars and on columns, teeming with precious stones, and confounding even the imagination by the glory of display. And when I look upon them, I not only think of this, but I consider those

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<sup>130</sup> *Isaiah* 35:1 (adapted)

<sup>131</sup> Francesco Petrarca (Petrarch) (1304-1374) — Italian poet; settled in Venice

<sup>132</sup> William Shakespeare (1564-1616) — English playwright; author of *The Merchant of Venice*

<sup>133</sup> Thomas Otway (1652-1685) — English playwright; author of *Venice Preserv'd*

<sup>134</sup> Ann Radcliffe (1764-1823) — English fiction writer; refers to Venice in her novel *The Mysteries of Udolpho*

<sup>135</sup> Friedrich Schiller (1759-1805) — German poet; author of the unfinished novel, set in Venice, *The Ghost-Seer* or *The Apparitionist*

<sup>136</sup> (Great) Council of Venice — (1172-1797) Ruling body of Venice, composed of members of the nobility

monuments of that proud day, alas! now liberty is lost—crumbling as does the Coliseum, or the Arch of Trajan—stricken and sad, beautiful it may be, but with that beauty which denotes *the end*, when the hectic<sup>137</sup> blush is tingeing and flitting across the cheek. I feel as if I had entered into the darkened and hushed chamber of death, when the last pulse is beating, when the showy robes of this world are to be put off, and the simple sheet is to be put on; but I think I hear the voice of prophecy and admonition, it may not be of the ancient sibyl<sup>138</sup> with her mystic books, but a voice, as important to us, as that voice to Rome of olden days, though it speaks only in deserted mansions, unvisited canals, or the weeds and slime from which Venice sprang, now often recovering their original hold, and proving the principle that "*dust must return to dust*."<sup>139</sup>

The same principles that cast such a pearl upon the ocean, where they transformed many insignificant islands and beds of sand into the most beautiful creations of man, are acting upon us at the present moment, under the advantages of a position singularly favored by Heaven; and such principles must, in the course of time, deck our republic with ornaments as glorious as are seen in Venice. But, what a sad reflection then, that our day must come too! What a melancholy thought that men will not continue so to govern themselves as to preserve that liberty which, as it is given or withheld, advances them in, or retards the possession of happiness and civilization!

Musing thus, I was wandering all solitary in the narrow alleys of Venice, when, all at once, I came upon the magnificent Piazza di San Marco, or, in other words, the Place of Saint Mark. The sun was setting; and the people were refreshing themselves with coffee in multitudes there—not under the arcades of the surrounding palaces, but in the open Place—people of almost every name and nation, the Hun, the Turk and the Slavonian,<sup>140</sup> the Greek and the Roman, the sons of Goths and Saracens, as well as the once proud Venetian. The broad lagoon before me was covered with lively gondolas, filled with parties who were idly floating on the little ripples of the waves, enjoying the evening air, or chatting

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<sup>137</sup> Hectic — (per Webster) feverish; flushed

<sup>138</sup> Sibyl — In ancient Greek belief, a woman who makes prophecies; an oracle

<sup>139</sup> *Ecclesiastes* 3:20 (adapted)

<sup>140</sup> Slavonia — Historical region of Croatia

over the affairs of the hour and the day. The Adriatic sailors were thick upon the quay; not the bold tars of old renown, but the Austrian livery-clad slave, who makes vain show to give his master a little domain upon the sea. The Austrian soldier, an outward-well-clad being enough he is, but it may be with not a shirt to his back, and with an ever-craving stomach—so ill-clad, ill-fed, and ill-paid, are these myrmidons<sup>141</sup>—was taking his regular sentinel pace around the Palace of the Doges.

I sat down at the foot of the campanile of San Marco, the tower where Galileo made his observations. I wandered thence to the Ducal Palace, and saw the Giant's Staircase, and the Bridge of Sighs. The beautiful verses of Byron were lively in my mind, and I ran over the perilous history of the doges, one of whom he has so immortalized. Are these Shylocks,<sup>142</sup> I thought, these dealers in gold and jewels here, under yon arcades? The Basilica of San Marco, this gorgeous mosque, more than church, at last absorbed all attention. I looked well upon its cupolas, its slender pinnacles, its semi-circular arches, the interlacings of gold and bronze that decorate the principal portal, before I entered the spacious vestibule; and as I ran my eyes over its Gothic arches and Greek columns, intermingled with Moorish tracery, I thought of the brilliant days when the gorgeous palace was covered over for tilt or tournament, a wild carnival, with a canopy sparkling with artificial stars, and a carpet of the richest stuffs of the East.

All of splendor, all of wealth I ever dreamed of, even in reading Arabian tales of princely palaces springing up by magic stroke, seemed to be amply realized, as I passed this vestibule and gazed upon the interior, which then, I know not why, began to be partially lighted up. Before it, everything in all Europe that I have as yet seen of luster or of wealth, dwindles into insignificance. The spoils of nations, the conquered treasures of the East, were before me. Diamonds, emeralds, rubies and pearls are the ornaments of this house of God. The revenue of a kingdom would scarcely purchase this single tabernacle! The whole interior is lined with mosaics—mosaics of onyx and emerald too! The grand altar is placed upon a pavilion, supported by four columns of white marble, filled with figures which represent the history of the Old and New

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<sup>141</sup> Myrmidon — Hired ruffian

<sup>142</sup> Shylock — Jewish moneylender in Shakespeare's play *The Merchant of Venice*

Testament. In the rear of this is another altar, where reposes the holy sacrament, environed by columns, two of which are of oriental alabaster, transparent as the crystal, and of the greatest rarity, with two others of blue and black, and two of serpentine with a balustrade of porphyry.

How many people of bygone centuries have wrought to make this edifice, which of itself has seen a period of seven hundred years! The ten exterior gates are of Corinthian brass, and Venice plundered them from Constantinople, who plundered them from—I know not whom. The serpentine columns of the interior were plundered too, and the Saracenic pillars that ornament the out and the in, show that they were plundered also. I espied far up, at last, amid the richly-worked facade of the church, half-hidden among porphyry columns, marble statues, mosaics and gilded bronze, the four famous horses of Lysippos' workmanship, which, in the cars of conquering armies, have almost made the circle of the world: in one age, belonging to the chariot of the sun of Corinth of old; in another, decorating the triumphal arcs [arches?] of such opposite characters as a Nero<sup>143</sup> and a Trajan at Rome, then journeying to Byzantium,<sup>144</sup> whence the Venetians plundered them; at last seized amid the magic victories of that human miracle, Napoleon, to decorate the Carrousel-Place at Paris, whence a million of allied bayonets rescued them with other trophies, to reinstate upon the portals of St. Mark! Here they are now, the same beautiful pieces of bronze as ever, but the symbols of power and empire no more, for though an inscription in golden letters proclaim that they were *victoriously* brought back to Venice, yet it was not Venetian, but Austrian arms that brought them there; and though Austria yields to Venice her lion and her horses, to grace her grand Piazza, yet only the trappings of her ancient glory are left, in which she is dying by inches every hour, laurelled, one may say, as were the victims of ancient sacrifice that the augurers led in train:

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<sup>143</sup> Nero (37-68) — Roman emperor

<sup>144</sup> Byzantium — Greek colony at mouth of the Black Sea; became Constantinople

"Glory and Empire! once upon these towers  
With **freedom**—god-like triad! how ye sate!

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Oh! Agony—that centuries should reap  
No mellow harvest! Thirteen hundred years  
Of wealth and glory turned to dust and tears;  
And every monument the stranger meets,  
Church, Palace, Pillar, as a mourner greets;  
And e'en the Lion all subdued appears,  
And the harsh sound of the barbarian drum  
With dull and daily dissonance repeats  
The echo of thy tyrant's voice along  
The soft waves, once all musical to song,  
That heaved beneath the moonlight with the throng  
Of gondolas———."145

Thinking of the checkered destiny to which time and conquest had subjected these famous horses, of which I have been speaking, and perhaps led to the reflection by these beautiful verses in which Byron turns, in the ode that I have been quoting, from dying Venice to apostrophize my own home:

"*That one great clime, in full and free defiance  
Which rears her crest, unconquered and sublime,  
Above the far Atlantic.*"146

I could not but flatter myself with the fancy—*fact*, it may be, in ever changing the seat of Empire—that the day would come when even these horses might cross the Atlantic, and adorn some triumphal arch in that far-off land. In the progress of art, ever an attendant as it is of power and glory, illuminating and embellishing their conquests as it does, who—knowing the history and era of the little republics of the earth—dare say there is more improbability in such a prediction, than that Corinth should have lost them, or that the refugees of the little islands almost lost among the seaweeds of the Adriatic should have struck down the walls of proud Byzantium, and placed the trophies by their own Lion? I would not for the world inculcate a spirit of conquest, yet, if there is ever an excusable use of force, it is possessing oneself of these

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<sup>145</sup> Byron. *Ode on Venice*

<sup>146</sup> Byron. *Ibid.*

rich treasures of art, particularly when thus consecrated by a long and interesting history. When I look around upon the invaluable models of antique and modern art, that ages of conquest and labor have clustered along the shores of the Adriatic and Mediterranean, I almost am willing to change the bad sentiment of Caesar, "*that if Justice was ever to be violated, it was to be violated for the sake of ruling*,"<sup>147</sup> into another, that if war was ever to be waged, it is to be waged for the purpose of *stealing*—famous objects of art. The Greeks plundered the East; the Romans plundered them. The hieroglyphic columns of Egyptian art even now stand on the Roman piazzas. Titus<sup>148</sup> plundered Jerusalem. The barbarians plundered the Roman Empire. Venice plundered Constantinople. Bonaparte plundered *her*.

To tell the truth, and to use a common but expressive phrase, "*my mouth waters*," when I see this rich grouping of the arts in breathing pictures, and an almost moving statuary; and, Attila-like, I begin to turn a Goth. I feel a passion for stealing creeping over me. I cannot help thinking, what a beautiful prize our noble fleet would have won, if, when we had the little trouble with Naples, we had pushed those troubles to the verge of war, and have seized the rich museum of Naples—the accumulated treasures from Herculaneum and Pompeii—with the famous Hercules, and the more famous group of *Dirce*<sup>149</sup> *and the Bull*! What a prize too would be Venice, with her prodigious quantity of pictures, the *chefs d'oeuvre* of a Tintoretto, a Titian, and Paul Veronese! We can never buy such precious things. Wealth cannot purchase them. All the annual revenue of the United States could not purchase many an Italian gallery. The noblemen of England and the princes of Russia, the greatest buyers in the market at the present day, negotiate, but negotiate in vain. Alas! if we ever have them at all, we must *steal* them, as they stole other finer works from Greece and the East. The English plunder, in their way—witness the *Elgin Marbles*.<sup>150</sup> I like the Roman and Venetian mode the best. Heavens and Earth! what a swoop we might make, if we were to

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<sup>147</sup> Cicero; also attributed to Caesar

<sup>148</sup> Titus (39-81) — Roman emperor; Julia Flavia was his daughter

<sup>149</sup> Dirce — Greek mythological figure, killed by her twin sons, Amphion and Zethus, by tying her to the horns of a bull

<sup>150</sup> Elgin Marbles — Sculptures, part of the Parthenon, in Athens, removed by the Earl of Elgin

land a force at Civitavecchia,<sup>151</sup> and march upon Rome and plunder the Capitol and the Vatican! The whole world would then be obliged to visit us to study the arts in "the woods of the New World;" for, certain I am, that if we ever laid our clutches upon them, all the world could not bring them back to Europe again. You see, I am become an American Goth.

Another thought strikes me, as I enter Italy, and study more its history and its customs, and if it lead to another digression from my regular journal of things in Venice, I must excuse myself by asking again, "*what is the use of travel, but as the sight of things inspires thoughts?*" Everybody sees, but everybody does not think upon what it sees. When I see here in Venice, and remark throughout Italy, so many fine creations of genius, and read further, that Italy is at this day the very focus of the arts—witnessing too, pilgrims, as it were, from every part of the earth worshipping at her shrine—and seeing that it is here the student from every clime of the Old World and the New, resorts for cultivation and for study—I am amused that such a people as the English, who only within fifty years themselves have *begun* to be civilized, should sneer at republicans and republican governments as instruments to vulgarize and debase mankind, as fetters to the progress of art, refinement and taste, when all history and observation prove that, in proportion to the liberality of the institutions of government under which men are reared, has been and is the progress of art,—or, in other words, no matter what may be the *form* of the government, it is necessary that the popular principle should be the reigning principle of a government, in order fully to develop the energies, the tastes, and the highest intellectual capacities of man.

To make *men*, the government must fetter none of the powers of a *man*, but must stimulate his industry and his ambition to their ample exercise, so that whatever faculty there may be latent shall be encouraged to its full development. Wherever this is done, at the present day, as has been done in other times, there man exhibits the greatest capacities—it may be in one way or in another, just as the tastes of the people or the patronage of government incline. The reason that in the United States and in England, at the present day, there are more men that deserve the reputation of orators, than in all the rest of

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<sup>151</sup> Civitavecchia — Port city close to Rome

the world together, is, that in these two countries the popular principle has the most expansion. I mention this instance of the development of intellect, because I look upon oratory or extemporaneous speaking as the very highest exercise of the faculties of the human mind. The like I believe, as I have said in a former letter from England,<sup>152</sup> is the reason that business is done better, and with more energy and spirit, by the Americans and the English, than by any other people.

But when we come to the fine arts, the principle is modified, it is true, but is not changed. Eloquence and commerce cannot flourish long and securely under a despotism, for the tongue has no liberty, and enterprise has no range—but the fine arts can: for that amount of popular talent which is withdrawn from the field of politics and business can be turned to painting, sculpture and architecture, (not so well to literature however) as, from the fine arts, government has but little to apprehend—exercising the mind as they do in abstractions rather than in actions, pleasing rather than inflaming, occupying the mind with the creations of genius rather than letting genius loose to play upon the multitude, to raise the storm, the tempest, and then the revolution. Even though this is true, however, yet the nations of the present day with the freest institutions are cultivating the arts the most. The Russians are *buying*, I own, but who hears of the arts in Russia, or of a Russian artist? The Germans are at work, copying rather than originating, I believe, with no munificent institutions such as the French have in Italy and at home. The era of French advancement in the arts was the era of the republic, and of Napoleon, who, if a despot, was a despot of the people's choice, created and sustained by the popular principle alone. Louis Philippe at the present moment, a *chosen* monarch, and not a monarch by "*the grace of God*," is doing more for the arts than all the Bourbons<sup>153</sup> ever thought of doing.

The English are accumulating, and accumulating all that British gold can purchase, the greatest patrons of the arts of the present day—with critics of the finest taste, the keenest admirers too, of the art and beauty of every European gallery. Utility and Art with them march hand in hand. The one courts and wins the other, and the last adorns and graces

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<sup>152</sup> See Letter 30

<sup>153</sup> Bourbon — French royal dynasty; overthrown by the revolution of 1789; restored from 1814 to 1830

the first. Even Mars<sup>154</sup> is proud of Venus<sup>155</sup> for his wife, and Hercules appears the better side by side of an Apollo.<sup>156</sup> The English are older than we are, and hence the reason that what is true of them is not altogether true of us. Utility must first give us bread enough to eat, and then, when we are full, and have a little leisure, we will go to study Art. Besides, the English are three thousand miles *nearer school* than we are. It is a long road, that over the sea. But, let steam annihilate that distance, and make the way cheap, and when the latent tastes of the mass of my countrymen can be aroused and cultivated, when the arts of Italy can fall upon and kindle up the popular principle of which I speak, I know from the fine perception with which I see many Americans here judging works of art, that the *faculty is within*, and only needs an opportunity to *jump out*. Our disadvantage is immense. With no great models before us, we come to Europe as children in all such things. We have to begin our very alphabet. We study our *a b c*'s. We watch the strange emotion of a new power gathering within us, and, at first, we hardly know what it is; but, as it strengthens, it imparts a pleasure the like of which we never knew before.

Thus, much of the present, now of the past. Venice, but a city of the Middle Ages, when all the north of Europe was in profound darkness, is a brilliant refutation of those who assert that republicanism or democracy vulgarizes mankind. For architecture, witness its palaces and churches, which Palladio, the architect, has ranked among the most beautiful in the world. Step into the Piazza, or Piazzetta of St. Mark. Look there at the noble edifices of Sansovino.<sup>157</sup> Behold the Ducal Palace. Enter this edifice, and apart from history, the romance of the age of an Ariosto, what a blaze of art bursts upon you! The fine pictures of the finest artists are in view. Titian is there with his grandest coloring. Tintoretto appears in the wild enthusiasm of his inventive genius. Paul Veronese completes a trio, which the world cannot match. "*I can create*," said Charles V<sup>158</sup> "*by a breath, a hundred Dukes, Counts, or Barons, but*

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<sup>154</sup> Mars — Roman mythological god of war

<sup>155</sup> Venus — Roman mythological goddess of fertility

<sup>156</sup> Apollo — Greek and Roman mythological god of multiple associations

<sup>157</sup> Jacopo Sansovino (1486-1570) — Italian architect; active in Venice

<sup>158</sup> Charles V (1500-1558) — Holy Roman Emperor (including parts of Germany and Italy), ruler of the Spanish Empire and Netherlands

*alas! I cannot make one Titian.*"<sup>159</sup> The Venetian school of painting, in wealth of coloring and high imagination, surpasses all the other schools of Italy, and Titian was the chief of that school. I saw his famous *Magdalene* in the Barbarigo Palace, the engravings of which are all over the world. His *Assumption of the Virgin* is in the gallery of the academy. His *St. Peter Martyr*<sup>160</sup> is in the church of San Giovanni e Paolo. I traced out the tomb where "*lies the great Titian*"<sup>161</sup>—"*Qui giace il gran Tiziano*"<sup>162</sup>—in the pavement of the Church of the Frari, and after I had seen his pictures, I could not but feel some enthusiasm over the remains of the friend of Tasso,<sup>163</sup> and Ariosto, the proud artist whom all the monarchs of Europe courted, the mighty Charles V among the chief, but who preferred his beloved Venice to the patronage of all, and where he lived and died of the plague at the age of ninety. But, take your gondola and go over Venice, and leave not a church unvisited, for, wherever you look, outwardly beauty strikes the eye, and wherever you enter in, painting and sculpture charm the fancy. The palaces are full of treasures. The Palazzo Manfrin is one broad sparkling galaxy of art. I should fill a sheet with even churches and palaces that you *must* go to see—but what eulogy need the fine arts of that city, that springing from slime and seaweed, "*sat in state, throned on her hundred isles,*"<sup>164</sup> creating the master artist of the world, reviving the arts even, and when dying at last, dying with a Phidias,<sup>165</sup> or a Praxiteles<sup>166</sup> to boast of in the person of the immortal Canova,<sup>167</sup> the greatest sculptor of the age.

There is nothing, then, in Venice, that leads a republican to believe that the power of a free government *vulgarizes* mankind. For, whatever may have been the checkered history of Venice, it started as a democracy, and it ever depended upon the mass of people for support. The merchants of Venice were the patrons of the arts, and the like merchants, if not deserving the epithet given the Venetians, I trust we

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<sup>159</sup> Lady Morgan (Sydney). 1821. *Italy* 2:421

<sup>160</sup> Saint Peter Martyr (1206-1252) — Italian Catholic priest of Verona, killed by an assassin

<sup>161</sup> Lady Morgan (Sydney). 1821. *Italy* 2:421

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>163</sup> Torquato Tasso (1544-1595) — Italian poet

<sup>164</sup> Byron. *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*

<sup>165</sup> Phidias (c.480 B.C.-430 B.C.) — Greek sculptor

<sup>166</sup> Praxiteles (4th Century B.C.) — Greek sculptor

<sup>167</sup> Antonio Canova (1757-1822) — Italian sculptor

shall soon find in America—indeed we are finding already. History then, if it proves nothing else, proves that monarchs and a train of nobles are not necessary for the patronage of the arts; for, as in Venice, so in the republic of Genoa, the *merchants* only effected more than all the monarchs or all the aristocrats of Europe ever thought of doing. The history of Florence, of Pisa, of Siena—of all the proud republics of the Middle Ages—is but an addition to the principles I have been sustaining. They prove, each and all, that man, when left to his own unhampered energies, takes a longer step onward than when manacled by kings or nobles, or when even patronized by their wealth. What monuments have we of the haughty nobles of the Middle Ages, but their rocky castles on rocky pinnacles, where *ought* to be only the aerie of the eagle, (fit nest, it may be, however, for such birds of prey as those nobles were,) while the shores of the Mediterranean, the fertile plains on the banks of pleasant rivers, were the abodes of the commerce and the arts of republics, that clustered around them, as the beautiful grape on the pendent vine, all teeming with wealth—the refuge of freemen—the home of the artist—the inspired spot of the painter, the sculptor, and the poet!

Florence, of itself, to this day, is a monument to the glory of republican principles, establishing the fact that they not only elevate, but that they ennoble the man too. For this noble city stood, for centuries almost, as the sole bulwark of republican principles in Italy; and when it fell, it fell holding in its grasp the most wonderful achievements of the past and the present—the *Venus de Medici*, the *Apollonio*,<sup>168</sup> the *Dancing Faun*, the *Scythian Slave*, the group of the *Wrestlers*, with the *Fornarina*, and *Holy Family of Raphael*, the *Day and Night* of Michelangelo—boasting too of rearing and nursing such men as Petrarch and Galileo, and adding to them the fame of a Dante, and the refuge of an Alfieri;<sup>169</sup> knowing too, even to this moment, that there is not a people on earth who have a keener sensibility to all the beauties and delicacies of art.

But I find I have struck a topic too abundantly full of thought for a letter. An essay might be written upon it, not perhaps so useful to us as useful this side of the water, for thousands of Europeans now pretend to

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<sup>168</sup> Apollonio — ?? Work not identified

<sup>169</sup> Vittorio Alfieri (1749-1803) — Italian dramatist

believe that the higher efforts of the mind are incompatible with a free government. They overlook all I have said. They forget that the blind "*old bard, of Scio's rocky isle*"<sup>170</sup> was cradled in a free, if not in a republican government. They forget that the greatest epics of all times have been written by republican pens. Dante was the offspring of Florentine liberty. That kindred spirit, Milton,<sup>171</sup> whom we better know, was the son of the English Commonwealth. It is time then that we vindicate our rights; not only to an equality of intellect in every species of intellectual artisanship; and not only prove that equality to exist, and to be compatible with business and commerce, and free government, but to contend for the superiority too that History awards to freemen—proclaiming that superiority as it loudly does from the broad-mouthed trumpet of the Past, not only all along the hills and mountains of Attica,<sup>172</sup> and from the Capitol and the ruined arches of ancient Rome; but, even to this day, establishing the fact that Art is wealthiest where men are freest; pointing out to the American, as he enters into Italy, what Liberty did when Liberty was enthroned triumphant there—thus gladdening his eyes with the joyful sight of old republics, preeminent not only in Freedom, but in Art; inflaming his own bosom too with the warmest love, and the highest expectations for his own land, so that while he turns with sadness from the reverse that has overtaken this Italy, so beautiful in death, his heart leaps again with joy to think that over the waters, kindred principles are creating and fostering another Italy, where, under the blessing of Heaven, republics as mighty as those of Greece and Rome, are springing up.

Oh, could he but turn the warm and hearty intellects of the young men of America from the accursed and barren waste of scrambling for miserable offices, into some other field where proud ambition could win its due reward, and thus leave a name for other times, then the very waste of that high gift of God would be spirit and flame enough to make all America one broad blaze of light, dazzling enough to confound every

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<sup>170</sup> "old bard ..." (adapted) — Reference to Homer, whose birthplace was reputedly the Greek island of Scio in the Aegean Sea (modern Chios); words from Byron *The Bride of Abydos, Canto II*

<sup>171</sup> John Milton (1608-1674) — English poet and man of letters; defender of free speech; worked for Oliver Cromwell's Commonwealth of England

<sup>172</sup> Attica — Greek region around Athens

wretched subject of power, who palliates his own disgrace by swearing that republican liberty makes brutes of, or vulgarizes us.



## 60. In Venice

Venice,  
September 26, 1835.

The Arsenal in Venice, everybody visits, and well they may, to witness this huge forge, whence came the arms that brought death to the Arab and the Saracen, and defeat to the proud Genoese; whence came, too, the weapons that defended the domain of Christianity, and drove back the Turk and the infidel, when he had already passed the Adriatic, and made a stride upon Italy. The Arsenal is on an island in the eastern part of the city, and is so well defended by lofty walls and turrets as to resemble a fortress, the object of it being to preserve the artillery and the fleet. It was the great Arsenal of the powerful republic of Venice, and at times, it is said, there were on it sixteen thousand workmen and thirty-six thousand seamen. Its principal entrance is ornamented on the outside with the winged lion of Venice—a colossal lion in white marble taken from the Piraeus at Athens, another lion from Athens, a lioness taken from Corinth, and another having the word "Attica" marked upon it, which the Venetians plundered when they planted the banner of St. Mark in Athens, and thus wrested it from the Ottoman Porte.<sup>173</sup> But the Arsenal of Venice, like the city, is now dying or dead, and the principal sight of the present day is the ancient armory, and the few workmen left.

I took a gondola with my companion whom I re-found here, and a *valet-de-place*, the first with one oar costing about four *swanzingers* a day, (about 70 cents of our money,) and the other four or five *francs* of France, (you see I keep up my resolution of telling the American traveler who may come here, what it is necessary to pay)—the gondolier being necessary in a city where you cannot walk upon the water, and the *valet-de-place*, (a Frenchman is always found, an Englishman seldom or never,) where you have but little time to see, and are compelled to improve that time to the utmost advantage; and, at our ease, my companion and myself sailed from island to island, and from church to palace, through canal and over lagoon, searching out whatsoever was

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<sup>173</sup> Porte — Central government of the Ottoman empire

curious. The gondolas are something like our Indian canoes—not so very delicate to be sure, but easily overset, often, almost always even, with a covering of black in the center, an arched-like canopy under which the party sits looking out of the windows to the right and left. The oarsman stands in the stern, and with his paddle or oar propels or guides the gondola, very like the manner of the Indians of the North, with a delicacy and skill remarkable, however, as he will just jut by a neighboring gondola without a single shock, passing the turns of the canals and gliding under the single arch of the numerous bridges with safety and ease, using only a loud warning as he turns a corner, so that a gondola, if approaching, may be upon its guard.

Whenever you step upon any quay, a beggar with his hook, who holds your gondola, expects about a quarter or a half cent of our money; and into whatever church you enter, you will commonly find another beggar at the door, who, upon lifting the curtain for you to enter or to go out, expects a similar compensation, the prerogative probably that the miserable and wretched population have over the better-dressed, and better-looking. Now and then, as you sail along in the gondolas, you can see a female face at some one of the windows, whose eye is upon the canals, as the eyes of the Dutch girls are upon theirs; but, generally speaking, the sight of a woman elsewhere than in the churches, where they seem to be ever thronging to pray and to attend mass, is rather uncommon. For woman, in Catholic as in Protestant countries, is ever the greater frequenter of the church, the most constant, the most sincere, and the most devoted worshipper of God. The women of Venice, however, generally speaking, are kept shut up, and do not, as in many other towns of Italy, participate in all the business of their husbands. It may be that, from that universal corruption of manners, which, it has been said, once made Venice but a grand seraglio, it has been deemed necessary to keep its inmates under the strictest watch.

With the gondola and the valet, among our many other journeys, we went to visit the celebrated prisons of Venice, which were once unknown to all, save the government and their jailer, and into which were thrust all who dared too freely to question the acts of that august tribunal. They adjoin the Ducal Palace, and the communication between the tribunal in the palace where the accused was *arraigned*, and the horrid cells where confined, was by a covered bridge over the

intermediate canal, which was appropriately named, and so well known, as the Bridge of Sighs—Il Ponte dei Sospiri, the Italian name. Hence Byron writes:

“I stood in Venice on the Bridge of Sighs,  
A palace and a prison on each hand.”<sup>174</sup>

At the foot of this bridge are the Pozzi, or horrid cells where the hapless victims were incarcerated. They are small, dark and damp, sunk in the thick walls of the palace, and from them the prisoner was led in the dead of night to a cell upon the Bridge of Sighs, where he was strangled or beheaded, and then tumbled into the canal beneath, whose awful secrets it was death to explore. Byron, in his notes to *Childe Harold*, says that you may crawl down through holes half-choked by rubbish into two yet deeper stories of this underwater grave. We saw the spot where the hangman did his office. We marked the \_\_\_\_ all besprinkled plainly with *human* blood. Once a day, for a brief interval, while the prisoners took their wretched meal, a light was allowed, and then some of the captives employed the stolen minutes in scratching their names upon the walls with a memento of their feelings, some few of which of the date of 1605, Byron has copied in the notes of which I have been speaking. The French, when they broke down decrepit Venice, found a prisoner there who had been confined sixteen years; but, liberty given him by them, and the light of day, were fatal boons, for he became totally blind the instant he saw the sun. Oh, what a sad lesson, all this, of the cruelty of power! when, on the gloomy water in which hundreds of corpses had been plunged, I could not but utter a new anathema against power of every name and form, whether in republics or despotisms, and take a new oath to law and the courts of law where jurors sit, where one having the heart of a citizen can be secure.

From this hell amid the waters, we emerged with a heavy heart, to go and visit the Ducal Palace itself, where sat the "*potent, grave and reverend Signiors*,"<sup>175</sup> who dealt destruction to every foe. We entered the grand hall, where they held their high deliberations. Around its walls

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<sup>174</sup> Byron. *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*

<sup>175</sup> Shakespeare. *Othello* or *The Moor of Venice*

are the portraits of all the doges, except one, of Marino Faliero,<sup>176</sup> instead of which is a black funeral cloth suspended over a frame, with a Latin inscription, which says, "*The place of Marino Faliero, beheaded for his crimes.*" The English reader is made familiar with his story by Byron's *Historical Tragedy*. In this august hall, the painters have blazoned the history of Venice, as we have attempted to do the like on the Rotunda of our Capitol. There, paintings and the associations bring one back to the splendid triumph of Venice, and to the crusades of the Middle Ages. The humbled Frederic Barbarossa is not forgotten. The blind old Dandolo, tumbling from his galley upon the hostile shores of the imperial city of the east, is there. Paul Veronese has taken a poetic liberty, in representing Venice crowned and seated in the clouds. Who has the right to such a liberty, if not the city that exchanged the imperial purple of the Caesars from emperor to emperor at her will—the mistress of the Archipelago, the ocean queen to whom the proud crusaders paid their court, the victor at Lepanto<sup>177</sup> in that bloody fight of Christian with the Turk?

The Grand Hall of the senators, where they deliberated, awakens your recollection to all this history. You are on a spot where mighty men have swayed the destinies of the world. You recall from what they sprung—"water-fowl they were called, with fish their only food and salt their only merchandise;"<sup>178</sup> and thence, as you trace out their humble progress to the vast trade of the Indies,<sup>179</sup> and the whole East, till the discovery of the passage of the Cape of Good Hope, you cannot but, as I have said before, compare their origin to ours at Plymouth and Jamestown,<sup>180</sup> the pilgrims and cavaliers alike seeking a refuge, as the Venetians did, and alike pushing their trade to the utmost (then known) bounds of the earth. In this hall, apart from the paintings, are some fine pieces of ancient sculpture—a bust of Cicero and Marcus Aurelius,<sup>181</sup> an *Eagle and Ganymede*<sup>182</sup> attributed to Phidias, and a *Leda*<sup>183</sup> and a *Swan*, a piece

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<sup>176</sup> Marino Faliero (1285-1355) — Doge of Venice, executed for plotting to overthrow the state

<sup>177</sup> Lepanto — Site of naval battle in 1571, between Christian and Ottoman forces

<sup>178</sup> Casiodorus. circa 523 A. D. (attributed)

<sup>179</sup> Indies — The Americas

<sup>180</sup> Jamestown — First English settlement in Virginia (1607)

<sup>181</sup> Marcus Aurelius (121-180) — Roman emperor

<sup>182</sup> Ganymede — Greek mythological hero, abducted by Zeus in the form of an eagle

of sculpture so exquisitely beautiful, and voluptuous wherewithal, that if it could be described, one would not dare describe it.

The Lion's Mouth, with open jaws, so formidable a part of the Venetian history, or rather what it was, next attracted our attention. Into this lion's mouth, *denunzie secrete*,<sup>184</sup> anonymous fabrications of treason or conspiracy against the state were thrown by every wretch who chose to glut his vengeance or his pique against some citizen of the state, and woe to the miserable man thus ensnared! Death often, too often, was his fate. The French, on their possession of Venice, put an end to this famous lion's mouth, and here it is, therefore, looked upon without that thrill of terror with which it must have been viewed in olden times. The lion's mouth, the fearful prisons, the Bridge of Sighs, are sad incidents in the history of Venice, but they only show the abuses that may be made even of delegated power, and in what manner democracy may become a horrid tyranny. Before we republicans over the sea too loudly condemn, we must first see if we have no *secret denunciation*, no lion's mouth. The man who secretly reports the political opinions of his neighbor to steal his office from him, does not he use the lion's mouth! and the government who strips the citizen of his office for opinion's sake, does it not often send him across "the Bridge of Sighs," if not into the dreadful Pozzi of the Venetian prisons! The Venetian republicans began with only the lion's mouth, which we have under another name, and it was after the people submitted to that, that the denounced was thrust into the prisons, and tumbled headless from the Bridge of Sighs.

There is so much in this Old World to make a man jealous of all power, and to swear against it an everlasting hatred under every name and form; there is so much in all history to teach us that *all* government is an evil made necessary by our bad passions, and that the least are compelled by this necessity to suffer this *necessary* evil, the better for the human race, looking upon it even as the *disease* to make us die—the cholera or the plague, to sweep off the overabundance of a population—that I cannot help running out of my way, on every tempting occasion, to

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<sup>183</sup> Leda — Greek mythological figure. The sculpture viewed by Brooks sensuously shows Leda being impregnated by Zeus, disguised in the form of a swan. The theme has been a popular one with painters over the centuries, and has been represented in various ways.

<sup>184</sup> *denunzie secrete* — (Translation) *anonymous accusations*

show my countrymen how easy it is for power, even with us, to cloak acts that the whole world now reprobate, even despots themselves, under another name or in another effigy.

Our gondolier then took us—after we had seen the different rooms of the Ducal Palace, the hall of the Council of Ten,<sup>185</sup> of the Inquisition and all—among the narrow canals, and under the low bridges over them. The Grand Canal we often sailed up and down to see the palaces upon it. The Rialto bridge, with its angle span over the Great Canal, looked grander upon a second sight, and grander still at the third. If Palladio had had his way, what a miracle this luxurious artist would have made in building a bridge more capacious than this! We entered into the church of San Giorgio Maggiore, and if ornament and wealth would confound a man, one would be confounded here. We visited the various churches the Venetians had erected as votive offerings to God for the cessation of the plague in the city. If high heaven esteems marbles, precious stones, sculptured saints, rich mosaics, and gorgeous frescoes, the plague will never come again. Enough has been done to buy a dozen pestilences off.

The church of the Jesuits—Chiesa di Gesuiti, is a marvel in mosaics. Carrara<sup>186</sup> marble, with *verd antique*,<sup>187</sup> are so incrustured and interwoven that they resemble green and damask hangings. The ground being white, the green marble flowers interlined, imitate in their veins, the soft, silky, and varied hues of nature. Before the high altar is spread a rich Turkey carpet, formed—of inlaid marbles! The ceiling is a profusion of gilding. In short, the eye is so fatigued by the view of so much wealth, that even a simple rough stone begins in the contrast to have a beauty it never had before. One is drunk with beauty, even without the metaphor.

After a hard day's work, that I have but partially set forth, from the early fogs of the morning, (Venice is ever veiled at night) amid the noon-day sun, even to the shades of night—I sat down at dinner with my companion and an English friend to talk over "the glories of the day." I know not how it was with them, but I was utterly fatigued—exhausted with what my eyes had seen, and the reflections that so many stirring

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<sup>185</sup> Council of Ten — Major governing body of the Republic of Venice (1310-1797)

<sup>186</sup> Carrara — Renowned marble quarry in Tuscany

<sup>187</sup> Verd(e) antique — Serpentine stone, popular for decoration

sights aroused. I never was more wearied, not even when on a foot tramp over the snows and glaciers of the Switzers' home, or when among the moors of England, or the Highlands of Scotland. I mention this, not that it concerns me, but to show you the effect such display will have upon an eye now somewhat accustomed to see such things.

An English friend of mine boasted loudly of what he had seen in Milan, in Verona and Vicenza. "*You have seen nothing,*" was the reply of my companion, for the Englishman had just arrived. "*You are a child in sightseeing yet,*" he continued. "*Dream—magnify—fancy—rave—and you cannot come up to the reality of Venetian splendor. All England could not buy a Venetian church!*" The Englishman pricked up his ears, and my companion went on. "*Why, one of these six-hundred-years-old palaces here,*" said he, "*has a greater display of the fine arts than the whole of the British Museum. You are barbarians,*" he added, "*the best of you, in comparison with the old gondoliers here, in all that appertains to the arts.*"

My companion exaggerated much, but he had an odd habit for exaggeration whenever he met with a John Bull, who ever thinks his country the only country on earth; religiously believing, I fear, that all others are uninhabitable, except for the purpose of scraping together a little money so as to go home and die, and be buried in a "respectable" manner. I have laughed many a time to hear him tell an Englishman, with a serious face, how bloody duels were in America, how he loved them himself, and the bloodier the better—how thickly men died on the Mississippi, say—what horrid knaves they were, and what an amusement it was to blow up fifty or sixty men by a steamboat boiler, or to *lynch* a fellow when you had not time to try him, *because* dinner was waiting, say—till at last the credulous John would begin to crawl with terror from such an ogre. Indeed, I don't know but what it is as well to overact a character the world will give you, and thus by the very exaggeration show what dupes there are upon it. The Englishmen have always lifted up their hats to my companion with a politeness that astonished me; for the world, I don't know how it is, are ever over-civil to men whom they believe Satan has a title of, while to him whose route may perhaps be on another road, a simple "*how d'ye do*" will do! At any rate, it shows that virtue is not well patronized in this wicked age of ours.

After dinner in an Italian city, usually comes the opera, and I wound my way with my companions through the entangling alleys to the Opera House of Venice. The house itself is no grand show. The audience was not large. *Moses in Egypt*<sup>188</sup> was the theme. The actors and actresses, and musicians too, were a graceless set, the fame of Venetian music to the contrary notwithstanding, or else I have within me no susceptibility for that enjoyment which, it is said, we shall partake of with the angels of Heaven—music I mean—for as Tantalus<sup>189</sup> forgot his thirst at the sound of Orpheus's lyre, and Sisyphus<sup>190</sup> his stone—it may be by a similar inspiration, I soon forgot myself, and was—*a-snoring*—horrid to confess! in (M)orpheus's arms.<sup>191</sup> The graceless players, therefore, I have charged with all this sin, for I will not plead a deaf ear to that "language of the soul," as Petrarch beautifully terms the notes of melody, nor acknowledge myself "*fit for treasons, stratagems and war*,"<sup>192</sup> as Shakespeare, I think, denounces the haters of music. I only know I spent an evening dreaming of everything else but the stage and the orchestra—now in the hall of the Council of Ten, that mausoleum of power, marching out of "*the fatal den*"<sup>193</sup> where this secret tribunal thrust their victims—and anon in the lowest deep of the dark dungeons I had been visiting—till, wearied with this "*language of the soul*,"<sup>194</sup> I left my companions, who waited for the *language* of the legs in the ballet, and attempted to thread my way home, alone and unguided through the dark alleys of Venice.

Ye gods, ye thirty thousand gods of Athens, I must invoke the whole mythology of you all, what a condition I was in! I threaded every cross-laid alley, I believe, of the magnificently extended city. I walked, and walked, and walked. I turned, and squared, and turned, and wheeled, and walked, and walked and walked, and all of the end I could ever find

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<sup>188</sup> *Moses in Egypt* — Opera by Rossini (1818)

<sup>189</sup> Tantalus — Figure in Greek mythology, punished by his inability to eat nearby fruits and drink nearby water; hence "tantalize"

<sup>190</sup> Sisyphus — mythical king of Corinth, punished by the gods to forever roll a boulder uphill

<sup>191</sup> Brooks makes a play on words, using names from mythology: Orpheus was a charmed musician, and Morpheus the god of sleep.

<sup>192</sup> Shakespeare. *The Merchant of Venice* (modified)

<sup>193</sup> Pozzi or Piombi — Prison cells adjacent to the Doge's Palace

<sup>194</sup> Petrarch ?? — Work not identified

was the Rialto in the Place of St. Mark. A Cretan labyrinth<sup>195</sup> is a straight line in comparison. A Roman catacomb is not to be mentioned in the same century. I dashed over bridge and bridge—I suddenly halted on the very verge of the canals, when another footstep would have made a fish of me, or made me into fish, after the fish had eaten me up—but everywhere was that everlasting Rialto, and that now horrible St. Mark. I had been reading so many stories of ancient poniarding<sup>196</sup> in the alleys of Venice, and was so full of the belief that an English-speaking man had better not betray his foreign accent in murdering Italian, that I had made up my mind to walk till the dawn of day before I asked an Italian the way to my *albergo*.

Once or twice, I tried an Austrian sentinel whom I met training on his little station, but as I did not jabber his Hungarian, and as he could not comprehend my Italian, I gave that up at last; when, lo and behold! I met my companions with a guide searching for me, over the bridges, and by the narrow alleys, who comfortably consoled me with the remark that they had sought me at home, and not finding me there, were now listening to hear my last gulp in some canal! The rascals, I disappointed them, and I have only told you the story to give you an idea of the complexity of pedestrianism, or, as Cobbett<sup>197</sup> would have written it, of foot-padding<sup>198</sup> in Venice. People generally go to the Opera in gondolas.



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<sup>195</sup> Cretan labyrinth — Legendary maze of King Minos at Knossos, on the isle of Crete

<sup>196</sup> Poniarding — Stabbing or killing (poniard = dagger with a slender blade)

<sup>197</sup> William Cobbett (1763-1835) — English journalist and farmer, author of *Rural Rides*

<sup>198</sup> Foot-padding — (Probably) going on foot (a pun: footpad = a highwayman who operates on foot)

## 61. Venice to Padua

Padua,  
September 28, 1835.

It is time that I was off from Venice, though I was loath to leave so interesting a city; and yet I should be more loath to have an abiding place upon the waters, where I could never see a horse, a coach, a garden, or seldom feel the high importance of having feet. A gondola, agile and useful as it is, is not a horse; and a canal, even when lined with palaces, is not a road over which you can gallop, or a street upon which you can walk. No wells, no fountains—the rain is collected in reservoirs, and from these reservoirs, the people have their water to drink. Water, however, is not upon the Continent so indispensable an article, where wine is cheap, and within the power of almost every man, though the wine of Venice is acid enough to pass for tolerable vinegar—caused, as it is said, by the proximity of the sea. But the old Venetians made up for these wants by having country houses upon the mainland, richly built, and richly ornamented—with gardens adorned with statues of all the Greek and Romans gods, to say nothing of the often-strange intermingling of Egyptian idols and Christian saints. Napoleon, however, when he held Venice, gave the Venetians a garden for a promenade, upon their isles—a magnificent work, like all of his, and one of the most beautiful walks in the world is this garden near the Place St. Mark. The despot robbed them of their government, and basely betrayed them to Austria, when he had occasion to make a peace; but, nevertheless, his mighty mind was working for Venice wonders of good, and if it had been to this day subject to his most captivating power, it would have rapidly advanced, instead of having retrograded. A bridge to connect the city with the mainland was the scheme of Napoleon! Though he robbed them of their famous horses, and of some of the superabundance of their arts, to grace his own hall of the Louvre, yet he left behind a substantial good that amply paid them for all their loss of finery.

I did not see "the blood of our Savior," that the priests treasure up in a vial kept in the church of the Frari. I did not go to the island of Lido to pick up shells on the beach of the Adriatic. I did not see the convent of the Armenian monks on the little island of St. Lazzaro, where scholars

study the eastern languages, and where they keep a printing press for the publication of works in the Armenian language. I did not see the lady who every day feeds the flocks of pigeons that she has taught to come from all Venice to the Place St. Mark, precisely at 12 o'clock. I did not hear the gondoliers chant the strains of Tasso from barque to barque, or house to house. I did not buy Venetian pearls, the pretty works in glass, the pattern gondolas of gold, or a Venetian golden chain, worked by microscopic glasses—buy them here, if you will, but I have made a catalog of them for other travelers, if they choose to see and buy.

The Venetians to this day, I believe, are the best workers in gold; and though the shops do not sparkle with the wealth of bygone centuries, still, when lighted up at night, the jewelers look like princes in fairy homes. Woe to the man, however, who gives them what they ask. Trade and traffic are their rules. One third of the price demanded is often too high: more than one half, a prudent man seldom gives—such is the universal mode of trafficking in the shops. There is no knowing the value of anything by the price demanded for it; and, so far is this kind of management carried in Venice, that it is unsafe even to send a coat to a tailor for him to mend, until you know the extent of the price that he *expects* to demand for his labor. The future traveler will find these hints useful; and, in order to aid him more, I would advise him, as soon as he gets into Italy, to throw off all the false dignity of the overacting gentleman traveler, and to make traveling as it is, a business, a trade, always demanding "the price" beforehand, for all the lodgings that he enters, all the meals he eats—in short, of everything that he touches with an intention to take. Thus, he will be saved numerous quarrels and impositions every turn he makes, and go along easily, happily, and in a prudent manner.

Lodgings for single men in Venice are from 40 to 80 cents a day, depending upon the character of the hotel he visits—breakfast 30 or 40 cents with eggs—dinner 60 or 80 cents in a hotel with a bottle of wine. But a man who travels in Europe, prudently, seldom or never eats in his hotel, as at the restaurants and cafes the expenses are always less, often less by one half. The English *shilling* and a half (34 cents) are the ordinary perquisite for domestics in an English hotel, or a *franc* (19 cents) in France; but in Venice, a *swanzyger* (about 16 cents) will answer the same purpose, as will a *Paul* (10 cents) at Rome, or a *curline*

(8 cents) at Naples, such is the difference in value of money with him to whom the gratuity is given! A young man *can* live in Venice cheaper than he can live in New York or Boston, with a bottle of wine every day in the bargain.

I do not know that I can take a better time than this to speak of the restaurants and *cafes*, so thick all over Italy, the best inventions of the day for an economical and excellent mode of living. The restaurants furnish dinners at so much a dish, the price of which is marked in a written or printed sheet, and at them you can call for whatever dish you like, or as many as you like, according as your appetite prompts, never paying for more than you call for, and thus always measuring your appetite by the extent of your means. You are never obliged in Europe to eat at a hotel. All you contract for there is your lodgings; and hence, the restaurants always have numerous travelers, as well as residents of the town. A *cafe*, as its name imports, is a place for the sale of coffee, or ices it may be, or some other little luxuries, furnished with the journals of the place, and often with the principal journals of Europe; and in them, hundreds of unmarried men make their breakfasts, or spend their evenings, sipping their coffee, debating upon music, or the theater, or whatever else interests their fancies. Admirable contrivances they are for our grog shops and the like, and the consequence is, that though wine is within the reach of almost every man, yet there is not the tenth part of the drunkenness visible here that exists in America or England.

The people are most remarkably temperate, in this respect, a pattern to the world. The coffee takes the place of rum and brandy; but it is not, I must add, such stuff as we call in England or America, though a beverage made of the same material; but, so differently made, with the milk boiled and kept as hot as possible before it is mingled with the coffee, that one would hardly suspect that he had ever sipped the like before. Milk, however, is seldom used in the evening drink, the coffee and loaf sugar being taken alone, with a bit of bread. Tea is seldom seen upon the Continent, and I rather think that it is sold quite exclusively to the English and American travelers and residents.

A diligence (a stagecoach) goes from Venice on to Rome by way of Bologna and Ancona, making the *voyage* in about the same length of

time that a man can travel from Washington to Eastport,<sup>199</sup> though the *distance* itself is not remarkable—how much, I cannot say—for though I make every effort I can, I can gain no answer as to distances in this country, so as to get them into English miles, the leagues and the posts varying so often, that *time* is the only measure you can have. A steamboat also goes over the Adriatic to Trieste, twice or thrice a week. But as Trieste of itself is, I am told, not worth the voyage to see, I made up my mind to turn my route towards Florence and Rome.

I went to the papal consul, and he put the signet of the seal of the keys of the church upon my passport for a couple of Austrian *swanzingers*, without which, or the like sanction, I could not tread upon His Holiness's ground; and, fortified by this, I sent my portmanteau to the office of the customs, where, after an oversetting of every little thing I had—a suspicious scrutinization of my few English and Italian traveling companion books, with the remark that I had *very* many, (six or eight, I think I have!)—I was permitted to go. Why they give such a rigid examination puzzled me much, till I remembered that Venice was a free port, and that, therefore, whatever was dutiable must be paid for on going out. A book is the most *suspicious* thing you can carry into a despotic government, particularly such as the officers of the customs cannot read, for, like the hollow barrel of a gun, it may go off, even if it is not loaded.

Jack Cade<sup>200</sup> and King Power, though in the extremes, often approximate in opinions. Both have a summary mode of executing their own edicts, and both are very suspicious of those arts that men call *reading and writing*. "*Darn it all*," Jack would say, if he was Yankee-born, "*what's the use of this 'ere scrawl?*" The man of the *dogana*—they call the custom house in Italy by this appropriate name, a *dogging* concern it is!—probably had a like opinion, as he puzzled over my English guide book, and saw unintelligible remarks inscribed thereon.

"*Desponsamus te, Mare, in signum veri perpetui[que] dominii*"—"We espouse thee, O Sea, in token of our just and perpetual dominion,"—was the proud ejaculation of the doges of Venice, when they dropped into

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<sup>199</sup> Eastport (Maine) — Easternmost city in the U. S.

<sup>200</sup> Jack Cade — Metaphorical reference to the leader of a popular revolt against the government of England in 1450.

the Adriatic the golden ring, with which the Pope commanded them to espouse the ocean, promising that the bride should ever be obedient and subject to their sway, even as a wife is obedient to her husband! *Perpetual* dominion! Oh, what a haughty boast for the works of humble man! Dominion is ever on its march, and westward is its way. The fate of Adria, once a powerful city, not far from here, now buried deep in the earth, the very gulf on which it stood being seen no more, is the fate of Venice too. The fickle ocean bride has espoused another lord, with a richer dower. Our English fathers have possession now, but there is a sad admonition in the lines of Byron, when he exclaims,

—————"Albion ! in the fall  
Of Venice, think of thine, despite thy watery wall." <sup>201</sup>

Our yacht was ready—we were over-crowded with passengers—and I bade adieu to this proud monument of liberty upon the waters, with a feeling somewhat kindred to that with which a friend parts from the dying bed of another friend. I go from the dying Italy to see the dead. I bid adieu to the still standing monuments of freedom, to pass the Rubicon as a wanderer from a great republic over the sea, into the domain of ancient Rome, to see the prostrate, but more august monuments there. How sad it is to see palace after palace crumbling, as I move along the Grand Canal, with a slow and silent, but fatal ruin! I think of "*the beautiful Baiae*," that the Augustan poets describe, now the marble courts of the fish of the sea, which the traveler rows *over* to look upon! The Emperor of Austria forbids the palaces to be taken down, though they are now ruinous possessions for their owners. What once cost thousands and thousands of Venetian *ducats* can now be bought for half as many *francs*. Their very architecture tells the victories of the city—Greek, Gothic, Turkish, Saracenic and Roman. As our lazy yacht moves along, the foundations seem to sink in the floods. A deluge is upon the city, is the melancholy thought. The drowning inhabitants are flying to their arks. The sunlight of evening now falls upon the distant cupolas and spires. One bright illumination, I fancy, before the hour of burial. Now all is gone. The sea alone is visible. Venice has faded from my eyes, for I am upon the land, upon the banks of the Brenta.

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<sup>201</sup> Byron. *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, Canto V, XVII (adapted)

The *dogana* of Fusina, where we touched the mainland and got into the diligence, gave a renewed examination to the baggage of such of our passengers as had not the magical plumb<sup>202</sup> of the Custom House upon it, so that it was beginning to be dark as about twenty of us started in an oblong diligence, or omnibus,<sup>203</sup> for Padua. A happier collection of men and women I never saw together, if happiness is to be judged of by the *noise* they made; a criterion, by the way, which would make the loudest brawlers the happiest men, and fix the station of contentment in the lungs rather than in the heart. They sang, and clapped their hands, and danced as well as they could in the hall of the omnibus, till I really began to fancy I had joined a moving *menagerie*,<sup>204</sup> and was some kind of a beast or other in the concern. We took our coffee “on board,” while the diligence stopped to change its horses in front of a *cafe*, and the postilions applied for their little gratuity, which they expect at every post.

In such a caravan, in the evening too, I did not see much of the fertile banks of the Brenta, nor of the adjacent villas of the once Venetian nobles, with their “*Palladian façades, green verandas, and parterres of orange trees*,”<sup>205</sup>—but it did not require much observation to see that it was a beautiful and lovely country, favored by heaven in everything but a liberal government, which is perhaps more for the prosperity of a people than soil or climate, or even the fertilizing rains; as, under the impulse of such a government, the soil can be made fertile, as in England, or the *rivers* turned into *rains*, as in aforesaid, under the republics of Lombardy, or even the climate defied, as it has been under the *stadtholders* of Holland—or as each and all are now set at naught in our own New England. The like impulses of freemen that built up such a fairy city upon the waters of Venice, care but little for the rocks, or the barrens, or the fogs, or the snows, or the more important rays of that great luminary upon which all vegetation depends. Give the freeman but a foothold, if it be but on a barren rock of the ocean, and he will draw

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<sup>202</sup> Plumb — (Presumably) A mark or marker indicating that the customs-house inspection had been performed.

<sup>203</sup> Omnibus — vehicle designed to carry a large number of passengers (first known use of word, 1829)

<sup>204</sup> Menagerie — Collection of wild or foreign animals kept especially for exhibition, after the manner of a travelling circus

<sup>205</sup> Lady Morgan (Sydney). *Italy* 2:403

wealth and comforts all around him; for, when the land will not support him, he can go upon the deep, either finding treasures in its bosom, or wafting them from other climes, and thus making the world his tributary.

Between nine and ten of *our* clock, and three or four of the Italian mode of computation, for the Italians *begin* with their *Ave Maria*<sup>206</sup> of the evening, which is at sunset. and thus, varies every day, our heavy vehicle was rumbling through the gates of Padua, where stood the Austrian sentinel, watching all who enter. The once strange sight of seeing every city walled is strange no longer, and I pass through the ponderous gates now without dreaming of prisons, or chivalric romances. I cannot say, however, that there is no sensation when passing them at night, when the vehicle is arrested, when our passports are demanded, when we pass the drawbridge amid the clanking of its chains, when the huge mass of iron and wood turns creaking upon its heavy hinges to let us in, and we go groaning through the narrow portal by the single light of the watchman's lodge.

I thank kind heaven, that we have no need in our happy land of girding ourselves around with ditches filled with water, here and there passed by a bridge, to enter through some narrow crevice of brick and stone, and mortar, which human industry has piled up as a defense against man like himself: and as I think of this, and find myself vexed at every stop by my passport troubles, I love the more my own land, and that of my fathers too, blessed England, with all her faults! where no such walls are seen, and where no such checks are necessary. I am the more convinced that there is something in the race, a spirit in the blood, that circumstances, however it may modify, can never degrade from its proud superiority. The *soul* is always in the English body, no matter what or where may be its tenement.



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<sup>206</sup> *Ave Maria* — (Translation) *Hail Mary*; the central part of the Angelus prayer, recited three time daily in Roman Catholic observance.

## 62. Things in Padua

Padua,  
September 29, 1835.

The chief interest that I felt in Padua was, that I was entering into the birthplace, and the death-place too, of the immortal Livy,<sup>207</sup> who, even in the fragments that are left of his noble history, ever appears with such glorious beauty, the only historian of ancient Rome whom we identify with the old times of the king and republic, so that its fame seems to be as much indebted to his pen as he was indebted to its greatness, virtue and power for his subject. The Paduans show the monument to this day, in which they say was deposited in 1413, the leaden coffin that *held* his remains, which leaden coffin *then* found under the convent of the Benedictines of St Justinian, they concluded to be his, *because* he was a priest of Concord, and furthermore *because* the convent aforesaid is built upon the ruins of a temple once dedicated to that divinity! The force of the logic I did not feel, though the Paduans of that age undoubtedly did in 1413; for what little was then left of the dust of the supposed Livy, was then put in another coffin, that they adorned with branches of laurel, and carried in triumph to the temple of Saint Justinian, thus *Christianising* the *heathen* priest, and doing their best to give him a helping hand into the Christian heaven.

My incredulity, perhaps, was strengthened by the previous discovery that the Paduans had made in 1274 of the tomb of Antenor,<sup>208</sup> who, in the Trojan war, about 1,180 years before Christ, fleeing from the desolation of his burning city, landed upon the shores of the Adriatic, and founded Padua. Virgil beautifully alludes to this in the opening book of the Aeneid, when he introduces Venus suffused in tears, imploring the father of the gods, and men, in behalf of Aeneas,<sup>209</sup> her son, contrasting his hard doom with that of Antenor, who, although a fugitive like himself, yet once again was at peace, having already founded the city of Antenorea, now Padua, here settling his Trojan warriors and

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<sup>207</sup> Titus Livius (Livy) (c.59 B.C.-17 A.D.) — Roman historian

<sup>208</sup> Antenor — In Greek mythology, resident of Troy, named by Homer in the *Iliad*

<sup>209</sup> Aeneas — In Greek and Roman mythology, mentioned in Homer's *Iliad*

companions. Some bones, a sword, and many medals of gold and silver shut up within a coffin of cypress, which was enclosed within another of lead, were found in 1274, in digging the foundations of what is now a hospital. Without much logic, or even any to aid them, but their desire to find the founder of their city, they fixed upon them as the mortal spoils of Antenor; they put them in an old tomb near a church, and, to this day, this is called the Tomb of Antenor. "*Credat Judaeus Appella, non ego*,"<sup>210</sup> that bones will stand the rusting of 2,500 years, when even the mausoleum of the Augustuses<sup>211</sup> in Rome is but a pig pen, or a little better!

If Constantine Palaeologus<sup>212</sup> used a strong metaphor when he declared that Padua was built upon a plain that realized the image of a terrestrial paradise, it is no strong metaphor in our day. The hills that environ this magnificent plain laugh with cultivation. The plain itself has been well cultivated ever since the days of the Romans. Every field teems with life and plenty. The older the soil, the richer seems to be its productions; not, as with us, when we talk of land being *worn out*, even as the prairies of Alabama are *worn out* with even a three years' cotton cultivation, because the squatter has girdled his trees, not having time to fell them, gathered his crop, and fled to find an alluvial bottom, of which there is no end! Strabo<sup>213</sup> speaks of the fertility of the environs of Padua, and of its manufactures too, even in his day. Droll is it not, then, to hear of the New England farmer emigrating from *worn out* land of an age of fifty years! Antiquity with us has other definitions than those of Italy.

To work I went, to see churches and palaces and town, Sunday though it was, for I have not seen an English, which is an American Sunday too, since I left London. In Geneva, the Protestants attempt to better the Sunday of the Catholics, but a Genevan is far from an English Sunday. To go to church, and to be happy after service is over, is the Sunday of the Catholics. To go to church, and be as miserable as possible afterwards, is

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<sup>210</sup> *Credat Judaeus Appella, non ego* — (free translation) *Only the credulous believe it — not I*

<sup>211</sup> Mausoleum of Augustus — Large tomb built in Rome in 28 B.C. by Roman emperor Augustus (63 B.C.-14 A.D.)

<sup>212</sup> Constantine Palaeologus (1405-1453) — Last reigning Byzantine emperor; his death marked the end of the (Eastern) Roman Empire

<sup>213</sup> Strabo (c.64 B.C.-c.24 A.D.) — Greek geographer

ours. Which is the best, is not for me to say; and if I were to say, they would not tolerate an opinion on such a subject in our *free* country, where they *lynch* a man, as I see by the *Journal of Italy*, who gambles, or who is not so popular as he ought to be among the men who arbitrate upon his life! They have a market in Padua on Sunday morning, and they go to church after marketing is over. I don't exactly like this, though people will be hungry on this, as on other days. The rascally appetite acknowledges no holy day. But the beauty of an Old and a New England Sunday is, that it is with all a day of rest. Starvation on that day, when it is unlawful to cook, (in many places,) has made me think the less of it many a time. The feast of a Thanksgiving is the reason why all hail it as a glorious day, and if with us, as in England, the Sunday was the day for a better dinner, perhaps it would be better kept. Mankind do not love what is tristful,<sup>214</sup> and melancholy never helps their morals. The French dance on the green of a Sunday evening. The English sneak into gin shops and get drunk. Many an American buys an extra bottle of rum on Saturday night to swill down at home on Sunday. The Italians and the French have their frolics out of doors in the open air.

But I have been trifling on a serious subject, and I am sorry, though I cannot afford to scratch it all out. Both the Protestant and the Catholic Sundays have their serious faults, and these faults are in the extremes of both. Ours is the best for a government, the safest for a rigid moral community, ensuring the sturdiest and firmest population. The Catholic is the happiest, is less likely to lead to crime, and probably the honestest too. I will then finish this topic with the remark that, in whatever part of the world you go, wherever you find the religious influence the purest and the strongest, there you feel the greatest security for life and property, and there you will feel the most confidence in the character of the inhabitants. There are countries which Catholic bigotry transforms into a pandemonium, and there are others where the priests are among the most enlightened and pious of mankind. Even with us, a deacon may be a devil, and thus, you see, it is not the name nor the profession that makes a religion. To judge of a country as it is, apart from prejudice, as much as he can, never measuring the customs by those of his own education, is the duty of an American traveler—ever remembering that we are Protestants *because* we were born in a Protestant land, and that

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<sup>214</sup> Tristful — sad; melancholy

if France or Italy had given us birth, we should have been Catholics for a similar reason—or infidels, if our eyes had first opened on the banks of the Bosphorus, with the banner of Muhammad<sup>215</sup> for our cross!<sup>216</sup> I well remember the disgust I felt—it was in New Orleans—when I for the first time saw some Catholic priests interring a dead Catholic with all the showy ceremonies of their church, uttering what I called mummary over him, and sprinkling him well with ointments or incense that made a far from agreeable smell. But, when I saw, in another church, a hundred people eating bits of bread and sipping mouthfuls of wine, calling the first the body of our Savior and the second his blood—abstractly considered, I saw as much reason in one ceremony as in the other. Both are excellent so far as they impress a community with religious sentiments. Whatever religion does that, does the state a wondrous service. And when the traveler teaches himself to judge religious customs by that rule, he is stripping himself—the most difficult of all things—from the prejudices in which he has been educated.

I put myself into the church of St. Anthony of Padua, on this Sunday of which I speak, during the celebration of high mass. Not seeing any particular sense in this with my Protestant eyes, (a Catholic would probably say the same of the hymns and psalms chanted in our churches, the meaning of which, when sung, no man can comprehend,) I began to look at the pictures, the statues, the bas-reliefs, and the highly decorated altars. Never imagine, I beseech you, that the least disturbance is created here in a church, because during the service you choose to promenade where you please, if you will only leave the priests at the altars alone untouched. None of the old women even looked up or stopped the fingering of their beads. I would walk by crowds of them on their knees in the broad area of the church, and walk unheeded enough, unless I threatened with my eyes upward gazing at the pictures, to forget what was below, and thus to stumble over it. A cicerone<sup>217</sup> of the place often surprises you at first by the prominent places he chooses to give you, during the ceremonies of the church; but, after a while, you learn that you are not such an attracting person as you fancy yourself to be, and that you may walk where you please, provided you will run in

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<sup>215</sup> Muhammad (570-632) — Prophet and founder of Islam

<sup>216</sup> "our cross" — the symbol by which one identifies one's religion

<sup>217</sup> Cicerone — One who guides visitors

nobody's way. The chapel of St. Anthony<sup>218</sup> itself interested me much, for Anthony is no common saint, but a god in the calendar, they tell me. The French plundered this rich chapel well, when they had possession of Italy, but as they did not steal the tomb of the saint, which is its greatest treasure, the faithful will not much complain. Of the silver service, the lamps and candlesticks, they could make money, and these they took, but the marble of the tomb was worth nothing to them, though it did, as it is said, distil sweet perfumes from the carcass of the saint. You see then, as I have written you, St. Anthony is no common saint, and if you don't believe me now, watch on the 13th of June every year, and see if on this, the Saint's day, a fly, or an insect ever bites or torments, or even touches a horse, a cow, or a dog, or any other animal; for, if his history is correctly written, animals are sacred on that day, made so by his protectorship.

I wandered from this church—Il Santo, the saint, is its name—to see the cathedral which was over six hundred years in building; not continuing, to be sure, but inches by inches, time after time, from its commencement in 1123 to its completion in 1754! There is some hope you see then, of every foundation, even of the Bunker Hill monument, say. But the church lost all its beauty in the progress of its slow growth, it grew old in growing young, and it now looks like a bride of eighty, with a little rouge in her face, and a modest blush the evening of her marriage. A *Virgin* of Giotto, the restorer of painting to Europe, is here, valuable not only from its age, and the instruction it gives you as to the beginning of the revival of the art, but valuable also as a present from Petrarch, who regarded it as a *chef d'oeuvre* in his day (1360.) The portrait of Petrarch is to be seen here also. The poet left to this cathedral, of which he was a canon, a part of his library.

But churches did not interest me much, as I had just come from Venice, where they are richer and more splendid than they are here. St. Giustina, however, is worth going to see, for the architecture is after the design of Palladio, and in it there is a pavement of richly variegated marbles, and a beautiful series of carvings in wood of subjects from the New Testament, being the work of a monk who was occupied about it for twenty-five years! After this, I visited some of the palaces, into

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<sup>218</sup> Saint Anthony of Padua (1195-1231) — Portuguese Franciscan priest

almost all of which, in Italy, you can enter by giving some ten, twenty or thirty cents to the domestic who opens the door. The Palazzo della Giustizia—the palace of justice, has a Salone or great hall, 300 French feet in length, was the exchange of the Paduan merchants of the Middle Ages, the bazaar for the people who came there from all quarters to make their purchases. Long as it is, and 100 feet wide, the massy walls alone unpropped, have sustained it for six centuries, and are still illustrated by the frescoes of Giotto, representing the signs of the zodiac, the constellations, the planets, the months, the *saisons* and the twelve apostles. The monument of Titus Livy is here, of which I have spoken of before. The most curious lion in all the palaces, however, is in a private one, and this is a lion in sculpture of the angel Gabriel hurling the devils from Heaven. Sixty-six figures are cut in one block of Carrara marble, about six feet high; and the artist has perfectly preserved the unity of the whole by not having in a single instance literally severed or divided the marble between any two figures!

The University of Padua is, however, that which is most celebrated in the city. It is one of the most ancient in Italy, and was in existence as long ago as 1223. To it young men even resorted from all parts of the world, but its fame is eclipsed now by other universities more brilliant. The appendages of this university give an American an idea of what is thought worthy of bearing such a name this side of the water. The anatomical theater abounds in skeletons, and all other things artificial and natural, which can serve for demonstrations. There is a hall for experimental physics, where are collected machines of very many kinds. There is a cabinet of natural history also, with a fine collection of fossils, fishes, and the like. There is there a botanic garden, also full of all sorts of foreign trees and shrubs, enriched with fountains, which water and embellish it, and decorated by a balustrade which runs around, and which supports at intervals the busts of distinguished men who have made a particular study of plants and their properties, so that it is one of the most agreeable promenades of Italy.

There is at Padua a magnificent *Cafe*, which is about as fine a building as the White House in Washington. This is the largest *cafe* in Europe, it is said. I spent a portion of an evening there among a class of persons whom I should judge to be of the best society in the city. Ladies are as

prominent as the men, chatting in their different coteries,<sup>219</sup> at the different marble tables, sipping their coffee, or their ices, or eating bits of cake. The fashion of the city seemed to make this their grand evening resort. At eleven o'clock at night, they had not much dispersed, but seemed happily seated for an hour more.

The very best hotel of Padua is the "*Stella d'Oro*," the Star of Gold. A canal boat goes from thence to Venice every morning. The expenses of living are a little cheaper than in Venice. Vetturinos here will take you when you please to go on your way into Italy.



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<sup>219</sup> Coterie — (per Webster) An intimate and often exclusive group of persons with a unifying common interest or purpose

## 63. A little of everything

On the banks of the Po,  
September 30, 1835.

Horror of horrors! Misery, misery, thrice-doubled misery! What exquisite pleasure there is in traveling! Here I am, quarantined, in one of the most miserable places on the earth. I cannot get enough to eat, and what I do get is so dirty that I can't eat it. I cannot sleep o' nights, and the beds and sheets are so filthy, that if I could, the fleas would not let me. I am bitten all over from head to foot. All night I am engaged in fighting these invisible imps of Satan, and all day, I am inspecting the wounds they make. The mosquitoes of the Mississippi, the sand-flies of Alabama, are well-bred gentlemen in comparison with these rascals here, who people the nooks and corners of every part of your dress. Oh, Italy, sweet, beautiful Italy, the land of poets and painters and sculptors! Oh, how I abhor the very sound of your name! My enthusiasm is all thrown overboard. I had rather be in the hut of a Creek Indian. Ovid and Lucan,<sup>220</sup> ye lying poets, why have ye sung thus falsely of this dirty, muddy Po! A classic stream this! this vile river, too dirty, even for the fish! Even Virgil has sung of the Po, and Claudius [Ptolemy],<sup>221</sup> and Pliny<sup>222</sup> have written upon it, so that its name is in the mouth of every classic scholar from John O'Groat's house in Scotland to the tip end of Cape Horn in America, while they know nothing of those prettier but harder-named rivers, the Androscoggin and the Mattawamkeag of Maine, or the Coosa and Tallapoosa of Alabama. Poetry is—poetry, all the world over. Poets wear spectacles richly colored, and see things in other lights than others of us do, else, why have they made this muddy-yellow Po, the *golden* Po?

I see, over this dirty Po, some Christian habitations. There are there, I am told, good hotels. The people seem as if they were civilized. The town is tempting and pretty. But alas, I cannot even enter into this land

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<sup>220</sup> Lucan (39-65) — Successful Roman poet

<sup>221</sup> Claudius Ptolemy (100-170) — Greek writer, astronomer and geographer, lived in Alexandria

<sup>222</sup> Pliny the Elder (23-79) — Roman nobleman, scientist and historian

of promise. If I were to attempt it, they would shoot me with as little ceremony as they would shoot a dog. The land of promise is in my eyes, but I am but a Tantalus, grasping for what I cannot get. The Po is the boundary here of the Austrian and Papal dominions, and into the last I am again forbidden to enter till I have passed a four days' quarantine in this horrible place. I cannot write more than a line at a time without stopping, for a reason that I cannot tell. The fleas, the fleas, the horrible fleas! I rush in desperation among the boatmen on the banks of the Po, to speak a little Italian with them. But a cloud of fleas are ever surrounding them. I walk over the sands to seek a shade on the banks of the river, but everywhere follow the invisible fleas. The days have no end. The nights an eternity. I go to bed at seven and wake up at two. Time is a burden, a misery; and what a false notion it is, that the loss of an hour is the loss of so much of our existence, when that hour is to be in an existence tormented as ours is. Oh, the fleas! I am devoured by the fleas! Happy American is he who has no curiosity to see the *glories* of Italy; for, whether the mosquitoes suck his blood upon the coasts of the lower Mississippi, or he congeals upon the banks of the St. John,<sup>223</sup> he is happier than he would be here in the month of September, quarantined in a village not even worth a name—Santa Maria Maddalena, though, they call it—and doubtful, very doubtful, whether it is possible for him to enter further into Italy, as the cholera is raging in parts of Tuscany, and the pope and his cardinals are quarantining in the most rigid manner on every side. That such an American at home may be happier wherever he is, I have given him a sentence or two upon the *pleasures* of traveling. Never, never travel for pleasure. There is no happiness like that one enjoys in his own chimney corner, whether it be on the ottoman of the luxuriant parlor, or the dye-pot of a New England kitchen.

I left Padua at noon in a vetturino with my traveling companion for Ferrara, a good day's journey. I think we gave him twenty *zwanzingers*, (about \$3.50) to take us there in *one half* of his vetturino, a dinner and breakfast and lodging included, which you can see makes traveling cheap enough here, inasmuch as the dinner, breakfast and lodging would of themselves cost us that. The vetturinos find all if you choose, and as the provision does not cost them one fourth the sum it costs a

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<sup>223</sup> The Saint John River is located in New Brunswick province, Canada

stranger, it is always better to bargain thus. *One half* of the vetturino, our driver inserted in his written agreement, but we had a most interesting quarrel, with gestures and vocal thunder enough to shake an American house down, upon what constituted the half of the vetturino. My friend and myself divided it so as to take the two backseats to ourselves, where we were comfortably seated when he thrust another traveler, an Italian, upon us, and began to demonstrate that one half of a vetturino was a vetturino divided lengthwise, so as to give us one fore and one back seat. I must confess his logic was irresistible. He had the right of the argument, though, of course, we argued with all the power of a newly acquired Italian tongue, that a lateral division was as just as the longitudinal division that he wished to make. He, however, had inserted in the written agreement this *one half* in order to deceive us, and as we had the money as yet in our own hands, and him therefore in our power, we came to the resolution to do as we pleased. A storm of wrath then burst from him, and our only reply was one of our loudest laughs. There was not an Italian oath that he did not sound, from the humblest of the Saints up to the very *Sangue di Gesu Cristo* (the blood of Jesus Christ) the horrible apex of an Italian oath. But as the climax did not move us, he changed his tone in an instant into the most musical invocations to our hearts, which, having somewhat more of an effect, we told the Italian traveler to enter, and we would do what was right, when, after making him go through the form of seating on the forward seat, we cheerfully exchanged. Such lessons as these are necessary for such men. There is no peace with them unless you insist upon having all things as you choose, whether you are right or wrong—and, above all, be indifferent to their threats, for they are the greatest cowards in the universe. We fared a hundred percent better during the day in consequence of our morning fight.

Our road to Ferrara was along the rich plain of which I have spoken in a former letter. On our right was the Euganean hills, beautiful retreats, beautifully cultivated from the heart of the neighboring plain. The whole of this broad plain, and the wide extent of the hills, we saw from the summit of Monselice, the Mons Silices of the Latins. I did not remember, till evening, when I found in a hotel at Rovigo an Englishman reading the pilgrimage of Byron's *Childe Harold*, that the tomb of Petrarch,

*Laura's*<sup>224</sup> lover, was in the bosom of these hills, not very far from the road which I had been traveling. Arqua [Petrarca] was the country seat of Petrarch, and Padua, perhaps, may be called his home. He died at Arqua, and the chair in which he died, our new acquaintance told us, is among the relics of the day. Byron, whose *Childe Harold*—in poetry though it is—is, after all, one of the best books of travel for the present day, says of this,

"They keep his dust in Arqua where he died,  
The mountain village where his latter days  
Went down the vale of years: and 'tis their pride—  
An honest pride, and let it be their praise  
To offer to the passing stranger's gaze  
His mansion and his sepulcher: both plain  
And venerably simple, such as raise  
A feeling more accordant with his strain  
Than if a pyramid had formed his monumental fane."

Among the many things which the traveler will mark upon this road, (near Monselice, say,) perhaps the beauty of the women will most strike his attention, particularly if he sees them when neatly dressed in the costume of the country, a simple white veil thrown over their heads, and falling upon their necks. Even the common peasantry were among the most beautiful women my eyes ever beheld in any land. Finer, no, even that is difficult—finer figures I was going to say, might be seen in some saloons where art had been touching beauty to poetize her charms, but such expressions of the countenance, such beauty, thus most adorned when unadorned at all, is almost impossible to find in any other clime. No wonder, then, that Raphael has painted such divine *Madonnas*, if to the simple nature of such models as these before his eyes, he could add the beautiful fancies of his own lofty genius. No wonder, too, that Titian and others painted so beautifully, when thus inspired by some of the finest works of nature, or that such statues are found in Italy, where ideal beauty could find an embodiment of its high conceptions, even of the Venuses of the gods, among the simple peasantry of the Euganean hills.

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<sup>224</sup> "Laura" was the object of Petrarch's unrequited love, who inspired a large collection of his poems.

"With eyes so pure, that from their ray  
Dark vice would turn abashed away:

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Yet filled with all youth's sweet desires,  
Mingling the meek and vestal fires  
Of other worlds, with all the bliss,  
The fond, weak tenderness of this!"<sup>225</sup>

We passed the night at Rovigo, having passed the Adige river in a *pont volant*, or flying bridge, somewhat like those I described on the Rhine,<sup>226</sup> and which I then said, it seemed to me, would answer an excellent purpose in many parts of our country, where the current of the river is strong, and a bridge cannot be well built. From Rovigo, we set off in our vetturino long before day, and soon, after taking a breakfast at one of the numerous cafes upon the road, we found ourselves upon the Po, the far-famed river Po, here the boundary of the Austrian dominions in Italy, and of the Papal States of the North. Our passports were examined by the Austrian police, and we were permitted to pass over the river. When we arrived there, we were met by the *gens d'armes* of the pope, and escorted to the custom house on the banks of the river, with as much formality as so many prisoners would be led to the gallows. Our baggage was given a most scrutinizing examination. The few letters of introduction I had taken with me were felt over and over again, for being written in French, the *dogana* of the Italian custom house was but a precious little wiser for their contents, not one of them speaking or even reading French. The English books again excited suspicion. What treason might be lurking in such mischievous letters, they could not for the life of them tell.

During the over-scrutinizing prying that these dogana-men were making into the more ponderous luggage of my companion, upsetting everything as they did, and turning and twisting what he had in every manner, he became excited and angry with the impertinence, and, with his hands in his pockets, and his hat on his head, commenced a-whistling of *Yankee Doodle*, so as to pay impudence with impudence as much as was in his power. As for my own self, I stood with my hat under

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<sup>225</sup> Verses from *Lalla Rookh*, by Thomas Moore, 1817

<sup>226</sup> Flying bridge — See Letter 37

my arm, before this august personage, who seemed, in fact, overwhelmed by the dignities of his high office, that is, the duty of thrusting his fingers into dirty linen: and when it was necessary to bow, I bowed with all the grace I could summon, and even an Italian actress could not have said "yes, sir," "*si signore*," to his numerous questions, with a more amiable, or affable tone, though I could with a good heart have pitched him into his muddy Po. But the more he upset the things in my companion's wardrobe, the louder he whistled *Yankee Doodle*, and the louder he whistled the more he upset the things. Evidently *Yankee Doodle* was winning the day, for after everything was topsy-turvy, *Yankee Doodle* had nothing to lose and everything to gain. The man of the *dogana* commenced a terrible sputtering in Italian. My companion, who is a good French scholar, requested him to speak in French. "*I don't speak French, I speak Italian only—io* (with an emphasis) *io non parlo il Francese. Io parlo il Italiano solamente*"—sputtering louder than ever, and shaking his head in a whirlwind of wrath.

At last, with an ear but badly trained to the ever-changing pronunciation of the Italian in different parts of Italy, I discerned that he was lecturing my companion about his hat and his music, thus impudently displayed before the vicegerent<sup>227</sup> of God's vicegerent on earth, or, in other words, the man who fingers the dirty linen for the papal custom house. A truce was concluded by my intervention. My companion consented to take off his hat, after remarking that the man of the *dogana* had not started his. The music was lowered, and finally stopped when the baggage was done with.

I said to my companion, "*we have got to suffer for this.*" An Italian always punishes, if he can with impunity. In but a few minutes, I saw that my foreboding was right. The offended dignitary had had influence enough to procure an order to march us back over the Po, there to rest for four days in the vile village of which I have spoken, under the pretense that we had not fulfilled the quarantine in the states of Lombardy! He scrawled our passports all over with the orders prescribed, and thus prevented us from trying at some other pass. My companion sat down on his trunk, and whistling *Yankee Doodle* again, swore he would not go. He proposed to take the village, and the man of the *dogana* as a

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<sup>227</sup> Vicegerent — An administrative deputy

prisoner, and march with him on to Rome, to know if he had been doing right. The *gens d'armes*, however, and a soldier or two, gathered around us, and rapidly quickened our movements. They showed us the way civilly over their muddy Po. I felt the strong arm of power, and saw there was no resisting or dodging it, and that, therefore, submission with a good grace was the better part of valor. We hired then an Italian go-cart, with a horse that had the breath of life in him, but none to spare—with no flesh on his bones, and no hair on his hide, and with him training the go-cart, we came to this Santa Maria Maddalena, and halted at this inn, or *albergo*, the populousness of which in fleas I have already described. *Moral*. Never whistle or keep your hat on in a police office on the Continent.

Our difficulties did not end here. A foreigner is not permitted in Austro-Italia, without the permission of the police: and, in order to obtain this permission, we were sent further up the Po, some five or six miles to the police office of Occhiobello—I think it is—the head man of which reprinted on our passports again the Austrian seal, with the leave to reside four days within the precincts of his boundary. Thus fortified—and pleased even with the courtesy of this latter officer of the police, who had taken pity on the condition of two foreigners thus immured in the prison of a quarantine—we returned to our companions the fleas, to live on macaroni and soup, bread, grapes and wine, and to count the minutes of every hour of the long four days. I went to work studying my Italian with the more vigor in the vineyards, and under the shade of the trees on the Po. I write when their majesties the fleas have the condescension to permit, which is only at intervals when their appetites are glutted.

Feeling the want of words bitterly, as I have for the three months past, but above all, now at the present moment, to express ideas, and of a knowledge of them when expressed by others too, I must take this opportunity to make some remarks which may be useful to others. I can read, and have been able for some time to read Italian very well; but, when I entered Italy, this profited me little or nothing. The pronunciation was far other than that to which my ear had been accustomed. The same I may say of the French, and yet all the French I

had ever learned, was not worth a *groat*,<sup>228</sup> when I was forced to make a practical use of it. I find, even now, the French of an Englishman, a German, or an Italian, is almost as easy to be understood as my own language, *because*, generally speaking, they have not the quick clipping accent of the French themselves; but, to this day, a Frenchman, when speaking his native tongue, speaks a language that only with pain I can apprehend.

The inference I draw from this is, that a language taught by any other than a native of the country where it is spoken, is not, to be sure, a waste of time, but time misappropriated, when a native instructor can be procured. The colleges of the United States ought then to make every effort to procure teachers from the very country the language of which they wish to teach. To pay others for such a purpose is a misuse of funds. Unless their professors imbibe the language they teach from their infancy, even with their mothers' milk, they cannot exchange the accent of their native tongue, unless miraculously blessed with happy organs, for the accent of any other. It is so easy then, with a little effort, to procure foreign instructors, that they ought always to be procured by all the seminaries of learning. Many a young German would come to the United States for 500 dollars a year, or even less. I have heard them say so often. An Italian would hardly think of pushing a demand as high as that. Frenchmen, hundreds of them in Paris, would come over for a little remuneration, with a sufficiency of leisure time for other pursuits. Perhaps, for such low salaries, a man could not be kept long, though a German would consider himself amply compensated in having his expenses paid, and a knowledge of the English language added to his treasures. The eyes of all the young men of the world, except the sons of noble families, who have a father's title and a father's gold as their bequest, are fixed upon America. They look upon it as a land of promise, rich in stores for them, and their great hesitation in making a movement there is ignorance of the language, and want of friends and encouragement, which will teach them how to begin to live. These are the men to teach us and our children the languages they speak themselves.

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<sup>228</sup> Groat — An old English silver coin, worth four pence

This bitter want of words, and of comprehension above all, which I have so keenly felt ever since I have been on the Continent, has forcibly warped my former opinions from what they were, as to classic studies. A child, as I was in Germany, deaf as the dead—with my ears but half opened when French is spoken, and but half opened here, I feel no keen necessity for Greek and Latin, but every day makes me mourn that I cannot fluently speak German, French and Italian—languages not of the dead, but of the moving, the breathing, the talking spirits of the present day. Yet, I will not undervalue classic learning. I should have but a stupid pleasure in traveling in a land so classic as this, if a Latin classic had never been in my hand. Every picture gallery I enter, almost every statue I see, every noble specimen of architecture, makes the classics necessary. Even the Italian language itself is but a trifle to acquire when one is ready with his classic Latin. The Latin too will find you some conversable companions in every nook and corner of the earth. This very day, I have found a Roman priest speaking it fluently, who knew nothing else but his native tongue. And then it is the basis, not only of our own, but of most of the civilized languages of the world—and without it one cannot understand much either of the sciences or of the literature of mankind. The good of it, however, is an invisible good, compared with the immediate and pressing necessity we often feel of understanding and speaking a foreign language.

French is necessary as the current coin of the polite and the business world, to say nothing of its literature. Without a knowledge of it, it is difficult, painful even, to travel in Europe. The deaf and the dumb can hear as well, and speak as well on the Continent as the man who knows only the English language. Added to the necessity then, there is an absolute dishonor in not speaking it. Ignorance of it is a mark of a vulgar education here. To know French is no honor, as to spell correctly is no credit; but not to know, is the reverse, as is bad orthography or bad English. The German, too, has now become almost indispensably necessary, from the millions of men whose native tongue it is, and from the rich literature which it now has. Italian, it is pleasant to know, and the acquisition of it is easy, not to be compared in difficulty with the French—pleasant I say, for it is the language of the civilization of the Middle Ages, the tongue of Dante, Petrarch, Ariosto, Tasso, Alfieri of the

poets, and of Machiavelli<sup>229</sup> and the like among the writers of its prose—and what is as much, it is the chosen tongue of the music and the arts of the present day.

But, besides all these, even before the last, if not the two last, our situation on the globe renders another tongue necessary to us, which is but partially necessary to the young men of England and Germany. Cuba is an island intimately connected with our trade, and Spanish is the language of its inhabitants. Mexico is Spanish, and Mexico is on our borders. Indeed, immense portions of the American world, with the exception of the spot that we and the Indians inhabit, speak the Spanish tongue. Our young men who look for political rewards in embassies in such lands, should know the Spanish tongue. Every day those states are growing more important to our trade; and every day a necessity for knowing their language is enforced. Fortunate then it is, that the stumbling blocks for the acquisition and pronunciation of that language are but few in comparison with those that are presented to learning and pronouncing French or German, or many other tongues.

I often stagger with affright in witnessing, as I do every day in Europe, the almost imperious necessity of acquisitions which it seems beyond the bounds of human life to attain. Happy Cicero, who deemed a knowledge of the Greek enough in the study of languages! Happy Romans, who knew only one people that could instruct them in language, in science, and in arts! The English language has been made the language of millions by the colonial enterprise of England in the three great quarters of the world. To say nothing of that overshadowing empire, the seeds of which she planted in our land, she is rearing yet others in the Indies, and in New Holland<sup>230</sup> too, that in their day may be as mighty as ours. But how powerless is that man—how limited his range of acquisition—how feeble here where I am, or elsewhere upon the Continent of Europe—who knows only even this wide-spread English! He is but a child, an infant, ashamed of himself—a grown-up boy at school, learning to read in the classes of suckling babes! The very children give me lessons here. I study with them upon the grass. The poorest waterman on yonder Po can be my teacher in a thousand things.

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<sup>229</sup> Niccolò Machiavelli (1479-1527) — Italian historian and politician

<sup>230</sup> New Holland — early name for Australia

I court his company for the instruction he imparts. I spend an evening in an Italian revel to catch the sounds which even the gamblers at cards are uttering. If such reflections or confessions, as these on the banks of the Po, can stimulate one young mind in the pursuit of knowledge, or better direct a single parent in the education of his child, then I have not been quarantined—because my companion whistled—in vain.



## 64. Ferrara to Bologna

Bologna,  
October 2, 1835.

"Bologna sausages" were the embodiment of my idea of Bologna, before I looked into its streets and its history; but, as I do not find all the people living on sausages, as I expected, I am again led to amuse myself with the reflection of—how different almost always is the *reality* of a city or a place from the *fantasy* I have previously formed of it, from imperfect reading or imperfect observation! For example, in Dublin, I expected to find Irishmen and Irishwomen such as we see them in America; but the men were amongst the most accomplished of the men of the British empire, and the women among the fairest and most beautiful. They did not at all resemble the American hordes by which I had judged the Irish people. Again, I do not know how it is, or from what prejudice I have hitherto located the chief talents of a Frenchman in his legs, and in his capacity for curling the hair, (making the nation one of dancers and barbers—considering all other, of which there are so many cases, as exceptions from the general rule) when the truth turns out to be, that barbers are not half so numerous in France as in America, and dancing masters not more common in proportion to the population. But Bologna has much more in it than its sausages, and of that more I will speak anon, as I regularly bring up my journal from the banks of the muddy Po.

I got over the Po at last, but the *fleas* followed me, confound them, and they thicken the further you advance into Italy, this season of the year. The keys of St. Peter were put upon my passport at last. The men of the *dogana* let me part in peace. My ill luck is forgotten, and now I am in motion, I am in better humor; though the cholera has shut me out from Florence and from Tuscany for the present, and driven me, I am sure I cannot tell where, but all along the shores of the Adriatic, far down by the base of Apennines. No matter where I go, however, if there is no stop put to the going, for the cholera is sufferable, but an Italian quarantine is the most afflicting of all inventions. I got over the Po then, as I have said, and a little ride of three or four miles brought me to Ferrara. Even here, stood as sentinels at the gates, the white-coated troops of Austria—

here, even in the dominions of the church! The Po, I thought, was the boundary of the mighty Austrian empire, the court on the Danube<sup>231</sup> I fancied would be content with the line of the Po; but Austrian eagles have crossed even that, and hold the garrison of Ferrara. I demanded of a Roman priest, with whom I was riding, what that meant, but the only answer he gave me was a wise look and a French shrug of the shoulders, conveying the hint that he had nothing to do with the *bodies* of men, their *souls* being his only concern.

I entered the gate of Ferrara, but I found the city to be mighty only in its dissolution. Fields are within the far-extended walls. The very grass was growing in the streets. There seemed to be a city in the distance, but it was far from being the city, the home of Ariosto that he so apostrophizes, and eulogizes, and vaunts of as the boast of all Italia. But Ferrara had an interest for me more absorbing than that of an appetite [for] beauty. It is one of those places that genius has made historical. Even the present sadness of its streets comports with its story. The city where was the dungeon of Tasso—could it flourish? The castle where the tyrant Alfonso<sup>232</sup> dwelt—could it be else than sad and gloomy? The place where the wild fancies of an Ariosto had their birth—should it look like the land of the living, and be sprightly and gay?

As in prose, *Robinson Crusoe* is commonly the first book that is given to a boy to teach him to love to read, so Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* is often given for a like reason, to teach him a love for poetry or rhythm. I had my lesson in my day—and as the curious inventions of both make an impression upon all young minds, amounting to a belief, so did I religiously believe the truth of what I read in the *Orlando*, and, even to this day, I cannot quite forget that it is fiction. But, after I had seen from a wider and larger observation of the world that there were no such beings as Ariosto describes, I set my fancy to work to draw a picture of the land and the home where the writer of such fictions dwelt. The solemn air of Ferrara, its long and spacious streets so silent and solitary, answer partly for my picture. The half barbarous structure, Gothic and Saracen, of the Ducal *castelo*, full of towers and dungeons, with a moat all around, full of stagnant and green water, seemed a fit place for such

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<sup>231</sup> Vienna, capital city of Austria, sits on the River Danube.

<sup>232</sup> Alfonso II d'Este, Duke of Ferrara (1533-1597) — patron of Torquato Tasso

wild conceptions. Here was acted the dreadful tragedy that Byron describes in his poem of *Parisina*. Here were the halls in which the gloomy spirit of Calvin<sup>233</sup> found a refuge, and here too were the dungeons in which his followers perished. Tasso was sent from thence to a madhouse, and Ariosto himself was deserted there, amid the splendors of the court. The sumptuous domes overhead seemed to be the courts of pleasure, and the frightful dungeons underneath, the very precincts of the damned. The graces might dwell on high, and the demons underneath. The plain over which the eye could range looked like the fair abode of man, but the mass of building cut off from the plain by the moat, deep with water, showed that the tenants there had no sympathies with men elsewhere. As are the Alpine hills then, the home and the nursery of wild romance and song, so is even this little Alp of brick and mortar upon an Italian plain. Crowd it with the knights of the Middle Ages, people it with the "lady loves" of an Italian clime, adorn it with the luxurious pomp and wealth that Italy has even now, and doubly had in bygone times, and here then was enough of the inspiration of the place to inflame a cooler mind than that of Ariosto.

A host of ragged, amusing fellows beset us the moment we sallied forth from our hotel, offering us all manner of service, no matter what might be demanded, and having no idea of the meaning of the word "*no*." Cicerone, valet, domestic, vetturinos—each and all, they were at our service. Wherever we went, they went too, and the colder we looked, the louder they talked. A stray traveler is in fact for them a godsend, like a wreck upon the Jersey<sup>234</sup> coast, where they will plunder and plunder well, unless he is as keen as a Yankee peddler. We enlisted the whole cavalcade at last. Our retinue was as large as that of a little prince, the difference only being that our liverymen were in black with a white under-ground; or in other words, white cotton rags peeping through woolen rags, while a prince's liverymen may be clothed in white broadcloths and red trimmings. Be this as it may, we had our sport with them. Quite a commotion we made in the lonely streets of Ferrara. They took us into many churches, and bowed us in, and bowed us out, lifting the curtains at the door here, pointing out the fine paintings there—even beggars have an enthusiasm for paintings in Italy—dodging before

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<sup>233</sup> John Calvin (1509-1564) — French theologian and Protestant reformer; visited Ferrara in 1536.

<sup>234</sup> State of New Jersey

this altar, and kneeling before that cross, now using the holy water, now responding to the priests; but, as our retinue interested me more than the churches, I can recall little or nothing that I saw.

They took us to the library or the lyceum, and consigned us to the care of its custodian. There we saw many books, and some richly colored copies, made by monks, of the psalms; but all this vanishes from the mind before the inkstand and the worm-eaten chair of Ariosto. Plunderers have picked with the worms, so many little *morceaux*<sup>235</sup> of this chair, that the custodian watched us well when we looked at it. If we had been never so much disposed to steal our *morceau*, the attempt would have been in vain. The mausoleum of Ariosto, in white marble, is also seen in this library. The sacred ashes of this poet were transferred in 1801, during the existence of the short-lived Italian republic, under the auspices of the French, from the convent of the Benedictines to the hall of the library. A curious location indeed it is for a mausoleum, but why not a fit one for a poet and a scholar? The monuments of the mighty dead, who ever live in books, are in one sense in all the libraries in the world. The mausoleum is but a feeble tribute in comparison with his own *Orlando*, but it is the highest man can pay, the most stimulating perhaps, and here it stands in the museum of the library, the theater of his glory. We saw also here the original manuscripts of the *Orlando* and the *Jerusalem*, with autograph letters both of Ariosto and Tasso. The bust of Ariosto is on his own tomb. A portrait of him is seen in the vestibule on a painting of Benedetto,<sup>236</sup> his friend, where in a paradise he is represented as between St. Catherine and St. Sebastian—thus because Ariosto had said—"*Put me in your paradise, because I cannot so easily get into any other.*"

From the library, we went to the cell where Tasso was sent by the tyrant Duke of Ferrara, under the pretense that he was a madman. The dimensions of this cell are about nine paces long, between five and six wide, and about seven feet high. No man has ever yet been able to tell

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<sup>235</sup> *morceaux* — (Translation) *pieces*

<sup>236</sup> A contemporary publication states: "In the convent of San Benedetto is a painting representing paradise, by Garofalo, who had known Ariosto personally, in which the poet is seen between St. Catherine and St. Sebastian." [Ref. "The Gallery of Portraits", Vol. III, Malkin, London, Charles Knight, 1834, p.71] Garofalo (1481-1559) was a Ferrara-born painter.

what was the motive of the tyrant in thus incarcerating the immortal poet, though many motives have been assigned. A hospital, the building now is. The door we entered, after ascending a little flight of steps, led us into the large chamber, where upon rows of little beds were lying the unhappy victims of disease, suffering under different degrees of pain. I found the keeper there, and retreated with him as soon as possible from this receptacle of misery. He took a flambeau<sup>237</sup> into his hand, and after conducting us through some narrow passages, led us into a little yard, high-walled and dark, where, after opening the double doors, once ponderous but now worm-eaten and shattered, he showed us this cell of Tasso. But a single grated window let in a doubtful light—and here in this damp, dismal, and slimy cell, was a spirit like Tasso's confined, and condemned to the most horrible of miseries for seven years and two months! I read the numerous inscriptions all over the walls. The greatest names of the world almost, have there left the records of their visit. The keeper showed me that of Byron, and that of my own countryman Cooper<sup>238</sup> too, and I felt not a little pride in the manner in which he linked them together. For though Cooper is not a Byron, and has written more useless lumber than almost any of the distinguished American writers of the day, yet, *me judice*,<sup>239</sup> no one has written, or *can* write hundreds of things so well as he has written them. The name was pointed out to me by the keeper, not as to an American, for he knew not that I was one, but as a name considered in his estimation as worthy of a place after Byron's, and as well worth showing among the lion visitors of the present and bygone time. I begged a morsel of brick as a remembrance of my visit; and mine, I readily saw from the numerous holes that had been made all over the wall, was far, very far from being the first piece that had been taken away—probably to carry to the various ends of the earth.

A visit like this, to the cell in which a sovereign confined such a man as Tasso for so many years, is not uninstrusive, apart from the feelings it awakens in showing how terribly just is the award of posterity upon high-handed acts of power, and even upon all bad actions. The name of the house of Este of Ferrara would hardly be known at all over the

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<sup>237</sup> Flambeau — Flaming torch

<sup>238</sup> James Fenimore Cooper (1789-1851) — Popular American author; visited Italy circa 1832.

<sup>239</sup> *me judice* — (Translation) *in my opinion*

civilized world, or at least known only in the misty chronicles of his own race, if by one outrageous act of oppression he had not damned his name to eternal infamy, and made, as Byron has insinuated, the glory of his reign, his everlasting shame. Not a man ever visits the cell of the mighty bard, who does not in his heart curse the memory of the tyrant that sent him there. An immortality he never could have otherwise had, he has thus acquired for himself; but by it, his character is forever stamped with the deepest colors of infamy—a plague spot on his history, and he is remembered just as the pestilence is, for the mischief and havoc it spreads. And in witnessing the pride of all classes here—that Ariosto and Tasso were of their city, I could not but recall the difference between the tributes they, the living, paid to genius, and those paid by their fathers, the dead. Ariosto and Tasso, when living, were neglected and almost forgotten men, but now, when dead, what offerings they have! How thick their crowd of votaries! With what exultation the Ferrarese show the house of the one, and with what sad regret the cell of the other! But this neglect of living intellect, this transfer of its honors to the future, this sorrow and exultation, years after death, is not the fate of genius in Italy alone. It is its history all over the world, and in all of its ages and eras.

Ferrara is not a city to detain the traveler long. Its air is now unhealthy—its water unfit to drink, and its population not remarkably inviting. The tracks of grandeur are alone upon its streets. It is a city of the past, not the present. It serves as a vestibule for that magnificent history and that magnificent past, that awaits the traveler as he is entering Italy with his foot towards the fallen Forum and the falling Coliseum. A half a day was full enough to see all that I have described, and though past 3 o'clock in the afternoon, my companion and myself resolved to set off for Bologna in a little gig, with a little ragged driver, upon one, as they tell me here, of the most dangerous roads in Italy, "*full of robbers and thieves*," they say it is; and so very dangerous that the inhabitants of Ferrara and Bologna, or the vetturino, never pass it in the night. However, I saw nothing, though the route near Bologna between nine and ten o'clock, did seem a little suspicious. Not a carriage did we meet after dark, hardly a light could we mark in the houses on the road, till about ten o'clock, we reached the walls of Bologna, and on giving a little fee were admitted into the gate. The country through which we passed was flat, and seemed to be rich, and abundantly productive, the

road almost all the way paved with stones, as are the streets of Boston or New York. At a place called Malalbergo, we stopped a while to feed our horse, and here, as keeper of the inn, we found an old soldier of Napoleon's, who had followed him in his disastrous campaign to Moscow.

Arrived at Bologna, it being late, we stopped at a hotel, and entering, as is now our constant custom, we demanded the price of the lodgings. The price demanded was a *scudo* each, a piece of money just the value of our dollar—the Roman currency is the same as ours only with different names for the pieces of silver and gold. Not a word was said in reply. We ordered our baggage down again. The landlord asked what we would give. Not a word did we answer. He followed after us, begging for an offer, but finding we had none to make, fell down in his price to three *Pauls* each, just thirty cents of our money, when seeing that this was only about five cents more than the just price, we ordered the baggage upstairs again. Into the room he came soon after with four large wax candles, which we politely told him to take out again, for the bill next morning for them, as we did not choose to bargain for candles, would have been in all probability only a dollar or more. Common candles soon replaced his candles of wax, and we went on calmly then.

The next morning, by seven o'clock, there was a tap at my door, and a *valet de place* entered, apologizing and bowing, but offering for little or nothing in broken English, but tolerable French, to act as our cicerone of the place. We bade him good morning, and told him we would see to that when we were awake. But no sooner was I in bed again, than there was another tap. "*Come in*," I cried, and as the door opened and one fellow entered, I marked a whole string of others, forming a line to take turns to enter, among whom was one making all sorts of contortions in the form of winks, giving me a hint, as I afterwards translated it, not to make a bargain with the first till I had a talk with him. "*I am a vetturino-man*," said the first. "*I will take you to Florence with excellent horses, and very cheap*." "*But there is cholera in Tuscany, my good friend*," I said, "*and a quarantine when you want to get out again into the Roman states*." "*Oh no*," he said, and he swore to his veracity by all the heads of the saints. But I found out that he himself was from Florence, and if he could get travelers to carry there, he cared not how many lies he told to get them. I discussed matters with the whole train, but sent them away without

making a bargain that time, for such a lying, cheating set of knaves were they, that they would swear black was white to get you on the route where they belonged, and so many prices did they have, that there was no divining what was the just one.

Our landlord soon entered, and he told us the price of his breakfast without a demand. I felt this as a compliment to our sagacity as travelers in Italy, as it seemed he had given up the idea of fleecing us, as the Italians do the English-speaking people in general. A bargain was next struck with our *valet*, who was to show us the city. We sallied forth with him for the Accademia delle Belle Arti. A whole host of vetturino men were in our train; our cavalcade was quite as long as that in Ferrara. I asked the *valet* what it was necessary to give as a fee for entering the Accademia. He told me twice as much as was usual, and the first conversation he had with the doorkeeper was a quarrel in Italian for one half the sum we were to give, as [he had] boldly told him that he had signified to us double the sum necessary in order to pocket half himself. We said not a word. We looked at the pictures, and listened to the conversation, which seemed to threaten to terminate in a serious quarrel, the doorkeeper claiming all, and the *valet* insisting on his share of the spoil. When we went out, we paid half the sum ordered by the *valet*. The *valet* followed us a little way, and then ran back to get his share of the spoil. The quarrel broke out again, more furiously than ever. We went back to amuse ourselves in listening to it. The doorkeeper justly said that we had given him no more than was usual. The *valet* told him that he lied, and intended to cheat him, and that, therefore, he would bring no more travelers there to the Accademia delle Belle Arti. We finished the quarrel by letting the *valet* know, deeply to his confusion, what he had been at, adding that, as we now understood him, there would be no further trouble—he apologizing that it was the way *he got his living*, seeming only to be sorry that he was found out. A *vetturino-man*, we soon learnt, had bribed him to sell us to his carriage, and sure, he worked hard enough, but we found one who is to take us on our journey for half the price. I have written this paragraph for two purposes—first, to show how such business is done in Bologna, and the second, to put the traveler on his guard. Even a little knowledge of Italian will save a man dollars and dollars.



## 65. Bologna

Bologna,  
October 2, 1835.

Bologna is another of those cities of the Middle Ages which records the brilliant triumphs of republican principles, not only in that elevation of sentiment which liberty imparts to a people, but a triumph of trade and manufactures, and even of high and exalting art and science. The history of Bologna from the past even to the present is a history triumphant in proclaiming that under a free government, the people are the happiest *and* the most enterprising, a position not often denied even here; but, adding also, that under such a government, science advances more rapidly, and arts more splendidly than under the richest patronage of an aristocracy or monarchy. But though Bologna is a city of the Middle Ages, yet it is not a city of the dead or the dying, as Ferrara is. There is life and soul in it even now. Its heart beats, and its pulse is quick; and though Austria, even here, under the sanction of the Pope, has its Huns, and its corps of myrmidon Swiss; and though every day, the bayonet of the one flashes in the streets, and the rumbling cannon of the other is rolled over its pavements, yet there is at this hour the material of revolution all alive here, ready at a fanning even to blaze. The people are unlike the other Italians whom I have seen. By their very insolence they seem to make themselves respected and feared. Here they think and speak what they please, growling at the soldiery as they parade, and telling you publicly what they think of their masters, and how they will serve them, if Providence ever sends the proper time. Their police, notwithstanding it is often cruelly rigid with strangers, and has, within my observation, refused a Swiss his passport for Rome (for no other reason than that he was a *Swiss*), yet suffers this insolence on the part of the Bolognese, leaving them the liberty of evaporating their bile by grumbling, but parading the Austrians and mercenary Swiss often enough in the streets to show them that grumbling is the only liberty they have. The Pope has found that the Bolognese are too unmanageable for him and his beggarly troops, and he is, therefore, heartily glad that Austria has relieved him from the burden, and secured the fidelity of his subjects. Certain I am, it would cost no trouble at all to make a revolution here, for the discontent is universal, and the hatred of Rome

and Vienna is expressed in every quarter. The Bolognese sit uneasily under their chains.

Bologna is full of interesting objects of art, and here, upon the threshold of the Papal States, I should be glad to stop and study its arts as a preparation to enjoy the Vatican and the Capitol, if I did not fear that the cholera might reach Rome before I can, and thus shut me out from a visit to that city upon which my whole heart is now fixed. The rapid view I have taken must confine me to a description as rapid as the view. I will then pass over its two hundred churches, almost all rich with paintings—men of New England, boast not of the number of your churches now, when here in a city of only 60,000 inhabitants there are two hundred of them—remarking only that those of St. Petronius and St. Dominic are the most interesting from their historical associations—the first being the one where the famous meridian of Cassini<sup>240</sup> was traced upon the pavement in 1655, and where Charles the V was crowned by Clement the VII<sup>241</sup>—and the other, for the beautiful shrine of St. Dominic,<sup>242</sup> the founder of the Dominicans, and for the *Paradise* of Guido,<sup>243</sup> one of his most remarkable compositions in fresco. In a city, however, which gave birth to Guido, Domenichino, Albani, and the three Carracci, it is unnecessary to hunt much in order to find beautiful tablets. The masterpieces of all these artists, indeed, are to be found within the churches, the palaces, or the galleries of Bologna. Here, for the first time, I saw a Guido, that Homer<sup>244</sup> of the painters, simple, grand and pathetic, in the *Massacre of the Innocents*, where for the first time too, I felt what a poem might be written with colors upon canvas as well as printed upon paper. Domenichino appears too, in all his genius, in his allegorical picture of *Il Rosario*, where though less simple, less austere, less sublime than the great Guido, he is not less beautiful nor less interesting. Such beautiful *Virgins* do these masters paint here, that I am hardly surprised that the Catholics gaze upon and hang over their divine faces, absorbed in such deep admiration of the painter that they at last

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<sup>240</sup> Giovanni Domenico Cassini (1625-1712) — Italian mathematician and astronomer; his meridian observation at Bologna confirmed Kepler's theory that the Earth revolves around the Sun.

<sup>241</sup> Pope Clement VII (1478-1534) — Born in Florence; member of Medici family

<sup>242</sup> Saint Dominic (1170-1221) — Born in Spain; founder of the Dominican Order

<sup>243</sup> Guido Reni (1575-1642) — Italian Baroque painter

<sup>244</sup> Homer — Legendary author of ancient Greek epic poems, *Iliad* and *Odyssey*

believe his beautiful creation to be the mother of Jesus herself. How the canvas can speak, how genius can make even colors touch the heart, what *words* there are even in painted pantomime, is an ever-recurring feeling that I have as I go into the galleries and the palaces of this city!

The Accademia delle Belle Arti is the richest collection of paintings in Bologna—perhaps, for its number, the choicest in the world—and yet that number is about two hundred and fifty. The masterpieces of Guido Reni are there, as I have said, engravings from which are seen the world over, and the copiers of which are from all countries but—ours. Domenichino's *Martyrdom of St. Agnese*, the *Madonna in Glory* and the *Madonna del Rosario* are also there. The Carracci figure in some excellent pieces, and so do Guercino and Parmigianino.<sup>245</sup> The jewel of the gallery, however, is said to be the *St. Cecilia* of Raphael, the saint being represented as listening to a choir of angels, and surrounded by St. John, St. Paul the Evangelist, St. Augustine<sup>246</sup> (I never heard of him) and the Magdalene. Volumes have been written upon this picture. It is said to have changed the whole character of the art—to have drawn from the canvas the lifeless and gilded forms of Cimabue and Giotto, and to have replaced them with the animation, beauty and soul that distinguished the great masters that followed after it. Winckelmann,<sup>247</sup> the learned commentator of pages and pages upon the single arm, even upon the single finger of a statue, has especially dwelt upon this painting with a learning far above my comprehension. It is in this gallery that the traveler, who comes the route I have taken, finds recorded, as it were, the history of the art. The opening room of the gallery is covered with the works of the early painters, who revived the art, if we may credit the historians, once so famous in Greece and Rome, and we trace its progress here from Giotto even to the present day—though no great *progress* can be seen, it is true, since Guido and Domenichino and Raphael burst forth upon the world in such resplendent genius.

Witnessing the ardent study that very many young men were making of the great works of those masters, I could not but feel a wish that some of

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<sup>245</sup> Parmigianino (1503-1540) — Italian painter and printmaker

<sup>246</sup> Saint Augustine (354-430) — Early Christian theologian

<sup>247</sup> Johann Joachim Winckelmann (1717-1768) — German art historian and archaeologist

my own countrymen were of the number! What reason is there that our country in the arts should be almost a blank! We have had reason, heretofore, it is true, in our poverty, in the necessity too of seeking the *Useful* before we thought of the *Beautiful*; but that day is now gone by. But few countries at the present moment are richer than ours. Italy is not so rich in active wealth, none is so prosperous; and for this reason, therefore, it is time to adorn the *Useful* with the *Beautiful*, to mingle the one with the other, and to begin to claim for ourselves that love for, that eminence in even the arts, which have in all bygone days distinguished all republics—none ever more promising than ours. But who, perhaps you demand, is to take the lead in this magnificent reformation? Who is to provide the money and the men? Congress, it is certain, will never move but to a partial extent. The habits of the members will never lead them to the cultivation of the arts. They are not perhaps to be blamed, for, coming from the various ends of so wide an empire, they cannot have an opportunity to foster that taste, and to create that enthusiasm, that others have with better opportunities, who upon the little galleries of our seaboard cities, often see something that approximates to the beauty we see here. Besides, the members of Congress are often afraid to do what their hearts would prompt them. Many of them are content to be led, and never think of leading. The securing of their own reelection is never to happen by the expenditure of money for the patronage of the arts; and unhappily it so is—that politics and literature, science and the arts are not associated together with us, as they almost always are in Europe, but are often made irreconcilable enemies. We have no nobles by "the grace of God," and blessed be heaven that it is so; but we have a princely race of men who are to take their place, but in only the doing of their good.

Our merchants are our princes, as in Venice and Genoa of old. They have the money of the country. They have its resources in their hands. The wide world is the sphere in which they act; the ocean, even, is but their grand highway. Their enterprise is now the admiration of all mankind. The railroads they have made, the canals they have cut, the beautiful ships of theirs which throng the ports of all the civilized world, have given them a character as exalted as *merchants* can aspire to. But one other field of ambition have they then in which to crown themselves with princely honors, to rank themselves side by side with the high-born nobles of this European world, and that is in the **patronage of the**

**arts.** It is their duty as it is their glory. They alone can do it. They alone have the means. They alone have the liberality. Upon them rest our hopes and expectations. What the Venetian merchants did for Venice, they must do for us; and if they will but imitate the bright example, the republican cities of the United States will soon be as brilliant as the proud republic of Venice. Let them unite together for this purpose. Boston ought to send at least ten of its young artists to Europe and pay their bills. New York could send twenty—Philadelphia fifteen—Baltimore ten, and what would be the expense? Not eight hundred dollars a year for each, hardly five hundred in Bologna; and all the subscribers to such a scheme as would confer immortal honor upon its projectors, could be amply compensated by the copies of the great paintings of the day, which they might justly demand from the young men whom they sent out, as the recompense for the money advanced. Or out of these copies a public gallery may be formed; and thus, we could see in America what Europe thinks as much of, as we think of the *Iliad* of Homer or the *Aeneid* of Virgil, or the *Divine Comedy* of Dante.

In a republic like ours, we should shine in the *Beautiful* as we do in the *Useful*. The highest efforts of intellect, with the tongue, the pen, the pencil and the chisel, are not incompatible with the greatest simplicity of manners, and the greatest equality of condition. While every American should, even with the vengeance of a radical, cry down the incipient social aristocracy that is springing up—while he should abhor and denounce the importation of European principles and fashions, even with fanaticism—yet he should insist at the same time upon the cultivation and introduction of whatever advances us as men, whatever adorns the intellect, or exalts the sentiments, whatever links itself in with, and purifies the tender associations of the heart, whether it be of religion, of poetry, of painting, or of sculpture. The whole intellect of our great country at the present moment, is absorbed in the *Useful*. *Utility* is the juggernaut riding over everything else. The *Beautiful* is trodden under it. *Intellect* is even chained in dragging the car. *Virtue*—*Religion* too, are in danger of becoming its victims. It is time then to cry for a change, to turn the crowd, to insist upon that alliance of the two, which alone can make a people good and great. The merchants of our great cities, whom commerce with the world has liberalized, and who can afford to be liberal too, are the men who must make the change.

I come back now to Bologna. My thoughts often run away with my pen, and carry it upon home, and, indeed, I should do but little service in giving you but a catalog of things here, if I did not select of the beautiful what I thought worth imitation, and of the bad what I thought worth condemnation. If a wall of fire was between us and Europe, perhaps it would be well, for it may be that we copy more of the bad than the good. But, as it is easy to copy what is mischievous, we must insist now upon introducing what is beneficial, to counteract one with the other. Europe is full of instruction for us, though we do falsely flatter ourselves that we are the wisest people in the world, and every lesson we study, whether to follow or to shun it, will do us a service. With this view, I am ever making comparisons, illustrations, and references, and if they occur too often, or are too impertinent, or too assuming, the only excuse I can offer is, an over-anxiety that I may feel to do good to a land made dearer to me every step I take from it. If other Americans who have been here had, from any connection with the press, been induced to do the like, I would not trouble you with a thought out of the range of my journey.

But—I *do* now come back to Bologna, to go on with my catalog only. Bologna has its palaces as well as other Italian cities, and many of them are worth visiting for the beauty of the paintings within them. The subjects that the painters have selected then, are oftener classical than religious, and therefore more interesting to me, for I am already weary of *Saints, Madonnas, Magdalenes, the Cross, Angels, the infant Jesus*, and myriads of the like, upon which Italian painters have exhausted all their efforts to decorate the churches. In one of these palaces that we visited, a little girl, of about seven or eight years, acted as our guide, pointing out with astonishing skill what was most beautiful in the frescoes, or the paintings, and telling us all about the men who painted them, with a vivacity that interested us deeply. But this is not so very remarkable in a city where the chairs of the university have been filled by female professors, who were professors of Greek, and of physic—lecturers in anatomy, even! Indeed the anatomical preparations in the university here, famous for their execution, were the work of a woman. To this day, women attend the lectures upon these preparations, under the cover of a mask, however, as they attend a ball. Bologna, indeed, has been the residence of many remarkable women, [one] among whom was renowned for her thesis in Latin, in which she attempted to prove that the first fault was committed by Adam, and not by Eve, who was the

seduced and not the seducer—on which account, to show her contempt of the sex, she would never marry, but, as others have said, *because* she could not, as she was so hideously ugly!

The University of Bologna was once among the most famous of the world, with its 6,000 students, and seventy-two professors; but, with the loss of its liberty, the university even lost its splendor. It is great, however, even to this day, and it is said to be an excellent place for the education of young men. Indeed, Bologna is one of the best places in the world for a father to educate his children in, as masters speaking all the European languages can be obtained, as it is the cheapest of the Italian cities to live in, and its good society is said to be among the best. Rents are cheap. Provisions are cheap. Everything is cheap, even as it is with us in our smaller cities and towns. And then, Bologna is a pretty city too. The theater is one of the largest in Italy. The buildings are beautifully built. Almost the whole of the city has magnificent arcades over its sidewalks, sheltering the promenades from the sun and the rain. These, undoubtedly, are the fruits of its republican liberty, when the man on foot was thought as much of as the man in his carriage. The fountain of Neptune, in the great square of the city, is one of its most remarkable ornaments. The raging ocean-god is here displayed in all his majesty. Sirens and dolphins are subject to the sway of his trident.

But, yet more remarkable than this are the two great leaning towers of the city, both built between 1110 and 1120, one being about 140 feet high and nearly nine feet out of the perpendicular, and the other about 330 feet high, and two feet and a half out of the perpendicular.<sup>248</sup> They are both of brick, and square in form, and have a frightful look as they threaten to tumble upon every passerby. But, yet more curious than even this, is a range of arcades, not less than three English miles in length, connecting with the church of St. Luke on a summit of a mountain of the Apennines! The arches are 690, the steps 514, with fifteen lateral chapels, each painted with some incident in the life of the Virgin. The expenses must have been enormous for the arcades, even to say nothing of the church, which was forty years in building. The reason of this singular structure is, that in the church there is an effigy of the Virgin, *said* to be painted by St. Luke, which effigy a Grecian monk found

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<sup>248</sup> The respective heights of the Two Towers of Bologna are 48m (157 feet) and 97.2m (319 feet).

in the church of St. Sophia, at Constantinople, with an inscription on it, commanding him to carry it to the Monte della Guardia, there to be placed upon the altar in the church of St. Luke. To find this mountain, the monk walked over almost all the Christian world before he could learn that it was near Bologna. But when he found it, the image was received with enthusiasm, and in solemn procession placed upon the mount. Its worshippers multiplied, but access to it was difficult at such a distance, and on such a mount; and, in order to remedy this evil, the priests stimulated the people to make it accessible by the series of arcades of which I have spoken. A splendid church was built for the reception of the effigy, whose remains, it is said, are valuable even to this day in bringing on, or in stopping the rains. Where the Grecian monk placed it, they keep it to this day, and though it would have been easier to have brought it to the city, than it has been to bring the city to that, yet that would have been violating the command the monk saw on the inscription.



## 66. Bologna to San Marino

Ancona,  
October 6, 1835.

We left Bologna on the morning of the 3rd, in a vetturino for Ancona, which is the chief papal commercial city on the Adriatic, and which is on the usual route that travelers take to the Ionian islands and to Greece—a steamboat running thence, once a month, to Corfu. The vetturinos travel thirty to fifty miles a day, according to circumstances, and our hour of starting was long before daylight, sometimes being awakened as early as two o'clock in the morning, and never later than four. The price we gave for a journey was ten Roman *scudi*, without the *buona mano*, which is about a *scudo* more as a customary gratuity; for these eleven American dollars, we rode three days, were found in three excellent dinners with wine, and two beds each night. Our vetturino was conducted by three horses, and was large enough to carry six persons. The carriage was far more comfortable and more beautiful than the common hackney coaches of America. Thus, you see that vetturino traveling in Italy is as cheap as one can desire, though one may have some reasonable objection to rising at two o'clock in the morning, and to eat a hearty dinner just as one goes to bed, after a whole day's fast.

As we left the gate and walls of Bologna—which was no easy thing, for the peasantry were thronging around them, (kept in order by the military on horseback,) with their teams loaded with huge butts or pipes of wine on which a duty is to be paid, after our passports were signed with the permission to depart—we started upon the road that leads to Imola, once the *Forum Cornelii*, supposed to have been erected by Sulla. The town of Imola has risen on its ruins, and stands at the entrance of the rich and extensive plain of Lombardy on a branch of the river Vatrenus, now called the Santerno, which river the road crosses on a bridge, and then proceeds to Faenza, anciently *Farentia*, where Sulla obtained a victory over the adherents of Carbo.<sup>249</sup> This town is of a square form, and its four principal streets are straight, and meet at the marketplace, which, when we were there, was thronged with women

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<sup>249</sup> Gnaeus Papirius Carbo (c130-82 BC) — Three-time consul of Rome

vending, on their little tables, all kinds of eatables, from bread and grapes even to hot boiled chestnuts, which seems to be a cheap and favorite food of the poor Italians. Women, indeed, are the chief traders out of doors here, and the most industrious part of the population, it seems.

Faenza was our stopping-place for four or five hours, while our horses were fed and kept housed during the heat of the day, and thus, though we had time enough to visit everything, yet in all my visitings I could not see that anything was left of its famous earthen ware, to which it gave the name of *Faience*. *Forum Livii* (now shortened into, and called, Forli,) was our sleeping place for the night. But a thunderstorm, with a deluge of rain during the evening, prevented us from seeing what is said to be one of the handsomest squares in Italy, and we were off next morning long before anything was visible. *Forum Popilii* (now called Forlimpopoli,) was the most remarkable place near which we passed, but a castle and a few dwelling houses are now all that mark the site of this forum. Cesena, the last town on the old *Via Aemilia*, which anciently belonged to Cisalpine Gaul, was the town where we spent our second noonday. It stands on the river Sapis, now the Savio, and is approached by a superb modern bridge thrown on that river. The town contains near ten thousand inhabitants, a handsome fountain, and a colossal statue of the late Pius VI,<sup>250</sup> who passed his novitiate near there as a novice of the order of St. Benedict, in the church of the Madonna del Fuoco, or our "lady of the fire."

Near this Cesena, in the direction of Tavignano, anciently Compitum, the *Via Aemilia* crosses the Pistello, a rivulet which has been called the Rubicon. That river which, till the reign of Augustus, formed the boundary of Cisalpine Gaul toward the southeast, discharges itself into the Adriatic on the road between Forlimpopoli and Ravenna. It is composed of several small streams which unite about one mile from the sea, and assumes the name of Fiumicino, the ancient *veritable* river that [Julius] Caesar crossed when he "passed the Rubicon." The famous march of Caesar, when he made up his mind to violate the territories of the great republic of antiquity, interested me much in the whole of this

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<sup>250</sup> Pope Pius VI (1717-1799) — Born Count Giovanni Angelo Braschi; studied at Jesuit college, and University of Ferrara; elected Pope 1775; abducted by French troops (under Napoleon) and died in France.

region, all around which we had ample time to visit. The Rubicon is a river more widely known than even the "Father of Waters", with his stream of 4,000 miles. But if the Pistello is the Rubicon of antiquity, the little muddy Tiber which at times frets and roars under the Pennsylvania Avenue in Washington,<sup>251</sup> is as great a *river*, and if it be the Fiumicino, the world can judge that even that is no great stream with such a diminutive Italian name. Brooks or creeks, we should call all these rivers in America.

The interest attached to the river, however, is not fixed upon its magnitude or meanness, but upon the great consequences of that act of Caesar's, when he deliberated with himself, upon the narrow bank, what should be the fortune of Rome; and, because it is the spot where, in carrying out his maxim of—"*if justice is to be violated, let it be violated for the purpose of reigning*," he settled the destinies of the Roman republic, and virtually led to the enthroning of the emperors. One of those mighty men who stand in history apart from others, as if made of some diviner stuff, there felt striving wildly in his bosom *Justice* and *Ambition*. That high and noble nature that ever distinguishes exalted men, made him tremble at the thought of violating the boundary line of his own country. The fearful consequences and the monstrous wrongs, his foresight clearly showed him; but he acted at last, as every such man-hunter has acted, from the days of Nimrod<sup>252</sup> to those of Napoleon. Ambition triumphed, and patriotism fell. [George] Washington, alone of the men of the sword in a crisis like this, has disdained a crown. But the great and the base act of that wonderful man of antiquity upon this Rubicon, has given immortality and a boundless fame to a rivulet, and made it as important in history, as the Mississippi or the Amazon is in geography, though the students of the past debate, even in whole volumes, upon its identity, and almost mystify its very existence. I have just been perusing a good-sized book in Italian, which is chiefly confined to debating the question of "*which is the veritable Rubicon*." My guide to the spot, however, flippantly settled the question in a minute, and though he did not pretend to show me the foot-tracks of Caesar, yet he showed me the very spot where he crossed! He was a Frenchman, and a

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<sup>251</sup> Muddy river — Probable reference to Rock Creek, at the western end of Pennsylvania Avenue, shortly before entering the much larger Potomac River

<sup>252</sup> Nimrod — Biblical figure, probably mythical

Frenchman was never heard to say, "*I do not know*," when you asked him about the past.

Rimini was the second night's halting place of our vetturino. The country through which we had been passing is called Romagna, of which Imola is on the northern confines. Corn, hemp, and flax fields, with abounding vineyards, skirted the road on which was our first day's ride, and on the either side were cottages and farms. From Cesena to Forli, the scenery was delightful, with lovely plains about us, and the hills of Apennines on our right. Cesena was long governed during the Middle Ages by petty military chiefs, but the last of its seigneurs bequeathed the city by will to the Roman see. But now, in all of these cities, in the whole of Romagna even, there is the utmost contempt for the papal government, and the utmost hatred of the Austrians, whose troops are ever encamped as far on this road as the walls of Forli. Forli indeed, is said to be daily in a state of rebellion, and if it were not for the Austrian troops, the rebellion, now invisible, would soon be so strong and so loud as to sever all Romagna from Rome, so far off over the Apennines. Rimini was the *Ariminum* of the Romans, originally an Umbrian town, but when colonized by the Romans it became the key of Italy on the eastern coast. The sea, however, has now retired so far from the coast that the ancient port of Ariminum is traced with difficulty, but its marble ornaments embellish several of the churches in the modern town. Thus is ended the commercial importance of the city, of the possession of whose port Caesar thought so much.

But the interest attached to the city is far from being ended with its importance in the geography of the day. It is one of those old interesting cities of Italy that are old enough to have *two* antiquities, as it were; for with the ruins of the triumphal arch of Augustus adorning its *Porta Romana*, are numerous fabrics of the warlike chiefs Malatestas, whose bloody swords were brandished against the Turks<sup>253</sup> as well as the Roman; fabrics, churches, castles and citadels of Istrian marble, whose mingled architecture of the past and the present tells the ages of which they were, and thus link one era in the history of man with another. Again, this is the scene of that famous episode in Dante's *Inferno*, where

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<sup>253</sup> In 1465, Sigismondo Pandolfo Malatesta (1417-1468) Lord of Rimini; commanded Venetian forces in a campaign against the Ottoman Empire.

he and Virgil encounter among the shades of Semiramis,<sup>254</sup> Dido<sup>255</sup> and Cleopatra,<sup>256</sup> ever beaten by storms, the unhappy Francesca da Rimini,<sup>257</sup> who so tenderly, in the misery of Hell, describes to them the love of the happy days on earth—an episode as famous with the readers of Dante, as is the monologue, "*to be or not to be*," of Shakespeare. Pellico<sup>258</sup> also has written a tragedy upon this same theme, and laid the scene in this city.

But there was something to see of the living, as well as of the dead, the evening I was in Rimini, for the whole population in one grand mass, with all the priests of the city at its head, were turned out, making a grand procession in the streets, with candles and images varying from the full-sized figure of our Savior to the little facsimile ones of the protecting saints of the city, the priests chanting and praying, and the multitude loudly responding, each and all invoking the high powers of Heaven to turn the cholera from their city, and from the states of God's vicegerent upon earth. I joined in the prayer with my whole heart, and willingly bowed and kneeled with the multitude, for what stranger would stand when thousands were kneeling in the streets all around him? But, probably, my prayers sprang from different impulses than theirs, as the quarantines are much more frightful in Italy to me, than the pestilence is to them. Never, however, did I witness a more solemn procession. The response of the crowds to the prayers of the priests was loud, and hearty and sincere. The windows of all the houses by which the procession passed, were decorated. The numerous bells of a Catholic city were quickly ringing. The churches were all illuminated within on every altar, and on every candelabra. "*The cholera will not come*," said a sincere Catholic, when the services were over, and though in this part of Italy I have more faith in *cleaning* than in *praying*, so dirty are the towns in general, yet I hope that the Virgin and the saints will listen to such

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<sup>254</sup> Semiramis — Legendary wife of King Nimrod of Assyria

<sup>255</sup> Dido — Reputedly the first queen and founder of Carthage

<sup>256</sup> Cleopatra (69-30 B.C.) — Last active member of the Ptolemaic dynasty, rulers of Egypt; renowned for her liaisons with Julius Caesar and Mark Antony

<sup>257</sup> Francesca da Rimini (1255-c.1285) — Daughter of the Lord of Ravenna. Slain by Giovanni Malatesta after discovering her adulterous relationship with his brother Paolo. Her figure appears in Dante's *Divine Comedy*, consigned to the second circle of Hell.

<sup>258</sup> Silvio Pellico (1789-1854) — Italian writer, dramatist and patriot

earnest prayers. I am deeply interested in it, for if a *cordon* was drawn around me, as it is around Tuscany at the present moment, there would be no such thing as getting out of the Papal States. Such a sensation in a strange land in the time of a double pestilence of quarantines and cholera, is one of the most disagreeable that can affect a traveler.

Not far from Rimini, upon a high and steep hill, among savage rocks, overlooking the despotism and slavery of men all around—there, firmly and proudly enthroned, sits a little republic of an age of thirteen hundred years—one of the oldest, if not the oldest, governments of the world; but alas! “the *last* of all the Romans,”—the *last* of those glorious republics that once dotted and sparkled upon all the Italian plains! **Liberty**, that inspiring word, when no longer heard in the Roman Forum, and no longer fought for on the isles of Venice, when the very whisper of it was death upon the banks of the Arno, even then found a refuge in the forbidding cliffs that overlook the Adriatic, and was proudly blazoned upon the portals of **San Marino**.

The oldest republicans of the world are there in one little town, as some proud eagle in her sky-built aerie. The waves of despotism have for ages beat against this rock, but have never over-topped its summit. The invading armies of Romagna, the Hun, the Austrian, and the Frank, have never clambered up its sides. Even the “*thunderer of the Earth*,”<sup>259</sup> as the French once styled the last man-conqueror of theirs, who by the noise and confusion he made well deserved the name, hurled no bolts of wrath against this little republic, nestling in the very heart of his achievements. Even when flushed with triumphs, and seizing everything for himself and France, with his own hand, he complimented the little miracle of a government, and promised it an increase of territory, which the people had the wisdom to refuse, with thanks for the offer, but with the avowal that they had no ambition to aggrandize their territory, and thus to compromise their liberties.

Even despots then, and the subjects of despots, respect a government thus consecrated by age, and the interest of an American is redoubled, upon seeing this little *facsimile* of his own far-off land; upon feeling, as it were, the pulse of a people, whose sympathies are in unity with his. The

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<sup>259</sup> “Thunderer of the Earth” — Napoleon Bonaparte

little heart that is beating here upon the rock of San Marino is in the New World, sending life-blood through ten thousand mighty veins, and flushing with its health the broad-spread surface of a country that reaches from the sea-wrought battlements of the Bay of Fundy to the sands of Mexico: and though the hope is wild, yet it will spring up—that the humble work of the honest Dalmatian mason<sup>260</sup> who, flying from persecution, founded his city upon the Titan's mount, may become what the like government was that arose on the Palatine Hill, and stretched at last from Scotia<sup>261</sup> to the Euphrates, or like that nobler empire of those wandering pilgrims who first landed on the rock of Plymouth. Italy would thrice save the world, and thrice redeem it from its indifference, if but the principles and the purity of Marino's republic could extend from the frozen needles of the Alps to the blazing mouths of Vesuvius.



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<sup>260</sup> San Marino takes its name from the stonemason, Marinus, a native of Dalmatia (modern Croatia), who founded an independent community on Monte Titano in 301 A.D.

<sup>261</sup> Scotia — Scotland

## 67. To Ancona

Ancona,  
October 7, 1835.

But up, up, I must be off. But what a lazy truant I am upon the road! Rimini we left long before daylight, and upon the borders of the Adriatic we witnessed the rising of the sun. Over the water, from its bed in the East, as it seemed to come as an emblem of the light and civilization which had blazed upon the world from the opposite shores of the sea; but alas, only the emblem is now left, for the land of its birth is sunk in apathy, and the thick ruins of its past are its only glory. The emblem, however, did magnificent honors to the scene. The sky with its thousands of clouds hung, as it were, with so many banners of flame. The rich waves of light rolled far and wide across the sea of heaven—and the shores of the Adriatic bounded in joy, as if in welcome of his coming. A sunrise so beautiful I never witnessed before, and I could not but connect it in my thoughts with the autumnal sunsets of my own home, which even the sky of Italy has not yet equaled in my eye—indulging in a curious reverie, as I walked upon the sands, or up the little hills—thinking it might be that the glory of the morning was left for the land where was the morning of man, while the brighter evening of his race was pictured in our own golden West, where not only the clouds stream with red and purple and blue, like rainbows in motion, but where the very forests dance in robes of light, and the tremulous leaves vie in splendor, and throw back and reflect all the colors, as mellowed and dyed in the depth of the sky.

I know not why, but so it is, there is a new pleasure that a man feels whenever for the first time his eyes fall upon a new river, or a new sea; and the sensation is similar, whether it be a river or a sea, though the greater or less according to the magnitude and extent of the waters, or the history connected with them. One of the grandest views, if not the sublimest in the United States, it strikes me, is the junction of the Mississippi and the Ohio—not that there is aught of itself in the scenery around so very astonishing, but the idea of extent and power inflame the imagination there, when you see a stream of about 3,000 miles long mingling with another of 1,200 miles, and the greater absorbing the less,

which of itself is a mighty river, without even swelling its stream, or widening its banks, as it seems to the eye, and both then to course on together a thousand miles more to meet the ocean! The almost boundless extent, and the awful but silent power of the seeming lazy current, affected me more than the noise of Niagara, because extent was associated with power. A like sensation I felt even here, on the shores of the Adriatic, because here, for the first time, my eyes had had an actual view of the broad sea itself, free and loose as it were, and not in chains, as among the lagoons of Venice. But, as in the junction of the Mississippi and the Ohio, of which I have spoken, there is nothing at all astonishing in the scenery around, the sensation is powerful nevertheless. The sight of a new sea is perhaps a new era in a man's life. It may be that he thinks he has made a new acquisition, and his heart beats proudly at the thought. Or it may be that I felt aroused by the association of similar objects in the sea, those longings after home, which every traveler feels, more or less, in a foreign land. I saw the same waters, which in their everlasting flow may roll upon the very shores where all my hopes and my heart are; and as I discerned in the distance the Adriatic banks of Ancona, of Dalmatia, or of Greece, or it may be some American ship seeking her way to Trieste, I felt that on board each of these there was a link that might connect me with them.

The sight of a ship always does a stranger's heart good, when he is in a foreign land, and particularly if he has been long in the interior of that land, for upon it he feels as if he could walk where he will be a stranger and a foreigner no more. The great glory of the Adriatic, though, is not this in the eye of a pilgrim from the New World. It is the only changeless thing amid the ruined empires all around. The oldest of all—yet it is the only thing young. Beauty and youth sit upon its waves and its shores alone. The Mediterranean, the Archipelago, and the Adriatic are as they were when Homer coasted along them, or when the Egyptian sent arts and arms to Greece. Twenty nations, with their opulent cities, their regal palaces, their temples, and their arts, have fallen upon the peninsula between the Euxine<sup>262</sup> and the Mediterranean alone. The Trojan, the Lydian, the Macedonian, the Persian, the Greek, the Roman and the Turk have each in turn shed their blood, and won their triumphs on its plains.

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<sup>262</sup> Euxine — Black Sea

Just over this sea is the land of Pericles,<sup>263</sup> Themistocles<sup>264</sup> and Cimon.<sup>265</sup> An American steamboat, in a single day, would carry me quite near the Acropolis and Mars Hill, or the Areopagus<sup>266</sup> of Athens; but the city that Pericles adorned with marble has but few other relics of interest left than the genius of the place. As we rode along, I could not but think upon the varied races of men that have sailed in arms over these waters, and upon the various means of navigation, from the Grecian and Roman with their galleys, and the Venetian clinging to the coast without a compass to guide him, to that new invention, that new power that a countryman of ours vivified and subdued for the service of man, so as to enable him to defy wind and tide.<sup>267</sup>

And it was a source of high gratification to me to see that, though I was now upon one of the oldest known seas of the world, which the prow had been cleaving ever since the sheet was spread to catch the wind to move the wood, yet that upon all these seas, from the best I could learn, aye, even from the Pillars of Hercules to the Euxine, from the mouth of the Nile to Genoa the Superb, seas where arts and arms and commerce had their birth—yet that upon all these, thus laving<sup>268</sup> the shores of Egypt, and Palestine, and Greece, and Italy, and Turkey, and Gallia, and Spain, there are *not so many steamboats now as there are upon the single inland water of Lake Erie*, where sixty years ago the savage raged, and the tomahawk was brandished in terror! Good God, what an idea does this give of the growth and promise of my country! I verily believe that the inland trade of the single state of New York is now worth all the trade of the whole Mediterranean and its tributaries. The three hundred steamboats of the Mississippi would create more astonishment here

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<sup>263</sup> Pericles (c.495 B.C.-429 B.C.) — Greek general of Athens during the Persian and Peleponnesian wars.

<sup>264</sup> Themistocles (c.524 B.C.-459 B.C.) — Athenian politician during the Persian invasions

<sup>265</sup> Cimon (or Kimon) (c510-450 BC) — Athenian statesman and military hero

<sup>266</sup> Areopagus — Prominent rocky knob in Athens, close to the Acropolis; known by the Romans as Mars Hill

<sup>267</sup> (perhaps) Robert Fulton, who developed a commercially successful steamboat on the Hudson in 1807.

<sup>268</sup> Laving — washing, bathing

than did the army of the Persian monarch who lashed the sea,<sup>269</sup> and the vast inland vale from which they come is a world almost, if not quite, as large as Thucydides<sup>270</sup> or Strabo dreamed of.

But up—up, and on. Every little thought pulls me aside upon some speculation, and I shall never get to Rome. I get along as slowly as our vetturino goes. Our third day's ride was all along the Adriatic, on the old *Via Flaminia*. Cattolica we passed, a town so called from having served as a place of refuge to the orthodox prelates, who, in the time of the council of Rimini, separated themselves from the Arian or heterodox bishops. Pesaro, once a Roman colony, was the town in which we made our regular noonday halt. The villa inhabited by the late queen<sup>271</sup> of England is about one mile from here; and in her pleasure grounds are two monuments, the one erected to the memory of her brother, who fell at Waterloo,<sup>272</sup> and the other to the memory of her daughter, the late princess Charlotte of Wales. General Bonaparte made this his headquarters too, when, as the republican general, he was driving the Austrians from Italy.

Fano, the ancient *Fanum Fortunae*, was the next town we entered. It is upon the coast of the Adriatic, near the mouth of the ancient Metauros, a river famous for having witnessed the defeat of Hasdrubal,<sup>273</sup> A. U. C. 545,<sup>274</sup> by the Roman consuls of that year. But at Fano, we only halted to fill our vetturino with four Catholic priests, one a Jesuit, and one a Benedictine, and the others of what orders I do not know; and when we started again, we were in the train of two other vetturinos full of

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<sup>269</sup> According to Herodotus, in 480 BC, the Persian ruler Xerxes ordered that the Hellespont (Dardanelles) should receive 300 lashes, after a storm carried away the bridge he had constructed to invade Greece.

<sup>270</sup> Thucydides (c.460 B.C.-c.400 B.C.) — Athenian historian and general

<sup>271</sup> Caroline, Princess of Brunswick (1768-1821) — As wife of George IV, Queen of the United Kingdom 1820-1821. The couple's child, Princess Charlotte of Wales, was born in 1796, dying in childbirth in 1817. George and Caroline separated c.1797. In 1814, she took the rural palace of Villa Caprile, near Pesaro, where she was rumored to have a liaison with a servant.

<sup>272</sup> The Queen's brother, Frederick William, Duke of Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel, was killed in 1815 at the Battle of Quatre Bras, two days before the Battle of Waterloo.

<sup>273</sup> Hasdrubal Barca, brother of Hannibal, was killed in 207 B.C. at the Battle of Metaurus, in the Second Punic War.

<sup>274</sup> A. U. C. — Years since the foundation of Rome in 753 BC

Catholic priests, all bound to Rome. The Jesuit did not bite me, and the others were very civil, though one of them loved his beads and his Latin prayer book more than conversation, probably because I murdered his Italian so. But they have one droll habit, to which I have not as yet become accustomed, though I have witnessed it among all classes of men from the Rhine to the Adriatic—and that is, the custom of kissing each other, and embracing, for the same reason that we shake hands. Now, though there might be some sense in kissing a pretty cousin or a pretty female friend whom one had not seen for many a day, yet it is indeed droll to see ten or twelve strapping great men with long beards often, and stiff mustachios, busily kissing as many others as strapping as themselves. But such, nevertheless, was the drollery we witnessed at Senigallia, where we halted for the night, and where our whole flock of priests kissed every stray shepherd whom they met, of every other flock. However, I have made up my mind long ago to think one custom in one part of the world as reasonable as another, and when the man in America tells me what is the use of shaking hands, I will tell him what is the use of kissing in Italy. The kissing ceremony with half of the world has reason and feeling on its side, but the *shaking hands*, with gloves on, has not even that. Every time I sneezed, the priests wished some saint would bless me, and bowed their heads, and the blessings came down thick, and the bows often, for I had a most amazing cold. If there is a sneezing saint, then, and he hears the benedictions of the priests, my life will be a lucky one.

Senigallia, our third night's lodging place, the Sena Gallica of the Romans, is a little town upon the Adriatic, with a port full of little vessels that cruise in and across the sea. The priests insisted upon acting as our cicerones of the place, but it did not cost us much time to see its churches, and the shipping and the sailors, the strangest of all the shows, speaking a varied language in Italian idioms that outrival even the confusion of Babel, according as they were from the Eastern or Italian side of the waters, and appearing in as many varied costumes as there are dominions hereabout. Our dinner was, however, the most important affair of the day, which our priests, by their affability and intelligence, made very agreeable, telling us all they knew about their land, and inquiring all about ours, particularly of the valley of the Mississippi, of the progress of Catholicism, in which they have the most exalted promises. The usual quarrel at night, first with dirty sheets, and

then with wet ones, ended the day, though not so well as usual this time, for we could find no dry sheets in the house, and therefore dispensed with any. This little quarrel has become as regular as going to bed.

Off before daylight, we were again on our fourth day's journey in our vetturino. I am out of all patience with the horses that are never made to trot, but that trip along in a quickstepping walk. However, a man must never be in a hurry in Italy. That is the first lesson he must learn. An American must in this respect unchange his whole man, and forget his whole education. Our route this day was along the Adriatic. On one side was the calm sea, and the blue sky, and on the other gentle hills sloping gradually toward the water, but the quicker the road is passed over, the better for the traveler. The promontory of Ancona was in sight long before we reached it. At last we were riding along the rocks thrown up to beat back the sea. The citadel was passed. The gates were reached, and a French soldier in his red breeches and long grey coat was standing there! A French army here on the Adriatic, the tri-colored flag waving over the walls, the poor Pope plundered on one flank by Austria, and on the other by France! Nevertheless, I am so weary of the Austrian white coat, and the papal locomotives<sup>275</sup> in uniform, that a laughing, happy little Frenchman is to the eye as an oasis in the desert.



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<sup>275</sup> Brooks disparagingly compares the Austrian soldiers to machines.

## 68. Ancona to Rome

Rome,  
October 12, 1835.

I have been traveling in a Roman diligence ever since—I can remember, and at last I am housed within the walls of "The Eternal City." The mode and manner of coming, *firstly*, as the preachers say, and *secondly*—upon matters and things in general, as usual, you will cry—and first of the first, let me go back to Ancona.

Ancona retains its ancient name, a word of Greek origin, expressive of the angular form of the promontory on which the town is placed, and Strabo ascribes its foundation to the Syracusans who fled from the tyranny of Dionysius.<sup>276</sup> The town has a magnificent quay, and a peculiarly fine harbor of a circular form, which Trajan enlarged and improved at his own expense. A triumphal arch of Corinthian order, erected near the port to commemorate this act of princely beneficence, is well proportioned, finely frescoed, simple, grand, and composed of very large blocks of Parian marble. It is now the great Roman harbor of the Adriatic, and perhaps the only Roman city on which there exists any commerce of any great extent, or much business, life and energy. The Pope allows there, for the sake of commerce, all religions, and thus the useful intermingling of the Protestant and the Hebrew,<sup>277</sup> with the Catholic faith, creates something like activity in this free port. But the streets, even the widest of them, are so narrow that two carriages can hardly pass abreast, and there are many of them in which no carriage can go at all. The walls are too small for the population, and hence the houses are overcrowded with inhabitants—and full of myriads and myriads of fleas.

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<sup>276</sup> Dionysius I of Syracuse (c.432 B.C.-367 B.C.) — Greek tyrant; Ancona was founded by Syracusan settlers c.387 B.C.

<sup>277</sup> The Jewish presence in Ancona dates from 967 A.D. By 1550, they numbered about 2,700. At the outbreak of WW-II, there were over 1,000 residents; few were sent to Germany, most paying bribes to remain in the city.

Among the public edifices, the cathedral is the most prominent. It stands on a high and commanding summit, with the busy city beneath, the Apennines not far off on the side of land, and the Adriatic, with the opposite coast of Dalmatia sometimes visible, on the other side. The position and the view are superb, and every traveler should wind up the hill to see the mountains and the sea. It stands, it is said, on a site of a temple of Venus, which shows, if such be the fact, that the ancient worshippers of that beautiful divinity knew well how to give her the choicest place for a home. The lazaretto, that indispensable appendage of every Italian city, is well worth seeing. The custom house or exchange is adorned with statues and paintings. But the population, after all, is the choicest of the shows, and among them the Jews are the most conspicuous in their way. I entered with my friend into the narrow streets in which they live. The women took us by force, yes, by all the strength they could muster, (not another rape of the Sabines<sup>278</sup> you will say,) into their shops, and there in one manner and another compelled us to buy. The process of sale was to demand a double or a triple price, and then to ask what we would give, and to insist upon an offer, and as no reasonable man ever thinks of underbidding one half the price demanded, when we made them offers, they always accepted them. Thus, we purchased garments in which it is dangerous to move for fear of splitting them to pieces, handkerchiefs that even the winds will splinter, and stockings so feeble that they tumble apart when we look at them. The pretty Jewesses of Ancona! Look out for them hereafter. Never enter their streets even, for there is no escaping them. They cheated us delightfully, and then gave us coffee to console us. My friend and myself had hardly money enough left to get to Rome.

A tax is charged upon all strangers who enter Ancona by land, of three *Pauls*, (30 cents)—and such is the custom I believe, in very many of the principal towns; at least it is in Ferrara and Bologna and Ancona, thus far, and in Rome also, I am told, a card of permission to reside in the city also costing three *Pauls* more. Regularly, every night that we have slept upon the road, all the way from Milan, our passport has been demanded, and carried to the Police, and there is almost always some charge, greater or less. I mention this as among the blessings of many

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<sup>278</sup> Rape of the Sabine Women — In Roman mythology, the event in early times when Roman menfolk abducted young women from nearby cities, including the Sabine people, and took them as their wives.

governments crowded together, and as one only of the trivial consequences of that disunion which would fall upon us from the separation of our states. The introduction of the passport system would necessarily follow, and this is one of the greatest nuisances on the Continent of Europe.

Ancona we left at night about one o'clock, in a Roman stagecoach that carried twelve persons, and that *could* carry almost as many more. The French garrisons extend no further than the walls of the city, and there, of course, we lost sight of them. The French, by the way, seized upon the port of Ancona because the Austrians garrisoned Bologna and Ferrara and Forli; and thus, the two great powers, between them, are taking care of the eastern dominions of the Holy See. The next town of importance we reached was Loreto, so famous for having within one of its churches the Santa Casa, the Holy House in which not only Christ was born and bred for twelve years, but his mother Mary also; which aforesaid Holy House—having been in imminent danger in Nazareth of Galilee from the armies of Titus Vespasian,<sup>279</sup> but in a danger more imminent afterwards when Galilee was in possession of the infidels, and every professor of Christianity was put to the sword—at last, in 1291, was lifted from its foundations by angels, and transported through the air as far as Dalmatia; but, not liking that residence, three years afterwards, took another jump across the Adriatic too, and alighted in the dead of night in a forest near Recanati, (not far from Loreto,) where all the trees bowed down to the ground, and thus remained in reverence, like the fish to whom St. Anthony preached, as long as the Holy House continued among them. The Virgin Mary there took notice of the house, and devotees and pilgrims flocked fast to the sacred dwelling; but, as the devil tempting some thieves and robbers there to plunder the pilgrims as they came, the Holy House, after a sitting of only eight months, took another flight, and set itself down about a mile further off, on the joint property of two brothers; but the brothers quarrelling and fighting, at last, about the division of the spoil of the pilgrims, the Holy House took its last and final jump upon its present situation, where the people of Loreto have covered it in a splendid church, and where pilgrims have adorned it with the dazzling treasures of golden lamps, censers, statues, chalices, vases of gold and silver, jewels, gems, robes, pictures, mosaics,

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<sup>279</sup> Titus Vespasian (39-81) — Roman military commander in Judaea; later Emperor

the *ex voto* offerings<sup>280</sup> of nobles, and crowned heads, as well as of the humble and the poor. The scarlet gown that the Virgin had on when the angel Gabriel appeared to her, and the *holy porringer* in which Jesus was fed, are also to be seen. Any *Agnus Dei*, rosary, crucifix, &c. &c. shaken about reverently in this holy porringer by the proper priest, will cure the diseases of the owner, and even keep off the Devil himself.

The immense treasures of this Holy House,<sup>281</sup> the French, in their invasion of Italy, appropriated to their own use about the time that they abolished Sundays, and found out a new God, and *bled* Paris with the guillotine. At the Restoration, the image of the Holy Mother of God got back to Loreto, and princes and nobles have been since enriching it, while the pilgrims are yet grooving the marble floor on their creeping knees. The history of the Holy House that I have given you, I have translated from an Italian chronicle, in my own words to be sure, but keeping to the facts, which are much more solemnly told, however, than I have told them. Prince Eugene Beauharnais,<sup>282</sup> Maria Louisa, ex-duchess of Parma and queen of Etruria,<sup>283</sup> Charles the Fourth of Spain,<sup>284</sup> the princess of Württemberg,<sup>285</sup> the emperor of Austria,<sup>286</sup> and such like personages have enriched this place with emeralds and amethysts, and turquoise rings set in gold, and rubies and pearls, and garnets, all for the Holy Mother of God, who, when on earth, was content with the earthen holy porringer, to feed her child, bred in a humble house not better than the cabin of an Indiana woodcutter on the banks of the Ohio.

My book, of which I have spoken, has given me my chief knowledge of the Holy House. For though I was in Loreto at early morning, the house

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<sup>280</sup> *ex voto* offering — offered in fulfillment of a vow

<sup>281</sup> The Holy House of Loreto has been a pilgrimage site since the 13th century. The original Santa Casa, a rectangular stone structure, has been wrapped with an ornate sculpted marble screen, and incorporated into a large basilica, richly decorated.

<sup>282</sup> Prince Eugène Beauharnais (1781-1824) — Adopted stepson of Napoleon Bonaparte; led an active military career

<sup>283</sup> Maria Luisa, Duchess of Lucca, Queen of Etruria (1782-1824) — Daughter of Charles IV of Spain; Duchess of Lucca from 1817

<sup>284</sup> Charles IV of Spain (1748-1819) — Bourbon dynasty; abdicated in 1808

<sup>285</sup> Princess Pauline of Württemberg (1810-1856) — Duchess of Nassau, 1829-39

<sup>286</sup> Emperor of Austria (1768-1835) — Francis I; reigned 1804-1835

where pilgrims throng to the church, and when the altars are most brightly lit up, and the treasures seem the richest, I had but a hasty look, for my breakfast was at the time inviting me more than this flying house of the Savior, and the book I concluded would better instruct me than the priests. It was about daylight when our diligence reached its stopping-place in the town, and one of the first voices I heard at the windows of the coach was a man whispering in a very low tone, that he had something important to show us, if we would descend. My friend and myself descended, and followed him in a narrow alley of a dim and doubtful look, and there entering into a little shop, we found various kinds of relics for sale, rosaries, &c., all blessed in the holy porringer, and among them all the book which gave us the miraculous history of the Holy House. After sputtering out what bad Italian we knew at the walk he had made us take, in order to see his relics and his book, we bought the last, and I busied myself in reading it on our way in the diligence to Rome.

After quitting the great pilgrimage ground of the Christian world—which rivals Jerusalem and St. Peter's, where men and women have thronged in caravans, with their banners, their governors, and their priests, even to the number of 100,000 at a time, it is said, performing the most painful devotions on their knees around the circuit of the Holy House, in such multitudes, as I have hinted before, that they groove in the marble even to the depth of an inch and a half—we started for Foligno, across the Apennines on our way to Rome. Macerata was one of the first towns we passed, of about 10,000 inhabitants, situated in the summit of a mountain where the traveler can see the Adriatic, often a delightful view, when it is the first, as the voyager comes from the side of the Mediterranean. Tolentino was one of the next towns that we entered, is nothing remarkable, unless it be in having the sepulcher of St. Nicholas, and in being the place where the treaty was signed between the Pope and Bonaparte when the conqueror got the *Belvedere Apollo*, and the toilette of the Virgin of Loreto. Valcimarra, a poverty-stricken village, situated in a valley covered with superb oaks comes next, and then the plain ceases; and then the ascent is continued up to the narrow passage of Serravalle (the name vale[?]) and ascent made with six horses, two postilions, and two yokes of oxen, at the rate of about a mile or a little more an hour, though it was far from being so very difficult.

Oxen, however, among the Apennines, are indispensable appendages to the post, as it seems.

Serravalle is a village crowded between two mountains which are a little distant one from the other. It was the boundary line of the late kingdom of Italy; near here is the little village of Camerino, which, Livy says, furnished 600 men to Scipio<sup>287</sup> to pass into Africa. The ruins of walls, and gates of an ancient Gothic castle, are to be seen there at the present day. After this, we entered the narrow passage of Colfiorito, where the road is creviced in the rock, and forms a semicircle of about two miles in extent; and so very narrow is it, that if two carriages meet, it is always difficult, and often quite impossible without retrograding, to pass. Next comes the village of Casenove, in a territory as sterile as death, the only resource of whose inhabitants seems to be the charity of the passing travelers; for men, women and children invoked us in all the names of the thirty thousand saints, more or less, with the Virgin Mary in the bargain, to relieve their wants, promising us if we did, ten thousand blessings—now bowing their heads to the earth, now kneeling in the dirt, resorting in short to all the ingenious devices that could touch our hearts. My own happy country! How *happy* are you in never being shocked with such spectacles of human misery and degradation!

Foligno came next, but it was deep night when we arrived there. The worst passes of the Apennines we had surmounted and cleared. The scenery had been wild and naked, but the quicker it is passed, the happier the traveler will be. So much misery meets the eye to induce one to wish for a longer tarry. Our diligence stopped at Foligno till day, and out of the then unoccupied seats, I made my bed for the night, much more comfortable I found in the morning than my flea-bitten companion had discovered in the house. Daylight showed us that Foligno was in a pretty vale, and our eyes were delighted again to behold hills covered with *verdure* and with trees. The ruins of the ancient temple of Clitumnus,<sup>288</sup> that classic stream sung by the poets from Virgil to Claudian,<sup>289</sup> was on the summit of the hill by our road. A Catholic chapel it is now, but the devastators of bishops and monks have left but little of

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<sup>287</sup> Publius Scipio (236 B.C.-183 B.C.) — (Scipio Aricanus) Roman general from a prominent family; defeated Hannibal in Second Punic War

<sup>288</sup> Clitumnus — Temple also mentioned by Byron in *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*

<sup>289</sup> Claudian (c.370-c.404) — Born in Alexandria; Latin poet

that beauty that the architect Palladio so much admired. Virgil, in his *Georgics*, apostrophizes this stream, and speaks of its fleecy flocks (*albi greges*) and lordly bulls (*maxima taurus*) that bleed for the gods, and bring Roman triumphs to their temples. But Clitumnus has lost its virtue since the days of Propertius<sup>290</sup> and Silius Italicus,<sup>291</sup> for now, though the cattle are white, they are not those plump milk-white snowy bulls that become the whiter from laving in and drinking of the stream. And though the scenery was pretty enough, yet I was far from agreeing with Pliny, when the beggars thronged around me, that "*there is nothing with which you may not be pleased.*" "*In summa, nihil erit ex quo non capias voluptatem*"—for the Italian cry of "*carita, carita, qualche cosa,*" "*charity, charity, something, something—give me something,*" is now louder than even the oracles of the river god, or the prayers there *offered to the Umbrian Jupiter.*

I feel now that I am on classic ground, and as I saw on the Highlands of Scotland with the *Lady of the Lake* in my hand, or on the Lakes of Westmoreland with the poems of Wordsworth, objects the inspiration of British pens, even so, I see here, or begin to see, what inspired the pen of a Virgil and a Horace. The walls of Spoleto, the Spoletium of Livy, are before me on the acclivity of a mountain—the citizens in which repulsed the conquering Hannibal, when, flushed with victory on the lake of Trasimene that he had dyed red with Roman blood, he put himself on the route to Rome. Porta Fuga is the name of a gate bearing an inscription which, to this day, records the event. Soon after passing Spoleto, and the suburbs so beautiful, we began the ascent of the mountain, Somma, the Jupiter of the Apennines. Seeing oxen as usual fastened to our diligence, I got out, and commenced the ascent on foot; and I reached the summit, and had time to make a little dinner of sour wine, and hard crumbs of bread, all I could get, long before the lazy oxen reached me. Beggars throng this hill; a capital plan for them, as on one side the carriages go slowly up, the passengers generally walking, and on the other, they are dragged chained downward. Terni came next, the birthplace of Tacitus,<sup>292</sup> but better known for its Cascata delle

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<sup>290</sup> Sextus Propertius (c.50 B.C.-15 B.C.) — Latin poet

<sup>291</sup> Silius Italicus (c.28-c.103) — Roman consul and epic poet

<sup>292</sup> Tacitus (56-120) — Roman senator and historian

Marmore,<sup>293</sup> or its marble cascade. Byron, in his *Childe Harold*, gives a magnificent description of this “*Hell of waters*” as he calls it, when “*they howl and hiss;*” but as an Englishman’s “*hell of waters*” differs so very much from an American model of Niagara, or even the second-rate cataracts of my own state, I came to the conclusion that the poetry was grander than the waterfall, and therefore kept the diligence on to Rome, without waiting a day to visit the cascade some distance from the road.

The strange, and if not beautiful, scenery on the road from Terni along the Apennines interested me much. But all I could think of was the Tiber and Rome. I caught a glimpse of the first just as the sun was setting and night hurrying on; and I would not sell the delicious pleasure inspired by that first glimpse for many a richer show. Soratte’s towering brow that Horace apostrophizes, was even now, as it was in his day, blanched with snow. The ruins of the ancient Otriculum, but a mass of rubbish now, inspired an Italian who was with us, and he burst forth in an *improvisation* as wild in expression, as it was amusing and new. But darkness came on, and I could see no more. Two dragoons on horseback escorted us across the Campagna, and all I could hear in the distance was the beating of the horse’s hoofs upon the pavement. The rising mist obscured everything; and though I strained my eyes, I could see nothing through the mist and my window, for that, my fellow travelers would not let me open, on account of the *malaria*. But they told me all was misery, or ruin, and desolation, though this was once a colonnade of palaces and temples that led to Rome! Sleep was out of the question. All I could think of was Rome. I magnified the horrors around me, as we rode slowly over the land which Madame de Staël so beautifully describes as a land fatigued with glory. By the first light of morning, we were at the walls of Rome, entering the Porta del Popolo, a place so far from answering to my preconceived ideas of *ruined* Rome, that I found it to be one of the most beautiful places I had ever seen. Our passports were taken from us. Our course was then up the Corso to the *dogana*, or custom house, which is in part the ruins of an ancient temple.

The emotions of a traveler when entering a city which, in the New World, has ever been among his earliest dreams, where topography was

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<sup>293</sup> Cascata della Marmore — A man-made waterfall, 165m high, constructed by the ancient Romans in the Umbria region of Italy.

taught him even with the geography of his own land, are not such as can be well described, or if described, to be shared by others. It is one of those eras in a man's life which he never forgets, and the impressions go with him to his death. I was disappointed in everything that I saw at first, as is every man whose anticipations are linked with the poetic Rome of the past, and not the half-dead and half-living Rome of the present. I have as yet just seen enough to know that in years only, of study too, can this august city be visited. What a paltry account I shall give you then in my hurried marches of some twenty or thirty days!



## 69. Things in Rome

Rome,  
October, 1835.

Antiquity in the mind of an American assumes a new definition, the moment he puts foot within the walls of the city of Romulus and the Caesars. Christopher Columbus becomes to him as a contemporary. The brick and mortar ruins of Jamestown in Virginia seem to be but the ruins of yesterday. Our *Pilgrim Fathers* are *Fathers* no more. The abbeys and the cathedrals of our fatherland<sup>294</sup> lose all that charm with which we first beheld them, as we look upon these august ruins of the great Republic of antiquity, this once mighty city, this more than London even in population, of the Caesars. The living Rome looks like the rest of Italy. "The Gate of the People," the spouting fountains there, the restored obelisk of the Egyptians, the well crowded Corso, the *piazza* of Spain, these are places in which the living are seen, where the men of the present live and die, but in the old Rome of the republic and the Caesars, that are the courts and the halls of the dead, and the mightiest works of the proudest men, I could now track out by the putrefaction and the nauseous odors of the atmosphere that surrounds them. The filth of their environs is the best guide-book of their majesty.

The Roman Forum, the proud capitol ground of the old republic, as much richer once than ours as are the stars of heaven than the glow-worms of the earth—that holy spot where civilization, light and liberty streamed over the whole world, exalted by the temples of gods and the footsteps of god-like men, audible even now almost with the voice of Cicero, what is this spot at the present day? Chained convicts are digging twenty feet underground for the sacred way, around the bases of broken arches and columns. Near where the Rostrum was supposed to be is a filthy stable. A vile rail-fence hedges in the temple of Concord and Jupiter Tonans, and a mock of a soldier stands guarding the narrow pass of the shelving earth. Cattle are feeding around Jupiter Stator where Romulus rallied his legions against his Sabine invaders, the god upon whose arch Cicero apostrophized. Men are pitching stones in sport

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<sup>294</sup> Our fatherland — England (Britain)

over the *Sacra Via*. The foot of the Palatine is the stopping place of the market men, and hay is eaten by the oxen in mangers made of the marble and the glorious relics of Romans. A Cow-Yard (Campo Vaccino) the place has been called. The bleating of flocks and the tinkling of little bells now take the place of the eloquence of Cicero and Hortensius,<sup>295</sup> and swarms of lizards and rats and mice run highly the heaped-up earth *under* which a Scipio and a Horace and a Virgil trod. The proud Palatine where Roman liberty was cradled, in the thatched cottage of Romulus, and stifled in the golden palace of Nero—desolation sits brooding upon it. The earth even has overgrown bath and temple; there is a city underground, and the fox nestles in the brambles that choke up its corridors, and the chambers of princes have become the stables of the jackass! Modern man has attempted to make a home there, but the ruins have been too thick to abide in, and the vine was more easily grown over them, than the house reared above them.

The glory of the Capitoline Hill is gone, for this hill has so often quaked with revolutions—Gaul, republican, imperialist and papist having made it their battle-ground—that nothing of the ancient edifices are seen, and modern ones have taken their places. The Tarpeian rock, it is true, stands; but it is no longer that terrible rock whence traitors were thrown—for the earth was filled up at its base, and cliffs have tumbled from its summit. Among dirty cottages and dirtier people, beggars that were thick, and filth almost insufferable, I found a lane and the staircase of a house that led me to its top; but one view was enough, and I never wish for another. The poetry of the past is so shocked by the misery of the present, all around the Capitol, that the only lesson we learn is that one of horror, that we ourselves and even the greatest of godlike men, rear what monuments to their fame one may, must all experience the like destiny that those once consecrated spots are now suffering under. The rolling and ruinous car of time grinds up temples, hills and men, as easily as the insignificant worm that creeps.

I love, in a strange city, especially in a city like Rome, to wander about first without a guide or a guide-book, ignorant of what I see, and thus with no trumpet for fame, so that I may know what impressions strange objects make upon me—objects without the name. This mazy, misty

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<sup>295</sup> Hortensius (114 B.C.-50 B.C.) — Roman orator

wandering one may enjoy to his full content within the wide-stretched walls of Rome, and there feel as lonely and as sadly solitary as if within the broad-spread forests of Maine. Indeed, my thoughts have often left the thick-strewn ruins here, where one with difficulty at times climbs over masses of brick and mortar, to compare the prospect with those long, leafless, and lifeless over-branching pines through which a hurricane of fire has run with a track of black desolation. The winds have, perhaps, thrown down many, and choked up the way among the roots; and so have time and revolution here thrown down arches, and walls, and the traveler wanders in a wilderness of ruins, even within a city, without a voice to disturb him, or even a sound, save that of the owl or some other bird that makes its nest in the many crevices of the many lone walls. For Rome is, and *has been*, indeed, a mighty city, and all that is said of it is true, and more is true, as it is one of those few places which from its grandeur, beauty and sublimity, even, is so much above us, that we cannot exaggerate in speaking of it. If it had no past, the present alone would be worth a pilgrimage from America; and if there were no present—if all were as the ruins of the Palatine or the broken temples of the Forum, yet the past would be enough to pay for the pilgrimage. All the *ages* of Rome have been grand in their way. The republic was simple, yet august, free, powerful, and proud. The empire was rich, dazzling and glorious. The second empire of the pope has been as renowned as each of the others, and as powerful too, with its religious sway. It is the city of the apostles, as well as of the republicans and Caesars. But even Rome, "*the Niobe of Nations*,"<sup>296</sup> as Byron so beautifully calls it, with the carcasses of so many ruins encumbering it, is the most wonderful place of the earth. Its churches are uneclipsed in splendor. Its galleries of the arts have no equals. All Greece, all Italy, Egypt even, have their bright focus here. It is the home of the fine arts, the great school of artists from all the civilized world, and what a student sees elsewhere, is but the starlight compared with the full brightness of the moon. Beauty has made it her abiding place, even in death.

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<sup>296</sup> "Niobe of Nations" — Byron. *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*. The poet draws an analogy between ruined Rome and the Greek mythological character Niobe; after her 14 children were murdered, they remained scattered and unburied for nine days. Brooks retells the story in Letter 90.

The marble Apollo of Grecian art presides in the Vatican, with a look, an air, and a tread worthy of the god of eloquence, of music, of poetry and arts. That miracle of architecture and wealth, St Peter's, is here. Grandeur is yet enthroned upon the vast walls of the Coliseum. But what need be said of a city where a Michelangelo left his *Last Judgment*, and Raphael his lodges and his *Transfiguration*, except to add that the treasures of the past and the present time are there, and that in a year of ardent study, a man cannot see all, and understand all that ought to be seen. I come home every night weary with the investigation of new things of which I never dreamed, fatigued and exhausted with such exciting mental efforts, and find hourly that a claim is laid upon my knowledge of mythology and of antiquity, of men past and present, and upon my taste and eyes too, that years of reading and observation can gratify me with. An Englishman or an American, educated as the people are, is but an infant in Rome, by the side even of a common *valet de place*, who has been bred and born in its study.

But I had no year to spend in the re-reading of Latin classics from Livy to Tibullus,<sup>297</sup> nor the thousand and one authors who have written on the antiquities of Rome—many of them being antiquarians here, even before the discovery of America. Nevertheless, if a man has leisure, nowhere can Virgil be read with such interest as in Italy, or Horace as in Rome, and history is always doubly interesting when studied and traced upon the spot. Gibbon<sup>298</sup> must be fresh in memory for the *Decline and Fall*, and Livy for the rise and growth—else much of that charm with which history crowns everything it touches, is lost. I sallied forth at first, as I was going to say, in my former paragraph, without guide or man, and as my first thoughts will at least be newer than my second, I will tell what they are.

I followed the Corso, which is the Broadway<sup>299</sup> of the modern Rome, but lined with palaces though filled with the arts, a street I may add not wider than Wall Street, New York, and with a sidewalk upon which only two persons can conveniently pass. I came to the Capitol, I hardly know how; I ascended the steps, observed the statues there, and then three

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<sup>297</sup> Tibullus (c55-19 BC) — Minor Roman poet; little is known of his life

<sup>298</sup> Edward Gibbon (1737-1794) — English historian; author of *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*

<sup>299</sup> Broadway — Major North-South street of Manhattan, New York City

edifices that form three sides of the area; but never would one judge that this was the Capitoline Hill, the place of temples, chapels, altars, the citadel and schools of ancient Rome. I walked over this area, and descending the hill upon the other side, looked down upon the desolation of the Forum. Broken columns, a pavement seen thirty or forty feet under the earth that has been dug from over it, ruined art and grandeur contrasting strangely with meanness, poverty, and filth; convicts excavating, or a student perhaps with his pencil, copying, tell you that this is some place important; but unless a description of the book is vivid upon your memory, you never would dream it was the Roman Forum. I descended steps, and walked over what was once the Sacra Via. I tried to read the Latin inscriptions on some of the temples; but this was not easy, as they are so blackened and disfigured; but yet I read enough to awaken and to enlighten a little my curiosity.

Through a range of trees, I ventured my way over a graveled walk. A church<sup>300</sup> on my left peeping out from amidst Corinthian columns, the portico of which seemed to have been buried to half the height of the pillars, the cornice in front gone, but sculptured in the friezes at the sides with griffons and candelabra, attracted my attention; and tracing the shaded route, and going around this church in the filthy alleys, I found this church was nestled in the embraces of the temple of Antoninus and Faustina,<sup>301</sup> the holy God in heathen arms! I went on further; vast masses of brick towering high with prodigious arches met my eager gaze. There I afterwards learnt was the ruined basilica of the Christians of the empire. As I went on farther, ruin thickened upon ruin. The triumphal arch of Titus might be guessed at from its *relievos*. The colossal ruins opposite, antiquarians are deliberating about to this very day. Some of the Coliseum was before me, the mighty mien of which there is no mistaking. Its name is written, as it were, on its grand and towering walls.

I retraced my steps, for I saw that I was wandering in a wilderness of bricks and there was a weight and an oppression in the loneliness of the place. I got into the Forum Boarium at last. I saw the Cloaca Maxima, a little clear stream of excellent water was then running through its

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<sup>300</sup> Chiesa di San Lorenzo in Miranda

<sup>301</sup> Faustina the Elder (c.100-141) — Wife of the Roman emperor Antoninus Pius (86-161)

vaults. There was not a man, nor a breathing thing to be seen about this once busy spot, this Wall Street of the bankers and the tradesmen. The arch of Septimus Severus<sup>302</sup> was there, disfigured and broken. The immense marble blocks of Janus Quadrifrons<sup>303</sup> which had been buried deep in the earth, stands also there. I knew not then the name of a single thing. I could not even dream what the highly adorned place once might be. But now it was the offal ground of Rome. Vaults seem to be emptied there. A quick rapid view is all one can take.

I retraced my steps again. I crossed the Forum. I went through the ruins of the basilica of Constantine. I found myself soon in yet another stranger position, where life was mingled with desolation, where man seemed to have made a discovery, and to exult in his success. Huge masses of broken granite columns stood up in regular order. The earth had been cleared out for a wide space, and the area cleared had been fenced in. A Doric column, adorned all over with *bassi relievi*, was placed at the further end. There was no mistaking this, for it must be the historic column of Trajan. Trophies, eagles, wreaths, all proclaimed it; but why was St. Peter<sup>304</sup> standing on the top of Trajan's column, the apostle of peace, surmounting the sculptured wreath, proclaiming a Roman emperor's triumph over the fallen Dacians? The French, I learnt, made this excavation, but yet they were the propagandists of arts as well as of arms.

I returned home to my lodgings in the *piazza* of Spain, amazed and confounded in my unguided wanderings among the ruins of Rome. My impressions were that the world has been retrograding, and that modern pride should stand abashed before even the ruins of antiquity. I felt for the moment, in contrasting the humiliation of the present with the grandeur of the past, a sense of shame, and an awful fear, that the human race was going backward rather than forward. Certain it is that *this* Rome is eighteen hundred years behind the Rome of the Christian era; and were it not for science, how art and taste would tremble in the contrast, and what little even eloquence and poetry could say!

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<sup>302</sup> Septimus Severus (145-211) — Roman emperor

<sup>303</sup> Jannus Quadrifrons — Four-faced figure of Janus, the Roman god of transitions and duality

<sup>304</sup> Saint Peter — One of the twelve apostles of Jesus Christ

The Tiber, the far-famed Tiber, which Roman poetry has adorned with so many charms, was one of the next objects of my visit; but the *golden* Tiber I found to be like the Po, a *yellow* muddy stream, which in America would be classed among the streams of the eighth or tenth class. The Androscoggin in Maine is a larger river. Cape Fear river in North Carolina rolls a volume of water far larger, and I only mention this in comparison because it is the only one of the prominent southern rivers that at this moment strikes my attention. But upon the little Tiber, as is London on the Thames, was situated that mighty city which once ruled not only the land but the waves. However, the Roman poets are not so much to be derided; and an American should [not] make the Ohio or the Red River of his own land a standard for the measurement of European rivers—for the Tiber is among the considerable rivers of Europe as to size, when seen as it runs through Rome. I venture to say, however, that no man whose ideas of the Tiber were formed from the reading of Roman classics, ever looked upon the stream itself without a keen disappointment upon finding his magnificent visions of dazzling gold to be settled down in turbid water and yellow mud. The golden Mississippi would be a proper name, from the extent, as well as the color of its current, and from the value of it as one of the great arteries of an immense country.

The Tiber exhibits at present nothing very remarkable upon it, but its ruins. There is no commerce there or signs of commerce—and the only *galleys* of the present day are little ill-built boats that never trust their heads far beyond Ostia, the ancient port. The bridges, however, or the relics of bridges, have a history of intense interest, as well as the stream that has borne upon it so many vast events. The bridge of St. Angelo,<sup>305</sup> adorned with statues, angels and saints, is the most beautiful of the bridges of the present day; but the wanderer never thinks of them when he is passing it, while he sees before him the mighty mausoleum of Hadrian,<sup>306</sup> and at his side the triumphal bridge on which the Roman heroes passed triumphant to the Capitol. The little relics of the Sublician bridge, peeping at times above the surface of the Tiber when the water

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<sup>305</sup> Ponte Sant'Angelo — Bridge across the River Tiber, Rome, built 134 A.D.

<sup>306</sup> Castel Sant'Angelo — Mausoleum built in 139 A.D. beside the River Tiber, in Rome, for the emperor Hadrian (76-138) and family; later used as a fortress and castle

is lower, recall to one's memory the famous fight of Horatius Cocles,<sup>307</sup> when with his single arm he beat back Porsena's troops, and thus preserved the Capitol: and though even little or nothing is left of the ancient Aemilian bridge,<sup>308</sup> yet, when one sees where it was, the Ponte Molle of the present day, he understands the history of the arrest of Catiline's<sup>309</sup> conspirators under the consulate of Cicero, as well as the story of the battle of the Christian Constantine with the tyrant Maxentius.<sup>310</sup> Of the eight ancient bridges of the Romans, there now exist only two, and some ruins of two others.

One of the many huge masses of stone that attract the attention of a stranger in Rome, is the vast mole of the emperor Hadrian, who in laying thus broadly the basis of his tomb, and piling thus high upon such foundations a mausoleum, grander than modern palaces, little dreamed what a citadel he was making for others to fight in and from, and how contemptible his own proud ashes would be in it. The tomb of the Roman ruler for three centuries has been the citadel of Rome. Rome has been defended there. The Popes have made it their castle, and Rome was theirs when the mole of Hadrian belonged to them. The crusaders have assaulted it in vain. Frederic Barbarossa battled against it. The Gothic Theodoric<sup>311</sup> made his prison there. The triumphant rage of the whole city has been spent upon it in a vain attempt to dislodge their tyrants; but the indissoluble structure has withstood force and fame, and is standing yet as a massive fabric that bids fair for an existence in the centuries to come, though nothing is left of its builder, not even his bones or his dust—nothing of his relics even, but the walls of his mole and his marble bust. So firm has been this mole as a castle of defense and assault, that it has been remarked that, by a lamentable coincidence,

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<sup>307</sup> Horatius Cocles (6th. C. B.C.) — Roman army officer, honored for his role in defending the Pons Sublicius (bridge) against the army of Lars Porsena

<sup>308</sup> Pons Aemilius — Nowadays known as Ponte Rotto. This is different from the Ponte Molle (now Ponte Milvio)

<sup>309</sup> Catiline (108 B.C.-62 B.C.) — Roman senator, leader of a conspiracy against Cicero's consulship in 63 B.C. Letters revealing the plot were intercepted at the Ponte Milvio, and the conspirators executed immediately. Catiline fled, and subsequently died in battle.

<sup>310</sup> Maxentius (c.278-312) — Roman emperor; defeated in 312 by Constantine the Great at the Battle of the Milvian Bridge (and perhaps drowned)

<sup>311</sup> (perhaps) Theodoric the Great (454-526) — King of the Ostrogoths, ruler of Italy, king of the Visigoths

the tomb of one of the Roman despots has helped to perpetuate the subjection of the Roman people.

Far different, however, from this has been the destiny of the mausoleum of Augustus on the north side of what was once the Campus Martius. The classical reader may perhaps have in his memory some one of the descriptions which the Roman writers have given of this proud mausoleum, once holding the ashes of the masters of mankind, and built to brave eternity. If so, he will recollect that it was incrustated with marble, and was raised to a great height, so as to form a stately dome. The summit was adorned with a statue of Augustus himself. Two Egyptian obelisks stood at the entrance, and evergreens were planted on the broad belts that marked the divisions of its height and its succeeding stories. Graves surrounded the imperial pile; and the Bustum, where the bodies of the Augustan family were burnt, was not far from that. This was the great receptacle of the ashes of Augustus himself, and of Germanicus<sup>312</sup> too. Marcellus<sup>313</sup> was also buried here, the beautiful and pathetic lines upon whose death in Virgil's *Aeneid* are so widely famous. But, above all, Julius Caesar was buried here—that man so wonderful in everything he touched, and so wonderful in all his life—whether he was heading his legions in the battlefield, or mounted on the rostrum of the forum—whether he was making love with the charming Cleopatra, or disputing with the stern Cato<sup>314</sup>—whether playing in puns and pretty sayings, or writing military annals—astonishing men when [alive] by the versatility of his genius, and confounding the world by the majesty of his death.

For this mausoleum, in which were the relics of such a man, I sought in company with an English friend. We coasted along the banks of the Tiber, and inquired of the passers-by where it was, but we often asked in vain; for, though we entered the shops of the very neighborhood to inquire, many could not tell us where it was. But we discovered it at last. We followed up a narrow street that stretches towards the Tiber. We turned an alley, and found ourselves in a place, the suburbs of which

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<sup>312</sup> Germanicus (15 B.C.-19 A.D.) — Prominent general of the Roman Empire

<sup>313</sup> Marcus Claudius Marcellus (42 B.C.-22 B.C.) — Nephew and designated heir of Roman emperor Augustus

<sup>314</sup> Cato the Younger (95 B.C.-46 B.C.) — Roman politician and orator, renowned for his moral integrity

were so very filthy, devoted to such base purposes as they were that, on account of the exhalations, existence around seemed to be insupportable there. We entered at last an ill-looking door of an ill-looking house, and, after ascending some crumbling steps, found ourselves entering, under the escort of an old woman, what was once the burial-place of mighty men of Rome. *Pigs had their pens in the sepulchral chamber.* Where the ashes of men deified as gods had rested, *cattle had been fed.* The cells of the august dead were the stables of the living brute. A fortress this place was during the Dark or Middle Ages. Then it was hollowed out as a vineyard, and at last it became a circus, to serve for bullfights and fireworks! The gravestones even have been used as a measure for weight; and the sign that the Julian race sculptured, as a mark that their august remains were there, the Romans adopted to tell how much was 300 weight<sup>315</sup> of corn! The sarcophagus of Agrippina,<sup>316</sup> the grand-daughter of Augustus "the Divine," stands tenantless in an open court on the hill of the Capitol; but where Augustus himself is, or his sarcophagus—or Caesar—or Germanicus—no man can tell. The groves, I need not say, are gone. The dome has tumbled down. Where were the evergreens, is the railing of the circus. In short, but few places more miserable than this could now be found in Rome: and such is the story of the mausoleum of the proud and divine Augustus! Such is the fabric in which he hoped to rest in peace! Such is the value of that fame that seeks to trumpet itself by gorgeous edifices, or that fixes upon any other memorials than those God himself has reared, such as the everlasting hills.



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<sup>315</sup> 300 weight — Three hundredweight = three hundred pounds

<sup>316</sup> Agrippina the Elder (14 B.C.-33 A.D.) — Granddaughter of Emperor Augustus; Wife of Germanicus

## 70. The Vatican

Rome,  
October, 1835.

Untenanted as Rome now is by strangers, for the cholera and quarantines have blocked up almost all the avenues that foreigners take to enter it, and alarmed as the whole population are by the reports of the cholera in Venice and in Florence, it seems to be as sad and as mournful a place as ever man was permitted to dwell in. Half of it is indeed one great tomb; and the man whose eyes have been accustomed to witness the energy and activity of the English race in the two worlds, can hardly see life even in what is really moving and breathing. It requires all the exaggerations my fancy can create, to realize the idea that this city was once as large as London, and with edifices immensely richer, and that the now uninhabited and sickly Campagna was once thickly filled with villas and palaces as much more sumptuous than those that surround the city of the Thames, as is the bright, luminous sky of Rome to the dark, dim, and cloudy atmosphere of London.

But there is no doubt of the fact, though Rome at present is not so populous as Philadelphia by twenty or thirty thousand inhabitants, where more business is now done in a single hour, at least in a single day, than is done in Rome for a year. Tacitus<sup>317</sup> says that in the reign of Claudius<sup>318</sup> the population of Rome was 5,984,072 souls, and Eusebius<sup>319</sup> swells the amount to 9,300,000; but as it is difficult to define what was meant by Rome, whether all Roman citizens were included, no matter where they lived, or the whole of Italy, which probably was the fact by Eusebius' computation, commentators have come to the conclusion that the least amount of Roman population in the days of its prosperity must have been one million, but probably as high as two, or even three, taking in all those within, and those

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<sup>317</sup> Tacitus (c.56-c.120) — Roman historian

<sup>318</sup> Claudius (10 B.C.-54 A.D.) — Roman emperor

<sup>319</sup> Eusebius (c.260-c.340) — Greek historian of Christianity

immediately under, the Aurelian walls—which, by the way, are only about seventeen miles in circumference. But this mighty population, be it more or be it less, was reduced in the fourteenth century as low as 33,000; and under Leo X,<sup>320</sup> when it began to revive, it was only 85,000; and even now, it is probably less than 140,000—though about that amount is said to be the population of the present day.

Judge then, only from the statement of these figures, what must have been, and what is, the present appearance of Rome—particularly bearing in mind that the whole of that broad-spread and once fertile plain from the base of the Apennines to the Mediterranean, once thickly clustered with habitations, is now almost deserted, or tenanted only at the hazard of life, as are the swamps in the neighborhood of Charleston, (S. C.) so that a modern Roman banker—Torlonia<sup>321</sup> is his name, owns whole fields of the ruins of what were once the august habitations of emperors, or the playground of the Romans, such as the Circus of Caracalla.<sup>322</sup> The tombs of mighty families also are within his district, and among them the lofty mausoleum of Cecilia Metella,<sup>323</sup> about which, and around which, so thick are the bricks and mortar of ancient ruins, that it would be almost impossible to plough the fields.

Thus, ruined and deserted is the Rome of old. And though all is eloquent with a moral, yet the city and suburbs are sad and mournful, and every day this living among the dead makes me sigh more for the sight of the living. I find it to be the sanctuary of the scholar, where he may revel in the full glory of his exciting pursuits; and it may be well chosen as the sanctuary of the Christian too—for where can a moral be pointed with a force so keen as upon ruins of man, and man's ambition, so thick as these? But, yet, it is the city of the dead. There is no life here, such as is seen even in the solitudes of America, or in the glens of Scotland. The sky is bright. The air is inviting. But the people look, talk and walk as if they belonged to another time. There is a *consumption* upon everything.

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<sup>320</sup> Pope Leo X (1475-1521) — Born into the Medici family of Florence; papacy 1513-1521

<sup>321</sup> Early in the 19th century, the Torlonia family acquired a valuable collection of statuary, now held in the Torlonia Museum, Rome.

<sup>322</sup> Caracalla (188-217) — Roman emperor

<sup>323</sup> Mausoleum of Cecilia Metella — Large and well-preserved, the tomb dates from 1st century B.C.

A gloom hangs over the devoted city. It seems to be struggling with death; and death by and by will have it, even in spite of the administrations of man.

But, as my last letter was chiefly upon the ruins of Rome, and as this, I see, is running that way, I will turn my pen from what is so saddening and so gloomy, to write to you of what there exists at the present moment, beautiful and grand, even beyond the picturings of the warmest fancy, before that fancy finds its originals here. I am a raging Anti-Catholic when I see squadrons of priests crowding the streets of Rome; and Satan himself tempts me strongly to be at least an infidel, when I hear every church resounding with ceremonies from morning to night. But, when I enter the palace of the Vatican, and exchange "the saints" and "the angels" for the choicest works of Grecian and Roman art, and remember that the Popes are the men who have collected and preserved these precious monuments of antique workmanship, I lose half of my rage, and all my infidelity is at an end.

The love of art, the taste for beauty, the civility and the politeness that mark the Catholic priest wherever you see him, (Ireland except,) are the most tempting arguments I find in favor of his system; and my great surprise, in traveling over the world, is that all the world are not smitten by the men, and the works of such men, who have enjoined in their religion all that can touch, sway, charm, or awe the human heart. Certain it is, I shall think the better of the whole race of the Popes for having been in the Vatican, and the worse of the effects of religion upon society for having been in Rome, though all people must be miserable under the sway of priests alone, no matter what their professions are—for when the church rules the state, and there is no state but the church, so much is thought of heaven, and so little of earth, that the result undoubtedly would be as in Rome—the building up of little costly heavens, like St. Peter's, say, and the employment of earth's laborers to feed and pay the laborers upon this heaven upon the earth.

The sum of the argument is, that in preparing for the other world, this world is entirely forgotten; and, as the earth will not produce without cultivation, and commerce will not flourish without men and means, the consequence is what we see in Rome—the whole treasures of the state within its churches, which are the richest on the earth, and misery and

beggary enough among mankind. A Christian will say this is indeed an unknown sin, but it is nevertheless the fact—*Rome is too religious*. There is a need of the government of men exclusively devoted to earth's concerns to take care of men; and as there are always sinners enough among the managers of such a government to look out well for the things of this world, the priests come in very opportunely to lead the people to forget at times such things, and then to think of heaven.

What I say then, perhaps, ought to be directed against the government of Rome, and not against the church, which, though centered in one head, are very different things in fact. There seems to be as much in a priest to unfit him to govern mankind, as there is in a sinner to rule in heaven—the reason undoubtedly being, that politicians must at times pull and haul, and then let go and pull again: whereas the priest never lets go, but always pulls, either because his conscience troubles him, or that he judges man by other than worldly rules—whereas the politician's conscience is tenderer, and very elastic at times. *Conscience*, too, is the devil and all, when it is not upon the right road. A man that has a *conscience* will never stir a step, even if a world is tumbling on him—whereas *reason* in such a case would run and scamper like a rocket. I have seen a man with a conscience many a time (I do not speak literally,) puffing and puffing to blow a whirlwind back—whereas, when a reasonable man came along, he mounted it at once, and safely rode it off. Our *souls* are for the church government, but our *bodies* are for our own, and our fellow men.

But to the Vatican—not to talk of its "bulls," and its "thunders," though they were once so terrible all over the Christian world, that even the servants of kings would not touch their masters, nor the food that fed them. The Vatican is the papal palace, or the home of the Popes, though the Popes do not live there all the year, (if they live there at all,) on account of the *malaria* to which the situation at times is exposed. St. Peter's and the Vatican Palace are side by side, and the greatest church in the world is in companionship with the greatest palace; for the Vatican has so many rooms, that none count them alike—some making the number 4,422, others 11,000, and others yet 13,000, including the subterranean. The city of Turin, which seems to occupy an area as large as Boston, and the Vatican, are pronounced to have about an equal circumference, from which you judge whether the tenant and owner of

such a palace had not a right to make a bull, and to thunder a little now and then. But be this as it may; for, if he had not a right to thunder on account of the extent of his palace, no man had a better right to thunder over what was in it. The whole revenue of the United States for half a century, would not be able to buy the works of art here collected.

Though I had been seeing some things as I had travelled along in Italy, and felt even a little wiser for having been in England, and though I had believed my curiosity long ago to be all dead, surfeited as it had been with novelties—yet young Ben Franklin with his two loaves of bread under his arm, when he first entered the city of William Penn,<sup>324</sup> did not feel *queerer* than I did, when I first came into these dazzling galleries of art. If a young bashful boy, when he is first making his entrance into society, remembers his first impressions of female beauty in the bright saloon, when all is glory, and all with him is love, and every whisper, and every smile touch him to the heart, then he may have some idea of my impressions in this saloon of mine; only remembering that, though my marble and porphyry statues cannot talk, nor sing, nor dance, yet none of his that are singing or dancing have the tenth part of the beauty of mine.

Jonathan<sup>325</sup> never went snapping his whip through the streets of Boston, nor with a droller feeling than I did from one end of these galleries to the other. Long ago, from drawings and engravings, I had formed an acquaintance with many of the *gentlemen* and *ladies* here, and *Mr. Belvedere Apollo*, and the *Mrs. Muse Thalia, Polyhymnia* and all, I was delighted to see. Demosthenes<sup>326</sup> and Cicero were old acquaintances of mine, that schoolboy lessons had at least impressed upon my memory. The philosophers of Greece were to be seen, and the Roman emperors, and so were all the gods from Jupiter downward—to say nothing of fauns and bacchantes,<sup>327</sup> I know not how many. The personages, of whom I had been reading for years, were all before me. Ideas which

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<sup>324</sup> Benjamin Franklin, in his autobiography, tells of the occasion when he unintentionally bought more rolls of bread than he needed, and felt an obligation to share the surplus "riches" with others less fortunate.

<sup>325</sup> Brother Jonathan — Personification of New England; emblem of the early United States, comparable to the later Uncle Sam

<sup>326</sup> Demosthenes (384 B.C.-322 B.C.) — Athenian statesman and orator

<sup>327</sup> Bacchante — Female follower of Bacchus; a priestess

have ever been seeking for objects on which to fix themselves, were embodied at once. An admirable commentary I found them to be on all that I had read of Roman or Grecian story. A new book was opened, a living book as it were, and, in my fancy, I carried myself back hundreds of years into an age and an era where arts and men were as renowned as those of the present day.

The man who goes into the sculpture gallery of the Vatican for the first time, forgets the ages that have elapsed since the executions of the works that he sees. The numerous relics which a lucky chance has so well preserved, give him an intimacy, as it were, with the Roman and Grecian ages that he never felt before. The Scipios are known the better when the plain sarcophagus of Scipio Barbatus<sup>328</sup> is seen. The attributes given the Roman deities one can understand the more when one sees the Jupiter or the Juno<sup>329</sup> that a Grecian chisel has carved. Mythology is personified there as it was with the ancients, as well as ideal as it is with us. The sculptured car, and the marble horses attached, give a vivid idea of a chariot race of old; and the halls of the massive and solemn Egyptian relics, with their unfathomable hieroglyphics,<sup>330</sup> remind one of that dark and doubtful people, whose history and whose laws are so obscure to us. The scholar feels within these halls that a flood of light is bursting upon him, such as he never saw before, and the lover of beauty is charmed with objects that even his *beau ideal* can never draw in a more graceful or grander form. Pomp and majesty also are enthroned in every room, and the mere vulgar admiration of wealth, or the products of wealth, is satiated, and more.

The beautiful *Belvedere Apollo* is here, and such a man the eyes of man never saw before. The agonized *Laocoon* is also here, with his hapless boys, and such agony is *written* on marble as never man described with pen. Both of these statues are Grecian, and the last is the joint work of three Rhodian sculptors, and was found in the Baths of Titus, having been buried there for years. Here is the *Meleager*,<sup>331</sup> also asserted to be

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<sup>328</sup> Lucius Cornelius Scipio Barbatus (d. c.280 B.C.) — Roman consul; defeated the Etruscans. His sarcophagus was discovered in the tomb of The Scipios.

<sup>329</sup> Juno — Roman goddess of marriage (among other roles)

<sup>330</sup> Contrary to Brooks, the Egyptian hieroglyphic writing scheme had been fully deciphered in the 1820s by Champollion.

<sup>331</sup> Meleager — Greek mythological hero

one of the finest sculptures that the world can boast. The *Venus*, the *Ganymede*, the *Adonis*,<sup>332</sup> the group of the Nile and his offspring, nymphs, Amazons,<sup>333</sup> the Danaides,<sup>334</sup> Dianas, torsos, candelabras, cinerary urns, vases of all sizes, magnificent sphinxes in alabaster, vestals, animals of many kinds in marble and porphyry—things innumerable, in short, are to be seen in galleries where you walk at least a mile. A statue of Marcellus, a young wild boar in *nero antico*, a swan, a semi-colossal statue of Tiberius in Pentelic marble, *Silenus with a Tiger*, the *Father of Trajan*, the *Minerva Medici*, a semi-colossal statue of *Fortune*, the celebrated *Belvedere Torso*, by Apollonius of Athens,<sup>335</sup> a *Sappho*, Juno as *Queen of Heaven*, are but few of the many remarkable works of ancient artists.

The relics of the lustrous days of old and shining Rome, that plunderer of the world, are gathered here. Pilasters of the purest alabaster, mosaics of workmanship the most curious, the rich sarcophagi of emperors, and baths of basalt, granite and porphyry, the columns of Grecian and Roman temples upholding domes of faultless purity. But I must stop, for who can ever narrate, or who would fain attempt to describe the details of these halls of beauty? Oh, we must steal them all, for we can never have the like without. Old Rome plundered other republics, and, when we are strong enough, we must plunder her. The rascals even stole their wives, the Sabine women, and as the Arts are the mistress of republics, why should not ours run away with them when it can? You see what a shameless sinner I am when in such a place as this, and though I am far from approving the principle, nevertheless I cannot help thinking that Bonaparte would have been a blockhead if he had not taken the finest of these things to adorn the Louvre of the Tuileries. But when we steal them, no Holy Alliance will be able to get them back.



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<sup>332</sup> Adonis — In Greek mythology, an eternally young god

<sup>333</sup> Amazons — In Greek mythology, a tribe of women warriors

<sup>334</sup> Danaides — Daughters of Greek mythological figure Danaus, king of Egypt

<sup>335</sup> Apollonius The Athenian (1st. C. B.C.) — Greek sculptor and copyist

## 71. The Vatican (continued)

Rome,  
October, 1835.

All the wonders of the wonderful Vatican are not, however, in the sculpture galleries alone, though there is nothing in beauty and art to be compared with them in the habitable globe. The Lodges of Raphael, as they are called, rooms which his pencil has adorned with *The School of Athens*, *The Battle of Constantine*, and others, and *God dividing the light from darkness*, *Joseph explaining the dream of Pharaoh*, and many more frescoes by the same master, which the Christian world are copying to this day as illustrations for the Bible. *The Last Judgment*, in the Sistine chapel of the Vatican, is a fresco by Michelangelo, on which he worked three years, and is pronounced to be one of the sublimest pieces of art. The French were copying it, when I was in the chapel, for Louis Philippe, and what I saw was so faded, that it could with difficulty be traced out at all. Michelangelo has said that painting in oil was but boys' play in comparison with this of fresco; but what a pity it is, that a work demanding such genius, and such labor, should perish so quickly! The *Prophets and the Sibyls*, the figure of the *Deity*, and those of *Adam and Eve* are frescoes upon the ceiling of this chapel, by the same great man. In another gallery is the celebrated painting of the *Transfiguration* by Raphael, the *Savior* in which is a miracle upon the canvas. The head, in particular, has an expression of sublimity and glory which I never saw equaled before, and which impresses the beholder with as strong an emotion as the most beautiful poetry or the most powerful prose. Domenichino's *Communion of St. Jerome* contends in fame even with this masterpiece of Raphael; and the contest is between them as to "*which is the greater picture of the two most renowned in the world?*" This little gallery—little in comparison with the other galleries of Italy, has but few pictures, but such as it has, are the specimens of the art. And though Raphael's may be the first, yet such pictures as Titian's *Madonna and the Saints*, and Guido's *Crucifixion of St. Peter* are the second—and with such a second, what must the first be?

This much may be said of the arts in this vast Vatican, and of works which cannot be seen even in weeks, and studied only in months and years. But there is yet another apartment, as astonishing in its way as are the arts in theirs—and that is the Library. The hall in which this is placed is by far the largest I have ever seen; and every little division in this magnificent hall is beautifully kept and adorned with frescoes, or other exhibitions of art. Judge what must be the value of its contents, from the fact that its collections began in the fifth century by the pontiff St. Hilarius, and that from that day to the present, the pontiffs of Rome have increased its treasures. There are forty thousand manuscripts in this superb apartment, exclusive of the printed volumes. The vestibule of this library contains Chinese works, relative to anatomy, astronomy, and geography, together with two columns, bearing ancient inscriptions. In the great saloon, adorned with frescoes, and with Etruscan and Grecian vases, cinerary urns, sarcophagi, one of which is of white marble, with a winding sheet of asbestos, and holds some of the rarest manuscripts in the world. Hebrew, Syriac, Arabic and Armenian bibles are there. A Greek bible of the sixth century, in capital letters, written according to the version of the Septuagint, and from which all the subsequent copies have been taken, is also shown. A Greek manuscript containing the Acts of the Apostles in letters of gold, a gift to a Pope by the Queen of Cyprus, a manuscript [of] Pliny, with beautiful miniatures of animals, a Virgil of the fifth century written in capital letters, and illuminated with miniatures, representing the Trojans and the Latians in the dress of their own times, a science of the ninth century, illuminated with ancient marks, a treatise on the seven sacraments, composed by Henry VIII of England, and original letters between that Prince and Anne Boleyn,<sup>336</sup> are among the many curious objects pointed out—beautiful and historical too, as to the progress of art, as well as ancient, for such splendid books in manuscript, as I have spoken of, show what infinite care was bestowed upon a work in ancient times, and how much it must have cost.

Two long galleries, in the long hall of the library, branch to the right and left from this grand saloon. Fine columns of porphyry, two of which with figures on the top were taken from the arch of Constantine, support the

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<sup>336</sup> Anne Boleyn (c.1501-1536) — Second wife of King Henry VIII of England

gallery on the right. Here are modern paintings—presses<sup>337</sup> filled with books, Tuscan and Grecian vases, and, at the extremity of the gallery, is a cabinet containing [a] beautiful cameo of Jupiter, Asclepius,<sup>338</sup> Etruscan antiquities, human hair found in an ancient sarcophagus, ancient seals, rings, &c. with the finest bust extant of Augustus. The gallery on the left is equally splendid and equally curious. Here are seen lamps and other antiquities found in the catacombs—instruments used in torturing the primitive Christians, and a portrait of the emperor Charlemagne<sup>339</sup> in stucco. Near the end of this gallery is a cabinet superbly enriched with porphyry, and other precious marbles, hung round with specimens of the Egyptian papyrus, and over this is a ceiling, the masterpiece of Mengs,<sup>340</sup> in fresco. But I am only compiling a catalog; and yet this is necessary to give you a faint idea of what employed me for hours even in the outward observation of, without touching, or reading, or seeing even the printed books, all of which are kept in cases, or presses, and called for from the catalog.

Thus, hurriedly, have I taken you through some of the apartments of the Vatican, stopping only to notice a thing here and there—but of its treasures, of its wealth, of its grandeur and beauty, no pen can give even a humble idea. I pardon all the sins at *my* confessional, of which they say the Popes have been guilty, for this proud monument of their taste, and their fame. No bigotry, no fanaticism, no injustice has presided over these splendid halls; for Roman god and Egyptian idol have as high a pedestal as Christian saint. The liberality, the enthusiasm, that have thus brought, collected, and preserved, and adorned these masterpieces of master men, are worthy of all praise; and whatever the Protestant may find to disgust him in Roman government or Roman chapel, he will forget all here in unbounded admiration for the care that has been bestowed upon *Learning* and upon *Art*. This, Roman pontiffs have done, this, the government of Rome, the government of church and state in one, favored it is true by its position amid the ruins of the Rome of old, though no Raphael, nor Michelangelo were *dug* from them.

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<sup>337</sup> Press — (per Webster) closet, cupboard

<sup>338</sup> Asclepius — In Greek mythology, the god of medicine

<sup>339</sup> Charlemagne (c.747-814) — Charles I; King of the Franks; King of the Lombards; Emperor of the Romans; unified much of Europe

<sup>340</sup> Anton Raphael Mengs (1728-1779) — German Bohemian Neoclassical painter

But, if such are the doings of a hierarchy and a despotism, what is the duty of a free people, governing themselves, justly boasting of their privileges, but at the same time loudly proclaiming that it is their aim to enlarge, to elevate, and to cultivate the minds of men to the utmost possible extent? Do Americans believe that there is no *intellect*, but in that which the pen traces on paper, or the voice thunders out in the forum? Has the mechanic, with the exalted plans of a Fulton,<sup>341</sup> no intellect, no soul, even if he never puts pen to paper, nor makes a speech in public? The chisel, I tell them, can embody a thought with tenfold the power of the pen; and if the works of the chisel could be printed and everywhere spread, they would believe it. The pencil begins when the pen has exhausted its utmost power, and when a Milton or a Byron stops, a Raphael starts. What Byron, for an example of the power of sculpture, has so beautifully written of the dying gladiator of the Capitol, the Grecian artist has made sublime and awful, even in marble. The British bard soared and stretched and soared, but yet he only *described*, while the sculptor makes the thing itself, the very man, the very gladiator, and of marble too. Not a faculty, God has given us, that cannot be developed more than it is; and when we limit the patronage of intellect to men of letters, we underrate the souls entrusted to us. The eye can drink in pleasure as well as the mouth. He who touches our hearts, or elevates our ideas by addressing them, deserves as much our gratitude as he who does it by our ears.

Let us not boast, then, of enlarging the mind, cry not too clamorously that "*we are the greatest people on earth*,"<sup>342</sup> till we begin to have some idea of that intellect that acts even in a higher sphere than eloquence or poetry. We may cut up the earth as we may, and dash about the rocks as we please, in making railroads and canals, and a flood or an earthquake can do the like, and, in all this, a shovel and gunpowder are as important instruments as we are; but there is a destiny higher and beyond that, a region more of the soul even on this earth for mortal man, and perhaps we are better fitted for that heaven which Christianity promises us, and Christian poetry so richly decorates with angels, and music, and beauty and glory, the more we fit our eyes and our ears on earth to enjoy the pleasures tempting us above. Eloquence may exhaust its power; poetry

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<sup>341</sup> (perhaps) Robert Fulton (1765-1815) — Engineer and inventor; worked with steamboats and submarines

<sup>342</sup> "The greatest people on earth" — A claim repeated down to the present day

may be inspired, but it can never describe such a Savior as that of Raphael in his *Transfiguration*.

There is a *Sermon* in it, of nobler pathos than Fenelon<sup>343</sup> ever reached. Certain it is, our senses will never elevate our souls, but our souls must be addressed through them, and the poetry and the sculpture that preach to the eye, and the music that touches the ear, divide empire with the homily of the pulpit, and the written volume of the divine. Christianity has met with its wonderful success by addressing all these avenues of the soul. *Words* are but signs, and are changed at pleasure, though they admit of more variation and are clearer than hieroglyphics, or music; yet hieroglyphics can group more thought together, and music has a power that words cannot even aspire to. Rely upon it, that though Utility is good in its way, and is the first, and most important lesson a man is to learn, yet it is a lesson he is taught in common with the brute; and that a country is far from reaching the destiny that our republic claims, which bounds its ambition by the *necessary* and the *Useful* alone. Greece never was content with that, nor Rome, and a republic whose future is shadowed out as ours is, in the very tracings that nature has drawn upon our soil, in river, mountain, and lake, should at least begin to prepare itself for that future that awaits it.



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<sup>343</sup> François Fénelon (1651-1715) — French theologian; wrote numerous treatises and sermons

## 72. Capitoline Museum

Rome,  
October 1835.

Did you ever take up a pen to write, and find that the subject was so wide, so full of everything, that you not only knew not where to begin, but what to say? Talk of London! the relics even of august Rome are worth a thousand Londons. Talk of Paris! for a thousand years the world has been plundering this mighty storehouse of antiquity, and it is now richer in art than Paris can be in a thousand years to come. Even at this moment, it is probable that there is more of magnificence buried *under* the earth in Rome, than there is *upon* the earth elsewhere. The mausoleums of mighty Romans have been made fortresses, and the statues of a Phidias and Lysippus were flung down as weapons of war from the battlements of antique temples. Alaric<sup>344</sup> came with sword and fire, heading the maddened Goth, but he beat against, and burnt in vain, the brazen beams and the massive structures of the Forum. The blazing temples of the Capitol, the aerial aqueducts, the marble-sheltered groves still survived his inundation, though as a Christian writer says, "*he made the city the sepulcher of the Roman people.*" Genseric<sup>345</sup> came next with his Vandals, and they plundered the tiles from the temples without, and the treasures within, and wrenched the precious metals from the marbles that held them. Vitiges<sup>346</sup> came like a raging lion, burning everything without the walls, and desolating the whole Campagna, so that the aqueducts were ruined, and the baths of the emperors rendered useless. Totila<sup>347</sup> threatened the overthrow of every monument, and his violence caused a desertion of the city for more than forty days. The Lombards have roared around its walls. German and Norman have pillaged within them. Constantine plundered the arch of Trajan to adorn his own.

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<sup>344</sup> Alaric I, King of the Visigoths (c.370-410) — Sacked Rome in 410 A.D.

<sup>345</sup> Genseric (c.400-477) — King of the Vandals; captured and plundered Rome in 455; died in Carthage

<sup>346</sup> Vitiges, King of the Ostrogoths in Italy (d. 540) — Unsuccessfully besieged Rome in 537-538 A.D.

<sup>347</sup> Totila, King of the Ostrogoths (d. 552) — Captured Rome in 546 A.D.; recaptured in 550 A.D.

The early Christians leapt upon the idols, and the idolatrous temples, with a fiery fanaticism; and in their horror of gods and goddesses, they had no eye for beauty, and forgot all love of art. The fanes<sup>348</sup> of Roman deities fell under the wrath of the Christian God, and the column that upheld the temple was torn from its base to uphold the church. Theater, circus and bath trembled, and fell under their indignation. The Coliseum was long the quarry of Rome. Marble pillars and porticoes, and statues even, were burnt for lime. The bronze of the temple was melted into cannon for the castle of St. Angelo. But, even to this day, Rome, if not covered with marble, as in the days of Augustus and Nero, is sprinkled all over with fragments of it, the relics of one knows not what, so that the baths, even now, under the huge masses of brick that cover them, are little quarries where precious pieces are often found, and often, very often, even in the lone as well as the frequented street, have I seen beautiful marble in the very pavements under our feet.

War, however, and the Christian, are not the sole destroyers that have triumphed in this capital of the world. The Tiber rolled his flood over all but the Seven Hills. The earthquake shook down "*buildings as large as provinces*," to quote an ancient writer, till at last we read of the *fields* within the walls, of contending armies encamping on different hills, and fighting on different plains, and even that the roads had become so bad in the magnificent streets where once a Pompey triumphed, that in the short days of winter, the Pope could not conclude the processions prescribed by the ritual!

Rome was forgotten at last. The mistress of the world slumbered for a while. The city of the Caesars was made a solitude. Ruins choked up her highways. The matchless *Laocoon* was buried and forgotten in the palace of Titus, as well as those other famous antique relics found in the Farnese gardens, which stood upon a portion of the site of the former palace of the Caesars. But a new power, a new Rome in the progress of Christianity, sprung up on the Vatican; and though without the arms or the panoply, or the magnificence of the Rome of old, it soon established empire as mighty over the earth. The Rome of the republic, and of the Caesars, was in part deserted, it is true, for another modern Rome that

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<sup>348</sup> Fane — temple; shrine

now stands upon the Campus Martius of old, and is bordering upon the Tiber and the Forum; but the Rome of antiquity was unearthed to make it yield its treasures—and what relics of the past are yet standing, are guarded as well as they can be, when their multiplicity and age are remembered.

Of a part of the treasures that have been dug up and found in Rome and the villas of the Romans adjoining, I have already spoken in what I have said of the Vatican; but this part, which would be a magnificent whole in any other city, is but a part of the treasures even of the existing Rome. The modern Capitol, on the brow of the Capitoline Hill, holds a museum in which there is a collection of sculptures inferior only to that of the Vatican. Of the works of antiquity preserved in that hall, one of the first that strikes the eye is an equestrian statue of Marcus Aurelius in the center of the square—a statue famous in the arts, upon which critics, however, divide as to its merits. A colossal statue of Oceanus, called *Marforio*, because it was found in the Forum of Mars, stands in the quadrangle of the Museo Capitolino, as it is called. All I can do, of course, is to give you a faint idea of some few of the most magnificent relics of ancient arts preserved here, and then a little catalog of names, so that you may see on what Grecian and Roman artists exerted their power.

The famous *Dying Gladiator* is among the most remarkable pieces of sculpture in the world, and this was found in the gardens of Sallust,<sup>349</sup> the Roman historian—gardens which were upon the Quirinal Hill, and among the most magnificent, even of the luxurious Romans, adorned as they were with temples, a circus, baths, and with the finest sculpture, of which the *Dying Gladiator* is a specimen. Debates are loud and strong as to the character which this statue represents; whether it be a Greek herald or a Spartan or barbarian shield-bearer. The renowned antiquarian Winckelmann, thinks it to be a herald; but, be the name what it may, there is no doubt that it represents a wounded man dying, who perfectly expresses what there remains of life in him. This statue it is that Byron describes in his *Childe Harold*, and of which I have spoken in my former letter as illustrating the fact that even a Byron cannot describe with his well-chosen words, with half of the power that the sculptor can with his chisel.

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<sup>349</sup> Sallust (86 B.C.-c.35 B.C.) — Roman historian and politician

The *Faun* with his goat, about the size of life, is another piece of inimitable sculpture here, and is indeed a most animated and matchless representation of the laughing, drunken, grape-loving deity. This was found in the sumptuous villa of the emperor Hadrian at Tivoli. *Venus rising from the Bath*, *Cupid and Psyche*<sup>350</sup> embracing, found in the Aventine Hill, the innocent child playing with a swan,<sup>351</sup> and *Antinous*,<sup>352</sup> are first among the many beautiful objects of the collection—while the *Centaur* is remarkable for its force and vigor, and the *Hecuba* for the perfect expression of the ugliness of this woman hired to howl. The *Cupid Bending* is an exquisite specimen of infantine sculptured grace. The *Faun* of Praxiteles attracts attention. The semi-colossal *Hercules*, holding the apples of the Hesperides, is most remarkable for still retaining the gilding on the bronze. This was found in the Forum Boarium, and is the only antique statue on which the gilding now remains. The *bassi relievi* of the many sarcophagi, arms, vases, pedestals, &c. are objects all worth examining, and, on these sarcophagi, there is a treasure of learning for the classical scholar who is studying ancient costumes, arts, religion, war, and superstitions, or the acts of an Achilles, Hercules, Jove, or the gods and goddesses and demigods of the pagan mythology. Homer can be read here in marble; and here too, one may say, is the bible of the ancient world. A mosaic, spoken of by Pliny in terms of praise, found in Hadrian's villa at Tivoli, and representing four doves on the brink of a vase, one of them drinking, is also remarkable, and copies of it are seen in every shop of Rome, in cameos as well as mosaic.

The *Apartment of the Philosophers* in the Museum has two marble shelves around the room, on which are ranged the busts of poets, philosophers, and other distinguished characters of antiquity. Virgil, Socrates,<sup>353</sup> Seneca,<sup>354</sup> Plato,<sup>355</sup> Diogenes,<sup>356</sup> Archimedes,<sup>357</sup>

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<sup>350</sup> Psyche — In Greek mythology, a mortal woman who marries Cupid (Eros, Love) and becomes divine

<sup>351</sup> Child playing with a swan — (perhaps) *Boy with Goose*

<sup>352</sup> Antinous (c.111-130) — Greek youth, favorite of Roman Emperor Hadrian

<sup>353</sup> Socrates (c.470 B.C. -399 B.C.) — Prominent Athenian philosopher

<sup>354</sup> (probably) Seneca the Younger (c.4 B.C.-65 A.D.) — Roman philosopher and statesman

<sup>355</sup> Plato (c.426 B.C.-348 B.C.) — Preeminent Greek philosopher

<sup>356</sup> Diogenes (c.412 B.C.-323 B.C.) — Greek philosopher and Cynic

Demosthenes,<sup>358</sup> Cleopatra, Sappho,<sup>359</sup> Aristotle,<sup>360</sup> Cicero, and a host of others are there. In the saloon are the two columns of *giallo antico*<sup>361</sup> which ornament the large niches of this apartment, where stands the *Hercules* of bronze that once belonged to the tomb of Cecilia Metella, and the figures of *Victory*, which support the arms of Clement XII,<sup>362</sup> once belonged to the triumphal arch of Marcus Aurelius. *Jove armed with lightning*, in *nero antico*,<sup>363</sup> the *Hercules* in basalt, a remarkable *Minerva*, *Isis*<sup>364</sup> with the lotus on her head, and *Diana* as a huntress, are here.

The *Apartment of the Emperors* has *bassi relievi* representing the genii<sup>365</sup> in cars, *Bacchus on a tiger*, with fauns, satyrs, &c., the *Chase of the Calydonian boar*, and *Perseus*<sup>366</sup> *liberating Andromeda*,<sup>367</sup> and in the middle of the room is a statue of Agrippina, the mother<sup>368</sup> of Germanicus, seated in a curule chair;<sup>369</sup> and around the apartment, on two shelves of marble, stand busts of the Roman emperors and their relations, among the most striking of which are Julius Caesar, Drusus,<sup>370</sup> Germanicus, Caligula,<sup>371</sup> Julia<sup>372</sup> (Titus's daughter,) Marcus Aurelius, Septimus Severus and Maximus.<sup>373</sup>

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<sup>357</sup> Archimedes (c.287 B.C.-c.212 B.C.) — Greek mathematician, engineer and scientist

<sup>358</sup> Demosthenes (384 B.C.-322 B.C.) — Greek statesman and orator

<sup>359</sup> Sappho (c.630 B.C.-c.570 B.C.) — Female, Greek poet from the island of Lesbos, best known for her love poetry

<sup>360</sup> Aristotle (384 B.C.-322 B.C.) — Prolific Greek philosopher and scientist

<sup>361</sup> *Giallo antico* — a yellow-colored ornamental marble

<sup>362</sup> Pope Clement XII (1652-1740) — Papacy 1730-1740

<sup>363</sup> *Nero antico* — an ornamental black marble

<sup>364</sup> *Isis* — Egyptian goddess of health and marriage

<sup>365</sup> *Genius* (pl. *genii*) — In Roman mythology, the spirit of a person (also place or thing) which accompanies the person throughout his life

<sup>366</sup> *Perseus* — Greek mythological hero, who beheaded Medusa

<sup>367</sup> *Andromeda* — Greek mythological princess, saved by Perseus from certain death

<sup>368</sup> Agrippina the Elder (14 B.C.-33 A.D.) — Actually, wife of Germanicus

<sup>369</sup> *Curule chair* — A type of folding chair used by the senior magistrates of Rome

<sup>370</sup> *Drusus* — Not identified

<sup>371</sup> *Caligula* (12-41) — Roman emperor, biological son of Germanicus

<sup>372</sup> *Julia Flavia* (64-91) — Daughter of Emperor Titus; married to a second cousin; seduced by her uncle; deified after her death

<sup>373</sup> *Maximus* — Not identified

The *Apartment of the Vase*, with other vases, holds one found near the tomb of Cecilia Metella, which is adorned with bacchanalian ornaments. A bronze vase is also there, which, according to the inscription upon it, was once the property of Mithridates Eupator,<sup>374</sup> king of Pontus. Ancient Roman weights and scales, a casket, a measure, and a candelabrum are also shown.

The *Apartment of the Dying Gladiator* is the richest in this troop, for, in addition to the gladiator, it holds an *Apollo*, and a *Juno*, both semi-colossal, each much admired, as well as some of the other choicer works of which I have spoken above.

Some chambers are filled with a series of Egyptian sculptures taken from the Canopus, or Egyptian temple that stood in the villa of that great builder, the emperor Hadrian, at Tivoli. But those Egyptians, if these be their specimens, would have been as wise to let marble and basalt alone; for the people whose gods were an ox, cats, and onions, could not have that idea of beauty that a *Venus* or an *Apollo* would inspire.

From this splendid collection of these fragments of that antiquity that now inspires me with doubled veneration of the power and the men of the Rome of old, I passed over the square of the Campidoglio to the Palazzo dei Conservatori. Statues of *Rome triumphant and a weeping province at her feet*—the *two Dacian captive kings*—a group of a *lion devouring a horse*, stand in the quadrangle beyond the arcade. In the arcade, among I know not how many other things, is seen a Rostra column originally placed in the Roman Forum in honor of Gaius Duilius,<sup>375</sup> the first Roman who gained for his country a naval victory over the Carthaginians, whom he humbled by a total defeat, having destroyed fifty of their ships. A *basso rilievo* (found in the Forum) of Curtius<sup>376</sup> devoting himself to the Dii Manes<sup>377</sup> is also here.

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<sup>374</sup> Mithridates VI, King of Pontus (135 B.C.-63 B.C.) — Mithridates Eupator, his empire encompassed modern Turkey and the fringes of the Black Sea

<sup>375</sup> Gaius Duilius (3rd. c. B.C.) — Roman consul, defeated the Carthaginian fleet at the Battle of Mylae; his success was attributed to the use of a novel boarding device.

<sup>376</sup> Curtius — Not identified

<sup>377</sup> Dii Manes (or Di Manes) — Underworld deities thought to represent souls of beloved ones.

The third room contains the antique bronze, the *Wolf suckling Romulus and Remus*,<sup>378</sup> and which, it is said, was struck with lightning when Caesar fell. The wolf, it is said, to which Cicero, in his oration against Catiline and in some verses of his in his treatise *de Divinitate*, alludes, as having been struck by lightning. The marks of where the gilding was, and of where the lightning struck, are visible even to this day, but antiquarians dispute upon this subject, and some deny that this is the thunder-stricken wolf of Cicero. Volumes have been written upon this relic of other days, and Greek and Latin quoted in profusion, but be the truth as it may, I will persuade myself that it was the very wolf that stood upon the turrets of the Capitol, and I gazed upon it as an object venerable even to a Cicero, a Livy and a Virgil.

In the fifth room are seen two ducks in bronze, said to have been found in the Tarpeian rock, and to be the ones that were honored with a post in the ancient Capitol, in honor of those which by their *noise* aroused the Romans to a rally when Brennus,<sup>379</sup> general of the Gauls, was attempting to scale the Tarpeian rock to obtain possession of the citadel. *Geese*, Livy says it was, that saved the Capitol, the geese consecrated to Juno, whom the Romans fed when they were starving themselves, and whom the geese in their turn saved from the Gauls; but, be this as it may, these are *Ducks* that are here at the present day.

The fourth room, however, was the most interesting of all to me, for it contains the *Fasti Consulares* of the Romans, the names of the consuls, chiseled in stone, as records of these great rulers of the day, who once held power in Rome. Often, in reading the names of these great men of the day, as standing thickly crowded in the margin of the books of Livy, mutilated often as they are—only some letters of their names at times being left—I have thought what a folly their ambition was, but when I saw the very records themselves, that impression was redoubled in its force. The consular office in Rome was an object of as high ambition as is the presidency of the United States, and the man whom the suffrages of the Romans bore to that exalted station, considered himself as immortalized for all time to come. But, what a wreck is here, upon even these stony records of their fame! Broken and crowded together they

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<sup>378</sup> Romulus and Remus — Roman mythical twin brothers, suckled by a she-wolf; Remus was killed by Romulus, who went on to found the city of Rome.

<sup>379</sup> Brennus (4th. C. B.C.) — Led the sack of most of Rome by Cisalpine Gauls.

are—fixed and propped up in the wall—many blanks—the names that ought to fill them never to be known—with others mutilated, and but a letter or two remaining! This *is* faint! This is the destiny of the highest and most august of the Roman dignitaries—of the men whose eloquence swayed the mighty multitude in the Forum, and whose valor led them to victory and to glory. What more can ye promise yourselves, ye who seek might and renown, which, if ye win them, will never exalt you to half the height of a Roman consul.<sup>380</sup>

Other apartments of this conservative palace, of which I have just been speaking, have within them frescoes, friezes, and pictures by some of the most celebrated masters of the art. Some of the subjects are—the *Battle of the Horatii and Curiatii*—the *Sacrifice of Numa Pompilius* with the *Institution of the Vestal Virgins*—the *Rape of the Sabines*, *Horatius Cocles in the Sublician Bridge*, and *Mucius Scaevola burning his own hand*, in presence of Porsena, after having killed one of the Etrurian officers whom he mistook for the king. Titian's *Recumbent Venus*, commonly called *Vanity* from the large label upon the canvas, *Omnia Vanitas*, Guercino's *Persian Sybil*, and his *St. Petronilla* rising from the sepulcher, and in the presence of the noble Roman to whom she was betrothed in marriage, the *Rape of Europa*<sup>381</sup> by Paul Veronese, with Guidos, the Caraccis and the like, adorn the picture gallery. The *Protometeca*, as it is called, is an apartment of eight rooms embellished with busts of illustrious characters, chiefly of men of modern Italy, now no more, which apartment has been dedicated by the popes to the Arcadian Academy.

But I must stop this catalog where it is, for, if I go on, all the paper I have is not large enough to contain even the names of objects illustrious in Rome. My object only is to give you a faint idea of things to be seen, and, from what I have already written, you will readily believe that a student may use his eye in intense study of objects of art only with profit, even for years and years. How the classical scholar must revel with delight in such a studio as that of the Vatican or the Capitol! What forcible commentaries a man reads from these blocks of marble upon all of

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<sup>380</sup> Brooks reflects further on the ephemeral nature of human life in Letter 76 (Rome: visit to catacombs) and Letter 84 (Naples: catacombs and tomb of Virgil).

<sup>381</sup> Europa — In Greek mythology, the mother of King Minos of Crete, abducted by Zeus

History that a Livy or a Gibbon has written, or all that a Virgil or a Horace have sung! The pages of the classics stand here, illuminated, as it were. Here the observer is let into the religion and into the patriotism of the Rome of his fancy, and he even sees, as I fancy, the interior of their homes, the very hearths that their Penates<sup>382</sup> guarded!

For myself, I never dreamed before that so many links connected us with these men of the past, and, day after day, I feel a shock of that pride which we all have as men of this generation, that we are so little advanced beyond them. What modern palace, for example, could have equaled the suburban villa of Sallust, the scholar as well as the man of pleasure, for from his grounds have come many of the curious relics of his day. How sumptuously Cicero must have dwelt in his Tusculum and near Gaeta! What an empire of art that was at Tivoli, which Hadrian erected! We can judge only from what has been rescued, and what has been preserved, and if these be chance specimens, what must the whole have been!

Time, war, flood, Goth, Saracen, Christian, German, Hun, Norman have been destroying for centuries, and yet so much is left! All the nations of the world now are visiting and plundering by pieces, and yet Rome holds out, mighty and inexhaustible—a quarry, as it were, that has no end—a mine without a bottom, laughing at her plunderers, and then dazzling them with her magnificence. The earth swallowed up, it seemed, palaces and villas for a while, when man was blindest and most mad, to let the man of a brighter day see what Rome was in the days of her strength and her glory. The pilgrimage ground of all mankind, indeed it must be, for centuries to come.

Our *valet de place*,<sup>383</sup> who acted as guide and antiquarian and artist too, in conducting us over the city of the Rome dead, and the Rome living, took us from the palace, the contents of which I have been describing, a few steps farther, to the palace of the now solitary senate, the last fragment of that august body that so long led Rome in her career of triumphs. This building is upon that brink of the Capitol that overlooks

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<sup>382</sup> Penates (or Di Penates) — Roman household deities

<sup>383</sup> *valet de place* — Tourist guide, familiar with local languages, sights and ways

the Forum, and we ascended its tower to see the ancient edifices and the sites of both the Romes.

Here, for the first time, the Seven Hills of the eternal city were marked out for my observation. What a shattered fragment, august as it is, is all I see, of that Rome that was! The sky, oh, how beautiful, and the air, how lighted up, as if the glory that had departed from below, still hovered over, and crowned the abiding places of the mighty dead! And effulgence indeed it was, as the sun was setting, that seemed not to be of earth, adorned, beautified, and emblazoned the whole scene. The Mediterranean was on one side, and the Apennines, the retreat of the Romans from the Campagna, was on the other. That Campagna, which was once so thick with villas, the like of that of Sallust, is now a barren, almost a deserted plain.

This Capitoline Hill, on which I stood, where Romulus first carried the regal spoils—where Manlius<sup>384</sup> was hurled to death from the Tarpeian rock—once the asylum of Romulus's little empire, sacred for whatever exile or criminal could reach the spot—and afterwards crowded with arches and temples—the very heart of that empire whose arms reached far into Asia and Africa on one side, and to the Scottish Highlands on the other—what holds it now of the fragments of its power, but this palace of its solitary senator!

The Palatine Hill is before me, the little hill that once was the nursery ground of the gigantic Rome, the circuit of which was marked by a ploughshare, the *palace* of which domain was the straw-roofed cottage of Romulus. All Rome then dwelt upon this hill, but in aftertimes it was not large enough for the golden palace of its emperor, for Nero covered the whole Palatine, and stretched beyond it. Tiberius, Augustus and Domitian<sup>385</sup> also dwelt there, and Caligula connected it with the Capitol by a bridge across the Forum. But what is it now? Evander<sup>386</sup> here might again gather his wandering tribes, and Pales,<sup>387</sup> the goddess of sheep, to

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<sup>384</sup> Marcus Manlius Capitolinus (d. 384 B.C.) — Roman consul; defended the citadel against attacking Gauls; subsequently condemned and executed

<sup>385</sup> Domitian (51-96) — Roman emperor

<sup>386</sup> Evander — In Roman mythology, a hero, later deified; founded city of Pallantium on the future site of Rome

<sup>387</sup> Pales — Roman deity of shepherds, flocks and livestock

whom it was consecrated, and from whom it derives its name, might here at present resume her creek, and re-ascend her sylvan throne, for it is fast reverting to that original pastoral simplicity which Tibullus the poet has described. Nothing but earth it was—adorned with everything wealth, power and art could place there, it became—and to earth, to the fields, to the nothing which it was, it is rapidly advancing again. My eyes are over the Roman Forum, which is almost under my feet, and its checkered history runs through my mind.

The Sabine women, whom as virgins the Romans stole for their wives—with disheveled locks and streaming garments, and imploring hands, here rushed in between their Roman husbands whom they had learned to love, and their Sabine fathers and brothers, and with tears and cries, begged that blood should not be shed. Here, Virginius<sup>388</sup> plunged the dagger into the heart of his daughter, exclaiming, "*thus, my child, thus do I liberate thee!*" when the wicked Appius Claudius,<sup>389</sup> triumphing over all obstacles, sought to make her his own. The sacred fig tree, under whose boughs the infant founders of Rome were nourished, was also here. What this far-famed spot in later days became—how it was crowded with arches, and temples, the triumphal crowds, the martial pomp, and then what it has become at last, the *cow yard* of Rome—all this I have spoken of before.

I looked a little further, and there was the Esquiline Hill, on which Maecenas,<sup>390</sup> that patron of the arts, and Virgil had their villas, where also are the baths of Titus, and his palace, and a part of Nero's golden house. All now is ruin, utter ruin there, and the baths of Titus are under the earth, and with a torch and a guide, the wanderer goes to see the shattered frescoes in its vaults.

Farther yet, I saw the Quirinal Hill, the Monte Cavallo of the present day, because upon it stands two colossal groups of a horse and a man, asserted to be the works of Phidias and Praxiteles. The temple of

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<sup>388</sup> Virginius — Lucius Verginius, Roman centurion; his daughter Verginia was betrothed to a tribune.

<sup>389</sup> Appius Claudius Crassus (5th C. B.C.) — Roman leader; desiring Verginia, he had her kidnapped and insisted that she was his slave.

<sup>390</sup> Gaius Maecenas (68 B.C.-8 B.C.) — Roman imperial adviser, renowned as a patron of the arts

Romulus Quirinus,<sup>391</sup> built by Numa,<sup>392</sup> was here, and the Quirinalian festivals, and here was the habitation of the illustrious Scipios, as well as the senaculum<sup>393</sup> for females of the worthless emperor Heliogabalus. The papal residence is now fixed upon this hill, and it therefore is not as dead as the others; for the villas, and the churches, and gardens of power present rescue it from desertion and death of the former part.

The Caelian Hill, once called Querquetulanus, from its many oaks, and once adorned with temples, fanes, and sacred groves, is now crowned by the proud basilica of St. John of Lateran, and monastic gloom, solitude, and desolation ever hover over this scene of former pagan splendor.

The Viminal Hill is no longer conspicuous, or perspicuous even, for, though I was shown where it was, yet its adjacent hollows have been so filled up by time and the ruins of ages, that I never should have unguided sought for a hill where it was.

The proud Aventine next attracted my attention. Remus ascended here to watch the fatal augury of omnipotent Jove. Here was the cave of Cacus,<sup>394</sup> the famed exploits of Hercules, and the altars consequent upon the victory. Here were the splendid temples to Juno, to the once chaste and venerable Bona Dea,<sup>395</sup> to Liberty, and to Diana. Gaius Gracchus<sup>396</sup> fled to this last temple of which I have spoken, after his efforts for the agrarian law, and the assassination of his brother Tiberius, for the purpose of committing suicide; but the nobles confined him, his death was commanded, his body thrown into the Tiber, and his widow forbidden to put on funeral robes. Now, the church of St. Alexis, it is conjectured, stands upon the site of the temple of the Hercules, that of Santa Maria del Priorato, and that of the Knights of Malta upon the site of the Bona Dea, and that of Santa Sabina, with its yet remaining twenty-

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<sup>391</sup> Quirinus — Deified form of Romulus

<sup>392</sup> Numa — Not identified

<sup>393</sup> Senaculum (or coenaculum) — Eating-room of a Roman house

<sup>394</sup> Cacus — Roman mythological giant, lived on the future site of Rome

<sup>395</sup> Bona Dea — (Good Goddess) In Roman mythology, a female divinity associated with chastity and fertility; the cult was of Greek origin

<sup>396</sup> Gaius Gracchus (154 B.C.-121 B.C.) — Roman politician; executed for his attempt at policy reform

four antique Corinthian columns of Parian marble upon the foundations of the Cumaean Diana.

"The Goth, the Christian, time, war, flood and fire  
Have dealt upon the seven-hill'd city's pride;  
She saw her glories, star by star, expire,  
And up the steep barbarian monarchs ride,  
Where the car climb'd the Capitol: far and wide  
Temple and Tower went down, nor left a site:  
Chaos of ruins! Who shall trace the void,  
O'er the dim fragments cast a lunar night,  
And say, "where was, or is," where all is doubly night?"<sup>397</sup>



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<sup>397</sup> Byron. *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*

## 73. St. Peter's

Rome,  
October, 1835.

I had thought of saying something of the churches of Rome, and of giving you at least a catalog of what is wonderful in them; but, so immense is their number, that I shall visit only a few of the most remarkable. But, so full are these of precious works of art, that I cannot give you even a catalog of what is remarkable in the few. A pleasure is enjoyed here in Rome, which cannot be enjoyed in any other city on the earth, and that is—of a constant change of curious objects from old to new, and from new to old, from the most astonishing ruins of the past, to the most magnificent structures of the present, from the bright foci of Grecian and Roman art to the modern workshops of a Thorwaldsen<sup>398</sup> and others—and the richest collections of ancient pictures to the modern studies of new beginners: so that, when one is weary of one pursuit, he can change it for another with ease and pleasure, and all within the walls of a single city. Rome thus not only presents contrasts in this way, but its very poverty, desolation and filth add to the grandeur of some of its edifices. For, when one has been clambering about the Tarpeian rock, and threading the nooks of the Capitol, and soiling his shoes in the purlieus of the Forum, he is in that state of mind in which the nearness and splendor of St. Peter's will astonish him the more. Thus, wearied with exploring ruins and vaults underground, and of the gloom which such a study throws over everything you see, I was delighted with the change that St. Peter's afforded me.

My first impression, in seeing this, the greatest church ever built and the richest now on earth, was the common one of disappointment—for it did not come up to the picture I had in my mind; but, in a short time this impression was worn away, and the majesty and superiority of this king of churches vindicated themselves, so that they reminded me of one of those great men who in all lands disappoint us at first, by the simplicity of their manners, but afterwards astound us by the grandeur of their

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<sup>398</sup> Bertel Thorvaldsen (1770-1844) — Danish sculptor; established a successful workshop in Rome

conceptions. How St. Paul's in London could ever have put in a claim to be compared with this, is more than I can understand; for, though my first impression, as I will own, was in favor of the grandeur and effect of St. Paul's, yet such impression can last no thinking man a single day. St. Peter's is even more beautiful, even at first, and grander far, afterwards, as its proportions are studied, and as much more wealthy in all that appertains to art, as the sun is brighter than the moon.

St. Peter's is placed on the summit of a gentle acclivity, in an immense piazza of an oval form, once the circus of Nero.<sup>399</sup> The center of this piazza is adorned with an obelisk of red Egyptian granite, the only one at Rome which has been preserved entire; and this was transported from Heliopolis to Ostia by order of Caligula. After the fall of the Roman empire, this was tumbled down, and forty-one machines with strong ropes and iron rollers, and eight hundred men, and one hundred and sixty horses were employed for eight days to raise it out of the earth in which it was buried—and in transporting this obelisk from the place where it lay buried to the place where it now stands, only three hundred paces, four months of labor were spent. Two beautiful fountains also adorn this piazza, and the water is spouted rapidly from them, and falls into circular basins of oriental granite, entire pieces of fifty feet in circumference. The colonnades are semi-circular, consisting of two hundred and eighty-four large Doric columns, intermixed with pilasters, and forming on each side of the piazza a triple portico—that in the center being sufficiently spacious for two carriages to pass each other. On the entablature of their colonnades is a balustrade ornamented with one hundred and ninety-two statues, each being about eleven feet and a half in height. Beyond the colonnades are two magnificent covered galleries, each 360 Paris feet<sup>400</sup> in length, and leading to the vestibule of the basilica, which stands on the summit of a noble flight of steps, adorned with statues of St. Peter and St. Paul. The vestibule is 439 Paris feet in length, 37 wide, and 62 high, and contains equestrian statues of Constantine and Charlemagne. The front of the basilica is 370 Paris feet in length and 149 in height, and is ornamented with immense Corinthian columns and pilasters, each column being 8 feet and 3 inches

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<sup>399</sup> The following description of St. Peter's follows closely *Information and Directions for Travellers on the Continent*, 6th Ed., by Mariana Starke, London, John Murray, 1828, Ch. VII, p.194 et seq.

<sup>400</sup> The Paris foot measured 1.0657 imperial feet.

in diameter, and 88 feet high, base and capital inclusive. The front is terminated with a balustrade, surmounted by thirteen colossal statues, seventeen feet in height, and representing our Savior and the apostles. The center door of the church is bronze, ornamented with *bassi relievi*. This is the gorgeous entry to the more gorgeous church, whose interior length is 614 English feet. the breadth of the nave, 207, the breadth of the cross, 79, the diameter of the cupola, 139, the height from the pavement to the first gallery, 174, to the second gallery 240, to the representation of the deity in the lantern, 393, and to the summit of the exterior cross, 448.

So admirably proportioned is this basilica, that, notwithstanding its immense size, no person, at first sight, perceives the dimensions to be remarkably large. And, such is the optical delusion, that the statues of children, which support the vases of holy water, do not appear more than three feet in height, though they are really gigantic. The interior of this wonderful piece of human workmanship is encrusted with rare and beautiful marbles, adorned with the finest pictures in mosaic existing, and supported by an immense number of rich and massive columns, the greater part of which are antique, seven of them, it is said, being taken from Solomon's<sup>401</sup> temple. Its wealth and its treasures no one can give an idea of, for every man must be dazzled and confounded by their extent. Even as long ago as the year 1694, this edifice was supposed to have cost 47,000,000 of dollars; and every year has been since adding to its cost, and to such an extent, that it is quite certain that the whole revenue of the United States, all the money that flows into our Treasury for four entire years, could not build its like. What an idea does this give of the power and the magnificence of the Popes who erected such an edifice, and what a world must have been tributary to them in order to provide the means! The reason why such a magnificent church was erected on this spot, was, that here St. Peter was buried. The Christian emperor Constantine first erected a spacious church upon this spot, which, after standing eleven centuries, went to decay. About the year 1450, the Pope Nicholas V<sup>402</sup> began to rebuild it; and thirty Popes, from that time to 1614, employing the genius of a Bramante,<sup>403</sup> a Sangallo,<sup>404</sup>

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<sup>401</sup> Solomon (c.1010 B.C.-c.931 B.C.) — King of Israel; reputedly wealthy and wise

<sup>402</sup> Pope Nicholas V (1397-1455) — Papacy lasted from 1447 to his death

<sup>403</sup> Donato Bramante (1444-1514) — Italian architect; designed the plan for the basilica of St. Peter's

a Raphael, and Michelangelo Buonarroti, as architects, were engaged in its construction. Yet, old as it is, the pure air of Italy has left it fresh and light to this day; and, so far from seeming, like the smoky St. Paul's, the work of a thousand years gone by, it looks like the work of yesterday.

I know not where to begin in this world of a church, and this forest of statues that adorn it, to attempt to give you even a faint idea of its contents. All that the fancy of the Christian preachers say of the gold and the jasper of heaven, seems to be realized here in this little heaven below. Under the cupola, which is the idea of Michelangelo, who boasted that he would raise the Pantheon aloft, and who seems to have accomplished his boast—a cupola of 400 Paris feet in circumference, of the form most beautiful, embellished all over with mosaics and gold, reposes the high altar of the church, crowned with a sumptuous *baldacchino*<sup>405</sup> of bronze gilt, near ninety feet high, sustained upon four twisted columns adorned with vine-leaves, which creep up even to the capitals. Angels, at each angle of the pavilion, let fall from their hands garlands of flowers, and this pavilion is the neatest work in bronze that is known, of which the Pantheon was stripped to find. The Pope and the cardinal alone have the right to celebrate mass at this altar. The sacred confession, as it is called, is at the foot of this sumptuous altar. A beautiful balustrade of marble, decorated with above a hundred superb and elegant lamps, ever burning night and day, enriches it; and a double staircase leads to the interior part, which is incrustated with a profusion of precious marbles, and embellished by the statues of St. Peter and St. Paul. Under this place was the grave of St. Peter, and in a small chapel near, rest, it is said, his mortal remains.

At the upper end of the middle nave is the tribune, decorated according to the designs of Michelangelo, and containing the chair of St. Peter, above which is a transparent painting of the Holy Ghost, represented in the form of a dove. The real chair of St. Peter is of wood, and heretofore served for the Popes on the day of their coronation; but this chair of wood is now incrustated in ivory and bronze, and thus the contrast of the simplicity of the one, and the magnificence of the other, as signaling the diversity of manners and times, is vividly forced upon us. Under the

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<sup>404</sup> Giuliano da Sangallo (c.1445-1516) — Italian sculptor and architect; assisted in the design and construction of St. Peter's Basilica

<sup>405</sup> Baldacchino — Canopy of state erected over an altar or throne (= baldachin)

chair are the keys of the church and the pontifical tiara, borne by genii; and above, rays of glory, which surround the Holy Spirit, come flowing in on all the sides, with an illusion, created by the light, that produces a fine effect.

The church of St. Peter is filled with the mausoleums of the Popes, and although these mausoleums in general do not pass for being masterpieces of art, almost all of them, nevertheless, exhibit some beautiful pieces of sculpture. One, for example, that of Alexander VII,<sup>406</sup> is admired by connoisseurs. The Pope here is represented in his pontifical robes, upon his knees, upon a carpet wrought in African marble. *Death*, who is below, makes an effort to raise the carpet, and to show himself to the pontiff, but *Charity* and *Truth* fortify and encourage him. But yet more worthy of attention than these, is the precious collection of pictures worked in mosaic, the new art, which assures the painter the durable fame that the sculptor has; for the perishable pencil-works of the master painters of the world are now copied into these mosaics, and thus an eternity is assured them, as fixed as mortal man can promise any of his works. Raphael's *Transfiguration*, Guido's *Archangel Michael*, Domenichino's *St. Jerome*, Guercino's *St. Petronilla*, pictures among the most famous in the world, are thus perpetuated. These mosaics consist of small pieces of glass—I have seen the laboratory in an apartment of the Vatican—some of them being scarcely larger than pin heads, tintured with all the different degrees of color necessary to form a picture; and when the mosaics are finished, they are polished in the same manner as mirrors. The ground on which these vitreous particles are placed, consists of calcined marble, fine sand, gum tragacanth, whites of eggs and oil, which composition continues for some time so soft, that there is no difficulty either in arranging the pieces, or altering any which may have been improperly placed, but by degrees it grows as hard as marble, so that no impression can be made upon the work.



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<sup>406</sup> Pope Alexander VII (1599-1667) — Papacy from 1655 to his death; his tomb is the work of Bernini

## 74. Churches of Rome

Rome,  
October, 1835.

The subterranean church under St. Peter's, built by Constantine, is one of the places most interesting in this wilderness of marble. As the visitor descends by the sacred chapel under the high altar, the idea of a grotto is forced upon him; and, with his young priests for guides, and their torches, he wonders where he is going. Old tombs are the first things he stumbles upon—and there are so many, that he believes he is in a city of the dead. But everything has an air of such antiquity that the dead seem not of his generation, but the dead of another age; and the ghosts of the past, he feels as if he were communing with. Besides of many of the Popes, are the tombs of Charlotte, queen of Jerusalem and Cyprus,<sup>407</sup> and of the family of the British Stuarts,<sup>408</sup> the inscriptions upon whose tombs seem to declare that they are the rightful monarchs of England. The height of this subterranean church is between eleven and twelve English feet, and the pavement the same as in the days of Constantine.

But, come go with me to the top of this mountain of architecture, and then I will let you off; for I am telling, I fear, only what hundreds have read in far better descriptions before. We left our names some days beforehand, and at last got permission to ascend. The first staircase is of so easy, broad, and regular an ascent, that mules might mount it with but a little trouble. Up and up we ascended, till we were upon the roof of the building—and then, when I saw workmen and workshops there, little houses and comfortable habitations all about me, and domes, as of new churches springing up yet higher on every side, I felt that I was really in a little city, and forgot that I was high in air. Towering far above was the mighty cupola, this "Pantheon of Agrippa,"<sup>409</sup> that architects had

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<sup>407</sup> Charlotte, Queen of Cyprus (1444-1487) — Crowned 1458; fled to Rome in 1463; buried in the chapel of St. Andrew and St. Anthony, in St. Peter's Basilica

<sup>408</sup> Monument to Maria Clementina Sobieska (1702-1735) married the Pretender James (Stuart) III in 1719

<sup>409</sup> Pantheon of Agrippa — Brooks compares the grandiose dome of St. Peter's (internal diameter 41m.) with the 43m. dome of the Pantheon, erected in Rome circa 126 A.D.

reared thus proudly toward the skies; and, after we had satisfied every curiosity with an examination of the suburbs below, we commenced the ascent in this double falvi [shell?] over our heads. Staircases are so arranged between the exterior and interior walls, that it is not difficult to ascend into the lantern, or even very difficult to ascend into the ball, which, though eight French feet in diameter, and large enough to hold ten persons, appears to the spectator below to be only a common celestial globe. In this cupola, which is one of the greatest achievements of architectural genius, we enjoyed some of the finest views of the church below, and amused ourselves with the optical illusions that were created in a building so magnificent. The mosaics that below were of common size, were monsters here, and the many who were walking in the aisles under us, were but as pigmies and creeping things. The iron clamps that are affixed here and there to this mass of masonry, sustained even on the stout pillars below, show that architects have some doubt as to its permanency or durability; and when I was upon it, very naturally enough, I reflected upon what a crash would be created by the tumbling down of the greatest dome into the greatest and richest church of the world.

As I am not in Rome during the time of the carnival, or of any of those great religious ceremonies, when St. Peter's is filled with the multitude, or illuminated all over from cupola to its base, I cannot, of course, describe what would be its effect, but can only fancy that it must be one of the most splendid spectacles that ever was got up. As it is, all I see is the cardinals performing their customary morning devotions, and the confessionals marked in all the languages of Europe, and in many of those of Asia, as the fit places for the penitent to approach, who cannot speak the language of the country he is in; and, during a certain hour of the day, some priest is in some one of all these stalls, who can speak the language that the confessional purports. Admiring gazers are ever studying the niches and walls of this vast hall of art, though the number is at present but few, on account of the cholera. The pilgrim yet continues to kiss the foot of the bronze statue of St. Peter, which was cast from the fragments of a demolished statue of Jupiter Capitolinus; and so much has this image of the apostle, thus created from the thunderer of the pagan gods, been kissed by the lips of the devout, that, hard as it is, the great toe is well-nigh worn away.

St. Peter's is the prince of the Roman churches in magnificence, but with such a prince, what must be its satellites—its churches of secondary rank? In any other city than Rome, they would astonish the world, and be the theme of universal admiration, but the dazzling glories of this head of the church eclipses all others that are not its equal. The basilica of St. John in Lateran, the erection of which was begun by Constantine, is a miracle in my eye, even after I have seen St. Peter's. An obelisk covered with hieroglyphics, brought from Egypt to Rome under Constantine the Great, first placed in the Circus, and afterwards tumbled down, and covered in the earth, and then raised and stationed here by Pope Sixtus V,<sup>410</sup> stands in front of the church; and thus, that which once ornamented the Temple of the Sun in Thebes, now ornaments what is called the mother church in Rome—the church that the Popes have ever regarded as their cathedral, and which they take possession of as soon as they are elected. The pavement of this church is mosaic. The bronze doors came from the Temple of Saturn. The altar of the holy sacrament is adorned with four magnificent fluted columns of bronze gilt, supposed to have been taken from the Temple of Jupiter Capitolinus. The monument of Clement XII was over the tomb of Agrippa. It was taken from the Pantheon, and is said to be, in point of shape, the most beautiful sarcophagus extant. Do you wonder then, that the modern Romans have so many beautiful things, when they had the chosen relics of the plunderers of Greece and Egypt, ay, the plunderers of the world!

The Baptistery of Constantine, with a dome supported by porphyry columns, and adorned with pillars of *verd antique*, and oriental alabaster—the place where, it is said, the emperor Constantine was baptized—and the Santa Scala,<sup>411</sup> or holy staircase of twenty-eight steps of white marble, reported to have belonged to the palace of Pilate, which such multitudes have ascended on their knees, that two or three of the steps have been quite worn out, and now all are covered with planks of wood to preserve them, as men and women always ascend on their knees!—such, and a hundred such objects as these I must pass over, if I intend to be done with Rome, in order to give you but a sketch of other things more important. One other church then, and I will allude to the

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<sup>410</sup> Pope Sixtus V (1521-1590) — Papacy from 1585 until his death

<sup>411</sup> Santa Scala — The Holy Staircase once led to the official residence of Pontius Pilate (d. c.37 A.D.) in Jerusalem, and was considered to have been sanctified by the footsteps of Jesus Christ during his final days.

others but incidentally, and you shall hear no more particulars of the churches of Rome.

The basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore cannot be passed over, for it ranks as the third among the Roman churches. It stands on the summit of the Esquiline Hill, upon the foundations of an ancient temple of Juno Lucina. The great fault in the beauty of this church is that it is too rich. I laugh [now] at myself for wondering at the wealth of the churches of Venice, when I see such a church as this. The nave is supported by antique Ionic columns, thirty-six are of white marble, and four of granite. The *baldacchino*, or *thing* over the high altar, to put it into plainer English, is supported by antique columns of porphyry. Two of its chapels are said to be the richest in Italy—one, that of Sixtus V, which is incrustated with fine marbles, and adorned with Corinthian pilasters, *bassi relievi*, and paintings; and the other, the Borghese chapel, which confounds one by its wealth. All the magnificence of art has been summoned to embellish it, and whatever marble, or gold, or jasper, or agate, or the precious *lapis lazuli*<sup>412</sup> can heap upon the wealth of an altar, has been profusely lavished upon that of the Madonna here. The princess Borghese entered this chapel as I, with a party, was examining its treasures. To all who were in it, she made a sweeping courtesy, and then fell upon her knees not far from the altar. A priest in his robes walked up, whispered a word in her ear; and as soon as he went out, others came again, also in their robes, and the music, as of a choir of women, broke out from some hidden recess over our heads. The organ sounded loudly and richly, and the loud chant of the priests mingled with its concluding notes at times. Gilded doors opened above us in a niche in front, but over our heads, and an image of the Madonna, black and execrably painted, appeared. The sound of the organ was louder, the notes of the singers were redoubled in force, and the chant of the priests was terribly solemn.

Indeed to tell the truth, I was becoming a little confounded, and getting unusually solemn myself, for I defy any man to resist the impressions of such a scene as this—till our *valet de place* took me aside and told me that this Madonna was painted by St. Luke, (a villainous dauber he must have been,) and that, but a few days before I came here, it was carried from thence in a solemn procession of perhaps 20,000 persons to St.

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<sup>412</sup> *lapis lazuli* — Deep blue semi-precious stone

Peter's, with all the pomp of the Catholic church, and that then the Pope himself officiated in praying before it, and that multitudes and multitudes kissed the frame of it, thus urging its intercession before the throne of God, that the cholera might be averted from Rome! Since which time, he said, the people were easier, for it was now believed the pestilence could not come! Now, though there is much sense in thus quieting a multitude who fear a pestilence that first seizes those who fear it, yet, wicked Protestant as I am, I could not but laugh at the means, and but think how much good these twenty thousand people might have done, if they had spent that day in clearing up the filth in the streets of Rome. Whether this resort was not better than ours, at times, of lying bulletins of health, when there is no health, it is not for me to determine, but if it has been successful, the people must have been fearfully alarmed before the procession, for the news of the breaking out of the cholera in Venice has thrown the city into consternation; and, blessed be my fortune, I have just arrived here in time to save being shut out, for the gates of Rome are closed against the traveler from Venice; and Naples, doubly alarmed, is at present closed against Rome. However, Naples is but a trifle in comparison with Rome, and I shall return quite contented, even if I can get no farther.



## 75. Palaces of Rome

Rome,  
October 18, 1835.

The modern palaces in Rome, or rather their contents, are great objects of attraction; but the word palace is far from giving an American an idea of what these structures commonly are. No habitation, in truth, can well be more uncomfortable than a Roman palace. The floors are of brick, and uncarpeted. The air enters at all points. Chilliness and gloom and desertion seem to dwell there. They are always built with an open court, into which carriages can drive; and this court, and even the marble staircases that lead from it into the interior, are commonly so dirty, so filthy even, that a stranger is disgusted the more by the contrast of mock splendor with such squalid nastiness. These beautiful staircases, I have at times seen put to that use to which we devote the worst of places; and to find beautiful frescoes, pictures and statuary, I have been obliged to study my way along, with as much care as I would walk in a barnyard. Full one half of what is called a *palazzo* in Rome, will bear this strong description. Comfort is a word which none of them know the meaning of; and, as for their being habitable places, they never can be to a man who has seen aught of comfort in England or America.

To this remark, the Palazzo Borghese is an exception; but there is no comfort even in this, though it is an edifice far more splendid than any in the United States, and profusely rich in pictures and furniture. Nine large rooms in it are usually shown to strangers, and the walls of these rooms are adorned with pictures from the pencils of the greatest painters of the world. In any other place than Rome, it would be a gallery of which a nation would be proud—but here, it is the property of but the Borghese family alone. *Diana shooting*, by Domenichino, is one of its remarkable pictures, and the *Deposition from the Cross* by Raphael, is another; but Titian, Guercino, Albano, Giulio Romano,<sup>413</sup> Carlo Dolci,<sup>414</sup>

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<sup>413</sup> Giulio Romano (c.1499-1546) — Italian Mannerist painter

<sup>414</sup> Carlo Dolci (1616-1686) — Italian baroque painter

Caravaggio, Gherardo delle Notti,<sup>415</sup> and Paul Potter<sup>416</sup> with his cattle, and Teniers<sup>417</sup> with his frolic and his fun, figure prominently among the multitude.

The Palazzo Sciarra, is also rich in pictures, the two most remarkable paintings in which are, perhaps, *Vanity and Modesty* by Leonardo da Vinci, and *Gamblers cheating a Youth* by Caravaggio.

The Palazzo Doria has in it some of the most celebrated landscapes in Rome. Gaspard Poussin<sup>418</sup> here figures with his dark landscapes in tempera. The fanciful Albano is also visible. The light and airy Claude<sup>419</sup> here shines forth in some of his most famous works. His *Sacrifice to Apollo* is one of his greatest things. Salvator Rosa<sup>420</sup> is here in his sublime landscape called his *Belisario*. Rubens,<sup>421</sup> Holbein,<sup>422</sup> Murillo,<sup>423</sup> Rembrandt,<sup>424</sup> and Teniers are not forgotten. Such a collection of pictures, anywhere else but in Rome, would immortalize the owner as one of the mighty patrons of art, but here, in the abounding splendor of everything of the like, it is thought nothing of. Rome, indeed, is so full of such things, that even a catalog of the names is tedious, and I will, therefore, soon relieve you from them.

The Palazzo Spada contains a colossal statue of a warrior holding a globe, supposed to represent Pompey, and to be the figure at whose base Caesar fell.

The Palazzo Farnese, the materials for building which were chiefly taken from the Coliseum and the Theater of Marcellus, and which was in

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<sup>415</sup> Gerard van Honthorst (1592-1656) — (nickname Gherardo delle Notti) Dutch Golden Age painter; successful in Rome and Netherlands

<sup>416</sup> Paulus Potter (1625-1654) — Dutch painter of animals within landscapes

<sup>417</sup> Teniers (16th-17th C.) — Family of Flemish painters

<sup>418</sup> Gaspard Dughet (1615-1675) — (aka Gaspard Poussin) French landscape painter, born in Rome

<sup>419</sup> Claude Lorrain (1600-1682) — (aka Claude) French painter and engraver, specialized in landscapes; lived mostly in Italy

<sup>420</sup> Salvator Rosa (1615-1673) — Italian Baroque painter

<sup>421</sup> Peter Paul Rubens (1577-1640) — Prominent Flemish/Dutch painter

<sup>422</sup> Hans Holbein the Younger (c.1497-1543) — German-Swiss portrait artist

<sup>423</sup> Bartolomé Esteban Murillo (1617-1682) — Spanish Baroque painter

<sup>424</sup> Rembrandt van Rijn (1606-1669) — Preeminent Dutch artist

part the work of Michelangelo, is one of the most splendid pieces of architecture in Rome. Before it stand two magnificent basins of Egyptian granite (above seventeen feet in length, and in depth between four and five feet,) which were found in Caracalla's Baths, and in the quadrangle is the sarcophagus of Cecilia Metella, made of Parian marble and found in her monument. The gallery above stairs is ornamented with some of the finest frescoes in Rome, executed by Annibale Carracci and his scholars, the mere enumeration of whose subjects will give you an idea of what a school for mythology it is. *Paris recovering the golden apple from Mercury—Pan offering goat skins to Diana—Galatea with Tritons, Nymphs and Loves—Jupiter and Juno—Apollo slaying Marsyas—Boreas carrying off Orithyia—Diana and Endymion—Europa on the Bull—Aurora and Cephalus in a chariot—Titan asleep and Cupid flying with a basket of roses—Venus and Anchises—Hercules and Iole—Cupid binding a Satyr—Syrinx turned into reeds by Pan—Leander conducted by Cupid swimming, to visit Hero—Perseus and Andromeda—Polyphemus playing on the syringa to charm Galatea—Polyphemus hurling the fragment of a rock at Acis—Jupiter and Ganymede—Hyacinthus and Apollo—Perseus beheading Medusa, and Hercules wrestling with the Nemean Lion*; all of which paintings are divided by ornaments in what is called in Italian, *chiaroscuro*,<sup>425</sup> of wonderful workmanship. You see thus how the fictions of the poets are used by the artist to embody even the walls and vaults of an apartment, and you yourself can judge what must be the taste and the faculties of such a people, thus born with their eyes upon such beautiful creations—thus dwelling, as it were, in the realms of fancy, and seeing on earth the actions of the gods above.

But, one more palace among the many, I will speak of, and then I shall have done. This other is the Palazzo Corsini, in which there are nine large rooms studded with gems of art, by Guido, by Murillo, Claude Lorrain, Domenichino, Salvator Rosa, Nicolas Poussin,<sup>426</sup> Albano, Rubens, Holbein, Bassano,<sup>427</sup> and I know not how many other eminent men. The wealth of these palaces of Rome, in all that appertains to art, is astonishing; and thus, one sees that, go where he may, whether into church, house, palace, or street, the arts welcome him, and cheer his

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<sup>425</sup> *chiaroscuro* — use of light and shadow for heightened artistic effect

<sup>426</sup> Nicolas Poussin (1594-1665) — French Baroque painter; lived in Rome

<sup>427</sup> Bassano (15th-16th C.) — Family of Italian artists

way. The people live and breathe in an atmosphere of poetry, sadly tintured, it is true though, by the atmosphere of—fact.

The Fountains of Rome are among the most magnificent in the world, and certainly by far the most magnificent I have seen. Though the barbarians overthrew the aerial aqueducts of the Romans, yet water does not cease to flow from the mountains, and even now it is conducted into the streets and piazzas of Rome, with a manner and a pomp suited to the dignity of the Eternal City. The Fontana di Termini has a statue of Moses, on each side of which is a *basso rilievo*—the one representing Aaron conducting the Israelites to quench their thirst; the other, Gideon encouraging them to pass the river Jordan, and directing his soldiers to lead the way.

In the Piazza Navona are two fountains, one of which is ornamented with a triton and other sculpture; and out of the other rises, upon a rock, the statue of a sea-horse on one side, and on the other, of a lion; the four sides of which rock, that an obelisk surmounts, being embellished with four colossal statues, representing four of the great rivers of the world—the Ganges, the Nile, (with its head covered, to signify that its source was unknown,) the Plata, and the Danube. This Place Navona is sometimes permitted to be overflowed by these fountains, and in the basin that it makes, representations of sea-fights are given.

The Fountain of Trevi is one of the grandest in Rome. Among the niches in the columns, over this flowing river, is a Neptune carved upon a coach, drawn by horses of the sea that Tritons conduct. In two other niches are allegorical figures, the one representing salubrity, and the other, health. Above these statues are bas-reliefs—one representing Agrippa conducting the water to Rome, and the other, a young girl, pointing out the source of this water to the soldiers. The cornice supports four other statues, also allegorical—one the goddess of flowers, another the fertility of the fields, another the autumn or fruitfulness, and the last, the charm of the prairies enameled with flowers, or the spring. The coach of Neptune throws out a great quantity of water, and it comes spouting and tumbling over the rocks; and though the effect is grand, yet the crossway where the fountain is, is not large enough for such a magnificence of work. Beautiful idea, however, this is, particularly in a climate like that of Rome, of thus bringing

refreshing cataracts into the very streets, and to the very doors of the people; and among the many things here that we ought to copy as age comes upon us, this is not the least.

The *piazzas* or *places* of Rome, may be spoken of next, in order after its fountains—for in these piazzas is commonly placed some one of those fountains. The Piazza del Popolo, of which I spoke in my first letter as being at the part where I first entered, is the most magnificent in Rome. The Pincian Hill, embellished with a superb promenade, is just above it. A winding ascent is almost concealed on its sides among the trees and the walls. A fountain stands in its center, and lions spout water from their mouths. Two churches front the gate. Elegant buildings are around the sides. All looks new, fresh and neat, and it is one of those few parts of Rome where one can live in peace.

The Piazza d'Espagna is the common resort of foreigners, particularly of those who speak the English language. The fountain in it, and the lofty staircase that leads up to the Pincian Hill, where even now, a murder is done now and then, are its principal ornaments. The place of St. Peter was described in alluding to the church. Monte Cavallo was spoken of from the hill of the Capitol.

The Place of Pasquin, perhaps more famous from its statue, abroad, than all the others for their grandeur at home, is very little and very dirty; but here stands a torso, or mutilated statue, from whence has come the word *pasquinades*.<sup>428</sup> Some think that this statue was the body of a soldier of Alexandro, but others say, that Pasquin was a tailor, a man agreeable but satiric, and a critic, who dwelt in this quarter of the city, and around whom assembled persons of his character; and a statue having been found in this place, they put it up, and called it after the name of the witty tailor. To this statue there were affixed epigrams and *bons mots*,<sup>429</sup> called *pasquinades*. In another place, not far off, upon the side of the Capitol, was a statue of a river [god], found in the Forum, and to which was given the name of Marforio. These two statues were often pitted against each other in conversation. To Marforio was applied a placard putting a question, and afterwards the response was affixed to

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<sup>428</sup> *pasquinade* — (per Webster) satirical writing; a lampoon posted in a public place

<sup>429</sup> *bon mot* — (per Webster) witticism; a clever remark

the statue of Pasquin. The government was at last so much annoyed with this kind of conversation, that Marforio was transferred to the Capitol—and thus ended the colloquy of these pieces of marble. Poor Pasquin is now neglected, and never thought of by a Roman, though his fame is spread far and wide in the word *pasquinade*.

I have not spoken of the Pantheon yet, but I have not forgotten it—for one of the first objects I sought out was this, the oldest building in the world, the glorious relic of sixteen centuries—the pride of old Rome, and the ornament of the new. A marketplace is now around its noble portico, and upon the fountain opposite many a young Roman urchin was trailing down his mouth the long strings of his macaroni. Dirt, filth, everything unattractive, was all around; and it was the very last place in which a stranger would expect to find the temple of all the gods. The preservation of this building, and the general destruction of old Roman edifices, is wonderful; and to what miraculous chance we are indebted for it, no man can tell. One of the old Popes, we know, (Eugenius IV)<sup>430</sup> cleared away ruins all around the Pantheon, and the piazza in which it stands was choked up with them.

But the Pantheon does not stand as it did, high and elevated in an open square, where all of its beauties might be beheld and approached, for the accumulation of earth has buried five of its steps, and a part of its foundations, and dirty buildings are crowded around all but its portico. The marbles which once encrusted it, are chiefly gone, and only the ugly bricks are left to ornament its exterior. The Popes have plundered it of its bronze, and Genseric, king of the Vandals, lost its costly doors in the Sicilian sea. A fortress it became at last, and then a church, the church of the Martyrs, and the twenty-eight cartloads of relics of Christian saints there deposited, consecrated it to the Christian God, and saved it from Christian pillage, and the malicious demon, who, it is said, long attacked with blows the worshippers that would invade the Pantheon of the Pagan gods. The portico and the frieze are, however, in a good state of preservation. The stately vestibule, supported by sixteen magnificent Corinthian columns of red oriental granite, with their bases and capitals of white marble, antique in point of beauty, and the entablature and

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<sup>430</sup> Pope Eugene IV (1383-1447) — Papacy ran from 1431 to his death in 1447

pediment of the portico, in the tympanum<sup>431</sup> of which are holes that once served for *bassi relievi*, each and all, yet stand as a monument of Roman art, even in its lustrous days. But the interior, from the novelty of its construction, perhaps, makes a greater impression than this portico so much admired, measured, and copied by artists of every land. The form is a rotunda. There is not a window in it, but it is lighted from above, the dome of which is all open, uncovered by glass even, and the clouds from its center are seen with a beautiful effect, as they flit athwart the vault above. The rains pour in there, and the snows when there are any, and the rotunda is, as it were, but a wall from the winds. But in a climate, such as that of Italy generally is, though today (October 18,) it is sufficiently cold, such a view of the skies through such a dome, particularly in the summer, must be not only beautiful but grand, and at times even sublime.

Imagine the Rotunda to be, as the ancients have described it, full of the statues of gods in bronze, silver and gold and precious marbles, ornamented with columns of porphyry, caryatides, mosaics; with everything, in short, that the masters of the world could concentrate there. What then must have been the effect of the rich starlight pouring in there, or the full moon, or the high sun, even in his garniture of clouds, heightened as all this grandeur was by the superstition that every marble was a god, from Jupiter the Avenger who stood upon the tribune, to the Infernal Deities that were placed upon the pavement! The priest now has an altar where an idol stood. His candle is burning under the niche where a Roman god was placed. The beggars kneel about the doors where the Romans entered, and, with starving appetites, beg for bread. Christianity has gained, but, whether man has advanced, it is at least a question that one will put himself upon such a spot. The inscription however, in honor of Raphael, is at least instructive in this, if in nothing else, in showing that the empire of the arts may be disputed, if not by us of this day, by men who were not very long before us.



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<sup>431</sup> Tympanum — The wall surface over an entrance, door or window, bounded by a lintel and arch.

## 76. Rome beyond the walls

Rome,  
October, 1835.

The Theater of Marcellus, erected by Augustus in honor of his nephew Marcellus, is now almost tumbled down, and though enough is left to give a faint idea of its former magnificence, yet about all we can see are the arches, corridors and substructures, on which the proud fabric once rested. The palace of the sole Roman senator of the present day now stands upon these ruins, the arches of which are filled with coal shops, blacksmiths, or vegetables. This is the destiny of that Augustan fabric that boasted once of its Doric and Ionic columns, and of its capacity to hold 30,000 persons. The theater of Pompey, which this proud Roman general built after his return from the Mithridatic war, at the consecration of which above 500 lions were killed, and eighteen elephants were exhibited in combat, is now seen with torches and lanterns underground, and about all that is left of it is the reticulated brickwork of the Romans, that even now, on all sides of Rome, is defying time. The temple of Aesculapius has become the church of St. Bartholomew. In a narrow street close against the wall, stands the mausoleum of Gaius Publius Bibulus which, an inscription says, the senate and the people erected to his worth—but when Bibulus lived, or who Bibulus was, nobody knows, for his mausoleum, surviving the wreck of a thousand others, has outlived his fame. The pyramid of Gaius Cestius, of the college of Roman priests, has also outlived his fame, and it is doubtful even in what age he lived, though his pyramid has a height of 113 Paris feet, and is at the base sixty-nine feet in length. The Taberna Meritoria, or the Roman Hospital for invalid soldiers, has been turned into the church of Santa Maria. St. Sabine stands on the foundations of Diana, and St. Alexis over the ruins of Hercules. The temple of Remus is now the church of a brace of Saints. The arch of Titus, who is represented as loaded with the spoils of Jerusalem, is dilapidated and falling. On the spot supposed to have been the Lupercal, where was the ancient Temple of Romulus, is now the church of St. Theodorus, below the level of the earth, the steps to which lead *downward*. The Temple of Chastity is converted into the church of Santa Maria—in Cosmedin, it is

added, because the edifice was overloaded with ornaments. In the walls of this church can now be seen the Grecian marble fluted columns, and the finely worked capitals of the Temple, and in its portico is an ugly ancient mask, called the Mouth of Truth, from an opinion once prevalent among the populace that oracles issued from it. Diocletian's Baths are converted into the churches of St. Bernard, and of Santa Maria, the present entrance of which was the *Caldarium* of the baths in times gone by. The pope's oil cellar is also in one of the rooms of these once spacious baths. The basilica of Santa Croce has a part of the true cross which St. Helena brought from Jerusalem, and the subterranean chapel of this ancient saint is also there.

The church of St. Peter in Prison stands over a dungeon where the apostle, it is said, suffered imprisonment. I went down into the dungeon, and, by the aid of torches, saw the column to which, it is said, he was bound—the spring of water which was said to be miraculously issued forth that he might baptize the two jailers and forty-seven of his fellow prisoners, who afterwards suffered martyrdom. The spiders were thick, and the dungeon was wet, and the rock was hard—nevertheless, I knocked off a piece from the walls, to keep in memory of my visit. But I must stop even this running catalog of curious facts, for, as I have said again and again, the catalog of even a thousandth part of what would be precious relics or things in any other city, would weary you, if I were to make it out in Rome.

Come, go out but for a short time beyond the walls of Rome—for the suburbs of Rome are only second in curiosity to the city itself—and, as I have resolved to break away from this city, even with but the briefest chronicle of what has deeply interested me, (for I can readily see that my visions as awakened on the spot can find but little sympathy elsewhere,) I will only group together the things most remarkable of all. The church of St. Sebastian in the catacombs is a great curiosity, or rather the catacombs are, over which it is built. A Capuchin friar, after giving each of us a torch, and taking one himself, led us into these dark and doubtful labyrinths of the early Christians, who, in the days of persecution, used these catacombs not only for cemeteries, but for hiding places, and for the worship of God. Anon, we were under the earth, with walls of *pozzolana*, as the Romans call this species of soft stone in the catacombs, surrounding us on every side. The cavities

within these walls were made for graves, and had a coffin aspect, which in such a spot chilled the blood. The passages between these walls are but from two to three feet wide, and as they lead, the stranger knows not where—for these catacombs, it is said, reach to Ostia, a distance of sixteen miles—we should have felt that we were incarcerated for life, and that our own bodies would soon rest in these skeleton-stripped cavities, if we had had any suspicion of the guidance of our friar. Persons indeed have often lost themselves in these subterranean labyrinths; and so dangerous had this in particular become, that long ago it was blocked up in part, and the whole of its remote stretch is now shut out from curious investigation.

These excavations were undoubtedly made by the ancient Romans, in searching for the materials of which their buildings were made. The Christians, when the penalty of death was inflicted in Rome upon him who worshipped the true God, fled hither, and the multitude at last, making this their retreat, dug out chambers where religious exercises were performed. I could not but contrast these dim and dismal dungeons where Christianity was cradled, with the proud and aspiring basilica of St. Peter's, that towers so high in air above all other structures of ancient or modern time; and, forgetful of the waste of treasures that had been lavished upon it, I could not but consider it a noble monument to the memory of those men whose bones had been crumbling in the cavities of the rock by my side. That feeble praise, which was here uttered tremblingly under the earth to the almighty God of the universe, is now not only echoed along the aisles and the vaults of the greatest fabric on earth, but it is sounded and resounded loudly and proudly under the arch of the heavens in the four quarters of the globe, while the pagan gods are tumbled down, or preserved only as relics of art. It has been supposed that 170,000 martyrs were buried here.

The sepulcher of the Scipios, in a subterranean repository, dark and damp, is seen on the way to the catacombs. The circus of Romulus (the son of Maxentius,) is one of the most perfect in Rome. The mausoleum of Cecilia Metella is a beautiful fabric which has well braved time, though long ago it was plundered of all that was in it, and converted into a fortress, as the ugly battlements, now overgrown with weeds upon their tops, are ready to prove. The fountain and the grotto of Egeria, of which but little of the ancient beauty is left, interest us from their classical

associations The Templo di Redeundo, or the Temple of the Return, marks the spot where was supposed to be the site of Hannibal's camp when he was besieging Rome—a temple that the Romans erected in joy of his return to his own country. These are a few of the objects on one side of Rome, in fields of ruins where not even the plough runs, or perhaps can run, so thickly strewn is the land with walls and bricks; but yet this land, which was once crowded with habitations, is now overrun with weeds and bushes.

A few villas are all that now form the suburbs of Rome. Among these, the villa Borghese is the most magnificent, or at least the best kept. On Sundays, the whole of Rome resort hither in vehicles and on foot; and for the two Sabbaths past, there has been a rustic fete, which has redoubled in number the accustomed crowd. Turkeys, chickens, handkerchiefs, wine in bottles, legs of bacon, and other things as attractive, were fixed upon a pole or mast, perpendicularly stationed in the ground, and the winner of these things was he who could climb up its slippery sides, and drop down the things on the top. Thousands of people assembled to witness this, and a band of music soothed the multitude or stimulated the dance of the peasants. Other villas there are, as well as this, all famous for at least some one precious work of art—but I have said enough of art, and I must skip over these without even a word.

Tivoli, where is the vast and rich villa of the emperor Hadrian, eighteen miles from Rome, of which the emperor himself was the architect, and which he adorned with temples, baths, theaters, porticos, and imitations of the most remarkable buildings in the world, and with a *Vale of Tempe*, *Elysian Fields*, and *Infernal Regions* even, is one of the most attractive objects about Rome. What a paradise, and how rich in art must have been this villa, which genius of every kind did its utmost to adorn. Maecenas' villa, or the ruins of it, can be seen about here, and opposite is what is left of the villa of Sallust. Some ten miles off was the villa of Horace; and the antiquarian, well versed in ancient lore, with a love of classic study, may be happy about here for weeks, though among a population not the safest in the world, and though living in a manner that a prince would not choose, to say the least.

Frascati I visited also, about twelve Roman miles from Rome, upon a prancing horse, with a cavalcade of crazy young men—English, German, and French—who were too wild to stop to study what we galloped over, and therefore I am not much the wiser for the visit. Tusculum we visited near there, and walked over and through the bushes that cover its ruins. The reticulated brickwork of Cicero's villa, where he wrote his Tusculum questions, is the most interesting thing to be seen there. This villa, it seems, was upon the side of a hill, with a beautiful view all around, and there this great man retired from Rome, trained his mind for meditation and philosophy. But if I do not stop now, I never shall—and therefore, I am resolved, after a few more words of advice upon living and buying in Rome, to leave the city and start on the route to Naples.

Better cameos can be bought in Rome than in any other place of Italy. The workmanship of them is often wonderfully delicate, but the price of a well-worked one is always high. Mosaics here are also better than anywhere else where I have been. The models of all the ancient ruins can be bought here in marble, as well as of the masterpieces of sculpture. Cameo necklaces, earrings, and the like, are well executed here. Prints and colored drawings of everything, of the past and the present, can be found in the shops. Two thirds, aye, nearly all of the Roman shops in the Corso and the Piazza of Spain, are but epitomes of the curiosities of Rome; and if a man has money to spend, he can nowhere better gratify an enlightened taste than in the purchase of these models of what are the wonderful things of the world. As Rome indeed chiefly lives upon the arts, and upon the strangers who visit it, purchases can be made here to better advantage than elsewhere; but, woe to the man who does not trade with a Roman of the present day warily, for the price demanded for a thing is no sign of its value—and unless the purchaser is a connoisseur, and even then, unless he has huckstered from shop to shop, he will be cheated in everything he buys. Double, and even triple the value of a thing, and of what the vender will take, is often demanded of a stranger who is making purchases.

A man can live in Rome for almost any price. Many artists live well there for less than a dollar a day, and my own expenses were but little more

than that at the "*Hotel de Londres*,"<sup>432</sup> one of the very best hotels in the city. But a young man, who manages prudently, never dines at his hotel, but always dines out at a restaurant where, if not so many, choice articles may be obtained of what he likes, amply enough for a dinner, at the cost of from thirty to forty cents, wine included. Families alone have the habit of dining at the hotels, and all other travelers usually dine at the restaurants, which, from four to seven o'clock, are usually crowded with men and women from all parts of the world. An artist may obtain fair lodgings in Rome for twenty-five or thirty cents a day—a breakfast for ten or twelve cents, of bread and coffee, and a dinner from twenty-five to forty cents—and no man in Rome, or on the Continent of Europe, I believe, thinks of eating more than two regular meals a day.

Five hundred dollars in Rome will go about as far in expenses as two thousand dollars in London; for, as you travel southward, this change is marked in the value of money—that an English *shilling* (twenty-three cents about,) becomes a *franc* in France (19 cents about,) a *paul* in Rome (10 cents,) and a *carline* in Naples, which is 8 cents of our money. Expenditures, however, always depend upon the manner in which a man manages. He (as the American generally, in imitation of the English) who drives up to a hotel in his own carriage, with his courier, ordering all and paying all, will find that neither two nor three dollars will pay his daily expenses in Rome, though he cannot have one single comfort that another may not have for a third of the sum. All traveling in Italy depends upon the practice and skill of the traveler, as to the amount expended. A little knowledge of the language is indispensable to getting along cheaply and smoothly without a courier, for there are hundreds of places where French is not the current coin of conversation, though in every large town there are servants in the hotels who speak French very well. The important fact that everything must be bargained for in advance, even the washerwoman, for a nightcap or neckerchief, must always be kept in mind.

Three beautiful little rooms, two bedrooms and a pretty saloon overlooking a garden in the "*Hotel de Londres*," cost me and my companion one dollar a day. Our breakfast in the hotel was 30 cents—our dinner there, 60 cents, with wine; but it was such a dinner as in

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<sup>432</sup> *Hotel de Londres* — Hotel of London

London would cost two dollars. Each man pays the servant at least ten cents a day, and candles are a separate bill. Our lodging, probably, was cheaper than it would have been, if Rome had not been unusually deserted, on account of a fear of the cholera. A *valet de place* costs five francs a day, whose services are indispensable here; but if a party is formed, the divided expense is but a trifle.

Almost every picture-gallery you see in Rome costs money, and so does almost every species of sightseeing, unless it be on public days, and then sights are so numerous, that the aggregate of the whole is quite a serious bill, though, in detail, ten or fifteen cents are the most a man need give, and five will often answer his purpose, particularly in a party—for in Italy three young men on an average can travel for the same price that it would cost two alone. The market of Rome is one of the best in Italy. The wine of Orvieto takes the place of the old Falernian, which has lost all its fame, and it can be bought for twelve or fifteen cents the flask.

A family intending to make a long stay in Rome would do well to hire private lodgings, which can be easily obtained, and then to order their dinners to be brought from the restaurants. Grapes, apples, pears, peaches and apricots, we have found delicious—and for a single *balocchi*, which is in value of an American cent, we have often bought as many grapes as two of us could eat. Many a Roman lives on bread and grapes, or macaroni, which is delicious with him, and his flask of wine, for ten or fifteen, or twenty cents a day at the most. Italy, you may thus see, is, next to the interior of our country—the West and New England population off the great roads—the cheapest country in the world to travel in. I have thrown these little items together, so that an American at home may know with how much to venture abroad, as well as for the benefit of the future traveler.



## 77. Americans in Europe

Naples,  
November, 1835.

One is amused now and then in Europe by the odd specimens of his countrymen that he meets abroad. One night, I was walking in the streets of Rome with my traveling companion, when a man speaking English came up and addressed him as an acquaintance, with a "*Good God, how happy I am to see you!*" "*I am dying here, all alone.*" "*These fellows here can't understand a word I say, and I can't understand a word of theirs.*" "*How did you get here?*" "*Where did you come from?*" "*What a thing it is to be in a country where you can't talk, and where you can't understand!*" "*I want to go to Naples, and I cry "Naples," and they cry "no:" but what the devil they mean, is more than I can tell.*" Really, I said to myself, this poor man is in a sad situation. I don't blame him for being over-rejoiced to see an acquaintance of his, especially one who speaks a language he can understand. We took him to our hotel, and as this had been the first opportunity he had had for a long time to open his mouth, I was astonished by his volubility.

We installed him in a chamber by our side. But we soon found we had discovered a droll companion. A picture gallery he would finish up at a single glance. One stride through the Vatican, and all the Vatican was seen—the *Apollo Belvedere*, the *Laocoon*, the glorious and gorgeous rooms, the works of Raphael, and Angelo, Domenicino, and all! We worried him to death in the museum of the Capitol. The *Dying Gladiator*, the delicate and chaste embracing of *Cupid and Psyche*—nothing could make him halt before it. Before we would have finished one room, he would have traversed all, with the keeper at his heels, wondering what manner of a wild man this was, who was thus striding by the shining fragments of august antiquity. "*Beautiful,*" "*magnificent,*" "*grand,*" "*sublime,*" were his standing adjectives, and he applied them to everything without reference to thing, time or place. St. Peter's, with one stride, and repeated exclamations of "*grand,*" "*sublime,*" "*magnificent*" and "*beautiful,*" was visited in less than half an hour. But, the chief part of our fun was to take him among the ruins of Rome, the huge,

incoherent masses of brick, and to show him them. Nothing on earth was such a bore to him as these old bricks. We hunted for relics of marble for hours in the wilderness of the palace of the Caesars, and he, poor man, was bored to death. We mounted the lofty walls of the Coliseum, and took him along with us over arch and battlement, so that all Rome could be seen, but, nevertheless, we bored him to death. We studied out the *metae* and *spina*<sup>433</sup> of the Circus of Romulus as illustrations of the ancient chariot races, but he saw nothing but weeds and desolation there, and the same everlasting bricks. The awful history of the Roman Forum never awakened him, and all he saw was the cattle about there, and the chained convicts, "*digging holes underground*," as he termed it.

Here in Naples, today, we burst forth in a roar of laughter at one of his speeches; for while we were studying the celebrated group of what is called the *Farnese Bull*, he had finished all the rows in the vast gallery of the *Museo Borbonico* above us, and when we asked him what he had seen, he told us there was nothing there but *old pots*, and that we had better go home. These *old pots*—*what* do you guess they were? these *old pots* that were not worth going to see! Why, nothing more or less than the most famous collection of Etruscan vases in the world, which the whole treasury of the United States could not buy! Among these *old pots* were beautiful tripods found in the temple of Isis at Pompeii, couches for the gods, carried in the Lectisternia festivals of the ancients, chalices, candelabras, altars, idols—in short, almost all the appendages of heathen worship that were found in that disinterred city of the dead, when the whole past was made present, as it were, by falling upon Pompeii—which, under the lava of Vesuvius as it was, no barbarian, whether Goth or Christian, could despoil. These *old pots* are worth a study of days and days, and yet our strange companion had finished them at a glance, disgusted with the idea that these Neapolitan Lazzaroni<sup>434</sup> should have collected them here, as a show to cheat us out of our money by. These *old pots* are now copied in the ornamenting of rooms all over England, and there are some Englishmen who go so far in their admiration of them, that they are endeavoring in the furnishing

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<sup>433</sup> The typical Roman circus was an oblong open-air space, comprising two sections of track, divided by a median strip (*spina*); the final turning points were marked by poles (*metae*).

<sup>434</sup> Lazzaroni — Poorest members of the lower class of people in Naples

and in the decorations of their rooms, to copy, and thus to represent for this day, what antiquity was, when these *old pots* were in fashion.

Indeed, there are but few specimens of this strange man whom we caught, let loose and running wild in the streets of Rome. Four days he had been there when we saw him, and with money enough in his pockets, he had been galloping every day all over Rome—now on horseback, now in a *cabriolet*,<sup>435</sup> and now a *fiacre*,<sup>436</sup> and, when we saw him, he swore (by all the heathen deities of course,) that he had seen all Rome, from beginning to end—its Alpha and Omega—and what on earth his landlord meant when he said “*no*,” to his demand of Naples, he never understood; till we told him he could not go to Naples for thirty days to come, as this was the quarantine, during which thirty days we kept him busily at work looking at old bricks and dirty alleys, or else in crying out “*sublime*” and “*grand*” in the picture galleries, the palaces, the churches and the museums of august Rome, till he was at last so surfeited with “*glory*,” that even his parrot adjectives ceased to drop from his mouth. He speaks no language on earth—not even his own (mark, English is his native tongue.) By the mere force of gravity, as it were, he had tumbled from the Alps into Rome. He had got into a diligence, and following it without stopping, and crying “*Rome*” when it changed, he had been brought to Rome. His progress is a miracle to me. How on earth he ever gets along, is a puzzle. But, everybody cheated him, and he paid everybody, and perhaps gold is the only universal language on earth.

By the way, for the honor of our country, we ought to institute an examination of the passengers on board our New York packets, and throw overboard such as are not fit to go abroad. Europe is now overrun with many of the most extraordinary specimens of American humanity. We are judged of, there, by what foreigners see; and when they see, for example, such a novelty as I have described above, they certainly can form no high estimate of American civilization, if he be a specimen. The large majority of American travelers in Europe are young men, the sons of rich parents, many of whom are ornaments to their country, and many are far otherwise. The mind of that American indeed must have

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<sup>435</sup> *cabriolet* — Light vehicle with two wheels, drawn by a single horse; occupied by a driver and one passenger; popular as a hire vehicle in Paris

<sup>436</sup> *fiacre* — Horse-drawn four-wheeled carriage used for hire.

much of strength in it, who is not changed or affected by what he sees here; and if he properly cultivates that change, it will do him good—for America has much to learn, as well as much to dread from Europe; but if that change be but imitation—if it be but a servile copying of men and things, the American is ruined forever as an American, and is never more fit for his own land.

When we come here, we fall at once into a new state of society, where rank is everything, where thought and action run in far different channels than with us, and the temptation to deliver ourselves to this tide that whirls all others along, is irresistible almost. But whoever does surrender himself to it, otherwise than as a spectator of a show—woe to him as an American. His race for his own country is already run. Every step he takes, when he returns to his family, will shock half of his friends and make enemies of the rest. The fashions, the customs of Europe would be pests for us; and yet, as I have said before, we are so far from being the most enlightened people on earth, that Europe has ten thousand of the most important lessons to teach us; but then there is as much danger in studying these lessons, as Ulysses found when he sailed by the land of the Sirens;<sup>437</sup> and, as he stopped up the ears of his sailors, and lashed himself to the mast, so, figuratively speaking, we must stop up our ears, and lash ourselves to the mast.

I can fancy no better school than that of Europe for the young American, after he has seen something of his own land; and yet I can fancy none more dangerous to all his future prospects and future character. By character, I do not mean to speak of morals, but of principles—not moral principles, but principles for society, for government, for behavior, for conversation, for everything, in short, that a man may say or do. For example, I saw, in September, a young American in Switzerland who had been so long in Europe (two years only,) that he had forgotten his own language; and though he did condescend to speak English at times, he lisped it so, through the hairs of his mustachios, and he was so very graceful in all his gestures, that he seemed to be the veriest fool I ever saw on earth. I took him for a fool, and a fool, especially such a fool, is a man out of the ordinary way, from whom

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<sup>437</sup> In Greek mythology, the Sirens were creatures, partially of human female form, inhabiting rocky coasts, who lured sailors and caused ships to wreck by the enchantment of their singing. The reference to Ulysses is from Homer's *Odyssey*.

something is to be learned. I sought his acquaintance, and obtained it. Judge then, what was my surprise to find this man, whom I fancied to be a fool, to be a very sensible man. Yet, everybody made fun of him. He was the butt of all company. And why? Simply because he had **un-Americanized** himself, and had somewhere picked up a voice and a manner which he thought to be mighty fine, but which, nevertheless, was neither that of a man nor brute beast. Such a voice alas, in the United States, would be a bar to all success in almost everything—for by it the man made himself ridiculous, and ridicule is a weapon as strong in one sense as the arrow of death is in another.

Such fashions as these, if I may call them fashions, are what is so dangerous. But then, as a man sees more of the world, he imbibes from that world (and so he ought in fact—or else, what is the use of seeing it?) new habits of thought. If these habits of thought, thus imbibed, be in accordance with our institutions, all is well and good; but if they be otherwise, what is more injurious? For example, it is notorious that when Americans forget that they are Americans—princes born even, with the royal blood of a republic in their veins, and that each one of them at home is more of a man, if liberty and self-government make the man, than nine-tenths of the princes of Europe—when they forget this, and become the hunters of rank, and the hunters of other hunters of this same rank, it is notorious, I say, that they are the most abject and degraded slaves of the day. They out-Herod Herod in all they do.<sup>438</sup> Who does not blush for them, and blush for himself, that he is a countryman of theirs?

Think of a nation like ours, not one in fifty of whom can trace our genealogy further than our father's father, boasting of family—of rank—of blood—of all those silly things, in short, that men think so much of here! Our patent of nobility is in what we are at the present moment, proclaimed in that bright charter of constitutional freedom, and blazoned in those proud institutions that are above the reach of all the rest of the world. We are a nation of princes. The *royal blood* runs in all our veins. But when we boast of family abroad, or thrust ourselves

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<sup>438</sup> Herod Agrippa (11 B.C.-44 A.D.) — Grandson of Herod the Great, King of Judaea, was sent to the imperial court in Rome. There he was favored by Emperor Tiberius, and educated alongside his son Drusus and the future emperor Claudius.

unceremoniously upon men of rank, our position is as absurd. Our title is a thing never to be spoken of, and never doubted. A monarch never troubles himself about his own rank, or the rank of others, and the only thing he thinks of is to sustain the character he has. Simplicity of character, energy without pretension, security as to position, pride for our country, for what that country has done, and for the precious blessings it enjoys—modest, but determined resolution; these are some of the characteristics of the true American in another land, and he who possesses them, does honor to us all. But throw him overboard, yes, throw him overboard, who starts for Europe on purpose to be a fool. I do not know but that it is necessary for our own security even, as the whole character, customs, and fashions of our country, if not at present, will soon be principally influenced by the number of Americans who are now annually visiting Europe and returning to their homes. Havre, Liverpool, and London are now, for all practical purposes, nearer New York than Naples is to Paris; and hence, from one of the most natural laws that regulate the intercourse of one people with another, it must happen that such facilities of traveling will in some degree assimilate the new continent with the old.



## 78. A plague of Consuls

Naples,  
November, 1835.

Naples, I have said, is further, for all practical purposes, from Paris than Paris is from New York, and yet the distance is but about a thousand miles. However, one feels here as if one was quite at the end of the world, as the diligences upon the road are so dull, and the difficulty of getting along is so great, though excellent, in general, are the roads. The mail, it is true, comes by the courier in ten or twelve days, and so does the mail come from America to Europe, sometimes in fifteen days. But there is no security for the transportation of anything here, such as there is in England or the United States. A letter is often opened and detained, one knows not how long, or destroyed, it may be, because the government do not like what is said in it. Not a letter, for example, have I seen a foreigner receive in Rome, which has not been opened. All are "smoked," and pierced, that is, cut in two places, and sprinkled well with vinegar, and it may be that in this process the seals are broken, but nevertheless it is a fact that they are broken, and that the contents can thus be easily read. I feel, therefore, as if I was in fact at the end of the world, for I will trust no letter in such a country, and have received none, and expect to receive none till I get to Paris.

The want of security, then, in the means of transportation, puts Naples almost at the end of the world. Newspapers are precious and scarce. The postage is immense. A stray *Galignani* (an English newspaper printed in Paris,) may now and then be seen, and the sight of one is a precious treasure; but almost all I learn from the United States is in the little journals of Italy, which are about as large as one eighth part of the *National Intelligencer* in Washington. They tell me the Union is breaking up, that riots and rows are desolating the whole land, that the slaves are rebelling, and that a servile war is threatened, and they rejoice loudly, as they hold up this admonition of the folly of men attempting to govern themselves. Nothing so much delights them as this last demonstration, as they call it, of the impossibility of a republic, even when founded under the most favorable circumstances. The Lynch laws particularly

delight them. The Mississippi gamblers, lynched as they were, are nevertheless compensated with an immortality in every despot's journal in Europe. The slave missionaries are wearing a crown of glory here, as martyrs of a mad democracy. How true all these things are, I have no means of telling; for all I see is in the little Italian journals, which are particularly occupied with such of our affairs as tend to discredit all republican institutions. And, perhaps, one of the greatest *pleasures* of traveling is to read such news of one's own country in a foreign land, particularly when it is probable that all is at least founded on fact. The emperor of Austria, it is said, has seized this occasion to inspire his Italian subjects with a horror of all republican institutions, by making it optional with some state prisoners in Italy—whether they will choose the punishment of death at home, or *banishment to the United States!*

But I am wandering far away from my journal as a traveler. I did not in my last even tell you how I got out of Rome, and before I finish this, I shall not get you into Naples, for on a road where every spot is classic, the traveler must go very slow. We finished in Rome our quarantine of thirty days, but as that was all in the way of business, we never felt its infliction. We went to the police, and surrendering our bill of residence, for which we had paid, were given the passport, which we were told to take to the American consul. The regulation of our passports we usually left to some domestic of our hotels, who look upon the fee attending this as a perquisite of their situation. But when we spoke with the domestic of the hotel, and demanded the usual fees, he laughed in our faces, when we told him we were Americans, as we must, to use his own phrase, go through the *pounding* of the American consul, whose signature was the most costly of all powers represented at Rome. The fee, he said, was two Roman *scudi*, which is two dollars of our money. I did not believe this possible, for I am yet so green in traveling that I have never before found this exaction made. An Englishman, who was with us, laughed at us loudly. "*Your speculating, trafficking character,*" he said, "*is even seen in your consular agent at Rome.*" But this consul, by the way, is an Italian, not an American. Rome is, perhaps, the only place in Europe where a British traveler pays to the agents of his own government a single cent (for a passport stamp,) but as the religious Protestant rebellion of England put England so out of the Catholic pale that she never has had a minister plenipotentiary there, she has sent there a consul, upon the

same footing as ours, whose signature costs a British subject, thirty cents only of our money.

Not crediting the story of the domestic of the hotel, I sought out the house of the American consul, or the palace as it is called, though not a very shining house even, nor with an atmosphere around it so pure as that of the Elysian Fields. I mounted the third story of it, and after wandering through the purlieu of his kitchen, came into his office, which was that of a Roman lawyer, and then was received by his clerk. The clerk tried to put us off with the remark that the consul was not in, but as we did not want him, only his consular stamp, we succeeded in getting it, for which, sure enough, the two dollars was demanded. Two of us gave him his four dollars, and we demanded in a surly humor an account of what we considered a most outrageous and disreputable system of sponging. It may be just that he should have something for this signature from a traveler; no, even this is not just, for the American government is bound to pay him, if pay is needed, but why is not the exaction such as other nations demand? Why is an American passport made a laughingstock in every Roman hotel? And who can reply to the taunt of the Englishman, that our speculating, trafficking character even fixes itself upon our consular agents abroad?

Let every American, I say, redress this evil for himself, till his government redresses it for him. Take no American passports, if you want to save expense in every town where an American consul chooses to exact this enormous fee for such a little service. Spoil the trade. An English passport will carry any man who speaks the English language from one end of Europe to the other with but a trifling expense; and even a passport from the Foreign Office of England with the direct signature of Lord Palmerston<sup>439</sup> upon it, can be obtained for one tenth part of the sum that an American passport costs, provided this exaction is continued. First, I object to the exaction as outrageously disproportionate in comparison with other nations, and next I object to the dishonor it inflicts upon the Americans as a people. Again, a consul in Rome, for all I can see, is as unnecessary as the fifth wheel of a coach, for there is no commerce there, and his signature would never be

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<sup>439</sup> Henry John Temple, Lord Palmerston (1784-1865) — Three times British Foreign Secretary, and twice British Prime Minister

needed for passports if he had not linked himself with the police, which is the surliest and the worst bred in the world: but, if such an officer is necessary, let him be an American. For, if every American traveler is to pay him such a tribute—the sum is large enough now, as the American visitors are so many, to support a young unmarried American exceedingly well, who by his studies and pursuits in this, the storehouse of the arts of the world, could ultimately do his country honor.

I repeat, then, my advice to my countryman who embark for Europe by way of England, to spoil the trade. As for myself, I never will touch an American passport again, after I get back to England, till the government wipes off this stigma upon it. Remember, the exaction does not exist in Rome alone, but it follows a traveler now, every step he takes from Paris; and in Naples it is as in Rome, and so on to Florence and Leghorn, and Marseilles and Paris. Everywhere in short, where the 160 consuls that our government has, (and his signature to passports is necessary,) are stationed, the American traveler with an American passport, is liable to this exaction. And if, in the course of his European tour, he comes in contact with fifty such consuls, his passport alone will cost him one hundred dollars for American signatures, which, added to the fees that must ever be given in almost all the nations through which he passes, will make a passport a very costly item among all his other expenses.

For example, (to give you an idea of the passport system,) twenty signatures are put upon a traveler's passport between Rome and Naples, and Naples and Rome. Two dollars are paid to the American consul in Rome when Rome is left, and two dollars to the American consul in Naples when Naples is left; and the American consul at Rome considers it a favor that he does not demand two dollars more, when Rome is left a second time.<sup>440</sup> The Roman police ask about a dollar for their signature. The Neapolitan signature in Rome costs nearly a dollar more. The Neapolitan minister of Foreign Affairs in Naples charges nearly two dollars. Then the Tuscan agent at Naples must also be paid. In short, there is not one of these twenty signatures that does not cost more or less, either in what is paid the police, or in money given to attendants upon the office for carrying the passports there.

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<sup>440</sup> Contrary to Brooks' expectation, the consular fee was indeed exacted a second time on his return journey (see Letter 87).

The greatest of all these sponges, however, are the American consuls: and thus, our happy country, which at home is freed from all such miserable passport restrictions upon the intercourse of its citizens, exhibits the spectacle abroad of being the most greedy, to turn that miserable system to the profit of its own agents. No. I am as proud of bearing the American eagle as a proof that I am an American citizen, as any man can be, but I will not bear it when it is soiled and tarnished thus. The lion and the unicorn have no such stigma upon them.

A contract with a vetturino was made in Rome to take four of us to Naples for eight dollars each, exclusive of *buona mano*, the time occupied in the journey was to be three days, and we were to be found with dinner and beds upon the road. He treated us so well, that we gave him a *napoleon* for his *buona mano*, though a fourth part of it would have answered—and what was of as much value to him, we gave him "*a good character*" in an English letter for other English-speaking travelers, in which we did not forget to warn all others against the *doganas* on the road, where is stationed a race of plunderers who need keen watching.



## 79. The road to Naples

Naples,  
November, 1835.

We left Rome at an early hour in the morning, and in a short time were upon what was the Via Appia, the great work of Appius Claudius, in the year of Rome 441. Soon after we left the walls of Rome we were upon the wide desert of the Campagna, and but little was to be seen, save the ruined monuments that flank the sides of the *Queen of Ways* (Regina Viarum, as the poet called it.) As the Romans were forbidden to bury their dead within the walls, they built up splendid monuments all along the Appian Way, which was in fact their Westminster Abbey, whose aisle, however, was as long as the road itself, and whose arching was the sky over it. "*Siste Viator*," the motto which we so often quote for our tombstones—"stop, traveler," once stood here on the monuments and mausoleums of the Romans that thickly bordered this most magnificent of the Roman roads—but monuments and mausoleums are now tumbled down, and all that can be seen, amid the desert waste, are the hideous ruins where they were; old bricks in masses, disfiguring the ground, and puzzling the antiquary to tell to whom they once belonged. By these monumental ruins, strewn for miles upon the Appian Way, this road can now be tracked out, for these ruins stand at present as mournful landmarks of what Rome and its suburbs were. What an interesting spectacle they must have been in Cicero's day, when the Scipios and other noble families had their mausolea upon this road—a spectacle to which he so beautifully alludes in his appeal to Catiline! This celebrated road went in a straight line to Albano. And, by the way, all the old Roman roads ran as straight as needles; but the Romans nevertheless, did not hold to the American doctrine of making roads, that the shortest way to get round a hill is over its top, for they tunneled often, or else reduced the hill nearly to the surrounding level.

A constant succession of ruins, most probably sepulchral, attends the traveler all the way to Albano, one of which, more conspicuous than the others from its height, has been attributed to Ascanius.<sup>441</sup> Albano we

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<sup>441</sup> Ascanius (12th C. B.C.) — Legendary son of the Trojan hero Aeneas

tarried long enough to visit, and to feed our vetturino horses, and then we started further upon our road in a country which had become that of hills. If I stop, however, at Albano, to talk over its history, and that of its vicinity, I never shall get away. La Riccia (as it is now called,) upon a dreary hill, was the next town that we passed, but it seemed to be in nothing remarkable at present, though it interested me as being the Aricia where Horace made his first night's tarry in his journey to Brundisium, in company with Heliodorus the rhetorician. All around here is indeed classic ground, but the beautiful poetry of the Aeneid of Virgil, I fear, will be the poetry with me no more; for what I have seen has sadly dampened the fancies with which I had ever decked this land of Turnus, of Nisus, and Euryalus,<sup>442</sup> and of the haughty Queen of Heaven. Nevertheless, I can readily see that this may have been a paradise of a retreat for a Roman from the city or the plain, for it is interesting even now, though no Diana is now in its groves, as in days of yore, and though no temple and lake are now made sacred to her. The Speculum Dianae (Diana's Mirror,) is now the Lake of Nemi, which Byron describes as "*navel'd in the woody hills.*" These woody hills were Diana's grove, in which, it was fabled, no horses would ever enter. Diana here brought her beloved Hippolytus, whom she restored to life; and horses could not enter her grove, for the horses of Hippolytus, frightened by the sea monsters of Neptune's creation, had dashed him against the rocks, and caused his death. Here too, was, at times, Egeria's retreat; and thus, you see that everything, as it were, sings of poetry, and from this you can judge what a beautiful land of romance it was. At a place now called Genzano, the Cinthiarum of the Romans, there is now every June a festival, the festival of Flora,<sup>443</sup> by which one is reminded of its olden times. The ground at the festival is covered for a considerable extent with a beautiful mosaic work, formed by the leaves of flowers plucked from their stalks. Many of these flowers are gathered for weeks beforehand, and are yet so beautifully preserved, that their colors appear unfaded, when so disposed as to imitate in this vegetable mosaic work the papal arms, &c. Not far from here is the ancient Lavinium; and on an eminence above Genzano is the Lanuvium that was founded by Diomedes. Our first night's tarry was at Cisterna, on the borders of the

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<sup>442</sup> Turnus, Nisus, Euryalus — Characters in Virgil's *Aeneid*

<sup>443</sup> The Inflorata festival, founded in 1778, continues to the present day (2017). The carpets of flowers are accompanied by a masked parade wearing medieval and traditional clothes.

Pontine Marshes, which is supposed to be near the Tres Tabernae mentioned by St. Paul in the Acts of the Apostles.

Cisterna is about one of the most miserable places a traveler can find on the face of the earth. The only decent building in the whole village was the hotel in which we were lodged. There we had a good dinner at 6 o'clock, and comfortable beds, but the water was undrinkable, and the wine but poorly compensated for its bad quality. But everything around had so suspicious an aspect, that if we had not been four strong in number, we should have been less quiet in the enjoyment of our beds. At three o'clock the ensuing morning, we were mounted in our vetturino again, and on our way to and over the Pontine Marshes. It was yet long before daylight, and I could not see well where I was. Our coachman was as alert as we were at every sound he heard, and when he passed a party of noisy laborers, he made his horses go at the top of their speed. True, it is said there is no cause for alarm from robbers now in this gloomy place, but the gloom and the desolation impress the traveler with concern, and it is almost impossible to journey among a people held from robbery only by fear, through a place so peculiarly fitted for it, as all this region seems to be, without this impression. We passed crowds of people moving onward with their torches from the villages on the border of these marshes, to work upon them during the day, and as they held their torches before their livid and sallow faces, they looked like so many grim ghosts from the regions below, brandishing their fiery ensigns in some parade or other.

The sun arose upon us, as we were upon these famous marshes, and then, for the first time, we saw clearly where we were. The road upon which we were was excellent for such a place, and, bordered with trees as it was, it stripped the view of half its horrors. Indeed, this region cannot be what it was, so terrible, so awfully hideous as travelers have described it, in which the *malaria* was so potent, that it was almost death to pass it. We had been warned, in fact, not to cross it before the sun had removed the vapors, and then not with an empty stomach, but here we were upon it before daylight even, and without a breakfast also. But, when I remembered that October was not September, nor the warm summer months of July and June, I ceased to have any concern on this account. He who has seen the swamps in the vicinity of New Orleans, or the low grounds of South Carolina, between the Santees, say,

has seen places far more frightful than this. I was reminded, in my journey over it, of the Dismal Swamp, between Virginia and North Carolina, though the brush and tangled wood is thick on that, and there is little or none on this.<sup>444</sup> The Dismal Swamp, however, if I am right in my recollections,<sup>445</sup> is not so long as the Pontine Marshes are, though they may be wider.<sup>446</sup>

This region of swamp here is about twenty-four English miles in length, and varies from six to twelve in breadth. To make a road through these marshes and to drain them, has been an object in progress, from the time of Appius Claudius two thousand years ago to the present day: and upon them have worked the Roman republicans, and the Caesars, Theodoric the Goth and the Popes; but generally, in vain, till Pius VI formed his road upon the foundations of the Appian Way, long hidden under water, and drained the swamps so judiciously as to render them in some degree capable of cultivation. French engineers pursued the same measures, and Pius VII<sup>447</sup> at last succeeded, in some measure, in purifying a tract of country where gales in former times were tainted with pestilence and death. Nevertheless, Pliny says, upon the authority of an older writer, that this swampy ground once included thirty-three cities in the earlier times of the Roman republic—a fact which seems almost incredible now, though one may fancy that the streams ever flowing from the neighboring mountain, and losing themselves in a soil which offered no outlet, could become stagnant at last, and thus so full of pestiferous exhalations, as to make cities uninhabitable, and to drive the inhabitants off.

The classic recollections all along this route were not a few, and they perhaps made the most pleasant associations of the day. We were upon the humid marshes, where came the Volscian Queen, the Amazonian

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<sup>444</sup> The preceding names refer to geographic locations visited by Brooks in his 1833 journey from Washington DC to Charleston, South Carolina.

<sup>445</sup> Brooks traversed the Dismal Swamp in March 1833, en route to Charleston SC.

<sup>446</sup> The Great Dismal Swamp, between Virginia and North Carolina, is estimated to have originally occupied 1,600 square miles (equivalent to a square of 40 x 40 miles).

<sup>447</sup> Pope Pius VII (1742-1823) — Papacy from 1800 to his death. Brooks' account follows closely *"Information and Directions for Travellers on the Continent"*, by Mariana Starke, London: John Murray, 1828, 6th. Ed., p.265.

Virgin Warrior, and the deathless Camilla.<sup>448</sup> Virgil, Horace, Martial<sup>449</sup> and others of the Roman poets have ever made even these swamps of interest. The Forum Appii is here, where Horace embarked with his companions in his Brundisium journey. The vestiges of the canal in which he was, nineteen miles in length, may be seen even to this day. Here it was that he waged war with his stomach, on account of the badness of the water, and waited with an ill humor, while his companions ate: and while I regarded the prospect all around, I could well see that there was not much change even now from that time, when:

"The fenny frogs, with croakings hoarse and deep,  
And gnats loud buzzing, drove away all sleep." <sup>450</sup>

From this journey of the Roman poet, one can readily see that traveling was but a slow undertaking in ancient times, and that even the dull motion of the present day is an improvement upon the past; for Horace was all night upon this short canal, and it was near the dawn when he reached "*the white rocks of Anxur*,"—the Terracina of our day.

We breakfasted at Terracina, at eleven o'clock, upon sour wine, bread soup, and macaroni, all we could get, and thus we were far from finding this Anxur to be the "*splendidus Anxur* " that Martial describes.

"O nemus: O fontes! solidumque madentis arenae,  
Littus, et aequoreis splendidus Anxur aquis!"<sup>451</sup>

But I never shall forget the impression that the full broad-spread Mediterranean here made upon me, and I clambered over the rocky cliffs under which the modern Terracina lays, in ecstasies almost to have a view. This was the first time I had stood upon the borders of this famous sea, and heard the surging of its waves; and, as I have said in a

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<sup>448</sup> Camilla — Mythological figure in Virgil's *Aeneid*, daughter of a deposed king of the Volsci. Fulfilling her father's vow, Camilla was raised as a virgin huntress and warrior. She is mentioned by Boccaccio in his collection of biographies *De Mulieribus Claris (On Famous Women)*.

<sup>449</sup> Martial (c.39-c.103) — Satirical Roman poet

<sup>450</sup> Lines translated from Horace

<sup>451</sup> Martial. *Book 10, epigram 51*.

former letter,<sup>452</sup> in speaking of the Adriatic, every new sea that a man's eyes view makes an era in his life. A glimpse of the promontory of Circe,<sup>453</sup> it is said, may be seen from these heights, and thus of that enchantress's land whose magic spells bewitched even an Ulysses. A few sails, however, in sight, gladdened my eyes even more than the Circean promontory could, for, when a stranger is in a strange land thus far from home, not only does the sea delight him by the association that this may be the water that laves his own shores, but a ship is, as it were, the link of a chain that touches his own heart and those of his friends. But Terracina, apart from all this train of thought, is imposing and grand, even from its position, for the jutting rocks there crowd narrowly upon the sea, and upon these rocks are trees of oranges and lemons, and the myrtles and the palms are often spreading down their sides. The sea air refreshes the land made hot by the sun, and thus, as it were, is mingled the tropic with the temperature of the northern clime. I visited the black ruins of Theodoric's palace, and saw the remains of the Temple of Jupiter Anxur, whose shattered, yet frowning, vestiges of former grandeur yet attract the eye.



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<sup>452</sup> See Letter 67

<sup>453</sup> Circe — Greek mythological goddess, enchantress and sorceress, encounters Ulysses in Homer's *Odyssey*

## 80. Arrival at Naples

November 1835.

Our breakfast and our walks finished at Terracina, walks not only over the hills, but among the fishermen on the sands of the shore, and our passports signed, the most important act for the traveler of all, we bade adieu to that once famous city and very soon entered the very passes of classic brigandage, (if I may apply the phrase to places where it is probable more robberies have been committed than in all the other places of the world.) I venture to say no traveler, for fifty years, ever passed these passes with an easy heart, for here have flourished the most famous brigands of the earth—from Mastrillo, whose head long decorated the gates of Terracina, down to Ira Diavolo, the bandit of Itri. These bandits once descended in masses from the mountains whose sides overhang this road upon the sea, and then when they had plundered and murdered to their hearts' content, they fled to their mountain caves, and defied pursuit. Soldiers now are stationed thickly upon this road, but, notwithstanding even the presence of their arms, a robbery is now and then committed, even to this day. The people all about have the air of bandits. The cloaks that they suspend over their shoulders, and their slouching hats, give them a sinister aspect that no man wishes to trust.

The narrow pass immediately beyond Terracina was anciently called Lantulae, and the classical reader will recognize it as the spot which was occupied by Fabius Maximus<sup>454</sup> in the second Punic war, to prevent Hannibal's advance by the Appian Way. It is bordered upon one side by steep rocks and mountains, covered with an endless variety of beautiful flowers and shrubs, and on the other side it is washed by the sea. We journeyed along, as usual in such cases, talking earnestly of robbers and each deciding what we should do if they came, which was to give up our money—and, thanks be to the system of letters of credit, this was not much—when we came safely enough, of course, to the end of the Pope's

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<sup>454</sup> Fabius Maximus (c.280 B.C.-203 B.C.) — Roman politician and general; his strategy was successful in containing Hannibal's forces, despite inferior strength.

dominions, where our passports were again signed, and entered those of his Neapolitan Majesty, where successive scenes occurred.

In Europe here, particularly in Italy, I have a horror upon entering a new sovereign's dominions; and which is most to be feared—the bandits of the mountains, or the bandits of the custom house—is a question I have not decided yet. Since the police on the confines of the Po sent my companion and myself over this stream to be quarantined in a vile village upon its banks, I approach a man of authority with an instinctive dread. Judge then, how we must have felt, as a Neapolitan sallied from the gate of the barrier, with a pair of tongs in his hand, and demanding our passports, took them in these tongs, and then shrunk from us with as much afright as if we were the plague. Two soldiers with fixed bayonets prevented our further progress, which my new friend, (who, as I have said in a former letter, had tumbled from the Alps by the laws of gravitation, into Rome) attempting, in unconscious innocence to make, came back to us with his hair erect, at the bayonets bristling in his eyes, demanding what on earth this meant. Not knowing ourselves, of course, we could not answer; but, after waiting a long time, the police officer came out, seeking an explanation of the German passport which my new friend had innocently got, he hardly knew how. The German, however, was a step beyond the Neapolitan's ken, and his Neapolitan Italian, particularly when he bellowed it out, to make us hear, twenty feet off, or more, was many steps beyond us; but, at last we explained, as we could, the German metamorphosis our American friend had gone through, as he had come into Italy through the German dominions, whom he permitted to pass—our quarantine in Rome, it appears, having been fully out, and the police and all its minions hovered around us for a fee.

We feed<sup>455</sup> them, of course—there is no other way—and passing but a short distance further, we went through another mill which took toll again; when, arriving at Fondi, four miles further, we found that the custom house mill was yet to be passed, the worst mill of all. The custom house officers have the power to ransack a man's baggage as they please; and in Italy, generally speaking, they exercise this power less or more, according to the proportion that they think a man will pay to be

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<sup>455</sup> Fee — (per Webster) to tip

free from them. At Fondi, the chief of the custom house was one of the best built and, as to personal beauty, the noblest man I ever saw. His head, his whole figure, seemed to be shaped in Nature's best mold. Under our system of government, I am certain, if there is anything of intellect to be judged of by the face or head, that such a man must have been one of the very first men of his age. I looked upon his commanding figure with the same interest with which I would study the *Belvedere Apollo*; and yet, for a Neapolitan dollar, that man let all our baggage pass unexamined! And we gave him this dollar in public, and he turned to his companions laughingly and said, "*Now we will have some wine and a dinner!*" Such are the debasing influences of that order of society, which in some degree forces all to be knaves, and thus, not only degrades the character, but even the intellect of mankind. The king rules by force, and taxes unwilling subjects by force. The people in revenge turn knaves, and cheat and rob when they think it can be done with impunity. A government sustained wholly by force, over an unwilling people, must never expect to have subjects that are honest. The reward of such a state of society is for the knaves, not the virtuous.

Our second night's tarry was at Mola di Gaeta. We had passed Itri, which is one of the most miserable bandit-looking-like villages in one of the prettiest countries on earth—a country abounding with vines, figs, and the like good things of this world. The cenotaph of Cicero is shown upon this road, erected to mark the spot where this, the greatest and "the last of the old Romans," was slain. Even the little pathway mentioned by Plutarch,<sup>456</sup> as turning from the Appian Way down to the coast, when he was hastening to embark, is shown by the people. The whole district, all around here, is classical. The road is lined with antiquities, and in walls and vineyards, they are to be seen. Hereabout, (but antiquaries dispute upon these spots,) was the famous villa of Cicero, (his Formianum, as it is called,) which once was so splendid a place that Cicero boasts of it and says—"basilicam habeo, non villam."<sup>457</sup> A hotel called "*Villa di Cicerone*" now stands upon a villa which they suppose to be his, and in its garden, are yet seen ruins of the Formianum. This, however, was but one of Cicero's villas, splendid as it was, for it appears that this great man not only knew how, but had the means, to enjoy all the comforts, and the

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<sup>456</sup> Plutarch (46-120) — Greek biographer; later became Roman citizen

<sup>457</sup> (Translation) "I have a basilica, not a villa."

physical as well as the intellectual luxuries of this life. On an eminence above Mola is the tomb of Munatius Plancus,<sup>458</sup> the disciple of Cicero, which is of a circular and magnificent form, like the mausoleum of Cecilia Metella, near Rome.

At a short distance across the bay, is the ancient city of Gaeta, which derives its name from Caieta, the faithful nurse of Aeneas, whom he buried here. This ancient city rises on a little tongue of land out of the ocean as it were, and makes a beautiful appearance in the distance. It was near the harbor of Gaeta that Ulysses landed on his return from Troy, and having sent some of his men to examine the coast, Antiphates, King of the Laestrygonians, a giant, and a cannibal, seized them, devoured one, and by hurling rocks, sunk the whole fleet of Ulysses, save the warrior's own vessel. A fleet of fishing boats now occupy this sea. The race of men upon the shore seem to be stricken by poverty, and all its attendant miseries. Beggars are thick and importunate. All is but the saddened relics of a once-famous bay where Romans loved to live, and whose praises the Roman poets sang.

The third morning, we were up at early dawn, and off as usual on our journey. The ancient Liri was passed this day, now called the Garigliano. Near this river was the ancient Minturnae, but about all that is to be seen of it now are the remains of an aqueduct, a theater, and an amphitheater. A marsh in this neighborhood was the spot to which Marius<sup>459</sup> fled, when he fell into the power of the magistrates of Minturnae. The reader will recollect that this Marius was the proud victor of Carthage, who disputed with Sulla the empire of Rome, but who, obliged at last to fly from Rome, was treacherously landed in these marshes at the mouth of the Liri by the sailors to whom he had entrusted his life. At length, the magistrates of Minturnae found him here, concealed by a cottager, and dragging him quite naked from the fens, condemned him to death; but as no citizen could be found to undertake this office, a Gaul or Cimbrian was hired. The Gaul proceeded to his dungeon with his sword in hand to destroy him, but a glance from the eye of Marius, and the question "*Dost thou dare to kill Marius?*"

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<sup>458</sup> Munatius Plancus (c.87 B.C.-c.15 B.C.) — One of the few Roman historical figures whose tomb has survived and been identified

<sup>459</sup> Gaius Marius (157 B.C.-86 B.C.) — Roman general and military reformer; his civil war with Sulla weakened the Roman Republic.

unnerved his arm, so that he threw down the sword and fled, crying, "*I cannot kill Marius.*" The people of Minturnae, struck with astonishment, remorse ensued, and pity also, and Marius was let loose, and a vessel was given him to seek exile in another land. Carthage, the scene of his former glory, was the exile to which the winds drove him at last, but, as soon as he landed there, a Roman officer warned him off. Struck dumb with grief and surprise, he uttered not a word, till the officer demanding "*what answer he should carry back to the Praetor,*" "*Tell him,*" he replied with a deep sigh, "*that thou hast seen the exiled Marius sitting upon the ruins of Carthage,*" and thus, in the happiest manner, proposing the fate of that city and his own as warnings to the Praetor. Such circumstances as these, and these alone as they are recalled in journeying by the very spots, give interest to a road which otherwise would have no charms.

We coasted along, during this day's journey, the hills that produced the old Falernian wine, which Horace and other Roman Poets quaffed, and boasted of so much, and which in their day was more famous than are now the renowned vineyards upon the Rhine. The Mons Massicus was in full sight, but not with its groves of old, nor its branches shining in the sun. The modern Capua was the next place that attracted our attention, but this Capua is nearly three miles from that other Capua,<sup>460</sup> that "*altera Roma*" too, as it was called, where the invading armies of Hannibal reposed after the fatal battle of Cumae, and whose soft and subduing climate enervated him and his troops, and thus saved Rome itself. Modern Capua is but a dirty place, and but little is left, even of the ruins of the ancient, but what there are are strewn over fields and vineyards, as if to impress the traveler with the most melancholy ideas of fallen greatness, when he recalls to his mind the fact that this city once vied in splendor even with Rome itself. Aversa was our resting place for the third night, for we choose to enter Naples by day, and not in the darkness of night, which began to cover us by the time we were there.

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<sup>460</sup> Capua — Early city to the north of present-day Naples; founded about 600 B.C.; grew in importance, at one period rivaling Rome and Carthage in size; defected to Hannibal; later recaptured and punished by Rome; wealthy, but progressively lost importance; inhabitants reportedly annihilated by French troops early in the 16th C.

Early on the morning of the fourth day, we entered the beautiful and lively city with happy hearts, wearied with our journey, and rejoicing in seeing life and soul once more in the people among whom we were. Rome was so somber that there we always felt as if we were in a tomb, but here, all is action and vivacity; and it is the first city I have seen, since I left London, that reminds me of anything like what is daily visible in the busy cities of our own land. Never was there a city that made a more charming impression upon me as I entered it. The happy contrast it has with Rome is perhaps charm enough, but the novelties here are of commanding interest—the curious costume of men and horses—the strange exhibitions of character in the streets, where all the people seem to live—the squadrons of the Lazzaroni, &c. In short, things as might be expected to be seen where all houses are turned inside out, as it were, and thus all is made visible that only the household gods witnessed elsewhere.



## 81. Vesuvius and Pompeii

November 1835.

Lucky is it that Naples is about the end of things to be seen in Italy, and that much of that which is to be seen here is unlike what is to be seen anywhere else. I have seen so many churches, splendid in outward architecture, and princely in the decorations within, that I enter one now as a task. I have seen so much of palaces, that even a woodman's hut would be a better treat. Paintings begin to lose their charm, and even sculpture ceases to have that divinity which in my eyes it once had. A man's eyes become fatigued with splendor, as his appetite with sweets. Traveling and sightseeing in Italy at last begin to be as labor, a duty painful to be done, and one longs for repose, as if one was exhausted by study. I am quite weary myself, and I am quite sure too, that you must be weary of me, wandering, as I have been for a long time, among scenes which can little interest you in a land so utterly variant from this that I see here.<sup>461</sup>

Thus, lucky is it that Naples is at least the beginning of an end of the glories of Italy, and that this end is so diversified as to sharpen the eyes even of the dulled and saturated traveler. The smoke, the fire, the flames, and the earthquake of Vesuvius are here. That unearthed city of the dead, Pompeii, is also hereabout. This is the land of the Cumaean Sibyl, and the Tartarus and the Elysian Fields of the poets are here. If an American were to make Naples his first landing ground, as he put foot in this Old World, his senses would be stupefied by the strangeness of all things about him; but, the constant novelties, met with in months of traveling, have taken away from me almost all of that thrilling sensation that novelty, first seen, inspires; and I have even crept up the sands of Vesuvius and walked down its awful crater, over fire and sulfur, with but common emotion. I will not keep you long in Naples then, though there are sights enough to be seen to make a book of letters out of.<sup>462</sup> I am anxious to get to Paris, and I shall travel there now, as fast as the

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<sup>461</sup> Fatigued with so much touring, Brooks returns to this theme in Letter 89.

<sup>462</sup> In this one instance, Brooks apparently entertains the thought of publishing his letters in the form of a book.

mails will carry me, for Sicily is inaccessible under the present quarantine regulations of Naples; and if I go to Greece, I can see no prospect of getting back in this fever-fear, that now so rages in Italy as to block up almost all the means of communication. Every day I have reason to say, and to believe, that quarantines are worse than the plague or the cholera, for they shut me up, on whatever side I turn.

I ascended Vesuvius in company with my companions, among the first things I did in the vicinity of Naples. A tempting morning allured us from our homes on this mountain excursion; but no sooner were we on the sides of Vesuvius, than the rain fell in torrents, and the wind blew the smoky sulfurous vapor so in our faces that, choked as we were, every step cost us infinite pain. Two of my companions mounted on donkeys, and ascended on them till we came to the ashes that no donkey can overcome with a man upon his back, while two others of our party, one of whom was myself, trusted to our well-tried legs, and commenced the ascent on foot. Two boys followed us with wine, and grapes, and bread, and eggs, which they well knew they could find a market for on high, as fatigue and exhaustion made us hungry or thirsty.

Our route at first was among the vineyards that skirt the base and the sides of Vesuvius—lands devastated, yet enriched and made luxuriant, by the lava; and producing one of the most precious wines of Italy, the value of which may be known from its name of *Lacryma Christi*, or tears of Christ! We toiled up over the various strata of earth, the lava, &c. on our way, now marching between what was once a boiling stream of lava, now among pulverized ashes and cinders, and now over huge masses of stones, minerals and metals, all partly and irregularly fused and melted together, yet afterwards congealed in the oddest and most singular forms—with rocks, caves, and fissures rolled together like the waves of the sea, or some torrent, blackened over, as it is tumbling down the cliffs. Our eyes marked out the course of the several streams that various eruptions had taken. We enjoyed what is said to be one of the most delightful views in the world, as well as we could, drenched in rain as we were. Naples and its bay were within this view, with the islands upon it, and so were the plains of La Campagna Felice, the happy country, as it is called.

The ascent was not exceedingly difficult, till we were within a mile of the highest summit, when it became one of the most painful I ever made; for it was not only steep, but our foothold was in the ashes which slid from under us, every step we took; and, in addition to this, the sulfurous air that the wind drove in our faces, almost stopped respiration, as we would puff and puff to mount an inch higher. Many a time, I thought I must give up, as I sank down in the ashes, unable to breathe the dreadful air; but, when the vapors would clear away, I would mount again, and thus, with resolution, I puffed onward and upward, till at last my heart beat with joy, as I found myself on something that resembled level ground. But, even here, I could not see where I was, the vapor was so thick, blown as it yet was directly in our faces; and our guide, I am sure, might have conducted us all to the chasm of the crater, and then have tumbled us in with impunity, blinded as we were. At last, he put us in and under the shelter of a little crater, where on one side we were protected from the storm and the vapor, having by our feet spouting flames, and in every cavity beside us, the intensity of the heat of an oven. In this magnificent fireplace we devoured the bread, the wine and the grapes, and there, roasting our eggs, made as excellent a repast as we could desire. The rain fell upon us, it is true, but the heat dried us as fast as we were wet. I turned to my right, and found an old overcoat of mine, (with which I had made so many campaigns, that the worse it looked the more I valued it,) burnt through and through on the lava rock where I had hung it to dry. My shoes were finished too; and my companions, upon examination, found themselves well scorched while they were laughing at me.

Our little crater chasm became too hot for us, in fact, and we sallied out in the storm again, over the lava billows, now congealed, to see the grandest of all the craters, whence came all the smoke, the rocks and the flames. Along we went, feeling our way as it were, blinded by the vapor or the smoke, and coughing and suffocating almost, as the sulfur rushed in upon our lungs. Certain I am, that if I could only have seen Satan here, I never should have had a doubt that this was his home, for never did description or fancy put him in so awful a place. At last I came upon his very throne, as it were, for I presume it is settled that his throne sinks as deep in the earth as the thrones of other princes rise above it. This throne, I fancied, might be the very crater of the volcano, and horrid and direful enough was the pit, even to be the throne of Satan himself! I

looked into this awful hole of fire, and attempted to descend, and did descend some distance down its sides, but the smoke, the pitchy vapors, and sulfurous steams soon drove me back. I gladly regained the upper regions again, and all the ambition I ever felt to have a peep into the regions below was suffocated at once.

Our guide told us there were days, if Vesuvius was quiet, when we could descend to the bottom of the crater, but, surely, this was not one. Thus, amply satisfied with the drenching, steaming, smoking and suffocating we had undergone, we bade adieu to the summit, and began to tumble down the ashes on the side of the mountain which we had ascended with so much pain. Our descent downward was rapid enough, and as we leaped from spot to spot, we would at times sink in the ashes almost up to our knees. Soon we were at the Hermitage, where visitors tarry all night when they wish to see the rising of the sun from Vesuvius's summit, or to see the flames amid the darkness. Anon, we were among the vineyards below, and at the town of Portici, where our carriage awaited to take us to Naples. A few minerals purchased—our guide paid, and we were off—and thus ended our visit to Vesuvius.

One of our next visits out of Naples was to the far-famed Pompeii—distance about 12 miles. We hired a carriage in Naples, and at early morn were upon our way. By ten o'clock we were in the street of the tombs, and upon the gate of that city, which from the year 79 was lost, till accident discovered the place where it was, in 1750. If I were to undertake to tell all that is now to be seen in this city, I should but make a catalog, and interest no one, and therefore I will limit myself in as brief a description as possible. Unearthed as Pompeii now is, with its roofless houses that the superincumbent weight has tumbled in, the first impression is not that this is the mansion of the dead of so many centuries; and this impression is strengthened by the fresh and almost new appearance that all the buildings exhibit; but, when one sees so many tombs lining a single street, and when one sees streets so narrow, houses so small, and so strangely built, that first impression soon yields to another, which shows that this city is not of this century, nor even of many of the past that have gone by. Modern, you see, it is not, for there is nothing modern in all its arrangements. The Middle Ages, you also see, have left no stamp upon it, for there is nothing of a Gothic, or Saracen, or Arabic look. Thus, the mind wanders backwards, till it fixes

itself upon a period when it finds, as it were, an illustration in a city rescued from the dead, and yet preserved in all its freshness, of the books and the classics of other days, with which his reading has made him familiar.

Pompeii, now exposed as it is to the light of the sun, is a city of Magna Graecia,<sup>463</sup> bequeathed to us, as it were. We have in it one of the very best histories of the past, and such a history as no book can tell. Before I had seen this city, I had no idea of the intimate links that there were between our times and the times of old. The barbarian invaders of Italy never finding Pompeii, buried in ashes as it was, of course, could never disturb or overthrow aught that was in it, and even time and age were defied, for what these ashes had hidden, ceased to grow old any longer, and thus Pompeii has come down to us, just as it was when its inhabitants fled from its walls in terror of the eruptions of Vesuvius. Thus, we step into a city nearly eighteen hundred years old, but old age has not touched it, and we see the habitations of the men of that day, which they seemed but a moment before to have left for us to visit. How many things we see all like the present day, and how little time has changed us in much of life. In the pavements of the streets can be seen the very holes that the wheels of the carriages had worn, which was to me one of the freshest relics of old antiquity. Thimbles, needles, perfumes, false hair, eyebrows, cosmetics, flesh-scrapers, paint and rouge were found in some of the boudoirs of some of the women. Vanity you see, was the same then, eighteen hundred years ago, as it is now.

The horror of the affright of that awful day, when Pompeii was overwhelmed, is best seen in the villa of Diomede, which is but a little way out of the city. Two skeletons were found in his garden, (who had been probably flying toward the sea;) that nearest to the door had keys in one hand, and a gold ring ornamented with two separate heads in the other; and not far from these skeletons were found fragments of silver vases, and a linen wrapper, containing eighty-eight pieces of silver money, ten of gold, and nine of bronze. In this garden is seen what was a reservoir for fish, and a *Jet d'eau*,<sup>464</sup> ancient wine jars are still resting in

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<sup>463</sup> Magna Graecia — (Translation = Great Greece) name used by the Romans to identify the coastal areas of southern Italy which had been populated by Greek immigrants from the 8th Century B.C. onward.

<sup>464</sup> *jet d'eau* — Fountain throwing water to some height in the air

the cellar, against the walls, to which they are glued by dust and ashes; and here, the skeletons of eighteen grown persons and two children (one quite a baby,) were discovered. Perfect impressions of each corpse were distinguishable in the dust and ashes, which probably drifted through the loopholes into this cellar. Several necklaces, with other gold ornaments, silver and bronze rings, a piece of coral, a comb, &c. were among the valuables which, in the fright, a young woman, who was one of the skeletons, had grasped in her hands, when she, with the family, fled to this cellar for a retreat. Copies of these necklaces, as well as of many other curious things in Pompeii, are now manufactured and sold in Naples, and it is becoming quite fashionable to wear them at the present day.

As we went into the city by the Via Domitiana, as it was called, the road upon which were the tombs, as upon the Appian Way out of Rome, not only tombs are seen among which the Pompeians seemed to have their seats of pleasure, without that fear of the presence of the death that now besets all of us of this day, but an inn is seen, where strangers were lodged, when strangers were not permitted to sleep within the walls of the city. This inn appears to have been capacious, and to have been provided with horses and carriages, as remains of a cart, the tire of wheels with six spokes, the skeleton of a donkey, and a piece of bronze resembling a horse's bit, were found there. The excavation of the portico of this inn brought to light five human skeletons, four of which (locked in each other's arms) are supposed to be those of a mother and her children, who, on reaching the portico, were suffocated by showers of ashes. Close to the city gate is seen the sentry box, which was probably occupied by a soldier who died at his post, as a skeleton, a lance, and the crest of a helmet were found within it.

On entering the city, another inn is seen, with all the appendages of a *traiteur's*<sup>465</sup> kitchen, &c. A building called a coffee house is also here, but thus called without much reason, as coffee was a drink that the Greeks and Romans were ignorant of. Probably it answered the purpose of the restaurants of the present day. It may have been the place where the ancients bought their vomits, which they were accustomed to take—the wretches—when they wanted to do justice to a good dinner! The house

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<sup>465</sup> Traiteur — Restaurateur, caterer

of the Vestals<sup>466</sup> with the word *salve* (welcome,) wrought in mosaic, is also shown. The anatomical theater is not far off, where were found above forty chirurgical instruments, some resembling those of modern times, and others of which the use is unknown. The custom house, and a soap manufactory, and a public banking house, are here pointed out.

The house of Gaius Sallust is among the remarkable houses shown. A fountain of peculiar beauty adorned the quadrangle, and opposite to the door of entrance was a small flower garden, in which the *triclinium*<sup>467</sup> for summer dinners still remains. In the rooms, appropriated to the females of this house, are tolerably well-preserved paintings in fresco, such as Diana and Actaeon,<sup>468</sup> Europa, Phryxus<sup>469</sup> and Helle, Mars, Venus and Cupid. The room which contains the last-mentioned picture is beautifully paved with African marbles, and paintings. In a neighboring lane was discovered the skeleton of a woman, supposed to be the mistress of the mansion, with three other skeletons, according to supposition, three of her servants. A small quantity of money, a silver mirror, which Grecian ladies carried about them, intaglios<sup>470</sup> set in gold rings, a pair of earrings, a necklace composed of gold chains, and five gold bracelets were found among these skeletons.

As we went on yet further, our conductor, who is an officer appointed by the government, and who watched us narrowly lest we should plunder a relic, pointed out a farrier's shop, then the abode of a ballet master, decorated with frescoes representing musical instruments, theatrical scenery, &c. a chemist's and druggist's shop, and a restaurant, among other buildings. A house called "the house of a dramatic poet," was one of the most expensive and elegantly adorned private dwellings that we saw. Beautiful frescoes were found in this house, which artists class with the best productions of Raphael. Thus, you see, that even in the art

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<sup>466</sup> Vestals — Priestesses of Vesta, Roman goddess of the hearth. Because they took a vow of chastity, they are also known as Vestal Virgins.

<sup>467</sup> *triclinium* — The formal dining room in a Roman building, where diners reclined in groups of three upon couches.

<sup>468</sup> Actaeon — Greek mythological hero, discovered Diana at her bath

<sup>469</sup> Phryxus — (or Phrixus) Greek mythological figure, twin brother of Helle; fleeing the hatred of their stepmother on a ram with a golden fleece, Helle drowned in the Dardanelles, while Phryxus survived, sacrificing the ram to Zeus.

<sup>470</sup> *intaglio* — Engraved jewelry or gem

of painting, if their judgment be true, we are not ahead of the ancients. What most struck me, as I looked upon this house, was the classical and rich manner of decoration; and, though we of the present day, I soon learnt, may boast of our superior comforts, yet, we are far from being able to boast of superior elegance. For example, the walls of their apartments were painted all over with many subjects, of which the following is a specimen: Daedalus<sup>471</sup> flying toward Magna Graecia, Icarus<sup>472</sup> submerged in the Cretan sea, although a marine deity attempts to save him—combats of warriors on foot, and Amazons in cars, and the parting interview between Achilles and Briseis.<sup>473</sup> The most beautiful ancient mosaic hitherto discovered was found in the quadrangle of this house. It is now removed to Naples. It appears to represent the rehearsal of a drama, and is composed of several figures, among whom sits an old man, encircled by six persons, one being completely masked; another on the point of being masked; a third in the act of taking off her mask, perhaps to ask the old man for another, and a fourth, though apparently disposed to put on a mask, listening to what passes.

But I must hurry on to “the public baths,” but yet, I cannot stop here further than to say that, as a commentary upon ancient authors, from Homer down, it is one of the best in the world, for the traveler even to this day sees the manner in which these establishments were regulated, when bathing was almost as much the business of life as eating is now. After viewing these, we passed to many others, with open courts that had been richly decorated, from whence not only frescoes had been taken, but statues in marble and in bronze, and mosaics too. When these buildings were first disinterred, all was found as it must have been on the very day of that dread calamity, when the inhabitants were destroyed. Their kitchen utensils even, as well as the ornaments of their persons, were as they left them, and when tripods are found in one

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<sup>471</sup> Daedalus — Greek mythological craftsman; creator of the Cretan labyrinth; best known for his escape from Crete using wings of his own making.

<sup>472</sup> Icarus — In Greek mythology, son of Daedalus; accompanied his father in his escape from Crete but, on flying too close to the sun, his wings disintegrated and he fell to the sea, where he drowned.

<sup>473</sup> Briseis — Mythical Greek queen at the time of the Trojan War; captured and taken as a concubine by Achilles; later demanded and received by Agamemnon, but these events had negative consequences for the Greek cause; she was later handed back to Achilles, who rejoined the fight.

room, pots may be found in another. The Temple of Fortune, when first discovered, was full of marbles. The apartments appropriated to the sacerdotal ministers of the goddess are seen on the right of this temple, where was discovered a slab of marble recording their names. We learn from an inscription, that "*Marcus Tullius Cicero, son of Marcus, erected at his own private expense, this Temple to Fortuna Augusta,*" and thus it seems that, in the old as in our times, rich individuals erected their temples to their gods, as we do to ours.

The Forum Civile is one of the most interesting spots in Pompeii. At the northern end of its once splendid forum are the remains of a stately temple, supposed to have been consecrated to Jupiter. Here, in this forum, now so desolated, the people once assembled to learn the news, and to discuss important subjects, and here the national festivals and religious ceremonies were celebrated. On the right of the Temple of Jupiter stands a splendid and spacious edifice which was consecrated to Venus. The Basilica, or principal Court of Justice is not far off. Elsewhere is seen the Temple of Romulus, and the Pantheon. Near the Pantheon are ranges of shops, and in these shops, were found scales and hooks, inkstands, lamps, measures for liquids, &c. Even in the fish shops, were frescoes representing fishes.

The Triangular Forum interested us much, and so did the Tragic Theater, but the Temple of Isis interested us more. Bulwer in his *Pompeii*<sup>474</sup> has given an interest to this spot, and indeed to all Pompeii, for, taking the liberty of the romancer, he has put men in the streets, and priests at the altar, and thus we think we see Pompeii as it was. One of the unfortunate priests of Isis, or his skeleton rather, was found with a sacrificial axe in his hand, seeming as it were, to be making an effort to escape the dreadful consequences of the eruption, by hewing his way out of the kitchen door. Another seems to have [loaded] himself with the treasures of the temple, and fled, but was overtaken by death in the vicinity of the Tragic Theater, where his skeleton was discovered, with 360 coins of silver, 42 of bronze, and 8 of gold, wrapped up in cloth so strong as to have sustained no injury by the lapse of seventeen centuries. Others of the priests are supposed to have caught up the sacred hatchets, and attempted to cut themselves a passage through the

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<sup>474</sup> Bulwer. *The Last Days of Pompeii* (novel) was published in 1834.

walls of their temple, while some are supposed to have been suffocated when sleeping, and others either had not time to escape, or felt it a dereliction from duty to abandon their goddess.

The Comic Theater and the colossal amphitheater, with its thirty rows of seats, are also among the things that must be seen. Only three hundred skeletons have as yet been disinterred at Pompeii,<sup>475</sup> from which it appears that the inhabitants, generally speaking, made their escape. What may be called the movables of Pompeii have been chiefly removed to the Museum in Naples, for the purpose of preserving them, but nevertheless, Pompeii, as it is, is one of the great curious sights of this great world.

We spent about eight hours in this city, in which there dwells not now a soul, and we could with pleasure, if time had permitted, have stayed there for days. I parted from its walls through a gate opposite that which we entered; and as my eye saw in the distance other cities that had grown up around the base of this fearful Vesuvius, that had thus buried such a city here, I could not but feel that there was a temerity in the conduct of the inhabitants. There stood the awful mountain, even now, and if not muttering and thundering in all its ancient terror, yet strong in its capacity to act again, as the clouds of smoke that rolled from its crater, taught us. Pompeii, whose streets teemed with inhabitants, whose ports were crowded with vessels, whose people were the gayest and the liveliest of this sunny clime—buried in ashes, and lava, lost underground for centuries even from the knowledge of man. There it stands now, almost in its ancient glory, as an awful history of what a land this is; and yet, the people build, and live, and sing and dance here, even when Vesuvius is rolling his stream of fire down his sides. Herculaneum is sunk underground. The sun never enters it, but over it another city has grown up, and the carriage rolls now almost where were the clouds before.

I left Pompeii with an impression that I had been paying a visit to the dead, seventeen centuries old; and I [felt], for the day, that I had been living with the ancients in their own homes. But, as I moved toward Naples, and on Sunday, as it was, saw the crowded throng that filled the

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<sup>475</sup> The current estimate death toll at Pompeii is 2,000.

streets of every town, the vision was dissipated at once. From death, I had stepped to the busiest life, as it were. Antiquity was in a moment forgotten when in the crowd of Naples, for, with such a people, all one can think of is, of them. The pitchy smoke, and the lurid flames of Vesuvius have no terrors for them. The present is all they think of, and the past is with them but a song.



## 82. Royal Museum of Naples

November, 1835.

The Museum Borbonico is the lion of shows in Naples. In its way, as to Grecian antiquities, it is the first in Europe. Old Rome has not only contributed some of its finest pieces of sculpture to adorn it, but the gathered treasures of Magna Graecia, of Paestum,<sup>476</sup> of the Capua of old, of Herculaneum and of Pompeii, are there. I know not how many rooms there are, but there are very many, upstairs and downstairs, in a most extensive building, which we spent the better part of three days in examining. At every room stands a man who acts as the cicerone, and who expects a fee, and the expense of seeing all might be a little fortune, if a party was not formed to divide it, or if a *carline* in Naples (8 cents) did not go as far as a *franc* in France, or a *shilling* in England. The King of Naples, one readily sees, does not intend to make shows and gather antiquities for nothing.

What the traveler has not seen of Pompeii and Herculaneum in the cities themselves, he sees here, collected and preserved. Indeed, almost everything that could be removed, has been, so that the guard over it might be stricter, and the ravages of time the better prevented. Paintings have been taken from the walls even, not only portable pieces of plaster, which were framed and let into the walls, but the very frescoes that were painted upon the wet walls themselves. Thus, the Danzatrici,<sup>477</sup> and the Apollos, and the Venuses, and other gods and goddesses, and demigods, that once graced the halls and the courts of Pompeii, now grace the walls of the Royal Museum. Classical subjects are not only seen there, but caricatures also, with many others that are fanciful or whimsical. For example, a parrot is represented as drawing a car, and a grasshopper as driving; and again, there is a griffon in the same act, but with a butterfly for a driver. The number of these

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<sup>476</sup> Paestum — Ancient Greek city on the southern coast of Italy. Prosperous during the Roman imperial period, it was abandoned in the Middle Ages.

<sup>477</sup> The Tomb of the Dancing Women (Danzatrici) is named after the figures appearing on its frescos. It was discovered in 1833 in Apulia, and the frescoes moved to the Naples Museum, shortly before Brooks' visit.

paintings is about sixteen hundred, but there are but few of them well executed; and yet, the composition is elegant, [so] that antiquarians have concluded that they must in general be copies of the paintings of antiquity, made by the common house painters of the day for ornamenting of the rooms.

The scales, the weights, the measures, the kitchen utensils, the stoves, the lamps, the candelabra, the sacrificial vases of heathen worship—in short, all the relics of the cities buried by the fires of Vesuvius are here. Inkstands, even with remains of ink, were found, pens of cedar, fire irons, dice, distaffs, spinning wheels, pins and bodkins of ivory, earrings, nails, screws, locks, the very pivots upon which the doors at Pompeii revolved, letters for stamping bread, used in a manner so similar to our process of printing, that one wonders such an invention should have escaped the ancients, opera tickets for the boxes and benches, and silver cups, saucers, and spoons, (but no forks,) so that one is let into all the domestic economy, the luxuries and the enjoyments of the ancients of two thousand years ago, as if they were but the people of yesterday.

What is a curious fact in the history of these collections is, that mirrors, combs, rouge, and other personal ornaments were often found in the tombs of females, and arms, armor, styles and other apparatus in the tombs of men, while toys have been found in the tombs of children, whose skeletons are frequently surrounded with marbles, tops, and jointed dolls. The papyri found in their buried cities interested me not a little, for this is the first great collection I have seen. I saw the process of unrolling these burnt books of the ancients, which now look like pieces of charcoal—an operation, the difficulty and delicacy of which can hardly be described. The first discovery of the value of these papyri was made in 1753. The scrolls, when first discovered, were so precisely like charcoal that they had been constantly mistaken for it; and the scrolls which were then found in a Herculaneum villa would have shared the same fate, if the order in which they were placed, one above another, had not excited curiosity, and produced an examination, which led to the discovery of Greek and Latin words written upon these supposed pieces of charcoal.

But it will never do to linger to tell stories by the way, in a land so rich as this is in things of the past and the present. The Royal Museum, of

which I have been speaking, is as rich in sculpture as it is in other things, and it shares with Rome and Florence the possession of some of the wonders of the world. The far-famed colossal Hercules found at Rome, is here. A colossal Flora found at Rome, is also here. But the massive, mighty Hercules—in my eye an embodiment, though it is, of muscular power, and of the capacity of a terrible energy even in a state of repose—is no match for the light and airy Flora, who, even with her colossal figure, seems to be tripping along in a fairy drapery that hides nothing of her charms. In this Hall of Flora is a fragment from ancient Capua, supposed to have been a Psyche, and attributed to Praxiteles. The Hall of Apollo is adorned with a porphyry statue of Apollo in his theatrical dress. In the Hall of the Muses are Erato,<sup>478</sup> Clio,<sup>479</sup> Urania,<sup>480</sup> Terpsichore,<sup>481</sup> Mnemosyne,<sup>482</sup> and Thalia<sup>483</sup> from Herculaneum, and Polyhymnia<sup>484</sup> from Pompeii. In the Hall of the Venuses are Adonis from ancient Capua, the Venus Genetrix,<sup>485</sup> a Cupid of Praxiteles, and the group of a *Child and a Goose*, which is supposed to be a copy of a celebrated group in bronze by a Carthaginian sculptor. The Hall of Jupiter is adorned with lustral<sup>486</sup> basins, and Hermes,<sup>487</sup> and busts. In the Hall of Altars, is Atlas<sup>488</sup> himself supporting the celestial globe, with the busts of many of the Grecian poets and philosophers, among which is that of Aristides,<sup>489</sup> found in Herculaneum, now classed among the finest masterpieces of the Grecian chisel. In the Cabinet, as it is called, is a group of a Love and a Dolphin. The famous *Venus Callipige*, the rival of the *Venus de Medici*, is another. I have not seen the *Venus de Medici* as yet, but if it is a finer piece of work than this, it must be very fine.

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<sup>478</sup> Erato — In Greek mythology, the Muse of lyric poetry

<sup>479</sup> Clio — In Greek mythology, the Muse of history

<sup>480</sup> Urania — In Greek mythology, the Muse of astronomy

<sup>481</sup> Terpsichore — In Greek mythology, the Muse of dance

<sup>482</sup> Mnemosyne — Greek goddess, the personification of memory

<sup>483</sup> Thalia — In Greek mythology, the Muse of comedy

<sup>484</sup> Polyhymnia — In Greek mythology, the Muse of hymns

<sup>485</sup> Venus Genetrix — Sculpture of the Roman goddess Venus as a mother

<sup>486</sup> Lustral — Used in ceremonial purification

<sup>487</sup> Hermes — In Greek mythology, a messenger of the gods

<sup>488</sup> Atlas — In Greek mythology, a primordial deity condemned to hold up the sky for eternity

<sup>489</sup> Aristides (530 B.C.-468 B.C.) — Athenian statesman

In the gallery of the Foro Farnese is the celebrated group of the Farnese Bull, which was found in the Baths of Caracalla at Rome, and which descended to the King of Naples as the inheritor of the riches of the Farnese family. This group represents Dirce, bound with the hair of her head to the horns of a bull, by Amphion and Zethus, the sons of Lycus, King of Thebes, and their mother Antiope commanding them to detain the bull, and set Dirce free. The classical story is this: Jupiter, enamored of Antiope, presented himself to her in the form of a satyr, after she had been divorced by Lycus. His second wife Dirce suspected Lycus of infidelity, and persecuted Antiope with the most unrelenting barbarity. But she escaped, and was delivered of twins on Mount Cithaeron—Zethus and Amphion. When these twins became men, they determined to avenge their mother's wrongs: they besieged Thebes, put Lycus to death, and tied Dirce to the tail of a bull, (not to the head, as is here represented,) who dragged her, and tore her limb from limb, till the gods in compassion changed her into a fountain. This group, Pliny says, was one block of marble, but this is doubted. As I have said before, it was found, but cruelly mutilated, in the Baths of Caracalla, and only the statues of Antiope and the youths seated are in their original state.

It may be that I am wearying many a reader in thus calling his attention to such things as these. Certain it is, I am weary myself, but if the reader will remember that there are objects and facts this side of the water, as important to know, as many of the most important political facts are on our side, I am sure he will consent to be wearied, when I take the pains thus to condense in the fewest words what cost me days of study, and which it will be useful for him ever to know. To be ignorant here of the great and renowned objects of art, is as great a sin as ignorance of letters is with us, and every day I have reason to blush when I see even the Lazzaroni in the streets in a thousand things better informed than myself. Have patience then, while I drag you through the galleries of art, for I can readily see it is but a drag; but, happily constructed is he who ever made a study a pleasure, particularly when he was reading his alphabet, as it were. What we learn often costs us pain, but when we learn it, the pleasure doubly compensates for the trouble of learning. The *Venus Callipige*, for example, the Flora here, the Hercules of the

sculptor Glykon,<sup>490</sup> and the group of Dirce and others, are the ordinary topics of conversation in this land—the Websters, the Clays, and the Van Burens<sup>491</sup> of the day. As their mouths are shut upon politics and religion, but in a certain way, they take to Music, the Theater, and the Arts. Their rage is in one way, and ours is another; but he who would know aught of the world beyond the walls of his own home, must see or study what interests others who are beyond them. Many is the man who feels as much pleasure in unrolling a scorched piece of papyrus, and in deciphering the dark and doubtful letters thereon, as we feel in the triumph of our respective candidates for office—and who would not know what in another land is interesting all.

I will drag you along then a little further, whether you will go or not, into the apartment here of Egyptian, Etruscan, and Oscan antiquities; and, if you, like my novel friend who met me in Rome, have the most sovereign contempt for these *old pots*, at least I can have the pleasure of a laugh. I like to see these old Egyptian idols, for example—these statues of Isis, and this Isaic table—these cats and kittens of the old Egyptian worship. Serapis<sup>492</sup> and Anubis<sup>493</sup> are new acquaintances of mine. Mummies of the human species in painted cases of sycamore wood are to be seen here, among all the paraphernalia of the Isaic worship. The Etruscan antiquities in this museum are the most remarkable collection in the world. A sacrificial table, with Oscan characters,<sup>494</sup> is among the curious relics. Amulets, in porcelain of various colors, inscribed with hieroglyphics, puzzle as well as interest. Lachrymatories, incense bottles, and wine cups show how things were done in ancient times. A drunken faun reposing on a skin of wine—one of the four horses which ornamented the theater of Herculaneum—Mercury seated—the Pythian Apollo—the infant Hercules strangling the serpents sent by Juno to devour him, are but a few of the curiosities in the apartment of bronze sculpture, that was chiefly found at Pompeii and Herculaneum. In one of the rooms is seen the common pottery of Pompeii, such as little drinking cups for small birds confined in cages, coops for fattening poultry,

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<sup>490</sup> Glykon (fl. 216 A.D.) — Sculptor, perhaps in Rome; the Hercules statue is a copy of an 4th C. B.C. original, probably by Lysippos

<sup>491</sup> Webster, Clay and Van Buren — American politicians, contemporaries of Brooks.

<sup>492</sup> Serapis — Graeco-Egyptian god, introduced by Ptolemy I to unify his subjects

<sup>493</sup> Anubis — God associated with mummification and the afterlife in ancient Egypt

<sup>494</sup> The Oscan alphabet was used on the Italian peninsula before the current era.

pestles and mortars, curious beakers for wine, and lamps without end, some of them rare and interesting, especially three shaped like a boat. In another of the rooms is settled the long-vexed question, whether the ancients knew of the use of glass; for glass, white and colored, of almost every shape, and for almost every purpose known to the ancient and modern world, is seen in this room. True, the glass is not so clear and pure as ours, but enough is seen to prove that the ancients knew its use as well as we do. Even the peas and beans of the Pompeians are shown in another room, kept for ages as they have been, under the ashes of Vesuvius!

I will not take you into the apartment of sepulchral Grecian vases, though this room is one of the most magnificent of the whole: for, as the paintings on the vases are all on classical subjects, I can but make a catalog in copying them. Some of these vases are valued at 10,000 Neapolitan *ducats*, which are 8,000 dollars of our money. The Apartments of Paintings have some fine pictures, but the traveler will not be deeply interested in them, after he has been to Rome. Domenichino's *Guardian Angel*, who is shielding an innocent youth from the wily devil groveling near, is an interesting picture. The *Madonna and Infant Vision*, with St. John, St. Anne and Joseph in the background, by Raphael, is one of the best pictures I have seen in Naples. In another small room there are pictures dedicated to amatory subjects, but, being considered too free (in Naples too!) for general view, they are kept by themselves.<sup>495</sup> The chief of them is Titian's *Danae*, which is indeed a beautiful picture.

I will excuse you also from going to Herculaneum underground with me, for, though it is a sadder and a gloomier view than that of Pompeii, yet conducted as you are by candles, it is without a similar interest or a like instruction. The light of day enables you to see Pompeii as it was, but under another city, as Herculaneum now is, like excavations cannot be made. Besides, as Pompeii was more distant from Vesuvius than Herculaneum was, it suffered less. Pompeii was buried only in showers of hot cinders, in some places not ten feet deep, which were easily removed; but Herculaneum was embedded fifty feet deep, and in some

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<sup>495</sup> The Secret Cabinet, holding items of an erotic or sexual nature, has undergone varying levels of restriction over time. It is now (2017) open to the public, although visitors under 14 years of age must be accompanied by an adult.

places about 100 feet in a solid mass of ashes, lava, earth and stones vitrified by fire, and cemented by water, which makes excavation exceedingly difficult. The Theater was all I saw; and by the aid of torches, we walked through its various corridors up to the higher seats, and down to the lower by the same ancient staircases. But much more has been explored, and a tolerable idea may now be formed of the entire city.



## 83. Local color

Naples,  
November, 1835.

Naples, like Rome, is not to be studied in its palaces and studios alone, but its streets are full of interest. Generally speaking, the Italian cities are somber in their streets, and such is the sad aspect of all Rome, in particular, that one is every day reminded of a tomb. But Naples is not only a city of the past, but of the present day, and is one of the most populous cities of all Italy, the most populous indeed, with a population, too, remarkably singular in its appearance and in its manners. I know of no better theater that represents human life, than that of the Toledo, the principal street, the Broadway of Naples. Here, as I have said before, the houses seemed to be turned inside out, and the street is so full that the people must live out of doors. Little fires, for example, are seen in this Toledo, at which the coffee pot is heated. Little tables of little traders line the two sides of the street. The woman money changer is here, who turns your *carline* into coppers, and there is the vender of notions, who beseeches you to buy his something he has to sell. The walking peddlers are innumerable. Now, a man with silk stockings entreats you to buy, and now, another with rusty medals swears they are antiques. Such is the competition for employment here, particularly at this time, when strangers are scarce, that no less than six carriages have often watched our party of four as we sallied out of our hotel to take a walk into the town—then following us a half mile or more, and at one time gathering a dozen in their train—so that we walked up and about the streets with as great a retinue as a King, much to the amusement of lookers-on.

Competition I have often witnessed elsewhere, but never such competition as is witnessed here. As soon as our breakfasts are over, our room has four or five venders of paintings, and cameos, and necklaces, and the like things, in it, with engravings of everything curious here and hereabout, and copyings in lava and in marble of all that is renowned. But never did I see such traders before. They commence with telling you that they are unlike their neighbors, that they seek an honest livelihood in an honest manner, and that they fix

their things at the lowest price, so as never to be beaten down; but after all this introduction, fortified by words doubly as strong, the sum given is probably half the price demanded. The price of a thing is not the least criterion of its value. A universal system of huckstering exists. First, the price is demanded. Then you shake your head, and the question that immediately follows, is—what will you give? But such is the low price of labor here, such the facility of living in this land of wine and fruit, and macaroni, (and a happy man I shall be, if all my life I can always get so good a dinner,) that everything grown, made, or manufactured is cheap enough. Macaroni, for example, cost four cents a pound. A bottle of very good wine may be had for two, or two cents and a half. A *carline*, which is nearly eight cents of our money, will buy a laboring man a dinner of bread and macaroni, with a bottle of wine. But the difficulty here is to get even this *carline*, for five dollars are more easily earned with us. The labor of a mechanic, I am told, is but four *carline* a day. Twenty or twenty-five cents is all that many other laborers get. And thousands there are who can get no labor at all.

The cheapness of some little things struck me with astonishment. Such gloves, for example, as sell in our market for a dollar a pair, are here bought for a *carline*, eight cents only. True, they are neither handsome nor good as are the gloves of Paris, but they are as good as are sold in the United States for a dollar a pair. A hundred other things are sold in a like proportion; for, as I have said before, such is the facility for living, that labor is perhaps cheaper here than in any other place in the world. On account of this facility of living as well as the sunny clime, it may be that there has sprung up this race of men unknown in other cities, who are called the Lazzaroni, the number of which here, it is said, is forty thousand, who, having no home, are compelled to make the street their sleeping place. I have not, however, in my wanderings through the streets of Naples, been able to find this Lazzaroni, of which so much has been said. Ragged men there are here indeed, as the name purports, but that the ragged and the poor are so much more numerous here than in other cities of Italy in proportion to the population, I am prepared to doubt.

That men should sleep in the streets, in a clime like this, is not so very remarkable: for, in early morning in New Orleans, I have seen very

many sleeping there upon the cotton bags that were upon the levee.<sup>496</sup> I have also seen them in Rome. Again, when a poor man, without any other stimulus than that of hunger, can live very well for eight cents a day, it is natural that he should loll in the streets, and wait for employment there, or beg of the passers-by, for but a few grains of copper will save him from starvation; and he must be a poor beggar if he cannot get them in the course of the day. Judging from what I have seen, five hundred dollars will go as far here as a thousand or twelve hundred will in New York. Respectable families live, I am told, in good houses, for five hundred dollars a year. The soil around Naples is rich and productive. Sicily has only lost its old inhabitants, when it was the granary of Rome, but it is Sicily yet. The climate is very warm, and therefore such houses are not so much needed as in other latitudes.

The natural beauties of the Bay of Naples have been so often sung, that I shall leave them, further than to say that no traveler will probably be disappointed in this bay, and in the surrounding scenery. The sublime character which Nature has stamped upon the whole of this region, in the awful presence of Vesuvius, of itself would give it a preeminence; but, mingled with and softening this character, as does the beauty of the shores, and the towns and cities scattered upon them, that preeminence is rendered indisputable, so far as anything that I have seen. As Naples is seen towards the ocean, there are lines of palaces, stately spires, towers, terraced roofs, houses and villas overtopping each other, and these are mingled with luxuriant gardens, groves of olives, and grapes festooning the trees. Hill and dale are illuminated by the brightest sun. Nature seems to be holding a revelry on each. The smoke of Vesuvius but varies the scene. The cities look like fairy places that have been built up in some earthly Paradise. No description ever came up to the beauty of the place, if viewed in the setting of the sun, when the water is quiet, and the hum of the thousands can be heard who live upon its banks.

But, Paradise as it is, there is much reason for calling it, as it has been called, the Paradise of Devils. The people, for ages, have never known (but for a brief moment or two) what freedom was. Corruption has had time to fix itself upon them. A rock upon the rockiest height of New

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<sup>496</sup> Brooks visited New Orleans in April 1833.

England is a better home, for here the two better energies of the soul are gone, the courage of the man, and the virtue of the woman.



## 84. Naples, past and present

Naples,  
November 1835.

After a stroll upon the Toledo of Naples, which is generally the morning and evening occupation of the stranger, who there can amuse himself with all manner of spectacles, I commonly began the regular duty of the tourist, which is not a little fatiguing in such a place as Naples, where so many of its shows are in the suburbs. I like the contrast of this, the liveliest street in the world, with the desolation and solitude that mark many places not far from Naples, but even within the barriers of the city; for there is a pleasure in adjourning from the catacombs and Pompeii, or what was the beautiful Baiae, to the Via Toledo, where not only all sorts of trades are carried on in the nooks and corners of the streets, but where all sorts of eatables are sold, hot and cold, ready-cooked or raw, fruits natural, preserved, roasted or boiled, fish frying at every corner, and chestnuts too, macaroni gobbled down in strings an ell<sup>497</sup> long, stalls with their lemonade, orgeat,<sup>498</sup> iced water, and liquors; and everybody crying, screaming or talking with all his might. Now, the queen rolls along in her equipage, and the multitude in masses lift off their hats as she passes. Now, a funeral, it may be, is approaching, with all its attendants in white, many of whom are bearing torches, and forming a society as they do, are following in a funeral all their lives. All sorts of carriages are in motion, with all sorts of harnesses. The donkeys are often so thickly buried in the burdens upon their backs, that they can hardly be seen. And then the various exhibitions, which come in to make up the scene of conjurors and dancing dogs—of quacks and recitatives, of legerdemain,<sup>499</sup> and of people singing and dancing in wandering crowds from morning to night! What horrid sounds there are! Who would even suppose that the soft Italian could ever be tortured into such yells as these?

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<sup>497</sup> Ell — Old English measure of length, equal to 45 inches (1.14m)

<sup>498</sup> Orgeat — Non-alcoholic drink or syrup made from flavored sugar water and ground barley or almonds

<sup>499</sup> Legerdemain — (per Webster) Sleight of hand (as with cards or coins); skill or adroitness

Such a scene as this, I say, is a relief from the visit to the catacombs, which are now under what is a part of the city of Naples. I visited these receptacles of the dead. An old man, who, as attendant of the poor house in the vicinity, is allowed the fees which travelers usually give, with a torch, conducted us into these dark recesses of the dead, and explained the various positions as well as he could. But, no matter for his explanations, nor the various positions and shelvings of the rock in which these dead were buried. The place was once used, as were the catacombs of Rome, of which I have spoken in a former letter,<sup>500</sup> not only for the reception of the dead, but as a place of Christian worship. The length of this cavern in the earth is not now distinctly known, but it was supposed to extend several miles. Various apartments appear at present. In the sides of some of these apartments are excavations of about the size of a coffin: in others, excavations much larger, into which the dead were put. Time has torn away all that which once covered them from the sight of man, and now, as you wander along, guided by the torch, all that can be seen is bones and skulls, which at this time are so numerous, that one may strictly say there are cartloads of them. These bones of all the parts of the human body are now piled up in masses, and the skulls meet the eyes of the wanderer in these grim chambers of the earth every turn he takes, and every ruin he looks into. The dead of centuries seem to be here, and for centuries they seem to have been dead. I took but a rapid view of these dark places, and regained the daylight again with pleasure. A flood rain, which had fallen yesterday, had burst its way into these caverns, and swept the bones and the earth promiscuously in masses together. I do not know that I dislike more than other men to be reminded of death, or that I have more than the mass of mankind a fear of it, but I love not the visitation of such places as these—not that they remind me of death, but that they so deeply impress me with the utter worthlessness of human life. What is man, I cry, when myriads of them, once animated, once breathing, once proud and lofty, seem thus to be scattered upon the earth together, with their skulls piled one above another, and their bones as articles of the meanest merchandise. I think we are brutes, and brutes only sharing thus the destiny of the brutes, and it is long before I can regain that healthy feeling which once inspired a painter of England, whose name I

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<sup>500</sup> Catacombs of Rome — See Letter 76.

now forget, but who was not an Englishman by birth, when he said, in an angry reply to someone who was annoying him with the idea that we are all brutes without souls: “Sir, *I do not know whether **you** have a soul or not, but by \_\_\_ I have.*”

The Chiaia, as it is called, I have often visited. It is the fashionable parade-ground of Naples, and is situated directly upon the Bay. It is one of those beautiful places which the monarchs of Europe commonly make for their subjects, but which the people of America never take the trouble to demand, and to make for themselves. It is a public ground for promenade, adorned with trees, and walks, and statues; and, giving a fine view, as it does, of the beautiful Bay, and of the hills and mountains that encircle it, it is made one of the prettiest places in the world. Whenever I see such places as these made by the despotic monarchs of Europe—and the stranger can see the like in every European city that he visits—and when I see the people, whom we think to be political slaves, governed as they are by an authority in the construction of which they have no voice, occupying these places, and making themselves happy in the enjoyment, I am astonished at the apathy of my own countrymen—for there is hardly a city in the whole Union, except Boston with its Common, that has a proper place in which the people can take an airing or a walk. New York has its Battery to be sure, and Nature has done everything for it, but man little or nothing; but the Battery is no more of a size for the great population than a bushel measure is for its dancing hall. True it is, what foreigners say of us, that we build upon everything, no matter what or where, when profit may come from it, and that to money we sacrifice everything of beauty—for beauty and art seldom come under our consideration. But it is time—time indeed, that the people of our cities who have the power, should take the matter into their own hands, and insist upon that favor which monarchs with pleasure accord their subjects here—the right to enjoy places where they can stretch their arms and legs, and breathe pure air, and see at least what Nature is doing with vegetation now and then, for even the green grass is at times a curiosity with the inhabitants of the cities, and green fields always.<sup>501</sup>

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<sup>501</sup> The impulse for public parks in U.S. urban areas would come in the 1850s, under the leadership of such landscape architects as Frederick Law Olmsted.

From this public promenade, thus adorned with all that Nature and art could do for it with trees overshadowing beautiful walks, and choice sculpture adorning them, where the world was crowding with their gilded equipage, and in their dazzling robes, I took my way along the coast of the Bay to the grotto of Pausilypon, a long subterranean road cut through the huge hill of Pausilypon, which was one of the great works of the Romans, and is good and used even to this day. A little Neapolitan, of twelve or fourteen years of age, who spoke one word of English among some forty of Italian, that he learnt in some English voyages that he had made from Naples, met me upon the way, and using all the English he could muster, insisted upon acting as my guide. The best specimens, perhaps, I can give of his guidance, which was amusing throughout, was his history of this artificial passage which, he said, was cut through by the Devil, who popped himself through there, head first, when the Angel of God was after him. The Angel of God, he continued, attempted to follow, but the smoke and the brimstone were so thick that he backed out with fear! The length of this passage is nearly half a mile. Its height varies from thirty to eighty feet, and its breadth is about twenty-two. It is ever lighted with lamps, and a chapel is at its entrance, which a Capuchin friar attends, holding out a bag for all passers-by to drop a copper in, to pay for the candles of his under-the-earth of a chapel.

Over the Neapolitan side of this deep and dark grotto, upon the side of the beautiful hill through which it is cut, is the tomb of Virgil, the Mantuan bard. My little crazy-headed guide led me up the sides of the hill, all along and all around, to see the tomb of Virgil, a poet, he said, but a poet who, with the Devil, had something to do in forming this huge hole in Pausilypon's side. We knocked and thumped a half an hour at least, before we aroused an old woman who had the keys of the gate that led to the garden where the tomb of Virgil is shown. But alas! for the antiquarians who leave nothing settled, and who have a delight in dulling all our sentiments and sympathies, they tell us there is a doubt whether this be the tomb of him who sung of arms and man! But, I love to believe in such things, what the world says is true; and, as incredulity spoils all the pleasure of a voyage, I entered this tomb as if I were sure it was his, whose verses were among the first I ever read. I entered a low, vaulted brick chamber. There *was* the place where *was* the urn that *held* the ashes of the greatest of the Roman poets, but not a relic is left. The

bay no longer shades the sacred ground. The winds heedlessly sweep through the open windows. Scribbling names seek a petty glory in recording their visits upon the vault. There is not a vestige upon which a man can fix or fancy a sentiment. On a stone, distinct from the tomb is this inscription:

Qui cineres? Tumuli haec vestigia? Conditur olim  
Ille hic qui cecinit pascua, rura, duces.

Whose tomb? Whose ashes here repose? His tomb we raise  
Who erst did sing of warriors, flocks, and rural lays.

As I was looking upon the little that was left of this monument which, in its day, shielded the remains of Virgil, I was struck by the frail hold that even the most renowned of men have upon earth, let the monument be what it may that honors them. Here, for example, is the tomb of a man, but even this is disputed, whose poetry and whose name are as familiar as household words in almost every land—and who, as a classic, is in the hands of every scholar in all the nations of the civilized world—but what would have this monument been for him, if he had not erected one of his own in his Aeneid. Age destroys: man forgets. The dead can bequeath nothing to us of their bodies, as it were, for these and the honors over them perish as time passes away; but the soul, that lives forever in another world, can be bequeathed, it seems to me, even in this. The man whose mouth is shut by death, can yet speak by his spirit thousands of years after that death has come upon him. And when the world have forgotten all of the physical existence of that man—have lost his remains, and even forgotten where was his tomb, yet his spirit, his intellect, his soul lives, and animates, and impels the souls of a thousand generations after him. Not one in a million of his readers, perhaps, ever thought of *him*: but how many millions have thought of that intellect of his, which has towered so much above that of other men as to come gloriously down the tide of time, even to us! His body has shared the destiny of the multitude in the catacombs of which I have spoken, but his soul at least lives here, if it does not live in another world. It is from such reflections as these that I often think that a man cannot have an immortality in this world if it is denied to him in another. And when I see this vital spark, thus perpetuating itself upon this earth, I am sure that a perpetuity is given it in that world of spirits where spirits congenial with it live.

No place can be more beautiful than this hill *might* be made to be. The vineyards and orchards there, now, are not a Paradise; but, if the charm of English cultivation could deck this spot, a Paradise it would be, such is the glorious prospect all around upon the sea and upon the land, and such the brilliant sky and the luxuriant earth. I descended the winding road that led to the top of the hill, delighting my eyes at every turn by the view of Naples, which was in the distance; and, for the first time, I saw and felt what was the splendor of an Italian sunset, of which so much boast is made. A walk among the wine vaults, which cover perhaps an acre or two in a cavern excavated in the rock under the tomb of a Virgil, and I started for home. My little mad-headed guide I paid as much as he could earn in Naples in a week, and yet he asked for more. I asked the little rascal his reason, and he frankly told me that unless he asked he should not get, and asking was the only way to get. I had not heard the universal system of Neapolitan grumbling better explained, and when I gave him but a single grain more, he kicked up his heels, and told me, as a proof, that if he had not asked he should not have got.



## 85. More from Naples

Naples,  
November 1835.

I will now group my other visitings, and, in this letter, get from Naples—if possible—for my heart is in Paris, and I am bound there as quick as coaches can carry me. I spent between two and three days in examining the suburbs of Naples, which, though they are remarkable for the most striking natural wonders, and equally inviting classical fictions, are nevertheless the very things which cannot be described. Another ride through the subterranean grotto of which I have spoken, and we were on our way to Pozzuoli, the Puteoli of the ancients. The Christian will remember this place as the town where St. Paul disembarked, and remained preaching seven days before the commencement of his journey to Rome; and the classical scholar will call to mind that this was also the landing place of the embassy from Carthage, which was sent to Rome to sue for peace at the termination of the second Punic war. The Puteolanum, and the Cumanum, two other villas of Cicero, were also here, and, in the latter, he composed his Academic Questions. Every step I took upon these journeys was one of classical interest.

Among a hundred other things, Ischia was seen, the Inarine of the ancients, under the massive base of which mountain was fabled to be pressed the giant Typhoeus, because this son of Tartarus, as soon as he was born, made war against heaven, and even succeeded at one time in frightening all the immortal gods out—Jupiter himself, for example, in the disguise of a ram, Juno as a cow, Apollo as a crow, Bacchus as a goat, Diana as a cat, and Venus as a fish. The father of gods, however, at last rallied his troops, and peppering this naughty Typhoeus well with his thunderbolts, he knocked him to the earth, and crushed him under this volcanic mountain, when he vomited flames from his mouth and eyes, and made an earthquake every time he would shake his sides. The ruins of the temple of Jupiter Serapia in Pozzuoli are among the most interesting I have seen, but when I add that this edifice was so completely buried by an earthquake in 1730, as to be unknown and forgotten, when a peasant fortunately discovered the top of one of the columns a few inches above the ground, you will have an idea of the

manner in which the whole of Pozzuoli has fallen from its ancient magnificence.

From Pozzuoli, we passed in a boat over the Bay, and landed at Baulis. The promontory of Misenus was on our right, and Monte Nuovo on our left. Misenus is the spot where Aeneas interred Misenus, who was the son of Aeolus, the king of the winds and the trumpeter of Hector. He followed Aeneas from Troy to Italy; and being proud of his powers as a trumpeter, challenged a Triton to play against him, who doomed him on the Campanian shore. When Aeneas was hereabout, interceding with the Sibyl for her aid to assist his descent into hell, he was enjoined first to bury the corpse of his friend, which he did in the promontory on my right. The story is told in Aeneid VI. The Monte Nuovo, as its name purports, is a modern creation, which an earthquake produced in thirty-six hours in the year 1538. The harbor of Misenus in the Augustan era was the grand rendezvous of the Roman navy, as that of Portsmouth is to England at the present day; but now, naught is seen but ruins, and not a single sail is in sight. Twenty thousand slaves were manumitted for having worked for the completion of this famous Portus Julius—and both Horace and Virgil describe the [line missing] achieved in the days of Augustus. The ruins of the famous villa of the luxurious Lucullus where Tiberius expired, are on a hill which commands a view of the port. The villa of Marius, and the Piscinae of Hortensius, are now rowed by in boats, and their foundations may be seen under the water. In these reservoirs for fish, it is said, the fish were made so tame that they would leap from the water into the hands, and that they were often seen adorned with necklaces and other decorations. Pliny says that a dolphin, in the reign of Augustus, frequented the Lucrine lake, and that this dolphin was rendered so tame by a boy, that he would sit upon the fish's back, and thus cross the lake.

The Monte Nuovo, the earthquake's offspring of which I have spoken, has upset, if I may be allowed the word, almost all the surrounding country. It springs up in the Lucrine lake, but it has changed, if poetry was ever founded upon fact, the dark Avernus, the fabled entrance into Hell. I entered this region with a kind of terror upon me. The awful woods, the gloomy lakes, the sacred groves of poetic fiction, I surely expected to see. Shoals of visionary ghosts, enamored maidens, pensive youths, dusky nations of the dead, screams, shrieks, groans, and dismal

sounds—there thronged my fancy. I looked for the gaping gulf which Virgil describes—

From whence are heard the groans of ghosts, the pains  
Of sounding lashes, and of dragging chains.  
Some roll a mighty stone: some laid along  
And bound with burning wires, on spokes of wheels are hung.

But there is no Hell here now, I am very certain, nor sulfurous flames, nor even tremblings of the earth. The grisly Pluto has fled, and here where was his home, is now a clear, a tranquil, and inviting place. I could not see the Acheron, over which condemned souls were first conveyed to Hell. I looked in vain for the Styx, by which the gods were wont to swear, and which, it was said, flowed around this Hell nine times. Charon, the ferry-man is gone, and Cerberus, the many-headed dog, is no longer to be seen. Birds fly over this fatal lake at present, notwithstanding its name, Avernus, or *Aornos*, which signifies in Greek *without birds*, and fish also exist and abound in the lake. All that is left of its ancient story are the ruins of a temple, supposed to have been dedicated to Proserpina, or Pluto.

The Elysian Fields, the blissful seats of happy souls, are also here—but the Elysian fields are all poetry now, for either the country is wholly changed, or the poets did not even base their fictions upon facts. The residence of the Cumaean Sibyl is however, even to this day, pointed out. She, it will be remembered, instructed Aeneas how to descend into Hell, and accompanied him thither. This Sibyl of Cumaea was the most famous of all the ten. Apollo fell in love with her because she was so beautiful, and offered her the obtainment of any request she should make. She demanded to live as many years as she held grains of sand in her hand, which were a thousand in number—Apollo granted the request—but even then, the Sibyl denied to her lover the boon he had bought. Apollo in wrath gave her what he had promised her, a thousand years, but filled her with wrinkles and haggard looks—for the Sibyl had forgotten to stipulate for perpetual youth. She was 700 years old when Aeneas sought her grotto, and entreated for the revelations of futurity. I did not visit this cavern of the Sibyl, for as I could see nothing of the Tartarus, the Styx, or the other rivers of poetry, I did not choose to

waddle in the water to see the Sibyl's Baths. The earthquakes have not left vestiges enough to stand even the fictions of the poets upon.

From Tartarus and Elysium, we passed to what was the "Beautiful Baiae" of the Romans, where the mightiest men of that great people had their villas. Caesar, Tiberius, Nero, Caracalla, Pompey, Marius and Sulla had lived upon this spot. Nature, indeed, had made a heaven of it, so far as clime was concerned—but men had turned it into a hell, and turned themselves into devils in it. The focus of Roman debaucheries was here. *Here Nero murdered his mother.* Tacitus says that the monster gazed with pleasure on her corpse, and said he did not think she was so beautiful! Venus had a temple here. Its ruins are shown to this day. No doubt her worshippers were many in such a land of song and pleasure.

I did intend to take you to the Phlegraean fields, the fiery soil on which Hercules attacked and defeated the giants, when they had already scaled the walls of heaven, and frightened away the immortal gods. But you have had enough of mythological fiction—and all they do here now is to manufacture sulfur, alum, sal ammoniac, &c. I only wonder that the poets did not put their hell here, instead of Avernus, for the smoking ashy ground looks like the covering of some such awful place. Indeed, the whole of this region is such an uneasy-looking one, that the quicker Vesuvius is out of sight, the safer I shall feel. I have just learnt that a village in Calabria was swallowed up the other day, with the loss of 150 lives, and if Vesuvius's arms can reach thus far, who knows what they may do at home. A stranger is not accustomed, as the natives are, to walking on such a fiery soil. They believe the earth is full of such whims everywhere, and that therefore they must be content with it as it is.

I visited Cumae, the land where Homer fixed his Cimmerians with their dark and subterranean abodes. The Cumaeans were undoubtedly the greatest diggers in the ancient world, and plodded underground in aqueducts and caverns, as the Romans and Greeks plodded in temples and arches above. Upon a rock, near what is supposed to have been one of the streets of Cumae, according to Virgil, Daedalus alighted after his flight from Crete, and consecrated his wings to Apollo. I visited the Lake d'Agnano also, which was once the crater of a volcano. On the banks of this lake are some remains of a villa which belonged to Lucullus, who opened a communication between the sea and this lake, converting the

latter into a reservoir for fish. Not far distant from this is the *Grotto del Cane*, or the grotto of the dog, the mephitic<sup>502</sup> air of which throws a dog into convulsions, extinguishes a lighted torch, and prevents a pistol from going off. I did not visit Paestum, which travelers generally do, and perhaps you will thank me for not wearying you with more descriptions, though I have seen a thousand in other things in and around this Naples, that I pass over with pleasure, for I am fatigued with travelling and with sightseeing too, and I long for the day when I can be quiet again, and see the same room at least thirty days in succession.



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<sup>502</sup> mephitic — foul-smelling

## 86. Destination Florence

Florence,  
November 25, 1835.

I have taken a flight, you see, since my last was written, from Naples to Florence. The *mania* of going has seized me, and coaches, steamboats, and couriers I now find too slow for mania. The quarantines are coming off, and I am not fettered at every step. The cholera has politely adjourned over to the other side of Italy, and left me this side to travel in. When I was in Venice, it was in Florence and Leghorn, but these cities are healthy now, and Venice is blockaded up. Happy man indeed I am—for it would have hung heavily upon my heart to quit Italy without seeing one of the most famous and the most beautiful of its cities—La Bella Firenze, as the Italians call it.

Two routes were given me to leave Naples by: one by land, and the other by water, directly to Marseilles, for the steamboat could not touch at Leghorn, as Leghorn was yet under proscription on account of the cholera *having been* there. To pay sixty dollars for a voyage over the Mediterranean to Marseilles, without seeing a single object but water upon the way, was what I did not like so well; though the sixty-dollar price was put down to forty by the trafficking steamboat captain, when he found we would not pay that. Malta was shut out from us, and Sicily too, by quarantine regulations; and, as I have said in a former letter, the plague was in Alexandria, and some unknown disorder in Greece, but no plague, however, so fearful as the quarantines on return. All the steamboats that usually coast along the Mediterranean, and touch at Civitavecchia, Leghorn and Genoa, were stopped on account of these same quarantines. The only agreeable resource we had, then, was the land route, but doubt and anxiety attended us every step in this, for we knew not what petty state north of us might fix us upon its borders by quarantine regulations, and if we once got into Tuscany where the cholera had been raging, we were fearful that we could not get out.

However, we resolved to risk all on the land, and in pursuance of this resolution we engaged a passage in Angrisani's line of conveyances from

Naples to Rome, which cost us about sixteen dollars each, though twelve is the stipulated price, the *buona mano*, and the postilions, who expect to be feed at every post, making up full the four extra dollars each. His contract was to start at four o'clock in the morning, and to carry us through in twenty-four hours. We insisted upon a written contract, as is always our custom, and he gave us one, but it was written in such a manner that we surrendered it, and demanded another. This was promised us the morning we were to start. We were at his coach office at four o'clock in the morning, but there was no sign of a coach, or even of life about it. At six o'clock we were ready to start, but our contract was not ready, and we had no idea of starting without that. The conductor of the coach then told us it was impossible to be in Rome in twenty-four hours, and he could make no such contract in starting. We drummed up the master of the posts. We sought for Angrisani's agent in vain. We screamed out all the Italian we knew, and we mingled English with it to let them know of what country we were, for there is no language so effective in Italy as English, even when not a word can be understood. We took our baggage down with our own hands, and sitting upon it, cried we would never stir a step without our written contract to be in Rome twenty-four hours from the time we started. This resolute exhibition brought our conductor to his senses, and the agent that we could not find after an hour's search, even with the conductor's aid, was found by the conductor in a minute or two, and our written contract was produced. We were in Rome or at the gates of Rome, in our twenty-four hours, and were perfectly content.

I detail these facts for the benefit of future travelers in Italy; for, if we had not taken this course, we might not have been in Rome for three days, and thus, by one good hearty quarrel in advance, we saved a hundred upon the road, when we should have been fully in the conductor's power. We paid not a cent in advance. We moved rapidly, as an American accommodation generally moves. Our horses were changed quickly. Everything was done well, and we were perfectly satisfied with the conductor, and so was he with us.



## 87. Onward to Florence

Florence,  
November 26, 1835.

The road over which we travelled to Rome was the same that we took to Naples—and, therefore, about it, I have nothing to say that is new. When we approached the barrier of the Neapolitan dominions towards those of Rome, it was near nine o'clock at night, and the rain was pouring down in torrents only known in a southern clime. I was asleep, and so was my companion, in a comfortable coach, when, all at once we were aroused from this sleep by the cry of—Brigands! Brigands! Brigands! and a carriage was heard rushing by us at the top of its speed. Our postilion stopped, and our conductor demanded, *what Brigands!* in a voice that fully proclaimed his alarm.

A body of soldiers, however, which soon came up, relieved him from his alarms; and upon entering the police office in the village which was near, we got the history of the affair. A vetturino, it appears, was on its way to Terracina, with an Italian and his wife in it. They saw in the road two or three men whom they instantly concluded to be brigands—whereupon they turned their horses, yes, *waited* to turn their horses, and came back to the village screaming "*Brigands!*" as loud as they could. The Italian, as he related his story, was in a perspiration all over, and the trembling of his voice indicated the fear under which he labored. My own companion and myself were not without anxiety, well knowing the character of the place in which we were. The conductor of the coach proposed to stop. A German who was with us, and who spoke Italian perfectly well, and English passably well, and who knew the nature of the country through which we were to pass, as he had been over it a hundred times, sided with the conductor.

Our destiny was thus settled, as we concluded, for the night; when, all at once our tragedy was turned into a comedy, and we roared loudly with laughter, even in the presence of the august police, as the scouts of soldiers who had been sent out, came bringing three poor unhappy

peasants that could hardly walk, who were undoubtedly the brigands that the Italian saw upon the road. They told the police that a vetturino approached them, and immediately turned about, and then drove off as if Satan himself was after it, screaming they did not know what; and as these poor peasants were well known to be innocent of deeds of brigandage, and too feeble even to half kill a man, they were immediately let loose, and the Italian was sent on his way to Terracina, amid a thousand sneers and laughs.

The Pontine marshes were passed in the night. I dreamed and slept all the way over them, and am alive yet—the *malaria* to the contrary, notwithstanding and nevertheless. At early morning, we were passing over the Campagna in the neighborhood of Rome. At the gate of the city we hired a soldier to go with us to the police with our passports, for we desired to be out of Rome as soon as we could pass through it on our way to Florence. The soldier mounted our coach, and when it stopped, marched with us to the police hall of Rome. I asked the officer who presided there, to give us our passports as soon as he could, for, as he would see, all was ready to convey us to Florence. "*No*," was his answer, "*the signature of the American consul is not upon it, and we cannot sign it till he has recognized you as citizens there.*" I showed him this recognition on our way to [Naples]. "*Ah, but you must have it coming back,*" we were told. We went through the mill of the American consul again. We lost our day's journey to Florence. We were kept in Rome till night, and all because our consuls make such regulations with the police in every town through which an American passes, and a consul is—no matter whether his passport may have been previously signed, as ours was by our consul in Naples, for Paris, or not.

At ten o'clock the same night, we were on our way to Florence again, in a Roman diligence, which crawls along a little faster than a snail can creep. All I heard of this night's journey was the *winding up* of the wheels of this diligence, as we went over the spires of the Apennines, for the conductor sitting in front, by some well-prepared machinery, lets go and winds up his wheels as occasion calls. But we were yet upon the same road by which I had come to Rome, and therefore I did not lose much. In twenty-four hours from this time we were at Foligno, where the diligence left us in darkness and doubt, and went its way to Bologna by the Ancona route.

Impelled by the manner of going yet, we contracted with a vetturino, who, though we are now in the autumnal rains, put off with us for Perugia, a distance of about twenty-four miles, where we arrived wet and cold by daylight, the ensuing morning. Perugia is the capital of the rich and beautiful province of Umbria, and, in remote ages, was one of the most powerful cities of Etruria. It crowns the summit of a seemingly inaccessible rock, and commands an enchanting view, in which the Lake Trasimene is one of the finest features. The city has a strange and novel appearance, in which the ancient is mingled with the Middle Ages, and Greek and Gothic architecture stand together. I entered some of the churches of this city, and wandered about its strange-looking streets. A funeral service was carried on in one of the churches that I entered, and beggars were thronging the streets. But I did not stop long enough in the town to see much of its contents. The courier left at eleven o'clock, for the first time for two months, on his way to Florence, and we filled his carriage with our company. We were soon upon the heights that overlook the Lake Trasimene, and then descending upon the shores so renowned by the presence of Hannibal, and his bloody victory over the Romans. This land here and hereabout was ancient, even in the days of the Romans, and Livy studied it, as we study the times of Livy now. As we rode along this lake, our courier pointed out the spot upon which antiquarians have fixed as the battle ground, and commented upon the skill of Hannibal, who contrived upon an enemy's ground, to draw that enemy into a narrow, swampy, and foggy plain, where no army, however brave, could long have defended itself; for, on three sides are heights which were possessed by the troops of Carthage, and on the other side is a large unfordable lake.



## 88. Arrival at Florence

Florence,  
November, 1835.

Beyond the Lake, upon our road, we reached at last the confines of the papal dominions. The Lazaretto, where the victims of the quarantine had been lately incarcerated, we passed with a shrug, blessing the happy fortune that had saved us from such a prison. Our passports were inspected, found to be in order, and signed—and at last, we were beyond the dominions of the Pope. Sure I am, that I never quitted any dominions with greater pleasure. The police in them is the most surly and most grinding I have ever seen. The country seems to be the most wretchedly governed of any in Europe. The people are discontented, and miserably poor. The soldiers are a caricature of the very name. To say, in other states hereabout, that such a soldier is a soldier of the Pope, is to call him a coward and a sloven, and to abuse him in the strongest terms. Our militia<sup>503</sup> will pass for a specimen of these defenders of the Papal States.

It may be fancy, but we all thought that we could see a difference in the cultivation of the land, or the people, and the military, the moment we passed the papal line, and got into the Tuscan dominions. Though the Duke of Tuscany rules despotically over his little domain, yet his subjects are contented with him. His government is for the good of his people, and is wisely administered. Certain it is that the custom-house officers were none of the surly gang that we had so often met in the Pope's dominions. The police were civilized, and would give civilized answers. Throngs of beggars did not hang round our coach. Strangers seemed to be welcomed, and there were facilities for going along.

The Etruscan or Tuscan dominion, through which we were passing, was once the center of all that was known of civilization—even when Athens was rude, and Rome did not exist—which at last spread over Europe,

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<sup>503</sup> Brooks explains elsewhere his reasons for dissatisfaction with the prevailing U.S. militia system (see Letters 40 and 98).

and is now redeeming all America from the savage grasp. The rocky heights of Certina we passed without ascending, once a city of the Pelasgi. Arezzo, the birth place of Petrarch and Maecenas—in remote ages one of the strongest cities of the Etruscan confederacy—we approached in the shades of evening, through a country of increasing luxury and beauty. Wearied, as my eyes had been for many days past, with the miserable cultivation of what might be made a most lovely country, it was with joy that I saw the contrast here, even in spots of the tints of autumn, when the vine no longer flourished, and the olive looked sober and mournful.

Night came upon us, and the earth, mantled in darkness as it was, of course, we saw no more. A trooper, as is customary in all Italy, rode at our side from evening till we entered the gates of Florence in early morning. No diligence nor courier ventures abroad, after dark, without this guard. The sound of his horse's hoofs is ever mingled with your slumbers, and the glitter of his armor confuses your sleeping visions. The post boys and horses are changed every ten or twelve miles as with us, but the conductor or the driver—who, however, does not touch a rein nor a horse—keeps on with the carriage, conducting, and giving orders respecting it. The conductor is on or in the coach, and sleeps between the posts, when a new set of post boys and a new set of horses relieve the last; and, as the boys mount the horses' backs and snap their whips, the conductor goes to sleep again.

Thus, we journeyed on during the night to the gates of Florence, which we reached long before day. The sentinel hailed us, and let us in. Our passports were demanded and given up. We moved to the custom house, and a little fee saved our baggage from examination. We paid the fees of the postilions, and gave the courier his *buona mano*, and when all was included, our bill was nearly fourteen dollars each, for journeying a little over one hundred miles.

You see in these details how much it costs in Italy to move quick, and you see also what afflictions of custom house, police, guards, gates, &c., we are free from in our country—now united, and not split up into different states as Italy is—for, with us, one government rules all, and education and intelligence are *endeavored* to be diffused among all the people.

But, when we boast of what we are, let us remember what Italy was, and learn lessons from her downfall. Our destiny will be as fatal as hers, unless her lessons are read to, and impressed upon us. This beautiful city upon the Arno, this land fit for gods and goddesses—what was it once, when the standard of liberty floated upon its towers, and when its voice and its arm rallied all others, and drove back the tyrants, with the myrmidons in their train! Arts had their home here. Man grew strong in such a land, and its church of Santa Croce holds the ashes of some of the most illustrious of the mighty dead. The government is not bad now—it is a good government in its way—but it is not free, and thus the day of its glory is over.

"But Arno wins us to the fair white walls,  
Where the Etrurian Athens claims and keeps  
A softer feeling for her fairy halls.  
Girt by her theater of hills, she reaps  
Her corn, and wine, and oil, and Plenty leaps  
To laughing life, with her redundant horn.  
Along the banks where smiling Arno sweeps  
Was modern luxury of commerce born,  
And buried learning rose, redeemed to a new morn."<sup>504</sup>



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<sup>504</sup> Byron. *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*

## 89. Florence

Florence,  
November, 1835.

Florence is one of the three cities of Italy which are at present the most renowned for the possession of the arts, and of the great relics of antiquity. It is a city in which strangers love to make long tarrys, and where they are well paid for that tarry in what they can see, study, and learn. The Italian here is spoken with uncommon elegance and delicacy, and, all things considered, it is perhaps the best school in Italy for the person who seeks an acquaintance with the language.

Unfortunately, I am in that temperament at the present moment which unfits me for the enjoyment of its arts—a study of arts and antiquities for three months in Italy, and a constant journey of nearly five months upon the Continent, compelling me to think that quiet and rest are the greatest of all enjoyments. The American who goes down the peninsula of Italy by the way of Florence, will enter the city with far different feelings; for his feelings will be fresh, and not satiated and weaned[?] by constant observation. Again, I am compelled to feel the truth of the remark, that no man ought ever to journey more than three months at one time.

The first thing that strikes the traveler in returning from Southern Italy, is the new appearance of the architecture of Florence. It has a Gothic or a barbaric dye, to which his eyes have not been for some time accustomed, and he is soon impressed with the idea that he is not in a city of remote antiquity, but in a city of the Middle Ages. Yet, there is an elegance, an ornament and art about it, which distinguish it from other cities he may have seen; and, so marked is this elegance or ornament, that I have imagined that the history of the city was written, as it were, upon the buildings that stand in its streets. The great facade and portico have given way to such fortresses as were at times so necessary for the defense of liberty, or of a man's own house; and yet, these fortresses, strong and massive as they are, have an air of grandeur and beauty that puts them far above a common castle.

The Duomo, or cathedral of Florence, is one of the most interesting and ancient cathedrals of Italy. Its cupola was the admiration of Michelangelo, who was wont to say that art could scarcely imitate and never rival it. A hundred and fifty years it was in building, and monuments, inscriptions, sculptures, and paintings adorn it in every quarter. The Campanilla, or belfry, which is by its side—not upon it, as ours are—is one of the most beautiful toys of architecture my eyes ever beheld; and, in itself, it amply confutes the idea that in Grecian forms is all the beauty of architectural proportion. This tower rises to the height of 280 feet, overlooking the city, and it is incrustated with precious marbles, worked into groupings of every kind and name. The Baptisterio or Baptistery, near the Duomo and the Campanile, is also another beautiful toy. The gates of this structure are, however, its chief attraction, for they are of bronze, and as beautiful as the art and the genius of the best Florentine ever could make them. Copies are now being taken of one for the King of France, who has indeed his artists all over Italy, and who is thus running in the career of Bonaparte, perhaps hoping, like him, to please the Parisian pride with copies of trophies, when trophies cannot be won. The Duomo is a Tuscan-Gothic edifice. The Campanile is a Greco-Arabia-Gothic tower. The Baptistery is of an octangular form, with a dome somewhat like the Pantheon at Rome. The walls of this singular temple, both outside and inside, are incrustated with sculpture by the most eminent artists of the day in which it was built. Two porphyry columns rise before the principal entrance, given in the year 1117 by the Pisans to the Florentines, and an iron chain, suspended from its wall, is a trophy of the conquest of the Florentines over the Pisans in the year 1362. These were the chains of the port of Pisa.

The statues, portraits and monuments of the celebrated characters of the once renowned, and the once formidable, Florentine republic, are to be seen within the walls of its Duomo. But the monuments of its illustrious dead are in the church of Santa Croce, which the people call the Pantheon of Florence—and which is to Florence as Westminster Abbey to England. The outward walls of this far-famed church are rough, unfinished and dark. It is one of those gigantic creations that a people think of when they are strong, but which they find themselves too feeble to execute, when age or corruption has come upon them. It has none of the look of the rich and the gemmed churches of Rome, and

yet the moment the stranger enters its long-drawn aisles, he feels that there is a solemnity within them that marble and mosaics, and gold and gilt can never give.

But, architecture is not its attraction, nor aught that man has piled up within it, except these ranges of monuments which commemorate the fame of some of the greatest men whom all time has produced. The tomb of Michelangelo is here. The name of Michelangelo Buonarroti is inscribed upon the base, and his bust is upon the sarcophagus. Before this tomb, the steps of Alfieri were arrested, when, unknown and as a stranger, he wandered through the church; and the sight of it, he tells us, with the reflections to which it gave birth, was his first stimulus to ambition, in the pursuit of that immortal fame with which the world has crowned his life. But, close to the tomb which was his inspiration, is now the mausoleum of Alfieri himself. It represents Italy crowned, mourning at the sarcophagus of a poet, and is enriched by a *basso rilievo* head of Alfieri, and adorned with appropriate laurel wreaths, lyres and masks. The work is by Canova.

Alfieri was the Byron of Italy, with his vices and his genius, and his pride, and almost his principles too. A nobleman, he distinguished himself from the herd by his pen. A lover, the wife of a British peer was his mistress;<sup>505</sup> and the widow of a legitimate king, the Countess of Albany<sup>506</sup> of the royal blood of the Stuarts, his consort, or "*La mia Donna*," as he styles her. A writer, he denounced aristocracy, and yet was an aristocrat himself. But his genius has immortalized him; Italy owns his power; and he goes down to posterity in company with him, who planned the dome of St. Peter's, and whose chisel and whose pencil have astonished mankind.

Machiavelli's name and his epitaph next arrest the attention. "*To such a name*," says his epitaph in Italian, "*no eulogium is adequate*." I was surprised at this. The word *Machiavellian* has ever been associated in my mind, I know not how, with all that is most despicable in that

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<sup>505</sup> Alfieri's mistress, prior to 1784, was Penelope Pitt, Lady Ligonier. Alfieri fought a non-fatal duel with her husband Edward.

<sup>506</sup> Princess Louise of Stolberg-Gedern (1752-1824) — Countess of Albany; wife of the Jacobite Pretender Charles Edward Stuart; even after her husband's death, the lovers did not marry, since Alfieri was opposed to the institution.

literature which administers to the wants of tyranny; but such an eulogium has put me upon an inquiry, and I can now feel that to such a man no eulogium is adequate. For Machiavelli suffered for freedom, and for the republic of Florence, and died in poverty after twice conspiring against its tyrants.

Galileo's bones are also here, now honored, and with a fame so proudly known, even in that land which condemned him to prison for demonstrating that the world moved round the sun, and which forced him publicly to declare on his knees, that his system was false, and that the world did not move; thus showing again how the world may do injustice to the living, and persecute them even unto death, while they will rally over, and weep amid the remains of those living, even when they are in the tomb. His monument now declares that in his day, he was incomparable; and yet, notwithstanding he was the inventor of the telescope, the observer of the phases of Venus, and the investigator of the movement of the pendulum, and the verifier of the theory of the Heavens, yet he died under the anathema of the church and his sovereign, blind and poor and in exile!

The remains of other great men are here, but those of whom I have spoken are best known to fame in our far-off land; and thousands of other things, drawing me onward, leave me but little time to wander or reflect in the sacred precincts of Santa Croce. Dante was a son of Florence, but this Pantheon of theirs has no remains of his, though the Florentines, who banished him, have made every effort to bring back his bones to the city which gave him birth. Ravenna has his remains. This city was his asylum and his grave. The people who adopted him living, refuse to give him up dead: and thus, is ungrateful Florence justly punished for driving from its walls this champion of liberty, this matchless poet, this man who made a language, and whose fancy invigorated it with life.

Few cities are there, which can boast of such men as the republic of Florence, in those happy and lustrous days, when freemen bore their own standard with their own strong arms; and when that liberty, which is a goddess of more than Apollonian power, inspired men with soul as it did with strength and valor. I love to dwell with such thoughts as I look upon, and think over, the histories of states once free; for they

seem to me to refute the idea, so prevalent, that in republics the arts must suffer, and genius go unknown; for I believe that just the reverse is true, and when the dead despotisms can show me such a people as the Grecian and Roman republicans were, or the living even have of their own creation such churches within them as is the Pantheon of Florence, or the Westminster Abbey of England, then I will believe that man's powers are better developed when he is hampered at every corner he turns, than in a country where the very excitement of liberty stimulates and drives every faculty, both physical and intellectual, into the most extraordinary action. It may be an over-ardent love of my own land that sharpens my eyes, but nevertheless, I think I see in it the exercise of the same principles, and the same causes that have *driven* other republics to the patronage of arts and of literature, and that such is our *destiny*, which we could not avert if we would.

Our days of the Medici, our Lorenzos the Magnificent,<sup>507</sup> have not yet come, but the same commerce that flourished in Florence, and transformed its merchants into Medici, is acting upon us, and in due time, the Lorenzos must come. This city of the Medici was but a city of merchants, and traders, and mechanics. Every vestige of aristocracy was rooted out. Not a Ghibelline found favor in the eyes of the Guelphs.<sup>508</sup> And yet, what a treasury of the arts it is and was! What a bright fame it has! How proud may a Florentine feel of his ancestry, who at one time fought all the battles of Italy, defying the German on one side, and the Pope on the other, and the Ghibelline aristocracy upon all!



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<sup>507</sup> Lorenzo de' Medici (1449-1492) — (Lorenzo the Magnificent) de facto ruler of the Florentine Republic; powerful patron of the Renaissance of arts.

<sup>508</sup> Guelphs and Ghibellines were factions supported by the Pope and Holy Roman Emperor, respectively, in the city-states of central and northern Italy of the 12th and 13th centuries.

## 90. Arts in Florence

Florence,  
November, 1835.

Let us now see what are some of those works of art, which Florence boasts the possession of within her palaces; but, in my hurried sketch, I can only speak of the most remarkable, in galleries crowded with works of art. The marble Queen of Florence, which the whole world has agreed to admire as a piece of statuary unsurpassed in delicacy and beauty, is the *Venus de Medici*, the Venus of the Medici, of whom I have already spoken. This Venus was found in the villa of Hadrian at Tivoli. The sculptor is unknown, but it is generally believed to be the work of Praxiteles, who flourished 330 years before Christ. The celestial purity, the heavenly modesty, and the godlike grace of this Bride of Heaven have been themes of admiration with all who have seen her, even to the days of Byron, who was “*dazzled and drunk with its beauty*.” Nude as it is, not an improper feeling is inspired—and there is not a woman in the world who could not regard it without a blush, with such an inspiration of purity does even the marble seem to be infused. It stands in a room called the Tribune, a small octagon temple, and there it is associated with other of the most valuable works of art. The *Apollino*, or youthful Apollo, is a corresponding model of manly beauty in this same room. *Two Wrestlers*, the vanquished and the conquering, are also here, which, with the *Dancing Faun*, and the *Scythian slave preparing to flay Marsyas*, make the other ornaments of this little splendid room. But the walls are as richly decked with master paintings as the floor is covered with statues. A sleeping *Endymion*, and a *Samian Sibyl* by Guercino, who is styled the Magician of Paintings, are beautiful pictures, greatly admired. The *Holy Family* by Michelangelo, a *Virgin in contemplation* by Guido, *St. John in the desert*, and the *Fornarina*<sup>509</sup> of Raphael, are among the pictures very remarkable for beauty. *La Fornarina*, the favorite mistress of Raphael, his inspiration and his model, almost divides empire in the Tribune with the *Venus* of Praxiteles, and, as a woman, she appears to be on canvas what the Venus is on marble, though the sculptor's art, in my eye, triumphs over his of the pencil. The *Venus* of Titian is the opposite

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<sup>509</sup> *fornarina* — (Free translation) baker's daughter

of her in marble, for Titian's is not only young and beautiful, but is nude upon a couch, her right hand decked with flowers, and her whole figure beaming with voluptuous looks.<sup>510</sup>

I do not know where to go with you next, into this gallery of gems; for, wherever I look, I see enough to detain me in the study of months, and yet I have not the heart to stop. But neither Venuses nor Apollos will give an American bread, and therefore I must whip up my courser,<sup>511</sup> and dash with him upon the road. This is a specimen of the land of Sirens;<sup>512</sup> and though I am far from being contented in it, yet it is difficult to get out of its sway. "*Like Niobe, all tears*,"<sup>513</sup> is a famous metaphor in all the works of the day; and suppose, then, that we go into her hall here and see what she is. This Niobe, you know, was the daughter of Tantalus, and married Amphion, by whom she had seven sons and seven daughters. Proud of her progeny, she ventured to insult Latona, because she was the mother of only two, Apollo and Diana. Latona in wrath, summoned her children, when Apollo undertook to kill all of Niobe's sons, and Diana, all the daughters, excepting only one, who had married the King of Pylos. Niobe herself, stupefied at her woes, was metamorphosed into a stone, or, according to some, into a fountain of tears. This celebrated group of statuary, in the Hall of Niobe, commemorates the event. The figure of Niobe stands at the head of the hall, and her youngest daughter, terrified and kneeling, seeks refuge in her mother's arms. Ovid alludes to this part of the history thus:

"De multis minimam posco clamavit et unam;  
Dumque rogat, pro qua rogat, occidit."

"My youngest child, ah: spare! the frantic mother cries,  
While yet she heaven implores, the hapless maiden dies."

Her sons and her daughters are shown in various attitudes, some dead, some dying, some just stricken, some attempting to fly, and some looking upward to heaven. This group, it is said, once occupied, collectively, the tympan of a temple. Now the children are arranged in

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<sup>510</sup> Titian, *Venus of Urbino*

<sup>511</sup> Courser — Swift horse

<sup>512</sup> Sirens — In Greek mythology, female figures who lured sailors to their doom on a rocky coast.

<sup>513</sup> Shakespeare. *Hamlet*

an oblong hall, in a right line, in defiance of nature, and of the story which the group represents. It was found at Rome, near the Porta Ostiensis.

Among the first objects which strike the attention of the visitant upon entering this Gallery of the Arts, is a Wild Boar, said to be of Grecian sculpture, and so very remarkable for its execution that copies of it are seen in almost all the civilized nations of the world. The ceiling of the first corridor, which is an immense gallery, is adorned with arabesques. Portraits of the most renowned characters of antiquity, generals, statesmen, princes, and literati, are on the walls. Busts of the Roman emperors, with many of their relations, go round the corridors. In the second corridor, are Cupids, Bacchi, Bacchantes, Mercurys, Psyches, Ganymedes with the eagle, and a Venus whose head is encircled by a diadem, which seems to have been originally colored with Tyrian purple, and enriched with gold and precious stones. The ceiling of this immense gallery is adorned with paintings, representing the revival of the arts and sciences, with other historical subjects, in which are introduced portraits of all the most eminent characters among the Florentines. All these galleries are lined with statues or paintings.

I give but specimens of what there are in them, in order to give you an idea of the whole. There is a cabinet of the sculpture of the fifteenth century. There is also a cabinet of modern bronzes, the most remarkable piece in which is a *Mercury standing on the wind*, by John of Bologna,<sup>514</sup> a beautiful masterpiece of art, in which the Mercury really seems to be standing on a zephyr. There is then a cabinet of antique bronzes, in which are Grecian, Roman, Egyptian, and Etruscan divinities; a Roman eagle which belonged to the twenty-fourth legion; Altars, Tripods, Mural crowns; Hippogryphs, Chimaeras, helmets, spurs, bits, monas[?] of white metal, and needles made of hair, &c. &c. There is a cabinet of ancient vases in *terra cotta*, but that in Naples is far its superior. Another cabinet is adorned with paintings by Albano, Carlo Dolci, Caravaggio, Rubens, and Barocci's<sup>515</sup> *Madonna del Popolo*, which is the lion of the room. In this cabinet are: four tables of Florentine mosaic work, called *Opera di Commesso*, which consists of sparks of gems, and

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<sup>514</sup> Giambologna (John of Bologna) (1529-1608) — Flemish sculptor, based in Italy

<sup>515</sup> Federico Barocci (1528-1612) — Italian Renaissance painter and printmaker

minute pieces of the hardest and most precious marbles, so placed as to imitate flowers, insects, and painting of every description. The Octagon Table, in the center of the cabinet, displays topazes, onyxes, agate, *lapis lazuli*, &c., and it occupied the time of twenty-two artificers for twenty-five years, and cost nearly one hundred thousand dollars. Time and money enough this, you will say, upon one table, but it seems to me the most beautiful that the hand of man can form. The Cabinet of the Hermaphrodite contains a *Hermaphrodite*, reposing on a lion's skin. It is a masterpiece of Grecian sculpture. Hercules strangling the serpents that Juno sent to devour him, is also here, and so is a colossal head of Alexander, very much admired. In the Cabinet of Egyptian Antiquities are mummies and the coffins in which they are found, with many other things of Egyptian antiquity. In the Cabinet containing Portraits of Painters, chiefly done by themselves, is the celebrated vase of the Villa Medici adorned with *bassi relievi*, representing the sacrifice of Iphigenia.<sup>516</sup> The whole host of painters can be seen here, and the view is a delightful one, of so many fine heads, of so many great men, thus clustered together. From these are cabinets with pictures of the Venetian school, of the French school, of the Flemish school, of the Dutch school, and of the Italian school, in each of which there are some remarkable paintings by some of the great men in each. The Cabinet of Gems is also the gem of the cabinets, for it is ornamented with fine columns of oriental alabaster, and *verd antique*, and contains a most valuable collection of gems, most of which were collected by the Medicean princes, together with a table of Florentine mosaic work, executed when the manufacture was in its infancy, and representing the ancient port of Leghorn.

I have thus run rapidly through this gallery of the arts, stopping here and there, as something extraordinary took me out of the way of my running course. What a school it is of antiquity, and of the Middle Ages, and of the arts in all past time, I need not stop to dwell upon, for all can see. The choice treasures here—of the *Venus de Medici*—of the Medicean vase, on which is Iphigenia mournfully expecting her hapless doom before the altar of Diana, (for copies of which vase, by the way, Englishmen at times give 2,500 dollars or more)—of the group of Niobe,

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<sup>516</sup> Iphigenia — In Greek mythology, daughter of Agamemnon and Clytemnestra, sacrificed in retaliation for her father's offence to the goddess Artemis (= Diana).

and her children—the *Fornarina*, the *Appollino*—and of the *Hermaphrodite* of ambiguous beauty, draw thousands of visitors here from all parts of the earth where art is known or adored. The gallery presents a series of paintings, representing the art from its earliest dawn to its latest refinements, and in one of the corridors may be seen scriptural subjects painted by some Greek artists as far back as the thirteenth century; so that the stiff, angular and unmeaning Virgin and her child, daubed with gilt and spangled drapery, may be traced up to the divine conceptions of a Raphael. Go! I turn again, for I want to plunder all, and carry all to our own land as the nursery of arts there. As I have said before, the Romans stole many of these treasures from the Greeks. Barbarians then stole from them. Each was civilized by the possession of them, in their turn. Bonaparte plundered. The Holy Alliance re-plundered from him. Who knows but what our turn may come next. What cannot be bought, nor made, nor obtained in any other manner—may it not be plundered? You see what a Gentleman George<sup>517</sup> I am becoming. The Venus that graced the Louvre, as a trophy of Bonaparte, how prettily it would grace a wing of the American Capitol! What have you to say to that?



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<sup>517</sup> Gentleman George — Character in the novel *Paul Clifford*, by Edward Bulwer

## 91. Florence

Florence,  
November, 1835.

In my last letter, I raced through the Royal Gallery of Florence, but in this I will take you into what is called the Pitti Palace, now the royal residence, where the Grand Duke of Tuscany, with his wife and children, make their home. This palace was the house of a Florentine merchant of the Middle Ages, who, however, exhausted his fortune in building it. The Gallery of Paintings in this palace, considering its number, is among the choicest, if not the choicest, in the world. The French, during their invasion of Italy, took sixty-four of the best out of this collection to hang up in the Louvre, but these are all returned. Salvator Rosa has here distinguished himself in some of his ablest efforts, and a battle piece is greatly admired. Rubens has landscapes here. Michelangelo's Fortes attract great attention, and are great pictures in his way—for whether he acted as painter, or sculptor, or architect, he had a way of his own in all he did. Guido's *Cleopatra*, a demi-figure of the beautiful queen applying the fatal asp to her bosom, is also here. The most beautiful picture of the whole collection, however, and perhaps the most famous picture in the world, is Raphael's *Madonna della Seggiola*, as it is called. So famous is this work of art, that almost every engraver of note has attempted to perpetuate it. The eye of the most common observer could instantly note its extraordinary, its divine tenderness and beauty. Raphael is indeed the Prince of Painters, one will believe after seeing this.

But I will not detain you longer in the description of the paintings of the palace, though I cannot pass over the ceilings of some of the chambers, which are not only eminently beautiful, but which are, as it were, ever present histories of the events historical and classic of the past. Venus, Apollo, Mars, Jupiter and Hercules, each has a ceiling, on which the most prominent events, with their prerogatives, are recorded. In the chamber of Venus, for example, Minerva is seen forcing a youth from the arms of Venus to place him under the guidance of Hercules, while the Genius of War shows him the laurel wreath he ought to aspire after. The

*Continence of Scipio*—Antiochus<sup>518</sup> quitting his mistress to go where duty calls him—Cyrus<sup>519</sup> dismissing his prisoner Panthea,<sup>520</sup> that he might not be seduced by her charms—Augustus showing Cleopatra that her beauty had not power to captivate him, and Masinissa<sup>521</sup> sending poison to the Queen of Numidia, that she might avoid, by death, the disgrace of swelling Scipio's triumph, are among the subjects that adorn this chamber. Once more, let me detain you to describe the Bath of the Grand Duchess, so that you may see how princesses live in Europe, and then I am done with the Pitti Palace. In this Bath are columns of *verd antique*, with Corinthian capitals of the purest marble, and in the recesses between them are four nymphs, beautifully sculptured. The room is draped with light blue silk, and silver fringe, while every ornament is appropriate, the entablature being enriched with carvings of dolphins and sportive sea monsters, the tables inlaid with marine views, with chairs formed of ocean-shells supported by silver swans, whose wings conjoined make an elbow to repose upon. The *Venus* of Canova, which is in another apartment of this palace, or the *Venus de Medici* in the Tribune, need not disdain such a Bath as this.

The Giardino di Boboli, *or* the Boboli Garden, is an immense garden which is attached to the Pitti Palace, but the modern garden, however, does not give us an idea of what was in it, of groves, and woods, and walks, and temples and fountains, which rank it among the first of those beautiful places which the people of European cities often enjoy in common with their sovereigns, for this is thrown open twice a week to everybody who wishes to enter it. Two Dacian prisoners in oriental porphyry, a colossal Ceres,<sup>522</sup> a fountain decorated with a colossal Neptune, standing on a granite basin above twenty feet in diameter, with the Ganges, Nile, and Euphrates beneath, by John of Bologna; a Neptune in bronze, surrounded with sea monsters and the like, and four

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<sup>518</sup> Antiochus (4th to 1st C. B.C.) — A king of the Seleucid Empire

<sup>519</sup> Cyrus II of Persia (c. 600 B.C.-530 B.C.) — (Cyrus the Great) founder of the Achaemenid Empire

<sup>520</sup> Panthea — A Susian captive, taken after a battle of Cyrus the Great against the Assyrians. The story of Panthea was told originally by Xenophon.

<sup>521</sup> Masinissa (c.238 B.C.-c.148 B.C.) — First king of Numidia (Berber kingdom in North Africa); his queen, a Carthagian noblewoman, poisoned herself to avoid being displayed as a Roman prisoner.

<sup>522</sup> Ceres — Roman goddess of agriculture

unfinished statues of Michelangelo, are only a few among the many ornaments of this magnificent garden. These are the largest gardens in Italy, and evergreens, the cypress, the fir, or the laurel, preserve something of the verdure of summer, even in the depth of a winter; and in a climate too, which, whatever others may think of it, I am learning at this moment is almost as cold as is the climate of Maine in November. The snow covers (26th) the surrounding mountains, and the cold winds make a cloak and a fire indispensable comforts.

The Museum of Natural History in Florence is one of the greatest collections I have ever seen, and as I have often written you before in like cases, I know not whether a man unskilled in its learning receives much pleasure or pain from entering it. His ignorance of so many millions of things, the most common that daily come under his eye, afflicts him every room he visits, and at times he believes he has spent his days in learning nothing at all; for, this ignorance of things, that ought to interest him among the first, is, in such a museum, so forced upon his attention, that he blushes for himself. Here are anatomical preparations in wax and wood—and petrifications and minerals—and the thick-leafed, milky and spongy plants, which cannot be preserved in the common way, beautifully represented in wax and wood. The human body is here exposed in its every section, and by the closest imitations in colored wax. The mysteries of nature, through all its processes, even throughout the entire process of gravitation<sup>523</sup> from week to week, is here made known to the eye. There is also a famous representation of the progress of the plague in the human frame, done in wax, in which all the horrors of that direful pestilence are seen to the very life, as it were, from the moment that the pest seizes the victim, till he is hurled into the common charnel house, when the last stages of putrefaction come upon him, and the limbs drop off, and the rats and the worm eat his entrails. Quadrupeds and fishes, birds, reptiles, insects, shells, fossils, minerals of every kind and name are to be seen in the many rooms, where an apartment is devoted to each.

As I saw these things, I could not but think what a beautiful study this of Natural History would be for American women, who, though they cannot deck their chambers with Raphael's and Canova's works, might

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<sup>523</sup> Gravitation — Pregnancy

yet deck them with such preparations as these, and make rooms as beautiful, and more valuable perhaps, than if the masterpieces of art were within them. I do not know which I should choose as an ornament of an American house, if the choice were with me, whether it would be the pictures of the Pitti Palace, or the beautiful cases of shells, fossils, birds, and reptiles, if you please, in the rooms of the Museum of Natural History. Give me a library, with books enough, and such studies as these, and I am sure I could be happier than with all the pictures in the world, for the eye becomes accustomed to their beauty, and ceases to feel its inspiration, while the thought that study stimulates, ever agitates and interests the man. This Museum is open to the public, like all of the valuable exhibitions in Florence.



## 92. Florence

Florence,  
November, 1835.

I am afraid I shall weary you if I take you among the churches of Florence, for I am weary myself of entering them. But the church of the Annunziata, at least, must be visited for the purpose of seeing the celebrated fresco of the *Madonna del Sacco*, by Andrea del Sarto,<sup>524</sup> which is his masterpiece, and upon which, it is said, Michelangelo and Titian gazed with unceasing pleasure. It is now so ruined that but little of this pleasure will be felt. It is said that the author of this beautiful work executed it for a sack of corn in time of famine, and hence its name of *the sack*.

The Chapel of the Medici must also be seen, if only for the purpose of observing how much money may be spent in the decoration of a single room. This chapel was begun in 1604, but this mausoleum of the Tuscan princes is not finished yet, and millions of Tuscan *paoli* must yet be expended before it can be, after the sumptuous plan. The building is octangular, and the walls are beautifully encrusted with almost every kind of precious marble. Six sides of the octagon are embellished with sarcophagi of Egyptian and oriental granite, made after the designs of Michelangelo, and two of them are enriched with cushions of red jasper, which bear regal crowns of immense value. The sarcophagi are mere ornaments, the bodies of the princes being placed perpendicularly under them, in a subterranean repository. If this chapel is ever finished according to the plan, it will be the richest room on earth. Its weight in gold would hardly pay for it. Twenty millions of francs, I was told, have already been expended upon it, and yet the costliest parts do not yet seem to be touched, such as the high altar, and the decorations of the dome. Slabs of jasper, and the *lapis lazuli* yet to come, must be as precious as gold.

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<sup>524</sup> Andrea del Sarto (1486-1530) — Florentine painter of the High Renaissance and early Mannerism

The Laurentian Library has many curiosities in it, which a scholar will see with pleasure. In a glass case, there are the Pandects of Justinian, compiled by that Emperor in the year 530, and established as the Roman code, and which may now be said to be the basis of modern civil law. They were found, it is said, in 1137, in a barrel at Amalfi. The oldest manuscript of Virgil extant is also here, with the notes of a Roman consul of the fifth century in it. A Horace with Petrarch's handwriting in it, and notes, with portraits of himself and his passion, Laura, and a complete copy of Terence's<sup>525</sup> six plays, written throughout by Boccaccio, in a beautiful hand, are among the curiosities. In a small crystal case is preserved the finger of Galileo, directed upwards, as if pointing to the heavens whose laws he studied and revealed to the world. The sacristy of the church of St. Lawrence must not be forgotten, for it was designed by Michelangelo, and in it are his famous statues of *Day and Night*, and *Morn and Twilight*; but Michelangelo, if I may assume to be a judge, has found it difficult to put such aerial creations as day and night, and morn and twilight, into marble.

There are a hundred other things to be seen in such a city as Florence, in the scenery of which there is an instruction, when in the description there is none. The National Palace is a structure which will strike the traveler's attention as something extraordinary in architecture—of the ancient Etruscan and the Grecian style. Among the groups in marble around it is *David slaying Goliath*, by Michelangelo. The Palace of the Grand Duke is adorned with an equestrian statue of Cosimo I,<sup>526</sup> in bronze, by the famous artist John of Bologna, who has represented the Grand Duke as entering Florence in triumph after the conquest of Siena. The Magliabechian Library is worth visiting, if it be only to see the place where presided that greatest of all book-men, Magliabechi.<sup>527</sup> Some tower or some high dome must be mounted then, to see Florence and its environs, and its beautiful Arno, that flows through "a land of milk and honey." The truth of Ariosto's poetry will then rush upon the observer's mind, as he sees the valley so full of villas and little hills, as to seem to be sprinkled with decorations, as a gallery is with paintings or with statues. Cold as the winds are now from the Apennines, and forbidding as Winter in its coming, nevertheless I can see how beautiful man has

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<sup>525</sup> Terence (c.190 B.C.-c.159 B.C.) — Roman playwright, of Berber descent

<sup>526</sup> Cosimo I de' Medici (1519-1574) — Grand Duke of Tuscany

<sup>527</sup> Antonio Magliabechi (1633-1714) — Florentine librarian, scholar and bibliophile

made a valley that Nature has beautified, for in Europe one is often tempted to reverse in part the poet's language, and to say that man has made the country as well as the town—so much has the hand of man added to its beauty.

But if Florence is cold in early winter, Florence is almost the only habitable city in Italy, for an American at least, who loves a little liberty, and who abhors the restraints of police, and their soldiery. The Grand Duke does everything to attract strangers here, by making all under him civilized, polite, and agreeable, and by opening all that is public, free for public inspection—while in the other cities of Italy, dogs as surly as Cerberus often stand at the doors, and block up every pass-way. The police at Florence is filled by men as polite as ever graced a royal saloon, and, unlike the savages that keep a man crouching and bowing in Rome, with his hat off and his head erect and his eyes cast down, as a satyr is to the Apollo. A despotism as the government is, yet there is a grace and a suavity in it, that not only attach a stranger, but even the subjects to the despot; and nowhere in Tuscany did I hear a word uttered against the Duke, while elsewhere, kings and dukes, and cardinals and popes, all in authority, in short, are denounced and cursed whenever their victims are certain of the ear they address. Florence gains much by this civility, for strangers love to make long stops here, and they spend much money thus—in having the world as tributary to its galleries of the arts. The country is prosperous, and the people look happy, and one feels happier there himself, than in other places where filth and misery beset one's every step.

Besides, Florence is one of the cheapest cities of Italy to live in. Rooms and lodgings are cheap. Provisions are cheap and good. Sixty cents will give a man a dinner at a hotel that a gourmand might covet, with wine, and fowls, and game, and fish. For a dollar a day, he can live as well as a man need live, and far better than one can live in America for the like sum of money; and yet, he can spend as many dollars as he chooses. Hence, English families reside here in crowds. Russians and Germans make it their home. Americans love to tarry long. Indeed, it is the only city in Italy where a man can live, and be "at home." The people, as a mass, are a hundred percent better off than any others whom I have seen in Italy. One learns from this, that even a despotic government may

be good, when well administered, though I am far from saying with Pope:

"For forms of government let fools contest,  
That which is best administer'd is best"

as this good government depends upon the caprice or the life of a despot; but it teaches us at least this lesson—that it is not so much the form of government that makes a people happy, as the proper administration of it. Thus, pleased with Florence, this "*La Bella Firenze*," as the Italians justly call it, I am sorry that I could not visit it before I felt the fatigues of night overcoming me: and though I cannot recommend its climate to the American consumptive who is seeking his health in an Italian clime, yet I can recommend its beauties, its arts, its rulers, and all that is in it, to him who is so happy, as I am, as to be able to journey without reference to its winds, or snows, or ice, and who seeks instruction in other lands, so as to enjoy the more his own, the best of all, when he returns to the bosom of his friends.



## 93. Tuscany

December 1, 1835.

I did not visit the ancient Fiesole, not far from Florence, an ancient Etruscan town, where Sulla founded a colony, and which Catiline made his chief hold in Etruria, because I have seen enough of ruins, and am weary of climbing over dirty walls and into dusty arches; so that now, in the spirit of my new American acquaintance in Rome, who looked upon the Etruscan vases from Naples as nothing but old pots, I think of ruins as nothing but old rubbish. I record here this stupidity of feeling, on purpose, to let a traveler know, I care not who he is, how he will feel when he has been in Italy three months, no matter where in the south of Italy he may have been, provided he has spent that time as busily as I have among all the old ruins he could find.

I did not even visit the far-famed Vallombrosa, which is about seventeen miles from Florence, though Ariosto and Milton have immortalized it in their verse; for I had learned in Europe, many times, to my sorrow, that the American who leaves his own land—unrivalled in scenery, upon which Nature has stamped all that is majestic or sublime—for the purpose of seeing scenery in another land—spends his time in the pursuit of that which he can better find at home, no matter whether it be "Italian sunsets," or cataracts, or lakes, or vales. The hand of man often creates in Europe, even in the fields and vales, a beauty of which we cannot boast; but, where Nature is left unassisted, there is not a region in Europe that I have visited that an American need leave his own home to see, unless it be the glaciers of Chamonix.<sup>528</sup> I take every opportunity, you see, to throw my countrymen upon their own resources, even when it carries me out of the way—for, in America, generally speaking, we are proud of the very things of which we should not be proud, and neglectful of those which we have the most reason to boast of; always excepting, however, in this remark, all that appertains to political organization, the importance of which we justly feel. The junction of the Ohio and the Mississippi, for example, to return to scenery—the mountain scenery of Vermont and New Hampshire—the

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<sup>528</sup> See Letters 48 and 49

rivers in Alabama—Niagara in New York, and the cataracts and wild lakes in Maine, and the Peaks of Otter, and the vale of Kanawha, and the whole region of the springs in Western Virginia, are in their way objects of attraction, the like of which no man can find in any region of Europe.

I left Florence at noon, and, late at night, I was in Pisa, though the distance is but about thirty-five or forty miles; but a vetturino, even when they change horses as they do here, does not admit of extraordinary expedition, particularly when they change carriage, and the baggage with it at every post. In Tuscany there are no diligences, the Grand Duke having come to the not very wise conclusion in this age of the world, that the establishment of diligences would throw too many of the vetturino men out of employ: and thus, the traveler without his own carriage must traffic along as he can. But motion, however, is so cheap in these vetturinos, that one never has the heart to grumble, let him be tumbled about as he may—and I could not but laugh during this day's voyage, even as I paid the little bills, at the ingenuity of the people, as they changed their carriages at every post, on purpose, (it seemed to me,) of making their passengers pay for the transfer of the baggage from one to the other, with the little *buona mano* for the different drivers. At 11 o'clock at night, we entered the gates of Pisa. The gate was opened. The sentinel demanded if we were "*forestieri*," (strangers or foreigners,) and on learning that we were, our passports were demanded as usual, and the hotel to which we were going.

The next morning, we began our tour of the city of Pisa, which is not more than a six hours' work—for, this once haughty city, whose fleets in the eleventh, twelfth, and thirteenth centuries sailed in honor and in triumph over the Mediterranean, humbling the Saracens and Carthage to her power, and waging fierce war with her rival Florence, is now reduced to a population of about 16,000. Its streets are deserted, and its suburbs are waste and gloomy. The traveler wonders whence came the wealth that created the edifices of which it boasts, for he sees nothing of wealth in its present appearance, but is driven to history to find whence it came. The Cathedral, the Baptistery, the Campo Santo and the Campanile are buildings the like of which we have not in all the United States, and which it is doubtful whether we ever shall have, for the religious sentiment is not united enough with us to show itself in cathedrals and towers, or in Campo Santo, or holy burial grounds.

The Circular Tower, or the Leaning Tower of Pisa, which here goes by the name of Campanile, is one of the most famous structures in the world, and probably there are but few persons who have not seen a drawing of it in some publication or other. Its height is 181 feet and 7 inches, having eight winding galleries formed of regular arches and columns. There are fifteen attached columns in the lower story—thirty insulated columns<sup>529</sup> for each of the six successive peristyles or galleries, and twelve attached columns for the eighth or topmost story, which is of a lighter structure and less circumference than the others, and surrounded only by an iron balustrade. The six central galleries are therefore entirely open. The architect had completed this tower to the fourth story, when, most unexpectedly, the site upon which it was built gave way on the south side, and, of course, the whole building fell out of the perpendicular line. In spite of this, however, the artist finished it according to the original design, and this stupendous fabric, known all over the world as the Leaning Tower, has since stood all awry,<sup>530</sup> and apparently tumbling down, yet without any material decay or injury, from the year 1174 to the present moment—661 years!

This extraordinary edifice interested me so much that I purchased a beautiful model of it in alabaster; a remark which I make for the purpose of adding that such models can be purchased in Leghorn and in Florence, of all the remarkable buildings in Tuscany, and of the most remarkable masterpieces of sculpture in the world, which are invaluable to us as Americans, when we are so far from, and cannot see the originals. From Leghorn, they can be readily sent to the United States, and, sure I am, there are no prettier ornaments for a room, or ornaments which would more distinguish the house where taste presides and governs. The *Apollo Belvedere*, the *Venus de Medici*, the *Dying Gladiator*, the *Apollino*, in short everything remarkable in architecture, or in sculpture, is beautifully worked in alabaster at Florence, Pisa, and Leghorn, at what seems to me a very cheap price. For example, the tower of Pisa, in alabaster, costs only five or six dollars. The *Apollo Belvedere* can be bought for a like sum—the price, however, in some degree depending upon the size.

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<sup>529</sup> Insulated column — Column which is entirely detached from the main structure

<sup>530</sup> Leaning Tower of Pisa — Restoration work in the late 20th century stabilized the structure, and reduced the angle of lean by a third.

It seems to me that our colleges, when they have funds, could not do better than to order copies of all these Italian masterpieces of classic sculpture, and of architecture too: for a student in a three months' residence in Italy can learn more of the classics, in the galleries there, than he learns from our books in colleges, in dozens of months. Describe a Mercury as we may, and talk of Jupiter as we please, we feel that we know much more about them when we see them as wrought by the chisel of the Grecian sculptor.



## 94. Tuscany

Leghorn,  
December 2, 1835.

I passed from the beautiful Leaning Tower of Pisa, which, happily for Pisa, and the fame of the architect who built it, sunk a little in the earth in the building, as it is thus preeminently distinguished from anything else on earth, it being very unlike the leaning towers of Bologna—I passed from this to the Cathedral, which is but a few steps off. Its form is a Latin cross, the distinction between which and a Greek cross, all of your readers may not know, is that, in a Greek cross, all the *prongs*, if I may use this droll word in such a case, are equally long. It is not worth the while, after the many accounts I have given of cathedrals, to enter into particulars concerning this, further than to say that it is one of the most beautiful of the kind, with a dome arising from the center, supported by columns and arches, and adorned by pediments, pinnacles and statues. The church contains 162 columns of the richest marble, some of oriental granite; but, what is remarkable in them is their dissimilarity, as many of them are the relics of former temples of Greece and Rome; some fluted, some plain, some twisted, some spiral—all of different orders and of different hues; white, brocatello, granite, and porphyry. Three bronze doors, designed by the famous John of Bologna, are most beautifully wrought. The one in the center represents the incidents in the life of the Madonna, the other two the life of the Savior; and they are further adorned with fruits, festoons, and flowers, birds and beasts. The six carved columns that enclose the doors are, by some, deemed Grecian, and by others, Egyptian. Fronting the Leaning Tower is a bronze door, curiously sculptured, and the ornaments are sufficiently distinct and free from corrosion, though now exposed to the weather since the year 1184. The cathedral has been termed a Greco-Araba-Pisano structure, in order to give an idea of a style of architecture, which mingles with it a little of all strange orders. The Pisans consecrated their plunder, gained in an expedition against the Saracens of Palermo, in 1063, to its erection, which was finished before the end of the 11th century.

The Baptistery is not far from the Cathedral, for the Belfry, which is the Leaning Tower, and the Baptistery are often three buildings on the Continent instead of being in one, as with us and the English. The Baptistery is called a German Gothic structure, and is an octagon of white marble, the inside of the edifice resembling an ancient temple. The Font is an immense octagon vase, containing four basins for the immersion of infants, and a central one sufficiently large for adults. It is elevated on three steps of beautiful marble, and is adorned with *intagli* and mosaics. The pulpit is supported by nine columns of precious marble, and ornamented with *bassi relievi* formed out of oriental alabaster. This Baptistery was finished in 1153, when a *florin* from every family of the 150,000 inhabitants of that day was the sufficient contribution to erect such an edifice.

The Campo Santo, or Cemetery, is another structure in this group, making one more than the number that commonly surrounds a church. The history of this burial ground is curious enough. In the twelfth century, when the crusade spirit was raging, an Italian [archbishop] whose name was Lanfranchi,<sup>531</sup> a contemporary with the English Richard of the Lion Heart,<sup>532</sup> freighted fifty galleys with the earth of Mount Calvary and deposited it upon the spot round which the arcades of the Campo Santo are erected—prompted as well by the superstition of the day, as by the belief, that this earth had the power of destroying every corpse deposited in it in 48 hours. Around this earth stands a vast rectangle, surrounded by sixty-two light and elegant Gothic arcades of the Greco-Arabic school, which are composed of white marble and paved with the same material.

Around and within these walls are fresco paintings, chiefly scriptural, but some are from Dante. The *Triumph of Death* is represented among them, and as it was painted by an artist before the art of coloring, perspective, or *chiaroscuro*, was known, one can learn from it something of the history of art, as well as amuse himself with the fancy of the

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<sup>531</sup> Ubaldo Lanfranchi (d. 1207), archbishop of Pisa, is said to have brought back sacred soil from a crusade to the Holy Land, with which to build the cemetery.

<sup>532</sup> Richard I of England (1157-1199) — (Richard the Lionheart or Richard Coeur de Lion) was so named from his reputation as a warrior.

artist.<sup>533</sup> Death stands in the picture elevated upon a heap of dead, clad in mail—with cloven feet—with wings—and with a scythe that is mowing down kings, queens, warriors, governors and priests; and demons innumerable are there, with lions' heads, goats' feet, and serpents' tails—some plunging their victims into the fiery gulf, some bound upon their bristly backs, some clinging to the devils' legs, and some biting them in despair, to make them loose their hold. The angels, of course, are succoring the happy souls, who are bound upon another road. A hell is also drawn, in which the lascivious are whipped, and condemned to the nauseous embrace of devils; where the avaricious have liquid gold poured down their throats, and are tantalized by the perpetual chinking of money bags tossed about by little imps; where the passionate are linked together, with twining serpents to irritate them, to tear each other to pieces; where the gluttonous are tempted with the choicest fruits and most luxurious viands, but demons ever frustrate their even touching the tables; where the envious are immersed and frozen in perpetual ice; the slothful condemned to move about by devils brandishing pitchforks, with which the devils are sure to stick them if they do not move as fast there; where the proud walk with their heads off; and the false prophets who pretended to see the future, cannot even see the present, for the serpents that twist about their eyes. Mahomet is there, and the great devil of all has King Herod—gripped between his legs! Within the cloisters are about 300 works of art in sculptures, *bassi relievi*, columns, busts, urns, vases, sarcophagi, &c. &c, ancient Egyptian, Grecian, Roman, Etruscan and modern.<sup>534</sup>

It will not be worthwhile to extend this letter to describe the churches here, and the numerous paintings in them, nor the once far-famed University of Pisa, now shorn of its glory, nor the Botanic Garden, which claims to be the first established in the world; and, therefore, I will begin to hasten off to Leghorn, which is but at the distance of about fourteen miles. What little of life there is left of Pisa is on its quays. The most

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<sup>533</sup> The fresco *Trionfo della Morte* (Triumph of Death) is variously ascribed as the work of Francesco Traini (fl. 1321-1365) or Buonamico Buffalmacco (fl. 1315-1336). It was partially or totally destroyed during World War II.

<sup>534</sup> Many descriptions contained in the preceding paragraph are found in "Mementoes, historical and classical, of a Tour through part of France, Switzerland, and Italy, in the years 1821 and 1822", Vol. I, London, 1824, pp.201-202

remarkable sight I saw there was a quack doctor extolling in Tuscan eloquence the merits of his medicines from the top of his wagon, with a large crowd around him—now and then dealing out a panacea, and now and then hauling out a tooth, while he talked all the time with an accent and an emphasis that only a Cicero would be enabled to use in defending the state against a Catiline.

Pisa is the city where the unhappy victims of that dire disease, the consumption,<sup>535</sup> resort to try its air, to see if it will restore their lungs. Its climate in winter is said to be one of the best in Europe. Florence is too near the Apennines, and therefore too cold. Rome is too near the mountains too, and too cold, too uncertain and too damp. Naples is too near the sea, and too much exposed to its changes. Pisa is, therefore, probably the best station for him or her who believes a change of air to be necessary for the preservation of life. Living is cheap. Rents are low. The markets are good, &c. But in Italy, it seems to me that the people die by inches for want of wood, which is enormously dear, and very scarce. It makes one shiver even when well wrapped up in his cloak, to see them with their feet in bags, and their hands over a little pot of coals. I wish I could send them a township of land in Maine, where they often burn the trees for the purpose of selling the ashes at ten or twelve cents a bushel.

Leghorn they call Livorno in Italian, and it is one of those cities that a man wants to be out of, as soon as he is in it. If I were to be asked what was to be seen here, I should say nothing, nothing, and a hundred times worse than nothing. It is a commercial city, full of Jews,<sup>536</sup> and they speak here a little of all the languages under the sun. The cholera has just finished its ravages here, and it is a wonder that it left a soul, so shut up are the inhabitants in dirty narrow streets, within the city walls.

Five days have I been waiting here for a steamboat, advertised to go to Genoa five days ago, advertised with the announcement "*that she will positively sail.*" An Englishman who is with me, and I myself, raged and railed, as much as one is in duty bound in such a case, till a Frenchman

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<sup>535</sup> Consumption — Former term for tuberculosis. It was thought (optimistically) that "clean air" could effect a cure.

<sup>536</sup> Prior to WW-II, the Jewish community of Leghorn numbered over 2,000. Italian Fascist and German aggression reduced that number by about half.

put us in good humor again by saying, "*You are not in England nor in the United States; you must recollect that you are in Italy, where you must never be in a hurry, and must wait, not only till every petty government is willing to let a steamboat come and go, but even till they are ready to go themselves.*" That we were not in England nor America we readily saw, and a thousand times we had learnt that the people of Italy had no idea of the value of time, and thus we consoled ourselves as well as we could by watching for the steamboats in the morning, and going to bed a little after sunset in the evening. I roamed about the city, studying life as I could, I amused myself for hours in sitting down by the gates of the city, and seeing women smuggle within the walls, and by the custom house at the gates, loaves of bread, and bottles of wine, and fish. Happily-dressed women for such a purpose, and with what monstrous gowns!

I sailed about the shipping in the harbor, and gladdened my eyes with the American flag, which is the most joyous of sights to an American in a strange land. I found a brig from an eastern town of my own State, in which the adventurous captain, with his cargo for speculation, had brought a pretty wife, who was above all price. Her portrait had been taken by an *Italian* artist, and while her husband was extolling its likeness, as in duty bound, her own sharper eye told her it was no likeness at all, and at least she suspected it was but a sorry daub. But nevertheless, it was by an Italian artist, and for some reason or other, I don't know why, we have a habit of fancying that whatever comes from abroad must be particularly fine. The portrait was not worth the wood it was painted upon, and the husband had been wretchedly imposed upon by some vile Italian dauber, but, nevertheless, it was of Tuscan workmanship, and painted in this land of the arts. The husband had been boasting to me of the manner in which he had brought the Tuscans to terms in the selling of his cargo to the best advantage, but when I saw the portrait, I thought that in this case at least the Tuscan had got the better of the Yankee, and that each one was always the greatest in his own trade.

My English friend, in these water excursions with me, ran a risk that was near putting him in the Lazaretto for some twenty days. Ships that are under quarantine are marked on their sterns and bows, and yet are side by side and almost touch ships that are not quarantined at all. To ascend the sides of a ship with me, he entered the long boat of another vessel

that was near. No sooner was his foot upon it than all the people on board commenced such a cry as only a dozen demons could make, lifting up their hands in horror, as it were, and screaming to him to go back. He thought it was but mockery, and with English hardihood and impudence he held on to his footing, till the officer in charge of the vessel appeared, and told him that the Lazaretto was now his place, for he was on board a vessel that was quarantined! This word Lazaretto frightened him more than a dozen plagues probably would, and he leaped back in terror, demanding what on earth he could do to save himself from such a Hell on earth. A fee saved him, which he paid with pleasure, and whenever afterwards we saw a vessel marked as in quarantine, we shunned its sides with a shivering.

The hotel at which we stopped in Leghorn was the "*Europa*," the landlord of which speaks Italian, French, and English, in a manner remarkable for an uneducated man. He amused me often by his knowledge of little American peculiarities. The ordinary egg cups<sup>537</sup> of his household, for example, he turned aside for wine glasses, because as he said, when my English companion demanded the others, that he thought he was pleasing us Americans, taking him for an American, by giving us the wine cups that the Americans usually demand. This was a new piece of a peculiarity to me, which I had never marked in my own land. "*Why did you think we were Americans?*" I asked, "*for I have not told you.*" "*Oh,*" he replied, "*you see that chair that is broken. I never had an American in my house that did not break a chair by sitting in it when it was solely supported by two legs.*" I acquitted myself of this sin, for the Englishman broke the chair, and I laughed at him merrily on account of the mistake. This peculiarity is American. Our first college lesson is to sit with our feet higher than our heads, in a manner that but few European chairs can stand. In our hotels, often you will see whole rows of spots upon a wall that greasy heads have dotted, and you can trace the chairs all along its sides by the indentations they have made in the floor. It was funny enough to see a hotelkeeper thus far off distinguishing an American by the breaking of his chairs. The Englishman says I taught him the lesson, and nothing is more probable, for, really, I do think it is one of the most comfortable things in the world to make a bed of a chair.

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<sup>537</sup> Brooks may be referring to glass egg cups, which appeared in the 1830s.

I always envy the happiness of a man when I see him sprawling over six chairs.

Adieu to Leghorn. As Leghorn has no arts, and nothing but shops, you will pardon my tattle about the town, for when a wandering writer as I am can see no statues, he must see manners and men. Out of the walls is the English Protestant burying ground, where a few of our own countrymen lie, the victims of consumption at Pisa, as their tombstones tell. This, with the procession in thanks for the cessation of the cholera, is all I have seen of note. These processions are now common in the towns of Tuscany. The Cathedral of Pisa was filled with a crowd the day I was there, of peasants, men, women and girls, who were crowding to the altars, with huge wax candles in their hands, as presents to the Madonna, who had heard their prayers and sent the raging pestilence away. The Madonna is an image of worship quite unknown in the religion with which I was trained, and the use of wax candles to light up her altar is what I cannot comprehend; but, nevertheless, I cannot witness even this form of religion, and this universal thankfulness of a whole people thus expressed, without being impressed by and sharing in its solemnity. I have no wish to ridicule or to laugh at what I see, and if I was a Tuscan, and had a candle, I am quite sure I should give it too, for it is but a form; and if, as a form, it inspires the people with religious sentiment, I do not know why one who does not even see its use may not join in furthering it for a moral purpose. Happy the people, whose education is so clear and whose prejudices are so few, that they can approach and reverence the Deity without forms; but such a people—I know not where they are found.

Adieu to Leghorn again. The long-expected steamboat has come, and I am off in her tonight for Genoa.



## 95. Tuscany

Genoa,  
December 3, 1835.

A steamboat (as I wrote you in my last letter from Leghorn,) brought me across the Gulfs of Spezia and of Genoa. Our passage money was about fifteen dollars for a twelve hours' sail in a steamboat (not extraordinary,) and such a one as an American always enters with a loathing when he thinks of the open, spacious, noble steamers of his own land. Even the English workmen, who are the manufacturers of steamboats all along the Mediterranean, are full half a century behind us in comfort, convenience and speed; and such a boat, for example, as the "*Providence*," upon the Sound,<sup>538</sup> would here be a miracle. Lucky it was, however, for us, that a steamboat came at last, for the Duke of Lucca keeps his petty dukedom, not much larger than a Virginia farm, blockaded with a quarantine, and, as his dominions must be passed to get to Genoa by land, I blessed our fortunes that enabled us to dodge them by water. A motley crew we had as we came across the water. Our boat was of Marseilles, and the Captain and his crew were southern French. Our passengers were of almost all lands, and a little of the many languages of the earth was spoken. As the Captain called the roll of his passengers' names, it was amusing to contrast the responses of men from different countries, from the loud English "*here*," and the "*yes*," with the German, Italian and French, in their *ia*, and *gua*, and *oui*, *voilà*, *ecome*, and so on.

We arrived in the harbor of Genoa at 4 o'clock in the morning, and cast anchor there at that time, when I started from my little dungeon in the cabin of the steamer, and left the legion of snorers—for people snore in all languages, you know—to get a breath of air on high. Genoa was before me, and I could see it in the bright light of the stars. "*Genoa the Superb*,"<sup>539</sup> as it has been distinguished, to give a name to the palaces of its princely merchants, who, in their day, were the princes of the world.

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<sup>538</sup> The Sound — (Presumably) Portland Sound, Maine

<sup>539</sup> "Genoa the Superb" — Better translated as "Genoa the Proud" cf. Italian "Genova la superba (rivale di Venezia)"

I was in the very bay where the galleys of the proud republic once rode, and from whence they sailed to humble the Saracen and Turk, Pisan and Spaniard, Corsican and Maltese, Majorca, Minorca, Scio, Crete and Smyrna—spending their power all along the Archipelago, and upon the coasts of Africa and Asia, and making even Venice tremble in her isles. The Genius of Freedom, it was, that bore the banner of republicans thus in triumph over all the known seas, in the times when **Liberty** from the mouth of a Doria<sup>540</sup> could arouse the people to fly to arms.

But, alas, that day is gone, and "*Genoa the Superb*" is but a city that the king of Piedmont rules at his pleasure. If man wanted further proof that free institutions are absolutely necessary to make a people universally prosperous, and that under their impulse even the smallest state may have a powerful name, he can see proof enough of this in this princely city that merchants have built, even in a republic badly governed, and where the true constitutional principles that regulate ours were entirely unknown. The touch of despotism upon this city, as upon Venice, has been the touch of a palsy, and the misery and the beggars that are in each, tell how the mighty have fallen. The city where Columbus was born, and whose merchants he courted as he afterwards did the princes of Castile and Aragon, but a squadron from that land of savages that he sought with fear and trembling in his adventurous voyage, could now annihilate its navy, and block up its port. Thus, is the star of empire changing, and thus powerful has this distant world, even in its infancy, become—the very world that Genoa, in the days of her glory, believed a son of hers to be a madman, as he declared it to exist! Ay, more, the fleets of that New World that Columbus found, with the canoe of the savage alone upon its waters, are at this moment giving, to say the least, great anxiety to one of the most powerful nations in the world, and the harbors of Toulon and Brest, as I am told, are echoing with the sound of a preparation to meet them.

"*Never be in a hurry in Italy*," (and I *am* in a hurry now, for I hear of rumors of war so loud that France, I fear, will soon be too hot for an American,) is another repetition of the lesson I have been learning these three months past. True, we were in the harbor of Genoa at four o'clock in the morning, but it by no means follows that we can be on shore

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<sup>540</sup> Doria — Prominent Genoese family from 12th to 16th century

before another twelve hours have run their round of the clock. For the first time, as we are in the harbor, our Captain has told us that he did not know whether there was or was not a quarantine in Genoa for persons coming from Leghorn. But, be this as it may, he added, it is impossible to land without the permission of the trio—of the health office, of the police, and of the custom house. At eight o'clock, a man with a flag was rowed carefully around our boat. The quarantine, he told us, was yesterday, for the first time, taken off from vessels coming from Leghorn, provided there was no sickness on board. The number of the passengers was then demanded and given. We were called upon the deck, each and all, men, women and children, and were paraded for the inspection of this officer of health, who counted us, and examined us, and finding none surprisingly pale, and all able to walk, he gave us his permission to go on shore. But the police was the next mill through which we were to pass. Our passports were sent to the office and examined, when, as none of us were found to be of a suspicious character, we were all permitted to land. The custom house came next, and the moment we were upon the shore, they commenced the usual examination, and expected the usual fee. By the time we were free from these nuisances, and within the comfortable walls of the "*Albergo Croce di Malta*,"<sup>541</sup> it was full noon. This is the difficulty of passing from kingdom to kingdom, in the many little states of Italy.

I commenced an examination of Genoa, as soon as a traveler can usually disencumber himself from his traveling equipments and get into others; but a day and a half spent in Genoa is not long enough to see all its sights. Churches I visited again, but the churches of Genoa are like hundreds of others in Italy, only that there is here more of gilt and gold. We took a *valet de place*, an indispensable necessity in such blindfolding streets as these, and commenced a rapid study of all the lions of the city and its suburbs. The palaces of Genoa are its greatest boast, and there are so many that it is called the City of Palaces, often. But would you believe it? Two thirds of the streets of this City of Palaces are so narrow that you can almost shake hands across them. Horses never enter into them—I speak of streets as narrow as these—and with a carriage it would be impossible to pass. Porters and asses are the *beasts* of burden.

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<sup>541</sup> *albergo Croce di Malta* — Maltese Cross Inn

Sedan chairs<sup>542</sup> are the *vehicles* in which ladies sally out. The sun never enters the crevices between many walls, where hundreds of human beings live. The lanes of our American cities are as the largest streets in Genoa.

But, nevertheless, there is a splendor in these lanes which strikes the observer with admiration. The bridges, (and there are often bridges over other streets in the town,) the churches, the palaces, and all the public buildings, are of marble. The Strada Balli (the street is called *strada* here) the Strada Nuova, and the Strada Nuovissima are strikingly magnificent. The palaces upon them, once the palaces of the merchants of Genoa, though not remarkably spacious, are splendidly adorned with noble entrances, handsome staircases, floors of marble, fine pictures, and statues, and splendid terraces, which often communicate with gardens. The Palazzo Durazzo is one among the most splendid in the range. I entered another, I think it is called the Palazzo Serra, the magnificence of which I cannot better describe than by saying that a single room in it cost \$300,000, and yet this room is but 45 feet long and 28 feet wide; but the gilding of it, from the ducats which come from Venice, cost of our money \$300,000, when that sum of money was of twice the value it is at the present day. The Palace of the Sun is a name, I am told, at times given it, and perhaps this is the only name which can well describe such a hall of gold. Corinthian columns, with an entablature adorned with foliage, arabesques and caryatides,<sup>543</sup> silken draperies, tapestry, and *lapis lazuli*, with pictures and statues, are among the ornaments of this saloon. Titian, Tintoretto, Paul Veronese, Van Dyck, Michelangelo, Raphael, Carlo Dolci, Caravaggio, Rubens, the Carracci, Guido, Spagnoletto,<sup>544</sup> and, in short, the host of the great painters of the world, have worked with their pencils upon the halls of the palaces, or have sent their works to adorn them.

But—but, I must confess, there is no comfort in them. An Englishman's home is a Paradise in comparison. They are made to look at, not to be

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<sup>542</sup> Sedan chair — A chair or cabin for a single person, transported by two porters using wooden rails attached to its left and right sides.

<sup>543</sup> Caryatid — Sculpted female figure, taking the place of a pillar in an ancient Greek building

<sup>544</sup> Jusepe de Ribera (1591-1652) — (nicknamed Lo Spagnoletto) Spanish Tenebrist painter; worked in Italy

happy in, at least when the weather is as cold as it is at present. Comfort is a word only known in England, and in the northern and some of the western states of America. Our brethren of the South, like these children here of the sun, are tempted by their climate to forget their homes, and to think of living out of doors; but when a cold day like this comes upon them, if they did not put their feet in bags, and warm their noses with a pot of coals, it is because wood is cheaper, and they have the means to buy and burn as much as they please. I would give not a little for a carpet on these stone floors, and a roaring fire such as they have in those houses in Maine where they back an ox team into the door, and empty a cartload upon the fireplace at once. Think of freezing in the land of oranges and the olive, but my feet and my fingers ache while I write.

The Palazzo Ducale, where the doges of Genoa once resided, is among the buildings I have visited in the course of my journeyings today. The great Council Chamber, magnificent in point of size and ornamented by columns and pilasters of *brocatello*, once contained statues of marble of persons eminent for their public services; but, some day or other, when the people in their might were a little madder and a little stronger than it was becoming in their mightinesses to be, they tore them down from their niches and knocked them to atoms. But they are now replaced by others, the heads of which, however, are in plaster, and the drapery is linen stuffed with straw—and yet the effect is almost as good as that of the original statues could have been, so ingeniously has all been done. Among the paintings is one representing the landing of Columbus in America. Above the door of the Senatorial Chamber is the prow of an ancient Carthaginian galley, which was discovered near the beach in 1597.

During the time of our visit to this palace, the officers of the king of Sardinia were examining there the soldiers drafted for His Majesty's service. Thus are the peasants taken from their homes, and young men from their families, to march and countermarch in order to sustain a despotism which they have no reason to adore. How happy are we, that peace, and the wide ocean that parts us from Europe, make no such levies necessary. There is not an hour in my visitings in this Old World, that I do not see and feel the enjoyment of blessings which, as an American citizen, I never felt before—for our blessings are so common that, like the air that gives life, we forget our dependence upon them. If

the time should ever come when every son may be dragged from the home of his parents, and marched where a ruler chooses in time of peace, then one of our present blessings will be better understood.

I have visited, among other things, the Albergo dei Poveri,<sup>545</sup> which is said to be one of the most magnificent hospitals in Europe, and is sufficiently capacious to lodge above 2,000 persons. Genoa, with another great hospital, a school for the deaf and dumb, and the hospital of incurables, seems to be well provided with public charities, but, nevertheless, misery is very visible in its narrow streets. Hundreds of the poor, as I see them at present upon their knees in the churches, or begging at the doors, are objects pitiable to behold, for, raging as the cholera has been among them, during the autumn, in their narrow alleys, without air, or comforts, they look like ghosts and skeletons rather than human beings. The horrors of the pestilence in such a city as this cannot be adequately described, but a stranger can form at least a visionary idea of them from the pale and haggard monuments of wretched mortality that it has left behind.

I thank Heaven, with the most sincere gratitude, that in my wanderings over this Italy, even where the pestilence has been tracking its course upon the Adriatic and the Mediterranean, that even in the midst of it, as it were, I have not been in a single city struck with it at the time when I was within its walls, nor been entangled by cordons of quarantine in such a place as this. The people here speak of it with a shivering and horror, and the stories they recount would be improbable, if I did not see enough to convince me that what they said is all true. The cholera is bad enough to be sure, but to be pent up by a quarantine in such narrow alleys as these, without a breath of pure air—the very thought is enough to make a man die of vexation! The mass of the people of Italy are so filthy in their habits, and their comforts are so few, that at times I almost wonder that any of them are left. In Genoa, again, the houses are so crowded together, and so little can the air circulate among them, that, cold as the weather is at present, the whole atmosphere is nauseous, and, to a stranger, almost insufferable.

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<sup>545</sup> Albergo dei Poveri — (Hotel of the Poor) 17th century complex built as a shelter for the poor of Genoa

But I must whip up my traveling courser, and be up and on, for the Apennines and the Alps are to be crossed again, which is no route of pleasure when the snows are tumbling from their tops. Three ways there are to get to Paris, where I am bound, with all my might and main: one by the steamboat to Marseilles, the other by Nice, by land, which is a beautiful route in summer or spring or early autumn, and the other over the mountains by the way of Turin, and the Alpine pass of Mount Cenis, which is a road long and dull in the stupid diligences of the country, but nevertheless far shorter than the others. I do not know what are the expenses upon the other routes, but, upon this, the Messageries Royales [d'Italie] of Bonafous<sup>546</sup> advertises to take a traveler for 150 *francs*, and the time in making which journey is to be seven or eight days. But never trust to an advertisement in Europe as a sign of the cost for traveling, as the conductors are to be paid, and the post-boys every twelve miles at least, so that in all probability this 150 will be 200 francs, without including the board upon the road. I have taken a passage to Turin, where they promise to be in twenty-four hours, but as twenty-four hours upon this part of the Continent always means thirty-six, I shall not be at all disappointed if I am not there within that time.



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<sup>546</sup> The Bonafous family had a long history of transporting Italian silk products from Turin, over Alpine roads to Lyons and beyond. They were primarily responsible for encouraging the transformation of the Mont Cenis route from a mule trail to a roadway capable of handling wagons and coaches. [See, for instance: *Dans les traces d'Hercule: les voies transalpines du Mont-Cenis et du Petit-Saint-Bernard*", Reverdy, Paris: Presses Ponts et Chaussées, 2003]

## 96. Turin

Lyons (France),  
December 9, 1835

I am a long way off from Genoa now, and all my troubles seem to be over, as I approach a resting place in Paris. Go back with me to Genoa, and I will take you over the road a great deal quicker than I have come. We left Genoa at 4 o'clock on the morning of the 4th. When daylight came in upon us, we found in the interior of our diligence, two Genoese young merchants, a young Sardinian officer and his dog, and a Sardinian sergeant—which number, with my companion and myself, made out the number of six—the three who were within the *Coupe*, the front part of the diligence, of course not included. The Genoese and the Piedmontese talked an Italian *patois* which is as unlike the language of Florence and Rome as the Yorkshire dialect<sup>547</sup> of England is to the Cockney dialect of London: or, to come nearer home, the pure New England Yankee to the Arkansas wheel horse style of talking. I was in the fog at once, though all along I have been flattering myself on account of the progress I fancied that I had made in Italian, thinking at least I could understand it, though at times I was wonderfully mystified in Naples; but here I am mystified all about me. But Italian in Venice, in Rome, in Naples, and in Genoa, is almost a different language, and though each can readily understand the other, yet a stranger who has studied in one city would often be confounded in another. We crossed the maritime range of the Apennines, that almost overhang Genoa, the morning of the first day of our journey. Oxen helped us up the hills, and of course, under their winged speed, we crept with a velocity that Phaeton<sup>548</sup> might envy, when Jupiter sent his thunderbolt and knocked him into the Po. Covered as these mountains are with snow, in which our diligence sunk every time the wheel was turned, I can assure you I had no eye for the scenery, and the prospects of these now winter-clad cliffs, and the most comfortable nook I could find was the diligence, even side by side with the Sardinian's dog. Among these mountains, the old Ligurians, the

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<sup>547</sup> See Letter 11.

<sup>548</sup> Phaeton — In Greek mythology, son of the solar deity Helios; allowed to drive the sun chariot, he lost control, endangering the earth and was killed by Zeus.

ancient Genoese, found an asylum from the Roman legions, and here it was that they carried on that long and predatory war that Livy recounts. Novi was among the first of the towns that we reached—a town among vineyards at the base of the Apennines, which has a mingled air of poverty and splendor. But the all-absorbing spot of interest, (and yet without interest upon the spot, so utterly is everything changed,) is the field of Marengo, so named from the hamlet of Marengo, where Bonaparte in 1800 wrecked the armies of Austria, and in the pride of one of the most splendid victories that intellect and arm ever won, cried that he had annihilated the Alps. Marengo now is but as the fields around it—no trees nor fences obstruct the view, and the plain is broad and flat; but the eagle-surmounted column upon the spot where Desaix<sup>549</sup> fell, is there no more. The Holy Alliance suffered no such monument of their defeat to rest upon the fields where Bonaparte chased their army with havoc and affright. Marengo itself they cannot uproot, nor expunge the story from history; but if they had the power, there is no doubt that they would have done it on the day when they regained their thrones, and chained his mastermind in the distant island of St. Helena.<sup>550</sup>

I go out of Italy with different feelings for this mighty man than those with which I entered. Tyrant and butcher as he was, I have traced with delight the good that he has done here among the Alps and the Apennines, making the most magnificent roads, bridging rivers with works of Roman grandeur, freeing the people from the beggarly slavery of others, to make them, it is true, splendid slaves of his own, arousing industry, rewarding talent, dignifying the land again with a race like that which once inhabited it, of Roman spirit and Roman valor; and anon, as the patron of the Arts, unearthing the Forum of Trajan in Rome, at work at Tivoli, digging at Pompeii, or in the subterranean caverns of Herculaneum; equally great, equally glorious everywhere, whether he was annihilating the Austrians in his way at Marengo, or beating down the glaciers of the Simplon, or hunting for earth-buried statues in Rome and Naples. If he had lived, and had ruled Italy thirty years, it would have been the greatest country in Europe, for it has the best soil, and the

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<sup>549</sup> Luis Desaix (1768-1800) — French general; killed in the battle of Marengo. The reference to the column and eagle is found in Starke's *Travels in Europe*, Leghorn, 1828.

<sup>550</sup> Napoleon Bonaparte was imprisoned and died on the remote island of St. Helena.

best climate, and the materials for the best race of men—but, thank God, the tyrant and the butcher fell! As was said of Caesar, it was a pity that he died, but he was justly slain. One tyrant now and then is a blessing to mankind; but this one blessing is no compensation for the host of curses which the best of tyrants bring upon mankind. I hate the whole race, whether self-made, or "born by the grace of God."

But, let us come to Turin at once, for if I do not go faster than our diligence, I never shall get there. Our twenty-four hours, promised, were forty and more; and yet the distance is not great. All covered, as everything is, with the autumnal fogs, which, I am told, ever envelop the city at this season of the year, yet I can see that the city is one of the most beautiful in which I have been. It is seated in a spacious plain, loaded with mulberries, vines and corn, and watered by the Po. The entrance by the Genoa road is splendid. The streets, all of which are wide, straight and clean, intersect each other at right angles—so that in one particular spot in the middle of the town, they may, it is said, be all seen at once, issuing like rays from a common center. The bridge, thrown by the French over the Po, is one of the most beautiful pieces of architecture of its kind in Europe.

If the traveler into Italy strikes Turin among the first of the Italian cities, he will find sights enough there to study a week; but I have run over galleries of art and through splendid churches with a rapidity that tells me it is time I had a rest. The Royal Palace, however, interested me much, and this we had an opportunity to visit, as the king and his family were at Genoa. The master of the ceremonies, in due form of state, took us through the *salle des gardes*, *salle des Suisses*, *salle des ambassadeurs*, and I do not know how many other rooms; but these did not amuse me much till I came to the bedchamber of the queen, where I stopped, made a tarry and a study. To say that this is elegant and rich, would be but telling a common story, and the seeing of it would be but a common sight. But, it is not often that we republicans get into the bedchambers of kings and queens, and can stay as long as we please, and there see the manner of their private life. We read that they sleep in different chambers and have different beds, as is generally the custom in high life in Europe; but, after all, we do not see the toilette of royalty, and make a halt in the boudoir as long as we desire. Everything was left here, when I made the visit, as if the queen had been absent but a few hours, and was

immediately to return. All the instruments of her toilette were in full view, and of them, I can assure you from the inspection, royalty has not a few. But the toilette of a woman is a forbidden theme to touch upon, and I pass over that. Of the symbols of religion, however, I may say something, and these were not a few. A crucifix, for example, was hung over the bed. A basin of consecrated water was near. On two sides of the bed, were holy relics of saints and others, which are preserved with the greatest care under glass covers, in frames of gold. Among these relics were hair and nails, surrounded with gold. I entered a little prayer room, in which were a prayer book, an altar, and a cushion to kneel upon. A beautiful Virgin, with the infant Jesus, was also upon the walls. The library of her majesty, in an adjoining room, was by no means of an importance with other parts of the palace. There were but few books in a glass case, and these were not among the choicest in the world. In the gallery of the palace, the numerous and exquisite portraits of Van Dyck are among the most precious treasures of the collection.

Genoa is remarkable for her velvet, her tapestry, and her artificial flowers, and Turin is remarkable for the like manufactures, though in a less degree; but, as I did not tarry long enough in Turin, (though, by the way, one of its grand picture galleries is among the first of the second-rate galleries in Europe,) I cannot undertake to give an account of it. As soon as our diligence would jog on with us, and our passports arranged, which costs either here, or in Genoa, five or six francs more, we submitted ourselves to our destiny and started off for the Alps. My English companion had a strange fancy for passing the Alps on *traineaux*, or sleds, and he heartily wished for snows, and drifts, and storms; but, as in my lifetime I have seen quite enough of old Boreas<sup>551</sup> flusterings in my own land, I had no ambition for such a sport as that. I recollected the fearful snowstorm in which Madam de Staël envelops her Lord Oswald with his English wife, upon this very Alpine pass, and as her beautiful fictions<sup>552</sup> are generally founded upon some fact, I had no longing to undergo a like poetic martyrdom. I recollected the story<sup>553</sup> of Horace Walpole who passed by this same mount, whose chaise, he says, was taken to pieces, and loaded on mules, while he was carried in a

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<sup>551</sup> Boreas — In Greek mythology, the god of the cold north wind and bringer of winter

<sup>552</sup> Madame de Staël. *Corinne or Italy* (1807)

<sup>553</sup> Horace Walpole (1717-1797). *Letter to Richard West* (1739)

low armchair on poles, swathed in a beaver bonnet, beaver gloves, beaver stockings, and a bear skin; and, among other accidents he met with, a young wolf darted out of a wood of fir, and, seizing his poor dog by the throat, carried him off. Lalande<sup>554</sup> talks of *sliding* down the frozen snow in a quarter of an hour! But let the traveler have no fear now, for that mighty man who conquered at Marengo, and who led his soldiers over the pass of the St. Bernard, has made over Mount Cenis a passable, a safe, and even a beautiful road. Remember Livy's account of Hannibal's passage of the Alps; read the more modern story of Bonaparte's passages with the French soldiers; and, with these in your mind, the Alps will always be approached with a fear, which there is no fear now of entertaining.



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<sup>554</sup> (Perhaps) Jérôme Lalande (1732-1807), French astronomer, author of *Voyage d'un françois en Italie*, 1769

## SUMMARY OF VOLUME THREE — CLASSIC ITALY

LETTER 52 (Baveno, Lago Maggiore) Welcome change of language: Italian so musical — Uniformity of dress imposed by fashion — Rough-spoken Englishwomen — Simplon to Domodossola by wagon — Impressive road construction, now sadly neglected — Beggars, bargaining and cheating — Italy seems resigned to foreign domination — Goodbye to mountain wilderness — Reality often at odds with expectations — cholera quarantine restrictions — Futility of asking "why" — Diversity of coins

LETTER 53 (Milan) Travel from Lago Maggiore to Milan by a slow hired carriage — Contrast between easy-going, slow-paced Italian way of life and rush and bustle of America and Britain — Absence of railroads in Italy exemplifies the difference — Brooks and three companions take small boat to visit Isola Bella — Palace is an earthly paradise — Grounds, plants, statuary and interior decor surpass the imagination — Austrian Customs checkpoint at Lavene — Beautiful dwellings by Lake Como — Rain thwarted sightseeing — Lodged at Varese — Importance of bargaining: English-speakers pay more for food and accommodation — Words of advice to future young American visitors

LETTER 54 (Milan) Admission formalities, favoritism towards certain nationalities — Italians receive poor treatment at hands of police — Lombardy: fertility of the land — Aesthetic sense develops with time — Struck by classical Italian painters — American principle of "utility" yields place to that of "show" — images diffuse a patriotism, especially important in a republic

LETTER 55 (Milan) Impressionability to cathedrals has become weakened by repeated contact — Remains of Saint Borromeo — Celebration of Sunday different between Italian Catholics and New England Protestants — Capuchins — Surplus of priests and soldiers — Gothic architecture less prominent — Miraculous happenings strengthen faith — La Scala opera house: spacious and ornate — Social life in the boxes

LETTER 56 (Milan) La Scala: opera and ballet; abilities of Malibran — Theatre provides a permissible outlet for the Italian populace — Universal need in populations for a focus - something to agitate about — Government provides direction — In US, the only censorship of debate is provided by public opinion — In England, ambition within the social hierarchy is driving force — In France, less discussion of politics, more importance of theatre — In Italy, politics is absent from discussion, theatre is all — Milan: Roman remains, buildings public and private, public garden and promenade — Next stop Venice

LETTER 57 (Venice) Surreal approach by water — How do people live without streets? — Lombardy: Irrigation canals — Brescia — Lake Garda — Associations

with antiquity, both architectural and literary — Virgil's lines hold true — Peschiera — Verona

LETTER 58 (Venice) Verona: Large Roman amphitheater, marvelously preserved — Respect for accomplishments of earlier centuries — Fine arts in America are a scarce commodity — Vicenza: paintings, sculptures, theatre, palaces, churches — Treviso: arrived in darkness, fears unfounded — Maestre: embark in gondola, Grand Canal, Rialto

LETTER 59 (Venice) Former glory, wealth and culture / civilization — Doge's palace — St. Mark's basilica: splendor beyond anything in North America — Four famous horses: repeatedly captured and transported - what if one day they were stolen to take to the US?! — Mankind's creativity and enterprise favored by the liberality of its governments — The day will come when Americans can appreciate and study Italy's heritage — Venice: proof that neither republicanism nor democracy vulgarize mankind — Florence also: Wonderful heritage — Young men of America should apply their ambition to Art

LETTER 60 (Venice) Arsenal: Former importance, size — Steering a gondola — Ever-present beggars — Retiring women — Bridge of Sighs — Piombi: prison cells, pitiful conditions — Secret executions — Ducal Palace: once the seat of power; paintings and sculptures — Lion's Mouth: secret denunciations — Excesses of power, and their explanation — San Giorgio Maggiore: wealth of ornamentation — I Gesuiti: splendor and beauty — Tourism exhausting — Pulling an Englishman's leg — Opera House: mediocre, somniferous — Lost in the Venetian night

LETTER 61 (Padua) Aquatic life not appealing — Many of Venice's attractions left unseen — Master craftsmen in gold — Always bargain prices — Eating: where to go; what to pay — Advantage of cafes over hotel dining — Temperate drinkers — Coffee served with hot milk — Bypass Trieste — Papal visa — Quizzical customs inspection — Off for Rome — Passage of time: Cultures decay and die — The diligence: Exuberant happiness of the local passengers — Padua: Walled city; passport control — America and England blessedly free of such restrictions

LETTER 62 (Padua) Livy and Antenor: ancient events and beliefs — Padua: fertile land for millennia — Sunday service in a Catholic church — Severe contrast with New England Protestant service — Judge religious customs by the good that they do — Visits: Cathedral, churches, palace of justice, university, and a magnificent Cafe

LETTER 63 (Santa Maria Maddalena, Rovigo) Major inconvenience: forced to sit out four quarantine days, accompanied by bad food and abundant fleas — Disagreements with the coachman resolved — Home district of Petrarch — Beauty of local women — Rovigo — Across the River Po — Lacking respect for Customs officer — Back across the Po under military escort — Reflections on study and teaching of languages — Words in favor of Latin — Value of mastering French,

German and Italian — Growing importance of Spanish in America; comparative ease of learning

LETTER 64 (Bologna) More than just sausages — Disproving preconceptions — Released from quarantine — Ferrara: past glory, present decay — Orlando Furioso: Childhood imaginings — Hangers-on: self-appointed guides — Mausoleum in a library — Tasso's prison cell — Of Fame and Infamy — Bologna: night arrival; decisive price negotiation

LETTER 65 (Bologna) City a monument to republican principles — Independence of spirit — Hurried visit — Birthplace of notable artists — America must balance the principle of Utility with that of Beauty — Patronage of the Arts should fall to the merchant class; practical suggestions — University: prominent women; faded splendor, but still important — Leaning towers and a lengthy arcade

LETTER 66 (Ancona) Carriage hired, heading for Rome: early start, midday rest — Southward beside the Adriatic — Crossing the Rubicon: Caesar's ambition overcame his sense of duty — Austrian military presence — Abundant ancient remains — Rimini: citizen march to pray for safety from cholera — San Marino: bastion of republican spirit for over a millennium

LETTER 67 (Ancona) Leaving room by light of dawn — Reflections on encountering new rivers and seas — Adriatic: scene of much history — Abundance of steamboats in America — Cattolica and Fano — Priests and custom of kissing — Ancona: French troops

LETTER 68 (Rome) Ancona: free port, commerce, narrow streets — successful Jewish saleswomen — Loreto: Holy House, no longer airborne; pilgrims — Leaving the Adriatic coast — Slow crossing of the Apennines — Sleeping in stage coach — History on all sides — Overnight travel — Rome at last

LETTER 69 (Rome) For an American, Rome redefines antiquity — Passage of time leaves little of past glory — Forum and Capitol: Destruction all around — Occupied by cattle and befouled by waste — Human misery — First impressions, without a guidebook — Ruins merit study for what it is, and for what it once was — Full appreciation requires years of study — Ideal spot to read the accounts of Rome rise and fall — Capitol Hill, Forum, Coliseum — Incipient excavation — The Tiber disappoints in size, but its remaining bridges tell of ancient glories — Hadrian's mausoleum — Augustus' mausoleum made a pig-sty

LETTER 70 (Rome) So far diminished from its former size — Huge expanses of ruins — Vatican: Conserved treasures reflect great credit on the Popes — Overwhelming experience of beauty — Names familiar from schooldays made real by art — Sculpture gallery presents supremely realistic works

LETTER 71 (Rome) Vatican: Lodges of Raphael; Sistine Chapel; Library — Early manuscripts — Immensity of collections — America has a duty to develop the culture of its people

LETTER 72 (Rome) Remains a cultural storehouse, despite millennia of attacks, pillaging and natural disasters — Capitoline Museum: many works of antiquity — Conservatori palace: more inspiring masterpieces — Names of Roman consuls, chiseled in stone, in pitiful state of deterioration — Such is the destiny, even of the most powerful and most famous — Awareness of former level of sophistication, approaching that of modern day — Senate — Seven Hills, each with its history and remains

LETTER 73 (Rome) St. Peter's: grand impression, size, adornment, wealth — Piazza — Basilica: distinguished architects — Cupola — Mausoleums of Popes — Mosaics make permanent the designs of delicate frescos

LETTER 74 (Rome) St. Peter's: subterranean church; climbing the dome all the way to the cupola — Still a place of pilgrimage — Churches: St. John in Lateran; Baptistry of Constantine; Santa Maria Maggiore — Recent procession to pray for deliverance from cholera

LETTER 75 (Rome) Palaces, Roman style: Borghese exhibits nine rooms of paintings; Sciarra displays more paintings; Doria also; Spada; Farnese, a catalog of the best painters' art; Corsini, yet more paintings

LETTER 76 (Rome) Traces of former glory: buildings named and described — Catacombs — Villa Borghese — Tivoli — Frascati — Advice on buying artwork and replicas — Advice on living cheaply

LETTER 77 (Naples) An odd American, unable to appreciate the antiquities around him — "Old pots" in Naples — Thirty days wait in quarantine — Young Americans in Europe: Study the Europeans' enlightenment, but beware of imitating their un-American attitudes and behaviors — A case in point: likely to be ridiculed after only two years away from home — An American's "nobility" is found in the Constitution, not in his genealogical pedigree

LETTER 78 (Naples) Rome: Official prying into mail; anti-republican political slant of local newspapers — Extortionate charges of American consul: call for visitors to boycott use of American passport in Italy — Hired coach for Naples

LETTER 79 (Naples) Appian Way: tombs and mausoleums; Diana's Mirror; Festival of flowers — Pontine Marshes: gloomy surroundings; departure under darkness; formerly danger of assault — Terracina: view of the Mediterranean

LETTER 80 (Naples) Leaving Terracina — Entering Kingdom of Naples: checkpoints and fees — Governments sustained by force do not encourage honesty in their

subjects — Itri — Cicero's cenotaph — Mola di Gaeta — Marius condemned, then exiled — Liri — Capua — Naples at last, charming first impression

LETTER 81 (Naples) Travelling and sightseeing is becoming a chore; thankfully, Naples is the final destination in Italy — Diversity of experiences — Vesuvius: ascent, donkeys for some, sulfurous gas, fatigue, lunch vendors; no day to descend into the crater — Pompeii: fine state of preservation of city; history frozen in time; objects of daily life; skeletons — Modern society cannot boast of superior elegance — Lesson to modern Neapolitans of the risks of living beside a volcano; their lives are in the present, not the past

LETTER 82 (Naples) Royal Museum: fine collection, materials from Pompeii, Sculpture from ancient Greece and Rome; Egyptian and Etruscan exhibits; Priceless Grecian vases; paintings by famous names — Contrasts: Italy - importance of having a knowledge of music, theatre and the arts; America - political and religious topics of the day

LETTER 83 (Naples) Life on the streets, peddlers, traders — Competition for employment, universal bargaining over prices — Low cost of living; sleeping on the streets — Beauty of buildings, gardens, Bay, with Vesuvius

LETTER 84 (Naples) Sightseeing; contrast between silence of suburbs and liveliness of the city streets — Catacombs: reflections on the masses of human bones accumulated over centuries; worthlessness of human life — Chiaia: public park; why don't American cities provide something comparable for their citizens? — Grotto of Pausilypon — Tomb of Virgil: the man, the intellect

LETTER 85 (Naples) Pozzuoli — numerous classical and mythological references — Monte Nuovo, product of an earthquake — beautiful Baiae — Grotto del Cane

LETTER 86 (Florence) Urge to leave Naples as quickly as possible — Uncertainties and anxieties about route to take — Decided to use a coach; insisted on written contract — No contract, no departure — Remonstrance finally rewarded; en route for Rome

LETTER 87 (Florence) Brigands in the night; false alarm — Entering Rome by early morning; American consul's signature (again) — Same night, en route for Florence — Foligno, Perugia, Lake Trasimene

LETTER 88 (Florence) Glad to be clear of the police of the Papal States — Tuscany is wisely administered — Trooper escort through the night, all the way to Florence — Tuscany, once "free", is now governed by a tyrant (albeit benevolent) — America must be on its guard against losing its liberty

LETTER 89 (Florence) One of Italy's great cities of the arts — Brooks weary of culture after five months on the road — Architecture Gothic, not Roman — Domo,

Campanile, Baptistery, Santa Croce — Distinguished memorials: Michelangelo, Alfieri, Machiavelli, Galileo — Dante's remains are lost — What Florence became and was, America can also aspire to become

LETTER 90 (Florence) Royal Gallery of Florence: artworks galore — Sculptures, paintings, bronzes, mosaics, gems

LETTER 91 (Florence) Pitti Palace: paintings, royal bath chamber — Boboli garden: sculptures, fountains, woods and walks — Museum of Natural History: immense variety, graphic explanations, wax models; Brooks aware of small extent of his knowledge — Difficult choice: palace, museum or a library of books? — Snow on the mountains: winter is approaching

LETTER 92 (Florence) More sights to visit: Church of the Annunziata, Chapel of the Medici, Laurentian Library, National Palace — Enlightened despotism makes Florence the most agreeable place for an American to visit — Cheap place to live

LETTER 93 (Tuscany?) Feeling jaded with touring, skipped ruins and landscapes — By coach to Pisa — Glorious era long past, some impressive buildings remain — Leaning Tower: dimensions, history — Alabaster models of famous sculptures for sale, ship from Leghorn

LETTER 94 (Leghorn) Pisa: Cathedral, Baptistery, Cemetery and cloister — Imaginative fresco painting of the different fates that awaits souls bound to Heaven and those bound to Hell — University and Botanic Garden — Health resort for sufferers from tuberculosis — Leghorn: nothing to commend it — No ship movements due to cholera quarantine — Five days idled away — Enterprising Maine sea captain and his pretty wife — English friend almost placed in quarantine for ignoring regulations — How one hotelier identifies an American tourist — Another procession to pray for delivery from the pestilence

LETTER 95 (Genoa) Arrival by steamboat; varied group of nationalities and languages; faded glory; quarantine clearance — Narrowness of streets — Palaces, formerly of merchants, some with fine works of art; uncomfortable cold in winter — Military draft: blessedly unnecessary in America — Cholera: enormously thankful not to have been subjected to quarantine — Bound for Paris

LETTER 96 (Lyons) Take coach for Turin — various Italian language dialects— Reflections on Napoleon and the Battle of Marengo — Turin: Royal Palace, Queen's boudoir — Take coach for the Alps — Imagined discomforts and worse

END OF VOLUME THREE