

A YANKEE JOURNALIST'S EUROPEAN TOUR, 1835-36

VOLUME FOUR — HOMEWARD BOUND

by JAMES BROOKS

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97. Mont Cenis

Lyons (France),
December 10, 1835.

Susa, about forty miles from Turin, we reached after dark, but I could see that it was under the shadow of the mountains of the Alps. We dined or supped there—I don't know which to call it, for I always eat when a conductor of a European diligence gives the order, if it be, for precaution only, and whether I am hungry or not: for, one opportunity passed, such another may never return, as the diligences ever do honor to their name, though they are most diligently dull. Our eating over, our party, which was all French now, and as lively as Frenchmen ever are, began to overtake the diligence, which did not stop for us, but kept on its tedious way up the Alps. This was no difficult undertaking. you may be assured, as it is about as much work to haul a diligence over the Alps, as to haul a two-story American house over the White Hills of New Hampshire—such an American house, I mean, as at times we see in Portland, when a whole street some day or other decamps, and we find its buildings scattered about in another quarter of the town; for you know that we often see them on trucks, wandering hapless about our town. The moon lighted our way, and as there was yet no snow, we walked happily along, talking of Bonaparte,¹ whom the French seem to adore, and of American wars, &c &c. At two o'clock, A. M. we got into our diligence, and we went to sleep, when the lively conversation of our French companions was turned into as lively snores.

At daylight, we were near the summit, and the wheels of our diligence were groaning in the snow, of two feet deep—the almost perpetual snow that covers these Alps at all seasons of the year. The wind was blowing lustily, and the snow was drifting, and thus we were at once brought into the coldest winter, though with a clear sky over our heads. Nevertheless, our diligence was warm, and we were comfortable,

¹ Napoleon Bonaparte (1769-1821) — French military and political leader

though we got along but a mile an hour. Our passports were all signed as we passed the limits of Piedmont and Savoy. We found some coffee in an inn upon the summit; and here, all at once, we remarked that the language of the country was changed, that the Italian or Piedmontese which we had heard so long was now gone, and that the French was the order of the day. Signore, and Signora was Monsieur and Madame now, and our *cavalli* were changed into *chevaux*² by the postilions upon the route. The waiter was *garçon* now, and the *cameriere*³ was down the Alps. We English were Anglais now, and *gli Inglesi* no more; and such Italian oaths as "*the body of Christ*" and "*the blood of Christ*," are now "*sacre nom de Dieu*," "*the sacred name of God*." Nothing is stranger in a traveler's ear than this sudden change of languages in a day—in an hour, as it were. The open sounds of Italian letters were at once cut up for the short, clipped words of the French. We were in a new world, it seemed, and yet we were upon a mountain that parted the people under the same king.

We jogged on with our mountain of a diligence, through and over drifts of snow, with six stout horses trailing us along. The summit reached at last, in the full break of day, with the bright sun over our heads, my Englishman and myself thought we would scramble down the precipices on foot; and thus, leaving the road, reach the bottom long before the diligence. Scramble, indeed we did, and tumble too from gallery to gallery, and as the winds howled from cliff to cliff, and the snow gusts rushed along the ravines, I thought I was on our Mount Katahdin,⁴ rather than on the Alps, where the earth was yet green a mile below me. Long and long before the diligence had wound its distant way around the circles of the mountain road, we were in the "*Hotel Royal*" at Lanslebourg, an excellent inn, built by Napoleon for the accommodation of his officers when on their way to cross this Alp. The cold had reddened our cheeks, and the exercise and tumbles had given us a raging appetite, which we had ample time to gratify before the diligence overtook us. No avalanches hit us, or our diligence. No snow gusts buried us a thousand feet from the light of the sun. Not a wolf showed his head. The day of terrors is over. This mighty Alp is now as passable

² *chevaux* — (Translation) *horses*

³ *cameriere* — (Translation) *waiter*

⁴ Mount Katahdin — Highest peak in the state of Maine

as any great hill in Maine. Asylums⁵ (*maisons de refuge*) are scattered all along the difficult passages and if the *tormenta*,⁶ or the avalanche, block up the road, the *cantonieri*⁷ sally from their asylums, and with pick-axes and shovels soon clear the way. Glory be to Bonaparte for such works as these. Thus, has he annihilated the Alps, if not on the field of Marengo.

Lanslebourg is a dirty Savoyard village, at the base of Cenis, most of whom are employed, one way or the other, in facilitating the passage of the mountain during eight or nine months of the year. French is the only language in use here, though we are yet far from France. On and on we jogged, by a wild variety of soil and scene, but the first great thing that attracted our attention, except stupendous Alps and their cascades, was a huge fortress that the king of Sardinia has been building: a terror to the French, which brings its batteries to bear upon the road in all directions, and would rake and perhaps destroy an army that attempted to pass it. A French officer, however, who is with us, makes light of this bugbear, as he calls it, of this limb of the league of despots, and says a French army would pass it in any twelve hours of the day. Be this as it may, I would not give much for my head if I had to run such a gauntlet in such a narrow pass. Night came upon us somewhere near St. Jean de Maurienne, a district of country where cretins were once seen at every door, and where the inhabitants were universally afflicted with that horrid disease of Alpine regions; but Napoleon drained the marshes, and confining the water in its proper channels, rendered the air salubrious, and thus prevented the increase of cretins, and nearly exterminated the goiter—thus changing a glen of misery into a line of prosperous towns.⁸ I saw no more. Night came, and, before day, we were within the walls of Chambery, a town which has been made somewhat famous in the *Confessions* of Jean-Jacques Rousseau.⁹

⁵ Asylum — Place of shelter

⁶ *tormenta* — (Translation) *blizzard, snowstorm*

⁷ *cantonieri* — (Translation) *roadmenders*

⁸ Goiter and cretinism are sometimes associated with a single cause — shortage of iodine in the diet. The description of events in St. Jean de Maurienne is found in Mariane Starke's "Information and Directions for Travellers on the Continent", Chapter 6, Paris: Galignani, 1826. (See also Brooks' reference to goiter in the Grand St. Bernard region — Letter 50.)

⁹ Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) — Genevan philosopher and writer

Chambéry was our second day's breakfasting place, at 5 o'clock in the morning, the usual time when a London or a Parisian man of fashion goes to bed. It is a pretty dirty town, and a dirty pretty town, as I could see in my morning's walk, for here our diligence lost its character, and stopped four hours or more. The suburbs merit what Rousseau has said of them, deducting always much for his fine poetic eye.¹⁰ But the mud was thick, and when a man's boots are muddy, I must tell you, if you did not know the important fact before, everything is, in his eyes, out of order. The little narrow streets of these European towns are never, by the way, wide enough for an American to breathe in; for if old Boone¹¹ could not endure the sight of his neighbor's smoke, or the bark of his dog, what would he do in streets where he could jump across from window to window? And then the Savoyards are not neat. Their farmhouses are dirty. Their front doors are always out of order. Their horses and cows are on too intimate terms with their wives and children. I like dumb animals, but not quite so much as the Irish of New York, who, it is said, sometimes sleep in the arms of their pigs.

Imagine me now to take a leap of only about thirty miles, which Sam Patch¹² could never do in the best of his days, even with that noble motto of his, that "*some things can be done as well as others*," and you will find me at Pont-de-Beauvoisin, the frontier town of France. I might stop and talk of the tunnel that is cut through the mountain, and of the wild passes upon the way, but it is not worth the while, when a man is leaping thirty miles. This Pont-de-Beauvoisin is a little town upon a little stream, where are French troops, a French custom house and the French police. Upon crossing this little stream, which one paddle of the leg of a duck would send her over, we bade adieu to the last of the governments of Italy, and came into "*La Belle France*." Our passports were signed again. Our luggage was slightly examined, and then the Sardinian authorities let us go. I shed no tears upon thus parting with Italian

¹⁰ Quotation — "Plus près de Chambéri ... le chemin passe au pied de la plus belle cascade que je vis de mes jours." Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Les Confessions*, Part I, Book IV, 1752

¹¹ Daniel Boone (1734-1820) — American pioneer, woodsman and folk hero; legend has it that "*he could not live where he could smell the smoke of a neighbor's cabin*."

¹² Sam Patch (1799-1829) — American folk hero, gained notoriety for his spectacular high dives. His leap into the Niagara River in 1829 drew thousands of onlookers, and secured his fame. He died the same year after leaping into the Genesee River (upstate New York).

governments. The officers that serve there, whenever a stranger comes in their way, generally speaking, are a tribe of beggars in epaulettes and cockades, and a piece of silver that tickles them would make a Frenchman blush. But I did not enter France without solicitude. The rumors of war with the United States have been sounding so strong, that I did not know how long an American could tarry in its boundaries; and this solicitude was not quieted when I was selected from all the other passengers, and ordered to the police, who compared all the descriptions of my person in my passport with the man whom he had ordered before him. Their questions too were a little closer than any that were ever put to me before, even in Italy; but when I had laughingly told the officer I was not "*a man of war*," he laughingly replied it was well to keep watch of us Americans now, as there was no knowing how soon I might be. I mention this little instance as an illustration of public feeling here at this time, for, such an examination as this, a traveler is seldom or never subjected to in France, unless it be in a crisis or alarm or suspicion, such as exists at the present time.¹³

My passport was taken from me, and a French passport was given me, which will take me to Paris, where my own is sent, and where I can reclaim it when I choose. This, however, is nothing extraordinary, for such is the custom with all strangers when they enter the borders of France, and on their way to its capital. Our luggage, of course, was examined here again, and strictly examined too, and no fee was taken; but such has been our custom, throughout all Italy, to pay them, that it seems strange thus to be released from the custom.

Lyons was reached at 2 o'clock the ensuing morning. The Rhone is once more in my eye. The red-breeched soldiers of France are thick, it seems to me, in every street. I am in the "*Hotel du Parc*." But, Oh, the misery of traveling; for, I must be *murdered* three more days and three more nights, in a diligence, before I can see that Paris, the like of which all Frenchmen declare there is not in this world.



¹³ Relations between United States and France had become heated because of the delay by France in making reparations for injuries suffered by the U.S. during the Napoleonic wars, as previously agreed in a treaty of indemnity.

98. Impressions of Paris

Paris,
April 1836.

One of the first things that strikes the eye of an American upon entering this great capital, is the multiplicity of soldiers who are stationed here, in every part of the city. The soldiers of the line and the National Guards, the Municipal Guards on horseback, and the Municipal Guards on foot, the cavalry, &c. &c., with the insignia of authority about them, are objects which attract his attention from the early drum of the morning to the drum of the evening, when all are permitted to rest. No matter where he goes—be it to the theater, the people of arms are there, regulating everything, and obtruding even upon the very stage—or be it to a *fete*, they are even there, forming one line of carriages this way, sending another that, stopping this man, turning about that, directing all things, and making all people submit to their sovereign will. "*Liberty and Public Order*" is the motto of the National Guards, and certain it is they are ever administering to public order, whether they are to liberty or not. But a noble militia¹⁴ it is, and such as we ought to have in all of our states. No respect is paid to persons. No excuses are taken, no substitutes, no such ingenious inventions as our people have, of weak eyes, weak feet, weak smellers or the like; but, if life is in you, and death is not threatening at your very door, you must turn out and be ready to defend the law, no matter how rich you are, whether a banker like Rothschild or not; yet, you *must* turn out, and act as a sentry, and as a soldier, and take your time with others in guarding this law, night and day, in rain, storm, or sunshine. Impose fines upon our citizens just in proportion to their property, fixing a minimum of the fine so as not to let the poor escape, and in a very few years we should have such a militia, and then they would not *lynch* gamblers in Mississippi, nor beat police officers to death every other day in New York—facts which the advocates of monarchies and despotism ever here glory in blazoning as the beauties of democracy—but "liberty" and "public order" would go

¹⁴ Brooks admires the seriousness of the French militia. In his view, U.S. militias had failed to live up to the standards set by the nation's founders. Similar remarks, prompted by observing the local Frankfurt militia, are made in Letter 40.

together. The time is rapidly coming, in the United States, when men of property must be prepared to defend the law, if they wish to be preserved by it.

I do not know how many soldiers, of all the various kinds which European wars have invented, there are in and around this Paris, but I have heard the estimates vary from 40,000 to 60,000—surely an army, one would think, large enough to take care of a Parisian mob in the very worst of times. But 40,000 men, in the narrow streets of Paris, would find hard fighting with an enraged multitude throwing down upon their heads brickbats and stones and household furniture of all kinds; for hundreds of the streets here are but barricades, in which soldiers on foot, or cavalry, could not pass but with the most imminent danger, even as great as the soldier runs when facing a battery. The sun, during winter, never enters some of these streets. Not for a day, for three months, have some of them been dry. The water is carried off by a drain in the middle, and two carriages with difficulty pass on the sides of this drain. A multitude is mighty in such fortresses as these. Every roof is a battery. Every window is a porthole. Shot falls from five, six, or seven, or eight stories with great force. These forts are the secret of the success of Parisian revolutions, where the multitude, when aroused, have a power above all discipline, all standing armies, and all law.

But Louis Philippe¹⁵ is securely seated on his throne at present. Nothing but an assassination can unhorse him. With that great regulating class of modern times, which is the ruling power of the present day where it is permitted to exist, the middle interest I mean, he is popular and powerful. They regard him as a monarch who will do all he can for the good of France, and allow her as much of liberty, and of licentiousness even, as is consistent with the preservation of the government from the Parisian mob. The traders, the grocers, the merchants, the shopkeepers of all classes in Paris are republicans, but, at the same time, the advocates of Louis Philippe. The aristocracy are generally in favor of the old dynasty of the Bourbons, but, one by one, they are yielding to the new order of things. The *sans culottes* of other days—the "men without breeches," as they were called—are the same as they were then, always for a row, ready to hurrah for this man today, and to trample over him the next—now for a riot for the fun it allows of, and now for a *fete* for

¹⁵ Louis Philippe I (1773-1850) — King of France, 1830-1848

the same reason. But with all this hold that Louis Philippe now has upon the ruling mass of the French people, there is felt for him none of that old enthusiasm which led Napoleon onward over every empire and into every great city of the continent. They think that he is a safe king, an experienced king, a king who can be trusted; and at last they begin to have some confidence in his abilities, which must be for him a great prop of his government. Everything, indeed, that a man can do, who has studied well the character of his people, Louis Philippe is doing, whether it be in humoring the multitude, or in rallying around him that of the intellect of France which guides its press, or presides over its arts. So far as the arts are concerned, the days of Napoleon seem to be coming back, and Louis Philippe is attempting to act that part in peace, which the Grand Monarch acted in his day.

In no city is public order better guarded than in Paris at the present time. During that high and feverish season of the carnival, when all Paris is intoxicated with pleasure night and day, from the daily revelry on the boulevards to the midnight carousals in the balls, all was done in order. The mob were allowed the morning after the Carnival¹⁶ to throw meal and bran in the eyes of men better dressed than themselves; but, the police allowed no quarrelling, for such was the custom, and better-dressed men need not go where the mob was permitted this revelry, unless they were willing that their clothes should be whitened at times. Men and women, in their masks and their costumes, would scream, and drink and scream, but they were expected to drink and to scream *in order*; and hundreds of soldiers on foot, with the stoutly-mounted municipal guard, were ready to enforce that order, and to take him who violated it under their powerful custody. Revelry was allowed, and revelry was expected to their hearts' content, but all this revelry must be in order. The hired carriages of the revelers must march in line. The transformed women, and women-made men, and men-made women, though they might disgust an American idea of decency, interfered with nobody, and left the public at peace. I never saw a multitude kept in such perfect order, and with so much ease, as was the mighty multitude upon the boulevards during the closing days of the carnival. The carriages all moved in line. No deviation was permitted. A municipal

¹⁶ Carnival — A festive season in areas with a high presence of Roman Catholicism, celebrated in February or early March, preceding the Christian period of Lent; it is characterized by parades, parties and a public relaxation of social norms.

guard, on his horse, was stationed by the streets where it was not permitted to enter, and there no one attempted to enter.

The like has been the order, all the days of the fetes. "The Wood of Boulogne," and "the Elysian Fields," during the days of the *Longchamp*,¹⁷ though crowded for one of them with carriages, and with men and women on foot, exhibited the same order. Wherever the multitude goes, or is going, the municipal guards on foot and on horseback go with it, and keep it in order. No racing of horses is allowed. No rapid and dangerous movements. The line, or the *queue*, as the French call it, is the great order of the day. In the *queue*, the people enter the theater, and he who comes first, and gets the first place in the *queue*, gets the first place in that part of the theater for which he pays. Hence there is no crowding, nor fighting, nor boxing, nor kicking. The woman who puts herself there is as well protected as the man, and thus the rights of the weak are as well guarded as those of the strong.

I know no place where public order is so well kept as in the theaters of Paris, which are as numerous almost as churches are in Italy; for, long ago, I have ceased to think that we of New England are the greatest church builders in the world, as the Italians have ten or twenty to our one. In these theaters, nothing of impropriety is witnessed. No woman there will ever have occasion to blush for her sex, or remark those spectacles about the doors, which make theater-going, where the English language is spoken, dangerous even, to a woman of delicate construction. Search where you may, in whatever part, high or low, and delicacy can never be offended. The order is perfect. A woman may, if she choose, go there alone—unattended, and yet none will disturb or molest her, unless she chooses.

The theaters of Paris, it often seems to me, are the churches of Paris, and the churches often have much of the theatrical in them. The theaters are the only places, certainly, where preaching is carried on to any great extent; and, if Sunday is any sign, by their attendance, the theaters are doubly patronized upon that day. Almost always well filled—on Sundays they are crowded and over-crowded. The people go to them as we go to church. Sunday is the Parisian idle day. The father then takes his wife and children and makes his promenade upon the garden of the

¹⁷ Longchamp — Hippodrome; reference to the dates of horse races

Tuileries, until dinner time, when he resorts to a restaurant, and orders dinner for all, from which he adjourns to the theater to spend the day. Perhaps he looks into a church. The priest may be chanting—the candles burning—the altars lit up—the music sounding at times; but he marches with his family around the inner walls of the church, perhaps dropping a piece of copper into the box of the priest there, or kissing, for a *sou*, the image of Jesus here. As I have said before, there is much of the theatrical, even in the Parisian church. In one of them, for example, we have the cave where our savior was carried, and the sculptured images of the personages concerned in his burial—and this in what seems like a subterranean recess, all dark, but, as it is, lighted up by hundreds of candles, that send their doubtful rays from rock to rock!

If a man were to be asked which had the most influence in France, the church or the theater, perhaps he might be doubtful as to what answer he should make, but if the question were confined to Paris, I do not think that he could doubt long. I have been from one side of Paris to the other, in the visitings of its theaters, which is no small undertaking, I can assure you; from the Opera Italian and the Opera Francais, to the Theater of the Children, where little toddling babies act, and I never entered into one, which in the United States would not be called "*a good house*." High and low, rich and poor attend them. The laboring man, it seems to me, will spend his last bit of copper to have a view of the spectacle; and, even if his purse is low, it does not cost much to enter some part of the theater, for the theaters are divided into, I know not how many, parts. Plays have run for weeks, and weeks, and the spectacle is not changed till all Paris has seen it at least once, and multitudes often all the time. No such crowds as these attend the churches. No multitudes resort there, and when they are departed from thence, talk over the sermon as we do, and discuss this text and that, all the time debating upon the minister's merits. Nothing of the like is seen or known.

Long ago, I thought France was rescued from its infidelity, but the immortality of the soul is a very debatable question with the Parisians even to this day. "*What has become of Fieschi?*"¹⁸ was often in the

¹⁸ Giuseppe Marco Fieschi (1790-1836) — Born in Corsica; led a failed attempt to assassinate King Louis Philippe I in 1835; his trial provoked great interest; he was executed on February 19, 1836.

mouths of many, who for two weeks was the great lion of all Paris, but forgotten now. Some believe that the soul is in the blood, and others believe in what they call magnetism, that is, the power of magnetizing the dead or magnetizing the living; as, for example, when I choose, I can magnetize a person over the ocean, and make him or her think of me when I please. But the Parisians—I speak of the great middle class—have all sorts of creeds. The soul in the blood, and this of magnetism, are but two kinds of the many. Neither Catholics nor Protestants, they are more Catholic than Protestant, because their fathers were. They think little of the church because amusements attract their attention more. Sunday does not take them to the temple, but to Versailles, or Vincennes, or St. Cloud, or to Père Lachaise,¹⁹ that beautiful little Paris of the dead; or to the gardens of the Luxembourg, or of the Tuileries—the great Sunday Exchange of Paris, where the commerce of visits is carried on—where the men flock to see the belles of Paris, and the women, if not to see the beaux, to study costumes, and fashions, and to criticize colors and cuttings, now dilating upon this one's teeth, and that one's gloves, and this one's shoes; for teeth, and gloves, and shoes, or boots, are what the Parisians think more of than all other things in the way of ornament. To be well-gloved and well-shod are great points of ambition in this land of glove and boot-making, where, by the way, they sell water by the pail-full, and wood by the pound!

But enough of Paris. Mrs. Trollope has given you her account of society,²⁰ fashionable, religious, irreligious, moral, and so on, and Mr. Bulwer has given you his account, statistical, literary, and so on;²¹ so that I should have but little to add even from my four months' tarry, if I were to make a book of its sights and its wonders, which certainly I have no time to do at present; for this fact is remarkable, of Paris above all other places, that pleasure, if you engage in it, leaves no time for anything else. The left bank of the Seine is the home of the student, and the right is the home of the man of the world, and one cannot cross the other with any advantage to his separate pursuits.



¹⁹ The Père Lachaise cemetery, laid out in 1804, is the largest in the city of Paris.

²⁰ Frances Trollope. *Paris and the Parisians* (1835)

²¹ Henry Bulwer. *The Parisians* (series, 1803 onward, unfinished)

99. Paris to Brussels

Brussels,
April 4, 1836.

Paris being seen, and studied in and out, as well as it could be conveniently in the time of four months—affairs being arranged for a moving campaign once more, friends being bid "*adieu*," passports regulated, the American consul for example, being paid his ten *francs* and *fourteen sous* (!) (by the way, I fancy that this office is worth about \$6,000 a year at this time—Van Buren men: put in your claims!)—all these and many other melancholy things in the goodbye line being done, I started from Paris on the noon of the 5th, and arrived in Brussels on the evening of the 6th, after a ride in a French diligence of thirty-two hours, over a distance for which (twenty-one *francs* being paid) they promise to carry you in thirty hours—though if thirty hours in French mean only thirty-two hours in English, one is always a happy man in the translation. Never, by the way, translate French words, French promises, or French compliments literally into English, for though the French are the happiest people in the world to live among, and though, as they say, there is but one Paris, yet they seldom mean what they say, whether in quarrelling or in complimenting; and, as 30 is to 32, I set down as a most remarkable approximation to the truth, for I had translated it into 40 at least, and, therefore, was not only astonished by the time of arrival, but by the rapidity with which we moved.

Our diligence, which like all the French diligences, something resembled an American two-story house set on trucks, was populated, as is usual, from top to bottom, from the *Banquette* on high to the *Rotonde* in the rear, the exclusive good society occupying the *Coupe*, which may be called the parlor in front—the gentlemen and the gentlewomen at large the *Intérieur*, the sitting room of the concern, while Tom, Dick, and Harry, and Jenny and Suzy, got up into the *Rotonde*, and that class which is below Tom and Company, mounted on high, on what is called the *Banquette*, the roof of our rolling house, among the trunks, and old boxes, cats, and dogs, and fleas. I do not know why it is, in the management of this world's affairs, that the lower we are, the higher they put us, but, nevertheless, thus populated as I have described, from

stem to stern, we began to roll out of the streets of Paris. Exclusive good society will never do for a gentleman at large, and, therefore, I mounted the *Intérieur* with an American friend, where there were only six of us. Three persons alone can occupy the *Coupe*, but in the *Rotonde*, they put eight or ten at times, while in the *Banquette*, the multitude are strewn out in layers, as in an Irishman's house in New York City—so that it is often difficult to decide to whom belong legs, heads, and arms. For seats in all these places, the prices vary: that in the *Banquette*, for about half of that in the *Coupe*.

I do not know that we passed or saw anything remarkable in or upon the road, and therefore I will not drag over the many long leagues, all paved with stones, as are the streets in our cities, all the way from Paris to Brussels. The country is generally flat, and, while my eyes were open, we never mounted a hill of importance upon the whole route; but, for what was done at night, I cannot be accountable. I could not but think, however, that if two such cities were in our country, situated in such a level territory as this is between them, we should have built a railroad over it long ago, and have gone over it now at the rate of twenty miles an hour. The French, however, are not Yankees, nor are the Yankees French. They live to frolic and die, and we live to labor and to end the same way. While we build a railroad, they have a carnival or a fete, and as there is but one Paris, and Paris is the heaven of the French, they never see any occasion for building railroads to run away from it.²² The old paved roads are, therefore, likely to stand for years to come—running in a straight line, almost always (American fashion,) and mathematically proving, regardless of the English line of beauty, that a straight line is the shortest way between two points. Over these pavements, we rolled and rolled, over country and through city, town, and village, the music of the lumbering diligence ever grinding in our ears; except now and then, when it was disturbed by the cry of the beggars, who crowded every town we came to, each in each, that he or she was the most miserable creature on earth.

²² "*While railroads are talked of at Paris, they are made here [London].*" This first line of Michael Chevalier's influential book coincides with the spirit of Brooks' remarks. See "*Society, Manner and Politics in the United States*", Chevalier, Boston: Weeks, Jordan and Co., 1839.

The suburbs of Paris are nothing remarkable. The Parisians are not like the Londoners, lovers of the country, rather than of the town. A Parisian *Café* is more of an Eden in a Parisian eye than an English garden. Versailles, it is true, is a miracle in its way, but this miracle is far from reversing what I have said. Hence, in going out of Paris, no matter in what quarter, you see no suburbs around it decked with beautiful country houses, gardens, and little parks, such as surround London on all sides. The truth is, as I have insinuated, the Parisians find country enough in the walks of the Tuileries, or of the Champs Élysées. In the opera, their taste is better displayed than in the management of gardens and fields. They will adorn a head with more grace than they can adorn the earth. They alone, of all the people whom I have ever seen, know how to amuse themselves with elegance and taste, and to enjoy that amusement without running into the debasement of vice; and having this great and peculiar power, they find a pleasure in crowds and multitudes which an Englishman may find in his horses, his cattle, or his herbs, or his flowers. The city satisfies without wearying them, and the suburbs are rather resorted to for the recovery of health than for comfort or pleasure. Hence, too, in France, the traveler must everywhere remark the manner in which even the farmers crowd into villages, and the distances they will march over every day, rather than give up that society which is to them their life, their all worth living for. A French *chateau* is not to be mentioned the same century as an English mansion house or castle, and a French farmhouse is as unlike an English farmhouse, as two such *like* things can possibly be.

Brussels is 185 miles from Paris. La Villette was the first village we passed, three leagues from Paris, where Bonaparte halted when he was flying from Waterloo, so as to go into Paris under the protection of darkness. Cambrai, 43½ leagues from Paris (and a French league is 2½ English (or American) miles,) was the archbishopric of Fénelon,²³ and there is there a monument to his memory. Valenciennes was the frontier town we passed, when our passports were looked at for the first time, and I was permitted to go on without a word, though I had not incurred the expense of the signature of the Minister of Foreign Affairs. The French officers of the police are not so ignorant as the Italians, nor such

²³ François Fénelon (1651-1715) — French, Roman Catholic archbishop; writer and moralist

despots as the Austrians, and therefore one can trust much to them. On the frontier line, before we entered Belgium, of course, our luggage was examined, and our diligence was detained nearly two hours. The frontier line, however, is all imaginary. The custom houses, on the French and the Belgian sides of the road, are the only marks of division. No bribery is expected here, as in Italy and in many other places. The officers are civil, polite, and well-bred, and a bribe would probably offend them. Your baggage must be examined into, and no money can save the examination, whereas in Italy a few bits of silver, not over large, will often pass you along without even touching a lock. Mons was one of the next towns we came to—a strongly fortified city, which an eye, unskilled in the art of war, readily considers impregnable. Indeed, I never can see how they make soldiers leap over ditches filled with water like rivers, and mount battlements as tall as churches. But bombs make a city too uncomfortable for the inhabitants to live in, and when houses are tumbled down upon men's heads, and fire is rained night and day, it is not surprising that they surrender.



100. Brussels

Brussels,
April 4, 1836.

Brussels has all the usual accompaniments of the European towns, which I have described so often, and a repetition of which would be tedious. The people here, as elsewhere, have their walks and their parks, ornamented with trees, and flowers, and statuary, and not, as in republican America, are they content to be shut up all the day in narrow and unhealthy streets. The boulevards, the old ramparts of the city, now adorned with trees, whether for the pedestrian, or the carriage, are among the most beautiful walks and rides in Europe. The picture galleries, the botanic gardens, the museums, and the like, that elsewhere do honor to the European cities, are honored here.

Art is taking hand with Utility, and as I said in writing of Geneva,²⁴ and as I might have said of Paris, Art is made to educate, and to bring money into the pockets of the people. Why, for example, is it, that Brussels laces, or Brussels carpetings, are so famous, but that Art is studied, and its ornaments are turned to profit? The English make no such laces, and yet in England there are the best workmen in the world. Why is Paris so famous in all works of ornament—in tapestry, in porcelain, in clocks, in everything even, that appertains to beauty, while England, with all her enterprise, is but the humble imitator even of her patterns? For example, even the patterns of calicoes, which are often so much sought for in America, are invented in France, and sent by express to England, where her manufacturers, uniting their utility and enterprise with French ingenuity, crowd even the original inventors out of foreign markets? There is a reason for all this, and it is well worth knowing.

It cannot be that the French really have more innate invention, for English and American inventions in machinery show our superiority in all that appertains to the **useful**. But they have more taste. That part of the human soul which may be called the poetic part, is better cultivated with them than with us. And the reason is, that they have models for its cultivation which the English and the Americans have not. Beautiful

²⁴ Geneva — See Letter 46

pieces of sculpture, daily exposed to public observation, will give a mechanic an idea of beauty, with which he can ornament even a clock. A beautiful painting, also, is a model for even the common painter, that tells him how to adorn a house; or for a weaver, how to direct his threads; or for a paper-maker, how to contrive his figures. Rubens²⁵ and Van Dyck²⁶ were of Flemish origin, and Brussels and Ghent and Antwerp are the cities of laces and beautiful tapestry. England and America, to a certain extent, are their tributaries for these pieces of workmanship. The Louvre thus, in Paris, and the museums of paintings in the Flemish cities, are not mere luxuries, but are the means of cultivating the talent of the people, which talent brings money into the country.

Art, thus, is the companion of Utility.²⁷ The city that gives 25,000 dollars for a picture of Rubens, is doing an act which may bring millions of dollars within its walls. Paris, for example, lives upon its arts. Brussels, also lives upon the same nutriment. Why is Paris the city of modes or fashions? I will venture to say it was because of its attention to the arts. Napoleon concentrated there the great works of art that adorned all the galleries of Europe, and thus gave the best models to all who studied the adorning of the female form. Paris, as a city, has hardly the appearance of commerce, and yet Paris is one of the greatest and wealthiest capitals in Europe. How is this? I will tell you. Parisian gloves are sent the world over—and why? Because they are more beautiful than all others. And why is this? Because classic models have taught the Parisians what beauty is. Fifty out of a hundred Americans, who visit Paris, probably order all their boots and shoes from Paris, their lives afterwards, and the reason is, because they are more beautiful than the American mechanic makes.

I mention these two of the very smallest things in the equipment of the person, to show how necessary an idea of beauty, and a model of beauty, are to the mechanic, as well as to the amateur. The Parisian shopkeeper is an artist, and so are many in Brussels. The beautiful arrangement of the goods in their shops tempts you, and almost forces you to buy. Thus, art is seen in everything that exists, from the shops of the Palais Royal, and from the Pantheon, down to the bedroom even, where mirrors and

²⁵ Peter Paul Rubens (1577-1640) — Prominent Flemish/Dutch painter

²⁶ Anton Van Dyck (1599-1641) — Prominent Flemish portrait painter

²⁷ See also Letters 58, 59 and 65.

curtains, and even bedsteads, are arranged, or made after some classic model. Thus, we see, whenever we go into a city where art is attended to, how even the humblest citizen profits from it. The lace and carpet trade of Brussels—a city in which not a ship, nor a steamboat, appears, without a river, without even the sign of what we call commerce—is one of the great, and among the most beautiful, cities of Europe.

We have more railroads, it is true, England makes better shovels and ploughshares, the **useful** is better understood there than here; but, if we could add the lace and carpet trade to our Utility, or England to hers, who would grumble? Surely not the mechanic and female fingers that would be thus employed, or the farmer who fed them when thus employed. In all things that belong to **art**, except in the art of adorning grounds, the Continental nations excel the English—and the reason why the English excel others in gardening, the ornamenting of parks, and the like, is, that the English follow Nature in that—whereas others attempt to improve upon a model already perfect.

The American character or taste ought neither to be French nor English; but, as far as we approach the medium of the two, in almost all matters of opinion, or of conduct, we approach the best model of the European world, in the many things in which improvement would not injure us. I think I have said in a former letter—if not, I will say it now, that the English are democrats or republicans in the most effective machinery of their government, when compared with others upon the Continent, but the most aristocratic in the structure of their society. The French have less political freedom, but ten thousand times more social freedom. The English are the only people in Europe with a free press, and yet the only people among whom there is no kind of freedom in society. A learned man, or a scholar in England, is, so far as society is considered, but the tenth part of the man of the same acquirements in Paris. M. Thiers²⁸ is now the head of the French Ministry, but M. Thiers might have lived a thousand years in England, and he could never have been where he is in France. His son might have been, if his father's fame was bright enough to clarify his blood. Hence, I say, not only in what there is of Utility, but of Art, and of social intercourse, the medium of the French and the English is the medium which an American ought to seek after. France

²⁸ Adolphe Thiers (1797-1877) — French; son of a provincial attorney; historian and statesman; 3 times Prime Minister

and England (France with its appendages I mean, for Belgium is but a prolongation of France, and Holland is but England over the Channel,) are countries in which an American can learn more practical lessons than in all the others in which I have been. Thus, you see, I jump from topic to topic, but this is allowable in journeying, when one new idea is ever chasing on another.



101. Waterloo

Brussels,
April 6, 1836.

I have been to Waterloo, which is but 12 miles from Brussels, where the two ablest nations of Europe came into conflict, where neither of them can be justly said to have conquered the other, but where a third party, opportunely interfering, settled the day, and beat off and drove into exile one of the most astonishing men that the world has ever produced. I have now followed out the progress of that mighty man, from his first triumph on the Apennine summits, to the bridge of Lodi, and the bloody field of Marengo; and with delight I have gone over the noble roads that he has built, and seen the bridges, and harbors, and cathedrals, and galleries of art, and schools that came up under his command; so that my mind is suspended in doubt whether his good will acquit him of his evil; and thus, it was not without interest, apart from that created by the horrible slaughter on this memorable field, that I came here and witnessed the going down of his sun. The battlefields of Hannibal in Italy, and of the Roman generals, I have been over, but Carthage and Rome were not in my day, and I had no living guide to point out where the contending generals stood, and opposing battalions met, and to tell me what *he* saw with his own eyes, and heard with his own ears.

The story of Waterloo is so fresh, that, apart from its being the field where Napoleon lost his empire, you can see and study out all the incidents of the battlefield itself, and learn these little details of the slaughter that touch the heart. Every tree that now stands there, in its branches, and in its body, bears witness of the strife. Bullets are buried in them here, or their torn sides tell that the cannon balls passed there. Ruined houses, and shattered walls attest the progress of destruction. "*We buried four thousand here, and six thousand there,*" says the guide, and you walk over the green grass under which they are. "*The dead were three feet deep in this place, and you could not pass on over the piles of men and horses slain,*" he continues, and again you walk over the green grass where all this was. Waterloo, in short, is almost as it was then,

ruins except, created by the cannon and the musketry of the day, when, upon the morning of the 18th of June, 1815, Napoleon and Wellington,²⁹ the two greatest generals of the age, arrayed the best troops of the age, one against another.

We took a carriage in the morning at Brussels, and rode to Waterloo, where we were in a couple of hours, our way passing through the forest of Soignes, into which the men, women and children, of the villages of Waterloo and of Mont St. Jean, fled for preservation on the morning of the battle. This forest was in Wellington's rear, in which he probably intended to find protection in case Napoleon drove him from the field. At Waterloo, a guide volunteered his services, and as he was the one recommended to us, we took him to Mont St. Jean, some distance from Waterloo, where the battle was in reality fought; though Waterloo has given it the name, as, from Waterloo, Wellington, the night after the battle, dated his dispatches to the English Government. Our guide, who was a peasant, about eighteen years old the day of the battle, and who was then taken as the guide of one of the French Generals of Division, took us over the ground, and upon the several positions of the English and the French soldiers, and explained to us their various struggles for particular points; but, as military men and tourists have often related all those things, so much in detail, and so much better than I can, I will not recapitulate the oft-told story. I will remark, however, upon the battle, that the great fault of Napoleon seemed to be the too great confidence he reposed in the valor of his hitherto successful legions. He had been defeating the Prussians but a day or two before, and, forgetful that the English were not Prussians, he had not a doubt that he should beat the English in the same manner. Thus, over-confident, he yielded to the English the superiority of position; and neglected to provide for his own retreat.

The right of the English army was posted in a position impregnable to musketry, or infantry—and yet he seemed to be ignorant of the strength of the position, and ordered his men there to a certain slaughter, when but a few pieces of cannon would have knocked down the castle upon their heads, and beat the wall that defended them into millions of pieces. Again, he had the disadvantage of being the attacking party—and

²⁹ 1st Duke of Wellington (1769-1852) — Arthur Wellesley, Commander of British forces at Battle of Waterloo

again he mistook the English character, in supposing that his little Frenchmen, valorous as they were, could, with the bayonet, or with his cavalry, drive off from the field the English soldier, who was equally as valorous, and twice as stout, with a cavalry in all probability far better horsed than the French. The French soldier is probably quicker than the English, and this rapidity of movement, it was, that gave Napoleon many of his victories over Austrians, Prussians, and Russians, but the English that stood now upon the field were as impenetrable as a wall to the French cavalry; and, without even this defense, the English are a quicker-footed race than the Austrians, or any of the German nations whom I have seen. Nevertheless, the unprejudiced man who carefully goes over this great field of battle, must see that if Blücher³⁰ had not arrived with his Prussians, the English must have been driven from the field—perhaps not with slaughter, but certainly with defeat; but if, instead of Blücher, Grouchy³¹ had come, as Napoleon intended and planned, the defeat would have been slaughter, and the forest alone could have saved an English soldier.

Napoleon had directed all things with his usual skill, but treason, or misfortune, disappointed him. The Russians, he knew, were approaching, and the English, he also knew, must be cut up before they could unite, if he would preserve himself. Hence, he resolved upon attack, in spite of disadvantages. The Prussians, he thought, were provided with an enemy, but the Prussians galloped in upon him, and a force that he had beaten but a few days before, now proved his ruin. The three positions that Napoleon took during this day are clearly pointed out. The last was not far from the English line, and directly in front of Wellington. The more doubtful the battle became, the more he exposed his own life. But the friendly ball which should there have finished his career, would not come to take his life.

I will venture to say that no American ever stood upon this battleground without debating in his own mind whether the world would have gained or lost by the triumph over Napoleon on that day. As the sons of

³⁰ Gebhard Leberecht von Blücher (1742-1819) — Prussian military leader; fought against Napoleon at Leipzig and Waterloo

³¹ Emmanuel de Grouchy (1766-1847) — French general. On the day of the battle of Waterloo, Grouchy was occupied elsewhere and unable to contribute his strength to the French attack.

Englishmen, as men of the same tongue, and the same sinew, we feel proud of the valor of our *countrymen*, but yet the Englishman has so often been our enemy, and his taunts have often fallen so thickly upon us, that we deeply sympathize with the defeated French. Again, that mighty bad man, Napoleon, steals upon our hearts, and here, upon the spot of his downfall, following out as we do in our minds the ignoble exile where the English incarcerated him and almost murdered him, we almost wish the triumph had been the other way. He who has seen with his own eyes what Napoleon has done for the people, from Naples to Hamburg, upon the Alps and the Apennines, along the rivers and by the sea—what a breath of life he breathed into torpid man; and has forgotten his conscriptions, the bloody slaughter of his battlefields, and the havoc he wrought in thousands of families, will painfully mourn over his fate, and regret that it had not been all otherwise. An American who thinks considerately, can alone properly balance these contending emotions upon the plains of Waterloo.

A Frenchman goes over the ground with tears in his eyes, cursing the traitors who, he believes, sold his beloved France, never crediting the fact that English valor is a match for French on any field, or dreaming even that it was possible for his demigod Napoleon to be beaten. An Englishman goes there as upon the field of his country's greatest triumph, and exultation naturally swells his heart, as he traces out the spots where his countrymen stood like rocks against the fiery legions of France. Jerome Bonaparte,³² our guide told us, had shed bitter tears amid the ruins of the castle of Hougoumont, where he led on his soldiers in a vain attack against the English right. The Marquis of Anglesey had come there to show the spot where he had lost his leg;³³ and a tombstone was shown, upon which a band of Englishmen annually dined, the 18th of every June. The French, indeed, seldom visit Waterloo, though Waterloo is not far from their borders. But the English come there in myriads, and buy balls and buttons, of which it is probable enough has been already bought to fill a common-sized city.

³² Jerome Bonaparte (1784-1860) — Younger brother of Napoleon I; appointed King of Westphalia, later, Prince of Montfort

³³ 1st Marquis of Anglesey (1768-1854) — Henry Paget, 2nd Earl of Uxbridge; see also Letter 26.

We Americans go there as uninterested spectators, and judge of the events of that great day and of the succeeding, with greater calmness. The company the English were in when they drove Napoleon from the field—the band of Holy despots—we justly execrate; and even Englishmen at this day execrate them too, for Russia has not only devoured the wretched remnants of miserable Poland, but is threatening England in the East, while Prussia and Austria, and the Germanic States, are the natural enemies of English principles. England revived, re-created all these powers whom Napoleon was sweeping from the earth; but the spirit England conjured up is now fearfully haunting her, and she must make France, her old enemy, her present ally, provided she wishes for a force upon land to match her former friends. England gained nothing by the battle of Waterloo, though Austria grasped Italy and Venice in her clutches, the King of Piedmont the Genoese, and Poland was re-partitioned among the Northern Powers.

Whether the world has gained or not by the downfall of Napoleon on that day, is a question an American may justly raise. True, Napoleon was a tyrant, and a murderer even, and a man faithless to the principles which created him, but he was one of the noblest of that class of Caesars whom mankind know not whether to love or to hate, and he was the representation of that great principle which is at this day struggling all over the Continent, (France except,) against hereditary despotism. If any man was ever born to command his fellow man, it was such a man as he. If England had let him alone, he would, in his own arbitrary way, it is true, have put the Continent a century ahead of where it now is, and have made all nations over whom he ruled the practical people that the English and the Americans are. Indeed, I do not know whether to regret that he was not the victor, or to be content that he was vanquished.

I do not know that I can give you any particulars of the present appearance of the field of Waterloo, which would be of interest. The monuments that have been erected there, the mausoleums rather, were somewhat disfigured by the French, when, after the revolution in Belgium, they returned from the successful siege of Antwerp. The French soldiers, at that time, we were told, ran over the ground crying and screaming like raging madmen, and were for up-heaving every memorial of their defeat; but their generals, to their credit, restrained them, and even put a garrison upon the huge pyramid that the

Hollanders erected in honor of the victory. This huge mound of earth, two hundred feet high, with a lion upon the top, holding the globe under his claw, we ascended, as it gave us a fine view of all the surrounding country.³⁴ The Prince of Orange,³⁵ it is said, was wounded upon this spot; but, this spot, and all Belgium which was given to the King of the Netherlands³⁶ as his portion of the Waterloo spoil, has been wrested from him since that day by revolution, and thus from the Prince of Orange, his legal successor.

The use to which this great field is now put is the same as it was in June 1815, when so many thousands of soldiers trampled the then high grain under their feet. All open, unfenced, as is the whole of France and Belgium in general—the combatants had no other obstructions than the yielding grain, which readily fell before them. I do not see that blood thus profusely shed has fertilized the soil, but if the bodies had been suffered to rest and to rot upon the ground, increased fertility would probably have been the result. The slain were buried in pits without regard to form, or manner, tumbled in, one upon another—stripped naked as they had been by the peasantry—and now and then a hole can be seen in some of these pits where some curious hand has been examining for a skull. Occasionally a human bone is seen upon the ground, but this is not often, for, many years of cultivation and curiosity have nearly returned the ground to what it was when the opposing armies pitched battle upon it.

Limping beggars follow you, and tell you they were wounded there. Women and girls are at your heels with balls and buttons to sell. The marks of the cannon balls are very visible upon trees and walls. The road to Brussels is, as it was, when Napoleon led on his guards, crying out, "*Courage, my children—see the road to Brussels.*" But the road to Brussels was then made impassable by the heaps of dead, man piled upon horse, and horse upon man. The tree under which Wellington stood, stands there no longer. The earth taken away for the mound in

³⁴ The Lion's Mound, commemorating the battle of Waterloo, is 141 feet high; it was completed in 1826.

³⁵ William, Prince of Orange (1792-1849) — Born at The Hague; served in British army; promoted to general; wounded at Waterloo; sidelined after 1830 Belgian Revolution; later, King William II of the Netherlands

³⁶ William I, King of the Netherlands (1772-1843) — Father of William, Prince of Orange (later William II)

honor of the Prince of Orange has somewhat lessened the elevation. The inn where Blücher and Wellington met, is yet there, and is now called the "*Belle Alliance*."

Upon leaving the field, we rode to the village of Waterloo. This village is a very ill-looking affair, in an American's definition of a village, but a very good one, in a Frenchman's or a Swiss' estimation. There is but one street in it, and that is the road; and the houses on this street are not many, and are small. The church of Waterloo is small, and is full of monuments in honor of English officers slain—with epitaphs commemorating their valor. Cicerones innumerable almost thronged around, to show us all that was to be seen—or *commissionaires*, as they call themselves, in this part of the country. This church, the whole village of Waterloo even, and all Brussels, were filled with wounded victims after the battle. Not a house but took in its soldier.

As English was our native tongue, and as we were, of course, taken for English, as all Americans are upon the Continent, (this indeed occurring so constantly, that we fancy at last that we really are Englishmen,) our cicerones **would** take us to see where the leg of the Marquis of Anglesey was buried, and the slab erected in honor of it! The leg of the Marquis of Anglesey! buried! with a marble slab and an epitaph upon it!³⁷ How eminently English this is! How perfectly characteristic of John Bull, and yet how ridiculous—how very silly! Thousands of poor fellows were slaughtered, whole hecatombs of dead were huddled promiscuously together; and yet the *leg* of the *Marquis* of Anglesey has a monument, and the person who owns the garden where it is buried, and the *boot* in which his leg was wounded, derives quite a revenue from the English visitors, in showing to them the place where the *leg* was buried, and the room where the *leg* was cut off, and the *boot* in which the *leg* was. A *Marquis's* boot would make the fortune of any man in England. It is like the tooth of a saint in Italy.

Oh, Mr. Marquis of Anglesey, if you are a man of sense, as I am told you are, go to Waterloo—buy your leg—buy your boot—tear down your monument, cost what it may—for not a traveler upon this broad earth, unless he comes from your own land, but gives you a last and a sneer

³⁷ Brooks' distaste for this notorious exhibition (which continued until 1878) was shared by other commentators of the time.

when he sees the *grave* of your leg, and thinks of the thousands and thousands of that mighty multitude of dead who not only lost their legs, but their heads, their **all**, in the same great struggle which cost you this thus high-honored leg.



102. Antwerp

Antwerp,
April 9, 1836.

The French are the greatest murderers of words in the world, as, for example, they call this place Anvers; and, by the way, they chop up all things in this manner, metamorphosing everything of name or place, so that a man is often puzzled even to know himself when one is addressing him, or if, perchance, he sees his name in a way-bill. Antwerpen, the Flemish here call this town, Amberes the Spanish named it, when it belonged to them under the Charleses and the Philips, and Antverpia it was in the days of the Romans. I am beyond the dominion of the French language now. Flemish is altogether the language spoken by the poorer and the middle classes here, though almost everybody knows a little of French, and a little of English too. For when a people have a language that no other people will take the trouble of learning, they are obliged to take the trouble of learning other languages for themselves. The peasantry about Brussels speak what is called the Walloon. French is almost universally spoken in Brussels. At Mechelen, or Malines, as the French call it, twelve miles from Brussels, the traveler gets into the region of the Flemish or Dutch dialect, and but little else is there heard. The Thunderbludgeons, the Knaphuysens and the Straddlebuggers are the gentlemen who there figure upon the signs, and *Monsieur* is changed into *Mynheer* at once. If a Frenchman cannot master a mouthful of English consonants, what on earth can he do with the Schmiederbergers and the Schambackers here? But an English-speaking man must not laugh. Our English fathers have brought over the Channel hundreds of these words, particularly in the trades; and one must make progress in reading Flemish, merely by English analogies.

We left Brussels at two o'clock, and in half an hour we were at Mechelen, twelve miles off, not in a diligence, though, but on a railroad, over which runs a locomotive or a train of cars. A *franc* is all that is paid for passing over this distance. The railroad, in about a month, will be open to Antwerp, which is twenty-five miles from Brussels. A magnificent project is now under way for connecting, by a railroad, the city of Ostend with the river Rhine at Cologne, making it run by the

principal cities in Flanders; and never was there a better country for railroading, unless it be the southern part of our southern States, as it is almost as flat as the floor of a house. Thus, some parts of the Continent are awakening to the great example we have set them—an example set us by England, in the carrying out of which, however, we have far out-shot our instructors, and to such an extent as to excite both her admiration and surprise.

From the moment we began to approach, on our second day's ride from Paris, Flanders or French Flanders, there was a visible improvement in the appearance of the country houses all along upon the road. If the farms are not better—and of this we had not an opportunity of judging—certain it is that the farmhouses are more attractive in their appearance. The people put up for themselves neater and more comfortable habitations. Many of the beautiful country houses, in the vicinity of Antwerp, with their walks and artificial hills, reminded me of England and of the suburbs of London. The probable cause of this progressive difference is that, just in proportion to the coldness or bad state of the climate, people feel the necessity of making their homes more agreeable, as an inhospitable sky shuts them out from those enjoyments of the sun's blessings, which others can have in a better clime. Thus, for example, we of New England, and of the North, consider the open area of an Alabama house as an order of architecture not to our liking, and a Virginian or a Carolinian home has few comforts in our eye. But as to the excellence or grandeur of the architecture, the reverse of the remark is generally true, as applied to Europe; for architecture seems to have come from, and to have made its home in, the South. England, for example, is superior to all other nations in the comfortableness of her private habitations, but is out-done in all that is public, or in all that has relation to **beauty**, by every little nation or principality south of her. The proudest public building in London is but little more than a mockery, when contrasted with what every town in Italy presents to the traveler's eye.

A diligence took us from Mechelen, the land of laces,³⁸ in company with a corps of Flemings, whose tongue was all Greek to us—to Antwerp, once the great commercial emporium of the world, with its population

³⁸ Mechlin lace was a traditional Flemish craft, so-called from the anglicized form of the town name.

of 200,000 and over, but now reduced to 75,000. Antwerp is one of those cities that chance was the architect of, and therefore, its streets are as crooked as—anything you please to say. Be sure to go the way in them that you think you don't want to go, and you will come out where you willed. As the land of Rubens, where that great painter ended his days, I felt an interest in its picture galleries, which I have not felt before since I re-crossed the Alps. His tomb is here in St. James' church, and an altarpiece of his contrivance, with an allegorical painting in which he himself appears with his wives, his mistress, his father and others, under the emblems of Saints or Saintesses, if such persons figure in the calendar. The interest of the painting, however, is in the portraits it gives, and in the powerful execution; and probably not one in a hundred ever thinks of, or cares about, the religious part of it. Bonaparte, when he was gathering all the gems of the picture galleries for his Louvre, removed this from the spot where it has such a peculiar charm, overlooking as it does the tomb of Rubens, but he left behind, (as pay, say,) two noble docks for the shipping of Antwerp, which cost him 14,000,000 of francs. The Spaniards, nor the Austrians, who have ruled over Belgium, ever thought of such a gift for such a commercial port, though, it is true, they never plundered the picture galleries.

Van Dyck, Tenier³⁹ and Snyders⁴⁰ were Flemish, and flourished here, and many of their choice works are seen in the museum, together with the chair in which Rubens worked, preserved there as a sacred relic. The cathedral of Antwerp, the Notre Dame, with its lofty graceful spire of 470 feet, is one of the noblest Gothic cathedrals I have seen. It was ninety-six years in building! Think of that, ye people, who put up your houses in a quarter of a year. The *Descent from the Cross*, the masterpiece of Rubens' pencil is here. Napoleon stole this too, when he was stealing from Naples to Moscow.



³⁹ Tenier — Surname of several generations of Flemish painters (16th-17th century)

⁴⁰ Frans Snyders (1579-1657) — Flemish painter of animals and still lifes

103. Around Antwerp

Antwerp,
April 10, 1836.

The Botanical Garden of Antwerp is one of those things that distinguishes European cities from many of ours. The Flamands evidently have a taste for flowers and trees, and a country-like life, that the French have not; and, in many places, they have so managed their dead-flat land as to make it beautiful. The *Société de la Grande Harmonie* have gardens, and grottoes, and fancy temples, with entertainments and music on Sunday afternoon. As in all Catholic countries, the afternoon of the Sabbath is devoted to recreation, and to pleasure. The last Sunday here, for example, I attended the service at the cathedral, and perhaps there were three or four thousand people going out and coming in, all the morning, till nearly noon. The morning is devoted to worship, and the early morning too, for the Catholic is at his services with the early beam of the morning sun; but, in the afternoon, he amuses himself as best he can. The Sunday of which I speak, I visited the suburbs of Antwerp, and the whole population seemed to be poured out there, amusing themselves in all varieties of ways. Some were shooting with arrows, as our Indians shoot; and, as this is a favorite sport here, the marksmen were every way equal to our sons of the forest. Others were dancing quadrilles, and kicking up their heels to the liveliest tunes, as at our general musters aforesaid, in the interior of Maine. Others were drinking beer—and beer is the great drink here, instead of wine; for, in these low countries where the vine does not grow, wine is a little too dear for Tom and Harry. Whole *miles* of people—I cannot measure them otherwise—seemed to be drinking beer. Jack and Bill were here, having a game of cards, and Peter and Dick were there, pitching quoits onto little trap doors. Wooden shoes and leather shoes were here, "*shaving it down*," as we say, on a board, and there, a-straddle of another, were a couple of fellows eating fish, munching bread, and drinking beer again. Every country has its own way of spending the Sabbath. In New England, the great people give their great dinners on Sundays, but the great people there would be horrified at such a Sunday as this, over the Channel. What would a Connecticut man say, the son of him who hung

his cat because she caught a rat "*all on the Sabbath day?*" Certainly, he would think this better missionary ground than that of the other heathen—in Hindustan or China, say. But the Antwerpers are considered a very religious people.

Among my other visits in Antwerp was one to the citadel, which the French bombarded so furiously when they came in concert with the English, to liberate Belgium from the Dutch king. The citadel is a pretty good distance from the town, and in a fair field on three sides, where there was a good chance for a fair fight. All along, I have been puzzled, not being a military man, whenever I have visited a strong fort like this, or a walled town, to see how an enemy could force his way into it. But our guide here explained the process, the mode of operating, and what was before so difficult, became in my eyes quite simple. The bombs make a fort too hot for the inmates, even though they immure themselves in caverns underground, where the bombs cannot come, and the cannon balls knock the walls to pieces, and fill up the ditches, while the assailants dig onwards underground like moles—tunneling the earth, as the Londoners the Thames. The French knocked this citadel all to pieces. Even the brick caverns were at last no security for the poor Dutchmen immured within them; and places were shown where the balls pierced the brick arches, and tumbled down into the caves, killing officers and soldiers. But, the king of the Belgians is building it up again, and, as the science of fortification has advanced much since the days of the Duke of Alva,⁴¹ the Spanish general who built this, he thinks that it can now be really made impregnable. He had better be making his railroads, and take the diggers from the citadel to the towns; for with the money that it will cost to rebuild this, he could *railroad* nearly all of his little kingdom. Lucky men, we Yankees are, that have no need of citadels such as this, and can, therefore, use all our resources to bring the far-off ends of our country nearer together. Break up the Union though, and the Potomac will bristle with citadels like this, and passports and all such nuisances will follow in their train. I am a peace man, you see. Like all of my countrymen, I hold to no killing—except the killing of the Indians, who, poor devils, as Mr. Forsyth⁴² used to call

⁴¹ 3rd Duke of Alva (1507-1582) — Fernando Álvarez de Toledo; Spanish nobleman and general; unsuccessful in controlling the Dutch revolt

⁴² John Forsyth (1780-1841) — American politician, governor of Georgia 1827-1829, U. S. Secretary of State 1834-1841; supported 1830 Indian Removal Act.

them, have no souls, else they would not have been copper-colored, as seems to say the American logic of the present day.

Antwerp is thirty-five miles from Ghent, where our treaty was made—or Gand, as the French call it: seventy from The Hague, the capital of Holland: two hundred and ten from Paris, and about one hundred and seventy miles from London by way of the Thames. Canals connect the country in all directions. A steamboat goes up the Scheldt to Ghent. Diligences are as thick as grasshoppers in a dry time, and thus Antwerp is a good radiating point to go from thence where you please, whether it be to Paris by Brussels, or to the Rhine by the way of Aix-la-Chapelle. It is the better way to go up the Rhine, unless one wants to see Holland; for the Lower Rhine, like the Delta of the Mississippi, is flat, marshy, and uninteresting. So much for the information of the traveler.



104. Familiar Ground

London,
April 12, 1836.

An English steamboat, a rascally, villainous, dirty and stupid thing—John Bull is a century behind us in this respect—took us over from Antwerp to London, for which we paid, in all, (fare, dinner, breakfast, and servants,) about twelve dollars—distance less than two hundred miles. For that sum, one could sail down the Ohio and the Mississippi, some twelve or fifteen hundred miles. Our way, of course, was down the Scheldt, or Escaut, as it is called in French, by Dutch forts, and Belgic forts, for the country seems to be parceled out, with a bit of land here for his Majesty of The Hague, and a bit of land there for his Majesty of Brussels: so that the traveler, in the windings of the river, can hardly say under which dominion he is. The Dutch, however, have the mouth, and keep a frigate there as well as a fort: and as he who holds the mouth of anything, holds the most important part, it would be about as wise to give the whole, Antwerp and all, to the King of Holland, particularly as the Dutch is the language of the people here and all about. Brussels and that region, if I were a carver of kingdoms, I should hand over to the French. These nations with two tongues, are but a bother. Antwerp has lost much of her valuable trade with the Dutch colonies on account of her revolution, though she has not lost it all, indirectly at least, as Dutchmen under another flag are yet numerous in her port. I counted no less than a dozen American vessels in the river and the docks of Antwerp. In every commercial port I go to, my eye is delighted with the sight of our flag, borne there by our industrious merchantmen, whose enterprise is as great upon the ocean as that of their countrymen upon the land. One of our ships was loading with *grain*, which, it seemed to me, was like carrying coals to Newcastle, or onions to Weathersfield,⁴³ if that is better understood.

The Scheldt is not what it was in "days of yore," when it was almost as thickly crowded with ships as the Thames is now. Holland plucked from it the jewel of its trade, and Amsterdam and Rotterdam came up upon

⁴³ Weathersfield — Small town in southern Vermont

its ruins. But the seat of commerce, like the seat of empire, is ever changing, and, some day or other, in the order of time, even the Thames will be as the Scheldt is at present, or the more deserted and melancholy Tiber. Empire, glory, power, wealth, the Continent has been pouring over to England, and England is pouring them over to us. England is the link and the bond of the Old World and the New, and in passing over the narrow Channel, the difference is as great as in passing three thousand miles over sea. I could not but remark and feel astonished by this surprising difference, the moment I put my foot upon this English steamer. Here was the same language once more, the long lost, but welcome, notes of my own tongue, which sounded so sweetly in my ear. Almost everything reminded me of home, and I really felt as if I were touching a link that was connected with my own land. The huge piece of roast beef appeared again on the dinner table. And then came the plum pudding, an old acquaintance that I had not seen for months. The English and Americans upon the continent often go by the name of Monsieur Roast Beef; and one of the first dishes a French or an Italian servant in a restaurant proposes to John Bull or his Brother Jonathan, doubling over a French or an Italian bill of fare, is a beef steak, or a *Bifteck*. Monsieur G_d d_n is also another name for the English-speaking race—this being their common oath. This oath is so well known all over the Continent, that the mere uttering of it has a magical effect, very often, particularly in the Italian towns.

Thus, not only the same language met my ears, but the same habits, the same manners, the same customs, the very same table. Instead of laughing and talking happily as the Frenchmen do, we talk in those low whispers which, it is true, rather distinguish English society than ours, but which is becoming also, unfortunately, in our English imitation, the characteristic of ours. The same suppression of all feeling, pretended indifference as to others; and yet unexceptionable, though cold, politeness that begin to mark a company of gentlemen strangers in many parts of the United States, here marked our circle. For the world, we would hardly venture to speak to our right-hand man who, though the right-hand man might be very happy to have a civil word from us. "*It is cold to-day, sir,*" says one—"Yes, sir," says another, and "*very,*" he may add, as a mark of condescension. but his condescension is such as to show you that you have ventured to take a liberty in speaking to him. This is English, however, rather than American, but it is beginning to be

American, though the quicker the *beginning* is nipped in the bud, the better. How, in such a case, the Frenchmen would laugh and chatter! What an uproar a dozen of them would make! He thus continues to live more in one hour than the Englishman lives in twenty-four.

Little things often indicate more of a change, an idea of which a writer is attempting to convey, than others more important—and, therefore, I must call your attention to these little changes again. Our good French cup of coffee was gone, and a cup of tea appeared in its stead. He only who has drunk the coffee as it is prepared in France, knows what a sad change this is. The little delicious rolls of French bread disappeared, and the massive loaf of John Bull took its place. A beefsteak, that unaccustomed visitor upon a French table, now came piping hot upon ours. John Bull has the advantage here. Wine at dinner, as an ordinary drink, gave way to porter, ale and beer. Ox-tail soup, or soups with more imposing names, banished the *Potage a la Julienne, au lait d'amandes*,⁴⁴ or the like. The prodigious pile of roast beef and grease towered loftily in the center of the table, instead of the myriads of little dishes which the Frenchman cooks up from everything, even down to the feet of pigs, with an economy as wonderful as it is ingenious, never losing any part of an eatable thing. The *hors d'oeuvres*,⁴⁵ and the *entremets*⁴⁶—eggs puffed up sky-high, and mutton chops in paper curls (*côtelettes en papillottes*,) fled at once. Out of the mass cumbering our table, the Frenchman would, with his sauces, have made a hundred, (and it may be two) excellent dishes, working the beef into at least twenty forms, and the mutton into as many more. Say what we may, the Frenchman has the advantage over us, from the beginning of the chapter to the end.

I went upon the Continent with as violent a prejudice as ever man had against such French things, but I come back with an opinion all changed. The reason that we Americans are ever dying of dyspepsia, and the English of gout, is that we eat three times as much as the French, and are ever overloading our stomachs—while their manner of cooking, and serving up what is cooked, renders this exceedingly difficult. There is a *philosophy* in the kitchen with them, and after one's prejudices are

⁴⁴ *Potage a la Julienne, au lait d'amandes* — (Translation) *Julienned vegetable soup, with almond milk*

⁴⁵ *hors d'oeuvres* — *savory food served as an appetizer*

⁴⁶ *entremets* — (Translation) *small dish (such as a dessert) served "between courses"*

disposed of, he sees and enjoys it too, and at last discovers that there is a way of living better than he has lived, and for half the money.



105. Admiration for Britain

London,
April 13, 1836.

From anything contained in my last letter, you must not conclude that I am French mad, though I be French bitten, a little, as almost every stranger is likely to be in a city made so delightful to the stranger as Paris is; and where he can have whatever he asks for, whether it be of science on the left banks of the Seine, or of pleasure upon the right. But French bitten though the American or the Englishman be, he is readily cured as he passes over the Channel, and comes up the Thames. The spectacle exhibited upon this river is one of the greatest eye ever witnessed, or fancy ever dreamed of; and, if I were an Englishman, I should feel prouder of it than even a Roman could feel of his imperial Rome. Indeed, it is ever one of my proudest thoughts, that my own native tongue is the language spoken here, and that we are the children of this noble race. Talk of the Tiber—talk of Rome! why, the Thames has a hundred ships for every one that was upon the Tiber; and London is more and mightier than the imperial Rome. Paris is the capital of art, of science, of pleasure, and of opinion, it may be. The taste that rules in Paris, rules all this world. The universality of the language of the French is a weapon in the Frenchman's hands, by which he sways all Europe, more or less. But, nevertheless, London is the capital of the world. Paris is but a child by its side. Even our own New York is but an infant of two days old. At the magnitude and the might of this London I am more astonished, even now that I have had an opportunity to compare it with other places of the world. The ends and the suburbs of Paris an easy walk would bring to me, but the ends and suburbs of this London, in a walk I can never find. London indeed begins at the mouth of the Thames, and the *end* of London in more than one sense, reaches even among the Highlands of Scotland—for the whole of England and the whole of Scotland are but one great pasture to feed and clothe the mighty mass of human beings concentrated here.

I love England as the only land of liberty on this side of the sea. France, boast as she may, is not free—and, alas! I fear the prize of rational liberty is too great a boon for her to enjoy. Her society is free, her people

substantially acknowledge no distinction of ranks in the social circle—while on the contrary in England, the most slavish and factitious state of society exists that human ingenuity, it seems to me, can create; but nevertheless, France, politically speaking, is not free, and England is. The armed soldiery of London are but few and far between. In Paris, they guard and garrison everything—and the drum in the morning is the first thing in your ears, and the last at night. England, however, enjoys this exemption from her insular position, and that floating bulwark of her empire which she has upon the sea, while France must keep up myriads of soldiers to overcome the despots that grudge her even the freedom she has. The police of London, though numerous and strong, is without a weapon in its hands—while in Paris, the police on horseback and on foot are strong in arms. The police of London seem to be among its best-bred men, polite, courteous, and popular even—while the police of Paris can merit no applause like this, and it certainly is as odious as universal unpopularity can cause it to be. Again, the whole passport system, all *espionage*, are at once brushed away. One can go *where* and *when* he pleases, and no passport-keepers ask—why do you so?

But the chief pleasure I have is in reading the English press. I love the liberty of grumbling, which the English people so much enjoy. Accustomed, as I have been for six or eight months past, to read in Germany or in Italy the little sickly chronicles of kings and courts, the partially suppressed and metamorphosed news of public events, and in France, to observe the caution (if not fear) with which public affairs are spoken of—there is a great pleasure, reminding me of my own land, in reading the full, free, and vigorous words with which an English editor speaks of public measures and public men. The king, even, who, in the form of law, it is said, "*can do no wrong*"—the sacred person of His Majesty himself, is no longer sacred here. The king is admonished as well as his subjects. He is told to "*beware*," as well as his ministry. No title, no rank is a refuge from the salutary criticism of the press. The titled scoundrel receives its castigation, as well as the scoundrel to whom no title adds no rank.

The English press is free. The courts of law are just, and free. The liberty of the subject is perfectly secure. Every Englishman feels himself as free and as great in any tribunal as the Prime Minister of the Empire. And then the people love the law, which they feel that they have made, and

they obey it with pleasure. So that London, vast as it is, seems to be governed with as much ease as the best-ordered village in the interior of New England. A soldier, I have never seen necessary to enforce public order. An unarmed policeman but stands in the crowded thoroughfare of Cheapside or the Strand, and a single motion of his finger is obeyed as readily as if a hundred bayonets stood ready to back its command. Nowhere on the Continent are such gratifying spectacles as these exhibited. Even that bewitching France, which, with all their faults, make a stranger love their people and their land, there, are no such rational liberty and law as this. Indeed, I cannot convey to you a better idea of my own impressions of the difference between England and the Continent than to ask you to remember the severity with which I first spoke of and looked upon England, her aristocracy, her manners, and the like, when, fresh from America, I contrasted them with the happier forms in my own land—and to contrast what was then said, with what justice and a wider observation in Europe compel me to say now. Italy is the Paradise of Europe, ruined long ago by misgovernment and man. France, as the world defines civilization, is the most civilized of all the nations of the earth. France is delightful, bewitching even—the home of a happy race of happy men. No man can live in her capital and not feel that there is a charm there which no other capital in Europe has. But England, if not to be loved, is to be admired. There is something the traveler sees in the English blood which makes old England the wonder of the world. Her wealth, her magnificence, her power, astonish and delight him. An island upon which Nature and climate seem to have frowned, man has made a garden of, and even the rocks teem with production. Rivers, that are but rills in our estimation, float the commerce of the world. In this smoky, clouded, gloomy London, where even, at times (witness Sunday last,) a candle is needed at noon-day, and the clergyman cannot see to read his discourse, here in this mantle of smoke is the mistress of the Hindustan, the empress of the East, of the Canadas, of the many isles of the ocean, and then the great regulator of the politics and the commerce of the world!

A wonderful people, a wonderful land! I glory in the joyous reflection, for I see in it but the shadowings forth of what the same race in a more prosperous climate, aided by a more bountiful nature—and favored, I believe, by a yet happier and yet freer government—are yet to do. Liberty and law have made England what it is. The like, but yet stronger

impulse of liberty is arousing every faculty of the American people, and stimulating them to a degree of energy that astonishes even this astonishing people here, who are accustomed to think of nothing as impossible: and now, if law, the necessary companion of liberty, the only arm safe to check her generous aspirations for the benefit of the human race, if law and liberty march together with them, as in England here, I am sure that the time is rapidly coming, when the traveler will feel as much of that admiration for the American name, as he crosses the sea, as I have felt for the English in coming over the Channel, and in marking their astonishing practical superiority over all other nations of Europe.



UNNUMBERED LETTERS FROM PARIS

[Additional letters by James Brooks, published in the Portland Advertiser.]

Paris,
December 14, 1835.

Undoubtedly you would have put the question of—what has become of your troubadour-editor, who has been for a long while piping for you, not only amid the cities and the wilds of our own new bright land, but here also, in this old home of the human race; musing over the past, and contrasting the present and what he imagines must be the future, with the men and things of the New World. The last letter I mailed for you was in Milan,⁴⁷ over the Alps, you know, now under the two-headed eagle of Austria. The ill-omened look that the custom house police on the borders of Austria gave the hieroglyphics in my writing apparatus, and the fancied scrutinizing investigation at the post office in Milan of so large a package as I was franking, admonished me "*to take care*," for I was not in England, nor Switzerland, but there where a man's pen is clipped, his mouth shut and his writing desk invaded whenever tyranny chooses to order. Not having any particular affection for the Austrian police, nor the ambition for a martyrdom, and wishing to write and send a thousand things which can never go safely through an Austrian or Italian post office, I resolved, at Milan, not to discontinue writing, but to cease trusting what was written to the investigation of the post. See then, the reason why I have been still. All the particulars of my journey are written, and you shall have them as soon as I can arrange them for you by the coming packet ships.

Of this journey, then, I need not only say this for the information of what few friends may have enquired where I am, and have [...] been working my way through Lombardy, Romagna, and Southern Italy, amid cholera—and what is indefinitely worse, quarantines and *cordons*⁴⁸—in a country where the people, though they live, as someone has said, amid the carcasses of empires, so tremble and shiver at the sound of the

⁴⁷ Letter from Milan — (Probably) Letter 53

⁴⁸ *cordon sanitaire* — (Translation) quarantine line

trumpet of death, even afar off, that they not only resort to all manner of pompous prayers and processions in honor of the Supreme Being, but then, as if doubting him, fortify themselves as much as possible, by the worst of police regulations and lazarettos, which it is death to violate. Think of men, amid the august ruins of the Roman empire, who are daily trampling over the ashes of myriads of their race, who see too in the now dirty Forum and the towering Coliseum, for example, and in the desecrated tombs of the Vatican, what even the Caesars⁴⁹ and the Scipios⁵⁰ now are—think, I say, of such men cowering before even the distant rustling of the pestilence, and prostrate, almost with terror so that they quite shut up, or most vexatiously obstruct, all the avenues of their empire! I dodged, or underwent all their wretched police regulations—the lazaretto except, the most direful of all, I fancy—and while the Adriatic side of Italy was free from cholera, I traversed that, and when it had fled from the Mediterranean coast over toward the east, I traversed that—and thus I have been able to see all the cities of Italy worth seeing, though the cholera was in nearly all of northern Italy during my journey, without meeting with the pestilence itself. Of all these things, however, you will have enough in the letters I shall have quite ready for you by the next packet ships. This alone, of itself, I never should think of troubling you with, but as an introduction to the few words that I have now to write from a city upon which, at this moment, I am quite sure, the eyes of all my countrymen must be turned; and I am not sorry, therefore, that I am here at a moment so interesting, if I can be of service to you.

"The American war" is almost the sole topic of discussion in the political circles here, and, in comparison with what is considered its importance, the Peninsular difficulties dwindle into insignificance. All at once, I know not how it is, we are metamorphosed into a first-rate power, and St. Petersburg, and Washington, and the Courts of St. James and Versailles figure as among the prominent places of the world. Even the English, the greatest and most enterprising of all the travelers of the earth, who know all about Mount Sinai, the Pyramids, Siberia perhaps and the lower Danube, the best talking geographers of the present day, but who yet with all their knowledge are the most stupidly ignorant of a people who speak their language—who border upon their

⁴⁹ Caesars — Roman emperors

⁵⁰ Scipio — Prominent Roman family

possessions—who are the great recipients of their manufactures—even the English at last, in spite of the Trollopes,⁵¹ the Halls,⁵² and the Hamiltons⁵³ are waking up to but a faint conception, however, of our resources; which, now I have seen other countries, I know to be among the very first of the world, second only to the mistress of the ocean⁵⁴ herself, with all her colonies, her Indies and her all to back her. The cause of this sudden metamorphosis of the English press, and thus through it, of the English people, is traced in the reports of the late intelligent French travelers who have been in the United States—men without John Bull's⁵⁵ prejudices, and, I might as well add, John's stupidity, for John is often as stupid as he is prejudiced, the dullest of all the scholars of Europe, and needing the most whipping, too, before he can see a thing. These travelers from France, such as Tocqueville⁵⁶ and Chevalier, a race of men not of the Hamilton breed, have not been able to convince John Bull that we are civilized—even the French doubt that a little and consider us a species of Russians; but they have convinced him that what Jonathan⁵⁷ has said of his resources, his power, his wealth, and of the advance of mechanism and agriculture, is true—in short, that Brother Jonathan, since the declaration of Independence, has not been bragging nor prophesying, but toiling very hard to keep up with fact. The truth is, there is not a nation on the globe that has such resources and prospects as we have; England with her immense colonies, hardly excepted. And, within two months, England has begun to have an idea of the fact—the light however, not breaking in from her own prejudiced travelers, but thrown in on her from this side of the English Channel.

⁵¹ Frances ["Fanny"] Trollope (1780-1863) — (Mrs. Trollope) English author, published *Domestic Manners of the Americans* (1832)

⁵² Basil Hall (1788-1844) — Royal Navy commander; some statements in his 1829 *Travels in North America* gave offense to U. S. readers

⁵³ Captain Thomas Hamilton (1789-1842) — Scottish author; published *Men and Manners in America* (1833)

⁵⁴ Mistress of the Ocean — Britain

⁵⁵ John Bull — Character symbolic of an Englishman

⁵⁶ Alexis de Tocqueville (1805-1859) — French diplomat and political historian; best known in the U.S. for his work *Democracy in America*.

⁵⁷ Brother Jonathan — Personification of New England; emblem of the early United States, comparable to the later Uncle Sam

M. Chevalier,⁵⁸ who has lately travelled so much in the United States—a man of intellect (I judge from his writing only,)—has come back here, so full of what the United States are and are to be, that he has not only frightened his own Government into the most active naval preparations at Toulon and Brest, but in the *Journal of Debates*, his pen figures almost every day. Yesterday, the leading article, probably from his pen, indicates that, hereafter, the world is to be swayed as much by the republic of the United States, as by the greatest powers of Europe; that Empire, in short, is taking up its august abode elsewhere, quitting the old world to aggrandize the new. All these opinions the English credit, when coming from France, but never when coming from America, for John Bull is so much superior in matters of business to all the rest of Europe that he cannot believe us when we tell him that, just as he excels all other European states in enterprise, just so we excel even him. Hence, we have, of a sudden, become a first-rate power, even in English estimation—and the probability of a war with the United States is engaging the attention of the circles and the presses both sides of the Channel.

Perhaps you ask, what is happening, or what is to happen, here. All are awaiting the President's message. If that is not charged too full of electricity, we hope there will be no thunder here. M. Chevalier has come back here rather anti-Jackson-mad,⁵⁹ and in all probability his representations induce the French government to make such a parade of the naval forces in the seaports of France. He has seen that we are powerful and he believes, as is generally the case here, that a thirst for war is created by the power to wage it. The government of France however, is now laying upon its oars, rather wishing to stop than to go ahead, in the American phrase. But it is not an easy thing, even in a monarchy, to control public opinion, especially in such a monarchy as that of France. I do not believe, judging from what I can see and hear, that a war with the United States would be unpopular with the lower classes of the French; and you well know that there is nothing for which all Frenchmen would fight sooner, than for a point of honor, or perhaps, even a point of etiquette.

⁵⁸ Michel Chevalier (1806-1879) — French engineer, statesman and economist. Sent by the French government in 1834 to study the U.S., his impactful letters were published in *Lettres sur l'Amerique du Nord* (1837).

⁵⁹ The incumbent U.S. President was the former General, Andrew Jackson.

The intelligent Frenchman speaks of us with life and enthusiasm, as old allies, as a people who first taught the French to break the chain of a bad race of monarchs, and the worse chains of a horrid social system. True, they are reluctant to pay us this debt,⁶⁰ and what is more, the taunt of all the other European nations, that a young republic has alarmed one of the oldest kingdoms of Europe into dishonorable concessions, have tenderly touched French pride—but there is such a strong feeling of attachment for us in France, that a war can be entered upon only with the utmost reluctance, and then it can never be made popular. The taunts, however, of Europeans who would delight in embroiling us, have their effect. It is a pleasant theme for English Tories of the stiffer cast and Russian emissaries—in short, for all the subjects of despotism so thick and fearfully strong this side of the ocean. Even well-informed men here confess that "*things look squally*," and the thinking feel that a silly subject has become a serious one.

Nothing could be more inopportune for the progress of free principles than a war between the United States and France. France and England, and the little cantons of Switzerland, are the only defenders of Europe against Russian and Austrian despotism. The principles of the Holy Alliance grasp all the rest of Europe. France and England, the land of our forefathers in particular, with the little republics here and there, are the only refuges of men who dare to think of bettering the political condition of the human race. What green spots they are amid the barrenness all about them! England's navy overawes the despot upon the ocean, and the French legions make them tremble upon the land. England and France, moving together in their proper spheres, are invincible—lusty enough, perhaps, to grapple with a world. Our natural position, then, is not with St. Petersburg and Vienna, but with France and England. We ought to be their allies, not their enemies. France is for us, not against us, in the great war of principles that the human race is waging—a war in which our republic so gloriously leads the van. Every blow we strike at France is a blow at the highest interest of mankind. The day is coming—I wish it was accelerated—I want to hear of but one war, and it is this: the day is coming, I say, when Italy and Germany, if not Russia, will struggle for the degree of liberty that the French and English now enjoy. In that contest, France will be the champion upon

⁶⁰ France's unpaid debts — Reparations to the U.S., dating from the Napoleonic Wars, and agreed by a treaty, negotiated by Rives, and signed in 1831.

the land, and England upon the ocean. Would to heaven, then, that the arms of both were strengthened (not weakened) for a contest so dreadful. What a madness it is to embroil us with either, particularly with France, a nation that has so long been, and now is preeminently, our friend! But few know into what involutions diplomacy may have brought a simple debt, now acknowledged even by the debtor; but if diplomatists would stand aside, and let the commonsense of the two countries arrange the difficulty, all would be settled in a week. As it is, a hundred thousand men may be butchered, and a hundred millions of dollars expended, because a bow is not made according to Chesterfield,⁶¹ or because, instead of a soft word, one softer is not used? The message will probably give a turn to affairs here, for good or ill. Whatever it is, I will watch and write you.

Paris,
January 6, 1836.

The message of the President was received here on the 31st of December, *via* Liverpool, and from the hour of its reception instantly attracted the almost undivided attention of the European public—the English and the French journals publishing it entire, and the French continuing to comment upon it even to this day. As the effect of its reception is to you, undoubtedly, the most important point, I will hasten to say then, that it is *favorable*, and such as the friends of Peace in the United States would desire. It smooths the way to a reconciliation. It opens a door for arrangement. It makes apology enough for France, and, with it, France will be content. It is proud, and haughty, to be sure, and I am not sorry that it is, but it is of a different temper, and written in a better spirit, than the last; and in that light, I have not a doubt that the French will consider it a sufficient *amende*⁶² for their "wounded honor."

I have read all the remarks of the French journals with much care. Some few of them—of the ultra-democratic and of the ultra-royalist parties—for party purposes, yet continue to attack the Ministry on the subject; and, in order to annoy them the more, contend that the apology is not sufficient, and that before the money is paid, more apologies are

⁶¹ 4th Earl of Chesterfield (1694-1773) — Philip Stanhope; British statesman, remembered for his writings on etiquette. *Letters to His Son on the Art of Becoming a Man of the World and a Gentleman* (pub. 1774)

⁶² *amende* — (Translation) compensation (as in "to make amends")

necessary. But the great mass of the French journals are content with the message, though the content is rather a surly than a hearty feeling. The *Journal of Debates*, the most important of the ministerial journals, seems to think that the apology will answer, but is disposed to wait a while, and to see what the American journals and the American people think of it, before they come to a conclusion for themselves! In other words, the *Journal of Debates* is much **yes** and some **no**—with much of the non-committal in its articles. The *Journal of Debates*, as I have said before, is the best-informed journal in Europe as to American politics—for one of its editors has travelled in the United States, and has studied our laws and manners well. Indeed, the *Journal of Debates*, and the American correspondent of the *London Times*, who signs himself a *Genevese* traveler, but who, I rather guess, never stood upon the shores of Lake Lemman, are the chief authorities upon whom Europeans now rely for correct and lucid information from the United States. The *Journal of Debates* reviews all the topics touched in the message, and with all the intelligence of an American writer, treating of his own domestic matters.

There is now here no apprehension of war. The Americans in Paris feel relieved from a heavy burden of doubt. Whatever may be the effect of the message, they think that the intervention of England will obviate all difficulties, even if the message has not already done so. The best-informed Frenchmen, with whom I have conversed, seem to be satisfied with the apology indirectly given. The English journals of all parties contend that the money ought, forthwith, to be paid. I hear, too, that a banker, high in influence here, has urged a like opinion upon the King⁶³ and the Ministry. The only fear now apprehended—and this yet creates much anxiety—is that, when Mr. Barton⁶⁴ has arrived in America, and the naval preparations of the French are heard of, that the President will become exasperated, and send another bulletin to Congress, which will do as much mischief as his last message has done good. If the naval outfits of the French have the effect of urging similar preparations on our part, all will be well; for our navy and our fortifications can never be

⁶³ The King of France — Louis Philippe I (1773-1850), of the House of Orléans, reigned from 1830 to 1848.

⁶⁴ Thomas P. Barton — U.S. Chargé d'Affaires (Secretary of Legation) to France. He came to the U.S. in 1836 "bringing water for the fire between Jackson and Louis Philippe."

too strong, as our sea wall is the best bulwark that we have. But, if these outfits perplex the question still more, and embitter more the public mind, or lead to a new flaming message to Congress, then there is no knowing where the rupture may end. This is the only apprehension now felt, and as this stands upon some foundation, we shall continue to wait for news from America with some anxiety.

The newspapers and the letters from the United States received here are up to the 8th of December. You see, therefore, that we know nothing of the effects of the message upon the country, for we have seen only the very few comments that some of the New York journals made upon the day of its arrival in that city. The like excitement, that existed here the 1st of December, undoubtedly now exists with you, for you have heard the most exciting news from France and, as yet, probably know but little of what has here calmed this apprehension. We, therefore, expect much war and rumors of war by the next arrivals, but they will have little or no effect unless someone of the branches of government speaks.

The immense surplus revenue that we have excites the astonishment of all the Europeans. They forget that they might have the same, if their armies were only of 6,000 men, instead of some hundreds of thousands. The French journals see in the recommendation of the President to strengthen the militia, the germ of a standing army, and, therefore, the downfall of the republic! Europeans are always seeing our republic *to* tumble down, but it won't oblige them yet. What would many of them give if they could erase from the earth the bright example of a people governing themselves! The English journals complain that the horrible excesses of the Lynch Law⁶⁵ men have not been alluded to. Republican as I am, I must confess that this mode of butchering men is altogether too republican for me. If asked for a defense, the only one I can make is, that there are assassins in all governments—robbers and man-butchers too. They *Burke* people even in England.⁶⁶ Governor McDuffie's message⁶⁷ is read as a moral curiosity. South Carolina is a strange state with strange ways, and McDuffie is the strangest of her sons. Every

⁶⁵ Lynch Law — Public execution by a mob, without due process of law. In the 19th century, such practices were predominantly carried out in the U.S., as the extreme expression of racial prejudice.

⁶⁶ "They *Burke* people" — Reference unclear

⁶⁷ Governor McDuffie's message — Reference unexplained

family has one child whom the father and mother allow to do as it pleases. South Carolina is a little spoiled; and Mr. McDuffie has had the courage to advance some arguments that the world has forgotten for a thousand years.

The Chamber of Deputies is in session here, but they touch upon no topics interesting to us. How amusing it is to read the addresses of the Peers and Chambers to the King, so oddly contrasting with our plain mode of opening Congress! They stuff him well with flattery, and his son, the Duke,⁶⁸ the more, because he was so happy as to gain a wound in Africa! But let no American say a word to this. I have heard flattery far more nauseous administered in Congress to men in power. M. Dupin is nothing in that way to Mr. Senator Benton;⁶⁹ and I mourn to see such a man as M. Dupin engaged in such a work. For a proud, high-minded man seldom administers flattery to men in station, even when they deserve it—reserving such a tribute for those whom he cannot be suspected of flattering for selfish purposes.

Paris,
January 14, 1836.

Probably, I shall furnish you no news in writing now, in addition to what I wrote in a former letter, that all the differences between France and the United States are now considered here as satisfactorily adjusted. By the way of England, I presume you will have learnt, that the King and the Ministry of the French are satisfied with the apology given in the message, and that, after a few preliminaries are arranged, the money will be immediately paid. The King, I understand, has used all his efforts, with a somewhat reluctant Ministry, to induce them to assent to the message as a satisfactory apology for "the wounded honor of France." Even if a special message has been sent by the President to Congress upon the arrival of Mr. Barton, I do not believe that it will prevent the payment of the money, or have any other effect than that of retarding the now good feeling, that is again springing up between Frenchmen and Americans. Louis Philippe, I sincerely believe, has throughout done

⁶⁸ Ferdinand Philippe (1810-1842) — Duke of Orléans, wounded in 1835 at the battle of Habrah, Algeria

⁶⁹ Thomas Hart Benton (1782-1858) — Comparison unexplained

all he could, consistently with the preservation of his popularity here (the first point with a French King,) to accelerate the payment of the money. But he has a difficult Ministry to manage, and, above all, there is nothing that the French hate so much as the refunding of money in this manner. Every *franc* we have drawn out of them, is like drawing a tooth out of their heads. The French have been accustomed to *take*, not to *pay*.

Again, I believe that the Americans have no better friend than Louis Philippe, so far as I can judge from the attention and civilities he has ever shown to Americans, and is showing at the present time, often in preference to the high-titled noblemen of other countries. The name of an "American citizen," is indeed often a passport to the Tuileries,⁷⁰ when no other thus untitled and unadorned names would ever be invited to enter. This attachment to our country, he has more serviceably manifested in his late efforts to induce his Ministry to overlook much that is in the late message, and to study the more diligently the few words they seem to find of apology and explanation. Louis Philippe indeed, is one of the few monarchs that have understood the art of governing the French. Probably no other man than himself, in his condition, could have wrung this appropriation from the Chambers. Tried as he has been in adversity, he knows how to hold on, and to let go, when it is necessary—and the art of reigning in, and letting loose the spirit of the French, he possesses as well as even Napoleon did—always remembering that the great wish of his heart is to fix his family firmly upon the throne. At the present time, no monarch is more popular. There is no enthusiasm in his behalf, but the popularity seems to be abiding and deeply rooted in all the interests of the French.

I have read some of the comments, and extracts from other journals, upon the message in the *New York Courier and Enquirer*, which came here by the way of London—the Havre packet due, not having yet arrived—and from them, I see, that two opinions are prevailing in the United States as to the explanatory character of the message. No such differences of opinion prevail among the Americans here. All remark that the message is written in a kind and explanatory, though proud and haughty, spirit and that, in it, the French *can* find enough, *if* they choose to escape with us from the difficulties in which they have involved this negotiation. No American here feels humbled by aught that the

⁷⁰ Tuileries Palace — Royal residence in Paris

President has written on this subject, or would have wished him to have said more in the way of explanation. From the moment it was read, all here, except a few French journals of a decided party character, and a few men such as M. Bignon of the Deputies, who has always been hostile to the payment of the debt, considered it as much of an explanation as the President could in honor give, though without a doubt the French would be glad to have more. The debate in the Chamber upon that part of the address, which speaks of the United States, has been swallowed up in the now more engrossing subject of ill-fated and ill-used Poland. The members, seeing a quietus⁷¹ given to the American question, have turned their eyes from us to St. Petersburg and the Bosphorus.

The news of the awful calamity New York has experienced,⁷² arrived here by the way of England. The sensation among the New York merchants in this city for a while was great, as no one knew what was *his* calamity. Galignani,⁷³ in his journal, has justly remarked that the sympathy experienced by the French shows that no difficulties in negotiations can destroy the warm feelings that have existed between America and the French, ever since the revolution. A subscription is talked of, and money has in fact been subscribed for the relief of the sufferers, but this cannot amount to much. The sympathy with the sufferers, and the sorrow expressed for their loss, amid the existing troubles between the two governments, show that the national feeling is good and sound.

Paris,
January 22, 1836.

Not a word has been for some days said upon the American question. The subject has entirely ceased to attract public attention. Everybody considers it as settled. Even a special message, no matter how bitter it might be, would now hardly reawaken the public feeling. The Parisians

⁷¹ Quietus — Final settlement; closure

⁷² On December 16, 1835, the entire business district of New York City was destroyed by fire. The catastrophe was exacerbated by the extremely cold weather, which left most sources of water inaccessible.

⁷³ John Anthony Galignani (1796-1873) — Publisher; born in London, settled in Paris

have forgotten all about what has been said, while the King is busy in giving balls at the Tuileries, and the community in general in visiting the theaters, the Opera, and the masked balls, which begin at midnight, and keep up till next morning. The merits of Grisi,⁷⁴ and Tamburini,⁷⁵ and Rubini⁷⁶ are now the main discussions, with a word or so upon the music of the dead Bellini⁷⁷ and the living Rossini.⁷⁸ Mademoiselle Mars⁷⁹ has more auditors than the Chamber of Deputies, and the doctors of the Sorbonne⁸⁰ work hard all day, and fiddle and sing half the night. Funny people—a droll life! But they have one faculty I never credited them with before, that of uniting severe and intense labor and study with the most frivolous pursuits. Of religion, there is none that I can see, and of morality less; but *honor* answers the purpose of the first, and *prudence* the last; and without a religious bond, they are not worse than other people; and utterly destitute of even a profession of morality, they are not more immoral than the English. There is less vice in Paris, I sincerely believe, than there is in London, though much less profession of virtue. Indeed, there is not that temptation here to be debasedly vicious: for the necessity of concealment, half the temptation, is taken away. On the other hand, there is no security for anything. Words have strange significations. Falsehood is called—politeness. Exaggeration takes the place of truth. The mother never trusts the daughter from her eye. The wife never expects much virtue of her husband. Gallantry is—civility. The toilette⁸¹ is the great thought of life. Civilization is—in excellent eating, or fine appearance, graceful bows, and pretty words. "*I don't love you any longer,*" a man says to his lady love, "*I am very sorry, what a misfortune, adieu,*" with a shrug of the shoulders—and tomorrow he begins again, and tries another. Marriages are made after five minutes courtships, quit in a month, contracted again, and—not all, to be sure, dissolved again in *law*, but in *fact*. Truth is not expected, unless the falsehood is known, and then a crime is pardoned when a crime is

⁷⁴ (Probably) Giulia Grisi (1811-1869) — Italian soprano

⁷⁵ Antonio Tamburini (1800-1876) — Italian operatic baritone

⁷⁶ Giovanni Battista Rubini (1794-1854) — Italian bel canto tenor

⁷⁷ Vincenzo Bellini (1801-1835) — Italian opera composer; he had died in the preceding September.

⁷⁸ Gioachino Rossini (1792-1868) — Italian operatic composer

⁷⁹ Mademoiselle Mars (1779-1847) — French actress

⁸⁰ Sorbonne — Building formerly housed the University of Paris

⁸¹ Toilette — Attention to personal appearance

confessed. Forgetfulness is the chief thing necessary, and the memory of little things is not known in France. But I am anticipating sketches I may have to serve by and by.

I have here spoken of only a class—the middle classes in France, and in all countries, are virtuous and generally honest—but this, of which I have spoken, is the class probably that the *Journal of Debates* calls civilized, when it represented France as the just medium between the two extremes of *barbarism*, the one in the horrid tyranny of *despotic* Russia, and the other in the savage rudeness of *democratic* America! Nevertheless, Paris is a paradise to live in, except its abominable winter climate, with no sunshine. It is the only *free* country in its social organization, the only land where, in society, every man is on an exact equal according to his merits, without regard to adventitious circumstances. The whole country, the whole people, are a curious contradiction, even of themselves; and what is true is *not* true, for they act from no rules, and one may use the sentiment of the Austrian General when he said of the young Bonaparte, "*there is no calculating on that young madman, for he acts against all the principles of war.*" The people are a study, and can never be found out—a compound, as they are, of the *highest good* and the *worst bad*, making an indescribable *mélange*,⁸² agreeable or provoking, as one or the other predominates.

Please give my thanks to somebody (in Portland I suspect) who has been kind enough to send me something less than half a bushel of abuse and criticism, lavished upon me in the *Argus*⁸³ chiefly, and in one or two other newspapers. The only objection I had to the package was its weight, which was rather uncomfortable, as over here they reckon postage by the *pound* and not by the *sheet*. Though the sender of this luggage did not intend to do me a service, yet I am not the less grateful, for abuse has always done me more good than praise; and though one may be more agreeable, yet the other is more serviceable, particularly when I can improve upon its suggestions. Beat a man well, they say, and you will make something of him, no matter how stupid he may be. Besides, I was delighted to see the *Argus*, and to read its advertisements, marriages, &c., for the sight even of an adversary from my own home is

⁸² *Mélange* — (Translation) Mixture

⁸³ The *Eastern Argus* newspaper (1803-1863) was consistently critical of Brooks, the editor of its competitor, the *Portland Advertiser*.

pleasant, as I have not before seen a journal from Portland since I left New York. I would give not a little even to have a peep at our old Observatory⁸⁴ on the hill, though it can't read, write nor talk. An old *friend*, as the *Argus* has been so long, of mine, it would be unkind to forget me in my absence; though others might say, the keeping up of a fire upon an out-of-the-way, and unhearing adversary, was not just the thing.

I have not pretended in my letters to give perfectly full and minute accounts of the countries I travel over. Years of time, an accurate knowledge of all the European languages, and volume upon volume would be necessary for that. If I had more time and more money to spend in that time, I would stop longer, and write and re-write my letters; but, as it is, I must go quick, and write quick; and often, I am sorry to say, after having set up almost all night, passing an exhausting day of intense labor in seeing sights or making journeys, or acquainting myself with the history of the people among whom I was, I have been compelled to send you letters without even re-reading what I had most rapidly sketched. But what I have sent you has been true—as accurate a picture as I could draw, shadowed it may be, by my own opinions, which will always go for what they are worth, and no more. Nevertheless, honest and fearless, for I will write what I think, let it offend whom it may.

Paris,
February 15, 1836.

As I expected, the whole of the United States is in commotion, and you are breathing nothing but war and arms, while all is as "*calm here as a summer's morning*," to quote Mr. Frelinghuysen's⁸⁵ famous phrase. The special message of the President has reached us, but there is neither any panic nor fear of panic. Stocks are not touched, and the whole subject

⁸⁴ The Portland (Maine) Observatory stands in the Munjoy district of the city; 86 feet tall, it was built in 1807 as a maritime signal tower.

⁸⁵ Theodore Frelinghuysen (1787-1862) — Politician from New Jersey; U.S. Senator from 1829 to 1835; the quotation (from an 1834 Senate speech) refers to the President of the First National Bank, Nicholas Biddle, as sitting "calm as a summer morning, with his directors around him, receiving his salary ...".

matter is hardly thought of. Everybody considers the question settled by the intervention of England; and though some, ever-fearful of General Jackson's feverish temperament, have a doubt whether he will accept this mediation, yet, no one seriously believes that he can refuse it, or make up any reasonable arguments for the refusal. Never was there a negotiation so unfortunately mismanaged on all sides as this has been. The French Ministry have played the fool, and, it does seem to me that our Secretary of State also, with a flippancy that some call chivalry, and a haughtiness that some call dignity, has been playing the fool as well as they. Actually, I do not believe, judging from what I see here, that the two governments that rule over the two nations on the two sides of the ocean, can force the people of the two nations into a fighting humor. For such is the friendly feeling here manifested toward us, that the French would much sooner embrace than shoot us. Americans here mingle with the French like brethren, though the gulf between us and all of the subjects of John Bull is as broad as the Adriatic, notwithstanding we speak a language that each other understands, though Irish-Scotch-English-Yorkshire-Lancashire-Welsh-Cockney John Bull avers—reasonably enough, without a doubt—that we do not speak *his* tongue.

Undoubtedly, you have all solved the *use* of the special message by this time, though that is a question here somewhat difficult of explanation. How much time would it have cost the President to wait in order to witness the effects of his first message upon the French people? What accelerated at present the wheels of negotiation with such a velocity that the drivers of them cannot rest to hear from across the Atlantic, when the present long session of Congress makes no such velocity necessary? If almost everything in this world did not depend upon time, place, and circumstances, the special message that the President has sent to Congress, recommending non-intercourse, would have involved us in inevitable war; but as it is, the warlike spirit breathed in every line of it, has only the effect of exasperation, without leading to action, or closing even the doors of negotiation. The French Journals comment upon it, and use it to affect their own ministers, either to restore them to office, or to keep them out; but none of them have any belief that Congress will immediately resort to the non-intercourse recommended, or carry out any of the measures proposed, other than that of fortifying the coasts, and strengthening the Navy. At the Tuileries also, the subject has been taken into consideration; but there, the intervention of

England, it is believed, will settle all troubles now, and save French honor, which the French, in this silly affair, have, as usual, set a very high price upon.

Can it be that General Jackson will refuse the mediation of England? I do not believe it for a moment, and yet, this is now the only ground of fear. Mr. Forsyth,⁸⁶ I fear, is not the proper man for his counselor on this occasion for, though a man of talents, yet he is a man that ever regards little things as much as the great. The punctilio⁸⁷ or ceremony, which such an intellect as Bonaparte's would overset in an instant, with a laugh at him who valued them, Mr. Forsyth would dwell upon for days. The customary compliments at the end of a letter—for example, the "*most obedient servant,*" and "*with the greatest respect I am yours, &c.*"—would be as important to him as the substance above. This, if I understand the dispute, was the amount of the question between him and M. Pageot; for, with a government that acts towards other governments with the usual frankness and simplicity of ours, the refusal of M. Broglie's conciliatory note was out of character, as well as uncivil. But Mr. Livingston⁸⁸ is a man of just the other extreme, and though a man of the world, thinks more of the substance than the form, and, therefore, I hope his counsels will prevail. Cooler and less flippant than Mr. Forsyth, he is more the man that such a temperament as the President's needs. Easy indeed, I see it is, to work out an argument that the mediation of England comes too late, and that we cannot accept it with honor; but, the man who comes to this conclusion, must come to another at the same time—that this argument is worth more than thousands of lives, and millions of dollars. England, our fatherland, from which we rebelled—our enemy as she has been, our rival as she is, the envy of the European world, and the empress of the sea—she it is, who has offered us her services, and honored us in offering them, and if we refuse them now in scorn, or in a mere matter of form, the whole of Europe will be against us. But, I do not believe the government will be so mad, though there are many here who have doubts. I consider this question as settled by that intervention. The French so consider it,

⁸⁶ John Forsyth (1780-1841) — American politician, U. S. Secretary of State 1834-1841

⁸⁷ Punctilio — (per Webster) Careful observance of forms

⁸⁸ Edward Livingston (1764-1836) — U. S. Secretary of State 1831-1833; minister plenipotentiary to France 1833-1835

though England is wholly with us in the right—and this accounts for the coolness with which they look upon this last message of the President, recommending non-intercourse and preparations for war.

All Paris, at present, is also mad in the revelries of the closing of the Carnival. The Ministry is in a state of change, and Fieschi is the hero of the day; so that, between the masks of the balls, the fanfaronades⁸⁹ on the boulevards, the petition of the Tuileries, and the love dissertations of the renowned Fieschi—that he makes now and then, when speaking of his mistresses—there is no space left for American politics. All Paris, yesterday, for example, (Sunday,) was thronging the boulevards, and men dressed as women, straddling horses, women themselves mounted high in open cabriolets with masks and flowing robes, Bedouin Arabs, Indians, Turks, bears on horses, devils, beggars, in costume, and the like, were among the mighty multitude. Sunday as it was, even a saint, if there are any nowadays, must have laughed to see men of sense, with their whole hearts and souls engaged in such frolics as these. Incomprehensible people! I study them hard, but the only character they seem to have is such a one as admits of no rule, no analyzation at all. A special American message, arriving in such a Carnival, of course, you see, will hardly be read, or thought of, unless some wag may choose to ride up and down the boulevards in a General's uniform, proclaiming that he is *the* General Jackson, with all the emphasis upon the *son*.

Paris,
February 23, 1836.

For a week or ten days past, Paris has been in a perpetual hubbub, and the rumbling of carriages in the streets has been incessant, from the business carriages of the day and night to the hackney coaches and cabriolets of the morning, returning homeward with the crowd, started from their revelries only by the peep of the morning sun. But the Carnival is over now, and Fieschi's prattling head has rolled on the platform of the guillotine, so that quiet has returned, and one can think where one has been.

⁸⁹ Fanfaronade — Ostentation, bluster

I always, in a strange land, put myself upon a crowd, as it were, and drift wheresoever it chooses to carry me, for he who is travelling to see the world, is much to blame if he does not see *all* of it, so that when he returns to his own fireside, he may have no longings to return to see what he has left unseen. In a spirit like this, I have tumbled myself into all sorts of society of Paris during the Carnival; and though a thousand things are there to be seen, yet it is only a few of them that can stand the telling, for he who finds balls and carousels in masks underground drollier than these in full light in Paris, must have made some journeys which are better left unsung than told. But I have seldom been, droll as the places are in Paris, where some American woman has not been before me—masked it is true, but what will not woman do, when society bears her out and when she can conceal herself in a domino⁹⁰ and a mask.

The masked balls in Paris are the greatest sources of amusement during the Carnival, and these vary in character, from what is called quite respectable, to those of a doubtful character, and then to those about which there is no doubt at all. At the French Opera, the respectable masked balls are given, a ticket of admission to which is sold at the door, but given always to such women as choose to demand it; and to this ball the women go, dressed in black and masked in black, thus, with their faces so hidden, and their bodies and heads so concealed in a broad cape, that a husband would hardly know his wife. The men are without masks, but are not permitted to enter unless they are neatly dressed, in such a manner as to comply with all the requisitions of fashionable society in Paris. In consequence of these regulations, added to the price of ten *francs* which a ticket costs, secures a body of men well-known and responsible, while the other sex is of a mingled description, neither known nor responsible. The women resort there to amuse themselves, to turn men, as it were for a little while, and to say and to do what they please, in spite of the world, while the men become the subjects of intrigue, and puzzle their brains in guessing what manner of a person that may be with whom they are carrying on a conversation. There is no dancing—nothing even but music and a promenade—and a little lottery

⁹⁰ Domino — (per Webster) A long loose hooded cloak, usually worn with a half mask as a masquerade costume

establishment of *bonbons*,⁹¹ established for the benefit of the poor. The *rencontres*⁹² in such places are often singular enough. Perhaps a young man turns gallant, and it may be that some pretty girl of his acquaintance has been sounding him to see what his morals are, and at last when she finds him out, gives him a shake and runs. It may be that the love which a woman would not make elsewhere she pours forth here to her heart's content. But what is done, no man can tell, except he who becomes the subject of some intrigue, or he who throws himself upon some chance, and follows it out to the end. The Opera is opened for this company at midnight, when the company assembles and the music begins. At four, five, or six o'clock, the company departs, some to bed, but more to some *café* or some restaurant in order to refresh exhausted nature.

The next great ball, which has this year attracted the attention of the Parisian community, was that given in an immense hall at Musard's,⁹³ Rue St. Honoré, where thousands would resort in a single night, so that the string of carriages would at times extend a mile. This is at least a ball of a doubtful character, though hundreds of the most respectable people of Paris were in the habit of going there, and among this crowd of carriages even pompous liveries at times were seen. The women at the Opera were all masked, except some women of the lowest class, but all appeared, both men and women, in whatever costume they chose to assume. Masks, however, are forbidden to the men for the sake of preserving order, but nevertheless many of them are so disguised that they can scarcely be seen; though, if under this disguise they attempt anything disorderly, the police officers who are there in crowds, soon drive them out of the hall. No view, however, can be more beautiful than this, of such an assembly, almost all of which are in costume, and so varied is this costume, and often so beautiful, that you fancy at times that you are in a general assembly of all the nations and tribes of the earth, of the past as well as of the present. History is ransacked, and the manners and fashions of centuries gone by are studied, for the discovery of costumes; so that the Persian, the Greek, the Roman, and

⁹¹ Bonbon — (per Webster) something that is pleasing in a light or frivolous way

⁹² Rencontre — (Translation) Casual meeting

⁹³ Philippe Musard (or Muzard) presented "winter waltz nights at the Salle Valentino in the Rue Saint-Honoré from 1833".

the Scythian are not only there, but the Maid of Orleans,⁹⁴ Charlotte Corday⁹⁵ and, in short, almost all the women who have made themselves remarkable in the world. The Italian peasant, the Swiss mountain girl, the French coquette of the country, the Tartar, the North American Indian squaw, each and all make their appearance, and one is astonished, not only by the brilliant splendor, but deeply interested in the study of costumes, which in this respect, are one of the best books in the world. If one was never shocked in such a company by the outrageous taste of some of the men who go there as beggars, in rags sewed together, making as vile a figure as they can and being even at times covered with blood so as to be more horrid, the spectacle would be one of unmingled pleasure.

For nothing is more charming than the taste with which a French woman chooses or arranges a habit, so as to become her person. If her shoulders are pretty, the robe is adjusted for their display; but, if otherwise, they are carefully mantled by some ingenious device. The light and airy foot is set off for view, and the mask even is no protection for the bright and shining teeth. A French woman studies the human frame as a sculptor studies anatomy, and whenever nature can be aided, the aid is given; and whenever nature needs no aid, its majesty is shown, in spite of laws and in contempt of fashion, which no French woman seems to regard further than as it answers her own purpose, and her own person. Dress, indeed, is a science with the women here, which they make a study of, calling to its aid many others, among which is a knowledge of colors, and the art of combining them, as well as a knowledge of anatomy, to say nothing of what they regard in the arts in the way of sculpture and painting. The models of beauty are ever present in her eye, and she studies them to improve her taste and her person, as much as she can.

The first thing one French woman regards when she sees another, is her dress, and the first compliment she makes is, perhaps, "*how divine you look in that robe,*" or something of the like. What then can be more

⁹⁴ The Maid of Orleans — Joan of Arc (c.1412-1431) heroine of the Hundred Years War; captured by the English, she was martyred, and later canonized by the Church.

⁹⁵ Charlotte Corday (1768-1793) — Assassinated the French Revolutionary leader Jean-Paul Marat in 1793, during the Reign of Terror.

beautiful than a fancy spectacle of perhaps fifteen hundred women, thus dressed with taste in becoming costumes, representing all the nations of the world, and all the prominent costumes of nations dead, where very memory is almost gone by. And though a Frenchman is seldom or never the well-dressed man that an Englishman is, it may be because there are no such tailors this side of the water as there are in London; yet, when in the costume of princes, Turks, nobles, sailors, Greeks, Neapolitans, and the like, they make a curious and interesting assembly, mingled with their fancifully dressed companions of the other sex. The hall of Musard's, twice every week for four or five weeks past, has exhibited such a spectacle as this, and such is the small demand for entering it—only four or five *francs*—that it has been constantly crowded; and so much so, some nights, such has been the rage to go there, that people have stood out of doors till three o'clock in the morning, before it was their turn to enter in the line in which they were arranged. This ball opens at midnight like that of the Opera, but dancing is allowed there. It usually breaks up at daylight.

Perhaps there are a dozen other balls given at the theaters, like that of Musard's, but when you have seen one, you have an idea of all. There are other masked balls which you can visit for a single *franc*, and the value of the company is commonly measured by the price. The less that is said about the lowest sort the better, though this one remark is strictly true of Paris: that in no city of the world does *decency* appear on all sides as in Paris, so that modesty is seldom or never shocked in public. For even the theaters, which are elsewhere often unfit resorts for modest women, are here as proper and kept in as good order as the churches elsewhere. The police is rigid, and the people have a public delicacy which the English and Americans have not, and nowhere in Paris can such a revolting spectacle be seen, as that which nightly throngs one of the chief streets of London, or certain parts of many of the theaters of the United States.

The closing day of the Carnival, which was on Tuesday last, was spent by the mass of the Parisians on the boulevards, where and elsewhere, an ox, highly caparisoned, was led in a train, all in the richest costumes of Rome of old. The boulevard, which is near the largest and principal street of Paris, was full of carriages of all kinds—the rich coach of the English with their men in livery, the milkman with his cart, the postman twanging his horn and snapping his whip, the cart with its heavy

wheels, the cabriolet full of masks—in short, with all of the vehicles that a great city like Paris can furnish. All were crowded with men and women and children, many in costumes, and all in their best and show-off habits. The sidewalks were so thick with human beings that a man could hardly pass from point to point, and barrels were sold for standing places, and windows were let out at so much a day. The whole city, in short, was in a masquerade, and night did not even end the scene in the boulevards, for there thousands of torches were paraded up and down, and loud and joyous was the revelry.

Midnight changed the scene. The masked balls opened then, and the mighty multitudes flocked into them to dance and caper, and carouse. I went to bed overwhelmed with fatigue, quite satiated with glory of such a kind, but the next morning, at early dawn, I walked two or three miles toward that part of Paris, out of the barriers, near where is *Père Lachaise*, and there, perhaps, were thirty thousand people, thousands in carriages, and thousands on foot, who made this the assembly ground after the carousals overnight. Every shop in Paris, and every shop beyond the barriers, and the windows too, were thronged, and the streets were so obstructed by the multitude that only the carriages could move in regular lines. The *canaille*⁹⁶—and never was there a better opportunity to see a Parisian mob—amused themselves with all sorts of grimaces, and contortions, and screams; and if anyone was disposed to take exception to their grimaces, they covered him over with meal and flour. The soldiers of the line were thick among them, and the municipal guards on horseback kept all in order, so that, large as was the multitude, and obstreperous even, disorder never was permitted to verge beyond a proper point. The armed force of Paris is like the standing army of other nations; and, though the multitude now and then give it an overthrow, yet they are awed and kept in quiet before it. At what hour this crowd dispersed, I did not stop to see. This one remark may be made of it with truth, that though there were some instances of drunkenness, and all were enfeebled by want of sleep, yet the difference in the number of drunkards between an English and an American crowd of the like character, was wonderfully in favor of the French. A beastly drunkard was a rare exception, that shocked and mortified even the *canaille*.

⁹⁶ Canaille — (per Webster) rabble, ruffraff

Friday morning, the multitude was out again, I know not how many strong, to see the execution of Fieschi, Morey and Pepin.⁹⁷ Many of my American friends adjourned from a brilliant ball about three o'clock in the morning, which is regularly given here by an American banker, whose purse is now among the heaviest in Paris—and when, only in Paris, there is an union of the French and the Americans—to see the chopping off of heads by the ax of the guillotine, that was to take place at eight o'clock. But, to secure places for witnessing this tragedy, one must be there long before daylight, and then buy a peep at a window for five *francs* or more, as he would a box at the theater. I did not see the execution, nor the crowd, and therefore must refer you to the newspapers for particulars. Perhaps, you will not see in them that the mistress of Fieschi has been engaged at a *Cafe*, to sit at the counter, so as to draw customers there; and that the caricaturists have made some of the incidents of this so terrible an execution even laughable by their wit; but, as these facts illustrate some of the peculiarities of the Parisians, they are worth remembering. Fieschi himself, indeed, is an epitome of the French of his class. The *glory* of his death seems to have amply compensated him for the pain of dying. The figure he has made for months in the public eye, has persuaded him that he was one of the chief members of the state, and at last he began to believe that, though he was an assassin of the republicans, he should die as a patriot of Louis Philippe. All he wanted to live for, it seems, was to *write* a little more, which passion seized him at the close of his days, and his letters he had scattered about as Sibylline⁹⁸ leaves for immortality. The French at last became so attached to the heroism of this miscreant, that if they could have had the power, they probably would have pardoned him his crime, only provided, however, that he could get a substitute for the guillotine—for the loss of that spectacle, it is not possible that the multitude would on any condition, have submitted to.

END OF LETTERS FROM PARIS

⁹⁷ Morey and Pepin were accomplices of Fieschi in his assassination attempt.

⁹⁸ Sibylline — Prophetic

SUMMARY OF VOLUME FOUR — HOMEWARD BOUND

LETTER 97 (Lyons) Coach crosses the Alps by Mont Cenis, slower than a walking pace — Leave Piedmont and enter Savoy — Switch from Italian to French — Fears of snowy disaster unfounded — Roadside fortress in construction — Chambery — French border: passport held and sent on to Paris

LETTER 98 (Paris) Soldiers everywhere — National Guards, Municipal Guards: maintaining public order — Admiration for the militia — Narrow streets: Tactical advantage of the Paris mob — Public satisfaction with the monarch — Carnival: revelry, but orderly revels — Theaters in Paris: hugely popular, safe for women, more popular than churches, more entertaining — Sunday attractions — Importance of fashion: compare and critique

LETTER 99 (Brussels) Paris: Four-month residence at an end — Coach for Brussels: its several compartments — Flat countryside deserves a railroad — Parisian preference for city over suburbs — Border controls: more polite, no bribery expected

LETTER 100 (Brussels) Accustomed European civic features not found in America — walks, parks, galleries — Practical utility of art appreciation in business — Belgians and French not more inventive, but have more taste — Stimulation of public displays of sculptures and paintings — Art and design benefit all in the community — America should learn from France and England, seeking a happy medium in utility, art, political freedom and social freedom.

LETTER 101 (Brussels) Waterloo: Recent occurrence (1815); different experience from visiting Roman battlefields — French and English positions — Role of Blucher's Prussians — Does the good done by Napoleon outweigh the evil? — Emotions still fresh and strong in combatant nationals — An American may judge that the good done by Napoleon has already been reversed — Dutch memorial mound — Few traces of thousands of lost lives — Summary burial in common graves — Waterloo village — Absurdity of commemorating the Marquis of Anglesey's leg

LETTER 102 (Antwerp) Language confusion awaits the English-speaking visitor: Walloon French and Flemish Dutch — Railroad projects: follow American example — Comfort of buildings related to climate — Antwerp: on the trail of Rubens

LETTER 103 (Antwerp) Botanical Garden; Sunday morning service; Sunday afternoon entertainment; Citadel — America (united) has no need to use its resources in building fortresses; city well-placed for the traveler

LETTER 104 (London) Steamboat to London — Belgium's viability as a kingdom questioned — Antwerp has seen better days, but trade may return eventually — Notable impact of returning to things English; the link between America and the Continent of Europe — French cooking more imaginative and healthier — Coldness of the English replaces vivacity of the French

LETTER 105 (London) Pride in sharing English language and descending from that country — England's power, political freedom, freedom of the press, justice — What England is now, America may one day become

END OF VOLUME FOUR