

Dreams, Waking Thoughts, and Incidents

William Beckford

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Dreams, Waking Thoughts, and Incidents; in a Series of Letters from Various Parts of Europe

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Dreams, Waking Thoughts, and Incidents

Dreams, Waking Thoughts, and Incidents; in a Series of Letters from Various Parts of Europe

LETTER I

June 19th, 1780. Shall I tell you my dreams? To give an account of my time is doing, I assure you, but little better. Never did there exist a more ideal being. A frequent mist hovers before my eyes, and, through its medium, I see objects so faint and hazy, that both their colours and forms are apt to delude me. This is a rare confession, say the wise, for a traveller to make: pretty accounts will such a one give of outlandish countries: his correspondents must reap great benefit, no doubt, from such purblind observations. But stop, my good friends; patience a moment! I really have not the vanity of pretending to make a single remark, during the whole of my journey: if be contented with my visionary way of gazing, I am perfectly pleased; and shall write away as freely as Mr. A., Mr. B., Mr. C., and a million others whose letters are the admiration of the politest circles.

All through Kent did I doze as usual; now and then I opened my eyes to take in an idea or two of the green, woody country through which I was passing; then closed them again; transported myself back to my native hills; thought I led a choir of those I loved best through their shades; and was happy in the arms of illusion. The sun set before I recovered my senses enough to discover plainly the variegated slopes near Canterbury, waving with slender birch-trees, and gilt with a profusion of broom. I thought myself still in my beloved solitude, but missed the companions of my slumbers. Where are they? Behind yon blue hills, perhaps, or t'other side of that thick forest. My fancy was travelling after these deserters, till we reached the town; vile enough o' conscience, and fit only to be passed in one's sleep. The moment after I got out of the carriage, brought me to the cathedral; an old haunt of mine. I had always venerated its lofty pillars, dim aisles, and mysterious arches. Last night they were more solemn than ever, and echoed no other sound than my steps. I strayed about the choir and chapels, till they grew so dark and dismal, that I was half inclined to be frightened; looked over my shoulder; thought of spectres that have an awkward trick of syllabing men's names in dreary places; and fancied a sepulchral voice exclaiming: Worship my toe at Ghent; my ribs at Florence; my skull at Bologna, Sienna, and Rome. Beware how you neglect this order; for my bones, as well as my spirit, have the miraculous property of being here, there, and everywhere. These injunctions, you may suppose, were received in a becoming manner, and noted all down in my pocket-book by inspiration (for I could not see), and hurrying into the open air, I was whirled away in the dark to Margate. Don't ask what were my dreams thither: nothing but horrors, deep-vaulted tombs, and pale, though lovely figures, extended upon them; shrill blasts that sung in my ears, and filled me with sadness, and the recollection of happy hours, fleeting away, perhaps for ever! I was not sorry, when the bustle of our coming-in dispelled these phantoms. The change, however, in point of scenery was not calculated to dissipate my gloom; for the first object in this world that presented itself, was a vast expanse of sea, just visible by the gleamings of the moon, bathed in watery clouds; a chill air ruffled the waves. I went to shiver a few melancholy moments on the shore. How often did I try to wish away the reality of my separation from those I love, and attempt to persuade myself it was but a dream!

This morning I found myself more cheerfully disposed, by the queer Dutch faces with short pipes and ginger-bread complexions that came smirking and scraping to get us on board their respective vessels; but, as I had a ship engaged for me before, their invitations were all in vain. The wind blows fair; and, should it continue of the same mind a few hours longer, we shall have no cause to complain of our passage. Adieu! Think of me

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sometimes. If you write immediately, I shall receive your letter at the Hague.

It is a bright sunny evening: the sea reflects a thousand glowing colours, and, in a minute or two, I shall be gliding on its surface.

LETTER II

OSTEND, *June 21st.*

T'other minute I was in Greece, gathering the bloom of Hymettus, but now I am landed in Flanders, smoked with tobacco, and half poisoned with garlic. Were I to remain ten days at Ostend, I should scarcely have one delightful vision; 'tis so unclassic a place nothing but preposterous Flemish roofs disgust your eyes when you cast them upwards; swaggering Dutchmen and mongrel barbers are the principal objects they meet with below. I should esteem myself in luck, were the nuisances of this seaport confined only to two senses; but, alas! the apartment above my head proves a squalling brattery, and the sounds which proceed from it are so loud and frequent, that a person might think himself in limbo, without any extravagance.

Am I not an object of pity, when I tell you that I was tormented yesterday by a similar cause? But I know not how it is; your violent complainers are the least apt to excite compassion. I believe, notwithstanding, if another rising generation should lodge above me at the next inn, I shall grow as scurrilous as Dr. Smollett, and be dignified with the appellation of the Younger Smelfungus. Well, let those make out my diploma that will, I am determined to vent my spleen, and like Lucifer, unable to enjoy comfort myself, tease others with the details of my vexatious. You must know, then, since I am resolved to grumble, that, tired with my passage, I went to the Capuchin church, a large solemn building, in search of silence and solitude; but here again was I disappointed. Half-a-dozen squeaking fiddles fugued and flourished away in the galleries, and as many paralytic monks gabbled before the altars, while a whole posse of devotees, in long white hoods and flannels, were sweltering on either side.

Such piety, in warm weather, was no very fragrant circumstance; so I sought the open air again as fast as I was able. The serenity of the evening, joined to the desire I had of casting another glance over the ocean, tempted me to the ramparts. There, at least, thought I to myself, I may range undisturbed, and talk with my old friends the breezes, and address my discourse to the waves, and be as romantic and whimsical as I please; but it happened that I had scarcely begun my apostrophe, before out flaunted a whole rank of officers, with ladies and abbés and puppy dogs, singing, and flirting, and making such a hubbub, that I had not one peaceful moment to observe the bright tints of the western horizon, or enjoy the series of antique ideas with which a calm sunset never fails to inspire me.

Finding, therefore, no quiet abroad, I returned to my inn, and should have gone immediately to bed, in hopes of relapsing into the bosom of dreams and delusions; but the limbo I mentioned before grew so very outrageous, that I was obliged to postpone my rest till sugar-plums and nursery eloquence had hushed it to repose. At length peace was restored, and about eleven o'clock I fell into a slumber, during which the most lovely Sicilian prospects filled the eye of my fancy. I anticipated the classic scenes of that famous island, and forgot every sorrow in the meadows of Enna.

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Next morning, awakened by the sunbeams, I arose quite refreshed by the agreeable impressions of my dream, and filled with presages of future happiness in the climes which had inspired them. No other idea but such as Trinacria and Naples suggested, haunted me whilst travelling to Ghent. I neither heard the vile Flemish dialect which was talking around me, nor noticed formal avenues and marshy country which we passed. When we stopped to change horses, I closed my eyes upon the whole scene, and was transported immediately to some Grecian solitude, where Theocritus and his shepherds were filling the air with melody. To one so far gone in poetic antiquity, Ghent is not the most likely place to recall his attention; and I know nothing more about it, than that it is a large, ill-paved, dismal-looking city, with a decent proportion of convents and chapels, stuffed with monuments, brazen gates, and glittering marbles. In the great church were two or three pictures by Rubens, mechanically excellent, but these realities were not designed in so graceful a manner as to divert my attention from the mere descriptions Pausanias gives us of the works of Grecian artists, and I would at any time fall asleep in a Flemish cathedral, for a vision of the temple of Olympian Jupiter. But I think I hear, at this moment, some grave and respectable personage chiding me for such levities, and saying, Really, Sir, you had better stay at home, and dream in your great chair, than give yourself the trouble of going post through Europe, in search of inspiring places to fall asleep. If Flanders and Holland are to be dreamed over at this rate, you had better take ship at once, and doze all the way to Italy. Upon my word, I should not have much objection to that scheme; and, if some cabalist would but transport me in an instant to the summit of Ætna, any body might slop through the Low Countries that pleased.

Being, however, so far advanced, there was no retracting; and as it is now three or four years since I have almost abandoned the hopes of discovering a necromancer, I resolved to journey along with Quiet and Content for my companions. These two comfortable deities have, I believe, taken Flanders under their especial protection; every step one advances discovering some new proof of their influence. The neatness of the houses, and the universal cleanliness of the villages, show plainly that their inhabitants live in ease and good humour. All is still and peaceful in these fertile lowlands: the eye meets nothing but round, unmeaning faces at every door, and harmless stupidity smiling at every window. The beasts, as placid as their masters, graze on without any disturbance; and I scarcely recollect to have heard one grunting swine or snarling mastiff during my whole progress. Before every village is a wealthy dunghill, not at all offensive, because but seldom disturbed; and there they bask in the sun, and wallow at their ease, till the hour of death and bacon arrives, when capacious paunches await them. If I may judge from the healthy looks and reposed complexions of the Flemings, they have every reason to expect a peaceful tomb.

But it is high time to leave our swinish moralities behind us, and to jog on towards Antwerp. More rich pastures, more ample fields of grain, more flourishing willows! a boundless plain before this city, dotted with cows and flowers, from whence its spires and quaint roofs are seen to advantage. The pale colours of the sky, and a few gleams of watery sunshine, gave a true Flemish cast to the scenery, and everything appeared so consistent, that I had not a shadow of pretence to think myself asleep.

After crossing a broad, noble river, edged on one side by beds of osiers beautifully green, and on the other by gates and turrets preposterously ugly, we came through several streets of lofty houses to our inn. Its situation in the Place de Mer, a vast open space surrounded by buildings above buildings, and roof above roof, has something striking and singular. A tall gilt crucifix of bronze, sculptured by some famous artist, adds to its splendour; and the tops of some tufted trees, seen above a line of magnificent hotels, have no bad effect in the perspective.

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

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

You can have no idea how many strange, amusing fancies played around me whilst I wandered along; nor how delighted I was with the novelty of my situation. But a few days ago, thought I within myself, I was in the midst of all the tumult and uproar of London: now, as if by some magic influence, I am transported to a city equally remarkable for streets and edifices, but whose inhabitants seem cast into a profound repose. What a pity that we cannot borrow some small share of this soporific disposition! It would temper that restless spirit which throws us sometimes into such dreadful convulsions. However, let us not be too precipitate in desiring so dead a calm; the time may arrive when, like Antwerp, we may sink into the arms of forgetfulness; when a fine verdure may carpet our Exchange, and passengers traverse the Strand, without any danger of being smothered in crowds, or lost in the confusion of carriages.

Reflecting, in this manner, upon the silence of the place, contrasted with the important bustle which formerly rendered it so famous, I insensibly drew near to the cathedral, and found myself, before I was aware, under its stupendous tower. It is difficult to conceive an object more solemn or imposing than this edifice at the hour I first beheld it. Dark shades hindered my examining the lower galleries or windows; their elaborate carved work was invisible; nothing but huge masses of building met my sight, and the tower, shooting up four hundred and sixty-six feet into the air, received an additional importance from the gloom which prevailed below. The sky being perfectly clear, several stars twinkled through the mosaic of the spire, and added not a little to its enchanted effect. I longed to ascend it that instant, to stretch myself out upon its very summit, and calculate from so sublime an elevation the influence of the planets.

Whilst I was indulging my astrological reveries, a ponderous bell struck ten, and such a peal of chimes succeeded, as shook the whole edifice, notwithstanding its bulk, and drove me away in a hurry. No mob obstructed my passage, and I ran through a succession of streets, free and unmolested, as if I had been skimming along over the downs of Wiltshire. My servants conversing before the hotel were the only sounds which the great Place de Mer echoed.

This universal stillness was the more pleasing, when I looked back upon those scenes of horror and outcry which filled London but a week or two ago, when danger was not confined to night only, and the environs of the capital, but haunted our streets at midday. Here, I could wander over an entire city; stray by the port, and venture through the most obscure alleys, without a single apprehension; without beholding a sky red and portentous with the light of fires, or hearing the confused and terrifying murmurs of shouts and groans, mingled with the reports of artillery. I can assure you, I think myself very fortunate to have escaped the possibility of another such week of desolation, and to be peaceably roosted at Antwerp. Were I not still fatigued with my heavy progress through sands and quagmires, I should descant a little longer upon the blessings of so quiet a metropolis, but it is growing late, and I must retire to enjoy it.

LETTER III

ANTWERP, *June 23rd.*

My windows look full upon the Place de Mer, and the sun, beaming through their white curtains, awoke me from a dream of Arabian happiness. Imagination had procured herself a tent on the mountains of Sanaa, covered with coffee-trees in bloom. She was presenting me the essence of their flowers, and was just telling me that you possessed a pavilion on a neighbouring hill, when the sunshine dispelled the vision; and opening my eyes, I found myself pent in by Flemish spires and buildings: no hills, no verdure, no aromatic breezes, no hope of being in your vicinity: all were vanished with the shadows of fancy, and I was left alone to deplore your absence. But I think it rather selfish to wish you here, for what pleasure could pacing from one dull church to another, afford a person of your turn? I don't believe you would catch a taste for blubbering Magdalens and coarse Madonnas, by lolling in Rubens' chair; nor do I believe a view of the Ostades and Snyders, so liberally scattered in every collection, would greatly improve your pencil.

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

My joy was, however, of short duration, as a few minutes brought me into the courtyard of the Chanoin Knyfe's habitation; a snug abode, well furnished with easy chairs and orthodox couches. After viewing the rooms on the first floor, we mounted a gentle staircase, and entered an ante-chamber, which those who delight in the imitations of art rather than of nature, in the likenesses of joint stools and the portraits of tankards, would esteem most capitally adorned: but it must be confessed, that, amongst these uninteresting performances, are dispersed a few striking Berghems and agreeable Polemburgs. In the gallery adjoining, two or three Rosa de Tivolis merit observation; and a large Teniers, representing a St. Anthony surrounded by a malicious fry of imps and leering devilesses, is well calculated to display the whimsical buffoonery of a Dutch imagination.

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

His servants, perhaps, assist not a little in the expenditure of so comfortable an income; the Canon being upon a very social footing with them all. At four o'clock in the afternoon, a select party attend him in his coach to an alehouse about a league from the city; where a table, well spread with jugs of beer and handsome cheeses, waits their arrival. After enjoying this rural fare, the same equipage conducts them back again, by all accounts, much faster than they came; which may well be conceived, as the coachman is one of the brightest wits of the entertainment.

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

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

It was late before I finished my musical excursion, and I took advantage of this dusky moment to revisit the cathedral. A flight of starlings was fluttering about one of the pinnacles of the tower; their faint chirpings were the only sounds that broke the stillness of the air. Not a human form appeared at any of the windows around; no footsteps were audible in the opening before the grand entrance; and, during the half hour I spent in walking to and fro beneath the spire, one solitary Franciscan was the only creature that accosted me. From him I learnt that a grand service was to be performed next day in honour of St. John the Baptist, and the best music in Flanders would be called forth on the occasion. As I had seen cabinets enough to form some slight judgment of Flemish painting, I determined to stay one day longer at Antwerp to hear a little how its inhabitants were disposed to harmony.

Having taken this resolution, I formed an acquaintance with Mynheer Vander Bosch, the first organist of the place, who very kindly permitted me to sit next him in his gallery during the celebration of high mass. The service ended, I strayed about the aisles, and examined the innumerable chapels which decorate them, whilst Mynheer Vander Bosch thundered and lightened away upon his huge organ with fifty stops.

When the first flashes of execution were a little subsided, I took an opportunity of surveying the celebrated Descent from the Cross, which has ever been esteemed one of Rubens's chef d'uvres, and for which they say old Lewis Baboon offered no less a sum than forty thousand florins. The principal figure has, doubtless, a very meritorious paleness, and looks as dead as an artist could desire; the rest of the group have been so liberally praised, that there is no occasion to add another title of commendation. A swinging St. Christopher, fording a brook with a child on his shoulders, cannot fail of attracting your attention. This colossal personage is painted on the folding-doors which defend the capital performance just mentioned from vulgar eyes; and here Rubens has selected a very proper subject to display the gigantic coarseness of his pencil.

Had this powerful artist confined his strength to the representation of agonizing thieves and sturdy Barabbases, nobody would have been readier than your humble servant to offer incense at his shrine, but when I find him lost in the flounces of the Virgin's drapery, or bewildered in the graces of St. Catherine's smile, pardon me if I withhold my adoration. After I had most dutifully observed all the Rubenses in the church, I walked half over Antwerp in search of St. John's relics, which were moving about in procession, but an heretical wind having extinguished all their tapers, and discomposed the canopy over the Bon Dieu, I cannot say much for the grandeur of the spectacle. If my eyes were not greatly regaled by the Saint's magnificence, my ears were greatly affected in the evening by the music which sang forth his praises. The cathedral was crowded with devotees and perfumed with incense. Several of its marble altars gleamed with the reflection of lamps, and, altogether, the spectacle was new and imposing. I knelt very piously in one of the aisles while a symphony in the best style of Corelli, performed with taste and feeling, transported me to Italian climates, and I was quite vexed, when a cessation dissolved the charm, to think that I had still so many tramontane regions to pass, before I could in effect reach that classic country, where my spirit had so long taken up its abode. Finding it was in vain to wish or expect any preternatural interposition, and perceiving no conscious angel, or Loretto-vehicle, waiting in some dark consecrated corner to bear me away, I humbly returned to my hotel in the Place de Mer, and soothed myself with some terrestrial harmony; till, my eyes growing heavy, I fell fast asleep, and entered the empire of dreams, according to custom, by its ivory portal. What passed in those shadowy realms is too thin and unsubstantial to be committed to paper. The very breath of waking mortals would dissipate all the train, and drive them eternally away; give me leave, therefore, to omit the relation of my visionary travels, and have the patience to pursue a sketch of my real ones from Antwerp to the Hague.

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

Towards evening, we entered the dominions of the United Provinces, and had all their glory of canals, track-shuyts, and windmills before us. The minute neatness of the villages, their red roofs, and the lively green of the willows which shade them, corresponded with the ideas I had formed of Chinese prospects; a resemblance which was not diminished upon viewing on every side the level scenery of enamelled meadows, with stripes of clear water across them, and innumerable barges gliding busily along. Nothing could be finer than the weather; it improved each moment, as if propitious to my exotic fancies; and, at sunset, not one single cloud obscured the horizon. Several storks were parading by the water-side, amongst flags and osiers; and, as far as the eye could reach, large herds of beautifully spotted cattle were enjoying the plenty of their pastures. I was perfectly in the environs of Canton, or Ning Po, till we reached Meerdyke. You know fumigations are always the current recipe in romance to break an enchantment; as soon, therefore, as I left my carriage, and entered my inn, the clouds of tobacco which filled every one of its apartments dispersed my Chinese imaginations, and reduced me in an instant to Holland.

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

As the evening was rather warm, I immediately walked out to enjoy the shade of the long avenue which leads to Scheveling. It was fresh and pleasant enough, but I breathed none of those genuine woody perfumes, which exhale from the depths of forests, and which allure my imagination at once to the haunts of Pan and the good old Sylvanus. However, I was far from displeased with my ramble; and, consoling myself with the hopes of shortly reposing in the sylvan labyrinths of Nemi, I proceeded to the village on the sea-coast, which terminates the perspective. Almost every cottage door being open to catch the air, I had an opportunity of looking into their neat apartments. Tables, shelves, earthenware, all glisten with cleanliness; the country people were drinking tea, after the fatigues of the day, and talking over its bargains and contrivances.

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

Abandoning therefore all hopes at present of this adventurous voyage, I returned towards the Hague, and, in my way home, looked into a country-house of the late Count Bentinck, with parterres and bosquets by no means resembling (one should conjecture) the gardens of the Hesperides. But, considering that the whole group of trees, terraces, and verdure were in a manner created out of hills of sand, the place may claim some portion of merit. The walks and alleys have all the stiffness and formality our ancestors admired; but the intermediate spaces, being dotted with clumps and sprinkled with flowers, are imagined in Holland to be in the English style. An Englishman ought certainly to behold it with partial eyes, since every possible attempt has been made to twist it into the taste of his country.

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I need not say how liberally I bestowed my encomiums on Count B.'s tasteful intentions; nor how happy I was, when I had duly serpented over his garden, to find myself once more in the grand avenue. All the way home, I reflected upon the economical disposition of the Dutch, who raise gardens from heaps of sand, and cities out of the bosom of the waters. I had still a further proof of this thrifty turn, since the first object I met was an unwieldy fellow (not able, or unwilling, perhaps, to afford horses) airing his carcass in a one-dog chair. The poor animal puffed and panted, Mynheer smoked, and gaped around him with the most blessed indifference.

LETTER IV

June 30th.

I dedicated the morning to the Prince of Orange's cabinet of paintings and curiosities both natural and artificial. Amongst the pictures which amused me the most is a St. Anthony, by Hell-fire Brughel, who has shown himself right worthy of the title; for a more diabolical variety of imps never entered the human imagination. Brughel has made his saint take refuge in a ditch filled with harpies and creeping things innumerable, whose malice, one should think, would have lost Job himself the reputation of patience. Castles of steel and fiery turrets glare on every side, from whence issue a band of junior devils. These seem highly entertained with pinking poor St. Anthony, and whispering, I warrant ye, filthy tales in his ear. Nothing can be more rueful than the patient's countenance; more forlorn than his beard; more pious than his eye, which forms a strong contrast to the pert winks and insidious glances of his persecutors; some of whom; I need not mention, are evidently of the female kind.

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

Mynheer Van Something is as eager to precipitate my motions as I was to get out of the damps and perplexities of Soorfleet yesterday evening; so mounting a very indifferent staircase, he led me to a suite of garret-like apartments; which, considering the meanness of their exterior, I was much surprised to find stored with some of the most valuable productions of the Indies. Gold cups enriched with gems, models of Chinese palaces in ivory, glittering armour of Hindostan, and Japan caskets, filled every corner of this awkward treasury. What of all its baubles pleased me most was a large coffer of some precious wood, containing enamelled flasks of oriental essences, enough to perfume a zenana, and so fragrant that I thought the Mogul himself a Dutchman, for lavishing them upon this inelegant nation. If disagreeable fumes, as I mentioned before, dissolve enchantments, such aromatic oils have doubtless the power of raising them; for, whilst I scented their fragrance, scarcely could anything have persuaded me that I was not in the wardrobe of Hecuba,

Where treasur'd odours breath'd a costly scent.

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

The butterflies, I must needs confess, were very near leading me another dance: I thought of their native hills and beloved flowers, of Haynang and Nan-Hoa; {110} but the jargon which was prating all around me prevented the excursion, and I summoned a decent share of attention for that ample chamber which has been appropriated to bottled snakes and pickled ftuses.

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

It was one o'clock before I got through the mineral kingdom; and another hour passed before I could quit with decorum the regions of stuffed birds and marine productions. At length my departure was allowable; and I went to dine at Sir Joseph Yorke's, with all nations and languages. The Hague is the place in the world for a motley assembly, and, in some humours, I think such the most agreeable.

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

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

Relying upon this comfortable security, I lingered unmolested amongst the beeches till the ruddy gold of the setting sun ceased to glow on their foliage; then taking the nearest path, I suffered myself, though not without regret, to be conducted out of this fresh sylvan scene to the dusty, pompous parterres of the Greffier Fagel. Every flower that wealth can purchase diffuses its perfume on one side; whilst every stench a canal can exhale, poisons the air on the other. These sluggish puddles defy all the power of the United Provinces, and retain the freedom of stinking in spite of their endeavours: but perhaps I am too bold in my assertion; for I have no authority to mention any attempts to purify these noxious pools. Who knows but their odour is congenial to a Dutch constitution? One should be inclined to this supposition by the numerous banqueting-rooms and pleasure-houses which hang directly above their surface, and seem calculated on purpose to enjoy them. If frogs were not excluded from the

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magistrature of their country (and I cannot but think it a little hard that they are), one should not wonder at this choice. Such burgomasters might erect their pavilions in such situations. But, after all, I am not greatly surprised at the fishiness of their site, since very slight authority would persuade me there was a period when Holland was all water, and the ancestors of the present inhabitants fish. A certain oysterishness of eye and flabbiness of complexion are almost proofs sufficient of this aquatic descent: and pray tell me for what purpose are such galligaskins as the Dutch burthen themselves with contrived, but to tuck up a flouncing tail, and thus cloak the deformity of their dolphin-like terminations?

Having done penance for some time in the damp alleys which line the borders of these lazy waters, I was led through corkscrew sand-walks to a vast flat, sparingly scattered over with vegetation. To puzzle myself in such a labyrinth there was no temptation, so taking advantage of the lateness of the hour, and muttering a few complimentary promises of returning at the first opportunity, I escaped the ennui of this endless scrubbery, and got home, with the determination of being wiser and less curious if ever my stars should bring me again to the Hague. To-morrow I bid it adieu, and if the horses but second my endeavours, shall be delivered in a few days from the complicated plagues of the United Provinces.

LETTER V

HAERLEM, *July 1st.*

The sky was clear and blue when we left the Hague, and we travelled along a shady road for about an hour, then down sunk the carriage into a sand-bed, and we were dragged along so slowly that I fell into a profound repose. How long it lasted is not material; but when I awoke, we were rumbling through Leyden. There is no need to write a syllable in honour of this illustrious city: its praises have already been sung and said by fifty professors, who have declaimed in its university, and smoked in its gardens. So let us get out of it as fast as we can, and breathe the cool air of the wood near Haerlem, where we arrived just as day declined. Hay was making in the fields, and perfumed the country far and wide with its reviving fragrance. I promised myself a pleasant walk in the groves, took up Gesner, and began to have pretty pastoral ideas; but when I approached the nymphs that were dispersed on the meads, and saw faces that would have dishonoured a flounder, and heard accents that would have confounded a hog, all my dislike to the walking filth of the Low Countries returned. I let fall the garlands I had wreathed for the shepherds; we jumped into the carriage, and were driven off to the town. Every avenue to it swarmed with people, whose bustle and agitation seemed to announce that something extraordinary was going forward. Upon inquiry I found it was the great fair at Haerlem; and before we had advanced much farther, our carriage was surrounded by idlers and gingerbread-eaters of all denominations. Passing the gate, we came to a cluster of little illuminated booths beneath a grove, glittering with toys and looking-glasses. It was not without difficulty that we reached our inn, and then the plague was to procure chambers; at last we were accommodated, and the first moment I could call my own has been dedicated to you.

You won't be surprised at the nonsense I have written, since I tell you the scene of the riot and uproar from whence it bears date. At this very moment the confused murmur of voices and music stops all regular proceedings: old women and children tattling; apes, bears, and show-boxes under the windows; French rattling, English swearing, outrageous Italians, frisking minstrels; *tambours de basque* at every corner; myself distracted; a confounded squabble of cooks and haranguing German couriers just arrived, their masters following open-mouthed; nothing to eat, the steam of ham and flesh-pots all the while provoking their appetite; Mynheers

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very busy with the realities, and smoking as deliberately as if in a solitary lusthuys over the laziest canal in the Netherlands; squeaking chambermaids in the galleries above, and prudish dames below, half inclined to receive the golden solicitations of certain beauties for admittance, but positively refusing them the moment some creditable personage appears; eleven o'clock strikes; half the lights in the fair are extinguished; scruples grow less and less delicate; Mammon prevails, darkness and complaisance succeed. Good-night; may you sleep better than I shall.

LETTER VI

UTRECHT, *July 2nd.*

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

Under these agreeable circumstances we entered the great city. The Stadt-huys being the only cool place it contained, I repaired thither as fast as the heat permitted, and walked in a lofty marble hall, magnificently covered, till the dinner was ready at the inn. That despatched, we set off for Utrecht. Both sides of the way are lined with the country-houses and gardens of opulent citizens, as fine as gilt statues and clipped hedges can make them. Their number is quite astonishing: from Amsterdam to Utrecht, full thirty miles, we beheld no other objects than endless avenues and stiff parterres scrawled and flourished in patterns like the embroidery of an old maid's work-bag. Notwithstanding this formal taste, I could not help admiring the neatness and arrangement of every inclosure, enlivened by a profusion of flowers, and decked with arbours, beneath which a vast number of round unmeaning faces were solacing themselves after the heat of the day. Each lusthuys we passed contained some comfortable party dozing over their pipes, or angling in the muddy fish-ponds below. Scarce an avenue but swarmed with female josses; little squat pug-dogs waddling at their sides, the attributes, I suppose, of these fair divinities.

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

Traversing the woods, we found ourselves in a large court, built round with brick edifices, the grass-plats in a deplorable way, and one ragged goat, their only inhabitant, on a little expiatory scheme, perhaps, for the failings of the fraternity. I left this poor animal to ruminate in solitude, and followed my guide into a series of shops furnished with gew-gaws and trinkets, said to be manufactured by the female part of the society. Much cannot be boasted of their handiworks: I expressed a wish to see some of these industrious fair ones; but, upon receiving no answer, found this was a subject *of which there was no discourse.*

Consoling myself as well as I was able, I put myself under the guidance of another slovenly disciple, who showed me the chapel, and harangued very pathetically upon celestial love. In my way thither, I caught a glimpse of some pretty sempstresses, warbling melodious hymns as they sat needling and thimbling at their windows above. I had

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a great inclination to have approached this busy group, but the roll of the brother's eye corrected me.

Reflecting upon my unworthiness, I retired from the consecrated buildings, and was driven back to Utrecht, not a little amused with my expedition. If you are as well disposed to be pleased as I was, I shall esteem myself very lucky, and not repent sending you so incorrect a narrative. I really have not time to look it over, and am growing so drowsy, that you will, I hope, pardon all its errors, when you consider that my pen writes in its sleep.

LETTER VII

SPA, *July 6th.*

From Utrecht to Bois le Duc nothing but sand and heath; no inspiration, no whispering foliage, not even a grasshopper, to put one in mind of Eclogues and Theocritus. But why did you not fall into one of your beloved slumbers, and dream of poetic mountains? This was the very country to shut one's eyes upon without disparagement. Why so I did, but the postillions and boatmen obliged me to open them, as soon as they were closed. Four times was I shoved, out of my visions, into leaky boats, and towed across as many idle rivers. I thought there was no end of these tiresome transits; and, when I reached my journey's end, was so completely jaded that I almost believed Charon would be the next aquatic I should have to deal with. The fair light of the morning (Tuesday, July 4th) was scarcely sufficient to raise my spirits, and I had left Bois le Duc a good way in arrears before I was thoroughly convinced of my existence; when I looked through the blinds of the carriage, and saw nothing but barren plains and mournful willows, banks clad with rushes, and heifers so black and dismal that Proserpine herself would have given them up to Hecate. I was near believing myself in the neighbourhood of a certain evil place, where I should be punished for all my croakings. We travelled at this rate, I dare say, fifteen miles, without seeing a single shed: at last, one or two miserable cottages appeared, darkened by heath, and stuck in a sand-pit; from whence issued a half-starved generation, that pursued us a long while with their piteous wailings. The heavy roads and ugly prospects, together with the petulant clamours of my petitioners, made me quite uncharitable. I was in a dark, remorseless mood, which lasted me till we reached Brée, a shabby decayed town, encompassed by walls and ruined turrets. Having nothing to do, I straggled about them, till night shaded the dreary prospects, and gave me an opportunity of imagining them, if I pleased, noble and majestic. Several of these waning edifices were invested with thick ivy: the evening was chill, and I crept under their covert. Two or three brother owls were before me, but politely gave up their pretensions to the spot, and, as soon as I appeared, with a rueful whoop flitted away to some deeper retirement. I had scarcely begun to mope in tranquillity, before a rapid shower trickled amongst the clusters above me, and forced me to abandon my haunt. Returning in the midst of it to my inn, I hurried to bed, and was soon lulled asleep by the storm. A dream bore me off to Persepolis; and led me thro' vast subterraneous treasures to a hall, where Solomon, methought, was holding forth upon their vanity. I was upon the very point of securing a part of this immense wealth, and fancied myself writing down the sage prophet's advice how to make use of it, when a loud vociferation in the street, and the bell of a neighbouring chapel, dispersed the vision. Starting up, I threw open the windows, and found it was eight o'clock (Wednesday, July 5th), and had hardly rubbed my eyes, before beggars came limping from every quarter. I knew their plaguy voices but too well; and that the same hubbub had broken my slumbers, and driven me from wisdom and riches to the regions of ignorance and poverty. The halt, the lame, and the blind, being restored, by the miracle of a few stivers, to their functions, we breakfasted in peace, and, gaining the carriage, waded through sandy deserts to Maestricht: our view, however, was considerably improved, for a league round the town, and presented some hills and pleasant valleys, smiling with crops of grain: here and there, green meadows, spread over with hay, varied the

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prospect, which the chirping of birds (the first I had heard for many a tedious day) amongst the barley, rendered so cheerful, that I began, like them, my exultations, and was equally thoughtless and serene. I need scarcely tell you, that, leaving the coach, I pursued a deep furrow between two extensive corn-fields, and reposed upon a bank of flowers, the golden ears waving above my head, and entirely bounding my prospect. Here I lay, in peace and sunshine, a few happy moments; contemplating the blue sky, and fancying myself restored to the valley at F., where I have passed so many happy hours, shut out from the world, and concealed in the bosom of harvests. It was then I first grew so fond of dreaming; and no wonder, since I have frequently imagined that Ceres did not disdain to inspire my slumbers; but, half concealed, half visible, would tell me amusing stories of her reapers; and, sometimes more seriously inclined, recite the affecting tale of her misfortunes. At midday, when all was still, and a warm haze seemed to repose on the face of the landscape, I have often fancied this celestial voice bewailing Proserpine, in the most pathetic accents. From these sacred moments I resolved to offer sacrifice in the fields of Enna; to explore their fragrant recesses, and experience whether the Divinity would not manifest herself to me in her favourite domain. It was this vow, which tempted me from my native valleys. Its execution, therefore, being my principal aim, I deserted my solitary bank and proceeded on my journey. Maestricht abounds in Gothic churches, but contains no temple to Ceres. I was not sorry to quit it, after spending an hour unavoidably within its walls. Our road was conducted up a considerable eminence, from the summit of which we discovered a range of woody steeps, extending for leagues; beneath lay a winding valley, richly variegated and lighted up by the Maese. The evening sun, scarcely gleaming through hazy clouds, cast a pale, tender hue upon the landscape, and the copses, still dewy with a shower that had lately fallen, diffused the most grateful fragrance. Flocks of sheep hung browsing on the acclivities, whilst a numerous herd were dispersed along the river's side. I stayed so long, enjoying this pastoral scene, that we did not arrive at Liège till the night was advanced, and the moon risen. Her interesting gleams were thrown away upon this ill-built, crowded city; and I grieved that gates and fortifications prevented my breathing the fresh air of the surrounding mountains.

Next morning (July 6th) a zigzag road brought us, after many descents and rises, to Spa. The approach, through a rocky vale, is not totally devoid of picturesque merit, and as I met no cabriolets or tituppings on the *chaufée*, I concluded that the waters were not as yet much visited; and that I should have their romantic environs pretty much to myself. But, alas, how rudely was I deceived! The moment we entered up flew a dozen sashes. Chevaliers de St. Louis, meagre Marquises, and ladies of the scarlet order of Babylon, all poked their heads out. In a few minutes half the town was in motion; tailors, confectioners, and barbers thrusting bills into our hands with manifold grimaces and contortions. Then succeeded a grand *entré* of *valets de place*, who were hardly dismissed before the lodging letters arrived, followed by somebody with a list of *les seigneurs* and *dames* as long as a Welsh pedigree. Half-an-hour was wasted in speeches and recommendations; another passed before we could snatch a morsel of refreshment; they then finding I was neither inclined to go to the ball, nor enter the land where Pharaoh reigneth, peace was restored, a few feeble bows were scraped, and I found myself in perfect solitude. Taking advantage of this quiet moment, I stole out of town, and followed a path cut in the rocks, which brought me to a young wood of oaks on their summits. Luckily I met no saunterer: the gay vagabonds, it seemed, were all at the assembly, as happy as billiards and chit-chat could make them. It was not an evening to tempt such folks abroad. The air was cool, and the sky lowering; a melancholy cloud shaded the wild hills and irregular woods at a distance. There was something so importunate in their appearance, that I could not help asking their name, and was told they were skirts of the forest of Ardenne, amongst whose enchanted labyrinths the heroes of Boyardo and Ariosto roved formerly in quest of adventures. I felt myself singularly affected whilst gazing upon a wood so celebrated in romance for feats of the highest chivalry; and, Don Quixote-like, would have explored its recesses in search of that memorable fountain of hatred, which (if you recollect the story) was raised by Merlin to free illustrious knights and damsels from the torments of rejected love. So far was I advanced in these romantic fancies, that, forgetting the lateness of the hour, I wandered on, expecting to reach the fountain at every step; but at length it grew so dusky that, unable to trace back my way amongst the thickets, in vain I strayed through intricate copses, till the clouds began to disperse and the moon appeared. Being so placed as to receive the full play of silver radiance, to my no small surprise, I beheld a precipice immediately beneath my feet. The chasm was deep and awful; something like the entrance to a grot discovered itself below, and if I had not already been disappointed on the score of the fount, I won't answer but that I should have flung myself adventurously down,

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and tried whether I might not have seen such wonders as appeared to Bradamante, when cast by Pinnabel, rather impolitely, into Merlin's cave. But no propitious light beaming from the cavity, I concluded times were changed; and searching about me, found at last a shelving steep, which it was just possible to descend without goat's heels, and that's all.

In my way home, I passed the redoute, and seeing a vast glare of lustres in its apartments, I ran upstairs and found the gamblers all eager in storming the Pharaoh Bank: a young Englishman of distinction seemed the most likely to raise the siege, which increased every instant in turbulence; but not feeling the least inclination to protract or to shorten its fate, I left the knights to their adventures, and returned ingloriously to my inn.

All languages are chattering at the Table d'Hôte, and all sorts of business transacted under my very windows. The racket and perfume of this place make me resolve to get out of it to-morrow; as that is the case, you won't hear from me till I reach Munich. Adieu! May we meet in our dreams by the fountain of Merlin, and from thence take our flight with Astolpho to the moon; for I shrewdly suspect the best part of our senses are bottled up there; and then, you know, it will be a delightful novelty to wake up with a clear understanding.

Indeed, Sir, no Monsieur *comme il faut*, ever left Spa in such dudgeon before, unless jilted by a Polish princess, or stripped by an itinerant Count! You have neither breakfasted at the Vauxhall, nor attended the Spectacle, nor tasted the waters. Had you but taken one sip, your ill-humour would have all trickled away, and you would have felt both your heels and your elbows quite alive in the evening. Granted; but pray tell your postillions to drive off as fast as their horses will carry them.

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

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

Many wild ideas thronged into my mind, the moment I beheld this celebrated river. I thought of the vast regions through which it flows, and suffered my imagination to expatiate as far as its source. A red, variegated sky, reflected from the stream, the woods trembling on its banks, and the spires of Nuys rising beyond them, helped to amuse my fancy. Not being able to brook the confinement of the carriage, I left it to come over at its leisure; and, stepping into a boat, rowed along, at first, by the quivering osiers; then, launching out into the midst of the waters, I glided a few moments with the current, and resting on my oars, listened to the hum of voices afar off, while several little skiffs, like canoes, glanced before my sight, concerning which distance and the twilight allowed me to make a thousand fantastic conjectures. When I had sufficiently indulged these extravagant reveries, I began to cross over the river in good earnest; and being landed on its opposite margin, travelled forwards to the town.

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

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quiet, in defiance of my adversaries, till it was time to survey the cabinet.

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

For my own part, I turned from them with disgust, and hastened to contemplate a Holy Family by Camillo Procaccini, in another apartment. The brightest imagination can never conceive any figure more graceful than that of the young Jesus; and if ever I beheld an inspired countenance or celestial features, it was here: but to attempt conveying in words what colours alone can express, would be only reversing the absurdity of many a master in the gallery, who aims to represent those ideas by colours which language alone is able to describe. Should you admit this opinion, you won't be surprised at my passing such a multitude of renowned pictures unnoticed; nor at my bringing you out of the cabinet without deluging ten pages with criticisms in the style of the ingenious Lady M –.

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

July 10th. Clouds of dust hindered my making any remarks on the exterior of this celebrated city; but if its appearance be not more beautiful from without than within, I defy Mr. Salmon himself to launch forth very warmly in its praise. But of what avail are stately palaces, broad streets, or airy markets, to a town which can boast of such a treasure as the bodies of those three wise sovereigns who were star-led to Bethlehem? Is not this circumstance enough to procure it every respect? I really believe so, from the pious and dignified contentment of its inhabitants. They care not a hair of an ass's ear whether their houses be gloomy and ill-contrived, their pavements overgrown with weeds, and their shops with filthiness, provided the carcasses of Gaspar, Melchior, and Balthazar might be preserved with proper decorum. Nothing, to be sure, can be richer than the shrine which contains these precious relics. I paid my devotions before it the moment I arrived; this step was inevitable: had I omitted it, not a soul in Cologne but would have cursed me for a Pagan.

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

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CORPORA SANCTORUM RECUBANT HIC TERNA MAGORUM;
EX HIS SUBLATUM NIHIL EST ALIBIVE LOCATUM.

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

Our road-side was lined with beggarly children, high convent walls, and scarecrow crucifixes, lubberly monks, dejected peasants, and all the delights of Catholicism. Such scenery not engaging a share of my attention, I kept gazing at the azure irregular mountains which bounded our view, and in thought was already transported to their summits. Various are the prospects I surveyed from this imaginary exaltation, and innumerable the chimeras which trotted in my brain. Mounted on these fantastic quadrupeds, I shot swiftly from rock to rock, and built castles in the style of Piranesi upon most of their pinnacles. The magnificence and variety of my aërial towers hindered my thinking the way long. I was still walking with a crowd of phantoms upon their terraces, when the carriage made a halt. Immediately descending the innumerable flights of steps which divide such lofty edifices from the lower world, I entered the inn at Bonn, and was shown into an apartment which commands the chief front of the Elector's palace. You may guess how contemptible it appeared to one just returned from the court of fancy.

In other respects, I saw it in a very favourable moment; for the twilight, shading the whole façade, concealed its plastered walls and painted pillars; their pediments and capitals being tolerably well proportioned, and the range of windows beneath considerable, I gave the architect more credit than he deserved, and paced to and fro beneath the arcade, as pompously as if arrived at the Vatican; but the circumstance which rendered my walk in reality agreeable, was the prevalence of a delicious perfume. It was so dusky, that I was a minute or two seeking in vain the entrance of an orangery, from whence this reviving scent proceeded. At length I discovered it; and, passing under an arch, found myself in the midst of lemon and orange trees, now in the fullest blow, which form a continued grove before the palace, and extend, on each side of its grand portal, out of sight. A few steps separate this extensive terrace from a lawn, bordered by stately rows of beeches. Beyond, in the centre of this striking theatre, rises a romantic assemblage of distant mountains, crowned with the ruins of castles, whose turrets, but faintly seen, were just such as you have created to complete a prospect. I was the only human being in the misty extent of the gardens, and was happier in my solitude than I can describe. No noise disturbed its silence, except the flutter of moths and trickling of fountains. These undecided sounds, corresponding with the dimness and haze of the scenery, threw me into a pensive state of mind, neither gay nor dismal. I recapitulated the wayward adventures of my childhood, and traced back each moment of a period, which had seen me happy. Then, turning my thoughts towards future days, my heart beat at the idea of that awful veil which covers the time to come. One moment, 'twas the brightest hope that glittered behind it; the next, a series of melancholy images clouded the perspective. Thus, alternately swayed by fears and exultation, I passed an interesting hour in the twilight, ranging amongst the orange trees, or reclined by the fountain. I could not boast of being perfectly satisfied, since those were absent, without whom not even the fields of Enna could be charming. However, I was far from displeased with the clear streams that bubbled around, and could willingly have dropped asleep by their margin. Had I reposed in so romantic a situation, the murmurs of trees and waters would doubtless have invited some strange mysterious dream" to hover over me, and perhaps futurity might have been unveiled.

LETTER VIII

July 11th. Let those who delight in picturesque country repair to the borders of the Rhine, and follow the road which we took from Bonn to Coblenz. In some places it is suspended like a cornice above the waters; in others, it winds behind lofty steeps and broken acclivities, shaded by woods and clothed with an endless variety of plants and flowers. Several green paths lead amongst this vegetation to the summits of the rocks, which often serve as the foundation of abbeys and castles, whose lofty roofs and spires, rising above the cliffs, impress passengers with ideas of their grandeur, that might probably vanish upon a nearer approach. Not choosing to lose any prejudice in their favour, I kept a respectful distance whenever I left my carriage, and walked on the banks of the river.

Just before we came to Andernach, an antiquated town with strange morisco-looking towers, I spied a raft, at least three hundred feet in length, on which ten or twelve cottages were erected, and a great many people employed in sawing wood. The women sat spinning at their doors, whilst their children played among the water-lilies that bloomed in abundance on the edge of the stream. A smoke, rising from one of these aquatic habitations, partially obscured the mountains beyond, and added not a little, to their effect.

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

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

July 12th. Having attained the summit, we discovered a vast, irregular range of country, and advancing, found ourselves amongst downs bounded by forests and purpled with thyme. This sort of prospect extending for several leagues, I walked on the turf, and inhaled with avidity the fresh gales that blew over its herbage, till I came to a steep slope overgrown with privet and a variety of luxuriant shrubs in blossom; there reposing beneath its shade, I gathered flowers, listened to the bees, observed their industry, and idled away a few minutes with great fascination. A cloudless sky and bright sunshine made me rather loth to move on; but the charms of the landscape, increasing every instant, drew me forward.

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

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After supper I walked on a smooth lawn by the river, to observe the moon journeying through a world of silver clouds that lay dispersed over the face of the heavens. It was a mild genial evening; every mountain cast its broad shadow on the surface of the stream; lights twinkled afar off on the hills; they burnt in silence. All were asleep, except a female figure in white, with glow-worms shining in her hair. She kept moving disconsolately about; sometimes I heard her sigh; and if apparitions sigh, this must have been an apparition. Upon my return, I asked a thousand questions, but could never obtain any information of the figure and its luminaries.

July 13th. The pure air of the morning invited me early to the hills. Hiring a skiff, I rowed about a mile down the stream, and landed on a sloping meadow, level with the waters, and newly mown. Heaps of hay still lay dispersed under the copses which hemmed in on every side this little sequestered paradise. What a spot for a tent! I could encamp here for months, and never be tired. Not a day would pass by without discovering some new promontory, some untrodden pasture, some unsuspected vale, where I might remain among woods and precipices lost and forgotten. I would give you, and two or three more, the clue of my labyrinth: nobody else should be conscious of its entrance. Full of such agreeable dreams, I rambled about the meads, scarcely knowing which way I was going; sometimes a spangled fly led me astray, and, oftener, my own strange fancies. Between both, I was perfectly bewildered, and should never have found my boat again, had not an old German naturalist, who was collecting fossils on the cliffs, directed me to it.

When I got home it was growing late, and I now began to perceive that I had taken no refreshment, except the perfume of the hay and a few wood strawberries; airy diet, you will observe, for one not yet received into the realms of Ginnistan. {127}

July 14th. I have just made a discovery, that this place as full of idlers and water-drinkers as their Highnesses of Orange and Hesse Darmstadt can desire; for to them accrue all the profits of its salubrious fountains. I protest, I knew nothing of all this yesterday, so entirely was I taken up with the rocks and meadows; no chance of meeting either card or billiard players in their solitudes. Both abound at Ems, where they hop and fidget from ball to ball, unconscious of the bold scenery in their neighbourhood, and totally insensible to its charms. They had no notion, not they, of admiring barren crags and precipices, where even the Lord would lose his way, as a coarse lubber decorated with stars and orders very ingeniously observed to me; nor could they form the least conception of any pleasure there was in climbing like a goat amongst the cliffs, and then diving into woods and recesses where the sun had never penetrated; where there were neither card-tables prepared nor sideboards garnished; no *jambon de Mayence* in waiting; no supply of pipes, nor any of the commonest delights, to be met with in the commonest taverns.

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

Wishing Monsieur d'Orloff all possible success, I should have left the company at a great distance, had not a violent shower stopped my career, and obliged me to return to my apartment. The rain growing heavier, intercepted the prospect of the mountains, and spread such a gloom over the vale as sank my spirits fifty degrees; to which a close foggy atmosphere not a little contributed. Towards night the clouds assumed a more formidable aspect. Thunder rolled awfully along the distant cliffs, and several rapid torrents began to run down the steeps. Unable to stay within, I walked into an open portico, listening to the murmur of the river, mingled with the roar of falling waters. At intervals a blue flash of lightning discovered their agitated surface, and two or three scared women rushing through the storm and calling all the saints in Paradise to their assistance.

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Things were in this state, when the orator who had harangued so brilliantly on the nothingness of ascending mountains, took shelter under the porch, and entering immediately into conversation, regaled my ears with a woful narration of murders which had happened the other day on the precise road I was to follow next morning.

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

I own I felt rather intimidated by so formidable a prospect, and was very near abandoning my plan of crossing the mountains, and so go back again and round about, the Lord knows where; but considering this step would be quite unheroical, I resolved to attribute my fears to the gloom of the moment, and the dejection it occasioned. It was almost nine o'clock before my kind adviser ceased inspiring me with terrors; then, finding myself at liberty, I retired to bed, not under the most agreeable impressions; and after tossing and tumbling in the agitation of tumultuous slumbers, I started up at seven in the morning of July 15th, ordered the horses, and set forward, without further dilemmas. Though it had thundered almost the whole night, the air was still clogged with vapours, the mountains bathed in humid clouds, and the scene I had so warmly admired no longer discernible. Proceeding along the edge of the precipices I had been forewarned of, for about an hour, and escaping that peril at least, we traversed the slopes of a rude, heathy hill, in instantaneous expectation of foes and murderers. A misty rain prevented us seeing above ten yards before us, and every uncouth oak or rocky fragment we approached seemed lurking spies or gigantic enemies. One time the murmur of the wind among invisible woods of beech, sounded like the wail of distress; and at another the noise of a torrent we could not discover, counterfeited the report of musquetry. In this suspicious manner we journeyed through the forest which had so recently been the scene of assaults and depredations. At length, after winding several restless hours amongst its dreary avenues, we emerged into open daylight. The sky cleared, a cultivated vale lay before us, and the evening sun, gleaming bright through the vapours, cast a cheerful look upon some corn-fields, and seemed to promise better times. A few minutes more brought us safe to the village of Viesbaden, where we slept in peace and tranquillity.

July 16th. Our apprehensions entirely dispersed, we rose light and refreshed from our slumbers, and passing through Mayence, Oppenheim, and Worms, travelled gaily over the plain in which Mannheim is situated. The sun set before we arrived there, and it was by the mild gleams of the rising moon, that I first beheld the vast electoral palace, and those long straight streets and neat white houses, which distinguish this elegant capital from almost every other.

Numbers of well-dressed people were amusing themselves with music and fireworks in the squares and open spaces; other groups appeared conversing in circles before their doors, and enjoying the serenity of the evening. Almost every window bloomed with carnations; and we could hardly cross a street without hearing the German flute. A scene of such happiness and refinement contrasted in the most agreeable manner with the dismal prospects we had left behind. No storms, no frightful chasms, were here to alarm us, no ruffians or lawless plunderers. All around was peace, security, and contentment in their most engaging attire.

July 17th. Though all impatience to reach that delightful classic region which already possesses, as I have often said, the better half of my spirit, I could not think of leaving Mannheim unexplored; and therefore resolved to give up the day to the halls and galleries of the electoral palace. Those, which contain the cabinet of paintings and sculptures in ivory, form a regular suite of nine immense apartments, about three hundred and seventy-two feet in length, well-proportioned and uniformly floored with inlaid wood. Each room has ample folding-doors richly

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gilt and varnished. When seen in perspective these entrances have the most magnificent effect imaginable. Nothing can give nobler ideas of space than such an enfilade of saloons unencumbered by heavy furniture, where the eyes range without interruption: I wandered alone from one to the other, and was never wearied with contemplating the variety of pictures which enliven the scene, and convey the highest idea of the collector's taste. When my curiosity was a little satisfied, I left this amusing series of apartments with regret, visited the library which the present Elector Palatine has formed, upon the same great scale that characterizes his other collections, and, after viewing the rest of the palace, saw the opera house, which may boast of having contained one of the first bands in Europe: from thence I returned home in a very musical humour.

An excellent harpsichord seconded this disposition, which lasted me till late in the evening; when growing drowsy, I yielded to the influence of sleep, and was in an instant transported to a far more delightful palace than that of the elector; where I expatiated in perfumed apartments with yellow light, and conversed with none but Albano and Claude Lorrain, till the beams of the morning sun entered my chamber, and forced my visiting companions to fly murmuring to the shades. I cannot say but I was sorry to leave Mannheim, though my acquaintance with it was entirely confined to inanimate objects. The cheerful air and free range of the galleries would be sufficient, for several days, for my amusement; as you know I could people them with phantoms. Not many leagues out of town, lie the famous gardens of Schweidsing. The weather being extremely warm, we were glad to avail ourselves of their shades. There are a great many fountains inclosed by thickets of shrubs, and cool alleys which lead to arbours of trellis-work, festooned with nasturtiums and convolvuluses. Several catalpas and sumachs in full flower gave considerable richness to the scenery; and whilst we walked amongst them, a fresh breeze gently waved their summits. The tall poplars and acacias, quivering with the air, cast innumerable shadows on the intervening plats of greensward, and, as they moved their branches, discovered other walks beyond, and distant jets of water rising above their foliage, and sparkling in the sun. After passing a multitude of shady avenues, terminated by temples or groups of statues, we followed our guide through a kind of arched bower to a little opening in the wood, neatly paved with different coloured pebbles. On one side, appeared niches and alcoves, ornamented with spars and polished marbles; on the other, an aviary; in front, a superb pavilion, with baths, porticos, and cabinets, fitted up in the most elegant and luxurious style. The song of exotic birds; the freshness of the surrounding verdure heightened by falling streams; and that dubious poetic light admitted through thick foliage, so agreeable after the glare of a sultry day, detained me for some time in an alcove reading Spenser, and imagining myself but a few paces removed from the Idle Lake. I would fain have loitered an hour more in this enchanted bower, had not the gardener, whose patience was quite exhausted, and who had never heard of the Red-Cross Knight and his achievements, dragged me away to a sunburnt, contemptible hillock, commanding the view of a serpentine ditch, and decorated with the title of Jardin Anglois. Some object like decayed limekilns and mouldering ovens, is disposed in an amphitheatrical form, on the declivity of this tremendous eminence: and there is to be ivy, and a cascade, and what not, as my conductor observed. A glance was all I bestowed on this caricature upon English gardens; I then went off in a huff at being chased from my bower, and grumbled all the road to Entswegen; where, to our misfortune, we lay amidst hogs and vermin, who amply revenged my quarrels with their country.

July 20th. After travelling a post or two, we came in sight of a green moor, with many insulated woods and villages; the Danube sweeping majestically along, and the city of Ulm rising upon its banks. The fields in its neighbourhood were overspread with cloths bleaching in the sun, and waiting for barks which convey them down the great river, in ten days, to Vienna, and from thence through Hungary, into the midst of the Turkish Empire. I almost envied the merchants their voyage, and descending to the edge of the stream, proffered my orisons to Father Danube, beseeching him to remember me to the regions through which he flows. I promised him an altar and solemn rites, should he grant my request, and was very idolatrous, until the shadows lengthening over the unlimited plains on his margin, reminded me that the sun would be shortly sunk, and that I had still above fifteen miles to go. Gathering a purple iris that grew upon the bank, I wore it to his honour; and have reason to fancy my piety was rewarded, as not a fly or an insect dared to buzz about me the whole evening.

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You never saw a brighter sky nor more glowing clouds than gilded our horizon. The air was impregnated with the perfume of clover, and for ten miles we beheld no other objects than smooth levels enamelled with flowers, and interspersed with thickets of oak, beyond which appeared a long series of mountains, that distance and the evening tinged with an interesting azure. Such were the very spots for youthful games and exercises, open spaces for tilts, and spreading shades to screen the spectators.

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

A share of this celestial transport seemed communicated to me whilst my eyes wandered over the plain, which appeared to widen and extend in proportion as the twilight prevailed.

The dusky hour, favourable to conjurations, allowed me to believe the spirits of departed friends not far removed from the clouds, which, to all appearance, reposed at the extremity of the prospect, and tinted the surface of the horizon with ruddy colours. This glow still lingered upon the verge of the landscape, after the sun disappeared; and 'twas in those peaceful moments, when no sound but the browsing of cattle reached me, that I imagined benign looks were cast upon me from the golden vapours, and I seemed to catch glimpses of faint forms moving, amongst them, which were once so dear; and even thought my ears affected by well-known voices, long silent upon earth. When the warm hues of the sky were gradually fading, and the distant thickets began to assume a deeper and more melancholy blue, I fancied a shape like Thisbe ^{133} shot swiftly along; and, sometimes halting afar off, cast an affectionate look upon her old master, that seemed to say, When you draw near the last inevitable hour, and the pale countries of Aneantsic are stretched out before you, I will precede your footsteps, and guide them safe through the wild labyrinths which separate this world from yours. I was so possessed with the ideas and so full of the remembrance of that poor, affectionate creature, whose miserable end you were the witness of, that I did not, for several minutes, perceive our arrival at Guntsberg. Hurrying to bed, I seemed in my slumbers to pass that interdicted boundary which divides our earth from the region of Indian happiness. Thisbe ran nimbly before me; her white form glimmered amongst dusky forests; she led me into an infinitely spacious plain, where I heard vast multitudes discoursing upon events to come. What further passed must never be revealed. I awoke in tears, and could hardly find spirits enough to look around me, till we were driving through the midst of Augsburg.

July 21st. We dined and rambled about this renowned city till evening. The colossal paintings on the walls of almost every considerable building gave it a strange air, which pleases upon the score of novelty.

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

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some such city, may easily be traced. Sometimes a corner of Antwerp discovers itself; and generally, above a Corinthian portico, rises a Gothic spire. Just such a jumble may be viewed from the statue of Augustus, under which I remained till the Concierge came, who was to open the gates of the town-house, and show me its magnificent hall.

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

I must confess it had a somewhat similar effect upon me; and I descended the flight of steps with as much pomposity as if a triumphal car waited at my feet, or as if on the point of giving audience to the Queen of Sheba. It happened to be a Saint's day, and half the inhabitants of Augsburg were gathered together in the opening before their hall; the greatest numbers, especially the women, still exhibiting the very identical dresses which Hollar engraved. My lofty gait imposed upon this primitive assembly, which receded to give me passage with as much silent respect as if I had really been the wise sovereign of Israel. When I got home, an execrable supper was served up to my majesty; I scolded in an unroyal style, and soon convinced myself I was no longer Solomon.

July 22nd. Joy to the Electors of Bavaria! for planting such extensive woods of fir in their dominions as shade over the chief part of the road from Augsburg to Munich. Near the last-mentioned city, I cannot boast of the scenery changing to advantage. Instead of flourishing woods and verdure, we beheld a parched dreary flat, diversified by fields of withering barley, and stunted avenues drawn formally across them; now and then a stagnant pool, and sometimes a dunghill, by way of regale. However, the wild rocks of the Tyrol terminate the view, and to them imagination may fly, and walk amidst springs and lilies of her own creation. I speak from authority, having had the pleasure of anticipating an evening in this romantic style.

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

July 23rd. We were driven in the evening to Nymphenburg, the Elector's country palace, whose bosquets, jets-d'eaux, and parterres are the pride of the Bavarians. The principal platform is all of a glitter with gilded Cupids and shining serpents spouting at every pore. Beds of poppies, hollyhocks, scarlet lychnis, and the most flaming flowers, border the edge of the walks, which extend till the perspective meets, and swarm with ladies and gentlemen in parti-coloured raiment. The Queen of Golconda's gardens in a French opera are scarcely more gaudy and artificial. Unluckily, too, the evening was fine, and the sun so powerful that we were half roasted before we could cross the great avenue and enter the thickets, which barely conceal a very splendid hermitage, where we joined Mr. and Mrs. T., and a party of fashionable Bavarians.

Amongst the ladies was Madame la Contesse, I forget who, a production of the venerable Haslang, with her daughter, Madame de —, who has the honour of leading the Elector in her chains. These goddesses stepping into a car, vulgarly called a cariole, the mortals followed, and explored alley after alley and pavilion after pavilion. Then, having viewed Pagodenburg, which is, as they told me, all Chinese; and Marienburg, which is most assuredly all tinsel; we paraded by a variety of fountains in full squirt, and though they certainly did their best (for many were set a-going on purpose), I cannot say I greatly admired them.

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The ladies were very gaily attired, and the gentlemen, as smart as swords, bags, and pretty clothes could make them, looked exactly like the fine people one sees represented in a coloured print. Thus we kept walking genteelly about the orangery, till the carriage drew up and conveyed us to Mr. T's.

Immediately after supper, we drove once more out of town, to a garden and tea-room, where all degrees and ages dance jovially together till morning. Whilst one party wheel briskly away in the valz, another amuse themselves in a corner with cold meat and rhenish. That despatched, out they whisk amongst the dancers, with an impetuosity and liveliness I little expected to have found in Bavaria. After turning round and round, with a rapidity that is quite inconceivable to an English dancer, the music changes to a slower movement, and then follows a succession of zig-zag minuets, performed by old and young, straight and crooked, noble and plebeian, all at once, from one end of the room to the other. Tallow candles snuffing and stinking, dishes changing, heads scratching, and all sorts of performances going forward at the same moment; the flutes, oboes, and bassoons snorting and grunting with peculiar emphasis; now fast, now slow, just as Variety commands, who seems to rule the ceremonial of this motley assembly, where every distinction of rank and privilege is totally forgotten. Once a week, on Sundays that is to say, the rooms are open, and Monday is generally somewhat advanced before they are deserted. If good humour and coarse merriment are all that people desire, here they are to be found in perfection, though at the expense of toes and noses. Both these extremities of my person suffered most cruelly; and I was not sorry to retire about one in the morning to a purer atmosphere.

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

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

After dinner we were led round the churches; and if you are as much tired with reading my voluminous descriptions, as I was with the continual repetition of altars and reliquaries, the Lord have mercy upon you! However, your delivery draws near. The post is going out, and to-morrow we shall begin to mount the cliffs of the Tyrol; but don't be afraid of any long-winded epistles from their summits: I shall be too well employed in ascending them. Just now, as I have lain by a long while, I grow sleek, and scribble on in mere wantonness of spirit. What excesses such a correspondence is capable of, you will soon be able to judge.

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

Mighty glad was I to make my escape; and in about an hour or two, we entered a wild tract of country, not unlike the skirts of a princely park. A little farther on stands a cluster of cottages, where we stopped to give our horses

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some bread, and were pestered with swarms of flies, most probably journeying to Munich fair, there to feast upon sugared tarts and bottle-noses.

The next post brought us over hill and dale, grove and meadow, to a narrow plain, watered by rivulets and surrounded by cliffs, under which lies scattered the village of Wollrathshausen, consisting of several cottages, built entirely of fir, with strange galleries hanging over the way. Nothing can be neater than the carpentry of these simple edifices, nor more solid than their construction; many of them looked as if they had braved the torrents which fell from the mountains a century ago; and, if one may judge from the hoary appearance of the inhabitants, here are patriarchs who remember the Emperor Lewis of Bavaria. Orchards of cherry-trees impend from the steeps above the village, which to our certain knowledge produce no contemptible fruit.

Having refreshed ourselves with their cooling juice, we struck into a grove of pines, the tallest and most flourishing perhaps we ever beheld. There seemed no end to these forests, save where little irregular spots of herbage, fed by cattle, intervened. Whenever we gained an eminence it was only to discover more ranges of dark wood, variegated with meadows and glittering streams. White clover and a profusion of sweet-scented flowers clothe their banks; above, waves the mountain-ash, glowing with scarlet berries; and beyond, rise hills and rocks and mountains, piled upon one another, and fringed with fir to their topmost acclivities. Perhaps the Norwegian forests alone equal these in grandeur and extent. Those which cover the Swiss highlands rarely convey such vast ideas. There, the woods climb only half way up their ascents, and then are circumscribed by snows: here, no boundaries are set to their progress, and the mountains, from their bases to their summits, display rich unbroken masses of vegetation.

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

I could not help fixing myself on the banks of the lake for several minutes, till this apparition was lost, and confounded with the shades of night. Looking round, I shuddered at a craggy mountain, clothed in dark forests and almost perpendicular, that was absolutely to be surmounted before we could arrive at Wallersee. No house, not even a shed appearing, we were forced to ascend the peak, and penetrate these awful groves.

Great praise is due to the directors of the roads across them, which, considering their situation, are wonderfully fine. Mounds of stone support the passage in some places; and, in others, it is hewn with incredible labour through the solid rock. Beeches and pines of a hundred feet high, darken the way with their gigantic branches, casting a chill around, and diffusing a woody odour. As we advanced, in the thick shade, amidst the spray of torrents, and heard their loud roar in the chasm beneath, I could scarcely help thinking myself transported to the Grande Chartreuse; and began to conceive hopes of once more beholding St. Bruno. {140} But, though that venerable father did not vouchsafe an apparition, or call to me again from the depths of the dells, he protected his votary from nightly perils, and brought us to the banks of Wallersee Lake. We saw lights gleam upon its shores, which directed us to a cottage where we reposed after our toils, and were soon lulled to sleep by the fall of distant waters.

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July 26th. The sun rose many hours before me, and when I got up was spangling the surface of the lake, which expands between steeps of wood, crowned by lofty crags and pinnacles. We had an opportunity of contemplating this bold assemblage as we travelled on the banks of the Meer, where it forms a bay sheltered by impending forests; the water, tinged by their reflection with a deep cerulean, calm and tranquil. Mountains of pine and beech rising above, close every outlet; and, no village or spire peeping out of the foliage, impress an idea of more than European solitude. I could contentedly have passed a summer's moon in these retirements, hollowed myself a canoe, and fished for sustenance.

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

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

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

I had hardly lost sight of them and regained my carriage before we entered a forest of pines, to all appearance without bounds, of every age and figure; some, feathered to the ground with flourishing branches; others, decayed into shapes like Lapland idols. I can imagine few situations more dreadful than to be lost at night amidst this confusion of trunks, hollow winds whistling among the branches, and strewing their cones below. Even at noonday, I thought we should never have found our way out.

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

Our inn had long airy galleries, and a pleasant balcony fronting the mountain. In one of these we dined upon trout fresh from the rills, and cherries just culled from the orchards that cover the slopes above. The clouds were dispersing, and the topmost peak half visible, before we ended our repast. Every moment discovering some inaccessible cliff or summit, shining through the mists, and tinted by the sun with pale golden colours. These appearances filled me with such delight and with such a train of romantic associations, that I left the table and ran

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to an open field beyond the huts and gardens, to gaze in solitude and catch the vision before it dissolved away. You, if any human being is able, may conceive true ideas of these glowing vapours sailing over the pointed rocks; and brightening them in their passage with amber light.

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

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

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

When got beyond the last chapel, I began to hear the roar of a cascade in a thick wood of beech and chestnut that clothes the steeps of a wide fissure in the rock. My ear soon guided me to its entrance, which was marked by a shed encompassed with mossy fragments, and almost concealed by bushes of the caper-plant in full red bloom. Amongst these I struggled, till, reaching a goat-track, it conducted me, on the brink of the foaming waters, to the very depths of the cliff, whence issues a stream which dashes impetuously down, strikes against a ledge of rocks, and sprinkles the impending thicket with dew. Big drops hung on every spray, and glittered on the leaves partially gilt by the rays of the declining sun, whose mellow hues softened the summits of the cliffs, and diffused a repose, a divine calm, over this deep retirement, which inclined me to imagine it the extremity of the earth, and the portal of some other region of existence; some happy world beyond the dark groves of pine, the caves and awful mountains, where the river takes its source! I hung eagerly on the gulph, impressed with this idea, and fancied myself listening to a voice that bubbled up with the waters; then looked into the abyss and strained my eyes to penetrate its gloom, but all was dark and unfathomable as futurity! Awakening from my reverie, I felt the damps of the water chill my forehead, and ran shivering out of the vale to avoid them. A warmer atmosphere, that reigned in the meads I had wandered across before, tempted me to remain a good while longer, collecting the wild pinks with which they are strewed in profusion, and a species of thyme scented like myrrh. Whilst I was thus employed, a confused murmur struck my ear, and, on turning towards a cliff, backed by the woods from whence the sound seemed to proceed, forth issued a herd of goats, hundreds after hundreds, skipping down the steeps: then followed two shepherd boys, gamboling together as they drove their creatures along: soon after, the dog made his appearance, hunting a stray heifer which brought up the rear. I followed them with my eyes till lost in the windings of the valley, and heard the tinkling of their bells die gradually away. Now the last blush of crimson left the summit of Sinai, inferior mountains being long since cast in deep blue shades. The village was already hushed when I regained it, and in a few moments I followed its example.

July 27th. We pursued our journey to Inspruck, through the wildest scenes of wood and mountain that were ever traversed, the rocks now beginning to assume a loftier and more majestic appearance, and to glisten with snows. I had proposed passing a day or two at Inspruck, visiting the castle of Ambras, and examining Count Eysenberg's

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cabinet, enriched with the rarest productions of the mineral kingdom, and a complete collection of the moths and flies peculiar to the Tyrol; but, upon my arrival, the azure of the skies and the brightness of the sunshine inspired me with an irresistible wish of hastening to Italy. I was now too near the object of my journey, to delay possession any longer than absolutely necessary; so, casting a transient look on Maximilian's tomb, and the bronze statues of Tyrolese Counts and worthies, solemnly ranged in the church of the Franciscans, set immediately off.

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

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

After a long ascent, the shades of evening reposing in the valleys, and the upland snows still tinged with a vivid red, we reached Schönberg, a village well worthy of its appellation: and then, twilight drawing over us, began to descend. We could now but faintly discover the opposite mountains, veined with silver rills, when we came once more to the banks of the Inn. This turbulent stream accompanied us all the way to Steinach, and broke by its continual roar the stillness of the night, which had finished half its course before we were settled to rest.

July 28th. I rose early to scent the fragrance of the vegetation, bathed in a shower which had lately fallen, and looking around me, saw nothing but crags hanging over crags, and the rocky shores of the stream, still dark with the shade of the mountains. The small opening in which Steinach is situated, terminates in a gloomy strait, scarce leaving room for the road and the torrent, which does not understand being thwarted, and will force its way, let the pines grow ever so thick, or the rocks be ever so considerable.

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

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

The farther we advanced in the dell, the larger were the plantations which discovered themselves. For what purpose these gaudy flowers meet with such encouragement, I had neither time nor language to inquire; the mountaineers stuttering a gibberish unintelligible even to Germans. Probably opium is extracted from them; or, perhaps, if you love a conjecture, Morpheus has transferred his abode from the Cimmerians, and has perceived a cavern somewhere or other in the recesses of these endless mountains. Poppies, you know, in poetic travels,

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always denote the skirts of his soporific reign, and I don't remember a region better calculated for undisturbed repose than the narrow clefts and gullies which run up amongst these rocks, lost in vapours impervious to the sun, and moistened by rills and showers, whose continual tricklings inspire a drowsiness not easily to be resisted. Add to these circumstances the waving of the pines, with the hum of bees seeking their food in the crevices, and you will have as sleepy a region as that in which Spenser and Ariosto have placed the nodding deity.

At present, I must confess, I should not dislike submitting to his empire, for a few months or years, just as it might happen, whilst Europe is distracted by demons of revenge and war; whilst they are strangling at Venice, and tearing each other to pieces in unhappy London; whilst Etna and Vesuvius give signs of uncommon wrath; America welters in her blood; and almost every quarter of the globe is filled with carnage and devastation. This is the moment to humble ourselves before the God of Sleep; to beseech him to open his dusky portals; and admit us into the repose of his retired kingdom. If you are inclined to become a suppliant, hasten to the Tyrol, and we will search together about the mountains, traverse the poppy-meads, and look into every chasm and fissure that excludes daylight, in hopes of discovering the mansion of repose. Then when we have found this corner (or I think our search will be successful) Morpheus will give us an approving nod, and beckon us in silence to couch, where, soon lulled by the murmurs of the place, we shall sink into oblivion and tranquillity. But we may as well keep our eyes open for the present, till we have made this important discovery, and look at the beautiful country round Brixen, whither I arrived in the cool of the evening, and breathed the freshness of a garden, immediately beneath my window. The thrushes, warbling amongst its shades, saluted me, the moment I awoke next morning.

July 29th. We proceeded over fertile mountains to Bolsano. Here first I noticed the rocks cut into terraces, thick set with melons and Indian corn; gardens of fig-trees and pomegranates hanging over walls, clustered with fruit; amidst them, a little pleasant cot, shaded by cypresses. In the evening we perceived several further indications of approaching Italy; and after sunset the Adige, rolling its full tide between precipices, which looked awful in the dusk. Myriads of fire-flies sparkled amongst the shrubs on the bank. I traced the course of these exotic insects by their blue light, now rising to the summits of the trees, now sinking to the ground and associating with vulgar glow-worms. We had opportunities enough to remark their progress, since we travelled all night; such being my impatience to reach the promised land!

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

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

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

July 31st. My heart beat quick when I saw some hills, not very distant, which I was told lay in the Venetian State, and I thought an age, at least, had elapsed before we were passing their base. The road was never formed to delight an impatient traveller; loose pebbles and rolling stones render it, in the highest degree, tedious and jolting. I should not have spared my execrations, had it not traversed a picturesque valley, overgrown with juniper, and strewn with fragments of rock, precipitated, long since, from the surrounding eminences, blooming with cyclamens.

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I clambered up several of these crags,

fra gli odoriferi ginepri,

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

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

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

About five in the evening, we had left the country of crags and precipices, of mists and cataracts, and were entering the fertile territory of the Bassanese. It was now I beheld groves of olives, and vines clustering the summits of the tallest elms; pomegranates in every garden, and vases of citron and orange before almost every door. The softness and transparency of the air soon told me I was arrived in happier climates; and I felt sensations of joy and novelty run through my veins, upon beholding this smiling land of groves and verdure stretched out before me. A few glooming vapours, I can hardly call them clouds, rested upon the extremities of the landscape; and, through their medium, the sun cast an oblique and dewy ray. Peasants were returning homeward from the cultivated hillocks and corn-fields, singing as they went, and calling to each other over the hills; whilst the women were milking goats before the wickets of the cottages, and preparing their country fare.

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

Passing under a Doric gateway, we crossed the chief part of the town in the way to our locanda, pleasantly situated, and commanding a level green, where people walk and eat ices by moonlight. On the right, the Franciscan church and convent, half hid in the religious gloom of pine and cypress; to the left, a perspective of

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walls and towers rising from the turf, and marking it, when I arrived, with long shadows; in front, where the lawn terminates, meadow, wood, and garden run quite to the base of the mountains.

Twilight coming on, this beautiful spot swarmed with people, sitting in circles upon the grass, refreshing themselves with cooling liquors or lounging upon the bank beneath the towers. They looked so free and happy that I longed to be acquainted with them; and by the interposition of a polite Venetian (who, though a perfect stranger, showed me the most engaging marks of attention), was introduced to a group of the principal inhabitants. Our conversation ended in a promise to meet the next evening at a country house about a league from Bassano, and then to return together and sing to the praise of Pacchierotti, their idol, as well as mine.

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

August 1st. The whole morning not a soul stirred who could avoid it. Those who were so active and lively the night before, were now stretched languidly upon their couches. Being to the full as idly disposed, I sat down and wrote some of this dreaming epistle; then feasted upon figs and melons; then got under the shade of the cypress, and slumbered till evening, only waking to dine, and take some ice.

The sun declining apace, I hastened to my engagement at Mosolente (for so is the villa called), placed on a verdant hill encircled by others as lovely, and consisting of three light pavilions connected by porticos: just such as we admire in the fairy scenes of an opera. A vast flight of steps leads to the summit, where Signora Roberti and her friends received me with a grace and politeness that can never want a place in my memory. We rambled over all the apartments of this agreeable edifice, characterised by airiness and simplicity. The pavement incrustured with a composition as cool and polished as marble; the windows, doors, and balconies adorned with silvered, iron work, commanding scenes of meads and woodlands that extend to the shores of the Adriatic; spires and cypresses rising above the levels; and the hazy mountains beyond Padua, diversifying the expanse, form altogether a landscape which the elegant imagination of *Horizonti* never exceeded. Beyond the villa, a tumble of hillocks present themselves in a variety of forms, with dips and hollows between, scattered over with leafy trees and vines dangling in continued garlands.

I gazed on this rural view till it faded in the dusk; then returning to Bassano, repaired to an illuminated hall, and had the felicity of hearing La Signora Roberti sing the very air which had excited such transport at Padua. As soon as she had ended, and that I could hear no more those affecting sounds, which had held me silent and almost breathless for several moments, a band of various instruments stationed in the open street began a lively symphony, which would have delighted me at any other time; but now, I wished them a thousand leagues away, so melancholy an impression did the air I had been listening to leave on my mind.

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

August 2nd. Our route to Venice lay winding about the variegated plains I had surveyed from Mosolente; and after dining at Treviso we came in two hours and a half to Mestre, between grand villas and gardens peopled with statues. Embarking our baggage at the last-mentioned place, we stepped into a gondola, whose even motion was very agreeable after the jolts of a chaise. Stretched beneath the awning, I enjoyed at my ease the freshness of the gales, and the sight of the waters. We were soon out of the canal of Mestre, terminated by an isle which contains a cell dedicated to the Holy Virgin, peeping out of a thicket from whence spire up two tall cypresses. Its bells

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tingled as we passed along and dropped some paolis into a net tied at the end of a pole stretched out to us for that purpose.

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

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

Here, meditation may indulge her reveries in the midst of the surges, and walk in cloisters, alone vocal with the whispers of the pine. I passed this consecrated spot soon after sunset, when daylight was expiring in the west, and when the distant woods of Fusina were lost in the haze of the horizon.

We were now drawing very near the city, and a confused hum began to interrupt the evening stillness; gondolas were continually passing and repassing, and the entrance of the Canal Reggio, with all its stir and bustle, lay before us. Our gondoliers turned with much address through a crowd of boats and barges that blocked up the way, and rowed smoothly by the side of a broad pavement, covered with people in all dresses and of all nations.

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

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

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

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August 3rd. It was not five o'clock before I was aroused by a loud din of voices and splashing of water under my balcony. Looking out, I beheld the grand canal so entirely covered with fruits and vegetables, on rafts and in barges, that I could scarcely distinguish a wave. Loads of grapes, peaches, and melons arrived, and disappeared in an instant, for every vessel was in motion; and the crowds of purchasers hurrying from boat to boat, formed one of the liveliest pictures imaginable. Amongst the multitudes, I remarked a good many whose dress and carriage announced something above the common rank; and upon inquiry I found they were noble Venetians, just come from their casinos, and met to refresh themselves with fruit, before they retired to sleep for the day.

Whilst I was observing them, the sun began to colour the balustrades of the palaces, and the pure exhilarating air of the morning drawing me abroad, I procured a gondola, laid in my provision of bread and grapes, and was rowed under the Rialto, down the grand canal, to the marble steps of S. Maria della Salute, erected by the Senate in performance of a vow to the Holy Virgin, who begged off a terrible pestilence in 1630. I gazed, delighted with its superb frontispiece and dome, relieved by a clear blue sky. To criticize columns or pediments of the different façades, would be time lost; since one glance upon the worst view that has been taken of them, conveys a far better idea than the most elaborate description. The great bronze portal opened whilst I was standing on the steps which lead to it, and discovered the interior of the dome, where I expatiated in solitude; no mortal appearing except an old priest who trimmed the lamps, and muttered a prayer before the high altar, still wrapped in shadows. The sunbeams began to strike against the windows of the cupola just as I left the church, and was wafted across the waves to the spacious platform in front of St. Giorgio Maggiore, by far the most perfect and beautiful edifice my eyes ever beheld.

When my first transport was a little subsided, and I had examined the graceful design of each particular ornament, and united the just proportion and grand effect of the whole in my mind, I planted my umbrella on the margin of the sea, and reclining under its shade, my feet dangling over the waters, viewed the vast range of palaces, of porticos, of towers, opening on every side and extending out of sight. The Doge's residence and the tall columns at the entrance of the place of St. Mark, form, together with the arcades of the public library, the lofty Campanile and the cupolas of the ducal church, one of the most striking groups of buildings that art can boast of. To behold at one glance these stately fabrics, so illustrious in the records of former ages, before which, in the flourishing times of the republic, so many valiant chiefs and princes have landed, loaded with the spoils of different nations, was a spectacle I had long and ardently desired. I thought of the days of Frederic Barbarossa, when looking up the piazza of St. Mark, along which he marched in solemn procession, to cast himself at the feet of Alexander the Third, and pay a tardy homage to St. Peter's successor. Here were no longer those splendid fleets that attended his progress; one solitary galeass was all I beheld, anchored opposite the palace of the Doge, and surrounded by crowds of gondolas, whose sable hues contrasted strongly with its vermilion oars and shining ornaments. A party-coloured multitude was continually shifting from one side of the piazza to the other; whilst senators and magistrates in long black robes were already arriving to fill their respective charges.

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

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

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appear a very genteel, decent sort of people, well used to the mode of their times and accustomed to miracles.

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

The republic, wisely jealous of ecclesiastical influence, connives at these amusing rambles, and, by encouraging the liberty of monks and churchmen, prevents their appearing too sacred and important in the eyes of the people, who have frequent proofs of their being mere flesh and blood, and that of the frailest composition. Had the rest of Italy been of the same opinion, and profited as much by Fra Paolo's maxims, some of its fairest fields would not, at this moment, lie uncultivated, and its ancient spirit might have revived. However, I can scarcely think the moment far distant, when it will assert its natural prerogatives, awake from its ignoble slumber, and look back upon the tiara, with all its host of idle fears and scaring phantoms, as the offspring of a distempered dream. Scarce a sovereign supports any longer this vain illusion, except the old woman of Hungary, and as soon as her dim eyes are closed we shall probably witness great events. {156}

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

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

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

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

I reposed amidst bay leaves, fanned by a constant air, till it pleased the fathers to send me some provisions, with a basket of fruit and wine. Two of them would wait upon me, and ask ten thousand questions about Lord George Gordon, and the American war. I, who was deeply engaged with the winds, and fancied myself hearing these rapid travellers relate their adventures, wished my interrogators in purgatory, and pleaded ignorance of the Italian language. This circumstance extricated me from my difficulties, and procured me a long interval of repose.

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

When I was thoroughly convinced of the reality of these sounds, I moved towards the shore from whence they proceeded: a glassy sea lay full before me; no gale ruffled the expanse; every breath was subsided, and I beheld the sun go down in all its sacred calm. You have experienced the sensations this moment inspires; imagine what they must have been in such a scene, and accompanied with a melody so simple and pathetic. I stepped into my boat, and instead of encouraging the speed of the gondoliers, begged them to abate their ardour, and row me lazily home. They complied, and we were near an hour reaching the platform before the ducal palace, thronged as usual with a variety of nations. I mixed a moment with the crowd; then directed my steps to the great mosque, I ought to say the church of St. Mark; but really its cupolas, slender pinnacles, and semicircular arches, have so oriental an appearance, as to excuse this appellation. I looked a moment at the four stately coursers of bronze and gold that adorn the chief portal, and then took in, at one glance, the whole extent of the square, with its towers and standards. So noble an assemblage never met my eyes. I envied the good fortune of Petrarch, who describes, in one of his letters, a tournament held in this princely opening.

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

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

There is something strange and singular in the tower, which rises distinct from the smooth pavement of the square, a little to the left as you stand before the chief entrance of St. Mark's. The design is rather barbarous, and terminates in uncouth and heavy pyramids; yet in spite of these defects it struck me with awe. A beautiful building called the Loggetta, and which serves as a guard-house during the convocation of the grand council, decorates its base. Nothing can be more enriched, more finished than this structure; which, though far from diminutive, is in a manner lost at the foot of the Campanile. This enormous mass seems to promise a very long duration, and will probably carry down the fame of St. Mark and his Lion to the latest posterity. Both appear in great state towards its summit, and have nothing superior, but an archangel perched on the topmost pinnacle, and pointing to the skies. The dusk prevented my remarking the various sculptures with which the Loggetta is crowded.

Crossing the ample space between this elegant edifice and the ducal palace, I passed through a labyrinth of pillars and entered the principal court, of which nothing but the great outline was visible at so late an hour. Two reservoirs of bronze, rich with sculptured foliage, diversify the area. In front a magnificent flight of steps presents itself, by which the senators ascend through vast and solemn corridors, which lead to the interior of the edifice.

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The colossal statues of Mars and Neptune guard the entrance, and have given the appellation of *scala dei geganti* to the steps below, which I mounted not without respect; and, leaning against the balustrades, formed like the rest of the building of the rarest marbles, adored the tutelary divinities.

My devotions were shortly interrupted by one of the *sbirri*, or officers of police, who take their stands after sunset before the avenues of the palace, and who told me the gates were upon the point of being closed. So, hurrying down the steps, I left half my vows unpaid and a million of delicate sculptures unexplored; for every pilaster, every frieze, every entablature, is incrustated with porphyry, verde antique, or some other curious marble, carved into as many grotesque wreaths and mouldings as we admire in the loggios of Raffaello. The various portals, the strange projections, the length of cloisters; in short, the noble irregularity of these imperial piles, delighted me beyond idea; and I was sorry to be forced to abandon them so soon, especially as the twilight, which bats and owls love not better than I do, enlarged every portico, lengthened every colonnade, and increased the dimensions of the whole, just as imagination desired. This faculty would have had full scope had I but remained an hour longer. The moon would then have gleamed upon the gigantic forms of Mars and Neptune, and discovered the statues of ancient heroes emerging from the gloom of their niches.

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

These fits of enthusiasm were hardly subsided, when I issued from the gates of the palace into the great square, which received a faint gleam from its casinos and palaces, just beginning to be lighted up, and become the resort of pleasure and dissipation. Numbers were walking in parties upon the pavement; some sought the shade of the porticos with their favourites; others were earnestly engaged in conversation, and filled the gay illuminated apartments, where they resorted to drink coffee and sorbet, with laughter and merriment. A thoughtless giddy transport prevailed; for, at this hour, anything like restraint seems perfectly out of the question; and however solemn a magistrate or senator may appear in the day, at night he lays up wig and robe and gravity to sleep together, runs intriguing about in his gondola, takes the reigning sultana under his arm, and so rambles half over the town, which grows gayer and gayer as the day declines.

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

Whilst the higher ranks were solacing themselves in their casinos, the rabble were gathered in knots round the strollers and mountebanks, singing and scaramouching in the middle of the square. I observed a great number of Orientals amongst the crowd, and heard Turkish and Arabic muttering in every corner. There the Sclavonian dialect predominated; there some Grecian jargon, almost unintelligible. Had St. Mark's church been the wondrous tower, and its piazza the chief square, of the city of Babylon, there could scarcely have been a greater confusion of languages.

The novelty of the scene afforded me no small share of amusement, and I wandered about from group to group, and from one strange exotic to another, asking and being asked innumerable ridiculous questions, and settling the

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politics of London and Constantinople, almost in the same breath. This instant, I found myself in a circle of grave Armenian priests and jewellers; the next amongst Greeks and Dalmatians, who accosted me with the smoothest compliments, and gave proof that their reputation for pliability and address was not ill-founded.

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

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

In the intervals of shuffling and dealing, some talked over the affairs of the grand council with less reserve than I expected; and two or three of them asked some feeble questions about the late tumults in London: as much, however, through indolence and forgetfulness, I should conjecture, as from any political motive, for I don't believe all those wise stories, which some travellers have propagated, of Venetian subtlety and profound silence. They might have reigned during the dark periods of the republic, but at this moment the veil is rent in fifty places; and without any wonderful penetration, the debates of the senate are discoverable. There doubtless was a time when, society being greatly divided, and little communication subsisting among the nobles, secrets were invariably kept; but since the establishment of casinos, which the ladies rule, where chit-chat and tittle-tattle are for ever going forwards, who can preserve a rigorous taciturnity upon any subject in the universe? It was one o'clock before all the company were assembled, and I left them at three, still dreaming over their coffee and card-tables. *Trieze* is their favourite game: *uno, due, tre, quattro, cinque, fante, cavallo* are eternally repeated; the apartments echoed no other sound.

No lively people could endure such monotony; yet I have been told the Venetians are remarkably spirited, and so eager in the pursuit of amusement as hardly to allow themselves any sleep. Some, for instance, after declaiming in the Senate, walking an hour in the square, and fidgeting about from one casino to another till morning dawns, will get into a gondola, row across the Lagunes, take the post to Mestre or Fusina, and jumble over craggy pavements to Treviso, breakfast in haste, and rattle back again as if the devil were charioteer: by eleven the party is restored to Venice, resumes robe and periwig, and goes to council.

This may be very true, and yet I will never cite the Venetians as examples of vivacity. Their nerves, unstrung by disease and the consequences of early debaucheries, impede all lively flow of spirits in its course, and permit at best but a few moments of a false and feverish activity. The approaches of rest, forced back by an immoderate use of coffee, render them, too, weak and listless, and the facility of being wafted from place to place in a gondola, adds not a little to their indolence. In short, I can scarcely regard their Eastern neighbours in a more lazy light; and am apt to imagine that instead of slumbering less than other people, they pass their lives in one perpetual doze.

August 4th. The heats were so excessive in the night, that I thought myself several times on the point of suffocation, tossed about like a wounded fish, and dreamt of the devil and Senegal. Towards sunrise, a faint breeze restored me to life and reason. I slumbered till late in the day, and the moment I was fairly awake, ordered my gondolier to row out to the main ocean, that I might plunge into its waves, and hear and see nothing but waters around me.

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We shot off, wound amongst a number of sheds, shops, churches, casinos, and palaces, growing immediately out of the canals, without any apparent foundation. No quay, no terrace, not even a slab is to be seen before the doors; one step brings you from the hall into the bark, and the vestibules of the stateliest structures lie open to the waters, and level with them. I observed several, as I glided along, supported by rows of well-proportioned pillars, adorned with terms and vases, beyond which the eye generally discovers a grand court, and sometimes a garden.

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

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

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

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

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

A swarm of lawyers filled the Sala del Maggior Consiglio, and one of the first advocates in the republic was pleading with all his might, before a solemn row of senators. The eyes and ears of the assembly seemed equally affected. Clouds of powder and volleys of execrations issuing every instant from the disputants, I got out of their way; and was led from hall to hall, and from picture to picture, with exemplary resignation. To be sure, I was heartily tired, but behaved with decency, having never once expressed how much I wished the chefs-d'uvre I had been contemplating, less smoky and numerous.

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

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account of the mysteries within; some little dialogue between the Three Inquisitors, or debate in the Council of Ten.

This is the tribunal which holds the wealthy nobility in continual awe; before which they appear with trembling and terror: and whose summons they dare not disobey. Sometimes, by way of clemency, it condemns its victims to perpetual imprisonment in close, stifling cells, between the leads and beams of the palace; or, unwilling to spill the blood of a fellow-citizen, generously sinks them into dungeons, deep under the canals which wash its foundations; so that, above and below, its majesty is contaminated by the abodes of punishment. What other sovereign could endure the idea of having his immediate residence polluted with tears? or revel in his halls, conscious that many of his species were consuming their hours in lamentations above his head, and that but a few beams separated him from the scene of their tortures? How ever gaily disposed, could one dance with pleasure on a pavement, beneath which lie damp and gloomy caverns, whose inhabitants waste away by painful degrees, and feel themselves whole years a-dying? Impressed by these terrible ideas, I could not regard the palace without horror, and wished for the strength of a thousand antediluvians, to level it with the sea, lay open the secret recesses of punishment, and admit free gales and sunshine into every den.

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

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

That rise and glitter o'er the ambient tide.

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

When I had spent a delightful half-hour in viewing the distant isles, M. de. B. accompanied me to the Mendicanti, one of the four conservatorios, which give the best musical education conceivable to near one hundred young women. You may imagine how admirably those of the Mendicanti in particular are taught, since their establishment is under Bertoni's direction, who breathes around him the very soul of grace and harmony.

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The chapel in which we sat to hear the oratorio was dark and solemn; a screen of lofty pillars, formed of black marble and highly polished, excluded the glow of the western sky, and reflected the lamps which burn perpetually before the altar. Every tribune was thronged with people, whose profound silence showed them worthy auditors of Bertoni's compositions. Here were no cackling old women, or groaning Methodists, such as infest our English churches, and scare one's ears with hoarse coughs accompanied by the *naso obligato*. All were still and attentive, imbibing the plaintive notes of the voices with eagerness; and scarce a countenance but seemed deeply affected with David's sorrows, the subject of the performance. I sat retired in a solitary tribune, and felt them as my own. Night came on before the last chorus was sung, and I still seem to hear its sacred melody.

August 18th. It rains; the air is refreshed and I have courage to resume my pen, which the sultry weather had forced to lie dormant so long. I like this odd town of Venice, and find every day some new amusement in rambling about its innumerable canals and alleys. Sometimes I go and pry about the great church of Saint Mark, and examine the variety of marbles and mazes of delicate sculpture with which it is covered. The cupola, glittering with gold, mosaic, and paintings of half the wonders in the Apocalypse, never fails transporting me to the period of the Eastern empire. I think myself in Constantinople, and expect Michael Paleologus with all his train. One circumstance alone prevents my observing half the treasures of the place, and holds down my fancy, just springing into the air: I mean the vile stench which exhales from every recess and corner of the edifice, and which all the altars cannot subdue.

When oppressed by this noxious atmosphere, I run up the Campanile in the piazza, and seating myself amongst the pillars of the gallery, breathe the fresh gales which blow from the Adriatic; survey at my leisure all Venice beneath me, with its azure sea, white sails, and long tracts of islands shining in the sun. Having thus laid in a provision of wholesome breezes, I brave the vapours of the canals, and venture into the most curious and murky quarters of the city, in search of Turks and Infidels, that I may ask as many questions as I please about Damascus and Suristan, those happy countries which nature has covered with roses.

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

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

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

We went together to view a collection of medals in one of the Gradanigo palaces, and two or three inestimable volumes, filled with paintings that represent the dress of the ancient Venetians; so that I had an opportunity of

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observing to perfection all the Lapland nothingness of my companion. What a perfect void! Cold and silent as the polar regions, not one passion ever throbbled in his bosom; not one bright ray of fancy ever glittered in his mind; without love or anger, pleasure or pain, his days fleet smoothly along: all things considered, I must confess I envied such comfortable apathy.

After having passed a peaceful hour in dreaming over the medals and rarities, M. de V. was for conducting me to the Armenian convent, but I begged to be excused, and went to S. Giovanni e Paolo's, a church ever celebrated in the annals of painting, since it contains that masterpiece of Titian, The Martyrdom of St. Peter. It being a festival, the huge Gothic pillars were covered with red damask, and the shrines of saints and worthies glimmered with tapers. The dim chapels on each side the nave received a feeble light, and discovered the tombs of ancient Doges, and the equestrian statues of many a doughty General. I admired them all, but liked nothing so much as a snug bas-relief I found out in a corner, which represents St. Mark and some other good souls a-prosing, whilst his lion and the old serpent squabble and scratch in the foreground of the sculpture, like cat and dog by the fireside. After dinner, when the shadows of domes and palaces began lengthening across the waves, I rowed out

On the clear hyaline, the glassy sea,

to observe the last sunbeams fade on the tufted gardens of the Giudecca, and to contemplate the distant Euganean hills, once the happiest region of Italy; where wandering nations enjoyed the simplicity of a pastoral life, long before the arrival of Antenor. In those ancient times, deep forests and extensive pastures covered the shores [{170a}](#) of the Adriatic, and innumerable flocks hung on the brow of the mountains. This golden period ended upon the incursion of the Trojans and Heneti; who, led by Antenor, drove away the unfortunate savages, and possessed themselves of their habitations. [{170b}](#) The form of the hillocks is varied and picturesque, and the sun, sinking behind them, suffuses their summits with tints of the brightest orange. Scarce one evening have I failed to remark the changeful scenery of the clouds, and to fill my mind with recollections of primeval days and happier ages. Night generally surprises me in the midst of my reveries; I return, lulled in my gondola by the murmur of waters, pass about an hour with M. de R., whose imagination and sensibility almost equal your own; then, retire to sleep, and dream of the Euganeans.

LETTER IX

August 27th. I am just returned from visiting the isles of Burano, Torcello, and Mazarbo, distant about five miles from Venice. To these amphibious spots the Romans, inhabitants of eastern Lombardy, fled from the ravine of Attila; and, if we may believe Cassiodorus, there was a time when they presented a beautiful appearance. Beyond them, on the coast of the Lagunes, rose the once populous city of Altina, with its six stately gates, which Dandolo mentions. [{170c}](#) Its neighbourhood was scattered with innumerable villas and temples, composing altogether a prospect which Martial compares to Baia:

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Æmula Baianis Altini littora villis.

But this agreeable scene, like so many others, is passed entirely away, and has left nothing, except heaps of stones and misshapen fragments, to vouch for its former magnificence. Two of the islands, Costanziaco and Amiano, that are imagined to have contained the bowers and gardens of the Altinians, have sunk beneath the waters; those which remain are scarcely worthy to rise above their surface.

Though I was persuaded little was left to be seen above ground, I could not deny myself the imaginary pleasure of treading a corner of the earth once so adorned and cultivated; and of walking over the roofs, perhaps, of concealed halls and undiscovered palaces. M. de R., to whom I communicated my ideas, entered at once into the scheme; hiring therefore a *peiotte* we took some provisions and music (to us equally necessities of life), and launched into the canal, between St. Michael and Murano.

The waves coursed each other with violence, and dark clouds hung over the grand sweep of northern mountains, whilst the west smiled with azure and bright sunshine. Thunder rolled awfully at a distance, and those white and greyish birds, the harbingers of storms, flitted frequently before our bark. For some moments we were in doubt whether to proceed; but as we advanced by a little dome in the Isle of St. Michael, shaped like an ancient temple, the sky cleared, and the ocean subsiding by degrees, soon presented a tranquil expanse, across which we were smoothly wafted. Our instruments played several delightful airs, that called forth the inhabitants of every island, and held them silent, as if spell-bound, on the edge of their quays and terraces, till we were out of hearing.

Leaving Murano far behind, Venice and its world of turrets began to sink on the horizon, and the low desert isles beyond Mazorbo to lie stretched out before us. Now we beheld vast wastes of {171} purple flowers, and could distinguish the low hum of the insects which hover above them; such was the silence of the place. Coasting these solitary fields, we wound amongst several serpentine canals, bordered by gardens of figs and pomegranates, with neat Indian-looking inclosures of cane and reed: an aromatic plant clothes the margin of the waters, which the people justly dignify with the title of marine incense. It proved very serviceable in subduing a musky odour, which attacked us the moment we landed, and which proceeds from serpents that lurk in the hedges. These animals, say the gondoliers, defend immense treasures which lie buried under the ruins. Woe to those who attempt invading them, or prying too cautiously about!

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

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

Nothing can be well more fantastic than the ornaments of this structure, formed from the ruins of the Pagan temples of Altina, and incrusting with a gilt mosaic, like that which covers our Edward the Confessor's tomb. The pavement, composed of various precious marbles, is richer and more beautiful than one could have expected, in a place where every other object savours of the grossest barbarism. At the farther end, beyond the altar, appears a semicircular niche, with seats like the gradines of a diminutive amphitheatre; above rise the quaint forms of the apostles, in red, blue, green, and black mosaic, and in the midst of the goodly group a sort of marble chair, cool and penitential enough, where St. Lorenzo Giustiniani sat to hold a provincial council, the Lord knows how long

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ago! The fount for holy water stands by the principal entrance, fronting this curious recess, and seems to have belonged to some place of Gentile worship. The figures of horned imps cling round its sides, more devilish, more Egyptian, than any I ever beheld. The dragons on old china are not more whimsical: I longed to have it filled with bats' blood, and to have sent it by way of present to the sabbath; I can assure you it would have done honour to their witcheries. The sculpture is not the most delicate, but I cannot say a great deal about it, as but little light reaches the spot where it is fixed. Indeed, the whole church is far from luminous, its windows being narrow and near the roof, with shutters composed of blocks of marble, which nothing but the last whirlwind, one should think, could move from their hinges.

By the time we had examined every nook and corner of this singular edifice, and caught perhaps some small portion of sanctity by sitting in San Lorenzo's chair, dinner was prepared in a neighbouring convent, and the nuns, allured by the sound of our flutes and oboes, peeped out of their cells and showed themselves by dozens at the grate. Some few agreeable faces and interesting eyes enlivened the dark sisterhood; all seemed to catch a gleam of pleasure from the music; two or three of them, probably the last immured, let fall a tear, and suffered the recollection of the world and its profane joys to interrupt for a moment their sacred tranquillity.

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

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

Too much applause cannot be given to the Marchetti, who sang the part of Sisera, and seconded the composer's ideas by the most feeling and spirited execution. There are few things I shall regret more at Venice, than this conservatorio. Whenever I am musically given, I fly to it, and hear the most striking finales in Bertoni's and Anfosse's operas, as long and often as I please.

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

Good-night! I am quite exhausted with composing a chorus for these same Amazonians. The poetry I send you, which seems to be some of the most picturesque and nervous an Italian ever produced. The music takes up too much room to travel at present. One day or other, perhaps, we may hear it in some dark grove, when the moon is eclipsed and nature in alarm.

This is not the last letter you would receive from Venice, was I not hurrying to Lucca, where Pacchierotti sings next week, in the opera of Quinto Fabio, of all operas the most worthy to excuse such a musical fanaticism. Adieu.

LETTER X

September 4th. I was sorry to leave Venice, and regretted my peaceful excursions upon the Adriatic, when the Euganean hills were lost in a golden haze, and the sun cast his departing gleam across the waters. No bright rays illuminated my departure, but the coolness and perfume of the air made some amends for their absence.

About an hour's rowing from the isle of Saint Giorgio in Alga, brought us to the shores of Fusina, right opposite the opening where the Brenta mixes with the sea. This river flows calmly between banks of verdure, crowned by poplars, with vines twining round every stalk, and depending from tree to tree in beautiful festoons. Beds of mint and flowers clothe the brink of the stream, except where a tall growth of reeds and osiers lift themselves to the breezes. I heard their whispers as we glided along; and had I been alone might have told you what they said to me; but such ærial oracles must be approached in solitude. The morning continued to lower as we advanced; scarce a wind ventured to breathe; all was still and placid as the surface of the Brenta. No sound struck my ears except the bargemen hallooing to open the sluices, and deepen the water.

As yet I had not perceived an habitation; no other objects than green inclosures and fields of Turkish corn, shaded with vines and poplars, met my eyes wherever I turned them.

Our navigation, the tranquil streams and cultivated banks, in short the whole landscape, had a sort of Chinese cast, which led me into Quang-Si and Quang-Tong. The variety of canes, reeds, and blooming rushes, shooting from the slopes, confirmed my fancies, and when I beheld the yellow nenupha expanding its broad leaves to the current, I thought of the Tao-Se, and venerated one of the chief ingredients in their beverage of immortality. Landing where this magic vegetation appeared most luxuriant, I cropped the flowers; but searched in vain for the kernels, which, according to the doctrine of the Bonzes, produce such wonderful effects. Though I was deceived in this pursuit, I gained, however, in another. The bank upon which I had sprung presented a continual walk of level turf, surrounded by vines, concealing the trees which supported them, and forming the most delightful bowers. Under these garlands I passed, and gathered the ripe clusters which dangled around, convinced that Noah had discovered a far superior beverage to that of the Tao-Sé. Whilst I was thus agreeably employed, it began to rain, and the earth to exhale a fresh, reviving odour, highly grateful to one who had been so long confined to walls and waters. After breathing nothing but the essence of the canals and the flavours of the Rialto, after the jingling of bells and brawls of the gondoliers, imagine how agreeable it was to scent the perfume of clover, to tread a springing herbage, and listen in silence to the showers pattering amongst the leaves. I staid so long amidst the vines, that it grew late before we rowed by the Mira, a village of palaces, whose courts and gardens, as magnificent as statues, terraces, and vases can make them, compose a grand, though far from a rural prospect.

Not being greatly delighted with such scenery, we stayed no longer than our dinner required, and reached the Dolo an hour before sunset. Passing the great sluices, whose gates opened with a thundering noise, we continued our course along the peaceful Brenta, winding its broad full stream through impenetrable copses, surmounted by tall waving poplars. Day was about to close when we reached Fiesso; and it being a misty evening, I could scarcely distinguish the pompous facade of the Pisani palace. That where we supped looks upon a broad mass of foliage, which I contemplated with pleasure as it sank in the dusk.

We walked a long while under a pavilion stretched before the entrance, breathing the freshness of the wood after the shower, and hearing the drops trickle down the awning above our heads. The Galuzzi sang some of her father

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Ferandini's compositions, with a fire, an energy, an expression, that one moment raised me to a pitch of heroism, and the next dissolved me in tears. Her cheek was flushed with inspiration, her eyes glistened; the whole tone of her countenance was like that of a person rapt and inspired. I forgot both time and place whilst she was breathing forth such celestial harmony. The night stole imperceptibly away, and morning dawned before I awoke from my trance. I don't recollect ever to have passed an evening, which every circumstance conspired so much to improve. In general, my musical pleasures suffer terrible abatements from the phlegm and stupidity of my neighbourhood, but here every one seemed to catch the flame, and to listen with reciprocal delight. The C – threw quick around her the glancing fires of genius: and, what with the song of the Galuzzi, and those intellectual meteors, I scarcely knew to what element I was transported; and doubted for several moments whether I had not fallen into a celestial dream. I loathed the light of the morning star, which summoned me to depart; and, if I may express myself so poetically,

Cast many a longing, ling'ring look behind.

LETTER XI

September 5th. The glow and splendour of the rising sun, for once in my life, drew little of my attention. I was too deeply plunged in my reveries, to notice the landscape which lay before me; and the walls of Padua presented themselves some time ere I was aware. At any other moment, how sensibly should I have been affected with their appearance! how many ideas of Antenor and his Trojans, would have thronged into my memory! but now I regarded the scene with indifference, and passed many a palace, and many a woody garden, with my eyes riveted to the ground. The first object that appeared, upon lifting them up, was a confused pile of spires and cupolas, dedicated to blessed St. Anthony, who betook himself to the conversion of fish, after the heretics would lend no ear to his discourses.

You are too well apprised of the veneration I have always entertained for this ingenious preacher, to doubt that I immediately repaired to his shrine and offered up my little orisons before it. Mine was a disturbed spirit, and required all the balm of St. Anthony's kindness to appease it. Perhaps you will say I had better gone to bed, and applied myself to my sleepy friend, the pagan divinity. 'Tis probable that you are in the right; but I could not retire to rest without venting some portion of effervescence in sighs and supplications. The nave was filled with decrepit women and feeble children, kneeling by baskets of vegetables and other provisions; which, by good Anthony's interposition, they hoped to sell advantageously in the course of the day. Beyond these, nearer the choir, and in a gloomier part of the edifice, knelt a row of rueful penitents, smiting their breasts, and lifting their eyes to heaven. Further on, in front of the dark recess, where the sacred relics are deposited, a few desperate, melancholy sinners lay prostrate.

To these I joined myself, and fell down on the steps before the shrine. The sunbeams had not yet penetrated into this religious quarter; and the only light it received proceeded from the golden lamps, which hang in clusters round the sanctuary. A lofty altar, decked with superstitious prodigality, conceals the holy pile from profane glances. Those who are profoundly touched with its sanctity may approach, and walking round, look through the crevices of the tomb, and rub their noses against the identical bones of St. Anthony, which, it is observed, exude a balsamic odour. But supposing a traveller ever so heretical, I would advise him by no means to neglect this

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pilgrimage; since every part of the recess he visits is decorated with the most exquisite sculptures. Sansovino and the best artists have vied with each other in carving the alto relievos of the arcade, which, for design and execution, would do honour to the sculptors of antiquity.

Having observed these objects with much less exactness than they merited, and acted perhaps too capital a part amongst the devotees, I hastened to the inn, luckily hard by, and one of the best I am acquainted with. Here I soon fell asleep in defiance of sunshine. 'Tis true my slumbers were not a little agitated. St. Anthony had been deaf to my prayer, and I still found myself a frail, infatuated mortal.

At five I got up; we dined, and afterwards, scarcely knowing, nor much caring, what became of us, we strolled to the great hall of the town; an enormous edifice, as large as that of Westminster, but free from stalls, or shops, or nests of litigation. The roof, one spacious vault of brown timber, casts a solemn gloom, which was still increased by the lateness of the hour, and not diminished by the wan light, admitted through the windows of pale blue glass. The size and shape of this colossal chamber, the coving of the roof, with beams like perches for the feathered race, stretching across it, and, above all, the watery gleams that glanced through the casements, possessed my fancy with ideas of Noah's ark, and almost persuaded me I beheld that extraordinary vessel. The representation one sees of it in Scheutzer's *Physica Sacra* seems to be formed upon this very model, and for several moments I indulged the chimera of imagining myself confined within its precincts. How willingly, could I but choose my companions, would I encounter a deluge, to float whole years instead of months upon the waves!

We remained walking to and fro in the ark, till the twilight faded into total darkness. It was then full time to retire, as the guardian of the place was by no means formed to divine our diluvian ideas.

LETTER XII

September 6th. At Padua, I was too near the last and one of the most celebrated abodes of Petrarch, to make the omission of a visit excusable; had I not been in a disposition to render such a pilgrimage peculiarly pleasing. I set forwards from Padua after dinner, so as to arrive some time before sunset. Nothing could be finer than the day; and I had every reason to promise myself a serene and delicious hour, before the sun might go down. I put the poems of Petrarch into my pocket; and, as my road lay chiefly through lanes, planted on either side with mulberries and poplars, from which vines hung dangling in careless festoons, I found many a bowing shade, where I sat, at intervals, to indulge my pensive humour over some ejaculatory sonnet; as the pilgrim, on his journey to Loretto, reposes here and there, to offer his prayers and meditations to the Virgin. In little more than an hour and half, I found myself in the midst of the Euganean hills, and, after winding almost another hour amongst them, I got, before I was well aware, into the village of Arquà. Nothing can be more sequestered or obscure than its situation. It had rather a deserted appearance; several of its houses being destitute of inhabitants, and crumbling into ruins. Two or three of them, however, exhibited ancient towers, richly mantled with ivy, and surrounded with cypress, that retained the air of having once belonged to persons of consideration. Their present abandoned state nourished the melancholy idea with which I entered the village. Could one approach the last retreat of genius, and not look for some glow of its departed splendour?

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Dear to the pensive eye of fond regret,
Is light still beaming from a sun that's set.

The residence of Petrarch at Arqua is said to have drawn thither from Padua the society of its more enlightened citizens. This city, whilst Petrarch lived in its neighbourhood, was engaged in rebellion against the Venetians; and Francis de Carrara, the head of it, went often to Arqua, to consult Petrarch; when he found himself obliged to sue to Venice for peace. The poet was indeed deputed, upon this occasion, his ambassador to the state; as being a person whose character and credit were most likely to appease its wrath. His success in this embassy might, perhaps, have been some recompense for an employment he accepted with much regret, as it forced him from his beloved retirement. In a letter to one of his friends, written about this period of his life, he says: I pass the greatest part of the year in the country, which I have always preferred to cities: I read; I write; I think: thus, my life and my pleasures are like those of youth. I take pains to hide myself; but I cannot escape visits: it is an honour which displeases and wearies me. In my little house on the Euganean hills, I hope to pass my few remaining days in tranquillity, and to have always before my eyes my dead, or my absent, friends. I was musing on these circumstances as I walked along the village, till a venerable old woman, seated at her door with her distaff in her hand, observing me, soon guessed the cause of my excursion; and offered to guide me to Petrarch's house. The remainder of my way was short, and well amused by my guide's enthusiastic expressions of veneration for the poet's memory; which, she assured me, she felt but in common with the other inhabitants of the village. When we came to the door of the house, we met the peasant, its present possessor. The old woman, recommending the stranger and his curiosity to her neighbour's good offices, departed. I entered immediately, and ran over every room, which the peasant assured me, in confirmation of what I before learnt from better authority, were preserved, as nearly as they could be, in the state Petrarch had left them. The house and premises, having unfortunately been transmitted from one enthusiast of his name to another, no tenants have been admitted, but under the strictest prohibition of making any change in the form of the apartments, or in the memorial relics belonging to the place: and, to say the truth, everything I saw in it, save a few articles of the peasant's furniture in the kitchen, has an authentic appearance. Three of the rooms below stairs are particularly shown, and they have nothing in them but what once belonged to the poet. In one, which I think they call his parlour, is a very antique cupboard; where, it is supposed, he deposited some precious part of his literary treasure. The ceiling is painted in a grotesque manner. A niche in the wall contains the skeleton of his favourite cat, with a Latin epigram beneath, of Petrarch's composition. It is good enough to deserve being copied; but the lateness of the hour did not allow me time. A little room, beyond this, is said to have been his study: the walls of it, from top to bottom, are scribbled over with sonnets, and poetical eulogies on Petrarch, ancient and modern: many of which are subscribed by persons, of distinguished rank and talents, Italians as well as strangers. Here, too, is the bard's old chair, and on it is displayed a great deal of heavy, ornamental carpentry; which required no stretch of faith to be believed the manufacture of the fourteenth century. You may be sure, I placed myself in it, with much veneration, and the most resigned assent to Mrs. Dobson's relation: that Petrarch, sitting in this same chair, was found dead in his library, with one arm leaning on a book. Who could sit in Petrarch's chair, void of some effect? I rose not from it without a train of pensive sentiments and soft impressions; which I ever love to indulge. I was now led into a larger room, behind that I first saw; where, it is likely enough, the poet, according to the peasant's information, received the visits of his friends. Its walls were adorned with landscapes and pastoral scenes, in such painting as Petrarch himself might, and is supposed to have executed. Void of taste and elegance, either in the design or colouring, they bear some characteristic marks of the age to which they are, with no improbability, assigned; and, separate from the merit of exhibiting repeatedly the portraits of Petrarch and Laura, are a valuable sketch of the rude infancy of the art, where it rose with such hasty vigour to perfection. Having seen all that was left unchanged in this consecrated mansion, I passed through a room, said to have been the bard's bed-room, and stepped into the garden, situated on a green slope, descending directly from the house. It is now rather an orchard than a garden; a spot of small extent, and without much else to recommend it, but that it once was the property of Petrarch. It is not pretended to have retained the form in which he left it. An agreeably wild and melancholy kind of view, which it commands over the Euganean hills, and which I beheld under the calm glow of approaching

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sunset, must often, at the same moment, have soothed the poet's anxious feelings, and hushed his active imagination, as it did my own, into a delicious repose. Having lingered here till the sun was sunk beneath the horizon, I was led a little way farther in the village, to see Petrarch's fountain. Hippocrene itself could not have been more esteemed by the poet, than this, his gift, by all the inhabitants of Arqua. The spring is copious, clear, and of excellent water; I need not say with what relish I drank of it. The last religious act in my little pilgrimage was a visit to the church-yard; where I strewed a few flowers, the fairest of the season, on the poet's tomb; and departed for Padua by the light of the moon.

LETTER XIII

September 7th. Immediately after breakfast, we went to St. Justina's, a noble temple, designed by Palladio, and worthy of his reputation. The dimensions are vast, and the equal distribution of light and ornament truly admirable. Upon my first entrance, the long perspective of domes above, and chequered marble below, struck me with surprise and pleasure. I roved about the spacious aisles for several minutes, then sat down under the grand cupola, and admired the beautiful symmetry of the building.

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

I left them hard at work, taking more exercise than had been their lot for many a day; and, mounting into the organ gallery, listened to Turini's {182} music with infinite satisfaction. The loud harmonious tones of the instrument filled the whole edifice; and, being repeated by the echoes of its lofty domes and arches, produced a wonderful effect. Turini, aware of this circumstance, adapts his compositions with great intelligence to the place, and makes his slave, the organ, send forth the most affecting, long-protracted sounds, which languish in the air, and are some time a-dying. Nothing can be more original than his style. Deprived of sight by an unhappy accident, in the flower of his days, he gave up his entire soul to music, and scarcely exists but through its medium.

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

The sun was just sunk when we arrived; the whole ether in a glow, and the fragrance of the arched citron alleys delightful. Beneath them I walked in the cool, till the Galuzzi began once more her enchanting melody. She sung till the moon tempted the fascinating G—a and myself to stray on the banks of the Brenta. A profound calm reigned upon the woods and the waters, and moonlight added serenity to a scene naturally peaceful. We listened to the faint murmurs of the leaves, and the distant rural noises, observing the gleams that quivered on the river, and discovered a mutual delight in contemplating the same objects.

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

September 8th. It was evening, and I was still asleep; not in a tranquil slumber, but at the mercy of fantastic visions. The want of sound repose had thrown me into a feverish impatient mood, that was alone to be subdued by harmony. Scarcely had I snatched some slight refreshment, before I flew to the great organ at St. Justina's, but tried, this time, to compose myself in vain. M. de R., finding my endeavours unsuccessful, proposed, by way of diverting my attention, that we should set out immediately for one of the Euganean hills about five or seven miles from Padua, at the foot of which some antique baths had very lately been discovered. I consented, without hesitation, little concerned whither I went, or what happened to me, provided the scene was often shifted. The lanes and enclosures we passed on our road to the hills, appeared in all the gaiety that verdure, flowers, and sunshine could give them. But my pleasures were overcast, and I beheld every object, however cheerful, through a dusky medium. Deeply engaged in conversation, distance made no impression; and we beheld the meadows, over which the ruins are scattered, lie before us, when we still imagined ourselves several miles away. Had I but enjoyed my former serenity, how agreeably would such a landscape have affected my imagination! How lightly should I not have run over the herbage, and viewed the irregular shrubby hills, diversified with clumps of cypress, verdant spots, and pastoral cottages, such as Zuccarelli loved to paint! No scene could be more smiling than this which here presented itself, or answer, in a fuller degree, the ideas I had formed of Italy.

Leaving our carriage at the entrance of the mead, we traversed its flowery surface, and shortly perceived among the grass an oblong basin, incrustated with pure white marble. Most of the slabs are large and perfect, apparently brought from Greece, and still retaining their polished smoothness. The pipes to convey the waters are still discernible; in short, the whole ground-plan may be easily traced. Nothing more remains: the pillars and arcades are fallen, and one or two pedestals alone vouch for their former existence. Near the principal bath, we remarked the platforms of several circular apartments, paved with mosaic, in a neat simple taste, far from inelegant. Weeds have not yet sprung up amongst the crevices; and the universal freshness of the ruin shows that it has not been long exposed.

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

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

Taking our eyes off this extensive prospect, we turned them to the fragments beneath our feet. The walls appear plainly composed of the *opus reticulatum* so universal in the environs of Naples. A sort of terrace, with the bases of columns circling the mount, leads me to imagine here were formerly arcades and porticos, for enjoying the view; for on the summit I could trace no vestiges of any considerable structure, and am therefore inclined to conclude, that nothing more than a colonnade surrounded the hill, leading perhaps to some slight fane, or pavilion, for the recreation of the bathers below.

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

To produce such a revolution, divine how I must have been fascinated! and be not surprised at my repeating all the way that pathetic sonnet of Petrarch:

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

September 9th. You may imagine how I felt when the hour of leaving Padua drew near. It happened to be a high festival, and mass celebrated at the grand church of St. Anthony, with more than ordinary splendour. The music drawing us thither, we found every chapel twinkling with lights, and the choir filled with a vapour of incense. Through its medium several cloth of gold figures discovered themselves, ministering before the altar, and acting their parts with a sacred pomposity, wonderfully imposing. I attended very little to their functions, but the plaintive tones of the voices and instruments, so consonant with my own feelings, melted me into tears, and gave me, no doubt, the exterior of exalted piety. Guadazni sang amongst the other musicians, but seemed to be sinking apace into devotion and obscurity. The ceremony ended, I took leave of M. de R. with sincere regret, and was driven away to Vicenza. Of my journey I scarce know any more than that the evening was cold and rainy, that I shivered and was miserable.

September 10th. The morning being overcast, I went, full of the spirit of Æschylus, to the Olympic Theatre, and vented my evil temper in reciting some of the most tremendous verses of his furies. The august front of the scene, and its three grand streets of fanes and palaces, inspired me with the loftiest sentiments of the Grecian drama; but the dubious light admitted through windows, scarce visible between the rows of statues which crown the entablature, sunk me into fits of gloom and sadness. I mused a long while in the darkest and most retired recess of the edifice, fancying I had penetrated into a real and perfect monument of antiquity, which till this moment had remained undiscovered. It is impossible to conceive a structure more truly classical, or to point out a single ornament which has not the best antique authority. I am not in the least surprised that the citizens of Vicenza enthusiastically gave in to Palladio's plan, and sacrificed large sums to erect so beautiful a model. When finished, they procured, at a vast expense, the representation of a Grecian tragedy, with its chorus and majestic decorations. You can enter into the rapture of an artist, who sees his fondest vision realized; and can easily conceive how it was, that Palladio esteemed this compliment the most flattering reward. After I had given scope to the fancies which the scene suggested, we set out for Verona.

The situation is striking and picturesque. A long line of battlement walls, flanked by venerable towers, mounts the hill in a grand irregular sweep, and incloses many a woody garden and grove of slender cypress. Beyond rises an awful assembly of mountains; opposite to which a fertile plain presents itself, decked with all the variety of meads and thickets, olive-grounds and vineyards.

Amongst these our road kept winding till we entered the city gate, and passed (the post knows how many streets and alleys in the way!) to the inn, a lofty, handsome-looking building; but so full that we were obliged to take up with an apartment on its very summit, open to all the winds, like the magic chamber Apuleius mentions, and commanding the roofs of half Verona. Here and there a pine shot up amongst them, and the shady hills, terminating the perspective with their walls and turrets, formed a romantic scene.

Placing our table in a balcony, to enjoy the prospect with greater freedom, we feasted upon fish from the Lago di Garda, and the delicious fruits of the country, grapes worthy of Canaan, and peaches such as Eden itself might have gloried in producing. Thus did I remain, solacing myself, breathing the cool air, and remarking the evening tints of the mountains. Neither the paintings of Count this, nor the antiquities of the Marquis t'other, could tempt me from my aerial situation; I refused hunting out the famous Paolos scattered over the town, and sat like the owl in the Georgics,

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Solis et occasom servans de culmine summo.

Twilight drawing on, I left my haunt, and stealing downstairs, inquired for a guide to conduct me to the amphitheatre, perhaps the most entire monument of Roman days. The people of the house, instead of bringing me a quiet peasant, officiously delivered me up to a professed antiquary, one of those diligent plausible young men, to whom, God help me! I have so capital an aversion. This sweet spark displayed all his little erudition, and flourished away upon cloacas and vomitoriums with eternal fluency. He was very profound in the doctrine of conduits, and knew to admiration how the filthiness of all the amphitheatre was disposed of; but perceiving my inattention, and having just grace enough to remark that I chose one side of the street when he preferred the other, and sometimes trotted through despair in the kennel, he made me a pretty bow, I threw him half-a-crown, and seeing the ruins before me, traversed a gloomy arcade and emerged alone into the arena. A smooth turf covers its surface, from which a spacious row of gradines rises to a majestic elevation. Four arches, with their simple Doric ornament, alone remain of the grand circle which once lifted itself above the highest seats of the amphitheatre; and, had it not been for Gothic violence, this part of the structure would have equally resisted the ravages of time. Nothing can be more exact than the preservation of the gradines; not a block has sunk from its place, and whatever trifling injuries they may have received have been carefully repaired. The two chief entrances are rebuilt with solidity and closed by portals, no passage being permitted through the theatre except at public shows and representations, sometimes still given in the arena.

When I paced slowly across it, silence reigned undisturbed amongst the awful ruins, and nothing moved, save the weeds and grasses which skirt the walls and tremble with the faintest breeze.

I liked the idea of being thus shut in on every side by endless gradines, abandoned to a stillness and solitude I was so peculiarly disposed to taste. Throwing myself upon the grass in the middle of the arena, I enjoyed the freedom of my situation; and pursued the last tracks of light, as they faded behind the solitary arches, which rose above the rest. Red and fatal were the tints of the western sky; the wind blew chill and hollow, and something more than common seemed to issue from the withering herbage on the walls. I started up, fled through a dark arcade, where water falls drop by drop, and arrived, panting, in the great square before the ruins. Directing my steps across it, I reached an ancient castle, once inhabited by the Scaligeri, sovereigns of Verona. Hard by appeared the ruins of a triumphal arch, which most antiquarians ascribe to Vitruvius, enriched with delicate scrolls and flowery ornaments. I could have passed half-an-hour very agreeably in copying these elegant sculptures; but night covering them with her shades, I returned home to the Corso; where the outlines of several palaces, designed by Michel San Michele, attracted my attention. But it was too dusky to examine their details.

September 11th. Traversing once more the grand piazza, and casting a last glance upon the amphitheatre, we passed under a lofty arch which terminates the perspective, and left Verona by a wide, irregular, picturesque street, commanding, whenever you look back, a striking scene of towers, cypress, and mountains.

The country, between this beautiful town and Mantua, presents one continued grove of dwarfish mulberries, among which start up innumerable barren hills. Now and then a knot of poplars diversify their craggy summits, and sometimes a miserable shed. Mantua itself rises out of a morass formed by the Mincio, whose course, in most places, is so choked up with reeds as to be scarcely discernible. It requires a creative imagination to discover any charms in such a prospect, and a strong prepossession not to be disgusted with the scene where Virgil was born. For my own part, I approached this neighbourhood with proper deference, and began to feel the God, but finding no tufted tree on which I could suspend my lyre, or verdant bank which invited to repose, I abandoned poetry and entered the city in despair.

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

A few paces from the town stand the remains of the palace where the Gonzagas formerly resided. This I could not resist looking at, and was amply rewarded. Several of the apartments, adorned by the bold pencil of Julio Romano, merit the most exact attention; and the grotesques, with which the stucco ceilings are covered, equal the celebrated loggios of the Vatican. I don't recollect ever having seen these elegant designs engraven, and believe it would be perfectly worth the pains of some capital artist to copy them. Being in fresco upon damp neglected walls, each year diminishes their number, and every winter moulders some beautiful figure away.

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

When it was too late to examine the paintings any longer, I walked into a sort of court, or rather garden, which had been decorated with fountains and antique statues. Their fragments still remain amongst weeds and beds of flowers, for every corner of the place is smothered with vegetation. Here nettles grow thick and rampant: there, tuberoses and jessamine cling around mounds of ruins, which during the elegant reign of the Gonzagas led to grottos and subterranean apartments, concealed from vulgar eyes, and sacred to the most refined enjoyments. I gathered a tuberoses that sprang from a shell of white marble, once trickling with water, now half filled with mould, and carrying it home, shut myself up for the rest of the night, inhaled its perfume, and fell a-dreaming.

September 12th. A shower having fallen, the air was refreshed, and the drops still glittered upon the vines, through which our road conducted us. Three or four miles from Mantua the scene changed to extensive grounds of rice, and meads of the tenderest verdure watered by springs, whose frequent meanders gave to the whole prospect the appearance of a vast green carpet shot with silver. Further on we crossed the Po, and passing Guastalla, entered a woody country full of inclosures and villages; herds feeding in the meadows, and poultry parading before every wicket.

The peasants were busied in winnowing their corn; or, mounted upon the elms and poplars, gathering the rich clusters from the vines that hang streaming in braids from one branch to another. I was surprised to find myself already in the midst of the vintage, and to see every road crowded with carts and baskets bringing it along; you cannot imagine a pleasanter scene.

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

Strata jacent passim sus quæque sub arbore poma.

Beyond these rich masses of foliage, to which the sun lent additional splendour, at the utmost extremity of the pastures, rose the irregular ridge of the Apennines, whose deep blue presented a striking contrast to the glowing

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colours of the foreground. I fixed my eyes on the chain of distant mountains, and indulged, as usual, my conjectures of what was going forward on their summits; of those who tended goats on the edge of the precipice; traversed, at this moment, the dark thickets of pines, and passed their lives in yonder sheds, contented and unknown. Such were the dreams that filled my fancy, and kept it incessantly employed till it was dusk, and the moon began to show herself; the same moon which, but a few days ago, had seen me so happy at Fiesso. Her soft light reposed upon the meads, that had been newly mown, and the shadows of tall poplars were cast aslant them. I left my carriage, and running into the dim haze, abandoned myself to the recollection it inspired. During an hour, I kept continually flying forwards; bounding from enclosure to enclosure like a hunted antelope, and forgetting where I was or whither I was going. One sole idea filled my mind, and led me on with such heedless rapidity, that I stumbled over stones and bushes, and entangled myself on every wreath of vines which opposed my progress. At length, having wandered where chance or the wildness of my fancy led, till the lateness of the evening alarmed me, I regained the chaise as fast as I could, and arrived between ten and eleven at the place of my destination.

September 13th. Having but a moment or two at liberty, I hurried early in the morning to the palace, and entered an elegant Ionic court, with arcades of the whitest stone, through which I caught peeps of a clear blue sky and groves of cypresses. Some few good paintings still adorn the apartments, but the best part of the collection has been disposed of, for a hundred thousand sequins, amongst which was that inestimable picture, the *Notte of Corregio*. An excellent copy remained and convinced me the original was not undeservedly celebrated. None but the pencil of Corregio ever designed such graceful angels, nor imagined such a pearly dawn to cast around them. Ten thousand times, I dare say, has the subject of the Nativity been treated, and as many painters have failed in rendering it so pleasing. The break of day, the first smiles of the celestial infant, and the truth, the simplicity of every countenance, cannot be too warmly admired. In the other rooms, no picture gave me more pleasure than *Jacob's Vision* by *Domenico Feti*. I gazed several minutes at the grand confusion of clouds and seraphim descending around the patriarch, and wished for a similar dream.

Having spent the little time I had remaining in contemplating this object, I hastened from the palace and left Modena.

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

At present I thought of little else, to say truth, but what I had seen at Fiesso; and what I was to hear at Lucca. The anxiety inspired by the one, and impatience by the other, rendered me shamefully insensible to the merits of Bologna (where I passed near two hours), and of which I can add nothing but that it is very much out of humour, an earthquake and *Cardinal Buoncompagni* having disarranged both land and people. For half-a-year the ground continued trembling; and for these last months, the legate and senators have grumbled and scratched incessantly; so that, between natural and political commotions, the Bolognese must have passed an agreeable summer.

Such a report of the situation of things, you may suppose, was not likely to retard my journey. I put off delivering my letters to another opportunity; ran up a tall slender tower as high as the *Campanile di San Marco*, by way of exercise; and proceeded immediately after dinner towards the mountains. We were soon in the midst of crags and stony channels, that stream with ten thousand rills in the winter season, but during the summer months reflect every sunbeam, and harbour half the scorpions in the country.

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

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

I joined one of these frisking assemblies, whose shadows were stretched by the setting sun along the level herbage. There I sat a few minutes whilst they shook their beards at me, and tried to scare me with all their horns; but I was not to be frightened, and would offer up my adorations to departing day, in spite of their caperings. Being tired with skipping and butting at me in vain, the whole herd trotted away, and I after them. They led me a dance from crag to crag and from thicket to thicket.

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

The rocks here formed a spacious terrace; along which I continued surveying the distant groves, and marking the solemn approach of night. The sky was hung with storms, and a pale moon seemed to advance with difficulty amongst broken and tempestuous clouds. It was an hour to reap plants with brazen sickles, and to meditate upon revenge.

A chill wind blew from the highest peak of the Apennines, inspiring evil, and making a dismal rustle amongst the woods of chestnut that hung on the mountain's side, through which we were forced to pass. I never heard such fatal murmurs; nor felt myself so gloomily. I walked out of the sound of the carriage, where the glimmering moonlight prevailed, and began interpreting the language of the leaves, not greatly to my own advantage or that of any being in the universe. I was no prophet of good, but full of melancholy bodings, and something that bordered upon despair. Had I but commanded an oracle, as ancient visionaries were wont, I should have thrown whole nations into dismay.

How long I continued in this strange temper I cannot pretend to say, but believe it was midnight before we emerged from the oracular forest, and saw faintly before us the huts of Lognone, where we were to sleep. This blessed hamlet is suspended on the brow of a bleak mountain, and every gust that stirs shakes the whole village to its foundations. At our approach two hags stalked forth with lanterns and invited us with a grin, which I shall always remember, to a dish of mustard and crow's gizzards, a dish I was more than half afraid of tasting, lest it should change me to some bird of darkness, condemned to mope eternally on the black rafters of the cottage.

After repeated supplications we procured a few eggs, and some faggots to make a fire. Its blaze gave me courage to hear the hollow blasts that whistled in the crevices; and pitching my bed in a warm corner, I soon fell asleep, and forgot all my cares and inquietudes.

September 14th. The sun had not been long above the horizon, before we set forward upon a craggy pavement hewn out of the rough bosom of the cliffs and precipices. Scarce a tree was visible, and the few that presented

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themselves began already to shed their leaves. The raw nipping air of this desert with difficulty spares a blade of vegetation; and in the whole range of these extensive eminences I could not discover a single corn-field or pasture. Inhabitants, you may guess, there were none. I would defy even a Scotch highlander to find means of subsistence in so rude a soil.

Towards midday, we had surmounted the dreariest part of our journey, and began to perceive a milder landscape. The climate improved as well as the prospect, and after a continual descent of several hours, we saw groves and villages in the dips of the hills, and met a string of mules and horses laden with fruit. I purchased some figs and peaches from this little caravan, and spreading my repast upon a bank, baked in the sunshine, and gathered large spikes of lavender in full bloom.

Continuing our route, we bid adieu to the realms of poverty and barrenness, and entered a cultivated vale sheltered by woody acclivities. Among these we wound along, the peasants singing upon the hill, and driving their cattle to springs by the road's side; near one of which we dined in a patriarchal manner, and afterwards pursued our course through a grove of taper cypresses, waving with the cool gales of the evening. The heights were suffused with a ruddy glow, proceeding from the light pink clouds which floated on the horizon. No others were to be seen. All nature seemed in a happy tranquil state; the herds penned in their folds, and every rustic going to repose. I shared the general calm for the first time this many a tedious hour; and traversed the dales in peace, abandoned to flattering hopes and gay illusions. The full moon shone propitiously upon me as I ascended a hill, and discovered Florence at a distance, surrounded with gardens and terraces, rising one above another. The serene moonlight on the pale grey tints of the olive, gave an Elysian, visionary appearance to the landscape. I never beheld so mild a sky, nor such soft gleams: the mountains were veiled in azure mists, which concealed their rugged summits; and the plains in vapours, that smoothed their irregularities, and diffused a faint aërial hue, to which no description can render justice. I could have contemplated such scenery for hours, and was sorry when I found myself shut up from it by the gates of Florence. We passed several lofty palaces of the true Tuscan order, with rustic arcades and stout columns, whose solidity and magnificence were not diminished by the shades of midnight. Whilst these grand masses lay dark and solemn, the smooth flagstone, with which every street is paved, received a chequered gleam, and the Arno, the brightest radiance. Though tired with my jumble over the Apennines, I could not resist the temptation of walking upon the banks of so celebrated a river, and crossing its bridges, which still echoed with music and conversation. Having gratified the first impulse of curiosity, I returned to Vaninis, and slept as well as my impatience would allow, till it was time next morning (September 15th), to visit the gallery, and worship the Venus de Medicis. I felt, upon entering this world of taste and elegance, as if I could have taken up my abode in it for ever; but confused with the multitude of objects, I knew not where to turn myself, and ran childishly by the ample ranks of sculptures, like a butterfly in a parterre, that skims before it fixes, over ten thousand flowers.

Having taken my course down one side of the gallery, I turned the angle and discovered another long perspective, equally stored with prodigies of bronze and marble; paintings on the walls, on the ceilings, in short, everywhere. A minute brought me, vast as it was, to the extremity of this range; then, flying down a third, adorned in the same delightful manner, I paused under the bust of Jupiter Olympius; and began to reflect a little more maturely upon the company in which I found myself. Opposite, appeared the majestic features of Minerva, breathing divinity; and Cybele, the mother of the gods.

I bowed low to these awful powers, but seeing a black figure just by, whose attitude seemed to announce the deity of sleep, I made immediately up to it. You know my fondness for this drowsy personage, and that it is not the first time I have quitted the most splendid society for him. I found him, at present, of touchstone, with the countenance of a towardly brat, sleeping ill through indigestion. The artist had not conceived such high ideas of the god as live in my bosom, or else he never would have represented him with so little grace or dignity.

Displeased at finding my favourite subject profaned, I perceived the lively transports of enthusiasm began in some degree to be dissipated, and I felt myself calm enough to follow the herd of guides and spectators from chamber to

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chamber and cabinet to cabinet, without falling into errors of rapture and inspiration. We were led slowly and moderately through the large rooms, containing the portraits of painters, good, bad, and indifferent, from Raffaele to Liotard; then into a museum of bronzes, which would afford both amusement and instruction for years.

To one who can never behold an ancient lamp or tripod without the associations of those who sacrificed on the one and meditated by the other, imagine what pleasures such a repository must have communicated.

When I had alarmed, not satisfied, my curiosity by rapidly running over this multitude of candelabra, urns, and sacred utensils, we entered a small luminous apartment, surrounded with cases richly decorated, and filled with the most exquisite models of workmanship in bronze and various metals, classed in exact order. Here are crowds of diminutive deities and tutelary lars, to whom the superstition of former days attributed those midnight murmurs which were believed to presage the misfortunes of a family. Amongst these now neglected images are preserved a vast number of talismans, cabalistic amulets, and other grotesque relics of ancient credulity.

In the centre of the room, I remarked a table, beautifully formed of polished gems, and, hard by it, the statue of a genius with his familiar serpent, and all his attributes; the guardian of the treasured antiquities. From this chamber we were conducted into another, which opens to that part of the gallery where the busts of Adrian and Antinous are placed. Two pilasters, delicately carved in trophies and clusters of ancient armour, stand on each side of the entrance; within are several perfumed cabinets of miniatures, and a single column of Oriental alabaster about ten feet in height,

Lucido e terso, e bianco, più che latte.

I put my guide's patience to the proof, by remaining much longer than any one else ever did, in admiring the pillar, and rummaging the drawers of the cabinets. At last, the musk with which they are impregnated obliged me to desist, and I moved on to a suite of saloons, with low arched roofs, glittering with arabesque, in azure and gold. Several medallions appear amongst the wreaths of foliage, tolerably well painted, with representations of splendid feasts and tournaments for which Florence was once so famous.

A vast collection of small pictures, most of them Flemish, covers the walls of these apartments. But nothing struck me more than a Medusa's head by that surprising genius Leonardo da Vinci. It appears just severed from the body, and cast on the damp pavement of a cavern: a deadly paleness covers the countenance, and the mouth exhales a pestilential vapour: the snakes, which fill almost the whole picture, beginning to untwist their folds; one or two seemed already crept away, and crawling up the rock in company with toads and other venomous reptiles.

The colouring of these disgusting objects is faithful to a great degree; the effect of light, prodigious; the whole so masterly that I could not help entering into this description; though I fear to little purpose, as words at best convey but a weak idea of objects addressed to the sight alone.

Here are a great many Poleburgs: one in particular, the strangest I ever beheld. Instead of those soft scenes of woods and waterfalls he is in general so fond of representing, he has chosen for his subject Virgil ushering Dante into the regions of eternal punishment, amidst the ruins of flaming edifices that glare across the infernal waters. These mournful towers harbour innumerable shapes, all busy in preying upon the damned. One capital devil, in the form of an enormous lobster, seems very strenuously employed in mumbling a miserable mortal, who sprawls, though in vain, to escape from his claws. This performance, whimsical as it is, retains all that softness of tint and delicacy of pencil for which Poleburg is so renowned.

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Had not the subject so palpably contradicted the execution as to become remarkable, I should have passed it over, like a thousand more, and brought you immediately to the Tribune. I dare say our sensations were similar on entering this apartment. Need I say I was enchanted the moment I set my feet within it, and saw full before me the Venus de Medicis? The warm ivory hue of the original marble is a beauty no copy has ever imitated, and the softness of the limbs exceeded the liveliest idea I had formed to myself of their perfection.

Their symmetry every artist is acquainted with; but do you recollect a faint ruddy cast in the hair, which admirably relieves the whiteness of the forehead? This circumstance, though perhaps accidental, struck me as peculiarly charming; it increased the illusion, and helped me to imagine I beheld a breathing divinity.

When I had taken my eyes reluctantly from this beautiful object, I cast them upon a Morpheus of white marble, which lies slumbering at the feet of the goddess in the form of a graceful child. A dormant lion serves him for a pillow: two ample wings, carved with the utmost delicacy, are gathered under him; two others, budding from his temples, half concealed by a flow of lovely ringlets. His languid hands scarce hold a bunch of poppies: near him creeps a lizard, just yielding to his influence. Nothing can be more just than the expression of sleep in the countenance of the little divinity. His lion too seems perfectly lulled, and rests his muzzle upon his fore-paws as quiet as a domestic mastiff. I contemplated the god with infinite satisfaction, till I felt an agreeable sleepiness steal over my senses, and should have liked very well to doze away a few hours by his side. My ill-humour at seeing this deity so grossly sculptured in the gallery, was dissipated by the gracefulness of his appearance in the Tribune. I was now contented, for the artist, (to whom the Lord give a fair seat in paradise!) had realized my ideas; and, if I may venture my opinion, sculpture never arrived to higher perfection, or, at the same time, kept more justly within its province. Sleeping figures with me always produce the finest illusion. I easily persuade myself that I behold the very personage, cast into the lethargic state which is meant to be represented, and I can gaze whole hours upon them with complacency. But when I see an archer in the very act of discharging his arrow, a dancer with one foot in the air, or a gladiator extending his fist to all eternity, I grow tired, and ask, When will they perform what they are about? When will the bow twang? the foot come to the ground? or the fist meet its adversary? Such wearisome attitudes I can view with admiration, but never with pleasure. The wrestlers, for example, in the same apartment, filled me with disgust: I cried out, For heaven's sake! give the throw, and have done. In taking my turn round the enchanted circle, I discovered still, another Morpheus; stretched carelessly on a mantle, with poppies in his hands; but no wings grow from his temples, nor lion supports his head. A moth just issuing from his chrysalis is the only being which seems to have felt his soporific influence; whereas the other god I have mentioned may vaunt the glory of subduing the most formidable of animals.

The morning was gone before I could snatch myself from the Tribune. In my way home, I looked into the cathedral, an enormous fabric, inlaid with the richest marbles, and covered with stars and chequered work, like an old-fashioned cabinet. The architect seems to have turned his building inside out; nothing in art being more ornamented than the exterior, and few churches so simple within. The nave is vast and solemn, the dome amazingly spacious, with the high altar in its centre, inclosed by a circular arcade near two hundred feet in diameter. There is something imposing in this decoration, as it suggests the idea of a sanctuary, into which none but the holy ought to penetrate. However profane I might feel myself, I took the liberty of entering, and sat myself down in a niche. Not a ray of light reaches this sacred inclosure, but through the medium of narrow windows, high in the dome and richly painted. A sort of yellow tint predominates, which gives additional solemnity to the altar, and paleness to the votary before it. I was sensible of the effect, and obtained at least the colour of sanctity.

Having remained some time in this pious hue, I returned home and feasted upon grapes and ortolans with great edification; then walked to one of the bridges across the Arno, and surveyed the hills at a distance, purpled by the declining sun. Its mild beams tempted me to the garden of Boboli, which lies behind the Palazzo Pitti, stretched out on the side of a mountain. I ascended terrace after terrace, robed by a thick underwood of hay and myrtle, above which rise several nodding towers, and a long sweep of venerable wall, almost entirely concealed by ivy. You would have been enraptured with the broad masses of shade and dusky alleys that opened as I advanced, with

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white statues of fauns and sylvans glimmering amongst them; some of which pour water into sarcophagi of the purest marble, covered with antique relievos. The capitals of columns and ancient friezes are scattered about as seats.

On these I reposed myself, and looked up to the cypress groves spiring above the thickets; then, plunging into their retirements, I followed a winding path, which led me by a series of steep ascents to a green platform overlooking the whole extent of wood, with Florence deep beneath, and the tops of the hills which encircle it, jagged with pines; here and there a convent, or villa, whitening in the sun. This scene extends as far as the eye can reach.

Still ascending I attained the brow of the mountain, and had nothing but the fortress of Belvedere, and two or three open porticos above me. On this elevated situation, I found several walks of trellis-work, clothed with luxuriant vines, that produce to my certain knowledge the most delicious clusters. A colossal statue of Ceres, her hands extended in the act of scattering fertility over the prospect, crowns the summit, where I lingered to mark the landscape fade, and the bright skirts of the western sun die gradually away.

Then descending alley after alley, and bank after bank, I came to the orangery in front of the palace, disposed in a grand amphitheatre, with marble niches relieved by dark foliage, out of which spring tall aërial cypresses. This spot brought the scenery of an antique Roman garden full into my mind. I expected every instant to be called to the table of Lucullus hard by, in one of the porticoes, and to stretch myself on his purple triclinias; but waiting in vain for a summons till the approach of night, I returned delighted with a ramble that had led me so far into antiquity.

Friday, September 16th. My impatience to hear Pacchierotti called me up with the sun. I blessed a day which was to give me the greatest of musical pleasures, and travelled gaily towards Lucca, along a fertile plain, bounded by rocky hills, and scattered over with towns and villages. We passed Pistoia in haste, and about three in the afternoon entered the Lucchese territory, by a clean, paved road, which runs through some of the pleasantest copses imaginable, bordered with a variety of heaths and broom in blossom. Sometimes it conducted us down slopes, overgrown with shrubby chestnuts and arbor vitæ; sometimes between groves of cypresses and pines laden with cones: a red soil peeping forth from the vegetation adds to the richness of the landscape, which swells all the way into gentle acclivities: and at about seven or eight miles from the city spreads into mountains, green to their very summits, and diversified with gardens and palaces. A more pleasing scenery can with difficulty be imagined: I was quite charmed with beholding it, as I knew very well that the opera would keep me a long while chained down in its neighbourhood.

Happy for me that the environs of Lucca were so beautiful; since I defy almost any city to contain more ugliness within its walls. Narrow streets and dismal alleys; wide gutters and cracked pavements; everybody in black, like mourners for the gloom of their habitations, which, however, are large and lofty enough of conscience; but having all grated windows, they convey none but dark and dungeon-like ideas. My spirits fell many degrees upon entering this sable capital; and when I found Friday was meagre day, in every sense of the word, with its inhabitants, and no opera to be performed, I grew terribly out of humour, and shut myself up in a chamber of the inn, which, to complete my misfortune, was crowded with human lumber. Instead of a delightful symphony, I heard nothing for some time but the clatter of plates and the swearing of waiters.

Amongst the number of my tormentors was a whole Genoese family of distinction; very fat and sleek, and terribly addicted to the violin. Hearing of my fondness for music, they speedily got together a few scrapers, and began such an academia as drove me to one end of the room, whilst they possessed the other. The hopes and heir of the family a coarse chubby dolt of about eighteen played out of all time, and during the interval of repose he gave his elbow, burst out into a torrent of commonplace, which completed, you may imagine, my felicity.

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Pacchierotti, whom they all worshipped in their heavy way, sat silent the while in a corner; the second soprano warbled, not absolutely ill, at the harpsichord; whilst the old lady, young lady, and attendant females, kept ogling him with great perseverance. Those who could not get in, squinted through the crevices of the door. Abbés and greyhounds were fidgeting continually without. In short, I was so worried that, pleading headaches and lassitudes, I escaped about ten o'clock, and shook myself when I got safe to my apartment, like a spaniel just fresh from a dripping copse.

LETTER XIV

LUCCA, *September 25th.*

You ask me how I pass my time. Generally upon the hills, in wild spots where the arbutus flourishes: from whence I may catch a glimpse of the distant sea; my horse tied to a cypress, and myself cast upon the grass, like Palmarin of Oliva, with a tablet and pencil in my hand, a basket of grapes by my side, and a crooked stick to shake down the chestnuts. I have bidden adieu, several days ago, to the dinners and glories of the town, and only come thither in an evening, just time enough for the grand march which precedes Pacchierotti in *Quinto Fabio*. Sometimes he accompanies me in my excursions, to the utter discontent of the Lucchese, who swear I shall ruin their opera, by leading him such confounded rambles amongst the mountains, and exposing him to the inclemency of winds and showers. One day they made a vehement remonstrance, but in vain; for the next, away we trotted over hill and dale, and stayed so late in the evening, that cold and hoarseness were the consequence.

The whole republic was thrown into commotion, and some of its prime ministers were deputed to harangue Pacchierotti upon the rides he had committed. Billingsgate never produced such furious orators. Had the safety of their mighty state depended upon this imprudent excursion, they could not have vociferated with greater violence. You know I am rather energetic, and, to say truth, I had very nearly got into a scrape of importance, and drawn down the execrations of the Gonfalonier and all his council upon my head, in defending him, and in openly declaring our intention of taking, next morning, another ride over the rocks, and absolutely losing ourselves in the clouds which veil their acclivities. These threats were put into execution, and yesterday we made a tour of about thirty miles upon the highlands, and visited a variety of castles and palaces.

The Conte Nobili conducted us, a noble Lucchese, but born in Flanders and educated at Paris. He possesses the greatest elegance of imagination, and a degree of sensibility rarely met with upon our gross planet. The way did not appear tedious in such company. The sun was tempered by light clouds, and a soft autumnal haze rested upon the hills, covered with shrubs and olives. The distant plains and forests appeared tinted with deep blue, and I am now convinced the azure so prevalent in Velvet Breughel's landscapes is not exaggerated.

After riding for six or seven miles along the cultivated levels, we began to ascend a rough slope, overgrown with chestnuts; here and there some vines streaming in garlands displayed their clusters. A great many loose fragments and stumps of ancient pomegranates perplexed our route, which continued, turning and winding through this sort of wilderness, till it opened on a sudden to the side of a lofty mountain, covered with tufted groves, amongst which hangs the princely castle of the Garzonis, on the very side of a precipice.

Alcina could not have chosen a more romantic situation. The garden lies extended beneath, gay with flowers, and glittering with compartments of spar, which, though in no great purity of taste, has an enchanted effect for the first

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time. Two large marble basins, with jet-d'eaux seventy feet in height, divide the parterres; from the extremity of which rises a rude cliff, shaded with firs and ilex, and cut into terraces.

Leaving our horses at the great gate of this magic inclosure, we passed through the spray of the fountains, and mounting an almost endless flight of steps, entered an alley of oranges, and gathered ripe fruit from the trees. Whilst we were thus employed, the sun broke from the clouds, and lighted up the vivid green of the vegetation; at the same time spangling the waters, which pour copiously down a succession of rocky terraces, and sprinkle the impending citron-trees with perpetual dew. These streams issue from a chasm in the cliff, surrounded by cypresses, which conceal by their thick branches some pavilions with baths. Above arises a colossal statue of Fame, boldly carved, and in the very act of starting from the precipices. A narrow path leads up to the feet of the goddess, on which I reclined; whilst a vast column of water arched over my head, and fell, without even wetting me with its spray, into the depths below.

I could with difficulty prevail upon myself to abandon this cool recess, which the fragrance of bay and orange, extracted by constant showers, rendered uncommonly luxurious. At last I consented to move on, through a dark wall of ilex, which, to the credit of Signor Garzoni be it spoken, is suffered to grow as wild and as forest-like as it pleases. This grove is suspended on the mountain side, whose summit is clothed with a boundless wood of olives, and forms, by its azure colour, a striking contrast with the deep verdure of its base.

After resting a few moments in the shade, we proceeded to a long avenue (bordered by aloes in bloom, forming majestic pyramids of flowers thirty feet high), which led us to the palace. This was soon run over. Then, mounting our horses, we wound amongst sunny vales, and inclosures with myrtle hedges, till we came to a rapid steep. We felt the heat most powerfully in ascending it, and were glad to take refuge under a bower of vines, which runs for miles along its summit, almost without interruption. These arbours afforded us both shade and refreshment; I fell upon the clusters which formed our ceiling, like a native of the north, unused to such luxuriance: one of those Goths which Gray so poetically describes, who

Scent the new fragrance of the breathing rose,
And quaff the pendent vintage as it grows.

I wish you had journeyed with us under this fruitful canopy, and observed the partial sunshine through its transparent leaves, and the glimpses of the blue sky it every now and then admitted. I say only every now and then, for in most places a sort of verdant gloom prevailed, exquisitely agreeable in so hot a day.

But such luxury did not last, you may suppose, for ever. We were soon forced from our covert, and obliged to traverse a mountain exposed to the sun, which had dispersed every cloud, and shone with intolerable brightness. On the other side of this extensive eminence lies an agreeable hillock, surrounded by others, woody and irregular. Wide vineyards and fences of Indian corn lay between, across which the Conte Nobili conducted us to his house, where we found prepared a very comfortable dinner. We drank the growth of the spot, and defied Constantia and the Cape to excel it.

Afterwards, retiring into a wood of the Marchese Mansi, with neat pebble walks and trickling rivulets, we sipped coffee and loitered till sunset. It was then time to return: the dews began to fall, and the mists to rise from the valleys. The profound calm and silence of evening threw us all three into our reveries. We went pacing along heedlessly, just as our horses pleased, without hearing any sound but their steps.

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Between nine and ten we entered the gates of Lucca. Pacchierotti coughed, and half its inhabitants wished us at the devil.

I think now I have detained you long enough with my excursions: you must require a little repose; for my own part, I am heartily tired. I intended to say some things about certain owls, amongst other grievances I am pestered with in this republic; but shall cut them all short, and wish you good-night; for the opera is already begun, and I would not miss the first glorious recitative for the empire of Trebizond.

LETTER XV

LIVOURNO, *October 2nd.*

No sooner were we beyond the gates, than we found ourselves in narrow roads, shut in by vines and grassy banks of canes and osiers, rising high above our carriage, and waving their leaves in the air. Through the openings which sometimes intervene we discovered a variety of hillocks clothed with shrubberies and verdure, ruined towers looking out of the bushes, not one without a romantic tale attending it.

This sort of scenery lasted till, passing the baths, we beheld Pisa rising from an extensive plain, the most open we had as yet seen in Italy, crossed by an aqueduct. We were set down immediately before the Duomo, which stands insulated in a verdant opening, and is by far the most curious and highly finished edifice my eyes ever viewed. Don't ask of what shape or architecture; it is almost impossible to tell, so great is the confusion of ornaments. The capitals of the columns and carvings of the architraves, as well as the form of the arches, are evidently of Grecian design, but Gothic proportions. The dome gives the mass an Oriental appearance, which helped to bewilder me; in short, I have dreamed of such buildings, but little thought they existed. On one side you survey the famous tower, as perfectly awry as I expected; on the other the baptistery, a circular edifice distinct from the church and right opposite its principal entrance, crowded with sculptures and topped by the strangest of cupolas.

Having indulged our curiosity with this singular prospect for some moments, we entered the cathedral and admired the stately columns of porphyry and the rarest marbles, supporting a roof which, like the rest of the building, shines with gold. A pavement of the brightest mosaic completes its magnificence: all around are sculptures by M. Ang. Buonaroti, and paintings by the most distinguished artists. We examined them all, and then walked down the nave and remarked the striking effect of the baptistery, seen in perspective through the bronze portals, which you know, I suppose, are covered with relievos of the finest workmanship. These noble valves were thrown wide open, and we passed between to examine the alabaster fount in the baptistery, constructed after the primitive ritual, and exquisitely wrought. Many palm trees appear amongst the carved work, which seems to indicate the former connections of the Pisanese with Palestine.

Our next object was the Campo Santo, which forms one side of the opening in which the cathedral is situated. The walls, and Gothic tabernacle above the entrance, rising from a level turf, appear as fresh as if built within the present century, and, preserving a neat straw colour, have the cleanest effect imaginable. Our guide unlocking the gates, we entered a spacious cloister, forming an oblong quadrangle, enclosing the sacred earth of Jerusalem, conveyed hither about the period of the crusades, in the days of Pisanese prosperity. The holy mould produces a rampant crop of weeds, but none are permitted to spring from the pavement, which is entirely composed of tombs with slabs and monumental inscriptions smoothly laid. Ranges of slender pillars, formed of the whitest marble

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and glistening in the sun, support the arcades, which are carved with innumerable stars and roses, partly Gothic and partly Saracenic. Strange paintings of hell and the devil, mostly taken from Dante's rhapsodies, cover the walls of these fantastic galleries, attributed to the venerable Giotto and Bufalmacco, whom Boccaccio mentions in his Decamerone.

Beneath, along the base of the columns, rows of pagan sarcophagi are placed, to my no small surprise, as I could not have supposed the Pisanese sufficiently tolerant to admit profane sculptures within such consecrated precincts. However, there they are, as well as fifty other contradictory ornaments.

I was quite seized by the strangeness of the place, and paced fifty times round and round the cloisters, discovering at every time some odd novelty. When tired, I seated myself on a fair slab of *giallo antico*, that looked a little cleaner than its neighbours (which I only mention to identify the precise point of view), and looking through the filigreed covering of the arches, observed the domes of the cathedral, cupola of the baptistery, and roof of the leaning tower rising above the leads, and forming the strangest assemblage of pinnacles perhaps in Europe. The place is neither sad nor solemn; the arches are airy, the pillars light, and there is so much caprice, such an exotic look in the whole scene, that without any violent effort of fancy one might imagine one's self in fairyland. Every object is new, every ornament original; the mixture of antique sarcophagi with Gothic sepulchres, completes the vagaries of the prospect, to which, one day or other, I think of returning, to act a visionary part, hear visionary music, and commune with sprites, for I shall never find in the whole universe besides so whimsical a theatre. It was between ten and eleven when we entered the Campo Santo, and one o'clock struck before I could be persuaded to leave it; and 'twas the sun which then drove me away; whose heat was so powerful that all the inhabitants of Pisa showed their wisdom by keeping within doors. Not an animal appeared in the streets, except five camels laden with water, stalking along a range of garden walls and pompous mansions, with an awning before every door. We were obliged to follow their steps, at least a quarter of a mile, before we reached our inn. Ice was the first thing I sought after, and when I had swallowed an unreasonable portion, I began not to think quite so much of the deserts of Africa, as the heat and the camels had induced me a moment ago.

Early in the afternoon, we proceeded to Livourno through a wild tract of forest, somewhat in the style of our English parks. The trees in some places formed such shady arbours, that we could not resist the desire of walking beneath them, and were well rewarded; for after struggling through a rough thicket, we entered a lawn hemmed in by oaks and chestnuts, which extends several leagues along the coast and conceals the prospect of the ocean; but we heard its murmurs.

Nothing could be smoother or more verdant than the herbage, which was sprinkled with daisies and purple crocuses, as in the month of May. I felt all the genial sensations of Spring steal into my bosom, and was greatly delighted upon discovering vast bushes of myrtle in bloom. The softness of the air, the sound of the distant surges, the evening gleams, and repose of the landscape, quieted the tumult of my spirits, and I experienced the calm of my infant hours. I lay down in the open turf—walks between the shrubberies, listlessly surveyed the cattle browsing at a distance, and the blue hills that rose above the foliage, and bounded the view. During a few moments I had forgotten every care; but when I began to inquire into my happiness, I found it vanish. I felt myself without those I love most, in situations they would have warmly admired, and without them these pleasant meads and woodlands were of little avail.

We had not left this woody region far behind, when the Fanalè began to lift itself above the horizon the Fanalè you have so often mentioned; the sky and ocean glowing with amber light, and the ships out at sea appearing in a golden haze, of which we have no conception in our northern climates. Such a prospect, together with the fresh gales from the Mediterranean, charmed me; I hurried immediately to the port and sat on a reef of rocks, listening to the waves that broke amongst them.

LETTER XVI

October 3rd. I went, as you would have done, to walk on the mole as soon as the sun began to shine upon it. Its construction you are no stranger to; therefore I think I may spare myself the trouble of saying anything about it, except that the port which it embraces is no longer crowded. Instead of ten ranks of vessels there are only three, and those consist chiefly of Corsican galleys, that look as poor and tattered as their masters. Not much attention did I bestow upon such objects, but, taking my seat at the extremity of the quay, surveyed the smooth plains of ocean, the coast scattered over with watch-towers, and the rocky isle of Gorgona, emerging from the morning mists, which still lingered upon the horizon.

Whilst I was musing upon the scene, and calling up all that train of ideas before my imagination, which possessed your own upon beholding it, an ancient figure, with a beard that would have suited a sea-god, stepped out of a boat, and tottering up the steps of the quay, presented himself before me with a basket in his hand. He stayed dripping a few moments before he pronounced a syllable, and when he began his discourse, I was in doubt whether I should not have moved off in a hurry, there was something so wan and singular in his countenance. Except this being, no other was visible for a quarter of a mile at least. I knew not what strange adventure I might be upon the point of commencing, or what message I was to expect from the submarine divinities. However, after all my conjectures, the figure turned out to be no other than an old fisherman, who, having picked up a few large branches of red coral, offered them to sale. I eagerly made the purchase, and thought myself a favourite of Neptune, since he allowed me to acquire for next to nothing some of his most beautiful ornaments.

My bargain thus expeditiously finished, I ran along the quay with my basket of coral, and, jumping into a boat, was rowed back to the gate of the port. The carriage waited there; I filled it with jasmine, shut myself up in the shade of the green blinds, and was driven away at a rate that favoured my impatience. We bowled smoothly over the lawns I attempted describing in my last letter, amongst myrtles in flower, that would have done honour to the island of Juan Fernandes.

Arrived at Pisa, I scarcely allowed myself a moment to revisit the Campo Santo, but, after taking my usual portion of ice and pomegranate-seeds, hurried on to Lucca as fast as horses could carry me, threw the whole idle town into a stare by my speedy return, and gave myself up to *Q. Fabio*.

Next day (October 4th) was passed in running over my old haunts upon the hills, and bidding farewell to several venerable chestnuts, for which I had contracted a sort of friendship by often experiencing their protection. I could not help feeling some melancholy sensation when I turned round the last time to bid them adieu. Who knows but some dryad enclosed within them was conscious of my gratitude, and noted it down on the bark of her tree? It was late before I finished my excursion, and soon after I had walked as usual upon the ramparts the opera began.

LETTER XVII

FLORENCE, *October 5th.*

Dreams, Waking Thoughts, and Incidents

It was not without regret that I forced myself from Lucca. We had all the same road to go over again, that brought us to this important republic, but we broke down by way of variety. The wind was chill, the atmosphere damp and clogged with unwholesome vapours, through which we were forced to walk for a league, whilst our chaise lagged after us.

Taking shelter in a miserable cottage, we remained shivering and shaking till the carriage was in some sort of order, and then proceeded so slowly that we did not arrive at Florence till late in the evening. We found an apartment over the Arno prepared for our reception. The river, swollen with rains, roared like a mountain torrent. Throwing open my windows, I viewed its agitated course by the light of the moon, half concealed in stormy clouds, which hung above the fortress of the Belvedere, and cast a lowering gleam over the hills, which rise above the town, and wave with cypress. I sat contemplating the effect of the shadows on the bridge, on the heights of Boboli, and the mountain covered with pale olive groves, amongst which a convent is situated, till the moon sunk into the darkest quarter of the sky, and a bell began to toll. Its sullen sound filled me with sadness. I closed the casements, called for lights, ran to a harpsichord Vannini had prepared for me, and played somewhat in the strain of Jomelli's *Miserere*.

October 6th. Every cloud was dispersed when I arose; the sunbeams glittered on the stream, and the purity and transparency of the ether added new charms to the woody eminences around. Such was the clearness of the air that even objects on the distant mountains were distinguishable. I felt quite revived by the exhilarating prospect, and walked in the splendour of sunshine to the porticos beneath the famous gallery; then to an ancient castle, raised in the days of the republic, which fronts the grand piazza: colossal statues and venerable terms are placed before it. On one side a fountain clung round with antique figures of bronze, by John of Bologna, so admirably wrought as to hold me several minutes in astonishment; on the other, three lofty Gothic arches, and under one of them the Perseus of Benvenuto Cellini, raised on a pedestal, incomparably designed and executed; which I could not behold uninterested, since its author has ever occupied a distinguished place in my kalendar of genius. Having examined some groups of sculptures, by Baccio Bandinelli and other mighty artists, I entered the court of the castle, dark and deep, as if hewn out of a rock; surrounded by a vaulted arcade, covered with arabesque ornaments, and supported by pillars as uncouthly carved as those of Persepolis. In the midst appears a marble fount with an image of bronze, that looks quite strange and cabalistic. I leaned against it, to look up to the summits of the walls, which rise to a vast height, from whence springs a slender tower. Above, in the apartments of the castle, were preserved numbers of curious cabinets, tables of inlaid gems, and a thousand rarities, collected by the house of Medici, but exposed by the present sovereign of Tuscany to public sale.

It was not without indignation that I learnt this new mark of contempt which the Austrians bestow on the memory of those illustrious patrons of the Arts; whom, being unwilling to imitate, they affect to despise as a race of merchants, whose example it would be abasing their dignity to follow.

I could have stayed much longer to enjoy the novelty and strangeness of the place; but it was right to pay some compliments of form. That duty over, I dined in peace and solitude, read over your letters, and repaired, as evening drew on, to the thickets of Boboli.

What a serene sky! what mellowness in the tints of the mountains! A purple haze concealed the bases, whilst their summits were invested with saffron light, discovering every white cot and every copse that clothed their declivities. The prospect widened as I ascended the terraces of the garden.

After traversing many long alleys, brown with impending foliage, I emerged into a green opening on the brow of the hill, and seated myself under the statue of Ceres. From this high point I surveyed the mosaic cupola of the Duomo, its quaint turret, and one still more grotesque in its neighbourhood, built not improbably in the style of ancient Etruria. Beyond this singular group of buildings a plain stretches itself far and wide, most richly scattered over with villas, gardens, and groves of pine and olive, quite to the feet of the mountains.

Dreams, Waking Thoughts, and Incidents

After I had marked the sun's going down, I went through a plat of vines hanging on the steeps, to a little eminence, round which the wood grows wilder and more luxuriant, and the cypresses shoot up to a surprising elevation. The pruners have spared this sylvan corner, and suffered the bays to put forth their branches, and the ilex to dangle over the walks, many of whose entrances are nearly overgrown. I enjoyed the gloom of these shady arbours, in the midst of which rises a lofty pavilion with galleries running round it, not unlike the idea one forms of Turkish chiosks. Beneath lies a garden of vines and rose-trees, which I visited, and found a spring under a rustic arch of grotto-work, fringed round with ivy. Millions of fish inhabit here, of that beautiful glittering species which comes from China. This golden nation were leaping after insects, as I stood gazing upon the deep, clear water, and listening to the drops that trickle from the cove. Opposite to which, at the end of an alley of vines, you discover an oval bason, and in the midst of it a statue of Ganymede, sitting reclined upon the eagle, full of that graceful languor so peculiarly Grecian. Whilst I was musing on the margin of the spring (for I returned to it after casting a look upon the sculpture), the moon rose above the tufted foliage of the terraces. Her silver brightness was strongly contrasted by the deep green of the holm-oak and bay, amongst which I descended by several flights of stairs, with neat marble balustrades crowned by vases of aloes.

It was about seven o'clock, and everybody was jumbling to my Lord T-'s, who lives in a fine house all over blue and silver, with stuffed birds, alabaster cupids, and a thousand prettinesses more; but, after all, neither he nor his abode are worth mentioning. I found a deal of slopping and sipping of tea going forwards, and many dawdlers assembled.

As I can say little good of the party, I had better shut the door, and conduct you to the opera, which is really a striking spectacle. However, it being addressed to the sight alone, I was soon tired, and gave myself up to conversation. Bedini, first soprano, put my patience to severe proof, during the few minutes I attended. You never beheld such a porpoise. If these animals were to sing, I should conjecture it would be in his style. You may suppose how often I invoked Pacchierotti, and regretted the lofty melody of *Quinto Fabio*. Everybody seemed as well contented as if there were no such thing as good music in the world, except a Neapolitan duchess, who delighted me by her vivacity. We took our fill of maledictions, and went home equally pleased with each other for having mutually execrated both singers and audience.

LETTER XVIII

October 22nd. They say the air is worse this year at Rome than ever, and that it would be madness to go thither during its malign influence. This was very bad news indeed to one heartily tired of Florence, at least of its society. Merciful powers! what a set harbour within its walls! * * * * * You may imagine I do not take vast or vehement delight in this company, though very ingenious, praiseworthy, etc. The woods of the Cascini shelter me every morning; and there grows an old crooked ilex at their entrance, twisting round a pine, upon whose branches I sit for hours, hear, without feeling, the showers trickling above my head, and see the cattle browsing peacefully in their pastures, which hazel copses, Italian pines, and groves of cypress enclose.

In the afternoon I never fail hiding myself in the thickets of Boboli, and marking the golden glimmer of sunset between their leaves. The other evening I varied my walks, and ascended one of those pleasant hills {214} which rise in the vicinity of the city, and command a variegated scene of spires, towns, villas, cots, and gardens. On the right, as you stand upon the brow, appears Fesule with its turrets and white houses, covering a rocky mount; to the left, the vast Val d'Arno lost in immensity. A Franciscan convent stands on the summit of the eminence, wrapped

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up in ancient cypresses, which hinder its holy inhabitants from seeing too much of so gay a view. The paved ascent leading up to their abode receives also a shade from the cypresses which border it. Beneath which venerable avenue, crosses with inscriptions are placed at stated distances, to mark the various moments of Christ's passion; as when fainting under His burden He halted to repose Himself, or when He met His afflicted mother (*Giesu incontra la fua afflitta madre*).

Above, at the end of the perspective, rises a chapel designed with infinite taste and simple elegance by M. A. Buonarotti. Further on, an ancient church, in the corrupt Greek style of the primitive Christians, incrusting with white marble, porphyry, and verd antique. The interior presents a crowded assemblage of ornaments, elaborate mosaic pavements, and inlaid work without end. The high altar, placed in a semicircular recess, which reminded me of the church at Torcello, glitters with barbaric paintings on a gold ground, and receives the strongest glow of light imaginable from five windows, filled up with transparent marble clouded like tortoiseshell. A smooth polished staircase leads to this sacred place: another brought me to a subterraneous chapel, supported by confused groups of variegated pillars, just visible by the glimmer of lamps. I thought of the Zancaroon at Cordova, and began reciting the first verses of the Koran.

Passing on not unawed, I followed some flights of steps, which terminate in the neat cloisters of the convent, in perfect preservation, but totally deserted. Ranges of citron and aloes fill up the quadrangle, whose walls are hung with superstitious pictures most singularly fancied. The Jesuits were the last tenants of this retirement, and seem to have had great reason for their choice. Its peace and stillness delighted me.

Next day a very opposite scene engaged me, though much against my will. Her R. H. the G. Duchess having produced a princess in the night, everybody put on grand gala in the morning, and I was carried, along with the glittering tide of courtiers, ministers, and ladies, to see the christening. After hearing the Grand Duke talk politics for some time, the doors of a temporary chapel were thrown open. Trumpets flourished, processions marched, and the archbishop began his business at an altar of massive gold, placed under a yellow silk pavilion, with pyramids of lights before it. Wax tapers, though it was noon-day, shone in every corner of the apartments. Two rows of pages, gorgeously accoutred, and holding enormous torches, stood on each side his Royal Highness, and made him the prettiest courtesies imaginable, to the sound of an execrable band of music, though led by Nardini. The poor old archbishop, who looked very piteous and saint-like, struck up the *Te Deum* with a quavering voice, and the rest followed him full gallop.

That ceremony being despatched (for his R. H. was in a mighty fidget to shrink back into his beloved obscurity), the crowd dispersed, and I went, with a few others, to dine at my Lord Tilney's.

Evening drawing on, I ran to throw myself into the woods of Boboli, and remained till it was night in their profound recesses. Really this garden is enough to bewilder an enthusiastic spirit; there is something so solemn in its shades, its avenues, and spires of cypresses. When I had mused for many a melancholy hour amongst them, I emerged into the orangery before the palace, which overlooks the largest district of the town, and beheld, as I slowly descended the road which leads up to it, certain bright lights glancing across the cupola of the *Duomo* and the points of the highest towers. At first I thought them meteors, or those illusive fires which often dance before the eye of my imagination; but soon I was convinced of their reality: for in a few minutes the battlements of the old castle, which I remember mentioning in a former letter, shone with lamps; the lantern of the cathedral was lighted up on a sudden; whilst a stream of torches ran along its fantastic turrets.

I enjoyed this prospect at a distance: when near, its pleasure was greatly diminished, for half the fish in the town were frying to rejoice the hearts of H. R. Highness's loyal subjects, and bonfires blazing in every street and alley. Hubbubs and stinks of every denomination drove me quickly to the theatre; but that was all glitter and glare. No taste, no arrangement, paltry looking-glasses, and rat's-tail candles. I had half a mind to return to Boboli.

LETTER XIX

October 23rd. Do you recollect our evening rambles last year upon the hill of pines? and the dark valley where we used to muse in the twilight? I remember we often fancied the scene like Valombrosa; and vowed, if ever an occasion offered, to visit that deep retirement. I had put off the execution of this pilgrimage from day to day till the warm weather was gone; and the Florentines declared I should be frozen if I attempted it. Everybody stared last night at the opera when I told them I was going to bury myself in fallen leaves, and hear no music but their rustlings.

Mr. — was just as eager as myself to escape the chit-chat and nothingness of Florence; so we finally determined upon our expedition, and mounting our horses, set out this morning, happily without any company but the spirit which led us along. We had need of inspiration, since nothing else, I think, would have tempted us over such dreary, uninteresting hillocks as rise from the banks of the Arno. The hoary olive is their principal vegetation; so that Nature, in this part of the country, seems in a withering decrepit state, and may not unaptly be compared to an old woman clothed in grey. However, we did not suffer the prospect to damp our enthusiasm, which was the better preserved for Valombrosa.

About half way, our palfreys thought proper to look out for some oats, and I to creep into a sort of granary in the midst of a barren waste, scattered over with white rocks, that reflected more heat than I cared for, although I had been told snow and ice were to be my portion. Seating myself on the floor between heaps of corn, I reached down a few purple clusters of Muscadine grapes, which hung to dry in the ceiling, and amused myself very pleasantly with them till the horses had finished their meal and it was lawful to set forwards. We met with nothing but rocky steeps shattered into fragments, and such roads as half inclined us to repent our undertaking; but cold was not yet amongst the number of our evils.

At last, after ascending a tedious while, we began to feel the wind blow sharp from the peaks of the mountains, and to hear the murmur of the forests of pine which shade their acclivities. A paved path leads across them, quite darkened by boughs, which, meeting over our heads, cast a gloom and a chill below, that would have stopped the proceedings of reasonable mortals, and sent them to bask in the plain; but, being not so easily discomfited, we threw ourselves boldly into the forest. It presented one of those confusions of tall straight stems I am so fond of, and exhaled a fresh aromatic odour that revived my spirits.

The cold to be sure was piercing; but setting that at defiance, we galloped on, and issued shortly into a vast amphitheatre of lawns and meadows, surrounded by thick woods beautifully green. Flocks of sheep were dispersed on the slopes, whose smoothness and verdure equal our English pastures. Steep cliffs and mountains, clothed with beech to their very summits, guard this retired valley. The herbage, moistened by streams which fall from the eminences, has never been known to fade; and, whilst the chief part of Tuscany is parched by the heats of summer, these upland meadows retain the freshness of spring. I regretted not having visited them sooner, as autumn had already made great havoc amongst the foliage. Showers of leaves blew full in our faces as we rode towards the convent, placed at an extremity of the vale, and sheltered by remote firs and chestnuts towering one above another.

Alighting before the entrance, two fathers came out and received us into the peace of their retirement. We found a blazing fire, and tables spread very comfortably before it, round which five or six overgrown friars were

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lounging, who seemed, by the sleekness and rosy hue of their countenances, not totally to have despised this mortal existence.

My letters of recommendation soon brought the heads of the order about me, fair round figures, such as a Chinese would have placed in his pagoda. I could willingly have dispensed with their attention; yet to avoid this was scarcely within the circle of possibility. All dinner we endured the silliest questions imaginable; but that despatched, away flew your humble servant to the fields and forests. The fathers made a shift to waddle after, as fast and as complaisantly as they were able, but were soon distanced.

Now, I found myself at liberty, and ran up a narrow path overhung by rock, with bushy chestnuts starting from the crevices. This led me into wild glens of beech trees, mostly decayed and covered with moss: several were fallen. It was amongst these the holy hermit Gualbertus had his cell. I rested a moment upon one of their huge branches, listening to the roar of a waterfall which the wood concealed; then springing up, I clambered over crags and fragments, guided by the sound, and presently discovered a full stream, precipitating itself down a cliff of pine, amongst which I remained several minutes, watching the fallen floods; till, tired with their endless succession, I plunged into the thickest of the grove. A beech received me, like a second Gualbertus, in its hollow trunk. The dry leaves chased each other down the steep on the edge of the torrents with hollow rustlings, whilst the solemn wave of the forests above exactly answered the idea I had formed of Valombrosa,

. . . where th' Etrurian shades
High overarch't imbowl.

The scene was beginning to take effect, and the genius of Milton to move across his favourite valley, when the fathers arrived puffing and blowing, by an easier ascent than I knew of. Pardon me, if I cursed their intrusion, and wished them as still as Gualbertus.

You have missed the way, cried the youngest; the hermitage, with the fine picture by Andrea del Sarto, which all the English admire, is on the opposite side of the wood: there don't you see it on the point of the cliff?

Yes, yes, said I a little peevishly; I wonder the devil has not pushed it down long ago; it seems to invite his kick.

Satan, answered the old Pagod very dryly, is full of malice; but whoever drinks of a spring which the Lord causeth to flow near the hermitage is freed from his illusions.

Are they so? replied I with a sanctified accent; then prithee conduct me thither, for I have great need of such salutary waters, being troubled with strange fancies and imaginations, such as the evil one himself ought to be ashamed of inspiring.

The youngest father shook his head, as much as to say, This is nothing more than a heretic's whim.

The senior muddled, I conjecture set forwards with greater piety, and began some legendary tales of the kind which my soul loveth: rare stories of caves and dens of the earth, inhabited by ancient men familiar with spirits, and not the least discomposed by a party of angels coming to dinner, or playing a game at miracles to pass away the evening. He pointed to a chasm in the cliff, round which we were winding by a spiral path, where Gualbertus used to sleep, and, turning himself towards the west, see a long succession of saints and martyrs sweeping athwart the sky, and gilding the clouds with far brighter splendours than the setting sun. Here he rested till his last hour,

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when the bells of the convent beneath (which till that moment would have made dogs howl, had there been any within its precincts) struck out such harmonious jingling that all the country around was ravished, and began lifting up their eyes with singular devotion, when, behold! cherubim appeared, light dawned, and birds chirped, although it was midnight. Alas! alas! what would I not give to witness such a spectacle, and read my prayer-book by the effulgence of opening heaven!

However, willing to see something at least, I crept into the consecrated cleft, and extended myself on its rugged surface. A very penitential couch! but commanding glorious prospects of the world below, which lay this evening in deep blue shade; the sun looking red and angry through misty vapours, which prevented our discovering the Tuscan sea.

Finding the rock as damp as might be expected, I soon shifted my quarters, and followed the youngest father up to the Romitorio, a snug little hermitage, with a neat chapel, and altar-piece by Andrea del Sarto, which I should have more minutely examined in any other place, but where the wild scenery of hanging woods and meadows, steep hills and nodding precipices, possessed my whole attention. I just stayed to taste the holy fountain; and then, escaping from my conductors, ran eagerly down the path, leaping over the springs that crossed it, and entered a lawn of the smoothest turf, grazed by sheep, and swelling into gentle acclivities, skirted by groves of fir, whose solemn verdure formed a contrast with its tender green. Beyond this pleasant opening rises a second, hemmed in with copses; and still higher, a third, whence a forest of young pines spires up into a lofty theatre terminated by peaks, universally concealed under a thick mantle of beech, tinged with ruddy brown. Pausing in the midst of the lawns, and looking upward to the sweeps of wood which surrounded me, I addressed my orisons to the genius of the place, and prayed that I might once more return into its bosom, and be permitted to bring you along with me, for surely such meads, such groves, were formed for our enjoyment!

This little rite performed, I walked on quite to the extremity of the pastures, traversed a thicket, and found myself on the edge of precipices, beneath whose base the whole Val d'Arno lies expanded. I listened to distant murmurings in the plain, saw smoke rise from the cottages, and viewed a vast tract of barren country, which evening rendered still more desolate, bounded by the high mountain of Radicofani. Then, turning round, I beheld the whole extent of rock and forest, the groves of beech, and wilds above the convent, glowing with fiery red, for the sun, making a last effort to pierce the vapours, produced this effect; which was the more striking, as the sky was dark, and the rest of the prospect of a melancholy blue.

Returning slowly homeward, I marked the warm glow deserting the eminences, and heard the bell toll sullenly to vespers. The young boys of the seminary were moving in a body to their dark inclosure, all dressed in black. Many of them looked pale and wan. I wished to ask them whether the solitude of Valombrosa suited their age and vivacity; but a tall spectre of a priest drove them along like a herd, and presently, the gates opening, I saw them no more. A sadness I could scarcely account for came over me. I shivered at the bare idea of being cooped up in such a place, and seeing no other living objects than scarecrow priests and friars; to hear every day the same dull service and droning organ; view the same cloisters; be led the same walks; watched, cribbed, confined, and filled with superstitious fears.

The night was growing chill, the winds boisterous, and in the intervals of the gusts I had the addition of a lamentable screech-owl to raise my spirits. Upon the whole, I was not at all concerned to meet the fathers, who came out to show me to my room, and entertain me with various gossipings, both sacred and profane, till supper appeared.

Next morning, the Padre Decano gave us chocolate in his apartment; and afterwards led us round the convent, insisting most unmercifully upon our viewing every cell and every dormitory. However, I was determined to make a full stop at the organ, which is perhaps the most harmonious I ever played upon; but placed in a dark, dingy recess, feebly lighted by lamps, not calculated to inspire triumphant voluntaries. The monks, who had all crowded around me when I first began, in expectation of brisk jigs and lively overtures, soon took themselves

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away upon hearing a strain ten times more sorrowful than that to which they were accustomed. I did not lament their departure, but played dismally on till our horses came round to the gate. We mounted, spurred back through the grove of pines which protect Valombrosa from intrusion, descended the steeps, and, gaining the plains, galloped in three hours to Florence.

LETTER XX

SIENNA, *October 26th.*

At last fears were overcome, the epidemical fever at Rome allowed to be no longer dangerous, and myself permitted to quit Florence. The weather was neither gay nor dismal; the country neither fine nor ugly; and your friend full as indifferent as the scenes he looked at. Towards afternoon, a thunderstorm gave character to the landscape, and we entered a narrow vale enclosed by rocks, with streams running at their base. Poplars with faded yellow leaves sprung from the margins of the rivulets, which seemed to lose themselves in the ruins of a castle, built in the Gothic times. Our road led through its court and passed the ancient keep, still darkened by its turrets; a few mud cottages are scattered about the opening where formerly the chieftain exercised his vassals, and trained them to war. The dungeon, once filled with miserable victims, serves only at present to confine a few goats, which were milking before its entrance. As we were driven along under a tottering gateway, and then through a plain and up a hill, the breeze whispering amongst the fern which covers it, I felt the sober autumnal cast of the evening bring back the happy hours I passed last year at this very time, calm and sequestered. Full of these recollections, my eyes closed of their own accord, and were not opened for many hours; in short, till we entered Sienna.

October 27th. Here my duty of course was to see the cathedral, and I got up much earlier than I wished, in order to perform it. I wonder our holy ancestors did not choose a mountain at once, scrape it into shrines, and chisel it into scripture stories. It would have cost them almost as little trouble as the building in question, which may certainly be esteemed a masterpiece of ridiculous taste and elaborate absurdity. The front, incrusting with alabaster, is worked into a million of fretted arches and puzzling ornaments. There are statues without number and relievos without end.

The church within is all of black and white marble alternately; the roof blue and gold, with a profusion of silken banners hanging from it; and a cornice running above the principal arcade, composed entirely of bustos representing the whole series of sovereign pontiffs, from the first Bishop of Rome to Adrian the Fourth. Pope Joan figured amongst them, between Leo the Fourth and Benedict the Third, till the year 1600, when she was turned out, at the instance of Clement the Eighth, to make room for Zacharias the First.

I hardly knew which was the nave, or which the cross aisle, of this singular edifice, so perfect is the confusion of its parts. The pavement demands attention, being inlaid so curiously as to represent variety of histories taken from Holy Writ, and designed in the true style of that hobgoblin tapestry which used to bestare the halls of our ancestors. Near the high altar stands the strangest of pulpits, supported by polished pillars of granite, rising from lions' backs, which serve as pedestals. In every corner of the place some chapel or other offends or astonishes you. That, however, of the Chigi family, it must be allowed, has infinite merit with respect to design and execution; but it is so lost in general disorder as to want the best part of its effect.

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From the church one enters a vaulted chamber, erected by the Piccolominis, filled with valuable missals most exquisitely illuminated. The paintings in fresco on the walls are rather barbarous, though executed after the designs of the mighty Raffaele; but then, we must remember, he had but just escaped from Pietro Perugino.

Not staying long in the Duomo, we left Sienna in good time; and, after being shaken and tumbled in the worst roads that were ever pretended to be made use of, found ourselves beneath the rough mountains round Radicofani, about seven o'clock on a cold and dismal evening. Up we toiled a steep craggy ascent, and reached at length the inn upon its summit. My heart sunk when I entered a vast range of apartments, with high black rafted roofs, once intended for a hunting palace of the Grand Dukes, but now desolate and forlorn. The wind having risen, every door began to shake, and every board substituted for a window to clatter, as if the severe power who dwells on the topmost peak of Radicofani, according to its village mythologists, was about to visit his abode. My only spell to keep him at a distance was kindling an enormous fire, whose charitable gleams cheered my spirits, and gave them a quicker flow. Yet, for some minutes, I never ceased looking, now to the right, now to the left, up at the dark beams, and down the long passages, where the pavement, broken up in several places, and earth newly strewn about, seemed to indicate that something horrid was concealed below.

A grim fraternity of cats kept whisking backwards and forwards in these dreary avenues, which I am apt to imagine is the very identical scene of a sabbath of witches at certain periods. Not venturing to explore them, I fastened my door, pitched my bed opposite the hearth, which glowed with embers, and crept under the coverlids, hardly venturing to go to sleep, lest I should be suddenly roused from it by the sudden glare of torches, and be more initiated than I wished into the mysteries of the place.

Scarce was I settled, before two or three of the brotherhood just mentioned stalked in at a little opening under the door. I insisted upon their moving off faster than they had entered, suspecting that they would soon turn wizards, and was surprised, when midnight came, to hear nothing more than their mewings, doleful enough, and echoed by the hollow walls and arches.

LETTER XXI

RADICOFANI, *October 28th.*

I begin to despair of magical adventures, since none happened at Radicofani, which Nature seems wholly to have abandoned. Not a tree, not an acre of soil, has she bestowed upon its inhabitants, who would have more excuse for practising the gloomy art than the rest of mankind. I was very glad to leave their black hills and stony wilderness behind, and, entering the Papal territory, to see some shrubs and corn-fields at a distance, near Aquapadente, which is situated on a ledge of cliffs, mantled with chestnut copses and tufted ilex. The country grew varied and picturesque. St. Lorenzo, the next post, built upon a hill, overlooks the lake of Bolsena, whose woody shores conceal many ruined buildings. We passed some of them in a retired vale, with arches from rock to rock, and grottos beneath half lost in thickets, from which rise craggy pinnacles crowned by mouldering towers; just such scenery as Polemburg and Peter de Laer introduce in their paintings.

Beyond these truly Italian prospects, which a mellow evening tint rendered still more interesting, a forest of oaks presents itself upon the brows of hills, which extends almost the whole way to Monte Fiascone. It was late before we ascended it. The whole country seems full of inhabited caverns, that began as night drew on to shine with

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fires. We saw many dark shapes glancing before them, and perhaps a subterranean people like the Cimmerians lurk in their recesses. As we drew near Viterbo, the lights in the fields grew less and less frequent; and when we entered the town, all was total darkness.

To-morrow I hope to pay my vows before the high altar of St. Peter, and tread the Vatican. Why are you not here to usher me into the imperial city: to watch my first glance of the Coliseo: and lead me up the stairs of the Capitol? I shall rise before the sun, that I may see him set from Monte Cavallo.

LETTER XXII

ROME, *October 29th.*

We set out in the dark. Morning dawned over the Lago di Vico; its waters of a deep ultramarine blue, and its surrounding forests catching the rays of the rising sun. It was in vain I looked for the cupola of St. Peter's upon descending the mountains beyond Viterbo. Nothing but a sea of vapours was visible.

At length they rolled away, and the spacious plains began to show themselves, in which the most warlike of nations reared their seat of empire. On the left, afar off, rises the rugged chain of Apennines, and on the other side, a shining expanse of ocean terminates the view. It was upon this vast surface so many illustrious actions were performed, and I know not where a mighty people could have chosen a grander theatre. Here was space for the march of armies, and verge enough for encampments. Levels for martial games, and room for that variety of roads and causeways that led from the capital to Ostia. How many triumphant legions have trodden these pavements! how many captive kings! What throngs of cars and chariots once glittered on their surface! savage animals dragged from the interior of Africa; and the ambassadors of Indian princes, followed by their exotic train, hastening to implore the favour of the senate!

During many ages, this eminence commanded almost every day such illustrious scenes; but all are vanished: the splendid tumult is passed away; silence and desolation remain. Dreary flats thinly scattered over with ilex, and barren hillocks crowned by solitary towers, were the only objects we perceived for several miles. Now and then we passed a few black ill-favoured sheep feeding by the way-side, near a ruined sepulchre, just such animals as an ancient would have sacrificed to the Manes. Sometimes we crossed a brook, whose ripples were the only sounds which broke the general stillness, and observed the shepherds' huts on its banks, propped up with broken pedestals and marble friezes. I entered one of them, whose owner was abroad tending his herds, and began writing upon the sand, and murmuring a melancholy song. Perhaps the dead listened to me from their narrow cells. The living I can answer for: they were far enough removed.

You will not be surprised at the dark tone of my musings in so sad a scene, especially as the weather lowered; and you are well acquainted how greatly I depend upon skies and sunshine. To-day I had no blue firmament to revive my spirits; no genial gales, no aromatic plants to irritate my nerves and give me at least a momentary animation. Heath and furze were the sole vegetation which covers this endless wilderness. Every slope is strewn with the relics of a happier period; trunks of trees, shattered columns, cedar beams, helmets of bronze, skulls and coins, are frequently dug up together.

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I cannot boast of having made any discoveries, nor of sending you any novel intelligence. You knew before how perfectly the environs of Rome were desolate, and how completely the Papal government contrives to make its subjects miserable. But who knows that they were not just as wretched in those boasted times we are so fond of celebrating? All is doubt and conjecture in this frail existence; and I might as well attempt proving to whom belonged the mouldering bones which lay dispersed around me, as venture to affirm that one age is more fortunate than another. Very likely the poor cottager, under whose roof I reposed, is happier than the luxurious Roman upon the remains of whose palace, perhaps, his shed is raised: and yet that Roman flourished in the purple days of the empire, when all was wealth and splendour, triumph and exultation.

I could have spent the whole day by the rivulet, lost in dreams and meditations; but recollecting my vow, I ran back to the carriage and drove on. The road not having been mended, I believe, since the days of the Cæsars, would not allow our motions to be very precipitate. When you gain the summit of yonder hill, you will discover Rome, said one of the postillions: up we dragged; no city appeared. From the next, cried out a second; and so on from height to height did they amuse my expectations. I thought Rome fled before us, such was my impatience, till at last we perceived a cluster of hills with green pastures on their summits, inclosed by thickets and shaded by flourishing ilex. Here and there a white house, built in the antique style, with open porticos, that received a faint gleam of the evening sun, just emerged from the clouds and tinting the meads below. Now domes and towers began to discover themselves in the valley, and St. Peter's to rise above the magnificent roofs of the Vatican. Every step we advanced the scene extended, till, winding suddenly round the hill, all Rome opened to our view.

A spring flowed opportunely into a marble cistern close by the way; two cypresses and a pine waved over it. I leaped up, poured water upon my hands, and then, lifting them up to the sylvan Genii of the place, implored their protection. I wished to have run wild in the fresh fields and copses above the Vatican, there to have remained till fauns might creep out of their concealment, and satyrs begin to touch their flutes in the twilight, for the place looks still so wondrous classical, that I can never persuade myself either Constantine Attila or the Popes themselves have chased them all away. I think I should have found some out, who would have fed me with milk and chestnuts, have sung me a Latian ditty, and mourned the woeful changes which have taken place, since their sacred groves were felled, and Faunus ceased to be oracular. Who can tell but they would have given me some mystic skin to sleep on, that I might have looked into futurity?

Shall I ever forget the sensations I experienced upon slowly descending the hills, and crossing the bridge over the Tiber; when I entered an avenue between terraces and ornamented gates of villas, which leads to the Porto del Popolo, and beheld the square, the domes, the obelisk, the long perspective of streets and palaces opening beyond, all glowing with the vivid red of sunset? You can imagine how I enjoyed my beloved tint, my favourite hour, surrounded by such objects. You can fancy me ascending Monte Cavallo, leaning against the pedestal which supports Bucephalus; then, spite of time and distance, hurrying to St. Peter's in performance of my vow.

I met the Holy Father in all his pomp returning from vespers: trumpets flourishing, and a legion of guards drawn out upon Ponte St. Angelo. Casting a respectful glance upon the Moles Adriani, I moved on till the full sweep of St. Peter's colonnade opened upon me, and fixed me, as if spell-bound, under the obelisk, lost in wonder. The edifice appears to have been raised within the year, such is its freshness and preservation. I could hardly take my eyes from off the beautiful symmetry of its front, contrasted with the magnificent though irregular courts of the Vatican towering over the colonnade, till, the sun sinking behind the dome, I ran up the steps and entered the grand portal, which was on the very point of being closed.

I knew not where I was, or to what scene transported. A sacred twilight concealing the extremities of the structure, I could not distinguish any particular ornament, but enjoyed the effect of the whole. No damp air or fetid exhalation offended me. The perfume of incense was not yet entirely dissipated. No human being stirred. I heard a door close with the sound of thunder, and thought I distinguished some faint whisperings, but am ignorant whence they came. Several hundred lamps twinkled round the high altar, quite lost in the immensity of the pile.

Dreams, Waking Thoughts, and Incidents

No other light disturbed my reveries but the dying glow still visible through the western windows. Imagine how I felt upon finding myself alone in this vast temple at so late an hour, and think whether I had not revelations.

It was almost eight o'clock before I issued forth, and, pausing a few minutes under the porticos, listened to the rush of the fountains: then traversing half the town, I believe, in my way to the Villa Medici, under which I am lodged, fell into a profound repose, which my zeal and exercise may be allowed, I think, to have merited.

October 30th. It was a clear morning; I mounted up to the roof of the house, and sat under a set of open pavilions, surveying the vast group of stately buildings below; then repaired immediately after breakfast to St. Peter's, which even exceeded the height of my expectations. I could hardly quit it. I wish his Holiness would allow me to erect a little tabernacle under the dome. I should desire no other prospect during the winter; no other sky than the vast arches glowing with golden ornaments, so lofty as to lose all glitter or gaudiness. But I cannot say I should be perfectly contented, unless I could obtain another pavilion for you. Thus established, we would take our evening walks on the field of marble; for is not the pavement vast enough to excuse the extravagance of the appellation? Sometimes, instead of climbing a mountain, we should ascend the cupola, and look down on our little encampment below. At night I should wish for a constellation of lamps dispersed about in clusters, and so contrived as to diffuse a mild and equal light for us to read or draw by. Music should not be wanting: one day to breathe in the subterraneous chapels, another to mount high into the dome.

The doors should be closed, and not a mortal admitted. No priests, no cardinals: God forbid! We should have all the space to ourselves, and to such creatures, too, as resemble us.

The windows I should shade with transparent curtains of yellow silk, to admit the glow of perpetual summer. Lanterns, as many as you please, of all forms and sizes; they would remind us of China, and, depending from the roof of the palace, bring before us that of the Emperor Ki, which was twice as large as St. Peter's (if we may credit the grand annals), and lighted alone by tapers, for his Imperial Majesty, being tired of the sun, would absolutely have a new firmament of his own creation, and an artificial day. Was it not a rare fantastic idea? For my part, I should like of all things to immure myself after his example, with those I love; forget the divisions of time, have a moon at command, and a theatrical sun to rise and set at pleasure.

I was so absorbed in my imaginary palace, and exhausted with contriving plans for its embellishment, as to have no spirits left for the Pantheon, which I visited late in the evening, and entered with a reverence approaching to superstition. The whiteness of the dome offending me, I slunk into one of the recesses, closed my eyes, transported myself into antiquity; then opened them again, tried to persuade myself the pagan gods were in their niches, and the saints out of the question; was vexed at coming to my senses, and finding them all there, St. Andrew with his cross, and St. Agnes with her lamb, etc., etc. Then I paced disconsolately into the portico, which shows the name of Agrippa on its pediment. I leaned a minute against a Corinthian column; I lamented that no pontiff arrived with victims and aruspices, of whom I might inquire, what, in the name of birds and garbage, put me so terribly out of humour! for you must know I was very near being disappointed, and began to think Piranesi and Paolo Panini had been a great deal too colossal in their view of this venerable structure. I left the column, walked to the centre of the temple, and, folding my arms, stood as fixed as a statue. Some architects have celebrated the effect of light from the opening above, and pretended it to be distributed around so as to give those who walk beneath the appearance of mystic substances beaming with radiance. Mighty fine, if that were the case! I appeared, to be sure, a luminous figure, and never stood I more in need of something to distinguish me, being forlorn and dismal in the supreme degree.

But though it is not so immense as I had expected, yet a certain venerable air, an awful gloom, breathed inspiration, though of the sorrowful kind.

I had expected a heap of Venetian letters, but could not discover one. I had received no intelligence from England this many a tedious day; and for aught I can tell to the contrary, you may have been dead these three weeks. I

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think I shall wander soon in the Catacombs, which I am half inclined to imagine communicate with the lower world; and perhaps I may find some letter there from you, lying upon a broken sarcophagus, dated from the realms of Night, and giving an account of your descent into her bosom. Yet, I pray continually, notwithstanding my curiosity to learn what passes in the dark regions beyond the tomb, that you will condescend to remain a few years longer on our planet; for what would become of me, should I lose sight of you for ever? Stay, therefore, as long as you can, and let us have the delight of dozing a little more of this poor existence away together, and steeping ourselves in pleasant dreams.

October 31st. I absolutely will have no antiquary to go prating from fragment to fragment, and tell me, that were I to stay five years at Rome, I should not see half it contained. The thought alone, of so much to look at, is quite distracting, and makes me resolve to view nothing at all in a scientific way; but straggle and wander about, just as the spirit chooses. This evening, it led me to the Coliseo, and excited a vehement desire in me to break down and pulverize the whole circle of saints' nests and chapels, which disgrace the arena. You recollect, I dare say, the vile effect of this holy trumpery, and would join with all your heart in kicking it into the Tiber. A few lazy abbots were at their devotions before them; such as would have made a lion's mouth water; fatter, I dare say, than any saint in the whole martyrology, and ten times more tantalizing. I looked first, at the dens where wild beasts used to be kept, to divert the magnanimous people of Rome with devastation and murder; then, at the tame cattle before the altars. Heavens! thought I to myself, how times are changed! Could ever Vespasian have imagined his amphitheatre would have been thus inhabited? I passed on, making these reflections, to a dark arcade, overgrown with ilex. In the openings which time and violence have made, a distant grove of cypresses discover themselves; springing from heaps of mouldering ruins, relieved by a clear transparent sky, strewed with a few red clouds. This was the sort of prospect I desired, and I sat down on a shattered frieze to enjoy it. Many stories of ancient Rome thronged into my mind as I mused; triumphal scenes, but tempered by sadness, and the awful thoughts of their being all passed away. It would be in vain to recapitulate the ideas which chased one another along. Think where I sat, and you may easily conjecture the series. When the procession was fleeted by (for I not only thought, but seemed to see warriors moving amongst the cypresses, and consuls returning from Parthian expeditions, loaded with strange spoils, and received with the acclamations of millions upon entering the theatre), I arose, crossed the arena, paced several times round and round, looked up to arcade rising above arcade, and admiring the stately height and masses of the structure, considered it in various points of view, and felt, as if I never should be satisfied with gazing, hour after hour, and day after day. Next, directing my steps to the arch of Constantine, I surveyed the groups of ruins which surrounded me. The cool breeze of the evening played in the beds of canes and osiers which flourished under the walls of the Coliseo: a cloud of birds were upon the wing to regain their haunts in its crevices; and, except the sound of their flight, all was silent; for happily no carriages were rattling along. I observed the palace and obelisk of St. John of Lateran, at a distance; but it was too late to take a nearer survey; so, returning leisurely home, I traversed the Campo Vaccino, and leaned a moment against one of the columns which supported the temple of Jupiter Stator. Some women were fetching water from the fountain hard by, whilst another group had kindled a fire under the shrubs and twisted fig-trees, which cover the Palatine Hill. Innumerable vaults and arches peep out of the vegetation. It was upon these, in all probability, the splendid palace of the Cæsars was raised. Confused fragments of marble, and walls of lofty terraces, are the sole traces of its ancient magnificence. A wretched rabble were roasting their chestnuts, on the very spot, perhaps, where Domitian convened a senate, to harangue upon the delicacies of his entertainment. The light of the flame cast upon the figures around it, and the mixture of tottering wall with foliage impending above their heads, formed a striking picture, which I stayed contemplating from my pillar, till the fire went out, the assembly dispersed, and none remained but a withered hag, raking the embers, and muttering to herself. I thought also it was high time to retire, lest the unwholesome mists, which were streaming from the opening before the Coliseo, might make me repent my stay. Whether they had already taken effect, or no, I will not absolutely determine; but something or other had grievously disordered me. A few centuries ago I should have taxed the old hag with my headache, and have attributed the uncommon oppression I experienced to her baleful power. Hastening to my hotel, I mounted into the open portico upon its summit, nearly upon a level with the Villa Medici, and sat, several hours, with my arms folded in one another, listening to the distant rumours of the town. It had been a fine moment to have bestrode one of the winds which piped around me, offering, no doubt, some compact from Lucifer.

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November 1st. Though you find I am not yet snatched away from the earth, according to my last night's bodings, I was far too restless and dispirited to deliver my recommendatory letters. St. Carlos, a mighty day of gala at Naples, was an excellent excuse for leaving Rome, and indulging my roving disposition. After spending my morning at St. Peter's, we set off about four o'clock, and drove by the Coliseo and a Capuchin convent, whose monks were all busied in preparing the skeletons of their order, to figure by torchlight in the evening. St. John's of Lateran astonished me. I could not help walking several times round the obelisk, and admiring the noble open space in which the palace is erected, and the extensive scene of towers and aqueducts discovered from the platform in front.

We went out at the Porta Appia, and began to perceive the plains which surround the city opening on every side. Long reaches of walls and arches, but seldom interrupted, stretch across them. Sometimes, indeed, a withered pine, lifting itself up to the mercy of every blast that sweeps the champagne, breaks their uniformity. Between the aqueducts to the left, nothing but wastes of fern, or tracts of ploughed lands, dark and desolate, are visible, the corn not being yet sprung up. On the right, several groups of ruined fanes and sepulchres diversify the levels, with here and there a garden or woody inclosure. Such objects are scattered over the landscape, that towards the horizon bulges into gentle ascents, and, rising by degrees, swells at length into a chain of mountains, which received the pale gleams of the sun, setting in watery clouds.

By this uncertain light we discovered the white buildings of Albano, sprinkled about the steeps. We had not many moments to contemplate them, for it was night when we passed the Torre di mezza via, and began breathing a close pestilential vapour. Half suffocated, and recollecting a variety of terrifying tales about the malaria, we advanced, not without fear, to Veletri, and hardly ventured to fall asleep when arrived there.

November 2nd. I arose at daybreak, and forgetting fevers and mortalities, ran into a level meadow without the town, whilst the horses were putting to the carriage. Why should I calumniate the air? it seemed purer and more transparent than any I had before inhaled. The mountains were covered with thin mists, and the morning star sparkled above their summits. Birds were twittering amongst some sheds and bushes, which border the sides of the road. A chestnut hung over it, against which I leaned till the chaise came up. Being perfectly alone, and not discovering any trace of the neighbouring city, I fancied myself existing in the ancient days of Hesperia, and hoped to meet Picus in his woods before the evening. But, instead of those shrill clamours which used to echo through the thickets when Pan joined with mortals in the chase, I heard the rumbling of our carriage, and the curses of its postillions. Mounting a horse, I flew before them, and seemed to catch inspiration from the breezes. Now I turned my eyes to the ridge of precipices, in whose grotts and caverns Saturn and his people passed their life; then to the distant ocean. Afar off rose the cliffs, so famous for Circe's incantations, and the whole line of coast, which was once covered with her forests.

Whilst I was advancing with full speed, the sunbeams began to shoot athwart the mountains, the plains to light up by degrees, and their shrubberies of myrtle to glisten with dewdrops. The sea brightened, and the Circean rock soon glowed with purple. I never felt my spirits so exhilarated, and they could not have flowed with more vivacity, even had I tasted the cup which Helen gave Telemachus. You will think me gone wild when I tell you I was, in a manner, drunk with the dews of the morning, and so enraptured with the prospects which lay before me as to address them in verse, and compose charms to dispel the enchantments of Circe. All day were we approaching her rock; towards evening Terracina appeared before us, in a bold romantic site; house above house, and turret looking over turret, on the steeps of a mountain, inclosed with mouldering walls, and crowned by the ruined terraces of a delightful palace: one of those, perhaps, which the luxurious Romans inhabited during the summer, when so free and lofty an exposition (the sea below, with its gales and murmurs) must have been exquisitely agreeable. Groves of orange and citron hang on the declivity, rough with the Indian fig, whose bright red flowers, illuminated by the sun, had a magic splendour. A palm-tree, growing on the highest crag, adds not a little to its singular appearance. Being the largest I had ever seen, and clustered with fruit, I climbed up the rocks to take a close survey of it, and found a spring trickling near its fount, bordered by fresh herbage. On this I stretched myself on the very edge of the precipice, and looking down upon the beach, and glassy plains of ocean,

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exclaimed with Martial:

O nemua! O fentes! aolidumque madentis
Littus, et acquorcis splendidus Anxur aquis!

Glancing my eyes athwart the sea, I fixed them on the Circean promontory, which lies right opposite to Terracina, joined to the continent by a very narrow strip of land, and appearing like an island. The roar of the waves lashing the base of the precipices, might still be thought the howl of savage monsters; but where are those woods which shaded the dome of the goddess? Scarce a tree appears. A few thickets, and but a few, are the sole remains of this once impenetrable vegetation; yet even these I longed to visit, such was my predilection for the spot.

Who knows but Circe might have led me to some other palace, in a more secret and retired vale, where she dwells remote from modern mariners, and the present inhabitants of her environs; universally changed to swine for these many ages? Their metamorphoses being so thoroughly established as to leave no further pretence for her operations, I can imagine her given up to solitude, and the consciousness of her potent influence. Notwithstanding the risks of the adventure, I wished to have attempted it, and seen whether she would have allowed me, as night came on, to warm myself by her cedar fire, and hear her captivating song. Perhaps, had the goddess been propitious, I might have culled some herbs of wondrous efficacy. You recollect, I dare say, how renowned the cliff was for them, and remember that Circe's attendants, deeply skilled, like their mistress, in pharmacy, were continually gathering plants in the woods and wilds which enriched her abode. It was thus the companions of Ulysses found them employed, when, entering her palace, they unwarily drank the beverage she offered. Ovid has told this story in a masterly manner, and formed a lively picture of the magic dome, with the occupations of its inhabitants. We see them judiciously arranging their plants, whilst Circe directs and points out, with the nicest discernment, the simple and compound virtues of every flower.

Descending the cliff, and pursuing our route to Mola along the shore, by a grand road formed on the ruins of the Appian, we drove under an enormous perpendicular rock, standing detached, like a watch-tower, and cut into arsenals and magazines. Day closed just as we got beyond it, and a new moon gleamed faintly on the waters. We saw fires afar off in the bay, some twinkling on the coast, others upon the waves, and heard the murmur of voices; for the night was still and solemn, like that of Cajetas's funeral. I looked anxiously on a sea, where the heroes of the Odyssey and Æneid had sailed in search of fate and empire, then closed my eyes, and dreamed of those illustrious wanderers.

Nine struck when we arrived at Mola di Cajeta. The boats were just coming in (whose lights we had seen out upon the main), and brought such fish as Neptune, I dare say, would have grudged Æneas and Ulysses.

November 3rd. The morning was soft, but hazy. I walked in a grove of oranges, white with blossoms, and at the same time glowing with fruit, some of which I obtained leave to gather. The spot sloped pleasantly towards the sea, and here I amused myself with my agreeable occupation till the horses were ready, then set off on the Appian, between hedges of myrtle and aloes, catching fresh gales from the sea as I flew along, and breathing the perfume of an aromatic vegetation, which covers the fields on the shore. We observed variety of towns, with battlemented walls and ancient turrets, crowning the pinnacles of rocky steeps, surrounded by wilds, and rude uncultivated mountains. The Liris, now Garigliano, winds its peaceful course through wide extensive meadows, scattered over with the remains of aqueducts, and waters the base of the rocks I have just mentioned. Such a prospect could not fail of bringing Virgil's panegyric of Italy full in my mind:

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Tot congesta manu praeruptis oppida saxis
Fluminaque antiquos suhterlabentia muros.

As soon as we arrived in sight of Capua, the sky darkened, clouds covered the horizon, and presently poured down such deluges of rain as floated the whole country. The gloom was general; Vesuvius disappeared just after we had the pleasure of discovering it; lightning began to flash with dreadful rapidity, and people to run frightened to their houses. At four o'clock darkness universally prevailed, except when a livid glare of lightning presented momentary glimpses of the bay and mountains. We lighted torches, and forded several torrents almost at the hazard of our lives. The fields round Naples were filled with herds, lowing most piteously, and yet not half so much scared as their masters, who ran about cursing and swearing like Indians during the eclipse of the moon. I knew Vesuvius had often put their courage to proof, but little thought of an inundation occasioning such commotions.

For three hours the storm increased in violence, and instead of entering Naples on a calm evening, and viewing its delightful shores by moonlight instead of finding the squares and terraces thronged with people and animated by music, we advanced with fear and terror through dark streets totally deserted, every creature being shut up in their houses, and we heard nothing but driving rain, rushing torrents, and the fall of fragments beaten down by their violence. Our inn, like every other habitation, was in great disorder, and we waited a long while before we could settle in our apartments with any comfort. All night the waves roared round the rocky foundations of a fortress beneath my windows, and the lightning played clear in my eyes. I could not sleep, and was full as disturbed as the elements.

November 4th. Peace was restored to nature in the morning, but every mouth was full of the dreadful accidents which had happened in the night. The sky was cloudless when I awoke, and such was the transparence of the atmosphere that I could clearly discern the rocks, and even some white buildings on the island of Caprea, though at the distance of several miles. A large window fronts my bed, and its casements being thrown open, gives me a vast prospect of ocean, uninterrupted except by the peaks of Caprea and the Cape of Sorento. I lay half an hour gazing on the smooth level waters, and listening to the confused voices of the fishermen, passing and repassing in light skiffs, which came and disappeared in an instant.

Running to the balcony the moment my eyes were fairly open (for till then I saw objects, I know not how, as one does in dreams), I leaned over its rails, and viewed Vesuvius rising distinct into the blue ether, with all that world of gardens and casinos which are scattered about its base; then looked down into the street, deep below, thronged with people in holiday garments, and carriages, and soldiers in full parade. The woody, variegated shore of Posilipo next drew my attention. It was on those very rocks, under those tall pines, Sannazaro was wont to sit by moonlight, or at peep of dawn, holding converse with the Nereids. 'Tis there he still sleeps; and I wished to have gone immediately and strewed coral over his tomb, but I was obliged to check my impatience, and hurry to the palace in form and gala.

A courtly mob had got thither upon the same errand, daubed over with lace and most notably be-periwigged. Nothing but bows and salutations were going forward on the staircase, one of the largest I ever beheld, and which a multitude of prelates and friars were ascending in all the pomp of awkwardness. I jostled along to the presence chamber, where his Majesty was dining alone in a circular inclosure of fine clothes and smirking faces. The moment he had finished, twenty long necks were poked forth, and it was a glorious struggle amongst some of the most decorated who first should kiss his hand. Doing so was the great business of the day, and everybody pressed forward to the best of their abilities. His Majesty seemed to eye nothing but the end of his nose, which is doubtless a capital object.

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Though people have imagined him a weak monarch, I beg leave to differ in opinion, since he has the boldness to prolong his childhood and be happy, in spite of years and conviction. Give him a boar to stab, and a pigeon to shoot at, a battledore or an angling rod, and he is better contented than Solomon in all his glory, and will never discover, like that sapient sovereign, that all is vanity and vexation of spirit.

His courtiers in general have rather a barbaric appearance, and differ little in the character of their physiognomies from the most savage nations. I should have taken them for Calmucks or Samoieds, had it not been for their dresses and European finery.

You may suppose I was not sorry, after my presentation was over, to return to Sir W.'s and hear Lady H. play, whose music breathes the most pastoral Sicilian ideas, and transports me to green meads on the sea-coast, where I wander with Theocritus.

The evening was passing swiftly away in this delightful excursion of fancy, and I had almost forgotten there was a grand illumination at the theatre of St. Carlo. After traversing a number of dark streets, we suddenly entered this enormous edifice, whose six rows of boxes blazed with tapers. I never beheld such lofty walls of light, nor so pompous a decoration as covered the stage. Marchesi was singing in the midst of all these splendours some of the poorest music imaginable, with the clearest and most triumphant voice, perhaps, in the universe.

It was some time before I could look to any purpose around me, or discover what animals inhabited this glittering world: such was its size and glare. At last I perceived vast numbers of ugly beings, in gold and silver raiment, peeping out of their boxes. The court being present, a tolerable silence was maintained, but the moment his Majesty withdrew (which great event took place at the beginning of the second act) every tongue broke loose, and nothing but buzz and hubbub filled up the rest of the entertainment.

The last ballet, formed upon the old story of *Le Festin de Pierre*, had wonderful effect, and terminated in the most striking perspective of the infernal region. Picq danced incomparably, and Signora Rossi led the Fandango, with a grace and activity that pleased me beyond idea. Music was never more rapturous than that which accompanies this dance. It quite enchanted me, and I longed to have sprung upon the stage. The cadence is so strongly marked by the castanets, that it is almost impossible to be out of time; and the rapidity of steps and varied movements scarcely allows a moment to think of being tired. I should imagine the eternal dance, with which certain tribes of American savages think they are to be rewarded in a future existence, might be formed somewhat on this model. Indeed the Fandango arrived in Spain with the conquerors of the other hemisphere, and is far too lively and extatic to be of European original.

November 6th Till to-day we have had nothing but rains; the sea covered with mists, and Caprea invisible. Would you believe it? I have not yet been able to mount to St. Elmo and the Capo di Monte, in order to take a general view of the town.

At length a bright gleam of sunshine roused me from my slumbers, and summoned me to the broad terrace of Chiaja, directly above the waters and commanding the whole coast of Posilipo. Insensibly I drew towards it, and (you know the pace I run when out upon discoveries) soon reached the entrance of the grotto, which lay in dark shades, whilst the crags that lower over it were brightly illumined. Shrubs and vines grow luxuriantly in the crevices of the rock; and their fresh yellow colours, variegated with ivy, have a beautiful effect. To the right a grove of pines sprung from the highest pinnacles: on the left, bay and chestnut conceal the tomb of Virgil, placed on the summit of a cliff which impends over the opening of the grotto, and is fringed with a florid vegetation. Beneath are several wide apertures hollowed in the solid stone, which lead to caverns sixty or seventy feet in depth, where a number of peasants, who were employed in quarrying, made such a noise with their tools and their voices as almost inclined me to wish the Cimmerians would start from their subterraneous habitations, and sacrifice these profane to the Manes.

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Walking out of the sunshine, I seated myself on a loose stone immediately beneath the first gloomy arch of the grotto, and looking down the vast and solemn perspective, terminated by a speck of grey uncertain light, venerated a work which some old chroniclers have imagined as ancient as the Trojan war. 'Twas here the mysterious race I have just mentioned performed their infernal rites, and it was this excavation perhaps which led to their abode.

The Neapolitans attribute a more modern, though full as problematical an origin to their famous cavern, and most piously believe it to have been formed by the enchantments of Virgil, who, as Mr. Addison very justly observes, is better known at Naples in his magical character, than as the author of the *Æneid*. This strange infatuation most probably arose from the vicinity of the tomb, in which his ashes are supposed to have been deposited; and which, according to popular tradition, was guarded by those very spirits who assisted in constructing the cave. But whatever may have given rise to these ideas, certain it is they were not confined to the lower ranks alone. King Robert, {240} a wise though far from poetical monarch, conducted his friend Petrarch with great solemnity to the spot; and, pointing to the entrance of the grotto, very gravely asked him, whether he did not adopt the general belief, and conclude this stupendous passage derived its origin from Virgil's powerful incantations? The answer, I think, may easily be conjectured.

When I had sat for some time, contemplating this dusky avenue, and trying to persuade myself that it was hewn by the Cimmerians, I retreated without proceeding any farther, and followed a narrow path which led me, after some windings and turnings, along the brink of the precipice, across a vineyard, to that retired nook of the rocks which shelters Virgil's tomb, most venerably mossed over, and more than half concealed by bushes and vegetation. Drops of dew were distilling from the niches of the little chamber, which once contained his urn, and heaps of withered leaves had gathered on the pavement. Amongst these I crept to eat some grapes and biscuits, having duly scattered a few crumbs as a sort of offering to the invisible guardians of the place. I believe they were sensible of my piety, and, as a reward, kept vagabonds and clowns away.

The one who conducted me remained aloof at awful distance, whilst I sat commercing with the manes of my beloved poet, or straggling about the shrubbery which hangs directly above the mouth of the grot. I wonder I did not visit the eternal shades sooner than I expected, for no squirrel ever skipped from bough to bough more venturously. One instant I climbed up the branches of a chestnut, and sat almost on its extremity, my feet impending over the chasm below; another I boldly advanced to the edge of the rock, and saw crowds of people and carriages, diminished by distance, issuing from the bosom of the mountain, and disappearing almost as soon as discovered in the windings of its road. Having clambered high above the cavern, I hazarded my neck on the top of one of the pines, and looked contemptuously down on the race of pigmies that were so busily moving to and fro. The sun was fiercer than I could have wished, but the sea-breezes fanned me in my aerial situation, which commanded the grand sweep of the bay, varied by convents, palaces, and gardens, mixed with huge masses of rock and crowned by the stately buildings of the Carthusians and fortress of St. Elmo. Add a glittering blue sea to this perspective, with Caprea rising from its bosom, and Vesuvius breathing forth a white column of smoke into the ether, and you will then have a scene upon which I gazed with delight, for more than an hour, almost forgetting that I was perched upon the head of a pine, with nothing but a frail branch to uphold me. However, I descended alive, as Virgil's genii, I am resolved to believe, were my protectors.

LETTER XXIII

Dreams, Waking Thoughts, and Incidents

November 8th. This morning I awoke in the glow of sunshine; the air blew fresh and fragrant; never did I feel more elastic and enlivened. A brisker flow of spirits than I had for many a day experienced, animated me with a desire of rambling about the shore of Baii, and creeping into caverns and subterraneous chambers. Off I set along Chiaja, and up strange paths which impend over the grotto of Posilipo, amongst the thickets mentioned a letter or two ago; for in my present lively humour, I disdained ordinary roads, and would take paths and ways of my own. A society of kids did not understand what I meant by intruding upon their precipices; and scrambling away, scattered sand and fragments upon the good people that were trudging along the pavement below.

I went on from pine to pine, and thicket to thicket, upon the brink of rapid declivities. My conductor, a shrewd savage, whom Sir William had recommended to me, cheered our route with stories that had passed in the neighbourhood, and traditions about the grot over which we were travelling. I wish you had been of the party, and sat down by us on little smooth spots of sward, where I reclined, scarcely knowing which way caprice was leading me. My mind was full of the tales of the place, and glowed with a vehement desire of exploring the world beyond the grot. I longed to ascend the promontory of Misenus, and follow the same dusky route down which the Sibyl conducted Æneas.

With these dispositions I proceeded; and soon the cliffs and copses opened to views of the Baian bay, with the little isles of Niscita and Lazaretto lifting themselves out of the waters. Procita and Ischia appeared at a distance, invested with that purple bloom so inexpressibly beautiful, and peculiar to this fortunate climate. I hailed the prospect and blessed the transparent air that gave me life and vigour to run down the rocks, and hie as fast as my savage across the plain to Puzzoli. There we took bark and rowed out into the blue ocean, by the remains of a sturdy mole: many such, I imagine, adorned the bay in Roman ages crowned by vast lengths of slender pillars; pavilions at their extremities, and taper cypresses spiring above their balustrades: this character of villa occurs very frequently in the paintings of Herculaneum.

We had soon crossed the bay, and landing on a bushy coast, near some fragments of a temple which they say was raised to Hercules, advanced into the country by narrow tracks covered with moss and strewed with shining pebbles; to the right and left, broad masses of luxuriant foliage, chestnut, bay, and ilex, that shelter the ruins of columbariums and sepulchral chambers, where the dead sleep snug amongst rampant herbage. The region was still, save when a cock crew from the hamlets, which, as well as the tombs, are almost concealed by thickets. No parties of smart Englishmen and connoisseurs were about. I had all the land to myself, and mounted its steeps and penetrated into its recesses, with the importance of a discoverer. What a variety of narrow paths, between banks and shades, did I wildly follow! my savage laughing loud at my odd gestures and useless activity. He wondered I did not scrape the ground for medals, and pocket little bits of plaster, like other plausible young travellers that had gone before me.

After ascending some time, I followed him into the Piscina Mirabilis, the wondrous reservoir which Nero constructed to supply his fleet, when anchored in the neighbouring bay. 'Tis a grand labyrinth of solid vaults and pillars, as you well know, but you cannot conceive the partial gleams of sunshine which played on the arches, nor the variety of roots and ivies trailing from the cove. A noise of trickling waters prevailed, that had almost lulled me to sleep as I rested myself on the celandine which carpets the floor; but curiosity urging me forward, I gained the upper air; walked amongst woods a few minutes, and then into grotts and dismal excavations (prisons they call them), which began to weary me.

After having gone up and down in this manner for some time, we at last reached an eminence that looked over the Mare Morto, and Elysian fields trembling with poplars. The Dead Lake, a faithful emblem of eternal tranquillity, looked deep and solemn. A few peasants were passing along its margin, their shadows reflected on the water: all was serene and peaceful. Turning from the lake I espied a rock at about a league distant, whose summit was clad with verdure, and finding this to be the promontory of Misenus, I immediately set my face to that quarter.

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We passed several dirty villages, inhabited by an ill-favoured generation, infamous for depredations and murders. Their gardens, however, discover some marks of industry; the fields are separated by neat hedges of cane, and corn seemed to flourish in the inclosures.

I walked on with slowness and deliberation, musing at every step, and stopping ever and anon to rest myself by springs and tufted bay-trees; when insensibly we began to leave the cultivated lands behind us, and to lose ourselves in shady wilds, which, to all appearance, no mortal had ever trodden. Here were no paths, no enclosures; a primeval rudeness characterized the whole scene,

Juvat arva videre,
Non rastris, hominum non ulli obnoxia curæ.

The idea of going almost out of the world, soothed the tone of mind into which a variety of affecting recollections had thrown me. I formed conjectures about the promontory to which we were tending; and when I cast my eyes around the savage landscape, transported myself four thousand years into antiquity, and half persuaded myself I was one of Æneas's companions. After forcing our way about a mile through glades of shrubs and briars, we entered a verdant opening at the base of the cliff which takes its name from Misenus. The poets of the Augustan age would have celebrated such a meadow with the warmest raptures; they would have discovered a nymph in every flower, and detected a dryad under every tree. Doubtless imagination never formed a lovelier prospect. Here were clear streams and grassy hillocks, leafy shrubs and cypresses spiring out of their bosom,

Et circum irriguo surgebant lilia prato
Candida purpureis mista papaveribus.

But as it is not the lot of human animals to be contented, instead of reposing in the vale, I scaled the rock, and was three parts dissolved in attaining its summit, a flat spot covered with herbage, where I lay contemplating the ocean, and fanned by its breezes. The sun darted upon my head; I wished to avoid its immediate influence: no tree was near. Deep below lay the pleasant valley: 'twas a long way to descend. Looking round and round, I spied something like a hut, under a crag on the edge of a dark fissure. Might I avail myself of its covert? My conductor answered in the affirmative, and added that it was inhabited by a good old woman, who never refused a cup of milk, or slice of bread, to refresh a weary traveller.

Thirst and fatigue urged me speedily down an intervening slope of stunted myrtle. Though oppressed with heat, I could not help deviating a few steps from the direct path to notice the uncouth rocks which rose frowning on every quarter. Above the hut, their appearance was truly formidable; dark ivy crept among the crevices, and dwarf aloes with sharp spines, such as Lucifer himself might be supposed to have sown. Indeed, I knew not whether I was not approaching some gate that leads to his abode, as I drew near a gulph (the fissure lately mentioned) and heard the hollow gusts which were imprisoned below. The savage, my guide, shuddered as he passed by to apprise the old woman of my coming. I felt strangely, and stared around me, and but half liked my situation. To say truth, I wished myself away, and heartily regretted the green vale.

In the midst of my doubts, forth tottered the old woman. You are welcome, said she, in a feeble voice, but a better dialect than I had heard in the neighbourhood. Her look was more humane, and she seemed of a superior

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race to the inhabitants of the surrounding valleys. My savage treated her with peculiar deference. She had just given him some bread, with which he retired to a respectful distance, bowing to the earth. I caught the mode, and was very obsequious, thinking myself on the point of experiencing a witch's influence, and gaining, perhaps, some insight into the volume of futurity. She smiled at my agitation, and kept beckoning me into the cottage.

Now, thought I to myself, I am upon the verge of an adventure. O Quixote! O Sylvio di Rosalva! how would ye have strutted in such a situation! What fair Infantas would ye not have expected to behold, condemned to spinning wheels, and solitude? I, alas! saw nothing but clay walls, a straw bed, some glazed earthen bowls, and a wooden crucifix. My shoes were loaded with sand: this my hostess perceived, and immediately kindling a fire in an inner part of the hovel, brought out some warm water to refresh my feet, and set some milk and chestnuts before me. This patriarchal politeness was by no means indifferent after my tiresome ramble. I sat down opposite to the door which fronted the unfathomable gulph; beyond appeared the sea, of a deep cerulean, foaming with waves. The sky also was darkening apace with storms. Sadness came over me like a cloud, and I looked up to the old woman for consolation.

And you too are sorrowful, young stranger, said she, that come from the gay world! How must I feel, who pass year after year in these lonely mountains? I answered that the weather affected me, and my spirits were exhausted by the walk.

All the while I spoke she looked at me with such a melancholy earnestness that I asked the cause, and began again to imagine myself in some fatal habitation,

Where more is meant than meets the ear.

Said she, Your features are wonderfully like those of an unfortunate young person, who, in this retirement . . . The tears began to fall as she pronounced these words; she seemed older than before, and bent to the ground with sorrow. My curiosity was fired. Tell me, continued I, what you mean? who was this youth for whom you are so interested? and why did he seclude himself in this wild region? Your kindness might no doubt alleviate, in some measure, the horrors of the place; but may God defend me from passing the night near such a gulph! I would not trust myself in a despairing moment.

It is, said she, a place of horrors. I tremble to relate what has happened on this very spot; but your manner interests me, and though I am little given to narrations, for once I will unlock my lips concerning the secrets of yonder fatal chasm.

I was born in a distant part of Italy, and have known better days. In my youth fortune smiled upon my family, but in a few years they withered away; no matter by what accident. I am not going, however, to talk of myself. Have patience a few moments! A series of unfortunate events reduced me to indigence, and drove me to this desert, where, from rearing goats and making their milk into cheese, by a different method than is common in the Neapolitan State, I have, for about thirty years, prolonged a sorrowful existence. My silent grief and constant retirement had made me appear to some a saint, and to others a sorceress. The slight knowledge I have of plants has been exaggerated, and, some years back, the hours I gave up to prayer, and the recollection of former friends, lost to me for ever! were cruelly intruded upon by the idle and the ignorant. But soon I sank into obscurity; my little recipes were disregarded, and you are the first stranger who, for these twelve months past, has visited my abode. Ah, would to God its solitude had ever remained inviolate!

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It is now three-and-twenty years, and she looked upon some characters cut on the planks of the cottage, since I was sitting by moonlight, under that cliff you view to the right, my eyes fixed on the ocean, my mind lost in the memory of my misfortunes, when I heard a step, and starting up, a figure stood before me. It was a young man, in a rich habit, with streaming hair, and looks that bespoke the utmost terror. I knew not what to think of this sudden apparition. 'Mother,' said he with faltering accents, 'let me rest under your roof; and deliver me not up to those who thirst after my blood. Take this gold; take all, all!'

Surprise held me speechless; the purse fell to the ground; the youth stared wildly on every side: I heard many voices beyond the rocks; the wind bore them distinctly, but presently they died away. I took courage, and assured the youth my cot should shelter him. 'Oh! thank you, thank you!' answered he, and pressed my hand. He shared my scanty provision.

Overcome with toil (for I had worked hard in the day), sleep closed my eyes for a short interval. When I awoke the moon was set, but I heard my unhappy guest sobbing in darkness. I disturbed him not. Morning dawned, and he was fallen into a slumber. The tears bubbled out of his closed eyelids, and coursed one another down his wan cheeks. I had been too wretched myself not to respect the sorrows of another: neglecting therefore my accustomed occupations, I drove away the flies that buzzed around his temples. His breast heaved high with sighs, and he cried loudly in his sleep for mercy.

The beams of the sun dispelling his dream, he started up like one that had heard the voice of an avenging angel, and hid his face with his hands. I poured some milk down his parched throat. 'Oh, mother!' he exclaimed, 'I am a wretch unworthy of compassion; the cause of innumerable sufferings; a murderer! a parricide!' My blood curdled to hear a stripling utter such dreadful words, and behold such agonising sighs swell in so young a bosom; for I marked the sting of conscience urging him to disclose what I am going to relate.

It seems he was of high extraction, nursed in the pomps and luxuries of Naples, the pride and darling of his parents, adorned with a thousand lively talents, which the keenest sensibility conspired to improve. Unable to fix any bounds to whatever became the object of his desires, he passed his first years in roving from one extravagance to another, but as yet there was no crime in his caprices.

At length it pleased Heaven to visit his family, and make their idol the slave of an unworthy passion. He had a friend, who from his birth had been devoted to his interest, and placed all his confidence in him. This friend loved to distraction a young creature, the most graceful of her sex (as I can witness), and she returned his affection. In the exultation of his heart, he showed her to the wretch whose tale I am about to tell. He sickened at her sight. She too caught fire at his glances. They languished they consumed away they conversed, and his persuasive language finished what his guilty glances had begun.

Their flame was soon discovered, for he disdained to conceal a thought, however dishonourable. The parents warned the youth in the tenderest manner; but advice and prudent counsels were to him so loathsome, that unable to contain his rage, and infatuated with love, he menaced the life of his friend as the obstacle of his enjoyment. Coolness and moderation were opposed to violence and frenzy, and he found himself treated with a contemptuous gentleness. Stricken to the heart, he wandered about for some time like one entranced. Meanwhile the nuptials were preparing; and the lovely girl he had perverted found ways to let him know she was about to be torn from his embraces.

He raved, and rousing his dire spirit, applied to a malignant dæmon who sold the most inveterate poisons. These he presented, like a cup of pure iced water, to his friend, and to his own affectionate father. They drank the draught, and soon began to pine. He marked the progress of their dissolution with a horrid firmness. He let the moment pass beyond which all antidotes were vain. His friend expired; and the young criminal, though he beheld the dews of death hang on his parent's forehead, yet stretched not forth his hand. In a short space the miserable father breathed his last, whilst his son was sitting aloof in the same chamber.

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The sight overcame him. He felt, for the first time, the pangs of remorse. His agitation passed not unnoticed. He was watched: suspicions beginning to unfold, he took alarm, and one evening escaped; but not without previously informing the partner of his crimes which way he intended to flee. Several pursued; but the inscrutable will of Providence blinded their search, and I was doomed to behold the effects of celestial vengeance.

Such are the chief circumstances of the tale I gathered from the youth. I swooned whilst he related it, and could take no sustenance. One whole day afterwards did I pray the Lord, that I might die rather than be near an incarnate demon. With what indignation did I now survey that slender form and those flowing tresses, which had interested me before so much in his behalf!

No sooner did he perceive the change in my countenance, than sullenly retiring to yonder rock, he sat careless of the sun and scorching winds; for it was now the summer solstice. Equally was he heedless of the unwholesome dews. When midnight came my horrors were augmented; and I meditated several times to abandon my hovel, and fly to the next village; but a power more than human chained me to the spot and fortified my mind.

I slept, and it was late next morning when some one called at the wicket of the little fold, where my goats are penned. I arose, and saw a peasant of my acquaintance leading a female strangely muffled up, and casting her eyes on the ground. My heart misgave me. I thought this was the very maid who had been the cause of such unheard-of wickedness. Nor were my conjectures ill-founded. Regardless of the clown who stood by in stupid astonishment, she fell to the earth and bathed my hand with tears. Her trembling lips with difficulty inquired after the youth; and, as she spoke, a glow of conscious guilt lightened up her pale countenance.

The full recollection of her lover's crimes shot through my memory. I was incensed, and would have spurned her away; but she clung to my garments and seemed to implore my pity with a look so full of misery, that, relenting, I led her in silence to the extremity of the cliff where the youth was seated, his feet dangling above the sea. His eye was rolling wildly around, but it soon fixed upon the object for whose sake he had doomed himself to perdition.

I am not inclined to describe their ecstasies, or the eagerness with which they sought each other's embraces. I turned indignantly my head; and, driving my goats to a recess amongst the rocks, sat revolving in my mind these strange events. I neglected procuring any provision for my unwelcome guests; and about midnight returned homewards by the light of the moon, which shone serenely in the heavens. Almost the first object her beams discovered was the guilty maid sustaining the head of her lover, who had fainted through weakness and want of nourishment. I fetched some dry bread, and, dipping it in milk, laid it before them. Having performed this duty I set open the door of my hut, and retiring to a neighbouring cavity, there stretched myself on a heap of leaves, and offered my prayers to Heaven.

A thousand fears, till this moment unknown, thronged into my fancy. I mistook the shadow of leaves, that chequered the entrance to the grot, for ugly reptiles, and repeatedly shook my garments. The flow of the distant surges was deepened by my apprehensions into distant groans: in a word, I could not rest; but issuing from the cavern as hastily as my trembling knees would allow, paced along the edge of the precipice. An unaccountable impulse hurried my steps. Dark clouds were driving across the sky, and the setting moon was flushed with the deepest crimson. A wan gleam coloured the sea. Such was my terror and shivering, that, unable to advance to my hut or retreat to the cavern, I was about to shield myself from the night in a sandy crevice, when a loud shriek pierced my ear. My fears had confused me; I was in fact hard by my hovel, and scarcely three paces from the brink of the cavern: it was from thence the cries proceeded.

Advancing in a cold shudder to its edge, part of which was newly crumbled in, I discovered the form of the young man suspended by one foot to a branch of juniper that grew ten feet down: thus dreadfully did he hang over the gulph from the branch bent with his weight. His features were distorted, his eye-balls glared with agony, and his screams became so shrill and terrible, that I lost all power of assistance. Fixed, I stood with my eyes riveted

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upon the criminal, who incessantly cried out, 'O God! O Father! save me, if there be yet mercy! save me, or I sink into the abyss!'

I am convinced he saw me not; for not once did he implore my help. My heart was dead within me. I called out upon the Lord. His voice grew faint, and as I gazed intent upon him, he fell into utter darkness. I sank to the earth in a trance, during which a sound like the rush of pennons assaulted my ear: methought the evil spirit was bearing off his soul; I lifted up my eyes, but nothing stirred; the stillness that prevailed was awful.

The moon looked stained with streaks of blood; her orb hanging low over the waves afforded a sickly light, by which I perceived some one coming down that white cliff you see before you; and soon I heard the voice of the young woman calling aloud on her guilty lover. She stopped. She repeated again and again her exclamation; but there was no reply. Alarmed and frantic she hurried along the path, and now I saw her on the promontory, and now by yonder pine, devouring with her glances every crevice in the rock. At length perceiving me, she flew to where I stood, by the fatal precipice, and having noticed the fragments fresh crumbled in, pored importunately on my countenance. I continued pointing to the chasm; she trembled not; her tears could not flow; but she divined the meaning. 'He is lost!' said she; 'the earth has swallowed him! but, as I have shared with him the highest joy, so will I partake his torments. I will follow; dare not to hinder me.' I shrank back.

Like the phantoms I have seen in dreams, she glanced beside me; and, clasping her hands above her head, lifted a steadfast look on the hemisphere, and viewed the moon with an anxiousness that told me she was bidding it farewell for ever. Observing a silken handkerchief on the ground, with which she had but an hour ago bound her lover's temples, she snatched it up, and imprinting it with burning kisses, thrust it into her bosom. Once more, expanding her arms in the last act of despair and miserable passion, she threw herself, with a furious leap, into the gulph.

To its margin I crawled on my knees, and, shuddering, looked down into the gloom. There I remained in the most dreadful darkness; for now the moon was sunk, the sky obscured with storms, and a tempestuous blast ranging the ocean. Showers poured thick upon me, and the lightning, in clear and frequent flashes, gave me terrifying glimpses of yonder accursed chasm.

Stranger, dost thou believe in the great Being? in our Redeemer? in the tenets of our faith? I answered with reverence, but said I was no Catholic. Then, continued the aged woman, I will not declare before a heretic what were the sacred visions of that night of vengeance! She paused; I was silent.

After a short interval, with deep and frequent sighs, she resumed her narrative. Daylight began to dawn as if with difficulty, and it was late before its radiance had tinged the watery and tempestuous clouds. I was still kneeling by the gulph in prayer when the cliffs began to brighten, and the beams of the morning sun to strike against me. Then did I rejoice. Then no longer did I think myself of all human beings the most abject and miserable. How different did I feel myself from those, fresh plunged into the abodes of torment, and driven for ever from the morning!

Three days elapsed in total solitude: on the fourth, some grave and ancient persons arrived from Naples, who questioned me, repeatedly, about the wretched lovers, and to whom I related their fate with every dreadful particular. Soon after I learned that all discourse concerning them was expressly stopped, and that no prayers were offered up for their souls.

With these words, as well as I recollect, the old woman ended her singular narration. My blood thrilled as I walked by the gulph to call my guide, who stood aloof under the cliffs. He seemed to think, from the paleness of my countenance, that I had heard some gloomy prediction, and shook his head when I turned round to bid my old hostess adieu! It was a melancholy evening, and I could not refrain from tears, as, winding through the defiles of the rocks, the sad scenes which had passed amongst them recurred to my memory.

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Traversing a wild thicket, we soon regained the shore, where I rambled a few minutes whilst the peasant went for the boatmen. The last streaks of light were quivering on the waters when I stepped into the bark, and wrapping myself up in an awning, slept till we reached Puzzoli, some of whose inhabitants came forth with torches to light us home.

I was vexed to be roused from my visions, and had much rather have sunk in some deep cave of the Cimmerians than returned to Naples.

LETTER XXIV

NAPLES, *November 9th.*

We made our excursion to Pompeii, passing through Portici, and over the last lava of Mount Vesuvius. I experienced a strange mixture of sensations, on surveying at once the mischiefs of the late eruption, in the ruin of villages, farms, and vineyards; and all around them the most luxuriant and delightful scenery of nature. It was impossible to resist the impressions of melancholy from viewing the former, or not to admit that gaiety of spirits which was inspired by the sight of the latter. I say nothing of the Museum at Portici, which we saw in our way, on account of the ample description of its contents already given to the public, and because it should be described no otherwise than by an exact catalogue, or by an exhibition of engravings. An hour and half brought us from this celebrated repository to Pompeii. Nothing can be conceived more delightful than the climate and situation of this city. It stands upon a gently-rising hill, which commands the bay of Naples, with the islands of Caprea and Ischia, the rich coasts of Sorrento, the tower of Castel a Mare; and on the other side, Mount Vesuvius, with the lovely country intervening. It is judged to be about an Italian mile long, and three and a half in circuit. We entered the city at the little gate which lies towards Stabiæ. The first object upon entering is a colonnade round a square court, which seems to have formed a place of arms. Behind the colonnade is a series of little rooms, destined for the soldiers' barracks. The columns are of stone, plastered with stucco and coloured. On several of them we found names scratched in Greek and Latin; probably those of the soldiers who had been quartered there. Helmets and armour for various parts of the body were discovered amongst the skeletons of some soldiers, whose hard fate had compelled them to wait on duty, at the perilous moment of the city's approaching destruction. Dolphins and tridents, sculptured in relief on most of these relics of armour, seem to show that they had been fabricated for naval service. Some of the sculptures on the arms, probably belonging to officers, exhibit a greater variety of ornaments. The taking of Troy, wrought on one of the helmets, is beautifully executed; and much may be said in commendation of the work of several others.

We were next led to the remains of a temple and altar near these barracks. From thence to some rooms floored (as indeed were almost all that have been cleared from the rubbish) with tessellated mosaic pavements of various patterns, and most of them of very excellent execution. Many of these have been taken up, and now form the floors of the rooms in the Museum at Portici, whose best ornaments of every kind are furnished from the discoveries at Pompeii. From the rooms just mentioned we descended into a subterraneous chamber, communicating with a bathing apartment. It appears to have served as a kind of office to the latter. It was probably here that the clothes used in bathing were washed. A fireplace, a capacious cauldron of bronze, and earthen vessels, proper for that purpose, found here, have given rise to the conjecture. Contiguous to this room is a small circular one with a fireplace, which was the stove to the bath. I should not forget to tell you that the skeleton of the poor laundress (for so the antiquaries will have it), who was very diligently washing the bathing

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clothes at the time of the eruption, was found lying in an attitude of most resigned death, not far from the washing cauldron in the office just mentioned.

We were now conducted to the temple, or rather chapel, of Isis. The chief remains are a covered cloister; the great altar on which was probably exhibited the statue of the goddess; a little edifice to protect the sacred well; the pediment of the chapel, with a symbolical vase in relief; ornaments in stucco, on the front of the main building, consisting of the lotus, the sistrum, representations of gods, Harpocrates, Anubis, and other objects of Egyptian worship. The figures on one side of this temple are Perseus with the Gorgon's head; on the other side, Mars and Venus, with Cupids bearing the arms of Mars. We next observe three altars of different sizes. On one of them is said to have been found the bones of a victim unconsumed, the last sacrifice having probably been stopped by the dreadful calamity which had occasioned it. From a niche in the temple was taken a statue of marble: a woman pressing her lips with her forefinger. Within the area is a well, where the priest threw the ashes of the sacrifices. We saw in the Museum at Portici some lovely arabesque paintings, cut from the walls of the cloister. The foliage which ran round the whole sweep of the cloister itself is in the finest taste. A tablet of basalt with Egyptian hieroglyphics was transported from thence to Portici, together with the following inscription, taken from the front gate of the chapel:

N. POPIDUS N. F. CELSINUS.
AEDEM ISIDIS TERRAE MOTU COLLAPSAM
A FUNDAMENTO P. SUA RESTITUIT
HUNC DECURIONES OB LIBERALITATEM
CUM ESSET ANNORUM SEX ORDINI SUO
GRATIS ADLEGERUNT.

Behind one of the altars we saw a small room, in which, our guide informed us, a human skeleton had been discovered, with some fish bones on a plate near it, and a number of other culinary utensils. We then passed on to another apartment, almost contiguous, where nothing more remarkable had been found than an iron crow: an instrument with which perhaps the unfortunate wretch, whose skeleton I have mentioned above, had vainly endeavoured to extricate herself, this room being probably barricaded by the matter of the eruption. This temple, rebuilt, as the inscription imports, by N. Popidius, had been thrown down by a terrible earthquake, that likewise destroyed a great part of the city (sixteen years before the famous eruption of Vesuvius described by Pliny, which happened in the first year of Titus, A.D. 79) and buried at once both Herculaneum and Pompeii. As I lingered alone in these environs sacred to Isis, some time after my companions had quitted them, I fell into one of those reveries which my imagination is so fond of indulging; and transporting myself seventeen hundred years back, fancied I was sailing with the elder Pliny, on the first day's eruption, from Misenum, towards Retina and Herculaneum; and afterwards towards the villa of his friend Pomponianus at Stabiae. The course of our galley seldom carried us out of sight of Pompeii, and as often as I could divert my attention from the tremendous spectacle of the eruption, its enormous pillar of smoke standing conically in the air, and tempests of liquid fire continually bursting out from the midst of it, then raining down the sides of the mountain, and flooding this beautiful coast with innumerable streams of red-hot lava, methought I turned my eyes upon this fair city, whose houses, villas, and gardens, with their long ranges of columned courts and porticos, were made visible through the universal cloud of ashes, by lightning from the mountain; and saw its distracted inhabitants, men, women, and children, running to and fro in despair. But in one spot, I mean the court and precincts of the temple, glared a continual light. It was the blaze of the altars; towards which I discerned a long-robed train of priests moving in solemn procession, to supplicate by prayer and sacrifice, at this destructive moment, the intervention of Isis, who had taught the first fathers of mankind the culture of the earth, and other arts of civil life. Methought I could distinguish in their hands all those paintings and images, sacred to this divinity, brought out on this portentous

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occasion, from the subterranean apartments and mystic cells of the temple. There was every form of creeping thing and abominable beast, every Egyptian pollution which the true prophet had seen in vision, among the secret idolatries of the temple at Jerusalem. The priests arrived at the altars; I saw them gathered round, and purifying the three at once with the sacred meal; then, all moving slowly about them, each with his right hand towards the fire: it was the office of some to seize the firebrands of the altars, with which they sprinkled holy water on the numberless bystanders. Then began the prayers, the hymns, and lustrations of the sacrifice. The priests had laid the victims with their throats downward upon the altars; were ransacking the baskets of flour and salt for the knives of slaughter, and proceeding in haste to the accomplishment of their pious ceremonies; when one of our company, who thought me lost, returned with impatience, and calling me off to some new object, put an end to my strange reverie. We were now summoned to pay some attention to the scene and corridor of a theatre, not far from the temple. Little more of its remains being yet cleared away, we hastened back to a small house and garden in the neighbourhood of Isis. Sir W. Hamilton (in his account of Pompeii communicated to the Society of Antiquaries), when speaking of this house, having taken occasion to give a general idea of the private mansions of the ancient citizens, I shall take the liberty of transcribing the whole passage. A covered cloister, supported by columns, goes round the house, as was customary in many of the houses at Pompeii. The rooms in general are very small, and in one, where an iron bedstead was found, the wall had been pared away to make room for this bedstead; so that it was not six feet square, and yet this room was most elegantly painted, and had a tessellated or mosaic floor. The weight of the matter erupted from Mount Vesuvius has universally damaged the upper parts of the houses; the lower parts are mostly found as fresh as at the moment they were buried. The plan of most of the houses at Pompeii is a square court, with a fountain in the middle, and small rooms round, communicating with that court. By the construction and distribution of the houses, it seems, the inhabitants of Pompeii were fond of privacy. They had few windows towards the street, except where, from the nature of the plan, they could not avoid it; but even in that case the windows were placed too high for anyone in the streets to overlook them. Their houses nearly resemble each other, both as to distribution of plan, and in the manner of finishing the apartments. The rooms are in general small, from ten to twelve feet, and from fourteen to eighteen feet; few communications between room and room, almost all without windows, except the apartments situated to the gardens, which are thought to have been allotted to the women. Their cortiles, or courts, were often surrounded by porticos, even in very small houses; not but there were covered galleries before the doors of their apartments to afford shade and shelter. No timber was used in finishing their apartments, except in doors and windows. The floors were generally laid in mosaic work. One general taste prevailed of painting the sides and ceilings of the rooms. Small figures and medallions of low relief were sometimes introduced. Their great variety consisted in the colours, and in the choice and delicacy of the ornaments, in which they displayed great harmony and taste. Their houses were some two, others three stories high.

We now pursued our way through what is with some probability thought to have been the principal street. Its narrowness, however, surprised me. It is scarcely eleven feet wide, clear of the footways raised on each side of it. The pavement is formed of a large sort of flattish-surfaced pebbles; not laid down with the greatest evenness or regularity. The sideways may be about a yard wide, each paved, irregularly enough, with small stones. There are guard stones at equal intervals, to defend the foot passengers from carriages and horses. I cannot say I found anything either elegant or pleasant in the effect of this open street. But, as the houses in general present little more than a dead wall towards it, I do not imagine any views, beyond mere use and convenience, were consulted in the plan. It led us, however, through the principal gate or entrance, to a sort of Villa Rustica, without the limits of the city, which amply recompensed our curiosity. The arcade surrounding a square garden, or courtyard, offers itself first to the observer's notice. Into this open a number of coved rooms, adorned with paintings of figures and arabesques. These rooms, though small, have a rich and elegant appearance, their ornaments being very well executed, and retaining still their original freshness. On the top of the arcade runs a walk or open terrace, leading to the larger apartments of the higher story. One of the rooms below has a capacious bow-window, where several panes of glass, somewhat shattered, were found, but in sufficient preservation to show that the ancients were not without knowledge of this species of manufacture. As Horace and most of the old Latin Poets dwell much on the praises of ancient conviviality, and appear to have valued themselves considerably on their connoisseurship in wine, it was with great pleasure I descended into the spacious cellars, sunk and vaulted beneath the arcade

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above-mentioned. Several earthen amphoræ were standing in rows against the walls, but the Massic and Falernian with which they were once stored, had probably long been totally absorbed by the earth and ashes, which were now the sole contents of these venerable jars. The ancients are thought to have used oil, instead of corks, and that the stoppers were of some matter that could make but little resistance, seems confirmed by the entrance of that, which now supplied the place with wine. The skeletons of several of the family who had possessed this villa were discovered in the cellar, together with brass and silver coins, and many such ornaments of dress as were of more durable materials. On re-ascending, we went to the hot and cold baths; thence to the back of the villa, separated by a passage from the more elegant part of the house; we were shown some rooms which had been occupied by the farmer, and from whence several implements of agriculture had been carried, to enrich the collection at Portici. On the whole, the plan and construction of this villa are extremely curious, and its situation very happily chosen. I could not, however, help feeling some regret, in not having had the good fortune to be present at the first discovery. It must have been highly interesting to see all its ancient relics (the greatest part of which are now removed) each in its proper place; or, at least, in the place they had possessed for so long a course of years. His Sicilian Majesty has ordered a correct draught of this villa to be taken, which, it is hoped, will one day be published, with a complete account of all the discoveries at Pompeii.

Our next walk was to see the Columbarium, a very solemn looking edifice, where probably the families of higher rank only at Pompeii, deposited the urns of their deceased kindred. Several of these urns, with their ashes, and one among the rest of glass, inclosed in another of earth, were dug out of the sepulchral vaults. A quantity of marble statues, of but ordinary execution, and colossal masks of terra-cotta, constituted the chief ornaments of the Columbarium. It is situated without the gates, on the same side of the city as the villa just described. There is something characteristically sad in its aspect. It threw my mind into a melancholy, but not disagreeable tone. Under the mixed sentiments it inspired, I cast one lingering look back on the whole affecting scene of ruins, over which I had for several hours been rambling, and quitted it to return to Naples, not without great reluctance.

LETTER XXV

ROME, *December 9th.*

My last letter was despatched in such a hurry that I had not time to conclude it. This will be nearly as imperfect; but yet I cannot forbear writing, having the vanity to believe that you are pleased with hearing only that I am well.

Your friend H. walked with me this morning in the Loggios of Raffaele, and we went afterwards to the Capitol. Nothing delighted me more in the whole treasury of sculptures, than a figure in alto relievo of Endymion, reclined on the mountain's brow: his head falls upon his breast with an ease and gracefulness, of which the Greeks alone had ever a true conception. Most of the chambers, if you recollect, are filled with the elegant remains of Adrian's collection. The villa of that classic emperor at Tivoli, must have been the most charming of structures. Having travelled into various and remote parts of his empire, he assembled their most valuable ornaments on one spot. Some of his apartments were filled with the mysterious images and symbols of Egypt: others with Eastern tripods and strange Adriatic vases. Though enraptured with St. Peter's and the Vatican, with the gardens and groves of pine, that surround this interesting city, still I cannot help sighing after my native hills and copses, which look (I know not how it happens) more like the haunts of Pan than any I have seen in Italy. I eagerly anticipate the placid hours we shall pass, perhaps next summer, on the wild range which belongs to our sylvan deities. In their deep fastnesses I will hide myself from the world, and never allow its glare to bicker through my foliage. You will

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follow me, I trust, into retirement, and equally forget the turmoils of mankind. What have we children of the good Sylvanus to do with the miseries or triumphs of the savages that prowl about London? Let us forget there exists such a city, and when reposing amongst ivy and blossoms of bloom, imagine ourselves in the ancient dominions of Saturn, and dream that we see him pass along with his rustic attendants.

LETTER XXVI

AUGSBURG, *January 20th*, 1781.

For these ten days past have I been traversing Lapland: winds whistling in my ears, and cones showering down upon my head from the wilds of pine through which our route conducted us. Often were we obliged to travel by moonlight, and I leave you to imagine the awful aspect of the Tyrol mountains buried in snow.

I scarcely ventured to utter an exclamation of surprise, though prompted by some of the most striking scenes in nature, lest I should interrupt the sacred silence that prevails, during winter, in these boundless solitudes. The streams are frozen, and mankind petrified, for aught I know to the contrary, since whole days have we journeyed on without perceiving the slightest hint of their existence.

I never before felt the pleasure of discovering a smoke rising from a cottage, or of hearing a heifer lowing in its stall; and could not have supposed there was so much satisfaction in perceiving two or three fur caps, with faces under them, peeping out of their concealments. I wish you had been with me, exploring this savage region: wrapped up in our bear-skins, we should have followed its secret avenues, and penetrated, perhaps, into some enchanted cave lined with sables, where, like the heroes of northern romances, we should have been waited upon by dwarfs, and sung drowsily to repose. I think it no bad scheme to sleep away five or six years to come, since every hour affairs are growing more and more turbulent. Well, let them! provided we may enjoy, in security, the shades of our thickets.

ADDITIONAL LETTERS

[The following Letters, written in a second Excursion, which was interrupted by a dangerous illness, are added on account of their affinity to some of the preceding.]

LETTER I

COLOGNE, *May 28th*, 1782.

This is the first day of summer; the oak leaves expand, the roses blow, butterflies are about, and I have spirits enough to write to you. We have had clouded skies this fortnight past, and roads like the Slough of Despond. Last Wednesday we were benighted on a dismal plain, apparently boundless. The moon cast a sickly gleam, and now and then a blue meteor glided along the morass which lay before us.

After much difficulty we gained an avenue, and in an hour's time discovered something like a gateway, shaded by crooked elms and crowned by a cluster of turrets. Here we paused and knocked; no one answered. We repeated our knocks; the stout oaken gate returned a hollow sound; the horses coughed, their riders blew their horns. At length the bars fell, and we entered by what means I am ignorant, for no human being appeared.

A labyrinth of narrow winding alleys, dark as the vaults of a cathedral, opened to our view. We kept wandering along, at least twenty minutes, between lofty mansions with grated windows, and strange galleries, projecting one over another, from which depended innumerable uncouth figures and crosses, in iron-work, swinging to and fro with the wind. At the end of this gloomy maze we found a long street, not fifteen feet wide, I am certain; the houses still loftier than those in the alleys, the windows thicker barred, and the gibbets (for I know not what else to call them) more frequent. Here and there we saw lights glimmering in the highest stories, and arches on the right and left, which seemed to lead into retired courts and deeper darkness.

Along one of these recesses we were jumbled, over such pavement as I hope you may never tread upon; and, after parading round it, went out at the same arch whence we came in. This procession seemed at first very mystical, but it was too soon accounted for by our postillions, who confessed they had lost their way. A council was held amongst them in form, and then we struck into another labyrinth of hideous edifices, habitations I will not venture to call them, as not a creature stirred; though the rumbling of our carriages was echoed by all the vaults and arches.

Towards midnight we rested a few minutes, and a head poking out of a casement directed us to the hotel of Der Heilige Geist, where an apartment, thirty feet square, was prepared for our reception.

LETTER II

INSBRUCK, *June 4th*.

No sooner had we passed Fuezen than we entered the Tyrol, and the country of wonders. Those lofty peaks, those steepes of wood I delight in, lay before us. Innumerable clear springs gush out on every side, overhung by luxuriant shrubs in blossom. The day was mild, though overcast, and a soft blue vapour rested upon the hills, above which rise mountains that bear plains of snow into the clouds.

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At night we lay at Nasariet, a village buried amongst savage promontories. The next morning we advanced, in bright sunshine, into smooth lawns on the slopes of mountains, scattered over with larches, whose delicate foliage formed a light green veil to the azure sky. Flights of birds were merrily travelling from spray to spray. I ran delighted into this world of boughs, whilst C. sat down to draw the huts which are scattered about for the shelter of herds, and discover themselves amongst the groves in the most picturesque manner.

These little edifices are uncommonly neat, and excite those ideas of pastoral life to which I am so fondly attached. The turf from whence they rise is enamelled, in the strict sense of the word, with flowers. A sort of bluebell predominated, brighter than ultramarine; here and there auriculas looked out of the moss, and I often reposed upon tufts of ranunculus. Bushes of phillerea were very frequent, the sun shining full on their glossy leaves. An hour passed away swiftly in these pleasant groves, where I lay supine under a lofty fir, a tower of leaves and branches.

LETTER III

PADUA, *June 14th.*

Once more, said I to myself, I shall have the delight of beholding Venice; so got into an open chaise, the strangest curricule that ever man was jolted in, and drove furiously along the causeways by the Brenta, into whose deep waters it is a mercy, methinks, I was not precipitated. Fiesso, the Dolo, the Mira, with all their gardens, statues, and palaces, seemed flying after each other, so rapid was our motion.

After a few hours' confinement between close steeples, the scene opened to the wide shore of Fusina. I looked up (for I had scarcely time to look before) and beheld a troubled sky, shot with vivid red, the Lagunes tinted like the opal, and the islands of a glowing flame-colour. The lofty mountains of the distant continent appeared of a deep melancholy grey, and innumerable gondolas were passing to and fro in all their blackness. The sun, after a long struggle, was swallowed up in the tempestuous clouds.

In an hour we drew near to Venice, and saw its world of domes rising out of the waters. A fresh breeze bore the toll of innumerable bells by my ear. Sadness came over me as I entered the great canal, and recognised (the scene of many a strange adventure) those solemn palaces, with their lofty arcades and gloomy arches, beneath which I had so often sat.

The Venetians being mostly at their villas on the Brenta, the town appeared deserted. I visited, however, all my old haunts in the Place of St. Mark, ran up the Campanile, and rowed backwards and forwards, opposite the Ducal Palace, by moonlight. They are building a spacious quay, near the street of the Sclavonians, fronting the island of San Giorgio Maggiore, where I remained alone at least an hour, following the wanderings of the moon amongst mountainous clouds, and listening to the waters dashing against marble steps.

I closed my evening at my friend M. de R.'s, and sung over the airs I composed in the dawn of our acquaintance.

Next morning the wind was uncommonly violent for the mild season of June, and the canals much agitated; but I was determined to visit the Lido once more, and bathe on my accustomed beach. The pines in the garden of the Carthusians were nodding as I passed by in my gondola, which was very poetically buffeted by the waves.

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Traversing the desert of locusts, I hailed the Adriatic, and plunged into its bosom. The sea, delightfully cool, refreshed me to such a degree, that, upon my return to Venice, I found myself able to thread its labyrinths of streets, canals, and alleys, in search of amber and Oriental curiosities. The variety of exotic merchandize, the perfume of coffee, the shade of awnings, and the sight of Greeks and Asiatics sitting crossed-legged under them, made me think myself in the bazaars of Constantinople.

'Tis certain my beloved town of Venice ever recalls a series of Eastern ideas and adventures. I cannot help thinking St. Mark's a mosque, and the neighbouring palace some vast seraglio, full of arabesque saloons, embroidered sofas, and voluptuous Circassians.

LETTER IV

PADUA, *June 19th.*

The morning was delightful, and St. Anthony's bells in full chime. A shower which had fallen in the night rendered the air so cool and grateful, that Mad. de R. and myself determined to seize the opportunity and go to Mirabello, a country house, which Algarotti had inhabited, situate amongst the Euganean hills, eight or nine miles from Padua.

Our road lay between poplar alleys and fields of yellow corn, overhung by garlands of vine, most beautifully green. I soon found myself in the midst of my favourite hills, upon slopes covered with clover, and shaded by cherry-trees. Bending down their boughs I gathered the fruit, and grew cooler and happier every instant.

We dined very comfortably in a strange hall, where I pitched my pianoforte, and sang the voluptuous airs of Bertoni's Armida. That enchantress might have raised her palace in this situation; and, had I been Rinaldo, I certainly should not very soon have abandoned it.

After dinner we drank coffee under some branching lemons, which sprang from a terrace, commanding a boundless scene of towers and villas; tall cypresses and shrubby hillocks rising, like islands, out of a sea of corn and vine.

Evening drawing on, and the breeze blowing fresh from the distant Adriatic, I reclined on a slope, and turned my eyes anxiously towards Venice; then upon some little fields hemmed in by chestnuts in blossom, where the peasants were making their hay, and, from thence, to a mountain, crowned by a circular grove of fir and cypress.

In the centre of these shades some monks have a comfortable nest; perennial springs, a garden of delicious vegetables, and, I dare say, a thousand luxuries besides, which the poor mortals below never dream of.

Had it not been late, I should certainly have climbed up to the grove, and asked admittance into its recesses; but having no mind to pass the night in this eyrie, I contented myself with the distant prospect.

LETTER V

ROME, *June 29th.*

It is needless for me to say I wish you with me: you know I do; you know how delightfully we should ramble about Rome together. This evening, instead of jiggeting along the Corso with the puppets in blue and silver coats, and green and gold coaches, instead of bowing to Cardinal this, and dotting my head to Abbé t'other, I strolled to the Coliseo, found out my old haunts amongst its arches, and enjoyed the pure transparent sky between groves of slender cypress. Then bending my course to the Palatine Mount, I passed under the Arch of Titus, and gained the Capitol, which was quite deserted, the world, thank Heaven, being all slip-slopping in coffee-houses, or staring at a few painted boards patched up before the Colonna palace, where, by the by, to-night is a grand *rinfrresco* for all the dolls and doll-fanciers of Rome. I heard their buzz at a distance; that was enough for me!

Soothed by the rippling of waters, I descended the Capitoline stairs, and leaned several minutes against one of the Egyptian lionesses. This animal has no knack at oracles, or else it would have murmured out to me the situation of that secret cave, where the wolf suckled Romulus and his brother.

About nine, I returned home, and am now writing to you like a prophet on the housetop. Behind me rustle the thickets of Villa Medici; before, lies roof beyond roof and dome beyond dome: these are dimly discovered; but don't you see the great cupola of cupolas, twinkling with illuminations? The town is real, I am certain; but, surely, that structure of fire must be visionary.

LETTER VI

ROME, *June 30th.*

As soon as the sun declined I strolled into the Villa Medici; but finding it haunted by fine pink and yellow people, nay, even by the Spanish Ambassador, and several more dignified carcasses, I moved off to the Negroni garden. There I found what my soul desired, thickets of jasmine, and wild spots overgrown with bay; long alleys of cypress totally neglected, and almost impassable through the luxuriance of the vegetation; on every side antique fragments, vases, sarcophagi, and altars sacred to the Manes, in deep, shady recesses, which I am certain the Manes must love. The air was filled with the murmurs of water, trickling down basins of porphyry, and losing itself amongst overgrown weeds and grasses.

Above the wood and between its boughs appeared several domes, and a strange lofty tower. I will not say they belong to St. Maria Maggiore; no, they are fanes and porticos dedicated to Cybele, who delights in sylvan situations. The forlorn air of this garden, with its high and reverend shades, make me imagine it as old as the baths of Dioclesian, which peep over one of its walls. Yes, I am persuaded some consul or prætor dwelt here only fifty years ago. Would to God, our souls might be transported to such solitary spots! where we might glide along the dark alleys together, when bodies were gone to bed. I discovered a little cave that would just suit us; celandine, Venus' hair, and a thousand delicate plants, growing downwards from the cave; beneath lies a clear

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spring.

At the close of day, I repaired to the platform before the stately porticos of the Lateran. There I sat, folded up in myself. Some priests jarred the iron gates behind me. I looked over my shoulder through the portals, into the portico. Night began to fill it with darkness. Upon turning round, the sad waste of the Campagna met my eyes, and I wished to go home, but had not the power. A pressure, like that I have felt in horrid dreams, seemed to fix me to the pavement.

I was thus in a manner forced to view the dreary scene, the long line of aqueducts and lonesome towers. Perhaps the unwholesome vapours, rising like blue mists from the plains, affected me. I know not how it was; but I never experienced such strange, such chilling terrors. About ten o'clock, thank God, the spell dissolved; I found my limbs at liberty, and returned home.

LETTER VII

NAPLES, *July 8th.*

The sea-breezes restored me to life. I set the heat of midday at defiance, and do not believe in the horrors of the sirocco. Yesterday I passed at Portici, with Lady H. The morning, refreshing and pleasant, invited us at an early hour into the open air. We drove, in an uncovered chaise, to the royal Boschetto: no other carriage than Sir W.'s is allowed to enter its alleys. We breathed a fresh air untainted by dust or garlic. Every now and then, amidst wild bushes of ilex and myrtle, one finds a graceful antique statue, sometimes a fountain, and often a rude knoll, where the rabbits sit undisturbed, contemplating the blue glittering bay; at least, I should do so, if I were a rabbit.

The walls of this shady inclosure are lined with Peruvian aloes, whose white blossoms, scented like those of the magnolia, form the most magnificent clusters. They are plants to salute respectfully as one passes by, such is their size and dignity. In the midst of the thickets stands the King's Pagliaro, surrounded by gardens with hedges of luxuriant jasmine, whose branches are suffered to flaunt as much as Nature pleases.

The morning sun darted his first rays on their flowers just as I entered this pleasant spot. The hut looks as if erected in the days of fairy pastoral life; its neatness is quite delightful. Bright tiles compose the floor; straw, nicely platted, covers the walls. In the middle of the room, you see a table spread with a beautiful Persian carpet; at one end, four niches with mattresses of silk, where the King and his favourites repose after dinner; at the other, a white marble basin. Mount a little staircase, and you find yourself in another apartment, formed by the roof, which being entirely composed of glistening straw, casts that comfortable yellow glow I admire. From the windows you look into the garden, not flourished with parterres, but divided into plats of fragrant herbs and flowers, with here and there a little marble table, or basin of the purest water.

These sequestered inclosures are cultivated with the greatest care, and so frequently watered, that I observed lettuces, and a variety of other vegetables, as fresh as in our green England.

AN EXCURSION TO THE GRAND CHARTREUSE IN THE YEAR 1778

The Grand Chartreuse has exceeded my expectations; it is more wonderfully wild than I can describe, or even you can imagine. It has possessed me to such a degree that at present I can neither think, speak, nor write upon any other subject.

June 5th. I left Geneva, and after passing through a succession of valleys between innumerable mountains, and after crossing a variety of picturesque bridges, thrown over the streams which water them, arrived at Aix, in Savoy, famous for its baths, which, as disagreeable things are generally the most salutary, ought doubtless to be of the greatest efficacy; for more uninviting objects one seldom meets with.

Advancing beneath a little eminence, partly rock, partly wall, we discovered the principal bath, filled with a blue reeking water, whose very steam is sufficient to seethe one without further assistance.

Scarce had we stood looking on it a minute, before down dashed three or four dirty boys, as copper-coloured as the natives of Bengal; who by splashing us all over, and swimming about a *la crapaudine*, convinced us that it was not their fault, if we would not have companions in the delights of bathing. I soon hurried away from this salubrious cauldron, and stepping into a little chapel hard by, where they were singing vespers, prayed heartily to the Virgin, that I might never need the assistance of those wonder-working waters over which she presides. As there was but little company in the town, and little amusement, I went to bed at nine, and rose at four the next morning, that I might reach before sunset the celebrated road, which Charles Emanuel had cut through a rocky mountain. My plan succeeded, and after dining at Chambéry (a place scarce worth speaking of to you), and passing by a cataract that throws itself from a lofty steep, I began to discover a beautiful woody vale, terminated on one side by the hallowed cliffs of the Grand Chartreuse, and on the other by the mountain which Charles Emanuel had perforated in so extraordinary a manner. The sun was just sinking in a brilliant cloud, which seemed to repose on a swelling hill, covered with cattle, when we quitted the cheerful valley, and began to descend between two ridges of precipices, that at some distance had the appearance of towering ramparts. Pursuing our route, we found ourselves in a deep cleft, surrounded by caverns, echoing with a thousand rills which trickle down their sides, and mingling their murmurs with the rattling of our wheels and the steps of our horses, infinitely repeated and multiplied, formed, altogether, the strangest combination of sounds that ever reached my ears. The road itself is admirably cut, and hewn with such neatness that, were it not for the savage and desolate air of its environs, I should have imagined myself approaching some grand castle or considerable city. Toward the summits of the precipices, that in some places rise to a majestic elevation (the two sides here and there nearly meeting in an arch), hang light woods of glossy green, which, being agitated by a gentle wind, cast a moving shadow over the cleft beneath, and, at a little distance, gave our road the appearance of a chequered pavement.

Having wound through the bosom of the mountain for some time, I was struck by the unexpected appearance of a grand edifice, resembling a vast portal, supported by Doric pilasters, and crowned with an ornamented pediment. Upon my nearer approach I found a smooth tablet filling up the space I had allotted for an entrance, on which was engraven a pompous Latin inscription, setting forth with what incredible labour and perseverance his Majesty, Charles Emanuel the Second of Sardinia, Cyprus, and Jerusalem, King, had cut this road through the mountain; which great enterprise, though unattempted by the Romans, and despaired of by other nations, was executed under his auspices. I very sincerely wished him joy, and, as the evening was growing rather cool, was not sorry to perceive, through an opening in the rocks, a wide-extended plain, interspersed with meadows, embosomed by woods, in which I distinguished Les Echelles, a village, where we were to lie, with its chimneys smoking, under the base of one of the Carthusian mountains, round which had gathered a concourse of red and greyish clouds.

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The twilight was beginning to prevail when we reached our inn, and very glad I was to leave it at the first dawn of the next day. We were now obliged to abandon our coach; and taking horse, proceeded towards the mountains, which, with the valleys between them, form what is called the Desert of the Carthusians.

In an hour's time we were drawing near, and could discern the opening of a narrow valley overhung by shaggy precipices, above which rose lofty peaks, covered to their very summits with wood. We could now distinguish the roar of torrents, and a confusion of strange sounds, issuing from dark forests of pine. I confess at this moment I was somewhat startled. I experienced some disagreeable sensations, and it was not without a degree of unwillingness that I left the gay pastures and enlivening sunshine, to throw myself into this gloomy and disturbed region. How dreadful, thought I, must be the despair of those who enter it never to return!

But after the first impression was worn away, all my curiosity redoubled; and desiring our guide to put forward with greater speed, we made such good haste, that the meadows and cottages of the plain were soon left far behind, and we found ourselves on the banks of the torrent, whose agitation answered the ideas which its sounds had inspired. Into the midst of these troubled waters we were obliged to plunge with our horses, and, when landed on the opposite shore, were by no means displeased to have passed them.

We had now closed with the forests, over which the impending rocks diffused an additional gloom. The day grew obscured by clouds, and the sun no longer enlightened the distant plains, when we began to ascend towards the entrance of the desert, marked by two pinnacles of rock far above us, beyond which a melancholy twilight prevailed. Every moment we approached nearer and nearer to the sounds which had alarmed us; and, suddenly emerging from the woods, we discovered several mills and forges, with many complicated machines of iron, hanging over the torrent, that threw itself headlong from a cleft in the precipices; on one side of which I perceived our road winding along, till it was stopped by a venerable gateway. A rock above one of the forges was hollowed into the shape of a round tower, of no great size, but resembling very much an altar in figure; and, what added greatly to the grandeur of the object, was a livid flame continually palpitating upon it, which the gloom of the valley rendered perfectly discernible.

The road, at a small distance from this remarkable scene, was become so narrow, that, had my horse started, I should have been but too well acquainted with the torrent that raged beneath; dismounting, therefore, I walked towards the edge of the great fall, and there, leaning on a fragment of cliff, looked down into the foaming gulph, where the waters were hurled along over broken pines, pointed rocks, and stakes of iron. Then, lifting up my eyes, I took in the vast extent of the forests, frowning on the brows of the mountains.

It was here first I felt myself seized by the genius of the place, and penetrated with veneration of its religious gloom; and, I believe, uttered many extravagant exclamations; but, such was the dashing of the wheels, and the rushing of the waters at the bottom of the forges, that what I said was luckily undistinguishable.

I was not yet, however, within the consecrated inclosure, and therefore not perfectly contented; so, leaving my fragment, I paced in silence up the path which led to the great portal. When we arrived before it, I rested a moment, and leaning against the stout oaken gate, which closed up the entrance to this unknown region, felt at my heart a certain awe, that brought to my mind the sacred terror of those, in ancient days, going to be admitted into the Eleusinian mysteries.

My guide gave two knocks; after a solemn pause, the gate was slowly opened, and all our horses having passed through it, was again carefully closed.

I now found myself in a narrow dell, surrounded on every side by peaks of the mountains, rising almost beyond my sight, and shelving downwards till their bases were hidden by the foam and spray of the water, over which hung a thousand withered and distorted trees. The rocks seemed crowding upon me, and, by their particular situation, threatened to obstruct every ray of light; but, notwithstanding the menacing appearance of the prospect,

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I still kept following my guide, up a craggy ascent, partly hewn through a rock, and bordered by the trunks of ancient fir-trees, which formed a fantastic barrier, till we came to a dreary and exposed promontory, impending directly over the dell.

The woods are here clouded with darkness, and the torrents, rushing with additional violence, are lost in the gloom of the caverns below; every object, as I looked downwards from my path, that hung midway between the base and the summit of the cliff, was horrid and woeful. The channel of the torrent sunk deep amidst frightful crags, and the pale willows and wreathed roots spreading over it, answered my ideas of those dismal abodes, where, according to the druidical mythology, the ghosts of conquered warriors were bound. I shivered whilst I was regarding these regions of desolation, and, quickly lifting up my eyes to vary the scene, I perceived a range of whitish cliffs, glistening with the light of the sun, to emerge from these melancholy forests.

On a fragment that projected over the chasm, and concealed for a moment its terrors, I saw a cross, on which was written VIA COELI. The cliffs being the heaven to which I now aspired, we deserted the edge of the precipice, and ascending, came to a retired nook of the rocks, in which several copious rills had worn irregular grottoes. Here we reposed an instant, and were enlivened with a few sunbeams, piercing the thickets and gilding the waters that bubbled from the rock, over which hung another cross, inscribed with this short sentence, which the situation rendered wonderfully pathetic, O SPES UNICA! the fervent exclamation of some wretch disgusted with the world, whose only consolation was found in this retirement.

We quitted this solitary cross to enter a thick forest of beech-trees, that screened in some measure the precipices on which they grew, catching, however, every instant terrifying glimpses of the torrent below. Streams gushed from every crevice in the cliffs, and falling over the mossy roots and branches of the beech, hastened to join the great torrent, athwart which I every now and then remarked certain tottering bridges, and sometimes could distinguish a Carthusian crossing over to his hermitage, that just peeped above the woody labyrinths on the opposite shore.

Whilst I was proceeding amongst the innumerable trunks of the beech trees, my guide pointed out to me a peak, rising above the others, which he called the Throne of Moses. If that prophet had received his revelations in this desert, no voice need have declared it holy ground, for every part of it is stamped with such a sublimity of character as would alone be sufficient to impress the idea.

Having left these woods behind, and crossing a bridge of many lofty arches, I shuddered once more at the impetuosity of the torrent; and, mounting still higher, came at length to a kind of platform before two cliffs, joined by an arch of rock, under which we were to pursue our road. Below we beheld again innumerable streams, turbulently precipitating themselves from the woods, and lashing the base of the mountains, mossed over with a dark sea-green.

In this deep hollow such mists and vapours prevailed as hindered my prying into its recesses; besides, such was the dampness of the air, that I hastened gladly from its neighbourhood, and passing under the second portal, beheld with pleasure the sunbeams gilding the Throne of Moses.

It was now about ten o'clock, and my guide assured me I should soon discover the convent. Upon this information I took new courage, and continued my route on the edge of the rocks, till we struck into another gloomy grove. After turning about it for some time, we entered again into the glare of daylight, and saw a green valley skirted by ridges of cliffs and sweeps of wood before us. Towards the farther end of this inclosure, on a gentle acclivity, rose the revered turrets of the Carthusians, which extend in a long line on the brow of the hill; beyond them a woody amphitheatre majestically presents itself, terminated by spires of rock and promontories lost amongst the clouds.

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The roar of the torrent was now but faintly distinguishable, and all the scenes of horror and confusion I had passed, were succeeded by a sacred and profound calm. I traversed the valley with a thousand sensations I despair of describing, and stood before the gate of the convent with as much awe as some novice or candidate, newly arrived, to solicit the holy retirement of the order.

As admittance is more readily granted to the English than to almost any other nation, it was not long before the gates opened, and whilst the porter ordered our horses to the stable, we entered a court watered by two fountains and built round with lofty edifices, characterized by a noble simplicity.

The interior portal, opening, discovered an arched aisle, extending till the perspective nearly met, along which windows, but scantily distributed between the pilasters, admitted a pale solemn light, just sufficient to distinguish the objects with a picturesque uncertainty. We had scarcely set our feet on the pavement when the monks began to issue from an arch, about half way down, and passing in a long succession from their chapel, bowed reverently with much humility and meekness, and dispersed in silence, leaving one of their body alone in the aisle.

The Father Coadjutor (for he only remained) advanced towards us with great courtesy, and welcomed us in a manner which gave me far more pleasure than all the frivolous salutations and affected greetings so common in the world beneath. After asking us a few indifferent questions, he called one of the lay brothers, who live in the convent under less severe restrictions than the fathers whom they serve, and ordering him to prepare our apartment, conducted us to a large square hall with casement windows, and, what was more comfortable, an enormous chimney, whose hospitable hearth blazed with a fire of dry aromatic fir, on each side of which were two doors that communicated with the neat little cells destined for our bedchambers.

Whilst he was placing us round the fire, a ceremony by no means unimportant in the cold climate of these upper regions, a bell rang which summoned him to prayers. After charging the lay brother to set before us the best fare their desert afforded, he retired, and left us at full liberty to examine our chambers.

The weather lowered, and the casements permitted very little light to enter the apartment: but on the other side it was amply enlivened by the gleams of the fire, that spread all over a certain comfortable air, which even sunshine but rarely diffuses. Whilst the showers descended with great violence, the lay brother and another of his companions were placing an oval table, very neatly carved and covered with the finest linen, in the middle of the hall; and, before we had examined a number of portraits which were hung in all the panels of the wainscot, they called us to a dinner widely different from what might have been expected in so dreary a situation. The best fish, the most exquisite fruits, and a variety of dishes, excellent without the assistance of meat, were served up with an order and arrangement that showed it was not the first time they had entertained in the noblest manner. But I was not more struck with the delicacy of the entertainment, than with the extreme cleanness and English-like neatness of the whole apartment and its furniture. A marble fountain, particularly, gave it a very agreeable aid, and the water that fell from it into a porphyry shell was remarkable for its clearness and purity. Our attendant friar was helping us to some Burgundy, which we pronounced of very respectable antiquity, when the Coadjutor returned, accompanied by two other fathers, the Secretary and Procurator, whom he presented to us. You would have been both charmed and surprised with the cheerful resignation that appeared in their countenances, and with the easy turn of their conversation.

The Coadjutor, though equally kind, was as yet more reserved: his countenance, however, spoke for him without the aid of words, and there was in his manner a mixture of dignity and humility, which could not fail to interest. There were moments when the recollection of some past event seemed to shade his countenance with a melancholy that rendered it still more affecting. I should suspect he formerly possessed a great share of natural vivacity (something of it being still, indeed, apparent in his more unguarded moments); but this spirit is almost entirely subdued by the penitence and mortification of the order.

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The secretary displayed a very considerable share of knowledge in the political state of Europe, furnished probably by the extensive correspondence these fathers preserve with the three hundred and sixty subordinate convents, dispersed throughout all those countries where the court of Rome still maintains its influence.

In the course of our conversation they asked me innumerable questions about England, where formerly, they said, many monasteries had belonged to their order; and principally that of W., which they had learnt to be now in my possession.

The Secretary, almost with tears in his eyes, beseeched me to revere these consecrated edifices, and to preserve their remains, for the sake of St. Hugo, their canonized Prior. I replied greatly to his satisfaction, and then declaimed so much in favour of Saint Bruno, and the holy prior of Witham, that the good fathers grew exceedingly delighted with the conversation, and made me promise to remain some days with them. I readily complied with their request, and, continuing in the same strain, that had so agreeably affected their ears, was soon presented with the works of Saint Bruno, whom I so zealously admired.

After we had sat extolling them, and talking upon much the same sort of subjects for about an hour, the Coadjutor proposed a walk amongst the cloisters and galleries, as the weather would not admit of any longer excursion. He leading the way, we ascended a flight of steps, which brought us to a gallery, on each side of which a vast number of pictures, representing the dependent convents, were ranged; for I was now in the capital of the order, where the General resides, and from whence he issues forth his commands to his numerous subjects; who depute the superiors of their respective convents, whether situated in the wilds of Calabria, the forests of Poland, or in the remotest districts of Portugal and Spain, to assist at the grand chapter, held annually under him, a week or two after Easter.

This reverend father Dom Biclét died about ten days before our arrival: a week ago they elected the Pere Robinét prior of the Carthusian convent at Paris in his room, and two fathers were now on their route to apprise him of their choice, and to salute him General of the Carthusians. During this interregnum the Coadjutor holds the first rank in the temporal, and the Grand Vicair in the spiritual, affairs of the order; both of which are very extensive.

If I may judge from the representations of the different convents, which adorn this gallery, there are many highly worthy of notice, for the singularity of their situations, and the wild beauties of the landscapes which surround them. The Venetian Chartreuse, placed in a woody island, and that of Rome, rising from amongst groups of majestic ruins, struck me as peculiarly pleasing. Views of the English monasteries hung formerly in such a gallery, but had been destroyed by fire, together with the old convent. The list only remains, with but a very few written particulars concerning them.

Having amused myself for some time with the pictures, and the descriptions the Coadjutor gave me of them, we quitted the gallery and entered a kind of chapel, in which were two altars with lamps burning before them, on each side of a lofty portal. This opened into a grand coved hall, adorned with historical paintings of St. Bruno's life, and the portraits of the Generals of the order, since the year of the great founder's death (1085) to the present time. Under these portraits are the stalls for the Superiors, who assist at the grand convocation. In front appears the General's throne; above, hangs a representation of the canonized Bruno, crowned with stars.

Were I, after walking along the dim cloisters, and passing through the antechapel, faintly illuminated by a solitary lamp, suddenly to enter this hall at midnight, when the convocation is assembled, and the synod of venerable fathers, all in solemn order, surrounding the successor of Bruno, it would be a long while, I believe, before I could recover from the surprise of so august a spectacle. It must indeed be a very imposing sight: the gravity they preserve on these occasions, their venerable age (for Superiors cannot be chosen young), and the figures of their deceased Generals, dimly discovered above, may surely be allowed to awe even an heretical spectator into a momentary respect for the order. For my own part, I must confess, that the hall, though divested of all this accompaniment, filled me with a veneration I scarcely knew how to account for; perhaps the portraits inspired it.

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They were all well executed, and mostly in attitudes of adoration. The form of Bruno was almost lost in the splendour of the stars which hovered over him. I could in some moments fancy myself capable of plunging into the horror of a desert, and foregoing all the vanities and delights of the world, to secure my memory so sublime a consecration.

The Coadjutor seemed charmed with the respect with which I looked round on these holy objects; and if the hour of vespers had not been drawing near, we should have spent more time in the contemplation of Bruno's miracles, portrayed on the lower panels of the hall. We left that room to enter a winding passage (lighted by windows in the roof), that brought us to a cloister six hundred feet in length, from which branched off two others, joining a fourth of the same most extraordinary dimensions. Vast ranges of slender pillars extend round the different courts of the edifice, many of which are thrown into gardens belonging to particular cells.

We entered one of them: its inhabitant received us with much civility, walked before us through a little corridor that looked on his garden, showed us his narrow dwelling, and, having obtained leave of the Coadjutor to speak, gave us his benediction, and beheld us depart with concern. Nature has given this poor monk very considerable talents for painting. He has drawn the portrait of the late General, in a manner that discovers great facility of execution; but he is not allowed to exercise his pencil on any other subject, lest he should be amused; and amusement in this severe order is a crime. He had so subdued, so mortified an appearance, that I was not sorry to hear the bell, which summoned the Coadjutor to prayers, and prevented my entering any more of the cells. We continued straying from cloister to cloister, and wandering along the winding passages and intricate galleries of this immense edifice, whilst the Coadjutor was assisting at vespers.

In every part of the structure reigned the most death-like calm: no sound reached my ears but the minute drops from off the eaves. I sat down in a niche of the cloister, and fell into a profound reverie, from which I was recalled by the return of our conductor; who, I believe, was almost tempted to imagine, from the cast of my countenance, that I was deliberating whether I should not remain with them for ever.

But I soon roused myself, and testified some impatience to see the great chapel, at which we at length arrived, after traversing another labyrinth of cloisters. The gallery immediately before its entrance appeared quite gay, in comparison with the others I had passed, and owes its cheerfulness to a large window (ornamented with slabs of polished marble), that admits the view of a lovely wood. Being neatly glazed, and free from paintings or Gothic ornaments, it allows a full blaze of light to dart on the chapel door; which is also adorned with marble, in a plain but noble style of architecture.

The father sacristan stood ready on the steps of the portal to grant us admittance; and, throwing open the valves, we entered the chapel and were struck by the justness of its proportions, the simple majesty of the arched roof, and the mild solemn light, equally diffused over every part of the edifice. No tawdry ornaments, no glaring pictures, disgraced the sanctity of the place. The high altar, standing distinct from the walls, which were hung with a rich velvet, was the only object on which many ornaments were lavished, and even there the elegance of the workmanship concealed the glare of the materials, which were silver, solid gold, and the most costly gems. It being Whit-Sunday, this altar was covered with statues of gold, shrines, and candelabra of the stateliest shape and most delicate execution. Four of the latter, of a gigantic size, were placed on the steps; which, together with part of the inlaid floor within the choir, were spread with beautiful carpets.

The illumination of so many tapers striking on the shrines, censers, and pillars of polished jasper, sustaining the canopy of the altar, produced a wonderful effect; and, as the rest of the chapel was visible only by the faint external light admitted from above, the splendour and dignity of the altar was enhanced by contrast. I retired a moment from it, and seating myself in one of the furthest stalls of the choir, looked towards it, and fancied it had risen like an exhalation.

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Here I remained several minutes breathing nothing but incense, and should not have quitted my station soon, had I not been apprehensive of disturbing the devotions of two aged fathers who had just entered, and were prostrating themselves before the steps of the altar. These venerable figures added greatly to the solemnity of the scene; which as the day declined increased every moment in splendour; for the sparkling of several lamps of chased silver that hung from the roofs, and the gleaming of nine huge tapers which I had not before noticed, began to be visible just as I left the chapel.

Passing through the sacristy, where lay several piles of rich embroidered vestments, purposely displayed for our inspection, we regained the cloister which led to our apartment, where the supper was ready prepared. We had scarcely finished it, when the Coadjutor, and the fathers who had accompanied us before, returned, and ranging themselves round the fire, resumed the conversation about St. Bruno.

Finding me very piously disposed by the wonders I had seen in the day to listen to things of a miraculous nature, they began to relate the inspirations they had received from him, and his mysterious apparitions. I was all attention, respect, and credulity. The old Secretary worked himself up to such a pitch of enthusiasm, that I am very much inclined to imagine he believed, in these moments, all the marvellous events he related. The Coadjutor being less violent in his pretensions to St. Bruno's modern miracles, contented himself with enumerating the noble works he had done in the days of his fathers, and in the old time before them.

It grew rather late before my kind hosts had finished their narrations, and I was not sorry, after all the exercise I had taken, to return to my cell, where everything invited to repose. I was charmed with the neatness and oddity of my little apartment; its cabin-like bed, oratory, and ebony crucifix; in short, everything it contained; not forgetting the aromatic odour of the pine, with which it was roofed, floored, and wainscoted. The night was luckily dark. Had the moon appeared, I could not have prevailed upon myself to have quitted her till very late; but, as it happened, I crept into my cabin, and was by whispering winds soon lulled asleep.

Eight o'clock struck next morning before I awoke; when, to my great sorrow, I found the peaks, which rose above the convent, veiled in vapours, and the rain descending with violence.

After we had breakfasted by the light of our fire (for the casements admitted but a very feeble gleam), I sat down to the works of St. Bruno; of all medleys the strangest. Allegories without end: a theologico-natural history of birds, beasts, and fishes: several chapters on paradise; the delights of solitude; the glory of Solomon's temple; the new Jerusalem; and numberless other wonderful subjects, full of enthusiasm and superstition.

Saint Bruno was certainly a mighty genius; I admire the motives which drew him to this desert; but perhaps before we come to that part of the story, you will like to know what preceded it. My Saint (for Bruno has succeeded Thomas of Canterbury) was of noble descent, and possessed considerable wealth. He was not less remarkable for the qualities of his mind, and his talents gained him the degree of Master of the great sciences in the University of Rheims; here he contracted a friendship with Odo, afterwards Urban the Second. Being always poetic, singular, and visionary, he soon grew disgusted with the world, and began early in life to sigh after retirement. His residence at Grenoble, where he was invited by Hugo, its bishop, determined him to the monastic state.

This venerable prelate imparted to him a vision in which he seemed to behold the desert and mountain beyond his city visible in the dead of night by the streaming of seven lucid stars that hung directly over them. Whilst he was ardently gazing at this wonder, a still voice was heard declaring it the future abode of Bruno by him to be consecrated as a retirement for holy men desirous of holding converse with their God. No shepherd's pipe was to be heard within these precincts; no huntsman's profane feet to tread these silent regions, which were to be dedicated solely to their Creator; no woman was to ascend this mountain, nor violate by her allurements the sacred repose of its inhabitants.

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Such were the first institutions of the order as the inspired Bishop of Grenoble delivered them to Bruno, who selecting a few persons that, like himself, contemned the splendours of the world and the charms of society, repaired with them to this spot; and, in the darkest parts of the forests which shade the most gloomy recesses of the mountains, founded the first convent of Carthusians, long since destroyed.

Several years passed away, whilst Bruno was employed in actions of the most exalted piety; and, the fame of his exemplary conduct reaching Rome (where his friend had been lately invested with the papal tiara), the whole conclave was desirous of seeing him, and entreated Urban to invite him to Rome. The request of Christ's vicegerent was not to be refused; and Bruno quitted his beloved solitude, leaving some of his disciples behind, who propagated his doctrines, and tended zealously the infant order.

The pomp of the Roman court soon disgusted the rigid Bruno, who had weaned himself entirely from worldly affections.

Being wholly intent on futurity, the bustle and tumults of a busy metropolis became so irksome that he supplicated Urban for leave to retire; and, having obtained it, left Rome, and immediately seeking the wilds of Calabria, there sequestered himself in a lonely hermitage, calmly expecting his last moments. Many are the miracles which he wrought and which his canonized bones have since effected: angels (it is said), hovered round him in his departing hour, and bore him on their wings to heaven. The different accounts of his translation are almost endless; and as they are all nearly in the same style, it will be needless to recite them.

I had scarcely finished taking extracts from the life and writings of St. Bruno when the dinner appeared, consisting of everything most delicate which a strict adherence to the rules of meagre could allow. The good fathers returned as usual with the dessert, and served up an admirable dish of miracles, well seasoned with the devil and prettily garnished with angels and moonbeams. {284}

Our conversation was interrupted, very agreeably, by the sudden intrusion of the sun, which, escaping from the clouds, shone in full splendour above the highest peak of the mountains, and the vapours fleeing by degrees discovered the woods in all the freshness of their verdure. The pleasure I received from seeing this new creation rising to view was very lively, and, as the fathers assured me the humidity of their walks did not often continue longer than the showers, I left my hall.

Crossing the court, I hastened out of the gates, and running swiftly along a winding path on the side of the meadow, bordered by the forests, enjoyed the charms of the prospect, inhaled the perfume of the woodlands, and now turning towards the summits of the precipices that encircled this sacred inclosure, admired the glowing colours they borrowed from the sun, contrasted by the dark hues of the forest. Now, casting my eyes below, I suffered them to roam from valley to valley, and from one stream (beset with tall pines and tufted beech trees) to another. The purity of the air in these exalted regions, and the lightness of my own spirits, almost seized me with the idea of treading in that element.

Not content with the distant beauties of the hanging rocks and falling waters, I still kept running wildly along, with an eagerness and rapidity that, to a sober spectator, would have given me the appearance of one possessed, and with reason, for I was affected with the scene to a degree I despair of expressing.

Whilst I was continuing my course, pursued by a thousand strange ideas, a father, who was returning from some distant hermitage, stopped my career, and made signs for me to repose myself on a bench erected under a neighbouring shed; and, perceiving my agitation and disordered looks, fancied, I believe, that one of the bears that lurk near the snows of the mountains had alarmed me by his sudden appearance.

The good old man, expressing by his gestures that he wished me to recover myself in quiet on the bench, hastened, with as much alacrity as his age permitted, to a cottage adjoining the shed, and returning in a few

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moments, presented me some water in a wooden bowl, into which he let fall several drops of an elixir composed of innumerable herbs, and having performed this deed of charity, signified to me by a look, in which benevolence, compassion, and perhaps some little remains of curiosity were strongly painted, how sorry he was to be restrained by his vow of silence from inquiring into the cause of my agitation, and giving me farther assistance. I answered also by signs, on purpose to carry on the adventure, and suffered him to depart with all his conjectures unsatisfied.

No sooner had I lost sight of the benevolent hermit, than I started up, and pursued my path with my former agility, till I came to the edge of a woody dell, that divided the meadow on which I was running from the opposite promontory. Here I paused, and looking up at the cliffs, now but faintly illumined by the sun, which had been some time sinking on our narrow horizon, reflected that it would be madness to bewilder myself, at so late an hour, in the mazes of the forest. Being thus determined, I abandoned with regret the idea of penetrating into the lovely region before me, and contented myself for some moments with marking the pale tints of the evening gradually overspreading the cliffs, so lately flushed with the gleams of the setting sun.

But my eyes were soon diverted from contemplating these objects by a red light streaming over the northern sky, which attracted my notice, as I sat on the brow of a sloping hill, looking down a steep hollow vale, surrounded by the forests, above which rose majestically the varied peaks and promontories of the mountains.

The upland lawns, which hang at immense heights above the vale, next caught my attention. I was gazing alternately at them and the valley, when a long succession of light misty clouds, of strange fantastic shapes, issuing from a narrow gully between the rocks, passed on, like a solemn procession, over the hollow dale, midway between the stream that watered it below and the summits of the cliffs on high.

The tranquillity of the region the verdure, of the lawn, environed by girdles of flourishing wood, and the lowing of the distant herds, filled me with the most pleasing sensations. But when I lifted up my eyes to the towering cliffs, and beheld the northern sky streaming with ruddy light, and the long succession of misty forms hovering over the space beneath, they became sublime and awful. The dews which began to descend, and the vapours which were rising from every dell, reminded me of the lateness of the hour; and it was with great reluctance that I turned from the scene which had so long engaged my contemplation, and traversed slowly and silently the solitary meadows, over which I had hurried with such eagerness an hour ago.

Hill appeared after hill, and hillock succeeded hillock, which I had passed unnoticed before. Sometimes I imagined myself following a different path from that which had brought me to the edge of the deep valley; another moment, descending into the hollows between the hillocks that concealed the distant prospects from my sight, I fancied I had entirely mistaken my route, and expected every moment to be lost amongst the rude brakes and tangled thickets that skirted the eminences around.

As the darkness increased, my situation became still more and more forlorn. I had almost abandoned the idea of reaching the convent; and whenever I gained any swelling ground, looked above, below, and on every side of me, in hopes of discovering some glimmering lamp which might indicate a hermitage, whose charitable possessor, I flattered myself, would direct me to the monastery.

At length, after a tedious wandering along the hills, I found myself, unexpectedly, under the convent walls; and, as I was looking for the gate, the attendant lay brothers came out with lights, in order to search for me. Scarcely had I joined them when the Coadjutor and the Secretary came forward, with the kindest anxiety expressed their uneasiness at my long absence, and conducted me to my apartment, where Mr. — was waiting, with no small degree of impatience; but I found not a word had been mentioned of my adventure with the hermit; so that, I believe, he strictly kept his vow till the day when the Carthusians are allowed to speak, and which happened after my departure.

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We had hardly supped before the gates of the convent were shut, a circumstance which disconcerted me not a little, as the full moon gleamed through the casements, and the stars, sparkling above the forests of pines, invited me to leave my apartment again, and to give myself up entirely to the spectacle they offered.

The Coadjutor, perceiving that I was often looking earnestly through the windows, guessed my wishes, and calling a lay brother, ordered him to open the gates, and wait at them till my return. It was not long before I took advantage of this permission, and escaping from the courts and cloisters of the monastery, all hushed in death-like stillness, ascended a green knoll, which several ancient pines strongly marked with their shadows: there, leaning against one of their trunks, I lifted up my eyes to the awful barrier of surrounding mountains, discovered by the trembling silver light of the moon shooting directly on the woods which fringed their acclivities.

The lawns, the vast woods, the steep descents, the precipices, the torrents, lay all extended beneath, softened by a pale bluish haze, that alleviated, in some measure, the stern prospect of the rocky promontories above, wrapped in dark shadows. The sky was of the deepest azure; innumerable stars were distinguished with unusual clearness from this elevation, many of which twinkled behind the fir-trees edging the promontories. White, grey, and darkish clouds came marching towards the moon, that shone full against a range of cliffs, which lift themselves far above the others. The hoarse murmur of the torrent, throwing itself from the distant wildernesses into the gloomy vales, was mingled with the blast that blew from the mountains. It increased. The forests began to wave, black clouds rose from the north, and, as they fled along, approached the moon, whose light they shortly extinguished. A moment of darkness succeeded; the gust was chill and melancholy; it swept along the desert, and then subsiding, the vapours began to pass away, and the moon returned the grandeur of the scene was renewed, and its imposing solemnity was increased by her presence. Inspiration was in every wind.

I followed some impulse which drove me to the summit of the mountains before me; and there, casting a look on the whole extent of wild woods and romantic precipices, thought of the days of St. Bruno. I eagerly contemplated every rock that formerly might have met his eyes; drank of the spring which tradition says he was wont to drink of; and ran to every pine whose withered appearance bespoke a remote antiquity, and beneath which, perhaps, the saint had reposed himself, when worn with vigils, or possessed with the sacred spirit of his institutions.

It was midnight: the convent bell tolled; for the most solemn hour of prayer was arrived. I cannot, nor would I, attempt to unfold to you, in prose, half the strange things of which I thought, and which I seemed to see, during this wild excursion. However, I owe to it the poetical humour in which I composed the following lines, written immediately on my return, in the album of the fathers, during the stillest watch of the night:

ODE.

To orisons, the midnight bell
Had toll'd each silent inmate from his cell;
The hour was come to muse or pray,
Or work mysterious rites that shun the day:
My steps some whis'pring influence led,
Up to yon pine-clad mountain's gloomy head:
Hollow and deep the gust did blow,
And torrents dash'd into the vales below.
At length the toilsome height attain'd,
Quick fled the moon, and sudden stillness reign'd.
As fearful turn'd my searching eye,

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Glanc'd near a shadowy form, and fled by;
Anon, before me full it stood:
A saintly figure, pale, in pensive mood.
Damp horror thrill'd me till he spoke,
And accents faint the charm bound silence broke:
Long, trav'ler! ere this region near,
Say, did not whisp'rings strange arrest thine ear?
My summons 'twas to bid thee come,
Where sole the friend of Nature loves to roam.
Ages long past, this drear abode
To solitude I sanctified, and God:
'Twas here, by love of Wisdom brought,
Her truest lore, Self-knowledge, first I sought;
Devoted here my worldly wealth,
To win my chosen sons immortal health.
Midst these dun woods, and mountains steep,
Midst the wild horrors of yon desert deep,
Midst yawning caverns, wat'ry dells,
Midst long, sequestered aisles, and peaceful cells,
No passions fell distract the mind,
To Nature, Silence, and Herself consign'd.
In these still mansions who shall bide,
'Tis mine, with Heaven's appointment, to decide;
But, hither, I invite not all:
Some want the will to come, and more the call;
But all, mark well my parting voice!
Led, or by chance, necessity, or choice
(Ah! with our Genius dread to sport),
Sage lessons here may learn of high import.
Know! Silence is the nurse of Truth;
Know! Temperance long retards the flight of Youth
Learn here, how penitence and pray'r
Man's fallen race for happier worlds prepare;
Learn mild demeanour, void of art,
And bear, amidst the world, the hermit's heart;
Fix, trav'ler! deep this heaven-taught lore:
Know Bruno brings it, and returns no more.
(Half sighed, half smiled his long farewell),
He turn'd, and vanish'd in the bright'ning dell.

My imagination was too much disturbed, and my spirits far too active, to allow me any rest for some time, and I had not long been quieted by sleep, when I was suddenly awakened by a furious blast, that drove open my casement, and let in the roar of the tempest, for the night was troubled. In the intervals of the storm, in those moments when the winds seemed to pause, the faint sounds of the choir stole upon my ear; but were swallowed up the next instant by the redoubled fury of the gust, which was still increased by the roar of the waters.

I started from my bed, closed the casement, and composed myself as well as I was able; but no sooner had the sunbeams entered my window, than I arose, and gladly leaving my cell, hastened to the same knoll where I had stood the night before. The storm was dissipated, and the pure morning air delightfully refreshing; every tree,

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every shrub, glistened with dew. A gentle wind breathed upon the woods, and waved the fir-trees on the cliffs, which, free from clouds, rose distinctly into the clear blue sky. I strayed from the knoll into the valley between the steeps of wood and the turrets of the convent, and passed the different buildings, destined for the manufacture of the articles necessary to the fathers; for nothing is worn or used within this inclosure which comes from the profane world.

Traversing the meadows and a succession of little dells, where I was so lately bewildered, I came to a bridge thrown over the torrent, which I crossed; and here followed a slight path that brought me to an eminence, covered with a hanging wood of beech-trees feathered to the ground, from whence I looked down the narrow pass towards Grenoble. Perceiving a smoke to arise from the groves which nodded over the eminence, I climbed up a rocky steep, and, after struggling through a thicket of shrubs, entered a smooth, sloping lawn, framed in by woody precipices; at one extremity of which I discovered the cottage, whose smoke had directed me to this sequestered spot; and, at the other, a numerous group of cattle, lying under the shade of some beech-trees, whilst several friars, with long beards and russet garments, were employed in milking them.

The luxuriant foliage of the woods, clinging round the steeps that skirted the lawn; its gay, sunny exposition; the groups of sleek, dappled cows, and the odd employment of the friars, so little consonant with their venerable beards, formed a picturesque and certainly very singular spectacle. I, who had been accustomed to behold milk-maids singing blithe, and tripping lightly along with their pails, was not a little surprised at the silent gravity with which these figures shifted their trivets from cow to cow; and it was curious to see with what adroitness they performed their functions, managing their long beards with a facility and cleanliness equally admirable.

I watched all their movements for some time, concealed by the trees, before I made myself visible; but no sooner did I appear on the lawn, than one of the friars quitted his trivet, very methodically set down his pail, and coming towards me with an open, smiling countenance, desired me to refresh myself with some bread and milk. A second, observing what was going forward, was resolved not to be exceeded in an hospitable act, and, quitting his pail too, hastened into the woods whence he returned in a few minutes with some strawberries, very neatly enveloped in fresh leaves. These hospitable, milking fathers, next invited me to the cottage, whither I declined going, as I preferred the shade of the beeches; so, throwing myself on the dry aromatic herbage, I enjoyed the pastoral character of the scene with all possible glee.

Not a cloud darkened the heavens; every object smiled; innumerable gaudy flies glanced in the sunbeams that played in a clear spring by the cottage; I saw with pleasure the sultry glow of the distant cliffs and forests, whilst indolently reclined in the shade, listening to the summer hum; one hour passed after another neglected away, during my repose in this most delightful of valleys. The cattle were all slunk into the recesses of the wood, and were drinking at the streams which flow along their shades, before I could prevail on myself to quit the turf and the beech trees. Never shall I cease regretting the peaceful moments I spent in Valombré, as never perhaps, were I even to return to it, may so many circumstances unite to render it pleasing.

When I returned unwillingly to the convent, the only topic on which I could converse was the charms of Valombré; but notwithstanding the indifference with which I now regarded the prospects that surrounded the monastery, I could not disdain an offer made by one of the friars, of conducting me to the summit of the highest peak in the desert.

Pretty late in the afternoon I set out with my guide, and, following his steps through many forests of pine, and wild apertures among them, strewn with fragments, arrived at a chapel, built on a mossy rock, and dedicated to St. Bruno.

Having once more drunk of the spring that issues from the rock on which this edifice is raised, I moved forward, keeping my eyes fixed on a lofty green mountain, whence rises a vast cliff, spiring up to a surprising elevation;

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and which (owing to the sun's reflection on a transparent mist hovering around it) was tinged with a pale visionary light. This object was the goal to which I aspired; and redoubling my activity, I made the best of my way over rude ledges of rocks, and crumbled fragments of the mountain interspersed with firs, till I came to the green steeps I had surveyed at a distance.

These I ascended with some difficulty, and, leaving a few scattered beech-trees behind, in full leaf, shortly bid adieu to summer, and entered the regions of spring; for, as I approached that part of the mountain next the summit, the trees, which I found there rooted in the crevices, were but just beginning to unfold their leaves, and every spot of the greensward was covered with cowslips and violets.

After taking a few moments' repose, my guide prepared to clamber amongst the rocks, and I followed him with as much alertness as I was able, till laying hold of the trunk of a withered pine, we sprang upon a small level space, where I seated myself, and beheld far beneath me the vast desert and dreary solitudes, amongst which appeared, thinly scattered, the green meadows and hanging lawns. The eye next overlooking the barrier of mountains, ranged through immense tracts of distant countries; the plains where Lyons is situated; the woodlands and lakes of Savoy; amongst which that of Bourget was near enough to discover its beauties, all glowing with the warm haze of the setting sun.

My situation was too dizzy to allow a long survey; so turning my eyes from the terrific precipice, I gladly beheld an opening in the rocks, through which we passed into a little irregular glen of the smoothest greensward, closed in on one side by the great peak, and on the others by a ridge of sharp pinnacles, which crown the range of white cliffs I had so much admired the night before, when brightened by the moon.

The singular situation of this romantic spot invited me to remain in it till the sun was about to sink on the horizon: during which time I visited every little cave delved in the ridges of rock, and gathered large sprigs of the mezereon and rhododendron in full bloom, which, with a surprising variety of other plants, carpeted this lovely glen. A luxuriant vegetation,

That on the green turf suck'd the honey'd showers,
And purpled all the ground with vernal flow'rs.

My guide, perceiving I was ready to mount still higher, told me it would be in vain, as the beds of snow that lie eternally in some fissures of the mountain, must necessarily impede my progress; but, finding I was very unwilling to abandon the enterprise, he showed me a few notches in the peak, by which we might ascend, though not without danger. This prospect rather abated my courage, and the wind rising, drove several thick clouds round the bottom of the peak, which increasing every minute, shortly screened the green mountain and all the forest from our sight. A sea of vapours soon undulated beneath my feet, and lightning began to flash from a dark angry cloud, that hung over the valleys, and deluged them with storms, whilst I was securely standing under the clear expanse of ether.

But the hour did not admit of my remaining long in this proud station; so descending, I was soon obliged to pass through the vapours, and, carefully following my guide (for a false step might have caused my destruction), wound amongst the declivities, till we left the peak behind, and just as we reached the green mountain, which was moistened with the late storm, the clouds fled and the evening recovered its serenity.

Leaving the chapel of St. Bruno on the right, we entered the woods, and soon emerged from them into a large pasture, under the grand amphitheatre of mountains, having a gentle ascent before us, beyond which appeared the

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neat blue roofs and glittering spires of the convent, where we arrived as the moon was beginning to assume her empire.

I need not say I rested well after the interesting fatigues of the day. The next morning, early, I quitted my kind hosts with great reluctance. The Coadjutor and two other fathers accompanied me to the outward gate, and there within the solemn circle of the desert bestowed on me their benediction.

It seemed indeed to come from their hearts, nor would they leave me till I was a hundred paces from the convent; and then, laying their hands on their breasts, declared that if ever I was disgusted with the world, here was an asylum.

I was in a melancholy mood when I traced back all the windings of my road, and when I found myself beyond the last gate, in the midst of the wide world again, it increased.

We returned to Les Echelles; from thence to Chamberry, and, instead of going through Aix, passed by Amecy; but nothing in all the route engaged my attention, nor had I any pleasing sensations till I beheld the glassy lake of Geneva, and its lovely environs.

I rejoiced then because I knew of a retirement on its banks where I could sit and think of Valombré.

Footnotes:

{110} Hills in the neighbourhood of Quang–Tong

{127} The Peries, inhabitants of Ginnistan, live upon perfumes, etc., etc. See Richardson's Dissertations.

{133} Thisbe, a favourite greyhound torn to pieces by a mad dog.

{140} See the description of the Grande Chartreuse.

{156} The conduct of the emperor, since the death of his mother, seems to be accomplishing this prediction apace.

{170a} It is reasonably conjectured that the sea formerly washed the walls of Padua.

{170b} T. Livius, L. i., c. i.

{170c} Lib. v., c. iv., p. 5.

{171} Called Roscani in Venetian, and reduced to ashes for the glass manufactory at Murano.

{182} A nephew of Bertoni, and worthy of his uncle.

{214} Mentioned by Dante in his Purgatorio.

{240} Mem. pour la Vie de Petrarque, vol. i., p. 439.

{284} Angela are frequently represented, in legendary tales, as riding on the beams of the moon.