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A WINTER JOURNEY.

"So we are really to start to-morrow?—will it come true, do you think?" said my sister to me; and I answered her by repeating the question, for we had determined upon the journey so long, and had postponed it so often, that it was hard to believe in it now. We were going to Florence, as we told everybody; but I rather think we were all young enough to be going to that impossible country, which is always somewhere else than where we happen to be, and which, after all, is most certainly to be reached in a fortunate summer morning's dream. However, we did not convey our superlative expectations to each other, but spoke like sober British people, and pretended that we expected only to see pictures and cathedrals, like the rest of the world, leaving all the vaguer glories without expression. However, we were neither habitual tourists nor rich people, and it took us no small trouble to get fairly underweigh, which was the event of the mutual question which passed between us two women as we sat over a newly-lighted fire in a bedroom of a hotel at London Bridge, a little excited and a little anxious, resting for the first time that day, and having a little mutual confidence over our cup of tea.

We were anxious, and not without reason, for we were a whole household bent upon foreign travel, with little children whose capabilities of bearing fatigue were quite untried; and the health of the head of the house was somewhat broken; and we were not rich, so that it was necessary for somebody to keep one wakeful eye always upon the expenses, whatever else of more exciting interest might intervene. Our party consisted of a husband and wife, two children, an English nursemaid, and the husband's sister, I myself, who am no longer a young lady, though I am an unmarried woman. My brother was brought up to be an architect, and had begun to do very well in his profession when my father died. My father had been a builder in extensive business, and died, as busy men do so often, just at the moment when his business wanted him most. We were all sisters but Harry, all married but myself, and our little fortunes were in the utmost peril. Harry said immediately that there was but one course for him to take—he relinquished his own profession, though at the cost not only of his own likings and his own pride, but of that progress and advancement then open to him which a professional man finds it so hard to regain, and went heroically, the very day after the funeral, through the noisy building-yard to my father's old office. I am not quite sure even that my sister-in-law quite approved of this sacrifice, or that he had the support from her which would have helped him on, poor fellow; and he had not been brought up to business, and was tormented with a divided heart, discontent with the occupation he was compelled to, and eagerness to return to his own proper path. Even the sight of other people who had not started half so well, nor were nearly so able as himself, getting on before him, and being intrusted with works which were quite above them, while he was cribbed up in that builder's office, fretted and vexed his spirit within him. He persevered about three years, then, disgusted and unsuccessful, sold the business, and then paid over to us all the sums my father had left us, which it had been impossible to realise before. When our old home was broken up, I had gone to live with Harry. Alice was an old old friend of mine. I knew she and I could get on together, and I was determined that no brother-in-law should have the chance of frowning me away. I remember that night after they had all gone away, Harry came in very tired and pale. He put down a book on the table before Alice, and explained it all to her how their own money matters stood. "Now," said he, jumping up, "I must have a new start. We must put something between us and this business, which

has been the death of us. Pack up the little ones in a basket, and let's be off to Italy for a year."

I looked up in surprise, thinking it a joke; but Alice was neither surprised nor joking. I saw in a moment that they had settled upon it before. That was quite six months before the time when my sister and I sat together over the bedroom fire at London Bridge, wondering whether we really positively should start on the next day.

Of course we missed the early train next morning. It was not nurse's fault, for little Johnnie and Mary stood virtuously ready, with little red-and-blue faces just appearing out of a mass of wrappings, full twenty minutes before the hour. It was not my fault; I was stirring ever so long before. It was not Alice's fault, nor Harry's fault; but the conclusion was we lost the Folkestone train, and had to content ourselves with the down one half an hour later, into which we all managed to scramble a half-minute before it started. The treacherous waves of the Channel looked quiet that day. Quiet and clear into the grey winter sky rose the cliffs and the castle, brown and grey and dull white in a sober harmony of monotones. We made mutual congratulations all round: no fear of sea-sickness this day at least. Oh bootless boast! There was no storm, not the very least in the world; one had not the sad satisfaction of believing in a possibility of going to the bottom presently, and being relieved of one's misery. It was a famous passage; but only to see the determined melancholy of that poor lady with the veil over her face, whose eyes are fixed upon her footstool as if her life depended on it! or the spasmodic energy of that other, who runs her little girl about the deck, and declares with her last breath that motion and air are salvation! Let us not speak of these distresses; only let me beg everybody to put no dependence on a calm day—no faith in the still ripple with which that big traitor woos his victims from the track. The Channel is inscrutable.

We slept that night in Paris, and here made a halt of two days. Neither Alice nor myself had ever been in Paris before. What could we see in two days? I am afraid we saw nothing but that outside aspect which *habitués* have ceased to notice, but which must always strike strangers. Leaving our hotel, we came at once in sight of the Tuileries, with all its recollections of splendour and of horror—where the Grand Monarque holds court for ever—where Marie Antoinette continually erects her brave white face; and one can always see that poor beautiful head carried on the spear point past those princely windows. One cannot tell what tragedies may still lurk in the Imperial romance which holds present possession of these walls; but I confess my first thought, with a shiver, was of the Princess Lamballe and her friend-mistress looking out upon the mob in that splendid square. Such squares! One after another spread abroad with palaces for walls, and such size, and breadth, and conscious superiority to all limitations about them, as somewhat startles an inexperienced insular eye. Despotism is unquestionably grander to look at than that form of government which includes Boards of Works and Marylebone Vestries. Suppose a palace, half a mile long, drawn out in magnificent quadrangles down one side of Regent Street, turning a long line of windows and archways to the street, and toppling over half-a-dozen houses here and there whenever it is minded to thrust forth a new arm, or dislikes its neighbours, or finds their presence interfere with the clear and rigid line in which its royal taste delights. This imperial and arbitrary grandeur has, however, its other side. The dirtiest cab, the poorest hack, nay, very omnibuses, come and go unquestioned and unhesitating in a dozen different and eccentric lines of road through those same squares, penetrating through sentinelled gateways, and lumbering their heavy way within a hundred yards and in full sight of the canopied door by which the imperial visitors find admittance to the sovereign's presence; and all day and all night long the palace listens to the common din of common Parisian life and labour, and shelters under its shadow the honest *épicier*,

that favourite of fiction; and Mademoiselle, amongst her gloves and embroideries, as neat, as piquant, and as attractive, as she who had the luck to furnish Sterne with gloves and a paragraph. This mixture of the arbitrary and familiar is somewhat amazing to an unaccustomed stranger. If I were to philosophise, I should be inclined to say with humility that this was inseparable from a despotic and irresponsible power. The father of his people, who kindly takes all the management of all their concerns, while he snubs the inquisitive elder branches, must pet the simpler portion of his family. He loves to live among them; he delights in the sight and sound of all their activity; he does not withdraw himself into the haughty seclusion of parks and woods like a constitutional majesty. Yes, your Emperor is the true efflorescence and expression of your universal popular opinion and rule of everybody. The one man who can do it, and the everybody who is nobody, always side together and support each other against that lot of people who think they can do it, who represent the country in the eyes of the world in everything but government, and who are the nation, so far as influence and judgment goes. This is my opinion, in spite of the barricades and the Red Republicans. I am a woman, and, consequently, superior to argument. A democracy and a despotism are as near as possible convertible terms; in proof of which, dear friends, I offer you the Tuileries, which you can see any day, as the London rioter saw those bricks and that oven which proved Jack Cade to be Mortimer, and I hope you will be equally satisfied with the proof.

I am obliged to admit that we did not even attempt to enter the Louvre. There was certainly very little time; but we went to Notre Dame and the Sainte Chapelle, which were more immediately interesting to Harry. I suppose everybody knows, though I did not, that Notre Dame is the heart of the *Ile de Paris*, in the middle of the Seine, an insulated point, crested and bristling with spires and pinnacles. In the centre of this there rises up to heaven, with all its arches and pillars and clustered floriation, one of those noblest works of human skill, which, for my part, I rather reckon with the everlasting rocks and mountains than with the visible productions of men. My brother is rather elaborate in the descriptions which he makes to our uninstructed and feminine understandings. I ought to know how much of a building belongs to one period and how much to another, and to rejoice in discovering where one generation of labourers broke off, and another entered into their labours. But I am inclined to resent sometimes this picking to pieces of a perfection. My theory is that it was never made—that the thing was born, or grew with a spontaneous and indescribable progression. Of course there were throngs of scaffolds, and workmen clustering on like bees on every pinnacle as it rose; but does any one suppose *they* made it, these mere artificers in wood and stone? There is a sort of refinement of barbarism in that piece of antiquarian solemnity, which I have heard of, of numbering and preserving the stones of a fine old church, forsooth, to put it together as if it had been a chair or a bedstead! The life of the old ages sprang from its native soil by natural impulse into these living tabernacles. The life of our age finds another development. Let us be content. I am quite willing that every stone should be numbered, and every course of masonry traced in the churches that people build now.

But Our Lady has wonderful habitations, it must be admitted. Where she sits there with her divided river on each side of her, and half the laundresses of Paris busy on the brink rustling their wet linen in the cold Seine, though it is January, she has seen the strangest fortunes in her day. Even now pillar and wall inside are tawdry with the remaining decorations for the last princely baptism; but within, the place looks forlorn and cold, heavy with incense, and soiled with use, yet not inhabitable. Perhaps all foreign churches are somewhat the same to English eyes. I will not say quite so much as that, but I certainly thought so in Notre Dame.

At the end of a long, broad, noble avenue of trees, the Place de la Concorde separates the gardens of the Tuileries from the Champs Elysées, which is simply another very fine avenue, with lines of trees on either side, and great houses retired within long withdrawing gardens beyond. It is something to see the Place de la Concorde at night. The extent is so great, and the lamps so many that they seem to be placed at two or three different levels, and dazzle the spectator like an illumination. Then there are the carriage-lamps (or cab-lamps, which are quite as good at a distance), twinkling along the different lines of road which intersect it, and looking like wandering couples of lights which have been seized with the fancy of promenading. Few people about, the darkness of a winterly night lying heavy upon the Tuileries gardens on one side, and the Champs Elysées on the other; very little around to be heard anywhere, and silence gradually falling even upon the Rue Rivoli. This great *Place*, in possession of its lights, is exceedingly imposing. Then the long colonnades of the Rue Rivoli itself, with a lamp at every arch, a profusion and waste of light spreading its brightness on the night air with nobody to see it, which, I presume, if the *épiciers* dared form themselves into vestries and deliver their opinion upon public economy, would not be so abundant and prodigal. As for the daylight streets, with their gay and noisy crowds—the artificiality quite beyond anything known to us, yet quaintly mingled with a homeliness equally foreign to the British atmosphere—everybody has described them. Master Johnnie made his own comment on the scene as he marched through the streets shouting, "Soldier! soldier!" at the top of his small voice, that being a development of humanity in which Johnnie particularly delights:—a true description, and a more simple one, could not be given—it is soldier, soldier everywhere—red-legged soldiers, Zouaves, fierce, picturesque, and with a look of Orientalism more real than one could have supposed; blue soldiers, grey soldiers, gendarmes in cocked-hats gloriously superior to the gentlemen in blue who comforted the heart of Frederika Bremer. Imagine Policeman X in a cocked-hat and mustaches!—or heroes like these condescending to flirtation in an area; or lost children and unprotected females clinging to the war-like skirts of such protectors of the peace! For I rather think our lively neighbours have no comprehension of defence or protection which has not a military and aggressive air. Honour to Policeman X!—he is an Anglo-Saxon ideal, though he does not know it; and Master Johnnie delivers a true judgment when he shouts, "Soldier! soldier!" in acknowledgment of the cocked-hats of the gendarmes.

I confess I found the Palais Royal very attractive; the shop windows in that paradise of nicknacks were full of ornaments made of the new metal aluminium, which the scientific people declare with triumph to look nearly as well as pewter, and to be rather dearer than silver. It was pretty enough in the said shop windows to tempt my sister and I a little; but our French is, or was, to speak genteelly, *limited*, and Harry would lend himself to no extravagances. I almost think there was the least morsel of a quarrel on the subject; but I have long ago given up in disgust any interference with the quarrels of married people. Just at the very moment when the struggle gets interesting, when one has taken one's side, and gets excited by the conflict, the combatants suddenly appear all smiles and mutual satisfaction; one or the other has happened to touch the harmonising string, and the affair is over. I say it may be very good fun for themselves, but it is excessively disgusting to the spectator, who had made up his or her mind for a battle-royal, and suddenly finds the ground taken from beneath his feet, and the two dear people before him totally unconscious of having been at daggers-drawn half an hour ago; so I have given up all part in quarrels matrimonial. We went back to our hotel accordingly, a little silent and sulky, to dine at a *table-d'hôte* where there was nobody but dreary young Englishmen and wandering Yankees,

exchanging dull criticisms upon the theatres, and confidences as to where they are going. Everybody knows the glib voice with a little lisp in it which is going on to Rome next week, and after that to Naples, and has thoughts of the East, and thinks —"Yes, it will be very nice," with a modest deprecation of its own enjoyment. Englishman and respectable Frenchman in an *enveloppe Anglaise* are not more amusing at a *table-d'hôte* than they would be at an ordinary dinner-party. It is a fashion now, I suppose, to look impenetrable, immovable, self-contained, like Napoleon the Third amongst a certain class of his subjects; but they are not half so agreeable, these solemn men behind their mustaches, as the old lively gesticulating Frenchman of former times.

Next day we went on to Lyons, haply frightening other passengers out of our carriage at the very sight of our babies. In a long day's journey by express train one does not see very much of a country. Here and there a picturesque French town, throwing up its two or three grey spires upon the sky—here a broad placid river of a pale ashy green, which tells of chalk in the soil—and anon brown hill-sides bristling with hosts of low poles all of a length, and planted in regular rows up and up almost to the sunny summit of the slope. Alas for one's old childish idea of luxuriance and graceful overgrowth—of seeing the sky through big transparent vine-leaves, and looking up overhead at clustering branches of those grapes which make the wine of the poets. These rigid little sticks are the bones of the vineyards which grow the wines of Burgundy—these brown hills stuck with all those pine-points are the *coté d'or* —the golden side—the richest slopes of France. One gets tired of seeing them glide away in their bristling monotony in long stretches between us and the sky; and it is not easy to imagine anything picturesque or luxuriant in the growth of vines which lean upon props no taller than those we use for our carnations. Trade, summary leveller! has done it all. This vine, the noblest of parasites, might have festooned the trees, and made alleys of verdure over all those hills, but for the practical people. It is done in some places "with much advantage to the landscape, but great harm to the liquor," is the melancholy admission which bursts from the sober soul of *Murray;* and, accordingly, the *coté d'or*, like the hills of the Rhine, thrusts into the air its millions of naked sticks, some four feet high, nothing half so dignified or imposing as the hop-poles of Kent; and mile after mile, and hill after hill, the winterly sky hangs over them till they glide away into streaks of confused outline, and are lost in the night.

A cold night, nearly ten o'clock—a cold wind blowing about the gaunt stone passages and pens of the railway station, especially here, where they have turned us in like a parcel of sheep to wait for our luggage; both the children preternaturally wide awake, as children always are when awoke at untimeous hours; and my sister in the highest degree of fidget as to which side the draughts are on, and all the possibilities of taking cold. Harry comes back to us with a blank face—there is no *bagage!* We got no ticket for it at Paris, where they shut us all up in a waiting-room till the train was ready, and drove all thoughts of luggage out of our heads. What are we to do? If Alice would only let the draughts alone for five minutes, and suffer the children to take cold in peace, if they must take cold! Alas! there is nothing for it but a telegraphic message, a day's delay, and a night of discomfort. "Without even the children's night-things!" cried Alice, with a shiver and half sob of despair, while my brother made his way to the half-closed telegraph office, not in the best humour in the world; and for once unable to conclude, as men and heads of families love to do, that it was somebody's fault. Then we womankind, with our bundle of children, came out of that luckless *Bureau de Bagages* to the open air, where all the omnibuses and all the cabs were driving away, while we stood dolefully looking at them, and wondering whether Harry was lost, or apprehended, or had disappeared

with the boxes. The cold wind blew in our faces out of the darkness, sighing over the strange black unseen town. Oh that delightful French system, which takes care of everybody's affairs, and manages all our business for us! Then I was sent off to look for my brother, and found him, with the blackest of British faces, paying, I think, seventeen francs for his telegram. By this time not a conveyance was visible anywhere; everything had driven off. Harry, with the boldness of despair, made a rush into the darkness, and arrested a passing *voiture*, the benevolent passenger in which consented to carry our forlorn party to the hotel, and so we reached our discomfortable rest at last—not a *sac de nuit* amongst us—"not even the children's night-things!" repeated poor Alice, who had made up her mind to a general cold all round, and was on the watch for coughs already. However, we all managed to sleep, and forgot our troubles.

Of all places in the world, to be obliged to stay at Lyons! but it is scarcely just to say so after all. Lyons, from one of the hill-tops which hem it in—Lyons, from Fourvières, where Our Lady gleams in the sun, is worth a day's delay in a long journey. We stand on one side of a great amphitheatre—the forts, the houses, and the spires of Lyons, dropping downwards from the heights to the noble basin below, where two great rivers, mirrors full of reflection, thread their way calmly through the crowding city, and bear a joint report of all its noise and greatness to the quiet country and the sea. Far below, the cathedral casts its shadow into the Rhone, where, at the same moment, the sunny clouds over our heads float in reflection; and parting by a strip of dark buildings and crowded roofs, the sun lights upon the Saone beyond, and betrays it in a flash of triumph. I suppose these lanes below are as dirty, as narrow, as unwholesome, and as miserable as can well be imagined; but air, and sunshine, and distance, are famous idealisers, and one sees nothing in this light misbecoming the noble situation of the manufacturing princes. Certainly there is nothing in Manchester or Glasgow which the hardiest patriot could put in comparison with the circle of hills within the shelter of which Lyons plies her shuttle, or with the Rhone and Saone which brighten her streets. Yonder, far below, is a great square, the Place Bellecour, a desert in the midst of a wood — a square which contains fifteen acres; a true piece of useless French magnificence, the equestrian statue in the midst of which looks, from this height, like one of the Nuremberg toys stamped in tin, which children love: and here, all round upon the hill-sides, high and blank, rise those dead walls, unsmiling and immovable, without an opening or a break to catch the sunshine; which betray the fortifications, *not* intended to protect the city, but to overawe it. Behind the treacherous silence of this fort lurk guns which command the weavers' quarters—the St Croix — the nest of fantastic seditions, which spring naturally among sedentary and indoor workmen, and thrice naturally among Frenchmen—gunpowder enough to bring all those high houses about their ears at a whisper of insurrection. There are times, to be sure, when even our own pale cotton-spinners grow dangerous; and long ago Manchester was held in orthodox terror by peaceable people, as a centre of something else than the Peace party, and something worse than pugilistic speeches; but fancy a sombre fort glooming and brooding, with all its hidden guns, over the heads of the cotton-mills and trades' unions! One could almost pardon the weaver who chafed himself into the madness and rage of sedition, as he looked out over his loom, day after day, from the window of his *mansarde* upon the diabolical calm of those walls, always casting their shadow on him, behind which the very guns are pointed which shall blow his habitation into ruins if he moves or cries. If to know that one is suspected is an inducement to evil, the sight of that fort, and the knowledge of its object, must keep insurrection always before the eyes of the weavers of Lyons.

Notwithstanding, it does not much

injure the view. Rising from the depths of the populated valley and the brightness of its rivers, yonder far away are the grey hills of Dauphiné, capped with snow—the mildest of the Alpine heights, yet something to us who are yet innocent of Alps. They say that one can see Mont Blanc on a clear day—the climax of the wonderful panorama; but everybody knows that it never is a very clear day when one goes to see a view. Let us be thankful that we have seen Lyons rising from her rivers to her hills, with blue touches of smoke over her roofs and towns; and though Mont Blanc is not visible, here is Our Lady of Fourvières gleaming high in copper from the summit of her little dome, who has more than once or twice swept the cholera and other plagues from grateful Lyons, and up here among the healthful breezes dispenses cures on every hand;—a simple little plain building of local celebrity—a mere village church, with odd votive pictures on the walls, representing ladies and gentlemen, very blank and open-eyed, kneeling without any perceptible inducement, and pretty little pieces of needlework framed and glazed. I am afraid, at the first glance, I called them samplers, where, in white canvass and coloured silks, appeared pretty little inscriptions, *Reconnaissance à Marie.* Close to the door burned upon some sort of stand a quantity of votive candles of all sizes, and in all stages of decline—before nothing particular, so far as I could discover—and which produced a very odd effect, with their irregular cluster of glimmering little lights. Perhaps they were waiting their turn to be transferred to some altar; perhaps the entrance of the priest would promote them, if they held out long enough; at all events, there they were, all clustered together in a corner, vaguely doing honour, like the pictures and the samplers, to "Marie."

On the next day we resumed our journey, having recovered the unlucky baggage. This time we had a fellow-passenger—a young man, blooming and beardless, returning from Paris, where he had been buying himself a substitute for the conscription, and running over with fun and satisfaction. At every country station on the road, groups of unlucky peasants in blouses, each with his bundle on the end of a stick, stared up wistfully at our train as they waited for the one which was carrying them to Paris. "*Voilà la conscription!*" cried our young companion, pointing out of the window with all the eagerness of a Frenchman, and a mixture of fun, sympathy, and self-congratulation very amusing to see. He was never tired of pointing them out to us. He seemed to have been just sufficiently near a similar fate to be able to imagine himself among those rueful recruits, and to find something particularly piquant and agreeable in the contrast. He was not a sentimental Frenchman, and he was too young and too thoughtless to take the graver view of the subject. He looked out upon the new conscripts with undisguised fun and laughter. He had given "*deux mille cinq francs*" for his substitute, and had been compelled to go to Paris from his town, Beaucaire, famous for fairs, to get his representative accepted by the authorities. He was too gay and full of frolic spirits himself to think much of this except as an adventure. He had no particular objection to accept the chance of the conscript for his own part, though he laughed at them, but his *parents* would not hear of it, and the lad entered into a half-laughing and wholly uncomprehending discussion of enlistment in England, lamenting meanwhile, in deference to my sister and myself, whose French, as I have said before, was limited, that he knew no English, *pas un mot.* "Ah, the soldiers in England were all volunteers! Was it so?" "No, no," another traveller interposed eagerly—"not all; married men like Monsieur served only of their own will; but *pour la generale*—no, no!—it was impossible;" whereupon our young friend returned to the charge, "Was it indeed all *volontiers?*—all?" He and his compatriot shook their heads over it, and at last assented politely; but, doubtless, were convinced that Monsieur was romancing, and that an army which could exist without a conscription was an impossible dream. This dear good young fellow,

—I am old enough to be affectionate to a lad of twenty,—I wish he had not made that confession that he had no English, for in this unfortunate way the chances are few that Maga will ever reach his benighted eyes. That afternoon, worn out by fatigue, and weary, my brother was ill, fit for nothing but bed or a sofa, filling us with anxiety lest the journey should prove too much for him, and for the moment totally prostrated. To see how our young companion contrived a couch for him—helped to cover him up, for it was excessively cold; and above all our wraps—not that it was necessary, only out of the exuberance of his good young heart—threw his own overcoat, a generous addition to the pile—brings tears to one's eyes even in recollection. When we came to Avignon, where the train stopped a little, and where our young friend left us, he stayed to help my brother tenderly out of the carriage, to give him his arm to the refreshment-room; and, last and crowning kindness of all, to send off a waiter flying for a *chauffrette* to put under the invalid's chilly feet. You may laugh—it is not very romantic; but Alice and I were much more like crying over that *chauffrette*. God bless the boy in his sunny southland country, and bring all the blossoms of his youth to fruit! I like all Frenchmen better for his sake.

Under these circumstances, it is not to be expected that we should have had much enjoyment of the road. I remember only glimpses of distant white peaks upon the sky—of one point where again it was possible to see Mont Blanc, and where yet, of course, we did not see it—of the brown elbow of hill, where every clod is worth gold, the slopes of L'Hermitage—of other stretches of steep and terraced ground, where other vineyards ought to be, and of the quiet Rhone, silently accompanying our steps, sometimes disappearing for an hour, only to come in sight fuller and calmer than before; a glimpse of Avignon over the shadowy plain, lying in a ghostly half-light under the hills, though the sky is still rosy over those dark heights, and full of a colourless, wistful, shining overhead, and round the opposite horizon is the last of our daylight; after that—clang clang, throb throb—a feeble new moon palpitating over a half-seen peak, a wide undiscernible country, and nothing more to be seen or recognised till we come again to streets and lights; and Alice looks out with fear and trembling to see a faint breath of night-air stir the dry twigs of some trees before our hotel window, and calls it wind; and wonders if it will be calm to-morrow, when she means to trust her treasures to the sea.

Wind!—a good fan in a vigorous hand could get up as brisk a gale incontinently; but don't be afraid, Alice! we are innocently intent upon getting to the steamer in good time—say half an hour before she sails next morning—as if she were a reasonable English boat, with no nonsense about her. And we *were* up in time; Harry much restored, a day so calm that not even Alice could suspect any wind abroad in it, and the courage of the whole party resolute for the voyage. To the steamer—"Have you take your place, sare?" says a grave *commissionaire*, who has come up-stairs on a voyage of discovery. "The *bagage* should have go two, tree hour before to the bureau—have you take your place?"

"Taken our places? no—impossible! We only arrived last night," cried Harry. "Never mind, we are not particular about our places; we will take what we can get—let us go."

"But Monsieur is too late; it is impossible," said this solemn extinguisher of our hopes. "The place must be take in good time—say the day before—say thees morning. *Le bagage* must go to the bureau two, tree hours, as I tell you. It is too late; you can do nothing. The ship go to sail in an hour. No—impossible!"

We looked at each other with blank faces—such a day! the sun, exuberant in the heavens, diving down in arrows of light even into that little three-cornered *Place* before the windows; not a cloud upon the sky, nor a breath of wind—an ideal unbelievable day, when all the world would go to sea if it could. But there stood the *commissionaire*

holding his ground steadily upon the *il faut* of his impracticable country. Yes, to be sure, it was all system, order, regularity. Who but an illogical English savage would think of rushing down to a vessel half an hour before she sailed, thinking it all right so long as he got his luggage and himself on board? They do things differently in France—there everything must be ruled in delightful square lines, and nobody taken aback with an unforeseen arrival. Why, Monsieur le Capitaine might have been driven out of his reckoning by the unexpected advent of a bundle of passengers tumbling into his ship at the last moment! and Messieurs of the Bureau lost a night's rest and a week's temper in consequence of an attempt so daring. Heaven defend us from such fatal consequences of insular sauvagism! the barbarians must wait.

And so we had to do, and did, with an indescribable amount of grumbling. Such a day! Alice, who is the greatest coward that ever trembled on the verge of a voyage (I don't believe she really was very sorry in her heart), did not cease her regrets all day. After we had reconciled ourselves to our fate a little, we sallied out in a body, and climbing a height which it is orthodox to climb when one goes to Marseilles, saw spread out before us, for the first time, the blue Mediterranean — so blue, so bright, so calm, its great surface rippled over like an inland lake, and the clouds which lie becalmed upon the sky resting equally unbroken upon that gigantic mirror; grey cliffs, greyer in the contrast with the wonderful blue of the sea and the brightness of the sunshine, falling off in the distance westward, and the little fort of the Chateau d'If perched on its island, breaking in an irregular point into the bay on the other side below; the harbour with its masts and quays, the old port and the new, with a long sweep between, where again those dead grey walls rise gloomy and unbroken, repelling the light; fortifications and defences, less disagreeable to contemplate here, with their faces turned towards the sea, than frowning over the labours of a manufacturing city. By-and-by we descended to the port itself, to see the Sicilian Company's boat, which was to sail next day, and consider whether we could trust ourselves to her safe-keeping. Some of these Marseilles fortifications, seen close at hand, moated round by basins of sea-water, look impregnable; but Marseilles is not imposing as a seaport to people who have come from London, and know Liverpool. In these docks the vessels are packed like herrings *end on*, as the seafaring people say—bows and sterns pointing at the quay, but never even, it appeared, in the very act of loading or unloading, laid alongside — this, I presume, by way of making these operations more troublesome, and giving greater scope to that French ingenuity which loves to overcome difficulties of its own making. One remarkable thing we all observed simultaneously—*nobody was doing anything;* everybody was at leisure to run into a crowd and gesticulate over some poor thief whom a gendarme had collared. Even the horses took a leisurely lunch out of their bags while they stood waiting. One could hear one's-self speak upon those sunny quays; the cranes hung high in the sun, the waggons waited, the ships bristled their bowsprits at us over the horses' heads, and nobody had the least appearance of doing anything, or of finding it necessary to do anything, though it was the height of the day; and I presume in such a seaport, judging by ordinary rules, there must have been something to do. Fancy the possibility of hearing any word addressed to you by a little five-year-old voice on one of the quays of Liverpool, not to say in the docks of St Katherine; but it is perfectly practicable yonder in the sunshine at La Joliette.

The Sicilian boat was little and dumpy, and unsatisfactory on the whole. Alice, who had escaped the legitimate steamer with so much *éclat*, and who had been very profuse in her regrets hitherto, became rather silent as we approached the vessel which was to sail to-morrow. I saw her look up furtively at the flag dangling from a mast-head, and knew by her eyes that she was quite convinced the wind was rising, and

that something dreadful would happen to-morrow to that "Marie Antoinette," which turned her black hull upon us so uninvitingly. But Alice was heroical, and would not say a word. We had decided in full family council that it was much better, both for the purse and the children, to go by sea. My brother, however, returned to us shaking his head, and the cloud lightened from his wife's face. Harry did not like the looks of the "Marie Antoinette," and we drove off, with sweet and universal satisfaction, to take our places in the diligence for Nice.

Yes, in the diligence—twenty-four hours — we who had forgotten all about stage-coaches, and hitherto had thought a day in a railway carriage sufficiently fatiguing. But you understand we were not rich people, and could not afford to be carried by post-horses, and sleep three nights on the road. We were sanguine of the children sleeping all night, as people who travel by night say they do, poor little unfortunates; and boldly launched upon this journey in the *interieur* of a French diligence, which two strangers shared with us. We had to put Nurse in the *rotonde* behind, and take Johnnie between us—Alice and I. O the miseries of that night! We were stifled with rugs and shawls and wrappings, which the night was not cold enough to make necessary. We were so closely packed in, that Johnnie's little boot, once lost, was irrecoverable till we stopped. Our fellow-travellers sat like men of wood, immovable, resigning themselves to the discomforts of the journey with that total and passive submission which the Continental peoples always exhibit, contrary to our English custom of getting pleasure and comfort out of it at all risks. Johnnie did not comprehend it, poor little man! He twisted and cried, rubbed his unfortunate eyes out, and kicked his sturdy little feet against everything they encountered, in a vain attempt to enlarge the prison in which he found himself. Blessed interval of rest when he happened to fall asleep!—not giving in, but overpowered of a sudden. Fatal moment when he woke again, and scrambled from his mamma to my arms, and from my arms back again to his mamma! — while little Mary, poor child, lay with her curls upon my shoulder, so fast and safe asleep that half-a-dozen changes during the night did not disturb her repose. At last, most blissful sight, the morning broke. By this time at last everybody had fallen asleep, even Johnnie, and only I saw the sun rising over trees in full leaf and a green country —a startling contrast to the landscape of yesterday. Trees in full leaf, and luxuriant, but not green—grey, ashy, not unlike the willow-trees at home, when the wind has ruffled their branches, and turned their white lining to the light. The sun rose above these trees into a sky entirely cloudless, which widened over his rim in circles and innumerable shades of colour, from burning orange to a tender pink, which by-and-by melted by soft gradations into the universal blue. In this light I had full opportunity of studying the physiognomies of the three gentlemen opposite; the head of our own household, upon whose chin (pardon, oh domestic authorities!) I could see the beard of a day growing fast; and the two slumbering Frenchmen, one of whom reposed within two great straps depending from the centre of the carriage, for the convenience of the unfortunates who sat in the middle. The Frenchmen were visibly father and son — the father middle-aged, fat, and good-humoured; the youth pale, heavy-eyed, and sickly. They had broad crape ribbons both on their white hats, and the lad's eyes were so swollen and heavy that I could not help making a history for them. They had lost the mother of their house, no doubt—and this was the mother's boy, the invalid son, whom the honest unsentimental father, who was not heartbroken, was taking somewhere for change and recovery. Of course I was wrong—that is to say, I did not ascertain that I was right. On the contrary, we heard quite another story to account for their journey; but still I think he must have just lost his mother, that sick boy with his heavy eyes.

But it was the conscription—again the conscription! The father showed

us later in the day, with great pride, a gold medal won by his Eugene in Paris, for drawings from the life—he was an artist. He was besides, as it was very easy to see, of the most delicate frame, almost a positive invalid. Yet this lad had been drawn by the pitiless lot, and, unless his father could succeed by representation of the state of his health in freeing him, was actually a conscript! For this reason they were bound to the very extremity of France—to Antibes—to endeavour to procure the youth's exemption. I do not know why they were going *there*, of all places in the world—whether it was the old man's native town, or what reason there was for making that the place of appeal; but this was the object of their journey. The father had been a soldier in his day; he was a practical, cheery, matter-of-fact-looking Frenchman, proud of his boy, and anxious about him, though there were little intercourse of word between them. He hoped that his own services and his son's weakness together would save the youth from the necessity of serving; but that was still only a hope. Perhaps they were not rich enough to spend two thousand francs upon a substitute like our young friend of Beaucaire, and they went on their way heavily, the young man sitting motionless and despondent in his corner, turning his heavy eyes from the light, indifferent to everything, as it appeared. Poor boy! I wonder if they have let him go back to his art and his study. Surely nobody could be so cruel as to lay a musket on that feeble young shoulder, or send him into the crowd of a noisy *caserne* with those worn and heavy eyes.

When one thinks of a road along the coast, one imagines a placid level road in sight of the sea, with no great difference of altitude from one point to another. That is to say, *I* thought so, thinking of this road to Nice, which I promised myself wound snugly along the coast, finding out bays and headlands, under the sunshine, in a reasonable and moderate way. This, of course, only shows my ignorance; but I am thankful to believe that at home there are people of my standing who don't know everything. Of course, the young generation are all perfectly aware that one has to wind up and down among the Maritime Alps when one travels along the coast of the Mediterranean; but, for my own part, I did not anticipate this mountainous road. Here we go up, up—horses (six of them) labouring on in a toilsome walk—*conducteur* marching with shouts of encouragement, now on this side, now on the other—great shoulders of hills folding us in on all sides, with here and there a line of wall visible upon the heights above, which surely cannot mean the road which we have yet to reach? high cones and hill-tops overhead, of which, straining from the windows of the diligence, one can scarcely see the summit; and deep precipitous descents below, to which the rash vehicle approaches close enough to give one many a shudder. All green, green, and still more green, as one ascends higher, with the grey foliage of those trees through which the sun broke this morning, and which are olive trees—with the vegetation fresher and more verdant, of groves of cork—and greenest of all, with pine trees, fresh and luxuriant, which make a summer on the hills. Up, and still up, till on the landward side these vast green slopes open wide towards the more majestic hills, and show us, far away, the white peaks dipping into the clouds, the heights from which "Jura answers in her misty shroud;" and higher still, till we have gained the topmost ribbon of road which circles the highest head of all these leafy hills. To this ledge—which is a good road when one reaches it, though it looks from below like a morsel of grey wall built into the face of the hill—comes up with flying leaps the telegraph which has travelled in our sight all the way—in our sight, but not beside us; striding, like some wonderful giant, over the precipices, drawing its daring bridge, like a spider's thread, from mount to mount, striking straight "as the crow flies," with an arbitrary directness which impresses the imagination most strangely, and with a total disregard of all obstacles, to the topmost height, towards which we, who are not giants

and magi, but only some twenty helpless human creatures in a diligence, have been creeping and winding for an hour or two in a hopeless roundabout. Of course I have heard a great deal about the electric telegraph, like everybody else, and, heaven help us! like most other people, have heard news by it in my day sufficiently startling, sudden, and terrible; but I never before saw this big Ethiopian mute, and voiceless confidant of nations, show himself so like a weird spirit and geni of Arabian tales. He is a very humdrum person when he draws those big lines of his like a bit of manuscript prepared for a musician, though they are lines that thrill with many a dirge, and echo many a triumph, alongside of our peaceable railways; but when one sees those fairy threads scaling hills and crossing precipices, one gets startled into wonder and admiration. I confess, however, that after the first moment my thoughts were not sentimental ones, touching the private joys and calamities which could thus cross the hills so much more rapidly than we could—or philosophical, concerning this close union of far-off quarters and "annihilation of distance;" but that somehow there suddenly appeared before me a vision of those other lofty telegraph-wires which leap over everybody's head into the high windows of the Tuileries, and that my fancy consolidated itself into one thought of that mysterious person called Napoleon the Third. To be sure, it was nonsense—for the telegraph is the nineteenth century in impersonation, and enlightenment, and progress, and all the rest of it; yet I am obliged to confess, I thought of none of these things as I watched, with a little thrill of almost awe and wonder, how that big Spy of the Emperor marched, swifter than any fiery cross, to the edge of his domains, and in his progress scaled, as if they had been so many mole-heaps, the everlasting hills.

And then came the beautiful Mediterranean, blue, blue—I cannot say how blue—like the blue of eyes—and Cannes on the beach, marketing and pleasuring—and the grey olives and the green pines standing out against the sea—and the sun sinking, with no clouds to attend him, making once more, in lack of these, the steadfast sky itself gorgeous with those marvellous indescribable gradations of colour. I wonder what those priggish people mean who babble of complimentaries and primaries, and say there is no true harmony of colour but red and green. Was ever sweeter harmony than the young spring green of those pine branches, falling, without any help or intervention, upon the full blue of that sea?—did ever fairy combination show sweeter than that rosy pink, that angelic blush, which melts and melts into that other blue, the blue of the sky? Never mind—the theory of colour does famously for talk, which is something—Nature and we know better, and so there is no need of making a disturbance about it. Sleep, child, upon our knees, with the twilight on your face—with tiny roses on your cheeks, and some dim gold gleaming among the stray locks of your hair—thank heaven there is no green in *your* complexion to complete the harmony!—and now let the sea fall darkling in the midst of its beatitude—and welcome night.

Welcome night! and oh the delight, after a night-journey, of—one cannot pause for refined expression—going to bed! I trust nobody is shocked. Baths and bread-and-milk for the bairnies—and then that delicious rest, quickened by the knowledge that fragrant oranges grew under their windows, which their happy hands might pluck to-morrow. I think, if I were an invalid—which, alas! there seems little hope of—I should choose Nice for my winter-quarters. It is not in the least interesting, my dear connoisseur! I do not believe there is a picture in the town, and the architecture is, as a Cockney tradesman would say, "beneath contempt;" but then there is *that* Mediterranean, that sea of suns, rippling as if it loved it on the peaceful beach—and the hills beyond, grey and dark and silent, relieving all this light; and something like an island lying on the water far off, which, after all, is only the point of San Ospizio, and showing against its solid darkness the misty glory of the sunbeams, and the transparence of

the sea. I think it was at Nice that Johnnie distinguished himself by trying to catch the dust in the sun—as it was on the road to Nice that poor little Mary immortalised her simplicity by bestowing her half-franc, her whole worldly store, upon a little beggar-boy who besieged the diligence. Talk of invalids! those children, who are not at all given that way, expanded like flowers in the delicious May weather which we found waiting for us there. People come to be epicures in climate as in other things. It was the fashion in Nice at that moment to shiver and complain of cold with that dear English look of discontent which seems to upbraid Providence with leaving something short of perfection wherever our delightful country people go. If I could only have taken a phial out of my pocket, and produced for their benefit an hour of that day on which we left London, or a whistle full of that wind which cut us into little pieces on the heights of Fourvières! But certainly it is our national privilege—the safety-valve of the savage insular nature. Grumble then, oh excellent exiles, and carry your grey parasols, and dangle in your hands those fresh oranges with stalks and green leaves to them, and forget that it is January. It is very easy to do so where you are.

Nice, like all the other towns of the Mediterranean, occupies a bay, the high headlands of which, stretching out like protecting arms half round that semicircle of blue water, aid the darker hills behind in preserving from storms and chills the bright little town upon its beach. It is divided by a river, or rather by the bed of a river, a wide dry channel duly bridged over, and of an imposing breadth, through which there straggles a little rivulet of clear water, quite inadequate to the task of moistening a quarter part of the gravel bed which calls itself the Paglione. Great square houses, painted either white or in light tints akin thereto, with row upon row of green shutters to make them gay, have begun to stray in little detachments out of the town towards the hills; and vast hotels seem to the eye of a stranger to form half the bulk of the town itself, which has no features of nationality whatever, but is like every other place subjected to a yearly invasion of visitors. The *table-d'hôte* is full and gay, filled up by *habitués*, as one can easily perceive, who know what they are about, and the best way of making themselves comfortable. There is even a public breakfast at half-past ten o'clock, where one begins the day with cutlets and fried potatoes, and where weak-minded English strangers interject their little pots of coffee and boiled milk, their orthodox bread and butter, into the midst of the wine-bottles and stronger fare of their neighbours. At this same *table-d'hôte* we were a little startled to hear an Englishman declare his intention of remaining "till the war began!" The war!—what war? Then we, who had been shut up from newspapers for a week or two, heard for the first time those new-year's compliments of the French Emperor, which seem to have stirred all England into the delightful excitement of gossips over an impending quarrel. "There cannot be a doubt about it," said our informant, loftily. I do not know what this gentleman meant to do with himself "when the war began," but for us, who were bound for Italy, and meant to remain there, this suggestion was rather exciting. "If one could only see a *Times!*" cried Alice, who had unbounded faith in the Thunderer; but instead of a *Times*, we could but lay our heads together over a *Galignani*, which respectable old lady was in a high state of fuss and nervous excitement. However, we had no further information of this supposititious war in leisurely Nice, where everybody took everything very quietly. We, too, enjoyed the sunshine and the rest with all our hearts, and climbed the rock on which perches a little old castle, to look over a widened horizon of sea and sun upon one side, and on the other to look down upon breaks of garden among the houses, where the foliage suggested nothing so strongly as a bush of gorse in full bloom, so full were the oranges among their leaves. The hills beyond were heavy with olives, a grey and misty cloud of vegetation

upon the slopes, which rose dark and sombre in the light, though scattered everywhere with white houses, rising at different elevations almost to the summits of those hills. Let us turn down to the beach; it is entirely occupied, but not by young ladies in pretty hats, or groups of children. That sea, which knows no tide, ripples with a soft regularity upon its ridge of pebbles, but does not send its music, thus near at hand, into the faces of any of those seekers of health or pleasure who keep upon the terrace yonder, out of reach of this tender foamy spray. No, for the beach has homelier tenants. Here comes a fresh-water brook, briskly rattling into the sea, and in possession of a host of washerwomen, who kneel on each side as close as so many flies, animated by the liveliest industry, and beating their linen with an energy which, in this calm country, it is pleasant to hear; and yonder stray their mistresses or assistants, in careful superintendence of the long lines stretched from pole to pole along the beach, where the said linen hangs to bleach or dry in the sun. How these poor women manage it, day after day and all day long, to work upon their knees, half dropping into the water, with that fervid sun beating on their heads, I cannot tell. The labour in such a constrained position must be prodigious; but the scene is extremely cheerful, and odd, and amusing. I wonder who wears all those clothes? I wonder if it is true that the Italians are not very remarkable for their love of clean linen. Oddly enough, these picturesque public washings only exist among people who are reported, falsely or truly, to be a little indifferent in this respect. I never saw a more cheerful sight than I saw one day upon the *Green* at Glasgow, where the little wild savages of girls sat under the sun, watching the clothes laid to bleach upon the grass, while their mothers washed hard by within reach of the Clyde; yet one understands that Glasgow is not a model of cleanliness. However, I have homely tastes. I like to see the linen swept through that pure running water, and dried among those breezes. But I suppose that is why the genteel people in Nice—the visitors and promenaders—keep up upon the dusty terrace, and never spread themselves in groups upon the shingle, as we do at home.

From Nice we started early in the morning for Genoa, another twenty-four hours' journey, which we arranged to break by stopping for the night half-way, and being taken up next morning by the night diligence. This road is like a road in fairy-land, or in one's dreams. Up spur and straight over fold after fold, and slope after slope, of those continuous hills, dashing round sharp curves of road which follow the line of those deep and narrow ravines which divide them, finding out at every turn another and another bay lying calm within the shelter of those vast projecting and protecting arms, each with its little town smiling like a princess from the beach, calmly ripening her oranges, cultivating her palms, and tending her vineyards with such care as Eve bestowed on her flowers in Milton's Eden, where every plant and blossom brightened to her presence. Pines green with the green of spring; great olive-trees, grey and rich; rows of little aloes hanging over in miniature hedges from the garden walls; orange-trees, low and green, and golden with showers of fruit; pale little lemons hiding among their leaves,—interpose between us and the sea, as we come dashing down from the heights almost at a gallop towards the Mentone or San Remo of the moment—when amidst all this wealth of nature our momentary stoppage collects a crowd of importunate beggars not to be repulsed. Then up again, as the morning brightens towards noon, labouring up the hills, sweeping once more through the sharp double of the road which rounds those ravines—ravines terraced step by step from the deep bottom yonder, where a mountain stream has scarcely room to flow, up to the verge of this lofty road, sometimes higher, to the very hill-tops, and terraced in a dainty and sumptuous fashion unknown to less favoured and luxuriant lands. One could fancy, in the absence of the vines, that these smooth green terraces were so many grassy benches

which some benevolent giant had amused himself with making, out of a tenderly contemptuous kindness for the feeble little pigmies who surrounded him. Here is one of these ravines, not a valley, but a cleft between two hills, with a narrow stony watercourse marking its centre, pressed into very slender bounds by the grass and the young trees which almost meet over its rugged line, and rising in a succession of lines not so regular as the seats of an amphitheatre, but adapted to the inequalities of the soil. Here delightful little corners, where two people could sit together looking down upon the Mediterranean through its fringe of trees. Here prolonged is a lordly bench which could hold a score of spectators, all living green, as velvety (in the distance) as an English lawn, solitary, without even a cottage within sight to mark where some one watched over those sunny gardens—sheltered on either side so deeply and warmly that wind can never reach them, save that soft wind which whispers over the herbage, the hush of the calm sea. Ah, troubled human people, sweeping past, glad of the momentary level of the road, and with no leisure to linger, or to see how nature smiles out of her superior happiness at you and your walletful of cares! I wonder why it is that Nature *does* look happiest in those solitary places, and in the early mornings, and the summer midnights, when there is no human eye about to spy upon the secret of her joy.

These valleys are not always vineyards, but sometimes orange-gardens; and though there is not a creature visible, nor apparently the least need of any common vulgar appliances of husbandry where everything is so perfect, yet the labour bestowed upon them must be immense. Notwithstanding, when we come to the next in succession of those picturesque towns which dot the whole road, here is again the same crowd of beggars, pathetic, and not to be denied. Such richness of country, such poverty of people. I do not understand how it is accounted for; for certainly there is no appearance of indolence in the dainty and extreme cultivation of those clefts among the hills.

When there is a little pause from the perpetual ascent and descent of the road, and the country spreads into a plain, where here and there a tall black cypress shoots straight up into the sky, looking like an attenuated spire, the aspect is said (*vide* Murray) to be Oriental—chiefly, I presume, because here they cultivate the date-palm, which, like other things which ought to be imposing, does not strike one half so much as an orthodox imagination desires it should. I humbly conceive that Oriental means dull, and long for the hills and the hollows which reveal in glimpses, like visions of enchantment, the further course of the coast-line, which is too costly a pleasure to be enjoyed all at once, and which one prefers to have hoarded up among the mountains, and dispensed bit by bit as the occasion offers. But, alas, this darkness! in which one has only the gratification of knowing that one is ever so many hundred feet above the sea; that below the descent is straight into the rocks which edge the Mediterranean; that this jar of the wheel was against the bit of wall which is our sole protection; and that this mad diligence gallops, *sans* drag, *sans* caution, down a slope which an English coachman would take with the most serious precautions, and would not like even then. But fortunately no accident befalls us, and everybody has fallen into an uncomfortable doze, when we dash along the stony street of Alassio, where we are to stop for the night. Oh night of chill and misery! There are two babies, four bags, a dozen shawls, a *Murray*, a basket, and a French novel to be produced in the dark out of the dust of the diligence; every article is handed out separately to the applause of the group of idlers, who stand by, and who are all prepared to escort us to our hotel, where we are safely delivered. Then the hotel itself, where there are some five or six rooms, all opening out of each other, and into somewhere else, with one solitary fireplace in the last one, with tiled floors, and ceilings half as high as St Paul's, and a bit of carpet the size of a small tablecloth spread in the centre of each; and a voluble landlady, with a coloured handker-

chief tied over her head, who speaks a great deal of French, and will not understand that we speak very little, and are tired enough and stupid enough to have forgotten that. How we all nursed the fire in that one fireplace—the fire which was not disposed to burn!—and meekly swallowed our coffee, and crept under the quilted coverlids with a dire anticipation of the diligence which was to pick us up at six o'clock next morning. Then the bill, which came in at dawn, our first true Italian bill, at sight of which the British lion stirred within the bosom of my brother. Let us not think of these agonies of travel; but, dearest traveller! fight like a true Briton over every bill they produce to you at an Italian inn.

We resumed our journey next day in a vehicle still less comfortable and still more daring than that which had brought us to Alassio, when we had for our travelling companion a merry Genevese, on commerce and on politics intent, hastening to Genoa full of expectation, and with a story on his lips which roused in all our minds once more the slumbering terror of the war. The Austrian flag had been burnt by the crowd — the Austrian consul, roughly treated, had left the city. Telegraphic information, sent immediately to Turin, had been answered by the despatch of five vessels bearing troops from Nice, said our informant, who, noways discouraged by his news, proved himself a famous playfellow for the children during the day's journey. Of course, this story being true, and the Genoese mob having thus the support of the authorities, war was all but declared. Thus we went dashing on towards Genoa by just such a road as we had traversed yesterday, but under a light less favourable, the day being dark, wet, and cloudy, with at least one blast of snow, and our minds being somewhat roused by the possibility of finding ourselves actually in the presence of war, or at least of war impending. Coloured by our own fancies, we found excitement in the aspect even of the languid market-place crowd of the coast towns through which we passed, and discovered a quickened pace and a more important mien among the sturdy little grey soldiers, looking so clean and comfortable, whom one sees in the Sardinian states. Even the Mediterranean partook the sentiment, and, though there was no storm, undulated in a strong swell and current, such as one would rather look at than feel, and threw a heavy angry surf upon the rocky beach. As we drew towards the end of our journey too—for even admiration and the love of beauty have their limits—I rather think we began to be more interested in the progress we made, and more pleased by the speed of our conveyance than by the loveliness of the landscape. Rattling down the hills, turning sharp corners with a jerk, dashing and *crunching* through the broad gravelly course as wide as a Thames, through which meanders a pitcherful of fair water bearing a big name, and calling itself a river — we hurried on to the famous old republic, the superb Genoa. Fine as this road and country are at all times, it must be still finer during the brief period when these Pagliones and Polceveras, of which we have crossed so many, are really rivers, and not mere beds of gravel. But there seems rain enough in these clouds to fill them up. Farewell, summer country, sleeping mid-world on the tideless beach of that bright sea! We are going south, it is true, but we are going back to winter—back to winter, back to war, back to tumults, cares, and labours — back to the world. I conclude that the world stopped somewhere on the other side of Nice, and begins again here as we draw near the gate of Genoa. Farewell, beautiful Riviera! We think of you no more as yonder crescent of a city piles upward to the sky before our eyes, and throws her arms into the sea—nor of the splendour of that noble bay, nor of "the Doria's pale palace," nor of any beauty here—but look up with a shudder, half of excitement, half of terror, at the fortifications, and regard with an unusual interest the brisk little soldiers, and think of the flag burned, and the consul fled, and big Austria bristling her bayonets and setting her mustache; and brave little Sardinia blowing her trumpet from the hills, and rousing one cannot tell what echoes

from the rich Lombard plains, the canals of Venice, and the streets of Milan. We saw excitement in every face we passed in the lamplight, as we threaded our way through the streets of Genoa, and thought of nothing less than Italy in arms.

But alas for English credulity and human weakness, that we should have to tell it! Though the evening gun that night startled us all to the windows with a sudden thrill, half fearing, half hoping the commencement of hostilities—alas, it was all a *canard!* The Black Eagles had suffered no violence from the mob of Genoa — the Austrian consul remained in the calmest security. I do not remember at this moment how the five ships carrying troops were accounted for — whether they too were inventions like the mob, or whether it was merely a common military transfer from one place to another. I think the latter was the truth. But we were "regularly sold," according to Harry's vulgar exclamation. Of course we were much relieved, and, if the truth must be told, just a little disappointed, to find everything pacific, and the warlike rumour just as vague here as in other places. However, there was an indisputable excitement in Genoa — more than once, during that first evening, a distant echo of the Marseillaise, that common Continental language of political passion, ascended to our high windows; and even the common operation of changing guard was certainly performed with an importance and *afflatus* which whispered of something in men's minds deeper than sentry-boxes. The streets were full of groups in eager discussion—the cafés crowded — and still, ever and anon, came dropping from this colonnade or yonder piazza that ominous echo of the Marseillaise.

Genoa, as seen from these aforesaid high windows of ours, consisted, in the first place, of a high terrace balustraded with marble, which ran in a curve, not sufficiently bold to be called a semicircle, round the middle of the harbour, and beyond which appeared the masts—of which there certainly did not seem to be "a forest" — of vessels lying in the port. Round these ships, only partially visible, ran on either side a long arm of solid masonry with a light at each end, shutting in to the dimensions of a doorway this great calm basin, so well enclosed and sheltered that a storm without could hardly send a hint of its presence to the refugees who harboured here. Beyond the line of the terrace, straight up from the water's edge, in lines of building rising over each other so that the foundation of one is little more than level with the roof of the other, the town piles upward on either side, continuing, in a wider crescent than the harbour, the grand and irregular natural line of the coast. This bay or gulf of Genoa is the complete work for which all these lovely little bays, these Villefranches and Monacos and Mentones on the road, were the studies; for the divine Artist does not scorn that principle of repetition full of infinite gradations of contrast which human art has groped its way to, as one of its laws. This deepest crescent is the centre and climax whether you come from one side or the other—from Rome or from France — of a coast which doubles into innumerable recesses, and of a sea which luxuriates in bay after bay; and is well worthy to gather together and perfect with the superb seal of all its clustered palaces the two wonderful lines of sea and of mountain which have their common issue here. But as for the city of palaces, or anything which warrants that name, we can see nothing of it from these same high windows — high, not because they are shabby, for look at those walls, where Eneas, with legs which would have carried a dozen fathers, bears off old — was it Anchises? — on his sturdy shoulders. I humbly hope I am correct in supposing it to be Eneas, though there is a lady in pink (also with legs) beside him, whom I do not remember in the tale, and one dreadful hero killing another in the foreground of the piece, towards whom the principal personages show the most profound indifference. However, never mind the story; the room is magnificent, and the frescoes are by Piola — a local greatness. Dearest Reader! when you go to

Genoa (if you can afford it), go to the Hôtel de la Ville, and ask for the suite of apartments which opens from the right-hand side of the *Salle-à-manger*. *We* could not afford it; but we have all come under a solemn vow never to reveal, under any circumstances, the rate at which the respectable Monsieur Schmidt gave us those magnificent rooms. With all the harbour before, and a good supply of bedrooms behind—bedrooms splendid with satin quilts, with pillows frilled with embroidery, with lace curtains, with walls and alcoves rich with elaborate ornament in stucco; and last, but greatest, doors that closed as fast as if they were English; with fires that were perfection—coal—the first coal that we had seen on the Continent—English coal! mingled with wood. What could mortal desire further? But I dare not for my life—as I have told you—betray the moderate amount of francs for which, the house being only moderately full at the moment, we had them by the day!

The wonders of Genoa lie, however, in the principal line of street, which is quite behind and above our present quarters. Let us descend our glistening marble staircase, and close our eyes to the fact that it leads out under a ruinous-*looking* colonnade, in which dwell *whiffs* innumerable which are not of Arabian sweetness. One thinks involuntarily of those two-and-seventy different smells which immortalise Cologne, when one comes out under those heavy old arches. But now for the Via Balbi, the Strada Nuova, the streets of palaces. There they rise with that pale Italian blue above them, the momentary shining of a sky which is full of rain. Some half-dozen of those vast mansions on either side are quite enough to form a street; and as you pause at door after door of the six, you look in upon a splendid vista of arches and columns perhaps enclosing a green nest of orange trees, or widening into a magnificent court, from the ample marble sides of which rise the staircases which lead to the house. Then, though they are alike, there is a variety in each; one springs upwards on graceful marble columns to a domed roof, and beyond throws only some three or four broad low steps between you and the orange garden, against the fresh green of which the pillars shine. Another reveals to you its miniature quadrangle cloistered round, at the top of a short but princely staircase, down which on either side a pair of gigantic lions have been rushing, when some sudden spell arrested their course and fixed them there. Next door the prospect widens, and one court draws itself out within another, with perhaps a gallery and grand balustrade behind, from which the inmates, cool in the shadow of their own lofty roof, could hear their fountain trickle as it played. Whosoever would see the fountain, if it chances to be a work of note, or would examine the frescoes, if there happen to be any about hiding among the columns, or would simply look at a kind of architecture so liberal and princely, may enter as he will; and if there is a collection of pictures above, which is exceedingly probable, is free to penetrate into the *salons* without either fee to pay or warrant of respectability to offer. I think these open courts and columns are a somewhat handsomer way of withdrawing one-self from the street than the Burlington House fashion of building a dead brick wall between the thoroughfare and one's gentility; and it is these princely entrances which gain for Genoa her distinction of *la superba*. The buildings themselves are no doubt grand and imposing; but in this is the characteristic and remarkable feature.

There are various picture-galleries, too, in Genoa, though I am half disposed to think that is something of a vulgar enthusiasm which rushes upon every picture within its range, and must see all the questionable Titians and second-rate Dolces to be found in *Murray*. But we went into the Red house in the Strada Nuova—the red house, more euphoniously the Palazzo Rosso—and saw a little wilderness of fine pictures, and some portraits which immediately took possession of the stately house, and revealed (to me at least) the Genoa of the past. I do not find much interest in portraits, as a gene-

ral rule; but there was something in those fine Vandykes, those princely gentlemen and noble ladies, with the small heads full of intelligence, the dainty hands, and sumptuous dress in which that courtly painter delights, which somehow gave a living expression to the sentiment of magnificence which pervaded all these palaces. No, they do not belong to our age, these echoing courts and columns—not to the lounging Italian out of doors, who is more than half a Frenchman, nor to the ladies in crinoline, but to those princely figures on the canvass, those refined and thoughtful faces looking down as if they had been observing all this course of ages from their pensive places on the ancestral walls.

Still anxious for news in our remaining flutter of excitement about the problematical war, we made several desperate but ill-rewarded efforts to get papers. There was not a single syllable of Italian among our party. Our sole hope was in the possibility that Genoa might have newspapers published in French; and so I suppose there are some one or two; but the sole French-Italian broadsheet which we had the luck to light upon was a very amazing little publication—a journal of Monaco, called, I think, the *Eden*. To us, who were eager for news of the possible outbreak of a war which would be European, it was wonderfully ludicrous to light upon this tiny champion of the tiniest principality in Christendom—I suppose in the world. To hear this odd little "organ" entering into the historical antecedents of its "country"—to behold its rebukes to the rebellious towns of Mentone and Roccabruna, which, "in forsaking the rule of Prince Charles, forsook the march of progress and national advancement," was the oddest anticlimax in the world. Monaco, as perhaps everybody does *not* know, is a tiny pleasure-town in one of those bays of the Mediterranean, along which the other day we were travelling—a nominal little monarchy, or rather princedom, to which Mentone, a vassal bigger than the master, and Roccabruna, a village among the hills, once belonged. These unprincipled places have withdrawn themselves from under the mighty sceptre of Charles XIII. or XIV. of Monaco, —and oh! to witness the rampant patriotism of the *Eden!* Poor little *Eden!* I daresay it had a great soul; but when, in answer to anxious questions about Austria and France, one read that article about those two deserters of towns, the result was an explosion of laughter which quieted everybody's political anxieties for the night, better than *Galignani*, perhaps even better than the *Times*.

And next evening we went to sea! —the length of Leghorn—a whole ten hours' voyage along the coast of the Mediterranean—a night when the flags hung down limp and motionless from the mastheads, without a breath to stir them—the rain over, the clouds promising to break, the moon known to be yonder, if the clouds would but let her forth. Yet Alice had her misgivings. The evening gun darted with a flash and roar into all the echoes—the pale water glistened round us lying in the harbour—the lights ran twinkling line above line into the windows in the town—dark boat-loads of opaque objects, afterwards recognised to be men and women, came dropping out to us one by one; and by-and-by, when we had lost our patience and recovered it again, we sailed at last, sweeping out of that sea-gate of Genoa into the brimful and glistening sea—out of sight of the last arm of the crescent and its towered and clustered pile of houses, across another and another bay, with great dark hills stealing out around and beyond them, opening in black and dim perspective out of the night. The moon broke out at last—the night was lovely. I dare say, had we been in England, half the passengers would have stayed on deck all night. But here people love to be wretched when they are travelling. When we went down at midnight there was not a soul visible on the whole length of the vessel save the man at the helm, the look-out man, the officer on his watch, and a heap of dark figures on the boiler and about it, laid out at full length dead asleep.

We got into Leghorn before we were aware, so smooth and rapid was the voyage;—got into Leghorn—that

is to say, got into a great basin, with various ships, some fortifications, and a house in sight, all of which we had the great gratification of gazing at for an hour or two, as it was quite impossible we could land till the police had come to look at us. I do not know when the police did arrive. Words have different significations—that which means a solemn procession of bluecoats and batons in London, and a rush of gendarmerie and cocked-hats in France, may perhaps mean a secret missive from the shore at Leghorn. At all events, our permission came at last, without any visible appearance of the much-to-be-respected police; and we "disembarked." To disembark means, at Leghorn, to go out for a half-day's excursion in a little boat which will call at the customhouse in passing, and after getting through the necessary ceremonials there, will carry you on to your destination, at which you are pretty sure to arrive some time, hour not specified. Through the strangest passages and alleys of water, which were not docks, I suppose—at least there was not a vessel of any kind in them—we reached at last a dreary hotel, where there was no more appearance of a town than of the pyramids. I presume there *is* a town of Leghorn, but I can testify by experience that one may safely arrive at the port bearing that name, find some breakfast, and make one's way to the railway station, without being at all aware of the existence of a seafaring and laborious population anywhere in one's vicinity. That is to say, we all believe in Leghorn, but we could not see it.

One thing, however, we did see abundantly, and that was the customhouse. We were all examined, it is true, in the middle of our little water-excursion on our way to the hotel. But that does not matter; we must all be examined again at the gate of the railway, little bags and all, when the wary officers of La Dogana examine whether there are any creases in poor Alice's best silk gown (creases! have I not seen mud upon it? classic mud! thy venerated dust, oh ancient Trinity, moistened by thy perennial rains!) and go over all our united wardrobe with a conscientious inspection. But courage! we are safe at last; here they come, all the boxes nicely tied up with official string, with little pewter seals hanging at each—virtuous boxes, warranted and done for; and here we are once more in a railway carriage—our last conveyance—hurra! almost at the end of our long journey. When the children are lifted into the carriage (by a handsome fellow in a grey uniform, who lets us know *par parenthèse* that he has four of his own, for which piece of information our universal heart warms to him, though his soldiership is an odd railway porter), —when the children, I say, are lifted in, Alice kisses them clandestinely with a little sentiment in her face. Yes, here they are, those little creatures, beyond price or value—those two only ones surviving (and the fathers and mothers know what *that* word means and implies) safe upon the Tuscan soil, and no harm taken. I do not wonder, for my part, that their mother is very quiet for a little, and has something in her eyes.

And so here we go, moderately, yet quickly, through the long flat, when at last one finds out the Arno by the sails of a line of boats perfectly relieved against the grassy plain beyond — nay, not the sails alone, but almost the entire hull as well, so level is the landscape—and where our road is bordered by fields covered with water, which we find out with wonder to be fields of rice, and draw up gently to a town from which that Tower, which is to all the world the sign of Pisa, projects its leaning side towards us. Then on again into a true Italian landscape —that landscape which in old pictures one supposes a composition, and looks on with doubt accordingly —where the little hills slope softly up and down, bearing each upon its crest its house or little cluster of houses, and its town, and where all the unequal heights and varieties of soil, coupled with those unfailing resemblances, make up a scene so rich, and soft, and novel, so rural, and nevertheless so refined and delicate, and with such a dainty gentle animation and cheerfulness in its aspect, that one is startled with a landscape altogether out of one's ex-

perience—nature fresh and living, yet not the nature one has been accustomed to see. So that it is not the towns or the people principally, but perhaps, chiefest of all, this fresh and unaccustomed scenery, which convinces us that we are no longer among the Gauls and Teutons, but are where the old world lived in the old ages, and where the modern arts were born. And here is Florence in the dark,—Florence, our journey's end and temporary habitation—the Florence of Dante and Michael Angelo—the Florence of the Medicis—the City of Imaginations! Can any one see anything in the darkness? Hark! there is a rustle of water—the Arno running full under its bridges. Is there no *campanile* visible over the house-tops?—no shadow of the great Dome upon our road? Dome!—*campanile!* I wonder what anybody is thinking of!—as for the house-tops, there is no such thing to be seen anywhere—and, lo! we plunge out of our *fiacre*, the whole bundle of us, into the doorway of a hotel, it is true, in the second place; but, firstly, into the white abyss, profound and impenetrable, of—a fog!

From the depths of which, oh kindest reader! a slowly receding voice, with passive despair in its accents, bids you farewell!

THE TURKS IN KALAFAT, 1854.—PART II.

Tourists, both English and foreign, newspaper correspondents, and travellers of all kinds, were constantly visiting Widdin; and during their stay these usually associated themselves in greater or less intimacy with ourselves. But our original party, the heroes who shared the glories and perils of the feats of arms which I have detailed, and still have to detail—who braved the battle and the breeze, and the bugs and the fleas, from first to last—consisted of five; three "Own Correspondents," one Sardinian officer (the only foreigner I ever met who came up to the English idea of a gentleman), and myself. I cannot say that I have preserved agreeable memories of our stay in Widdin. We had, amongst five, one very small room, so low that we could touch the ceiling, and subject, by reason of its want of height, to a curious variety of temperature; the hot air all collecting in a layer under the ceiling, while it was starving cold on the floor; so that, by the mere process of standing up, you had your head and your legs in quite different climates. There was no fireplace, but by a most unsatisfactory arrangement, which left you to be starved at the mercy of your servants, a stove-like projection from the wall, opening into and fed from the adjoining ante-room, held a fire which thus warmed two apartments, and cooked your dinner besides. There was no furniture; reading or eating, we squatted Turkish fashion; and at bed-time each man rolled himself in a big wadded quilt, and deposited himself on the floor, which was just big enough to hold the five of us ranged in parallel lines. With fleas we were happily not much troubled, for a little cleanliness easily eradicates them; but the bugs held their ground more stoutly, and though they received a severe check from a well-combined operation, by which one of our party probed all the chinks in the wall with a penknife (bringing out the enemy spitted on the blade), and then pasted the crevices up with paper, they still remained in objectionable force to the end of our stay. Provisions were constantly running short; wood, which at the best of times could only be got with much trouble, and by special order of the Pasha, ran shorter; and we perpetually found ourselves high and dry, shivering at the prospect of a winter's day without food or fuel, and in the blessed frame of mind which such a state of affairs naturally engenders. The long-suffering Spero—who, under happier circumstances, had but the one fault of measuring the freshness of butter by the recentness of his purchase of it,