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SEVEN LETTERS OF WASHINGTON IRVING

EDITED BY CLARA AND RUDOLF KIRK

SEVERAL years ago seven letters of the young Washington Irving came into the possession of the Library. Since they cover the time in Irving's life when he was seeing the world for the first time and since few letters of this period have survived, we are printing them in full, in the belief that their intrinsic interest as well as their historical value warrants taking up two numbers of the Journal with them. The second half of these manuscripts will be published in June.

THE Irving letters in the Rutgers Library were written in the years 1804 and 1805 by Washington to his older brothers, William and Peter, and to his friend, Andrew Hicks. They are more than personal letters, for even on this first trip abroad the twenty-one-year-old Irving contemplated the publication of a journal of travel. Before boarding his ship in New York, he purchased a small vellum-bound notebook, in which to jot down his impressions day by day. From these impressions he planned to compose with more care letters to family and friends. In one of the letters to Peter, then editor of *The Morning Chronicle*, Washington suggested that the brother at home copy and polish the letters for him and lay them aside until his return. "This letter," he wrote on July 25, 1804, soon after his arrival in France, "has been written at different times and in different humors, but generally in a careless, hasty manner which must serve as an excuse for its manifold imperfections. If you find anything or in any other letters I may write, that you think

Bordeaux July 7th 1804

My dear Mother

I have now been a Week in Bordeaux and my ideas begin to collect again, for I suppose you they have been quite in a state of derangement since my arrival, from the novelty of my situation. My letters of introduction have procured me the most hospitable attentions. I was introduced shortly after my arrival to a Dr. Ellison resident of this place. He was a fellow student of yours under Dr. Romayne since which time he has been in different parts of Europe and at length settled himself in Bordeaux, I am told he is shortly to be married to a lady of this city. He is a very gentlemanly, clever fellow, and highly respected here. To his friendship I am indebted for the very agreeable situation in which I am placed. I am in the family of a Monsieur Ferrer, an old gentleman who sometime since was one of the richest and most respectable Merchants in Bordeaux, and for some time Mayor of the city, but a succession of misfortunes ~~and~~ have stripped him of most of his property. He has still enough to support him in an easy genteel style. His house is handsomely furnished and his table both plentiful and elegant.

Bordeaux July 7 1804

Manuscript Letter of Washington Irving

proper to publish, I beg you will arrange and finish it *handsomely*." Obviously, the thought of publication was never far from Irving's mind. Though three of the four Journals written by Irving on this trip abroad have been preserved, and re-printed,¹ letters based on these notes are exceedingly rare.²

Irving's entire trip is covered by the seven long letters in our collection. The first two were sent from Bordeaux and the third from Rome; they were written in the period when Irving was still assiduously writing in his Journal. Both the Journal notes and the letters home grew less frequent as the sociable young Washington learned how to enjoy himself in Europe. By the time he reached Paris in May of 1805, his Journal stopped entirely. Except for a fragmentary notebook of 1805,³ and a sheaf of nine pages of notes⁴ hastily inscribed during this delightful period in Paris, we have no record of his stay in that city. We are very fortunate to have in the present collection two letters of this Paris period, one dated May 31, 1805 and written to "My dear Brother," the other dated June 19, 1805, and appended to a long letter to Andrew Hicks. Our last two letters are written from London before Irving sailed for New York in January, of the following year.

These long, detailed accounts of his experiences written home to William and Peter were no more than those good brothers deserved. For they had noticed that the health of this youngest and much loved brother was somewhat impaired—though certainly not from poring over the law books which Washington thoroughly disliked—and they had insisted that he make the "grand tour" of Europe, an unusual opportunity in 1804 for a young New Yorker of moderate means. "It is with delight we share the world with you," wrote William soon after his departure, rejoicing that the brothers could bestow upon Washington what no one else in the family, except the parents, had ever enjoyed.

¹ *Mr. Irving's Notes and Journal of Travel in Europe (1804-1805)* with an Introduction by William P. Trent, New York, 1920, 3 Vols. The third Journal has never been found.

² *The Life of Washington Irving*, Stanley T. Williams, New York, 1935, I, 48.

³ In the possession of W. F. Clarke of Scarsdale, New York.

⁴ "Washington Irving's First Stay in Paris," Stanley T. Williams, *American Literature*, March, 1930.

Accompanied to the wharf by his devoted family and friends, Washington, too ill to walk onto the ship, was lifted over the side of a vessel bound for Bordeaux, on May 19, 1804. Captain Shaler was heard to observe, "There's a chap who will go overboard before we get across."⁵ But the Captain was mistaken, for Irving was so revived by sea air that he boasted in his first letter home, "I was quite expert at climbing to the mast head and going out on the main top-sail yard." The twenty-three-month trip seems completely to have restored Irving's health, about which we hear little in these letters, except for such cheerful passing comments as, "I never was in a better state of body and mind than at present. I am much the same slender looking fellow as usual but have a degree of strength and activity that almost places me above fatigue."

The letters reflect the mind of an eager traveller, hardly more than a boy, romantically absorbed by many new impressions of old Europe. "I cannot express the sensations I felt on first catching a glimpse of European land," he wrote to William. "Everything is novel and interesting to me."⁶ A climb up an old church spire, the sight of a snow-capped mountain, a bragging soldier in an inn, a walk through a crowded street and a glimpse of a pretty face, these are the pictures which fill the pages of the young man on his first trip abroad. Like the Irving of later days, he was subject to moods, and occasionally the charm of Europe was blotted out by his homesickness, especially when he received no letters on an in-coming packet. "The idea that I am far from home, deprived of frequent communications with my friends, 'A stranger and a sojourner in the land' often throws a damp upon my spirits which I find it difficult to shake off." But the mood never lasted long, for here he was in Europe, a pleasant-looking youth, with sufficient money in his pockets, abroad for the first time.

Pierre Irving, the nephew and biographer of Washington Irving, has written instructions to the printer on many pages of the manuscript letters before us. In *The Life and Letters of Washington Irving* he attempted to preserve, he said, only those parts of the letters which showed the character of his uncle, and he drew his pencil through long descriptions of "scenery and places with which

⁵ *Life and Letters of Washington Irving*, Pierre M. Irving, N.Y., 1869, I, 27.

⁶ *Ibid.*, I, 28.

they abound, and other particulars which would be minute or tedious.”⁷ Without any fear of boring the reader we offer the letters just as Irving wrote them, with the original spelling and punctuation unchanged. “They are,” as Irving said, “brief journals of my daily observations and ideas collected from what I see and hear.” As such they are fresh and interesting to the modern reader.

Part One—Irving at Bordeaux

IRVING passed the first five weeks of his year abroad in Bordeaux to improve his command of the French language—which he never thoroughly mastered. Here he lived comfortably in the home of the ex-mayor, M. Ferrier, and his aged wife. “You cannot conceive how agreeably and tranquilly we live,” he wrote to brother Peter. It is evident that Irving was hardly conscious of the fact that France was at that time in a state of war, for 1803 marked the first year of the war of 1803-1814, when England was in constant danger of invasion. Irving heard with surprise “some talk” on the subject of “the invasion having commenced,” but since “the papers were mute on the subject,” the citizens of Bordeaux gave the matter little thought and Irving still less. Instead he examined the “antiquities” of the town, appraised the beauty of the strollers on the Rue de Tourney, and hurried to The Grand Theatre where he twice saw the great tragedian, Pierre Lafon.

The two letters printed in this issue of the Journal are both addressed to Peter Irving. They were written, however, to be read by Washington’s stern father, the Deacon, his mother, and the numerous brothers and sisters at home, and therefore reflect his more restrained and sober style. To Peter, for instance, he remarks on the fact that “there are so few handsome female faces in this place at present . . . Large mouths & small eyes are very fashionable and they twist and oil their hair profusely.”⁸ In his Journal too he laments “the great scarcity of beauty that prevails at Bordeaux,” and then elaborates the thought: “They have also a manner of dressing their heads that I do

⁷ *Ibid.*, I, 28-29.

⁸ Trent, *op. cit.*, I, 18-19.

not admire. They torture the hair into unnatural twists & ringlets and lard it over with a profusion of *ancient oil*. My objection to this mode may arise from its reminding me of the greasy locks of the squaws I have seen in Canada. At any rate, it cannot be equal in beauty in the eyes of an unprejudiced person, to light fanciful ringlets of hair dry & elastic, that play with every zephyr." Though Irving passes lightly over this passage in the Journal when he writes to his family, these are the sentences on which he elaborates when he composes a long letter to "My dear fellow," an unidentified friend in New York.⁹ To him he writes, "You can't imagine how many narrow escapes I have every day, from falling in love. How often in walking the street, do I see a fair nymph before me tripping along in airy movements. Her form of the greatest symmetry, while the zephyrs are continually betraying:

'. . . the alluring line of grace
That leads the eye a wanton chase
And lets the fancy rove.'

I hurry after to catch a nearer view, to feast my eyes with the bright vision before it disappears. The sound of my steps call her attention, she turns her face towards me—the charm is broken—and all my admiration & enthusiasm is disapated. I see a wide mouth, small black eyes, cheeks highly rouged and hair greased with antient oil and twisted from the forehead to the chin till it resembles the head dress of a Medusa!"

The example above is one among many of how Irving both expanded and contracted the Journal notes when he wrote to family and friends. Many paragraphs in the two letters here printed do not appear in Irving's Journal at all; the remaining paragraphs are extensively modified when turned into letters. The dates of the entries in these letters follow only approximately the dates of the entries in his Journal. To improve the effectiveness of his descriptions, Irving rearranged freely the notes before him. July 1, 1804, is the date of the first of our two letters, and also the date of the first entry in the Journal; the last entry in our second letter is July 25, while his Journal continues to describe his life in Bordeaux until August 3, two days before Irving set out for Genoa and further adventure.

⁹ Williams, *op. cit.*, I, 48-52.

BORDEAUX JULY 1st 1804.*My dear Brother**

I wrote you by the ship *Iohn* from the Quarantine Ground,¹⁰ in the mouth of the Gironne; as that letter may not possibly come to hand I will just mention that we got out of the Hook the evening of the day we saild from New York, that we had a pleasant tho' rather tedious passage, owing to calms & head winds, that the first land we made was Cape Penas on the coast of Spain and that on the twenty fifth of Iune we came to anchor in Verdun Roads, mouth of the Gironne after a passage of thirty six days.

We remaind at Quarantine till the twenty eighth in compliance with a rule observed towards all american vessels. We were then examined with respect to our passports by the Guard ship, a soldier was put on board to prevent our landing till we arrived at Bordeaux; and to attend us to the municipality &c at that place, to have our names professions &c registered & our passports examined & signed. Such are a few of the precautions innumerable that are observed at this day in France.

Our sail up the River was delightful. At first the river was wide and the Banks poor and uninteresting. The river Gironne is formed by the junction of the Dordonne and the Garonne, after entering the latter, the prospects are vastly superior. You then begin to have an idea of

“The vine cover'd hills and gay vallies of France.”

The country is highly cultivated. Hill and dale is one continued vineyard which presents a rich and most luxurient green; the trees are beautiful and picturesque and kept in excellent order. The country is diversified by villages and chateaux, and along the Banks are scattered small cottages embosomed in trees and often over run with vines. They reminded me of those retreats of contentment and felicity so often sung by our pastoral poets, and had but the Garonne have parted with its muddy character and “rolled a silver wave” I should have

* The first letter is addressed to Peter Irving (October 30, 1772-June 27, 1838) Washington Irving's older brother. For a comparison of this letter with the entries in the *Journal* of corresponding date see *Trent*, 1, 3-5. Compare also Irving's long letter to an unidentified friend, *Williams*, 1, 48-52. In this letter Irving again makes use of his *Journal* material on which he elaborates and embroiders once more. Five sentences from this letter are quoted by *Pierre Irving*, 1, 28.

¹⁰ Irving was detained in quarantine for five days. He arrived in the city of Bordeaux on June 30, 1804.

pronounced them the very habitations for our rural rhymsters. About ten or twelve miles below Bourdeaux the banks of the river on one side became perpendicular, and we observed square holes cut in them that appeared like the mouths of caverns. These we were told were entrances to the Quarries from whence they cut the stone used for building at Bourdeaux. These quarries are said to run eight and nine miles under ground; we wished to go ashore and enter one of them, but the *Militaire* would not consent to it, and we did not attempt to bribe him. The chateaux cottages &c in the country are all built of stone. Among the former, one was pointed out to me by one of my fellow passengers / an old gentleman who had left Bordeaux eighteen years since / as worthy of notice. He informed me that for many years while he resided in France it was called "*Le chateau de Diable*" from an opinion the country people had, that it was haunted; and that nobody could be prevailed upon to live in it. Since the revolution however, the fear of his Satannick majesty has ceased to prevail as much as formerly; they have turned him out of this country seat at least; for I perceived that it was inhabited.

On yesterday morning / Saturday the 30 Iu^{ne} / we arrived and disembarked at this port after having been exactly six weeks on ship board. I had began to be considerably of a sailor before I left the ship. My sound jacket and loose trousers were extremely convenient. I could lie down any wheres without fear of spoiling my clothes. I was quite expert at climbing to the mast head and going out on the main topsail yard.

I was thoughtless enough to forget my Surtout when I left New York, and should have suffered for the want of it had not the captain have lent me a comfortable great coat during the Voyage. I also forgot a bottle of Lavender water which M^r Johnson¹¹ made for me. It would have been very grateful at sea as our cabin was crowded.

JULY 2^d 1804

I was interrupted in my letter yesterday; and I must now finish it in a great hurry as there is a Vessel to set sail for New York in an hour. I shall not therefore be as particular as I intended, but my next shall be very minute. Every thing is novel and interesting to me. The

¹¹ "The celebrated actress" is written in the handwriting of Pierre Irving on a separate slip of paper and attached to the MSS., *i.e.*, Mrs. Elizabeth Johnson.

heavy gothic looking buildings. The ancient churches the manners of the people—it really appears like another world. There are few handsome streets, the whole city is cut up into lanes alleys & the houses on each side extremely high. The buildings are many of them extremely ancient. They are all built of stone and the better order decorated with sculpture. The weather is excessively hot, owing in a great degree to the reflection of the sun from the pavements which are of light colored lime stone the same as the buildings. The heat of the weather will oblige me to leave the place soon and go to some pleasant situation in the country near Montpellier.

This morning I met Leffingwell¹² of the house of Leffingwell & Dudley of New York. You cannot conceive how glad I was to see him. He is an old acquaintance & a very clever fellow. He is here on business. I went with him to the consul Lee to get my protection & to deliver my letter of introduction. My reception was very friendly and I shall dine with M^r Lee tomorrow. As yet I have staid at the Hotel Franklin where Capt Shaler¹³ and myself had a room together, but to day I shall expect to go in a french family. I have only delivered one of my letters as yet, but intend to deliver the rest today.

My ideas are not collected sufficient to give you a rational letter, you must expect my next to be more satisfactory.

I am much hurried & forget every thing I wished to say.

Give my love to father mother and all the family and the warmest remembrances to my friends. Another vessel sails in a day or two by which I will write.

Your affectionate Brother

W. I.

P.S. Bonaparte has assumed the title of Emperor of france and it is expected will be crown'd on the 14 inst. Georges is shot. Moreau¹⁴ it is said has sat out for spain with an intencion of embarking for America. Thus wags the world.

¹² Leffingwell is referred to again in a letter to an unidentified friend, "He is here with a ship of which he is part owner, and is detained by government, for having touched at the English port of Gibraltar. Leffingwells head seems entirely turned with french manners, and I expect when he returns to New York he will be quite what the french term an Incroyable." Williams, 1, 51.

¹³ The Captain of the ship which brought Irving to Europe.

¹⁴ Jean Victor Moreau (1763-1813) did come to the United States to escape from Napoleon. He settled near Morrisville, New Jersey, where he lived for over eight years.

*My Dear Brother**

BORDEAUX, JULY 7th 1804

I have now been a Week in Bordeaux and my ideas begin to collect again, for I assure you they have been quite in a state of derangement since my arrival, from the novelty of my situation. My letters of introduction have procured me the most hospitable attentions. I was introduced shortly after my arrival to a D^r Ellison resident of this place. He was a fellow student of yours under D^r Romaine¹⁵ since which time he has been in different parts of Europe and at length settled himself in Bordeaux, I am told he is shortly to be married to a lady of this city. He is a very gentlemanly, clever fellow, and highly respected here. To his friendship I am indebted for the very agreeable situation in which I am placed. I am in the family of a Mons^r Ferrier, an old gentleman who sometime since was one of the richest and most respectable merchants in Bordeaux and for sometime Mayor of the city, but a succession of misfortunes has stripped him of most of his property. He has still enough to support him in an easy genteel style; His house is handsomely furnished and his table both plentiful and elegant.

The family consists of the old gentleman the old lady and myself with three servants. They are a most amiable old couple, highly estimated and visited by the first people of Bordeaux. The french that they speak is free from the barbarous gascon accent and dialect that prevails in this part of France, and as they do not speak english I am obliged to talk entirely in french, which makes me improve more rapidly in the language than I otherwise would. It is merely as a favor and in consequence of the reccommendation of D^r Ellison that I was admitted in this family, for they do not take boarders. I am universally congratulated on my good fortune.

I am gradually growing accustomed to the looks of Bordeaux. Its narrow streets and high buildings no longer appear singular. There is a strength and solidity about the houses that gives them an air of dignity which we do not find in our light american buildings. The houses inside & out are of a kind of lime stone, excepting that their rooms are sometimes panneld, with board floors. But generally the floors are of stone marble or tyle. The houses are commonly three

* Letter to Peter Irving. For a comparison with Irving's Journal notes of the same time, see Trent, *op. cit.*, 1, 5-24.

¹⁵ Benjamin Romaine, master in the school in New York attended by Irving.

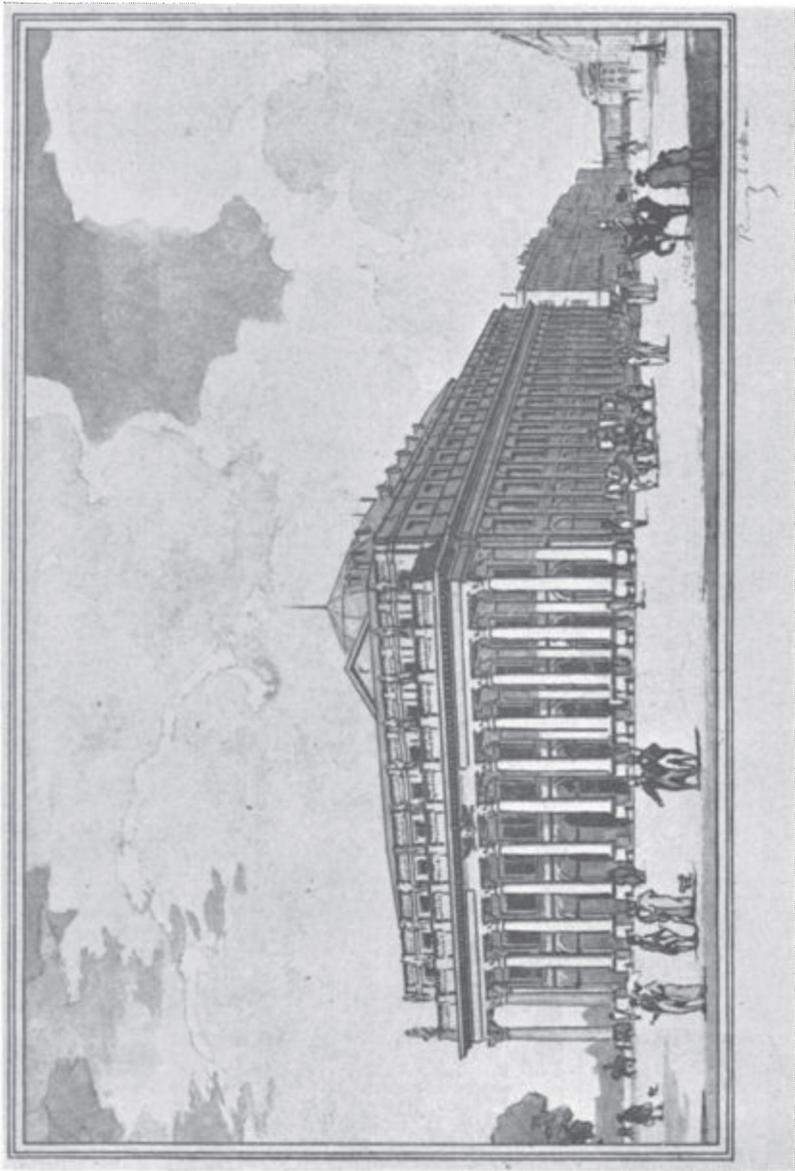
stories high, The windows in the casement style with handsome Iron raild balconies. The doors are folding and very large and eight or ten feet within the entrance a folding gate of open worked iron extends across the passage. In the middle of the houses is a square court open from top to bottom of the house with galleries running round it in the upper stories. From this court the interior rooms of the houses receive both light and air. You cannot conceive how cool and agreeable these houses are in summer, and I am told they are very warm in winter when carpets are spread over the paved floors.

There are some remains of antiquity at this place, particularly the Palais Galien which stands near my lodging. It is the remains of a roman amphitheatre built of Bricks and stone, under the reign of the Emperor Galien, towards the middle of the third century. Since the revolution the land on which it stands was sold in common with other national property and the purchasers began demolishing the building to make way for streets and houses. Fortunately however a gentleman of taste¹⁶ arrived from paris in quality of Prêfet of this department, and rescued the precious remain of antiquity from entire demolition. The municipality have received a charge to look to its preservation so that there are hopes of its still remaining for a considerable space of time. Nothing however stands but part of the bare walls and one of the grand entrances. Here and there on the inside are mutilated capitals of Tuscan columns which appear to have been of the same kind of stone which they use in Bordeaux for building at present. I regard this ancient pile with peculiar reverence two or three times I have strolld home at night thro its silent ruins and as I passed under the dark arches of the grand entrance I have almost fancied I could see an old roman stalking amidst the gloom.

There are also several ancient churches of which I have only seen the interior of two which were of inferior order, but extremely antique in their appearance. There is a party of us intend in a day or two, to visit the cathedral and several of the superior churches as also the chateau Trompette. A castle built in the reign of Lewis the fourteenth.

By thy bye this old building has not served merely for a place of amusement to the romans. As I was poring over an old book printed

¹⁶ Trent identifies this "gentleman of taste" with Comte Antoine Claire Thibaudeau, who was appointed Prefect of the Gironde by Napoleon in 1800. I, 157.



Courtesy of the Grolier Club

The Grand Theater of Bordeaux

in 1619 and entitled *chronique Bourdeloise* I found an account of several jovial meetings held by some *bon vivants* of the infernal regions, in the Palais Galien they also held some kind of a court there, I could not understand the french well enough perfectly to understand what kind of a one it was, but I believe it bore some resemblance to what we term in english a *Dover Court*. The same book mentions the execution of a man for sorcery, who before his death, confessed to have been at some of these diabolic festivals. Since the revolution, however, nothing of the kind has been known, the devil having abandoned his old habitations and entered into the heads and hearts of the great men of the land.

The Grand Theatre¹⁷ is a magnificent building & said to be the finest of its kind in France. The interior however, is not painted to suit my taste, and the painting is much soild & faded. I have been twice to see La Fond¹⁸ one of the two first tragedians in France. He was performing a few nights at this place and has I believe returned to Paris. Tho I could not understand the language, yet I was delighted with the actor. His figure is tall and majestic, his face uncommonly expressive and his voice full and sonorous. The other actors are miserable enough as is generally allowd. The french actors are very violent in their gesticulations and their attitude[s] are often to straind & unnatural. The scenery is very handsome & well executed. The dresses superb with great attention to *costume*.

There are two or three other Theatres of inferior merits, one of them called the theatre Francaise is nearly as large as our theatre but the actors are miserable. One of the low theatres has a lack pudding on a stage in front of the house, to draw the multitude by his tricks and jokes.

JULY 8.

At one Oclock I am to accompany M. Bosc (the gentleman to whom my letter of credit is directed) to his country seat a little ways out of town, to dine & spend the afternoon there.

M. Bosc has promised to take charge of my letters to and from New York when I am travelling so that you will direct all my letters under cover to his firm in Bordeaux.

¹⁷ Built by Victor Louis in 1773-80.

¹⁸ Pierre Lafon (1775-1846). For further comments on Lafon see Irving's letter to an unidentified friend, Williams, 1, 49.

Mess. J. J. Bosc & C^o rue du Pont-St Iean. I have established an exchange of papers for you with I Berner & C^o ship Chandlers; Berner was formerly clerk to Constantine the broker who recommended him to me as a person who would be eager to make such an exchange. He has promised to send the Journal du Commerce of Paris and a paper of Bordeaux with any political or commercial handbill &c that occurs in return for the Morning Chronicle & such other american papers as you can spare. You will take care to be punctual as he has been repeatedly disappointed in similar arrangements. His direction is I Berner & C^o N^o 96 chartron Bordeaux. The french papers are very barren concerning public affairs. The motions of government are not so public here as in England or with us and it is merely by vague rumors we learn what is going forward in respect to affairs of the nation. Moreau¹⁹ has departed for some port of the continent to sail for america but what port I cannot learn. The Emperor it is expected will be crown'd sometime this month, but whether by the hands of the pope or by the cardinal Flesch uncle to the Emperor, I am uncertain.²⁰ In fact I hear less of the war and of the public concerns of France, here, than I did in New York.

JULY 9th.

The people in Bordeaux exercise a liberty of speech that at first surprized me. They make no scruple of talking very freely among themselves concerning the First Consul and reprobatng his conduct. This I am told is not noticed by the police as long as it is done in private but should they express their sentiments publicly and endeavor to instill them in the minds of others they would certainly involve themselves in trouble. In New York we have an opinion that France is in a state of Agitation and confusion in consequence of the war and the preparations for the invasion. As yet I have seen nothing of the kind. Everything apparently goes on with smoothness and regularity. No armed forces are seen parading the streets no drums or cannons to be heard. All is order and tranquility and did I not know to the contrary I should think them in peace with all the world. The merchants are the chief sufferers as I see their Vessels laid up in

¹⁹ See note 14.

²⁰ He had been proclaimed Emperor on May 18. The coronation by the Pope took place on December 2, 1804.

the river totally dismantled of their rigging and they universally complain of want of business. The American shipping crowd the port and enjoy a fine harvest during the contests of Europe. It is only from seeing soldiers posted at the public places that I recollect I am under a military government. A stranger while he acts peaceably may walk the streets continually and frequent every place of curiosity business or amusement apparently unnoticed and unknown, but let him once behave improper and he will soon find his every movement is markd and known.

To this strictness of the Police may be ascribed the personal security and public tranquility of france. The Roads and highways of the country are patrolled by troops of Gens d'armes who visit the different Taverns & houses and acquaint themselves with the manner of living of the inhabitants and their modes of subsistance the cities swarm with spies in every direction.

In consequence the streets & lanes may be traversed & the roads & highways travelled night & day without any danger of depredation or insult. Were this not the case every thing might be apprehended from the number of poor people and beggars with which this country abounds. The streets swarm with fruit women, tumblers, shoe blacks and savoyards with their musical instruments and now and then you have a grand concert both vocal & instrumental from half a dozen italian peasant women with fiddles & tamborines. The streets are entirely free from broils & boxing matches. A drunken man is very rarely seen, and generally happens to be some american who has been *enjoying* himself. Our country men have got a name for drunkenness among this temperate people and often when there is any disturbance at a public place of amusement it is common for the french to say—"pho its only some drunken american or other." This vice which they consider inexcusable among themselves, they excuse in an american; they say "it is the custom of his country."

JULY 10th

An Embargo has been laid on the Vessels in the port for some days past, to facilitate the passage of a number of Gun boats down the River. Yesterday it was taken off and a Schooner sails this morning for New York which occasions me to finish my letter abruptly.

The excellent situation I am in has determined me to remain about a month longer at this place and to take a French master immediately. By this plan I shall escape some of the hot weather which prevails in this season in the South of France, and also be enabled to travel with more satisfaction from a better acquaintance with the language. As I have nearly got through the routine of dinners which my letters brought upon me, I shall become quite domestic. M. Ferriere's house is in a retired part of the city where I shall not be liable to noise or interruption. The fashions here are very similar to those of New York, so that I have not been obliged to purchase many articles of clothes, my other expenses independent of board have been very trifling.

Amid the scenes of novelty that surround me, my thoughts often recur towards home with the most lively emotions. The idea that I am far from home, deprived of frequent communications with my friends, "A stranger and a sojourner in the land" often throws a damp upon my spirits which I find it difficult to shake off. This I hope will wear away in time as I become more accustomed to the manners of the people and more acquainted with their language, should it not, I am affraid it will induce me to shorten the term of my absence. Those who have never been far from home, have no idea with what fondness the imagination dwells upon the little spot of earth where our family and friends are collected and from which we are far distant. I have laid in bed and thought of you all for hours and you are nightly the subject of my dreams.

My health is vastly improved. I am convinced that a little travelling will be sufficient to restore it perfectly. The climate and manner of living in this country agree most excellently with my constitution. The weather is not so hot as it was on my first arrival. The heat here has not that oppressive and enervating quality that it has in New York, and the evenings are cool and delightful.

There is a beautiful walk in the centre of one of the Public streets with three rows of high trees and stone benches under them called the Rue Tourney. There is also a superb public garden calld the "Champ de Mars" very extensive and enclosed with Iron railing; before the revolution it was laid out with flower beds paterres &c &c was open to none but well dressd persons, but since, it has become common to all ranks, and no flowers are cultivatd It contains sev-

eral delightful shady walks and groves. My chief amusement in the evening is walking in these places and observing the various forms and faces around me. In the morning I rise early and study; I then go down in the garden (we have a very pretty one in rear of the house) where I find the old gentleman seated under a favorite Fig tree reading the paper. After I have read the news and the old gentleman has examined the state of his plants & flowers, which form his chief objects of amusement we take our breakfast sociably together. You cannot concieve how agreeably and tranquilly we live. The old people are the pictures of health and good nature, and I do not believe there was ever a sour word passed between them. M. Ferriere has for a long time wished for the seeds of some plants from New York but has been repeatedly disappointed in his endeavors to procure them, inclosed you will find a list of the seeds he most wishes for with a request to father to send them. I wish you would deliver it to Brother William and desire him when he has time to attend to it. If they are put in a small box and delivered to some captain sailing for this port, they will come safe to hand.

remember me most affectionately to father mother and all the family. have been too much engaged since my arrival to write to them all individually but this must serve for a family Letter. I wish you would let the letters I write to you & william & in fact to all of the family, be kept together with care and not scatterd about negligently as I shall wish to see them at some future period.

Remember me to Hicks,²¹ the Swartuonts Robertson²² & c & request them to write frequently. You will also remember me to M^r Hoffman²³ and his family particularly. You will tell him that I was shewn by M^r Ionathan Iones of this place a letter lately received by him from M^r Colden dated at paris. M^r Colden's health was much improved but he was extremely anxious respecting his connexions in New York, not having received any intelligence concerning them for a long time. He talked of shortening his tour in consequence & probably returning to embark at this place for New York. I took the liberty of writing him what particulars I reccollected con-

²¹ Andrew Hicks, an old school friend in New York.

²² Archibald Robertson, Irving's instructor in drawing when he was in school.

²³ Josiah Ogden Hoffman, the New York lawyer under whom Irving had been reading law for the past six years.

cerning M^{rs} Colden and the rest of his family and friends and I hope it will have some effect in lessening his uneasiness.

JULY 11th

The Vessel sailed yesterday sooner than I expected which prevented me from getting this letter on board her; I shall therefore continue it till the next opportunity.

You will find my letters, in some places contradictory; they are brief journals of my daily observations and ideas, collected from what I see and hear, and I often find, one day, some mistaken opinion I have formed or some misinformation I have received the day preceding. You will therefore make all due allowances in this particular.

In a former part of this letter I mentioned that the people of Bourdeaux exercise a liberty of speech in private which they dare not use in public. I am since informed that they make no hesitation of speaking their sentiments in the coffee houses & other public places this however I presume is only partially the case and that this liberty is allowd them only as long as their sentiments are favorable to the government. Certain it is however, the Emperor is no favorite among the Bordeaulaise. Some of the people of this place, merchants of respectability with whom I am acquainted, have spoken of him to me with the greatest contempt. I have seen verses of the most pointed and inflammatory kind which are written against him and circulated about in manuscript. At the theatre, when any sentence occurs that may be applied to him it is loudly applauded. The other evening in one of their celebrated Tragedies, speaking of an Usurper & a Tyrant, it was said "He is our conqueror, not our King." This sentence I am told was extravagantly applauded for near ten minutes. The people of this city (which you know is a very commercial place) are extremely anxious for peace; which makes them the more bitter against the "powers that be."

JULY 12th

Yesterday afternoon, I spent most agreeably in viewing one of the finest pieces of Gothic architecture said to be in France. This was the Church of S^t André the cathedral of Bordeaux. It was built by the English when in possession of this city in the eleventh or twelvth

century. The style of architecture is said to be extremely similar to that of Westminster Abbey in London and bears about it an air of indescribable dignity and solemnity. The first view of it brought strongly to my recollection the words of our invaluable poet.

“How reverend is the face of this tall pile” &c²⁴

It is a vast building entirely of stone decorated with all that profusion of carved work and minute ornament that characterizes the Gothic style. When inside, the lofty ceilings of arched work the vast pillars the windows of painted glass had a tout ensemble that produced emotions of awe and veneration. The effects of the revolution are discernable in this building. The unhallowed hands of tasteless barbarians have stripped the paintings from the walls, have torn the images of the saints from the Niches of which they had retained peaceable possession for centuries, and have decapitated several of the cardinals who are ranged over the grand Portal. Still however they could not injure the beauty of the main architecture, the undertaking would have required too much labor and time for the patience of a mob. The Church has been cleaned, is undergoing repairs in several places has again become the “house of prayer,” and promises to stand for centuries if left unmolested by sacriligious hands. Our company consisted of five and we procured the old sexton of the place to shew us the way to the top of one of the grand towers, of which there are two. Our ascent was quite intricate, and reminded me of some of those winding and perplexed passages thro which some of the heroes of modern romances wander when prowling about the interior of an old castle. In some places we had to ascend stone stair cases that wound up a round tower of about six feet diameter and dimly lighted by narrow appertures in the wall. We then had to pass through narrow passages made in the wall of the church having now and then on one side small square holes that looked into the interior of the building & on the other side similar ones that gave us a peep into the city. In one place our route entered the church and formed a narrow gallery almost as high as the cieling or roof from whence we could see the people far below us at their prayers. In another place we had to walk on a kind of stone cornice that ran round part of the outside of the edifice. After a great deal

²⁴ Congreve's *Mourning Bride*, Act II, Scene 1.

of this winding and twisting through intricate passages we at last arrived on the highest accessible part of one of the steeples.

The view from this place was vast and interesting. Beneath us lay the city presenting a singular *melange* of architecture of different orders and periods. Beyond it the beautiful harbour in form of a crescent, crowded with the ships of *my country*, and all around in the distance, a level country covered with Vineyards, diversified by chateaus and enlivened by the waters of the Garonne. From the eminence on which we stood there ran up a spire of about an hundred and twenty or thirty feet high. We could stand on the inside and see to the very top of it as there was no stairs or any wooden work to intercept the view. It is built entirely of stone with windows to the very top and what surprized me was that the walls were not a foot in thickness. This gave it a dangerous appearance particularly as I observed cracks in several places secured by bars of iron.

After we had remaind here for some time and witnessed a beautiful sunset we set out to retrace the labyrinth by which we had ascended, and got safe down again without any bruises or dislocations. I shall visit this church again before I leave Bordeaux, for I have not examined in any satisfactory manner its construction & architecture. There are two churches in this city still more ancient, tho not equal to this in size or workmanship. I have not seen them yet.

13th

The Ship John Morgan arrived here three or four days since and I have been extremely disappointed in not receiving letters by her. Do write often to me; you cannot think how earnestly I desire to hear from you all. Your best way will be to direct to me as I have before mentioned, to the care of Mess^r J J Bosc & C^o, but if any vessel should be sailing to Genoa or Leghorn soon you may also write to me by that opportunity directed either to the house of Mess^{rs} Philip & Anth^y Felichi at Leghorn or to the House of Kuhn Green & C^o Genoa.

There has been some talk here for these few days past of the invasions having commenced, but it has subsided. The papers are mute on the subject, indeed they have little to say except about the intended Dresses of the Empereur & Emperess at the coronation,

which is to take place the 18 Brumain, and similar subjects of abject adulation. A paper in paris entitled the *Publiciste* lately inserted an extract from a foreign paper, containing conjectures of Bonapartes designs with respect to the Papal territory. The paper was immediately stopped, and it was with great difficulty that it was permitted to commence again after two days cessation on condition of changing its Editor.

A great part of the *Beau Monde* of Bordeaux have gone to take the waters of Bagneres, a town situated among the Pyrenes, and famous for its medicinal springs. To this desertion of the fashionable world it is probably owing that there are so few handsome female faces in this place at present, I assure you I have hardly seen a lady since my arrival whose countenance accorded with my ideas of beauty. Large mouths & small eyes are very fashionable and they twist and oil their hair profusely. There are two young ladies here however with whom I am delighted. They are the daughters of Mr Ionathan Iones, an american & one of the first merchants of the place, and who has been very attentive to me in consequence of a letter I had for him. His daughters speak english tolerably well and though they are brought up in the french style, (as M^{rs} Iones is a french lady) yet they have very much the appearance and manners of the american ladies, one of them is quite a handsome girl.

JULY 15th

This morning I went with several others to visit the church of S^t Michel. After viewing the cathedral of S^t André there is nothing in the architecture of this church capable of exciting admiration. It is a gothic building not quite so old as S^t André but also built by the English. We ascended the steeple, which stands at a little distance from the main body of the church, and enjoyed a fine prospect from the top of it. The spire which was of stone & very high, was blown down in a storm about thirty years since.²⁵ I could not learn if it did much damage in the neighborhood. In a vaulted apartment under this tower, are several bodies of persons who have been dead a long time. They have been taken out of the family vaults of the church to make room for fresh corps's. What is singular, the skeletons remain entire and are covered with the skin as dry as parchment. They

²⁵ The hurricane of 1768 destroyed the spire of the bell tower of St. Michel.

were ranged about the walls without order and many had fallen to the floor and were trodden to pieces. The fellow who bore the light and acted as *cicerone* handled and toss them about without ceremony. It reminded me forcibly of the grave diggers scene in hamlet. Here was a true picture of the equality to which death reduces us. Persons of all ranks & descriptions crowded promiscuously together. In one place the body of a Belle leaned against that of a Beggar and in another a Chevalier of S^t Louis was the intimate neighbor of a common Porter!

Sunday is considered in france as a day of relaxation and pleasure. The Principal people in Bordeaux go out of town and spend the day at their county houses which are generally two or three miles from the city. The lower classes shut up their shops (except such as are very eager to make money, and such as keep confectionaries &c) and amuse themselves in the walks and public gardens.

The churches are again reopened, but the people do not attend them with any of the fervor that prevailed before the revolution. In the evening every place of amusement endeavors to entrap a portion of the multitude, and their choice is bewildered between stage dancing, plays, horse riding, juggling & fireworks.

17th

The dealers in fashions & delicacies, such as milliners confectioners &c display a very pretty taste in the arrangements and decorations of their shops. The principal streets have a gay look, from this circumstance, and a stranger is often tempted to purchase what he does not want from the pretty and inviting manner in which the merchandize is exposed to view. The tradespeople are also great adepts in the art of persuasion, and, with a trifling knowledge of the English language, and an infinite share of adroitness & insinuation, will often manage to make some of our simple Country men, buy a thousand things they have no occasion for.

I was highly amused the other day with an instance of the kind. I went to the Exchange with an honest American captain and as the hour of business had not commenced we amused ourselves with walking in a wide lobby that runs round the change room, on each side of which are ranged *Boutiques* or stalls, of petty merchants, jewellers, confectioners &c. The Captain stopped before one of these, to price a very small hand organ, as he was thinking of purchasing one to

teach a canary bird to whistle. The Boutique was kept by a pretty little black eyed woman who could prattle a little broken english. Finding the captain was not inclined to buy she prevailed upon him to accompany her to a small ware Room she had in the neighborhood where she would shew him some very fine instruments. As we were going the captain turnd to me with a knowing wink & whispered, "Now you see how she'll palaver a body & try to come along side of the L'argent, but the devil a sous do I lay out for her fiddles & music mills."

The little woman however, knew how to manage her cards, she playd *hail columbia yankee doodle* got her husband to play on the forte piano, helped us to wine in short I cannot repeat half the manouvers but by the help of music & wine & flattery & a pretty face the honest captain was so bewildered that before he got out of the ware room he had bought a large, lumbering hand organ for 400 livres (about a third more than it was worth) which he declared he did not know what the devil to do with after he had got it.

20th

The commencement of the revolution must have been fatal to many fine specimens of the arts. In this city there are still traces of the barbarism that prevaild. The churches stripped of many of their paintings, the Saints broken to pieces or decapitated, and two or three fine bronze statues of their kings, melted down and coind into money. The men of taste and understanding in many of the cities made use of a successful artifice to preserve several of the finest monuments of the arts from the fury of the populace, which was directed against every thing that reminded them of Royalty or nobility.

On the public statues, columns &c they caused to be written "Fellow Citizens, this is *your* property, let it not be destroyed."

Had the same mania prevaild in antient times in the revolutions that took place, had they then extended their rage to the very effigies of Gods & men, what would have become of the fine reliques that now excite the admiration of the world. Their temples would have been demolished, their appolos, their Hercules's their venus's shattered to atoms and as Laocoon was a priest, perhaps like the modern saints, his head would have experienced a slight disunion from his body.

The French look back to the days of Robespierre & his contemporaries with horror, and perhaps it is the fear of similar scenes with those that then prevailed, that prevents them from making some desperate struggle to shake off the Tyrant that oppresses them.

25th

I hasten to finish this letter to profit by an opportunity that occurs in half an hour. I have been prevented from writing any thing in this letter for these three or four days as I have been pretty steadily employed in writing to others. I shall, however, go about a similar *family epistle* as soon as this is closed, and direct it either to you or william. This letter has been written at different times and in different humors, but generally in a careless, hasty manner which must serve as an excuse for its "manifold imperfections." If you find any thing in it, or in any other letters I may write, that you think proper to publish, I beg you will arrange and finish it *handsomely*. It would put a great restraint upon my letter writing if I was obliged to finish every sentence in a manner fit for publication.

I shall conclude with again assuring you that my health is much improved. I have also got over the homesickness in a great measure, that oppressed my spirits some time since.

I shall rest here till the vintage commences, as I wish to acquire the language as much as possible before I set out & I could not have a better situation than I am in at present. It is a perfect little palace where I reside and every thing around me is agreeable. I could not be accommodated in any decent hotel in Bordeaux at as cheap a rate as I pay where I am.

You mention in a hasty addition to a letter of Hick's that you have no time to write punctually. I am perfectly sensible how much your time must be occupied, and, tho a letter from you will always be received by me with the liveliest pleasure, yet I cannot complain if I receive one but seldom.

With every wish for your prosperity and happiness, I am my dear brother

Yours affectionately

W.I.