

# LETTERS OF WASHINGTON IRVING

EDITED BY CLARA AND RUDOLF KIRK

*THE letters by Washington Irving which are included here form a portion of the group which are owned by the Library. The first two, written to Irving's brother Peter Irving from Bordeaux in 1804 immediately after he went abroad, were published in the last number of the JOURNAL. The four letters here printed, dated nearly a year later, were addressed to his brothers Peter and William Irving and to a friend, Andrew Hicks, and give us glimpses of Irving during the second half of his first visit to Europe. The last letter of the group will be published in December.*

## Part Two – From Italy to Paris and London

**A**FTER a five weeks' stay in Bordeaux, Irving left that city on August 5, 1804, with his Journal under his arm, for a ten months' trip through southern Europe, which finally brought him to Paris in the spring of 1805. Irving, at the age of twenty-one, had been sent abroad by his brothers, Peter and William, to recover his health and to see the world. "My health is perfectly restored," he assured his anxious family in an early letter. His own animated account of his adventures in the four letters which follow indicate that he has now turned his whole attention to seeing the world. These letters, and the two Journals of the period, in which he wrote his day-to-day observations, show us a gay and eager youth quite prepared to help fight off pirates and bandits, to prattle in French, Spanish, or Italian with his fellow travellers in the coach, to flirt with the novices of a convent when he had the opportunity, and to profit by walks and talks in the galleries of Rome with his artist-friend, Washington Allston. In short, this light-hearted young Irving quickly threw off his ill-health, and learned to enjoy to the full all the European wonders, which his stern father in far-away New York would have frowned upon.

In the first of these four letters, written on April 12, 1805, Irving reports to his brother William that he is about to leave Rome in the

company of a clever young lawyer, Joseph Cabell, whom he had met earlier in the year in Naples. "I am eager to get to Paris, where I can rest some time from my wanderings and pay attention to several branches of art and science into which I wish to get a little insight," writes Irving to his brother as an excuse for his sudden departure with Cabell, who had promised to show him Paris. Though Washington covers the announcement with a description of Holy Week in Rome, William is not so easily fooled. In his reply to this letter William chides Washington for his "skipping through Italy and omitting to visit Florence and Venice," and makes it clear that he considers his meeting with Cabell "unfortunate."<sup>1</sup>

On April 13, the day after Irving wrote the first of our letters, the second Journal came to an abrupt end, probably because of the difficulties of travel in those days, and also because of the many new impressions crowding in upon the young man. "Every moment was occupied either by observation, study or reflection," he writes to William, who had taken him to task for neglecting his family. "In sitting down to communicate information, I should have sacrificed an additional stock that might have been acquired. Even the hasty notes which I usually take in travelling, became troublesome & encroaching."

For a knowledge of Irving's activities between April 13 and May 17, 1805, we have been dependent upon his brief Travelling Notes.<sup>2</sup> The second of the following letters, addressed to Andrew Hicks, an old school friend in New York, is therefore a valuable addition to our picture of Irving during this interval. Begun on May 4, 1805, the letter was continued on June 6 and 19; it was not actually mailed until Irving's friend, James Bankhead, found it among Irving's boxes in Paris. Bankhead added an explanatory note of his own, and mailed the letter to Hicks on October 10, a fortnight after Irving had left Paris for Holland. In this letter, extending over so many weeks, we not only have a detailed description of the trip north from Italy, but also a paragraph on Paris, where Irving hardly had time to write to his family at all. Here he put aside his fourth Journal,

<sup>1</sup> *Mr. Irving's Notes and Journal of Travel in Europe, 1804-1805*. Edited by William P. Trent, New York, 1920, I, xxxvi.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, III, 71-84.

begun on May 17, 1805, and resorted instead to hasty notes of his daily round of theaters, parks, shops, and cafés.<sup>3</sup>

The third letter in our collection is one of the few which have come down to us from this period. Washington writes to his brother, presumably William, that he has "not yet recovered from that kind of delirium which every stranger experiences on first arriving in Paris." He then gives an account of his friends to his older brother, "as I suppose you are anxious generally to know what company I am in, especially in such a City as Paris." And he hastens to add, "Be assured, my dear brother, that the importance of being guarded in my intimacies is sufficiently impressed on my mind. Left to my own discretion I feel the great necessity of keeping a steady eye on my conduct and of endeavoring to convince my friends that the confidence they reposed in me was not misplaced." He admits to his brother that in reviewing his conduct in Europe he observed here and there "little follies that a young man surrounded by allurements cannot always avoid," but, he added, he would not "seriously blush to acknowledge" any of his actions. The "little follies" he refers to had already been recorded in the brief private notes kept at that time. "Had a levee of Taylors—Shirt makers bootmakers &c to rig me out *a la mode de Paris*," and "In the evening went to the Theatre Montansier in the Palais Royal. This is a little theatre much frequented by the frail fair ones . . . After theatre took a stroll in the garden of Palais Royal—accosted by a *fille de Joie* who begged me to purchase a boquet for her—I saw it was a mere scheme of the poor girls to get a few sous to buy herself some bread for the next day she having had no custom that night—it was evident she & the old woman who sold boquets acted in concert. I pitied her and paid double price for the boquet. The poor creature kissd me thankd me a dozen times & wanted me to go home with her."<sup>4</sup> As Irving wrote to his brother Peter, "I am a young man & in Paris."<sup>5</sup>

After four months in Paris which seemed to him "of all the places

<sup>3</sup> "Washington Irving's First Stay in Paris," Stanley T. Williams, *American Literature*, March, 1930, pp. 15-20.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 16-17.

<sup>5</sup> *The Life and Letters of Washington Irving*, Pierre M. Irving, New York, 1883, I, 72.

. . . I have seen in Europe . . . the most fascinating,"<sup>6</sup> Irving left France for a short tour of the Low Countries before he set sail for England, "the land of our forefathers," thankful, as he tells us in the fourth letter here printed, that his "ramblings are nearly at an end."

ROME, APRIL 12<sup>th</sup> 1805

*My dear Brother\**

I wrote you a letter which I finished and dispatched the day before yesterday by the way of Bordeaux, but hearing of an opportunity that presents for New York from Leghorn I improve it to send you a few lines which are scribbled in the midst of the hurry of preparation for a long Journey. I leave this city tomorrow in company with M<sup>r</sup> Cabell of Virginia,<sup>6a</sup> our ultimate destination is paris.

The route we expect to take will be from hence to Bologna by the way of Lovetto & Ancona, avoiding all Tuscany which is still surrounded by a *cordon* of Troops. From Bologna [to] Milan, then across the lake Maggiore—along the course of the river Tecina to Mount S<sup>t</sup>Goatherd, across the mountain to the lake of Lucerne in Switzerland, over the lake to Lucerne from thence to Zurich—from Zurich to Basle and then by the best route, to Paris. Those are the general points we expect to strike tho we may make many deviations as circumstances may render necessary or adv[is]able. It is a long fatiguing journey to contemplate but the beautiful scenery and interesting objects throughout make me anticipate it with delight. //// The season is highly favorable.

I have not spent the time generally allowed by Travellers for

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6a</sup> Joseph Carrington Cabell was five years older than Irving. He was a member of a distinguished Virginia family, and, like Irving, was educated for the law which he never practiced. He later collaborated with Thomas Jefferson in the founding of the University of Virginia, of which he became Rector.

\* Addressed to Mr. William Irving Iunr.

New York

United States of America

This letter was written the day before Irving left Rome for Paris, and on the same day Irving ended his second Journal. For William's irate reply to this letter, see Williams, *op. cit.* I, 65-70. For a comparison of this letter with the last entry in the second Journal see Trent, *op. cit.* III, 68-70.

viewing rome, but I think I have taken as comprehensive a view of it as is consistent with my plans

I am eager to get to Paris where I can rest some time from my wanderings and pay attention to several branches of art & science into which I wish to get a little insight. I have been rambling about, restless and unsettled for nearly a year and shall be glad of a little repose. My mind is fatigued by being kept on the Stretch so long by a continual succession of novelties and wonders in nature & art It requires relaxation, but that it can never enjoy while I am in motion—I fear, not while I am in Europe—Rome has almost exhausted me and I have hardly room for another city in my head.

On my arrival at Naples from Cicily I received a number of Letters from New York—five from you one from Jack and one from my worthy friend Beebee<sup>7</sup>—I have now all your letters to number nine inclusive the last date is 30<sup>th</sup> Nov<sup>r</sup> Since which I have received no letters from my friends. I am impatient to hear further from you all, but do not expect to do so till I arrive at Paris.

My health is perfectly restored, 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 & activity that almost places me above fatigue. For my part it is immaterial to me whether I grow stouter or not—as to growing *fat* I have decided absolutely against it—it is one of those unweildy [*sic*] tokens of health that I would willingly be excused the burden of.

I have been a witness of all the glories of *Holy Week* so much cried up by the italians as a Miracle of religious pomp & ceremony—to me it has been the most empty parade I ever saw the absence of the pope is much regretted it is said his presence would have made the ceremonies much more imposing. Perhaps I am prejudiced against the Romish religion from having been a witness to the gross ignorance superstition and misery it has intailed upon the inhabitants of these countries—but their grand ceremonies are to me the most pompous farces imaginable—To describe them would but be fatiguing you with discriptions of ostentations humility and the grossest absurdities. The chief parts of the business that pleased me was the *Miserere* a fine piece of sad, melancholy music representing the pas-

<sup>7</sup> Alexander Beebee, one of Irving's young friends in New York.

sion of our Saviour. It is counted an exquisite piece of music by the italians and is sung by very fine voices. The illumination of the Cross in S<sup>t</sup> Peters. This is a large cross suspended in the centre of the church covered with lamps. The effect of light and shade it produces among the arcades columns aisles & recesses of the church is inimitable—Here the best company of rome resort as to a promenade. This church is one of the finest objects of art which I have seen in Europe and well deserves to be ranked among the Wonders of the world—as I am no architect I can not pretend to give you a description of it, except that it is built with such fine judgement, that, though it abounds with the richest marbles, tombs, chapels &c no one part obtrudes itself to injure the majestic, striking effect of the whole.

Time will not allow me to be particular. Your future letters will be forwarded to the same address at Bordeaux and you may also safely write to me by the way of Nants,—Dieppe Antwerp, Amsterdam & Rotterdam directing my letters to the care of M<sup>r</sup> Luc Callaghan—Banker Paris. I wish you would desire my acquaintances to write frequently to me—their letters will cost me but trifling postage which I will cheerfully pay

There is nothing cheers me so much as frequent letters from my friends.

You mention in one of your letters a wish that I should visit Scotland before I return—I am affraid the season when I shall be in England will be unfavorable for that purpose and I doubt much, after I have seen england whether Scotland will afford me much instruction. I think it is better to see fewer countries & see them well—however I shall be guided by your future advice—by circumstances & by expences.

Remember me to father mother the family and all my friends, and I again beg you to request them to write often

Your affectionate Brother

W. I.

INTRA LAGO MAGGIORE—MAY 4<sup>th</sup> 1805\*

Seated in a comfortable Inn, in one of the picturesque little villages that grace the borders of this beautiful lake my mind softened by the lovely scenery around—occurs [*sic*] with fond recollection to my far distant friends in America—I seize a moment of leisure that occurs to address a few lines to my friend to assure him that “*the affections of our early youth and the intimacy of riper years,*” are not obliterated from my heart. I should look back with infinite self reproof on the long long period I have suffered to elapse in silence, did not the continual occupation both of mind and body which I have experienced in travelling, operate as a sufficient excuse. My friend Andrew I have no doubt will regard my silence in a charitable light, convinced that it does not result from any deficiency of Friendship.

An Account of my Journey from Rome through the delightful scenes of Antient Umbria and the fertile plains of Lombardy would be too long for the few moments I have to write. From Rome to Loretto the country was indescribably picturesque. The solitary, romantic passes of the Appenines were finely contrasted by the chain of delicious valleys that extends through them. Nothing could be more delightful than after passing thru a long defile of the mountains—surrounded by rocks precipices & torrents, where nature put on her most wild & fantastic forms—to descend into a valley—blooming with all the graces of spring—variegated by Groves corn-fields and meadows—enlivened by villages convents and cottages and watered by the Classic streams of the Tiber the Nar or the clitumnus.—The charms of these valleys have been extolld both by the antients and moderns and among the latter Addison describes them in the following beautiful lines

“————— umbrias green retreats  
Where Western gales eternally preside  
And all the seasons lavish all their pride  
Blossoms & fruits & flowers together rise  
And the whole year in gay confusion lies.”

\* To Andrew Hicks, a school friend of Irving's in New York. There is no address on this letter. For a comparison of the letter with the jottings of the trip in Irving's notebook, see Trent, *op. cit.*, III, 76-79.

—I find I am already wandering from the original intention of this letter and talking of Umbria instead of my voyage on Lake Maggiore. Of my travelling arrangements you are probably informed from my former letters. My fellow traveller is M<sup>r</sup> Cabell of virginia a gentleman of whose talents information & disposition I cannot speak too highly. We have for servant *honest* John Josse Vandermoere—a native of Bruxelles,—and one of the most faithful upright fellows I ever knew in his profession—He speaks french dutch & English and can make out to murder the italian tongue almost as badly as myself.

Having engaged a boat at the village of Sesto to take us to Magadino at the other extremity of the lake we embarked yesterday morning after breakfast. Our bark was small—covered with a linen awning and rowed by four stout men. The morning was overcast but the weather mild and pleasant and the country around so beautiful that we did not feel the want of sunshine to enliven us. We gently moved along thro a succession of romantic scenery on the transparent waters of the lake and about nine O'clock landed at the village of Arona situated at the foot of the picturesque promontory of the same name. While the boatmen were taking their breakfast we visited the remarkable statue of S<sup>t</sup> Carlo Barromeo situated on the summit of a neighboring hill that overlooks the lake. The walk was long and fatiguing. I would give you some account of this S<sup>t</sup> Carlo were it not imposing too much on your patience. He is one of the numerous host of saints that Italy has produced and like the generality, was besainted either because he was of a powerful family or had been very charitable—to the church. If I recollect right he even carried his goodness to Milan, so far as to found there another church—That city having not more than between *one and two hundred* churches already erected. His statue is proportiond to his services and sanctity—It is a huge figure of Bronze *sixty feet high* and more remarkable for its size than for either grace of attitude or elegance of proportions, for the cardinals habit in which it is represented effectually excludes either. The statue stands on a proportionable pedestal of Granite and the whole is erected on a mound of earth to which you ascend by an avenue of handsome horsechestnuts. The admirers of S<sup>t</sup> Carlo are loud in their boastings of this statue which

they say equals the famous Colossus of Rhodes; I forget the proportions of the latter, but I apprehend the saint must yield the palm to his unsanctified rival. At any rate the statue is sufficiently enormous to gratify the ambition of any priest—when we approached it a flight of little birds were sporting about its head and shoulders having formed their nests in the ears & eyelids and others in the plaits of the garment, secured by their elevated station from the attempts of the most aspiring urchin.

From the hill on which the statue stands is one of the most lovely prospects imaginable—The eye embraces a great extent of the lake winding among the mountains—in some places ruffled by gentle Zephyrs—in others smooth and tranquil—reflecting the churches cottages & groves that ornamented its borders or the white sails of the little barks that seemed to repose upon its surface. The surrounding mountains presented a variety of character. Some rough and craggy rose abruptly from the waters edge—their sides were rocky & barren scantily covered in different places with dwarf trees and scattered shrubbery—Their snowy summits were lost in clouds that rolled half way down them. Others rose in gentle gradations clothed with flourishing trees thro the thick foliage of which, were seen the white walls of cottages or the towering spires of chapels and convents. Their sides were cultivated and fertile and skirted by luxuriant plains that extended to the borders of the lake varied by groves & meadows. Opposite to us on the right was the romantic Promontory of Anghiera crowned by a picturesque castle, which with a small village below it, was reflected in the serene waters of the lake. We could not resist our inclination to linger some time about this charming spot—so sending the boatman who accompanied us, to tell his companions when they had finished their breakfast to come with the boat to the foot of the mountain we threw ourselves on the grass to enjoy at leisure the enchanting prospect. The air was pure & salubrious—perfumed by numerous flowers that grew about the mountains. The repose of the scene was only interrupted by the chirp of the swallow as he skimmed over the tranquil lake below us and dipped his wings in its glassy surface—the full melody of the nightingale—robin & lark or the distant song of some peasants at work on a neighboring hill. You have no doubt often experienced the effect

of such scenes & situation on the mind soothing it into the most voluptuous state of tranquility and pensiveness. Ogilvie expresses it most correctly

“On the airy mount reclin’d  
 What wishes sooth the musing mind  
 How soft the velvet lap of spring  
 How sweet the Zephyrs violet-wing”

After re-embarking we continued our voyage keeping along the borders of the lake—now passing by a neat village the white houses of which seemed almost to rise out of the water—and now skirting the base of a mountain whose summit was almost enveloped in clouds.

Towards afternoon the weather began to break away—the clouds roll’d off to the snowy tops of the alps which they completely shrowded and the sun breaking from among them enlivened the superb scenery—chequering the lake and mountains with broad masses of light & shade. About two o’clock we entered the bay of Marzozzo which presents an assemblage of the most romantic objects. The Bay is bounded by stupenduous hills the tops of which were covered with snow and their sides broken in cliffs and precipices—On the borders of the water were situated small villages the white buildings of which had a beautiful effect contrasted to the green of the mountains at whose feet they stood.

The bosom of the bay was unruffled by the slightest breeze and from the centre of it rose the celebrated Borromean (or as they have been termed *enchanted*) Islands. These are three inconsiderable little islands the largest not above a third of a mile in circumference—but indescribably picturesque from their form and situation. Isola Bella (I. E. The beautiful Island) in particular has the most delicious appearance from a distance. No pains or expence have been spared to ornament it. It is covered with Orangeries—terraces of Lemon citron myrtle &c and an over hanging grove of vast Laurel trees—and thro the rich foliage are seen the walls of a magnificent palace. The whole is beautifully reflected in the transparent waters of the lake and forms a picture that almost realizes the discription of fairy abodes given by the poets. Were not the days of romance

at an end I should have been tempted to mistake it for an Elysian isle formed among the silver waves by the wand of an Enchantress. It reminded me of the lines of Thompson

“The landscape such inspiring perfect ease  
Where Indolence (for so the wizard hight)  
Close hid his castle mid embowering trees  
That half shut out the beams of phoebus bright  
And made a kind of chequered day and night.”

Numerous Travellers have been rapturous in their praises of this Island, among others Keysler<sup>8</sup> very quaintly compares it to “a pyramid of sweetmeats, ornamented with green festoons and flowers.” On approaching near to it—the illusion dissipated and its charms in a great measure vanished—The works of art became too visible and we were disappointed in finding it laid out in all the preposterous formalities of clipped walks—artificially trimmed trees—stone terraces—heavy statues and dutch flower beds. We were all thro the palace and gardens. The former is immensely large and magnificent and contains a few good paintings. Part of it is built over the lake the waves of which wash its base. The windows and balconies command exquisite views of the lake from different points.

The garden is raised on arches and partly usurped from the lake—its soil is brought from the neighboring shores. From the grand terrace of the garden you have an extensive prospect of the surrounding scenery. The two other Islands—one called Isola Madre—is ornamented with a palace & groves—the other called Isola Piscatori (fishermans Island) is completely covered by a small village of fishermans huts with the church in the middle—the village seems to rise out of the lake. All these Islands belong to the Barro-mean family who likewise own vast tracts of land in the vicinity of the lake and are immensely rich.

We parted from Isola Bella early this morning in a heavy shower of rain; our boat, however, was well covered & dry—We rowed close under Isola Madre which is far more picturesque on a near approach than its more artificial neighbor. About nine O'clock we arrived in this village situated in a most beautiful part of the lake

<sup>8</sup> Johann Georg Keysler (1693-1730), a German historian and traveller.

where the scenery reminds me of the highlands in the hudson. As the weather threatned to be stormy all day we determined to remain here till tomorrow morning—particularly as we were told that if we proceded we should have to sleep at Magadino where there is no decent hotel. To this detention you are indebted for this letter, as there were no objects of curiosity to employ my attention. I am ever happy to avail myself of such moments of leisure to scribble to my friends—but in travelling it is not very often that they occur—and when I write generally I trespass on the time that should be occupied in acquiring information. The Weather has cleared off this afternoon and we have had a charming ramble in the environs of the village and along the beautiful borders of the Lake. Adieu for the present—as I have began [*sic*] the history of my voyage on the Lake I will finish it—You shall have the rest after my arrival at Magadino.

6<sup>th</sup> Bellinzona—We left our Inn at Intra on the morning of the 5<sup>th</sup> without regret for we could find nothing fit to eat there—the few articles they gave us were so stewd & fritterd in oil that we could not relish them—We had sent Iohn on a foraging party in the kitchen & Larder but he returned with the melancholy intelligence “That there was to be a grand feast the next day in honor of S<sup>t</sup> Francis and all the *prog* was monopolized to satisfy the greedy stomachs of several fat members of the church, who were to officiate at the solemn ceremony.”

I will not fatigue you with discriptions of the subsequent Scenery of the Lake except generally remarking that the Mountains became grander as we proceded—descending more abruptly to the waters edge—in some places cultivated around the bases and speckled with villages convents & cottages that had a very picturesque appearance—in other places, they were rugged & sterile, torrents dashed down the precipices and large masses of rock detached from the heights had tumbled to the shore. The scenery had less of the beautiful in it than at the commencement of the lake, but there was more of the Sublime. It approached considerably to the character of the highland scenery of the Hudson excepting that here the mountains were of greater magnitude.

PARIS JUNE 19<sup>th</sup> 1805.*Dear Hicks—*

The above was scribbled at two different places on my journey where I happened to have a moment of leisure. You will perceive [*sic*] it breaks off rather abruptly which if I recollect right was occasioned by the sudden apparition of "mine host" at Bellinzona with a smoking fricasse. The pen immediately gave way to the knife & fork the letter was thrust among my other papers nor did it ever make its appearance again till this morning—when in tumbling over my portfolio it popped unexpectedly upon me. *a la bonne heure* its a sheet & a half of writing—*clear gain*. So Ill just add a few lines to it and send it off. If you please we'll make no longer stay at Bellinzona but skip over Mount S<sup>t</sup> Goatherd to Altorf—from Altorf along the Lake of the four Cantons to Lucerne from Lucerne to Zurich from Zurich to Basle from Basle thro franche Comté Alsace & Champaine to Paris and here behold me quietly seated in my room in Hotel d'angleterre, rue du colombier, fauxbourg S<sup>t</sup> martin.

And now, I suppose, you expect I am about to give you some idea of Paris<sup>9</sup>—if so you will be disappointed—I have not as yet acquired a single clear idea about this enormous city myself except that there is not a place on the globe where the sensual pleasures appetites &c &c &c are more thoroughly studied and may be more completely gratified

The most languid mind the most sickly & vitiated palate cannot fail of enjoyment among the infinite variety of amusement the endless articles of luxury with which this metropolis abounds—Every desire, wish, inclination—natural or artificial seems to have been completely investigated—to have been followed up to its source traced thro every turning twisting and ramification—and a thousand means devised both to incite and satisfy it. Heaven—earth—seas, seem to have been ransacked to furnish out this vast magazine of——

<sup>9</sup> Irving spent four months in Paris, from May 24 to September 22, 1805. Information on this period is extremely scarce for Irving kept no Journal at this time. For Irving's brief notes on his sojourn in Paris, see Williams, *op. cit.*, March, 1930, pp. 15-20.

Sir

The above fragments were forgotten by our friend Irving, on his departure from Paris, (which was about a fortnight ago) and he has written me from Holland requesting that I would forward them to you which I do with pleasure. M<sup>r</sup>. Irving is in good health and spirits, and will I have no doubt, on his arrival in London, give you, as interesting and entertaining, an account of his visit to Holland, as the above of Italy—In haste, I beg sir that you will accept the assurances of

respect & consideration from

y<sup>r</sup>. Ob-S<sup>t</sup>.

Ia<sup>s</sup>. Bankhead<sup>10</sup>

Paris. October 10<sup>th</sup> 1805

PARIS, MAY 31<sup>st</sup> 1805

*My dear Brother,\**

I was rendered extremely happy yesterday by the reception of your letters N<sup>o</sup> 12 & 13 which were sent on to me to Paris by my very attentive friends the Bosc's as to N<sup>os</sup> 10 & 11 I expect they are taking an *improving tour* in the South of Europe in company with others from my acquaintances—they may perhaps follow the route I have taken, and passing from Banker to Banker at length arrive to hand; I would be glad, however, should you retain copies of them, if you will give me the most interesting passages from them in your next letter

You find fault with my letters from Genoa as not being sufficiently particular, but I expect before this you have received my long letter

<sup>10</sup> James Bankhead, secretary to Monroe while he was Minister in Paris. Irving lived with Bankhead in the Hotel d'Angleterre, Rue du Colombier, Faubourg St. Martin, from June 4 to his departure on September 22, 1805.

\* Though this letter bears on it no address, we are safe in assuming that it is written to William. In the second paragraph, Irving refers to "my long letter from Messina" which was written to William (See Williams, *op. cit.*, I, 59), and in the third paragraph he mentions a "short letter" from Rome, which is the letter to William of April 12, in the Rutgers collection. As far as we know this letter is printed here for the first time. It has no counterpart in *Notes and Journal of Travel in Europe*, (1804-5), edited by William P. Trent, New York, 1920.

from Messina which will be more satisfactory. In my tour thro Sicily Italy and Switzerland objects multiplied on me so rapidly each deserving such particular attention, that I found it impossible to continue the same degree of particularity in my letters that I had formerly observed. Every moment was occupied either by observation, study or reflection, and in sitting down to communicate information, I should have sacrificed an additional stock that might have been acquired. Even the hasty notes which I usually take in travelling, became troublesome & encroaching. If then you feel disappointed at not receiving letters from me equally long as formerly, you must excuse their insufficiency, as resulting not from idleness but from occupation, and a wish to profit as much as possible from the scenes thro which I am passing.

I wrote you from Rome a short letter mentioning the route I intended to take. I have happily completed it and arrived in this city a few days since in excellent health & spirits. The journey tho long & fatiguing was the most interesting and delightful I have made in Europe. As I informed you in my letter from Rome, we took the Route by the way of Loretto and Ancona to Bologna, from thence to Milan, from Milan across the beautiful lake of Locarno (or as it is sometimes calld lake Maggiore) to Bellinzona thence over the Mount S<sup>t</sup> Gothard to Altorf—from Altorf across the Lake of the four cantons (or Lake of Lucerne) to Lucerne, from thence to Zurich, from Zurich to Basle and from Basle thro the provences of Alsace, franche Comté and champaigne to Paris.

The Scenery of Switzerland surpassed my expectations. The route we had chosen was particularly favorable to present us with every variety and gradation from the awful solitudes of the Alps, where rocks piled on rocks lift their stupendous summits into the clouds, roaring with torrents, and hung with *avalanches*, to the gentle scenes of Lucerne Zurich and the Rhine where all is beauty tranquility & luxurience. Nor is the character of the swiss less singular than that of his native mountains. Like his country, he seems to stand alone in Europe, and to possess traits and qualities that are peculiar to himself. In him is still seen the proper dignity of man preserved, that independence of thought that frankness and candor that we may search for in vain among the surrounding nations. In him are still

seen the sublime characteristics of a freeman nor have the misfortunes & subjugation of his country been able to destroy that energy of mind and firmness of manner that liberty alone produces. Honesty, long since driven from courts and palaces seems to have taken up her residence among the wild mountains of Switzerland and to have fixd her empire in the hearts of its worthy Inhabitants—After struggling along thro the miserable inhabitants of Italy—continually encompassed by swarms of rogues & vagabonds and irritated by the uniform system of imposition and peculation that is observed in that country towards the traveller, what pleasurable sensations did we experience on finding ourselves among the honest Swiss. We went thro the country—in a manner with our purses open in our hands and I may safely say that during our whole route thro that country, not one incident of the most trivial nature occurred, to injure the harmony of our feelings or to derogate from that high opinion we had formed of the national character. No part of Europe has interested me so much as this little spot. France speaks to the senses, Italy to the imagination, but Switzerland to the *heart*. My fellow traveller, Cabell, was so highly charmed with the country that he intends returning there and passing a part of the Summer among the mountains, pursuing at the same time practical Studies in botany & mineralogy. Did my time & plans permit I should gladly have joined him in the expedition.

This letter is merely written to let you know where I am so that you will excuse its being very short. I have not yet recovered from that kind of delirium which every stranger experiences on first arriving in paris—and my ideas are entirely unsettled. I am at present in a hotel in the most gay and noisy part of the city, but I have taken an apartment in the other part of the city on the other side of the Seine where I shall be more retired.<sup>11</sup> I have begun to attend a course of Lectures on natural history delivered early in the morning at the Garden of plants.<sup>12</sup> They are gratis as well as most of the lectures in paris. Tho I do not expect to make any important proficiency

<sup>11</sup> Irving lived at the Hôtel de Richelieu, Rue de la Loi, until June 4, 1805, when he removed to Hôtel d'Angleterre, where he remained until he left Paris.

<sup>12</sup> Irving writes the following in his notebook: "31— Tended lectures on botany." See Williams, *op. cit.*, p. 19.

in these studies, yet they serve to improve me in the language, and it is always well to be acquiring information. I shall take a french master as soon as I get settled. I daily find my deficiency in the language more and more irksome, I wish to become master of it. I have formed some american acquaintances here that are both agreeable and highly advantageous. M<sup>r</sup> Cabell has introduced me to M<sup>r</sup> M<sup>c</sup>Clure one of our commissioners for the settlement of claims. He unites the pleasing qualifications & manners of the gentleman to the solid information & talents of the man of Science & literature. His conversation is extremely instructive and he takes peculiar delight in imparting his knowledge & advice to young men. The attentions I daily receive from him are very flattering. He lives in a retired but handsome style I have likewise found here Col. Mercer,<sup>13</sup> another of our commissioners with whom I became acquainted at Naples as I mentioned in a former letter. I then gave you my opinion of this gentleman who I expect will in a little while make a conspicuous figure in america both he & M<sup>r</sup> Cabell reside at the house of M<sup>r</sup> M<sup>c</sup>-Clure

Vanderlyn<sup>14</sup> is also here and I shall be a near neighbour of his when I remove to my new apartment. These gentlemen together with M<sup>r</sup> Biddle the secretary of our Minister, are as yet my most intimate acquaintances, I shall in a day or two be introduced to M<sup>r</sup> Skipwith and two or three other americans of merit. There are a considerable number of Americans in paris but as most of them are either trifling or questionable characters I do not wish to become acquainted with them. I give you this account of my acquaintances as I suppose you are anxious generally to know what company I am in, especially in such a City as Paris. Be assured my dear brother that the importance of being guarded in my intimacies is sufficiently impressed on my mind. Left to my own discretion I feel the great neces-

<sup>13</sup> Col. John Mercer, whom Irving met in Naples in March of this year.

<sup>14</sup> John Vanderlyn (1776-1852). Irving had studied with Vanderlyn at Archibald Robertson's school of drawing in New York. Vanderlyn drew the crayon sketch of Irving accompanying this article. The drawing shows Irving wearing his hair over his forehead in the modish French fashion.

For a long letter describing Irving's friendship with Vanderlyn, see *Life and Letters of Washington Irving*, Pierre M. Irving, New York, 1869, I, 71-73. Irving's expense book of the period has in it an entry of August 12, payment to "Vanderlyn for Portrait." *Ibid.*, p. 73.



*From the original drawing by Tantiolyn, Paris 1815*

*Your affectionate friend  
1800  
Mary Ann Innes.*

sity of keeping a steady eye on my conduct and of endeavoring to convince my friends that the confidence they reposed in me was not misplaced. That they have indulged considerable expectations of me I cannot pretend to be ignorant—but I candidly assure you it is more a subject of uneasiness than pleasure to me. I fear I shall disappoint their hopes. Travelling has made me better acquainted with myself, it has given me a humiliating conviction of my own insufficiency—of my own ignorance and how very much I have to learn, how very much to acquire. Still however I flatter myself that I have not let any opportunity of instruction pass by without endeavoring to profit by it, and on reviewing my conduct while in Europe, tho I here and there observe little follies that a young man surrounded by allurements cannot always avoid—yet it is with satisfaction I reflect that there is no action which I would seriously blush to acknowledge. To render myself worthy of the good opinion of my friends shall still be my chief study to ensure their approbation—my constant effort and with all my soul I join in the prayer of the poet

Raise me above the vulgar breath,  
Pursuit of fortune, fear of death,  
And all in life thats mean:  
Still true to reason be my plan,  
And let my actions speak the man,  
Thro' ev'ry varying scene.

You mentioned in one of your former letters that you were collecting letters of introduction for me for England; I hope it has been attended to as I have no other letters for London excepting those that M<sup>r</sup> Robertson wrote for me.<sup>15</sup> As I did not return to Genoa I have not received the letters of introduction that Lady Shaftesbury<sup>16</sup> offered me for her friends tho I might still have them on writing to her. I have no inclination however, to be acquainted with the nobility in england, their company would be too expensive, and tho I am confident letters from Lady S. would procure me the politest attentions, yet I am not sure but that an untitled american would

<sup>15</sup> Archibald Robertson, whose school of drawing Irving attended in New York.

<sup>16</sup> Irving enjoyed the friendship of Lord and Lady Shaftesbury in Genoa.

be considered among them as a very insignificant personage—I will never move in any circle where my society is merely tolerated. I have had a complete surfeit of nobility in Italy & Sicily. It makes my blood boil to see a star on the jacket or a ribbon in the button hole, entitle a blockhead a puppy a scoundrel to rank above the man of worth and merit, whose very countenance ought to awe him into insignificance. I mingled among them thro curiosity and tho I had every reason to be satisfied with the attentions I received, yet I soon became completely fatigued with their empty uninstrucive society. Thank heaven, we *order these matters better in America* every day makes me more and more sensible of the peculiar blessings of my country—every government thro which I pass enables me to draw an advantageous comparison. My eyes are opened in respect to many things that were hid from me while in America. I regard objects in another point of view. I have experienced a great change in my opinions on several important subjects, and look back with surprise on former errors & prejudices. These are the grand advantages I have gained by travelling and they are to me invaluable—I am enabled to take a view of my country—like an edifice, at a distance. The eye without resting on trifling particulars embraces the whole and is enabled to judge of the form, the proportions, the harmony & solidity and to admire the simplicity the strength & grandeur of the building. In new york you are in a manner thrust in a corner darkend by petty factions and family contests and the observer is apt to be prejudiced against the fabrick by the obscure nook in which he is placed.

As to your wish that I should pass thro part of Germany on my way to England, I have some doubts whether the route would be very advantageous—by a person who has performed it I am told it is very disagreeable, that however should not prevent my undertaking it was there sufficient instruction to be obtained to balance the trouble & expence. I shall enquire more concerning that subject. I have thoughts of remaining in paris till some time in September as there is no place in Europe where a man has equal opportunities of improvement and at so little expence. It is a thing that does honor to the french, that their public galleries, libraries &c &c are open to the world, without any rapacious keeper porter or servant as in Italy & england to extort a gratuity from the visitor. Lectures on almost

every art and science are given gratis. Gardens for the botanist, schools for the anatomist &c &c are provided and attended by the most learned men. The Stranger is even treated with more attention than the Citizen of paris. The latter is admitted into the Louvre but twice a week, but the stranger can gain admittance every day (except the day of cleaning) upon shewing his passport.

I cannot fix exactly the time when I shall return to America—I should not like to venture across the Atlantic in the winter, neither should I wish to remain another year in Europe. Much as I am interested and amused by the scenes in which I am mingling—my amor patriae still predominates and I feel I could never be content to reside out of America. I expect however, my return will be in next Spring as early as the season will permit.

As you express a wish to know something of my money matters, I have at present about 340\$ of my original credit left out of which I shall have to pay for a few articles of clothing that I have had made, for I arrived in paris with a ward robe much like Yorricks. When those debts are settled I suppose I shall have about 270 or so \$ left—my additional credit remains in the hands of Bosc untouched. Upon the whole I think I have managed pretty well considering I have made a larger tour than I originally contemplated. I found travelling in Italy far more expensive than I had expected.

I am obliged to finish this letter abruptly that it may go off with the post; I am eager to send you intelligence of my safe arrival here. Give my remembrances as usual and desire all my friends to write to me; letters may be sent me by the way of Nantz, Havre, Amsterdam &c delivering them with a careful charge to the captain and directed to me, to the care of Mess<sup>rs</sup> Rougemont & Scherer, Bankers, Paris.

give my love to all the family

Your Affectionate Brother  
WI.

P.S. I shall write again in a day or two when I get settled. I shall then give you accounts from time to time of diff<sup>t</sup> parts of my tour.

P.S. After the first of August direct all letters to me to London. [This postscript is written sideways across the letter.]

LONDON, OCT. 20<sup>th</sup> 1805.*My dear Brother,\**

By the date of this letter you will perceive that I am safely arrived in the land of our forefathers, and have become an inhabitant of the famous & foggy city of London. Thus you see I shift from city to city and lay countries aside like books, after giving them a hasty perusal. Thank heavens my ramblings are nearly at an end and in a little while I shall once more return to my friends and sink again into tranquil domestic life. It may seem strange to you who have never wandered far from home, but I assure you it is true that in a short time one gets tired of travelling even in the gay & polished countries of Europe.

Curiosity cannot be kept ever on the stretch; like the sensual appetites it in time becomes sated and no longer enjoys the food it formerly searched after with avidity. On entering a strange place at present I feel no more that interest that prompted me on first arriving in Europe to be perpetually on the hunt for curiosities & beauties.

In fact the duty imposed upon me as a traveller to do so, is often irksome

On arriving at Naples I became acquainted with an American Gentleman of talents who had made the tour of Italy. I was much diverted with the manner in which he addressd his Valet de place one morning as we were going out in search of Curiosities "Now my friend" said he "recollect I am tired of churchs convents, palaces, galleries of paintings, subterraneous passages & Great men, if you have any thing else to shew me,—*allons.*" At present I could almost feel inclined to make a similar speech myself. I own notwithstanding, that London is extremely interesting to me, as it offers both in buildings & inhabitants such a contrast to the cities on the continent, and then, it is so completely familiarized to me from having heard & read so much about it since my infancy, that every square street & lane appears like an old acquaintance.

\* To Peter Irving. For notes on this period, see Trent, *op. cit.*, III, 123-163. The full notes, printed by Trent, are not the basis of this letter, which is reprinted by Pierre Irving, *op. cit.*, I, 73-75, up to the sentence, "such is a concise sketch of my journey." The MS. letter is incomplete.

I left paris on the 22<sup>d</sup> Sept<sup>r</sup>.<sup>17</sup> in company with M<sup>r</sup> Gorham of Boston & M<sup>r</sup> Massie of Virginia<sup>18</sup> and after a pleasing tour thro the Netherlands by the way of Brussels and Maestricht we arrived at Rotterdam on the thirtieth. We had made a stop of two days at Brussels which is one of the most beautiful cities I have seen in Europe—we staid another day at Maestricht, in order to visit a remarkable cavern in its neighborhood but I will not fatigue you with a description of it. I was much interested by the change that I continually observed as I proceeded, from the carelessly cultivated plains of france to those of the netherlands where the hand of labor appears to be never idle in the improvement of the soil, from the dirty comfortless habitations of the french peasantry to those of holland where cleanliness is almost a Vice—in fine from the light skip and gay thoughtless air of the frenchman, to the heavy tread and phlegmatic leaden features of the dutchman. How astonishing is it that a trifling space—a mere ideal line should occasion such a vast difference between two nations, that neither the people—houses, manners language—tastes should resemble each other. The Italians & the turk are more similar than the parisien & the Hollander.

I had intended making a hasty tour in Holland but on arriving at Rotterdam I found an excellent packet about sailing for Gravesend. The passing & repassing of these packets is connived at by the french general who *commands* at Rotterdam as he pockets a part of the passage money of each passenger—The vessel clears out for Embden under the Prussian flag.

On my arrival at Rotterdam I heard a report that Prussia either had declared or was about to declare in favor of france in consequence of which the owners were fearful of sending any more packets to England under Prussian colours. As I dreaded any accidental detention in the Phlegmatic cities of Holland I determined on availing myself of the packet that was about sailing, as did likewise my companions. Indeed I did not regret much my not being able to see more of Holland, as the little I had already seen I was told was a faithful specimen of the rest—a monotonous uniformity prevailing over the whole country.

<sup>17</sup> After giving a farewell dinner to his friends at the Hôtel d'Avanche.

<sup>18</sup> John Gorham of Boston, and Thomas Massie of Virginia.

Leaving therefore the gentle mynheers to smook their pipes in peace, we embarked on the evening of the third of October, and on the morning of the fourth, sailed from the mouth of the Meuse. The next morning on *turning out* I had the first glimpse of Old England; we were just opposite Margate within four or five miles of the shore. We anchored the same evening in the Thames opposite Gravesend. As we were direct from an enemies country we were not permitted to land till permits should arrive from the Alien office at London. I did not receive mine till the morning of the eighth (suffering a detention of three days) when I went immediately on shore took a post chaise and arrived in the afternoon at London. Such is a concise sketch of my Journey.

The next day I waited on M<sup>r</sup> Robertson to whom I had a letter from his Brother. He received me in the most friendly manner but you can have no idea what was my chagrin & disappointment at finding that he had no letters for me. You will recollect you had proposed in one of—

[Here the manuscript ends]

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#### METEOROLOGICAL DIARY

THE latest of a long series of gifts from the Misses Elizabeth Rutgers and Margaret Bayard Baldwin to the Library contains, among several very interesting items, a meteorological diary which was kept by Gerard Rutgers of Belleville, New Jersey, between 1803-1829. Some future issue of the Journal will, without doubt, contain an extended account of this diary which treats of agriculture and matters of the day, in addition to giving a most accurate account of the weather.

Other items of special interest are 18th Century deeds to property in New York formerly in the possession of the Rutgers Family, and books from the library of Gerard Rutgers.