DICKENS CHARLES

THE LETTERS OF CHARLES DICKENS. VOL. 3, 1836-1870

Чарльз Диккенс

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Диккенс Ч.

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Содержание

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PREFACE

Since our publication of "The Letters of Charles Dickens" we have received the letters addressed to the late Lord Lytton, which we were unable to procure in time for our first two volumes in consequence of his son's absence in India. We thank the Earl of Lytton cordially for his kindness in sending them to us very soon after his return. We also offer our sincere thanks to Sir Austen H. Layard, and to the senders of many other letters, which we now publish for the first time.

With a view to making our selection as complete as possible, we have collected together the letters from Charles Dickens which have already been published in various Biographies, and have chosen and placed in chronological order among our new letters those which we consider to be of the greatest interest.

As our Narrative was finished in our second volume, this volume consists of Letters *only*, with occasional foot-notes wherever there are allusions requiring explanation.

Mamie Dickens.
Georgina Hogarth.

London: *September, 1881.*

ERRATA

VOL. III

Page 87, line 5. For "J. W. Leigh Murray," *read* "Mr. Leigh Murray."
" 111, line 8. For "annoying," *read* "amazing."
" 243, line 10. For "Tarass Boulla," *read* "Tarass Boulba."
" 259, line 6, and in footnote. For "Hazlett," *read* "Hazlitt."
" 261, line 2. For "procters," *read* "proctors."

THE LETTERS OF CHARLES DICKENS

1836 to 1839

Mr. John Hullah

Furnival's Inn, Sunday Evening (1836) (?).

My dear Hullah,

Have you seen *The Examiner?* It is rather depreciatory of the opera; but, like all inveterate critiques against Braham, so well done that I cannot help laughing at it, for the life and soul of me. I have seen *The Sunday Times*, *The Dispatch*, and *The Satirist*, all of which blow their critic trumpets against unhappy me most lustily. Either I must have grievously awakened the ire of all the "adapters" and their friends, or the drama must be decidedly bad. I haven't made up my mind yet which of the two is the fact.

I have not seen the *John Bull* or any of the Sunday papers except *The Spectator*. If you have any of them, bring 'em with you on Tuesday. I am afraid that for "dirty Cummins'" allusion to Hogarth I shall be reduced to the necessity of being valorous the next time I meet him.

Believe me, most faithfully yours.

The same

Furnival's Inn, Monday Afternoon, 7 o'clock (1836).

My Dear Hullah,

Mr. Hogarth has just been here, with news which I think you will be glad to hear. He was with Braham yesterday, who was *far more full* of the opera[1] than he was; speaking highly of my works and "fame" (!), and expressing an earnest desire to be the first to introduce me to the public as a dramatic writer. He said that he intended opening at Michaelmas; and added (unasked) that it was his intention to produce the opera within *one month* of his first night. He wants a low comedy part introduced – without singing – thinking it will take with the audience; but he is desirous of explaining to me what he means and who he intends to play it. I am to see him on Sunday morning. Full particulars of the interview shall be duly announced.

Perhaps I shall see you meanwhile. I have only time to add that I am

Most faithfully yours.

The same

Petersham, Monday Evening (1836).

Dear Hullah,

[1] "The Village Coquettes."

Since I called on you this morning I have not had time to look over the words of "The Child and the Old Man." It occurs to me, as I shall see you on Wednesday morning, that the best plan will be for you to bring the music (if you possibly can) without the words, and we can put them in then. Of course this observation applies only to that particular song.

Braham having sent to me about the farce, I called on him this morning. Harley wrote, when he had read the whole of the opera, saying: "It's a sure card – nothing wrong there. Bet you ten pound it runs fifty nights. Come; don't be afraid. You'll be the gainer by it, and you mustn't mind betting; it's a capital custom." They tell the story with infinite relish. I saw the fair manageress,[2] who is fully of Harley's opinion, so is Braham. The only difference is, that they are far more enthusiastic than Harley – far more enthusiastic than ourselves even. That is a bold word, isn't it? It is a true one, nevertheless.

"Depend upon it, sir," said Braham to Hogarth yesterday, when he went there to say I should be in town to-day, "depend upon it, sir, that there has been no such music since the days of Sheil, and no such piece since "The Duenna."" "Everybody is delighted with it," he added, to me to-day. "I played it to Stansbury, who is by no means an excitable person, and he was charmed." This was said with great emphasis, but I have forgotten the grand point. It was not, "I played it to Stansbury," but, "I sang it —*all through!!!*"

I begged him, as the choruses are to be put into rehearsal directly the company get together, to let us have, through Mrs. Braham, the necessary passports to the stage, which will be forwarded. He leaves town on the *8th of September*. He will be absent a month, and the first rehearsal will take place immediately on his return; previous to it (I mean the first rehearsal – not the return) I am to read the piece. His only remaining suggestion is, that Miss Rainforth will want another song when the piece is in rehearsal – "a bravura – something in the 'Soldier Tired' way." We must have a confab about this on Wednesday morning.

Harley called in Furnival's Inn, to express his high delight and gratification, but unfortunately we had left town. I shall be at head-quarters by 12 Wednesday noon.

Believe me, dear Hullah,
Most faithfully yours.

P.S. – Tell me on Wednesday when you can come down here, for a day or two. Beautiful place – meadow for exercise, horse for your riding, boat for your rowing, room for your studying – anything you like.

Mr. George Hogarth

[3]13, Furnival's Inn, Tuesday Evening, January 20th, 1837.

My dear Sir,

As you have begged me to write an original sketch for the first number of the new evening paper, and as I trust to your kindness to refer my application to the proper quarter, should I be unreasonably or improperly trespassing upon you, I beg to ask whether it is probable that if I commenced a series of articles, written under some attractive title, for *The Evening Chronicle*, its conductors would think I had any claim to some additional remuneration (of course, of no great amount) for doing so?

Let me beg of you not to misunderstand my meaning. Whatever the reply may be, I promised you an article, and shall supply it with the utmost readiness, and with an anxious desire to do my best, which I honestly assure you would be the feeling with which I should always receive any request coming personally from yourself. I merely wish to put it to the proprietors, first, whether a

[2] Mrs. Braham.

[3] Printed in "Forty Years' Recollections of Life, Literature, and Public Affairs," by Charles Mackay.

continuation of light papers in the style of my "Street Sketches" would be considered of use to the new paper; and, secondly, if so, whether they do not think it fair and reasonable that, taking my share of the ordinary reporting business of *The Chronicle* besides, I should receive something for the papers beyond my ordinary salary as a reporter.

Begging you to excuse my troubling you, and taking this opportunity of acknowledging the numerous kindnesses I have already received at your hands since I have had the pleasure of acting under you,

I am, my dear Sir, very sincerely yours.

Mrs. Hogarth

Doughty Street, Thursday Night, October 26th, 1837.

My dear Mrs. Hogarth,

I need not thank you for your present[4] of yesterday, for you know the sorrowful pleasure I shall take in wearing it, and the care with which I shall prize it, until – so far as relates to this life – I am like her.

I have never had her ring off my finger by day or night, except for an instant at a time, to wash my hands, since she died. I have never had her sweetness and excellence absent from my mind so long. I can solemnly say that, waking or sleeping, I have never lost the recollection of our hard trial and sorrow, and I feel that I never shall.

It will be a great relief to my heart when I find you sufficiently calm upon this sad subject to claim the promise I made you when she lay dead in this house, never to shrink from speaking of her, as if her memory must be avoided, but rather to take a melancholy pleasure in recalling the times when we were all so happy – so happy that increase of fame and prosperity has only widened the gap in my affections, by causing me to think how she would have shared and enhanced all our joys, and how proud I should have been (as God knows I always was) to possess the affections of the gentlest and purest creature that ever shed a light on earth. I wish you could know how I weary now for the three rooms in Furnival's Inn, and how I miss that pleasant smile and those sweet words which, bestowed upon our evening's work, in our merry banterings round the fire, were more precious to me than the applause of a whole world would be. I can recall everything she said and did in those happy days, and could show you every passage and line we read together.

I see *now* how you are capable of making great efforts, even against the afflictions you have to deplore, and I hope that, soon, our words may be where our thoughts are, and that we may call up those old memories, not as shadows of the bitter past, but as lights upon a happier future.

Believe me, my dear Mrs. Hogarth,
Ever truly and affectionately yours.

[5] DIARY – 1838

Monday, January 1st, 1838.

[4] A chain made of Mary Hogarth's hair, sent to Charles Dickens on the first anniversary of her birthday, after her death.

[5] This fragment of a diary was found amongst some papers which have recently come to light. The Editors give only those paragraphs which are likely to be of any public interest. The original manuscript has been added to "The Forster Collection," at the South Kensington Museum.

A sad New Year's Day in one respect, for at the opening of last year poor Mary was with us. Very many things to be grateful for since then, however. Increased reputation and means – good health and prospects. We never know the full value of blessings till we lose them (we were not ignorant of this one when we had it, I hope). But if she were with us now, the same winning, happy, amiable companion, sympathising with all my thoughts and feelings more than anyone I knew ever did or will, I think I should have nothing to wish for, but a continuance of such happiness. But she is gone, and pray God I may one day, through his mercy, rejoin her. I wrote to Mrs. Hogarth yesterday, taking advantage of the opportunity afforded me by her sending, as a New Year's token, a pen-wiper of poor Mary's, imploring her, as strongly as I could, to think of the many remaining claims upon her affection and exertions, and not to give way to unavailing grief. Her answer came to-night, and she seems hurt at my doing so – protesting that in all useful respects she is the same as ever. Meant it for the best, and still hope I did right.

Saturday, January 6th, 1838.

Our boy's birthday – one year old. A few people at night – only Forster, the De Gex's, John Ross, Mitton, and the Beards, besides our families – to twelfth-cake and forfeits.

This day last year, Mary and I wandered up and down Holborn and the streets about for hours, looking after a little table for Kate's bedroom, which we bought at last at the very first broker's which we had looked into, and which we had passed half-a-dozen times because I *didn't like* to ask the price. I took her out to Brompton at night, as we had no place for her to sleep in (the two mothers being with us); she came back again next day to keep house for me, and stopped nearly the rest of the month. I shall never be so happy again as in those chambers three storeys high – never if I roll in wealth and fame. I would hire them to keep empty, if I could afford it.

Monday, January 8th, 1838.

I began the "Sketches of Young Gentlemen" to-day. One hundred and twenty-five pounds for such a little book, without my name to it, is pretty well. This and the "Sunday"[6] by-the-bye, are the only two things I have not done as Boz.

Tuesday, January 9th, 1838.

Went to the Sun office to insure my life, where the Board seemed disposed to think I work too much. Made Forster and Pickthorn, my Doctor, the references – and after an interesting interview with the Board and the Board's Doctor, came away to work again.

Wednesday, January 10th, 1838.

At work all day, and to a quadrille party at night. City people and rather dull. Intensely cold coming home, and vague reports of a fire somewhere. Frederick says the Royal Exchange, at which I sneer most sagely; for —

Thursday, January 11th, 1838.

To-day the papers are full of it, and it *was* the Royal Exchange, Lloyd's, and all the shops round the building. Called on Browne and went with him to see the ruins, of which we saw as much as we should have done if we had stopped at home.

Sunday, January 14th, 1838.

To church in the morning, and when I came home I wrote the preceding portion of this diary, which henceforth I make a steadfast resolution not to neglect, or *paint*. I have not done it yet, nor will I; but say what rises to my lips – my mental lips at least – without reserve. No other eyes will

[6] "Sunday, under Three Heads," a small pamphlet published about this time.

see it, while mine are open in life, and although I daresay I shall be ashamed of a good deal in it, I should like to look over it at the year's end.

In Scott's diary, which I have been looking at this morning, there are thoughts which have been mine by day and by night, in good spirits and bad, since Mary died.

"Another day, and a bright one to the external world again opens on us; the air soft, and the flowers smiling, and the leaves glittering. They cannot refresh her to whom mild weather was a natural enjoyment. Cerements of lead and of wood already hold her; cold earth must have her soon. But it is not.. (she) who will be laid among the ruins… She is sentient and conscious of my emotions *somewhere*– where, we cannot tell, how, we cannot tell; yet would I not at this moment renounce the mysterious yet certain hope that I shall see her in a better world, for all that this world can give me.

* * * * * *

"I have seen her. There is the same symmetry of form, though those limbs are rigid which were once so gracefully elastic; but that yellow masque with pinched features, which seems to mock life rather than emulate it, can it be the face that was once so full of lively expression? I will not look upon it again."

I know but too well how true all this is.

Monday, January 15th, 1838.

Here ends this brief attempt at a diary. I grow sad over this checking off of days, and can't do it.

* * * * * *

Mr. W. L. Sammins

48, Doughty Street, London, January 31st, 1839.

Sir,

Circumstances have enabled me to relinquish my old connection with the "Miscellany"[7] at an earlier period than I had expected. I am no longer its editor, but I have referred your paper to my successor, and marked it as one "requiring attention." I have no doubt it will receive it.

With reference to your letter bearing date on the 8th of last October, let me assure you that I have delayed answering it – not because a constant stream of similar epistles has rendered me callous to the anxieties of a beginner, in those doubtful paths in which I walk myself – but because you ask me to do that which I would scarce do, of my own unsupported opinion, for my own child, supposing I had one old enough to require such a service. To suppose that I could gravely take upon myself the responsibility of withdrawing you from pursuits you have already undertaken, or urging you on in a most uncertain and hazardous course of life, is really a compliment to my judgment and inflexibility which I cannot recognize and do not deserve (or desire). I hoped that a little reflection would show you how impossible it is that I could be expected to enter upon a task of so much delicacy, but as you have written to me since, and called (unfortunately at a period when I am obliged to seclude myself from all comers), I am compelled at last to tell you that I can do nothing of the kind.

If it be any satisfaction to you to know that I have read what you sent me, and read it with great pleasure, though, as you treat of local matters, I am necessarily in the dark here and there, I can give

[7] "Bentley's Miscellany."

you the assurance very sincerely. With this, and many thanks to you for your obliging expressions towards myself,

I am, Sir,
Your very obedient Servant.

Mr. J. P. Harley

Doughty Street, Thursday Morning.[8]

My dear Harley,

This is my birthday. Many happy returns of the day to you and me.

I took it into my head yesterday to get up an impromptu dinner on this auspicious occasion – only my own folks, Leigh Hunt, Ainsworth, and Forster. I know you can't dine here in consequence of the tempestuous weather on the Covent Garden shores, but if you will come in when you have done Trinculizing, you will delight me greatly, and add in no inconsiderable degree to the "conviviality" of the meeting.

Lord bless my soul! Twenty-seven years old. Who'd have thought it? I *never* did!

But I grow sentimental.

Always yours truly.

Mr. Edward Chapman

1, Devonshire Terrace, 27th December, 1839.

My Dear Sir,

The place where you pledge yourself to pay for my beef and mutton when I eat it, and my ale and wine when I drink it, is the Treasurer's Office of the Middle Temple, the new building at the bottom of Middle Temple Lane on the right-hand side. You walk up into the first-floor and say (boldly) that you come to sign Mr. Charles Dickens's bond – which is already signed by Mr. Sergeant Talfourd. I suppose I should formally acquaint you that I have paid the fees, and that the responsibility you incur is a very slight one – extending very little beyond my good behaviour, and honourable intentions to pay for all wine-glasses, tumblers, or other dinner-furniture that I may break or damage.

I wish you would do me another service, and that is to choose, at the place you told me of, a reasonable copy of "The Beauties of England and Wales." You can choose it quite as well as I can, or better, and I shall be much obliged to you. I should like you to send it at once, as I am diving into all kinds of matters at odd minutes with a view to our forthcoming operations.

Faithfully yours.

[8] No other date, but it must have been 7th February, 1839.

1840

Mr. H. G. Adams.[9]

1, Devonshire Terrace, York Gate, Regent's Park,
Saturday, Jan. 18th, 1840.

Dear Sir,

The pressure of other engagements will, I am compelled to say, prevent me from contributing a paper to your new local magazine.[10] But I beg you to set me down as a subscriber to it, and foremost among those whose best wishes are enlisted in your cause. It will afford me real pleasure to hear of your success, for I have many happy recollections connected with Kent, and am scarcely less interested in it than if I had been a Kentish man bred and born, and had resided in the county all my life.

Faithfully yours.

Mr. Thompson.[11]

Devonshire Terrace, Tuesday, 15th December, 1840.

My dear Thompson,

I have received a most flattering message from the head turnkey of the jail this morning, intimating that "there warn't a genelman in all London he'd be gladder to show his babies to, than Muster Dickins, and let him come wenever he would to that shop he wos welcome." But as the Governor (who is a very nice fellow and a gentleman) is not at home this morning, and furthermore as the morning itself has rather gone out of town in respect of its poetical allurements, I think we had best postpone our visit for a day or two.

Faithfully yours.

[9] Mr. Adams, the Hon. Secretary of the Chatham Mechanics' Institute, which office he held for many years.

[10] "The Kentish Coronal."

[11] An intimate friend.

1841

Rev. Thomas Robinson.[12]

1, Devonshire Terrace, York Gate, Regent's Park,
Thursday, April 8th, 1841.

Dear Sir,

I am much obliged to you for your interesting letter. Nor am I the less pleased to receive it, by reason that I cannot find it in my conscience to agree in many important respects with the body to which you belong.

In the love of virtue and hatred of vice, in the detestation of cruelty and encouragement of gentleness and mercy, all men who endeavour to be acceptable to their Creator in any way, may freely agree. There are more roads to Heaven, I am inclined to think, than any sect believes; but there can be none which have not these flowers garnishing the way.

I feel it a great tribute, therefore, to receive your letter. It is most welcome and acceptable to me. I thank you for it heartily, and am proud of the approval of one who suffered in his youth, even more than my poor child.

While you teach in your walk of life the lessons of tenderness you have learnt in sorrow, trust me that in mine, I will pursue cruelty and oppression, the enemies of all God's creatures of all codes and creeds, so long as I have the energy of thought and the power of giving it utterance.

Faithfully yours.

The Countess of Blessington

[13] *Devonshire Terrace, June 2nd, 1841.*

Dear Lady Blessington,

The year goes round so fast, that when anything occurs to remind me of its whirling, I lose my breath, and am bewildered. So your handwriting last night had as startling an effect upon me, as though you had sealed your note with one of your own eyes.

I remember my promise, as in cheerful duty bound, and with Heaven's grace will redeem it. At this moment, I have not the faintest idea how, but I am going into Scotland on the 19th to see Jeffrey, and while I am away (I shall return, please God, in about three weeks) will look out for some accident, incident, or subject for small description, to send you when I come home. You will take the will for the deed, I know; and, remembering that I have a "Clock" which always wants winding up, will not quarrel with me for being brief.

Have you seen Townshend's magnetic boy? You heard of him, no doubt, from Count D'Orsay. If you get him to Gore House, don't, I entreat you, have more than eight people – four is a better number – to see him. He fails in a crowd, and is *marvellous* before a few.

I am told that down in Devonshire there are young ladies innumerable, who read crabbed manuscripts with the palms of their hands, and newspapers with their ankles, and so forth; and who

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[12] A Dissenting minister, once himself a workhouse boy, and writing on the character of Oliver Twist. This letter was published in "Harper's New Monthly Magazine," in 1862.

[13] This, and all other Letters addressed to the Countess of Blessington, were printed in "Literary Life and Correspondence of the Countess of Blessington."

are, so to speak, literary all over. I begin to understand what a blue-stocking means, and have not the smallest doubt that Lady – (for instance) could write quite as entertaining a book with the sole of her foot as ever she did with her head. I am a believer in earnest, and I am sure you would be if you saw this boy, under moderately favourable circumstances, as I hope you will, before he leaves England.

Believe me, dear Lady Blessington,
Faithfully yours.

Mr. L. Gaylord Clark

September 28th, 1841.

My dear Sir,

I condole with you from my heart on the loss[14] you have sustained, and I feel proud of your permitting me to sympathise with your affliction. It is a great satisfaction to me to have been addressed, under similar circumstances, by many of your countrymen since the "Curiosity Shop" came to a close. Some simple and honest hearts in the remote wilds of America have written me letters on the loss of children – so numbering my little book, or rather heroine, with their household gods; and so pouring out their trials and sources of comfort in them, before me as a friend, that I have been inexpressibly moved, and am whenever I think of them, I do assure you. You have already all the comfort, that I could lay before you; all, I hope, that the affectionate spirit of your brother, now in happiness, can shed into your soul.

On the 4th of next January, if it please God, I am coming with my wife on a three or four months' visit to America. The British and North American packet will bring me, I hope, to Boston, and enable me, in the third week of the new year, to set my foot upon the soil I have trodden in my day-dreams many times, and whose sons (and daughters) I yearn to know and to be among.

I hope you are surprised, and I hope not unpleasantly.

Faithfully yours.

Mrs. Hogarth

[15]*Devonshire Terrace, Sunday, October 24th, 1841.*

My dear Mrs. Hogarth,

For God's sake be comforted, and bear this well, for the love of your remaining children.

I had always intended to keep poor Mary's grave for us and our dear children, and for you. But if it will be any comfort to you to have poor George buried there, I will cheerfully arrange to place the ground at your entire disposal. Do not consider me in any way. Consult only your own heart. Mine seems to tell me that as they both died so young and so suddenly, they ought both to be buried together.

Try – do try – to think that they have but preceded you to happiness, and will meet you with joy in heaven. There *is* consolation in the knowledge that you have treasure there, and that while you live on earth, there are creatures among the angels, who owed their being to you.

Always yours with true affection.

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[14] The death of his correspondent's twin-brother, Willis Gaylord Clark.

[15] On the occasion of the sudden death of Mrs. Hogarth's son, George.

Mr. Washington Irving

My dear Sir,[16]

There is no man in the world who could have given me the heartfelt pleasure you have, by your kind note of the 13th of last month. There is no living writer, and there are very few among the dead, whose approbation I should feel so proud to earn. And with everything you have written upon my shelves, and in my thoughts, and in my heart of hearts, I may honestly and truly say so. If you could know how earnestly I write this, you would be glad to read it – as I hope you will be, faintly guessing at the warmth of the hand I autobiographically hold out to you over the broad Atlantic.

I wish I could find in your welcome letter some hint of an intention to visit England. I can't. I have held it at arm's length, and taken a bird's-eye view of it, after reading it a great many times, but there is no greater encouragement in it this way than on a microscopic inspection. I should love to go with you – as I have gone, God knows how often – into Little Britain, and Eastcheap, and Green Arbour Court, and Westminster Abbey. I should like to travel with you, outside the last of the coaches down to Bracebridge Hall. It would make my heart glad to compare notes with you about that shabby gentleman in the oilcloth hat and red nose, who sat in the nine-cornered back-parlour of the Masons' Arms; and about Robert Preston and the tallow-chandler's widow, whose sitting-room is second nature to me; and about all those delightful places and people that I used to walk about and dream of in the daytime, when a very small and not over-particularly-taken-care-of boy. I have a good deal to say, too, about that dashing Alonzo de Ojeda, that you can't help being fonder of than you ought to be; and much to hear concerning Moorish legend, and poor unhappy Boabdil. Diedrich Knickerbocker I have worn to death in my pocket, and yet I should show you his mutilated carcass with a joy past all expression.

I have been so accustomed to associate you with my pleasantest and happiest thoughts, and with my leisure hours, that I rush at once into full confidence with you, and fall, as it were naturally, and by the very laws of gravity, into your open arms. Questions come thronging to my pen as to the lips of people who meet after long hoping to do so. I don't know what to say first or what to leave unsaid, and am constantly disposed to break off and tell you again how glad I am this moment has arrived.

My dear Washington Irving, I cannot thank you enough for your cordial and generous praise, or tell you what deep and lasting gratification it has given me. I hope to have many letters from you, and to exchange a frequent correspondence. I send this to say so. After the first two or three I shall settle down into a connected style, and become gradually rational.

You know what the feeling is, after having written a letter, sealed it, and sent it off. I shall picture your reading this, and answering it before it has lain one night in the post-office. Ten to one that before the fastest packet could reach New York I shall be writing again.

Do you suppose the post-office clerks care to receive letters? I have my doubts. They get into a dreadful habit of indifference. A postman, I imagine, is quite callous. Conceive his delivering one to himself, without being startled by a preliminary double knock!

Always your faithful Friend.

[16] This, and all other Letters addressed to Mr. Washington Irving, were printed in "The Life and Letters of Washington Irving," edited by his nephew, Pierre M. Irving.

1842

Professor Felton

Fuller's Hotel, Washington, Monday, March 14th, 1842.

My dear Felton,[17]

I was more delighted than I can possibly tell you, to receive (last Saturday night) your welcome letter. We and the oysters missed you terribly in New York. You carried away with you more than half the delight and pleasure of my New World; and I heartily wish you could bring it back again.

There are very interesting men in this place – highly interesting, of course – but it's not a comfortable place; is it? If spittle could wait at table we should be nobly attended, but as that property has not been imparted to it in the present state of mechanical science, we are rather lonely and orphan-like, in respect of "being looked arter." A blithe black was introduced on our arrival, as our peculiar and especial attendant. He is the only gentleman in the town who has a peculiar delicacy in intruding upon my valuable time. It usually takes seven rings and a threatening message from – to produce him; and when he comes he goes to fetch something, and, forgetting it by the way, comes back no more.

We have been in great distress, really in distress, at the non-arrival of the *Caledonia*. You may conceive what our joy was, when, while we were dining out yesterday, H. arrived with the joyful intelligence of her safety. The very news of her having really arrived seemed to diminish the distance between ourselves and home, by one half at least.

And this morning (though we have not yet received our heap of despatches, for which we are looking eagerly forward to this night's mail) – this morning there reached us unexpectedly, through the Government bag (Heaven knows how they came there!), two of our many and long-looked-for letters, wherein was a circumstantial account of the whole conduct and behaviour of our pets; with marvellous narrations of Charley's precocity at a Twelfth Night juvenile party at Macready's; and tremendous predictions of the governess, dimly suggesting his having got out of pot-hooks and hangers, and darkly insinuating the possibility of his writing us a letter before long; and many other workings of the same prophetic spirit, in reference to him and his sisters, very gladdening to their mother's heart, and not at all depressing to their father's. There was, also, the doctor's report, which was a clean bill; and the nurse's report, which was perfectly electrifying; showing as it did how Master Walter had been weaned, and had cut a double tooth, and done many other extraordinary things, quite worthy of his high descent. In short, we were made very happy and grateful; and felt as if the prodigal father and mother had got home again.

What do you think of this incendiary card being left at my door last night? "General G. sends compliments to Mr. Dickens, and called with two literary ladies. As the two L. L.'s are ambitious of the honour of a personal introduction to Mr. D., General G. requests the honour of an appointment for to-morrow." I draw a veil over my sufferings. They are sacred. We shall be in Buffalo, please Heaven, on the 30th of April. If I don't find a letter from you in the care of the postmaster at that place, I'll never write to you from England.

But if I *do* find one, my right hand shall forget its cunning, before I forget to be your truthful and constant correspondent; not, dear Felton, because I promised it, nor because I have a natural tendency to correspond (which is far from being the case), nor because I am truly grateful to you for, and have been made truly proud by, that affectionate and elegant tribute which – sent me, but

[17] This, and all other Letters addressed to Professor Felton, were printed in Mr. Field's "Yesterdays with Authors," originally published in *The Atlantic Monthly Magazine*.

because you are a man after my own heart, and I love you *well*. And for the love I bear you, and the pleasure with which I shall always think of you, and the glow I shall feel when I see your handwriting in my own home, I hereby enter into a solemn league and covenant to write as many letters to you as you write to me, at least. Amen.

Come to England! Come to England! Our oysters are small, I know; they are said by Americans to be coppery; but our hearts are of the largest size. We are thought to excel in shrimps, to be far from despicable in point of lobsters, and in periwinkles are considered to challenge the universe. Our oysters, small though they be, are not devoid of the refreshing influence which that species of fish is supposed to exercise in these latitudes. Try them and compare.

Affectionately yours.

Mr. Washington Irving

Washington, Monday Afternoon, March 21st, 1842.

My dear Irving,

We passed through – literally passed through – this place again to-day. I did not come to see you, for I really have not the heart to say "good-bye" again, and felt more than I can tell you when we shook hands last Wednesday.

You will not be at Baltimore, I fear? I thought, at the time, that you only said you might be there, to make our parting the gayer.

Wherever you go, God bless you! What pleasure I have had in seeing and talking with you, I will not attempt to say. I shall never forget it as long as I live. What would I give, if we could have but a quiet week together! Spain is a lazy place, and its climate an indolent one. But if you have ever leisure under its sunny skies to think of a man who loves you, and holds communion with your spirit oftener, perhaps, than any other person alive – leisure from listlessness, I mean – and will write to me in London, you will give me an inexpressible amount of pleasure.

Your affectionate friend.

Professor Felton

Montreal, Saturday, 21st May, 1842.

My dear Felton,

I was delighted to receive your letter yesterday, and was well pleased with its contents. I anticipated objection to Carlyle's[18] letter. I called particular attention to it for three reasons. Firstly, because he boldly *said* what all the others *think*, and therefore deserved to be manfully supported. Secondly, because it is my deliberate opinion that I have been assailed on this subject in a manner in which no man with any pretensions to public respect or with the remotest right to express an opinion on a subject of universal literary interest would be assailed in any other country…

I really cannot sufficiently thank you, dear Felton, for your warm and hearty interest in these proceedings. But it would be idle to pursue that theme, so let it pass.

The wig and whiskers are in a state of the highest preservation. The play comes off next Wednesday night, the 25th. What would I give to see you in the front row of the centre box, your spectacles gleaming not unlike those of my dear friend Pickwick, your face radiant with as broad a grin as a staid professor may indulge in, and your very coat, waistcoat, and shoulders expressive of

[18] On the subject of International Copyright.

what we should take together when the performance was over! I would give something (not so much, but still a good round sum) if you could only stumble into that very dark and dusty theatre in the daytime (at any minute between twelve and three), and see me with my coat off, the stage manager and universal director, urging impracticable ladies and impossible gentlemen on to the very confines of insanity, shouting and driving about, in my own person, to an extent which would justify any philanthropic stranger in clapping me into a strait-waistcoat without further inquiry, endeavouring to goad H. into some dim and faint understanding of a prompter's duties, and struggling in such a vortex of noise, dirt, bustle, confusion, and inextricable entanglement of speech and action as you would grow giddy in contemplating. We perform "A Roland for an Oliver," "A Good Night's Rest," and "Deaf as a Post." This kind of voluntary hard labour used to be my great delight. The *furor* has come strong upon me again, and I begin to be once more of opinion that nature intended me for the lessee of a national theatre, and that pen, ink, and paper have spoiled a manager.

Oh, how I look forward across that rolling water to home and its small tenantry! How I busy myself in thinking how my books look, and where the tables are, and in what positions the chairs stand relatively to the other furniture; and whether we shall get there in the night, or in the morning, or in the afternoon; and whether we shall be able to surprise them, or whether they will be too sharply looking out for us; and what our pets will say; and how they'll look, and who will be the first to come and shake hands, and so forth! If I could but tell you how I have set my heart on rushing into Forster's study (he is my great friend, and writes at the bottom of all his letters: "My love to Felton"), and into Maclise's painting-room, and into Macready's managerial ditto, without a moment's warning, and how I picture every little trait and circumstance of our arrival to myself, down to the very colour of the bow on the cook's cap, you would almost think I had changed places with my eldest son, and was still in pantaloons of the thinnest texture. I left all these things – God only knows what a love I have for them – as coolly and calmly as any animated cucumber; but when I come upon them again I shall have lost all power of self-restraint, and shall as certainly make a fool of myself (in the popular meaning of that expression) as ever Grimaldi did in his way, or George the Third in his.

And not the less so, dear Felton, for having found some warm hearts, and left some instalments of earnest and sincere affection, behind me on this continent. And whenever I turn my mental telescope hitherward, trust me that one of the first figures it will descry will wear spectacles so like yours that the maker couldn't tell the difference, and shall address a Greek class in such an exact imitation of your voice, that the very students hearing it should cry, "That's he! Three cheers. Hoo-ray-ay-ay-ay-ay!"

About those joints of yours, I think you are mistaken. They *can't* be stiff. At the worst they merely want the air of New York, which, being impregnated with the flavour of last year's oysters, has a surprising effect in rendering the human frame supple and flexible in all cases of rust.

A terrible idea occurred to me as I wrote those words. The oyster-cellars – what do they do when oysters are not in season? Is pickled salmon vended there? Do they sell crabs, shrimps, winkles, herrings? The oyster-openers – what do *they* do? Do they commit suicide in despair, or wrench open tight drawers and cupboards and hermetically-sealed bottles for practice? Perhaps they are dentists out of the oyster season. Who knows?

Affectionately yours.

The same

1, Devonshire Terrace, York Gate, Regent's Park,
London, Sunday, July 31st, 1842.

My dear Felton,

Of all the monstrous and incalculable amount of occupation that ever beset one unfortunate man, mine has been the most stupendous since I came home. The dinners I have had to eat, the places I have had to go to, the letters I have had to answer, the sea of business and of pleasure in which I have been plunged, not even the genius of an – or the pen of a – could describe.

Wherefore I indite a monstrously short and wildly uninteresting epistle to the American Dando; but perhaps you don't know who Dando was. He was an oyster-eater, my dear Felton. He used to go into oyster-shops, without a farthing of money, and stand at the counter eating natives, until the man who opened them grew pale, cast down his knife, staggered backward, struck his white forehead with his open hand, and cried, "You are Dando!!!" He has been known to eat twenty dozen at one sitting, and would have eaten forty, if the truth had not flashed upon the shopkeeper. For these offences he was constantly committed to the House of Correction. During his last imprisonment he was taken ill, got worse and worse, and at last began knocking violent double knocks at Death's door. The doctor stood beside his bed, with his fingers on his pulse. "He is going," says the doctor. "I see it in his eye. There is only one thing that would keep life in him for another hour, and that is – oysters." They were immediately brought. Dando swallowed eight, and feebly took a ninth. He held it in his mouth and looked round the bed strangely. "Not a bad one, is it?" says the doctor. The patient shook his head, rubbed his trembling hand upon his stomach, bolted the oyster, and fell back – dead. They buried him in the prison-yard, and paved his grave with oyster-shells.

We are all well and hearty, and have already begun to wonder what time next year you and Mrs. Felton and Dr. Howe will come across the briny sea together. To-morrow we go to the seaside for two months. I am looking out for news of Longfellow, and shall be delighted when I know that he is on his way to London and this house.

I am bent upon striking at the piratical newspapers with the sharpest edge I can put upon my small axe, and hope in the next session of Parliament to stop their entrance into Canada. For the first time within the memory of man, the professors of English literature seem disposed to act together on this question. It is a good thing to aggravate a scoundrel, if one can do nothing else, and I think we *can* make them smart a little in this way…

I wish you had been at Greenwich the other day, where a party of friends gave me a private dinner; public ones I have refused. C – was perfectly wild at the reunion, and, after singing all manner of marine songs, wound up the entertainment by coming home (six miles) in a little open phaeton of mine, *on his head*, to the mingled delight and indignation of the metropolitan police. We were very jovial indeed; and I assure you that I drank your health with fearful vigour and energy.

On board that ship coming home I established a club, called the United Vagabonds, to the large amusement of the rest of the passengers. This holy brotherhood committed all kinds of absurdities, and dined always, with a variety of solemn forms, at one end of the table, below the mast, away from all the rest. The captain being ill when we were three or four days out, I produced my medicine-chest and recovered him. We had a few more sick men after that, and I went round "the wards" every day in great state, accompanied by two Vagabonds, habited as Ben Allen and Bob Sawyer, bearing enormous rolls of plaster and huge pairs of scissors. We were really very merry all the way, breakfasted in one party at Liverpool, shook hands, and parted most cordially…

Affectionately your faithful friend.

P.S. – I have looked over my journal, and have decided to produce my American trip in two volumes. I have written about half the first since I came home, and hope to be out in October. This is "exclusive news," to be communicated to any friends to whom you may like to intrust it, my dear F – .

The same

1, Devonshire Terrace, York Gate, Regent's Park,
London, September 1st, 1842.

My dear Felton,

Of course that letter in the papers was as foul a forgery as ever felon swung for… I have not contradicted it publicly, nor shall I. When I tilt at such wringings out of the dirtiest mortality, I shall be another man – indeed, almost the creature they would make me.

I gave your message to Forster, who sends a despatch-box full of kind remembrances in return. He is in a great state of delight with the first volume of my American book (which I have just finished), and swears loudly by it. It is *True* and Honourable I know, and I shall hope to send it you, complete, by the first steamer in November.

Your description of the porter and the carpet-bags prepares me for a first-rate facetious novel, brimful of the richest humour, on which I have no doubt you are engaged. What is it called? Sometimes I imagine the title-page thus:

OYSTERS

IN

EVERY STYLE

OR

OPENINGS

OF

LIFE

BY

YOUNG DANDO

As to the man putting the luggage on his head, as a sort of sign, I adopt it from this hour.

I date this from London, where I have come, as a good profligate, graceless bachelor, for a day or two; leaving my wife and babbies at the seaside… Heavens! if you were but here at this minute! A piece of salmon and a steak are cooking in the kitchen; it's a very wet day, and I have had a fire lighted; the wine sparkles on a side table; the room looks the more snug from being the only *un*dismantled one in the house; plates are warming for Forster and Maclise, whose knock I am momentarily expecting; that groom I told you of, who never comes into the house, except when we are all out of town, is walking about in his shirt-sleeves without the smallest consciousness of impropriety; a great mound of proofs are waiting to be read aloud, after dinner. With what a shout I would clap you down into the easiest chair, my genial Felton, if you could but appear, and order you a pair of slippers instantly!

Since I have written this, the aforesaid groom – a very small man (as the fashion is), with fiery red hair (as the fashion is *not*) – has looked very hard at me and fluttered about me at the same time, like a giant butterfly. After a pause, he says, in a Sam Wellerish kind of way: "I vent to the club this mornin', sir. There vorn't no letters, sir." "Very good, Topping." "How's missis, sir?" "Pretty well, Topping." "Glad to hear it, sir. *My* missis ain't wery well, sir." "No!" "No, sir, she's a goin', sir, to have a hincrease wery soon, and it makes her rather nervous, sir; and ven a young voman gets at all down at sich a time, sir, she goes down wery deep, sir." To this sentiment I replied affirmatively, and then he adds, as he stirs the fire (as if he were thinking out loud): "Wot a mystery it is! Wot a go is natur'!" With which scrap of philosophy, he gradually gets nearer to the door, and so fades out of the room.

This same man asked me one day, soon after I came home, what Sir John Wilson was. This is a friend of mine, who took our house and servants, and everything as it stood, during our absence in America. I told him an officer. "A wot, sir?" "An officer." And then, for fear he should think I meant a police-officer, I added, "An officer in the army." "I beg your pardon, sir," he said, touching his hat, "but the club as I always drove him to wos the United Servants."

The real name of this club is the United Service, but I have no doubt he thought it was a high-life-below-stairs kind of resort, and that this gentleman was a retired butler or superannuated footman.

There's the knock, and the Great Western sails, or steams rather, to-morrow. Write soon again, dear Felton, and ever believe me…

Your affectionate friend.

P.S. – All good angels prosper Dr. Howe! He, at least, will not like me the less, I hope, for what I shall say of Laura.

The same

1, Devonshire Terrace, York Gate, Regent's Park,
London, 31st December, 1842.

My dear Felton,

Many and many happy New Years to you and yours! As many happy children as may be quite convenient (no more!), and as many happy meetings between them and our children, and between you and us, as the kind fates in their utmost kindness shall favourably decree!

The American book (to begin with that) has been a most complete and thorough-going success. Four large editions have now been sold *and paid for*, and it has won golden opinions from all sorts of men, except our friend in F – , who is a miserable creature; a disappointed man in great poverty, to whom I have ever been most kind and considerate (I need scarcely say that); and another friend in B – , no less a person than an illustrious gentleman named – , who wrote a story called – . They have done no harm, and have fallen short of their mark, which, of course, was to annoy me. Now I am perfectly free from any diseased curiosity in such respects, and whenever I hear of a notice of this kind, I never read it; whereby I always conceive (don't you?) that I get the victory. With regard to your

slave-owners, they may cry, till they are as black in the face as their own slaves, that Dickens lies. Dickens does not write for their satisfaction, and Dickens will not explain for their comfort. Dickens has the name and date of every newspaper in which every one of those advertisements appeared, as they know perfectly well; but Dickens does not choose to give them, and will not at any time between this and the day of judgment…

I have been hard at work on my new book, of which the first number has just appeared. The Paul Joneses who pursue happiness and profit at other men's cost will no doubt enable you to read it, almost as soon as you receive this. I hope you will like it. And I particularly commend, my dear Felton, one Mr. Pecksniff and his daughters to your tender regards. I have a kind of liking for them myself.

Blessed star of morning, such a trip as we had into Cornwall, just after Longfellow went away! The "we" means Forster, Maclise, Stanfield (the renowned marine painter), and the Inimitable Boz. We went down into Devonshire by the railroad, and there we hired an open carriage from an innkeeper, patriotic in all Pickwick matters, and went on with post-horses. Sometimes we travelled all night, sometimes all day, sometimes both. I kept the joint-stock purse, ordered all the dinners, paid all the turnpikes, conducted facetious conversations with the post-boys, and regulated the pace at which we travelled. Stanfield (an old sailor) consulted an enormous map on all disputed points of wayfaring; and referred, moreover, to a pocket-compass and other scientific instruments. The luggage was in Forster's department; and Maclise, having nothing particular to do, sang songs. Heavens! If you could have seen the necks of bottles – distracting in their immense varieties of shape – peering out of the carriage pockets! If you could have witnessed the deep devotion of the post-boys, the wild attachment of the hostlers, the maniac glee of the waiters! If you could have followed us into the earthy old churches we visited, and into the strange caverns on the gloomy sea-shore, and down into the depths of mines, and up to the tops of giddy heights where the unspeakably green water was roaring, I don't know how many hundred feet below! If you could have seen but one gleam of the bright fires by which we sat in the big rooms of ancient inns at night, until long after the small hours had come and gone, or smelt but one steam of the hot punch (not white, dear Felton, like that amazing compound I sent you a taste of, but a rich, genial, glowing brown) which came in every evening in a huge broad china bowl! I never laughed in my life as I did on this journey. It would have done you good to hear me. I was choking and gasping and bursting the buckle off the back of my stock, all the way. And Stanfield (who is very much of your figure and temperament, but fifteen years older) got into such apoplectic entanglements that we were often obliged to beat him on the back with portmanteaus before we could recover him. Seriously, I do believe there never was such a trip. And they made such sketches, those two men, in the most romantic of our halting-places, that you would have sworn we had the Spirit of Beauty with us, as well as the Spirit of Fun. But stop till you come to England – I say no more.

The actuary of the national debt couldn't calculate the number of children who are coming here on Twelfth Night, in honour of Charley's birthday, for which occasion I have provided a magic lantern and divers other tremendous engines of that nature. But the best of it is that Forster and I have purchased between us the entire stock-in-trade of a conjurer, the practice and display whereof is intrusted to me. And O my dear eyes, Felton, if you could see me conjuring the company's watches into impossible tea-caddies, and causing pieces of money to fly, and burning pocket-handkerchiefs without hurting 'em, and practising in my own room, without anybody to admire, you would never forget it as long as you live. In those tricks which require a confederate, I am assisted (by reason of his imperturbable good humour) by Stanfield, who always does his part exactly the wrong way, to the unspeakable delight of all beholders. We come out on a small scale, to-night, at Forster's, where we see the old year out and the new one in. Particulars shall be forwarded in my next.

I have quite made up my mind that F – really believes he *does* know you personally, and has all his life. He talks to me about you with such gravity that I am afraid to grin, and feel it necessary to look quite serious. Sometimes he *tells* me things about you, doesn't ask me, you know, so that I

am occasionally perplexed beyond all telling, and begin to think it was he, and not I, who went to America. It's the queerest thing in the world.

The book I was to have given Longfellow for you is not worth sending by itself, being only a Barnaby. But I will look up some manuscript for you (I think I have that of the American Notes complete), and will try to make the parcel better worth its long conveyance. With regard to Maclise's pictures, you certainly are quite right in your impression of them; but he is "such a discursive devil" (as he says about himself) and flies off at such odd tangents, that I feel it difficult to convey to you any general notion of his purpose. I will try to do so when I write again. I want very much to know about – and that charming girl… Give me full particulars. Will you remember me cordially to Sumner, and say I thank him for his welcome letter? The like to Hillard, with many regards to himself and his wife, with whom I had one night a little conversation which I shall not readily forget. The like to Washington Allston, and all friends who care for me and have outlived my book… Always, my dear Felton,

With true regard and affection, yours.

Mr. Tom Hood

My dear Hood,

I can't state in figures (not very well remembering how to get beyond a million) the number of candidates for the Sanatorium matronship, but if you will ask your little boy to trace figures in the beds of your garden, beginning at the front wall, going down to the cricket-ground, coming back to the wall again, and "carrying over" to the next door, and will then set a skilful accountant to add up the whole, the product, as the Tutor's Assistants say, will give you the amount required. I have pledged myself (being assured of her capability) to support a near relation of Miss E – 's; otherwise, I need not say how glad I should have been to forward any wish of yours.

Very faithfully yours.

1843

Mr. Macvey Napier

[19]*Devonshire Terrace, London, January 21st, 1843.*

My dear Sir,

Let me hasten to say, in the fullest and most explicit manner, that you have acted a most honourable, open, fair and manly part in the matter of my complaint,[20] for which I beg you to accept my best thanks, and the assurance of my friendship and regard. I would on no account publish the letter you have sent me for that purpose, as I conceive that by doing so, I should not reciprocate the spirit in which you have written to me privately. But if you should, upon consideration, think it not inexpedient to set the *Review* right in regard to this point of fact, by a note in the next number, I should be glad to see it there.

In reference to the article itself, it did, by repeating this statement, hurt my feelings excessively; and is, in this respect, I still conceive, most unworthy of its author. I am at a loss to divine who its author is. I *know* he read in some cut-throat American paper, this and other monstrous statements, which I could at any time have converted into sickening praise by the payment of some fifty dollars. I know that he is perfectly aware that his statement in the *Review* in corroboration of these lies, would be disseminated through the whole of the United States; and that my contradiction will never be heard of. And though I care very little for the opinion of any person who will set the statement of an American editor (almost invariably an atrocious scoundrel) against my character and conduct, such as they may be; still, my sense of justice does revolt from this most cavalier and careless exhibition of me to a whole people, as a traveller under false pretences, and a disappointed intriguer. The better the acquaintance with America, the more defenceless and more inexcusable such conduct is. For, I solemnly declare (and appeal to any man but the writer of this paper, who has travelled in that country, for confirmation of my statement) that the source from which he drew the "information" so recklessly put forth again in England, is infinitely more obscene, disgusting, and brutal than the very worst Sunday newspaper that has ever been printed in Great Britain. Conceive *The Edinburgh Review* quoting *The Satirist*, or *The Man about Town*, as an authority against a man with one grain of honour, or feather-weight of reputation.

With regard to yourself, let me say again that I thank you with all sincerity and heartiness, and fully acquit you of anything but kind and generous intentions towards me. In proof of which, I do assure you that I am even more desirous than before to write for the *Review*, and to find some topic which would at once please me and you.

Always faithfully yours.

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[19] This, and all other Letters addressed to Mr. Macvey Napier, were printed in "Selection from the Correspondence of the late Macvey Napier, Esq.," editor of *The Edinburgh Review*, edited by his son Macvey Napier.

[20] His complaint was that the reviewer of his "American Notes," in the number for January, 1843, had represented him as having gone to America as a missionary in the cause of international copyright – an allegation which Charles Dickens repudiated, and which was rectified in the way he himself suggested.

Professor Felton

1, Devonshire Terrace, York Gate, Regent's Park,
London, March 2nd, 1843.

My dear Felton,

I don't know where to begin, but plunge headlong with a terrible splash into this letter, on the chance of turning up somewhere.

Hurrah! Up like a cork again, with *The North American Review* in my hand. Like you, my dear – , and I can say no more in praise of it, though I go on to the end of the sheet. You cannot think how much notice it has attracted here. Brougham called the other day, with the number (thinking I might not have seen it), and I being out at the time, he left a note, speaking of it, and of the writer, in terms that warmed my heart. Lord Ashburton (one of whose people wrote a notice in the *Edinburgh* which they have since publicly contradicted) also wrote to me about it in just the same strain. And many others have done the like.

I am in great health and spirits and powdering away at Chuzzlewit, with all manner of facetiousness rising up before me as I go on. As to news, I have really none, saving that – (who never took any exercise in his life) has been laid up with rheumatism for weeks past, but is now, I hope, getting better. My little captain, as I call him – he who took me out, I mean, and with whom I had that adventure of the cork soles – has been in London too, and seeing all the lions under my escort. Good heavens! I wish you could have seen certain other mahogany-faced men (also captains) who used to call here for him in the morning, and bear him off to docks and rivers and all sorts of queer places, whence he always returned late at night, with rum-and-water tear-drops in his eyes, and a complication of punchy smells in his mouth! He was better than a comedy to us, having marvellous ways of tying his pocket-handkerchief round his neck at dinner-time in a kind of jolly embarrassment, and then forgetting what he had done with it; also of singing songs to wrong tunes, and calling land objects by sea names, and never knowing what o'clock it was, but taking midnight for seven in the evening; with many other sailor oddities, all full of honesty, manliness, and good temper. We took him to Drury Lane Theatre to see "Much Ado About Nothing." But I never could find out what he meant by turning round, after he had watched the first two scenes with great attention, and inquiring "whether it was a Polish piece."..

On the 4th of April I am going to preside at a public dinner for the benefit of the printers; and if you were a guest at that table, wouldn't I smite you on the shoulder, harder than ever I rapped the well-beloved back of Washington Irving at the City Hotel in New York!

You were asking me – I love to say asking, as if we could talk together – about Maclise. He is such a discursive fellow, and so eccentric in his might, that on a mental review of his pictures I can hardly tell you of them as leading to any one strong purpose. But the annual Exhibition of the Royal Academy comes off in May, and then I will endeavour to give you some notion of him. He is a tremendous creature, and might do anything. But, like all tremendous creatures, he takes his own way, and flies off at unexpected breaches in the conventional wall.

You know H – 's Book, I daresay. Ah! I saw a scene of mingled comicality and seriousness at his funeral some weeks ago, which has choked me at dinner-time ever since. C – and I went as mourners; and as he lived, poor fellow, five miles out of town, I drove C – down. It was such a day as I hope, for the credit of nature, is seldom seen in any parts but these – muddy, foggy, wet, dark, cold, and unutterably wretched in every possible respect. Now, C – has enormous whiskers, which straggle all down his throat in such weather, and stick out in front of him, like a partially unravelled bird's-nest; so that he looks queer enough at the best, but when he is very wet, and in a state between jollity (he is always very jolly with me) and the deepest gravity (going to a funeral, you know), it is

utterly impossible to resist him; especially as he makes the strangest remarks the mind of man can conceive, without any intention of being funny, but rather meaning to be philosophical. I really cried with an irresistible sense of his comicality all the way; but when he was dressed out in a black cloak and a very long black hat-band by an undertaker (who, as he whispered me with tears in his eyes – for he had known H – many years – was a "character, and he would like to sketch him"), I thought I should have been obliged to go away. However, we went into a little parlour where the funeral party was, and God knows it was miserable enough, for the widow and children were crying bitterly in one corner, and the other mourners – mere people of ceremony, who cared no more for the dead man than the hearse did – were talking quite coolly and carelessly together in another; and the contrast was as painful and distressing as anything I ever saw. There was an Independent clergyman present, with his bands on and a bible under his arm, who, as soon as we were seated, addressed – thus, in a loud emphatic voice: "Mr. C – , have you seen a paragraph respecting our departed friend, which has gone the round of the morning papers?" "Yes, sir," says C – , "I have," looking very hard at me the while, for he had told me with some pride coming down that it was his composition. "Oh!" said the clergyman. "Then you will agree with me, Mr. C – , that it is not only an insult to me, who am the servant of the Almighty, but an insult to the Almighty, whose servant I am." "How is that, sir?" said C – . "It is stated, Mr. C – , in that paragraph," says the minister, "that when Mr. H – failed in business as a bookseller, he was persuaded by *me* to try the pulpit; which is false, incorrect, unchristian, in a manner blasphemous, and in all respects contemptible. Let us pray." With which, my dear Felton, and in the same breath, I give you my word, he knelt down, as we all did, and began a very miserable jumble of an extemporary prayer. I was really penetrated with sorrow for the family, but when C – (upon his knees, and sobbing for the loss of an old friend) whispered me, "that if that wasn't a clergyman, and it wasn't a funeral, he'd have punched his head," I felt as if nothing but convulsions could possibly relieve me…

Faithfully always, my dear Felton.

Mrs. Hogarth

Devonshire Terrace, 8th May, 1843.

My dear Mrs. Hogarth,

I was dressing to go to church yesterday morning – thinking, very sadly, of that time six years – when your kind note and its accompanying packet were brought to me. The best portrait that was ever painted would be of little value to you and me, in comparison with that unfading picture we have within us; and of the worst (which – 's really is) I can only say, that it has no interest in my eyes, beyond being something which she sat near in its progress, full of life and beauty. In that light, I set some store by the copy you have sent me; and as a mark of your affection, I need not say I value it very much. As any record of that dear face, it is utterly worthless.

I trace in many respects a strong resemblance between her mental features and Georgina's – so strange a one, at times, that when she and Kate and I are sitting together, I seem to think that what has happened is a melancholy dream from which I am just awakening. The perfect like of what she was, will never be again, but so much of her spirit shines out in this sister, that the old time comes back again at some seasons, and I can hardly separate it from the present.

After she died, I dreamed of her every night for many months – I think for the better part of a year – sometimes as a spirit, sometimes as a living creature, never with any of the bitterness of my real sorrow, but always with a kind of quiet happiness, which became so pleasant to me that I never lay down at night without a hope of the vision coming back in one shape or other. And so it did. I went down into Yorkshire, and finding it still present to me, in a strange scene and a strange bed,

I could not help mentioning the circumstance in a note I wrote home to Kate. From that moment I have never dreamed of her once, though she is so much in my thoughts at all times (especially when I am successful, and have prospered in anything) that the recollection of her is an essential part of my being, and is as inseparable from my existence as the beating of my heart is.

Always affectionately.

Professor Felton

Broadstairs, Kent, September 1st, 1843.

My dear Felton,

If I thought it in the nature of things that you and I could ever agree on paper, touching a certain Chuzzlewitian question whereupon F – tells me you have remarks to make, I should immediately walk into the same, tooth and nail. But as I don't, I won't. Contenting myself with this prediction, that one of these years and days, you will write or say to me: "My dear Dickens, you were right, though rough, and did a world of good, though you got most thoroughly hated for it." To which I shall reply: "My dear Felton, I looked a long way off and not immediately under my nose".. At which sentiment you will laugh, and I shall laugh; and then (for I foresee this will all happen in my land) we shall call for another pot of porter and two or three dozen of oysters.

Now, don't you in your own heart and soul quarrel with me for this long silence? Not half so much as I quarrel with myself, I know; but if you could read half the letters I write to you in imagination, you would swear by me for the best of correspondents. The truth is, that when I have done my morning's work, down goes my pen, and from that minute I feel it a positive impossibility to take it up again, until imaginary butchers and bakers wave me to my desk. I walk about brimful of letters, facetious descriptions, touching morsels, and pathetic friendships, but can't for the soul of me uncork myself. The post-office is my rock ahead. My average number of letters that *must* be written every day is, at the least, a dozen. And you could no more know what I was writing to you spiritually, from the perusal of the bodily thirteenth, than you could tell from my hat what was going on in my head, or could read my heart on the surface of my flannel waistcoat.

This is a little fishing-place; intensely quiet; built on a cliff, whereon – in the centre of a tiny semicircular bay – our house stands; the sea rolling and dashing under the windows. Seven miles out are the Goodwin Sands (you've heard of the Goodwin Sands?) whence floating lights perpetually wink after dark, as if they were carrying on intrigues with the servants. Also there is a big lighthouse called the North Foreland on a hill behind the village, a severe parsonic light, which reproves the young and giddy floaters, and stares grimly out upon the sea. Under the cliff are rare good sands, where all the children assemble every morning and throw up impossible fortifications, which the sea throws down again at high water. Old gentlemen and ancient ladies flirt after their own manner in two reading-rooms and on a great many scattered seats in the open air. Other old gentlemen look all day through telescopes and never see anything. In a bay-window in a one-pair sits, from nine o'clock to one, a gentleman with rather long hair and no neckcloth, who writes and grins as if he thought he were very funny indeed. His name is Boz. At one he disappears, and presently emerges from a bathing-machine, and may be seen – a kind of salmon-coloured porpoise – splashing about in the ocean. After that he may be seen in another bay-window on the ground-floor, eating a strong lunch; after that, walking a dozen miles or so, or lying on his back in the sand reading a book. Nobody bothers him unless they know he is disposed to be talked to; and I am told he is very comfortable indeed. He's as brown as a berry, and they *do* say is a small fortune to the innkeeper who sells beer and cold punch. But this is mere rumour. Sometimes he goes up to London (eighty miles, or so, away), and

then I'm told there is a sound in Lincoln's Inn Fields at night, as of men laughing, together with a clinking of knives and forks and wine-glasses.

I never shall have been so near you since we parted aboard the *George Washington* as next Tuesday. Forster, Maclise, and I, and perhaps Stanfield, are then going aboard the Cunard steamer at Liverpool, to bid Macready good-bye, and bring his wife away. It will be a very hard parting. You will see and know him of course. We gave him a splendid dinner last Saturday at Richmond, whereat I presided with my accustomed grace. He is one of the noblest fellows in the world, and I would give a great deal that you and I should sit beside each other to see him play Virginius, Lear, or Werner, which I take to be, every way, the greatest piece of exquisite perfection that his lofty art is capable of attaining. His Macbeth, especially the last act, is a tremendous reality; but so indeed is almost everything he does. You recollect, perhaps, that he was the guardian of our children while we were away. I love him dearly…

You asked me, long ago, about Maclise. He is such a wayward fellow in his subjects, that it would be next to impossible to write such an article as you were thinking of about him. I wish you could form an idea of his genius. One of these days a book will come out, "Moore's Irish Melodies," entirely illustrated by him, on every page. *When* it comes, I'll send it to you. You will have some notion of him then. He is in great favour with the Queen, and paints secret pictures for her to put upon her husband's table on the morning of his birthday, and the like. But if he has a care, he will leave his mark on more enduring things than palace walls.

And so L – is married. I remember *her* well, and could draw her portrait, in words, to the life. A very beautiful and gentle creature, and a proper love for a poet. My cordial remembrances and congratulations. Do they live in the house where we breakfasted?..

I very often dream I am in America again; but, strange to say, I never dream of you. I am always endeavouring to get home in disguise, and have a dreary sense of the distance. *À propos* of dreams, is it not a strange thing if writers of fiction never dream of their own creations; recollecting, I suppose, even in their dreams, that they have no real existence? *I* never dreamed of any of my own characters, and I feel it so impossible that I would wager Scott never did of his, real as they are. I had a good piece of absurdity in my head a night or two ago. I dreamed that somebody was dead. I don't know who, but it's not to the purpose. It was a private gentleman, and a particular friend; and I was greatly overcome when the news was broken to me (very delicately) by a gentleman in a cocked hat, top boots, and a sheet. Nothing else. "Good God!" I said, "is he dead?" "He is as dead, sir," rejoined the gentleman, "as a door-nail. But we must all die, Mr. Dickens, sooner or later, my dear sir." "Ah!" I said. "Yes, to be sure. Very true. But what did he die of?" The gentleman burst into a flood of tears, and said, in a voice broken by emotion: "He christened his youngest child, sir, with a toasting-fork." I never in my life was so affected as at his having fallen a victim to this complaint. It carried a conviction to my mind that he never could have recovered. I knew that it was the most interesting and fatal malady in the world; and I wrung the gentleman's hand in a convulsion of respectful admiration, for I felt that this explanation did equal honour to his head and heart!

What do you think of Mrs. Gamp? And how do you like the undertaker? I have a fancy that they are in your way. Oh heaven! such green woods as I was rambling among down in Yorkshire, when I was getting that done last July! For days and weeks we never saw the sky but through green boughs; and all day long I cantered over such soft moss and turf, that the horse's feet scarcely made a sound upon it. We have some friends in that part of the country (close to Castle Howard, where Lord Morpeth's father dwells in state, *in* his park indeed), who are the jolliest of the jolly, keeping a big old country house, with an ale cellar something larger than a reasonable church, and everything, like Goldsmith's bear dances, "in a concatenation accordingly." Just the place for you, Felton! We performed some madnesses there in the way of forfeits, picnics, rustic games, inspections of ancient monasteries at midnight, when the moon was shining, that would have gone to your heart, and, as Mr. Weller says, "come out on the other side."..

Write soon, my dear Felton; and if I write to you less often than I would, believe that my affectionate heart is with you always. Loves and regards to all friends, from yours ever and ever.

Very faithfully yours.

Mr. Macvey Napier

Broadstairs, September 16th, 1843.

My dear Sir,

I hinted, in a letter of introduction I gave Mr. Hood to you, that I had been thinking of a subject for the *Edinburgh*. Would it meet the purposes of the *Review* to come out strongly against any system of education based exclusively on the principles of the Established Church? If it would, I should like to show why such a thing as the Church Catechism is wholly inapplicable to the state of ignorance that now prevails; and why no system but one, so general in great religious principles as to include all creeds, can meet the wants and understandings of the dangerous classes of society. This is the only broad ground I could hold, consistently with what I feel and think on such a subject. But I could give, in taking it, a description of certain voluntary places of instruction, called "the ragged schools," now existing in London, and of the schools in jails, and of the ignorance presented in such places, which would make a very striking paper, especially if they were put in strong comparison with the effort making, by subscription, to maintain exclusive Church instruction. I could show these people in a state so miserable and so neglected, that their very nature rebels against the simplest religion, and that to convey to them the faintest outlines of any system of distinction between right and wrong is in itself a giant's task, before which mysteries and squabbles for forms *must* give way. Would this be too much for the *Review?*

Faithfully yours.

1844

Professor Felton

Devonshire Terrace, London, January 2nd, 1844.

My very dear Felton,

You are a prophet, and had best retire from business straightway. Yesterday morning, New Year's Day, when I walked into my little workroom after breakfast, and was looking out of window at the snow in the garden – not seeing it particularly well in consequence of some staggering suggestions of last night, whereby I was beset – the postman came to the door with a knock, for which I denounced him from my heart. Seeing your hand upon the cover of a letter which he brought, I immediately blessed him, presented him with a glass of whisky, inquired after his family (they are all well), and opened the despatch with a moist and oystery twinkle in my eye. And on the very day from which the new year dates, I read your New Year congratulations as punctually as if you lived in the next house. Why don't you?

Now, if instantly on the receipt of this you will send a free and independent citizen down to the Cunard wharf at Boston, you will find that Captain Hewett, of the *Britannia* steamship (my ship), has a small parcel for Professor Felton of Cambridge; and in that parcel you will find a Christmas Carol in prose; being a short story of Christmas by Charles Dickens. Over which Christmas Carol Charles Dickens wept and laughed and wept again, and excited himself in a most extraordinary manner in the composition; and thinking whereof he walked about the black streets of London, fifteen and twenty miles many a night when all the sober folks had gone to bed… Its success is most prodigious. And by every post all manner of strangers write all manner of letters to him about their homes and hearths, and how this same Carol is read aloud there, and kept on a little shelf by itself. Indeed, it is the greatest success, as I am told, that this ruffian and rascal has ever achieved.

Forster is out again; and if he don't go in again, after the manner in which we have been keeping Christmas, he must be very strong indeed. Such dinings, such dancings, such conjurings, such blindman's-buffings, such theatre-goings, such kissings-out of old years and kissings-in of new ones, never took place in these parts before. To keep the Chuzzlewit going, and do this little book, the Carol, in the odd times between two parts of it, was, as you may suppose, pretty tight work. But when it was done I broke out like a madman. And if you could have seen me at a children's party at Macready's the other night, going down a country dance with Mrs. M., you would have thought I was a country gentleman of independent property, residing on a tiptop farm, with the wind blowing straight in my face every day…

Your friend, Mr. P – , dined with us one day (I don't know whether I told you this before), and pleased us very much. Mr. C – has dined here once, and spent an evening here. I have not seen him lately, though he has called twice or thrice; for K – being unwell and I busy, we have not been visible at our accustomed seasons. I wonder whether H – has fallen in your way. Poor H – ! He was a good fellow, and has the most grateful heart I ever met with. Our journeyings seem to be a dream now. Talking of dreams, strange thoughts of Italy and France, and maybe Germany, are springing up within me as the Chuzzlewit clears off. It's a secret I have hardly breathed to anyone, but I "think" of leaving England for a year, next midsummer, bag and baggage, little ones and all – then coming out with *such* a story, Felton, all at once, no parts, sledgehammer blow.

I send you a Manchester paper, as you desire. The report is not exactly done, but very well done, notwithstanding. It was a very splendid sight, I assure you, and an awful-looking audience. I am going to preside at a similar meeting at Liverpool on the 26th of next month, and on my way

home I may be obliged to preside at another at Birmingham. I will send you papers, if the reports be at all like the real thing.

I wrote to Prescott about his book, with which I was perfectly charmed. I think his descriptions masterly, his style brilliant, his purpose manly and gallant always. The introductory account of Aztec civilisation impressed me exactly as it impressed you. From beginning to end the whole history is enchanting and full of genius. I only wonder that, having such an opportunity of illustrating the doctrine of visible judgments, he never remarks, when Cortes and his men tumble the idols down the temple steps and call upon the people to take notice that their gods are powerless to help themselves, that possibly if some intelligent native had tumbled down the image of the Virgin or patron saint after them nothing very remarkable might have ensued in consequence.

Of course you like Macready. Your name's Felton. I wish you could see him play Lear. It is stupendously terrible. But I suppose he would be slow to act it with the Boston company.

Hearty remembrances to Sumner, Longfellow, Prescott, and all whom you know I love to remember. Countless happy years to you and yours, my dear Felton, and some instalment of them, however slight, in England, in the loving company of

The Proscribed One.
Oh, breathe not his name!

Sir Edward Lytton Bulwer

Athenæum, Thursday Afternoon, 25th January, 1844.

My dear Sir Edward,

I received your kind cheque yesterday, in behalf of the Elton family; and am much indebted to you on their behalf.

Pray do not believe that the least intentional neglect has prevented me from calling on you, or that I am not sincerely desirous to avail myself of any opportunity of cultivating your friendship. I venture to say this to you in an unaffected and earnest spirit, and I hope it will not be displeasing to you.

At the time when you called, and for many weeks afterwards, I was so closely occupied with my little Carol (the idea of which had just occurred to me), that I never left home before the owls went out, and led quite a solitary life. When I began to have a little time and to go abroad again, I knew that you were in affliction, and I then thought it better to wait, even before I left a card at your door, until the pressure of your distress had past.

I fancy a reproachful spirit in your note, possibly because I knew that I may appear to deserve it. But *do* let me say to you that it would give me real pain to retain the idea that there was any coldness between us, and that it would give me heartfelt satisfaction to know the reverse.

I shall make a personal descent upon you before Sunday, in the hope of telling you this myself. But I cannot rest easy without writing it also. And if this should lead to a better knowledge in each of us, of the other, believe me that I shall always look upon it as something I have long wished for.

Always faithfully yours.

Mr. Thompson

[21]Liverpool, Wednesday Night, 28th February,
Half-past ten at night.

My dear Thompson,

There never were such considerate people as they are here. After offering me unbounded hospitality and my declining it, they leave me to myself like gentlemen. They saved me from all sorts of intrusion at the Town Hall – brought me back – and left me to my quiet supper (now on the table) as they had left me to my quiet dinner.

I wish you had come. It was really a splendid sight. The Town Hall was crammed to the roof by, I suppose, two thousand persons. The ladies were in full dress and immense numbers; and when Dick showed himself, the whole assembly stood up, rustling like the leaves of a wood. Dick, with the heart of a lion, dashed in bravely. He introduced that about the genie in the casket with marvellous effect; and was applauded to the echo, which did applaud again. He was horribly nervous when he arrived at Birmingham,[22] but when he stood upon the platform, I don't believe his pulse increased ten degrees. A better and quicker audience never listened to man.

The ladies had hung the hall (do you know what an immense place it is?) with artificial flowers all round. And on the front of the great gallery, immediately fronting this young gentleman, were the words in artificial flowers (you'll observe) "Welcome Boz" in letters about six feet high. Behind his head, and about the great organ, were immense transparencies representing several Fames crowning a corresponding number of Dicks, at which Victoria (taking out a poetic licence) was highly delighted.

* * * * * *

I am going to bed. The landlady is not literary, and calls me Mr. Digzon. In other respects it is a good house.

My dear Thompson, always yours.

Countess of Blessington

Devonshire Terrace, March 10th, 1844.

My dear Lady Blessington,

I have made up my mind to "see the world," and mean to decamp, bag and baggage, next midsummer for a twelvemonth. I purpose establishing my family in some convenient place, from whence I can make personal ravages on the neighbouring country, and, somehow or other, have got it into my head that Nice would be a favourable spot for head-quarters. You are so well acquainted with these matters, that I am anxious to have the benefit of your kind advice. I do not doubt that you can tell me whether this same Nice be a healthy place the year through, whether it be reasonably cheap, pleasant to look at and to live in, and the like. If you will tell me, when you have ten minutes to spare for such a client, I shall be delighted to come to you, and guide myself by your opinion. I will not ask you to forgive me for troubling you, because I am sure beforehand that you will do so. I beg to be

[21] On the occasion of a great meeting of the Mechanics' Institution at Liverpool, with Charles Dickens in the chair.

[22] He had also presided two evenings previously at a meeting of the Polytechnic Institution at Birmingham.

kindly remembered to Count D'Orsay and to your nieces – I was going to say "the Misses Power," but it looks so like the blue board at a ladies' school, that I stopped short.

Very faithfully yours.

Mr. Thompson

Devonshire Terrace, March 13th, 1844.

My dear Thompson,

Think of Italy! Don't give that up! Why, my house is entered at Phillips's and at Gillow's to be let for twelve months; my letter of credit lies ready at Coutts's; my last number of Chuzzlewit comes out in June; and the first week, if not the first day in July, sees me, God willing, steaming off towards the sun.

Yes. We must have a few books, and everything that is idle, sauntering, and enjoyable. We must lie down at the bottom of those boats, and devise all kinds of engines for improving on that gallant holiday. I see myself in a striped shirt, moustache, blouse, red sash, straw hat, and white trousers, sitting astride a mule, and not caring for the clock, the day of the month, or the week. Tinkling bells upon the mule, I hope. I look forward to it day and night, and wish the time were come. Don't *you* give it up. That's all.

* * * * * *

Always, my dear Thompson,
Faithfully your friend.

The same

Devonshire Terrace, Sunday, March 24th, 1844.

My dear Thompson,

My study fireplace having been suddenly seized with symptoms of insanity, I have been in great affliction. The bricklayer was called in, and considered it necessary to perform an extensive operation without delay. I don't know whether you are aware of a peculiar bricky raggedness (not unaccompanied by pendent stalactites of mortar) which is exposed to view on the removal of a stove, or are acquainted with the suffocating properties of a kind of accidental snuff which flies out of the same cavernous region in great abundance. It is very distressing. I have been walking about the house after the manner of the dove before the waters subsided for some days, and have no pens or ink or paper. Hence this gap in our correspondence which I now repair.

What are you doing??? When are you coming away???? Why are you stopping there????? Do enlighten me, for I think of you constantly, and have a true and real interest in your proceedings.

D'Orsay, who knows Italy very well indeed, strenuously insists there is no such place for headquarters as Pisa. Lady Blessington says so also. What do you say? On the first of July! The first of July! Dick turns his head towards the orange groves.

* * * * * *

Daniel not having yet come to judgment, there is no news stirring. Every morning I proclaim: "At home to Mr. Thompson." Every evening I ejaculate with Monsieur Jacques[23]: "But he weel come. I know he weel." After which I look vacantly at the boxes; put my hands to my gray wig, as if to make quite sure that it is still on my head, all safe: and go off, first entrance O.P. to soft music.

* * * * * *

Always faithfully your friend.

Mr. Ebenezer Jones

Devonshire Terrace, York Gate, Regent's Park,
Monday, 15th April, 1844.

Dear Sir,

I don't know how it has happened that I have been so long in acknowledging the receipt of your kind present of your poems[24]; but I *do* know that I have often thought of writing to you, and have very often reproached myself for not carrying that thought into execution.

I have not been neglectful of the poems themselves, I assure you, but have read them with very great pleasure. They struck me at the first glance as being remarkably nervous, picturesque, imaginative, and original. I have frequently recurred to them since, and never with the slightest abatement of that impression. I am much flattered and gratified by your recollection of me. I beg you to believe in my unaffected sympathy with, and appreciation of, your powers; and I entreat you to accept my best wishes, and genuine though tardy thanks.

Dear Sir, faithfully yours.

Mr. Charles Babbage

9, Osnaburgh Terrace, New Road, 28th May, 1844.

My dear Sir,

I regret to say that we are placed in the preposterous situation of being obliged to postpone our little dinner-party on Saturday, by reason of having no house to dine in. We have not been burnt out; but a desirable widow (as a tenant, I mean) proposed, only last Saturday, to take our own house for the whole term of our intended absence abroad, on condition that she had possession of it to-day. We fled, and were driven into this place, which has no convenience for the production of any other banquet than a cold collation of plate and linen, the only comforts we have not left behind us.

My consolation lies in knowing what sort of dinner you would have had if you had come *here*, and in looking forward to claiming the fulfilment of your kind promise when we are again at home.

Always believe me, my dear Sir, faithfully yours.

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[23] A character in a Play, well known at this time.

[24] "Studies of Sensation and Event."

Countess of Blessington

Milan, Wednesday, November 20th, 1844.

My dear Lady Blessington,

Appearances are against me. Don't believe them. I have written you, in intention, fifty letters, and I can claim no credit for anyone of them (though they were the best letters you ever read), for they all originated in my desire to live in your memory and regard. Since I heard from Count D'Orsay, I have been beset in I don't know how many ways. First of all, I went to Marseilles and came back to Genoa. Then I moved to the Peschiere. Then some people, who had been present at the Scientific Congress here, made a sudden inroad on that establishment, and overran it. Then they went away, and I shut myself up for a month, close and tight, over my little Christmas book, "The Chimes." All my affections and passions got twined and knotted up in it, and I became as haggard as a murderer, long before I wrote "The End." When I had done that, like "*The* man of Thessaly," who having scratched his eyes out in a quickset hedge, plunged into a bramble-bush to scratch them in again, I fled to Venice, to recover the composure I had disturbed. From thence I went to Verona and to Mantua. And now I am here – just come up from underground, and earthy all over, from seeing that extraordinary tomb in which the dead saint lies in an alabaster case, with sparkling jewels all about him to mock his dusty eyes, not to mention the twenty-franc pieces which devout votaries were ringing down upon a sort of sky-light in the cathedral pavement above, as if it were the counter of his heavenly shop. You know Verona? You know everything in Italy, *I* know. The Roman Amphitheatre there delighted me beyond expression. I never saw anything so full of solemn ancient interest. There are the four-and-forty rows of seats, as fresh and perfect as if their occupants had vacated them but yesterday – the entrances, passages, dens, rooms, corridors, the numbers over some of the arches. An equestrian troop had been there some days before, and had scooped out a little ring at one end of the arena, and had their performances in that spot. I should like to have seen it, of all things, for its very dreariness. Fancy a handful of people sprinkled over one corner of the great place (the whole population of Verona wouldn't fill it now); and a spangled cavalier bowing to the echoes, and the grass-grown walls! I climbed to the topmost seat, and looked away at the beautiful view for some minutes; when I turned round, and looked down into the theatre again, it had exactly the appearance of an immense straw hat, to which the helmet in the Castle of Otranto was a baby; the rows of seats representing the different plaits of straw, and the arena the inside of the crown. I had great expectations of Venice, but they fell immeasurably short of the wonderful reality. The short time I passed there went by me in a dream. I hardly think it possible to exaggerate its beauties, its sources of interest, its uncommon novelty and freshness. A thousand and one realisations of the Thousand and one Nights, could scarcely captivate and enchant me more than Venice.

Your old house at Albaro – Il Paradiso – is spoken of as yours to this day. What a gallant place it is! I don't know the present inmate, but I hear that he bought and furnished it not long since, with great splendour, in the French style, and that he wishes to sell it. I wish I were rich and could buy it. There is a third-rate wine shop below Byron's house, and the place looks dull and miserable, and ruinous enough. Old – is a trifle uglier than when I first arrived. He has periodical parties, at which there are a great many flowerpots and a few ices – no other refreshments. He goes about, constantly charged with extemporaneous poetry, and is always ready, like tavern dinners, on the shortest notice and the most reasonable terms. He keeps a gigantic harp in his bedroom, together with pen, ink, and paper, for fixing his ideas as they flow, a kind of profane King David, but truly good-natured and very harmless.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.