

J. W. GOETHE
ITALIAN JOURNEY
<1786-1788>

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ORIGINAL TITLE
ITALIENISCHE REISE
Translation by
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Froh empfand ich mich nun auf gläztr'kem Boden
besiedelt,
Länder und reizender sprach Horwolt und
Midwall zu mir;
Ich befolge den Gath's durchblätter die Wege
der Alten
Mit geschäftiger Hand füglich mit neuen
Graus;
Aber die Nachte hindurch hält Amor mich
anders beschäftigt,
Wird ich auch hell nur gelebt bei who
doch ließtold vergnügt!
Und belah' ich mich nicht wenn ich das
reißlichen Busens
Formen spähe der Hand leite die Hüften
hinauf.
Dann versteck ich erst recht den Marmor
ich daug und vergleiche,
Sche mit fühlenden Aug fühlt mit
schönder Hand.

PART THREE

SECOND ROMAN VISIT

JUNE 1787 - APRIL 1788

*Longa sit huic aetas, dominaeque potentia terrae,
Sitque sub hac oriens occiduusque dies.**

42. GOETHE: Autograph of the fifth Roman Elegy, first draft.

JUNE

CORRESPONDENCE

Rome, June 8

I arrived here safely two days ago, and yesterday the Feast of Corpus Christi rebaptized me as a Roman citizen. I hated to leave Naples because of the tremendous lava stream which was coursing from the summit to the sea and I would have liked to add to my experience by observing it from close quarters.

But today I feel I have been compensated for what I missed, not so much by the tumult of the feast itself, which, though impressive as a whole, occasionally offends one's feelings by details in bad taste, as by the sight of the tapestries after Raphael's designs, which are displayed at this time.

The best of them are undoubtedly his, and the others which are displayed with them, though probably designed by his pupils or his contemporaries, are not unworthy of the immense spaces they cover.

June 16

Just a few words, dear friends, to tell you that I am very well and more and more finding out who I am, learning to distinguish between what is really me and what is not. I am working hard and absorbing all I can which comes to me on all sides from without, so that I may develop all the better from within. During the last few days I have been in Tivoli. The whole complex of its landscape with its details, its views, its waterfalls, is one of those experiences which permanently enrich one's life.

I forgot to write by the last mail. After walking about Tivoli and sketching in the heat, I was very tired. I went out there with Hackert, who is a master at copying Nature and has such a sure hand that he never has to correct a drawing. He has praised, criticized and encouraged me, and in these few days I have learned a great deal from him. I now see clearly what and how I

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should study in order to throw off burdens which I should otherwise have to stagger under all my life.

One more observation. For the first time I can say that I am beginning to *love* trees and rocks, and, yes, Rome itself; till now I have always found them a little forbidding. Small objects, on the other hand, have always delighted me, because they reminded me of the things I saw as a child. But now I am beginning to feel at home here, though I shall never feel as intimate with these things as I did with the first objects in my life. This thought has led me to reflect on the subject of art and imitation.

During my absence, Tischbein discovered in the convent near the Porta del Popolo a painting by Daniele da Volterra. The monks were willing to sell it for one thousand scudi, a sum which Tischbein, being an artist, was unable to raise. Through the good offices of Meyer, he made a proposal to Signora Angelica, which she agreed to. She paid the stipulated sum, took the painting into her house and later bought back from Tischbein, for a considerably higher figure, the fifty per cent commission due him. It is an excellent painting, depicting the Deposition. Meyer made a drawing of it which still exists.

June 20

Since my return I have been looking again at excellent works of art, and my judgment is, I think, becoming clearer and more sure of itself. To profit fully from Rome, I should need to spend at least another year, studying in my own way, and, as you well know, I cannot study in any other. If I were to leave now, I should only know how much I do not yet clearly understand. But let us drop this subject for the time being.

The Farnese Hercules has gone, but I have seen him on his original legs. One cannot understand why, for years and years, people found the substitute ones by Porta so good. Now it is one of the most perfect works of antiquity. The King plans to build a museum in Naples where all his art collections — the Herculaneum collection, the Pompeii murals, the paintings from Capo-

dimonte, the whole Farnese legacy — will be housed and exhibited. Our fellow countryman, Hackert, has been the prime mover in this magnificent project. Even the Farnese Toro will emigrate to Naples, to be erected on the Promenade. If they could detach the Gallery with the Carracci from the Palazzo Farnese and transport it, they would.

June 27

Hackert and I visited the Colonna Gallery, where paintings by Poussin, Claude Lorrain and Salvator Rosa are hung side by side. Hackert has copied several of them and studied the others thoroughly, and his comments were most illuminating. I was pleased to discover that my judgments of these pictures are still pretty much what they were when I paid my first visit. Nothing he said has compelled me to change my views; he has only confirmed and enlarged them. What one needs to do is to look at them and then immediately look at Nature to learn what they saw in her and in one way or another imitated; then the mind is cleared of misconceptions, and in the end one arrives at a true vision of the relation between Nature and Art. I shall never rest until I know that all my ideas are derived, not from hearsay or tradition, but from my real living contact with the things themselves. From my earliest youth this has been my ambition and my torment: now that I am grown up, I am determined at least to attain the attainable and do what can be done, after having so long — deservedly or undeservedly — suffered the fate of Sisyphus and Tantalus.

May you continue to love me and never lose faith in me. I now get along tolerably well with other people and I have learned the art of treating them with candour. I am well and enjoying myself all the time.

Tischbein is a very good fellow, but I'm afraid he will never reach a point where he can work with ease and freedom. I will tell you more about this remarkable man when I see you. My portrait is going to be very good; the likeness is striking and

everyone is pleased with the general idea of the picture. Angelica is also painting me, but her picture is not going to come off. She is very disappointed that it is making no progress and is not like me. It remains the portrait of a handsome young fellow without any resemblance to me whatever.

June 30

The great feast of St. Peter and St. Paul has come at last. Yesterday we saw the illuminated dome and the fireworks of Castel Sant'Angelo. The illuminations are spectacular, like a scene from fairyland; one can hardly believe one's eyes. Now that I have learned to see objects just as they are and not, as formerly, to supply with imagination what is not there, a spectacle has to be really grand before I can enjoy it. On my journey I have seen, I count, about half a dozen, and this last one is certainly among the greatest. To see the colonnade, the church and, above all, the dome, first outlined in fire and, after an hour, become one glowing mass, is a unique and glorious experience. When one thinks that, at this moment, the whole enormous building is a mere scaffolding for the lights, one realizes that nothing like it could be seen anywhere else in the world. The sky was cloudless and the light of the risen moon softened the brightness of the lamps; but when the second lot of illuminations were set ablaze, the moonlight was eclipsed. Then the blaze was over, and again the full moon softened the lights and made everything a fairyland again.

The fireworks were beautiful because of their setting, but they did not compare with the illuminations of the church. We are going to see them both a second time.

End of June

The school in which I am enrolled as a pupil is far too great to let me leave it soon. I must cultivate my knowledge of the arts and my modest talents and reach some sort of maturity; otherwise, I shall bring you back but half a friend, and all my

striving, toiling, crawling and creeping would have to begin all over again. If I were to tell all the pieces of good luck I have had, my letter would never come to an end. Why, everything I wished for has been handed to me on a platter. I have nice rooms, kept by nice people. As soon as Tischbein leaves for Naples, I shall move into his studio, which is spacious and cool. So, when you think of me, think of a lucky man. I shall keep on writing you letters and this way we shall always be together.

I am full of new thoughts. When I am left to myself and have time to reflect, I can recover the smallest details of my earliest youth and then, when I turn to the external world again, the splendour of the objects by which I am surrounded makes me forget myself and carries me as far and as high as my innermost being permits. My eye is becoming better trained than I would have believed possible and my hand should not altogether lag behind. There is only one Rome in the world. Here I feel like a fish in the water, or, rather, like the globule which floats on the surface of mercury, but would sink in any other fluid. Nothing clouds my thoughts except the fact that I cannot share my happiness with my dear friends. The sky is now wonderfully serene. Rome is slightly foggy in the morning and the evening, but on the hills of Albano, Castello and Frascati, where I spent three days last week, the air is always limpid and pure. There is a nature for you which is worth studying!

The weather at the beginning of this month was mild and fine. I went to Castel Gandolfo for the first time to enjoy a real *villeggiatura* and soon felt myself a native of that incomparable region. A wealthy English art dealer, called Mr. Jenkins, was living there in an imposing house which had once been the home of the General of the Jesuits. It had plenty of accommodation for guests, salons for gay parties, and covered walks where one could stroll in cheerful company.

Such an autumn resort is more like a watering place than anything else. Persons who have never met before are brought by chance into close contact. Meals, walks and excursions, serious and light conversation encourage rapid intimacy, and, in a place like this, where there is nothing to do — even the diversions of taking the cure and talking about one's ailments are lacking — it would be a miracle if marked elective affinities did not soon begin to develop among the visitors.

After I had been there for some days, a very handsome young lady and her mother arrived from Rome, where they had been my near neighbours on the Corso. Though I had often passed them in the evenings as they sat in front of their door, I had never spoken to them, for I stuck firmly to my resolve not to allow myself to be distracted from my pursuits by relations of that kind. I had noticed, though, that, after my promotion to a "Milord", they had returned my bow more warmly than before. Now here we were, brought together like old acquaintances, and it was easy to start a conversation by talking about the concert given in my house. The young lady expressed a lively interest in things that really matter, and her charms were enhanced by the melodious Roman dialect which she spoke rapidly but distinctly and with that noble accent which elevates even the middle classes above their station and imparts a certain dignity to the most ordinary and commonplace remarks.

A new era is beginning for me. My spiritual horizons have been so extended by all my looking and learning that now I have to knuckle down to some definite piece of work. Human individuality is a strange thing: it is only during the last year, when I have had to depend solely on myself and at the same time be in daily contact with complete strangers, that I have really come to know my own.

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The pair introduced me to a young lady from Milan who was with them. She was the sister of one of Mr. Jenkins's clerks, a young man who, owing to his efficiency and honesty, was a great favourite with his employer. The three ladies seemed to be intimate friends.

The two young beauties — they really deserved the title — presented a marked but pleasing contrast. The Roman had dark-brown hair, a pale-brown complexion, brown eyes and was somewhat serious and reserved; the Milanese had light-brown hair, a clear delicate skin, blue eyes, and was more outgoing, not so much forward as eager to know about things.

I was sitting one day between the pretty young pair, playing a kind of lotto, and had first pooled my stakes with the Roman one, but as the game went on, it came to pass that I also tried my luck by betting with the Milanese. In short, I was beginning to form a new partnership and, in my innocence, I was quite unaware that this divided interest was resented. But when the game ended, the mother took me aside and with the dignity of a Roman matron politely intimated to the "respected foreigner" that, once he had shown interest in her daughter, it was not *comme il faut* to pay attentions to another, for, during a *villeggiatura*, it was an understood convention that persons who had formed a mild attachment should abide by it in public and carry on an innocent and graceful exchange of courtesies. I apologized as best I could, but defended myself by saying that, as a foreigner, I could not recognize obligations of this kind because, in my country, it was customary to be equally polite and attentive in society to all the ladies and that surely such behaviour was appropriate in the case of two ladies who were intimate friends.

But alas, as I tried to make my excuses, I felt oddly certain that, in an impetuous instant, my heart had already decided in favour of the Milanese, as can easily happen when one's affections are disengaged. One feels complacently sure of oneself, with nothing to fear or desire till, suddenly, one is confronted with a vision of all that is desirable and, at such a moment, is unconscious of the danger threatening one from behind its enchanting features.

SECOND ROMAN VISIT

The next morning the three of us found ourselves alone together, and the scales turned still more in favour of the Milanese. She had the great advantage over her friend that her eagerness for knowledge was obvious in everything she said. She did not say in so many words that her education had been neglected, but complained of its limitations.

"We aren't taught to write," she said, "for fear we might use our pens to write love letters. We wouldn't even be taught to read if we didn't have to read our prayer books; but nobody would dream of teaching us foreign languages. I would give anything to know English. I often hear Mr. Jenkins and my brother, Signora Angelica, Signor Zucchi, Signor Volpato and Signor Camuccini talking to each other in English, and I listen with envy. Then I see all those yard-long newspapers lying on that table, full of news from all over the world, and I don't know what they are saying."

"It's a shame," I said, "especially since English is so easy to learn and you would very soon get a grasp of it. Why don't we have a try now?"

I picked up one of the immense English papers, glanced through it quickly and found an article about a woman who had fallen into the water but been fortunately rescued and returned to her family. There were certain interesting complications about the case: it was not clear whether she had meant to drown herself and which of her two admirers, the favoured or the rejected one, had risked his life to rescue her. I showed her this item and asked her to follow it carefully with her eyes while I read it.

First of all I translated all the nouns and tested her to see whether she remembered what they meant. In this way she soon got a general view of the key words in a sentence and the place they occupied. Next, I moved on to the causative, motivating and qualifying words, and pointed out to her, in as entertaining a fashion as I could, how they brought the whole to life. Again I catechized her for some time until, in the end, without any prompting from me, she read the whole passage aloud as easily as if it had been printed in Italian, accompanying her

reading with the most graceful movements. I have seldom seen such an expression of joy on a face as on hers as she thanked me with the utmost warmth for having initiated her into this new world.

The visitors had increased in number. Angelica had also arrived and at dinner I was given the place on her right at the long common table. My pupil was standing on the other side, and while the others were bowing each other to their seats, without a moment's hesitation, she walked round and sat down next to me. Angelica looked surprised, for an intelligent woman like her could see at a glance that something had happened, and here was her friend, who till now had avoided the ladies even to the point of being curt and impolite, evidently tamed and captivated, much to his own surprise.

Outwardly I could still control myself fairly well, but possibly my emotions betrayed themselves by a certain awkwardness of manner as I divided my attention between my two neighbours. I tried to keep up a lively conversation with my older friend, who was rather silent that day, and to calm down the other with a quiet, almost passive interest, for she was still enraptured about the foreign language and like someone blinded by a sudden long-wished-for vision who does not know how to readjust herself to normal surroundings.

My state of excitement was very soon, however, to suffer a cruel surprise. Towards evening I went looking for my young friends and found the older ladies sitting in a pavilion with a glorious view. As I gazed at the picturesque landscape I felt a fascination which could not be attributed merely to the sunset and the evening air. The dazzling lights on the hilltops, the cool, blue shades in the valley looked more wonderful to me than any oil painting or water colour. I could not take my eyes off the scene, but at the same time I felt a longing to leave the spot and pay homage to the last rays of the sun in a smaller and more congenial company.

Unfortunately, I could not refuse when the Roman mother and her friends invited me to sit down, especially since they made

room for me at the window which had the best view. They were talking about that inexhaustible subject, a trousseau. The precious time went by as I listened patiently to a discussion of what would be needed, the number and quality of the wedding presents, the essential things the family would be giving, the contributions of friends, male and female, some of which were still a secret, and God knows what else. What was more, the ladies had pinned me down to taking a walk with them later.

Then the conversation turned to the merits of the bridegroom. The description was in his favour, though no secret was made of his shortcomings; but they all seemed confident that the grace, intelligence and amiability of his bride would correct these once they were married.

I got more and more impatient and finally, just as the sun was sinking into the distant sea, I asked as discreetly as I could who the bride might be. They were all surprised that I didn't know what was a matter of common knowledge, and only then did they remember that I was not a friend of the family but a stranger.

I need hardly say how horrified I was to hear that the bride was none other than my pupil who had become so dear to me but a short while before. The sun had set and I succeeded under some pretext in disengaging myself from the company which, all unwittingly, had taught me so cruel a lesson. I returned to the house very late and, early next morning, I set off on a long ramble, after saying that I would not be back for dinner.

I was old and experienced enough to be able to pull myself together, but it hurt. "It would be strange indeed," I said to myself, "if a fate like Werther's should pursue you to Rome and ruin the way of life you have so carefully maintained up till now."

I returned without delay to Nature and the study of landscape, which I had been neglecting, and tried to copy it as faithfully as possible; but I was more successful at seeing than at doing. What little technical skill I possessed was barely sufficient for a humble sketch, but I found my perception of the objects in the landscape, rocks, trees, hills, lakes and brooks, had become

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sharper and I felt reconciled to the pain which had thus heightened my sensibility.

From now on, I must cut my long story short. Our house and those in the neighbourhood were full of visitors, so that it was possible for us to avoid each other without affectation. An attraction of this kind is apt to make one friendly and polite to others and this is well received in society. My behaviour pleased, and I had no falling-out with anyone except with our host, Mr. Jenkins. One day, after a lengthy excursion into the mountains and woods, I brought back a basketful of mushrooms and handed them over to the cook, who was delighted because this highly priced food was rare in those parts. He prepared a tasty dish of them, served it at dinner and everybody enjoyed it. But when someone, wishing me to get the credit for having brought them back from the wilderness, let out the secret, our English host was very angry that a stranger should have contributed a dish to the common table of which he knew nothing. He said nothing to me, but, behind my back, he complained that it was very rude to surprise a host at his own table with food which had been neither ordered nor chosen by him. Hofrat Reiffenstein had diplomatically to break all this to me after dinner. Suffering though I was inside from a very different kind of pain than that which can be caused by mushrooms, I kept my temper and replied that I had taken it for granted that the cook would report the gift to his master; but in future, if I came upon any such edibles during my walks, I would certainly show them first to our excellent host for his examination and approval.

To be just to him, the main reason for his indignation must have been the fact that mushrooms are a dubious food, and that they had been served without being properly examined first. Thinking over this culinary adventure, it struck me as funny that I, who had rashly infected myself with a very special poison, should, through another act of imprudence, have come under the suspicion of trying to poison a whole household.

It was not hard for me to behave as I had decided I should. I

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tried to avoid the English lessons by leaving the house very early in the morning, and I only approached my secretly beloved pupil when there were several other people present. My knowledge that she was a bride and the future wife of another man elevated her in my eyes above the trivial state of girlhood, and, though I still felt the same affection for her as before, I was soon able to meet her on terms of easy friendship as a person who, in any case, was no longer a lighthearted youth. In our personal contacts I showed my devotion—if one can call any natural attraction by that name—without any fuss but rather with a kind of reverence, and she, who certainly knew by then that her engagement was known to me, had no cause to complain of my behaviour. The others, who saw me talking freely with everybody, did not notice or suspect anything, and so the hours and days followed each other in their peaceful course.

Meanwhile, letters from home had revealed that my journey to Italy, so long planned, so often postponed, and eventually undertaken on the spur of the moment, had aroused restlessness and impatience among those I had left behind and even a wish to follow me and enjoy the same happiness of which my cheerful letters had painted such a favourable picture. In the intellectual and art-loving circle of our Duchess Amalia it had been a tradition, of course, to consider Italy as the New Jerusalem for all truly cultivated persons, and an acute longing, such as only Mignon could express, had long been alive in their hearts and minds. Now the dam had burst at last and it gradually became obvious that not only the Duchess, with her entourage, but also Herder and the younger Dalberg were making serious preparations to cross the Alps. I advised them to postpone their journey until after the winter was over, and then to enjoy by easy stages all the beauties which the surroundings of the capital of the world, southern Italy, etc., had to offer.

My advice was sincere and objective enough, but I also had my personal interest in mind. I had so far lived through this momentous period of my life among complete strangers and at long last, through accidental but natural contacts, had established

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a humane way of living which I was just beginning to enjoy. But the unchanging routine of life in a closed home circle among people to whom one is related or whom one knows inside out, now enduring, now accepting, now sharing, now going without, creates in the end a lukewarm state of resignation in which pain and joy, ill humour and pleasure obliterate each other, a mean average which abolishes all singularity.

Persuaded by these feelings and premonitions, I firmly made up my mind to leave Italy before my friends arrived. It was clear to me that my way of looking at things would not be theirs, at least not at first, for it had taken me a whole year of effort to rid myself of those Cimmerian ways of thinking which are native to the northern world, and accustom myself to observing and breathing more freely under a blue welkin. Almost without exception, I found German travellers very tiresome. Either they came to look for something which they should have forgotten, or they could not recognize what they had so long desired to see, even when it was before their eyes. The visitor from the north imagines that Rome will supplement his own existence and supply what he lacks: it only gradually dawns on him, to his great discomfort, that he has to alter his reactions completely and start from the very beginning. Strangers from Germany I could always avoid, but the errors, superficialities and slow responses of people I loved and respected, yes, and even their attempts to enter into my way of thinking, would upset and frustrate me.

Though all this was clear to me, I wisely left everybody in the dark about the day of my departure and continued making good use of my time, thinking for myself, listening to the opinions of others, observing their efforts and making practical attempts of my own.

In all this I received much encouragement and profit from talking to Heinrich Meyer, a native of Zurich. He was a hard-working, self-disciplined artist who knew better how to use his time than the circle of younger ones who fondly believed that solid progress in theory and technique could be combined with fast living.

On me, the ultimate effect of this tour was to strengthen my sense of really standing on classic soil and convince my senses and my spirit that here greatness was, is and ever will be. It lies in the nature of time and the mutual interaction of physical and moral forces that greatness and splendour must perish, but my ultimate feeling was less of sadness at all that had been destroyed than of joy at so much which had been preserved and even reconstructed more splendidly and impressively than it had been before.

The Church of St. Peter, for example, is a bolder and grander conception than any antique temple. Even the fluctuations in taste, now a striving for simple grandeur, now a return to a love for the multiple and the small, are signs of vitality, and in Rome the history of art and the history of mankind confront us simultaneously.

The observation that all greatness is transitory should not make us despair; on the contrary, the realization that the past was great should stimulate us to create something of consequence ourselves, which, even when, in its turn, it has fallen

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in ruins, may continue to inspire our descendants to a noble activity such as our ancestors never lacked.

All the time, however, my pleasure in beholding these instructive and elevating things was, I will not say spoiled, but interwoven with and accompanied by painful thoughts. I had learned that the fiancé of the nice young girl from Milan had broken off his engagement — under what pretext I did not know — and jilted her, and that she, poor child, from shock and despair had fallen victim to a violent fever and was in danger of her life. Though I had no cause for self-reproach — I had controlled my affection and stayed away from her, and had been explicitly assured that, whatever pretexts had been given, the *villeggiatura* was not among them — nevertheless, I was deeply moved to think that the dear face which I should always remember as so friendly and happy was now clouded and changed. I went every day to inquire how she was, twice daily at the beginning, and it was with pain that my imagination tried to evoke the impossible and picture those cheerful features, which deserved only sunshine and joy, now dimmed by tears and ravaged by sickness, their youthful bloom prematurely wasted and pale from mental and physical suffering.

In such a state of mind, the sheer presence of a succession of great works in their imperishable dignity was a welcome anodyne, but, understandably enough, I contemplated most of them with profound sadness.

I looked at the ancient monuments and saw only that, after many centuries, they had been reduced to shapeless masses; I looked at buildings of a later date, magnificent and intact, and they spoke to me only of the decline of many great families; I looked at things which were alive and blooming and, even there, I thought only of the secret worm within which would in time destroy them; I thought how vainly we put our trust in moral or religious support alone, for nothing on this earth can sustain itself if it lacks physical strength; and I brooded in a sad compassion. Just as a happy mind will invest even crumbling walls and scattered masonry with new life, like a fresh, perennial

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vegetation, so a melancholy mind robs a living creature of its most beautiful adornment and reduces it, in our eyes, to a bare skeleton.

I could not come to a decision about an excursion into the mountains, which I had planned to take before winter set in, until I knew for certain that she was better, and then I made arrangements, so that it was in the very place where I had first met her, so lively and amiable, during those beautiful days of autumn, that I received the news of her complete recovery.

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stairs at the back. There I was suddenly confronted by the dark triumphal arch of Septimius Severus, which cast a still darker shadow. In the solitude of the Via Sacra the well-known objects seemed alien and ghost-like. But when I approached the grand ruins of the Colosseum and looked through the gate into the interior, I must frankly confess that a shudder ran through me, and I quickly returned home.

Any gigantic mass has a peculiar effect on me; it has something about it which is at once fascinating and awe-inspiring. I drew up a *summa summarum* of my whole stay in Italy, and this aroused in my agitated soul a mood I might call heroic-elegiac, for it tried to embody itself in the poetic form of an elegy.

At such a moment, how could I fail to remember the elegy of Ovid,* the poet who also was exiled and forced to leave Rome on a moonlit night? *Cum repeto noctem*. I could not get him out of my head, with his homesick memories, his sadness and misery far away on the shores of the Black Sea. I tried to recite his poem to myself and parts of it came back word for word, but the only effect of this was to confuse and frustrate my own composition, and when, later, I tried to take it up again, I could get nowhere with it.

*Cum subit illius tristissima noctis imago,
Quae mihi supremum tempus in Urbe fuit;
Cum repeto noctem, qua tot mihi cara reliqui;
Labitur ex oculis nunc quoque gutta meis.
Iamque quiescebant voces hominumque canumque:
Lunaque nocturnos alta regebat equos.
Hanc ego suspiciens, et ab hac Capitolia cernens,
Quae nostro frustra iuncta fuere Lari.*

My farewell to Rome was heralded in a particularly solemn manner: for three consecutive nights a full moon stood in a cloudless sky, diffusing its magic over the immense city, and more than ever before, I felt myself transported into another simpler and greater world.

At the end of each day, spent in distractions mingled with sadness, I took a walk with a few friends, and on one evening I went out quite alone. After having wandered along the Corso — perhaps for the last time — I walked up to the Capitol, which rose like an enchanted palace in a desert. The statue of Marcus Aurelius reminded me of the Commendatore in *Don Giovanni*, for it seemed to be intimating to the wanderer that he was venturing upon something unusual. Nevertheless, I walked down by the

TRAVELS

IN

AMERICA AND ITALY,

BY

VISCOUNT DE CHATEAUBRIAND,

AUTHOR OF ATALA, TRAVELS IN GREECE AND PALESTINE,

THE BEAUTIES OF CHRISTIANITY, &c.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

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VOL. II.

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WALK THROUGH ROME, BY MOONLIGHT.

From the top of the *La Trinita da Monte*, the steeples, and other edifices afar off, look like first draughts effaced by a painter, or like jagged coasts beheld from the sea, whilst on board a ship at anchor.

The shadow of the Obelisk: how many men have cast their eyes on this shadow in Egypt and in Rome?

La Trinita da Monte is deserted: a dog is barking in this retreat of the French. A small light issues from an elevated chamber in the Villa Medicis.

The Corso: calm, and whiteness of the buildings; depth of the transverse shadows. The Colonna Square. The Antonine Column half illuminated.

The Pantheon: extremely beautiful by moonlight.

The Coliseum: its air of awful grandeur and stillness by this same light.

St. Peter's: effect of the moon upon the dome; as also, upon the Vatican, the Obelisk, the two fountains, and the circular colonnade.

A young girl asked me for alms — her head

wrapped in her lifted petticoat: *la poverina* resembled a Madonna, and had well selected both time and place. Had I been Raphael, I would have made a picture of her. The Roman will beg when he is dying of hunger, but he is not even then importunate if refused: like his ancestors, he makes no effort to sustain life—either his senate or his prince must support him.

Rome slumbers amidst her ruins. This luminary of the night, this globe which some have imagined to be a depopulated and deserted world, moves her pale solitudes over the solitudes of Rome: she lights up streets without inhabitants, enclosures, squares, gardens, which no person enters, monasteries no longer resonant with the voices of recluses, cloisters as deserted as the porticoes of the Coliseum.

What was doing here eighteen centuries ago, at a like hour to this? Not only has ancient Italy vanished, but the Italy of the middle ages is also gone. Nevertheless, the traces of both are plainly marked at Rome. If the modern city vaunts her St. Peter's, ancient Rome opposes her Pantheon and all her ruins: if the one marshals from the Capitol her consuls and emperors, the other arrays from the Vatican her long succession of pontiffs. The Tiber divides the rival glories: seated in the same dust,

Pagan Rome sinks faster and faster into decay, and Christian Rome is gradually re-descending into the catacombs whence she issued.

I have in my mind subjects for a score of letters upon Italy, which perhaps might be read, if I could express my ideas as vividly as they are conceived; but the days are gone by, and I need repose. I feel like a traveller, who, conscious that he must depart to-morrow, has sent before him his *luggage*—as we may denominate man's illusions and his years: every minute some fresh article is confided to that swift runner (as the Scripture terms him) Time.*

* Of this score of letters which I had in my head, I have written only one—namely, that upon Rome, to M. de Fontanes. The several fragments that have preceded and follow might have formed materials for other letters; but I have completed a description of Rome and Naples in the fourth and fifth books of the *Martyrs*. The only addition wanting to what I was desirous to say about Italy is the historical and political part.

[*By Correspondents.*]

ROME.

Oh! how thou art changed, thou proud daughter
of fame,
Since that hour of ripe glory, when empire was
thine,
When earth's purple rulers, kings, quailed at
thy name,
And thy capitol worshipped as Liberty's shrine.
In the day of thy pride, when thy crest was un-
tamed,
And the red star of conquest was bright on thy
path,
When the meteor of death thy stern falchion's
edge flamed,
And earth trembled when burst the dark storm
of thy wrath.

But Rome thou art fallen! the memory of yore,
Only serves to reproach thee with what thou art
now:
The joy of thy triumph for ever is o'er,
And sorrow and shame set their seal on thy brow.

Like the wind shaken reed, thy degenerate race,
The children of those once the brave and the free--
Ah, who can the page of thy history trace,
Nor blush, thou lost city, blush deeply for thee!
Could the graves yield their dead, and thy war-
riors arise,
And see thy blades rusted, thy war banners fur'd,

Would they know the proud eagle that soared
thro' the skies,
Whose glance lightened over a terror struck
world?

Yet e'en in disgrace, in thy sadness and gloom,
An halo of splendour is over thee cast:
It is but the death-light that reddens the tomb,
And calls to remembrance the glories long past.

L.

A ROMAN JOURNAL

to the Happy Few

ESCALUS: Thou seem'st, my friend, something misanthropic and envious

MERCUTIO: Mine eyes too young did feast on perfect beauty

SHAKESPEARE

PREFATORY NOTE

It is assuredly no great merit to have been to Rome six times. I venture to recall this small circumstance, because it will perhaps incline the reader to vouchsafe me a measure of his confidence.

The author of this journal has one great disadvantage: nothing, or almost nothing, seems to him worth speaking of with gravity. The nineteenth century holds quite the contrary view and has its reasons for this. Liberty, in inviting an infinity of worthy souls to give their opinion, who have not had time to *form* an opinion, places every speaker under the necessity of assuming a *grave air* that impresses the vulgar, and that the wise condone, considering the necessity of the times.

This itinerary will therefore not have the necessary pedantry. This aside, why should it not deserve to be read by the traveler bound for Rome? To compensate for the talent and the eloquence that he lacks, the author has devoted a good deal of attention to visiting the monuments of the Eternal City. He began to write his notes in 1817, and has corrected them at each new voyage.

The author entered Rome for the first time in 1802. Three years previously it had been a republic. The thought of this still troubled all minds, and as a consequence of it our small company was provided with an escort of two observers who did not leave us during our entire sojourn. When we would go outside of Rome, for example, to the Villa Madame or to St. Paul's beyond the Walls, we would have a bottle of wine served to them, and they would smile to us. They came and kissed our hand the day of our departure.

Shall I be accused of *egotism* for having reported this small circumstance? Presented in an academic or grave style, it would have

filled a whole page. Let this be the author's excuse for his bluntness and for his *egotism*.

He saw Rome again in 1811; there were no more priests in the streets, and the Civil Code ruled; it was no longer Rome. In 1816, 1817 and 1823, the amiable Cardinal Consalvi was seeking to please everyone, even foreigners. Everything had changed in 1828. The Roman who stopped to have a drink in a tavern was obliged to drink standing, for fear of being beaten on a *cavalletto*.

Signor Tambroni, Signor Izimbari, Signor degli Antonj, Count Paradisi, and several other illustrious Italians whom I would name if they were dead, could with all sorts of advantages in their favor have written this book that I, a poor foreigner, am undertaking. Errors there will surely be, but never the intention to deceive, to flatter, to belittle. I shall tell the truth. In our day and age, this is no small commitment, even in connection with columns and statues.

What made me resolve to publish this book is that often, finding myself in Rome, I have wished that such a book existed. Every article is the result of an excursion, and it was written on the spot or in the evening upon my return.

All the anecdotes contained in this volume are true, or at least the author believes them to be so.

I. AUGUST - DECEMBER, 1827

MONTEROSSI (TWENTY-FIVE MILES FROM ROME), AUGUST 3, 1827 / The persons with whom I am going to Rome say that Saint Petersburg must be seen in the month of January and Italy in summer. Winter is everywhere like old age. It may abound in precautions and resources against ill, but it remains an ill; and he who has seen the land of sensual delight only in winter will always have a quite imperfect notion of it.

From Paris, traversing the ugliest country in the world which simpletons call "France the beautiful," we came to Basel, from Basel to the Simplon. A hundred times we wished that the inhabitants of Switzerland spoke Arabic. Their exclusive love of *gleaming coin* and of the service of France, where people are well paid, spoiled their country for us. What can one say of Lake Maggiore, of the Borromean Islands, of the Lake Como, except to pity people who do not go mad over them?

We passed rapidly through Milan, Parma, Bologna; in six hours one may perceive the beauties of these towns. Here my duties as a guide began. Two days sufficed for Florence, three hours for Lake Trasimene, on which we went boating, and here we are now at last eight leagues from Rome, twenty-two days after having left Paris; we could have made this journey in twelve or fifteen. The Italian post has served us very well; we traveled comfortably with a landau and a barouche, seven masters and one servant. Two other servants are coming by the Milan-to-Rome coach.

The ladies with whom I am traveling plan to spend one year in Rome; it will be our headquarters, as it were. Thence, by excursions, we shall see Naples, and all Italy beyond Florence and the Apennines. We are in sufficient number to constitute a small company for the

evenings, which are the difficult part of the day when one travels. We shall, moreover, seek to be admitted to Roman salons.

Here we hope to find Italian ways and customs, which the imitation of Paris has somewhat altered in Milan and even in Florence. We are eager to know the social habits by means of which the inhabitants of Rome and Naples seek everyday happiness. Our Paris society is no doubt better; but we are traveling in order to see new things, not barbarian tribes, like the fearless adventurer who penetrates the mountain fastnesses of Tibet or who alights upon the shores of the South Sea isles. We seek more subtle shades; we wish to see manners of acting closer to our perfected civilization. How, for example, does a cultivated man with an income of a hundred thousand francs a year live in Rome or in Naples? How does a young couple having only one quarter of this sum to spend occupy its evenings?

In order to acquit myself with a little dignity of my duties as cicerone, I point out things that are curious; but I have very purposely reserved for myself the right not to express my opinion. It is only at the end of our sojourn that I shall propose to my friends to view somewhat seriously certain art objects the merits of which are difficult to perceive when one has spent one's life amid the pretty houses of the rue des Mathurins and colored lithographs. I hazard, not without trembling, the first of my blasphemies: it is the paintings one sees in Paris that prevent one from admiring the frescoes of Rome. I here write down little observations that are wholly personal, and not the ideas of the amiable persons with whom I have the good fortune to be traveling.

The sovereign of this country enjoys the most absolute political power, and at the same time he directs his subjects in the most important matter of their lives, that of salvation.

This sovereign was not a prince in his youth. During the first fifty years of his life, he paid court to personages more powerful than himself. In general, he enters upon affairs only at a time when these are relinquished elsewhere, about the age of seventy.

A pope's courtier has always the hope of replacing his master, a circumstance that is not observed in other courts. A courtier, in Rome, does not only seek to please the pope, as a German chamberlain aims to please his prince, he desires further to obtain his benediction. By an indulgence in *articulo mortis*, the sovereign of Rome may ensure the eternal happiness of his chamberlain; this is not a joke. The Romans of the nineteenth century are not unbelievers as we are; they may have

doubts on religion in their youth, but one would find very few deists in Rome. There were many before Luther, and even atheists. Since that great man the popes, having grown afraid, have kept a close watch over education. The people of the countryside have become so imbued with Catholicism that in their eyes nothing occurs in nature without a miracle.

Hail is invariably meant to punish a neighbor who has neglected to bedeck with flowers the cross that stands at the corner of his field. A flood is a warning from above, intended to bring a whole countryside back on the right path. Should a young girl die of fever in the middle of August, it is a chastisement for her love affairs. The curate is careful to say so to each of his parishioners.

This deep superstition of the country-people is communicated to the upper classes through nurses, maids, servants of every kind. A young Roman *marchesino* of sixteen is the most timid of men, and dares to speak only to the servants of the house; he is much more of a fool than his neighbor the shoemaker or the print-dealer.

The people of Rome, who have been witness to all the absurdities of the cardinals and other great lords of the papal court, have a much more enlightened piety. Every kind of *affectation* is promptly lampooned in a satiric sonnet.

The pope thus exercises two quite different powers. As priest he can ensure eternal bliss to the man whom he puts to death as king. The fear that Luther struck in the hearts of the popes in the sixteenth century was so great that if the States of the Church formed an island separated from any continent, we should see its people reduced to the state of moral vassalage of which ancient Egypt and Etruria have left a memory, and which can be observed nowadays in Austria. The wars of the eighteenth century have prevented the degradation of the Italian peasant.

By a happy chance, the popes who have reigned since 1700 have been men of merit. No state of Europe can present a comparable list for these 129 years. One cannot too highly praise the good intentions, the moderation, the reason and even the talents that have appeared upon the throne during this period.

The pope has but one minister, *il segretario di stato*, who almost always enjoys the authority of a prime minister. During the 129 years that have just elapsed, one single *segretario di stato* was decidedly bad, Cardinal Coscia, under Benedict XIII, and he spent nine years in prison in the Castel Sant'Angelo.

One must never expect heroism from a government. Above all things Rome fears free inquiry, which may lead to Protestantism. Hence the art of thinking has always been discouraged here and, when necessary, persecuted. Since 1700 Rome has produced several good antiquarians. The most recent, Quirino Visconti, is known throughout Europe and deserves his fame. To my mind he is unique. Two great poets have appeared in this country: Metastasio, to whom we do not do justice in France, and in our own days Vincenzo Monti (the author of the *Basiliana*), who died in Milan in October, 1828. Their works well portray their centuries. They were both very pious.

The career of ambition is not open to laymen. Rome has princes, but their names are not to be found in the country's royal almanac (Cracas' *Notizie*); or, if they do slip in, it is for some unremunerated benevolent office without power. If representative government did not bring the inquiring spirit and freedom of the press in its wake, some cultivated pope, like Gangarelli or Lambertini, would give his peoples a single chamber responsible for voting the budget.

Talents would then be needed to be *tesoriere*, which is the name of the minister of finance. This chamber might be composed of ten deputies from the towns, twenty Roman princes and all the cardinals. These gentlemen were formerly the pope's counselors.

A civil war, and a bitter one, may be feared here, as soon as the nineteen million Italians see Austria, which is their bugbear, involved in some long-term war; then the two parties will turn their eyes toward the king of France.

Rome is a despotic state. But offices are for life, and no one is dismissed. Under Leo XII, Carbonarism and Herr von Metternich have changed everything. Terror reigns in Ravenna and in Forlì. The most distinguished men are in prison or in flight. Florence is the oasis where all the poor persecuted of Italy seek asylum. Those who have absolutely no money at all go to live in Corsica.

There are two ways of seeing Rome: one can observe everything that is curious in a district, and then pass on to another.

Or else run every morning after the kind of beauty to which one feels responsive on waking up. We shall take the latter course. Like true philosophers, each day we shall do what seems to us most agreeable that day; *quam minimum credula posteru*.

ROME, AUGUST 3, 1827 / It is the sixth time that I enter the Eternal

City, and yet my heart is deeply stirred. It is an immemorial custom among affected people to be moved upon arriving in Rome, and I am almost ashamed of what I have just written.

AUGUST 9 / Our plan being to spend several months here, we have wasted a few days running, like children, wherever our curiosity dictated. My first visit, on arriving, was to the Colosseum, my friends went to St. Peter's; the following day we looked hurriedly over the museum and Raphael's *Stanze* (or rooms) of the Vatican. Frightened by the number of famous names on the things that we saw, we fled from the Vatican. The pleasure that it held out to us was too serious. Today, in order to see the city of Rome and Tasso's tomb, we went up to Sant'Onofrio—a magnificent view. From there we perceived at the other end of Rome the palace of Monte Cavallo, whither we repaired. The great names of Santa Maria Maggiore and San Giovanni in Laterano attracted us next. Yesterday, a rainy day, we saw the Borghese galleries, the Doria and the statues of the Capitol. Despite the extreme heat we are constantly on the move, we are famished, as it were, to see everything, and every night we return to our quarters horribly tired.

AUGUST 10 / Having set out this morning to see a famous monument, we were stopped on the way by a beautiful ruin, and next by the sight of a pretty palace which we entered. We ended by roaming about almost at random. We reveled in the good fortune of being in Rome in complete freedom, and *without thinking of the duty of seeing*.

The heat is extreme. We take a carriage early in the morning. Around ten o'clock we seek refuge in some church, where we find coolness and shade. As we sit in silence on some wooden bench with a back, our heads tipped back and resting against its surface, our souls seem to become released from all their earthly bonds, as if to see the *beautiful* face to face. Today we took refuge in Sant'Andrea della Valle, opposite the frescoes of Domenichino; yesterday it was Santa Prassede.

AUGUST 12 / This first madness has somewhat abated. We feel the desire to see the monuments in thorough fashion. This is how they will now give us the most pleasure. Tomorrow morning we are going to the Colosseum, and shall leave it only after having examined everything that should be seen.

AUGUST 13 / On August 3 we traversed these desert countrysides, and this immense solitude that extends around Rome to a distance of several leagues. The aspect of the country is magnificent; it is not a flat plain; the vegetation is vigorous. Most views are dominated by some remnant of an aqueduct or some tomb in ruins that impress upon this Roman countryside a character of grandeur that nothing can equal. The beauties of art double the effect of the beauties of nature and prevent satiety, which is the great defect of the pleasure of seeing landscapes. Often, in Switzerland, a moment after the liveliest admiration, one may be overcome by boredom. Here the soul is challenged by that great people which today is no more. At times one is appalled, as it were, by its power, one sees it ravage the earth; at other times one feels pity for its misfortunes and its long decadence. During this reverie the horses have covered a quarter of a league; we have circumscribed one of the folds in the terrain; the aspect of the countryside has changed, and the soul returns to the contemplation of the most sublime landscapes that Italy offers.

Salve magna pars rerum.

On August 3 we had not the leisure to deliver ourselves to these sentiments, we were troubled by the dome of St. Peter's that rose on the horizon; we were fearful of not reaching Rome before nightfall. I spoke to the postillions, poor devils who were feverish, yellow and half dead; the sight of a crown brought them out of their torpor. At last, as the sun was setting behind St. Peter's dome, they stopped in the Via Condotti, and suggested to us that we stop at Franz's, by the Piazza di Spagna. My friends took a lodging on this square. This is where all foreigners roost.

The sight of so many bored oafs would have spoiled Rome for me. I looked for a window from which one could overlook the city. I was at the foot of Monte Pincio; I climbed up the immense stairway of the Trinità dei Monti, which Louis XVIII has just magnificently restored, and I took a lodging in the house formerly inhabited by Salvator Rosa, on the Via Gregoriana. From the table on which I am writing I can see three-fourths of Rome; and across from me, at the other end of town, the cupola of St. Peter's rises majestically. In the evening, I perceive the setting sun through the windows of St. Peter's, and a half-hour later the admirable dome is outlined against the exquisitely pure glow of an orange-hued twilight surmounted high up in the sky by some star that is just appearing.

Nothing on earth can be compared to this. The soul is moved and

elevated, a calm felicity fills it to overflowing. But it seems to me that in order to be equal to these sensations one must have loved and known Rome for a long time. A young man who has never encountered unhappiness would not understand them.

On the evening of August 3 I was so troubled that I was unable to bargain, and I am paying much more for my two rooms an the Via Gregoriana than they are worth. But at such a moment how can one give one's attention to such trivial concerns? The sun was about to set, and I had only a few moments; I hastened to conclude, and an open barouche (these are the cabs of the country) drove me rapidly to the Colosseum. It is the most beautiful of ruins; there breathes all the majesty of ancient Rome. Memories of Titus Livius filled my soul; I saw before me Fabius Maximus, Publicola, Menenius Agrippa. There are other churches besides St. Peter's: I have seen St. Paul's of London, the cathedral of Strasburg, the Duomo of Milan, Santa Justinia of Padua. Never have I encountered anything comparable to the Colosseum.

AUGUST 15 / My host has put flowers in front of a small bust of Napoleon that is in my room. My friends are definitely keeping their lodgings on the Piazza di Spagna, beside the stairway that leads up to the Trinità dei Monti.

Imagine two well-bred travelers touring the world together; each of them goes out of his way to sacrifice his little everyday plans to the other; at the end of the voyage the result will be that they have constantly been in each other's way.

If there are several of you, and you want to see a town, you can agree on a morning hour, to set out together. You wait for no one; you assume that the absent have reasons for spending this morning to themselves.

During the tour it is agreed that he who puts a pin on the collar of his coat becomes invisible; no one speaks to him from that moment. Finally, each of us may, without failing in politeness, make solitary trips in Italy, and even return to France. That is our charter, written and *signed* this morning in the Colosseum, on the third story of the porticos, on the wooden seat placed there by an Englishman. By means of this charter we hope to be as fond of one another upon our return from Italy as we were on coming there.

One of my companions has a great deal of wisdom, goodness, tolerance and gentle gayety; this is the *German character*. He has in

addition a firm and profound mind that nothing dazzles; but sometimes he will forget for a whole month to use this superior mind. In everyday life he is like a child. We call him Frederick. He is forty-six years old. Paul is only thirty. He is a very handsome man, and of infinite wit, who loves sallies, the clash of views, the rapid rattle of conversation. I believe that in his opinion the best book in the world is Beaumarchais' *Memoirs*. It is impossible to be more amusing and kind. The greatest misfortunes glide over him without causing him to frown. He thinks no more about the year to come than about the one that passed a century ago. He wants to become acquainted with these fine arts *about which he has heard so much*. But I suppose that he feels them as Voltaire does.

I do not know if I shall mention Paul and Frederick by name again in the course of these notes. They have had them in their possession for over a month. I do not know whether they have read them through to the end, but they found their portraits to be faithful. There are two other travelers of a rather serious turn of mind, and three women, one of whom understands Mozart's music. I am quite sure that she will like Correggio. Raphael and Mozart resemble each other in this: every figure of Raphael, like every air of Mozart, is at the same time dramatic and agreeable. A personage drawn by Raphael has so much grace and beauty that one finds a vivid pleasure in looking at him individually, and yet he admirably serves the drama. It is a stone in a vault, which you cannot remove without impairing the solidity.

I should say this to travelers: On arriving in Rome, do not let yourself be poisoned by any opinion; do not buy any book. The time of curiosity and of science will only too soon replace that of emotions; take lodgings in the Via Gregoriana or, at least, on the third story of some house on the Piazza Venezia, at the end of the Corso; flee from the sight, and even more the contact, of the curious.

ROME, AUGUST 16 / The Colosseum can be seen from three or four wholly different points of view. The finest perhaps is that which is offered to the spectator when he is in the arena where the gladiators fought, and he sees those immense ruins rise all about him. What impresses me most about it is that pure blue sky that one perceives through the upper openings of the building toward the north.

It is best to be alone in the Colosseum. Often you are annoyed by the pious murmurs of the devout who, in flocks of fifteen or twenty, make the stations of the cross, or by a Capucin friar who, since Benedict

XIV, who restored this edifice, comes and preaches here on Fridays. Every day, except at the time of the siesta or on Sunday, you run into masons assisted by convicts; for there is always some corner of crumbling ruins to be repaired. But this odd sight, in the long run, does not impair the mood of revery.

One climbs to the passageways of the upper stories by stairs that are in a fair state of repair. But if you are without a guide (and in Rome any cicerone is bound to spoil your pleasure) you run the risk of passing over vaults worn thin by rain, that may collapse. On reaching the highest story of the ruins, still on the north side, you view, across from where you are standing, behind tall trees and almost at the same height, San Pietro in Vincoli, a church famous for the tomb of Julius II and Michelangelo's *Moses*.

To the south you look over the ruins of the amphitheatre which, on that side, are much lower and your eye comes to rest, in the distant plain, on the sublime basilica of St. Paul's, that burned on the night of July 15 to 16, 1823. It is half hidden by long rows of cypresses. This church was built on the very spot where, after his martyrdom, was buried the man whose words have created that immense river which is still today, under the name of the Christian religion, so much a part of all our affections. The quality of *saint*, which was once the height of honor, today detracts from St. Paul. This man has had a far greater influence on the world than Caesar or Napoleon. Like them, he exposed himself to a probable death for the sake of having the pleasure of commanding. But the danger that he ran was not *beautiful* like that of soldiers.

From the height of the ruins of the Colosseum one lives simultaneously with Vespasian who built it, with St. Paul, with Michelangelo. Vespasian, triumphing over the Jews, once passed on the Via Sacra, near that arch of triumph erected to his son Titus, which, even in our day, the Jew avoids in his course. Here, closer by, is the Arch of Constantine; but it was built by architects who were already barbarians; decadence was beginning for Rome and for the West.

I feel only too keenly that such sensations can be indicated, but cannot be communicated. Elsewhere these memories could be commonplace; for the traveler standing on these ruins, they are immense and full of emotion. These stretches of wall, blackened by time, affect the soul in the same way as the music of Cimarosa, who can make the vulgar words of a libretto sublime and moving. The man with the greatest aptitude for the arts, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, for example, reading in

Paris the most sincere description of the Colosseum, could not help finding the author ridiculous because of his exaggeration, even though the latter might have gone to great pains to scale down his impressions.

In order to give some kind of idea of the remnants of this immense edifice, more beautiful perhaps today when it is falling into ruin than it ever was in its full splendor (then it was but a theatre, today it is the most beautiful vestige of the Roman people), one would have to know the circumstances of the reader's life. A description of the Colosseum can only be attempted through the spoken word—after midnight, for example, at the home of a charming woman, amid pleasant company, when she and the women around her are in a wholly receptive mood. The narrator requires a rather rare kind of attention before he dares give way to his emotions; images crowd in upon him, which the listeners can glimpse with the eyes of the soul. Speaking of which, how alive still is the soul of the greatest people on earth! Against the Romans one can hold the same objections as against Napoleon. They were sometimes criminal, but never has man been greater.

How deceiving it is to speak of what one loves! What is to be gained by it? The pleasure of being stirred for a moment by the reflection of the emotion of others. But a fool, nettled at the fact that you are doing all the talking, may make a quip that will defile your memories. This perhaps explains the modesty of true passion that common souls forget to imitate when they play at passion.

I would ask the reader who has not been to Rome to be good enough to glance at a picture of the Colosseum.

You see an oval theatre, of enormous height, still entire on the exterior on the north side, but ruined toward the south. It could hold 107,000 spectators.

The outer façade describes an immense ellipse; it is decorated by four orders of architecture: the two upper stories are formed of Corinthian half-columns and pilasters; the order of the ground level is Doric, and that of the second story Ionic. The three first orders are defined by columns half sunk in the wall, as on the new theatre on the rue Ventadour.

The world has seen nothing so magnificent as this monument; its total height is 157 feet, and its outer circumference 1641 feet. The arena where the gladiators fought is 285 feet in length by 182 in width. On the occasion of the dedication of the Colosseum by Titus, the Roman people had the pleasure of seeing five thousand lions, tigers and other

wild animals put to death, as well as nearly three thousand gladiators. The games lasted one hundred days.

The emperor Vespasian began this theatre on his return from Judea. He put twelve thousand Jewish war prisoners to work on it; but he could not finish it; this glory was reserved for Titus, his son, who dedicated it in the year 80 after Christ.

Four hundred and forty-six years later, that is to say in the year 526 of our era, Totila's barbarians ruined various parts of it, in order to seize the bronze clamps that held the stones together. All the blocks of the Colosseum are pierced by large holes. I shall admit that I find it impossible to explain several of the labors undertaken by the Barbarians, the object of which is said to have been to dig in the enormous masses that form the Colosseum. After Totila, this edifice became a kind of public quarry where, for ten centuries, the rich Romans fetched the stones to build their houses, which in the Middle Ages were regular fortresses. Still in 1623, the Barberini, nephews of Urban VIII, took from it all the material for their immense palace. Hence the proverb,

*Quod non fecerunt Barbari fecere Barberini.*¹

AUGUST 17, 1827 / Once, toward the end of the Middle Ages (1377), Rome was reduced to a population of thirty thousand inhabitants; yesterday Cardinal Spina even said twelve thousand; now it has a hundred and forty thousand. If the popes had not returned from Avignon, if the Rome of the priests had not been built at the expense of ancient Rome, we should have had many more monuments of the Romans; but the Christian religion would not have made such an intimate alliance with the *beautiful*; we should see today neither St. Peter's nor so many magnificent churches scattered over the earth: St. Paul's of London, Sainte Geneviève, etc. We ourselves, the sons of Christians, would be less responsive to the *beautiful*. As a result of which you may, at the age of six, have heard speak of St. Peter's of Rome with admiration.

The popes fell in love with architecture², that eternal art that marries so well with the religion of terror; but thanks to the Roman monuments they did not cling to the Gothic. This was an infidelity to

¹ What the barbarians did not do, the Barberini have done. Paul II caused the southern side to be torn down.

² It is not when the purest virtue occupies the See of St. Peter and when the persons called to the administration of people are remarkable both for piety and talents,

hell. The popes, in their youth, before mounting on the throne, admired the remnants of antiquity. Bramante invented Christian architecture; Nicolas V, Julius II, Leo X, were men worthy of being stirred by the ruins of the Colosseum and by the dome of St. Peter's.

When he was working on this church, Michelangelo, already quite old, was found one winter day, after a heavy snowfall, wandering amid the ruins of the Colosseum. He had come to lift his soul to the pitch required to be able to feel the beauties and the defects of his own design of the dome of St. Peter's. Such is the power of sublime beauty: a theatre gives ideas for a church.

The moment other sightseers come to the Colosseum, the traveler's pleasure is almost entirely eclipsed. Instead of being carried away by sublime and absorbing reveries, in spite of himself he observes the foibles of the newcomers, and it seems to him that they have many. Life is reduced to what it is in a drawing room: in spite of yourself you listen to the banalities they utter. If I had the power, I would be a tyrant, I would have the Colosseum closed during my sojourns in Rome.

AUGUST 18 / The common opinion is that Vespasian caused the Colosseum to be built in the spot where Nero's pools and gardens formerly were; it was approximately the center of the Rome of Caesar and Cicero. The colossal statue of Nero, made of marble and 110 feet tall, was placed near this theatre; whence the name of Colosseo. Others claim that this denomination derives from the astonishing extent and the colossal height of this edifice.

Like ourselves, the Romans had the custom of celebrating the opening of a new house by a feast; a drama, presented with extraordinary pomp, constituted the dedication of a theatre; that of a naumachy was celebrated by a battle of barks; chariot races, and especially combats of gladiators marked the opening of a circus; wild-animal hunts featured the dedication of an amphitheatre. Titus, as we have seen, on the day of the opening of the Colosseum had an enormous number of wild animals brought out, which were all put to death. What sweet delight for the Romans! If we no longer feel this delight, it is to the religion of Jesus Christ that we owe it.

that the philosophically inclined writer feels called upon to protest his respect for the established authorities. Despite their errors, they maintain the *legal order*, and this order is now the first need of the peoples of Europe if they are to attain the degree of well-being that France enjoys in the reign of Charles X. (This note is of 1829.)

The Colosseum is built almost entirely of blocks of travertine, a rather ugly stone full of holes like tufa, of a white color shading into yellow. It is brought from Tivoli. The appearance of all the monuments of Rome would be much more attractive at first glance if the architects had had at their disposal the fine freestone used in Lyon or in Edinburgh, or else the marble of which Pola's circus (*Dalmatia*) is built.

Ancient numerals can be seen above the Colosseum's arches of Doric order; each of these arcades served as a door. Numerous stairways led to the upper porticos and to the tiers. Thus a hundred thousand spectators could enter the Colosseum and leave it in a few moments.

It is said that Titus had a gallery built that led from his palace on Mount Esquiline and enabled him to come to the Colosseum without appearing in the streets of Rome. It presumably emerged between the two arches marked with the numbers 38 and 39. There one notes an arch that is not numbered.

The architect who built the Colosseum had the daring to be simple. He was careful not to overload it with pretty and trivial little ornaments, like the ones that spoil the interior of the court of the Louvre. Public taste in Rome was not vitiated by the habit of the feasts and ceremonies of a court like that of Louis XIV. A king having to appeal to *vanity* is obliged to invent distinctions and to *change them often*.

The emperors of Rome had had the simple idea of uniting in their persons all the magistracies invented by the republic in accordance with the needs of the times. They were consuls, tribunes, etc. — Here all is simplicity and solidity; this is why the joints of the immense blocks of travertine that one sees on every side assume an astonishing character of grandeur. The spectator owes this sensation, which is further augmented by memory, to the absence of any small ornamentation; there is nothing to distract the attention from the mass of so magnificent an edifice.

The place where the games and the spectacles were held was called the *arena*, because of the sand that was spread on the ground on days when the games were to take place. It was surrounded by a rather high wall to prevent the lions and tigers from leaping on the spectators. This can still be seen in the wooden theatres in Spain that are built for bull-fights. This wall was cut through by openings shut by iron grilles. Through these the gladiators and the wild animals entered, and the corpses were brought out.

The place of honor, among the Romans, was above the wall that surrounded the arena, and was called the *podium*; from here one could enjoy the facial expressions of the dying gladiators, and make out the smallest details of the combat. Here were the seats reserved for the vestals, the emperor and his family, the senators and the chief magistrates. Behind the *podium* began the tiers intended for the people; these tiers were divided into three orders called *meniana*. The first division comprised twelve tiers, and the second fifteen. They were of marble. The tiers of the third division were built, it is believed, of wood. There was a fire, and this part of the theatre was restored by Heliogabalus and Alexander. Altogether the tiers could hold 87,000 spectators, and it is estimated that 20,000 found standing room in the porticos of the upper part, that were built of wood.

Above the windows of the highest story, holes are to be seen in which it is assumed that the beams of the *velarium* were set. They held the pulleys and ropes by means of which a series of immense strips of canvas were manipulated, which covered the amphitheatre and were intended to protect the spectators from the heat of the sun. As for the rain, I do not quite see how these tents could provide shelter against the driving rains to which Rome is exposed.

One must look to the East, among the ruins of Palmyra, of Balbec or of Petra, for structures comparable to this grandeur; but those temples astonish without pleasing. Vaster than the Colosseum, they never produce the same impression on us. They are built according to other rules of beauty, to which we are not accustomed. The civilizations that have created this beauty have disappeared.

Those great temples erected and hollowed out in India or in Egypt recall only ignoble memories of despotism; they were not destined to give pleasure to generous souls. Ten thousand slaves or a hundred thousand slaves perished of fatigue while engaged in those astonishing tasks.

As we come to know ancient history better, how many kings shall we not find more powerful than Agamemnon, how many warriors as brave as Achilles! But these new names will be without emotions for us. One reads the curious *Memoirs* of Bober, emperor of the East in about 1340. After pondering on them a moment, one thinks of other things.

The Colosseum is sublime for us, because it is a living vestige of those Romans whose history has filled our whole childhood. The soul finds relationships between the greatness of their undertakings and that

of this edifice. What place on earth ever saw at one time so great a multitude and such pomp? The emperor of the world (and this man was Titus!) was received here with cries of joy by a hundred thousand spectators; and now, what silence!

When the emperors attempted to fight the new religion preached by St. Paul, which announced equality before God to the slaves and to the poor, they sent many Christians to the Colosseum to suffer martyrdom. This edifice was therefore in great veneration in the Middle Ages; this is why it was not totally destroyed. Benedict XIV, in order to curb the great lords who for centuries had helped themselves to stones from here as from a quarry, built fourteen small oratories around the arena, each of which contains a fresco expressing a feature of the Passion of the Savior. At the eastern end, in a corner of the ruins, a chapel has been set up where mass is said; beside it, a locked door indicates the entrance to the wooden stairway by which one climbs to the upper stories.

On leaving the Colosseum by the eastern door, in the direction of San Giovanni in Laterano, one finds a small guard of four men and the immense flying buttress of brick put up by Pius VII to support this outer portion of the façade that is ready to crumble.

I shall speak later, when the reader has developed a taste for things of this kind, of the conjectures that have been put forward by the experts in connection with the constructions found below the present level of the arena of the Colosseum, at the time of the excavations executed on the orders of Napoleon (1810 to 1814).

I invite the reader beforehand to believe in this line only what seems to him to be proved, as this will affect his enjoyment; it is hard to imagine the presumption of Roman guides.

ROME, AUGUST 17 / What happy mornings I have spent at the Colosseum, lost in some corner of those immense ruins! From the upper stories one can look down on the arena and see the pope's convicts working while they sing. The sound of their chains mingles with the song of the birds; peaceful denizens of the Colosseum. They fly off by the hundreds when you approach the brush that covers the highest seats where the lordly Romans once sat. This soothing twittering of the birds that reverberates faintly in the vast edifice, and from time to time the deep silence that follows it, undoubtedly help the imagination in its flight through the centuries back to ancient times. One accedes to the most vivid delights that memory can procure.

This revery, which I extol to the reader, and which may seem ridiculous to him, is what La Fontaine calls "the somber pleasures of a melancholy heart."¹

In truth this is the only great pleasure that one finds in Rome. It is impossible for youth in its first flush, so full of mad hopes, to feel it. If the reader, more fortunate than the schoolchildren at the end of the last century, has not learned Latin painfully during his first childhood, his soul will perhaps be less engrossed with the Romans and what they have accomplished on earth. For us, who for years translated selections from Titus Livius and Florus, the memory of them precedes all experience. Florus and Titus Livius have told us of famous battles—and what ideas does one not have of a battle at the age of eight! That is when the imagination is fantastic, and the pictures it draws are immense. No cold experience intervenes to gnaw at their edges.

Since my first childhood imaginings, I have found a sensation, comparable by its immensity and its tenacity, triumphing over all other memories, only in the poems of Lord Byron. As I told him this one day in Venice, quoting *The Giaour*, he replied, "That is why it is full of dotted lines. The moment the experience of the age of reason can attack one of my images, I abandon it, I don't want the reader to find the same sensations in my work as at the Stock Exchange. But you French are light, you owe to this disposition, which is the mother of your defects and of your virtues, the ability to recapture, from time to time, the facile happiness of childhood. In England the hideous necessity of work appears on every hand. The moment he enters life the young man, instead of reading the poets or listening to the music of Mozart, hears the voice of sad experience that cries to him, *Work eighteen hours a day, or after-tomorrow you will die of hunger in the street!* The images of the Giaour must therefore be able to brave the experience and the memory of the realities of life. While he reads, the reader lives in another universe; this is the happiness of unhappy peoples. But you French, you are blithe as children—I marvel that you are responsive to this kind of merit. Do you really find beauty in anything that is not *fashionable*? My verses are fashionable among you, and you will find them ridiculous in twenty years. I will suffer the same fate as the abbé Delille."

I do not claim that these were the precise words of the great poet who spoke to me while his gondola was taking him from the Piazetta to the Lido.

¹ "Jusqu'aux sombres plaisirs d'un cœur mélancolique" — *Les amours de Psyche*.

I remember that I was bold enough to lecture him: "How can a man as lovable as you are *buy love?*"

This Roman revery, which seems so sweet to us and makes us forget all the interests of active life, is to be found equally in the Colosseum or in St. Peter's, depending on how our souls are disposed. As for myself, when I am immersed in it, if I were told that I am king of the earth there are days when I would not deign to get up to go and enjoy the throne; I would put it off to some other time.

AUGUST 19 / Paul, the most likable of our fellow-travelers, cannot bear the Colosseum. He claims that these ruins bore him or make him ill. I shall not weary the reader, who already has so many things to see, by forcing him to read the names of a host of second-rate artists. I shall name only what rises above the quality of *workmanship*. The curious who want to know the names of the vast number of mannered statues and ridiculous paintings that fill the churches of Rome will find them in Fea's or Vasi's itinerary. These gentlemen's purpose differed from mine; moreover, they were afraid of giving offense.

Nor shall I name art objects that are too insignificant; in Turin, in Naples, in Venice, in Milan one would see them with pleasure; but in a city rich with all the ruins of antiquity and so many monuments erected by the popes, their names are a useless weight to attention, which it is easy to put to better purpose.

Bandello, who was made Bishop of Agen by Henri II (1550), is an excellent romancer who, I know not why, does not enjoy the reputation he deserves; he left nine volumes of charming tales, a bit too gay perhaps, in which one sees as in *a mirror* the manners of the fifteenth century. Bandello happened to be in Rome in 1504. He invents nothing, his *nouelle* are based on true facts. In them one sees what Rome was like in the time of Raphael and of Michelangelo. There was a good deal more of magnificence, of wit and of gayety in the court of the popes than in the court of any king in Europe. The least barbarous was that of François I, where, however, many evidences of grossness were still to be found. The sword kills wit.

Every variety of merit, even that which is based on the art of thinking and of discovering truth in difficult matters, was then welcome in Rome. There all pleasures were to be found. A politeness that was reputed perfect did not impair the originality of minds. I advise the traveler to read some of Bandello's tales, chosen among those that have

their setting in Rome; it will cure him of prejudices that he may have picked up from Roscoe, Sismondi, Botta and other modern historians.

As for myself, I have sought to indicate the greatest possible number of facts. I would rather the reader should come upon a sentence lacking in elegance, if it give him an additional small idea concerning a monument. Often, instead of an expression that is more general, and thereby less dangerous for the author, I have used the *appropriate word*. Nothing is more shocking to nineteenth century fine usage. But I cling to the appropriate word, because it leaves a distinct memory.