

Our Terrible Passage 1823

*A  
Pilgrimage  
In  
Europe and America,  
Leading To  
The Discovery  
Of  
The Sources of The Mississippi  
And Bloody River ;  
With A Description of  
The Whole Course of The Former,  
And Of  
The Ohio.*

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LETTER X.

*Philadelphia, February 28th, 1823.*

WHERE shall I begin, my dear Madam ? Where I ought to end,—with myself ; for you are impatient to hear what is become of me. I know your friendship, and anticipate its wishes.

I am now in America. My hand-writing ought to convince you that I am alive ; but, since a very reverend father has made the dead write letters, it is become necessary to explain whether one is still in the land of the living, and particularly when one writes from another world, and has been many times near the gates of eternity.

For a description of our terrible passage, I must trust entirely to my memory ; for, during the whole voyage, I was so ill, that neither my stomach nor my head allowed me to write a single line. Besides, being as ignorant of naval affairs as a Tartar, any attempt to describe the nautical occurrences of the voyage would only tire out your patience, and expose my awkwardness and presumption, by a vain parade of hard technical words ; it would be only a useless addition to that deluge of *notes, narratives, voyages, adventures, observations, discoveries*, and so forth, with which so many intrepid navigators from Calais to Dover, from Reggio to Messina, from Gibraltar to Ceuta, from one side of the Sound, or of the Dardanelles, to the other, have enriched and inundated the world. I will give you only a slight sketch of what was most remarkable during this passage, although it was protracted to a period of more than three months and a half of suffering ; and I shall be the more laconic,

because my hand is weak and unfit for writing. Let us return, therefore, to where we should have begun.

At Liverpool, my intention, at first, was to embark for New York, the packets of which are very *comfortable* ; but, being informed that the yellow fever had committed considerable ravages there during the summer, and that it still prevailed, I determined to sail for Philadelphia. The persons to whom I was recommended, exerted themselves to secure a comfortable passage for me ; but, having been deceived respecting the accommodations of the ship and the character of her captain, they thought no other provisions necessary than wine and liquors. I therefore embarked with confidence ;—and miserably was I disappointed.

We left Prince's dock on the 3rd of November, at about five o'clock in the morning. The weather was beautiful, and, as I was told, favourable.

The names of the crew having been called over, it was discovered that the cook had deserted. This beginning was not propitious. A cook is an important personage everywhere ; but the resources of his art are particularly desirable, when the contingencies of scarcity of provisions, and other viatic incidents, demand an extra portion of skill and industry.

The steward or servant of the cabin was appointed to fulfil these important functions, and his *portfeuille* was handed over to James, a young American sailor, about twenty years of age, equally insolent and careless ; and thus we had two novices, in situations of great difficulty on board ship. The hour of dinner discovered to us that we had neither steward nor cook, and enabled us to form some idea of what we might expect in future. Among other things that threatened us, was uncleanness, the greatest torment that can be inflicted upon my stomach and senses. The larder and the wardrobe were equally ill-supplied, and dirty ; and I was laughed at for asking for implements to wash myself with.

The first day the wind was neither fair nor foul. The second, our passage between the island of Anglesea and the coast of Ireland, was a little opposed by contrary winds ; and a storm, which the captain told us was very dangerous on this coast, assailed us on the third, near Cape Clear ; from which period I date the beginning of my dreadful sea-sickness. On the seventh the wind subsided ; but we made no progress. On the tenth it blew with greater fury than ever, and drove us on the western coast of Ireland. The captain seemed not much delighted, and I was still less so, for the sea tore me to pieces. Fortunately, Killala bay afforded us shelter ; but in our endeavours to avoid Scylla, we ran into Charybdis. All this coast is inhabited by a semi-barbarous people, who had risen against the government, because they were starving ; and this was precisely the focus of the insurrection of the island. My companions had, however, only the fear of an attack. For my own part, I had not even that ; on the contrary, considering the dreadful state of my health and the appalling aspect of everything on board the vessel, and of this sea, (which is always stormy at this season,) I ought to have landed at any risk. I could lose nothing by passing from one set of barbarians to another ; I must gain by a change of element, and in every other respect ; but my resolution is naturally as inflexible as my destiny. On the thirteenth we continued our voyage.

The sea was still very rough, but the wind was fair for America, and we made some way ; this was my only consolation in a state that became daily more terrible. Stretched upon a wretched flock-bed, which the bones of my attenuated body penetrated even to the floor, my only relief was derived from resignation to my fate, and from that courage which, thanks to heaven, does not easily forsake me. My fellow passengers were Spanish Americans. They were dressed as gentlemen, for which they were indebted to their former profession of piracy.

Their mariners were in perfect unison with the atrocious character of their countenances, and gave no hope that they possessed a spark of humanity. The appearance of the captain was calculated to alarm a man who was going to visit his country, with a view to admire and to learn free and generous sentiments. The newly appointed cook, a hideous negro, covered with filth from head to foot, had only to show himself to disgust the most intrepid and chivalrous stomach, and to render his absence much more desirable than his presence. Little James was a most extraordinary fellow; a non-descript. At first I called out to him, “Steward !”—“ I am not a steward,” replied he, “ my name is James.”—“ Well then, James !”—“ What do you mean by James ? My name is Mr James.”—“ Very well, Mr James, will you.....—will you—will you.....” “ I am not a servant to any body.” I then asked the captain who, and where, was the servant. To this question he replied with one of his usual civil looks, and, laughing in my face, turned his back upon me.

By the short sketch I have given you of this delightful company, you may judge of the situation of an unfortunate being, who from complete exhaustion could not even stand. If I left my den I was obliged to drag myself along on my hands and knees ; but this excited no pity in these selfish and unfeeling wretches. Nor was my state of animal existence less deplorable than that of my social feelings.

The little fresh meat that remained was become completely putrid, and spoiled the onions, leeks, &c. with which it was cooked. I could not obtain a chicken, because it was first necessary that the whole of this delicious meat should be consumed. I offered, and made presents for good broth, but received only some made from salt meat. I was reduced to the miserable pittance of a few boiled potatoes, with which I had no other sauce than vinegar, for there was no oil.

I had very good wine, both French and Madeira; but these gentlemen did not confine themselves to accepting the offer I voluntarily made of sharing every bottle with them ; they had opened, and already emptied a considerable number. Mr James and the cook, thinking probably that I had nothing more to do either with this world or with wine, joined most effectively in the shameful rapacity of the honourable captain and my amiable fellow passengers. I saw this ; I might have stopped it ; for my mind was not then enfeebled, although my physical strength was utterly exhausted ; but I contented myself with heartily despising them all, and suffered them to act as they pleased. Their conduct supplied me with abundant matter for meditation on human life and human nature.

I saw in these wretches a perfect picture of heirs, nephews, *friends* and servants, who surround the death-bed of their fathers, uncles, friends, and masters, like birds of prey, plunder them both before and after their death, and exhaust every expedient for the gratification of their avarice and rapacity. And yet we accumulate, all our lives, at the expense even of justice and humanity—deaf to the groans of the widow, the orphan, and the wretched and for no other purpose than to feed the profligacy, vices, and voracity of these vultures.

We were now, my dear Madam, ploughing the ocean to the right and left, but without making any progress ; the contrary winds had re-assumed the command of our vessel and drove us from our destination. The storms which succeeded left us only just such intervals of calm as allowed us to estimate the different degrees of their violence. The storm which came on during the night of the twenty-sixth was truly terrible.

The waves beat with such force against the ship, that they produced an effect similar to that of the most dreadful earthquakes upon our houses. The shocks were so repeated and

violent that they loosened several casks of fresh water which dashed against each other, broke, and inundated the space between the deck and the cabin, occasioned the greatest disorder, drowned almost all the poultry, and spoiled a great part of what still remained of our wretched provisions. I patiently resigned myself to Providence, and repeated—*Fiat voluntas tua*. But my situation brought to my remembrance the saying of a good king, whose name I cannot recollect :

“ Purchè il reo non si salvi, il giusto pera.”

This king must either have lived before the time of Justinian, or he was unacquainted with his maxim—*Melius est, centum reos absolvere, quàm unum innocentem condemnare* ;—but let us return to our delightful voyage.

We proceeded sometimes to the south, sometimes to the north, sometimes to the east, but never to the west, which was our Colchis. Meantime, my sufferings increased. There was nothing but salt meat, and the water, which by the bye was very bad, was measured out to us in a bird-glass. I know not what would have become of me—for my stomach rejected all their dishes, rendered more disgusting by filth—had not a sailor sold me some rice.

Observe, my dear Madam, that American ships are always well provided with rice, which is so abundant with them ; but our captain, who had consumed his whole stock during his long stay at Liverpool, where it is much dearer, judged it expedient to defer purchasing any more till his arrival in America. You see therefore that I had embarked with a man who perfectly understood his interest, if not his duty. The difficulty however was to find some charitable person who would undertake to dress it, though I only wanted to have it boiled in water with a little salt. I could expect no kindness or humanity from my own unfeeling sex ; I therefore applied to that which we are not ashamed to oppress and to calumniate in every possible way. There was an Englishwoman on board, who was going to join her husband in America. She offered me her assistance; the more willingly as she had, during her sea-sickness, received relief from my wine, which, as well as my medicine-chest, had been at the service of the whole community. I had now therefore some chance of humane treatment, when I was suddenly seized with a putrid fever.

It is really astonishing that I could resist all these attacks, or support the effects of violent emetics, debilitated as I was by sea-sickness, destitute of every kind of restorative, of all physical or moral aid, and abandoned by all my powers except the energy of my mind.

I know not what that is which is called soul ; for as I have already said, I am neither a metaphysician, nor a theologian ; but it is unquestionably some divine faculty acting within us, without which it would be impossible for man, by his own unaided strength, to support some of the vicissitudes of life. I was more powerfully than ever impressed with this truth, in the terrible situation in which I found myself in this vessel; and it is principally for the benefit of this moral inference, that I have occupied your attention so long with this recital of grievances. Yes, my dear Countess, man is a mere puppet, acted upon by Providence, against which all human systems and all human powers are vain. How could the extraordinary, the incomprehensible genius of Archimedes, of Galileo, of Descartes, of Newton, operate by the unassisted energy and *free will* of man ? They were only machines moved by superior springs; and Providence puts them in motion, more or less, in proportion as it judges them more or less necessary.

At the moment I am writing to you, dear Madam, with a body almost completely restored to its former strength, I feel that my mind is weak, and that I could not now support what I

then sustained with so much heroism. I believe that Providence will not again grant me the same firmness, unless it should see fit to place me again in the same dreadful situation. But I forget myself ; for although I am writing from Philadelphia, we are still at a great distance from it. The idea of reverting to my subject frightens me, and leads me to indulge in these long digressions : this also will prove to you how much more feeble my mind is now than it was then.

I am sorry to return to my wretched bed. This is perhaps not less painful to you than disgusting to me ; but it is the only stage upon which I acted during the whole of my voyage ; and the *Epopœa* requires unity of place as well as of action. I hung between life and death till the 11th of December, when I began to revive a little. During the whole of this time, I had eaten nothing but rice, which however my good English nurse had not economized ; she and the rest of the passengers had probably little scruple on this head, for she afterwards repeatedly told me that every one on board had completely given me over. I one day saw the captain carefully remove all my effects into his closet, under pretence of protecting them, as he said, “ *from the wolves.* ” I could not help laughing ; and thanking him for this first mark of care so voluntarily bestowed. I just told him that his expectations would be disappointed, and that I should not die yet, in spite of all the sufferings and hardships I had experienced. Indeed I never for a moment thought I should die, so convinced was I that some superior power watched over my existence, as a proof of which, I tell you the following incident.

I was reduced to my last pittance of rice, and no more was to be had. I caused myself to be dragged upon the deck to breathe a little fresh air. I observed a pig with an ear of maize in his mouth. I asked the captain if he would have the goodness to allow me a little of this maize. “ What shall I give my pig then ? ” was his philanthropic reply. The same evening a storm arose. During the night it raged with great fury ; the waves washed over the deck ; one broke into the sty, which it carried away together with my rival, as an offering to the offended deities of ocean. By priority of demand, I became the rightful heir to his pittance, and this pittance kept me alive till we entered the Delaware. But, to make the hand of Providence more clear in the matter, while a sailor was endeavouring to save the captain’s pet from the first wave, a second rolled over him, as if to punish him for his presumption ; and, had it not been for the cordage of the mast, he would have shared the fate of the pig. The poor captain was inconsolable; he was very fond of it, and scratched it every day with great tenderness ; he declared it was very intelligent. I had some thoughts of recommending myself to his favor, by imitating the courtiers of Madame de Pampadour, who asked her every morning if she and her *Mouflet* had slept well.

The captain himself and all on board now seemed convinced that some superintending deity interposed its protection in my favour ; and if I had before obliged them to treat me with some degree of respect, I was from that time regarded with a species of veneration.

It is useless to repeat how often contrary winds drove us, sometimes towards Greenland, and sometimes towards the Azores. One day we were only sixty miles from the latter. I requested the captain to put into one of them that he might give us the opportunity of recruiting our strength, and provide a supply of provisions and fresh water ; for that which was in the casks had been so agitated by the storms that it was scarcely drinkable. He gave us a good reason for his refusal, viz. that he was forbidden to deviate from his course, unless on account of injury sustained by the ship, or loss of masts, or from being driven upon a dangerous coast ; so that my first lesson in navigation was, that we were not permitted to save ourselves till we were first at the bottom of the seas, or swallowed up by a whale. *Apropos* of whales ; I have been often very near realizing the promise I made you, in my last, from Liverpool, for

we saw a great number of them towards the coast of Greenland. Here however the great question arises .... *Can* one be swallowed by a whale ? I think the Inquisition ought to settle this as it did the question of the motion of the earth, which, Galileo would have it, moved round the sun, though Joshua makes the sun turn round the earth.

Naturalists assert that the whale feeds upon a small marine insect, that its throat is so narrow that it could not swallow a fish so big as a herring, and that it can only swallow its food, having no power of mastication. How then did Jonah find his way down ? To accommodate matters with the holy office, the naturalists must adopt some other hypothesis. But let us leave them to settle the question, and continue our voyage.

We had not gone far before we were assailed by another terrible storm : the night of the 26th of December it was terrific. A chain belonging to the rudder broke. The waves broke into the body of the vessel, swept over it, and so completely drenched it every instant, that everything in our cabin was afloat. One of our pirates was thrown out of bed, and received so severe a bruise in the leg, that he did not recover from it during the whole voyage. All was confusion and tumult. Several resigned themselves to despair ; and even the captain confessed, that this was a case which would justify his putting into port : but the Azores were not now within reach. The two pirates wept with all the cowardice of the base and sordid. I told them that, as they had boasted so much of having been sailors, they had better assist the crew ; but they were too busy with St Jago de Compostella, and our Lady of Cuba, to attend to worldly affairs. My poor Englishwoman was almost dead with fear ; I felt nothing like dying, for having been preserved so long, I had a persuasion that I should not die during this voyage. Everything was in disorder : in short, the captain determined to resign the ship to the winds and waves and let her drift ; for, in the latitude and longitude in which we then were, he had nothing to apprehend, either from the rocks or the coast.

We were between the Old and the New World ; each seemed to drive us from its shores towards the abyss.

There were but a few inches of timber between me and eternity ;—but when our hour is not come, eternity itself must recede ;—and thus it did recede from before my eyes.

The following day, although the storm had not subsided, there was the serenest sky I ever beheld. I dragged myself on deck, to enjoy the scene which the sea and the ship, still the sport of the waves, presented. It was indeed truly grand. We were sometimes upon a mountain, then in a plain, and then in an abyss. It was a perfect representation of our country, diversified by the most varied features of nature. Sometimes I saw the beautiful *plateau* of your *Cimerella*, and the illusion which painted you to my imagination was a delightful relief from this terrific picture. But a most extraordinary phenomenon presented itself, both to my eyes and to my mouth. I will make a present of it to the naturalists, to atone for having set them by the ears with the inquisition.

A north-west wind passed with such force over the surface of the waves, that it blew up the water in a kind of fine dust into the air, where it was penetrated by the rays of a most refulgent sun, and fell again in a shower of brilliants, far more beautiful than the golden one which fell on Danaë. So much for the eyes ; now for the mouth.

This shower in its descent was changed into fresh water, though there could be no doubt that it was the very identical sea-water which the winds had dispersed in the air, for not the smallest cloud was perceptible in the whole firmament ; the weather was perfectly clear, and nothing was seen in the air but the *tourbillons* occasioned by this great conflict between the

two elements. This is a fact, my dear Countess, and was recorded by the captain in his log-book. *Au reste*,—as people have believed in showers of *blood, stones, &c.* I think they may very fairly believe in this ; such a transformation is not difficult to account for, if it be true that the saline particles are lost at a certain elevation from the earth, as some naturalists pretend. Icarus, or Simon the magician, or some aeronaut, may perhaps have made some experiments on this subject. Learned men and naturalists, who are very happy at conjectures, may extricate this difficulty from the obscurity in which I leave it. I am not versed in natural philosophy ; I am a naturalist only in the sense of wishing to *leave nature to herself*, or at most only to aid her operations. I am but the herald at arms, who opens the lists for them, and retires.

January 6th 1823, we passed the southern point of the bank of Newfoundland ; we had, therefore, performed two-thirds of our voyage. This, Madam, is the famous bank which has so often been the apple of discord. The Americans, the French, and the English, contended for the exclusive privilege of the fishery, which is very valuable. The riches of this bank are one of the causes of our poverty : its cod, stock-fish, &c. which come and infect our country, lower the price of our produce and cattle, our principal commercial resources : our money thus goes into the pockets of foreigners, and our produce sells for nothing. This also is one of the blessings we owe our governments. But what is most singular is, that orthodox Catholics impoverish true believers to enrich orthodox heretics ; for this trade is now monopolized by the English and Americans. Well, my dear Countess, would you believe it ? This bank, which has so often poisoned my meals during Lent, refused to give me one of its myriads of fishes when it would have contributed to restore my health. All our efforts to catch any were vain. I must, however, acknowledge that our ship was not better supplied with the necessary implements for fishing than with other articles.

I passed the bank without giving it one *salve*, although it told me that my trials were near their close. These trials were rendered more endurable by my improved fare : the maize held out, and the *bouillie* was my ambrosia. As to nectar, I cannot say much ; the water was become more bitter than gall ; and unfortunately, the pirates, the captain, Mr James, the cook, with the assistance of the lady and *her mate*, had drained all my bottles of Cognac brandy. The captain one day drank so liberally of it in private, that he was ill for a week of an inflammation in the throat, which nearly killed him : they had fallen foul even of the whole stock of spirituous liquors, elixirs, &c. in my medicine chest. I was sometimes tempted to be angry, but having from the beginning discovered what sort of company I was in, I had always had sufficient self-command to look upon them with an eye of pity and contempt, and sometimes even to laugh at them. I mention these trifling incidents for the pleasure of indulging that unreserved communication which your friendship allows, and to give such hints to our common friends as may induce them, in similar circumstances, to be more cautious than I was in ascertaining the accommodations of the ship, the character of the captain, the company, &c. ; that they may avoid the situation in which I was placed. I have described it *en badinant* that I might not wound your sensibility : but it was really dreadful. The stench alone, which, from the dirt and the destitution to which we were compelled to submit, infected everything, even our own persons, was sufficient to kill a man, however enured to all the vicissitudes of life. It is said that we may accustom ourselves to anything, and this I can now attest from experience ; but I assure you I often wished myself an oyster, which, according to naturalists, is destitute of the sense of smell.

But we will turn from this disgusting picture, and, whilst advancing with a tolerably favourable wind, direct our attention to our pirates, who were arrayed in battle against Mr James and the captain.

It would be difficult in any monastery to find a greater glutton than this Mr James. Our pirates carefully concealed their dry provisions ; and to escape the danger of either having to offer, or being asked for, any, they ate them in secret during the night, or clandestinely in their berths during the day. Mr James, however, found an opportunity of making a skilful and successful attack upon these eatables, in which he was greatly favoured by the dampness and the stench of the room, which obliged them to expose their stores to view. James, moreover, was like the rat in the fable : “ I do not want eyes to know where there is anything good,—my nose is sufficient.” These gentlemen had perceived his exploits. One day they caught him in the act, and a severe kicking was the consequence. The captain ran to ascertain the cause of the disturbance, and took the part of his servant, or rather that of the offended sovereignty of the American people. The Spanish Americans would have been in a disagreeable situation if the mate had come to the assistance of his Anglo-Americans, for he would have brought the whole crew with him ; but, fortunately for them, he was jealous of the captain’s attentions to my good Englishwoman, and left him and Mr James to sustain the brunt of the battle. So long as the only weapons employed were fists, I forbore to interfere ; but when the Spaniards threatened to terminate the quarrel after their fashion, with knives, I used every means of conciliation. I must observe, that a considerable degree of irritation had for some time prevailed between the belligerent parties : the captain was not pleased to see his adversaries eat their provisions without inviting him to partake of them ; and they were equally dissatisfied with his solitary visits to his beer. These ridiculous scenes, together with the undisturbed enjoyment of my *bouillie*, had contributed a little to the recovery of my spirits and strength.

One more storm, my dear Countess ; it was the last, and it procured us a supply of food. It came on in the night of the 13th January, 1823, and continued almost the whole of the following day. As our vessel was much damaged, the waves washed over the deck at their pleasure, and sometimes brought with them the inhabitants of ocean ; but as they met with no obstruction, they generally returned the way they came. That night however we succeeded in capturing three that were entangled in the cordage, &c. I can give no description of them, for I did not see them till the following day, when they were cut into pieces and salted ; but they were of the *cetaceous* genus, which is very extensive. Their oily flesh, under any other circumstances, would have been insupportable ; but I thought it pretty good in such a famine ; the very idea of anything fresh was sufficient to stimulate the appetite, and give a relish to the food.

The captain was more alarmed by this, than by any former storms, though comparatively slight, for the vessel was in a most shattered condition, and he was apprehensive of being thrown against St George’s bank, which was not very distant, and the shoals of which are numerous and dangerous.

The 28th was a beautiful day and brought with it a ray of hope which revived our drooping spirits. Heaven sent us two beneficent messengers, to announce to us that the land, which had so long seemed to recede before us, was at length at hand. But alas! my dear Madam, like the unfortunate son of Idomeneus, they received death from the hands of those whom they came to console, and to congratulate on their arrival at the desired port, and at the termination of their sufferings. They were two of those lovely beings which embellish our forests and enliven our rural walks ; which cheer and amuse us in the gloom of solitude and in the splendour of a palace, and divert the mind from its oppressive load of thought and care ; which speak the language of harmony and innocent love ; which never inspire fear, and whose pleasures, desires, and even little animosities add new attractions to the magnificent picture of nature, and impart unspeakable delight by the sweet emotions they excite. They were two little birds of the continent of North America : they were devoured. By the bills and



feet I found that they were of the *passerine* tribe, and of the species of greenfinches ; which in America are redbreasts.

From the arrival of these unfortunate guests, our course was, for a considerable time, tolerably good and undisturbed by storms. Had the sea again visited our cabins, I know not how we should have resisted the cold, which was already most piercing, destitute as we were of fire, or any means of warming ourselves.

At length on the 6th of February, feeble as I was, I climbed up the main-mast and called out “ Mountains !” The captain, with a sarcastic smile and his usual civility, replied that the mountains I saw were clouds. I confess I deserved to be laughed at, for the mountains in that part of America are at more than 200 miles from the coast, which was not very near us ; but a mountaineer dreams only of mountains, as a fisherman does of nets and hooks.

On the 8th we saw, not mountains but forests, which, from the flatness of the ground, seemed to rise out of the ocean. We also discovered the mouth of the Delaware, between Cape May on the north, and Cape Henlopen on the south ; but from contrary winds we were not able to double the latter before the 11th. We had a pilot who steered the vessel from thence, between the dangerous banks of the bay and river, as far as Philadelphia. Thus we arrived at the last act of this tragi-comedy, and the *dénouement* was *assez plaisant*. It was a true Epopea; and, what is better, a Helen was the *causa mail tanti*. You must have understood before now, my dear Countess, that my good Englishwoman had not discouraged the attentions of the mate. To do her justice, however, I must confess that he was an attractive young fellow, and the opportunity was extremely *proximate*. Besides, confined as she had so long been in this terrible prison, subject to every species of privation, and to every temptation that could beset her, it was to be expected that a little gallantry would be the effect of so many powerful causes. I had foreseen that *this* was to be an episode in the drama : but, as she had not purchased a right to occupy a place in the cabin, and as the captain had, in a few days, generously offered it to her, she had not been able to resist the tender declarations with which he also every now and then entertained her. The accursed and almost inseparable companion of love, who spares neither the cottage nor the palace, neither the crew of a ship nor the inmates of a family, took possession of the heart of the mate ; and, as she was extremely free in the use of her tongue, and not very delicate as to the sentiments she inspired, she provoked him to strike her. Not being disposed patiently to bear this outrage, she courageously returned his blows, and hence ensued a noisy scuffle, which attracted the attention of the persons in the ship. The captain undertook, as it might be expected, the defence of his Dulcinea more warmly than he had before undertaken that of his Sancho Panza. Thus our champions valiantly entered the field of battle, and as, to the honour of the English, there is no danger of their having recourse to the *stiletto*, I let them take their fill of fighting. As to our pirates, no suffering inflicted on the whole species would have induced them to raise a finger : at last, however, Mr James interfered, and effected a separation in a manner which added much to the interest of the scene. He happened to have his plates in his hand, preparing to lay the cloth. The two gladiators came in contact with him,—the shock, together with the rolling of the ship, caused him to lose the centre of gravity, and laid him prostrate : the awful sound of broken plates was the signal of retreat, and put an end to the battle. Providence, by this last incident, harmonized all around us ; for what is the use of plates, without something to eat ? They were an, insult to our misery. For my own part, I rejoiced at it, and the cause made me laugh.

It is a pity that Calliope turned her back upon me ; otherwise I might, *en badinant*, have had a fine opportunity of introducing myself to the notice of the world, by a grand poem, adorned with every diversity of colour ; an *epobaterion-propemptico-elegiaco-epicedion-*

*threnosoterico-epithalamico-genethliaco-exegetico-nautico-epic* poem. After this long word, my dear Countess, you must take breath.

Some ill-natured critics might perhaps find fault with my poem for deficiency in great characters and a moral. To a philosopher, however, the heroes of Homer, and most other poets, are little better than my pirates, my captain, mate, Mr James, and my Helen : and, as for a moral, it is probably to be found only in Telemachus.

We are now in the bay of the Delaware ; a large basin about twenty-four miles in width and length, which is considered the mouth of this river. At length then we are upon the shores of this great continent, the honour of naming which was snatched from its Genoese discoverer by a Florentine, and which awakens in the heart of an Italian that national pride, which the stranger, not content with oppressing our unhappy land, has always striven to degrade and to stifle. This continent, as well as Europe, Asia, and Africa, will ever recall to the memory the bold enterprizes, the important discoveries, the courage, and the glory of our ancestors.

Cape May, and the countries to the right, as far as the river Hudson, in ascending the bay and the river, belong to New Jersey : Cape Henlopen (formerly Cape St James's) and all the country to the left, as far as the bay of Chesapeake, once belonged to Pennsylvania, but now form the state of Delaware, created since the formation of these colonies, into a confederate and independent republic.

At the bottom of the bay the bed of the river contracts, though still in some places three or four miles in breadth. But the view of the country speaks to the mind only by the ideas and reflections it suggests. The eye sees nothing but a flat country and vast forests, intersected at considerable intervals, by a few scattered farms or hamlets, almost as far as Newcastle, where the country begins to be more populous, more flourishing, and more diversified by plain, hill, and valley.

From Newcastle, a delightful little commercial town belonging also to the state of Delaware, you ascend the river forty-five miles ; and there, amid the windings of the Delaware, and, as it were, from the bosom of a majestic forest, emerges that stately city which is considered the largest and most important in all America ; and on whose site, before the time of Penn, the savage chased the bear and the panther. Two miles farther, it rises before you in all its majesty and extent, from north to south, commanding this superb river, which is still above a mile in breadth, although more than one hundred and fifty miles from its mouth ; and which, with the tide, conveys large three-mast vessels to the very doors of the opulent inhabitants. There we received the visit of the proprietors of the vessel, of the arrival of which they had been informed by signal from Cape Henlopen. They believed she had experienced the fate of many others, which had been lost during the last two months ; and although they knew that she was in the river, the floating masses of ice which covered its surface made them very uneasy ; so that, in spite of her shattered condition, they thought themselves happy at seeing her at all. And here I must stop one moment to pronounce the parting eulogium on my friend the captain.

I cannot advise the Americans to send him forth as a specimen of the nation, or of the generous sentiments which they so proudly arrogate ; if they do, they will stand a chance of being considered as Turks, or perhaps worse. But as a sailor, prepared to battle with every storm, he may justify their boast of the probability that America will become one of the most formidable maritime powers in the world. I spoke to him very plainly about his barbarian manners ; but I willingly forgave him, in consideration of his address and courage in those

dreadful storms, when the elements seemed every instant to threaten our destruction ; I therefore forgot my indignation, and converted a notice of his private behaviour, which in my wrath I had intended to insert in the newspapers, into an honourable certificate to his public conduct. The only revenge in which I indulged was, to pay him my passage without any discussion or allusion to the shameful violation of his engagements, which he obviously expected ; in short, without saying a single word, good or bad ; and when he saw this accompanied by his certificate, which certainly he did not expect, he looked extremely mortified. As for the mate, my dear Countess, it is impossible to describe to you his indefatigable activity, his courage, intelligence, and experience, at the early age of twenty-one. He quite captivated me. Is it, therefore, surprising that he should have captivated one of that sex whose hearts are so much more tender and impressible ? For this unhappy woman I feel real and deep compassion : she is in despair at the prospect of meeting her husband in a situation which reveals her fault. Let us drop the curtain on our drama, before we reach the catastrophe of the heroine, which will, I fear, be truly tragical, or behold the miseries which the pirates, who have already sailed for Cuba, are preparing to inflict.

Thus then, my dear Madam, the 21st instant, after three months and a half of suffering and vicissitudes, ordinary and extraordinary, brings us to the end of this voyage ; which, although three thousand five hundred miles, is generally performed in thirty or forty days. Happy shall I be if I am permitted to tell you the end of my future wanderings. I wish this letter may find the elements more propitious than I did, and that it may convey to you, without delay, the expression of my Transatlantic friendship.

A pilgrimage in Europe and America, leading to the discovery of the sources of the Mississippi and Bloody River : with a description of the whole course of the former, and of the Ohio (1828)

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