

Family Writings

Family Writings

by

James Fenimore Cooper

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THE ECLIPSE

The eclipse of the sun, which you have requested me to describe, occurred in the summer of 1800, on Monday, the 16th of June. Its greatest depth of shadow fell upon the American continent, somewhere about the latitude of 42° . I was then on a visit to my parents, at the home of my family, among the Highlands of Otsego, in that part of the country where the eclipse was most impressive. My recollections of the great event, and the incidents of the day, are as vivid as if they had occurred but yesterday.

Lake Otsego, the headwaters of the Susquehanna, lies as nearly as possible in latitude 42° . The village, which is the home of my family, is beautifully situated at the foot of the lake, in a valley lying between two nearly parallel ranges of heights, quite mountainous in character. The Susquehanna, a clear and rapid stream, flowing from the southeastern shore of the lake, is crossed by a high wooden bridge, which divides the main street of the little town from the lawns and meadows on the eastern bank of the river. Here were all the materials that could be desired, lake, river, mountain, wood, and the dwellings of man, to give full effect to the varied movement of light and shadow through that impressive day.

Throughout the belt of country to be darkened by the eclipse, the whole population were in a state of almost anxious expectation for weeks before the event. On the eve of the 16th of June, our family circle could think or talk of little else: I had then a father and four brothers living, and as we paced the broad hall of the house, or sat about the family board, our conversation turned almost entirely upon the movements of planets and comets, occultations and eclipses. We were all exulting in the feeling that a grand and extraordinary spectacle awaited us—a spectacle which millions then living could never behold. There may have been a tinge of selfishness in the feeling that we were thus favored beyond others, and yet, I think, the emotion was too intellectual in its character to have been altogether unworthy.

Many were the prophecies regarding the weather, the hopes and fears expressed by different individuals, on this important point, as evening drew near. A passing cloud might veil the grand vision from our sight; rain or mist would sadly impair the sublimity of the hour. I was not myself among the desponding. The great barometer in the hall—one of the very few then found in the State, west of Albany—was carefully consulted. It was propitious. It gave promise of dry weather. Our last looks that night, before sleep fell on us, were turned toward the starlit heavens.

And the first movement in the morning was to the open window—again to examine the sky. When I rose from my bed, in the early morning, I found the heavens serene, and cloudless. Day had dawned, but the shadows of night were still

lingering over the valley. For a moment, my eye rested on the familiar view—the limpid lake, with its setting of luxuriant woods and farms, its graceful bay and varied points, the hills where every cliff and cave and glen had been trodden a thousand times by my boyish feet—all this was dear to me as the face of a friend. And it appeared as if the landscape, then lovely in summer beauty, were about to assume something of dignity hitherto unknown—were not the shadows of a grand eclipse to fall upon every wave and branch within a few hours! There was one object in the landscape which a stranger would probably have overlooked, or might perhaps have called unsightly, but it was familiar to every eye in the village, and endowed by our people with the honors of an ancient landmark—the tall gray trunk of a dead and branchless pine, which had been standing on the crest of the eastern, hill, at the time of the foundation of the village, and which was still erect, though rocked since then by a thousand storms. To my childish fancy, it had seemed an imaginary flagstaff, or, in rustic parlance, the "liberty pole" of some former generation; but now, as I traced the familiar line of the tall trunk, in its peculiar shade of silvery gray, it became to the eye of the young sailor the mast of some phantom ship. I remember greeting it with a smile, as this was the first glance of recognition given to the old ruin of the forest since my return.

But an object of far higher interest suddenly attracted my eye. I discovered a star—a solitary star—twinkling dimly in a sky which had now changed its hue to a pule grayish twilight, while vivid touches of coloring were beginning to flush the eastern sky. There was absolutely no other object visible in the heavens—cloud there was none, not even the lightest vapor. That lonely star excited a vivid interest in my mind. I continued at the window gazing, and losing myself in a sort of day-dream. That star was a heavenly body, it was known to be a planet, and my mind was filling itself with images of planets and suns. My brain was confusing itself with vague ideas of magnitude and distance, and of the time required by light to pierce the apparently illimitable void that lay between us—of the beings who might inhabit an orb like that, with life, feeling, spirit, and aspirations like my own.

Soon the sun himself rose into view. I caught a glimpse of fiery light glowing among the branches of the forest, on the eastern mountain. I watched, as I had done a hundred times before, the flushing of the skies, the gradual illuminations of the different hills, crowned with an undulating and ragged outline of pines, nearly two hundred feet in height, the golden light gliding silently down the breast of the western mountains, and opening clearer views of grove and field, until lake, valley, and village lay smiling in one cheerful glow of warm sunshine.

Our family party assembled early. We were soon joined by friends and connections, all eager and excited, and each provided with a colored glass for the occasion. By nine o'clock the cool air, which is peculiar to the summer nights in the Highlands, had left us, and the heat of midsummer filled the valley. The heavens were still absolutely cloudless, and a more brilliant day never shone in our own bright climate. There was not a breath of air, and we could see the rays of heat

quivering here and there on the smooth surface of the lake. There was every appearance of a hot and sultry noontide.

We left the house, and passed beyond the grounds into the broad and grassy street which lay between the gates and the lake. Here there were no overhanging brandies to obstruct the view; the heavens, the wooded mountains, and the limpid sheet of water before up, were all distinctly seen. As the hour for the eclipse drew near, our eagerness and excitement increased to an almost boyish impatience. The elders of the party were discussing the details of some previous eclipse: leaving them to revive their recollections, I strolled away, glass in hand, through the principal streets of the village. Scarce a dwelling, or a face, in the little town, that was not familiar to me, and it gave additional zest to the pleasure of a holiday at home, to meet one's townfolk under the excitement of an approaching eclipse. As yet there was no great agitation, although things wore a rather unusual aspect for the busy hours of a summer's day. Many were busy with their usual tasks, women and children were coming and going with pails of water, the broom and the needle were not yet laid aside, the blacksmith's hammer and the carpenter's plane were heard in passing their shops. Loaded teams, and travellers in waggons, were moving through the streets; the usual quiet traffic at the village counters had not yet ceased. A farm-waggon, heavily laden with hay, was just crossing the bridge, coming in from the fields, the driver looking drowsy with sleep, wholly unconscious of the movement in the heavens. The good people in general, however, were on the alert; at every house some one seemed to be watching, and many groups were passed, whose eager up-turned faces and excited conversation spoke the liveliest interest. It was said, that there were not wanting one or two philosophers of the skeptical school, among our people, who did not choose to commit themselves to the belief in a total eclipse of the sun—simply because they had never seen one. Seeing is believing, we are told, though the axiom admits of dispute. But what these worthy neighbors of ours had not seen, no powers of reasoning, or fulness of evidence, could induce them to credit. Here was the dignity of human reason! Here was private judgment taking a high stand! Anxious to witness the conversion of one of these worthies, with boyish love of fun I went in quest of him. He had left the village, however, on business. But, true to his principles, before mounting his horse that morning, he had declared to his wife that "*he was not running away from that eclipse;*" nay, more, with noble candor, he averred that if the eclipse did overtake him, in the course of his day's journey, "*he would not be above acknowledging it!*" This was highly encouraging.

I had scarcely returned to the family party, left on the watch, when one of my brothers, more vigilant, or with clearer sight than his companions, exclaimed that he clearly saw a dark line, drawn on the western margin of the sun's disc! All faces were instantly turned upwards, and through the glasses we could indeed now see a dusky, but distinct object, darkening the sun's light. An exclamation of delight, almost triumphant, burst involuntarily from the lips of all. We were not to be disappointed, no cloud was there to veil the grand spectacle; the vision, almost

unearthly in its sublime dignity, was about to be revealed to us. In an incredibly short time, the oval formation of the moon was discerned. Another joyous burst of delight followed, as one after another declared that he beheld with distinctness the dark oval outline, drawn against the flood of golden light. Gradually, and at first quite imperceptibly to our sight, that dark and mysterious sphere gained upon the light, while a feeling of watchful stillness, verging upon reverence, fell upon our excited spirits.

As yet there was no change perceptible in the sunlight falling upon lake and mountain; the familiar scene wore its usual smiling aspect, bright and glowing as on other days of June. The people, however, were now crowding into the streets—their usual labors were abandoned—forgotten for the moment—and all faces were turned upward. So little, however, was the change in the power of the light, that to a careless observer it seemed more the gaze of faith, than positive perception, which turned the faces of all upward. Gradually a fifth, and even a fourth, of the sun's disc became obscured and still the unguarded eye could not endure the flood of light—it was only with the colored glass that we could note the progress of the phenomenon. The noon-day heat, however, began to lessen, and something of the coolness of early morning returned to the valley.

I was looking upward, intently watching for the first moment where the dark outline of the moon should be visible to the naked eye, when an acquaintance passed. "Come with me!" he said quietly, at the same moment drawing his arm within my own, and leading me away. He was a man of few words, and there was an expression in his face which induced me to accompany him without hesitation. He led me to the Court House, and from thence into an adjoining building, and into a room then occupied by two persons. At a window, looking upward at the heavens, stood a figure which instantly riveted my attention. It was a man with haggard face, and fettered arms, a prisoner under sentence of death. By his side was the jailor.

A painful tragedy had been recently enacted in our little town, The schoolmaster of a small hamlet in the county had beaten a child under his charge very severely—and for a very trifling error. The sufferer was a little girl, his own niece, and it was said that natural infirmity had prevented the child from clearly pronouncing certain words which her teacher required her to utter distinctly. To conquer what he considered the obstinacy of the child, this man continued to beat her so severely that she never recovered from the effects of the blows, and died some days after. The wretched man was arrested, tried for murder, condemned, and sentenced to the gallows. This was the first capital offence in Otsego County. It produced a very deep impression. The general character of the schoolmaster had been, until that evil hour, very good in every way. He was deeply, and beyond all doubt unfeignedly, penitent for the crime into which he had been led, more, apparently, from false ideas of duty, than from natural severity of temper. He had been entirely unaware of the great physical injury he was doing the child. So great was his contrition, that

public sympathy had been awakened in his behalf, and powerful petitions had been sent to the Governor of the State, in order to obtain a respite, if not a pardon. But the day named by the judge arrived without a return of the courier. The Governor was at his country-house, at least eighty miles beyond Albany. The petition had been kept to the last moment, for additional signatures, and the eighty miles to be travelled by the courier, after reaching Albany, had not been included in the calculation. No despatch was received, and there was every appearance that there would be no reprieve. The day arrived—thronged with people from Chenango, and Unadilla, and from the valley of the Mohawk, poured into the village, to witness the painful, and as yet unknown, spectacle of a public execution. In looking down, from an elevated position, upon the principal street of the village that day, it had seemed to me paved with human faces. The hour struck, the prisoner was taken from the jail, and, seated, as is usual, on his coffin, was carried to the place of execution, placed between two ministers of the gospel. His look of utter misery was beyond description. I have seen other offenders expiate for their crimes with life, but never have I beheld such agony, such a clinging to life, such mental horror at the nearness of death, as was betrayed by this miserable man. When he approached the gallows, he rose from his seat, and wringing his fettered hands, turned his back upon the fearful object, as if the view were too frightful for endurance. The ministers of the gospel succeeded at length in restoring him to a decent degree of composure. The last prayer was offered, and his own fervent "Amen!" was still sounding, hoarse, beseeching, and almost despairing, in the ears of the crowd, when the respite made its tardy appearance. A short reprieve was granted, and the prisoner was carried back to the miserable cell from which he had been drawn in the morning.

Such was the wretched man who had been brought from his dungeon that morning, to behold the grand phenomenon of the eclipse. During the twelvemonth previous, he had seen the sun but once. The prisons of those days were literally dungeons, cut off from the light of day. That striking figure, the very picture of utter misery, his emotion, his wretchedness, I can never forget. I can see him now, standing at the window, pallid and emaciated by a year's confinement, stricken with grief, his cheeks furrowed with constant weeping, his whole frame attesting the deep and ravaging influences of conscious guilt and remorse. Here was a man drawn from the depths of human misery, to be immediately confronted with the grandest natural exhibition in which the Creator deigns to reveal his Omnipotence to our race. The wretched criminal, a murderer in fact, though not in intention, seemed to gaze upward at the awful spectacle, with an intentness and a distinctness of mental vision far beyond our own, and purchased by an agony scarcely less bitter than death. It seemed as if, for him, the curtain which veils the world beyond the grave had been lifted. He stood immovable as a statue, with uplifted, and manacled arms and clasped hands, the very image of impotent misery and wretchedness. Perhaps human invention could not have conceived of a more powerful moral accessory, to heighten the effect of the sublime movement of the heavenly bodies, than this

spectacle of penitent human guilt afforded. It was an incident to stamp on the memory for life. It was a lesson not lost on me.

When I left the Court House, a sombre, yellowish, unnatural coloring was shed over the country. A great change had taken place. The trees on the distant heights had lost their verdure and their airy character; they were taking the outline of dark pictures graven upon an unfamiliar sky. The lake wore a lurid aspect, very unusual. All living creatures seemed thrown into a state of agitation. The birds were fluttering to and fro, in great excitement; they seemed to mistrust that this was not the gradual approach of evening, and were undecided in their movements. Even the dogs—honest creatures—became uneasy, and drew closer to their masters. The eager, joyous look of interest and curiosity, which earlier in the morning had appeared in almost every countenance, was now changed to an expression of wonder or anxiety or thoughtfulness, according to the individual character.

Every house now gave up its tenants. As the light failed more and more with every passing second, the children came flocking about their mothers in terror. The women themselves were looking about uneasily for their husbands. The American wife is more apt than any other to turn with affectionate confidence to the stronger arm for support. The men were very generally silent and grave. Many a laborer left his employment to be near his wife and children, as the dimness and darkness increased.

I once more took my position beside my father and my brothers, before the gates of our own grounds. The sun lay a little obliquely to the south and east, in the most favorable position possible for observation. I remember to have examined, in vain, the whole dusky canopy in search of a single cloud. It was one of those entirely unclouded days, less rare in America than in Europe. The steadily waning light, the gradual approach of darkness, became the more impressive as we observed this absolutely transparent state of the heavens. The birds, which a quarter of an hour earlier had been fluttering about in great agitation, seemed now convinced that night was at hand. Swallows were dimly seen dropping into the chimneys, the martins returned to their little boxes, the pigeons flew home to their dove-cots, and through the open door of a small barn we saw the fowls going to roost.

The usual flood of sunlight had now become so much weakened, that we could look up ward long, and steadily, without the least pain. The sun appeared like a young moon of three or four days old, though of course with a larger and more brilliant crescent. Looking westward a moment, a spark appeared to glitter before my eye. For a second I believed it to be an optical illusion, but in another instant I saw it plainly to be a star. One after another they came into view, more rapidly than in the evening twilight, until perhaps fifty stars appeared to us, in a broad dark zone of the heavens, crowning the pines on the western mountain. This wonderful vision of the stars, during the noontide hours of day, filled the spirit with singular sensations.

Suddenly one of my brothers shouted aloud, "The moon!" Quicker than thought, my eye turned eastward again, and there floated the moon, distinctly apparent, to a degree that was almost fearful. The spherical form, the character, the dignity, the substance of the planet, were clearly revealed as I have never beheld them before, or since. It looked grand, dark, majestic, and mighty, as it thus proved its power to rob us entirely of the sun's rays. We are all but larger children. In daily life we judge of objects by their outward aspect. We are accustomed to think of the sun, and also of the moon, as sources of light, as ethereal, almost spiritual, in their essence. But the positive material nature of the moon was now revealed to our senses, with a force of conviction, a clearness of perception, that changed all our usual ideas in connection with the planet. This was no interposition of vapor, no deceptive play of shadow; but a vast mass of obvious matter had interposed between the sun above us and the earth on which we stood. The passage of two ships at sea, sailing on opposite courses, is scarcely more obvious than this movement of one world before another. Darkness like that of early night now fell upon the village.

My thoughts turned to the sea. A sailor at heart, already familiar with the face of the ocean, I seemed, in mental vision, to behold the grandeur of that vast pall of supernatural shadow falling suddenly upon the sea, during the brightest hour of the day. The play of light and shade upon the billows, always full of interest, must at that hour have been indeed sublime. And my fancy was busy with pictures of white-sailed schooners, and brigs, and ships, gliding like winged spirits over the darkened waves.

I was recalled by a familiar and insignificant incident, the dull tramp of hoofs on the village bridge. A few cows, believing that night had overtaken them, were coming homeward from the wild open pastures about the village. And no wonder the kindly creatures were deceived, the darkness was now much deeper than the twilight which usually turns their faces homeward; the dew was falling perceptibly, as much so as at any hour of the previous night, and the coolness was so great that the thermometer must have fallen many degrees from the great heat of the morning. The lake, the hills, and the buildings of the little town were swallowed up in the darkness. The absence of the usual lights in the dwellings rendered the obscurity still more impressive. All labor had ceased, and the hushed voices of the people only broke the absolute stillness by subdued whispering tones.

"Hist! The whippoorwill!" whispered a friend near me; and at the same moment, as we listened in profound silence, we distinctly heard from the eastern bank of the river the wild, plaintive note of that solitary bird of night, slowly repeated at intervals. The song of the summer birds, so full in June, had entirely ceased for the last half hour. A bat came flitting about our heads. Many stars were now visible, though not insufficient number to lessen the darkness. At one point only in the far distant northern horizon, something of the brightness of dawn appeared to linger.

At twelve minutes past eleven, the moon stood revealed in its greatest distinctness—a vast black orb, so nearly obscuring the sun that the face of the great luminary was entirely and absolutely darkened, though a corona of rays of light appeared beyond. The gloom of night was upon us. A breathless intensity of interest was felt by all. There would appear to be something instinctive in the feeling with which man gazes at all phenomena in the heavens. The peaceful rainbow, the heavy clouds of a great storm, the vivid flash of electricity, the falling meteor, the beautiful lights of the aurora borealis, fickle as the play of fancy,—these never fail to fix the attention, with something of a peculiar feeling, different in character from that with which we observe any spectacle on the earth. Connected with all grand movements in the skies there seems an instinctive sense of inquiry; of anxious expectation, akin to awe, which may possibly be traced to the echoes of grand Christian prophecies, whispering to our spirits, and endowing the physical sight with some mysterious mental prescience. In looking back to that impressive hour, such now seem to me the feelings of the youth making one of that family group, all apparently impressed with a sensation of the deepest awe—I speak with certainty—a clearer view than I had ever yet had of the majesty of the Almighty, accompanied with a humiliating, and, I trust, a profitable sense of my own utter insignificance. That movement of the moon, that sublime voyage of the worlds, often recurs to my imagination, and even at this distant day, as distinctly; as majestically, and nearly as fearfully, as it was then beheld.

A group of silent, dusky forms stood near me; one emotion appeared to govern all. My father stood immovable, some fifteen feet from me, but I could not discern his features. Three minutes of darkness, all but absolute, elapsed. They appeared strangely lengthened by the intensity of feeling and the flood of overpowering thought which filled the mind.

Thus far the sensation created by this majestic spectacle had been one of humiliation and awe. It seemed as if the great Father of the Universe had visibly, and almost palpably, veiled his face in wrath. But, appalling as the withdrawal of light had been, most glorious, most sublime, was its restoration! The corona of light above the moon became suddenly brighter, the heavens beyond were illuminated, the stars retired, and light began to play along the ridges of the distant mountains. And then a flood of grateful, cheering, consoling brightness fell into the valley, with a sweetness and a power inconceivable to the mind, unless the eye has actually beheld it. I can liken this sudden, joyous return of light, after the eclipse, to nothing of the kind that is familiarly known. It was certainly nearest to the change produced by the swift passage of the shadow of a very dark cloud, but it was the effect of this instantaneous transition, multiplied more than a thousand fold. It seemed to speak directly to our spirits, with full assurance of protection of gracious mercy, and of that Divine love which has produced all the glorious combinations of matter for our enjoyment. It was not in the least like the gradual dawning of day, or the actual rising of the sun. There was no gradation in the change. It was sudden, amazing, like what the imagination would teach us to

expect of the advent of a heavenly vision. I know that philosophically I am wrong; but, to me, it seemed that the rays might actually be seen flowing through the darkness in torrents, till they had again illuminated the forest, the mountains, the valley, and the lake with their glowing, genial touch.

There was another grand movement, as the crescent of the sun reappeared, and the moon was actually seen steering her course through the void. Venus was still shining brilliantly.

This second passage of the moon lasted but a moment, to the naked eye. As it ceased, my eye fell again on the scene around me. The street, now as distinctly seen as ever, was filled with the population of the village. Along the line of road stretching for a mile from the valley, against the side of the mountain, were twenty waggons bearing travellers, or teams from: among the hills. All had stopped on their course, impelled, apparently, by unconscious reverence, as much as by curiosity, while every face was turned toward heaven, and every eye drank in the majesty of the sight. Women stood in the open street, near me, with streaming eyes and clasped hands, and sobs were audible in different directions. Even the educated and reflecting men at my side continued silent in thought. Several minutes passed, before the profound impressions of the spectacle allowed of speech. At such a moment the spirit of man bows in humility before his Maker.

The changes of the unwonted light, through whose gradations the full brilliancy of the day was restored, must have been very similar to those by which it had been lost, but they were little noted. I remember, however, marking the instant when I could first distinguish the blades of grass at my feet—and later again watching the shadows of the leaves on the gravel walk. The white lilies in my mother's flower-garden were observed by others among the first objects of the vegetation which could be distinguished from the windows of the house. Every living creature was soon rejoicing again in the blessed restoration of light after that frightful moment of a night at noon-day.

Men who witness any extraordinary spectacle together, are apt, in after-times, to find a pleasure in conversing on its impressions. But I do not remember to have ever heard a single being freely communicative on the subject of his individual feelings at the most solemn moment of the eclipse. It would seem as if sensations were aroused too closely connected with the constitution of the spirit to be irreverently and familiarly discussed. I shall only say that I have passed a varied and eventful life, that it has been my fortune to see earth, heavens, ocean, and man in most of their aspects; but never have I beheld any spectacle which so plainly manifested the majesty of the Creator, or so forcibly taught the lesson of humility to man as a total eclipse of the sun.

PASSAGES FROM A DIARY

Left Paris 14th of July, 1828—Monday.

MELUN.—An old town against a side-hill. Did not leave the carriage. Postilion took us out of the way. Postilion falls, and horse rolls over him—saved by his boots. Other postilions anxious to know what sort of boots he had worn.

It had rained a little in the morning, and, as what is called the *gras de Paris* is, in truth, the *gras* of all around Paris, the roads were greasy—I know no better word—and, for horses that are never corked, not entirely without danger. We were travelling *lieuonière*; or, in other words, in the place of the pole a pair of shafts had been attached to the carriage, and our team was composed of three of the sturdy Norman horses so well known on the French roads; the postilion riding the near horse, with traces so long as to enable him to travel wide of the others, and to control the movement. This beast slipped and fell. Rolling over, he caught the leg of his rider beneath his body. I was seated on the dickey of the *calèche* when the accident happened. Jumping down, the horses were backed, and the postilion, who lay quite helpless, was enabled to extricate his limb. The poor fellow uttered a few *sacr-r-r-és*, made a wry face or two, and limped back into the saddle. At the next relay he still walked, but with difficulty.

At Melun this accident became the subject of conversation among the postilions and stable-boys, most of whom were men of *la nouvelle France*, or youths who no longer adhere to the prejudices of their fathers, and admire the new philosophy, and the new-fashioned boots. There was, however, a solitary relic of the *ancien régime* present, in the person of an old man, who wore a powdered club as thick as a large beet-root, and whose whole air had that *recherché* character which always distinguishes the Frenchman of 1789 from him whose proper element is revolution. The old man listened to the account of the tumble with great gravity, nor did he utter a syllable until he had satisfactorily ascertained that no bones had been broken. Then, approaching with a politeness that would have been deemed ultra at Washington, he inquired if "Monsieur knew whether the postilion who had met with the fall, wore the ancient, or the modern boot?" When told the former, he turned to his noisy revolutionary comrades, with a grimace replete with sarcasm, and cried, "*Aha! voyez-wus, mes enfans, les anciennes modes out aussi leur mérite!*"

The old man was right. But, for the celebrated boot, at which travellers are so apt to laugh, it is probable the limb would have snapped like a pipe-stem. When one sees the manner in which French horses go skating along the slippery roads, he

understands at once the whole mystery of this extraordinary part of a postilion's equipment.

SENS.—A pretty town, with an archbishop. In Champagne. Country pleasing on the banks of the Yonne. Vineyards. Cows at work in the plough—in one instance, a woman and a cow drawing the plough together, a man driving!

AVALLON.—A pretty, and formerly strong town. Ravine. Promenades. Landlady assures us environs called "*la petite Suisse*." Pictures of women of different countries—*les Etats Unis* represented by the portrait of a *wench* black as a coal!

DIJON.—Pretty town. Ramparts. Very clean for a French town. Osages. Good and clean inns; Hôtel du Parc. Slept there.

GENLIS.—Château about as large as a second-rate American country-house. Quere—whether this the château where Mesdames de Selléry and de Genlis took the baths of milk? The good woman at the inn laughed at the question, and said there was not milk enough in the whole village to furnish baths for two such great ladies. The word château is greatly abused of late. Properly, it signifies a castellated and moated building; but is now applied to every thing looking like the residence of a country gentleman. The French often call the Palace of the Tuileries "*le Château*" par excellence. Saw fields of Indian corn. Low, but of good color. Country level. Jura in the distance.

AUXONNE.—About noon we came to the margin of the broad plain, which is watered by the Saône, on crossing which we entered Auxonne, one of the fortresses of this frontier, and now celebrated as the spot where Napoleon received his military education. France is girt with triple lines of fortresses on the side of the continent, though those near the mountains are of much less magnitude and strength than those which lie nearer Belgium and Germany. Diplomacy is made to perform the part of ramparts in this direction, Switzerland being as good a fortress, in the hands of friends, as can be desired. Country low, like Holland.

MT. ROLAND.—Ruins of a château, on a height that lay a short distance on our left—guide-books say a castle of Roland. This prince and Cæsar seem to divide the French ruins between them—they are tenants-in-common of half the round-towers between Calais and Marseilles. Day lovely. S—and I on the carriage-box. As we rounded the little height on which the ruin is seated, she exclaimed, "What a beautifully white cloud!" I saw an accurately defined mass, that resembled the highest wreath of a cloud, whose volume was concealed behind the mountains of the Jura, by this time so near as to be quite distinct. There was something that was not cloudy, too, in its appearance. Its outline was like that of a chiselled rock, and its brilliancy greatly surpassed the whiteness of vapor. I called to the postilion and pointed out this extraordinary object. "Mont Blanc, Monsieur!" We were, according to the maps, at least seventy miles from it in an air-line!

I shall never forget the thrill of that moment. There is a feeling allied to the love of the mysterious, causing all to look with pleasure at any distant object, which insensibly leads the mind to the contemplation of things that are invisible. The imagination steals down the sides of distant peaks into the valleys, which it is apt to people with creatures from its stores of recollections, or, perhaps, by its own creative power. This glimpse of the glacier—and it was only a glimpse, the shining mass settling behind the Jura as we descended on a gallop towards Dôle—transported us all, over a long line of road, into the very heart of the country toward which we were hastening. The eye actually swept across two cantons, and half of Savoy, to take in this speck of aerial brightness. I never before so ardently longed for wings, though their possession used to be one of the most constant of my youthful aspirations.

PONTARLIER.—This the last hold of France, on this road, the prison where the ruthless policy of Napoleon caused Toussaint to linger out the close of a life begun in the tropics—a cruel and most unmerited punishment. When will mankind cease to regard only the gorgeous points in the history of this extraordinary soldier, and weigh him, and his career, in the scales of eternal justice? But I can answer my own question. This will happen when men cease to say, "Such and such acts are for my interest," substituting, "Such is my duty." Our own country is filled with Napoleons on a very small scale. How often is the word "*interest*" dinging in our ears! how seldom are we required to recollect that there is such a thing as principle! Streams clear. Derrières de France. Custom-house officers. Cross a little brook; a stone by the road-side marks the boundary of France. Fields undivided; house in one country, its meadow in the other. Path cut up a fir-mountain.

SWITZERLAND.—No custom-house. Canton de Neufchtâel. Derrières de Suisse. Neatness of houses, though shape of Swiss buildings extends more or less through the Jura. Descent to the valley. St. Sulpice. Change truly magical. Cottages of admirable forms, and faultless neatness, scattered profusely along the road-side, the track itself being narrowed to the width which is exactly suited to good taste. The verdure in the valley rivalled the emerald, while the mountains loomed out from behind a thin curtain of vapor in dark patches of rock and larch. The house always at some little distance from the road. A real Swiss cottage is as much adapted to Swiss scenery, as the Gothic is suited to the holy and sublime feelings of devotion. Not an inch of naked earth is visible, with the exception of here, and there a footpath, winding from cottage to cottage, through emerald bowers, in a way to give the whole valley the appearance of a vast extent of pleasure-grounds, laid out with admirable simplicity. The effect of the sudden change from the bald fields of France was like passing into a new world. We had never before seen such a nature, and it really seemed to me as if I had never before seen such a faultless exhibition of art. We were overflowing with *touzy-mouzy*. Enormous chain drawn across the road at narrow gorge, during last invasion from France, to intercept artillery and baggage—broken by French moving a heavy gun against it. Huge staples still imbedded in rock. Limpid waters.

LA LORRAINE.—

August 1.—Took our usual drive. In passing a field, we were struck with the number of gleaners. Counted one hundred and twenty-nine in a field of less than five acres. Was told that they came from the mountains. Gendarme said that seven hundred had passed within a week. In some parts of the mountains they eat bread very seldom, using cheese and potatoes as substitutes. Large quarries.

August 2.—Went to Hindelbank—small village about two leagues from Berne. The church is one of the very humblest and smallest of all the parish churches I remember to have seen in Europe. The château of the Erlachs at a little distance on our right, before reaching the village. The little church contains the tombs of the Erlachs. A German artist of the name of Kahl, while employed on a monument for this distinguished family, took up his residence in the house of the parish-pastor, whose name was Langhans. His wife died at the birth of her first child, while the sculptor was an inmate of the family. Touched by the sorrow of his host, and inspired by the virtues and beauty of the deceased, Nahl struck out the idea of this monument—now become celebrated—at a heat, and executed it on the spot, as an homage to friendship and connubial worth.

The humble little church was readily opened, and we entered filled with expectation. A large, labored, and magnificent, but, I think, tasteless monument, nearly covered one side of the building. It was richly wrought in marbles of different colors, but was confused and meretricious, wanting the simplicity that belongs to every thing of this nature that is truly admirable. I had expected to see a piece of sculpture of rare merit, without exactly knowing what. I knew nothing of the Erlachs having a tomb at Hindelbank, and, seeing nothing but this labored work of art, quite naturally supposed this was the object of our excursion. I was already endeavoring to dissect the confused details, in order to find out the grain of wheat among the heap of tares, when I was called to the rest of the party. A woman came and raised a pair of doors in the floor—and there was the true monument. An ordinary flat tombstone, with armorial bearings and inscription, lay at the depth of about six inches below the floor. The idea was that of the grave giving up its dead for judgment. The stone was rent in twain, and near the head a fragment was so broken as to expose the faces, and busts of those who were summoned to the resurrection. The child lies tranquilly on the bosom of its mother, as if its innocence were passive, while the countenance of the latter is beaming with holy joy. One hand is a little raised, as if reverently greeting her Redeemer. The sculpture is equal to the thought, and the artist, probably from the circumstance of moulding the features after death, while he has preserved the beauty of a fine symmetry, has imparted to them a look entirely suited to the mystery of the grave. These things too often savor of conceit, and, after the momentary feeling of wonder into which, perhaps, you have been surprised, is a little abated, the mind turns with greater pleasure to the more severe models of classic taste. Such is not the case with this extraordinary monument. It grows upon you by study. And its

rare simplicity is quite as remarkable as the boldness and poetry of the conception. Even the material, perishable and plain as it is, helps to sustain the interest, for it betrays the poverty which could restrain, though it might not trammel, genius. There it lay, in noble contrast to the more ostentatious sorrow of the Erlachs. I would not have changed it into marble if I could, although it is no more than the common friable sandstone of the adjoining hills, of a grayish-blue color—the same of which half the houses in Berne are built. I have heard it said that the thought of this monument is not original. For this I cannot vouch; but it has all the appearance of having been produced under the pure inspiration of the imagination, quickened by strong and generous feeling. One seldom sees or hears of a particularly clever thing, without setting about hunting for the original. Ideas which are the most natural and beautiful, usually strike us as old acquaintances, on account of their fitness and truth.

August 3, Sunday.—A fine day, with heavy clouds. Different views of the nearer Alps. Got an idea of their height and distance by the absence of the higher peaks. Went into one of the churchyards of Berne. The whole space subdivided into divisions of the size of a grave, some occupied, others not; the limits of each marked off by low black posts at head and foot, each numbered. The graves which were occupied had a third post in the centre, with a brass plate inserted near the top, bearing inscriptions. Here and there were inscriptions written on paper, and glazed; in others, the words were painted on the wood. In several instances there were printed German verses, glazed like the others. Little wooden roofs, *à la Suisse*, protected these tablets. The brassy plates were the most numerous. There were also a few monuments in stone. Most of these had the inscriptions cut in brass let into the stone. There were a few faded wreaths suspended from the little posts, and very many of the graves were planted with roses. Others were complete beds of the plant commonly called "Everlasting," and which the French also term *Immortelles*. The centre-post, bearing the inscription which denotes that the narrow tenement has its occupant, is in general about five feet high, and is painted in alternate vertical stripes of black and white, like a barber's pole. The effect of such a cemetery is at all times singular, and when the sun falls full on the plates of brass, the appearance is glittering, and still more remarkable.

August 11.—Visited the large quarry. Ascended the mountains back of it, and had fine view of environs of Berne. Saw the gorge of Mother Travers, and the course of the Aar for miles, and the line of the Jura. Could not see the Alps. Beautiful groves of trees, and a lovely country. On our return counted' the number of people with light hair. Found that, among one hundred, ninety-seven, had hair of different shades of auburn, from the quite light to that which appears brown. Black hair in a native scarcely ever seen.

August 12.—The Bernese erect a pole with a bunch of straw on its end, like a broom, to warn people against walking through their fields. It is always respected. Scarce a fence of any kind, or a hedge, save those near the better class of houses.

On some of the Alps the milk is all put together, and two or three times in a season the cows are tried, to know the yield of each, and an estimate of each man's share is made in this way.

This evening we had a fine view from the upper Bastion, at Berne. The Nicsen, a mountain seven thousand feet in height, was perfectly distinct, to its summit. Above this lay a mass of clouds, which concealed the whole of the high Alps, excepting the Peak of the Jungfrau. The latter rose in a perfectly clear sky, above all, white, glittering, and distinct. It looked like a distant cliff belonging to some other orb, and seen across a waste of air. Its actual height far exceeds that to which balloons usually ascend. We have had several opportunities of observing the effect produced by seeing the Alps with their lower portions concealed in clouds; at no other time do we obtain ideas so distinct of their great elevation and prodigious magnitude. The peaks of the lower Alps—mountains in themselves twice as high as the summit of the Kaatskill—serve as scales by which to graduate our views; and when we see broad zones of clouds above these peaks, and, still higher, masses of glittering ice, we are enabled to form some opinion of their vast height. We must have seen more than a thousand acres of glacier, and yet it looked as if one might, cover it with a handkerchief.

August 13.—Rode on the route to Lucerne—*belle route*. Reminded of the Otsego Hills at some points. Saw a man in a new costume: no sleeves to his jacket, breeches of tow-cloth, large below, knees bare; stockings gartered below knee; two flaps of red cloth seeming to cover pockets. *One button* held together the whole apparatus—an important office. Counted twenty-three laborers to-day in a hay-field; sixteen were women, most of them young. The women mow, and do nearly all the field-work, notwithstanding which they are much better looking than women equally exposed in France—probably on account of the climate, and their superior cleanliness.

One sees gendarmes on all the promenades, and in the streets, with fuses slung over one shoulder—light men, dressed in brown coatees, high caps of castor, a short sword, and cartouche-box. They are less military in their attire and equipments than the French, but still soldierly.

Saw a proclamation to-day which termed the people "*L'honorable publique*."

August 20.—Two Americans at Berne. Count the number that pass during our residence here. (Less than a dozen, from July to middle of October.)

Lovely evening. The twilight views of the Alps most exquisite at the close of a cloudless day. The lustre of the glacier slowly retires, and is gradually succeeded by a beautiful rose-colored tint, the whole of the vast range becoming subdued to indescribable softness. The rosy coloring increases to that of a brilliant aurora. Suddenly there is another change. The light vanishes; you see the same range of eternal snow, but you see it ghastly and spectral. The forms are unaltered, but they look like the ghosts of mountains. You fancy that the spirits of the Alps are ranging

themselves before you. Slowly the light departs. The spectres grow more and more faint, less and less material, and at length vanish in the firmament. These changes do not occur until after evening has fallen on the lower world. To-night these lovely changes were followed by moonlight, when their hue changed again from the spectral look of twilight to a faint, delicate rose-color.

August 22.—Immense numbers of *goitres*, attributed to air, or to water. The water of *la Lorraine* deposits a white granular substance, which looks like loaf-sugar half dissolved, or like the finest particles of salt.

Went to the baths. A clean bath covered with linen, soap, and a clean warm gown, with towels, cost seven batz—the cheapest bath I ever took. Drunkenness not rare. Saw a drunken woman.

August 24, Sunday.—Variable weather. A great deal of mist clinging to all the lower mountains. The top of the Nicsen quite hid; a wide streak of watery clouds lay along the summits of the nearer mountains, leaving, their brown sides visible. Far above the clouds rose the entire range of the Oberland Alps to an altitude seemingly even greater than usual—caused by reaction, probably. Every peak and all the majestic formation clearly visible, though the whole range appeared severed from the earth. The line of communication was veiled, and, while all below was watery, or enfeebled by mist, the glaciers threw back the fierce light of the sun with powerful splendor. The separation from the lower world was made the more complete from the contrast between the sombre hues beneath, and the calm but bright magnificence above. It resembled a vision of such gorgeous but chastened grandeur as the imagination gives to heaven. There were moments when the peculiar spectral aspect dimmed the lustre without impairing the forms, and no language can do justice to the sublimity of the effect. It was impossible to look at them without religious awe; and, irreverent though it may seem, I could hardly persuade myself I was not gazing at some of the sublime mysteries which lie beyond the grave.

FRAGMENTS FROM A DIARY

PARIS, ANNO DOMINI 1830.

September 19th. The first fine day in a fortnight. About 2 o'clock General La Fayette came, and sat with me some time. He is fully aware of the wishes of the *Doctrinaires*, but is determined to give an effectual check to aristocracy. I think that Messieurs Guizot, De Broglie, &c., will be compelled to resign.

In the evening, at 7 o'clock, General La Fayette came for me, in his carriage. We drove to the Rue de Rivoli, and took up Mr. McLane and Mr. Thorne. We then went to the Palais Royal to be presented. So little ceremony was used, that General La Fayette, who had previously made his arrangements with the other gentlemen, first proposed the presentation to me at 2 o'clock. In consequence of a remark of mine, however, he had written a note, directly to the King, to apprise him of our wish.

We found the ante-chamber crowded, chiefly with officers, but no ladies. Following La Fayette, we penetrated to an inner room, where most of the high dignitaries were assembled. I observed Marshals Soult, and Maison, Cuvier, the Duc de Bassano, &c., among them. When the door opened, the King was seen directly before them; and the Quern, Mademoiselle d'Orleans, and the Princesses, with the younger children, stood in a group on the left. The King was dressed in the uniform of the National Guards, the duc d'Orleans as a Hussar, and the ladies with great simplicity—the Queen and Mademoiselle d'Orleans in striped-silk dresses.

We were introduced on entering, each receiving a few complimentary words. The ladies were polite, and, when we had passed them, they left their places to come and speak to us again. It struck me there was an evident desire to do honor to the American friends of the General. It was evident, however, that the presence of La Fayette gave uneasiness to a great many. The affectations and egotisms of rank are offended by his principles, and there is a pitiful desire manifested by the mere butterflies of society to turn his ideas and habits into ridicule. I am amazed to find how very few men are able to look beyond the glare of things.

After we had been presented, we would have retired, but our venerable friend insisted on our remaining. He retired with the King, and the room began to empty. An aid then came and requested us to approach a side-door. The King and La Fayette soon came out together, and we had a short conversation with the former. He spoke of his visit to America with pleasure, and used very courteous though unaffected language. We withdrew when he retired. In passing out of the room, a young officer said, "Adieu, l'Amérique!" The fear of losing their butterfly

distinctions and their tinsel, gives great uneasiness to many of these simpletons. The apprehension is quite natural to those who have no means of being known in any other manner, and it must be pardoned.

September 20th—Another fine day. I met Lord H— in the Tuileries this morning. As we had not met since April, when we used to talk politics together at Rome, we said a few words on the present state of things. I have always thought him a mild Tory, and no bad reflector of the hopes and fears of his caste. He is evidently uneasy, as every privileged Englishman must be, and expressed some apprehension about the turn things might take in France. I told him I was of opinion that there would be a struggle about the peerage. If the upper chamber should be made elective, I saw no fundamental principle to quarrel about. The suffrage would be extended, as a matter of course, and the minor interests would regulate themselves according to the necessities of the moment.

I was struck with one of his remarks. "If they have the substance, they had better have the form of a republic," he said. This is a thoroughly English idea. Whenever their radicals quote America, in Parliament or in the journals, there is one answer always resorted to: "America is a republic and England a monarchy." This accidental difference in the form, serves, with the majority, as a sufficient answer for all differences of substance! Now, if France remains a monarchy in form, with a greater degree of civil rights than those possessed by England, France will become an example that the opposition may cite without danger of the pregnant reply. One is tempted to ask, why France has not the same right to conceal a republic under the mantle of a King, as England has to conceal an aristocracy beneath the same shallow disguise?

The news from Belgium is getting more serious. L— H— is running about with a silly story, that is all over, for the *people* have behaved so badly as to induce the *better classes* to accede to the King's terms. Lord H— had some thing of the same tale, but it smells too strongly of vulgar aristocratical cant to be believed.

September 21st.—I went, this evening, to the reception of General La Fayette. The rooms were crowded with men, chiefly of the National Guard. As many privates were among them, some, of course, were not of the last decree of refinement. Mr. M— said he did not see the evidence of the General's power, and this in the presence of the youth, enterprise, and strength of France pressing about him in a manner to smother him. In a revolution, that is good support which is zealous and loyal support. At all times popular support, well directed, is the most potent of any.

There were a good many Americans present, and I am sorry to say that some of them were so mistaken in their estimate of things, as to fancy the General would have been stronger if he had been genteeler. I have observed the absence of the ministers and dignitaries from these *soirées*, but I ascribe it to policy. Neglect him they do not—they dare not—even if they were disposed to incur the hazard, rather than pay so cheap a price as a visit, now and then. But France is anxious to give

pledges to Europe; and as La Fayette is the head of the Republicans, it may be well not to place him on too high a pinnacle, at this moment. I believe he has the confidence of the King. As to the ministers, it may be otherwise; I know they have not his confidence.

September 22d.—This morning I got an invitation to dine at the Palais Royal to-morrow.

Lord H— called, and sat with me half an hour. Still uneasy about Belgium and Germany. I observed, in order to sound him, that I did not think England had sufficient reason to go to war with France about the frontier of the Rhine. He partly assented. But it was easy to see he had *arrière-pensées*.

In the evening I went to Mrs. Rives'. The reception was very genteel, and just what it ought to be, with the exception of a livery or two. As things trifling in themselves are misrepresented in Europe, they ought to be avoided.

Welles came in, and was much elated with the rise of stocks. They left off at 98, having been at 92 three days ago. I offered to bet a hundred francs, they would be at 95 again, in ten days. These Frenchmen are so volatile, that it is impossible they should keep stocks quiet so long, in a revolution. He who makes *bona fide* purchases when they are low, will be almost sure to gain.

All our ladies are full of a reception which the Queen means to give them to-morrow night. La Fayette, who, in his day, has wrought greater marvels, has brought this about.

September 23d.—The news from Belgium this morning still more serious. This contest will draw on the war which, in some shape or other, must grow out of the late revolution. The Dutchmen seem very obstinate, and the Belgians very spirited. The hatred of all elevations of the lower classes, among the European aristocracy, is so intense, that fight they must, to their own certain destruction.

At a little before 6, Thorne stopped for me, and we took up Mr. McLane, on our way to the Palais Royal. We had little ceremony in the reception. Our names were taken, and checked off, on the list of the company, when we were shown to an ante-chamber. The King soon opened the folding-doors himself, and we entered. Not half the guests had yet come. All the royal family, with a few attendants, were there. General La Fayette and family soon arrived. Dinner was soon announced. The King led Madame La Fayette, and La Fayette the Queen. Mademoiselle d'Orleans was seated on the right of the King, Madame La Fayette on his left; La Fayette on the right of the Queen, and M. Augustin Périer on her left. Here was an oversight in French courtesy. This seat should have been assigned to McLane. I am inclined to think the arrangement was not premeditated, for the French rarely fail in politeness.

The dinner-service was plate, the table large, and the servants very numerous. Beyond this, with the *décorations* of the guests, and the liveries, one might have

fancied himself at a Washington dinner. There was a little order in the entrances and exits of the courses, but no proclaiming of the *service of the King*, as before. Both the King and Queen helped more than is common at good French tables. I saw no embarrassment, or pretension of any sort, during dinner. When the Queen rose, the ladies turned, and the finger-bowls were handed them by servants, the gentlemen using them at the side-tables. We then withdrew into the wing of the Palace, opposite the Théâtre Français. Here coffee was served. Mrs. and Miss T— soon entered, and were presented by La Fayette. The Queen then went into an inner drawing-room, which was very large and magnificent, with a billiard-room communicating. Here the ladies seated themselves round a large table, a lady of the family working, rather *premeditatedly*, at another. I presume this lady, who had the, air of a governess, was so placed to give the reception an informal character.

In a few minutes, Mrs. R— entered, followed by Mrs. M— and a dozen more of our ladies. They were met by the Queen, who advanced some little distance, and Mrs. R— presented them all, in succession. Two or three more parties arrived, and were presented in the same manner, the whole seating themselves, by invitation. In about twenty minutes, the Queen arose and made the *tour* of the circle; afterwards the ladies retired, followed by most of the gentlemen. Mr. Rives, Mr. Middleton, and eight or ten gentlemen, came in with the ladies. The whole passed off very well, and without the least *gaucherie*, and our women, though with two or three exceptions no longer in the bud, looked uncommonly well. I scarcely remember to have seen so many women in a set, that looked so uniformly genteel and pretty. I suspect but one of being rouged. Two or three were really beautiful. This little exhibition convinces me of what I have often thought, that we only want Parisian mantua-makers and milliners, to carry off the palm in female grace and beauty; for it will be remembered that the effect was produced in a strong theatrical light, *without the aid of rouge*.

I was surprised to see the uniform grace of their courtesies, which were simple, easy, and dignified.

I wish I could say as much for all the men; though the gentlemen behaved, as such,, with modesty, *aplomb*, and quiet.

I thought the French looked a little surprised.

All the children were present, the little Duc de Montpensier racing round the rooms, though not in a noisy manner, with great *goût*. The others were more tranquil, though thoroughly at their ease. It struck me there was a little too much affectation of simplicity for a reception that was necessarily short and formal; and on the part of our women, a little too much dress. After all, it is difficult to hit the true medium in a case of this sort. The court sacrificed a little too much to republicanism, and we, a little too much to royalty. If there was to be a mistake, both erred on the right side.

Friday, 24th.—Passed the day in reading Jefferson's letters. I cannot say but the perusal of this book has elevated the man in my estimation. He discovers an equanimity of temper, and a philosophical tone of mind, that are admirable. Some of his remarks are of the first order, and nothing can be better than his diplomatic language; frank, courteous, and reasoning. In his judgment of nature he is certainly often wrong—in those he praises, as well as in those he censures. As respects the former, he has probably been influenced by political controversy. He has ascribed to corruption, or rather to a concealed intention, what was due to prejudice merely. Time is necessary to relieve the human mind from all the opinions which have been inculcated by those who have gone before, and, favored himself by position and circumstances, he makes no allowance for those who were not. I have no doubt that Hamilton was, at heart, a monarchist. This is no imputation on his talents, for all the theories of the day had that tendency. It is not probable that Hampden carried his ideas of liberty as far as a moderate Tory of our time is disposed to concede. Had Hamilton been sent to Europe, and had he taken a near view of those institutions, and that state of society, which he so much admired at a distance, his sagacity would at once have enabled him to separate the ore from the dross, and to have found how little there is of the former. But as a theory, his creative mind only aided in lending it plausibility and force; whereas, had he been able to correct his premises by actual observation, the deductions would have been very different.

Jefferson himself, though in a different way, betrays the same blindness to truth. He apprehends, for instance, the increasing power of the Executive, under the Constitution, because he has been accustomed to see strong executives in Europe, when the true theory would have taught him that, in a government like ours, the power must rest in the popular branch; and as power, like money, has a creative force, the increase of the prerogatives of Congress was far more to be apprehended than those of the President. In point of fact, the latter has neither lost nor gained a single privilege in forty-one years, while the former has often exceeded its proper functions. The representatives of the people are not likely, it is true, to oppress the people, but Congress shows a constant tendency to encroach on the rights of the States. Mr. Jefferson began to see this at the close of his life, and all his jealousy of the President seems to have disappeared.

Jefferson also makes another mistake. He ascribes the very natural influence, of England, through our habits, and her literature, to wrong motives. The greater will always possess an influence over the less, and he who lives fifty years, will see the influence of America over England. As the former is strongest in principle, it begins to show itself already, to the great uneasiness of those who are to lose by the change. Jefferson himself cultivated French literature more than English, and we are all, when we break loose from old habits, a little addicted to running into the opposite extreme. He is unphilosophical when he imputes the little parade of a few ancient soldiers, and particularly of men, vain and trifling, to be a settled design to introduce the forms of a monarchy. One of the chief merits of all our innovations, is, that they have been gradual, and that they have rather followed,

than preceded opinion, while he appears to have expected that, men were to abandon all their ancient ideas, to satisfy a theory that many deemed a little doubtful. He uses the title of Excellency himself, at one period of his letters, though, after he became impressed, by living in Europe, with the idea of resisting royalty by all the means in our power, he was disposed to practise an austerity of manner and style, for which the majority of his countrymen saw no sufficient reason. Most Americans who come to Europe now, get the same idea of the value of simpler forms as Jefferson entertained, because they see the uses to which ceremony is perverted in foreign nations. But we should remember that the most active poisons are, in certain cases, healthful remedies.

Saturday and Sunday, 25th and 26th.—The weather is getting better, after the most detestable September I have ever known.

The news from Brussels is getting to be of the highest interest. Reports differ, but I do not see how a civil war can be avoided. I am of opinion that an European war can scarcely be avoided. Unless the Governments give this direction to their people, in an age like this, they will give themselves employment at home. The ultras have recourse to all sorts of devices to create dissensions in France, but they will hardly succeed. On Sunday, the King reviewed about six thousand men of the garrison, at the Champs-de-Mars. He was well received by the troops and people.

September 27th.—The news is more favorable this morning, from Brussels. The Dutch defeated, with loss.

I have finished Jefferson. His suspicions of motives are not always as well founded as they should have been, in a man of his candor. It is unhappily but too manifest that towards the close of life, his memory failed him in a great measure. There is a singular and melancholy concurrence of testimony against the weak, not to say wicked, practice of calling on veterans in politics to give their opinions and recollections of the past, in the letter of Adams, concerning the authorship of the Declaration of Independence, and that of Jefferson to Mr. Giles, relating to the Eastern plot, in the war of 1812. It was, to the last degree, wilful to publish the latter of these letters.

The French begin to speak of the possibility of war, as connected with their interests in Belgium. If they let the present occasion pass, they will so far cool the ardor of the Belgians, as to place half a century in the way of their future union.

September 28th.—News to the 25th, from Brussels. The people and the troops are fighting still, in the upper part of the town. Advantage with the former.

Had a conversation with X— about South Carolina. Amazed at his ignorance of statistical facts. Spoke of Vermont as having one hundred thousand souls!! And yet this description of men form the mass of the talkers in this world. If one did not know that the people were of use negatively in governments, by preventing abuses,

one might be tempted to distrust the advantage of popular forms, from such specimens!

Wednesday, 29th.—The news from Brussels, this morning, still more ominous.

There is a strong desire in one party to confine this question to one of territorial separation; but the Bruxellois begin to denounce the dynasty.

Germany very uneasy, and only to be appeased by the concession of civil rights. Sooner or later, this bitter pill must be swallowed by the selfish party of monopolists.

The Belgians begin to talk of a confederated republic. Too small for that, surrounded by enemies.

PREFACE TO *ELINOR WYLLYS*

EDITOR'S PREFACE

There is so much of mystification resorted to, at the present time, in the publication of books, that it has become proper that the editor of *Elinor Wyllys* should explain what has been his own connection with this particular work.

The writer of this book is a valued female friend, who had a right to ask, and did ask, its editor's advice and assistance, in presenting it to the public. This advice and assistance have been cheerfully afforded, though neither has properly extended to the literary character of the work. As the author has not wished to appear, the name of the editor has been used in obtaining the copy-right, and his assistance given in forwarding and returning proof-sheets. Over a few of the last, the editor has cast an eye; but, believing the author of the book to be fully competent herself, to superintend her own work, as it has gone through the press, this supervision on the part of the editor has been very slight.

The editor has great confidence in the principles, taste, and intelligence of the real author of *Elinor Wyllys*. She has seen much of that portion of the world with which a lady becomes acquainted, and has seen that much under the most favorable circumstances. As usually happens in such cases, her book will be found free from exaggerations of every sort; and will be more likely to be well received by persons of her own class, than by those who are less familiar with its advantages. Imagination, feeling, sound principles, and good taste, are all to be found in this book, though in what degree, the public will necessarily decide for itself.

J. FENIMORE COOPER.

Philadelphia,
Oct. 8, 1845.

PREFACE

It will be well, perhaps, that the reader bear in mind, while running over the following pages, that many passing observations, many trifles, which naturally find their way into any sketch of social life, refer chiefly to things and notions in favour some ten years since; a period which is certainly not beyond the memory of man, but very possibly beyond the clear recollection of some young lady reader, just within her teens. New opinions, new ideas, new fashions have appeared among us