Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

Italian Journey (1786-88)

Published with a selection of Goethe's illustrations.



'Goethe in the Roman Campagna' - Johann Heinrich Wilhelm Tischbein (German, 1751–1829)
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Part I: From Carlsbad (*Karlovy Vary*) to the Brenner Pass

Auch ich in Arkadien!

I too, am in Arcadia!

Translator's Introduction

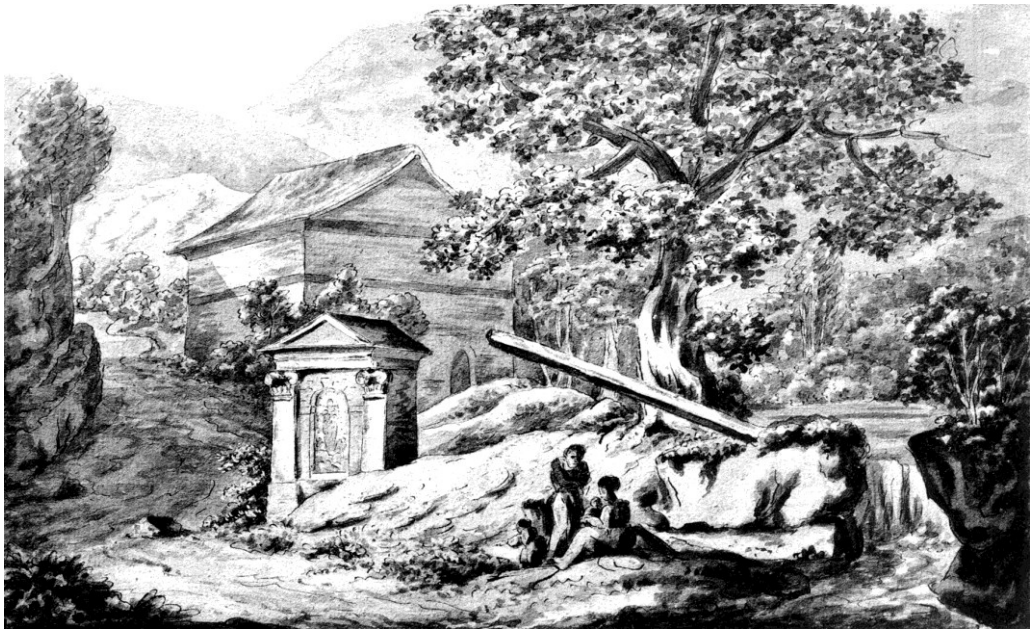
Goethe (1749-1832) was in Italy, and Sicily, from 1786 to 1788, his visit having a profound influence on his poetic and philosophical development. Closer contact with the remains, in Rome, of the Roman Classical world, and, in Sicily, with Classical Greek architecture, deepened his knowledge and understanding of ancient Greek and Roman culture, influenced as he had been by the writings of Winckelmann. Classicism tempered his initial leanings towards Romanticism throughout his later career. *Iphigenia in Tauris* (*1787*), the *Roman Elegies* (*1795*) the prose journal *Italian Journey* (*1817*), and the second part of *Faust* (*1832*), bear particular witness to this. During his stay, he lodged with the artist Tischbein (see the well-known painting, *Goethe in the Campagna*, of 1787) when the latter was in Rome.

You may view a map of Goethe's route in *Italian Journey*, from Carlsbad through Sicily to his final stay in Rome (open map in a new tab).

Italian Journey

September 3, 1786.

At three in the morning, I slipped away from Carlsbad (*Karlovy Vary*), otherwise they would never have let me go. The gathering, the members of which had so kindly celebrated the twenty-eighth of August, my birthday, had probably earned the right to detain me; but there was no time to linger. All alone, with only an overnight bag and a knapsack, I flung myself into a post chaise and arrived in Zwota (*Zwodau, now Svatava, near Sokolov, Czech Republic*) at half past seven, on a beautiful, calm, misty morning. The upper clouds were streaky and fleecy, the lower ones heavy. This seemed to me a good omen. I hoped to enjoy a good autumn after such a dreadful summer. By noon I was at Eger (*Cheb, on the Eger or Ohre River*) under a hot sun; recalled that the place shares the same latitude as my hometown (*Frankfurt am Main*), and was happy to be lunching under a clear sky again, at fifty degrees north.



'Chapel on the old Prague road in Carlsbad, with an inn to the right' - Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (German, 1749–1832)
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Entering Bavaria, one immediately passes Waldsassen Abbey — a precious possession of the clergy, who acquired wisdom sooner than most. It lies in a shallow, almost bowl-shaped valley, in a beautiful meadow, surrounded by fertile, gently rolling hills. This monastery also owns extensive holdings throughout the region. The soil is decomposed slate (*metamorphic rock formed from sedimentary mudstone).* The quartz, which is found in this type of rock, and which neither dissolves nor weathers, renders the soil loose, and exceptionally fertile. The land continues to rise as far as Tirschenreuth. The rivers flow towards one, northwards towards the Eger and Elbe rivers. From Tirschenreuth onwards, the land slopes southwards, and the rivers flow towards the Danube. I quickly gain a sense of any region if I investigate even the smallest stream to determine its course and which river system it belongs to. Then, even in areas that are impossible to survey, one can picture in one's mind the connections between the mountains and valleys.

Before the aforementioned place, an excellent road of decomposed granite commences; one cannot imagine a more perfect one; since the material consists of pebbles and clay, it provides both a firm foundation and a fine binding agent, making the road as smooth as a threshing floor. The surrounding area through which it runs looks all the worse by comparison: also of decomposed granite, flat-lying, and marshy, which renders the excellent road all the more welcome. Since the land it crosses slopes downwards, one travels at an incredible speed, which contrasts sharply with the slow pace possible on the Bohemian roads. The enclosed leaflet names the various post-stations. Enough that it told me I would reach Regensburg (*Ratisbon*) the following

morning at ten o'clock and thus would have covered the twenty-four and a half German miles (*approximately a hundred and four English miles*) in thirty-one hours. Meanwhile, as day began to break, I found myself not far from there, between Schwandorf and Regenstauf, and began to note an improvement in the arable land. It was no longer weathered rock, but alluvial, mixed soil. In ancient times, the ebb and flow of the tide from the Danube valley had an effect on all the valleys that now flow into the Regen River, creating those natural polders (*low-lying, reclaimed land*) upon which the local agriculture is founded. This observation applies to the vicinity of all major and minor rivers and, with it as a guide, the observer can quickly gain insight into the suitability of any soil for cultivation.

Regensburg

Regensburg is beautifully situated. The area was bound to attract the development of a city; and the clergy were sure to give it careful consideration. All the fields around belong to them, and within the city, church stands next to church, and abbey next to abbey. The Danube reminds me of the noble River Main. Near Frankfurt, the latter river and the bridge have a finer appearance, but here, on an island opposite, the district of Stadtamhof offers itself quite charmingly. I went straight to the Jesuit college, where the annual play was being performed by the students, and saw the end of an opera, and the beginning of a tragedy. They did no worse than any budding amateur troupe and were quite handsomely, almost too splendidly, dressed. This public performance convinced me anew of the Jesuits' wisdom. They disdained nothing that could possibly achieve an effect, and knew how to treat such things with loving care. With them, wisdom is not imagined in abstract terms; it is joy in the matter on hand, a shared and personal enjoyment, such as springs from life itself. Just as this large religious society (*the Jesuits were supressed in Bavaria in 1773, but continued to teach*) contains organ builders, woodcarvers, and gilders among its ranks, so too there are some who certainly embrace the theatre with knowledge and enthusiasm, and just as their churches are distinguished by a pleasing splendour, so these insightful men accommodate worldly sensuality by means of a decent theatre.

Today I am writing at a latitude of forty-nine degrees north. The weather is good. The morning was cool, and people here too are complaining about the damp, cold summer, though a wonderfully mild day has developed. The gentle atmosphere that a large river engenders is unique. The range of fruit on offer here is not particularly broad. I have eaten some fine pears; but I long for grapes and figs.

The Jesuits' actions and character have captured my attention. Their churches, towers, and buildings possess a grandeur and completeness in their design that

secretly inspires widespread awe. As decoration, gold, silver, metal, and polished stones are heaped in such splendid abundance that they must dazzle the beggars of every hue. Here and there, a touch of gaudiness is evident, so that popular taste is appeased, and folk are drawn to them. Such, is the external character of Catholic worship in general; but never have I seen it executed with such intelligence, skill, and consistency as by the Jesuits. All bears witness to the fact that they have not, like other religious orders, merely perpetuated an old, and tired rite, but rather, in line with the spirit of the age, have revitalised it with their pomp and splendour.

Here a rare type of stone is worked to produce various objects, seemingly a kind of conglomerate, but one I judge to be older, more primary, even porphyritic in nature. It is greenish in colour, contains quartz, is porous, and has large pieces of the hardest form of jasper embedded, within which are small, rounded, breccia-like lumps. One piece was particularly instructive and appealing, but the material was too heavy, and I have vowed not to haul any stones around with me on this journey.

Munich

September 6th.

On September 5th, at 12:30 p.m., I departed Regensburg. Upriver, by Bad Abbach, is a beautiful stretch where the Danube dashes against limestone cliffs stretching as far as Saal an der Donau. The limestone is like that near Osterode am Hartz, in the Harz Mountains — dense, but generally porous. I arrived in Munich at six in the morning and, after sightseeing for a good twelve hours, will mention only a few things. I quite failed to feel at home in the Art Gallery; I need to re-attune my eyes to paintings. There are excellent works, here. The sketches by Rubens from the Luxembourg Gallery gave me great pleasure.

Here, too, stands an exquisite toy, a model (*by Luigi Valadier, c.1774-1780, currently in the Treasury of the Residenz*) of Trajan's Column. The base is lapis lazuli, the figures gilded. It is of beautiful workmanship throughout, and enjoyable to view.

In the Hall of Antiquities (*the Antiquarium, in the Residenz, containing sculptures collected by Duke Albert V of Bavaria*), I could clearly see that my eyes are not as yet trained to appreciate such objects, so I chose not to waste time lingering there. Many of them failed to appeal to me at all, though I know not why. A Drusus caught my attention, two busts of Antonines appealed to me, with a few other things besides. Overall, the items are poorly arranged, even though they were clearly intended to be decorative, and the hall, or rather the vaulted ceiling, would look much more

impressive if only it were cleaner and better maintained. In the Natural History cabinet, I found some beautiful objects from the Tyrol, specimens of which I already know, and indeed own, in small samples.

I met a woman selling figs, which tasted as fine as the best. But fruit in general does not do particularly well at a latitude of forty-eight degrees north. People here complain of the cold and damp. A fog, that might have been mistaken for rain, greeted me this morning before I reached Munich. A cold wind has been blowing all day from the Tyrolean mountains. Viewed from the tower, they were overcast, the whole sky clouded over. Now the setting sun is still shining on the old tower that stands before my window. Forgive me for paying so much attention to wind and weather: the traveller on land, almost as much as the sailor, depends on both, and it would be a pity if my autumn in foreign lands were to be as unfavourable as the summer has been at home.

Now for Innsbruck. What shall I not leave behind, on either side, in carrying out this one idea, which has all too long preoccupied my soul!

Mittenwald

September 7th, 1786, evening.

It seems my guardian spirit says amen to my credo, and I thank him for leading me here on such a beautiful day. My last postilion exclaimed, with delight, that it was the first of this whole summer. I nurture, quietly, a superstition that the weather will continue this way, but my friends will have to forgive me if I start talking about the atmosphere and clouds again.

By the time I left Munich at five o'clock, the sky had cleared. Immense masses of cloud were clinging to the Tyrolean mountains. The bands of cloud lower down were also motionless. The road leads along the heights, with the Isar flowing below, between mounds of loose gravel. Here, the work of the ancient marine currents becomes tangible. In some of the granite rubble, I found siblings and relatives of the specimens in my cabinet which I owe to Knebel (*Karl Ludwig von Knebel, poet and translator*).

The mists over the river and the meadows lingered for a while, but at last were consumed. Between hills of gravel, which one must picture stretching for miles around, lay the most beautiful, fertile soil, like that in the Regen river valley. Now one meets the Isar again, and can view a sloping cross-section of the gravel layers, perhaps a hundred and fifty feet high. I reached Wolfratshausen and thereby attained the forty-eighth parallel. The sun was blazing fiercely; no one trusted the fine weather to last;

people cried out about the evil of the past summer which, they lamented, God had failed to do anything to alleviate.

Now a new world opened up before me. I was approaching the mountains, which gradually rose higher. Benediktbeuern is beautifully situated, and a delightful surprise, at first glance. A long, wide, white building rises from a fertile plain, with a broad, high, rocky ridge behind it. The track then leads up to Lake Kochel (*Kochelsee*); and higher still in the mountains to Lake Walchen (*Walchensee*). Here the first snowy peaks greeted my eye and, surprised at being so close to the snow-capped summits, I was informed that there had been thunder, lightning, and snowfall in the region yesterday. Given these sudden omens, people hoped for better weather, and from the fact of a first snowfall, suspected a transformation of the atmosphere. The cliffs surrounding me are all limestone, of the oldest fossil-free period. The limestone mountains stretch in immense, unbroken rows from Dalmatia to the St. Gotthard Pass and beyond. Belsazar Hacquet, the geologist, has travelled a large part of this range. They rest on ancient, quartz and clay-rich rocks.



'Snowy peaks seen from Saint Gotthard Pass looking towards Italy' - Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (German, 1749–1832)
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I arrived in Walchensee at half past four. An hour or so from the village, I met with a delightful adventure: a harpist and his daughter, a girl of eleven, were walking ahead

of us, and he asked me to allow the child to ride. He carried on, bearing the instrument, while I had her sit beside me; she carefully placed a large new box at her feet. A fine and well-behaved creature, already quite worldly, she had made a pilgrimage on foot to Einsiedeln (*in Switzerland*) with her mother, and they were just about to embark on the longer journey to Santiago de Compostela when her mother died, and was therefore unable to fulfil their vow. One could never do too much in venerating God's Mother, she said. After a serious fire, she herself had seen an entire house that had burned to the ground, yet above the door, behind a glass pane, was an image of the Virgin Mary, both the glass and image unharmed, which was indeed an outright miracle. She made all her journeys on foot, most recently playing in Munich before the Elector, and had entertained twenty-one princely figures in all. She kept me well entertained, also. Pretty, with large brown eyes, her forehead, denoting stubbornness, sometimes furrowed slightly. When she spoke, she was pleasant and natural, especially when she laughed loudly and childishly; however, when she was silent, she seemed to be trying to convey some meaning or other, while her upper lip contributed to her fateful expression. I talked with her a great deal; she was at home everywhere, and had a keen eye for detail. For example, she asked me, at one point, if I knew what kind of tree we were passing. It was a fine, large maple, the first one I had seen the whole journey. She had noticed it immediately, and was pleased, as several more trees appeared, one after the other, which she could also identify. She was going, she said, to the fair at Bozen (*Bolzano, in Italy*), to which I was probably also journeying. If I saw her there, I must buy her a fairing, which I promised I would. She longed to wear her new bonnet at the fair, which she had had made herself, in Munich, with materials bought from her earnings. She wished to show it to me beforehand. She then opened the box at her feet, and I was obliged to admire, with her, a richly-embroidered and beautifully-ribboned headdress.

We both anticipated enjoying another happy prospect. She assured me the weather would be fine. They carried their own barometer with them, and that was the harp. When the treble-string rose in pitch, the weather would prove fair, and it had done so that day. I took the omen in my stride, and we parted in the best of spirits, hoping to meet again soon.

The Brenner Pass

September 8th, in the evening.

I have finally reached, urged on almost by necessity, a place of rest; as quiet a spot as I could have wished for. This has been a day to savour in the memory for years to come.

At six o'clock I left Mittenwald; a brisk wind had completely cleared the sky. The cold was such as is only permissible in February. But, then the radiance of the rising sun, the dark foreground covered with spruce trees, the grey limestone cliffs in between, and behind them the highest snow-capped peaks against a deep blue sky — formed exquisite, ever-changing images.

At Scharnitz, you enter the Austrian Tyrol. The border is marked by a wall of stone that closes off the valley and is linked to the mountains. It looks highly impressive: on one side, the rock face has been reinforced, while on the other, it rises vertically. From Seefeld onward, the path becomes increasingly interesting, and where it had previously climbed from height to height ever since Benediktbeuern, all the streams flowing towards the Isar, now one looked over a ridge into the Valley of the River Inn, and Inzing lay before one. The sun was high and its rays were hot; I had to lighten my clothing, which I often changed with the weather throughout the day, by a layer.

Near Zirl, the road descends to the Inn Valley. The location is indescribably beautiful, and the high sun rendered it utterly delightful. The postilion hurried us on more than I would have liked: he had not yet attended Mass and wished to celebrate it there in Innsbruck, as it was the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and therefore to be attended all the more devoutly. The road rattled along the River Inn, past the Martinswand, a sheer, and monstrous limestone cliff. I dared to venture out and back, to the ledge where Emperor Maximilian I is said to have been stranded, doing so even without the help of the angel that came to his rescue, though it is always considered a rash undertaking.

Innsbruck is beautifully situated in a wide, fertile valley nestled between high cliffs and mountains. At first, I wished to rest, but the goings-on granted me no peace. For a short while, I amused myself by conversing with the innkeeper's son, a true local. And then, bit by bit, I met other folk. All were dressed for the Feast. Healthy and well-to-do, they flock in droves to Wilten, a place of worship, fifteen minutes north of the town in the direction of the mountains. By two o'clock, as my carriage parted the lively, colourful crowd, all was joyful procession and activity.

From Innsbruck onwards, the scenery becomes increasingly beautiful; words cannot do it justice. Following well-trodden tracks, one ascends a gorge that sends water flowing towards the River Inn, a gorge offering countless vistas. Wherever the path runs close to the craggy cliffs, or has been hewn into them, the opposite slope descends gently, allowing for intense cultivation. Villages, houses, cottages, huts, all painted white, lie scattered among the fields and hedgerows over the high, broad sloping expanse. Soon the landscape changes, and the arable land gives way to meadows, until these, too, disappear and a steep ascent commences.

I have gained many ideas for a scheme of literary creation, though none of them entirely new or unexpected. I have also dreamt a great deal about the work I have been talking of for so long, the one in which I so desperately wish to express to all what stirs within me, which I cannot point to directly in Nature.

Now the road grew darker and darker, the individual elements of the scene were lost, the masses grew ever larger and more magnificent, finally, as everything ahead of me moved past like some deep and mysterious image, I suddenly caught sight of high snow-capped peaks illuminated by the moon; and now I wait for morning to light this rocky cleft in which I am wedged, on the borderline between the North and South.

I will add a few more remarks about the weather, which may favour me so precisely because I devote so much thought to it. In the lowlands, one experiences good or bad weather once it has already arrived; in the mountains, one is present while it is forming. This has happened to me many a time when, on journeys, walks, or hunting trips, I have spent a day and a night in the mountain forests, below the cliffs, and a thought has taken root in my mind there which I would not trade for anything else, but which I cannot shake off like some clinging insect. I see examples of the following idea everywhere, as if it were a truth, and so I will express it, as I so often need to do as regards my other ideas, though at the risk of testing the patience of my friends.

Whether we observe mountains near to or from afar, their peaks sometimes gleaming in the sunshine, sometimes shrouded in mist, buffeted by stormy clouds, lashed by rain, or covered with snow, we attribute all this to atmospheric effects, since we can clearly see and perceive the air's movement and the resulting changes with our own eyes. The mountains, however, stand motionless, exposed to our senses in static form. We consider them dead because they are solid; we believe them inactive because they are unmoving. But for some time now, I have felt largely obliged to attribute the changes that manifest themselves in the atmosphere to an internal, silent, and hidden influence. I believe, in fact, that the mass of the Earth generally, and therefore its rocky outcrops in particular, do not exert a constant, unchanging attractive force, but rather that force manifests itself in a pulsating manner, so that it increases and decreases due to internal, essential, and perhaps also external, accidental causes. While all other manifestations of this oscillation may be too limited and crude, the atmosphere is delicate and expansive enough to betray these subtle effects. If the attractive force diminishes even slightly, the reduction in density and increased elasticity of the air immediately indicates the fact. The atmosphere can no longer support the moisture that was chemically and mechanically distributed within it; clouds descend, rain pours down, and torrents of water flood inland. But if the gravitational pull of the mountains increases, the density and elasticity of the air are immediately restored to their previous values, and two important phenomena arise. First, the mountains gather

immense masses of clouds around them, holding them close to themselves and unmoving, like secondary though higher peaks, until, as determined by an internal conflict of electrical forces, they descend as thunderstorms, fog, and rain. Then, the denser air acts upon the remaining cloud cover, now capable of absorbing, dissolving, and processing more water. I saw the dissipation of such a cloud quite clearly: it hung around the steepest peak, bathed in the sunset's glow. Slowly, its edges separated, flakes of vapour pulled away and lifted skywards; these disappeared, until the whole mass gradually vanished so, spun out before my eyes like the thread on a distaff, by an invisible hand.

If my friends should happen to smile at this itinerant weather observer, and his odd theories, perhaps I can give them cause for further amusement with a few other observations. I must confess that, since my journey is intended in truth as a means of escape from all the trouble I have endured around the fifty-first degree of latitude, I had hoped to enter a perfect paradise around the forty-eighth. But I find myself mistaken, as I should have anticipated earlier; since it is not the latitude alone that determines climate and weather, but the mountain ranges, especially those that bisect the land from east to west. Vast atmospheric changes are forever occurring in these ranges, and our northern countries suffer the most. Thus, the weather over the entire north this summer seems to have been determined by the great Alpine chain amidst which I am writing these comments. Here, it has rained continuously for the last few months, and south-westerly and south-easterly winds have at all times driven the rain northward. In Italy, they are said to have had fine, dry weather, indeed, too dry.

Now a few words about the kingdom of plants, which is dependent on climate, altitude, and humidity for its most diverse characteristics. In this regard, too, I have found no particular changes, though certainly some gains. Apples and pears fruit in the valley around Innsbruck, while peaches and grapes are brought there from Italy, or rather, the southern Tyrol. Around Innsbruck, they cultivate a lot of maize and buckwheat, both of which they call *blende*. Ascending the Brenner Pass, I saw the first larch trees, and near Schönberg im Stubaital, the first Swiss pine. I wonder if the girl harpist would have questioned me about those as well?

Regarding plants, I still feel very much a student. Until Munich, I believe I saw only the usual ones. Of course, my hurried journey day and night was not conducive to detailed observation. Now, although I have my copy of Linnaeus with me (*see Carl Linnaeus' various key works published from 1735-1774, for example 'Species Plantarum', 1753*) and have memorised his terminology thoroughly, when is there sufficient time and peace for analysis, which, if I know myself, will never be my forte anyway? In consequence, I tend towards generalisation, and when I saw the first

examples of gentiana at Lake Walchensee, it struck me that the first time I had previously found any plant that was new to me it was usually beside water.

What caught my attention further, was the apparent influence of altitude on the vegetation. I not only found new plants higher up, but also observed changes in the growth of familiar ones. While, in the lower-lying areas, branches and stems were stronger and more robust, with the buds closer together, and the leaves broader, higher in the mountains both branches and stems were more delicate, the buds set further apart, resulting in a larger space between the nodes, and more lanceolate leaves. I noticed this in a willow and a gentian, and confirmed in each case that they were not different species of their equivalents lower down. I also observed longer and slender rushes at Lake Walchensee than in the lowlands.

The limestone Alps, which I have traversed so far, are grey in colour, and take on beautiful, strange and irregular forms, even though the rock is divided into blocks and strata. But because the strata often slope, the rock weathers unevenly in general, and the walls and peaks look odd. This type of landscape stretches far up the Brenner Pass. In the area of the upper lake, I found a change in its composition. Over dark green and dark grey mica schist, heavily striated with quartz, lay a white, dense limestone, which was micaceous at the points of detachment and occurred in large, though infinitely fractured, masses. Above this, I found more mica schist, which, however, seemed to me to be softer than the previous. Further up, a special type of gneiss appears, or rather a type of granite that forms in association with gneiss, as in the area of Ellbögen. Up there, opposite the inn, the rock is mica schist. The torrents that descend the mountains carry along only this stone and the grey limestone.

The granite masses on which everything else rests cannot be far away. The map shows that one is located on the side of the great Brenner Pass itself, from which the streams pour forth in all directions.

I have observed this much as regards the outward appearance of the people. They are stalwart and upright. Their aspects are fairly similar: brown, open eyes, with well-defined black eyebrows as regards the women and, in contrast, blond, broader eyebrows in the men. The green hats worn by the men, set against the background of grey stone, give them a cheerful appearance. They wear them adorned with ribbons, or broad sashes of fringed taffeta, which are quite delicately sewn. Each man also bears a flower or a feather in his hat. In contrast, the women disfigure themselves with white, cotton, shaggy, very broad caps, like men's shapeless nightcaps. This gives them a completely foreign appearance, but when from home they wear the green men's hats, which are very flattering.

I had opportunity to witness the value the people place on peacock feathers, and indeed how every colourful sort of feather is honoured. Anyone wishing to travel through these mountains should carry such things with them. The offer of such a feather, at the right moment, guarantees a warmer welcome than that achieved by merely offering to buy a drink.

While I am collecting, sorting, arranging, and tying up these pages in such a way that they may grant my friends a swift and clear overview of my recent experiences, and thus, simultaneously, unburden myself of what I have noted and thought so far, I glance, and not without a shudder, at various packets, regarding which I must make a brief and honest confession: since they are to be my companions, I hope they will not hold too much influence over me during the coming months!

I had decided to take all my writings with me to Carlsbad (*Karlovy Vary*) in order to finally compile the edition that Göschen has been commissioned to produce (*it was published by Georg Joachim Göschen in Leipzig, between 1787 and 1790*). I already possessed the unpublished works in fine copies, made by the skilled hand of Secretary Vogel (*Christian Georg Karl Vogel, 1760-1819*). The worthy fellow accompanies me again on this journey to aid me with his expertise. This has enabled me, with Johann Herder's most faithful assistance, to send the first four volumes to the publisher, and I was about to do the same with the last four. Their contents currently consist partly of drafts, indeed of fragments, as my bad habit of starting many things and then abandoning them when my interest wanes has gradually increased over the years, given my other pursuits and distractions.

Since I had brought all these papers with me, I gladly obeyed the demands of the intellectual circles in Carlsbad, by reading aloud to them all that had remained unknown to the world until then, while they complained bitterly each time about my not completing those works they would have liked to discuss further.

My birthday presents mainly consisted of several poems I received, written on the subject of my unfinished and neglected works, each poem, in its own way, lamenting my approach. Among them, a poem conceived as an address by various species of bird stood out, in which a delegation of those lively creatures, sent to their dear friend, earnestly begged the addressee, to found and finally establish the kingdom promised them. No less insightful and charming were the other comments on my unfinished works, such that they suddenly came alive again for me, and I happily revived my former intentions, and communicated my plans for fulfilling them to my friends. This prompted urgent demands and requests, and gave Johann Herder the opportunity of persuading me to take these piles of paper with me once more, and above all to give 'Iphigenia' some attention, which she certainly deserves. The piece (*his play 'Iphigenia in Tauris' first performed in 1779*), as it currently exists, is more of a draft than a

finished work; it is written in poetic prose that sometimes verges on iambics and other syllabic metres. This, of course, greatly diminishes its impact if one fails to read it aloud carefully, and to conceal its shortcomings by means of various artifices. He urged me to complete the play, most earnestly, and since I had kept my wider travel plans from him, as from everyone else, he thought the journey I am now involved in to be merely another hike in the mountains, and scoffing, as always, at my interest in mineralogy and geology, suggested that instead of chipping away at barren rock, I should apply my skill to literary work. I was obliged to yield to his many, though well-intentioned, urgings: but until now, it has not proved possible to turn my attention to the task. Now I am separating 'Iphigenia' from the rest of my papers, and taking her with me to the warm and beautiful South, as my companion. The days are long now, my thoughts are untroubled, and the magnificent scenery in no way suppresses my poetic sensibility; on the contrary, accompanied by movement and fresh air, the latter is aroused all the more readily.

The End of Goethe's 'Italian Journey' Part I

Part II – From the Brenner Pass to Verona

From the Brenner Pass to Verona

Trento

September 11th, early morning.

After a full fifty hours of looking lively, and being constantly busy, I arrived here yesterday evening at eight, soon went to bed, and now find myself able to continue my narrative. On the evening of the ninth, when I had finished the first notes for my diary, I wished to sketch the inn, the post-house on the Brenner Pass, in situ, but failed to achieve it; I missed the mark, and returned somewhat disgruntled. The innkeeper asked me whether I wished to depart, as it was a moonlit night and best for travel, making me aware that he needed the horses the following morning to bring in the hay, and would like to be back by then. His advice was therefore self-serving, nevertheless I accepted it at face value since it corresponded with my inner urge. The sun reappeared, the weather was tolerable; I packed my things, and at seven I set off. The sky cleared above the clouds, and the evening was quite beautiful.

The postilion fell asleep, and the horses trotted downhill at their fastest pace, following their customary route; whenever they reached a level spot, they slowed down. The driver awoke, and urged them on again, and so I arrived swiftly, passing between high cliffs, at the rushing Adige River. The moon rose and illuminated immense vistas. Several mills, among ancient fir trees above the foaming stream, were utterly quaint in appearance.

When I arrived in Sterzing (*Vipiteno, Italy*) at nine, it was made clear to me that I was expected to leave immediately. In Mittenwald (*Mezzaselva*) at precisely twelve, I found everyone fast asleep except for the postilion, and so I continued on to Brixen (*Bressanone*), where I was practically abducted again, so that I arrived in Kollmann (*Colma*) at daybreak. The postilions drove so fast it was almost unbearable, and as much as I regretted having to traverse these magnificent regions at such a terrifying speed and at night, as if flying by, I was nevertheless inwardly pleased that a favourable wind was blowing behind me, propelling me towards my desired destination. At daybreak, I caught sight of the first vineyards. I met a woman carrying pears and peaches, and so I set off for Titschen (*Monte Pozza*), where I arrived at seven o'clock and was immediately sent on my way again. Now, finally, under a bright sun, after travelling northwards for a while, I beheld the valley in which Bozen (*Bolzano*) lies.

Surrounded by steep mountains, cultivated to a considerable height, the area opens towards the south, sheltered to the north by the Tyrolean mountains. A mild, gentle air filled the region. Here, the Adige River turns south again. The hills at the foot of the mountains are planted with vines. These are trained over long, low arbours, the blue grapes hanging gracefully from the top, ripening in the warmth from the nearby soil. Even on the valley floor, where otherwise there are only meadows, vines are cultivated in similar closely spaced rows, interspersed with maize, which is now sending up ever taller stalks. I have often seen it ten feet high. The wispy male flowers have not yet been removed, as is done when fertilisation has been over for some time.

I arrived in Bolzano (*Bozen*) under a bright, sunny sky. The many mercantile faces, gathered together, delighted me. Their state, namely a deliberate and comfortable existence, was quite vividly expressed. In the square fruit vendors were seated alongside round, flat baskets, over four feet in diameter, in which peaches lay side by side so as not to be damaged. The same was true for the pears. Here I recalled what I had seen written on the window of the inn at Regensburg:

‘Comme les pêches et les mélons
Sont pour la bouche d’un baron,
Ainsi les verges et les batons
Sont pour les fous, dit Salomon.’

‘As for the lips of some baron,
Are meant the peaches and melons,
So, for the fools, said Solomon,
Are meant the sticks and batons,’

That a Nordic baron wrote this is obvious, and that he would be obliged to alter his ideas in these regions is also clear.

The Bolzano Fair involves a brisk silk trade; fabrics are also offered there, along with whatever leather is brought in from the mountainous regions. However, several merchants come primarily to collect payments, take orders, and extend fresh credit. I felt a great desire to examine all of the products gathered there at once, but the urge, the restlessness that drives me onwards, prevents me from resting, and I hurried away again immediately. I can console myself with the fact that in our times which are preoccupied with statistics, all of this has probably already been printed, and one can readily learn about it from books. For me, the whole thing is about sensory impressions which no book, or picture can provide. I am renewing my interest in the world, testing my powers of observation, and examining the extent of my knowledge and understanding, whether, that is, my eyesight is clear, bright, and keen, how much I can grasp at a moment’s notice, and whether the wrinkles that have formed that burden

my brow can be erased. Even now, the fact that I have to attend to myself, be ever attentive, always present, has improved and altered my elasticity of mind completely, in but a few days. I have to worry about the currency, the rate of exchange, pay the amounts, remember them, and write them down, instead of just thinking, seeking, reflecting, issuing orders, and dictating.

From Bolzano to Trento, the road runs for thirty-seven miles along a fertile, and increasingly fertile, valley. Everything that struggles to survive in the higher mountains already shows greater vigour and life here; the sun shines hotly, and one feels a renewed sense of faith in a deity.

A poor woman called to me, asking me to take her child in the carriage because the heat of the ground was burning its feet. I performed the act of charity in honour of the mighty light from the heavens. The child was strangely dressed and adorned, but I failed to learn the reason why no matter what language I tried.

The Adige here flows more gently, forming broad gravel banks in many places. In the countryside, close to the river, and on the hill slopes, everything is planted so densely — and so intertwined — that it seems as if everything is stifling everything else: there are vineyards, corn-fields, mulberry trees, apple, pear, quince, and nut trees. Dwarf-elder (*sambucus ebulus*) cascades luxuriantly over the walls. Strong stems of ivory climb the rocks and spread far across them; lizards slip through the gaps, and everything that moves to and fro reminds one of charming paintings one has seen. The women's braided hair, the men's bare chests and light jackets, the sturdy oxen pulling their carts home from market, the heavily-laden donkeys — everything is like a vivid, dynamic painting by Johann Heinrich Roos. And, after sunset, as evening falls, with only a few clouds resting on the mountains amidst the mild air, or stationary rather than drifting in the sky, and the shrill chirping of the grasshoppers growing louder, one feels truly at home in the world, not banished or in exile. I enjoy it as if I were born and raised here, and have just returned from a voyage to Greenland, and a whaling expedition there. Even the clouds of dust, which sometimes swirl around the wagon, which have been strangers to me for so long, are welcome. The bell-like chirping of the grasshoppers is most charming, penetrating, and far from unpleasant. It makes for a merry sound when mischievous lads whistle in competition with a field full of these little singers; truly trying to outdo each other it seems. The evening is perfectly mild, as the day has been.

If someone born in the South, or who has lived in the South, were to hear of my delight at it all, they would consider me very childish. Alas, what I am expressing here I have been conscious of for a long time, while suffering beneath a harsh northern sky, having felt what one should enjoy as a natural and lifelong necessity to be solely an exception there.

Trento, September 10th, evening.

I have been wandering around this ancient city, which in some streets boasts new, well-built houses. In one of the churches, there is a painting depicting the assembled members of the Council of Trent (*1545-1563*) listening to a sermon by the Superior-General of the Jesuits (*there are a number of paintings extant depicting the Council of Trent, for example that by Elia Naurizio painted for the Church of Santa Maria Maggiore in Trento, and now in the Tridentine Diocesan Museum*). I would love to know what he was preaching to them about. The church of the Jesuit fathers (*Chiesa di San Francesco Saverio, the Church of St. Francis Xavier)* is clearly identifiable from the outside by the red marble pilasters on its facade; a heavy curtain closes the door to keep out the dust. I lifted it and entered a small vestibule; the interior is fronted by an iron grille, but in such a way that it can be seen in its entirety. Everything was quiet and deserted, since services are no longer held there. The front door was open only because all churches are supposed to be open for Vespers.

As I stood there contemplating the architecture, which I found similar to other Jesuit churches, an old man entered, and immediately removed his black cap. His old, faded black coat suggested a needy priest; he knelt before the grille and, after a brief prayer, rose again. As he turned round, he said to himself, almost under his breath: 'Since they've driven out the Jesuits; they should at least have paid them what the church cost. I know how many thousands were spent on it, and the seminary too.' Once, he had departed, and the door curtain had fallen behind him, I raised it again, but stayed silent. He halted on the upper step and said: 'It wasn't the emperor's doing, it was the Pope's.' Turning his face toward the street, not suspecting that I overheard, he continued: 'First the Spaniards, then us, then the French. Abel's blood cries out against his brother Cain!' And thus, he descended the steps, talking to himself, and reached the street. He is probably a man whom the Jesuits supported, and who, driven mad by the monstrous suppression of the order, now visits daily, to seek the shades of its former inhabitants in the empty building and, after a brief prayer, curse their enemies.

A young man, whom I asked about items of interest in the town, showed me a place called the Devil's House, which that otherwise ever-destructive entity was said to have built, in a single night, of rapidly-gathered stone. The truly remarkable thing about it, however, was something the good man failed to notice: that it is the only house in good taste I have seen in Trento, doubtless built in earlier times by some refined Italian.

I departed at five in the evening; the same spectacle as the previous evening unfolding, with the grasshoppers beginning their shrill chirping after sunset. For a

good mile, one travels between walls over which one sees trellises burdened by grapevines; other walls, insufficiently high at first, have been raised in height with stones, thorns, and other materials to prevent passers-by from picking the grapes. Many owners spray the front rows with lime, which renders the grapes inedible, but does no harm to the wine, as fermentation frees the juice of contaminants.

Rovereto

September 11th, in the evening.

Now I am in Rovereto, where the language apparently alters; northwards, it still fluctuates between German and Italian. Now, for the first time, I encountered a postilion who spoke pure Italian; nor does the innkeeper speak German, and I am obliged to essay my linguistic skills. How glad I am that the language I love is alive here, and in everyday use!

Torbole

September 12th, after dinner.

How I wished my friends could be here a moment, so they could enjoy the view that lies before me! I could have reached Verona this evening, but a delightful sight, a magnificent natural spectacle, lay before me: Lake Garda, which I wished to see, and I was wonderfully rewarded for my detour. I had set off from Rovereto after five, ascending a side valley where the stream still flows to the Adige River. As one climbs, an immense rocky barrier looms ahead, over which you must pass to descend to the lake There, the most beautiful limestone cliffs presented themselves, offering picturesque views. On descending, a small village lies at the northern end of the lake, with a little port, or rather, a landing stage there; the village is called Torbole. Fig trees accompanied the upward journey, while on descending to the rocky amphitheatre, I met with the first olive trees, laden with olives. Here, too, I encountered for the first time, as a common fruit, the small white figs that Countess Lantieri (*Maria Luisa, daughter of Count Adolfo of Wagensperg, governor of Trieste in 1773. She married Count Federico Lantieri in 1764*) had promised I should find.

From the room in which I am sitting, a door leads down to the courtyard; I have moved the table before it, and sketched the view in a few lines. You can see almost the entire length of the lake; only on the far left does the water disappear from view. The

shore, bordered on both sides by hills and mountains, is dotted with countless small villages.

After midnight the wind blows from north to south, so anyone wishing to descend the lake must do so then; since several hours before sunrise the currents of air turn around, and flow northward. At this time in the afternoon, it blows strongly towards me, and cools the atmosphere quite pleasantly. Meanwhile, my edition of Volkmann (*see Johan Jacob Volkmann's 'Historisch-Kritische Nachrichten von Italien', published 1718*) informs me (*page 790, Goethe changes 'adsurgens: rising' below, to 'resonans: resonant'*) that Lake Garda was formerly called Lake Benacus, and quotes a verse by Virgil (*Georgics II, 160*) confirming the fact:

Fluctibus et fremitu resonans Benace marino.

Benacus' waves, resonant and roaring like the sea.

This is the first line of Latin whose subject has ever stood vividly before me, a line which, at this very moment, as the wind grows ever stronger, and the waves rise higher as they break against the shore, is still as true today as it was those many centuries ago. Much has changed, yet the wind still rages over the lake, whose aspect still graces a line of Virgil's.

Written at a latitude of forty-five degrees, fifty minutes, north.

In the cool evening air, I went for a walk, and now find myself truly in a new and foreign country, amidst utterly unfamiliar surroundings. The people here live a carefree, idyllic life: firstly, the doors have no locks; but the innkeeper assured me I could rest easy, even were all my possessions made of diamonds; secondly, the windows are covered with oiled paper instead of being fitted with panes of glass; thirdly, a much-needed *convenience* is lacking, so that one exists almost in a state of Nature here. When I asked the waiter to direct me to *a certain place*, he pointed down into the courtyard. 'Qui abasso può servirsi!' ('*You can do it down there!*'). I asked: 'Dove?' ('*Where?*') — 'Da per tutto, dove vuol!' ('*Anywhere, wherever you wish!*') he replied kindly. The highest degree of casualness is evident, yet there is plenty of life and activity. All day long, the neighbourhood's women engage in chattering and shouting, yet all working away, accomplishing something, at the same time. I have not yet seen a single idle woman.

The innkeeper announced to me, with Italian fervour, that he was delighted to be able to serve me the most delicious trout. They are caught near Torbole, where the stream flows from the mountains, and the fish seek to make their way upstream. The

emperor receives ten thousand from the annual catch. They are not true trout, being large, sometimes weighing fifty pounds, and speckled all over their bodies, even as far as their heads; the taste is somewhere between trout and salmon, delicate and exquisite. (*Carpione, salmo carpio, a salmonid, are endemic to Lake Garda*).

My true delight, however, is in the fruit, in the figs, also the pears, which are bound to be delicious at a latitude where one can already see lemon-trees growing.

September 13th, in the evening.

This morning at three o'clock I set off from Torbole, with two oarsmen rowing. At first the wind was favourable enough for them to raise the sail. The morning was glorious, cloudy but calm though it was dawn. We passed Limone sul Garda, the terraced, hillside gardens of which, planted with lemon trees, appear rich and in pristine condition. The gardens consist entirely of rows of white, square pillars, spaced a certain distance apart and rising in steps up the mountain. Sturdy poles are laid across these pillars to protect the trees planted between them during the winter. Our slow pace of travel meant that it was easier to admire the pleasant views, and we had only reached Malcesine when the wind completely reversed, resuming its usual daytime course, and blowing northwards. Rowing was of little use against the overwhelming force of the wind, and so we were obliged to land on the shore at Malcesine. It is the first Venetian town on the eastern side of the lake. When you are aboard a boat, you cannot say: 'I'll be here, or I'll be there, today.' I wished to make the most of the time, especially to sketch the castle (*Castello Scaligero*), which is sited on the water, and is a fine subject. I made a sketch of it today as we sailed by.

September 14th.

The headwind that drove us to the port of Malcesine yesterday presented me with a perilous adventure, which I overcame with good humour and find amusing in retrospect. As I had planned, I went, early in the morning, to the old castle, which is accessible to everyone, lacking a gate, door, or guards. In the castle courtyard, I sat down opposite the old tower built on and into the rock; here I found a very comfortable spot for sketching: an ornate stone seat, raised three or four steps, beside a doorway such as one still finds in the older buildings of this region.



'Goethe's sketch of the castle on a rocky headland at Malcesine' - Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (German, 1749–1832)
Wikimedia Commons

I had not been sitting long, when several people entered the courtyard, glanced at me, then started to walk back and forth. The crowd grew larger, and dense enough that they eventually came to a halt in front of me. I noticed that my drawing had attracted attention but, little bothered, I continued sketching quite calmly. Finally, a man, not of the most prepossessing appearance, pressed close to me, and asked what I was about. I replied that I was developing a sketch of the old tower as a souvenir of Malcesine. He said that this was not allowed, and that I should cease. Since he said this in the local Venetian dialect, and I could barely understand him, I replied that I understood not a word. With true Italian composure, he then seized my sheet of paper, tore it across, and left it lying on the pasteboard. At this, I detected signs of discontent among the onlookers; in particular, an elderly woman said it was not right, and that they should summon the Podestà (*magistrate*), who knew how to judge such matters. I stood on the steps, my back against the door, and surveyed the ever-growing crowd. The fixed stares of curiosity, coupled with the good-natured expressions on most of the faces, and everything else that might characterise a foreign crowd, produced the most amusing impression on me. I thought I saw before me the chorus of birds, (*in Aristophanes' comedy, 'The Birds'*) which I, as their loyal friend, had often performed in at the Ettersburg Theatre (*c.1780. Castle Ettersburg was a residence for the dukes of Saxe-Weimar-Eisenach, and a cultural centre.*). This put me in the most cheerful mood, so that when the Podestà approached with his clerk, I greeted him freely and, in response to his question as to why I was sketching their fortress, modestly replied that I did not consider the structure to be one. I drew his, and the crowd's attention, to the sad state of decay of the towers and walls, and to the lack of gates, in short, to

the lack of defences generally, and assured them that I had intended to inspect, and draw, nothing here but a ruin. They said, if so, what could possibly be remarkable about a ruin? I responded at great length, while seeking to gain their attention and favour, that they surely must know that many travellers came to Italy simply for the sake of the ruins, and that Rome, the capital of the world, ravaged by barbarian invasions, was full of ruins, which had been sketched many hundreds of times, and that not everything from antiquity was as well preserved as the amphitheatre in Verona, which I hoped soon to visit.

The Podestà, who stood before me, but nearer the ground, was a tall, not exactly thin man of about thirty. The flat features of his dull face perfectly matched the slow and turgid manner in which he posed his questions. Even the clerk who was there, shorter and livelier, also seemed unable to find his bearings at first, in such a novel and unusual situation. I said several more things along the same lines; they seemed pleased to listen, and appealing to the friendly faces of some of the women, I thought I perceived agreement and approval.

However, when I mentioned the amphitheatre in Verona, known locally as the Arena, the clerk, who had meanwhile reconsidered, said that this might well be true, as it was a world-famous Roman edifice, but there was nothing remarkable about their fortress except that it marked the border between the territory of Venice and the Austrian Empire, and therefore should not be spied upon. I explained at length, however, that not only Greek and Roman antiquities, but also those of the Middle Ages deserved attention. They could hardly be blamed, of course, for not considering the building, which they had known since their childhood, to be as picturesque as I did. Fortunately, the morning sun bathed the tower, rocks, and walls in the most beautiful light, and I began to describe this scene to them with enthusiasm. Because the objects of my praise were behind my audience, and because they preferred not to turn away from me entirely, they suddenly twisted their heads, like those birds called wrynecks (*jynx torquilla*), to see with their own eyes, what their ears heard me lauding; indeed, the podestà himself turned his head, albeit with somewhat more decorum, toward the scene described. This struck me as so ridiculous that my good humour increased, and my description spared them nothing, least of all the ivy that had already richly adorned the rocks and stonework for some centuries.

The actuary replied that this was all very well, but the Emperor Joseph was a restless individual who certainly harboured evil designs against the Republic of Venice, and I must be one of his subjects, assigned to spy on the Empire's borders.

'Far from belonging to the Empire,' I exclaimed, 'I can boast, as genuinely as you, of being a citizen of a republic which, although it cannot be compared in power and size to the illustrious state of Venice, nevertheless governs itself, and is second to none

in Germany in terms of trade, wealth, and the wisdom of its rulers. I am a native of Frankfurt am Main, a city whose name and reputation have certainly reached you.'

'From Frankfurt am Main!' cried a pretty young woman. 'There, Signore Podestà, one could see there was something special about this stranger, whom I consider to be a good man; let Gregorio be summoned, who was in training there for a long time, he's best equipped to decide the matter.'

Already the faces around me had gained in benevolence, as their previously unpleasant expressions vanished, and when Gregorio arrived, the situation turned entirely in my favour. He was a man in his fifties, with a tanned Italian face, of the type one usually encounters. He spoke and behaved as someone familiar with foreign cultures, and he told me, at once, that he had been in Jakob Bolongaro's service (*Jakob Bolongaro and his partner Josef Maria Markus were renowned tobacco merchants and manufacturers*) and would be delighted to hear news of that family, and the city, which he recalled with pleasure. Fortunately, as his visit had coincided with my youth there, I thus possessed the double advantage of being able to remind him of exactly what it had been like during his time, and what had changed since. I mentioned all the Italian families, none of which were unfamiliar to me; he was very pleased to hear some of the details, for example, that Herr Allesina (*Johann Maria Allesina dealt in silk and fashion items*) had celebrated his golden wedding anniversary in 1774 and that a medal had been struck to commemorate it, which I myself possessed. He remembered quite clearly that the wife of this wealthy merchant was a Brentano by birth (*Johann had married Clara Francesca Brentano, in May 1724*). I also knew something of the children and grandchildren of these families, how they had been educated, provided for, and whom they had married.

As I gave him the most precise information about almost everything he asked, the man's expression alternated between pleasure and solemnity. He was happy and touched; the crowd became increasingly interested and were listening, tirelessly, to our conversation, part of which he, naturally, had to translate for them.

Finally, he said: 'Signore Podestà, I am convinced that here is a good, skilful, well-educated man who travels in order to learn. We should treat him well, such that he will speak well of us to his countrymen and encourage them to visit Malcesine, whose beautiful location is indeed worthy of being admired by strangers.' I reinforced these kind words by praising the region, the location, and the inhabitants, not forgetting the magistrates as wise and prudent men.

All this was deemed acceptable, and I received permission to explore the town, and the surrounding area, with Master Gregorio as I pleased. The innkeeper, in whose establishment I had been staying, now joined us, already anticipating an influx of

tourists who would flock to his premises once the advantages of Malcesine became more widely known. He examined my clothing with lively curiosity, but was particularly envious of a little pistol that could be slipped conveniently into my pocket. He praised those fortunate enough to be able to carry such fine weapons, something forbidden in their own country under the most severe of penalties. I interrupted the friendly but persistent fellow, several times, in order to express gratitude to my liberator. 'Don't thank me,' replied the good man, 'you owe me nothing. If the Podestà knew his trade, and the clerk wasn't the most self-serving of men, you would not have escaped their attentions so readily. That magistrate was more embarrassed than you, and your arrest, the reports, and your deportation to Verona would not have earned him a penny. He quickly realised that, and you were free even before our conversation was over.'

Towards evening, the good man took me to his vineyard, which was very well-sited, down by the lake. We were accompanied by his fifteen-year-old son, who was there to climb the trees, and pick the best fruit for me, while the old man selected the ripest grapes.

Between these two, innocent, well-meaning people, and alone in the infinite solitude of this corner of the earth, I felt, as I reflected vividly on the day's adventures, what a strange creature a man is, in that things he might enjoy with security and comfort in benevolent company, are often rendered awkward and dangerous simply out of his desiring, on whim, to appropriate the world and its contents to himself, after his own fashion.

Near midnight, my host accompanied me to the boat, carrying the fruit basket Gregorio had presented to me, and so I departed, with a favourable wind, that shore which had threatened at one stage to become Laestrygonian (*in Homer's 'Odyssey', the Laestrygonians were man-eaters*).

As regards my lake voyage, it ended happily, after the splendour of the lake's surface, and the Brescian shoreline, had truly refreshed my heart. Where the mountains lose height on the western side, and the land slopes more gently down to the lake, the townships of Gargnano, Bogliaco, Cecina, Toscolano, Maderno, the Duomo di Santa Maria Annunziata, and the town of Salò, all elongated along the shore, lie in a line. At ten in the morning, I landed on the eastern shore, at Bardolino, and loaded my luggage onto a mule, and myself onto another. The road then led over a ridge that separates the lake from the Adige valley. Here, the primeval waters seem to have wrought against each other, immense currents, flowing from both sides, creating a colossal dam of gravel. Fertile soil was deposited above in calmer periods, though the farmers are constantly plagued by the ever-present boulders. They rid the fields of them as much as possible, piling them up in rows and layers, thus forming thick quasi-

walls along the road. The mulberry trees looked sorry for themselves at this altitude, due to the lack of moisture. Not a stream is to be found. From time to time, one encounters puddles of rainwater that have collected, from which the mules, and perhaps even the drivers, quench their thirst. Down by the river, water-wheels are installed to irrigate the lower-lying land as needed.

Verona

September 15th

But the splendour of the new region (*the Adige Valley*), which one looks down on during the descent, cannot be described in words. It forms a wide garden, miles long, perfectly pristine and flat, at the foot of the high mountains and rugged cliffs. And so, on September 15th, at around one o'clock, I arrived in Verona, where I am, firstly, finishing this account, before collating and stapling the sheets of this second part of my diary, and where I hope, in joyful anticipation, to view the amphitheatre this evening.

Regarding the weather of these past few days, I report the following. The night of the ninth to the tenth was alternately bright and overcast, the moon always retaining a glow. Around five in the morning, the entire sky became covered with grey but thin cloud, which disappeared as the day lengthened. The lower I descended the lake, the finer the weather became. Where the great mountain range near Bolzano darkened the sky, the air exhibited a completely different quality; one could see from the various levels of the landscape, appearing quite lovely, which were distinguished from one another by their slightly more or less blue tints, that the atmosphere was full of evenly distributed vapour, which it was able to retain, and which therefore fell neither as dew nor rain, nor gathered as cloud. As I descended further, I could clearly observe that all the vapour emanating from the Bolzano valley, all the wisps of cloud rising from the mountains at noon, drifted towards the higher regions towards midnight, not obscuring them, but enveloping them in a kind of high-altitude mist. In the far distance, above the mountains, I could see a 'water-gall' so called (*a secondary rainbow, signalling rainfall*). South of Bolzano, they have had the most beautiful weather all summer, just a little rain, now and then (they say 'acqua' to describe the gentle rain), followed immediately by sunshine once more. Even yesterday, a few drops fell from time to time, though the sun was always shining. They have not had as good a year in a long time; everything is fine there; they have sent the bad weather our way.

I will only mention the mountains and types of stone briefly, since John James Ferber's account of his journey to Italy (*in 1771/2*) and Balthasar Hacquet's through

the Alps (*in 1779, and 1781*) provide ample information about the route. A quarter of an hour from the Brenner Pass, is a marble quarry, which I passed at dusk. It may well, nay must, like the one on the other side, rest on mica schist. I found this schist near Colma when day broke; further down, porphyry appeared. The rocks were so magnificent, and the heaps along the road so fractured, that one could have easily extracted and packed a roomful of them à la Voigt (*Johann Karl Wilhelm Voigt, a prominent mineralogist, geologist, and mining engineer active in Weimar*). I could assemble such examples, without any difficulty whatsoever, if only I could limit my eyes, and my desires, to a smaller scale. Soon after Colma, I found porphyry that split into regular plates; and between Branzoll (*Bronzolo*) and Neumarkt (*Egna*), a similar example, whose plates, however, divided into columns. Ferber considered them volcanic products, but that was fourteen years ago, when the whole world was ablaze. Hacquet ridicules the notion.

I have little to say about the people, and little of it pleasant. At daybreak, descending from the Brenner Pass, I noticed a marked change in their appearance; I was particularly displeased by the pale, brownish complexion of the women. Their features suggested lack of nourishment; the children were equally pitiful to behold, the men a little better, their appearance being otherwise quite regular and good. I believe the cause of this morbid condition lies in the frequent consumption of maize and buckwheat flour. The former, which they also call yellow blende, and the latter, called black blende, are ground down, and the flour cooked in water to form a thick porridge, which is eaten as such. The Germans on this side of the mountains knead the dough, and fry it in butter. The Italian Tyroleans, on the other hand, eat it as is, sometimes with grated cheese on top, and taste no meat all year round. Inevitably, this must clog and block the main passageways, especially in women and children, and their cachectic colour indicated such a condition.

They also eat fruit and green beans, which they boil in water and season with garlic and oil. I asked if there were any rich farmers. — 'Yes, of course.' — 'Don't they indulge themselves? Don't they eat better food?' — 'No, they are used to this.' — 'What do they do with their money? What other expenses have they?' — 'Oh, they have their masters too, who take it from them.' —That was the gist of my conversation with the landlady's daughter in Bolzano.

Furthermore, I learned from her that the winegrowers who seem the wealthiest are in the worst position, for they are in the hands of urban merchants who, in bad years, advance them enough to support life and, in good years, pay a pittance for the wine. But such is the same everywhere.

What confirms my opinion about their diet is that the women in the towns always look healthier. Pretty, full of face, their bodies appearing somewhat short, given their

stoutness and the size of their heads, but their expressions sometimes quite friendly and welcoming. We know the look of the men from the itinerant Tyroleans who visit us. In the countryside, the men look duller in complexion than the women, probably because the women do more physical work, and gain more exercise, while the men are sedentary, being shopkeepers or craftsmen. By Lake Garda, I found the people quite tanned, without the slightest hint of rosiness in their cheeks, but not at all unhealthy in appearance; on the contrary, they looked quite fresh and well-fed. The tan is probably due to exposure to the intense sunlight and heat at the foot of their cliffs.

The End of Goethe's 'Italian Journey' Part II

Part III: From Verona to Venice

From Verona to Venice

Verona

September 16th.

The amphitheatre (*the Arena*) is the first significant monument of antiquity that I have seen, and how well-preserved it is! When I entered it, and even more so when I walked around the top tier, it seemed strange to me to be viewing something grand, and yet in truth it seemed nothing at all. It was not meant to be seen when empty, but rather full of people, as it was more recently in honour of Joseph II and Pius VI (*Pius VI was in Verona in May 1782, having met the Holy Roman Emperor Joseph II in Vienna*). The emperor, though accustomed to encountering large crowds, is said to have been astonished. But it achieved its full effect only in ancient times, when the people were more of an entity than now. For such an amphitheatre is actually designed to impress the crowd with their own numbers, to allow them to be, themselves, the source of their entertainment.

When a spectacle is presented on flat ground, everyone presses forwards to see, those at the back seeking, by every means available, to climb above those at the front: they step onto benches, mount barrels, stand on wagons, lay boards to and fro, or occupy a neighbouring hill, surrounding the crater formed in the centre, in the process.

If such a spectacle occurs often, in the same spot, light scaffolding and platforms are usually erected for those who can pay, while the rest of the crowd must make do as they please. Satisfying the general need was the architect's task here. He prepared such a crater through art, as simply as possible, so that the people themselves might act as its ornamentation. Seeing themselves gathered together in this way, they were bound to marvel at themselves en masse. Otherwise accustomed only to seeing themselves wandering about in a confused manner, amidst a tumult, without order or particular discipline, that many-headed, many-minded, wavering, wandering creature, the people, now saw itself united in a single and noble body, a single entity, destined to be bound and fixed in form, and animated by one spirit. The simplicity of the oval shape is pleasing to every eye, and each person serves as a measure of the immensity of the whole. Now, seeing it empty, one has no standard by which to judge it; one cannot judge whether it is large or small.

The people of Verona deserve praise for the upkeep of the monument. It is built of reddish marble, which is susceptible to weathering, so the eroded steps are constantly being repaired, and almost all appear brand new. An inscription commemorates Hieronymus Maurigenus (*Girolamo Maurigeno*) and the incredible diligence he devoted to the task. Only a section of the outer wall remains, and I doubt it was ever fully completed. The lower arches, which open onto the large square called Piazza Brà, are rented out to craftsmen, and it is pleasant to see these vaults bustling with activity once again.

Verona, September 16th.

The most beautiful city gate, though always closed, is called Porta Stupa or Porta Palio. As a portal, given the distance from which it is visible, it is poorly designed; only close to does one recognise the merit of the edifice.

All sorts of reasons are given as to why it is kept closed. However, my suspicion is that the artist's intent was to create a new promenade leading to this gate, since it is misaligned with the current street. The left side of the area is nothing but barracks, and a horizontal line from the gate's centre points towards a nunnery, which would have had to have been demolished. This was doubtless recognised, and the wealthy and prominent citizenry likely had no desire to reside in this distant quarter. Perhaps the architect died, and the gate was closed, thus ending the project abruptly.

Verona, September 16th.

The portico of the theatre (*Teatro Filarmonico*), with its six large Ionic columns, is quite imposing. All the less so, therefore, is the life-size bust, of the Marchese Scipione Maffei wearing a large wig, positioned above the door in a painted niche supported by two Corinthian columns. The location is honourable, but to hold its own against the size and grandeur of the columns, the bust would have had to be colossal. As it is, it perches, modestly, on a small corbel, quite out of harmony with the rest of the structure.

The gallery enclosing the forecourt is also rather small, and the fluted Doric columns look like pitiful dwarfs next to those smooth-faced Ionic giants. But one should forgive the fact, in light of the fine display of objects arranged beneath these colonnades. Here, antiquities, unearthed mostly in and around Verona, have been gathered and mounted. Some are said to have been found in the amphitheatre itself. They include Etruscan, Greek, and Roman artefacts, dating back to the early periods, and also some more recent ones. The bas-reliefs are embedded in the walls and marked

with the numbers Maffei gave them, when he described them in his work 'Verona Illustrata' (*published 1731*). There are altars, fragments of columns, and similar remains; including a truly excellent tripod of white marble, upon which stand engaged genii with the attributes of gods. Raphael imitated, and embellished, similar motifs within the spandrels of the Villa Farnesina (*in Rome*).

The breeze blowing from the graves of the ancients carries a sweet perfume, as if from a hill of roses. The gravestones are designed with warmth and are touching, ever evoking life. Here is a man, beside his wife, looking out from a niche as if from a window. There a father and mother, their son between them, gazing at each other with ineffable naturalness. Here a couple clasps hands. There a father, reclining on a sofa, is seemingly being entertained by his family. The presence and immediacy of these headstones deeply moved me. They are of a later period of art, but simple, natural, and universally appealing. Here are no armoured knights on their knees awaiting a joyful resurrection. The artists, with varying degrees of skill, have depicted the simple reality of people, thereby continuing and preserving their existence. They neither fold their hands, nor look up to heaven, but, here below, are what they were, and as they were. They stand together, sharing in each other's lives and loving each other, and this is charmingly expressed by the images on the gravestones, even if a certain lack of craftsmanship is evident. A very richly decorated marble pillar also aroused new concepts of art in me.

As commendable as this exhibition is, it is evident that the spirit of noble preservation that initiated it no longer lives within. The precious tripod will soon perish, since it is free-standing and exposed to the elements on its western side. A wooden case would easily protect this treasure.

Had the unfinished palace of the Proveditore (*civil administrator*) been completed, it would have granted Verona a fine piece of architecture; otherwise, the nobility is raising new buildings, on an extensive scale, though unfortunately, each member is utilising the site of their previous residence, often in a narrow alleyway. Thus, a magnificent facade for a new seminary is being built in a lane in the most remote suburb.

As I was passing by the grand, solemn gate of a magnificent building, with a guide whom I had met by chance, he asked me if I would kindly step into its courtyard for a moment. It was the Palace of Justice (*the Palazzo della Ragione, late twelfth century*) and because of the building's height, the courtyard appeared like an immense well. 'Here,' he said, 'all the suspects and criminals are housed.' I looked around, and saw that on every floor, open corridors with iron railings led to numerous doors. A prisoner, as he emerged from his cell to be led to his interrogation, was obliged to stand in the open air, exposed to everyone's gaze; and since there were likely several

interrogation rooms, the chains rattled first down one corridor, then another, floor by floor. It was an unpleasant sight, and I don't deny that the good humour with which I formerly dealt with my fellow 'Birds' (*in his theatre production of the Aristophanes' play*) would have likely been found lacking here.

I walked along the rim of the craterlike amphitheatre at sunset, enjoying the most beautiful view over the city and surrounding area. I was completely alone, and below on the broad stones of the Piazza Brà, crowds of people strolled: middle-class women, and men of all classes. From this bird's-eye view, the former, in their black clothing, looked almost mummified. The *zendale* (*cape, or shawl*) and the *veste* (*dress*), which serve them in place of all other outer garments, form a costume entirely suited to those who often care little about cleanliness, yet always wish to appear in public, whether attending church or out for a stroll. The *veste* is a black taffeta gown which is worn above underskirts. If the woman has a clean white one underneath, she contrives to lift the black one at one side. This is fastened with a belt in such a way that it cuts off at the waist and covers the lappets of the corset, which can be of any colour. The *zendale* is a large hooded shawl (*often of satin and lace*), the hood itself raised high above the head on a wire frame, while the shawl is tied around the body like a sash, the ends falling down behind.

Verona, September 16th.

As I was walking away from the Arena today, I viewed a modern spectacle taking place a few hundred yards away. Four noblemen from Verona were playing ball (*pallone*) against four from Vicenza. The Veronese customarily form teams among themselves, and play for about two hours before nightfall throughout the year; on this occasion, because their opponents were from elsewhere, the crowd was extremely large. There must have been four to five thousand spectators there, at any one time. I saw no women from any social class.

Earlier, when I spoke of meeting the crowd's needs in such a situation, I described the formation of a natural, and accidental amphitheatre, as the people gathered in ranks and tiers. I could already, from afar, hear lively applause accompanying every significant blow. The game proceeds as follows: two gently sloping boards are erected at a suitable distance from each other. The player striking the ball stands at the top of the board at his end, his right hand armed with a broad, wooden, spiked ring. Another player from his side tosses the ball towards him, and he runs down to meet it, thereby increasing the force of his blow. The opponents seek to return it, and so it goes back and forth, until the ball finally comes to rest on the ground. The most beautiful poses, worthy of being immortalised in marble, are revealed. Since they are all well-built,

vigorous young men, dressed in short, crisp, white clothing, the sides are distinguished only by a coloured badge. Particularly fine is the pose which the striker adopts as he runs down the sloping surface, and prepares to strike the ball; it resembles that of the Borghese Gladiator (*the Hellenistic life-size sculpture, in the Louvre*).

It struck me as odd that they were performing this exercise on the old city wall providing not the slightest ease for the spectators; why did not they perform it in the amphitheatre, where there would be ample room!

Verona, September 17th.

What I have seen of the paintings here, I will only touch on briefly, while adding a few observations. I am not undertaking this wondrous journey under any illusions as to my degree of knowledge, but rather to learn about the objects I view; therefore, I tell myself that, frankly, I understand little about the art and the craft of painting. My attention, my observation, must therefore be directed toward the resulting aspect, the subject matter and its treatment in general.

The Church of San Giorgio (*Chiesa di San Giorgio in Braida*) contains a gallery of fine paintings; all the altarpieces, though not of equal worth, are nonetheless remarkable. But those unfortunate artists, what subjects they were obliged to paint! And how! A shower of manna, perhaps thirty feet long and twenty high! The miracle of the five loaves as its counterpart! (*Paolo Farinati and Felice Brusasorzi, respectively, painted the two large canvases of the 'Multiplication of the Loaves and Fishes', and 'Manna in the Desert'*) What was there worth depicting? Hungry people devouring tiny grains, and countless others being presented with bread and fish. The artists strained to make such meagre elements significant. And yet, spurred on by necessity, genius produces beautiful works. One artist (*Giovan Francesco Caroto*), tasked with depicting Saint Ursula and the Eleven Thousand virgins, accomplished the task with great intelligence. The saint stands in the foreground, as if she has triumphantly taken possession of the land. She is very noble, an Amazonian virgin, lacking all charm; one sees her throng, diminished by distance, disembarking from the ships, and approaching in procession. Titian's 'The Assumption of the Virgin' in Verona cathedral is quite blackened; the idea of depicting her as an incipient goddess not look heavenward, but down at her friends, is commendable.

In the Gallery of the Palazzo Gherardini, I found some very beautiful works by L'Orbetto (*Alessandro Turchi*) and became instantly acquainted with this deserving artist. From afar, one only learns about the most prominent artists, and one is often content merely to know their names; but when one approaches the starry firmament, and those lights of the second and third magnitude also begin to shimmer, each

emerging as an individual element of the entire stellar configuration, then the universe becomes vaster and art richer. I must commend the concept behind one of his paintings here. Just the two main figures. Samson has fallen asleep in Delilah's lap; she quietly reaches out for a pair of scissors lying on the table next to the lamp. The execution is very skilful. I noticed a Danaë in the Palazzo Canossa (*Turchi treated this subject; see the painting in the Royal Collection, England*).

The Palazzo Bevilacqua contains the most exquisite things. A so-called 'Paradise' by Tintoretto (*see the smaller 'Paradise' version in the Louvre*), actually a 'Coronation of the Virgin' as Queen of Heaven in the presence of all the patriarchs, prophets, apostles, saints, and angels, etc., provided that genius with a happy opportunity to develop the full richness of his art. The lightness of the brushwork, the intelligent execution, the variety of expression — to admire and rejoice in all this, one would need to own the piece oneself, so that it would be available to one's eyes for a lifetime. The background stretches to infinity; indeed, even the furthest cherubs, disappearing in glory, still possess character. The largest figures in the mid-ground may be a foot high, Mary and Christ, higher up, the latter placing the crown upon her head, about four inches in height. Eve is however the most beautiful woman in the picture, a little voluptuous as depicted from time immemorial.

A few portraits by Paolo Veronese (*born in Verona*) have only increased my admiration for that artist. The collection of antiquities is magnificent, a reclining son of Niobe is delightful, the busts, despite their restored noses, are mostly highly interesting, including an Augustus with the civic crown, a Caligula, and others.

It is my nature to venerate, willingly and joyfully, all that is great and beautiful; to cultivate this inclination day after day, hour after hour, through appreciating such magnificent objects, is the most blessed of all feelings.

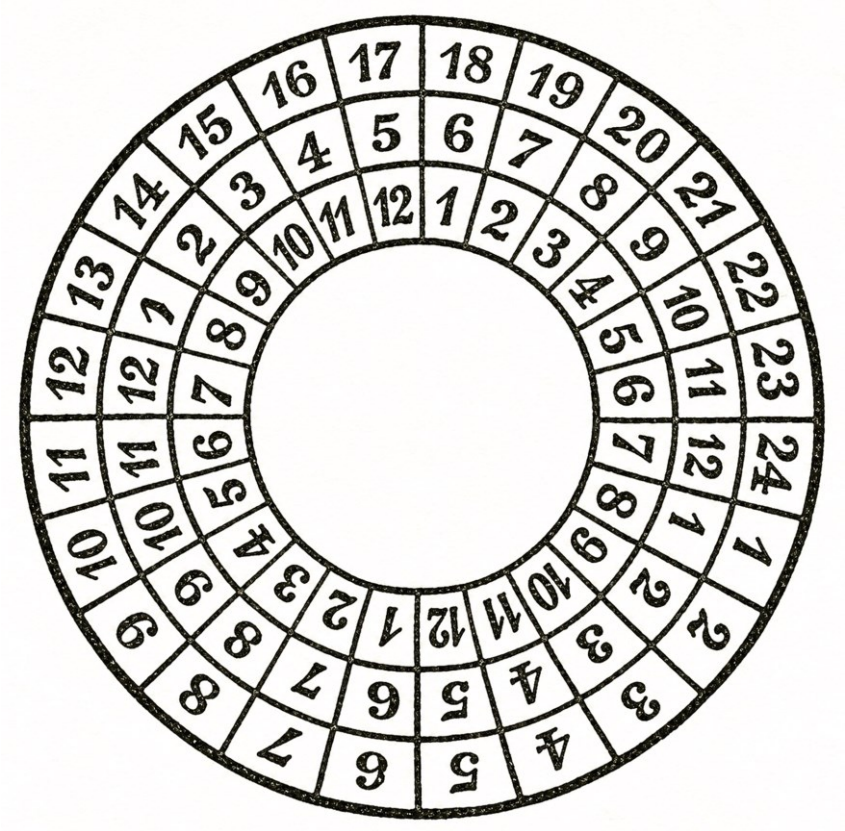
In a land where people enjoy the daytime, but especially rejoice in the evening, nightfall is of the utmost importance. Then work ceases, and the stroller returns, the father wishes to have his daughter home again, the day has reached its end; yet what daylight truly is, we Cimmerians scarcely know. Living in the perpetual fog and gloom of the North, it is all the same to us whether it is day or night. For, how many hours can we truly roam and enjoy ourselves beneath the open sky? As soon as night falls here, the day, which consisted of morning and evening, is definitively over, twenty-four hours have passed, a new chapter begins, the church bells ring, rosaries are lifted in prayer, and the maid enters one's room with a lighted candle and says: 'Felicissima notte!' The length of evening changes with the season, and anyone who lives their life here is never disoriented, since the enjoyment of their whole existence is based not on the hour, but on the point of day attained. If one were to impose German clocks for timekeeping on the people, it would only confuse them, for their own clock is an

intimate feature of their inner nature. An hour and a half, or an hour at least, before nightfall, the nobility set forth, heading towards the Piazza Brà, and the long, wide road leading to the Porta Nuova, and then out through the gate, along the edge of the city; then, as night falls, the process reverses. Some drive to church to say their 'Ave Maria della Sera,' others keep to the Piazza Brà, the gentlemen approaching the carriages to converse with the ladies, and so it goes on for quite some time; I have never been the last there; pedestrians linger well into the night. Today, just enough rain had fallen to wash away the dust; it was truly a lively and cheerful sight.

To further align myself with local custom in an important aspect, I have devised a method to comprehend, more readily, their reckoning of time. The following diagram may give an idea of this.

COMPARATIVE TABLE OF GERMAN AND ITALIAN TIME,
WITH THE HOURS OF THE ITALIAN SUN-DIAL. FOR THE LATTER
HALF OF SEPTEMBER.

MID-DAY.



'Comparative table of German and Italian time' - Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (German, 1749–1832)
Project Gutenberg

MIDNIGHT.

THIS NIGHT LENGTHENS HALF AN HOUR EVERY FORTNIGHT.

Month.	Day	Time of night as shown by German clocks.	Midnight consequently falls about
August	1	8½	3½
"	15	8	4
September	1	7½	4½
"	15	7	5
October	1	6½	5½
"	15	6	6
November	1	5½	6½
"	15	5	7
From this date the time remains constant, and it is: —			
		Night.	**Midnight.**
December January		5	7

THE DAY LENGTHENS HALF AN HOUR EVERY FORTNIGHT.

Month.	Day.	Time of night as shown by German clocks.	Midnight consequently falls about
February	1	5½	6½
"	15	6	6
March	1	6½	5½
"	15	7	5
April	1	7½	4½
"	15	8	4
May	1	8½	3½
"	15	9	3
From this date the time remains constant, and it is: —			
		Night.	**Midnight.**
June July		9	3

The inner circle represents our twenty-four hours from midnight to midnight, divided into the two sets of twelve, as we number them, and as our clocks depict them. The middle circle indicates when the church bells strike here at this time of year, namely also twice twelve in twenty-four hours, but in such a way that it strikes one here when it would strike eight at home, and so on, until twelve is reached. At eight in the morning, according to our clock, it strikes one again here, and so on. The outer circle finally shows how one reckons the twenty-four hours in actuality. For example, if I hear the seventh hour strike, at night and know that midnight is at five, I subtract that number from the previous one, and thus I have two hours past midnight. If I hear the seventh hour strike during the day and know that noon is also at five, I proceed in the same way and have two in the afternoon. If I want to express the hours in the local

way, I must know that noon is seventeen o'clock, to which I add two, and say nineteen o'clock.

When one first hears about and considers all this, it seems extremely confusing and difficult to execute; however, one soon becomes accustomed to it and finds this activity entertaining, just as the people here delight in such constant back-and-forth calculations, like children working a simple problem. Their fingers are always waving in the air anyway, they calculate everything in their heads, and enjoy working with numbers. Furthermore, the matter is so much easier for those born here, because they rarely concern themselves with noon and midnight and do not, as the foreigner in this country does, have to compare clocks. They simply count the hours from evening onward as they strike; during the day, they add the number to the alternating noon number they know. The table accompanying the diagram explains the rest.

Verona, September 17th.

The people here bustle about; especially in various streets where the shops and workshops stand side by side, the scene is lively. There is scarcely a closed door; the entire width of each of the premises stands open, and you can see to the rear, and observe everything taking place within: tailors sewing, shoemakers pulling leather and hammering, all half in the street; indeed, the workshops make up part of the street itself. In the evenings, when the lights are on, it appears truly vibrant.

The squares are packed on market days, with vegetables and fruit everywhere one looks, garlic and onions as plentiful as one can imagine. And then, they shout, jest, and sing all day long, throwing things, and wrestling, while cheering, and laughing incessantly. The mild climate, and the low food prices, allow them to live easily. Everything possible, takes place outdoors.

At night the singing and noise reach full volume. The ballad of 'Malbrook' *('Malbrough s'en va-t-en guerre')* can be heard on every street, then the sounds of a dulcimer, or a violin. They practise birdsong on a flute. imitating every kind of bird. The most wondrous sounds burst forth everywhere. Such a climate lends a heightened sense of existence even to poverty, and the very shadow of the people seems venerable.

The striking uncleanliness of the houses and a lack of home-comforts, stems from this: they are always outdoors, and in their casualness, lack thought. Everything is fine and good to the commoners; even the middle class live from one day to the next, while the rich and noble alone lock themselves away in their apartments, which are certainly not as comfortable as those of the North. They hold their gatherings in public meeting houses. The courtyards and colonnades are all squalid, and everything is done there, and in the most natural way. The people are always on guard as to their rights. The

rich may be rich, and build palaces, the nobleman may rule, but if a colonnade or a courtyard is constructed, the people soon employ it for their own needs, and they seem to have no greater desire than to rid themselves as quickly as possible of what they have consumed, and do so as frequently as possible. If any man objects to this, he is ill-advised to try and play the great lord; rather, he is obliged to act as if part of his building belongs to the public. He must simply close his door, and act as if all is perfectly fine. The people will not allow their rights to be limited as regards public buildings, leaving foreign visitors throughout Italy to complain about the fact.

Today, on various routes through the city, I observed the dress and manners, of the middle class especially, who are frequently present and busily occupied. They swing their arms as they walk. People of higher rank, who carry a sword on occasion, only swing the one arm, because accustomed to keeping their left arm still, and at the ready.

Although the people go about their business, and address their needs, most casually, they still keep a sharp eye on everything foreign in appearance. During the first few days, I noticed that everyone was gazing at my boots, since they are considered expensive items, and are scarcely worn even in winter. Now that I am wearing shoes and stockings, they no longer stare at me. But I noticed this morning, as they were all bustling about with their flowers, vegetables, garlic, and other market goods, that none of them failed to notice the cypress branch I was carrying. A few green cones hung from it, and next to them I held some caper twigs in flower. They all, young and old, looked at what I was holding, and seemed full of curiosity.

The branch and twigs I collected in the Giusti Gardens, which are in a splendid location, and contain tremendous cypress trees, pointing skyward, like spikes. The yew-trees trimmed to a point in Nordic gardens are doubtless imitations of these magnificent products of Nature. A tree whose branches, from bottom to top, the oldest as well as the youngest, seek the heavens, and which lives three hundred years or more, is surely worthy of veneration. Considering the time since the garden was laid out, these trees have already reached a great age.

Vicenza

September 19th.

The road here from Verona was very pleasant. One travels north-east following, to one's left, the foothills of the mountains, which are composed of sand, limestone, clay, and marl. On the slopes are sited villages, castles, and houses. To the right, the wide plain, through which one is travelling, stretches some distance. The broad, straight,

well-maintained road leads through fertile fields. One can see dense rows of trees on which the vines are trained upwards, to cascade down as if they were aerial branches. The idea of festoons must have been derived from this! The grapes mature early, and weigh down the long, swaying vines. The road is full of people of every kind and trade. I was particularly taken with the carts with low, saucer-shaped, solid wheels, which, drawn by four oxen, pull large trough-like carts in which the grapes are brought from the vineyards to be pressed. When empty, the drivers stand inside, and the whole line resembles a Bacchic triumph. Between the rows of vines, the land is used to grow various types of grain, especially buckwheat and sorghum.

As one approaches Vicenza, the hills rise to north to south; they are said to be volcanic and enclose the plain. Vicenza lies at their foot, cradled, if you will, in the hollow that they form.

Vicenza, September 19th.

I arrived here a few hours ago, and have already walked about the city, and viewed the Teatro Olimpico and other buildings designed by Andrea Palladio. A very nice little book with engravings has been published for the convenience of visitors, accompanied by an insightful text on the architecture. Seeing these works in person, one truly appreciates their great worth; for they are meant both to fill the eye with their sheer physical size, and to satisfy the mind with the beautiful harmony of their dimensions, not only in abstract elevations and sketches but displaying the entire interplay of distance and perspective. And so, I say of Palladio: he was a truly great man, in what he achieved outwardly, and within. The greatest difficulty with which he, like our modern architects, had to contend, is the appropriate use of the columnar orders in civic architecture; combining columns and walls always contains a contradiction. How well he integrated them, how greatly the presence exhibited by his works impresses such that one is almost persuaded by his various solutions! There is truly something divine in the power of his designs, entirely like that of a great poet who creates a third realm woven of truth and falsehood, the conjured existence of which enchants us.

The Olympic Theatre is a theatre like those of the ancients, realised on a smaller scale and indescribably beautiful, but compared to ours it seems to me like a rich, genteel, well-educated child compared to a clever, worldly adult who, though neither as rich, nor genteel, nor as well-educated, has a better understanding of what can be achieved in accord with his means.

When one considers here, in situ, the magnificent buildings that this one man erected, and sees how they are fouled by people's narrow, squalid needs, how his projects were mostly beyond the builders' capabilities, how little these exquisite

monuments of a noble human spirit reflect the lives of the population, it occurs to one that it is much the same in other fields of endeavour. One earns little gratitude from people when one seeks to elevate their inner needs, to give them a greater idea of themselves, to make them feel the splendour of truly noble existence. But if one lies to the 'birds', fills their heads with fairy tales, assists them in their day to day lives, and in the process worsens their lives, then one is theirs, and that is why our modern age takes such delight in tastelessness. I do not say this to belittle any of my friends, I am only saying that this is how they behave, and that one should not be surprised that everything is as it is.

How the Basilica Palladiana connects to, and contrasts with, the older, castle-like building beside it, riddled with unequally sized windows, which the architect surely envisioned as absent, along with its tower, is impossible to describe, though I must try to compose my own work (*Faust Part II*) in an equally new manner; for here too, alas, I find exactly what I am fleeing from (*the Romanticism of Faust Part I*), and what I am seeking (*the Classical World*), side by side.

September 20th.

Yesterday there was opera; the performance lasted until after midnight, and I longed for my bed. 'The Three Sultanas' (*'Les Trois Sultanes', a 1761 musical comedy by Charles-Simon Favart*) and 'The Abduction from the Seraglio' (*'Il Seraglio', Mozart's 'Die Entführung aus dem Serail', of 1782*) provided the scraps from which the piece was, rather ineptly, stitched together. The music sounded pleasant enough, but was probably composed by an amateur — since it contained nothing new or surprising to me. The ballets, on the other hand, were delightful. The lead couple danced an allemande so gracefully that no has ever seen anything more elegant.

The theatre is new, charming, beautiful, modestly splendid, and uniform throughout, as befits a provincial town; each box has its own hangings of the same colour, those of the Capitano Grande distinguished only by their slightly longer length.

The prima donna, much favoured by the entire crowd, was applauded tremendously as soon as she appeared, and the 'birds' behaved in a quite unruly manner, full of joy whenever she executed something well, which apparently was a frequent occurrence. She is a person with a natural manner, a pretty figure, a beautiful voice, a pleasing face, and a modest demeanour; though the movements of her arms could do with being a little more graceful. However, I shall not repeat the experience; I feel I have been corrupted to the point of becoming a 'bird' myself.

September 21st.

Today I visited Dr. Antonio Turra (*a prominent physician, botanist, and naturalist*). For about five years, under the previous bishop, he devoted himself, passionately, to botany; creating his herbarium of Italian flora, and establishing a botanical garden. But all that is over with now. Medical practice drove out Natural History, the herbarium is infested with worms, the bishop is dead, and the botanical garden, which is as good as, is once again planted with cabbage and garlic.

Dr. Turra is a very fine and good man. He told me his history with frankness, purity of heart, and modesty, and spoke very confidently and pleasantly, but he had no desire to open his specimen cabinets, which were likely not in a presentable state. Our conversation soon stalled.

September 21st, in the evening.

I went to see the old architect Ottavio Bertotti Scamozzi, who has published an edition of Palladio's work *('Le Fabbriche e i Disegni di Andrea Palladio Raccolti e Illustrati', 'The Buildings and Designs of Andrea Palladio Collected and Illustrated', 1776-83*) and is a worthy, and passionate artist. He offered me some guidance, being pleased by my interest. Among Palladio's buildings is one (*Casa Cogollo*) for which I have always had a particular fondness; it is said to have been his own residence. But up close, there is far more than one can see in the paintings depicting it. I would like to have drawn it, and illuminated the drawing with colours showing the material used and the effects that time has produced. But do not think the architect built himself a palace. It is the most modest house in the world, with only two windows on the first floor, separated by a wide space that could easily accommodate a third. If one were to recreate it in a painting, with the neighbouring houses also depicted, it would be delightful to see how it nestles among them. Canaletto should have done so.

Today I visited a magnificent house designed by him called the Rotonda (*Villa la Rotonda, Villa Almerico Capra Valmarana*), situated half an hour from the city, and at a pleasant height. It is a square building enclosing a circular hall illuminated from above. On each of the four sides, one can ascend a broad staircase, leading to a portico formed by six Corinthian columns. Architectural luxury has never reached greater heights, perhaps. The space occupied by the staircases and porticoes is far greater than that of the house itself; since each side might supply a satisfactory front facade for a temple. Inside, it can be called habitable, but not comfortable. The hall is of the most beautiful proportions, as are the rooms; but they would hardly suffice for the needs of a decent-sized family during a summer stay. However, it presents a most splendid appearance to the district, from every angle The variety with which its main mass,

together with the projecting columns, offers itself to the eyes of passers-by is great, and the owner's intention was perfectly achieved: he wished to leave behind a large estate in trust, and at the same time a tangible monument to his wealth. And just as the building is seen in all its splendour from all points of the compass, so too the view from it is most pleasing. One can see the course of the River Bacchiglione, bearing vessels from Verona downstream towards the River Brenta; and can survey the extensive possessions that the Marchese Capra wished to keep intact within his family. The inscriptions on the four pediments, which together comprise the following whole, deserve to be recorded:

Marcus Capra Gabrielis filius
qui aedes has
arctissimo primogeniturae gradui subiecit
una cum omnibus
censibus agris vallibus et collibus
citra viam magnam
memoriae perpetuae mandans haec
dum sustinet ac abstinet.

Marco Capra, son of Gabriele,
who this edifice
has subjected to the strictest primogeniture,
together with all
the censuses, fields, valleys, and hills
this side of the high road,
bequeathing them to perpetual memory,
bears and forbears the while.

The last line is particularly intriguing: a man who possessed so much wealth and power still feeling that he must 'bear' and 'forbear' the use of all this. The lesson could have been learned with less effort.

September 22nd.

This evening, I attended a meeting held by the Academy of Olympians (*The Accademia Olimpica, founded in 1555, dedicated to promoting science, arts, and the humanities.*) A bit lightweight, but rather fine, in its way; it maintains a certain spark of intellectual life among the people. A large hall (*the Odeo*) next to Palladio's theatre, was decently lit, the Capitano and a few of the nobility were present, with a well-

educated audience, many of them clergy, amounting to about five hundred persons in total.

The question posed by the President for the evening session was whether invention or imitation had delivered more benefit to the fine arts. The subject was quite well-chosen; since if one debates the alternatives inherent in the question, one could argue back and forth for a hundred years. Also, the academicians had made ample use of the opportunity, and produced a variety of works in prose and verse, much of it of a decent quality.

The audience was most lively. The listeners cried 'Bravo!', laughed, and applauded. If only one could stand before one's entire nation like that, and entertain it personally! We are obliged to compose our best work in literary form: then each reader must curl, up in a corner with it and grapple with it as best they can.

As one can imagine, Palladio's name was mentioned at every turn on this occasion too, whether the discussion revolved around invention or imitation. At the end, where a few humorous remarks are always called for, one academician had a bright thought, claiming that the others had left him nothing more to say as regards Palladio, so he would instead speak in praise of Franceschini, the great silk manufacturer, instead (*Palazzo Franceschini Folco, designed by Ottavio Scamozzi, was built in 1770 on behalf of Giovanni Franceschini a famous silk weaver, and his brother Girolamo.*). He then sought to demonstrate the advantage the imitation of Lyon and Florentine fabrics had brought this capable entrepreneur and, through him, the city of Vicenza, proving that imitation was far superior to invention. And this was done with such good humour that it aroused continual laughter. In general, those who spoke in favour of imitation received more applause; for they said only what the mass of people thinks and is capable of. At one point, the audience gave enthusiastic applause to a somewhat crude sophism, having failed to appreciate many good, indeed excellent, things said in honour of invention. Nonetheless, I am most pleased to have witnessed the debate, and it was most gratifying to find Palladio, after so many years, still revered by his fellow citizens as a guiding star and their role model.

September 22nd.

This morning, I was at Thiene, which lies north of Vicenza towards the mountains, where a new building is being erected according to an old plan, for which something might be said. Here, everything from the good old days is honoured, and it makes perfect sense to build a new structure based on an inherited design. The castle (*the Palazzo or Villa, Porto Colleoni Thiene*) is perfectly situated in the plain, the limestone Alps rising behind it without the distraction of any intermediate hills. From the

building, alongside the perfectly straight road, water flows on both sides, irrigating the vast rice paddies through which one travels.

I have only seen two Italian cities so far, and spoken to a few people, but I already know my Italians well. They are like courtiers, who think themselves the foremost people in the world and, owing to certain undeniable advantages, can indulge themselves with impunity, and at their ease. To me, the Italians seem rather a fine nation: one only has to look at the children, and the ordinary folk, as I now see them, and can observe them, since I am constantly exposed to their presence, and constantly avail myself of it. What characters, what faces, there are!

I must especially praise the Vicentines, for they offer the benefit of a large city. No one stares at you, and you can keep to yourself; yet if you approach them, they are talkative and charming, and I find the women particularly appealing. I would not wish that to seem a criticism of the Veronese women, who are well-educated with strong personalities; but they are mostly pale, and the zendale does them a disservice, since one forever seeks an attractive figure beneath the beautiful costume. Here, however, I find quite lovely creatures, especially of the dark-haired type which arouses my personal interest. There is also a blonde type, which appeals to me less.

Padua

September 26th, evening.

Today I travelled from Vicenza for four hours, crammed with all my luggage into a single-seater gig, called a *sediola*. The journey usually takes a comfortable three and a half hours; but since I wished to enjoy the glorious day, under a clear sky, I was pleased that the gig was running behind schedule. One travels southeast across a most fertile plain, between hedges and trees, without any distant views, until one sees a beautiful stretch of hills, running north to south, on the right. The abundance of vegetation and fruit festooned over the walls and hedges, and hanging from the trees, is indescribable. Pumpkins weigh down the roofs, and a most unusual type of cucumber adorns trellises and poles.

From the Padua Observatory (*La Specola, a renamed tower built by Ezzelino II da Romana, became the city's observatory in 1765*), I had a perfectly clear view of the city's magnificent location. To the north, the Tyrolean mountains, snow-covered and half-hidden in cloud, merged to the northwest with the Vicentine Alps, and finally, to the west, with the nearby Este Mountains, whose contours and hollows were clearly visible. To the southeast, stretched a sea of vegetation, without a single elevated spot:

tree after tree, bush upon bush, plantation following plantation, countless white houses, villas, and churches emerging from the greenery. On the horizon, I could clearly see St. Mark's Campanile in Venice, and other, smaller towers.

Padua, September 27th.

I have finally acquired the works of Palladio, not the original edition I saw in Vicenza, with its woodcut plates, but an exact copy, indeed a facsimile in copper, produced by an excellent man, the former English consul in Venice, Joseph Smith (*consul from 1744 to 1760, he published, in 1768, a facsimile edition of Palladio's 'I Quattro Libri dell'Architettura' of 1570*) One must give the English credit for having long appreciated what is good, and for finding so magnificent a way of disseminating it.

On the occasion of this purchase, I visited a bookshop that enjoys a special reputation in Italy. All the books are displayed, bound, around the room, and there is good company to be found there throughout the day. Any with even a passing interest in literature — clergymen, noblemen, artists — are constantly coming and going. People ask for a book, look something up, read, and converse as the mood takes them. I found about half a dozen people gathered, all of whom paid attention when I inquired about the works of Palladio. While the owner of the shop searched for the book, they praised it, and informed me about the original and the facsimile; they were familiar with both the work itself, and the author's merits. Since they took me for an architect, they commended me for having taken the time to study the works of this master before any other, claiming that he had contributed more to practical application and usage than Vitruvius himself, for he had studied the ancients and antiquity thoroughly, and had sought to make their knowledge more suited to modern needs. I talked for a long time with these affable folk, learning a little more about the city's historical landmarks, then took my leave.

Though churches are dedicated to saints, there is no reason why places in them should not be designated for monuments to people of intellect. I saw a marble bust of Cardinal Pietro Bembo Padua (*in the Basilica del Santo, by the Tuscan sculptor Danese Cattaneo*) set between Ionic columns, with a handsome, forcefully-carved face, I may say, and a luxurious beard; the inscription reads:

'Petri Bembi Card. imaginem Hier. Guerinus Ismeni f. in publico ponendam curavit ut cujus ingenii monumenta aeterna sint ejus corporis quoque memoria ne aber posteritate desideretur.'

‘Cardinal Pietro Bembo’s image was placed here, for the public, by Girolamo Guerino of Ismeno, as an eternal monument to Pietro’s genius, and so that his portrait may remain visible to posterity.’

The University of Padua, despite its grandeur, horrified me. I was glad I was not enrolled learn there. One could not imagine more cramped conditions, even though, as a student in the German academies one has to endure much as regards the lecture halls. The anatomical theatre, in particular, is a model of how to cram students together. The listeners are stacked one on top of the other in a tall pointed, funnel. They peer down, steeply, at the narrow platform on which the table is placed, and on which in turn no light falls, so that the lecturer must carry out his demonstrations by lamplight. The botanical garden (*Orto Botanico*), on the other hand, is much more cheerful and charming. Many plants can remain outside here even during the winter, if they are planted against a wall, or not far away. The whole area is then covered over at the end of October, and heated throughout the few winter months. It is both enjoyable and instructive to walk among unfamiliar vegetation. Faced with the familiar plants we observe, as well as other objects long-known to us, we tend not to think at all, and what is observation without thought? Here, amidst this newly encountered diversity, the idea that all plant forms might develop from a single form becomes ever more vivid. Only by means of such a principle would it be possible to truly determine gender and species, which, it seems to me, has so far been done most arbitrarily. At this point, I have become quite stuck as regards my botanical theories, and I do not yet see how to extricate myself. The depth and breadth of the subject seem equally difficult.

The large square, called Prato della Valle, is a very spacious area in which the main market is held in June. The wooden stalls at its centre certainly lack an attractive appearance, but the inhabitants assure me that a proper stone Market Hall, like the Fiera Verona, will soon be built here. The area surrounding the square already offers a fine site for this, offering a very beautiful and impressive view.

An enormous oval is surrounded by statues representing all the famous men who have taught and studied in Padua. Any local person or foreigner is permitted to erect a statue of a pre-determined size here in honour of any compatriot or relative, provided the person’s merit and academic presence in Padua are well proven.

A moat encircles the ellipse. On the four bridges leading up to it stand colossal statues of popes and doges; the others, smaller in size, were erected by guilds, private citizens, and foreigners. King Gustave III of Sweden commissioned a statue (*by Giovanni Farrari, in 1784*) of Gustavus Adolphus, because it is said that the latter once attended a lecture in Padua. Archduke Leopold of Tuscany has memorialised Petrarch

and Galileo (*in 1780, the sculptor was Pietro Danieletti*). The statues are made in a decent, modern style; a few are overly ornate, some quite natural in manner, all done in the costumes of their day appropriate to their rank and dignity. The inscriptions are also commendable. There is nothing tasteless or petty among them.

The idea, as executed, would be a welcome addition to any university, and most welcome at this one, since it is pleasant in the extreme to see history brought to life. It would become a truly beautiful place if they removed the wooden market stalls, and built a stone Fiera, as is the plan.

In the meeting place (*the Scoletta del Santo, adjoining the Basilica del Santo*) of the Confraternity of Saint Anthony, there are paintings reminiscent of the old German masters, including some early frescoes (*1511*) by Titian, where the major progress already evident in his art — progress that no artist north of the Alps had achieved at that time — is clearly visible. Immediately afterwards, I viewed works by some later artists, who, unable to attain the same profound degree of seriousness, nonetheless captured, successfully, the lighter aspects of their task. Giovanni Battista Piazzetta's 'The Beheading of Saint John' is, if one grants the master's manner, a rather tame painting in that style. John kneels, his hands folded before him, his right knee against a stone. He gazes toward heaven. A soldier, holding him bound from behind, turns to the side and looks into his face, as if astonished by the serenity with which the man submits. Above him stands another, who is supposed to deliver the blow, but lacks a sword; instead, he merely gestures with his hands, as if he were about to strike. Below, a third draws the sword from its scabbard. The idea is happy, if not grand; the composition is striking and of the best effect.

In the Church of the Hermits (*Chiesa degli Eremitani*), I found frescoes by Mantegna, one of the old masters, before which I stood amazed. What a sharp, assured sense of actuality these paintings convey! This utterly solid sense of reality — not a reality merely apparent, deceptive, appealing only to the imagination, but rather a robust, pure, luminous, detailed, conscientious, delicate, and circumscribed reality, which at the same time possesses an air of rigorous, industrious, and laborious effort — was adopted by subsequent painters, as I observed in paintings by Titian, so that the vitality of their genius, the energy of their nature, illuminated by the spirit of their predecessors augmented by their own strength, might rise ever higher, lift from the Earth, and bring forth heavenly, yet true, forms. Thus, art developed after the age of barbarity.

The audience hall of the town hall (*Palazzo della Ragione*), rightly titled 'Il Salone', is the most immense enclosed space imaginable, one that cannot be grasped in a moment. It is three hundred feet long, a hundred feet wide, and a hundred feet high to the vault which covers it lengthwise. The people were so accustomed to living outdoors

that the builders took a marketplace and vaulted it over. There is no doubt that the immense vaulted space evokes a unique sensation. It is an enclosed infinity, yet one related more to human beings than is the starry sky. The latter draws us out of ourselves, the former gently returns us to ourselves.

For that reason, also, I chose to linger in the Basilica di Santa Justina. It is three hundred and eighty nine feet long, relatively high and wide, simply but spaciously built. This evening, I sat in a quiet corner in silent contemplation; I felt quite alone, for no one in the world beyond, who might have been thinking of me at that moment, would have thought to have found me there.

Now it is time to pack once more; tomorrow morning I shall set out along the Brenta River. It rained today, but now it is clear again, and I hope to view the lagoons, and witness the Queen of the River (*Venice*) being wedded to the sea, in all the beauty of daylight; and to greet my friends from the depths of her embrace.

The End of Goethe's 'Italian Journey' Part III

Part IV: Venice

Venice

Thus, was it written, on my page in the Book of Fate, that, on the twenty-eighth of September 1786, at five in the early evening, according to our reckoning, I would behold Venice for the first time, enter the lagoon from the River Brenta and, shortly thereafter, reach and visit this wondrous island-city, this republic built by human beavers. And thus, thank Heaven, Venice is no longer a mere word to me, no longer the empty name that has so often tormented me, who am the mortal enemy of empty names.

As the first gondola approached our vessel (this is done to transport passengers who are in a hurry to Venice more quickly), I remembered an early childhood toy that I had not thought of for perhaps twenty years. My father owned a beautiful model gondola he had brought home from Italy; he valued it highly, and I felt greatly honoured whenever I was allowed to play with it. The first prow (*ferro*) I saw here, of gleaming sheet iron, and the first black gondola cabin (*felze*) — greeted me like old acquaintances; I savoured a pleasant, long-lost childhood memory.

I am well lodged at the Hotel 'Regina d'Inghilterra' (*the 'Queen of England' hotel, located at what is now Ramo dei Fuseri, numeri 1810-1812, where there is a commemorative plaque*), not far from St. Mark's Square, which is the great advantage of this neighbourhood; my windows overlook a narrow canal between tall buildings, with a single-arched bridge (*Ponte dei Fuseri*) directly below, and a narrow, bustling alleyway (*Calle dei Fuseri*) opposite. This is where I am staying, and this is where I will remain for a while, until my package of manuscripts for Germany is ready, or until I have had my fill of the city. The solitude for which I have often longed so deeply, I can now truly enjoy; for nowhere does one feel more alone than amidst a throng, pushing through a completely unknown crowd. In Venice, perhaps only one person is known to me, and I will not be meeting them immediately.

Venice, September 28, 1786.

My journey from Padua, in just a few words: travelling on the Brenta, on board a public vessel in civilised company (since the Italians are careful to keep to themselves), is decent and pleasant. The banks are adorned with gardens and summer houses; small villages extend right to the water's edge, and in some places, the busy high road runs immediately alongside. As one descends the river through the various locks, there are

frequent brief delays, which one can employ in looking around the countryside, and enjoying the abundant fruit on offer. Then one boards the boat again, and travels through a vibrant, fertile world, full of life.

To the many and varied images and scenes was added another image which, though of German origin, was quite in place here: two pilgrims, the first I had seen close to. They had the right to be carried downriver free of charge on this occasion; however, because the rest of the company shied away from their presence, they sat not undercover but rather at the stern with the helmsman. A rare sight in these times, the other passengers stared at them in amazement, and because in earlier times many a rascal had lurked beneath such a garb, they were held in small esteem. When I learned that they were Germans, and spoke no other language, I joined them and learned that they came from the Paderborn district (*in eastern North Rhine-Westphalia*). Both men were over fifty years of age, with dark but good-natured features. They had first visited the Shrine of the Magi together, in Cologne, then travelled through Germany, and were now on their way to Rome, then back to northern Italy, where one intended to wander back to Westphalia, while the other planned on venerating Saint James at Compostela.

Their clothing was familiar, but they looked far better dressed than we usually see them, imitated, sporting long taffeta gowns, at our masquerades. The large collar, the round hat, the walking stick, and the conch shell — the most innocent of drinking vessels — everything had its meaning, its immediate use; tin cases held their passports. But most remarkable were their small red morocco wallets; these contained every little gadget that could possibly satisfy one's simple needs. They had taken them out after finding holes in their clothes that needed mending.

The helmsman, most pleased to have found an interpreter, allowed me to ask them various questions; through this, I learned much about their views, especially concerning their journey. They complained bitterly about their fellow believers, even secular priests and monks. Piety, they said, must now be a very rare thing, because no one anywhere believed in theirs, and they were treated almost entirely like vagrants in Catholic lands, even though they presented evidence of their prescribed ecclesiastical route, and their episcopal passports. They recounted, with emotion, how well they had been received by the Protestants, especially by a country priest in Swabia, but above all by his wife, who had managed to persuade her somewhat-reluctant husband to permit her to provide them with the ample refreshment they so desperately needed. Indeed, upon their departure, she had given them a 'Conventionsthaler' (*Konventionstaler, a thaler struck in 1750, on the adoption of the Viennese standard coin*), which proved very useful to them as soon as they re-entered Catholic territory. To this, one of them added, with all the solemnity he was capable of: 'We also include

this woman in our daily prayers, and ask God to open her eyes as He opened her heart to us, that He may, albeit belatedly, receive her into the bosom of the one and only saving Church. And so, we certainly hope to meet her one day in Paradise.'

Of all this, while sitting on the small gangplank leading to the deck, I explained what was necessary and useful, to the helmsman and a few others who had crowded from the cabin into the cramped space. The pilgrims were given some meagre refreshments, for Italians are not fond of charitable giving. They then produced small, consecrated slips of paper, on which was a picture of the Three Magi along with Latin prayers of veneration. The pilgrims asked me to kindly distribute them among the small group, and give them to understand the great value of these paper slips. I achieved some slight success in this; for when the two seemed perplexed as to how they were to find the monastery designated for pilgrims amidst the vast city of Venice, the helmsman, suitably impressed, promised that as soon as they landed, he would offer some youth or other three marks to guide them to that distant place. He added, as an aside, that they would find little comfort there: the institution, designed to accommodate I know not how many pilgrims, had recently fallen into disuse, and its grant was being used for other purposes.

Thus entertained, I travelled down the beautiful Brenta, leaving behind many a splendid garden and palace, and glancing fleetingly at prosperous, bustling towns along the shore. As we entered the lagoon, several gondolas immediately swarmed around the boat. A Lombard, well-acquainted with Venice, urged me to join him so that we might enter more quickly, and avoid the Doge's custom-house. By means of a modest bribe, he managed to dissuade the few officials who tried to delay us, and so, beneath the rays of a bright sunset, we sped swiftly towards our destination.

September 29th, Michaelmas, in the evening.

Much has already been written and said about Venice, so I will be not too verbose in my description; I shall merely record what struck me. What impresses me most of all is, once again, the people, a vast mass, who live a directionless existence based on need.

This people did not seek out these islands for pleasure; nor was it arbitrariness that drove those who followed to join them; necessity taught them to seek security in the most disadvantageous of situations, which has later proved so advantageous, and displayed their wisdom, when the entire northern world was still gripped by darkness; increase and wealth were a necessary consequence. Now the dwellings became crowded ever closer together, the sand and marsh were replaced by rocks and stone, their houses sought the light, like trees densely packed and striving to gain in height what they lack in width. Treasuring every inch of ground and crammed into a narrow

space from the outset, they left no more width in the alleys than was necessary to separate one row of houses from the houses opposite, and provide the citizens with a rudimentary passageway. Moreover, water served as their streets, squares, and promenades. The Venetian had to become a new kind of creature, just as Venice can only be compared to herself. The grand, serpentine canal yields to no road in the world; nothing can truly rival the space in front of St. Mark's Square, by which I mean the vast expanse of water that, on this side of Venice proper, forms a crescent moon. Above the water, to the left, one sees the island of San Giorgio Maggiore, a little further to the right the Giudecca and its canal, and still further to the right the Dogana (*Customs House*) and the entrance to the Grand Canal, where a few enormous marble churches immediately catch the eye. These, in a nutshell, are the main features that I gazed at when emerging from between the two columns of St. Mark's Square. All these views and perspectives have been engraved so frequently on copper that those who have appreciated them can easily summon a vivid impression.

After dinner I hastened to gain a sense of the whole place and, without a guide, taking account only of the cardinal directions, plunged into the labyrinth of the city, which, although thoroughly crisscrossed by canals and waterways, is connected also by bridges and footbridges. One cannot grasp the narrowness and density of the whole without seeing it. Usually, one can measure the width of an alleyway with outstretched arms, almost or completely; in the narrowest, one's elbows are already touching the walls if one puts one's hands on one's hips; there are wider alleyways, and here and there a small square, but relatively speaking, everything may be termed narrow.

I found the Grand Canal and the Rialto Bridge readily enough; the latter consists of a single arch of white marble. From above, there is a magnificent view: the canal teeming with vessels, mainly bringing all kinds of supplies from the mainland, docking and unloading there, and interspersed with gondolas. Especially today, at Michaelmas, the scene was wonderfully vibrant; but to describe it adequately, I must elaborate a bit further.

The two main parts of Venice, separated by the Grand Canal, are connected by the Rialto Bridge, but there are also several other means of communication, involving open boats at designated crossing points. Today, it was a beautiful sight to see the well-dressed women, many of them veiled in black, crossing over to the celebrated Church of the Archangel (*La Chiesa di San Raffaele Arcangelo, in the Dorsoduro district*). I left the bridge, and walked to one of these crossing points to observe the passengers disembarking. I found some very beautiful faces and figures among them.

Feeling tired, I boarded a gondola, leaving the narrow streets behind, and, seeking the opposite spectacle, sailed along the northern part of the Grand Canal, around the island of Santa Chiara (*then a monastic site*), into the lagoon, ascending the Giudecca

Canal, towards St. Mark's Square. I felt, suddenly, like a fellow ruler of the Adriatic, as every Venetian feels when reclining in a gondola. I thought with veneration of my good father, who knew nothing better than to recount such things. Will it be the same for me? Everything around me is worthy of note, a great and respected work assembled by human strength, a magnificent monument, not to a ruler, but to a people. And even if its lagoons gradually fill up, if foul vapours hang over the marsh, its trade weakens, its power diminishes, the entire structure of the Republic and its essence will not be a moment less venerable to the observer. It is merely subject to time, like everything that has a passing existence.

September 30th.

Towards evening, lacking a guide, I lost myself once more in the furthest reaches of the city. The bridges here are all stepped so that gondolas, and presumably larger vessels as well, can easily pass beneath the arches. I tried to find my way about this labyrinth, without asking for directions, relying once again solely on the cardinal points of the compass. One does eventually untangle oneself, and an unbelievably intricate process it is, yet my method of experiencing it all, through the senses, is the best. I also took note of the behaviour, lifestyle, customs, and character of the inhabitants in each inhabited corner; they were different in every quarter. Good Lord! What a poor, if good, creature mankind is!

Many small houses stand directly beside the canals, but here and there are beautifully-paved stone causeways where one can stroll pleasantly amidst water, churches, and palaces. The long stone causeway on the northern side is particularly charming and delightful, offering views of the islands, especially Murano, a miniature Venice. The lagoons in between are bustling with gondolas.

September 30th, evening.

Today I broadened my understanding of Venice once again, by obtaining a map. After studying it a while, I ascended St. Mark's Campanile, where a spectacular sight unfolded before my eyes. It was midday and bright sunshine, so that I could clearly distinguish objects far and near without the aid of a spyglass. The tide covered the lagoons, and when I turned my gaze towards the Lido so-called (a narrow strip of land that encloses the lagoons), I saw the sea for the first time, and a few sails. Galleys and frigates were anchored in the lagoons themselves, a fleet destined to join the naval commander Angelo Emo, who is waging war against the Algerians, but stranded here due to unfavourable winds. The Paduan and Vicentine mountains, and the Tyrolean Alps, completed the picture beautifully for me, from evening to midnight.

October 1st.

I went about, and observed the city from various perspectives, and since it was Sunday, I noticed the filthy state of the streets, which compelled me to reflect. There is certainly some kind of policy in force; people sweep the mess into corners, and I also see large vessels sailing to and fro, which moor at certain points, and carry away the piles of excrement — this is done by folk from the surrounding islands who us it as manure. But there is neither consistency nor rigour in these efforts, and the filth is all the more inexcusable, since the place was designed entirely for cleanliness, like Dutch cities.

The streets are paved; even in the most remote quarters they are at least edged with brick; and where necessary slightly raised in the middle, with gutters on the sides to collect the water and direct it into covered channels. Other architectural features of this initially well-planned layout testify to the intent of its excellent builders to create in Venice the purest of cities, as well as the most unusual. I could not resist drafting a suggested course of action regarding the matter, while out for a stroll, and mentally prepared it for some police chief who might take it seriously. One always has the urge, and desire, to sweep other people's doorsteps.

October 2, 1786.

First thing of all, I hurried to the Carità (*The Scuola Grande della Carità, founded in 1260, now part of the Galleria dell'Accademia)*: Palladio's works indicated his plan (*devised around 1560*) for a monastic building there, by means of which he had intended to portray an example of the private residences of the wealthy and hospitable ancients. The plan, excellently drawn, both as a whole and in its individual details, had given me boundless pleasure, and I hoped to find a marvel; but, alas, barely a tenth of it was completed; yet even that part is worthy of his celestial genius, a perfection in the design, and a precision in the execution, such as I had never seen before. One might spend years contemplating such a work. It seems to me that I have seen nothing nobler, nothing more perfect, and I believe I am not mistaken in this. But conceive the excellence of this architect, born with an innate sense for the grand and yet pleasing, who first, with studious and exceptional labour, studies ancient designs in order to recreate them in his own work. He found here an opportunity to execute a favoured idea: to erect a monastery, intended as a dwelling for so many monks, and a hostel for so many strangers, in the form of an ancient private building.

The church (*Santa Maria della Carità*) was already there; from it, one enters an atrium of Corinthian columns, and one is enraptured, instantly forgetting all things

clerical. On one side is the sacristy, on the other a chapter house, next to it the most beautiful, open-welled, spiral staircase in the world, with a broad, central column, the stone steps built into the wall and set in such a way that each supports the next; one never tires of ascending it and descending; how beautifully it turned out can be deduced from the fact that Palladio himself declared it 'excellent'. From the forecourt, one enters the large inner courtyard. Of the building that was to surround it, unfortunately, only the left side has been erected: three orders of columns one above the other, halls on the ground floor, an arcade on the first floor in front of the monks' cells, and on the upper floor a wall with windows. But this description should be corroborated by viewing the remnants of his plan. Now a word about the execution.

Only the heads and bases of the columns, and the keystones of the arches, are made of hewn stone; the rest — I can hardly say of brick, but certainly fired clay. I have never seen such a use of clay. The frieze and cornice are also made so, as are the sections of the arch, all partially fired, and the building finally assembled with just a little mortar. It stands as if cast from a single mould. If the whole thing had been finished, and one could see it neatly cleaned and painted, it would be a heavenly sight.

However, the project was too ambitious, as is the case with many a modern building. The artist had not only assumed that the existing monastery would be demolished, but also that adjacent houses would be purchased, and that, it appears, is where both money and enthusiasm may have failed. Dear Fate, who favour and perpetuate so much folly, why did you prevent the completion of this work!

October 3rd.

The facade of Il Redentore (*Chiesa del Santissimo Redentore*), a large and beautiful, church, designed by Palladio, is even more commendable than that of his San Giorgio Maggiore. These edifices, engraved several times on copper, really need to be seen in person to fully grasp what is said of them. Here, I shall add only a few words.

Palladio was thoroughly imbued with the spirit of antiquity and felt the pettiness and narrowness of his age; like any great man he refused simply to surrender to it, but rather transformed what remained to him, as far as possible, according to his noble ideals. He was dissatisfied, as I gathered from a discreet turn of phrase in his book implying that Christian churches still continued to be built in the form of ancient basilicas; he therefore sought to approximate his sacred buildings to the ancient temple form. This resulted in certain imperfections, which I find successfully resolved in Il Redentore, but which seem over-conspicuous in San Giorgio. Johann Volkmann says something about this, but misses the point entirely.

Il Redentore is equally exquisite within; everything, including the design of the altars, is by Palladio; unfortunately, the niches, which should be filled with statues, are adorned with flat, painted, wooden, cut-out figures.

October 3rd.

In honour of Saint Francis, the Capuchin friars have lavishly decorated a side altar; nothing of stone was visible except the Corinthian capitals; everything else appeared to be covered with tasteful, magnificent embroidery in the style of arabesque, and so neatly done that one could not hope to see like work of greater value. I was particularly amazed by the broad, gold-embroidered tendrils and foliage. I went closer and discovered an ingenious deception. Everything I had taken for gold was, in fact, flattened straw, glued to paper, following the most beautiful designs, the background painted with vibrant colours, and indeed so varied and tasteful in execution that the result, the material used for which was utterly worthless, and which was probably created in the monastery itself, would have cost several thousand thalers if it had been genuine. It might perhaps be imitated, now and then.

On a quay overlooking the water, I have often noted a little fellow telling stories in Venetian dialect to a larger or smaller group of listeners. Unfortunately, I cannot understand a word, but no one laughs; only rarely do the audience, which usually consists of members of the lowest class, smile. There is nothing striking or ridiculous about the man's manner, but rather something very composed, yet at the same time there is an admirable variety and precision in his gestures, which suggests artistry and reflection.

October 3rd.

Map in hand, I sought to find my way, through curious and labyrinthine passages, to the Church of the Mendicants (*San Lazzaro dei Mendicanti, now the chapel of the Civic Hospital of Venice*). Here is the music conservatory, which is currently enjoying the greatest acclaim. The girls were performing an oratorio behind the screen (*a metal grille, still extant*); the church was full of listeners, the music very beautiful, and the voices magnificent. An alto sang the part of King Saul, the main character in the piece. I had never known such a voice before; some passages of the music were infinitely beautiful, the text perfectly singable, its Latin so Italianated that one was obliged to smile at times; but music covers a broad field here.

It would have been a truly delightful experience if the accursed *maestro di capella* had not been sounding the beat with a roll of sheet music so loudly, striking it against

the grille, as if he were teaching novices. Since the girls had performed the piece many times, his attentions were entirely unnecessary, and ruined the whole effect, just as if someone, wishing us to appreciate a beautiful statue, were to stick scarlet patches on all the joints. The extraneous sound destroyed all harmony. Now, here was a musician, and yet he was unaware of the effect, or rather, he wished his presence to be noted, in this unseemly manner, when it would have been better if he had let his worth be deduced from the perfection of the performance. I know the French are prone to this fault; I would not have expected it of the Italians, yet the public seems accustomed to it. It's not the first time that a conductor has allowed themself to believe that what is in fact ruining the audience's enjoyment is somehow enhancing it.

October 3rd.

Last night, I attended the opera at the Teatro San Moisè theatre; the theatres take their name from the church they are closest to; the performance was not particularly enjoyable! The libretto, the music, and the singers lacked inner energy, which alone can elevate such a thing to its highest point attainable. Not that any part was bad; but only that the two female leads seemed more concerned with posing, and pleasing, than with acting well. That at least gained them something. They had attractive figures, and good voices, and well-mannered, lively, gracious personalities. Among the men, however, there was no trace of inner power, or desire to impress the audience, nor was there a single truly commanding voice.

The ballet, a wretched invention, was condemned as a whole, but some excellent male and female dancers, the latter of whom considered it their duty to make the spectators familiar with every attractive part of their bodies, were enthusiastically applauded.

October 3rd.

Today, though, I witnessed a different performance, that of a 'comedy' which pleased me more. In the Ducal Palace, I observed a law case, one being heard in public; it was an important matter, and, fortunately for me, was being conducted during the holidays. One of the advocates was an extreme version of a stage buffoon: short and fat, but lively, with an exaggeratedly prominent profile, a voice of bronze, and a vehement delivery, as if he were deadly serious about what he was saying. I call it a comedy since everything is probably decided before the public performance takes place; the judges know what to say, and the parties what to expect. However, I find this kind of thing infinitely more agreeable than our sittings, held in private courts, and

offices. I will now attempt to give some idea of the circumstances, and how politely, and how naturally, without pomp, everything proceeds.

In a spacious hall of the palace, the judges were seated in a semicircle at one side. Opposite them, on a platform large enough to seat several people side by side, sat the lawyers for both parties, and directly in front of them, on a bench, were the plaintiff and defendant. The plaintiff's lawyer had stepped down from the lectern, as today's hearing was not intended to be contested. All the documents for and against, though already printed, were to be read aloud. A gaunt scribe in a shabby black coat, a thick notebook in his hand, prepared to fulfil his duty as speaker. The hall, incidentally, was packed with spectators and listeners. The legal question itself, as well as the individuals it concerned, must have seemed to the Venetians to be of the utmost importance.

In the Venetian state, entailed estates enjoy the privilege of absolute security; a property once so designated retains its character for all eternity, even if it has been sold several centuries ago through some turn of events or chance circumstance, and has passed through many hands since; ultimately, if the estate's true status comes to light, the descendants of the initial owners are held to be in the right, and the estate must be surrendered.

This time the dispute was of the utmost importance, for the lawsuit was brought against the Doge himself (*Paolo Renier, Doge from 1779-1789*), or rather against his wife (*Margherita Dalmet, born in Constantinople, a former tightrope dancer, referred to by the Venetian aristocracy, as 'La Falsa Dogaressa'*), who sat in person on the bench, wrapped in her zendale, separated from the plaintiff only by a narrow space. She is a lady 'of a certain age' (*she was forty-six to forty-seven years old at the time*), with a noble physique and a well-formed face, on which a serious, even somewhat sullen expression if you will, could be seen. The Venetians were proud of the fact that even a princess was obliged to appear before the court, and in her own palace too.

The clerk began to read, and only now did the role of this little fellow seated on a low stool, behind a small table close to the lawyers' lectern, in the presence of the judges, become clear to me; and especially the significance of the hourglass placed before him. While the clerk is reading aloud, time stands still; whereas the lawyers, if they wish to speak, are only granted a fixed allocation of time overall in which to do so. The clerk reads, the hourglass rests in a horizontal position, the little fellow holding it still. As soon as the lawyer opens his mouth, the hourglass is raised upright, but is immediately lowered to the horizontal again if he falls silent. Herein lies the lawyer's great opportunity: to interrupt the clerk's flow as he is reading, and make fleeting remarks, so as to attract and demand attention. Now, that little Saturn (*the Roman*

equivalent of the Greek Chronos, the personification of time) finds himself in the greatest of predicaments. He is obliged to alter the horizontal or vertical position of the hourglass at every moment; he is in the situation of those evil spirits in the traditional puppet show (*of the medieval 'Faust', the source of Goethe's verse drama*), who, summoned or released by the use of the magical words 'Berliche' and 'Berloche' respectively, uttered in rapid succession by the wilful buffoon (*Hanswurst*), know not whether to appear or vanish.

Anyone who has heard legal arguments presented in court can imagine what the reading was like: rapid, monotonous, yet clear and articulate enough. The skilful lawyer knows how to relieve the boredom with a joke or two, and the audience delights in these jests, giving way to uncontained laughter. I must mention one joke in particular, the most striking of those which I understood. The clerk had just recited the contents of a document by means of which one of the 'unjustly-designated' owners had disposed of the property in question. The lawyer asked him to read more slowly, and when the latter plainly uttered the words, 'I give, I bequeath!', the lawyer launched into a furious attack, shouting: 'What would you give? What bequeath? You devil of an impoverished wretch! You own nothing in all the world! And,' he continued, as if composing himself once more, 'that illustrious owner was in precisely the same situation; he desired to give, desired to bequeath, that which belonged to him no more than it does to you.' A deal of laughter erupted, but the hourglass instantly returned to its horizontal position. The reader continued reciting, pulling a face at the lawyer, though the jokes are all prearranged.

October 4th.

Yesterday I went to see a comedy, at the Teatro San Luca, which I thoroughly enjoyed; an improvised play performed in masks, with great naturalness, energy, and bravura. Of course, not all the actors and actresses were of equal ability; 'Pantalone' was very well-behaved, and one of the female players, forceful and attractive, though not in herself an extraordinary actress, spoke excellently, and knew how to conduct herself on stage. The piece was an extravaganza, similar to the one we have at home called 'Der Verschlag' (*'The Shack'; the piece was being performed in the style of Commedia dell'arte*). Its inexhaustible variety entertained us for more than three hours. Here, too, the people provide the foundation upon which everything rests; the audience participates, and the crowd joins with the theatre company to form a single entity. Throughout the day, in the squares and on the quays, in the gondolas and in the palazzos, buyers and sellers, beggars, boatmen, neighbours, lawyers and their opponents — all are alive and bustling, engaged in life, speaking and declaiming, shouting and bidding, singing and acting, cursing and roaring. And in the evening,

they go to the theatre and see and hear their daily life repeated, artificially re-enacted, politely embellished, interwoven with faery tales, distanced from reality by the actors' and actresses' masks, and brought nearer to it by the portrayal of their customs and manners. They rejoice in it all, like children, shouting, clapping, and making a noise. From daybreak to nightfall, indeed from midnight to midnight, all things are exactly the same.

However, I have not seen more natural acting anywhere despite the masks, such as can only be achieved with an exceptionally happy talent, and through lengthy practice.

As I write this, the crowd are making a tremendous racket on the quay beneath my window, and midnight has passed. They are forever gathered together for good or ill.

October 4th.

I have now heard various public orators: three fellows, in the square and on the stony shore, each relating tales in his own way, as well as two lawyers, two preachers, and the actors, among whom I must especially praise the man who played Pantalone. All had something in common, both because they were of one and the same nation, a nation which, living forever in public, is forever engaged in passionate speech, and because they imitated one another. In addition, there is a certain language of gestures, with which they accompany their expressions of intent, sentiment, and feeling.

Today, on the feast of Saint Francis, I was in his church, Chiesa di San Francesco della Vigna. The Capuchin friar's loud voice mingled with the shouts of the vendors in front of the church, in the manner of an antiphon; I was standing in the church doorway between the two, and it sounded quite strange.

October 5th.

This morning, I visited the Arsenale, always interesting to me, since I know nothing about maritime affairs, and viewed the lower school there; it looks now like an old family-owned manufactory, one that is still active though the time of its greatest prosperity, and production capability is long gone. As I followed the craftsmen about, I saw many remarkable things, and climbed on board a ship of eighty-four cannons, whose frame was complete.

A similar vessel burned to the ground six months ago beside the Riva degli Schiavoni; the powder magazine was not very full, and because the vessel split open, not too much damage was caused. The neighbouring houses lost their windows.

I saw the finest oak timber from Istria being worked, and while doing so, reflected quietly on the growth of that valuable tree. I cannot overstate how my hard-won knowledge of natural materials, which mankind needs and uses, helps me in understanding the methods employed by artists and craftsmen; thus, my knowledge of the mountains and the stone extracted from them is also of great advantage to my art.

October 5th.

To sum up the concept of the Bucentaur (*the ceremonial barge of the Doges of Venice*) in a single word, I would call it a magnificent 'galley'. The older ones, of which we still have depictions, justify this name even more than the current one, which blinds us to its origins with its splendour.

I always return to my former opinion. When an artist is presented with a real subject, he can create something truly authentic. Here, its creator was tasked with crafting a galley worthy of carrying the heads of the Republic to the traditional sacrament of their maritime rule, on the most solemn of days (*On Ascension Day, the Festa della Sensa, till 1798 when Napoleon had it destroyed, the galley carried the Doge out into the Adriatic to perform the 'Marriage with the Sea' – a ceremony in which the city was symbolically wedded to the waves*) and the task was and has been accomplished superbly. This version (*launched in 1729*) is entirely ornamental — one might say overloaded with decorative work — covered entirely by gilded carving, and serving no other purpose than as a veritable 'monstrance' to display the leaders of the people in a state of absolute splendour. For we know that the people, just as they like to decorate their hats, also desire to see their leaders splendidly adorned. This magnificent ship is a true inventory piece, whereby one can see what the Venetians once were, and considered themselves to be.

October 5th, written at night.

I have emerged from viewing a tragedy still laughing, and must immediately set down the cause of my amusement on paper. The play was not at all bad; the author had gathered all the various tragic elements together, and the actors performed well. Most of the situations involved were familiar, some were new and quite delightful. There were two fathers who hated each other, the sons and daughters from these opposing families being passionately in love with each other, indeed, one couple had secretly married. The action became savage and wild, and in the end, nothing could suffice to render the young people happy but for the two fathers to stab each other, whereupon the curtain fell to lively applause. Thereon the applause grew louder, shouts of 'Fuora!'

(‘*Come forth!*’), were heard, and this continued until the two main couples deigned to appear from behind the curtain, bow and then exit the stage on the far side.

The audience were still not satisfied; they continued clapping and shouting, ‘I morti!’ (*‘The dead men!’*) This went on until the two ‘corpses’ also appeared and bowed, at which point various voices were heard shouting: ‘Bravi i morti!’ They were detained on stage by this applause for a long while until they, too, were finally allowed to exit. The farce gains immense appeal for a member of the audience who, like myself, has the ‘Bravo! Bravi!’ that the Italians are always shouting, in their ears, and then hears the ‘dead’ being summoned to appear by use of this same cry of praise.

‘Goodnight!’ is something we Northerners may say at any time when departing in the dark, but the Italians say: ‘Felicissima notte!’ only once, namely when a candle is brought into one’s room, to mark the end of day and the beginning of night, and then it means something subtly different. Such are the untranslatable peculiarities of every language; for from the most potent to the least of words, everything is modified by the characteristics of those who speak it, whether due to their character, sentiments, or circumstance.

October 6th.

Yesterday’s performance of the tragedy taught me many things. Firstly, I was able to hear how the Italians handle and declaim their eleven-syllable iambs; then I understood how cleverly Carlo Gozzi, the playwright, had combined masked players and tragic characters. That is true drama to this audience; they wish to be moved in a forthright way; they lack a heartfelt, tender sympathy for the tragic, they are only concerned that the hero speaks well; since they value speech highly, but they like to be amused, or see something foolish enacted too.

They react to the action as they would to real events. When the tyrant handed his sword to his son, and demanded that the latter kill his own wife, who was standing opposite, the people began to express, loudly, their displeasure at this ultimatum, and the play almost came to a halt. They demanded that the old man take back his sword, which, of course, would have ruined the plot. Finally, the beleaguered son advanced resolutely to the proscenium, and begged them, humbly, to wait but a moment longer when the matter would unfold entirely as they wished. Even from an artistic point of view, however, the situation evoked was absurd, and quite unnatural given the circumstances, and I commend the people for their sensitivity.

Now I have gained a better understanding of the lengthy speeches, and the constant back and forth, of the Greek tragedies. The Athenians liked listening to speeches, and

were even better at it than are the Italians; from the cases in the law courts, where they would spend the day, they actually learned something useful.

October 6th.

In Palladio's completed buildings, especially his churches, I find much that is objectionable alongside what is quite exquisite. When I consider whether I am right or wrong in my assessment of that extraordinary man, it is as if he were standing beside me, saying: 'I executed this or that against my will, but I did so, nonetheless, because, under the given circumstances, it was the only way I could approach the noblest ideal more closely.'

It seems to me, the more I reflect on it, that when considering the height and width of an existing church, or an older mansion, the facades for which he was commissioned to design, Palladio thought only: 'How do I grant these spaces the greatest possible form? As regards some of the detail, I will be obliged to remove or botch something as need arises, and here and there some unseemliness will arise, yet be that as it may, the whole will have a noble effect, and I will be working on what pleases me.'

And so, he carried out the grand idea in his mind, even when it was somewhat inappropriate, and he was obliged to constrain and mutilate it in detail.

The east wing of the monastery of the Carità (*Santa Maria della Carità, along with the monastery and the Scuola Grande, now houses the Gallerie dell'Accademia*), on the other hand, seems of such high worth precisely because the artist had free rein, and was allowed to pursue his own vision without reservation. Had the monastery been completed, perhaps no more perfect work of architecture would exist in the entire world today.

How he thought, and worked, becomes ever clearer to me, the more I read his text, and note how he treats the architecture of the ancients; he uses few words, but they are all of weight. The fourth book, which depicts ancient temples, is a fine introduction to the extraction of meaning from such ancient remains.

October 6th.

Last night I saw 'Electre' by Crébillon (*the tragedy by Prosper Jolyot de Crébillon, the Elder, of 1709*) at the Teatro San Giovanni Crisostomo (*Teatro Malibran since 1835, re-named after the soprano Maria Malibran*), performed according to a translated text. I cannot express how tasteless I found the play, and how dreadfully tedious the performance.

The actors, in fact, are fine as regards their manner, and know how to entertain the audience with passages of oratory. 'Orestes' alone was given three different poetically-embellished speeches, in one scene. 'Electra', a pretty actress of medium height and force, with an almost French vivacity and like good manners, spoke her lines beautifully, but overacted madly from beginning to end, as the role unfortunately demands. However, I have learned something new. The Italian iambic, eleven syllables long, is very awkward as regards declamatory speech, because the last syllable is quite short, and causes a sharp and involuntary rise in pitch.

October 6th.

This morning, I attended the High Mass, which the Doge is obliged to attend annually, on this day, in the Chiesa di Santa Giustina (*now deconsecrated*) to celebrate an ancient victory over the Turks (*the Battle of Lepanto, 1571*). When the gilded barges carrying the Doge, and members of the nobility, reach the little square; and the strangely dressed boatmen strain at the red-painted oars; and the clergy and members of the various confraternities standing on the shore with lit candles set on poles, and in portable silver candlesticks, crowd each other, and surge about, as they wait; and carpeted bridges are stretched from the vessels to the shore; and first the long purple robes of the Savii (*the five senior magistrates*), and then the red ones of the senators, unfurl on the quay; and finally the old Doge, adorned with his golden Phrygian cap, steps out in the longest, golden robe and an ermine mantle, and three servants take hold of his train, all in that little square before the portal of the church, in front of whose doors the captured Turkish flags are raised, one might imagine oneself as witnessing a scene from some old woven tapestry, well-designed and brightly-coloured. The ceremony brought myself, a refugee from the North, much joy. In our culture, where all celebrations are carried out in dress-jackets, and where the greatest of them imaginable are celebrated with shouldered arms, something like this would be unwelcome. In Venice trailing robes, and un-militaristic ceremonies, seem fitting.

The current Doge (*Paolo Renier*) is a handsome and well-educated individual, who seemed unwell, but for the sake of his dignity held himself bolt upright beneath his heavy robes. In other regards, he looks like the grandfather of the entire people, and is very kind and affable; his clothes suit him well, and the cap beneath his Phrygian one is inoffensive, resting as it does, itself finely made and transparent, on the whitest, and finest hair in the world.

About fifty noblemen in long, dark red, trailing gowns accompanied him, mostly handsome men, with not a single uncouth figure among them; several of them tall, with broad heads, which their blond curly wigs suited; their features prominent, the

flesh soft and white, without appearing flabby or repulsive; and all exhibiting an intelligent, effortless, calm, self-assured, lightness of being, coupled with a high degree of cheerfulness.

Once everything in the church was in place and the High Mass began, the members of the confraternities (*called Scuole, these brotherhoods were composed of groups of non-patrician citizens, with a common interest, who were excluded from the oligarchic government*) entered through the main door, and exited through the right hand door, after receiving holy water in pairs, and bowing towards the high altar, the Doge, and the nobility.

October 6th.

This evening, I arranged to hear the famous song of the gondoliers, who chant the verses of Tasso and Ariosto set to their own melodies. It had to be pre-arranged, as it is not a common occurrence, but rather belongs to a half-forgotten tradition of bygone days. I boarded a gondola, by moonlight, one singer in front, the other at the stern; they began their song, and sang verse after verse, in turn. The melodies, as we know from Rousseau (*Jean-Jacques Rousseau highlighted the 'barcarolles' of the Venetian boatmen in his 'Dictionary of Music', 1767*), are a hybrid between chorale and recitative; they always maintain the same flow throughout, without fixed metre. The modulation is also the same, both pitch and metre changing according to the content of the verse, with a kind of exclamation at the point of change. The spirit, however, the life of it all, can be understood as follows:

Without investigating how the melodies came about; suffice to say that they are the sort of thing an idle person, humming various tunes, might employ as the setting for a poem they know by heart.

With a penetrating voice — the people value forcefulness above all — the gondolier, seated on the shore of an island, or the quayside of a canal, or on his gondola, tries to send his song as far as he can. It spreads across the still surface. In the distance, another gondolier hears it, who, knowing the melody and the words, responds with the next verse; the first then replies, each seeming to echo the other, as it were. The song lasts through the night, entertaining without tiring them. The farther apart they are, the more charming the effect can be: when the listener is placed between them, he is in the perfect spot.

To allow me to gain the full effect, they disembarked on the banks of the Giudecca, and took up opposite positions along the canal, while I walked back and forth between them, from the one who was about to begin singing to the one who had finished. Only then did the song achieve its maximum impact. With the voices arising from afar, the

sound is most strange, like a lament yet not caused by sorrow, though the result is enough to move one to tears. I attributed it to my mood; but my old boatman merely said: '*È singolare, come quel canto intenerisce, e molto più quando è più ben cantato*: it is extraordinary, how touching the song is, and more so when it is sung well.' He wished I could hear the women from the Lido, especially those in Malamocco and Pellestrina, for they too sang Tasso to the same and similar melodies. He added: 'Their custom, when the men are out fishing at sea, is to sit on the shore, at evening, and let their songs ring out in penetrating tones, until they can hear the men's voices replying from afar and so converse with them.' Is that not a beautiful concept? Though, one might well imagine that a nearby listener would find little pleasure in listening to their voices struggling to outdo the waves. But the idea of such singing is truly human; verses, over whose lifeless letters we might otherwise rack our brains, suddenly springing to life, borne by the melody. It is the song of a solitary spirit sounding over a vast distance, so that another, like-minded spirit, might hear and answer.

October 8th.

I visited the Palazzo Pisani Moretta (*on the Grand Canal*) today, because of a magnificent painting by Paolo Veronese. It depicts the female members of Darius III's family kneeling before Alexander and Hephaestus (*the painting, 'The Family of Darius before Alexander' was purchased for the National Gallery, London in 1857*); the mother, kneeling in front, mistakes the latter for the king, but he rejects this and points to the man on his left. The story goes that the artist was well-received in the palazzo, and entertained most honourably for a considerable time; and that he secretly painted the picture and, as a gift, rolled it up, and left it under the bed. It certainly deserves to have a unique tale of that sort attached to it, for it gives us a sense of the master's true skill. His great artistic talent, exemplified here not by a general tone imposed on the entire work, but rather by creating the most exquisite harmony through artfully distributed light and shadow, and by equally wisely-chosen alternating colours, is clearly evident here, the painting being perfectly preserved and as fresh as if it were painted yesterday. As soon as a painting of this kind suffers any surface deterioration, our enjoyment is, of course, immediately diminished, without our quite knowing why or to what degree.

Anyone wishing to argue with the artist about the use of costume contemporary to his period, may be answered simply by saying that the painting was intended to depict a scene from the sixteenth century, and that settles the matter. The progression of the figures from Darius' mother (*Sisygambis*) to his wife (*Stateira I*) and his eldest daughter (*Stateira II*) is perfectly done and most felicitous; the youngest princess

(*Drypetis*), kneeling, on the right, behind the others, is a pretty little thing with a charming, headstrong, and defiant face; she seems quite displeased with her position.

For October 8th.

My old gift, that of seeing the world through the eyes of the painter whose pictures I have just studied, led me to a thought of my own. It is evident that one's power of vision is shaped by the objects beheld from childhood upwards, and thus a Venetian painter must see everything as brighter and more cheerful than others. We, who live where the background is sometimes dark, dusty, and colourless, where the sun's rays are obscured, and perhaps in cramped quarters, are unable to derive an equally cheerful outlook merely from within.

As I sailed the lagoon in bright sunshine, watching the gondoliers, lightly poised, colourfully dressed, rowing with their single oar from the platforms of their gondolas, silhouetted against the blue air, their shadows falling on the bright green surface, I felt myself to be viewing a finest, freshest painting of the Venetian school. The sunshine highlighted the local colours, dazzlingly; the shadows so luminous in tone that they could have been used as highlights in their own right. The same was true of the reflections from the sea-green water. Everything was painted in bright colours, the foaming waves and the flashes of light necessarily adding the finishing touch.

Titian and Veronese embraced this clarity in the highest degree, and where it is not found in their works, it is because the original surface has been lost, or painted over.

The domes and vaults of St. Mark's Basilica, along with its facades, are richly decorated, with colourful figures on a gold background, all in mosaic work; some are quite good, others poor, depending on the masters who designed the original cartoon.

It struck me, deeply, that everything in art ultimately depends on our first invention, and that this invention possesses the right measure, and contains the true spirit, of the work, since one can reproduce, not even always in the most elegant way, both good and bad in mosaic with square pieces of glass. The art that covered the floors of the ancient world, and the arched heavens of the Christian basilicas, has now degenerated into adorning snuff-boxes and the clasps of bracelets. These present times are worse than one may think.

October 8th.

In the Farsetti house (*Ca' Farsetti, called 'The Versailles of the Doges'*), there is a valuable collection of casts of the finest antiquities. I will refrain from mentioning those I had already seen, in Mannheim and elsewhere, and will only mention more

recent acquaintances. A Cleopatra in colossal serenity, the asp about her arm, asleep in death; also, a Niobe, the mother covering her youngest daughter with her cloak to ward off Apollo's arrows; then various gladiators; a spirit resting his wings; and seated and standing philosophers.

These are works that the world can enjoy and learn from for millennia, without exhausting the value of such art in developing one's thought.

Many important busts transport me back to those ancient days of glory. Sadly, I feel how far behind I trail as regards my state of knowledge, but progress will be made; at least I see the way forward. Palladio opened it to me also, the path to all art and life. It may sound a little strange, but not as paradoxical as when Jakob Böhme, upon seeing a pewter bowl, was enlightened (*in 1610*) as to nature of the universe, by the planet Jupiter's radiance. Also in this collection, I saw a fragment of the entablature from the Temple of Antoninus and Faustina in Rome. The outstanding presence of this magnificent architectural item reminded me of that capital from the Pantheon, which I saw in Mannheim. It is certainly a world apart from the eccentric saints of our Gothic ornamentation, stacked one on top of the other on corbels, and from our tobacco-pipe columns, pointed turrets, and flowery spikes; those I am now rid of forever, thank God!

I would also like to mention a pair of sculptures which I recently viewed, albeit only in passing, but nonetheless with astonishment, and edification: two enormous lions of white marble before the gate of the Arsenale; one sits upright, propped up on its forepaws, the other reclines — magnificent counterparts, vivid in their contrasting poses. They are so large that they dwarf everything around them, and one would feel utterly lost if such sublime objects did not also uplift us. They are said to be from the best of Greek artistic periods, having been brought here from Piraeus during the glorious days of the Republic (*taken as spoils, by Francesco Morosini, in 1687*).

A few bas-reliefs, also perhaps from Athens, are embedded in the walls of the Church of Santa Justina, whose feast day coincided with the defeat of the Turks at Lepanto, but these are unfortunately somewhat obscured by church pews. The sacristan drew my attention to these reliefs because legend has it that Titian used them as models for the infinitely beautiful angels in his painting depicting the Martyrdom of Saint Peter (*destroyed in 1867, see Carlo Loth's copy in the church of Santi Giovanni e Paolo*). They are cherubs, decked out with the attributes of gods, so beautiful, in fact, that they defy all comprehension.

Then, with particular feeling, I contemplated the colossal, naked statue of Marcus Agrippa (*now in the National Archaeological Museum of Venice*) in the courtyard of a palazzo; a dolphin frieze positioned beside him suggests the naval hero. How heroic depictions of this sort make mere mortals seem like gods!

I examined the horses (*the 'Triumphal Quadriga', or the 'Horses of the Hippodrome of Constantinople'*) on St. Mark's Basilica in detail. From below, one notes that they are mottled, in places with a beautiful yellow metallic sheen, in others tarnished with a coppery-green hue. Close to, one sees, and learns, that they were once entirely gilded, and that they are covered with score-marks, where the barbarians tried to hack the gold off rather than file it down. That in itself was fortuitous, since at least the horses' forms were preserved intact.

What a magnificent set of creatures! I would like to hear a true equestrian expert's comments regarding them. What I find intriguing is that the horses seem heavy when seen close to, but slender as deer when seen from farther away.

October 8th.

This morning, I went with my guide and guardian to the Lido, to the promontory that closes off the lagoons and separates them from the Adriatic. We disembarked, and walked across the promontory. I heard a loud noise; it was the sound of the waves, breaking on shore, as they receded, since it was around midday, and near low tide. So, I have seen the sea with my own eyes. I followed the shoreline along the beautiful beach, flat as a threshing-floor, from which it was ebbing. I wished there were children there, so they could gather shells; I, myself childishly, collected enough of them, but I am dedicating them to some use — I wish to dry within them some of the fluid from the cuttle-fish that dart about here.

On the Lido, not far from the sea, are English and Jewish graveyards, containing the graves of those who were not permitted to rest in consecrated ground. I found the grave of the noble Consul Joseph Smith (*who had died in 1770*) and his first wife (*Catherine Tofts, the soprano, who had died in 1755*); I owe to him my copy of Palladio and thanked him for it, above his un-consecrated grave.

Not only is his grace un-consecrated, but his tombstone is also half-buried (*it is now located on the wall of St. George's Anglican Church in Venice, the cemetery having been dismantled*). The Lido must be regarded as merely a sand-bank; the sand, brought there, blown to and fro by the wind, and piled in heaps, is encroaching on the tomb everywhere. It will soon be difficult to find the slightly-elevated monument again.

The sea is such a magnificent sight! I would like to take a trip out in a fishing boat, as the gondoliers are fearful of venturing out on the waves.

October 8th.

By the sea I also found various plant specimens whose similar characteristics allowed me to better understand their properties; they are simultaneously solid yet ripe, tough yet succulent, and it is evident that the residual salt in the sandy soil, but even more so the salty air, endows them with these qualities; they are bursting with sap like aquatic plants, yet firm and tough like mountain plants; where their leaf-tips exemplify the tendency to become prickly, like those of thistles, they are tremendously sharp and strong. I found such a bushy plant (*Eryngium maritimum, sea-holly*), that seemed to me like our innocent coltsfoot, but is here armed with sharp weapons, and the leaves are leathery, as are the seed capsules and the stems, but rich and fatty. I have collected seeds and preserved the leaves.

The fish market and the endless array of seafood give me great pleasure; I often walk through it and cast my eyes on the unfortunate sea creatures the fishermen have caught.

October 9th.

A delightful day, from morning till night! I travelled as far as the island of Pellestrina, near Chioggia, where the large structures called Murazzi are built by the Republic as a defence against the sea. They are made of hewn stone, and are meant to protect the long promontory, called the Lido, which separates the lagoons from the sea, that wild element.

The lagoons are a product of ancient Nature. Initially, the configuration of the coastline and the ebb and flow of the opposing tide, and then the gradual sinking of the primeval waters, caused a considerable stretch of marshland to exist at the northern end of the Adriatic. This tidal marshland, is partially emptied at the ebb. Ingenuity has been exercised as regards the most elevated areas, and here stands Venice, clustered on a hundred islands, and surrounded by hundreds more. At the same time, at the cost of incredible effort and expense, deep canals were carved into the marshland so that warships could reach the main anchorage even at low tide. What human ingenuity and diligence devised and executed in ancient times, wisdom and diligence must now maintain. The Lido, a long strip of land, separates the lagoons from the sea, which can only enter at two points: at Forte Sant'Andrea to the north, and at the other end, near Chioggia. The tide rises twice a day, and the ebb carries the water out, always along the same channels and in the same direction. The residual water covers the inner marshy areas, and leaves the higher temporarily-submerged areas dry.

It would be entirely different if the sea were to seek new paths, attack the sandbank, and flood in and out arbitrarily. Not only would the villages on the Lido — Pellestrina, San Pietra in Volta, etc. — be submerged, but the communication channels would also be blocked, and as the water overwhelmed everything, the Lido would be carved into islets, and the islands within the lagoon reduced to mere tongues of land. To prevent this happening, the Venetians protect the Lido as best they can, so that the sea cannot arbitrarily attack and ruin what the people have taken possession of, and shaped and directed for specific purposes.

In extraordinary times, when the sea rises excessively, it is particularly helpful that it is only allowed to enter the lagoons in two places, the rest remaining a barrier; thus, the waves cannot penetrate at their highest, and must submit to the tidal ebb within a few hours, lessening their fury.

Apparently, Venice has no reason for concern; the slowness with which the land is sinking and the sea-level rising, grants the city time, and the Venetians, by cleverly deepening the canals, will seek to maintain possession.

If only they would keep their city clean, a thing which is as necessary as it is straightforward, as there have been major consequences over the centuries. It is now forbidden to pour anything into the canals, the penalty for doing so being severe, nor to brush excrement and other remnants into them; but any sudden downpour stirs all the leavings piled in the corners, carries it into the canals, and even worse, into the drains intended only for water runoff, clogging them to such an extent that the main squares are then in danger of being flooded. I have even seen some drains in the Piazzetta San Marco, which, like those in the larger Piazza, are very well-designed, nonetheless blocked, and full of contaminated water.

When the rain lasts all day, the filth is unbearable; everyone curses and swears. People soil their coats and mantles — which they wear all year — while ascending and descending the bridges. And since everyone wears shoes and stockings, they are splashed and the people moan at having been soiled not with common mud, but with caustic and corrosive filth. The weather clears again, and they forget about cleanliness. How true that is: the public always complains about being poorly served, yet does nothing to improve things. Here, if the sovereign people so desired, all could be immediately improved.

October 9th.

This evening, I ascended the Campanile of St. Mark's again; having recently seen from there the lagoons in their glory at high tide, I wished to see them also at low tide, in all their humility, and it is necessary to achieve both views if one desires a true

understanding. It seemed strange to find land appearing everywhere where there was previously water. The islands were no longer islands, but merely higher-lying patches of a large, grey-green marsh, pierced by beautiful canals. The marshy part is overgrown with aquatic plants and must therefore gradually rise, even though the ebb and flow constantly tear away at it, and churn it, giving the vegetation no peace.

Let me steer my narrative seawards once more, where today I observed on the shore the activity of sea snails, limpets, and edible crabs, and was truly delighted by it. What a precious thing a living creature is — delightful, and magnificent! How perfectly attuned to its circumstances, how true, and how real! I have derived great benefit from my limited study of Nature, and how glad I am to continue it here! But since information can be shared, I do not seek to entice my friends merely by the use of exclamation marks.

The walls built facing the sea consist first of a number of steep steps, then a gently rising slope, another step, followed by another gently sloping surface, and then a steep wall with an overhanging curb. The tide at flood covers these steps and surfaces until, in exceptional cases, it finally crashes against the top of the wall, and its projection.

The sea-water carries with it its inhabitants: small edible snails, limpets, and whatever else is mobile, especially the edible crabs. But scarcely have these creatures taken hold of the smooth walls than the sea, receding as it came, begins to withdraw again. At first, the teeming mass knows not what is happening, and expects the salty tide to return; since it does not, the sun beats down and dries the stone quickly, and then the retreat begins. At this opportunity, the edible crabs seek their prey. Nothing is more curious and comical than the gestures of these creatures, the form of which consists of a rounded body and two long claws, since its other spider-like legs are barely noticeable. As if on stilt-like arms, they stride along, and as soon as a limpet moves beneath its shell, they dart forward, insert a claw into the narrow space between the shell and the stone, turn the dwelling upside down, and devour the inhabitant. The limpets make their way along slowly, but immediately cling to the stone as soon as they sense the proximity of an enemy. The latter then behaves curiously, poking at the little roof, in a quite delicate and monkey-like manner; but it lacks the strength to overcome the powerful muscle of the soft creature within. It abandons its prey, and hastens after another wandering one, while the first continues its slow journey. I failed to see a single edible crab achieve its goal, though I watched the crowd retreat for hours, creeping over the two sloping surfaces and the steps between them.

October 10th.

Now, I can finally say I have seen a comedy! Today at the Teatro San Luca they were performing 'Le Baruffe Chiozzotte' which title might be translated as 'The Brawl in Chioggia.' The characters are all sailors, inhabitants of that place, with the addition of their wives, sisters, and daughters. The usual cries of the people, both polite and impolite, their squabbling, vehemence, good-naturedness, banality, wit, humour, and easy manners — everything was very well imitated. The play is by Carlo Goldoni (*first performed in 1762*), and since I was in that district only yesterday and the voices and behaviour of the sailors and dockworkers were still fresh in my mind, it gave me great pleasure. Though I failed to grasp every single reference, I could follow the whole thing quite well. The plot of the play is as follows: the women of Chioggia are seated on the street in front of their houses, spinning, mending nets, sewing, and chattering as usual; a young person walks by and greets one person in a more kindly manner than the others; immediately they begin teasing, this knows no bounds, intensifies and becomes mockery, then escalates into an exchange of accusations, one ill phrase surpassing the next, till one fierce neighbour blurts out the truth, and now scolding, cursing, and shouting, all are unleashed at once; there is no lack of defiant insults, such that the officers of the peace are obliged to intervene.

The scene of the second act is the courtroom; the clerk, standing in for the absent Podestà (who, as a nobleman, cannot be represented on stage), summons the women one by one. This is interesting, because he himself is in love with the first and, delighted to be speaking to her alone instead of interrogating her, declares his love for her. Another jealous woman, in love with the clerk, appears, as does the agitated lover of the first woman. The others follow, new accusations mount, and now the devil is loose in the courtroom, just as before in the harbour square.

In the third act, the jesting intensifies, and the whole thing ends in a hasty, makeshift denouement. The happiest idea of the play, however, is expressed in a character who is represented as follows:

An old boatman, whose limbs, and speech organs too, operate stiffly due to the harsh life he has experienced from a young age, appears as a contrast to the lively, chattering, shouting populace. He always readies himself, moving his lips and flexing his hands and arms, before finally blurting out what he has to say. Since he only manages to do this in brief sentences, he is endowed with a laconic seriousness, such that everything he utters sounds proverbial or aphoristic, which beautifully offsets his otherwise wild and passionate gestures.

I have never before experienced such joy as the audience expressed, at seeing themselves and their beloved neighbours presented so naturally. Laughter and cheers resounded from beginning to end. I must confess that the actors did a superb job, too.

They had assigned to the characters as cast voices commonly heard among the masses. The lead actress was absolutely charming, much better than in her recent role, dressed in heroic garb, and delivering speeches of tragic passion. The actresses in general, but especially these, imitated most gracefully the voices, gestures, and mannerisms of the people. Great praise is due to the author, who has created the most delightful comedy out of nothing. It speaks directly to his own lively nation, and was certainly written with a practised hand.

Of Antonio Sacchi's commedia dell'arte troupe, for which the playwright Carlo Gozzi wrote and which, incidentally, is now dispersed, I noted the actress playing 'Smeraldina' (*a servant*), a short, plump figure, full of life, agility, and good humour. Performing the role of 'Brighella' (*a schemer*), was a lean, well-built actor, particularly excellent in respect of his facial expressions, and hand gestures. Though they have neither life nor meaning for us, such masks, which we know almost exclusively from them being worn by mummers, are welcome here as features of this landscape. Fine folk of various ages, characters, and varying social class, forever dress in wondrous costumes here, and if one spends most of the year wearing a mask oneself, there is nothing more natural than seeing black masks employed on stage as well.

October 11th.

As true solitude is indeed impossible amidst so large a crowd, I have befriended an old Frenchman who speaks no Italian, feels he is being cheated and taken advantage of, and despite his letters of recommendation, knows not quite where he stands here. He is a man of some status, with excellent manners, but completely self-preoccupied; he is in his fifties perhaps, but has a seven-year-old son at home, of whom he anxiously awaits news. I have performed a few favours on his behalf; he is travelling, comfortably but speedily, through Italy, having wished to see it at least once, and learn as much as possible on the way; I offer him information on various topics. Speaking to him of Venice, he asked me how long I had been here, and on hearing that it was only a fortnight and my first visit, he replied: '*Il parait que vous n'avez pas perdu votre temps*: it seems your time has not been wasted.' That is the first testimonial of my good conduct that I can point to. He has been here a week now, and leaves tomorrow. It was delightful to see a true native of Versailles abroad. And now he is off again! I am amazed at how he can travel about and be unaware of anything beyond himself, and yet he is, in his own way, a truly educated, upright, and orderly fellow.

October 12th.

Yesterday at the Teatro San Luca they performed a new play: 'L'Inglicismo in Italia' (*'Englishness in Italy'*). Since many Englishmen and Englishwomen live in the country, it's natural that their customs and manners are observed, and I thought I might learn how the Italians view their wealthy, and therefore welcome, guests; but nothing of the sort. A few lively and farcical scenes, as usual, but the rest was far too earnest and heavy-handed, and with not a trace of true English sensibility, merely the usual Italian moral platitudes, and even those of the crudest kind.

It was unpopular too, and on the verge of being booed off the stage; the actors appeared out of their element, and out of place in the Chioggia square. This is the last play I shall attend here, my enthusiasm for the nation's theatre scarcely enhanced by the final performance.

After finishing a thorough review of my journal, and adding a few details from my notebook, the sheets are at last ready to be packaged up, and sent to my friends, for their judgement on them. Even now I find much in these pages that I could render more precise, expand, or improve upon; let them stand as a monument to my first impressions, which, even if not always exact, remain precious and valuable to me. If only I could send my friends a breath of the more light-hearted existence I enjoy here! To the Italian, the 'ultramontane' is indeed a vague concept, and for myself too, what lies in the North, 'beyond the Alps' now seems a gloomy affair; yet friendly figures ever beckon from the mist. The climate alone tempts me to prefer this region to another; for one's birthplace, and habits, are powerful fetters. I would not wish to dwell here, just as I would not wish to dwell anywhere, if I was idle; but now, my new surroundings preoccupy me entirely. Architecture rises like an ancient ghost from the tomb, urging me to study its rules, as if I were studying those of an extinct language, not to practise them and experience delight in doing so, but simply to honour, in a quiet way, the venerable, eternally-silent, past existence of bygone ages. Since Palladio bases everything on Vitruvius, I have also acquired Berardo Galiani's edition of the latter; but the tome weighs as heavily on my luggage as the study of it weighs on my brain. Palladio, through his words and works, his way of thinking and creative method, has already brought Vitruvius closer to me, and interpreted him better than the Italian translation can. Vitruvius makes for no easy reading; the text is written in a rather sombre style and, in truth, demands critical study. Nonetheless, I skim through it, and many a valuable impression remains with me. Or rather, I read it like a breviary, more out of devotion than for instruction. Night falls earlier now, providing more time for reading and writing.

Everything I have cherished since my youth has become dear to me again, thank God! How happy I am, in feeling that I dare approach the classics once more! Now, I

may confess my pervious illness and folly. For some years now, I forbade myself to look at a single Latin author, or contemplate anything that would awaken thoughts of Italy. If it occurred by accident, I suffered the most terrible pain. Herder has often mocked me for learning all my Latin from Baruch Spinoza, for he had noticed that his was the only book (*'Tractatus Theologico-Politicus', 1670*) in Latin that I read; but he failed to realise to what degree I was obliged to guard myself against the ancients, how anxiously I fled their abstruse generalities. Most recently, Wieland's translation of the 'Satires' (*Christoph Martin Wieland's translation of Horace's 'Satires', 1786*) left me utterly wretched; I scarcely read two before I was already maddened.

Had I not made the decision to carry out this journey, I would have perished, utterly: such was the intensity of my desire to see these places and things with my own eyes. Historical knowledge was no help to me; the objects though only a hand's breadth away, were separated from me as if by an impenetrable wall. Even now, rather than feeling that I am seeing them for the first time, it as if I were simply seeing them again. I have only been in Venice for a short time, yet I have sufficiently embraced life here, and know that I bear away with me, albeit incomplete, a perfectly clear and true understanding.

Venice, October 14th, 2 a.m.

In these final moments of my time here, being about to depart for Ferrara by packet-boat, I feel glad to be leaving Venice behind; for to remain and still gain pleasure and benefit, I would have to take other steps that are not part of my travel-plan; besides, everyone is now leaving the city, seeking their gardens and properties on the mainland. I am, however, well-loaded, bearing with me a rich, strange, and unique portrait of her.

The End of Goethe's 'Italian Journey' Part IV

Part V: From Ferrara to Rome

From Ferrara to Rome

October 16th, early morning, on board.

My travelling companions, men and women, all perfectly acceptable and honest people, are still asleep in the cabin. I, however, wrapped in my coat, have remained on deck both nights. Only towards morning has it become cool. I have now truly entered the forty-fifth degree of latitude, and still repeat my old song: I would gladly leave all of this land to its inhabitants if only I could secure, like Dido in myth, a great enough extent of their skies to encircle our own Northern dwellings (*fleeing from Tyre, she famously encircled enough space, by dividing a bull's hide into thin strips, to purchase the ground on which Carthage was founded*). It is indeed a different state of existence here. The passage in glorious weather was very pleasant, the views simple but charming. The River Po, a friendly stream, flows here through vast plains; one sees only its bushy and wooded banks, no distant views. Here, as on the Adige, I saw foolish hydraulic engineering works, childish and harmful like those on the Saale.

Ferrara

October 16th, at night.

Having arrived here this morning at seven o'clock, German time, I am preparing to leave again tomorrow. In this large, beautiful, flat, but depopulated city, I am overcome by a feeling of dissatisfaction for the first time. These same streets were once enlivened by a glittering court; here Ariosto lived, discontentedly, Tasso, unhappily, and yet I think to edify myself by visiting the place. Ariosto's tomb (*at that time in the Church of San Benedetto, now in the Sala Ariosto, on the first floor of Palazzo Paradiso, the Ariostea Library*) contains a wealth of marble, poorly arranged. Instead of Tasso's cell one is shown a wooden stable or coal-cellar, where he certainly was not imprisoned. And scarcely anyone there seems to know enough to answer one's questions. Finally, they reconsider, for the consideration of a tip. It is rather like Martin Luther's ink-stain, which the castellan (*of Wartburg Castle, where Luther supposedly threw his inkwell at Satan for distracting him*) renews from time to time. Most travellers have something of the practical person's love of detail about them, and like to seek out such things. I had become quite irritable, so that I failed to appreciate

a fine institute and academy, founded and enriched by a cardinal born in Ferrara, but some old monuments in the courtyard refreshed me.



'Wartburg Castle viewed from the south above a wooded slope' - Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (German, 1749–1832)
Wikimedia Commons

Then I was amused by a painter's clever idea: 'John the Baptist before Herod and Herodias'. The prophet, in his usual desert attire, points emphatically at the lady. She calmly regards the prince sitting beside her, and the prince, quietly and intelligently, observes the enthusiastic prophet. A medium-sized, white dog stands before the king, while a small Bolognese dog emerges from under Herodias's skirts, and both bark at the prophet. I think it a very felicitous idea.

Cento

October 17th, in the evening.

In a better mood than yesterday, I write from the artist Guercino's hometown. It is a completely different place to Ferrara. A friendly, well-built little place of about five thousand inhabitants, flourishing, lively, clean, situated on a vast, cultivated plain. As is my custom, I immediately climbed a tower. A sea of poplars, amidst which one can glimpse small nearby farmsteads, each surrounded by its own fields. Fertile soil, and a mild climate. It was an autumn evening such as we rarely experience in summer at

home. The sky, overcast all day, cleared, the clouds north and south drifting towards the mountains, and I hope for a beautiful morning tomorrow.

From here I can view the Apennines, which I am approaching for the first time. Winter here lasts only for December and January; April sees rain — otherwise, the weather is good throughout. The rain never persists for long; and September was finer and warmer than August at home. I gave the Apennines, to the south, a kindly greeting, for I shall soon have had had enough of the plain. Tomorrow I shall be writing at their feet.

Guercino loved his hometown, as Italians in general cherish and cultivate local patriotism to the highest degree, from which love so many delightful institutions, and indeed a multitude of local saints, have sprung. Under that master's direction, an academy of painting was established here. He left behind several works that still bring joy to the townsfolk, and which are indeed worthy of appreciation. Guercino is a sacred name, spoken by children and the elderly alike.

I was very taken by his painting depicting the risen Christ appearing to his mother (*'The Resurrected Christ Appears to the Virgin', 1629,originally painted for the Oratorio della Confraternita del Santissimo Nome di Dio, and now in the Pinacoteca Comunale, Cento*). Kneeling before him, she gazes at him with indescribable tenderness. Her left hand touches his body just beneath the grievous wound that mars his form. He has placed his left hand around her neck and, to gaze at her the better, is leaning back slightly. This gives the figure something of an unusual — not to say forced, air. Nonetheless, it remains infinitely pleasing. The quietly sorrowful gaze with which he looks at her is exceptional, as if the memory of his and her suffering, not immediately healed by the Resurrection, hovers before his noble soul. Sir Robert Strange has produced an engraving of the work; I wish my friends could at least see his attempt.

Then a Madonna captured my affection. The child longs for her breast, she hesitates shyly to expose it. The work is natural, noble, exquisite, and beautiful. Furthermore, there is a painting of Mary, guiding the arm of the child standing before her, and facing the spectator, as he bestows a blessing with raised fingers. A very fortunate and frequently repeated idea in the context of Catholic mythology.

Guercino is an inwardly-upright, robustly-masculine painter, devoid of any crudity. Rather, his works possess a delicate moral grace, a serene freedom and grandeur, and a distinctive quality that, once one has trained the eye to recognise it, is unmistakable. The lightness, purity, and perfection of his brushwork are astonishing. He employs particularly beautiful, reddish-brown hues for his garments. These harmonise remarkably well with the blue he frequently uses.

The subjects of the rest of the paintings are more or less unfortunate. In them, an excellent artist has laboured to realise his ideas, yet has squandered and lost both invention and execution, mind and hand alike lacking in power. But I am glad and grateful to have seen this fine series, even though such a rushed inspection offers scant enjoyment or instruction.

Bologna

October 18th, at night.

Early this morning, before daybreak, I left Cento and arrived here soon enough. A nimble and well-informed guide, once he knew that I intended only a brief stay, hurried me through all the streets, and past so many palazzos and churches that I scarcely had time to mark on my copy of Johann Volkmann's map where I had been, and who knows if I will remember all these places in the future even with the marks I made. But I still recall a few glowing works of art before which I felt truly at peace.

First, then, Raphael's 'St. Cecilia'! (*'The Ecstasy of St. Cecilia', or the 'St. Cecilia Altarpiece', c 1516-7, painted for the church of San Giovanni in Monte, and now in the Pinacoteca Nazionale, Bologna*). As I already knew, but now have seen with my own eyes: he simply executed what others wished to perform, and so I will say nothing further about the painting now, other than to say that it is by him. Five saints stand side by side, none of whom is concerned with ourselves, yet whose existence is so perfectly realistic that one wishes the scene preserved for all eternity, even if one is destined to vanish oneself. But to truly understand him, to truly appreciate him, and yet not praise him as though he were a deity who, like Melchizedek, appeared without father or mother (*see Hebrews 7:3*), one should consider his predecessors, his masters. They laid the foundations of their art on the firm ground of truth; they diligently, even anxiously, created a broad base and, competing with one another, built a pyramid, step by step, upon which, finally, profiting from their labours, and illuminated by heavenly genius, he was able to place the last summit stone, above and beyond which no other can rise.

One's artistic interest is particularly aroused by consideration of the works of the older masters. Francesco Francia (*Francesco Raibolini of Bologna*) was quite a decent artist; Pietro Perugino such a genuine fellow one might term him an honest German. If only fate had led Albrecht Dürer to explore Italy further! In Munich, I saw a few of his works, of incomparable greatness. The wretched fellow went awry in Venice, making a deal with the priests that cost him weeks and months! On his Dutch journey, he traded parrots for magnificent artworks of his, with which he had hoped to make

his fortune, and, to save on gratuities, painted portraits of the servants who brought him plates of fruit! I find such a poor fool of an artist infinitely touching because, in essence, it is also my fate, only I know how to look after myself a little better.

Towards evening, I finally escaped this ancient, venerable, and learned city, and the crowds who, protected from wind and sun, wander to and fro amidst the arched arcades that one sees on almost every street, gawking, buying, and conducting their business transactions. I climbed the tower, and revelled in the pure air. The view is magnificent! To the north, one sees the Paduan hills, then the Swiss, Tyrolean, and Friulian Alps — in short, the entire northern range, which at that hour was shrouded in mist. To the west, is an endless view, amidst which only the towers of Modena rise. To the east, a level plain stretches to the Adriatic Sea, which one glimpses at sunrise. To the south, the foothills of the Apennines, planted and overgrown right up to their peaks, are dotted with churches, palaces, and garden pavilions, like the Vicentine hills. The sky was perfectly clear, not a cloud in sight, only a kind of high-altitude mist on the horizon. The watchman assured me that for six years now, the mists had never encroached on the city. He said that previously, through his spyglass, he could easily see the hills around Vicenza with their houses and chapels, but now, even on the brightest days, only rarely. And this fog, he explained, clings particularly to the northern ridges, making of my own beloved homeland a veritable Cimmeria. The man also pointed out the healthy climate and the quality of the city air, noting that its roofs looked brand new, not a single tile marred by damp or moss. Admittedly, the roofs are all clean and beautiful, but the quality of the tiles may also contribute to this; at least in olden times, they were expertly fired in these parts, at great expense.

The leaning towers are a fearsome sight, and yet I think it highly possible that they were deliberately built that way (*the pair, Asinelli and Garisenda, actually lean due to subsidence).* I explain this to myself as follows. In times of urban unrest, every large building became a fortress, above which every powerful family raised a tower. Gradually, this became a matter of pride and honour; everyone wished to boast of a tower, and when finally straight towers became all too commonplace, crooked ones were built. The architect and the owner achieved their joint goal. One gazes at the many straight, slender towers but the eye seeks out the crooked ones. I was later at the top of the tower with the greatest tilt (*Garisenda*). The brick courses seemed to be set horizontally. With good, tightly-binding mortar and iron clamps, one can certainly create some amazing things.

Bologna, October 19th, evening.

I made best use of my day, observing and revisiting things, but art is like life: the deeper you delve into it, the more extensive it becomes. New stars appear in the firmament, stars that I cannot comprehend and that bewilder me: the Carracci brothers (*Annibale and Agostino*), Guido Reni, Domenichino (*Domenico Zampieri*), all Bolognese, born to a later, more fortunate era of art; but to truly appreciate them requires knowledge and judgement, which I lack and which can only be acquired gradually. A major obstacle to genuine contemplation, and immediate understanding, of their artistry is the often nonsensical subject matter of the paintings, which drives anyone mad who desires to venerate and love them.

It is as if the sons of the gods had been wed to the daughters of men, and that from this union all manner of monsters were born. While Guido Reni's heavenly vision, and his brush, which should have painted only the most perfect things imaginable, attracts the eye, one immediately longs to turn from his hideous and stupid subjects, which could scarcely escape the most damning insults in the world. And so, it goes on; one is forever confronted by anatomy, the chopping block, the slaughterhouse, always the hero or heroine's suffering, never any action, never any lively interest, always some fantasy engendered from without. Wrongdoers or ecstatics, criminals or fools, are his subjects, whereupon the painter, to save himself, drags in a naked man, a pretty female spectator, treating his spiritual heroes as no more than mere caricatures, while draping them in rather attractive pleated cloaks. There is nothing in them that displays any real understanding of human beings! Out of ten subjects, not one should have been painted, and the artist failed to treat even that one in the correct manner.

The large 'Pieta' by Guido Reni in the Church of the Mendicanti is everything one could possibly ask for in a painting, yet also everything absurd one might demand and expect of an artist. It is a votive painting. I believe the entire Senate praised and doubtless conceived the subject. The two angels, worthy of comforting a Psyche in her misfortune, are certainly needed here. The Saint Proclus, is a fine effort; but then the others, that bishop, those priests! Below are heavenly children playing with their various attributes and symbols. The painter, seemingly with a knife at his throat, tried to help himself as best he could, and toiled away, just to prove that he was no barbarian. Two nude figures by Guido also: a Saint John in the desert, and a Saint Sebastian, how exquisitely painted, yet what do they communicate? One half-opens his mouth, and the other writhes in agony.

Contemplating history in this discontented mood, I would claim that faith revived the arts but superstition became their master, and ruined them again.

After dinner, in a somewhat milder and less arrogant mood, I made the following note. In the Palazzo Tanari there is a famous painting by Guido Reni depicting the

Virgin Mary nursing the infant Jesus, larger than life-size, her head as if painted by a god; the expression with which she looks down upon the suckling child is indescribable. It seems to me a quiet, profound acceptance, as if she were allowing not a child of love and joy but rather a heavenly changeling to suckle, simply because things are as they are, and she, in a state of deepest humility, knows not at all how she has come to be in this situation *('The Tanari Madonna' is now lost, but recorded through an engraving by Mauro Gandolfi*). A large part of the painting is filled with an enormous cloth hanging, which connoisseurs praise highly; though I was unsure what to make of it. Its colours, too, have darkened; the room and the day were not of the brightest.

Despite the state of confusion that I find myself in, with regard to painting, I already feel that experience, familiarity, and taste will come to my aid even in these labyrinths. Thus, a 'Circumcision of Christ' by Guercino, (*1646, painted for the demolished Augustinian Church of Jesus and Mary, in Bologna, and now in the Musée des Beaux-Arts de Lyon*) appealed to me, because I already know and love the artist's work. I overlooked the unattractive content and took pleasure in the artistic execution. He painted every subject imaginable, all of it respectfully and perfectly, as if on enamel. And so I am like Balaam, the confused prophet, who blessed when he intended to curse (*see Numbers: 22-24*), and this would occur even more often if I were to stay longer.

Whenever one chances to come across a work by Raphael, or at least one that is reasonably attributable to him, one is immediately completely cured of irritation, and rendered happy. Thus, I found a 'Saint Agatha', a valuable, though not particularly well-preserved, painting. The artist has shown her as a healthy, self-possessed virgin, one free of any coldness or rusticity. I have noted her form and features carefully, and will mentally recite my 'Iphigenia' to her, permitting my heroine to say nothing that this saint would not seek to utter.

Since I am once again thinking of that sweet burden, in manuscript, I carry with me on my journey, I cannot conceal the fact that, in addition to the great works of art and Nature which I must work my way through, a wondrous succession of poetic figures also passes through my mind, diverting me. After Cento, I intended to continue my work on 'Iphigenia in Tauris' but what happened? My mind presented me with the plot of an 'Iphigenia at Delphi,' and I feel obliged to develop it. I record it here as briefly as possible:

Electra, in a final act of atonement, hoping that Orestes will bring the statue of Taurian Diana to Delphi, appears in the temple of Apollo and dedicates, to that god, the cruel axe-blade which has brought such havoc to the House of Pelops. Sadly, a Greek warrior approaches her and recounts how he had accompanied Orestes and

Pylades to Tauris, and witnessed his two friends being led to their deaths, while he escaped unharmed. The passionate Electra is unsure whether to direct her resulting anger at the gods or at the mortals involved.

Meanwhile, Iphigenia, Orestes, and Pylades also arrive at Delphi. Iphigenia's serene composure contrasts strikingly with Electra's worldly passion as the two sisters meet, without recognising one another. The Greek warrior on seeing Iphigenia, recognises in her the priestess to whom his friends were to be sacrificed, and informs Electra of the fact. She is about to slay Iphigenia with the axe she dedicated, and has now retrieved from the altar, when a fortunate turn of events averts a final, and terrible, act of evil.

If this scenario were to be worked through successfully, then hardly anything greater or more moving could be seen on the stage. But where can I find the energy and time, even if the mind is willing!

Feeling burdened and overwhelmed, now, by an abundance of good and desirable projects, I remind my friends of a dream I experienced, about a year ago, which seemed highly significant to me. I dreamt that I landed in a rather large boat on a fertile, richly-vegetated island, where I knew the most beautiful pheasants might be found. I immediately began bargaining with the inhabitants for examples of these birds, which they promptly killed and brought to me. They were indeed pheasants, but as dreams tend to transform reality, they had long, brightly-coloured tails, like those of peacocks, or rare birds of paradise. They were brought to me in bundles, laid with their heads inwards, and so neatly tied that their long, colourful plumes, hanging outwards, formed the most magnificent heaps imaginable in the sunlight, ones so large that there was scarcely any space left for the helmsman or oarsmen, neither fore nor aft. Thus, we ploughed through the calm water, and I was already thinking of various friends with whom I intended to share these colourful treasures. Finally attaining a sizeable harbour, I found myself lost among tall-masted vessels, and mounting deck after deck to observe and locate a safe landing place. We revel in such fantastic and illusory scenes, which, because they originate from within ourselves, must surely bear some analogy to our actual lives and destinies.

I have just visited the Academy of Sciences of the Institute of Bologna (*then housed in the Palazzo Poggi*). The large building, especially the inner courtyard, looks quite impressive, although not of the finest architectural quality. The staircases and corridors are adorned with stucco and fresco decorations; everything is well laid-out, in a dignified manner, and one is justifiably amazed by the many beautiful and informative things that have been brought together here, yet a German accustomed to a freer course of study might not feel entirely comfortable.

An earlier observation of mine comes to mind: that in the ever-changing course of time, humankind finds it difficult to detach itself from the original form of various types of building, even if the use of them has subsequently altered. Christian churches still cling to the basilica form, although the temple form might be more advantageous for modern worship. Scientific institutions still retain a monastic appearance because students of science originally found space and tranquillity in such pious environments. Italian courtrooms are as large and high-ceilinged as the community's resources allow; one feels as if one is standing in one of those open-air marketplaces where justice was once administered. And do we not still build even the largest theatres, complete with all their appurtenances, under the one roof, as if they were mere makeshift booths, hastily cobbled together, as at first, from wooden planks? Due to the enormous thirst for knowledge at the time of the Reformation, students were driven to using private houses, but what a length of time it took before we opened colleges to provide poor youths with a much-needed education!

Bologna, the evening of the 20th.

I spent this beautiful, sunny day entirely outdoors. As soon as I approach the mountains, I am drawn back to considering rock formations. I feel like Antaeus, in myth, who was ever more invigorated the more deeply he was connected to Mother Earth.

I rode on horseback to Monte Paderno, where the so-called Bolognese barite is found, from which small 'cakes' are made which, when calcined, glow in the dark if they have previously been exposed to light, and which are simply called *fosfori* here.

On the way, after climbing a sandstone hillside, I found entire boulders of fraueneis (*selenite, a crystalline form of gypsum*) exposed. Near a brickyard, a torrent ran down into which many smaller streams flow. At first glance, one might think one is viewing a mound of clay washed down by the rains, but upon closer inspection, I was able to discover a great deal regarding its nature: the solid rock of which this part of the mountains consists is a very fine-grained shale, alternating with gypsum. The shale is so intimately blended with pyrites that, when exposed to air and moisture, it alters completely. It swells; the layers become indistinct; and a kind of crumbly, conchoidal clay is formed, its surfaces shining like anthracite. Only by observing both forms, in the larger pieces, several of which I broke open, could one be convinced of the transition and transformation. At the same time, one sees the conchoidal surfaces covered with white edges, sometimes yellow patches; so that, gradually, the entire surface disintegrates. The hillside then looks like a large-scale, weathered deposit of

pyrites. Harder, green, and red layers can also be found beneath the surface. I've also frequently found pyrite particles embedded in the rock.

I then ascended various ravines, carved, in the crumbling and disintegrating mountain-side, by recent downpours, and to my delight found the sought-after barite quite often, mostly in imperfect egg shapes, emerging from several places in the recently eroded rock, some examples quite pure, others still completely surrounded by the clay in which they were embedded. That they are not glacial erratics can be verified at first glance. Whether they formed simultaneously with the shale-clay layer, or only during the process of swelling or decomposition, warrants closer examination. The pieces I found, whether larger or smaller, approximate an imperfect egg-shape; the smallest even transition to an indistinct crystalline form. The heaviest piece I found weighs seventeen *loth* (*eight and three quarter ounces*). I also found loose, and perfect, gypsum crystals in the same clay. Experts will be able to develop a more precise identification based on the pieces I brought away with me. And now I am burdened with stones again! I have packaged up an eighth of a hundredweight of this barite.

October 20th, at night.

How much more I would have to say, if I were to confess everything that went through my mind during this beautiful day! But my desire is stronger than thought. I feel irresistibly drawn onwards; I can only attend to the present moment with difficulty. And it seems heaven has heard my plea. A fellow traveller is just now arranging to depart for Rome, and so I will inevitably leave here the day after tomorrow. I must, therefore see to my belongings today and tomorrow, take care of a few matters, and finish my work.

Loiano

In the Apennines, October 21st, evening.

Whether I quit Bologna myself, or was driven forth, I know not. Suffice it to say that, urged on by my passion, I seized upon a more immediate opportunity for leaving. Now here I am, in a wretched inn, in the company of a Papal officer who is on his way to Perugia, his home town. When I sat down next to him in the two-wheeler, I paid him the compliment of saying, just for something to talk about, that, as a German accustomed to the company of soldiers, I found it very pleasant to now be travelling in the company of a Papal officer. — 'Please don't take offence,' he replied, ' but though

you may well have an inclination towards military life, since I hear that in Germany everything has a military flavour, for myself, despite the service making light demands on one, and the fact that I fully enjoy a comfortable life in Bologna, where I'm garrisoned, I would nonetheless like to be rid of this military jacket, and manage my father's estate instead. But I am the younger son, and so must accept my lot.'

Monghidoro

The evening of the 22nd.

I am in another small village in the Apennines, where I feel quite happy, travelling as I am in pursuit of my dreams. Today, a gentleman and a lady, both on horseback, joined us; an Englishman supposedly accompanied by his sister. Their horses are fine, but they travel without attendants, and the gentleman seems to be acting as both groom and valet. They find something to complain of everywhere; it is almost like reading the pages of Archenholz (*Johann Wilhelm Archenholz, historian, and publisher of the periodical 'Litteratur und Völkerkunde', 'Literature and Ethnology', which contained comments on English political and social institutions*).

The Apennines are an intriguing part of the world. Below the vast expanse of the River Po basin, a mountain range rose from the depths, which separates the lands to the south, lying between the eastern and western coasts. If the mountains had not been so steep, so high above sea level, and so strangely convoluted that the ebb and flow of the tides was prevented from having a greater and more extensive impact in ancient times, by inundating larger areas and lowering their height, one of the most fertile regions of Italy would have been created, with the most wonderful climate, though still lying somewhat higher than the surrounding area.

As it is, the range forms a curious network of mountain ridges intersecting one another; often one cannot even decide in which direction the water is likely to flow. If the valleys were shallower, the plains smoother and more irrigated, one might compare the land to Bohemia, except that the mountains possess a completely different character. However, one should not conceive of the region being a mountainous waste, but rather mostly-cultivated, though elevated. Chestnut trees thrive here, the wheat is excellent, and the fresh stems are already a fine shade of green. Small-leafed evergreen oaks line the roads, while slender cypresses surround the churches and chapels.



‘Mountain landscape with a small Italian house (1808)’ - Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (German, 1749–1832)
Klassik Stiftung Weimar, Museen (Inv. GGz/1258)
Digital reproduction · See Art. L. 111-1 CPI and § 68 UrhG

Yesterday evening the weather was gloomy, today it is bright and beautiful again.

Perugia

The evening of the 25th.

I failed to write anything the last two evenings. The inns were so bad that drawing forth a clean sheet of paper was out of the question. Besides, my things are in some disarray; since leaving Venice, my travelling-bag has grown more disorganised, and finding what I need goes less easily and smoothly.

Early on the twenty-third, at ten o’clock German time, we emerged from the Apennines, and I saw Florence lying in a wide, densely-cultivated valley strewn with endless villas and houses.

I hastened through the city, past the Cathedral and the Baptistery. Here, a completely new, unknown world opens to the traveller, but one I have chosen not to linger in. The Boboli Gardens are delightful. I departed as rapidly as I had come.

The city shows clearly how wealthy the folk were who built it; one can see that it has enjoyed a succession of fortunate governments. In general, it is striking how beautiful and magnificent the public works, roads, and bridges are in Tuscany. Everything here is clean and efficient; use and benefit are achieved with grace, and

everywhere one notices a lively sense of care. The Papal State, on the other hand, appears to have to survived only because the earth refuses to swallow it whole.

When I said before, how fertile the Apennines might have been, that is the case with Tuscany. Because the land is so much lower, the ancient sea truly did its work, and deposited a layer of deep clay soil. It is the colour of straw, and easy to work. They plough the fields deeply, but in the traditional way still: the plough lacks wheels, and the ploughshare is fixed in place. Thus, the farmer, bending forward behind his oxen, drags the share along and furrows the earth. They plough the ground up to five times, scattering only a little very light manure by hand. Finally, they sow wheat on the narrow heaped ridges, so that rain is obliged to run down the sloping sides into the deep furrows between them. The crop grows on the ridges, and they weed the ground walking back and forth along the furrows. This method is understandable where excess moisture is a concern; why they do it in the most beautiful areas, however, I cannot understand. I observed all this near Arezzo, where a magnificent plain opens out. One could not see purer soil, not a single clod anywhere, as if it had been sifted. Wheat does here quite well, seemingly finding the conditions suitable. Every second year they grow beans for the horses, which are not fed on oats here. Legumes are also sown, which are already a splendid green colour, and will seed in March. The flax has also already sprouted; it will stand throughout the winter; the frost only strengthens it.

Olive trees are strange things; they look almost like willows, and they lose their heartwood, and their bark splits in a similar manner. But they nevertheless have a more solid appearance. One can also see from the wood, which is finely-grained in the extreme, that the trees grow slowly. The leaves are willow-like, only with fewer leaves on the branches. On the hills around Florence, there are olive trees and grapevines everywhere; the soil in between is used for growing grain. Near Arezzo and beyond, the fields are more open. I think too little care is taken to keep the ivy down, which is harmful to olive trees and other plants, and would be quite easy to eradicate. Not a meadow is to be seen. It is said that buckwheat depletes the soil; and that since its introduction, agriculture here has suffered in this respect. I can well believe it, given the meagre amounts of manure used.

This evening I said goodbye to my captain, with the assurance, nay the promise, that I would visit him in Bologna during my return journey. He is a true representative of a large proportion of his countrymen. Here are a couple of his comments, in particular, which characterised him. Since I was often quiet and thoughtful, on one occasion he exclaimed: '*Che pensa! Non deve mai pensar l'uomo, pensando s'invecchia.*' This translates as: 'What are you thinking of! One should avoid thinking. It ages one so.' And after a conversation: '*Non deve fermarsi l'uomo in una sola cosa, perchè allora divien matto; bisogna aver mille cose, una confusione nella testa*: one

should not fixate on a single topic, or one will go mad; one should have a thousand things going on in one's head.'

The good man, of course, couldn't know that I was quiet and thoughtful precisely because a confused series of thoughts, old and new, filled my mind. The nature of such an Italian's education will become even clearer from the following. Since he no doubt realised that I was a Protestant, he suggested, after some preamble, that I might permit him to ask certain questions, for he had heard many strange things about Protestants, which he wished to be sure of. 'Are you allowed,' he asked, 'to live on close terms with a pretty girl without actually being married to her? Do your priests permit you that?' I replied: 'Our priests are wise men who take little notice of such trifles. Of course, if we were to ask them, they would object.' 'So, you are not obliged to ask?' he exclaimed. 'Oh, you fortunate fellows! And since there is no confessional in your churches, they will never know.' Thereupon he launched into a tirade, criticising the Catholic priests of whom he disapproved, while praising our blessed freedom. — 'But as regards confession,' he continued, 'what is the situation in your country? We hear that everyone, even those who are not Christians, must nevertheless attend confession; but because in their obstinacy they follow an incorrect path, they make their confession to some kind of ancient tree, which is certainly ridiculous and godless enough, but nevertheless proves that they recognise the need for confession.' Thereupon I explained to him our Lutheran understanding of confession and how it is conducted. To his way of thinking it all seemed highly convenient, but he considered it only about as helpful as confessing to a tree. After some hesitation, he asked me, earnestly, to give him an honest answer on another point: he had heard from one of his priests, who was a truly upright man, that we were allowed to marry a widowed sister-in-law, which was a matter of some gravity here. When I denied this and tried to explain the human aspects of our doctrine to him, he refused to grant it much attention, as it all seemed too commonplace to him, and turned instead to a new question:

'We are assured,' he said, 'that Frederick the Great, who won so many victories, even over the faithful, and filled the world with his fame, he whom everyone considers a heretic, is truly a Catholic and has the Pope's permission to conceal the fact; for, as is known, he never enters any of your churches, but performs divine worship in an underground chapel, though with a contrite heart in that he is not allowed to profess the holy religion publicly; for, of course, if he did so, his Prussians, who are a brutish people, and furiously heretical, would kill him on the spot, which would scarcely help the cause. That is why the Holy Father granted him permission, and in return, Frederick favours the one true religion, and allows it to spread as far as possible.' I indulged him in this, and simply replied that since it was a great secret, no one, of course, was able to bear witness to it. Our subsequent conversation was always roughly

the same in nature, so that I could only marvel at the cunning clergy, who seek to reject and distort anything that might penetrate, and thereby trouble, the shadowy realm of traditional doctrine.

I left Perugia on a glorious morning, feeling the bliss of being alone once more. The city's location is beautiful, the view of the lake (*Lake Trasimeno*) most delightful. Those scenes are certainly etched in my memory. The path led first downhill, then along a pleasant valley, framed on both sides by distant hills, until finally I saw Assisi lying before me.

Assisi

From Palladio's and Johann Volkmann's texts, I knew that a magnificent Temple of Minerva, built in the days of Augustus, was still standing, and perfectly preserved (*housing the Church of Santa Maria sopra Minerva since 1539*). I parted from my driver, who continued on his way to Foligno, at the Basilica Santa Maria degli Angeli, and climbed up to Assisi, battling against a strong breeze, for I longed to undertake a walk through this lonely countryside. The monstrous substructures of the Babylonian-style basilica, consisting of an upper church and the lower church in which Saint Francis rests, I left behind, and with a feeling of aversion, thinking that the people there would be of the same stamp as my Papal officer. I asked a handsome lad for directions to Santa Maria sopra Minerva; he accompanied me to the top of the town, which is built against the hillside. At last, we reached what is properly speaking the old town, and behold, the most praiseworthy of buildings stood before my eyes, the first complete monument of antiquity that I had ever seen. A modest temple, befitting so small a town, yet so perfectly and beautifully conceived that it would be notable anywhere.

Now, consider its location! Ever since I read in Vitruvius and Palladio how cities should be laid out, and how temples and public buildings should be constructed, I have had a great respect for such things. Here, too, the ancients proved themselves admirably attuned to the natural world. The temple stands about halfway up the slope, where two hills meet, in the square that is still called 'the Piazza' (*del Commune*) The square itself slopes slightly, and four streets converge on it, forming a compact St. Andrew's cross, two streets ascending from below, two descending from above. In ancient times, the houses opposite the temple, which now obstruct the view, would not have existed. If one imagines them removed, one would have a view towards the south into the rich countryside, and at the same time, Minerva's sanctuary would be visible from all sides. The layout of the streets may well be ancient, for they follow the shape and slope of the hill. The temple is not in the centre of the square, but is positioned so

that it is clearly visible, even in foreshortened form, to those approaching from Rome. In a drawing, one should not only depict the building itself, but also its happy location.

I could hardly tear my eyes away from the facade, admiring how ingeniously consistent the artist had been. The order is Corinthian; the columns span spaces slightly more than two column thicknesses wide. The column bases and the slabs beneath them appear to stand on pedestals, but this is only an illusion; for the base is pierced five times, and each time five steps ascend between the columns, leading to the platform on which the columns actually stand, and from which one enters the temple. The daring move of piercing the base was perfectly appropriate here, for since the temple is situated on a hillside, the staircase leading up to it would have had to extend too far and would have reduced the space available. How many more steps were set below cannot be determined; they are, with the exception of a very few, filled in, and paved over.

I tore myself away, reluctantly, from the sight and resolved to draw all architects' attention to this building, so that a precise set of drawings might be produced. I was reminded yet again how useless tradition is! Palladio, in whom I trusted completely, depicts this temple, but could scarcely have seen it himself, since he sets pedestals on the platform, rendering the columns immoderately tall and creating a hideous Palmyrene monstrosity (*i.e., akin to the Temple of Bel at Palmyra*), instead of this tranquil, lovely sight that delights the eye and mind. What is unfolding within me, through contemplating this work, is inexpressible and will bear eternal fruit.

I was walking along the Roman road (*Via Flaminia*), the evening fine, my mind at peace, when I heard rough, voices, arguing vehemently, behind me. I suspected they might be the Sbirri (*police officers*) I had already noted in the city. I walked calmly onward, listening to the shouts behind me. Then I soon realised that they were directing themselves towards me. Four of them, of unpleasant appearance, two armed with muskets, strode past, muttering, then after a few steps turned back and surrounded me. They asked who I was, and what I was doing there. I replied that I was a stranger travelling on foot via Assisi, while my driver and carriage went on to Foligno. They found it unlikely that someone would pay for a carriage and then walk. They asked if I had been to the Gran Convento. I said not, assuring them that I knew the building of old. However, since I was an architect, I had visited Santa Maria sopra Minerva on this occasion, which, as they knew, was a model of architecture. They did not deny this, but took great offence at my failure to pay homage to Saint Francis, and expressed their suspicion that my profession might be that of inciting conspiracy. I was told I was an indigent, and would be considered a contrabandist. I pointed out to them the absurdity of a contrabandist walking along the road, alone, without a knapsack. I offered to return to the town with them and present my papers to the

Podestà, so that he might endorse my being an honourable foreigner. They grumbled at this, saying it was unnecessary, and as I continued to speak firmly, in a serious manner, they finally left for the town. I watched them go.

The coarse fellows strode away, while behind them, the beautiful Minerva gazed at me once more, in a very kindly and consoling way. I glanced to my left at the dreary Basilica of Saint Francis and was about to continue on my road when one of the unarmed men separated from the group and approached me quite amicably. Greeting me, he said: 'You should at least give me a tip, dear stranger. I assure you I instantly thought you a good man and said so, loudly, to my companions. They are hotheads, quick to speak, but without worldly wisdom. You will have noticed that it was I who granted your words the most weight and approval.' I praised him, at this, and asked him to protect, in future, the honourable foreigners who came to Assisi for both religious and artistic reasons; especially the architects who, to the glory of their town, wished to measure and sketch the Temple of Minerva, which had never before been properly drawn or engraved. He must assist them, as they would surely be grateful; and I pressed some silver coins into his hand, which pleased him beyond expectation. He begged me to return, saying that I particularly should avoid missing the Saint's feast day, at which time I was certain to find inspiration and enjoyment. Yes, and if it were right for me, a handsome man, to seek a pretty woman, he assured me that the most beautiful and honourable woman in all of Assisi would gladly welcome me on his recommendation. He then departed, assuring me that he would remember me, in his prayers at the saint's tomb, that very evening, and pray for the success of my onward journey.

Thus, we parted, and I felt more than pleased to be alone once more with Nature and myself. The walk to Foligno was one of the most beautiful and pleasant I have ever taken. Four full hours along the mountainside, with a richly cultivated valley to the right.

Travelling by carriage makes for a tiresome journey; the best of it is that one can, if one wishes, follow behind, comfortably, on foot. I had let myself be dragged along from Ferrara, as far as here. Italy, highly favoured by Nature, has lagged behind other countries in every technical and mechanical aspect that makes for a more comfortable and less wearying way of life. The *vettura* (*carriage*), which is still called a *sedia*, a chair, surely originated from the old sedan chairs in which women, the elderly, and those of higher rank were carried by a pair of mules. Instead of the rear mule, harnessed to the fork, two wheels were added, and no further improvement was considered. One is still rocked along as folk were centuries ago, and that is how the Italians maintain their homes, and everything else.

If one wishes to see the ancient poetic idea realised — when people mostly lived outdoors and occasionally retreated to caves out of necessity — one must enter the buildings around here, especially in the countryside, entirely in keeping with the spirit and character of those cave-dwellings. Such incredible carefreeness the Italians exhibit, so as not to grow old too quickly! With unbelievable recklessness, they neglect to prepare for winter, and the longer nights, and consequently suffer like dogs for a good part of the year. Here in Foligno, I have seized the opportunity to write this, in an utterly Homeric household, where everyone has gathered around a fire burning on the floor in a large hall, shouting and clamouring, dining at a long table as in the 'Wedding at Cana' (*the painting by Paolo Veronese, 1563, now in the Louvre*), since someone brought me an inkwell, something I wouldn't have expected under such circumstances. But even the page before me betrays the chilly discomfort of my writing desk.

Now, I feel my audacity in traversing this country unprepared myself, and unaccompanied. Given the various currencies, the need for carriages, the extortionate prices, and poor inns, someone travelling alone for the first time, as I am, hoping and seeking uninterrupted enjoyment, will find it a daily hardship and feel wretched enough. However, I wish nothing more than to see the country, whatever the cost, and if they dragged me to Rome on Ixion's wheel, I would not complain.

Terni

October 27th, evening.

I am seated in a cave once more, one that suffered damage in the earthquake last October; the town is in a delightful area, which I happily explored on my walk, at the edge of a beautiful plain between mountain ranges, all of which are of limestone still. Like Bologna to the north, Terni in the south is situated at the foot of the Apennines.



‘Bridge over the Nera near Terni’ - Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (German, 1749–1832)
Klassik Stiftung Weimar, Museen (Inv. KK 1305)
Digital reproduction · See Art. L. 111-1 CPI and § 68 UrhG

Now the Papal officer has left me, a priest is my companion. He seems more content with his particular situation and, although he recognises me as a heretic, he readily answers my questions about the Catholic rite and other related matters. By constantly meeting new people, I am achieving my goal in full; one only needs to listen to the people talking amongst themselves to realise how vivid a picture of the entire country it grants one. They are all adversaries in the oddest way, possessing the most striking provincial, and urban, zeal, and cannot endure one another. The social classes are in perpetual conflict, and all this with such a lively, and immediate passion that they provide a day-long comedic performance, revealing themselves as if in a charade. Yet at the same time, they immediately grasp and recognise when a stranger finds their actions alien to him.

I climbed the hillside at Spoleto, and stood on the aqueduct (*Ponte delle Torre*), which is also a bridge from one mountain to another. The ten arches spanning the valley, made of brick, have stood so serenely for centuries, and the water still gushes forth in Spoleto everywhere. This is now the third work of the ancients that I have seen, and always with some grand purpose. It was second nature to them, to act for civic purposes — such is their architecture; so, the amphitheatre, the temple, and the aqueduct were conceived. Now I understand how right I was in detesting all arbitrary constructions, such as that barracks on the Weissenstein (*the Hercules Monument, with its grand cascade, in Wilhelmshöhe Park, at Kassel*), a piece of nothing about

nothing, a monstrous confection, and so it is with a thousand other things. All of it is stillborn, for what lacks a true inner existence is lifeless, and is neither great nor can become great.

What joy and insight I have gained over the past eight weeks; though it has cost me enough toil. I simply keep my eyes open and observe things closely. I would scarcely even attempt to judge them if only that were possible.

San Crocefisso is a curious chapel by the roadside, I don't believe it to be the remains of a temple that once stood there, but rather various columns, pillars, and beams were found, and have been pieced together – not stupidly, but well. It is impossible to describe; it must surely have been engraved somewhere on copper.

It feels quite strange that, in our efforts, thus, to gain an idea of antiquity, we are confronted only with ruins, from which we must now, painstakingly, reconstruct that of which we have, still, no clear concept.

Considering what we call 'classic ground' it's a different story. If one avoids indulging in fantasy, and accepts the landscape as it is, one can always see some fateful arena that gave rise to the greatest of deeds. And so, I have always utilised my perspective on the geology of a given landscape to suppress imagination and emotion, and so maintain a clear unprejudiced view of the locale. Then, history unfolds vividly, and in a wondrous way, and one understands within oneself what happened, to some degree, and thus I feel the greatest longing to read Tacitus in Rome.

I must not neglect to comment on the weather, too. As I ascended the Apennines from Bologna, the clouds were still drifting north, but later they changed direction and progressed towards Lake Trasimeno. They lingered there, travelling onwards probably around midday. So instead of the vast plain of the River Po sending the clouds towards the Tyrolean mountains all summer, it is now sending a portion towards the Apennines; which might well explain the rainfall here.

They are starting to harvest the olives now. Here they do it by hand, in other places they beat the branches with sticks to bring the fruit down. If there's an early winter, the remaining olives stay on the trees until spring. Today I saw the largest, and oldest of trees growing on very stony ground.

The Muses' favour, like that of the demons, is not always granted us at the right time. Today I agitated myself, through attempting to develop a poetic idea prematurely. Approaching the heart of Catholicism, surrounded by Catholics, confined to a *sedia* with a priest, striving, clear-mindedly, to observe and comprehend true Nature, and noble art, it became vividly clear to me that all trace of original Christianity has vanished; indeed, when I imagine it in all its purity, as we see it demonstrated in the Acts of the Apostles, I shudder at the formless, even baroque, paganism that has

been built upon, and weighs upon, those humble beginnings. Then I remembered the tale of the Wandering Jew who witnessed all those wondrous developments and revelations, and is doomed to experience his strange fate till Christ himself returns to look again upon the fruits of his teachings, and discover himself in danger of being crucified a second time. The phrase: '*Venio iterum crucifigi*,' was to serve as the subject of my catastrophic attempt (*cf. various versions of the apocryphal text, 'The Acts of Peter', where in reply to 'Domine, Quo Vadis?' 'Lord, whither goest thou?' Jesus is supposed to have replied 'I go to Rome, to be crucified once more.'*)

Such dreams float before my mind. Out of impatience to move on, I sleep fully clothed and know of nothing more delightful than being awakened before daybreak, clambering swiftly into the carriage and, between sleep and wakefulness, going forth to meet the day, allowing my earliest and best fantasies to run wild, as I please.

Civita Castellana

October 28th.

I wish to record this, my last evening before Rome. It is not even eight yet, but everyone is already in bed; so, I am free to take a final look at the past, and anticipate what is to come. Today was a truly bright, a glorious, day, the morning very cold, the afternoon clear and warm, the evening a bit windy, but very beautiful.

We left Terni very early, and reached Narni before daybreak, so I failed to see the bridge (*The 'Ponte d'Augusto' the Roman arched bridge built to carry the Flaminian Way over the river Nera*). There were valleys, and plains, near and far, a delightful landscape, all limestone mountains, not a trace of any other rock.

Otricoli lies on one of the gravel hills washed together by the ancient currents, and is built of lava brought from over the river.

Once one crosses the bridge (*Ponte Felici, which carried the Via Flaminia over the Tiber*), you find yourself in volcanic terrain, whether actual lava, or ancient rock altered by heat and fusion. One climbs a mountain that appears to be composed of grey lava. It contains many white, garnet-shaped crystals. The road leading from the heights to Civita Castellana, made of this same stone, is very smooth; the town itself is built on volcanic tuff, in which I thought I detected ash, pumice, and pieces of lava. The view from the castle (*Forte Sangallo, also known as the Rocca dei Borgia*) is very fine; Mount Soracte rises, picturesquely; most likely a limestone outcrop belonging to the Apennines. The volcanic strata are much lower than those of the Apennines, and the flow of water alone has carved out mountains, and isolated crags, from them,

creating wonderful scenic features: overhanging cliffs, and other irregularities of landscape.

Tomorrow evening, then, I shall be in Rome. I can hardly believe it even now, and once my wish is fulfilled, what else should I wish for? I can think of nothing, except that I might return home safely, with my boatful of pheasants, and find my friends healthy, happy, and well-disposed towards me.

The End of Goethe's 'Italian Journey' Part V

Part VI: Rome

Rome

November 1, 1786.

At last, I can breathe, and greet my friends with joy. May I be forgiven for the secretive nature of my well-nigh 'subterranean' journey here. I scarcely dared tell myself, where I was going; even on the way I was still afraid, and only beneath the arch of the Porta del Popolo did I feel certain of having reached Rome.



'Panorama of Rome from the Porta del Popolo' - Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (German, 1749–1832)
Klassik Stiftung Weimar, Museen (Inv. GGz/1957)
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And let me say also that I think of you a thousand times, indeed constantly now, in the vicinity of objects I never thought I would visit alone. Only when I had come to realise how everyone back there was bound, body and soul, to the North, and all desire to see these regions quenched, did I decide to make this long, solitary journey and seek the central point toward which an irresistible longing drew me. Indeed, in recent years it became a kind of illness from which only the sight and presence of Nature could cure me. Now I may confess that, of late, I had no longer allowed myself to open a book written in Latin, nor view a drawing of an Italian landscape. My need to see this country was overripe: now that it is satisfied, my friends and homeland have become truly dear to me again, and my return to them is desirable, indeed all the more desirable since I feel certain that I shall not so much be arriving with possessions for my own, private use, but treasures that will offer both myself and others guidance and a means of development throughout life.

Rome, November 1, 1786.

Yes, I have finally arrived in this great capital of the world! If I had seen it fifteen years ago, in good company, with a truly knowledgeable guide, I would have considered myself fortunate. But now that I have been able to visit it, and see it with my own eyes, alone, it is better that this joy has come to me so late.

I well-nigh flew over the Tyrolean mountains. I viewed Verona, Vicenza, Padua, and Venice, thoroughly, Ferrara, Cento, and Bologna, fleetingly, and Florence scarcely at all. My desire to reach Rome was so great, and increasing so with every passing moment, that I was unable to rest, spending only three hours in Florence. Now I am here, and calm, and seemingly destined to be at peace for the rest of my life. For, one may well say, a 'new life' begins when one sees, with one's own eyes, without and within, a whole of which one knew only part. All the dreams of my youth I now see realised, vividly, before me; the first copperplate engravings I remember (my father had hung views of Rome in an anteroom) I now see in reality, and everything I have long known only from paintings and drawings, copperplate engravings and woodcuts, or modelled in plaster or cork, now, together, meet my sight. Wherever I go, I find an old acquaintance, yet in a new world; it is all as I imagined it, and yet all quite fresh. I can say the same about my observations and ideas. I have had no entirely new thoughts, have found nothing completely strange to me, but my established ones have become so definite, so vivid, and so coherent that they may be considered new.

When Pygmalion's Galatea (*Elise*), whom he had shaped according to his desire, and granted as much real existence as any artist is capable of, finally approached him, saying: 'It is I!', how different was the living person from the carved stone!

How beneficial then, morally, it is for me, to live among so sensual a people, about whom so much has been said and written, and whom every stranger judges according to his own standards. I forgive all who criticise and rebuke them, because they are too far removed from us, and as a stranger, interacting with them is both difficult and complex.

Rome, November 3rd.

One of the major reasons I had for hurrying towards Rome, was the fast-approaching Feast of All Saints, on the first of November, thinking that if they bestowed so much honour on any one saint, what would they not bestow on all? But how wrong I was! The Roman Church celebrates no widespread feast on that day, as each order prefers to celebrate the memory of its patron saint quietly; for it is the name day, and the day of honour, the feast day, assigned to their saint, that truly allows each worshipper to share in that saint's glory.

Yesterday, however, on All Souls' Day, I fared better. The Pope commemorates the day in his private chapel on the Quirinal Hill. All are welcome. I hurried, with my friend, the artist Johann Tischbein, to Monte Cavallo (*Piazza del Quirinale*). The square in front of the Quirinal Palace has an individual, nay unique, character, being as irregular as it is grand, and charming. And there I beheld the two Colossi (*the statues of the Dioscuri, Castor and Pollux*). Neither eye nor mind are sufficient to encompass them wholly. We hurried, amidst the crowd, through the splendidly spacious courtyard, and ascended the staircase to an exceptionally spacious hall. In this anteroom, opposite the chapel, in sight of a series of rooms, one feels united under one roof with the Vicar of Christ, and wonderfully so.

The proceedings had begun; the Pope (*Pius VI, Giovanni Angelo Braschi*) and cardinals were already in the church; the Holy Father, being a most handsome and dignified man, the cardinals of varying ages and backgrounds.

I was seized by a strange longing for the head of the Church to open his golden mouth, speak with rapture of the ineffable salvation of blessed souls, and fill us, in turn, with rapture. But seeing him merely pace back and forth before the altar, turning now this way, now that, and behaving and muttering like a common priest, Protestant original sin stirred within me, and the familiar and customary Mass held no appeal at all. Certainly, Christ, even as a boy, did not teach and work silently, but gave his oral interpretation of Scripture then, and throughout his youth; for he spoke openly, intelligently, and well, as we know from the Gospels. What would he say, I thought, if he entered and found his representative on Earth, murmuring and swaying back and forth? I recalled the phrase 'Venio iterum crucifigi!' once more, and I nudged my companion, to suggest that we might exit into the vaulted and painted hall.

Here we found many people attentively admiring the exquisite paintings, for this All Souls' Day is also in Rome a celebration of all artists. Like the chapel, the entire palace, all its rooms, are open this day to everyone and freely accessible for many an hour; no tip is required, and the castellan never presses one to depart.

The murals fascinated me, and thus I encountered excellent painters, only known to me by name, such as the happy Carlo Maratti (*also Maratta*), whose work I have come to like and appreciate.

I was particularly pleased, however, by various masterpieces by artists whose styles I had already memorised. I gazed with admiration at the 'Saint Petronilla' by Guercino, commissioned for St. Peter's, where a mosaic copy now stands in place of the original (*'The Burial and Glory of Saint Petronilla', a baroque altarpiece, is now in the Musei Capitolini*). The saint's body is shown here raised from the grave, while the living saint,

resurrected in heaven, is received by a divine youth. Whatever one might say as regards the parallel narrative, the painting is beyond price.

I was even more astonished by a Titian (*'The Madonna of San Niccolò dei Frari', c 1533-1535, now in the Vatican Pinacoteca, originally created for San Niccolò della Lattuga in Venice*). It surpasses all others I have seen. Whether my perception is simply more refined, or whether it is truly the most excellent of all, I cannot quite discern. An immense chasuble, replete with embroidery, indeed with repoussé gold figures, envelops a handsome episcopal figure. Holding a massive crozier in his left hand, he gazes rapturously upwards; in his right he holds a book, from which he seems to have received divine inspiration. To the left a beautiful virgin, palm frond in hand, looks with sweet interest at the open book. To the right, a solemn old man, quite close to the book, seems to pay no attention to it: keys in hand, he may well be confident in his own ability to decipher it. Opposite this group, a naked, well-formed, bound youth, wounded by arrows, gazes ahead, humbly resigned. In the space between, two monks, one bearing a cross the other a lily, turn devoutly towards various heavenly beings, as the semicircular structure that encloses the group is open at the top. There, in supreme glory, the Madonna leans downwards, participating in the scene. The lively and happy child in her lap offers a wreath with a joyful gesture, indeed, seems about to cast it downwards. On both sides hover angels, holding wreaths. High above all, and above a triple circle of rays, reigns the heavenly dove, as both centre and keystone (*the dove, and therefore presumably an upper section of the painting, is not extant*).

One tells oneself that there must have been some sacred, ancient tradition at the root of this, that allowed these diverse, disparate individuals to be brought together in such an artistic and meaningful way. One asks not how or why; one simply accepts, and admires artistry beyond price.

Less incomprehensible, but still mysterious, is a mural by Guido Reni in a side-chapel. The most childlike, sweetest, most devout Virgin sits quietly sewing, two angels at her side attending on her every gesture. The lovely image tells us that youthful innocence and diligence are watched over and honoured by these heavenly beings. No legend, no interpretation is needed here.

Now, to lighten this mood of artistic seriousness, let me recount an amusing adventure. I noticed several German artists who greeted Tischbein as an acquaintance, noting my presence, and then pacing back and forth. Tischbein, who had left me for a few moments, returned and said: 'Here's a great deal of fun to be had! The rumour that you were in Rome has already spread, and the artists are aware of your being the only stranger unknown to them. Now, there's one among them who has long claimed to know you; indeed, he even claims to have enjoyed a friendly relationship with you, which none of us quite believed. He has been asked to look at you and dispel any doubt,

but has assured us, clearly and succinctly, that it is not you, and that the stranger displays not a trace of your appearance or features. So at least your incognito is safe for the moment, and it will be something to smile about later.'

I mingled more freely with the group of artists, and enquired as to the creators of various paintings whose styles were still unknown to me. Finally, one in particular caught my eye: 'Saint George', the dragon slayer and liberator of maidens. No one could name the artist. A small, unassuming man, who had been silent until then, stepped forward, and informed me that it was by Il Pordenone (*Giovanni Antonio de' Sacchis*), the Venetian, and one of his best paintings, in which his entire merit was evident. Now my inclination towards it was readily explicable: the painting had appealed because, already more familiar with the Venetian school, I am better able to appreciate the virtues of its masters.

The artist who identified the painter is Johann Heinrich Meyer, a Swiss who has been studying here for several years with a friend named Cölla, who draws antique busts, excellently done, working in sepia, and is well-versed in art history.

Rome, November 7th.

Now I have been here for seven days, the general layout of the city is gradually emerging in my mind. We walk back and forth, diligently, and I familiarise myself with the plans of both ancient and modern Rome, examine the ruins and buildings, and visit one villa after another. The greatest and most intriguing things I deal with very slowly, I simply open my eyes, look, and depart; and then return again, for one can only prepare oneself for Rome in Rome.

Let me admit, however, that it is a sad task to distinguish the old Rome from the new, but it must be done nonetheless, and in the end, one can hope to gain immeasurable satisfaction. One encounters traces of glory and a scale of destruction that both defy comprehension. What the barbarians left standing, the builders of the new Rome have ravaged.

When one considers the existence of a city two thousand years old and more, so extensively and fundamentally altered by the changing times, yet still on the same soil, encompassing the same hills, indeed often the same pillars and walls; and, as regards the people, traces still of the ancient Roman character, one becomes a participant in the vast decrees of Fate. Thus, it becomes difficult for the observer to grasp, from the outset, how one Rome follows on another, and not only does the new succeed the old, but various epochs of the old and new have also followed in succession. I myself seek at first merely to discern the half-hidden transitions; only then can the excellent preliminary work done by others be fully utilised. For from the fifteenth century to the

present day, distinguished artists and scholars have devoted their entire lives to the subject.

And the immense scale of everything has a calming effect on one, while one scurries to and fro in Rome seeking out the most important sights. In other towns and cities, one has to seek out what is significant; here, one is overwhelmed, and overcome by it. Wherever one goes views of every sort unfold: palaces and ruins, gardens and wasteland, wide or narrow spaces, cottages, stables, triumphal arches and columns — often all so close together that they could be captured on a single sheet of paper. One needs a thousand styluses; what use is a pen here! And then, in the evening, one is tired and exhausted from so much seeing and marvelling.

November 7, 1786.

My friends must forgive me if I am henceforth thought of as taciturn; on a journey, one gathers what one can along the way, each day brings something new, and one hastens to reflect on, and judge, it all. Here, however, one enters a truly vast school, where a single day conveys so much that one dares say nothing. Indeed, one would do well, having remained here for years, to observe a Pythagorean silence (*a strict, multi-year vow of silence was imposed on new initiates in the ancient Greek school of Pythagoras, so as to enhance the powers of contemplation*).

The same date.

I am quite well. The weather is, as the Romans say, brutal; there is a midday wind, the sirocco, which brings rain more or less daily; but I fail to find the weather unpleasant, it is warm, unlike rainy days in our Northern summer.

The same date.

I am now coming to know and appreciate Tischbein's talents more and more, as well as his artistic aims and intentions. He has shown me his drawings and sketches, which convey and express much that is good. His time with Johann Jacob Bodmer (*the Swiss author, academic, and critic*) led him to reflect on the earliest ages of humanity, when human beings, awakening to their presence on Earth, tasked themselves with mastery of the world.

As a thoughtful introduction to the whole, he has striven in one work to depict, in a realistic manner, the great age of the Earth. Here are mountains covered with magnificent forests, gorges carved by torrents of water, extinct volcanoes, barely

emitting a faint cloud of vapour. In the foreground, a mighty stump of an ancient oak tree remains embedded in the earth, on whose half-exposed roots a stag tests the strength of its antlers — as well-conceived a work as it is charmingly executed.

Then, in a most remarkable drawing, he has depicted Man as both a horse-tamer and superior to all the creatures of earth, air, and water, if not in strength, at least in cunning. The composition is extraordinarily beautiful; as an oil painting, it would have a major impact. We must absolutely obtain a copy of it for Weimar. Next, he had envisaged a work involving a gathering of old, wise, experienced men, in which he would have the opportunity to portray realistic figures. Exhibiting the greatest enthusiasm, however, he has chosen instead to sketch a battle scene in which two cavalry squadrons are attacking each other with equal fury, at a point framed by an immense rocky gorge, which the horses can only cross with the greatest effort. Defence is out of the question here. A bold attack is required, fierce determination, leading to success or a descent into the abyss. This scene will give him the opportunity to develop, in a most significant way, the knowledge he possesses of the horse, its anatomy and movement.

He then wishes to link these images, and a series of subsequent interspersed works, with poems which will serve to explain what is depicted, and which in turn, would grant the images, through various poetic ideas, body and charm. The idea is beautiful, but of course artist and poet would need to work together for several years to carry out such a project.

The same date.

I have only viewed Raphael's Loggias and the large fresco of 'The School of Athens,' etc., once, which is like trying to study Homer from a damaged, and partially-faded manuscript. The pleasure derived from one's first impression is partial; only when one has gradually examined, and studied, everything fully is one's enjoyment complete. The best preserved are the ceiling panels of the Loggias depicting biblical stories, the paint as fresh as if they were done yesterday — admittedly, very few are by Raphael's own hand, but all were superbly executed according to his designs and under his supervision.

The same date, November 7th, 1786.

Formerly, on various occasions, I entertained the curious notion that I would like to be guided on my travels in Italy by a well-informed individual, for example an Englishman knowledgeable as regards both art and history; however, all has turned

out now more beautifully than I could have imagined. Tischbein has visited, and now lives, here (*he had visited in the period 1779 to 1781, and settled in the city permanently in 1783*), and has long been a dear friend. He cherished a desire to show me Rome one day; our relationship, old as regards letters, is yet new through our now being here together; where could I find a more worthy guide? Though my time is limited, I will nevertheless enjoy and learn as much as possible. Yet despite all that, I foresee that as I leave Rome, I shall wish that I was only just arriving.

November 8th.

My odd, perhaps eccentric, semi-incognito has brought me advantages I would not have imagined. Since everyone feels obliged to ignore my identity, and thus no one is allowed to speak to me regarding my true self, the people here have no choice but to talk about themselves, and things that interest them. In this way, I am able to learn, albeit indirectly, what occupies everyone's thoughts, and whatever remarkable things are happening or about to. Court Councillor Reiffenstein (*Hofrat Johann Friedrich Reiffenstein, antiquarian, art-dealer, painter, and guide who played a pivotal role in the 18th-century art-world, as a key agent in Rome*) also indulges this whim of mine; but since, for some reason of his own, he could not endure the name I had adopted, he soon bestowed the title of Baron upon me, and I am now Baron Rondanini ('*the Baron who lives opposite the Palazzo Rondanini', or Rondinini, at Via del Corso, 518*). This sufficiently identifies me, all the more so since Italians only ever refer to people by their first names or their nicknames. Enough, I have it my way, and escape the endless inconvenience of having to account for myself, and my previous work.

November 9th.

Sometimes, I stand still for a moment, and survey the highest peaks that I have already gained. I greatly enjoy looking back at my time in Venice, that great city which sprang from the bosom of the sea like Pallas Athene from the head of Jupiter. Here, in Rome, the Rotonda (*the Pantheon*), both internally and externally, moved me to joyful veneration of its grandeur. In St. Peter's, I learned how art, like Nature, can transcend all comparisons. And thus, the Apollo Belvedere (*in the Vatican*) transported me beyond mere reality. For just as the most accurate drawings cannot convey the essence of the buildings, so it is here if one compares the original marble to the plaster casts, of which I had seen some very beautiful examples previously.

November 10, 1786.

I now live, here, in a state of clarity and peace that I have not experienced in a long time. My practice of seeing and interpreting all things as they are; my faithfulness to my rule, that of keeping my eyes wide open; and my complete relinquishment of all pretensions to knowledge, are once again proving most useful and, in a quiet way, render me extremely happy. Every day reveals some new and interesting object for study, every day offers fresh, grand, unfamiliar images, forming a whole that one may think and dream about for hours, without the imagination ever quite grasping it in its completeness.

Today I visited the Pyramid of Cestius, and this evening the Palatine Hill, topped by the ruins of the Imperial Palace complex, like a series of cliff faces. Of course, nothing of this can be conveyed! There is, in truth, nothing here which is insignificant, even if here and there one views something reprehensible and tasteless; for even such things play a part in the overall grandeur.



‘Ruins on the Palatine Hill, Rome’ - Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (German, 1749–1832)
Klassik Stiftung Weimar, Museen (Inv. GGz/0160)
Digital reproduction · See Art. L. 111-1 CPI and § 68 UrhG

Turning to myself once more, as human beings so readily do at every opportunity, I harbour a feeling of boundless joy within, indeed, one that I will even dare to express. A person who looks around with any degree of earnestness, here, and has eyes to see, must feel more solid; and must grasp the concept of solidity in a way that they have never before experienced so vividly.

The mind is imbued with increasing competence, and one attains seriousness without dryness, a calmly composed state imbued with joy. For my part, at least, it is

as if I had never truly appreciated the things of this world as I do here. I anticipate blessed consequences from it, affecting my entire life.

And so let me but compose myself, and whatever may come, all will fall into place, and rightful order. I am not here to indulge myself at whim; I wish to devote myself to great pursuits, to learn and educate myself before I reach the age of forty (*Goethe was thirty-seven at the time*).

November 11th.

Today I visited the nymph Egeria (*the Nymphaeum of Egeria, a 2nd-century AD structure in the Caffarella Valley*) then the Circus of Caracalla (*Circus of Maxentius*), and the ruined tombs along the Appian Way, including the tomb of Caecilia Metella, which truly gives one a sense of solid masonry. Those people laboured to produce works for eternity; everything was allowed for in advance, except the senselessness of the Vandals, to which everything was forced to give way (*in 455AD*). I longed for you all to be here. The remains of the great aqueducts are most venerable. What a beautiful, and grand aim, to bring water to the people by means of so immense an endeavour! In the evening I reached the Coliseum as dusk was falling. When you gaze at it, everything else is rendered small; it is so vast that one cannot hold the entire thing in one's mind. One remembers it as being smaller, yet if one returns there, it seems even larger.

Frascati, November 15th.

The company are all abed, and I am still writing using the ink they use for drawing. We have had a series of beautiful, rain-free days here, warm and sunny, such that one misses summer not at all. The area is very pleasant; the place is situated on a hillside, or rather, a mountainside, and for an artist every step offers the most magnificent subjects. The view is boundless; one can see Rome, and beyond Rome to the sea, and on the right, the mountains above Tivoli, and further still. In this delightful region, country houses are built solely for pleasure, and just as the ancient Romans had their villas here, so too, for a hundred years ago and more, rich and exuberant Romans have built their country houses in the most beautiful places. We have been walking the area for two days now, and there is always something new and charming to discover.

And then, it is hard to say whether the evenings are not even more enjoyable than the days. As soon as the stately landlady places the brass triple-branched lamp on the large round table and says 'Felicissima notte!', 'Have a most pleasant night!', everyone gathers in a circle and presents the drawings and sketches they have made throughout the day. They discuss whether the subject should have been presented to greater

advantage, whether its essence has been captured, and whether those initial general requirements, which one must consider even in a first draft, have been met. Court Councillor Reiffenstein, a man of insight and authority, knows how to keep order, and chair these meetings. This commendable institution, however, really owes its existence to the artist Philipp Hackert, who knows how to depict and execute landscape paintings, and with the utmost taste. When in Rome, he kept artists and enthusiasts, men and women, old and young, up to the mark, encouraging all to try their hand at something, each according to their talent and ability, and leading the company by example. This way of gathering and entertaining a group of artists was faithfully continued by Councillor Reiffenstein after Hackert's departure (*for Naples, and ultimately Florence*) and we find it commendable that he welcomes the active participation of all and sundry. The nature and character of the various members of the society emerge in a pleasant manner. Tischbein, for example, as a painter of neo-classical scenes, views landscape quite differently than a traditional landscape-painter does. He perceives significant groupings, and other graceful and expressive subjects, where another would notice nothing of significance, and thus he succeeds in capturing many an innocent human trait, be it in children, peasants, beggars and other such unsophisticated people, or even animal traits, since he knows how to depict creatures very successfully with a few characteristic strokes, thereby constantly providing new and charming material for conversation.

When conversation is exhausted, then, evoking Hackert's legacy, someone reads from Sulzer's 'Theory,' (*Johann Georg Sulzer's artistic theory, detailed in his 'General Theory of the Fine Arts', 1771–1774, emphasised their civilising effect*), and even if one cannot be entirely satisfied with that work from a more elevated standpoint, one nevertheless notes with pleasure its beneficial influence on those who are at an intermediate level of knowledge.

Rome, November 17th.

We have returned to Rome! Last night there was a dreadful downpour accompanied by
thunder and lightning, now it continues to rain but the air is warm.

I can only describe the pleasures of this day in a few words. I saw the frescoes by Domenichino in Sant'Andrea della Valle, and similarly, those in the Farnese Gallery, by Annibale Carracci and his studio. More than enough, surely, to occupy one for months, let alone a single day.

November 18th.

The weather is fine again, a bright, friendly, warm day. In the Villa Farnesina I saw the frescoes (*by Raphael and his workshop*) depicting the tale of Psyche, colourful reproductions of which have long brightened my rooms, then, in the church of San Pietro in Montorio, Raphael's 'Transfiguration' (*now in the Vatican Pinacoteca*) All these are old acquaintances, like friends one has made through corresponding from afar, whom one now sees face to face. Experiencing them all together is something else entirely; every genuine sympathy or its opposite is immediately apparent.

There are wonderful things to be found everywhere here; things that are not often spoken of, being less frequently reproduced in the form of copperplate engravings, or reproductions. I have brought some of the latter with me, drawn by talented young artists.

The same date.

The fact that I have maintained such an excellent relationship with Tischbein for so long, through our letters to each other, and that I have shared with him many a wish, even though seemingly hopeless of fulfilment, of visiting Italy, has made our meeting immediately both fruitful and enjoyable. He was forever thinking of me, and assisting me. He is also completely at home with the various types of stone employed in both ancient and modern buildings; he has studied them thoroughly, his artistic eye, and appreciation of solid matter serving him well. He recently sent a collection of samples, especially selected for myself, to Weimar, which will be a welcome and warming sight on my return. Meanwhile, a significant further gift has come to light. A clergyman, currently in France and intending to write a work on ancient types of stone, received, through the favour of the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith, (*the Congregatio de Propaganda Fide, known as the 'Propaganda', a committee of cardinals tasked with managing foreign missions and training missionaries to spread Catholicism*), various considerable pieces of marble from the island of Paros. These have been cut into sample pieces here, and twelve different ones were set aside for me, ranging from the finest to the coarsest grain, from the purest to those mixed with varying amounts of mica — some suitable for sculpture, others for architectural use. How much a precise knowledge of the material employed in the arts contributes to evaluation of the resulting work is readily apparent.

There are plenty of opportunities to gather such samples here. Visiting the ruins of Nero's palace (*the Domus Aurea*), we walked through freshly ploughed artichoke fields, and could not resist filling our pockets full of granite, porphyry, and marble fragments, thousands of which lie scattered about, as inexhaustible witnesses to the ancient glories of the walls they once covered.

The same date.

But now I must also speak of a wonderfully problematic drawing that can be clearly seen as related to all these excellent things. Several years ago, a Frenchman, known as an art lover and collector, stayed here. He was said to have come into possession of an antique fresco on plaster, its origin unknown, and that he had Anton Raphael Mengs restore it, and included it as a prized work in his collection. Johann Winckelmann, the art historian speaks of it enthusiastically somewhere. It depicts Ganymede offering Jupiter a bowl of wine, and receiving a kiss in return. The Frenchman died, leaving the painting to his landlady as an antique. Mengs died, but had declared on his deathbed that it was not antique, and that he had painted it (*He and Giacomo Casanova created it in imitation of an ancient Roman fresco, sufficiently skilfully to deceive Winckelmann. It resides in the National Gallery of Ancient Art, in Rome*). And now everyone is arguing about it. Some claim that Mengs simply dashed it off in jest, while others say that Mengs could never have produced anything of that quality, indeed, that it was almost too beautiful for Raphael. I saw it yesterday and must say that I know of nothing more beautiful than the figure of Ganymede, particularly the head and back, the rest has been extensively restored. Meanwhile, however, the painting is discredited, and nobody wants to relieve the poor landlady of her treasure.

November 20, 1786.

Since experience has ever taught us that people wish drawings and engravings to accompany poetry of every sort, and indeed, that painters themselves often dedicate their most elaborate paintings to a particular poetic passage, Tischbein's idea that poets and artists might collaborate to form a unified whole from the outset is highly commendable. The difficulty of doing so would, of course, be considerably reduced if the poems were short, and easily appreciated and promoted.

Tischbein also has some very charming, nay idyllic, suggestions as regards this idea, and it is truly remarkable that the subjects he wishes to explore in this manner are of such a nature that neither poetry nor the visual arts, on their own, would be sufficient to realise them. He told me about this on our walks, to entice me to enter into his plan. The title engraving for our joint work, has already been designed; if I weren't afraid of venturing into yet another new project, I might well allow myself to be seduced.

Rome, November 22, 1786, the Feast of St. Cecilia.

I must preserve the memory of this happy day in a few vivid lines, and at least recount in order all that I enjoyed. The weather was utterly beautiful and tranquil, with a perfectly clear sky, and warm sunshine. I walked with Tischbein to St. Peter's Square (*Piazza San Pietro*), where we first strolled up and down, and when it became too warm, in the shade of the great obelisk, the shade being just wide enough for two people to do so, eating grapes we had bought nearby. Then we entered the Sistine Chapel (*in the Apostolic Palace*), which we also found bright and cheerful, and the paintings well-lit. The 'Last Judgement' and the paintings on the ceiling, by Michelangelo, we jointly admired. For myself, I could only look and marvel. The master's inner confidence and manly energy, his grandeur, is beyond all description. After gazing at everything over and over, we left this sanctuary, and visited St. Peter's Basilica, which was filled with the most beautiful light from the dome, and appeared bright and clear in every part. As two people who appreciate life's finer things, we revelled in the grandeur and splendour, without, on this occasion, allowing ourselves to be troubled by overly-critical or rational thought, and we suppressed harsher judgement. We found it sufficient to take pleasure in what is pleasing.

Finally, we climbed to the roof terrace, where one finds in miniature a plan of the well-built city. Houses and warehouses, fountains (judging by appearances), churches, and a large temple, all suspended in the air, as it were, with pleasant walkways in between. We climbed to the dome, and gazed out over the bright, sunny landscape of the Apennines, Mount Soracte, the volcanic hills beyond Tivoli, Frascati, Castel Gandolfo, the plains, and further on, the sea. Beneath us, stretched the entire city of Rome in all its breadth and vastness, with its hilltop palaces, domes, and so forth. The air was still, and inside the copper dome, it was as hot as a greenhouse. Having absorbed all this, we descended, and the doors to the cornices of the dome, the drum, and the nave were unlocked for us; one can walk around, and view these parts, and the church from above. As we stood on the cornice of the drum, the Pope passed below, occupied with afternoon prayers. So, we lacked nothing from our visit. We descended to ground level, enjoyed a cheerful, if frugal meal at a nearby inn, and then continued on our way to St. Cecilia's Church (*Santa Cecilia in Trastevere*).



‘Saint Peter’s Basilica seen from the Arco Oscuro in Rome’ - Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (German, 1749–1832)
Wikimedia Commons

I would need many a written page to describe the decoration of the church, which was densely packed with people. Not a single stone of the pavement was visible. The columns were covered in red velvet and wound with gold braid, the capitals in embroidered velvet approximating their underlying shapes, and all the cornices and pillars were hung and covered in this way. All the spaces between the walls were covered with vividly-painted hangings, so that the whole church seemed as if lined with mosaics, and over two hundred wax candles burned around and beside the high altar, so that one entire wall was covered with lights, and the nave of the church was completely illuminated. The side aisles and side altars were similarly decorated and lit. Opposite the high altar, above and below the organ, were two scaffolded platforms, also covered in velvet, one for the singers, the other for the members of the orchestra who played continuously. The church was thronged.

I heard a beautiful musical performance here of a kind previously unknown to me. Just as there are violin and other concertos, here they perform concertos with added voices, with one dominant voice, the soprano for example, singing solo, the choir joining in, from time to time, as an accompaniment, and the full orchestra, of course, playing throughout. It produces a very fine effect. — I must end, with our ending to the day. In the evening we chanced to reach the opera house (*Teatro Valle, built 1726*), where ‘Fra i Due Litiganti’ (*by Giuseppe Sarti, 1782*) was being performed, but had enjoyed the day so much that we decided to pass it by.

November 23rd.

So that I, with my beloved incognito, might not end up, like an ostrich, thinking itself hidden because it has buried its head in the sand, I am yielding to a certain degree, while still maintaining my former title. I greeted, openly, the Prince of Liechtenstein (*Karl Michale Joseph, called Borromaus, von Liechtenstein*) a relation of the Countess von Harrach (*Countess Maria Josefa von Harrach-Rohrau*) whom I esteem so highly, and I dined with him several times, and soon realised that this concession of mine would have further consequences, and so it did. I had been told about Abate Vicenzo Monti and his 'Aristodemo,' a tragedy that was soon to receive its first performance. The author, I was told, wished to present a copy to me, and hear my opinion. I let the matter drop without specifically rejecting the idea, and finally met the poet and one of his friends at the prince's residence, where the play was read aloud.

The hero, as is well known, is a king of Sparta who takes his own life due to his pangs of conscience, and I was politely informed that the author of 'The Sorrows of Young Werther' would probably not object to finding some passages from his excellent book utilised in this work. And so, there was no escape from the wrathful spirit of that unfortunate young man even within the walls of Sparta.

The piece has a very simple, calm pace; the sentiments and language are appropriate to the subject matter, both powerful and gentle. The work testifies to a fine talent.

I did not fail, in my own way — though certainly not in an Italian way — to highlight all the good and praiseworthy aspects of the play, with which the gathering was reasonably satisfied, though, exhibiting a southern impatience, they still demanded something more. In particular, I was expected to predict what effect the play would have on a theatre audience. I excused myself by referring to my ignorance of the country, its ways of thought, and its taste, but was honest enough to add that I did not know whether the pampered Romans, who were accustomed to seeing a complete three-act comedy and a complete two-act opera as an interlude, or a grand opera with entirely foreign ballet interludes as intermezzi, would take pleasure in the noble, tranquil course of a tragedy unfolding without interruption. Furthermore, the subject of suicide seemed to me to lie entirely outside the realm of Italian ideas. I hear about people killing others almost every day, here, but I have not heard of anyone robbing themselves of their own life, or even considering it a possibility.

I was happy to receive a detailed explanation of the objections pertinent to my disbelief, and yielded readily to the most plausible of arguments. I also assured them that I desired nothing more than to see the play performed and to offer the most sincere and enthusiastic applause, amidst a chorus of friends. This declaration was most graciously received, and I had every reason to be satisfied with my concession at

this time — for Prince Liechtenstein is the epitome of kindness, and has arranged for me to view many art treasures with him, for which special permission from the owners and thus a higher degree of influence, is required.

However, my sense of humour proved insufficient when the Pretender's daughter (*Charlotte Stuart, Duchess of Albany, the illegitimate daughter of Charles Edward Stuart, he being known as the 'Young Pretender', and nicknamed 'Bonnie Prince Charlie'. She had joined her father in Rome in 1785*) also demanded to see the foreign 'marmoset'. I refused, and buried myself, decisively, once more.

And yet, this is not quite the right approach either, and I feel very vividly here what I have noticed earlier in life: that the person who wishes to do good must be just as active and engaged with others as the selfish, the petty, or the wicked. It is an easy thing to comprehend; but it is difficult to act accordingly.

November 24th.

I can say nothing more about the Italians than that they are children of Nature who, amidst the splendour and dignity of religion and the arts, are not an iota different than they would be if they dwelt in caverns in the forest. What strikes all foreigners, and what is once again the talk of the whole city— but only talk — is the high frequency of killings. Four people have already been murdered in our district, in the last three weeks. Today, a fine artist, Joseph Caspar Schwendimann, a Swiss medallist and engraver, the last pupil of Johann Carl Hedlinger (*died 1771*), the medallist and sculptor, was attacked, just like Winckelmann (*who was murdered in Trieste, while returning from Vienna to Rome, in 1768*). The murderer, with whom Schwendimann struggled, dealt him about twenty stab wounds, and when the police arrived, the wretch stabbed himself. That is not usually the case, here. The murderer reaches the nearest church, and finds sanctuary.

And so, in order to add some shade to my descriptions, I should doubtless report on crimes and calamities, earthquakes and floods, though it is the current eruption of Vesuvius that has set most of the foreigners here in motion, and one has to exert considerable self-control, not to be swept away by the crowd. This natural phenomenon truly has about it something akin to a rattlesnake, whose rattle irresistibly attracts people. It is as if all the art treasures of Rome were rendered irrelevant; all the foreigners are breaking off their courses of study, and hastening to Naples. But I will persevere here, in the hope Vesuvius will keep something back to impress me.

December 1st, 1786.

Karl Phillip Moritz is here, the author who has sparked our interest in him through his auto-biographical novel 'Anton Reiser' (*1785-86*), and his previous 'Travels of a German in England in 1782' (*published 1783*). He is an honest, an excellent man, whose company we greatly enjoy.

Same date.

Here in Rome, where they see so many foreigners, not all of whom visit this capital of the world for the sake of the fine arts but seek entertainment in other ways, the inhabitants are prepared for anything. There are certain lesser arts, requiring manual dexterity, and a love of craftsmanship, in which people here have developed substantial skills, and will gladly share their interest with foreigners.

Painting in wax belongs in this category. The preliminary work and preparation, followed by firing and various other necessary steps, may readily engage any person with even a basic understanding of watercolours, and the end result often achieves a modest artistic status, through the sheer novelty of the process. There are practised artists who offer instruction in the techniques involved, and under the guise of guidance, they often exercise their own skills, so that in the end, when the gleaming wax-enhanced picture is displayed in a golden frame, the fair disciple is quite surprised by the manifestation of her unconscious talent.

Another activity is to take impressions in fine clay of incised cameos, which can also be done with medals, reproducing both sides at once.

The production of glass-paste jewellery requires even more skill, attention, and diligence. For all these tasks, Court Councillor Reiffenstein possesses the necessary equipment and facilities, in his house, or at least in the immediate vicinity.

December 2nd.

I stumbled upon Johann Archenholzen's 'England und Italien' (*'England and Italy', 1785*) here, quite by chance. How such writing seems to shrink, faced with the actual place itself, as if the little book were to be placed on coals, and gradually turn brown and black, the pages curling, and vanishing in smoke. Certainly, he saw all that is here; but possesses far too little knowledge to justify so grandiose and contemptuous a manner, as he stumbles along, praising and criticising.

The same date.

This beautiful, warm, and calm weather, interrupted only occasionally by a few rainy days, is something completely new to me at the end of November and the start of December. We make the most of the good weather outdoors, and of the bad weather indoors; everywhere there is something to enjoy, learn, or do.

On November 28th, we returned to the Sistine Chapel and had the gallery unlocked, from which one can obtain a closer view of the ceiling. It is quite narrow, and one has to squeeze along behind the iron railing with some difficulty, and in apparent danger, which is why those prone to vertigo stay behind. But all is compensated for by the sight of the greatest of masterpieces. And, there and then, I was so captivated by Michelangelo that even Nature momentarily lost its appeal, since I am unable to see it with the wide-eyed wonder that he did. If only there were a way to truly commit such images to memory! At least I shall bring back whatever engravings and drawings of his works I can find.

From there we visited Raphael's Loggias, and, dare I say, one could barely endure to look at them. One's eyesight was so exercised and affected by those great forms, and the magnificent perfection of the details, that the eyes failed to trace the ingenious playfulness of the arabesques, while the biblical stories, beautiful as they are, could not compete with them. To view these works more often, to compare them, at greater leisure and without prejudice, must bring great joy; for initially, the encounter is far too one-sided.

From there, we progressed, in sunlight that was almost too warm, to the Villa Pamphili, with its most beautiful gardens, and stayed there until evening. A large, flat meadow, bordered by evergreen oaks and tall pines, was completely covered with daisies, all turning their heads towards the sun; and then my botanical speculations superseded all others, which I continued the next day on a walk to Monte Mario, Villa Mellini, and Villa Madama.

It is quite interesting to observe the continuous and vigorous growth of vegetation when uninterrupted by any severe period of cold; here there are no buds, and only now one begins to understand what a bud actually is. The strawberry trees, *Arbutus unedo*, are now blooming again, even as their last fruits ripen, and the orange trees also display their blossom, alongside half and fully-ripe fruit (though these latter trees, if not sheltered by buildings, are now being covered). There is plenty to think about as regards the cypresses, most respectable trees when quite old and well-established. I shall visit the Botanical Garden soon (*the University botanical garden, on the Janiculum, the Gianicolo Hill, at that time*), and hope to learn a lot there. In general, nothing compares to the new perspective on life which contemplating a foreign

country grants a thoughtful person. Though I am still the same being, I believe I have been transformed to my very core.

Let me close for now, and let me fill the next page entirely with misfortune, murder, earthquake, and calamity, so that my paintings too may possess their share of shade.

December 3rd.

The weather has been mostly unpredictable so far, alternating every six days or so. Two absolutely glorious days, an overcast one, two or three rainy days, and then beautiful ones again. I try to make the most of each.

Yet the magnificent objects around me still feel like new acquaintances. One has not lived with them long enough to learn their unique qualities. Some seize me so forcefully that, for a time, I become indifferent, even unjust, to others. For example, the Pantheon, the Apollo Belvedere, various colossal heads, and most recently the Sistine Chapel have so captivated my mind that I can scarcely see anything beyond them. How can one, as puny as one is and accustomed to littleness, compare oneself to these noble, immense, and skilled works of art? And if one tries to view things in perspective, an enormous multitude press in from all sides, and meet one at every step, each demanding its own tribute of one's attention. How can one extricate oneself from this? Only by letting it work on one, and develop patiently, and by diligently paying attention to what others have accomplished for our benefit.

Winckelmann's art history *('Geschichte der Kunst des Altertums', 'History of the Art of Antiquity', 1764),* translated into Italian by Carlo Fea (*as 'Storia delle Arti del Disegno presso gli Antichi', 1783/4*), the new edition, is a very useful work which I immediately acquired, and find very useful here amidst honest, interpretive and instructive company.

Even simple Roman antiquities are beginning to delight me. Historical inscriptions, and coins — things I previously dismissed — all, now, are drawing me in. Just as I once felt about natural history, so I feel here, since the entire history of Europe, and beyond, is linked to this place, and I count as a second birthday, a true rebirth, the day I entered Rome.

December 5th.

In the few weeks I have been here, I have seen many a visitor come and go, and marvelled at the casualness with which so many of them treat these valuable objects. Thank God that none of these migratory birds will be able to impress me hereafter, in

the North, if they speak of Rome; none will trouble my digestion; for I shall have seen it all before, and know more or less where I stand on the matter.

December 8th.

Every now and then, we have the most beautiful days. The rain, which falls from time to time, turns the grass and garden plants green. There are numerous evergreens here and there, also, so one barely misses the fallen leaves of the deciduous trees. In the gardens there are orange trees laden with fruit, planted directly in the ground, and uncovered.

I was all set to tell you, at length, about a most pleasant walk we took to the sea, and about the fishing we did there, when, in the evening, Moritz broke his arm while riding back, his horse slipping on the smooth Roman cobblestones. It ruined all the pleasure of the day, and has laid a curse on our little circle.

December 13th.

How truly pleased I am that you have all accepted my vanishing from sight, as I dearly wished. Please reconcile me with any who might have been offended by my doing so. That was not my intent, though even now I can say nothing to justify my behaviour. God forbid that I should ever grieve a friend because of my decision.

I am gradually recovering now from my fateful leap (*salto mortale*) and studying not merely enjoying myself. Rome is a world, and it takes years just to become acquainted with it. How happy those travellers seem who only look and depart.

This morning I came across Winckelmann's letters, which he wrote from Italy. With what emotion I began to read them! Thirty-one years ago, at this time of year, he, more a poor fool even than I, came to Rome, and he too was typically German in his seriousness as regards thorough and comprehensive study of its art. How diligently and skillfully he ploughed his way through it all! And where, now, is the memory of the man in this place!

Apart from the objects of Nature, which are true and consistent in all their aspects, nothing speaks to us as loudly as the traces of an honest, thoughtful man and true art, which are equally consistent. Here in Rome, one truly feels this, where so much that is transient has occurred, where so much foolishness has been perpetuated by power and wealth.

One passage in Winckelmann's letter regarding Franconia (*the region in northern Bavaria*) particularly pleased me: 'One must view all things in Rome with a certain

phlegmatism, lest one is thought to be a Frenchman. Rome, I believe, offers the noblest school for educating the world, and I too have been tried and tested herein.'

That fits perfectly with my method of approaching things, and certainly, beyond Rome, there is no concept of how it educates one. One must be, so to speak, reborn, and one looks back on one's previous ideas as if they were one's childhood shoes. The most ordinary person becomes someone here, or at least gains an extraordinary understanding, even if it fails to become part of their very being.

This letter is sent as we prepare for the New Year; all happiness to you at its start; before it ends, we shall see each other again, and that will be no small joy. This past year has been the most important of my life; whether I die now, or live for a while longer, in either case life has been good to me. Now a word or two for the little ones.

You can read, or tell the children the following: winter is barely noticeable; the gardens are planted with evergreens, the sun is bright and warm, and the only snow to be seen is on the most distant mountain peaks to the north. The lemon trees, planted against the walls in the gardens, are gradually being protected with reed matting, but the orange trees remain devoid of cover. A mass of beautiful fruit hangs on each of these trees, which, unlike ours, are not pruned and planted in pots, but stand happily and freely in the ground, in rows with their companions. One can imagine few things more delightful than such a sight. For a small tip, one can eat as many as one chooses. They are already good; in March they will be even better.

Recently we were at the coast, on a fishing expedition; the most wondrous creatures appeared in the shape of fish, crabs, and others with strange deformities; also, fish that give an electric shock to the person who touches them.

December 20th.

And yet all this causes more toil and anguish than pleasure. The rebirth that has transformed me from within continues to do its work. I thought I would learn worthwhile things here; but never imagined that I would have to return to so early a stage of schooling, that I would have to unlearn, indeed completely relearn, so much. Now, however, I am convinced of the need, and have given myself up to doing so entirely, while the more I must deny my former self, the more I rejoice. I am like a builder who, wishing to erect a tower, lays down poor foundations; quickly realising this he gladly tears down what he has already built, seeking to expand and refine his ground plan, so as to be more certain of his tower's grounding, and already rejoicing in the greater stability the future structure will possess. Heaven grant that, on my return, I also appreciate the moral consequences which life in the wider world has

brought me. Indeed, my moral sensibility undergoes major renewal along with my artistic sensibility.

Doctor Münter (*Friedrich Münter, the German-Danish scholar, theologian, and Bishop of Zealand*), who is an energetic and impetuous fellow, is here, having returned from a trip to Sicily. I know nothing of his motive for undertaking the journey. He will be visiting you in May, and will have much to tell you. He has been travelling about Italy for some two years. He is dissatisfied with the Italians, who, it seems, showed insufficient respect for the important letters of recommendation he had brought with him, which were supposed to grant him access to many archives, and private libraries, so he has failed to fully achieve his wishes.

He has collected many beautiful coins and, as he told me, owns a manuscript that allows those studying numismatics to classify their precise characteristics, in the manner of Linnaeus. Herder is apparently inquiring further into all this; perhaps I will be permitted to take a copy. Creating something along those lines seems possible, and would be a good thing when done, because, sooner or later, I must delve more seriously into the subject.

December 25th.

I am now beginning to visit and view, for a second time, the best things I have seen; initial wonder dissolves into a more extended experience, and one obtains a deeper sense of their value. To truly grasp the highest concept of what humanity has accomplished, the spirit must first attain perfect freedom.

Marble is a strange material, which is why seeing the actual Apollo Belvedere is a boundless delight, because the noblest breath of that living, ageless, eternally-youthful, form is lost immediately even in the best plaster cast.

Opposite us in the Rondanini Palace stands a Medusa mask (*the 'Medusa Rondanini', is now in the Glyptothek, Munich*) where, in a long and beautiful face, larger than life, the fearful stare of death is expressed, to unspeakable perfection. I already possess an excellent cast, but the magic the marble achieves fails to survive there. The noble translucency of the yellowish stone, approaching the colour of flesh, has vanished. Plaster, by comparison, always looks chalky and lifeless.

And yet, what a joy it is to enter a plaster caster's workshop, where one sees the magnificent limbs of statues emerging individually from the mould, and thereby gains an entirely new perspective on the resulting figures. There one can see, side by side, objects that are scattered throughout Rome, which provides an invaluable means of comparison. I could not resist acquiring a colossal head of Jupiter. It now stands

opposite my bed, well-lit, so that I can immediately address my morning devotions to it, and which, despite its grandeur and dignity, has given rise to an amusing little story.

Our old landlady is usually followed by her faithful cat, when she enters to make the bed. I was seated in the main hall, and heard her going about her business within. Suddenly, contrary to her usual habit, she opened the door and called out to me, very hastily and vehemently, to come quickly, and see a miracle. When I asked her what it was, she replied that the cat was worshipping God the Father. She had long since noticed, she said, that the creature possessed a Christian intelligence, but it was a great miracle nonetheless. I hurried to see with my own eyes, and, truly, it was a wondrous enough sight. The bust stands on a high base, and is truncated well below the breast, so the head is set high. The cat had jumped onto the table, placed its paws on the god's chest, and, stretching its limbs as far as possible and reaching with its muzzle as far as the sacred beard, was licking away, with the utmost delicacy, undisturbed in the slightest by either the landlady's interjections or my arrival. I allowed the good woman to express her astonishment, but explained this strange feline devotion to myself by suggesting that the animal, endowed with a fine sense of smell, must have detected the pungent grease that had seeped from the mould into the hollows of the beard and now clung there.

December 29, 1786.

I still have much to say and to praise as regards Tischbein who, a true German original, has made himself what he is. Moreover, I must report, with gratitude, how during his second stay in Rome he has looked after me in a very friendly manner, obtaining a number of copies, after the best masters, for me, some in black chalk, others in sepia and watercolour, which will gain value in Germany, where we are far removed from the originals, and which will remind me of all that is best.

During his artistic career, in which he initially focused on portraiture, Tischbein came into contact with various important men, especially in Zurich, and strengthened his sensibility, and broadened his insight through knowing them.

I brought the second part of 'Scattered Leaves' ('*Zerstreute Blätter' by Johann Gottfried von Herder*) with me, and was doubly welcome. Herder shall learn, though circuitously, just how effective his little book can prove, even after repeated readings. Tischbein simply cannot comprehend how anyone could have written the like without having visited Italy.

The same date.

In this world of art, one lives as if in a hall of mirrors, where, even against one's will, one often sees oneself and others repeatedly reflected. I noticed that Tischbein often observes me attentively, and now it turns out that he intends to paint my portrait. His sketch is finished; he has already stretched the canvas. I am to be depicted life-size, as a traveller wrapped in a white coat, seated, in the open air on a fallen obelisk, in the Roman countryside, with various edifices and ruins far off in the background (*Tischbein's painting of 'Goethe in the Roman Campagna', 1787, is in the Städel Museum, Frankfurt am Main*). It will be a beautiful painting, only too large for my northern apartments. I will doubtless retreat there again, but the portrait will find no place.

The same date, December 29th.

Incidentally, the numerous attempts made to draw me from my mode of concealment, the manner in which poets read their works to me or have them read to me, and how they all depend on me to play a part, none of this fools me, though it is entertaining enough, as I have already foreseen where such things lead. The many little cliques that surround the feet of their Rome, 'Ruler of the World', here and there, hint at something small and country-townish about the place.

Yes, it is the same here as everywhere else, and what might happen, to me or through me, bores me well before it happens. One, it seems, is obliged to take sides, help champion their passions and intrigues, praise the artists and dilettantes, belittle their rivals, and let the powerful and wealthy behave as they wish. Am I supposed to run the whole gamut here, which might well drive one to escape their world, and all to no purpose at all?

No, I won't delve any deeper than to know them, and then rest content, indoors and in private, and refrain from indulging myself, or others, in the wider world. I wish to see the true Rome, the essential Rome, not the one that alters with each passing decade. If I had more time, I would seek to use it more wisely. History is read quite differently here compared with anywhere else in the world. Elsewhere, one reads from the outside in; here, one feels as if reading the outer from the inner, everything swirls around one and then flows forth again. And this applies not only to Roman history, but to all of wider history. From here, one can follow the ancient Romans, conquering the lands as far as the Weser (*which flows from the Thuringian Forest to the North Sea*) or the Euphrates, or, if one wants to be a sight-seer, one can await their generals, returning in triumph, along the Sacred Way, nourish oneself on their gifts of grain and coins, and comfortably participate in all that splendour.

January 2, 1787.

One may say what one likes in favour of oral and written tradition, but in very few cases does it suffice, since it cannot convey the true character of any existent being, not even in spiritual matters. However, once one has gained a firm understanding, then one may happily listen or read, for doing so links to the live impression; now, one is able to think and judge.

You have often mocked me, and wished to demur when I was inclined to view stones, plants, and creatures from a fixed, and to me decisive, point of view: now I have turned my attention to architecture, sculpture and painting and will learn how to seek out my own way here also.

January 4th, 1787.

I must, after all, speak to you of the state of indecision I am now in, regarding my stay in Italy. In my last letter I wrote that I proposed to leave Rome immediately after Easter, and return home in stages. Until then I would gather a few more shells from the Mediterranean shore, and so appease my most urgent need. I am now cured of a violent passion, nay an illness, and am restored to the enjoyment of life, history, poetry, and antiquities, and have gathered items of treasure which it will take me many a long year to polish and finish.

Recently, however, friendly voices have reached me, to the effect that I ought not to be in such a hurry, but should wait until I can return home with even richer spoils. From the duke also (*Karl August, Duke of Saxe-Weimar and Saxe-Eisenach, in whose service Goethe then was*), I have received a very kind and considerate letter, in which he excuses me from my duties for an indefinite period, and sets me quite at ease with respect to my absence. My mind, therefore, turns to vast fields which I must otherwise have left untrodden. For instance, in the case of coins and cameos, I have as yet been able to do little or nothing. I have, indeed, begun to read Winckelmann's 'History of the Art of Antiquity,' but have passed swiftly over the art of ancient Egypt: for there I feel, once again, that I must be cautious; and am so, therefore, with regard to Egyptian matters. The more we look, the more distant becomes the horizon of art; and he who would step surely, must step carefully.

I intend to stay here till the Carnival (*held during the eight days ending on Shrove Tuesday, 20th February, 1787, Gregorian Calendar*); and, then, in the first week of Lent (*beginning on Ash Wednesday, 21st February*), set off for Naples, taking Tischbein with me, because it will be a treat to him, and also because, in his company, my enjoyment is more than doubled. I purpose to return hither before Easter (*Good*

Friday fell on 6th April), for the sake of the solemnities of Passion Week. But there lies Sicily — to the south. That journey requires greater preparation, and ought to be carried out in the autumn. It must be more than a mere ride round and across the island, which is soon done, but from which one would derive, in return for a deal of fatigue and money, nothing but a simple: '*I have seen it*'. The best way would be to lodge, first of all, in Palermo, and afterward in Catania; and then, from those points, to make planned and useful excursions, having previously, however, made a thorough study of *Riedesel* (*Johann Herman von Riedesel's 'Reise durch Sicilien und Grossgriechenland', 'Travels through Sicily and Magna Graecia', published 1771*) and others, with regard to the locality.

If I spend the summer in Rome, I shall set to work, and study and prepare myself for such a visit to Sicily. As I cannot very well travel there before November, and must stay there till December is over, it will be the spring of 1788 before I can hope to return home. Then, again, I have had before my mind a *medius terminus* (*middle course*), relinquishing the idea of visiting Sicily, spending a part of the summer in Rome, then, after paying a second visit to Florence, arriving home by the autumn.

But all these plans have been much perplexed by the news of the duke's misfortune. Since receiving the letters which informed me of the event I have had no rest, and would prefer to set off at Easter, laden with the fragments of my conquests and, passing swiftly through Upper Italy, be in Weimar again by June.



‘Garden entrance side of Goethe’s garden house in Weimar, framed by trees’ - Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (German, 1749–1832)
Wikimedia Commons

I am too much alone here to decide; and I write you this long tale of my entire situation, that you may be good enough to summon a council of those who love me, and who, being on the spot, know the circumstances better than I. Let them, therefore, determine the proper course for me to take, on the assumption, which I assure you is fact, that I am myself more disposed to return home than to stay. The strongest tie that holds me here in Italy is Tischbein. Even were it to be my happy lot to return to this beautiful land, I could never learn so much in so brief a stay as I have done in the society of this well-educated, highly-refined, and upright fellow, who is devoted to me, both body and soul, for I cannot tell you how greatly he is helping the scales fall, gradually, from my eyes. He who travels at night mistakes the dawn for day, and the darkness of a cloudy day for brightness: how shall it be when the sun truly rises? Moreover, I have hitherto kept myself private from the social world, which nonetheless is seizing hold of me by degrees, a world which I, for my part, was not unhappy to merely watch and observe, with stealthy glances.

I have written to Fritz (*Fritz von Stein the eldest son of Charlotte von Stein, who was fourteen at the time*) a humorous account of my reception into the Accademia dell’Arcadia (*the Pontificia Accademia degli Arcadi, a literary academy in Rome, founded in 1690*) and indeed it is a subject reserved for humour, as the institution has really been reduced to miserable insignificance.



'Profile portrait of a woman, probably Charlotte von Stein' - Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (German, 1749–1832)
Wikimedia Commons

Next Monday week Vincenzo Monti's tragedy ('*Aristodemo*') is to be acted. He is extremely anxious, and not without cause. It will be exposed to the approval or disapproval of a very demanding public, which requires to be amused from moment to moment; and his play lacks any passages of brilliance. He has asked me to accompany him to his box, and stand by him as his confessor at this critical moment. Another person is ready to translate my 'Iphigenie'; another, to do I know not what, in honour of me. They are all so divided into factions, and so bitterly against one another. But then my countrymen are so unanimous in my favour, that if I gave them any encouragement, and yielded in the very least to them, they would perform a hundred follies, and end with crowning me on the Capitol, an event of which it seems they have already seriously thought — as foolish as it would be to have a stranger and a Protestant, at that, play the leading part in such a comedy. What my role is in all this, and how great a fool I would be to think it all intended simply to honour me — all that we will speak of together one day.

January 6th.

I have just left Moritz, whose almost-mended arm was re-bandaged today. It is healing quite well. What I experienced and learned during the last forty days with the sufferer — in the role of his attendant, confessor and confidant, finance minister and

private secretary, all in one — may benefit us both in the future. The deadliest affliction and the noblest pleasures have forever gone hand in hand, during this period.

To my delight, I was able to place a cast of the colossal head of Juno, the original of which is in the Villa Ludovisi (*now in the Museo Nazionale Romano, Palazzo Altemps*), in the hall yesterday. She was the object of my first love affair in Rome, and now I possess her. No words can describe her. She is like a Homeric hymn.

I have certainly earned the company of such people in future, since I can now announce that 'Iphigenie' is finally complete, that is to say, that two almost-identical copies lie before me on the table, one of which will soon be sent to you. Please accept it kindly, for while the work does not explicitly state what I thought to do, one can, I am sure, surmise what I intended.

You have complained several times about various obscure passages in my letters, which suggest the pressure I am under amidst glorious experiences. This Greek travelling companion of mine ('*Iphigenie*') has played a significant role in the matter, compelling me to work when I should have been gazing about me.

I remembered that excellent friend of ours who proposed to set out on a mighty journey, one that might well have been called a 'voyage of discovery'. After several years of studious economy, it occurred to him to kidnap the daughter of a respected family, thinking it would be a quicker way to achieve his aim. Equally blasphemously, I decided to carry 'Iphigenie' off to Carlsbad. I shall record briefly the places where I had my most intense converse with her.

As I left the Brenner Pass, I took her from the larger package, and carried her with me. At Lake Garda, when the mighty mid-day wind drove the waves on shore, and where I was at least as alone as my heroine was on the coast of Tauris, I sketched the first lines of a new version, which I continued in Verona, Vicenza, and Padua, but most diligently in Venice. Then, however, the work stalled; indeed, I was led on to a new idea, namely to writ an 'Iphigenie at Delphi,' which I would have started immediately had various distractions, and a sense of loyalty to the older work not prevented me.

In Rome, however, the original work continued, with due diligence. In the evenings, before going to bed, I prepared for the morning's work, which I then began immediately upon waking. My method was quite simple: I calmly wrote a section, then read it through aloud in an orderly fashion, line by line, period by period. You will judge the result. I learned more than I accomplished. A few more remarks will follow regarding the piece itself.

January 6th.

Speaking of church matters once more, I must recount that we spent Christmas Eve wandering around, visiting churches where services were being held. One church in particular is very popular; its organ and the music are arranged in such a way that nothing is lacking of the pastoral scene, neither the shepherds' shawms, nor the birdsong, nor the bleating of sheep.

On Christmas Day, in St. Peter's Basilica, I viewed the Pope, and the entire clergy, as he celebrated High Mass, partly in front of the throne and partly from it. It provides a unique spectacle, magnificent and dignified enough, but I have grown so old in Protestant cynicism à la Diogenes, that its splendour takes more from me than it grants; I would also like to say, as did that pious Greek, my ancestor, to these later spiritual conquerors of the world: 'Hide not the sun from me!', the sun, that is, of the noble arts, and true humanity. (*Diogenes of Sinope was said to have addressed Alexander the Great in that manner, see Plutarch's 'Life of Alexander':14*).

Today, it being Epiphany, I saw and heard Mass celebrated according to the Greek rite. The ceremonies seem to me more stately, more austere, more contemplative, and yet more directed to the people than the Latin ones.

Here, too, I felt that I was too old now for anything unreal. Their ceremonies and operas, their processions and ballets, all slide over me like water from an oilskin. But a natural phenomenon like the sunset seen from Villa Madama, a work of art like my much-revered Juno, produce a deep and lasting impression.

Now I am dreading the theatre season. Seven productions open next week. Pasquale Anfossi himself is here directing his 'Alexander in India' (*'Alessandro nell' Indie', 1772, libretto by Pietro Metastasio*)*;* there's also to be a production of 'Cyrus' and a ballet of 'The Conquest of Troy.' That will be something the children would enjoy.

January 10th.

Here, then, comes the 'troubled child', for 'Iphigenie' deserves this epithet in more ways than one. On the occasion of my reading the work aloud, to our group of artists, I marked various lines, some of which I have improved upon according to my own view, while leaving others as they were, in case Herder might wish to add a few strokes of his pen. I worked it over quite ruthlessly.

The reason I have preferred to work in prose for several years now is actually due to the fact that our prosody is in a state of great uncertainty, since my insightful, learned, company of friends leave the decision on various questions a matter of taste and feeling, which then results in a lack of any guidelines.

I would never have dared to redo 'Iphigenie' in iambic verse had Moritz's 'Prosody' (*'Versuch Einer Deutschen Prosodie', 1786*) not served as my guiding light. My interactions with the author, particularly during his illness, have further enlightened me, and I urge my friends to consider the result favourably.

It is striking that in our language we have only a few syllables that are decidedly short or long. With the others, we proceed according to taste or arbitrariness. Now, Moritz's idea is that there is a specific hierarchy of syllables, and that a more significant syllable seems long in relation to a less significant one, rendering the latter short, but can also itself be rendered short when juxtaposed with some other syllable that seems of greater weight to the mind. Here, then, is at least a starting point, and even if it fails to solve everything, it nevertheless provides a guideline to follow. I have often consulted this maxim, and found it to be in accord with my own views and feeling.

Since I mentioned a recent public reading above, I must also recount how it went. These young men, accustomed to my earlier, vigorous, and intense works, expected something more in the style of my 'Götz von Berlichingen' and could not immediately adjust to the more measured pace; yet the nobler and purer passages did not fail of their effect. Tischbein, who was also barely able to comprehend the almost complete absence of passion, sketched a clever analogy for the work, or a symbol of it. He compared it to a sacrifice whose smoke, kept low by the gentle pressure of the air, drifts along the ground, while the flame seeks to rise more freely. He drew this very nicely and meaningfully. I have enclosed the result.

And so, this work, which I thought I would soon be finished with, has entertained and delayed me, occupied and tormented me, for a full three months. It is not the first time I have uttered work of utmost importance almost as an aside, and shall not dwell on it further.

Enclosed is a lovely cameo, a lion with a gadfly buzzing at its nose. The ancients loved the subject, and often employed it. I hope you will use it to seal your letters in the future, so that through this small token a kind of artistic echo may resonate between us.

January 13, 1787.

How much I feel the need to say each day, and how great the effort, and the distractions, that prevent me from setting a single meaningful word down on paper. Add to that the crisp, fresh air, when anywhere is preferable to the rooms indoors that, even without the effects of a stove or fireplace, only allow one to sleep or feel wretched. However, I cannot let various incidents of the past week go unaddressed.

In the Palazzo Giustiniani there is a sculpture of Minerva (*The 'Athena Giustiniani', now in the Vatican Museum*) that commands my utmost veneration. Winckelmann scarcely mentions it, at least not in the appropriate place in his writings, while I myself do not feel worthy enough to say anything about it. As we gazed upon the statue and lingered there for some time, the custodian's wife told us that it had once been a sacred image, and that the English, who were of 'that religion', still venerated it by kissing its left hand, which was indeed entirely white, while the rest of the statue is brownish. She added that a lady of that faith who had recently visited, had thrown herself to her knees, and worshipped the statue. She, a Christian, could not watch such a strange act without being amused, and indeed had run out of the hall to avoid bursting out laughing. Since I, too, did not wish to leave off gazing at the statue, she asked me if I perhaps knew a beautiful woman who resembled that work in marble, since it attracted me so greatly. The good woman knew of religious adoration and of love, and could not conceive of pure admiration for a magnificent work of art, of a 'platonic' veneration for an expression of the human spirit. We rejoiced in being of the English lady's company, and left with a desire to return. I will certainly visit again soon. If my friends wish to hear more, they should read what Winckelmann has to say regarding the high style of the Greeks. Unfortunately, he does not mention the Minerva there. But if I am not mistaken, she is of that high, austere style that transitions to the beautiful, like the bud as it opens, and so produces a Minerva whose severe character is appropriate to precisely such a transition!

Now for a different kind of spectacle! On Epiphany, the feast of salvation proclaimed to the Gentiles, we were at the Feast arranged by the *Congregatio de Propaganda Fide*. There, in the presence of three cardinals and a large audience, firstly, a speech was delivered on the subject of whereabouts Mary was when she received the three Magi — in the stable or elsewhere? Then, after the reading of several Latin poems on a like subject, about thirty seminarians came forward one after another and recited short poems, each in their native language: Malabarese, Epirote Greek, Turkish, Moldavian, Elean Greek, Persian, Colchian, Hebrew, Arabic, Syriac, Coptic, Sarrazinois, Armenian, Gaelic, Malagasy, Icelandic, Boyanese, Egyptian, Greek, Isaurian, Ethiopian, etc., and several others that I equally failed to understand. The poems, mostly composed in the national syllabary, seemed to be recited in national declamatory style; since barbaric rhythms and sounds emerged. The Greek sounded like a star appearing in the night. The audience laughed, uncontrollably, at the foreign voices, and so this performance, too, was reduced to mere farce.

Now, a little tale about how lightly the sacred is treated in holy Rome. The late Cardinal Albani (*Alessandro Albani, a patron of the arts. He had died in 1779*) was at one of these festive gatherings, much like the one I have just described. One of the

students began speaking in a foreign dialect, addressing the cardinals, thus: 'Gnaja! Gnaja!', sounding roughly like 'Canaglia! Canaglia!' (*'Scoundrel!' 'Scoundrel!'*). The cardinal turned to his fellow cardinals, and said: 'He knows us!'

January 13th.

How much Winckelmann failed to do; how much was left wanting! With the materials he appropriated, he built quickly just so as to have a roof over his head. If he were still alive, and healthy, he would be the first to grant us a revised version of his work. What more would he have observed, and corrected; what more could he have utilised of what others have newly unearthed and discovered by observing and effecting things according to his principles? And then Cardinal Albani is dead, for whose sake he wrote so extensively, while keeping so much perhaps to himself.

January 15, 1787.

And so, at last, 'Aristodemo' has achieved its first performance; very successfully, and to great applause. Since Vincenzo Monti is a member of the House of Nepos, and highly esteemed among the upper classes, all good things were to be expected. The stalls were immediately captivated by the poet's beautiful language, and the actors' excellent diction, and no opportunity was missed to express their satisfaction. The boxes, were generous in their applause, too. The German artists' group distinguished itself considerably, which was anticipated, as they are generally rather vociferous.

The author had stayed home, anxiously awaiting the success of the play, but favourable news arrived act by act, gradually transforming his anxiety to the greatest joy. Now there will be no shortage of repeat performances, and everything is progressing perfectly. Thus, in seemingly contradictory manner, provided each aspect of a work has its merits, one can win the applause of both the public and the connoisseur.

The performance itself was very commendable, and the main actor, who carried the weight of the entire play, spoke and acted superbly: one could almost believe one was witnessing the appearance of one of the ancient emperors. They had adapted the costume, which so impresses as carved on the statues, quite well to theatrical splendour, and one could see that the actor had studied the manners of antiquity.

January 16th.

Rome is facing a great loss of art. The King of Naples (*Ferdinand IV*) has ordered the Farnese Hercules to be transferred to his residence there (*it is now in the Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Naples*). All the artists are in mourning, but the occasion will grant us the opportunity of viewing something not available to our ancestors, as follows:

The known statue, namely the body from the head to the knees, and the lower feet along with the base on which they stand, was unearthed on Farnese land. However, the legs, from the knees to the ankles, were missing and were replaced by the sculptor and architect Giuglielmo della Porta. It has stood on those legs until now. Meanwhile, the original, ancient legs were found on Borghese land and were subsequently displayed in the Villa Borghese.

Now, Prince Borghese (*Marcantonio Borghese IV*) has relinquished his objections, and presented these precious relics to the King of Naples. The legs carved by Giuglielmo della Porta have been removed, the original ones are now in their place, and although one was quite satisfied with the former, a completely new perspective on, and enjoyment of, the now-harmonious work is anticipated.

January 18th.

Yesterday, on the feast of Saint Anthony Abbot, we had an enjoyable day; the weather was the most beautiful in the world, there had been a hard frost overnight, and the day was bright and warm.

It may be observed that all religions which extended their worship, or their speculation, inevitably reached the point where animals, too, partook of spiritual favours. Saint Anthony (*Anthony the Great*), the abbot or bishop, is the patron saint of four-legged creatures; his feast day is a Saturnalian holiday for otherwise oppressed animals, as well as for their keepers and drivers. All members of the nobility are obliged to stay home or walk on that day; and one never fails to hear alarming stories of how irreligious nobles, who forced their coachmen to drive then, were punished by experiencing serious accidents.

The church (*Sant'Antonio Abate all' Esquilino*) stands in such a spacious location that it almost seems deserted, but on the feast day it is bustling with life. Horses and mules, their manes and tails beautifully, even magnificently, braided with ribbons, are led to a small chapel, set slightly apart from the church. There, a priest, armed with a large aspergillum, sprinkles holy water, from tubs and buckets standing before him, over the creatures, not gently, but quite forcefully, or playfully, to tease them. Devout coachmen bring candles of varying sizes, and the gentry send alms and gifts, so that

the valuable and useful animals may be blessed and remain safe from all harm for a year. Donkeys and cattle, equally useful and valuable to their owners, likewise share in this blessing.

Afterwards, we enjoyed a long walk, under a cheerful sky, surrounded by the most interesting objects, to which we paid little attention on this occasion, rather letting pleasure and good humour prevail to the fullest.

January 19th.

So then, the great king (*Frederick the Great*), whose fame filled the world, whose deeds made him worthy of even the Catholic paradise, has finally passed beyond (*on August 17th, 1786*), to converse with his fellow heroes in the realm of shadows. One is pleased to be silent, when one has laid such a man to rest.

Today we had a wonderful day, exploring a part of the Capitoline Hill I had previously neglected. Then we crossed the Tiber, and drank Spanish wine, on a newly-docked ship. It is in this area that Romulus and Remus are said to have been found, and so, as if at a double and triple Pentecost, one can be simultaneously intoxicated by the sacred spirit of art, the mildest of climes, and memories of the ancients, as well as sweet wine.

January 20th.

What initially provides a joyful pleasure when experienced superficially later becomes burdensome when one sees that real enjoyment is deficient, if one lacks thorough knowledge.

I am fairly well prepared in anatomy, and have acquired a certain degree of knowledge of the human body, though not without effort. Here, one is constantly guided, but in a nobler way, by endless contemplation of ancient statues. In our medical and surgical anatomy, it is merely a matter of knowing the various parts, and even a meagre musculature will suffice for the purpose. In Rome, however, the parts are worthless if they do not contribute to a noble, and beautiful whole.

In the large San Spirito hospital (*Ospedale di Santo Spirito in Sassia*), a very finely muscular body has been prepared for the benefit of artists, in such a manner that its beauty astonishes. It could truly be mistaken for a battered demigod, a Marsyas.

Following the advice of the ancients, one should not study the skeleton as an artificially assembled mass of bones, but rather together with the ligaments which give it life and movement.

If I say that we also study perspective in the evenings, it surely confirms that we are hardly idle. But nonetheless, one always hopes to do more than one actually achieves.

January 22nd.

Of the German appreciation of art, and the artistic scene there, one might say one hears the bells ringing, but they fail to chime together. When I consider now what wonderful things there are at home, and how little I have made use of them, I feel like despairing, but then I look forward to my return, when I can hope to 'recognise' those masterpieces I have only skirted past.

Even in Rome, too little is available to those who are serious about gaining a complete picture. One must piece everything together from endless, though abundant, fragments. Of course, few foreigners are truly serious about seeing and learning anything worthwhile. They follow their whims, display their arrogance, and all those who deal with 'the foreigners' are well aware of this. Every guide has ulterior motives; everyone wants to recommend some merchant, or favours some artist, and why should they not? For does not the inexperienced person reject the most excellent of things, even when offered?

It would prove an extraordinary advantage to collectors, indeed would furnish a museum in its own right, if the government, whose permission has to be obtained before an antiquity can be exported, firmly insisted that a cast be previously made in every case. But, had even the Pope entertained such a notion, it would have been opposed by the few, for in no time at all the people would have been dismayed by the importance and value of what was being carried off, for which permission is often obtained secretly, in specific cases, through employing all sorts of means.

January 22nd.

Even before, but especially during the performance of 'Aristodemo' the patriotism of our German artists was roused. They never failed to speak well of my 'Iphigenie,' individual passages were again requested, and I ultimately found myself compelled to repeat my public reading of the entire work. Even then, I discovered some passages that flowed from my lips more smoothly than they seemed to do on the page. Of course, poetry is not meant for the eye alone.

Their favourable opinion reached the ears of the art dealer Johann Reiffenstein and the painter Angelika Kaufmann, and I was asked to read the work to them also. I requested a brief respite but, there and then, recounted the plot and the development of the play at some length. To a greater degree than I had expected, this summary won

the favour of the aforementioned individuals; even the artist Antonio Zucchi, from whom I least expected it, showed a quite open and well-intentioned interest. This is easily explained by the fact that the play approximates to the form of drama long established in Greek, Italian, and French theatre, and still appeals most to those who have not yet grown accustomed to the freedom of the English form.

Rome, January 25, 1787.

It is becoming increasingly difficult, now, for me to pen a straightforward account of my stay in Rome; for just as the sea deepens the further out one goes, so it is for me in my contemplation of this city.

One cannot understand the present without comprehending the past, and comparing the two requires a great deal more time and tranquillity. Even the location of this 'capital of the world' leads one to consider its origins. One soon realises that no great, and well-governed people, with any degree of wisdom, would have ceased its wandering and settled here, choosing this site for the capital of an empire; no prince, if he had the power, would have designated it a suitable place for a colony. It was rather shepherds and vagrants who first chose the site; a few vigorous youths laid foundations to be utilised by the later palaces of the lords of the world, on these hills to whose feet, amidst reedy marshland, the arbitrary will of some ruler had driven them. Thus, the seven hills of Rome were not employed as an elevated defence against the land that lay behind them; they were simply carved out by the Tiber, rising here above its ancient bed, which became the Campus Martius. If the spring season allows me to explore more widely, I will describe the city's disadvantageous situation in more detail. Even now I share most keenly the lamentations and anguish of the women of Alba Longa, who saw their city destroyed (*by Tullius Hostilius, Rome's third king*) and were forced to leave their beautiful city, chosen by a wiser leader, in order to partake of the mists of the Tiber, inhabit the wretched Caelian Hill, and from there look back at their abandoned paradise. I know little of the area yet, but I am convinced no capital city of an ancient people was ever as badly situated as Rome, and it is no surprise, since the Romans ultimately occupied all the free land within its boundaries, that they chose to build their country houses further away, on the sites of cities and towns they had destroyed, in order to live a less cramped and more enjoyable life.

January 25th.

It gives cause for peaceful contemplation to see how many people live here quietly, and how each occupies their time in their own way. We have viewed, at his home, some interesting copies of excellent paintings, recreated in miniature, by a clergyman who,

though without great innate talent, has dedicated his life to art. His finest is of Leonardo da Vinci's 'Last Supper' in Milan. It depicts the moment when Christ says to the disciples, with whom he sits at table, in pleasant and amicable fellowship: 'Yet there is one among you who will betray me.'

One hopes for a copper engraving, either based on this copy, or on others that have been undertaken. It would be to the greatest benefit if a faithful reproduction were to appear before a wide audience.

A few days ago, I visited Father François Jacquier, a Minim friar, at Chiesa della Trinità dei Monti. He is French by birth, known for his mathematical work, advanced in years, very pleasant to speak to, and intelligent. He has known the most distinguished men of his time, and even spent several months with Voltaire, who took a great liking to him.

And so, I have become acquainted with even more fine and sound individuals, of whom there are countless here, separated only by a kind of priestly mistrust. The book trade offers me no connections, and the literary news is rarely fruitful, so it is fitting for a solitary fellow to seek out hermits. Ever since the performance of 'Aristodemo,' in support of which we had worked energetically, I have once again been sought after; but it was all too clear that it was never about myself, they merely wished to strengthen their own party, and make use of me as an instrument, and if I had been willing to come forward and declare myself, I would merely have played a brief, phantom-like role. But once they saw that nothing was doing they let me alone, and I continued on my own safe and secure path.

Indeed, my existence is now burdened with enough weight to grant it the necessary gravity; I no longer fear the spectres that have so often toyed with me. Take heart, you will keep me elevated, and draw me back to you.

January 28, 1787.

Two considerations that affect everything, which one is summoned at every instant to pursue, I must not fail to mention, now that they have become clear to me.

Firstly, given the immense number of nonetheless fragmentary treasures in this city, when faced with each work of art, one is compelled to inquire about the era that gave rise to it. Thanks to Winckelmann, we are prompted to distinguish, as a matter of urgency, the various epochs, and recognise the differing styles employed by various schools; styles which they developed gradually and which were ultimately debased, over time. Every true art lover is convinced of this need. We all acknowledge the correctness and weight of his admonition.

But how to arrive at such a level of insight? Little groundwork has been done; the concept is correctly, even splendidly, formulated, but the details remain uncertain. Years of dedicated observation are necessary, and one must first learn to ask the right questions. Hesitation and delay are no help; attention is already keenly focused on this crucial point, and anyone who is serious about the matter will surely recognise that, in this field also, no judgement is possible except through historical analysis.

The second consideration refers exclusively to the art of the Greeks, and the need to investigate how those incomparable artists proceeded to create, based on the human form, a realm of divine types, which is perfectly complete in itself, and in which no principal figure is lacking, nor are the transitions and intermediate stages between them. I suspect that they proceeded according to the very laws by which Nature herself operates, and which I am attempting to trace. However, there is something further involved that I cannot at present articulate.

February 2, 1787.

The beauty of walking through Rome, by the light of a full moon, is incomprehensible unless one has done so. Everything is swallowed up by vast expanses of light and shadow, and only the largest, most general images are revealed to the eye. For three nights now, we have enjoyed, thoroughly and completely, the brightest and most glorious of skies. The Coliseum offers a particularly beautiful sight, at this time. The entrance is locked at night; a hermit lives there, next to a little chapel (*the Chapel of Santa Maria della Pietà, below the twenty-fourth arch*), and beggars sleep beneath the crumbling vaults. They had lighted their fire on flat ground, and a gentle breeze carried the smoke at first towards the arena, so that the lower parts of the ruins were veiled, and the immense walls above loomed darkly. We stood by the gate, and watched the phenomenon; the moon was high and bright. Gradually, the smoke spread through the walls, cracks, and openings, like a mist in the moonlight. The sight was exquisite. One should see the Pantheon, and the Capitol, illuminated thus, and the courtyard of St. Peter's Basilica, and the other major streets and squares. And so, the sun and moon, just like the human mind, perform a completely different function here than in other places; here where their gaze is met by immense yet civilising masses.

February 13th.

I must mention a stroke of luck, albeit a minor one, though all good fortune, great or small, is of the same kind and always gratifying. At Trinità dei Monti, the foundation for the new obelisk (*the Obelisco Sallustiano, erected 1789*) is being made; all the earth, from the ruins of the Gardens of Lucullus, which later came into the emperors'

possession, is piled in a heap. My wigmaker passed by early in the morning, and found in the rubble a flat piece of fired clay with several figures on it, which he washed, and brought to show us. I immediately claimed it for myself. It is not much larger than a hand, and seems to have come from the rim of a large bowl. Two griffins stand at an offering table; they are of the finest workmanship, and please me immensely. Were they set in a cameo ring, how gladly one would use them for sealing letters!

Many another relic I also gather round me, and nothing is futile or worthless, a thing which would be impossible here, where everything is instructive and meaningful. But what I love most is what I possess within my soul, and which, ever-growing, will ever-increase.

February 15th.

Before my departure for Naples, I could not avoid another reading of my 'Iphigenie.' Angelika Kauffman and Court Councillor Reiffenstein were among the listeners; even Antonio Zucchi insisted on it, as it was his wife's wish; he, meanwhile, is working on a large architectural drawing, which he is executing, masterfully, in a decorative style. He formerly visited Dalmatia with Charles-Louis Clerisseau, who had become a close associate, and is now drawing plans, which Clerisseau publishes, of the edifices and ruins, having learnt so much about perspective and various other effects, that he can now, in his old age, entertain himself on paper in a decent manner.

Angelika, she of the delicate soul, received the piece with an unbelievable show of empathy; she promised to make a drawing of one of the scenes for me, to keep as a memento. And so, just as I am preparing to leave Rome, I feel I am connecting, in a tender way, to these kind people. It is both a pleasant and a painful feeling to realise that they are reluctant to let me go.

February 16, 1787.

The happy arrival of 'Iphigenie', in Weimar, was announced to me in a surprising, and pleasant way. On my way to the opera, a letter was brought to me written in a familiar hand, and on this occasion doubly welcome, sealed as it was with the lion's head as an obvious sign of the package having arrived safely. I entered the crammed opera house and found myself a place beneath the large chandelier, among the unfamiliar crowd. There I, nonetheless, felt so close to my loved ones that I felt like jumping up and embracing them. I thank you most sincerely for the news of its arrival; may you greet the next arrival with as kindly a show of praise!

Here is the list of how I anticipate the copies I receive from Göschen (*Georg Joachim Göschen, his publisher, based in Leipzig*) being distributed among my friends, for though I am completely indifferent to how the public views these things, I nevertheless hope to bring some joy to my friends through them.

One simply attempts too much. When I think of my last four volumes as a whole, I feel a certain dizziness; I contemplate them individually, and that's how I rid myself of it.

Would it perhaps not have been better to have sent them out into the world, one by one, as I originally decided, and to have undertaken other projects, in which I have a fresher interest, with renewed courage and energy? Would it not have been better to write an 'Iphigenie at Delphi' than wrestle with the vagaries of 'Torquato Tasso'? (*Goethe's play of that name was began in Weimar in 1780, mostly written while in Italy, and completed in 1790*) And yet, I have already invested too much of myself in the Tasso to abandon it fruitlessly.

I sit myself down by the fireplace in the anteroom, and the warmth of a well-fuelled fire, for once, gives me fresh courage to begin a new sheet; for is it not truly wonderful that one can reach so far afield with one's immediate thoughts, indeed, transport one's current surroundings elsewhere merely with words. The weather is absolutely glorious, the days are lengthening noticeably, the laurels and boxwoods are in bloom, as are the almond trees. This morning I was surprised by a wondrous sight: in the distance, I saw tall, pole-like trees, clothed all over in the most beautiful violet colour. Upon closer inspection, it was the tree known in our greenhouses as the Judas Tree, or to botanists as 'cercis siliquastrum'. It produces its violet, butterfly-shaped flowers directly from the twigs and branches. The poles I saw before me, from whose bark the well-formed and coloured flowers burst forth by the thousand, had been pruned last winter. Meadowsweet flowers emerge from the ground like a hive of ants; the crocus and pheasant's eye adonis (*adonis vernalis*) appear less frequently, but are even more delicate and ornamental.

What joys and insights this southerly land will bring me, from which new creations will emerge! It is with natural things as with works of art; so much has been written about them, and yet everyone who sees them can still put them together in fresh ways.

When I think of Naples, or even Sicily, I find it striking, from both the accounts and images of them, that in those earthly paradises, so violent a volcanic hell reveals itself, frightening and maddening the inhabitants, as it did all those who witnessed those eruptions throughout the millennia.

However, I happily banish from my mind the hope of viewing those particular sights, in order to make proper use of the ancient capital of the world before my departure.

For a fortnight now, I have been in action from morning till night; I seek out all I have not yet seen. The most important things are examined a second and a third time, and now it is all starting to fall into place. For as the main objects come to occupy their proper positions, I find room and space for many lesser matters, in between. My love affairs with certain things are being clarified and resolved, and only now can my mind rise with serene participation to what is greater and most genuine.

One can only envy the artists, who, through reproduction and imitation, approach those great intentions in every way more closely, understanding them better than mere observers and thinkers. But in the end, everyone must do as they are able, and so I hoist every mental sail to navigate these shores.

The fireplace is quite warm, now, and the finest coals are heaped there, which rarely happens at home since not everyone has the desire, or the time, to devote hours of attention to the hearth, and so I wish to use this pleasant temperature to copy some comments from my note-book, that are already half-erased.

On February 2nd, we attended the Sistine Chapel for the service during which the candles are blessed. I immediately felt most uncomfortable, and soon left with my friends, realising that similar candles have been darkening the magnificent paintings for three hundred years with their smoke, while the incense, in holy arrogance, not only clouds those artificial suns, but dims them more and more every year, and finally plunges them into complete obscurity.

We sought the open air and, after a long walk, arrived at Sant' Onofrio, where Tasso is buried in a corner. His death mask is in the monastery library (*extant, and displayed in the Museo Tassiano, the room dedicated to Tasso's memory*). The mask is of wax, and I readily believe it was cast from his corpse. Not entirely intact, marred here and there, it nevertheless suggests, more than any other portrait of him, a talented, delicate, refined, and self-contained individual.

That is all for now. I want to turn to the second part of Volkmann's book (*Johann Jacob Volkmann's 'Historisch-Kritische Nachrichten von Italien': 'Historical and Critical Account of Italy', 1778, the standard guide-book*), covering Rome, to find what I have not yet seen, therein. Before I travel to Naples, the harvest must be gathered; I will find a better time later to bind it into sheaves.

February 17th.

The weather is incredibly, and indescribably beautiful; all through February, except for four rainy days, the sky has been clear and bright, almost too warm around noon. Now one seeks the outdoors, and if previously one has only contemplated gods and heroes, the landscape now, suddenly, reclaims its rightful place, and one becomes captivated by one's surroundings, enlivened by the most glorious of days. Now and then I recall how as an artist in the North one seeks to make something of thatched roofs and crumbling castles, how one manoeuvres about among streams and bushes, and scattered ruins, to capture a picturesque scene; so it feels quite strange, and all the more so because those things, after such long habit, still cling to one's mind, that for the past two weeks, having mustered my courage I have set off with modest sheets of paper, throughout the depths and heights where the villas stand, and without great deliberation, have sketched small, but striking, southern, and truly Roman, subjects, and now, with the help of good fortune, I am trying to add highlights and shadows. It is quite odd that one can see, most clearly, and comprehend whatever is good or better; but when one tries to appropriate that same, it seems to slip through one's fingers, and we grasp not what is right, but only what we are accustomed to grasping. Only through systematic practice could one progress, but how shall I find the time and power of concentration! Nevertheless, I feel much improved by this passionate, fortnightly, striving.

Various artists are happy to teach me, since I am quick on the uptake. But comprehending something does not always allow one to effect it right away; understanding something swiftly is, after all, a characteristic of the mind, but executing something correctly requires a lifetime of practice.

And yet the art-lover, however weakly he strives, must not be deterred. The few lines I draw on paper, often hastily, rarely correctly, facilitate my understanding of physical things; for one more readily approaches the universal the more one considers individual objects, sharply and precisely.

One should not consider oneself an artist, but rather proceed in one's own way. Nature has provided for her children, and the least among them is not hindered in his own existence, not even by the existence of what is most excellent: 'A little man is also a man!' And with that, let me leave the subject for now.

I have seen the sea twice, first the Adriatic, then the Mediterranean, briefly, as it were. In Naples, I wish to become better acquainted with it. Everything I have experienced suddenly comes flooding back to my mind; why not sooner, and why not more easily! How many thousands of things, some entirely new, studied from scratch, I could share!

February 17, 1787. Evening, the Carnival revelry having subsided.

I am reluctant to leave Moritz alone when I depart. His work is on the right track, but as he walks his own path, he seeks familiar hiding-places as usual. I encouraged him to write to Herder; the letter is enclosed. I hope for a reply containing something useful and helpful. Moritz is a remarkably good man; he would be much further on, if he had found, from time to time, people capable and kind enough to enlighten him about his true level of achievement. Currently, he cannot establish a more blessed relationship than Herder allowing him to write occasionally. He is engaged in a commendable antiquarian enterprise that well deserves support. Friend Herder will hardly have applied his efforts better or sown his excellent teachings in more fertile ground.

The large portrait that Tischbein has undertaken of me is already emerging from the canvas. The artist has had a skilled sculptor create a small clay model, which he then draped quite delicately in a cloak. He is painting diligently using this model, because the work must, of course, be at a certain stage of development before our departure for Naples, and it takes time merely to cover such a large canvas with paint.

February 19th.

The weather continues to be beautiful beyond compare; today was an agonising one spent among fools. At nightfall, I recovered, at the Villa Medici; the new moon is waxing, and framed by its delicate crescent, I could see the entire darkened disc almost with the naked eye, and quite clearly through an eyeglass. The day's perfumed mist hangs over the earth, a fragrant mist known only from Claude Lorrain's paintings and drawings, but the phenomenon is not easily seen so beautifully in Nature as it is here. Now, various flowers, I don't yet know the names of, are emerging from the ground, and new blossoms deck the trees; the almond trees are in bloom, creating a new, airy appearance among the dark green oaks; the sky is like a pale blue taffeta, illumined by the sun. What will the heavens be like in Naples! We find that most things are already green here. My botanical fancies are confirmed by all of this, and I am on my way to discovering new and beautiful ways in which Nature, such a monstrous thing in itself, that looks like nothing one can grasp, develops the most diverse of things from the simplest.



‘Villa Medici from the Salita di San Sebastiano, Rome’ - Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (German, 1749–1832)
Klassik Stiftung Weimar, Museen (Inv. GGz/0185)
Digital reproduction · See Art. L. 111-1 CPI and § 68 UrhG

Vesuvius, it seems, spews forth stones and ash, and at night the summit glows. Grant us a lava flow, in all its power! Now I can hardly wait until those magnificent scenes are mine.

February 21st, Ash Wednesday.

Now, at last, the foolishness is over. The countless lights last night were a magnificent spectacle. One must have witnessed the Carnival in Rome to completely rid oneself of the desire ever to see it again. It is impossible to write about it; an oral account at best might be entertaining. What is unpleasant is that people lack inner joy, and the ability or wish to indulge what little capacity for pleasure they might still possess. The wealthy are economical and hold back, the middle class are impoverished, and the people lethargic. These past few days have been indescribably noisy, but devoid of any heartfelt joy. The sky, infinitely pure and beautiful, looked down nobly, and ever so innocently, upon these antics.

Since I cannot refrain from my attempts to depict things here, I have made some drawings of Carnival masks, and of the clothing, peculiar to Rome, to entertain the children, then washed them with colours, so that they might provide an extra chapter of their ‘Orbis Pictus’ (*‘Orbis Sensualium Pictus’, 1658, a children’s textbook written by the Czech educator John Amos Comenius, published in 1658 with pictures, initially in Latin and German*) for the little dears.

The same date. February 21, 1787

I am employing the intervals between packing my belongings to catch up on various tasks. Tomorrow, we leave for Naples. I am looking forward to the fresh experience, since the scenery is said to be indescribably beautiful, and hope to regain new freedom and joy in that natural paradise, before returning to my artistic studies here in sober Rome.

Packing I find easy; I do it with a lighter heart than six months ago, when I parted with everything dear and precious to me. Yes, half a year has passed already, and of the four months I have spent in Rome, I have wasted scarcely a moment, which is to claim a great deal, yet I exaggerate not at all.

I know that 'Iphigenie' has arrived in Weimar; I hope to learn, at the foot of Vesuvius, that it has been well received.

Taking this trip with Tischbein, who has as magnificent a set of views about Nature as he does about Art, is of the utmost importance to me; yet, as true Germans, we cannot quite shake off our prior resolutions, and the prospect of achieving useful work. The finest quality paper has been bought, and we intend to sketch thereon, even though the sheer quantity, beauty, and brilliance of the scenes we shall view will most likely limit our good intentions.

One thing I am determined on, that I shall take none of my incomplete poetic works with me except 'Tasso'; I have the greatest hopes for it. If I but knew what you will think of 'Iphigenie,' it would serve me as a guide, since Tasso is a similar work, its subject matter even more limited than the former, and requiring even more detailed effort. But I am unsure as yet as to how it might develop; I must destroy, and completely, what I have done so far; it has been lying around far too long, and neither the characters, nor the plot, nor the tone of it, bear the slightest resemblance to my current ideas.

While tidying my papers, I came across some of your delightful letters, and upon reading them, encountered the accusation that I often contradict myself. While I could hardly be expected to realise that myself, since I dispatch what I have written immediately, it seems all too likely to me, as I am tossed about by tremendous conflicting forces, and it is only natural that I sometimes fail in knowing where I stand.

A story is told of a sailor who, caught in a stormy night at sea, tried to steer towards harbour. His small son, clinging to him in the darkness, asked: 'Father, what's that strange little light I see, sometimes above us, sometimes below?' His father promised

him an explanation later, and it seems it was the lighthouse beacon, which appeared now above, now below, to those tossed up and down, midst the wild waves.

I too am sailing towards harbour on a madly-turbulent sea; yet if I can but keep my eye fixed on the lighthouse's beam, even if its location appears to change, I shall ultimately recover the shore.

When departing a place, one involuntarily recalls every previous parting, and anticipates the future and final one, as I do now, and more strongly than usual, such that the thought occurs to me that we spend far too much time making preparations to live, since while doing so Tischbein and I are turning our backs on many a glorious thing, even on our own well-furnished 'museum'. Here stand three statues of Juno, side by side for comparison, and we are ignoring all three, as if they meant nothing at all.

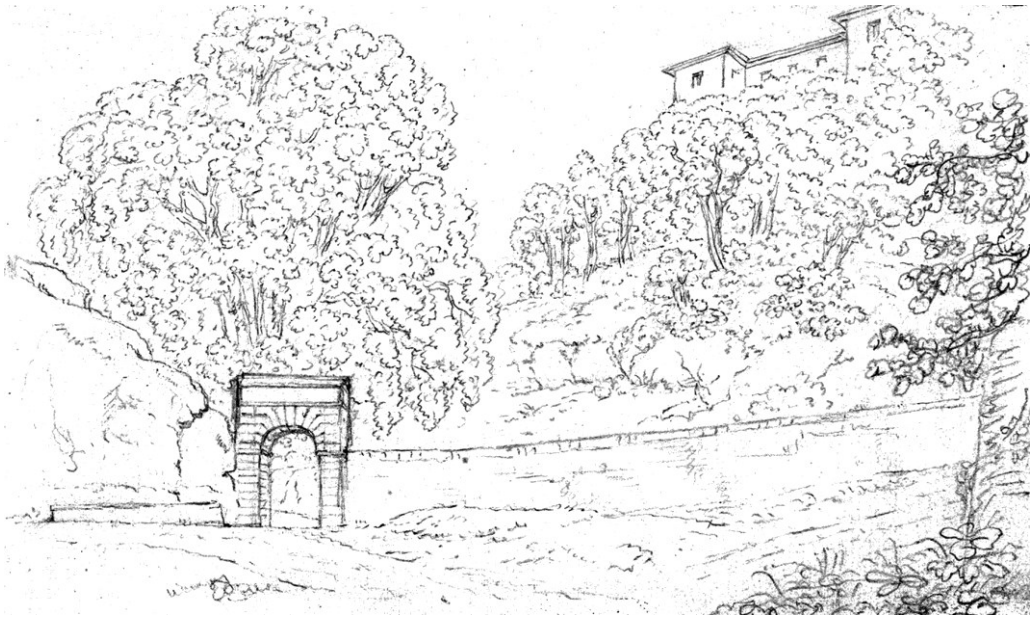
The End of Goethe's 'Italian Journey' Part VI

Part VII: Naples

Velletri

February 22, 1787.

We arrived here in good time. The weather had already become overcast the day before yesterday; the beautiful days led to gloomy ones, but various aerial signs indicated that it would improve, and indeed it did. The clouds gradually parted, and here and there the blue sky appeared, and finally the sun illumined our route. We passed through Albano, after stopping, before Genzano di Roma, at the entrance to a park which Prince Chigi (*Sigismondo Chigi Albani della Rovere*), the owner, maintains in a peculiar way — that is, not at all; and, in consequence, he dislikes anyone from looking round within the grounds. There a true wilderness has taken shape: trees and bushes, herbs and vines grow as they please, wither, collapse, and rot. Which is fine, and the scenery is all the better for it. The area in front of the entrance is indescribably beautiful. A high wall closes off the valley, a gated entrance allows a glimpse inside, then the hill rises, to where the castle (*The Ducal Palace of Ariccia*) sits at the top. It would make the most magnificent painting if a true artist were to create one.



'Park gate and Palazzo Chigi at Ariccia' - Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (German, 1749–1832)
Klassik Stiftung Weimar, Museen (Inv. GGz/0268)
Digital reproduction · See Art. L. 111-1 CPI and § 68 UrhG

I shall not describe it further, apart from saying that as we gazed, from the heights, at the mountains above Sezze, the Pontine marshes, the sea and the islands, a heavy, swirling burst of rain swept across the marshes towards the coast, and light and shadow, shifting and alternating, enlivened the desolate landscape in a complex way. Add to that the beautiful effect of several columns of smoke, illumined by the sun, rising from scattered, barely visible cottages.

Velletri is very pleasantly situated on a volcanic hill, which is connected to others on the north, but offers the most open of views in other directions.

We visited a museum created by the Cavaliere Giampaolo Borgia, who, favoured by his kinship with Cardinal Stefano Borgia, his brother, and by the Congregatio de Propaganda Fide, has been able to assemble an excellent collection of antiquities and other curiosities: Egyptian idols made of the hardest stone; small metal figures from earlier and later times; and flat, raised sculptures made of fired clay, excavated in the area, which lead one to attribute a distinctive style to the ancient tribe of the Volsci.

The museum possesses a variety of other rarities. I made a note of two Chinese ink-boxes, one depicting the entire process of breeding silkworms, the other the method of rice cultivation, both rendered in a highly naive yet detailed manner. The boxes and their covers are exceptionally beautiful and would be a fitting addition to the Congregatio de Propaganda Fide's library, alongside the book I have already praised.

It is surely inexplicable that these treasures are housed so near to Rome, and yet not visited more often. However, the inconvenience of having to travel here, and the attractions of Rome, may serve as an excuse. As we walked towards the inn, several women seated in front of the houses called out to us, asking if we might like to buy various antiquities. When we expressed serious interest, they brought out various old cauldrons, fire tongs, and other shoddy household items, and almost burst with laughter at having made fools of us. As we seemed annoyed, our guide smoothed things over, assuring us that the little game they played was customary, and that all visitors had to submit to it.

I am writing this in a most wretched inn, and feel neither the strength nor the inclination to continue. So, the kindest of goodnights!

Fondi

February 23, 1787.

We set off early, at three a.m. As day broke, we found ourselves amidst the Pontine Marshes, which do not appear quite as atrocious as they are commonly described as

being in Rome. While one cannot properly assess such a large and extensive undertaking as the planned drainage of the marshland when merely passing through, it seems to me that the work ordered by the Pope will, to a large extent, achieve its intended goals. Imagine a wide valley here, stretching from north to south with a gentle slope downwards towards the mountains to the east, and rising towards the sea to the west.

The old Via Appia has been restored along its entire length in a direct line, the main drainage channel has been dug on its right, and the water flows gently down into this, thus drying out the soil on the right hand side towards the sea, and allowing it to be given over to agriculture; it is cultivated as far as the eye can see, or could be if tenants could be found, except for a few spots that are too low-lying.

The left side, towards the mountains, is more difficult to manage. Though transverse channels run beneath the road into the main canal, the land slopes steeply there, towards the mountains to the north, preventing it from being drained in the same manner. It is said that a second drainage channel is planned to run along the mountainside. Large stretches, especially towards Terracina, are overgrown with willows and poplars.

A post-station in these parts consists of nothing more than a long thatched shed. Tischbein sketched ours and, as a reward, enjoyed a pleasure that only he truly knows how to appreciate. On the parched plain, a white horse had broken free and, taking advantage of its freedom, galloped back and forth over the brown soil, like a lightning flash; it was truly a magnificent sight, rendered all the more glorious by Tischbein's delight.

Where the town of Meza (*Ad Medias, or Casale di Mesa*) once stood, Pope Pius VI has had a large and beautiful building erected (*in 1780*), marking the centre of the marshlands. The sight of it increased our hope for, and confidence in, the success of the entire undertaking. Thus, we pressed on, engaged in lively conversation, mindful of the warning not to fall asleep on the way, and indeed, the bluish haze, which even at this time of year hovers at a certain altitude above the ground, reminded us of the dangers of breathing the air thereabouts. All the more pleasing and welcome, then, was the rocky location of Terracina, which we had scarcely enjoyed before catching sight of the sea immediately in front. Shortly afterward, the far side of the hill revealed a vista filled with fresh vegetation. The large, plump leaves of prickly pear cacti (*ficus indica*) rose among low, greyish-green myrtles, beneath the yellowish-green pomegranate trees, and pale green olive branches. Along the way, we saw nameless, never-before-seen flowers and shrubs. Daffodils and adonis bloomed in the meadows. For a while, the sea is to the right of the road; the limestone cliffs, close on the left. These are a continuation of the Apennines, which extend from Tivoli and connect to

the sea, from which they are separated first by the Romagna, then by the volcanic hills of Frascati, the Alban Hills, and Velletri, and finally by the Pontine Marshes. Monte Circello, the promontory opposite Terracina, where the Pontine Marshes end, may well also consist of a series of limestone cliffs.

At Terracina we moved away from the sea, and shortly afterwards entered the charming plain of Fondi. This small area of fertile, cultivated land, enclosed by a not-too-rugged mountain range, would surely charm anyone. Most of the oranges still hang on the trees, the crops are green, and there is plenty of wheat; olive trees grow in the fields, the little town lies to the north. A palm tree stood forth, which we greeted. Enough, for this evening. Forgive my rambling letter. I am obliged to write without thinking, simply in order to write at all. There are too many tasks to do, and the accommodation is too unsatisfactory, though my desire to confide something to paper is excessive. We arrived as night fell, and it is now time to seek rest.

Sant'Agata (*near Sessa Aurunca*)

February 24, 1787.

Seated in a cold room, I must try to report on a beautiful day. As we drove out of Fondi, it was almost light, and we were immediately greeted by orange trees hanging over the walls on both sides of the road. The trees are so laden with fruit they are beyond compare. The young leaves are yellowish at the top, but underneath and in the centre, they are the most vibrant green. Mignon (*the enigmatic character in Goethe's novel 'Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre', 'Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship', 1795–96*) was certainly right to long for such a place (*see her song 'Kennst du das Land, wo die Zitronen blühn': 'Do you know the land where the lemon-trees grow, in darkened leaves the gold-oranges glow'*).

Then we drove through well-ploughed and cultivated wheat fields, interspersed with neat rows of olive trees. The wind stirred them, revealing the silvery undersides of the leaves, the branches bending gently and gracefully. It was a grey morning, and a strong north wind promised to dispel all the clouds completely.

Then the road wound its way through the valley, between stony but well-cultivated fields, the crops a beautiful green. In some places, we saw spacious, round, paved areas surrounded by low walls; here, the grain is threshed at once, without needing to be transported home in sheaves. The valley narrowed, and the road climbed between bare limestone cliffs on either side. The storm was more violent, to our rear. Hail and snow fell, melting only slowly.

The walls of various ancient buildings surprised us with their net-like stonework. On the higher ground, the terrain is rocky, yet planted with olive trees where even the smallest amount of soil can support them. We then crossed a plain dotted with olive-groves, followed by a small town. Within the walls of garden enclosures, we came upon altars, ancient tombstones, and fragments of every kind. Then we came across the excellently constructed, but now earth-filled, basements of old country houses, overgrown with olive trees. Finally, we caught sight of Vesuvius, a plume of smoke rising from its summit.

Mola di Gaeta (*Formia*) once again greeted us with its abundant orange trees. We stayed there several hours. The bay in front of the town offers one of the most beautiful views, the sea lapping the shore. If the eye follows the latter to the west, till it reaches the horn of the bay which is shaped like a crescent moon, it encounters the fortress of Gaeta perched on a rock in the mid-distance. The view of the horn on the east extends much further; first one sees a range of hills, then Vesuvius, then the islands. Ischia lies in the sea, almost directly opposite the centre of the crescent.

Here, I found my first starfish and sea urchins washed on shore; a beautiful green leaf, like the finest vellum paper; then curious glacial erratics, most often of common limestone, but also serpentine, jasper, quartz, siliceous breccias, granites, porphyries, various types of marble, and green and blue glass. The latter two are hardly formed in this region; they are probably the debris from ancient buildings, and so we witnessed how the waves played, before our eyes, with the splendours of the ancient world. We lingered happily, and took pleasure in behaving almost like savages, which is indeed human nature. Leaving the neighbourhood of Mola di Gaeta, the beautiful view is maintained, even though the sea is lost. The last glimpse of it is a lovely bay, which we sketched. Now follow excellent orchards, fenced with aloes. We glimpsed an aqueduct that stretched from the mountains towards some indistinct, entangled ruins.

Then came the crossing of the Garigliano River. One then passes through fairly fertile areas towards a range of hills. Nothing remarkable is seen until, at last, the first mound of volcanic lava. Here begins a large, magnificent region of hills and valleys, above which snow-capped peaks eventually rise. Along the nearby heights, stretches a striking township (*Sessa Aurunca*). In the valley below lies Sant'Agata, and a respectable inn, where a lively fire burned in a fireplace designed like a small room. Meanwhile, our own room is cold, no windows, only shutters, which I am hastening to close.

Naples

February 25, 1787

Finally, we have arrived, in a happy mood and accompanied by good omens. Regarding the day's journey, I shall say only that we left Sant'Agata at sunrise, the wind was blowing fiercely behind us, and this north-easterly persisted all day. Only in the afternoon did we finally break free of the clouds; we suffered much from the cold.

Our route led us through and over the volcanic hills, among which I thought I discerned a few limestone cliffs. Finally, we reached the Capuan plain and, soon after, Capua itself, where we stopped for lunch. In the afternoon, the beautiful, flat plain opened up before us. The broad road ran between fields carpeted with green wheat, several feet at least in height. Poplars are planted in rows across the fields, branching at a certain height, up which vines, are trained (*the 'vite maritata' technique*).

This continues all the way to Naples. The soil is light, exceedingly loose, and well-cultivated. The vines are of unusual strength and height, their tendrils hanging like nets from poplar to poplar.

Vesuvius was visible to the south and somewhat to the left, violently steaming, and I was quietly pleased to see that remarkable object at last, with my own eyes. The sky grew ever clearer, and at last the sun shone, quite hotly, into our cramped abode as we rolled along. Beneath a perfectly clear, bright sky we drew nearer to Naples; and now we truly found ourselves in another country. The flat-roofed buildings suggested a different clime; their interiors must be none too welcoming, since everyone was out on the street, sitting about in the sun, as long as it chose to shine. The Neapolitan believes himself to be in paradise, and has a very bleak view of the Northern lands: '*Sempre neve, case di legno, gran ignoranza, ma danari assai*.' That is the image they have of our state of existence. For the edification of the reader, this characterisation translates as: 'Perpetual snow, wooden houses, great ignorance, but wealth enough.'

Naples announced itself as a joyful, free and lively city, full of countless people running around in confusion; the king was out hunting, the queen 'expecting', and so things could not have been better.

Naples, Monday, February 26.

'Alla Locanda del Sgr. Moriconi, al Largo del Castello.'

'At the Inn of Signore Moriconi, at Largo del Castello' (*Piazza del Municipio*). Letters from all four corners of the world may now find us at this address, sounding as cheerful as it is magnificent. Around the large medieval castle (*Castel Nuovo*) fronting the sea, stretches a broad, open space which, though surrounded on all four sides by houses, has therefore, probably since the time, long ago, when it was still unenclosed ground,

been called not a *piazza* but a *largo*. We are lodged in a spacious corner room, in this large corner house, a room which affords a clear and joyous view of the ever-changing scene. An iron balcony runs along the exterior past several windows, and even rounds the corner. One would never feel like leaving these lodgings, were it not for the sharp wind being so intensely noticeable.

The apartment is cheerful decorated, especially the ceiling, whose arabesques in a hundred compartments already hint at the proximity of Pompeii and Herculaneum. It would all be fine and good, but there is no sign of a fireplace or hearth, and February is certainly making its presence felt even here. I requested some warmth.

A tripod was brought, raised off the ground so that one can hold one's hands near it in comfort. A shallow basin is attached, containing gently-glowing coals, almost completely covered with ash. Here, one must be economical, as we learned in Rome. From time to time, one brushes the surface ash off with the head of a key, so that some of the coals are exposed to the air. If, however, one stirs the embers impatiently, one indeed feels an increase in warmth for a moment, but soon the entire ember is exhausted, at which point the basin needs to be refilled for a certain sum of money

I am not feeling entirely well, and would certainly have appreciated greater comfort. A reed mat serves as protection against the cold, concrete floor. Furs are not commonly available here, so I decided to put on a sailor's cloak we had brought along for fun, which serves me well, especially since I fasten it round my waist with a cord from the luggage. I must look like an amusing cross between a sailor and a Capuchin monk, since Tischbein, returning from visiting friends, couldn't help but laugh.

Naples, February 27, 1787.

Yesterday I spent the day peacefully waiting out a minor physical discomfort; today I indulged myself, and spent the time contemplating the most magnificent views. Say, tell, or paint what you will, there is more here than anywhere else. The shores, bays, and inlets of the sea, Vesuvius, the city, the suburbs, the castles, the pleasure palaces! We even visited the Grotto at Posillipo (*the Crypta Neapolitana, a Roman tunnel between Piedigrotta and Fuorigrotta*) in the evening, just as the setting sun was shining into it from the other side. I immediately forgave all those who are mad for Naples, and remembered, with emotion, my father, who received an indelible impression from the sights, especially those I saw for the first time today. And just as it is said that one to whom a ghost has appeared can never be totally happy again, so it could be said of my father, conversely, that he was never totally unhappy, because he could always recall Naples. For myself, I am very restrained these days, and only open my eyes wide when something is truly impressive.



‘Bay and castle near Naples’ - Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (German, 1749–1832)
Klassik Stiftung Weimar, Museen (Inv. GGz/0924)
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Naples, February 28, 1787.

Today we visited Philipp Hackert, the well-known landscape painter, who enjoys the special trust and exceptional favour of King Ferdinand and Queen Maria Carolina. He has been granted a wing of the Palazzo Francavilla (*near Piazza dei Martiri*) which he has furnished artistically, and inhabits contentedly. He is a very determined, and intelligent fellow who, despite his tireless diligence, knows how to enjoy life.

Then we went to the sea and saw all sorts of fish and strange creatures among the waves. The day was glorious, the Tramontane wind (*a north-westerly*) tolerable.

Naples, March 1st.

Even in Rome, my stubborn, solitary nature has shown a more sociable side than I care to admit. Indeed, it seems peculiar to venture out into the world with the intention of remaining solitary. Thus, I could not resist the Prince of Waldeck (*Christian August, Prince of Waldeck and Pyrmont*), who most kindly offered me an invitation and, through his rank and influence, has granted me access to many pleasant things. We had scarcely arrived in Naples, where he has already been residing for some time, when

he sent for us to join him on a trip to Pozzuoli and the surrounding area. I was already thinking of a trip to Vesuvius, but Tischbein is pressing me to accept his invitation, the outing being pleasant in itself, and promising much joy and benefit in the company of such a well-rounded and knowledgeable individual, especially given the beautiful weather. Also, a beautiful lady we met in Rome, who is inseparable from the prince, is to be part of the group along with her husband, and we all hope for a delightful experience.

I was familiar with this distinguished company, through previous conversations. Indeed, the Prince asked me at our first meeting what I was currently working on, and my 'Iphigenie' was so fresh in my mind that I was able to recount the details at length one evening. They listened; but I sensed that they had expected something more lively, more exuberant from me.

The same date, in the evening.

It would be difficult to give a sensible account of today. Who has not known that fleeting reading of a book which has irresistibly swept them away, and had the greatest of influences on their life, an effect already substantial, to which subsequent rereading and serious reflection adds little? It is something I experienced on reading 'Shakuntala' (*the play by Kalidasa; an apparent anachronism since the first German translation was only published in1791, by traveller, naturalist, and author Georg Forster, not taken directly from the Sanskrit, but, in turn, a translation of Sir William Jones's English translation, 'Sacontalá or The Fatal Ring', published in 1789. Goethe however may well have read the work pre-publication, in manuscript form*), and is it not the same for us with the significant people in our lives? A boat trip to Pozzuoli, was followed by an easy journey overland, and a cheerful stroll through the most wondrous region in the world, under the purest sky, but over the most difficult ground. We noted the ruins of buildings created long ago by unimaginable wealth, now condemned and unpleasant, boiling pools, sulphur-emitting clefts, slag heaps resisting plant life, barren and repulsive stretches, and yet ever-lush vegetation growing wherever it could, rising above all that has been killed off, bordering lakes and streams, indeed, existing in the form of a most magnificent oak forest on the walls of an ancient crater.



‘Fumaroles rising from the Solfatara crater at Pozzuoli’ - Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (German, 1749–1832)
Wikimedia Commons

And so, one is tossed back and forth between a natural and a historical reality. One wishes to think but feels quite unfit to do so. Meanwhile, life goes on happily, and we too certainly didn’t lack for that. Educated individuals, belonging to the world and its ways, but also, warned of the seriousness of our fate, are inclined to contemplation. Our unlimited view over land, sea, and sky bowed to the presence of a charming young lady, accustomed and inclined to accept homage.

Amidst all this commotion, however, I did not fail to make a few notes. In their future interpretation, the map we consulted in situ, and a quick sketch by Tischbein, will be of the greatest assistance; at the moment it is impossible for me to add even the slightest thing.

March 2nd.

Today I climbed Vesuvius, though the weather was gloomy and the summit shrouded in clouds. I travelled by carriage to Resina, then rode a mule up a mountain track among vineyards; then went on foot across the lava caused by the active flows of 1771, which is already covered by a fine but firm layer of moss; and then along the side of this lava-field. The hermit’s hut (*a well-known landmark*) was on my left, on the ridge. Further on, I climbed the ash hill, which is hard work. Two-thirds of the summit were covered with clouds. Finally, my guide and I reached the ancient caldera, now-completely filled, and found the fresh lava flows, two months and fourteen days old, and even a feeble one, five days old, which had already cooled. We climbed above these

to a newly formed volcanic mound, which steamed on all sides. The vapour was drifting away from us, so I sought to advance towards the crater. We had gone about fifty paces amidst the vapour when it became so thick that I could hardly see my shoes. Holding a handkerchief up to my face was no use, the guide had also disappeared in the mist, and my footing on the ejected lava fragments was unsteady. I thought it best to turn back, and save for a clearer day with less vapour the view I had hoped to see. Moreover, I now realised how difficult it is to breathe in such an atmosphere.

Incidentally, the mountain was completely still and silent. No flame, or roar, or hurling forth of stones, as it has been threatening the whole time lately. I have now reconnoitred it, so that I can readily conquer it as soon as the weather improves.

The lavas I found were mostly types I recognised. However, I discovered a phenomenon that seemed very strange to me, which I intend to investigate further, and about which I will consult experts and collectors. It is a stalactite-like lining of a volcanic chimney that was formerly domed, but has opened up and protrudes from the old, now choked crater. This solid, greyish, stalactite-like rock appears to me to have been formed by the sublimation of the finest volcanic vapours without the involvement of moisture, and without melting; it gives occasion for further thought.

Today being a Friday, there was a grand procession of the nobility, where everyone displayed their carriages, especially the horses. One could not possibly see anything more graceful than those creatures; it is the first time in my life that my heart has been so warmed by them.

March 3rd.

Today the sky is overcast and the sirocco is blowing; good weather for dealing with the post. So far, I have already seen a plentiful mixture of people here, some fine horses, and some very strange fish. 'Vedi Napoli e poi muori!' they say here. 'See Naples and die!' That no Neapolitan wants to leave their city, that their poets sing of its blissful location while employing magnificent hyperboles, would hardly be surprising even were there no Vesuvius nearby. One scarcely even recalls Rome here; compared to this free and open location, that 'capital of the world' seems like an old, out of place monastery nestled on the banks of the Tiber.

Maritime life is also bringing me entirely new food for thought. The frigate to Palermo departed yesterday, with a clear sky, and a strong Tramontane wind behind her. She will doubtless have spent no more than thirty-six hours at sea. With what longing I watched her in full sail as she passed between Capri and Cape Minerva (*Punta Campanella, the tip of the Sorrento peninsula*) and finally disappeared. If one saw someone one loved vanishing like that, one might well die of it! Now the sirocco is

blowing hard; if the wind strengthens further the waves round the breakwater will be quite lively.

The same date, March 3rd.

Enclosed, I send a few pressed leaves, as a sign of my visit here. Also, a slightly scorched envelope from your last letter, as proof that it was with me on Vesuvius. But do not imagine me, either in dreams or in waking life, as surrounded by danger; be assured that where I was there is no more risk than on the road to Schloss Belvedere (*outside Weimar*). The world is in the Lord's hands everywhere! One could surely say so on such an ascent. It is not that I seek adventures out of mere curiosity or because of some peculiarity of mine, but because I am clear-headed, usually, and grasp the essence of a subject quickly; I can do and dare more than some others. The voyage to Sicily is anything but dangerous. Once here, it doesn't seem as risky in reality as folk make it out to be, from afar.

The volcanic activity is scarcely felt at all in the south of Italy but, in the north, Rimini and nearby towns recently sustained damage. It exhibits strange whims; here, people talk of it as they do the wind and weather, as they discuss earthquakes similarly in Thuringia.

I am pleased that you have now become acquainted with the new version of 'Iphigenie'; I would have been even happier if the difference between the versions had been more obvious to you. I know what I did to achieve it, may speak to you about it, because I could still improve it further. If it is a pleasure to enjoy what is good, it is a greater one to perceive what is better, and in art only the best is good enough.

Naples, March 5th.

We spent the second Sunday of Lent (*March 4th*) wandering from church to church. While everything in Rome is utterly serious, here everything is lively and cheerful. The Neapolitan school of painting can only be truly understood in Naples. Here, one marvels at seeing the entire facade of a church (*Chiesa dei Girolamini*) frescoed from top to bottom, with Christ, above the door, driving from the Temple the buyers, sellers, and money-lenders, who, on either side, tumble down the steps, merrily and gracefully, if in somewhat startled a state. Luca Giordano, the artist responsible, must have been working swiftly to fill such a large area. Inside another church (*Chiesa del Gesù Nuovo*), the space above the entrance is richly decorated with a fresco (*by Francesco Solimena*) depicting the 'Expulsion of Heliodorus from the Temple'. How much there is to describe here! For example, the pulpit is not always, as elsewhere, a

lectern, a platform for the priest, but rather a gallery in which, on one occasion, I saw a Capuchin friar pacing back and forth, from one end to the other, exhorting the people to forego their sinfulness.

But the splendour of the full moon as we enjoyed it last night, wandering through the streets and squares, along the Chiaia, the endless promenade, and then back and forth along the seashore, is not be recounted or described. I was truly overwhelmed by the feeling of the infiniteness of space. To attain one's dream is certainly worth all the trouble.

The same date, March 5, 1787.

I must say something, at least of a general nature, about a distinguished man I met a few days ago. He is Prince Filangieri (*Gaetano Filangieri, fifth Prince of Satriano, the Italian jurist and philosopher*) known for his work concerned with legislation (*'La Scienza della Legislazione', 1780*). He belongs to those admirable young men who, most laudably, keep the happiness of human beings, and their freedom, at the forefront of their minds. His conduct displays him as a soldier, a knight, and as a man of the world; however, his decorum is tempered by the expression of delicate moral feelings which, pervading his entire being, shine forth most gracefully from both his words and his deeds.

He, is a heartfelt supporter of King Ferdinand, and the kingdom, even if he does not approve of everything that is done; he, too, is oppressed by fear of Joseph I (*Holy Roman Emperor and ruler of the Habsburg monarchy from 1780 until his death in 1790*). The thought of despotism, even if it only hovers in the air, is already terrifying to people of nobility. He spoke quite frankly with me about what Naples has to fear. He enjoys discussing Montesquieu (*Charles Louis de Secondat, judge, historian, and political philosopher*), Beccaria (*Cesare Bonesana di Beccaria, criminologist, jurist, philosopher, economist, and politician*), and even his own writings, all with the same good intentions, and a passionate, youthful desire to do good. He is still only in his thirties (*he was thirty-three years old at the time*).

He introduced me to the work of a writer whose unfathomable depths the newer Italian legalists find highly refreshing and edifying; his name was Giambattista Vico, and they prefer his works to those of Montesquieu. From a cursory glance at the book (*'Scienza Nuova': 'New Science', 1725*) which they presented to me as if it were a sacred text, it seemed to contain Sibylline prophecies of the triumph of the good and the right that is to come, or ought to come, given an earnest contemplation of the tradition, and of life itself. It is truly wonderful when a nation owns to such a forerunner; Hamann

(*Johann Georg Hamann the Lutheran philosopher from Königsberg, known as 'the Wizard of the North'*) will doubtless produce a similar code for the Germans, one day.

Naples, March 6, 1787.

Reluctantly, but out of a spirit of loyal companionship, Tischbein today accompanied me on my second visit to Mount Vesuvius. To a visual artist like himself, who only concerns himself with the most beautiful of human and animal forms, and indeed with the formless itself, rocks and landscapes, only by humanising them through the exercise of his good sense and taste, such a dreadful, shapeless accumulation of lava, constantly devouring itself, and waging war on every concept of beauty, must seem utterly abhorrent.

We drove off in a pair of caleches, not daring to navigate the city's hustle and bustle ourselves. The drivers shouted: 'Spostati!'(*'Move!'*) incessantly so that donkeys, carrying a load of wood or a heap of rubbish, oncoming carriages, porters hauling loads, pedestrians walking freely, children, and the elderly, would take care, and make way, so that our horses' brisk trot could continue unhindered.

The route through the outermost suburbs and gardens already hinted at something Plutonian, since it had not rained for a good while, and all the evergreen trees and shrubs were covered with thick, ash-grey dust; all the roofs, cornices, and anything else that offered a surface had likewise turned a shade of grey, so that only the magnificent blue sky and the light of a blazing sun gave any indication that one was still among the living.

At the foot of the steep slope, we were met by two guides, one old and one young, both capable men. The first hauled me, and the second carried Tischbein, up the mountain. Hauled, I say, because the guide girds himself with a leather strap, which the traveller grasps and, pulled upwards, can then more easily support himself on his own feet with the aid of a stick.

Thus, we reached the region above which the cone of Vesuvius rises, within the collapsed caldera of Mount Somma which spreads around it to the north and north-east.

After a glance westward across the landscape, a glance which like a healing bath washed away all the effects of exertion, and physical tiredness, we circled the ever-smoking, ash-spouting conical mount. As long as the ground allowed us to keep a safe distance, we could gaze at that magnificent and awe-inspiring spectacle. First, a violent roar of thunder would resound from the deepest abyss, then stones, large and small, were launched into the air by the thousand, enveloped in clouds of ash. Most fell back

into the depths once more. The rest, hurled sideways, fell onto the outer slopes of the cone, making a wondrous sound: first the heavier ones thumped and bounced down the side of the cone accompanied by dull thuds, then the smaller and lighter fragments, which had flown further, rattled down behind them, and finally a trickled of ash followed. All this occurred at regular intervals, which we could easily measure by counting to ourselves calmly.

The space of ground between Mount Somma and the cone, became quite narrow in extent, however, and several stones fell around us, rendering our path unpleasant. Tischbein felt even more displeased with the mountain, as that monstrosity, not content with being distinctly ugly, was now proving dangerous also.

But as a present danger may possess a certain allure, and challenge the human spirit to defy it, I considered that it must be possible, in the interim between two eruptions, to reach the crater's mouth and also find the way back down during that period. I discussed this with the guides under an overhanging rock of Mount Somma, where, safely encamped, we refreshed ourselves with the provisions we had brought. The younger one pledged to attempt the daring feat with me; we lined our hats with cloths, linen and silk, and stood ready, sticks in hand, I myself grasping his belt.

Small stones were still rattling around us, and the ash still trickling, as the nimble young man started pulling me onwards, over the glowing scree. Once there, we stood at the edge of that immense maw, a gentle breeze diverting the vapour away from us, but at the same time concealing the interior of the abyss, which steamed from a thousand cracks all around it. Through gaps in the vapour, one glimpsed fractured rock faces, here and there. The sight was neither particularly instructive nor pleasing, but precisely because one could see nothing, one lingered, hoping to glimpse at least something. Our silent counting was neglected; we stood on the sharp rim before the monstrous precipice. Suddenly, there was a thunderous roar, a terrible charge of stones flew past us, and we instinctively ducked, as if that would save us from the tumbling mass if it fell directly upon us. Smaller stones were already rattling down, and, without considering whether we had another quieter interval ahead, simply glad to have survived the danger, we reached the foot of the cone, with the ash still trickling, and our hats and the shoulders of our coats charred enough.

Received most tenderly by Tischbein, scolded, and slowly reviving, I was now able to devote particular attention to the older and newer lava flows. The older guide knew precisely how to identify the varying ages of the lava flows. Older ones were already covered with ash, and smooth, while newer ones, especially those which had flowed slowly, presented a curious sight. For as they crept along, carrying the masses that had solidified on their surface for a while, it inevitably happened that these masses would stall, from time to time but, propelled still by the molten currents, would be pushed

one upon another, remaining wonderfully jagged and solid, and looking more peculiar than ice floes driven upon one another in a similar situation. Among this molten, raw matter, there were also large blocks which, when broken open, seemed exactly like the type of ancient rock found by fracturing fresh stone from the mountain. The guides maintained that these were old lava flows from the deepest depths, which the mountain sometimes ejected.

On returning to Naples, I noted various small, strange, single-storey houses that were oddly constructed, lacking windows, with the rooms illuminated only by the door opening onto the street. From early morning until late at night, the inhabitants seated themselves in front of them, finally retreating into their caves.

The city, tumultuous in quite a different way in the evening, awakened in me the desire to be able to remain here some time, to sketch the busy scene to the best of my ability. I would not feel entirely comfortable in staying, however.

Naples, Wednesday, March 7, 1787.

This week Tischbein has been showing me, and describing, concisely, the finer points of a large part of Naples' art treasures. He is an excellent connoisseur of animals, and a draughtsman, and he had previously drawn my attention to the bronze head of a horse in the Palazzo Colombrano (*the Palazzo Diomede Carafa, or Palazzo Sant Angelo, at Via San Biagio dei Librai, nos. 119-121*). We visited today. The sculpture stands in the courtyard (*cast by 'Donatello' c.1455, it is now in the National Archaeological Museum of Naples, and replaced by a plaster cast, sited where Goethe saw it*), directly opposite the gateway, in a niche over a fountain, and is truly astonishing; what an effect the head must have had when combined with the other limbs to form a whole! The horse when entire was much larger than the ones on St. Mark's Basilica, and here, the individual head, viewed more closely than they, inspires even more admiration for what is revealed. The magnificent brow ridge, flaring nostrils, alert ears, and stiff mane all display the powerful agitation of a strong creature.

On turning round, we noted the statue of a female, which stood in a niche above the gateway. Winckelmann formerly considered it a representation of a dancer, saying, in his work, that diverse ancient sculptors depicted forms in lively motion which the great painters present as frozen nymphs and goddesses. It is very light and beautiful; the head has, at some time, been broken off, and re-attached subsequently, with care, it is otherwise undamaged, and certainly deserves siting in a better place.

Naples, March 9th.

Today I received your kind letters, dated February 16th. Please keep writing. I left a forwarding address, and will do so again when I resume my journey. It seems quite strange to me, reading them at such a great distance, that my friends have not met together, and yet often nothing is more natural than not being able to meet, even when one is close by.

The weather has darkened, and is changeable; spring is arriving, and we shall have rainy days. The summit of Vesuvius has not cleared since our visit. These last few nights flames were sometimes seen, but now all is quiet again; a stronger eruption is expected.

The storms of these days have revealed the magnificence of the sea to me, allowing me to study the waves in all their dignified form and motion; Nature is truly the only book that offers profundity on every page. In contrast, the theatre no longer gives me any pleasure at all. Here, during Lent, they perform sacred operas that are indistinguishable from secular ones, except that there are no ballets inserted between the acts; otherwise, they are as colourful as possible. At the Teatro San Carlo, they are staging 'The Destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar.' To me, it was no more than a large peepshow; it seems I have been spoiled for such things.

Today we were at the Prince of Waldeck's, at Capodimonte, where the large collection of paintings, coins, and other items is housed — not exactly aesthetically pleasing, but valuable nonetheless. So many traditional concepts are now being realised, and confirmed for me. What reach the North as individual items — coins, gems, vases —look quite different, as the pruned lemon trees do, when seen en masse here, in the country of which these treasures are native works of art. For where works of art are rare, their very grants them value; here one learns to appreciate only what is truly the best.

A high price is paid for Etruscan vases at the moment, and there are certainly some beautiful and excellent pieces among them. Every traveller seems to want to own one. They are not as expensive as they would be at home; so, I am afraid I may be tempted buy something myself.

Naples, Friday, March 9, 1787.

One pleasant thing about travel is that even the commonplace, through novelty and surprise, takes on the air of an adventure. When I returned from Capodimonte, I paid an evening visit to Signore Filangieri's home, where I found a woman seated on the sofa beside the lady of the house. The former's appearance seemed incongruous given the intimate manner in which she engaged, quite freely, in conversation. In a light,

striped, silk shawl, her head strangely adorned, the small, charming figure resembled a milliner who, concerned with the adornment of others, pays little attention to her own appearance. Milliners are so accustomed to charging for their work they cannot bear to think of performing the same for themselves without being paid. My arrival in no way interrupted her chatter, and she recounted a series of amusing stories that had come to her attention recently, or rather, had been prompted by her whimsical activities.

The lady of the house wished to allow me a chance to speak also, and talked of the magnificent location of Capodimonte and the treasures there. The woman, however, rose, in a lively manner, and, once on her feet, showed me greater politeness than before. She took her leave, and advanced to the door, saying to me, as she passed: 'The Filangieris are dining at my table these days; I hope to see you there too!' She was gone before I could accept. Only then did I learn that she was the Princess *** (*Teresa Ravaschieri, the wife of Prince Filippo Ravaschieri Fieschi di Satriano*), and closely related to the family (*she was the sister of Gaetano Filangieri*). The Filangieris were not rich and lived in a modest way. I imagined the little princess to live in a similar manner, since noble titles are not uncommon in Naples. I noted the name, day, and hour, so as to be sure to be in the right place, and at the right time.

Naples, Sunday, March 11, 1787

Since my stay in Naples will be brief, I shall address more distant locations first; the nearer ones will follow. With Tischbein I travelled to Pompeii, where we found magnificent views opening to left and right, which, though familiar to us from many a landscape drawing, now appeared in all their splendour. Pompeii astonishes everyone by its narrowness and littleness. The streets are confined, though straight, and paved with stepping stones along the sides, the houses small and lacking windows, the rooms illumined only by the light from the doorways leading to the courtyards and open galleries. Even public furniture and buildings — the bench by the gateway, the temple, and a nearby villa — are more like toy models for children to play with than anything. The rooms, corridors, and galleries, however, are painted in the most cheerful manner; the wall surfaces are uniform, each with a detailed painting in the centre, now mostly erased, and light and tasteful arabesques bordering it, from which charming figures of children and nymphs emerge, while elsewhere wild and tame animals spring forth from huge garlands of flowers. Thus, the current, utterly desolate state of the town, covered long ago by a rain of stones and ash, and then plundered by excavators, nonetheless points to its people's love of art and their creation of images of which even the most ardent amateur has no conception, and neither a feeling for, nor need.

Considering the distance between Pompeii and Mount Vesuvius, the volcanic layers that cover it could not have been driven here by simple projection, or by gusts of wind; rather, one must imagine the stones and ash floating in the air like clouds for a time, until they finally descended on this unfortunate place.

To better visualise the event, imagine how a deep snowfall might affect a mountain village. The spaces between the buildings, and indeed the shattered buildings themselves, were completely covered; only here and there remnants of masonry protruded. Later, when the hillside was first cultivated again and vineyards and gardens were created, many a landowner, before ploughing his land, was doubtless obliged to undertake a cautious search. Several rooms would often be discovered, empty except, say, for a pile of ashes in the corner of one, concealing various small household items, and works of art.

We washed away the strange, somewhat unpleasant, impression of the mummified city as, seated in a small taverna, in a bower near the sea, we ate a frugal meal, and delighted in the blueness of the sky, the brilliance and brightness of the waves, hoping that, we might meet here again, and enjoy ourselves together once more when the spot was covered with vine leaves.

Closer to the city, I again noticed the little houses, perfect replicas of those in Pompeii. We asked permission to enter one, and found that it was very neatly furnished. There were woven cane-chairs, and a chest of drawers entirely gilded, decorated with colourful flowers and varnished, showing that, after many centuries, after countless periods of change, the inhabitants of the region still maintain their way of life, its customs, inclinations and crafts.

Naples, Monday, March 12.

Today, gazing about in my usual manner, I wandered the city and noted many things worthy of future description, which are unfortunately not yet in a form to be shared. Everything here shows that a prosperous country, one that provides for basic needs in abundance, also produces a people of happy disposition who anticipate, without worrying, that tomorrow will bring what today has brought, and therefore are able to live carefree lives, filled with present gratification, moderate enjoyment, and a cheerful endurance of any temporary suffering! Here follows a fine example of the latter.

The morning was cold and damp; it had rained a little. I entered a square where the large paving stones appeared neatly swept. To my great surprise, I saw a number of ragged boys huddled in a circle, in this perfectly level space, the palms of their hands towards the ground as if warming themselves. At first, I thought it was a game of some sorts, but when I saw that their expressions were wholly calm and composed, as if

some need of theirs were being met, I strained my senses to find an explanation, but the latter served me not. I therefore had occasion to ask what had prompted these little rascals to assume that peculiar posture, and drawn them into a regular circle.

I learned that a local blacksmith had heated a wheel rim on the spot, which was done in the following way: The iron rim was laid on the ground, and as many oak shavings as necessary were heaped around it in a circle to warm it by the required amount. The kindling burnt down, the rim was fitted to the wheel, and the ashes were carefully swept away. The heat transferred to the pavement was then instantly employed by these little wretches, who would not move from the spot until they had absorbed the last degree of warmth. There are countless examples of such frugality and careful use of what would otherwise be lost. I find in this people the most lively and ingenious industry, not for garnering wealth, but for living without a care.

The same date, in the evening.

So that I would arrive at the odd little princess's house at the appointed time and not fail her, I summoned a servant. He guided me to the courtyard gate of a large palazzo (*the Palazzo Ravaschieri di Satriano, at Riviera di Chaia, no. 287*) but not thinking she might live in such a magnificent residence, I spelt the name for him once more, very clearly; he assured me I was in the correct place. The courtyard was spacious, secluded, quiet, clean and empty, bordered by the main building and its wings. The architecture was in the familiar cheerful Neapolitan style, as was the overall colour scheme. Opposite, was a large portal and a broad, gently-rising staircase. Servants in sumptuous livery were lined up on both sides of the stairs, who bowed low as I passed by. I felt like the Sultan in Wieland's fairy tale (*see Christoph Martin Wieland's collection of tales, 'Dschinnistan', 1786-1789*) and, following that prince's example, took heart. I was then received by higher-ranking servants, until finally a most courtly one opened the door to a large hall, revealing a room that I found just as cheerful, but also just as deserted as the rest of the palace seemed. As I paced back and forth, I saw a splendid table set, for about forty people, in a side gallery. A diocesan priest entered; and without asking who I was or where I came from, assumed my presence was known, and spoke of general matters.

A pair of French doors swung open, then immediately closed again behind the elderly gentleman who had entered. The priest lunged at him, and so did I. We greeted him with a few polite words, which he answered with barking, stammering sounds, in a strange dialect of which I was unable to decipher a single syllable. When he had taken his place by the fireplace, the priest withdrew, and I followed him. A handsome Benedictine monk entered, accompanied by a younger companion; he too greeted the

elderly fellow, and he too was barked at, whereupon he retreated to join us at the window. Monks, especially those more elegantly dressed, have the greatest social advantage; their clothing suggests humility and renunciation while simultaneously bestowing upon them a resolute dignity. In their demeanour, they can appear subservient without flaunting themselves, and then, when they stand forth again, a certain self-satisfaction even, suits them well, a quality one would not expect to be exhibited by any other class. Such was this fellow. I inquired about Monte Cassino (*the Benedictine Abbey*); he invited me to visit him there, and promised the warmest of welcomes.

Meanwhile, the hall had become crowded: officers, courtiers, diocesan priests, even some Capuchins were present. I searched in vain for our hostess, though her presence was imminent. Once again, a pair of double doors opened and closed. An old lady had entered, probably even older than our host, and now the presence, seemingly, of the lady of the house gave me the complete assurance that I was in a palace strange to me, while being utterly unknown to its inhabitants. The food was already being served, and I remained close to the clergymen, eager to slip into that paradise of a banquet hall with them, when suddenly Signore Filangieri and his wife entered, apologising for being late. A moment later, the princess also bounded into the hall, curtsying, bowing, and nodding her head as she rushed past everyone, and advanced on me. 'It is so good of you to keep your word!' she cried. 'Sit next to me at the table; you'll sample the best fare. Just wait a moment! I must choose a suitable place first, then you can sit yourself right beside me.' Thus prompted, I followed her various directions, and we finally seated ourselves, with the Benedictines directly opposite us, and Filangieri at my other side. — 'The food is quite good,' she said, 'all Lenten fare, but carefully chosen; I'll point out the best to you. Now I must go and tease the priests. I can't stand the fellows; they steal from our house every single day. What we have, we should eat ourselves, with friends!' — The soup tureen was passed around; the Benedictine ate with decorum. — 'Please, don't be embarrassed, to utter a request, Your Reverence.' she exclaimed, 'Is the spoon too small? I'll have a larger one brought. You gentlemen are used to a decent mouthful.' The priest replied that everything in that princely house was so excellently arranged that guests quite superior to himself would experience the most complete satisfaction.

The priest took only one of the pastries, but she called out to him that he should take half a dozen! Puff pastry, he must know, was easy enough to digest. The fellow took another, feelingly, thanking her for her gracious attention, as if he had not understood her sly jest. Even a more commonplace pastry, gave her an opportunity to unleash her malice; for when the priest pierced a slice, and drew it onto his plate, a second one came with it. 'Take a third, Father,' she cried, 'you seem to be laying a good

foundation there!' 'When such excellent materials are given him, the builder has an easy job of it!' replied the priest. And so, it went on, without her pausing other than to allot me, conscientiously, the best bites.

Meanwhile, I was discussing the most serious matters with my neighbour. In fact, I have never heard Filangieri utter an idle word. In this, as in many other ways, he resembles our friend Schlosser, except that, as a Neapolitan and a man of the world, he has a gentler nature and a more easy-going manner.

The clergymen were never left alone by my mischievous neighbour on the other side; in particular, the fish transformed into flesh form during Lent gave her inexhaustible cause to make irreligious and immoral remarks, but especially to emphasise and condone carnal lust, arguing that one should at least revel in the form, even if the essence was forbidden.

I remember even more such jokes, but don't dare to share them. Such things might sound quite tolerable at the time, especially coming from a pleasant enough lady, but in black and white, one may well find them distasteful. And then there's the peculiar quality of such audaciousness: it delights in the present moment because it surprises, but when recounted strikes one as insulting and repulsive.

Dessert had been served, and I feared things would continue in this way forever; but unexpectedly, she turned to me, quite composedly, and said: 'Let the priests swallow their Syracusan wine in peace; it seems I can't annoy them to death, nor even spoil their appetite. Now let us have a sensible talk! For what a conversation you've been entertaining with Filangieri! The good creature! He's always so busy with serious matters. I've often told him: 'When you make new laws, we're obliged, yet again, to work ourselves to the bone, simply to decide how to break those too; and always just when we've worked out how to transgress the old ones. See how beautifully Naples has managed itself to date; the people have lived carefree and happy for many a long year. Now and then, someone is hanged, and everything is allowed to continue on its own splendid course.'

She then suggested that I visit Sorrento, where she owned a large estate; her steward would feed me the finest fish, and the most delicious veal from milk-fed calves (*the veal known as mungata: 'milked'*) The mountain air and the heavenly view would cure me of all my philosophical musings, and then she herself would arrive, and all the wrinkles which I was allowing to appear too soon on my brow would disappear completely; and there we would live a truly pleasant life together.

Naples, Tuesday, March 13, 1787.

Today also I shall write you a few words, so that the one letter may provoke another in reply. I am doing well, but seeing less than I ought. The place inspires a carefree attitude and a leisurely pace of life, though my understanding of the city gradually becomes clearer.

On Sunday, you will recall, we were in Pompeii. Much misfortune has befallen the world, but little that has given posterity so much that is interesting. I know of few places that are more so. Despite the houses being small and cramped, all were painted most delicately inside. The city gate is remarkable, and the tombs adjoining it. That of a priestess is a semi-circular bench with a stone backrest, and an inscription carved in large letters. Beyond it, lies a view of the sea to the west, and thus the setting sun. A magnificent place, designed for the contemplation of beauty.

We found a good and lively company from Naples in the vicinity. They were quite relaxed and easy-going people. We dined at Torre Annunziata, enjoying the sea view. The day was most beautiful, the view of Castellammare di Stabia and nearby Sorrento delightful. The whole group seemed very much at home, some remarking that life must be impossible if not in sight of the sea. I am quite content to have the image of the waves in my soul, and so may happily return to the mountains again, from time to time.

Fortunately, there is a painter of very accurate landscapes here who, in his work, manages to convey a feeling of the open and abundant countryside round about. He has already produced quite a few sketches for me.

I have now studied the samples from Vesuvius thoroughly; everything is different when viewed in context. I should really devote the rest of my life to observation; I might discover much that would enrich human knowledge. Please inform Herder that my botanical investigations continue; always according to the same principle, but they will require a lifetime to carry through. Perhaps I am already capable of summarising the main points.

Now I am anticipating a visit to the Museum in the Royal Palace at Portici. Usually, one views it first; we will do so last. I still don't know what I shall be doing next: everyone wants me back in Rome for Easter. I wish things to take their course. Angelika Kauffman has undertaken to paint a picture based on my 'Iphigenie'; the idea is very felicitous, and I have no doubt she will execute it superbly. She has chosen the moment (*act III, scene III*) when Orestes finds himself in the presence of his sister (*Iphigenie*) and his friend (*Pylades*). The successive speeches made by the three characters she has chosen to present as a simultaneous event, transforming their words into gestures. Here, too, one can see her delicacy of feeling, and her knowledge of how to appropriate what is fitting to her craft. And in truth, it is the axis of the play.

Farewell, and love me! Everyone here is kind to me, even if they know not quite what to do with me; Tischbein, on the other hand, provides greater satisfaction, painting several life-size heads for them in the evenings, and they react to them like primitive peoples at the sight of a warship. The session amused me, as follows:

Tischbein possesses a remarkable gift for sketching gods and heroes, life-size and larger, with a pen. He uses minimal hatching, and applies the shading diligently with a broad brush, so that the heads stand out, rounded and majestic. The onlookers watched in amazement at how effortlessly he achieved this, and were genuinely delighted. They were then inspired to try painting like him; they seized brushes and took turns painting beards and smearing their faces. Is there not something primal about humanity in this regard? And this was a cultured gathering in the house of our host who himself draws and paints quite skillfully. One cannot truly grasp the nature of these people unless one has seen them.

Caserta, Wednesday, March 14th.

We are at Hackert's, in his most-comfortable apartment, which has been granted him for his use, in the old castle. The new one, is an admittedly enormous palace (*Reggia 'e Caserta*), like to the Escorial in style, built in a square, with several courtyards, and truly regal. The location is extraordinarily beautiful, on the most fertile plain in the world, while the gardens extend as far as the mountains. There, an aqueduct carries a stream to irrigate the entire castle and the surrounding area, while an entire mass of water, led over artificially created rocks, forms a most magnificent cascade. The gardens are beautiful, and perfectly suited to a region that is itself a garden entire.

The castle, though regal indeed, seemed to me insufficiently lively, and to someone like myself its vast empty rooms could never feel comfortable or liveable in. The king may well share the same view, since he has a place (*the Belvedere di San Lucio*) at the foot of the mountains that, closer to the local people, is a suitable base for hunting and the enjoyment of life.

Caserta, Thursday, March 15th.

Hackert lives quite comfortably in the old castle; there is plenty of room for him and his guests. Constantly occupied with drawing or painting, he nevertheless remains sociable and knows how to attract people by accepting everyone as a pupil. He has completely won me over as well, tolerating my lack of skill, patiently, and insisting above all on precision in drawing, and then on confidence and clarity in composition.

He always has three different shades of ink on hand when he is working, and by applying them, one after the other, starting with the background, a picture emerges, its source a mystery. If only it were as easy to do as it looks! He said to me with his usual strict candour: 'You have talent, but you don't know how to deploy it. Study with me for eighteen months, and you will produce something that will bring pleasure to yourself and others.' Is that not a text that should be the subject of an endless sermon delivered to all dilettantes? We shall see what he can do for me.

The special trust with which the Queen honours him is evidenced not only by his giving practical lessons to the princesses, but especially by the fact that he is frequently summoned in the evenings for instructive discussions on art and related topics. He bases his discussions on Sulzer's encyclopedia from which he selects one or another entry according to his own preference and conviction.

I was obliged to accept his method, and smile at, and to, myself. What a difference there is between a person who seeks inner growth and one who wants to influence the world and instruct it for its own benefit! Sulzer's theory had always been detestable to me, previously, because of its flawed fundamental principle, but now I saw that his work contained far more than most people need. The wealth of knowledge shared there, the way of thinking in which such a worthy man as Sulzer found solace — should that not be sufficient enough for ordinary folk?

We spent several enjoyable and meaningful hours with the restorer Federico Andres, who, summoned from Rome, also lives here in the old castle and diligently continues his work, in which the king takes an interest. I cannot begin to describe his skill in restoring old paintings; one would have to explain the difficulty of the task and, at the same time, the successful solution that this unique craft entails.

Caserta, March 16, 1787.

Your delightful letters of February 19th have come to my attention today, and I must immediately address them. How I long to recover my old self, by thinking of my friends.

Naples is a paradise; everyone lives in a kind of drunken self-forgetfulness. I experience the like; I hardly recognise myself, I feel like a completely different person. Yesterday I thought: 'Either you were mad before, or you are now.'

From here, I have also visited the remains of ancient Capua, as well, and everything associated with them.

In this region, one truly learns what crops there are here, and how the land is cultivated. The flax is already close to flowering, and the wheat is a foot or more high.

Around Caserta, the land is perfectly flat, the fields as uniform and neatly worked as garden flower beds. All is covered with poplars, around which the vines twine, and despite their shade, the soil still yields the most perfect harvest. If only spring would finally arrive with a vengeance! So far, despite the beautiful sunshine, we have suffered very cold winds — a result of the mountain snows.

In a fortnight's time, I have to decide whether to visit Sicily. Never before have I been so strangely torn. One day something arises that urges me to go, the next some circumstance that advises against it. Two spirits are at war over me.

Confidentially, and I say this to my female friends only, since it is something my male friends should not be made aware of, I realise that my 'Iphigenie' has fared poorly; people were so accustomed to the original version, and knew various lines they had memorised through repeated readings; now it all sounds quite different, and, in sum, no one will thank me for my endless efforts. Such a work is never truly complete; one declares it finished when one has done everything possible, given the time and circumstances.

But that must not deter me from undertaking a similar revision of 'Tasso.' I would rather throw it into the fire than leave it as it is; I intend to stand by my decision, since there's no other course, and will make something unique of it. That is why I am quite pleased that the printing of my work progresses so slowly. Yet it is also good to find oneself threatened, at a distance, by the typesetter's schedule. Is it not strange that one expects, indeed demands, a certain amount of coercion to complete the freest of actions.

Caserta, March 16, 1787

Though in Rome one enjoys studying, here one only wishes to live; one forgets oneself and the world, and for me it is a strange sensation to be surrounded by people who simply enjoy life. Sir William Hamilton (*diplomat, politician, antiquarian, and vulcanologist, who served as the British Envoy Extraordinary to Naples from 1764 to 1800, Horatio Nelson's mistress Emma being Hamilton's second wife*) who is here as the English ambassador has now attained, after long being an art-lover, and long a student of Nature, the pinnacle of all enjoyment of Nature and art in a beautiful girl (*Emma Hart as she called herself at the time, born Amy Lyon, had arrived in Naples with her mother, on her 21st birthday, 26 April 1786*). She lives with him, an Englishwoman of twenty or so. She is very beautiful and well-formed. He has had a Greek gown made for her, which suits her perfectly; she loosens her hair, adds a few scarves, and performs a variety of poses, gestures, and expressions, etc., so that one truly feels as if one were dreaming of ancient times. One sees what many an artist

would like to achieve, here fully realised, in movement, and surprising in its variety. Standing, kneeling, sitting, lying down, serious, sad, teasing, extravagant, penitent, alluring, threatening, anxious, etc., each pose flows from and follows another. She knows how to alter the folds of her veil with every expression, and creates a hundred different headdresses from the same fabrics. Her old knight (*Hamilton was fifty-six at the time*) holds the light, and surrenders himself completely to the performance. He finds in her all the women of ancient sculpture, all the beautiful profiles seen on Sicilian coins, even that of the Belvedere Apollo! This much is certain: the entertainment is unique! We have enjoyed it for two evenings already. This morning Tischbein is painting her portrait (*'Lady Hamilton as a Sibyl', now in the Goethe-Nationalmuseum, Weimar, 1788, though she did not, in fact, marry Hamilton till 1791*).

What I have gathered about the people, and the environment at Court, needs to be re-examined and organised. Today the king is out hunting wolves; they hope to kill at least five.

Naples, March 17th.

Though I wish to pen words, images of the fertile landscape, the open sea, the fragrant isles, the fiery mountain forever come before my eyes, and I lack the means to depict it all.

Only here, in this land, can one truly understand how humans first conceived of settled agriculture, here where the soil yields everything and where one can hope for four or five harvests a year. In the best seasons, they say corn can be harvested three times from the same field.

I have seen much, and reflected still more: the world opens wider and wider to me, and even everything I have long known is finally becoming my own. What creatures, we are — practising late what we know much earlier!

It is a pity I am unable to share my thoughts at every moment; Tischbein is with me, but as a person and artist, he is tossed to and fro by a thousand ideas, occupied with the demands of a hundred people. His situation is peculiar and remarkable; he cannot participate freely in another's doings, because he feels his time so limited for executing his own endeavours.

And yet the world is just a simple wheel, whose surroundings are ever the same, but seem ever-new to us to us because we are rotating with it.

What I always told myself was the case, has been proven true: that I could only learn to develop my understanding of a multitude of natural phenomena, and resolve

many a conflict of opinions in this country. I gather information from all sides, and will return with much, without losing my love of my native country, or my joy in life with a few close friends.

The gods still hold the scales regarding my Sicilian journey; the pointer swings to and fro. Who might the friend be whom those gods secretly announce as destined to be my companion (*see Goethe's comments of March 19*). I must not fail to have him join me on my island voyage, and my wanderings there, if I do go!

The frigate from Palermo is back once more; today, in eight days' time, it departs again. Whether I shall sail with it, whether I shall return to Rome for Holy Week and Easter, I still do not know. Never have I been so undecided; any event, any little thing, could decide it.

I feel better as regards people; one simply has to weigh them like a shopkeeper, not with a jeweller's scales, as sadly even friends tend to do among themselves, on experiencing each other's hypochondriacal whims, and strange demands.

Here, people know nothing of one another; they hardly notice those running to and fro beside them; they race around all day in this paradise without looking around them much at all, and when the neighbouring, volcanic 'mouth of hell' begins to rage, they seek the protection offered by the blood of Saint Januarius (*the patron saint of Naples; people gathered three times a year in the Cathedral, to witness the liquefaction of a portion of 'the saint's blood' held in a sealed ampoule*), just as the rest of the world seeks protection from, and would even offer some of their own blood to escape, Death and the Devil.

To walk through such a countless, restlessly-moving crowd is both intriguing and therapeutic. How they all flow together in a chaotic mass, and yet each individual finds their way to their destination. In such a large company amidst so much movement, I feel all the more motionless and alone; the louder the streets roar, the calmer I become.

Often, I think of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and his hypochondriacal lamentations, and yet I understand how such a fine organisation as his could be disrupted. If I did not feel such a connection to natural things and see that, despite my confusion, a hundred observations can be made, compared, and ordered, just as a surveyor uses a single, continuous line to take many individual measurements, I would often consider myself mad.

Naples, March 18, 1787.

We could no longer delay visiting Herculaneum, and the collection of excavated items, at Portici. The ancient city, lying at the foot of Vesuvius, was completely covered

with lava, the level of which was raised by subsequent eruptions, so that its buildings now lie sixty feet underground. They were discovered when digging a well, and encountering a floor paved with marble. It is a great pity that the excavation was not carried out properly by German excavators; for surely many precious relics of antiquity were lost or plundered amidst the haphazard movement of soil. One descends sixty steps into a crypt, where one marvels, by the light of a torch, at a theatre which was once open to the air, and hears about all that was found, and raised.

Well-recommended, we entered the museum and were warmly received. Yet we were not permitted to record anything. Perhaps this served to make us pay close attention, and so immerse ourselves more vividly in that bygone era when all these items stood in their living owners' homes, ready for use and enjoyment. Those small houses and rooms in Pompeii now seemed to me, simultaneously, both narrower and broader; narrower, because I imagined them crammed with many interesting objects like these, broader, because these same objects were not merely present as a necessity, but were most skilfully, and gracefully, adorned and enlivened by the visual arts, delighting and expanding the senses in a way that even the most spacious of houses, lacking such artistry, could not.

For example, one views a beautifully shaped urn, with the most delicate rolled rim at the top. Upon closer inspection, this rim is taken upwards in a curve on two sides; one grasps the semicircles extended as handles, and can lift the vessel comfortably. Various lamps are decorated with masks, and tendrils, matching the number of wicks they supported, such that each flame illuminated a true work of art. A number of tall, slender, bronze frames were designed to support the lamps, while other, hanging lamps are adorned with all sorts of ingeniously conceived figures, which, as they dangle and swing about, surpass even their intended purpose of pleasing and delighting.

Hoping to return, we followed the guides from room to room, experiencing, as best we could, as much pleasure and instruction as the allotted time allowed.

Naples, Monday, March 19, 1787.

In recent days, a new friendship has indeed developed. After Tischbein's faithful and helpful guidance through the realms of Nature and Art over these four weeks, and our visit to Portici yesterday, it became clear, after mutual consideration, that his artistic pursuits, as well as the business he is obligated to conduct in Naples, and at Court in anticipation of a future position there, are incompatible with my intentions, desires, and passions. Therefore, ever concerned for my well-being, he suggested a young man as a travelling companion, whom I have seen frequently during my first few days here,

and not without interest and affection. He is Christoph Heinrich Kniep, who has spent some time in Rome before his move to Naples, where he is at the very heart of landscape painting. Even in Rome, I heard him praised as a skilled draughtsman, but his creative work was not accorded the same acclaim there. I have come to know him quite well already, and would rather attribute this perceived shortcoming to indecisiveness, which I am sure can be overcome once we have spent some time together. A promising start confirms this hope, and if I have my way, we shall remain good friends for quite a while.

Naples, The same date.

One only needs to walk on the street, and to possess clear eyes, and one will see the most inimitable images.

Yesterday, at the Molo, a major and noisy spot in the city, I saw a Pulcinello arguing with a little monkey on a piece of wooden scaffolding, with a balcony above, where a rather demure girl was displaying her charms. Next to the monkey's scaffolding was a miracle-working doctor offering his arcana against all ills to the credulous faithful; if painted by Gerrit Dou, such a picture would have brought delight to contemporaries and posterity alike.

Today was also the Feast of Saint Joseph; he is the patron saint of all *fritoleri*, 'bakers' that is in the broadest sense. Because strong flames constantly leap from beneath their pans of black, boiling oil, all fiery torments belong to his domain; therefore, yesterday evening they decorated the houses with paintings of souls in Purgatory, and Last Judgements, glowing and flaming all around. Large pans stood before the doors on crudely built stoves. One man worked the dough, while another shaped it, drew it into rings, and threw them into the boiling fat. A third stood by the pan with a small roasting skewer; he took the rings out as they were cooked, and slid them onto another skewer for a fourth, who offered them to the onlookers; the latter two were young men with blond, curly wigs, which here signify angels. Several more figures completed the group, offering wine to the workers, drinking it themselves, and shouting praise for the food; even the angels and the cooks shouted. The crowd thronged forward, for all baked goods are sold at a discount, and a portion of the proceeds goes to the poor.

One could recount such details endlessly; it is the same every day, always something new and more amazing, even simply the variety of clothes one encounters on the street, or the crowd of people on Via Toledo alone!

And there is still much original entertainment to be found, when one lives among the people; it is all so natural that one can be natural with them. There is, for example,

Pulcinello, the true national mask, the 'Harlequin' of Bergamo, the 'Hanswurst' of the Tyrol. Pulcinello is a truly serene, calm, to a certain extent indifferent, almost lazy, and yet humorous servant; attributes one finds everywhere in many a waiter or domestic. I found particular amusement with ours today, though it involved nothing more than sending him to fetch some paper and quills. Misunderstandings, hesitations, good intentions, and a degree of mischief, produced the most charming scene that one could, with any luck, stage at the theatre.

Naples, Tuesday, March 20, 1787.

The news of a lava eruption just moments before, flowing unseen from Naples towards Ottaviano (*formerly Ottajano*), tempted me to visit Vesuvius for a third time. No sooner had I jumped from my two-wheeled, one-horse carriage, at the base of the moment than the two guides, who had previously accompanied us, appeared. Not wishing to be without the pair of them, I had hired the one out of habit and gratitude, the other because of my trust in him, and both for the sake of greater convenience.

Having reached the heights, the elder one stayed with the coats and provisions, the younger followed me, and we set off bravely towards the immense cloud of steam that rose in bursts from the mountainside below the cone; then we walked cautiously alongside it until we finally were able to view the lava welling up from beneath the wildly dispersing vapour, under the clear sky.

One may have heard of a thing a thousand times, yet its unique character is communicated to one only through direct observation. The lava stream was narrow, perhaps no wider than ten feet, but the way it flowed down the gentle, fairly-level slope nearby was striking enough. As it cooled along its sides and surface, a channel formed, which was raised ever higher as the molten material solidified below the fiery stream, despite its heat. This stream, in turn, spilled the slag floating on its surface to right and left, continuously, thereby gradually creating a walled canal along which the molten lava flowed, calmly, like a millstream. We walked beside this considerably-raised channel, the slag regularly rolling down the sides to our feet. Through some gaps in the wall, we could see the fiery stream from below, and, as it continued its descent, observe it from above.

The bright sunlight dimmed the effect of the glowing lava, and only a faint wisp of smoke rose into the clear air. I wished to approach the place where it burst from the mountain-side; there, my guide assured me, it would immediately form a vault-like roof overhead, on the like of which he had often stood during previous eruptions. To experience and confirm this, we climbed the mountain again, this time to approach the source from the rear. Fortunately, we found the place exposed to light by the brisk

breeze, though not entirely, since steam was billowing from countless cracks all around, and now we truly stood on the doughy, contorted, solidifying layer, which, however, extended sufficiently far forward that we were unable to see the lava actually gushing forth.

We tried a few dozen more paces, but the ground grew ever hotter; an impassable barrier of light-obscuring and suffocating smoke swirled around us. The guide who had gone on ahead quickly turned back, seized me by the arm, and we escaped the inferno.

After we had refreshed our eyes gazing at the view, and cleansed our throats and palates with wine, we wandered about, observing other features of that hellish peak piled high in the midst of paradise. I again paid close attention to several open vents, which, like volcanic chimneys, continuously and violently spewed forth not smoke, but glowing vapour. I saw that they were completely coated with stalactite-like formations, which, in the shape of teats and cones, clad the vents all the way to the top. Given the wide variety of chimneys present, several of these pendent forms caused by the flow were readily available to us, so that we could easily collect them with our sticks, and some hook-like contrivances. I had already found similar specimens at the shop of a dealer in lava, labelled under the heading of 'true' lava, and was pleased to discover that they were lumps of volcanic soot, deposited from the hot vapour plumes, and revealing the mineral components incorporated.

A heavenly evening, with the most glorious of sunsets, refreshed me on my return; yet I still felt the disturbance of mind and senses caused by so tremendous a contrast. The juxtaposition of the appalling and the beautiful, the beautiful and the appalling, cancels out the effect of, and produces an indifference to, both. Surely the Neapolitan would be a different person if he or she did not feel themself caught between God and Satan.

Naples, March 22, 1787.

Were it not for my German temperament, and desire to learn and do more than merely enjoy myself, I would choose to remain in this school dedicated to the light-hearted and cheerful life for some time longer, and try to gain a greater benefit from doing so. It is quite delightful here, if only one could settle oneself to it. The city's location and the mild climate can never be praised enough, but that is almost all the stranger can rely on.

Of course, anyone who has the time, temperament, and means, may settle comfortably and well here. Sir William Hamilton has thus created a pleasant life for himself, and is now enjoying his mature years here (*in the Palazzo Sessa*). The rooms

he has furnished in the English style are absolutely charming, and the view from the corner salon is perhaps unique. Below lies the sea, offering a view of Capri; to the right is Posillipo, and close by, the Villa Reale (*now Villa Communale*) promenade; while to the left there is an old Jesuit building, and further away the coast from Sorrento to Cape Minerva (*opposite Capri*). Such a view would be hard to find anywhere else in Europe, at least not at the heart of a large, populated city.

William Hamilton is a man of universal taste, who, after traversing all the realms of creation, has arrived at a beautiful wife, a masterpiece of that great artist, Nature.

And now, after all this and many another pleasure, the Sirens beckon me over the waves. If the wind is favourable, I will depart at the same time as this letter, destined to travel northward, I southward. The human mind loves the boundless; I, in particular, have a great need for wide open spaces. Not so much intellectual perseverance, but rather a period of rapid comprehension ought to be the focus of my efforts now. If I can only touch the tip of my finger to an object, I can readily appropriate the whole by listening to others, and applying my mind to it.

Strangely enough, a friend reminded me, recently, of 'Wilhelm Meister' and demanded a sequel; in this clime, it seems impossible, yet perhaps something of this heavenly air could be imparted to a final volume. May my life develop sufficiently to allow this, may the stem grow longer, and the flowers bloom more richly and beautifully. Certainly, if I cannot return home like one reborn, it would be better not to return at all.

Naples, March 22nd.

Today we came across a painting by Correggio, which is for sale, one not perfectly preserved, but which nevertheless retains the most delightful charm. It depicts the Virgin Mary and the Christ Child at the moment when he is torn between accepting his mother's breast or some pears an angel is offering him. Thus, a 'Weaning of Christ' (*'The Virgin Nursing the Christ Child' or 'The Virgin with an Angel', is now in the Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest*). The idea strikes me as extremely subtle and tender, the composition moving, natural, and joyful, and executed with the utmost charm. It immediately brings to mind his 'Marriage of Saint Catherine' and seems to me undoubtedly the work of Correggio's hand. (*One version of 'The Mystic Marriage of Saint Catherine of Alexandria with Saint Sebastian', not universally attributed to Correggio, is in the Museo di Capodimonte, Naples. Another, definitely by that artist, is in the Louvre, Paris*)

Naples, Friday, March 23, 1787.

My relationship with Christoph Kniep has developed, and solidified in a rather practical way. We were together in Paestum, where, as on the journey there and back, he proved himself most active in drawing various subjects. The most magnificent sketches have been achieved; he is now enjoying this busy, and industrious life, which has awakened a talent he scarcely dared dream he possessed. In such circumstances, one must be resolute; and it is precisely here that his precision and his meticulous skill are revealed. He never fails to draw an exact rectangle around the area of paper within which he intends to place his scene; sharpening and repeatedly sharpening his best English pencils is almost as much a pleasure for him as drawing itself; and his sketches are, in turn, everything one could wish for.

We have agreed on the following: from today, we will live and travel together, without his having to do anything beyond sketching, as he has these past few days. All the resulting items will belong to me, but so that he might derive profit from them after our return, he will paint from them a number of chosen subjects, for a certain predetermined sum. Given his skill, the significance of the views to be covered, and other factors, the rest will readily fall into place. The arrangement pleases me, and now, at last, I shall give a brief account of our journey.

Seated on the light, two-wheeled carriage, taking turns holding the reins, and with a good-natured, rough-hewn boy on the back, we rolled along through magnificent countryside, which Kniep, with his eye for the picturesque, welcomed. We then reached a mountain gorge, which one traverses at breakneck speed on the smoothest road, flying past the most delightful stretches of forest and cliff. Finally, Kniep couldn't resist sketching a splendid mountain near Cava de' Terreni, which stood out sharply against the sky before us, the summit of which he neatly and characteristically captured, its flanks also, down to its base. We both rejoiced in this, as the start of his execution of our contract.

In the evening, he made a like sketch, from the window, at Salerno, of the unique and truly fertile landscape, a description of which I shall forego. Who would not have been inclined to study, there, during those excellent times when academic and intellectual life flourished? (*In the 16th century, under the auspices of the Sanseverino family, the city was a centre of learning and the arts*). At the crack of dawn, we travelled along an unpaved, often marshy road towards a pair of beautifully formed mountains; we crossed streams and waterways, where we gazed into the wild blood-shot eyes of buffaloes, wallowing there like hippopotami.

The land became increasingly flat and barren; a few buildings hinted at a meagre level of agriculture. Finally, uncertain whether we were passing among rocks or ruins, we made out some large, elongated, rectangular masses, which we decided, from a

distance, were the remaining temples and monuments of a once magnificent city (*Paestum*). Kniep, who had already been sketching the pair of picturesque limestone summits, quickly sought a vantage point from which the distinctive character of this wholly un-picturesque region might be grasped and delineated.

Meanwhile, one of the locals showed me around the edifices; my first impression was one of astonishment. I found myself in a completely foreign world. For just as the centuries evolved from the austere to the pleasing, so too that progression shaped our human response, indeed, created it. Now, our sight, and through it our entire inner sensibility, is drawn to, and decisively shaped by, a slenderer architecture, so that those blunt, conical, tightly packed, massed columns appear cumbersome, even frightening. But I quickly composed myself, recalled my knowledge of art history and, reflecting on the age whose spirit found such architecture appropriate, absorbed the austere sculptural style, and in less than an hour felt at ease, indeed I praised the genius (*Winckelmann had described the temples at Paestum in his 1762 publication 'Anmerkungen über die Baukunst der Alten: Observations on the Architecture of the Ancients', identifying them as Doric Greek in style*) who allowed me to comprehend those well-preserved ruins, now seen with my own eyes, no mere image serving to convey their true nature. For in architectural elevation, they appear more elegant, in perspective clumsier, than they actually are; only when one walks around them, and through them, does one truly perceive the spirit that created them; one feels again, amidst them, what the architect inwardly intended. Thus, I spent the whole day, while Kniep wasted no time in capturing the most precise outlines. How glad I was to be completely free from the need to do so, and yet gain such reliable aids to memory. Unfortunately, there was no opportunity to spend the night there; we returned to Salerno, and the next morning set off early for Naples. Vesuvius was seen from its far side, amidst the most fertile region, with pyramidal poplars in the foreground along the road. This, too, was a pleasing sight, a record of which we acquired by pausing briefly.



‘Temple ruins beneath a dark blue sky (c. 1820)’ - Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (German, 1749–1832)
Klassik Stiftung Weimar, Museen (Inv. GGz/1380)
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As we reached a high point; the greatest of views opened up before us. Naples in all its glory, with its miles-long rows of houses along the flat shore of the gulf, then the promontories, headlands, cliffs, then the islands, and beyond all the sea – it was a delightful sight.

A dreadful burst of song, or rather, a gleeful shout and a howl of joy from the boy standing behind us, startled me and disturbed my thoughts. I reprimanded him sharply; he who had never had a harsh word from us before, and indeed was the most good-natured of lads.

For a while he was motionless, then he gently patted me on the shoulder, extended his right arm between us with his index finger raised, and said: ‘Signor, perdonate! Questa è la mia patria!’— Which translated, means: ‘Sir, forgive me! There is my native place!’— And so, I was startled a second time, and tears rose to the eyes of this poor northerner!

Naples, Sunday March 25, 1787. The Annunciation of the Virgin Mary.

Although I felt that Kniep was most happy to visit Sicily with me, I could also tell that there was someone he was reluctant to leave behind. Given his sincerity, I soon discovered that he had a sweetheart, who was closely and faithfully attached to him. How they had met was quite charming to hear; and how the girl had behaved thus far was quite endearing; now I was to see, for myself, how beautiful she was. Arrangements had been made for this, in such a way that I could at the same time enjoy one of the most beautiful views of Naples. Kniep led me onto the flat roof of a house, from which one could see the lower part of the city towards the Molo, the gulf, and the coast of Sorrento in its entirety; everything further to the right was foreshortened in the most peculiar way, which one could only perceive when standing at that very spot. Naples is beautiful and magnificent everywhere.

As we admired the scenery, a rather charming little head emerged suddenly, from below, though we had anticipated its owner's arrival, the entrance to the balcony simply being a long, rectangular opening in the floor, covered with a trapdoor. When the little angel had appeared fully, it occurred to me that older artists had depicted the Annunciation in just such a way, with the angel likewise ascending a staircase. This angel, however, was of a very beautiful form, with a lovely face and a pleasant, natural demeanour. I was delighted to see my new friend Kniep so happy, framed by the magnificent sky, and the most beautiful scenery in the world. He confessed to me, after she had departed, that he had thus far accepted his state of poverty willingly, precisely because it had revealed her love for him, and he had learned therein to appreciate her frugality; now, his improved prospects, and the promise of a more comfortable life, were especially prized by him since he could offer her, too, a better life.

The same date, March 25th.

After this pleasant adventure, I strolled along the seafront, quietly and contentedly. There, I obtained a profound insight into botanical matters. Please tell Herder that I will soon have completed my work on the archetypal plant (*der Urpflanze*), but I fear lest no one else is able to recognise the rest of the plant world within it. My remarkable theory of cotyledons is so refined that it would be difficult to take the subject any further.

Naples, March 26, 1787.

Tomorrow this letter to you will be dispatched. On Thursday the 29th, I will finally set sail for Palermo aboard the corvette, which, being unfamiliar with naval matters I elevated to the rank of frigate in my previous letters. The doubt as to whether I should

travel or remain here rendered me unsettled for part of my stay; now that I have made up my mind, I feel much better. For a person of my disposition, the voyage will prove salutary, indeed necessary. Sicily looks towards Asia and Africa, and to stand, myself, at the wondrous point on which so many radii of world history converge is no small thing.

I have treated my stay in Naples after its own manner, and been anything but diligent, yet have seen a great deal and formed a general impression of the country, its inhabitants, and its general state. On my return, I intend to catch up on various tasks; admittedly, only a few, for I must be back in Rome before June 29th, St. Peter's Day. If I miss Holy Week, I at least wish to celebrate the feast day there. My Sicilian journey must not divert me too far from my original intention.

The day before yesterday we had dreadful weather with thunder, lightning and torrential rain; now it has cleared again, and a wonderful Tramontane is blowing; if the wind remains constant, we will experience the swiftest of journeys.

Yesterday, my companion and I went to inspect our vessel and visit the cabin that will house us. A sea voyage is something I have never experienced before; the brief crossing, involving a circumnavigation of the coast perhaps, will stimulate my imagination and broaden my horizons. The captain is a young, lively fellow, the vessel quite dainty and charming, built in America, a good sailing ship.

Here all the vegetation is turning green; in Sicily I expect to find it even more so. By the time you receive this letter, I will be on my way back, having left Trinacria (*the ancient name for the island*) behind. Such is human nature: our thoughts are always leaping forward and back; I have not even arrived there yet, and an already returning. Yet I am not to blame for the confusion of this letter, being interrupted every moment, and yet desiring to finish writing this page.

I have just received a visit from a certain Marchese Berio (*Francesco Maria Berio, art and book collector, later famous for his literary salons*) a young man who seems to have acquired a good deal of knowledge. He too wished to meet the author of 'The Sorrows of Young Werther.' There seems to be a great yearning and desire for education and knowledge here. They are simply too happy though, to pursue that path thoroughly. If only I had more time, I would gladly offer it in their service. These last four weeks — what are they when considering all the tremendous and various life here! Farewell! I may have learned how to travel on this journey, but whether I will have learned how to live, I know not. Those people who appear to understand the matter are too different from me in nature and character for me to lay claim to their talent.

Farewell and love me, as I remember you, from the heart.

Naples, March 28, 1787.

These few days are proving a complete loss, filled with packing and saying goodbye, with shopping and settling bills, catching up with my tasks, and preparing for the voyage.

The Prince of Waldeck unsettled me once more, on parting. He spoke to me of nothing less than my preparing, on my return, to journey with him to Greece and Dalmatia. Once one ventures out into the world, and engages with it, one must beware of becoming detached from reality, or even driven mad. I am incapable of adding another word.

Naples, March 29, 1787.

For several days the weather has been uncertain, but today, on the appointed day of departure, it is as beautiful as can be. A most favourable Tramontane is blowing, in a clear, sunny sky, which makes one long to be off into the wide world. I bid a fond farewell to all my friends in Weimar and Gotha! May your love accompany me, which I am sure of always needing. Last night I dreamt my previous dream once more. It is as if I am destined to unload my boat of pheasants' feathers nowhere except among you. May it be laden with all the more splendid a cargo!

The End of Goethe's 'Italian Journey' Part VII

Part VIII: Sicily

Sicily

At sea, Thursday, March 29.

Unlike the last occasion on which the packet-boat departed, the favourable, fresh north-easterly wind failed. Sadly, a mild south-westerly, the most detrimental of all, blew from the opposite direction; and so, we learned how dependent sailors are on the capriciousness of wind and weather. We spent the morning, in a state of impatience, sometimes on the quay, sometimes in a café. Finally, at noon, we boarded the ship and enjoyed the most magnificent of views in most beautiful weather. The corvette lay at anchor not far from the pier. The bright sun shone through a hazy atmosphere, hence the cliffs of Sorrento, in shadow, were a beautiful shade of blue. Naples, illumined, and vibrant, glowed with every colour imaginable. Only at sunset did the corvette sail and, even then, only slowly, as the headwind sought to drive us towards Posillipo and the headland. The vessel sailed peacefully all night. It was built in America, a swift sailor, its interior furnished with pleasant cabins, and individual berths. The company was a well-behaved, but lively one: opera singers and dancers consigned to Palermo.

Friday, March 30.

At daybreak we found ourselves between Ischia and Capri, about a mile from the latter. The sun rose magnificently behind the mountains of Capri and Cape Minerva. Kniep diligently sketched the outlines of the coasts and islands and their various views; our slow speed suited his efforts. We continued our journey against a light wind. Vesuvius disappeared from sight around four, with Cape Minerva and Ischia still visible. They too vanished towards evening. The sun set in the sea, accompanied by clouds and a band of light, miles-long, of shimmering purple. Kniep sketched this phenomenon also. Now we were out of sight of land, the horizon a watery plain encircling us, the night bright, the moonlight beautiful.

I was only able to enjoy the magnificent view for a few moments; seasickness soon overcame me. I went to my cabin, lay down, abstained from all food and drink except white bread and red wine, and felt quite comfortable. Divorced from the outside world, I let my inner one take over, and since a slow voyage was to be expected, I immediately set myself a substantial task offering considerable entertainment. Of all my papers, I had only brought the first two acts of 'Tasso,' penned in poetic prose, on board with

me. These two acts, roughly the same in concept and flow as the present ones, but written ten years earlier, had something soft and nebulous about them, which soon dissipated when I allowed the form to take hold, and the rhythm to emerge according to my more recent ideas.

Saturday, March 31st.

The sun rose brightly from the sea. At seven o'clock we encountered a French ship that had set sail two days before us; our rate of progress improved all the more, yet we still saw no end to the voyage. The isle of Ustica offered some consolation, but unfortunately it was to port, while we had intended to keep it and Capri, to our starboard side. Around noon the wind became completely unfavourable, and we made no headway. To top it all, the waves began to rise, and almost everyone on board was seasick.

I remained in my adopted position, contemplating the whole of my play from every angle, beginning to end. The hours sped by, without my noticing them passing, except when the mischievous Kniep, on whose appetite the waves had no effect, brought me wine and bread from time to time, while praising the excellent midday meal, the cheerfulness and grace of the capable young captain and, with malicious glee, his regret that I was not sharing his pleasure. Likewise, the transition from a state of joy and merriment to one of discomfort and feeling unwell, and how these manifested themselves in various individual members of the party, provided him with further and ample material for mischievous description.

At four in the afternoon, the captain changed tack. The main sails were hoisted again, and we set our course directly for the island of Ustica, behind which, to our great delight, we caught sight of the mountains of Sicily. The wind improved, we progressed more swiftly towards Sicily, and also caught sight of several more islands. The sunset was a hazy one, the sky clothed in mist. The wind remained quite favourable all evening. Around midnight, the sea became very choppy.

Sunday, April 1st.

At three in the morning, a violent storm arose. In my sleep, and half-dreamily, I continued to plan out my drama, whilst listening to a deal of activity on deck. The sails were required to be furled; the ship was tossing about amidst high waves. Towards daybreak, the storm subsided, and the atmosphere cleared. Now the whole island of Ustica lay to port. A large turtle was pointed out to us, swimming in the distance, and clearly visible through our spyglass, though only as a living dot. Around noon, we could

clearly distinguish the coast of Sicily, with its promontories and bays, but had come quite close to the wind and were tacking back and forth. Towards afternoon, we were nearer the shore. We saw the whole north-western coast from the promontory of Lilybaeum (*Marsala*) to Capo Gallo (*Palermo*) quite clearly, the weather now fair, and the sunshine bright.

A school of dolphins accompanied the ship on both sides of the bow, forever darting ahead. It was amusing to watch them sometimes swimming along, obscured by the clear, translucent waves, sometimes leaping above the water, their dorsal spines and fins, and their green and gold sides, showing.

Since we were sailing well downwind, the vessel was heading straight for a bay just beyond Capo Gallo. Kniep seized this wonderful opportunity for sketching the various views in considerable detail. At sunset, the captain steered the ship back towards the open sea, and sailed northeast to reach the latitude of Palermo. I sometimes ventured on deck, but never lost sight of my poetic intent, and had now pretty much mastered the whole thing. Bright moonlight shone, from beneath a bank of cloud, its rays, reflected from the waves, infinitely beautiful. Painters, for the sake of effect, often lead us to believe that the reflections of celestial bodies in the water appear broadest to the observer where they exhibit the greatest brilliancy. Here, however, the reflection was broadest on the horizon, culminating, like the point of a pyramid, in a shimmer of light on the waves beside the vessel. The captain altered the ship's course several times during the night.

Monday, April 2nd, 8 a.m.

We found ourselves opposite Palermo. The morning's delay was most welcome to me. The plan for my drama had progressed well, in the belly of the whale, these past few days. I felt well, and could now observe the coast of Sicily attentively, from the deck. Kniep continued sketching diligently, and through his skill and precision, several sheets of paper became precious mementos of our tardy landing.

Palermo

Monday, April 2, 1787

Finally, with difficulty and some effort, we reached the port at three in the afternoon, where a most delightful sight greeted us. Completely restored, I took great pleasure in the view. The city faces north-east, nestled at the foot of high mountains; above, as was fitting for the time of day, the sun shone down. The clear, shaded sides of all the

buildings gazed back at us, illuminated only by reflected light. Monte Pellegrino was to our right, its graceful contours bathed in perfect light; to our left, facing the sea, lay the expansive coastline with its bays, headlands, and promontories. What produced a further, and most charming effect was the fresh green of delicate trees, whose crowns, lit from behind, their vegetation shimmering like great masses of glow-worms, swayed to and fro in front of the dark buildings. A bright haze bathed all the shadows in blue.

Instead of rushing, impatiently, to the shore, we remained on deck until we were swept along; where could we hope to regain a like vantage point, or as happy a moment, for the while!

Through the monumental sea-gate (*Porta Felice*), consisting of two enormous pillars, with a free space between them on high, so that the towering chariot of Santa Rosalia (*the patroness saint of Palermo*) can pass through during the famous festival, we entered the town, under guidance, and turned left immediately to reach a large inn. The innkeeper, a comfortable old man, wholly accustomed to receiving strangers of every nationality, led us into a large room the balcony of which overlooked the sea and the roadstead, Rosalia Hill, and the shore, so that we could see our vessel, and establish where we were, from the start. Delighted with the location of our room, we scarcely noticed that in its depths, hidden behind curtains, was a raised alcove in which stood the most spacious bed, adorned with a silk canopy, and matching, perfectly, the other antiquated, but stately furnishings. Such a sumptuous chamber somewhat embarrassed us; we demanded, as was customary, to negotiate terms. The old innkeeper, however, replied that there was no need for a special arrangement; he simply wished us to enjoy our stay. He also suggested we make use of the anteroom, which, cool and airy, with its several balconies, adjoined our room.

We delighted in the infinitely varied view and each sought to record it, drawing and painting the scene, for here one surveyed what would make for a boundless harvest for the artist.

The bright moonlight out to sea that evening was alluring, and kept us lingering on the balcony for a long time after our return. The quality of the light was unusual, the peace and grace profound.

Palermo, Tuesday, April 3, 1787.

Our first task was to take a closer look at the city, which is easy to survey but difficult to know; easy because a road a mile long (*Via Vittorio Emanuele*) cuts through it, running from the lower gate (*Porta Felice*) to the upper gate (*Porta Nuova*), that is, from the sea in the direction of the mountains, and this road is cut through again, roughly in the middle, by another (*Via Roma*): what lies along these streets is easy to

find; the interior of the city, however, is confusing for a stranger, and one can only orient oneself in this labyrinth with the help of a guide.

Towards evening, we turned our attention to the line of carriages carrying distinguished people who were heading out to the roadstead, to take some fresh air, converse, and perhaps court one another.

Two hours before nightfall, the full moon appeared, glorifying the evening indescribably. Palermo's location, overlooked, in every direction but the east, by mountains, means that the city and its shores often appear wondrously illuminated by the moon and stars, while the sun is only visible for part of the day. That is why, even today, on the brightest of days, we found the harbour's waters of a dark blue hue, sombre, and oppressive, instead of the ever-brighter, more cheerful, far-reaching brilliance of the sea, that one observes at Naples from noon onward.

Kniep had previously left me to find my way about, and make my observations alone, today, in order that he might capture the exact outline of Monte Pellegrino, the most beautiful of all the promontories in the world.

Palermo, April 3, 1787.

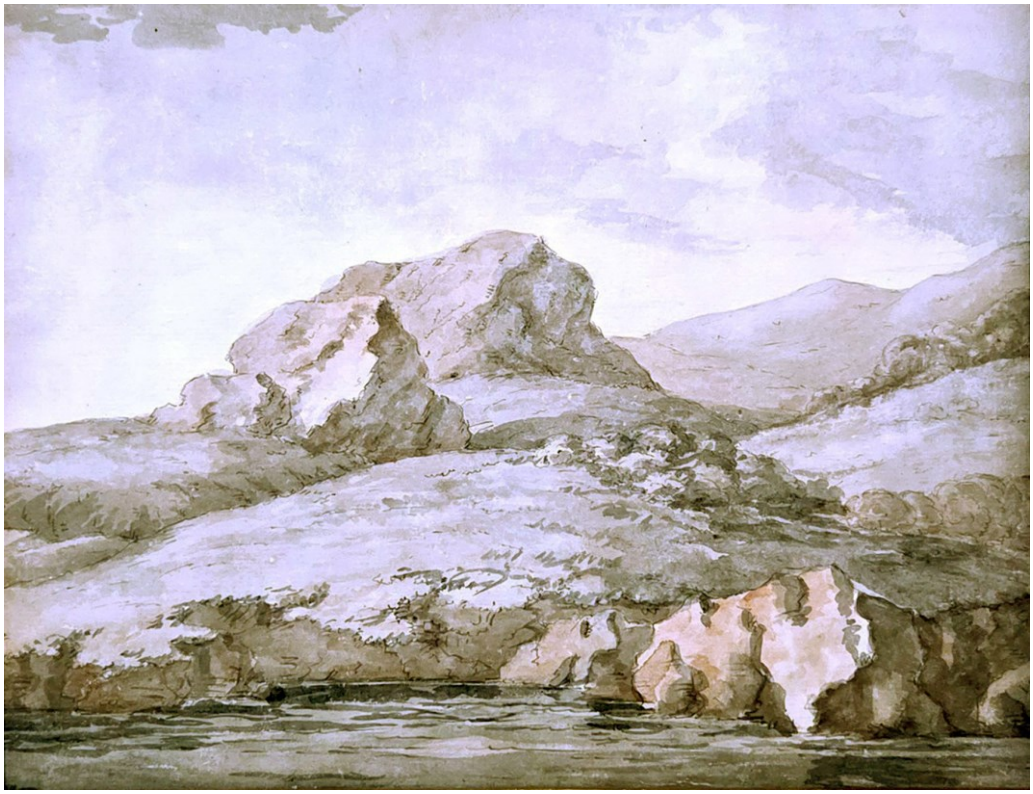
Here is a revised summary, of our journey and arrival, considered retrospectively, and quietly:

We set sail from Naples at sunset on Thursday, March 29th, and only landed in the port of Palermo four days later at three in the afternoon. A little diary, which I enclose, recounts our experiences. I have never embarked on a journey as calmly as this one, and never had a more peaceful time than on the voyage, which was greatly prolonged by constant headwinds, even in bed in the cramped cabin inn which I was obliged to stay for the first few days, being severely seasick. Now I think of you all with a sense of peace; for if anything is decisive for me, it will be this journey.

If you have never found yourself surrounded by sea, you can have no true concept of the world and your relationship to it. As a landscape artist, the wide, simple horizon line has roused entirely new ideas in me.

As the diary shows, we experienced many diversions on this short voyage, the trials and tribulations sailors experience, but in miniature, as it were. Incidentally, the safety and comfort of the packet-boat cannot be praised enough. The captain is a very good and amiable man. The company provided a whole theatre-cast, well-mannered, tolerable, and pleasant. The artist, whom I have with me, is a cheerful, loyal, and decent man who draws with the greatest accuracy; he has sketched all the islands and coastlines as they appeared; it will give you great pleasure when I return home with it

all. Furthermore, to shorten the long hours of the crossing, he has noted for me the various techniques of watercolour painting, which is now a highly developed art in Italy. It involves the use of certain colours to produce certain tones, which one would otherwise try to mix endlessly without learning the secret. I had studied some of this in Rome, but never in a coherent manner. Artists can attempt the like, in a country like Italy, directly. For words cannot express the hazy light that hovered around the coast, as we sailed towards Palermo on the most beautiful afternoon, nor the purity of the contours, the softness of the whole, the blending of tones, the harmony of sky, sea, and land. Whoever has viewed these scenes, carries them with them for life. Now I truly understand the art of Claude Lorrain and have hopes that one day, even in the North, I too will be able to conjure from my soul some shadow of this blissful abode. If only all pettiness were washed away as completely as the littleness of our thatched roofs from my conceptual understanding. Let me see what this queen of islands can do.



'A rocky Sicilian coastline in Goethe's drawing Memories of Sicily' - Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (German, 1749–1832)
Wikimedia Commons

Words cannot express how Sicily welcomed us: with the fresh green of mulberry trees, evergreen oleander, hedges of lemon-trees, and so on. In the public garden were wide beds of ranunculi and anemones. The air was mild, warm, and fragrant, the wind gentle. The moon rose full behind a promontory, and lit the sea; such a delight, after floating on the waves for four days and nights! Forgive me if I scribble this with a blunt

quill, the ink-well a shell from which my companion also traces his sketches. This will reach you like a murmur, while I prepare another kind of memorial celebrating these happy hours of mine, for all who love me. What it will be, I shall not say, nor can I say when you will receive it.

Palermo, Tuesday, April 3, 1787.

This page, my dear friends, should now grant you, insofar as is possible, the greatest pleasure; it is intended to convey the description of this incomparable bay encompassing a vast expanse of water. From the east, where a flatter promontory extends far into the sea (*at Capo Zafferano*), past a stretch of rugged, well-formed, wooded cliffs to the fishermen's dwellings in the suburbs, then along the frontage of the city itself, whose outer houses all face the harbour, as does our dwelling, to the gate through which we entered (*Porta Felice*), the shore continues westward to the usual landing place where smaller ships dock, until reaching the actual harbour at the pier, the station for larger ships. Beyond to the west, protecting all the vessels, Monte Pellegrino rises, in beautiful contours, leaving a lovely, fertile valley, stretching to the sea beyond, between itself and the city.

Kniep drew, and I mapped our surroundings, both deriving great pleasure, and now, as we happily return home, neither of us feels the strength nor the courage to repeat our efforts, and complete them. Our designs must therefore remain unfinished, to be used for future reference, and this sheet merely bears witness to our inability to grasp these scenes adequately, or rather, to our presumption in wanting to conquer and master them in so short a time.

Palermo, Wednesday, April 4, 1787.

This afternoon we visited the fertile and pleasant valley that winds its way down to the southern mountains, past Palermo, and over which the Oreto River meanders. Here, too, an eye for the picturesque and a skilful hand are required to find and capture a suitable viewpoint, and yet Kniep managed to find a spot where the water flows down from a half-destroyed weir, shaded by a cheerful group of trees and with an open view, and some farm buildings beyond, stretching along the valley.

The most beautiful spring weather, and a surge of growth, spread an enlivening feeling of peacefulness throughout the entire valley, a feeling which the over-eager guide, with his erudition, diminished for me, by recounting at length how Hannibal had once fought a battle here (*the Carthaginian general Hannibal Mago, Hannibal Barca's grandson, destroyed the city of Himera, nearby, in 409BC*) and what

monstrous acts of war had taken place on this very spot. I rebuked him sternly for conjuring up such dismal ghosts. It was bad enough, I remarked, that from time to time the crops had to be trampled, if not always by elephants, then at least by horses and people. One should not, at the very least, startle the imagination from its peaceful reverie, with such things.

He was most surprised that I disdained his recounting a piece of classical history in such a place, and I certainly failed to make him understand how I felt about confusing the past and the present in that manner.

I appeared even odder to the fellow, as I searched for pebbles in all the shallow places, many of which the river leaves dry, and then carried the various samples away with me. Once again, I failed to explain that one cannot gain a swifter understanding of a mountainous region than by examining the types of rock carried down by the streams, and that the task here also was to gain an idea of those eternal and classic witnesses to the Earth's past by examining such stony fragments.



'River in a mountainous Sicilian landscape' - Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (German, 1749–1832)
Klassik Stiftung Weimar, Museen (Inv. GGz/1332)
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My yield from this river was quite rich; I collected almost forty pieces, which, admittedly, could be classified as belonging to only a few categories. Most were of a type of rock that could be identified sometimes as jasper or chert, sometimes as clay-

slate. I noted them as partly rounded, partly misshapen boulders, partly rhomboid in shape, and of many different colours. Furthermore, there were many variants of older limestone, and as many breccias, whose binding agent was limestone, but whose bonded stones were sometimes jasper, sometimes limestone. There was also no shortage of boulders of shell-bearing limestone.

They feed their horses here on barley, cut-straw, and bran; in spring, they give them bolted green barley to refresh them, a practice they call 'rinfrescare'. Since they have no meadows, hay is scarce. There is some pasture on the mountains, and also in the fields, as a third of the land is left fallow. They keep a few sheep, the breed (*Barbaresca Siciliana*) originating from Tunisia, and generally more mules than horses, because the hot, dry grass suits the former better than the latter.

The plain on which Palermo lies, as well as areas bordering on its immediate vicinity, such as Ai Colli, and parts of Bagheria, consists primarily of shell-bearing limestone, from which the city is built. Consequently, large quarries are found in these areas. Near Monte Pellegrino, the rock layers have been excavated to a depth of fifty feet deep in one location. The lower ones are whiter in colour. They contain many fossilised corals and shellfish, especially large scallops. The upper layer is mixed with red clay and contains few or no shells. Red clay lies on top, but the layer is not very thick. Monte Pellegrino is different from all of these; it is formed of an older limestone containing many holes and fissures which, upon closer inspection, although very irregular, nevertheless follow the order of the layers. The rock is solid and resonant.

Palermo, Thursday, April 5, 1787.

We explored the city in detail, today. The architecture is mostly similar to that of Naples, but the public monuments, such as fountains, are even further removed from good taste. Here, unlike Rome, there is no artistic spirit regulating the work; the structures receive their form and existence solely by accident. One fountain, which is admired by the entire population of the island, would hardly have existed if Sicily did not have beautiful, colourful marble, and if a sculptor skilled in animal forms had not been in favour at that time. The fount (*Fontana Pretoria*) is difficult to describe. In the moderately sized square, stands a circular architectural structure, not very tall, with a base, walls, and cornice of coloured marble; Several niches are set into the wall in a row, from which, all kinds of animal heads, formed of white marble, gaze forth, set on outstretched necks: horses, lions, camels, and elephants alternate with one another, and one hardly expects behind this circular menagerie a fountain, which marble steps lead up to on all four sides, in order to draw the abundantly-provided water.

Something similar applies to the churches, where even the Jesuits' love of splendour is surpassed, though not by principle or intent, but merely by chance, just as contemporary craftsmen, sculptors, carvers of foliage, gilders, lacquerers and marble-workers choose to do, without exercising taste or receiving direction, in various places.

One recognises an ability to imitate natural things, as evidenced, for example, by the skillfully-crafted animal heads. This, of course, arouses the admiration of the masses, whose entire enjoyment of art consists in the degree to which the imitation is comparable to the original.

Towards evening, I made a rather amusing acquaintance when I entered a small shop on the long street (*the Cassaro*) to buy various odds and ends. As I stood in front of the shop, looking at the wares, a slight gust of wind arose, which, swirling along the street, immediately distributed an endless cloud of agitated dust into all the stalls and windows. 'By all the saints! Tell me,' I exclaimed, 'where does all the dust come from, and can it not be remedied?' This street rivals the Corso in Rome in length and beauty. On both sides are cobblestones, which all the shopkeepers and workshop-owners clean by incessantly sweeping and pushing everything to the middle of the street, which becomes ever-dirtier as a result, and returns, with every breath of wind, the very refuse assigned to it. 'In Naples, donkeys are kept busy carrying the sweepings to the gardens and fields each day; should not some similar arrangement be decreed, and implemented here?'

'It's just the way things are here,' the owner replied, 'whatever is thrown out of the house rots right there in a pile in front of the door. One sees here layers of straw and reeds, the contents of kitchen drains, and all sorts of other rubbish, which all dry together, and return to us as dust. We fight against it all day long. And look, our beautiful, neat, active brooms, worn-down in the end by brushing, only increase the filth before our houses.'

And, funnily enough, it really is true. They have charming little tufts of dwarf-palm that, with a little modification, could be used for fans; they wear down quickly, and the stumps lie by the thousand in the street. To my repeated question of whether measures could be taken against all this, he replied that it was common knowledge that those who were supposed to be responsible for public sanitation, because of their power and influence, could scarcely be compelled to use the funds properly. Furthermore, there was the curious fact that the people feared if the filth was cleared away it would become apparent how bad the paving was underneath, which would once again expose the dishonest management of the city's wealth. But all this, he added, with a comical expression, was merely the view of ill-intentioned people, while he himself rather agreed with those who claimed the nobility maintained this soft layer of dust for their

carriages, so they could complete their customary, evening pleasure-drive in comfort, over a resilient surface. As the fellow was now fired up, he went on to recount several instances of police misconduct, as comforting proof to me that humankind still possesses enough of a sense of humour to make fun of the inescapable.

Palermo, April 6, 1787.

Santa Rosalia, patroness and saint of Palermo, has become so widely known through the description of her festival given by Patrick Brydone (*in 'A Tour Through Sicily and Malta', 1773*) that it must surely be pleasing to her friends to read something with regard to the place and site where she is especially venerated.

Monte Pellegrino, a large mass of rock, wider than it is tall, lies at the north-western end of the Gulf of Palermo. Its beautiful shape defies description; an imperfect illustration can be found in the 'Voyage Pittoresque des Isles Sicile' (*by Jean-Pierre Louis Laurent Houël, published 1782-87*). The mountain consists of a grey limestone from an early period. The rocks are completely bare; no tree or shrub grows there, the flatter parts being sparsely covered by grass and moss.

At the beginning of the last century, the saint's remains were discovered in a cave on this mountain and brought to Palermo. Her presence freed the city from the plague, and Rosalia became the patroness saint of the people from that moment on; chapels were built in her honour, and magnificent celebrations were held.

Devout pilgrims made their way, diligently, to the mountain, and a path (*L'Acchianata*) was built, at great expense, which, rather like an aqueduct, rests on a series of pillars and arches, and ascends in a zigzag pattern between the cliffs.

The place of devotion itself is more suited to the humility of the saint, who sought refuge there, than the magnificent festivals held in honour of her total renunciation of the world. And perhaps all of Christendom, which for eighteen hundred years has based its possessions, its splendour, its solemn festivities on the pains of its first founders and most ardent confessors, has no holy place to boast of that is adorned, and venerated in a more innocent or heartfelt way.

Once one has climbed the mountain, one rounds a rocky corner, where one stands pressed close to the steep rock face, against which the sanctuary and the monastery are, to all intents, built.

The exterior of the sanctuary is neither inviting nor promising; one opens the door without expectation of anything much, yet one is most wonderfully surprised upon entering further. One finds oneself in a hall that runs the width of the church, and opens onto the nave. In it, one sees the usual vessels of holy water and a few

confessional boxes. The nave of the church is an open courtyard, bordered on the right by natural rock and on the left by a continuation of the hall. It is paved with stone slabs, slightly sloping to allow rainwater to run off; a small fountain stands approximately in the centre.

The cave itself has been transformed into the chancel without altering its primitive, rugged character. A few steps lead up to it: a large lectern with a choir book stands immediately before you, flanked by choir stalls. Everything is illuminated by daylight streaming in from the courtyard and nave. Deep in the darkness of the cave, stands the high altar in the centre.

As already mentioned, nothing of the cave has been altered; however, since water drips from the stone walls constantly, it is necessary to keep the place dry. This is achieved by lead troughs, which have been laid along the bordering rocks, and connected to each other at various points. Because they are wide at the top, and taper to a point at the bottom, and are also painted a dull green colour, it almost looks as if the cave's interior is overgrown with large cacti. The water is channelled partly to the side, partly to the rear, into a clear tank, from which the faithful draw it, using it to treat various ailments.

As I was examining these features closely, a priest approached and asked if I was perhaps Genoese, and wished to have a number of masses said. I replied that I had come to Palermo with a Genoese who would be ascending tomorrow for the feast day. Since one of us always had to remain in the city, I had visited today to survey the site. He replied that I must feel free to examine everything carefully, and perform my devotions. He specifically pointed me to an altar on the left side of the cave, which he considered a special shrine, and then left me.

Through the openings of a large, rebated gate of brass, I saw lamps shimmering beneath the altar. I knelt very close to the gate, and peered through the openings. Within, there was a latticework of finely woven brass wire, so that one could only distinguish the object behind it as if through a veil.

I glimpsed a beautiful woman by the dull light of various lamps. She lay as if in a state of rapture, her eyes half-closed, her head resting, idly, on her right hand, which was adorned with many rings. I could not gaze at her enough; the image seemed to possess a very special charm. Her garment is made of gilded sheet metal, which imitates a richly-woven gold fabric most effectively. Her head and hands, of white marble are, not, I dare say, crafted in a high style, but nonetheless are so natural and pleasing that one almost expects her to breathe and move. A small angel stands beside her, seemingly wafting a cooling breeze towards her with a lily stem.

Meanwhile, the priests had entered the cave, seated themselves in their chairs, and were chanting Vespers. I sat down on a bench opposite the altar, and listened to them for a while; then I returned to the altar, and knelt down, and tried to comprehend the beautiful image of the saint even more clearly. I surrendered myself, completely, to the charming illusion created by the sculpture and the place.

The priests' singing now faded, the water trickled into the basin beside the altar; the overhanging rocks of the forecourt, the actual nave of the church, rounding the scene further. There was a great stillness in this seemingly deserted space, profound order in a wild cave; the ostentatious trappings of Catholic, especially Sicilian, worship, still in their simple and natural state; the illusion created by the figure of the beautiful sleeping woman, charming even to a practised eye — enough, I could only tear myself away from the place with difficulty and did not reach Palermo again until late that night.

Palermo, Saturday, April 7, 1787.

In the public garden (*Villa Giulia, Palermo's seafront public garden*) near to the harbour, I spent the most delightful hours in quiet contemplation. It is the most wonderful place in the world. Regularly laid out, it nevertheless seems fairy-tale like; planted not so long ago, it transports one to antiquity. Green borders enclosed exotic plants, trellises of lemon branches arched to form charming pergolas, and tall walls of oleander, adorned with a thousand red, carnation-like blossoms, enticed the eye. Entirely unfamiliar trees, still leafless, probably from warmer climes, spread forth their branches and blooms strange to me. A raised bench behind the lower area, allows one to overlook the wondrously-intertwined growth, and directs the gaze afar, to large basins in which gold and silver fish swim about most pleasantly, sometimes hiding under moss-covered reeds, sometimes gathering in droves, lured by a morsel of bread. The plants are in shades of green quite unlike ours, sometimes more yellowish, sometimes more bluish. But what lent the whole scene its wondrous charm was an intense haze that spread uniformly over everything, to such noticeable effect that various objects, just a few paces from others, stood out as being of a more distinctive pale-blue in tone, such that their characteristic natural colour was lost, or at least appeared excessively blue to the eye.

The wondrous effect of such a haze on one's view of distant objects, ships, and promontories is remarkable enough for anyone with an eye for the picturesque, as their distances from the observer can then be distinguished clearly, indeed measured optically; therefore, a walk along the heights was most delightful. One no longer saw Nature, but rather images of objects as the most skilful of painters might differentiate

them, through the use of translucent layers of glaze. However, the impression of that wondrous garden had remained too deeply etched in my memory; the dark waves on the northern horizon, their movement towards the curving bay, even the very 'perfume' of the misted sea — all this evoked the blessed island of the Phaeacians in my mind, and stirred my senses. I immediately hurried to purchase a copy of Homer's 'Odyssey', to read that epic poem to my great edification (*see Books 5-13*), and to recite an impromptu translation to Kniep, who certainly deserved to rest comfortably with a good glass of wine after his rigorous efforts today.

Palermo, April 8, 1787. Easter Sunday.

Today, at daybreak, the boisterous joy over the Lord's Resurrection began. Firecrackers, rockets, serpents and the like, were launched from in front of the church portals, by the crateload, as the faithful thronged towards the opened double doors. The sound of bells and organ music, the choral singing in procession, and the responses of the religious choirs was truly fit to bewilder the ears of those unaccustomed to such noisy worship of the Christian God.

The early mass had scarcely ended when two well-dressed couriers of the Viceroy visited our inn, with the dual intention of, firstly, offering his congratulations to these newcomers to their festival celebrations and collecting a donation, and, secondly, of inviting me to dine, which meant my gift had to be increased somewhat.

After spending the morning visiting the various churches, and observing the features and forms of the people, I set out for the Viceroy's Palace, which is located at the upper end of the city. Because I arrived somewhat early, I found the great halls still empty; except for a small, lively man who approached me, and whom I immediately recognised as a Maltese.

When he learned that I was German, he asked if I knew anything about Erfurt, as he had spent some very pleasant time there. I was able to provide him with sufficient information regarding his inquiries about the Von Dacheröden family, and the coadjutor Karl von Dalberg, whereupon he was pleased to ask about others in Thuringia. With considerable interest, he inquired about Weimar. 'What of that young man,' he said, 'who, was a lively fellow when I lived there, and who dictated the very nature of the weather, rain or sun, for a while? I've forgotten his name, but suffice it to say he was the author of *The Sorrows of Young Werther*.'

After a short pause, as if reflecting on his comment, I replied: 'The person you so kindly inquired about is myself!' —With the most visible signs of astonishment, he stepped back, exclaiming: 'A great deal has changed, then!' — 'Indeed, yes,' I replied, 'between Weimar and Palermo I've experienced many a change!'

At that moment, the Viceroy (*Francesco d'Aquino, Prince of Caramanico*) entered with his retinue, and behaved with the proper degree of freedom befitting such a gentleman. He did not, however, refrain from smiling at the Maltese, who continued to express his surprise at encountering me there. At dinner, the Viceroy, beside whom I sat, asked about the purpose of my journey and assured me that he would issue orders permitting me to see everything in Palermo, and providing me with every assistance on my travels throughout Sicily.

Palermo, Monday, April 9, 1787.

All day today we were preoccupied with Prince Palagonia's nonsense (*Francesco Ferdinando Gravina II, known for his eccentric creation, the Villa Palagonia in Bagheria, the 'Villa of the Monsters'*), his folly being quite different from what one had imagined, through reading and hearing of it. For, whoever, possessing a love of truth, sets out to give an account of some absurdity or other, always finds themself in something of a dilemma: they wish to convey the concept, yet by doing so turn it into something worth speaking of, though it is actually a mere nothingness that seeks to be taken as something. And so, I must preface my description with another generalisation: that neither the most tasteless, nor the most excellent, springs directly from a single person or time, but rather, if one is attentive, one can trace the lineage of both the tasteless and the excellent back to their origin.

The fountain in Palermo, which I commented on, belongs to the ancestors of a similar frenzy to that of the prince, except that his folly, having been created on his own estate, shows the greater freedom and breadth. I will attempt to communicate its gradual revelation.

When a pleasure-palace is built in these regions, it lies more or less at the centre of the entire estate, and one therefore has to travel through cultivated fields, kitchen-gardens, and other agricultural features to reach the princely residence, the Sicilians proving themselves more economical than we northerners, who often devote a great deal of fertile ground to a park only to flatter the eye with barren shrubs. These southerners, on the other hand, erect a pair of walls between which one reaches the palace, without being aware of what lies to left or right. This entrance path usually begins with a large portal, perhaps with an arched vault too, and ends in the palace courtyard. In order that one has something to gaze at between these walls, they are curved at the top, and decorated with scrolls and pedestals, upon which perhaps a vase stands, here and there. The surfaces are whitewashed, divided into sections, and painted. The palace courtyard forms a circle of single-story buildings where the servants and labourers live; the square castle towers above everything else.

This is the traditional layout, as it may well have existed before the prince's father built the place, not in the best taste, admittedly, but still a tolerably good one. The current owner, however, without departing from the general principle, has given free rein to his desire, nay passion for, various misshapen, and tasteless creations, and to attribute to him even a spark of imagination grants him far too much credit.

One enters a large building, at the boundary of the property itself, taking the form of an octagon, extremely tall relative to its width. Four enormous giants, wearing modern leggings with buttons, support the cornice, on which, directly opposite the entrance, the Holy Trinity is represented, hovering.

The passage to the castle is wider than usual, the wall transformed into a continuous, high plinth upon which excellent bases support strange groups of figures, while several vases are placed in the spaces between them. The repulsiveness of these monstrosities, botched by the most common stonemasons, is further increased by the fact that they are carved from the loosest shell-bearing tuff; yet a better material would only highlight the worthlessness of their forms all the more. I said 'groups' earlier, using an erroneous and inappropriate term; for these arrangements arose from no kind of reflection, or even pure arbitrariness, but are rather jumbled together. Three figures at a time adorn such a square pedestal, their bases arranged so that together, in various positions, they fill the square space. The most distinguished of these usually consists of two figures, and their base occupies the largest front-part of the pedestal; these are mostly monstrous creatures of animal and human form. To fill the rear space of the pedestal, two more pieces are needed; the medium-sized one usually depicts a shepherd or shepherdess, a cavalier or lady, a dancing ape or dog. Now there remains a gap on the pedestal: this is usually filled by a dwarf, as his figure plays a significant role in mindless jokes everywhere.

To ensure that I fully transmit the elements of Prince Palagonia's madness, I hereby provide the following list. Humans: beggars (male and female), Spaniards (male and female), Moors, Turks, hunchbacks, figures with all kinds of deformities, dwarves, musicians, Pulcinellos, soldiers in antique costumes, gods, goddesses, people dressed in old French clothing, soldiers with cartridge pouches and gaiters. Mythological figures with grotesque elements: for example, Achilles and Chiron with Pulcinello. Creatures: only parts of them, a horse with human hands, a horse's head on a human body, deformed monkeys, many dragons and snakes, all kinds of paws on figures of all kinds, duplication and confusion of heads. Vases: all kinds of monsters, and flourishes, that terminate at the bottom in vase bellies and bases.

If one imagines such figures manufactured in a monstrous fashion, produced without rhyme or reason, and assembled without choice or intention, and then imagines these bases, pedestals and misshapen forms arranged in an endless series,

then one will feel the unpleasant sensation that must overcome anyone when they are obliged to run the gauntlet of these mad fancies.

One approaches the castle and is greeted by the wings of a semicircular forecourt; the main wall opposite, through which the entrance passes, is built in a fortress-like style. Here one finds an Egyptian figure set in the wall, a fountain without water, a monument, vases scattered about, and statues deliberately laid on their faces. One enters the main castle courtyard and finds it to be a conventional circular shape, surrounded by small buildings, extended into smaller semicircles, to give variety.

The ground is mostly covered with grass. Here, as if in a derelict churchyard, strangely ornate marble vases inherited from the father, dwarfs, and other misshapen objects from more recent times, stand haphazardly jumbled together, for which a place has not yet been found; one even comes upon an arbour crammed full of old vases and other ornate stonework.

The absurdity of such a tasteless way of proceeding is most clearly demonstrated by the fact that the cornices of the smaller houses lean precariously to one side or the other, so that one's sense of the level and the perpendicular, which is what truly makes us human and is the basis of all harmony, is baffled and ruined. Moreover, the rows of roofs are adorned with dragons and small busts, with monkey choirs and similar madness. Dragons alternate with gods; Atlas carries a wine barrel instead of the celestial globe.

If one seeks to escape all this, by entering the castle, built by the father, which has a fairly reasonable outward appearance, one will find, not far from the gate, the laurel-wreathed head of a Roman emperor, set on a dwarf's body, the latter seated on a dolphin.

Inside the castle itself, whose exterior might suggest a tolerable interior, the prince's fever has already operated at full blast again. The chair legs are unevenly sawn off, so that no one can sit, and the castellan warns against seating oneself on those chairs which can be sat on, because they conceal thorns beneath their velvet upholstery. Candelabras, of Chinese porcelain, stand in the corners, which, on closer inspection, have been gathered together from individual bowls, saucers, and the like. There is not a corner in which some arbitrary detail does not lurk. Even the priceless view across the headlands to the sea is marred by coloured panes, which, with their false tones, either chill or inflame the landscape. I must also mention a cabinet, the panels of which have been assembled from old, gilded, cut-up frames. The hundreds of carved patterns, the different gradations of older or newer, the more or less dusty and damaged gilding covering all the walls here, set tightly together, give the impression of a junk shop full of individual fragments.

To describe the chapel alone would require a whole volume. Here one finds an explanation for these manifestations of utter madness which could only flourish to this degree in an obsessed mind. I can only surmise the number of grotesque forms of misguided devotion that may be found there, but I will not withhold the most startling. Flat against the ceiling, is a rather large carved life-size crucifix, painted and varnished, with gilding added. A hook is screwed into the navel of the crucified figure, and a chain hanging from it is fastened to the head of a kneeling man, suspended in the air, in prayer. This latter figure, painted and varnished like all the other items in the chapel, is presumably meant to signify the owner's unceasing devotion.

Incidentally, the palace is not complete: a large hall, colourfully and richly designed by the father, but not decorated in a disgusting fashion like the rest, remains unfinished; clearly, the boundless madness of the owner was unable to cope with a further display of his follies.

Kniep, who, with his artistic feeling, was driven to despair by this madhouse, appeared impatient for the very first time; he urged me on as I tried to visualise individually, and draw schematically, the elements of this 'un-creation'. Finally, being kind, he sketched one of the figure-combinations, the only one that still yielded at least some sort of an idea. It depicted a horse-headed woman sitting on an armchair, playing cards with a cavalier, dressed in old-fashioned clothing from the waist down but adorned with a griffin's head, a crown, and a large wig. It recalls the coat of arms of the House of Palagonia, still highly peculiar even without all this madness: namely, a satyr holding a mirror up to a woman with a horse's head.

Palermo, Tuesday, April 10, 1787

Today we drove uphill to Monreale. A magnificent road, which the abbot of the monastery built, during a time of prodigious wealth; wide, with a comfortable incline, trees here and there, but especially extensive fountains and pipes, ornate and decorated almost in the manner of Palagonia, yet refreshing for animals and people alike.

The monastery of San Martino della Scale, situated on the hilltop above, is a respectable structure. A single confirmed bachelor, as seen in the case of Prince Pallagonia, rarely produces anything worthwhile; several together, however, have created the greatest of works, as churches and monasteries demonstrate. These religious societies were probably so influential precisely because they were more certain than any father of a family of an unlimited number of successors.

The monks showed us the many beautiful antiquities and natural objects they had collected. We were particularly struck by a medal with the image of a youthful goddess,

which was bound to inspire our delight. Those good fellows would gladly have allowed us to make a cast, but there was nothing on hand that would have been suitable for any kind of mould.

After showing us everything, not without a sombre comparison of past and present conditions, they led us to a pleasant little hall, from whose balcony one enjoyed a fine view; a table was set for us both, and there was no shortage of dishes from which to make a very good lunch. After dessert, the abbot entered, accompanied by his senior monks, sat down with us, and stayed for about half an hour, during which time we were asked several questions. We parted most amicably. The younger monks accompanied us once more to the rooms in which the collection was housed, and finally to our carriage.

We went home feeling completely different to how we had felt yesterday. Today, we lamented a large institution currently in decline, while the previous day's experience was of a tasteless enterprise still developing fresh growth.

The road to San Martino climbs older limestone layers. The rocks are broken up, and burned to produce lime, which is very white in colour. For fuel, they use a strong, long type of grass, dried in bundles. This is how 'calcara' (*white micro-marble*) is formed. Red clay, which forms the topsoil here, layers even the steepest heights; the higher the altitude, the redder it becomes, with little blackening from vegetation. In the distance, I saw a pit almost the colour of cinnabar.

The monastery stands in the midst of limestone mountains, which are very rich supplied with springs.
The surrounding mountains are prominent.

Palermo, Wednesday, April 11, 1787.

Having now examined these two main sites outside the city, we visited the Royal Palace (*the Palazzo dei Normanni*), where the guide busily showed us the rooms and their contents. To our great dismay, the hall where the antiquities are usually displayed was in utter disarray, as it was being re-decorated. The statues had been removed from their places, and draped with cloths, and we were obstructed by scaffolding, so that despite the good intentions of our guide and the efforts of the workmen, we could only gain a very incomplete impression of them. I was most interested in two bronze rams, which, even seen under these circumstances, aroused our artistic sensibilities to a high degree. They are depicted lying down, one leg forward, their heads turned in opposite directions as counterparts; powerful figures from that mythological breed worthy of bearing Phrixus and Helle. The wool is not short and curly, but long and cascading in waves, sculpted with great truth and elegance, and from the finest Greek period. They

are said to have stood in the port of Syracuse (*one was destroyed in 1848, the other is extant, having been restored, and is in the National Museum of Palermo*).

The guide then led us outside the city gate, to the catacombs (*Catacombe dei Cappuccini*), which, laid out with architectural ingenuity, are by no means simply quarries used as burial sites. In the hardened tuff of the vertically-hewn walls, vaulted openings have been carved, and within these, several sarcophagi have in turn been hewn, one above the other, carved wholly from the same mass, without the addition of masonry. The upper ones are smaller, and in the chambers above the pillars, there are burial places for children.

Palermo, Thursday, April 12, 1787.

Today we were shown the medal collection assembled by Prince Torremuzza (*Gabriele Lancillotto Castello*). I was somewhat reluctant to perform the visit. I know too little about the subject, and a traveller who is merely curious is detested by true connoisseurs and enthusiasts. But since one must begin somewhere, I resigned myself to it and derived much pleasure and benefit. It is helpful to reflect on the fact, even if only for a moment, that the ancient world was dotted with cities, the smallest of which left us, if not an entire series of art works, at least several epochs of it, recorded in exquisite coins. From these drawers, an endless Spring, full of the blossom and fruits of art, that of a craft practised in the higher sense, and of so much more, smiles forth. The splendour of the Sicilian cities, now dimmed, shines forth anew from these sculpted metals.

Unfortunately, in our past we other nations only possessed local coinage, which conveys nothing, and imperial coins, which repeat the same profile ad nauseam: images of rulers who were hardly exemplary human beings. How sad that our antiquities were confined to formless Palestine, and confusing Rome! Sicily and modern Greece now give us hope of some fresh renewal.

The fact that I make general observations about these subjects is proof that I have not yet achieved much understanding of them; but that will gradually improve along with other things.

Palermo, Thursday, April 12, 1787

This evening, another wish of mine was granted, and in a rather unusual way. I was loitering on the cobblestones in the main street, joking with the shopkeeper I mentioned before; suddenly, a tall, well-dressed courier approached me, swiftly, and held out a silver plate on which lay several copper pennies, and a few silver coins. Not

knowing what it meant, I shrugged, my head bowed, the usual sign of refusal, whether one understands, or simply denies the request or question. Just as quickly as he had come, he was gone, and now I noticed his companion on the opposite side of the street engaged in the same activity.

What did it signify, I asked the merchant, who, with a thoughtful, almost furtive, gesture pointed to a tall, gaunt gentleman who, dressed in courtly attire, was walking respectfully and calmly over the dung heaped in the middle of the street. His hair neatly-styled and powdered, his hat under his arm, he wore a silk robe, a sword at his side, and fine footwear adorned with stone buckles: the elderly fellow strode along solemnly and quietly; all eyes were upon him.

'That is Prince Palagonia,' said the shopkeeper, 'who walks about the city, from time to time, collecting ransom money to free Sicilians held captive as slaves on the Barbary coast. While these collections never amount to much, the issue remains in one's memory, and often those who refused during their lifetime bequeath handsome sums for the purpose. For many years now, the prince has been the head of this institution, and has done immeasurable good.'

'Instead of wasting money on the follies of his country estate,' I exclaimed, 'he should have spent those vast sums thus. No prince in the world would have accomplished more.'

The shopkeeper, dissenting, replied: 'Are we not all like him! We happily pay for our own follies, but expect others to fund our acts of virtue.'

Palermo, Friday, April 13, 1787

Count Borch (*Michał Jan Borch, Polish-Livonian nobleman, mineralogist, and author*) has diligently prepared the ground for us, as regards the stony landscape of Sicily, and anyone who visits the island with the same aim will doubtless be happy to express their gratitude. I find it pleasant, as well as obligatory, to celebrate the memory of a predecessor. After all, one is only a forerunner of others to come, in life as in travel!

The Count's activity, however, seems to me somewhat greater than his knowledge; he proceeds with a certain self-indulgence that is contrary to the modest seriousness with which one should treat important matters. However, his quarto book (*'Lythologie Sicilienne', Naples 1777*), entirely devoted to the Sicilian kingdom's lithology, is of great benefit to me, and, thus prepared, I was able to profitably visit the gem cutters, who, busier formerly, in the days when the churches and altars were yet to be adorned with marble and agates, still practise their craft. I ordered samples of soft and hard stone from them; they distinguish marble and agates in that way, primarily because

the price difference is based on the distinction. Besides these two categories, they are also most knowledgeable as regards another material, a byproduct of the lime-kilns. After firing, a kind of vitreous flux is found in them, which ranges from the lightest blue to the darkest, indeed to the blackest. These lumps are cut into thin slabs like other stone, valued according to the quality of their colour and purity, and successfully used instead of lapis lazuli in the veneering of altars, tombs, and in other ecclesiastical decorations.

The complete collection I desire is not yet ready; it will be sent to me in Naples. The agates are of the greatest beauty, especially those in which irregular patches of yellow or red jasper alternate with white, almost-frozen quartz, creating the most beautiful effect.

An exact imitation of such agates, achieved on the back of thin glass discs using lacquer paints, is the only sensible thing I gleaned from the Palagonian nonsense the other day. Such panels appear more attractive when used decoratively than genuine agate, since the latter must be assembled from many small pieces, whereas with these, the size of the panels is at the discretion of the architect. This skill certainly deserves to be imitated elsewhere.

Palermo, April 13, 1787

Italy without Sicily would leave an incomplete picture in the mind: here, lies the key to everything.

The weather is wonderfully variable; it is the rainy season now, the rain always intermittent; today we have thunder and lightning, and everything is turning a vibrant green. Some of the flax has already formed bolls (*the seed capsules*), while the rest is still in bloom. The flax fields below the hills look so beautifully blue-green that one imagines one is viewing a series of small ponds in the valleys. There are countless charming subjects for art! And my companion is an excellent man, a true friend, just as I honestly continue to play the role of loyal companion. He has already made some very fine sketches and will take the best home with him. What a prospect, to one day return, happily, with all my treasures!

I have not yet mentioned the food and drink here, and yet it is no small matter. The garden-produce is wonderful, especially the lettuce, so tender and with a flavour like milk; one understands why the ancients called it ‘Lactuca’. The various sorts of oil and wine are all very good, and they could be even better if more care were taken in their production. The fish are of the best, and most tender. We have also eaten excellent beef during our stay, even though it is not usually praised here.

Now, from lunch to the window! To the street! A wrongdoer has received a pardon, which is always traditionally done in honour of Easter week. Members of one of the brotherhoods lead him to a mock-gallows, where he is required to perform a prayer before the ladder, and kiss it, before being led away. He is a handsome man, middle class, well-groomed, wearing a white frock coat and white hat, everything white. He carries the hat in his hand, and if only colourful ribbons were attached, here and there, he could attend a ball dressed as a shepherd.

Palermo, April 13th and 14th, 1787.

And so, shortly before my departure, I have experienced a strange adventure, of which I will immediately give you a detailed account.

Throughout my stay, I had heard much talk at our communal dinner table of Alessandro Cagliostro (*the occultist and alchemist*), his origins, and his fate. The Palermitani (*residents of Palermo*) were in agreement that a certain Joseph (*Guiseppe*) Balsamo, born in their city, was a notorious fellow, exiled for various acts of mischief. However, opinions differed as to whether this man was the same person as Count Cagliostro. Some, who had seen him on occasion, claimed to recognise his likeness in that French copper engraving, which is quite well-known in our country, and has also found its way to Palermo (*see the line engraving by Christophe Guérin, 1781*).

During such conversations, one of the guests referred to the efforts undertaken by a Palermitano, a legal scholar, to clarify the matter. He had been prompted by the French ministry to investigate the background of a man who, before the eyes of France, indeed one might say the whole world, had been so audacious as to utter the most ludicrous lies in an important and dangerous trial (*the 1785 'Affair of the Diamond Necklace'*).

It was said that this legal scholar had compiled the family tree of Joseph Balsamo, and sent an explanatory memoir, with certified appendices, to France, where it would probably be made public.

I expressed my wish to meet this legal scholar, about whom much good was also spoken, and the narrator offered to register my name with him, and take me to meet him.

After a few days, we visited, and found him occupied with his clients. Once he had seen them out, and we had eaten breakfast, he produced his manuscript containing Cagliostro's family tree, copies of the documents necessary to establish its validity, and a draft of the memoir that had been sent to France.

He presented me with the family tree and provided the necessary explanation, of which I quote here as much as is necessary for easy understanding.

Joseph Balsamo's maternal great-grandfather was Matthaus Martello. His great-grandmother's maiden name is unknown. From this marriage came two daughters: one named Maria, who married Joseph Bracconeri and became Joseph Balsamo's grandmother; the other, named Vincenza, who married Joseph Cagliostro, who came from the small town of La Novara, eight miles from Messina. I note here that two bell-founders with that name still live in Messina. This great-aunt subsequently became Joseph Balsamo's godfather; he received her husband's given name and eventually also adopted the surname Cagliostro from his great-uncle.

The Bracconeri couple had three children: Felicita, Matthaus and Antonin. Felicita married Peter Balsamo, the son of a ribbon merchant in Palermo, Antonin Balsamo, who was presumably of Jewish descent. Peter Balsamo, the father of the infamous Joseph, went bankrupt and died at the age of forty-five. His widow, who is still alive, bore him, besides the aforementioned Joseph, a daughter, Johanna Joseph-Maria, who married Johann Baptista Capitummino, with whom she had three children, and who later died.

The memoir, which the author graciously read to us and entrusted to me for a few days, at my request, was based on baptismal certificates, marriage contracts, and other documents that had been carefully gathered. It contained nearly all the facts (as I can see from an extract I made at the time) that have now come to knowledge from the Roman court records: that Joseph Balsamo was born in Palermo at the beginning of June 1743, and baptised by Vincenza Martello, née Cagliostro; that in his youth he joined the Brothers Hospitallers of Saint John of God, an order that particularly cares for the sick; that he soon showed great intelligence and skill in medicine, but was sent away because of his misbehaviour; and that he later became a magician and treasure-hunter in Palermo.

His great gift for imitating handwriting was not left unused (so the memoir continues). Rather, he falsified or fabricated an old document, which caused a dispute over the ownership of a piece of property. He was investigated, imprisoned, escaped, and summoned by edict. He travelled through Calabria to Rome, where he married the daughter of a belt-maker. From Rome, he returned to Naples under the name Marchese Pellegrini. He ventured again to Palermo, was recognised, arrested, and escaped in a manner that is worth recounting at length.

The son of one of the first Sicilian princes and large landowners, a man who held prominent positions at the Neapolitan court, combined a strong body and an

unbridled temperament coupled with all the arrogance to which the rich and powerful, devoid of education, believe themselves entitled.

Donna Lorenza (*Lorenza Seraphina Feliciani, known as Serafina, whom Cagliostro married in 1768*) knew how to win the prince over, and the disingenuous Marchese Pellegrini trusted the pair completely. The prince showed, publicly, that the newly-arrived couple were under his protection, and flew into a rage when, at the urging of the party that had suffered losses due to the deception, Joseph Balsamo was once again imprisoned! The prince tried various means to free him, and when these failed, he threatened, in the President's antechamber, to mistreat the opposing party's lawyer most severely if he did not immediately quash Balsamo's arrest. When the opposing counsel refused, he seized him, struck him, threw him to the ground, trampled him underfoot, and was being forcibly restrained from inflicting further abuse when the President himself rushed out to investigate the commotion, and insisted on peace. Weak and dependent on the prince, the latter dared not punish the offender; the opposing party and their representative backed down, and Balsamo was set free without his release being recorded in the files, nor any note being kept of who had ordered it, or how it had occurred. Soon afterwards, Joseph left Palermo and engaged in various travels, of which the author could only give an incomplete account.

The memoir ended by asserting, forcefully, that Cagliostro and Balsamo were one and the same, a thesis that was harder to propose then than now, when we are fully informed of his later history.

Had I not suspected at the time that this essay would be made public in France, and that I would likely find it already in print on my return, I would no doubt have been permitted to take a copy, and inform my friends and the public, far earlier, of some interesting aspects.

Meanwhile, we have learned the majority of the information, indeed more than that memoir could address, from a source that otherwise has tended to spout only errors. Who would have believed that Rome would one day contribute so much to the enlightenment of the world, to the complete exposure of a swindler, as it did through the publication of an excerpt from the record of that trial! For although this document could, and should, have aroused greater interest, it nonetheless remains a valuable record in the hands of any reasonable person who was obliged to watch with dismay as the deceived, the partially-deceived, and the deceivers in the case, venerated the man and accepted his charades for years, feeling themselves elevated above other folk through their association with him, and, from the heights of their studied arrogance, pitying, if not belittling, the common sense shown by others.

Who would not have chosen to remain silent at the time? Indeed, only now, after the whole matter is done with, and settled beyond dispute, can I bring myself to share what I know, in order to complete the record.

When I discovered that several people noted in the family tree, especially the mother and sister, were listed as still living, I expressed, to the author of the memoir, my desire to see them, and so become acquainted with the relatives of so remarkable a person. He replied that it would be difficult to achieve, as those involved, poor but honourable people, lived very secluded lives, were unaccustomed to seeing strangers, and given the natural inclination of Sicilians to be suspicious might interpret the situation and my interest wrongly; however, he would send his clerk to me, who had access to the family and through whom he obtained the information and documents from which the family tree had been compiled.

The following day the clerk appeared, and expressed some concerns about the matter. 'I have always avoided, visiting these people again,' he said, 'for in order to get my hands on the marriage contracts, baptismal certificates, and other documents, and to make legal copies of them, I had to resort to a trick of my own. I took the opportunity to mention a family scholarship that was vacant somewhere, convinced them that the young Capitummino qualified for it, and that it was essential a family tree was drawn up, to identify to what extent the boy could lay claim to this scholarship; of course, everything would then depend on negotiation, which I would undertake if they promised me a fair share of the sum obtained, for my efforts. The good people gladly agreed to everything; I received the necessary documents, the copies were made, the family tree was drawn up, and since then I have been careful not to appear before them. Just a few weeks ago, old Capitummino met me, and I could only excuse myself by saying that such things progress very slowly here,'

So spoke the clerk. But, since I showed no signs of wavering, after some deliberation on his side we agreed that I should pretend to be an Englishman, bringing the family news of Cagliostro, who had just been released (*in June 1786*) from captivity in the Bastille, and had returned to London.

At the appointed hour, it might have been around three in the afternoon, we set off. The house was situated at the corner of a narrow lane, not far from the main road, Il Cassaro (*now Corso Vittorio Emanuele*). We climbed a wretched set of stairs and immediately found ourselves in the kitchen. A woman of medium height, strong and broad, but not corpulent, was busy washing kitchenware. She was neatly dressed and, as we entered, folded up one end of her apron to hide the soiled side from us. She looked at my guide cheerfully and said, 'Signor Giovanni, do you bring us good news? Have you any information?'

He replied: ‘I have not yet been successful in our matter; however, here is a stranger who brings greetings from your brother, and can tell you how he is currently faring.’

The greeting I was now bound to deliver was not part of our agreement; however, the introduction had already been made. — ‘You know my brother?’ she asked. — ‘All of Europe knows him,’ I replied, ‘and I believe it will be pleasing to you to hear that he is safe and well, since you must certainly have been worried about his fate until now.’ — ‘Come in,’ she said, ‘I will follow at once’; and I entered the main room, with the clerk.

It was so large and high that it would be considered a hall in our country; it also seemed to be the family’s entire living quarters. A single window illuminated its large walls, which had once been painted and on which hung various religious images in black, framed in gold. Two large un-curtained beds stood against one wall, and a small brown cabinet shaped like a writing desk against another. Old cane chairs, their backs once gilded, stood beside them, while the brick floor was worn down in many a place. Otherwise, everything was clean and tidy. We approached the family, who were gathered at the far end of the room by the single window.

While my guide was explaining the reason for our visit to old Balsamo, who was seated in the corner, several times repeating his words aloud because of the good old woman’s deafness, I had time to observe the room and its other occupants. A girl of about sixteen, with an attractive figure, whose features however had been blurred by smallpox, stood by the window; next to her was a young man whose unpleasant appearance, also disfigured by smallpox, caught my eye. In an armchair, or rather reclining against the window, was a sick, very misshapen person who seemed to be suffering from some kind of torpor.

Once my guide had completed his explanation, we were asked to seat ourselves. The old woman asked me some questions, which had to be translated for me, before I could answer, as I was barely able to understand the Sicilian dialect.

I gazed at the old woman with pleasure. She was of medium height but well-made; over her regular features, hung that unmistakable air of tranquillity usually enjoyed by those deprived of their hearing; the tone of her voice was gentle and pleasant. I answered her questions, and my replies had to be translated for her benefit as well.

The slow pace of conversation gave me an opportunity to choose my words carefully. I told her that her son had received a pardon, in France, and was currently in England, where he had been well received. Her joy at this news was accompanied by expressions of heartfelt piety, and as she now spoke somewhat more loudly and slowly, I could understand her a little better.

Meanwhile, her daughter had entered, and sat down next to my guide, who faithfully repeated to her what I had told her. She had on a neat apron and had arranged her hair in a net. The more I looked at her and compared her to her mother, the more striking became the difference between their persons. The daughter's entire being glowed with a lively, healthy sensuality; she might have been forty years old. She looked around intelligently, out of bright blue eyes, and I could not detect any suspicion in her gaze. As she sat, her figure promised more height than it displayed when she was standing; her posture was a forthright one; she sat with her body bent forward and her hands resting on her knees. Incidentally, her features, more dull than sharp, reminded me of her brother whose features I knew of from that copperplate engraving. She asked me various things about my journey, and about my desire to view Sicily, and was determined that I should return and celebrate the feast of Saint Rosalia with them.

While the grandmother was asking me further questions, and I was busy answering them, the daughter spoke in a low voice to my companion, but in such a way that I had an opportunity to ask what they were talking about. He then said that Donna Capitummino told him that her brother still owed her fourteen *oncias* (*the oncia was a gold coin minted in the Kingdoms of Sicily and Naples*); she had redeemed various goods pawned by him, after he had left Palermo hastily; but since then she had heard nothing from him, and received neither money nor support of any kind from him, even though, as she heard, he possessed great wealth and had a princely lifestyle. She asked if I would consider reminding him of the debt, in a proper manner, upon my return, and securing some assistance for her, or even taking a letter with me, or perhaps sending one in the post. I offered to do so. She asked where I lived, so she might bring the letter. I avoided giving her my address, offering to collect the letter myself the following evening.

She then told me about the difficulties of her situation; she was a widow with three children, one of whom, a girl, was being raised in a convent; the other was present, and her son had just left to begin his apprenticeship. Besides these three children, she had her mother with her, for whom she had to provide support, and moreover, out of Christian love, she had taken in the unfortunate invalid, which further increased her burden; all her hard work was barely enough to provide for herself and her family. She knew, of course, that God would not leave such good works unrewarded, but she still groaned under the burden she had borne for so long.

The young people joined in the conversation, and the talk became livelier. As I spoke with the others, I overheard the old woman asking her daughter if I too was a devotee of her holy religion. I could see that the daughter was cleverly trying to evade the answer by indicating to her mother, as far as I understood, that the stranger

seemed to be well-disposed towards her, and that it was probably improper to question me, directly, about the matter.

When they heard that I was about to leave Palermo, they became more insistent and begged me to return; they especially praised the paradisiacal days of the Rosalia festival, claiming that nothing like it was to be seen or enjoyed anywhere else in the world.

My companion, who had long wished to leave, finally brought the conversation to an end with a gesture or two, and I promised to return the next day, towards evening, to collect the letter. My companion was pleased that everything had worked out so well, and we parted happily.

One can imagine the impression this poor, pious, well-meaning family made on me. My curiosity was satisfied, but their natural and honest behaviour had aroused something within me that only grew stronger on reflection.

However, I immediately began to worry about the following day. It was only natural that my visit, which had surprised them at first, must have left them a great deal to think about, after my departure. I knew from the family tree that several other members were still alive; and it was only natural that they would gather their friends to hear, in their presence, what they had been astonished to hear me say that day. I had achieved my goal, and all that remained was to bring the affair to a proper end. Therefore, the next day, after dinner, I went alone to their apartment. They were surprised when I entered. The letter was not complete yet, they said, and some of their relatives also wished to meet me; they would be arriving that evening. I replied that I had to leave early the next morning, that I still had visits to make and things to pack, and that I had therefore preferred to come sooner rather than not at all.

Meanwhile, the son, whom I had not met the day before, entered. He resembled his sister in stature, and level of education. He brought the letter for me, which, as is customary in those regions, had been penned elsewhere by one of the public notaries. The young man was quiet, melancholy, and unassuming. He inquired about his uncle, asked about the nature of his wealth and mode of life, and wondered, sadly, why his uncle had so completely forgotten the family. ‘It would be our greatest happiness,’ he continued, ‘if he might come here someday and take care of us; but,’ he added, ‘how is it that he revealed to you that he still has relatives in Palermo? It is said that he denies us everywhere, and pretends to be a man of noble birth.’ I answered this question, which had been prompted by my guide’s imprudence on our first visit, in a manner that suggested that their uncle, though he might have reason to conceal his origins from the public, made no secret of it when with friends and acquaintances.

The sister, who had joined us during this conversation and was encouraged by her brother's presence, and probably also by the absence of my friend of yesterday, began, likewise, to speak very politely and animatedly. They both earnestly begged me to commend them to their uncle, if I should write to him; and equally they begged me to return after my journey through the kingdom, and celebrate the Feast of Santa Rosalia with them.

The mother seconded the children. 'My lord,' she said, 'although it is not really proper, since I have a grown daughter, to receive strange men in my house, for there is reason to be wary of both deceit and gossip, you will always be welcome when you return to this city.'

'Yes, indeed,' added the children, 'we long to show the noble lord around, during the festival, we wish to show him everything, and find seats on the scaffolding from which we can best see the festivities. How delighted he will be by the giant float, and especially the magnificent illuminations!'

Meanwhile, the grandmother had read, and reread the letter. Hearing that I sought to take my leave, she rose, and handed me the folded paper. 'Inform my son,' she began, with proud vivacity, indeed with an air of enthusiasm, 'tell my son how happy the news of him, that you brought me, has made me! Tell him that I hold him so dear, with all the strength of my heart' — and here she stretched out her arms, then pressed them to her chest — 'that I pray for him, every day, to God and Our Blessed Virgin, and that I give him, and his wife, my blessing, and that my dearest wish is to look upon him once more, with these eyes that have shed so many tears for him, before I die.'

The inherent elegance of the Italian language favoured her choice of words, and their noble arrangement, these being accompanied, moreover, by lively gestures, with which that nation accompanies the incredible charm of its utterances, which it spreads far and wide.

I said my farewells with a heavy heart. They all reached out their hands to me, the children escorted my exit, and as I descended the stairs, they ran to the balcony before the kitchen window, which overlooked the street, called after me, waved their goodbyes, and repeated once more that I must not neglect to return. I could still see them standing there on the balcony, as I turned the corner.

Needless to say, my involvement with the family aroused in me a lively desire to be of service to them, and to address their needs in some manner. I had now deceived them twice, and their hopes of aid, previously unanticipated, were, due to my northern European curiosity, on the verge of being dashed a second time.

My first intention was to send them, before my departure, the fourteen *oncias* that the fugitive owed, and to cover my gift by pretending that I expected to receive this

sum from him on my return; but when I did my calculations in my room, and counted out my coins and paper, I realised that in a country where the lack of communication makes distances seem infinite, I would put myself in an awkward position if I presumed to rectify, in heartfelt kindness, the injustice perpetrated by that insolent person.

Towards evening, I asked my shopkeeper what the weather was likely to do, since the festival tomorrow would involve a large procession, which was set to wind its way through the city, while the Viceroy himself was to accompany the Blessed Sacrament on foot. The slightest breeze would shroud both God and man in the thickest cloud of dust.

The cheerful fellow replied that in Palermo, people liked to rely on miracles. Several times in similar situations, a violent downpour had fallen, cleansing the dirt and dust from the streets at least partially, and clearing a path for the procession. This time, too, they harboured the same hope, and not without reason, for the sky was clouding over, and promised to deliver a rainstorm overnight.

Palermo, Sunday, April 15, 1787.

And so, it did! The most violent downpour fell from the sky. First thing this morning, I hurried out into the street to witness the miracle. And, truly, it did seem miraculous enough. The streams of rain, confined between the paving stones on either side, had carried the lightest debris down the side streets, partly towards the sea, partly into the drains, insofar as they were unblocked. It had, at least, pushed the coarser debris from one place to another, thereby tracing wondrously clear meanders on the pavement. Now, hundreds upon hundreds of people with shovels, brooms, and pitchforks were busy trying to widen, and connect these cleansed patches, heaping the remaining filth first on one side, then on the other. Thus, when the procession began, a perfectly clear path had indeed been forged through the mire, and both the clergy in their long robes, and the elegant nobility, with the Viceroy at their head, were able to pass through unhindered, and unstained. I imagined them as the children of Israel, for whom a dry path, through the swamp and mire, was prepared by angelic hands, and with this thought raised to a nobler level the unbearable sight of so many devout and respectable people praying, and parading ostentatiously, through an avenue of moist dung-heaps.

On the stepping stones one had clear passage, but in the interior of the city, to which our intention to see various things we had previously neglected led us today, it was almost impossible to pass, though here too the sweeping-away and heaping-up had not been neglected.

The celebration gave us the opportunity to visit the cathedral, and admire its curiosities, and also, since we were already out and about, to look around at other buildings; whereupon a Moorish house, thus far well preserved, greatly delighted us — not large, but with beautiful, spacious, and well-proportioned, harmonious rooms; nor exactly habitable if it were subject to a northern climate, but a most welcome dwelling in a southern one. Those knowledgeable about architecture may well be able to provide us with a sight of its ground plan and elevation.

We also saw various remnants of ancient marble statues in an unfriendly restaurant, but lacked the patience to identify them.

Palermo, Monday, April 16, 1787.

Since we now face the prospect of imminent departure from this paradise, I hoped to find perfect solace today in the public garden, to complete my reading of the Odyssey, and, while taking a walk to the valley at the foot of Monte Pellegrino, further consider the plan for a work entitled 'Nausicaa' and explore whether a drama could be gleaned from that subject. All this was accomplished, if not to great effect, then with considerable pleasure. I sketched out a plot and could not resist attempting, and even executing fully, the passages that particularly appealed to me.

Palermo, Tuesday, April 17, 1787.

It is a true misfortune to be haunted, and tempted by, so many spirits of creation! This morning, with the firm and calm intention of continuing my poetic dreams, I visited the public garden, but before I knew it, another spectre, one that had been stalking me for the past few days, seized me. The many plants that I am otherwise only accustomed to seeing in tubs and pots, indeed, for most of the year only behind glass, stand here cheerful, and fresh, under the open sky, and in fulfilling their development perfectly, their structure becomes clearer. In the face of so many new and renewed forms, my old whim returned: could I discover the structure of the primal plant among this multitude? Surely such a thing must exist! How else would one recognise that this or that form was a plant, if they were not all formed according to some pattern?

I endeavoured to investigate the features that distinguished the many divergent forms from one another. And I found, more and more, that the plants were similar rather than different, yet, though I tried to apply my botanical terminology, which seemed perfectly possible, my investigation proved fruitless; it unsettled me, without aiding me at all. My fine poetic intentions were disrupted; Alcinous's garden had vanished, while the earthly garden had opened before me. Why are we moderns so

variable in our thinking, why so prone to pursue disparate aims we cannot approach let alone fulfil!

Alcamo, Wednesday, April 18, 1787.

We exited Palermo in good time. Kniep, and the *vetturino* (*driver of a carriage or vettura*), had proven themselves excellent at packing the carriage inside and out. We drove slowly along the magnificent road, which we already knew from our visit to San Martino, and once again admired a splendid fountain along the way, while we were about to witness one of the more moderate customs of the country. Our *vetturino* had a small wine-flask slung over his shoulder, as is the custom of our camp-followers, and it seemed to contain enough wine for several days. We were therefore surprised when he rode up to one of the many fountains, opened the stopper, and let a trickle of water flow into the flask. We asked, in true German astonishment, what he intended to do, and whether there was enough space in the flask which we had thought full of wine, to which he replied with great composure that he had left a third of it empty, and since no one drinks unmixed wine, it was better to mix it all at once, as the liquids blended better that way, and one could not be sure of finding water everywhere. Meanwhile, he filled the flask, while we awaited the completion of this ancient oriental 'marriage' custom.

As we reached the heights beyond Monreale, we viewed a series of beautiful landscapes, in character more traditionally tilled than efficiently so. To our right, we gazed down to the sea, where, between two most wondrous promontories (*Punta Raisi, and San Vito la Capo*), stretched a perfectly straight shoreline, partly wooded and partly treeless, contrasting in a wonderfully serene manner with the rugged limestone cliffs. Kniep took the opportunity to sketch several of these in miniature.

Now we are in Alcamo, a quiet, clean little town, whose well-furnished inn is to be praised as a fine establishment, since from here one can easily visit the remote and isolated Temple of Segesta.

Alcamo

Thursday, April 19, 1787.

Our charming apartment, in a quiet mountain town, appeals to us, and we have decided to spend the whole day here. Let me, first of all, speak of yesterday's events. I now deny Prince Palagonia any claim to originality; it seems he had predecessors, and found examples to work from. On the road to Monreale, two monsters stand by a

fountain, and on the rim are several vases, exactly as if the prince himself had commissioned them.

Beyond Monreale, where one leaves the decent roadway, and enters a rugged mountain track, there are stones lying along the ridge, which, judging by their weight and weathering, I took to be iron ore. All the land is cultivated, with varying degrees of success. The limestone was reddish in hue, as the weathered soil is in that place. This red, clayey, calcareous soil is widespread; the ground is heavy, with no sand beneath it, but it produces excellent wheat. We came across ancient, strong but stunted olive trees.

Beneath the shelter of an airy lean-to, built on the side of the impoverished inn, we refreshed ourselves with a meagre snack. A pack of dogs eagerly devoured the discarded casings of our sausages; a beggar lad chased them away, and devoured the peelings from the apples we ate with relish, but he too was driven off by an older beggar. Professional rivalry is everywhere. The older beggar, clad in a tattered toga, wandered about in the role of a servant or waiter. I had noticed previously that when someone asked an innkeeper for something he lacked, he would send a beggar to obtain it from the grocer. However, we are usually spared the need for such questionable service, as our vetturino is excellent — he acts as stable-boy, guide, guard, runner, cook, everything.

On the higher mountains, olive-trees, carob-trees and ash-trees can still be found. They rotate the crops, employing a three year cycle: beans, then grain, then a fallow year, claiming that: ‘Manure works more miracles than the saints do.’ The grapevines are kept to a very low height.

Alcamo’s location is magnificent, perched on a hilltop some distance from the bay; the extent of the views captivated us. High cliffs and deep valleys abound, yet the landscape is expansive and varied. Beyond Monreale, one enters a beautiful valley, dual-pronged due to a rocky ridge running down its centre. The fertile fields are green and peaceful while, beside the broad track, wild thickets, and clumps of perennials, gleam with an almost absurd profusion of blossom: also lentil bushes, entirely covered in yellow butterfly-shaped flowers, with not a green leaf in sight; cluster upon cluster of hawthorns; aloes reaching upwards, ready to blossom; rich carpets of amaranth-red clover; insect-covered orchids; alpine roses; hyacinths with unopened bells; borage; alliums; and asphodels.

The water flowing down from Segesta carries along not only limestone but also numerous chert boulders; these are very hard, in various shades of dark-blue, red, yellow, brown, and other hues. I also found chert or flintstone exposed as veins in the

limestone cliffs, within bands of limestone. Entire hillocks of such boulders can be found before reaching Alcamo.

Segesta

April 20, 1787.

The Temple at Segesta (*of Doric order*) was never completed, and the area around it never properly surveyed; the perimeter upon which the columns were to be founded was simply levelled. Even now, the steps are nine to ten feet deep in the ground in places, yet there is no hill nearby from which stones and earth could have slid. Furthermore, the stones lie mostly in their natural position, and no debris is found beneath them.

All the columns are standing; two that had fallen over have recently been re-erected. Whether the columns were intended to have bases is difficult to determine, and the situation cannot be clearly shown without a sketch. Sometimes it appears as if the columns stood on the fourth step, but then one would have had to descend another step into the interior of the temple; sometimes the uppermost step is cut through, then it looks as if the columns had bases; sometimes these gaps were filled in again, and so one returns to the first scenario again. An architect might determine the facts more precisely.

The sides are composed of twelve columns, between the corners, while the front and back are composed of six, including the corner columns. The bosses in the blocks of the platform, used to lift the stones into place and normally removed thereafter, are still in evidence, proving that the building was never completed. The floor, however, provides the strongest evidence: in some places, there is a paved area of slabs along the sides, but in the centre the reddish limestone bedrock still rises above the level of the finished area; it could therefore never have itself been paved. There is also no trace of an inner hall. Even less has the temple been covered with stucco, though it can be inferred that this was the intention: the capitals have projections where the stucco might have been meant to be attached. The entire structure is built of a travertine-like limestone, now heavily eroded. The restoration of 1781 did the building a great service. The stonework that joins the sections is simple, yet beautiful. I could not find the 'two great round pieces like millstones' that Riedesel (*Johann Hermann von Riedesel, see his 'Travels through Sicily', 1773, page 12*) mentioned; perhaps they were used for the restoration of the columns.

The temple's location is singular: at the highest point of a wide, long valley, on an isolated hill (*Monte Barbaro*), yet still surrounded by cliffs, it overlooks a large valley stretching into the distance, but only a sliver of sea. The area reposes in a melancholy fertility, everywhere cultivated yet scarcely a dwelling. Countless butterflies fluttered among the flowering thistles. Wild fennel, eight to nine feet high, from the previous year and withered, stood so abundantly, and in such apparent order, that one could have mistaken the spot for a plant nursery. The wind howled among the columns, as if through a forest, and birds of prey hovered, screeching, above the pediments.

The arduous task of clambering around in the fairly unremarkable ruins of the ancient theatre deprived us of any desire to visit the ruins of the city. At the foot of the temple, large pieces of chert can be found, and the road to Alcamo is mixed with endless boulders of it. This introduces a proportion of silica into the soil, making it looser. On some fresh fennel, I noted the difference between the lower and upper leaves, yet it is always simply the same organism, developed from simplicity to diversity. Here, people are raking the soil very diligently; the men scour the entire field as if on a hunting expedition. Various insects can also be found. In Palermo, I had only noticed worms, lizards, leeches, and snails, no more beautifully coloured than ours, indeed, universally grey.

Castelvetrano

Saturday, April 21, 1787

From Alcamo to Castelvetrano, the route leads along the limestone mountains, over gravel hills. Between the steep, barren limestone peaks lie wide, hilly valleys, all cultivated, but almost devoid of trees. The gravel hills are full of large boulders, indicating ancient marine currents; the soil is beautifully mixed, lighter than before, due to the presence of sand. Salemi was on our right for an hour or so; then we crossed gypsum cliffs, overlain by limestone, the soil becoming increasingly well-compounded. In the distance, we could glimpse the sea to the west. In the foreground, the terrain was quite hilly. We encountered fig-trees sprouting new growth, but what truly delighted and aroused our admiration were the countless masses of flowers that had established themselves beside the broad track, scattered and repeated in large, colourful, adjoining patches. The most beautiful bindweed, hibiscus, and mallow, along with many varieties of clover, alternated among them, interspersed with alliums and goat's rue bushes. Through this colourful carpet we wound on horseback, following the countless intersecting narrow paths. In between grazed beautiful

reddish-brown cattle, quite small and neatly built, with particularly delicate little horns.

The mountains to the northeast all stand in a row, with a single peak, above Corleone (*Cuniglione*), rising from the centre. The gravelly hills reveal little water, and it seems that scant rainfall occurs here, as there are no water-scoured fissures or deposits of other sediment.

During the night, I had a unique experience. We had fallen, wearily, onto the beds in a rather unpretentious establishment. At midnight, I awoke to find the most delightful sight above me — a star, more beautiful than I had ever imagined. I revelled in the lovely, auspicious spectacle, but soon the star's gentle light vanished, leaving me alone in the darkness. Only at daybreak did I realise the cause of this miracle: there was a gap in the roof, and one of the most beautiful stars in the sky had passed through my meridian at that very moment. Travellers forever take natural phenomenon to be favourable omens.

Sciacca

April 22, 1787.

The track here, mineralogically uninteresting, leads over a line of limestone cliffs, jutting skywards here and there. All the level areas are incredibly fertile, producing barley and oats of the finest quality; Salsola *('Salsola soda', locally known as 'barilla', for the production of soda ash*) is cultivated; the aloes have already produced taller fruit stalks than those we saw yesterday and the day before. The many varieties of clover we had seen were still evident. Finally, we came to a small bushy grove, with a scattering of taller trees; at last, cork-wood too!

Agrigento (*Girgenti*)

April 23rd. Evening.

From Sciacca, it was a long day's journey here. Just before reaching the former place, we visited the mineral bath (*on Monte Kronio*). A hot spring gushes from the rock with a very strong sulphurous odour, the water tastes extremely salty, but not putrid. Perhaps the sulphurous vapour is produced as it emerges? A little higher up is a well, cool, and without odour. At the very top lies a sanctuary (*Santuario di San Calogero*), where the mineral bath is located; a strong vapour rose from it into the clear air.

The tide here rolls over limestone scree; quartz and chert are absent. I noted that the little rivers around Caltabellota, and the Macassoli (*Isburus*) also carry only limestone scree, while the Platani bears yellow marble and flint, the eternal companions of this noble limestone. A few pieces of lava caught my attention, but I suspect nothing volcanic in this area; rather, I think they are fragments of millstones, or pieces brought from afar for some purpose or other. At Montallegro, everything is gypsum: selenite and glacial erratics, entire rocks occurring among the limestone. I noted the remarkable rocky setting of Caltabellota!

Agrigento, Tuesday, April 24, 1787

Such a magnificent springtime view as was today's, at sunrise, was something we had never experienced in our entire lives. Modern Agrigento stands atop the ancient elevated fortifications, an area large enough to accommodate its present inhabitants. From our windows, we can view the wide, gentle slope of the former city, entirely covered with gardens and vineyards, beneath whose greenery one would scarcely suspect the ruins of a once densely-populated place. Only towards the southern end of this verdant and blossoming expanse is the Temple of Concordia visible, and to the east, the remains of the Temple of Juno; the ruins of other sacred buildings, aligned with these escape the eye's notice from above, instead it takes in the view southward to the shore, a mile or more away. We were denied the opportunity of rambling amidst those wonderfully verdant, blooming, soon to be fruitful regions, amidst branches and tendrils, as our guide, a good-natured little diocesan priest, asked us to devote our first day here to the town

Initially, he left us to admire the beautifully constructed streets, then he led us to various high points from which the view was even more magnificent due to its greater breadth and extent, and finally, for our artistic enjoyment, to the main church (*Cattedrale di San Gerlando*). This church contains a well-preserved sarcophagus (‘*The Sarcophagus of Hippolytus and Phaedra’*), employed as the altar: Hippolytus, with his hunting companions and horses, is being detained by Phaedra's nurse, who is about to deliver a message to him. The main intention here, clearly, was to depict handsome youths, hence the inclusion of the old woman, quite small and dwarfish, was a secondary idea, to create contrast. It seems to me that I have never before seen anything more magnificent and in a semi-sublime style, yet so perfectly preserved. For the time being, let it serve me as an example of the most graceful period of Greek art.

We were transported back to earlier eras by the sight of a magnificent krater (*Greek drinking vessel*) of considerable size in a perfect state of preservation. In addition, it

seemed that some remnants of ancient architecture had been incorporated, here and there, into the new church.

Since there are no inns here, a family kindly made room for us, providing us with a raised alcove in a large room. A green curtain separated us, and our luggage, from the family, who were engaged in making pasta — of the finest, broadest, and thinnest kind — in the large room. The pasta that commands the highest price, after being shaped into arm-length strands, is coiled, at the tips of the young girls' fingers, taking on a snail-shell-like form. We sat down with these pretty girls, had the process explained to us, and learned that the pasta was made from the best and heaviest wheat, called *grano forte*. Hands are used rather more than machinery and moulds. And so, they prepared a most excellent pasta dish for us, though regretting that they lacked enough of the most perfect kind even for a single serving, a pasta which, they claimed, was unavailable outside of Agrigento, indeed, outside of their own house. What they did serve us seemed unequalled in its whiteness and delicacy.

In the evening, our guide managed to quell the impatience that urged us on, by once again leading us to the heights, and many a magnificent viewpoint overlooking the nearby area of remarkable edifices we were to visit next day.

Agrigento, Wednesday, April 25, 1787

At sunrise, we took a descending path, the surroundings at every step becoming more and more picturesque. Confident that it was to our benefit, the little guide led us relentlessly through lush vegetation, past a thousand vistas, each of which showed the local area to be scenically idyllic. The uneven terrain contributes greatly, undulating over hidden ruins, which had been covered by fertile deposits all the more easily as the former buildings were of a light shell-bearing tuff. Thus, we reached the eastern edge of the ancient city, where the ruins of the Temple of Juno continue to deteriorate further each year, the loose stone being constantly eroded by the elements. Today we only intended to undertake a cursory survey, but Kniep was already choosing sites for his sketching tomorrow.

The temples stand on weathered rock; from here the ancient city walls extended directly eastward along a limestone deposit, which was elevated vertically above the flat beach left behind by the sea, both before and after it had formed these rocks, and lapped their base. Partly hewn from the rock, partly built of it, were the walls behind and above which the row of temples projected. The lower, middle, and upper levels of Agrigento must together have presented a magnificent sight from the sea.

The Temple of Concord has withstood so many centuries, its slender architecture realising in advance our own standards of the beautiful and the pleasing, that it relates

to that of Paestum as a godlike figure to a colossal statue. I will stifle my complaint that the more recent, though laudable, intention to preserve these monuments has been executed in a tasteless manner, by filling gaps with dazzlingly-white plaster; as a result, the monument appears somewhat cracked and fissured to the eye; how easy it would have been to have used plaster the colour of the weathered stone! Indeed, when one notes the friable shell-bearing limestone of the columns and walls, one is amazed it has lasted so long. But the builders, hoping to leave a legacy for like generations, took precautions: thin traces of whitewash can still be found on the columns, intended both to please the eye and to ensure their longevity.

Our next stop was at the ruins of the Temple of Jupiter (*Tempio di Giove Olimpico, Temple of Olympian Zeus, or the Olympeion*). It sprawls, like the bony remains of a giant skeleton, within, and beneath, several small pieces of land, crisscrossed by fences, and overgrown with plants both short and tall. Everything of significance has vanished beneath heaps of rubble except for an enormous triglyph and a mere fragment of a fluted half-column of similar proportions. I attempted to measure the latter with outstretched arms, but could not encircle it; however, I can give some idea of what the intact column may have looked like, since I could stand within a single flute, as if it were a small niche, the sides of the flute touching my shoulders. Two and twenty men, standing side by side in a circle, would roughly span the circumference of such a column when entire. We were left with the disappointing feeling that there was absolutely nothing to tempt the draughtsman there.

The Temple of Hercules, however, still reveals traces of its former symmetry. The two rows of columns that flanked the temple on either side lay parallel, north to south, as if fallen simultaneously; one row pointing uphill, the other down. The hill may have resulted from the collapse of the shrine. The columns, probably held together momentarily by the entablature, toppled all at once, perhaps felled by a storm, and still lie in perfect order, broken into the pieces from which they were once assembled. Kniep was already mentally sharpening his pencils to sketch the result of this remarkable occurrence.

The Temple of Asclepius, shaded by the most beautiful carob tree and closely adjoined by a small farmhouse, presented a pleasant picture.

We next descended to Theron's tomb and rejoiced at being in the presence of this often-reproduced monument, especially as it serves as the backdrop to a marvellous view; one gazes west to east along the rocky outcrop on which the ruined city walls, and beyond and above them, the remains of the temples, can be seen. Under Philipp Hackert's skilful hand, this view has become a delightful image *(see his 'View of the Temples at Agrigento', 1778, in the Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg*); Kniep, also, will surely not omit to attempt a sketch here.

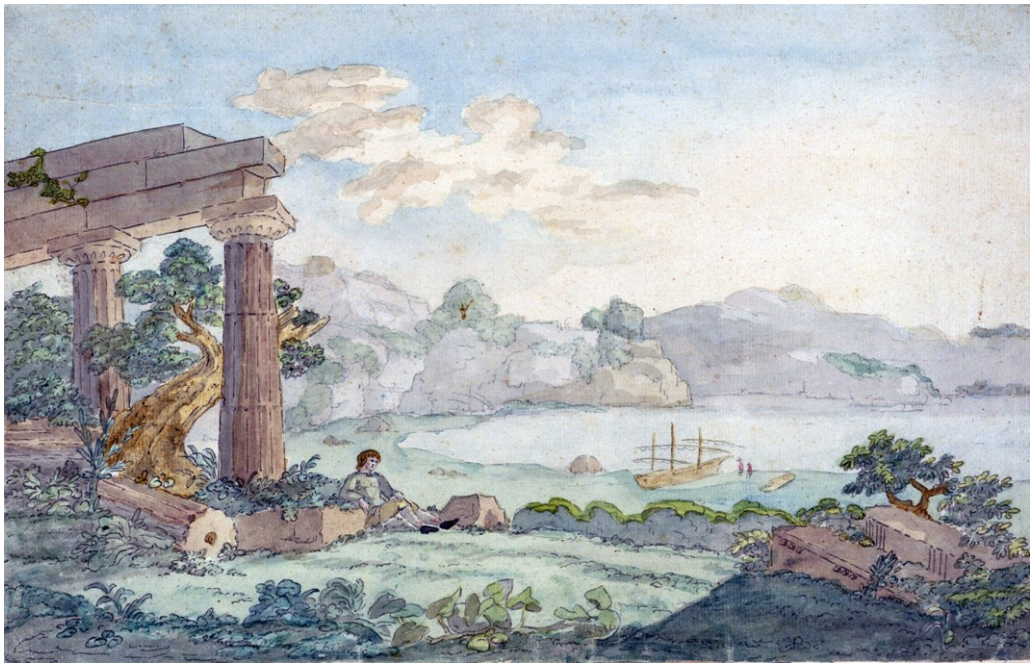
Agrigento, Thursday, April 26, 1787.

When I awoke, Kniep was already set to embark on his sketching trip, with a boy who was to show him the way and carry the portfolio. I enjoyed the most glorious morning by the window, my secret, hushed, yet not silent friend at my side. Out of pious reverence, I have not yet mentioned the name of the mentor whom I look and listen to from time to time; it is the excellent Von Riedesel, whose little book I carry like a breviary or a talisman clasped at my side. I have always, and gladly, found myself reflected more clearly in those who possess what I lack, and so it is here: his calm resolve, certainty of purpose, honest and proper means, thorough preparation and knowledge, and an intimate relationship with a masterly teacher, in his case Winckelmann; all this I lack, and everything else that springs from it. And yet I cannot be angry with myself for seeking to steal, seize, or cunningly obtain what has been denied me, in the ordinary course of my life to date. May that excellent man, at this moment, amidst the world's tumult, sense a grateful follower celebrating his merits, alone in this solitary place, which held so much charm for him that he longed to spend his days here, forgotten by his own, and forgetting them in turn.

I have now traversed yesterday's paths, with him as my spiritual guide, examining the objects to be seen from several sides, while referring now and then to my authoritative and diligent friend.

My guide drew my attention to an interesting feature of the ancient and mighty city. Amidst the rocks and masses of stone that served as Agrigento's bulwark, are various tombs, probably intended as the final resting place of the brave and the good. Where better could they have been laid to rest, for their own glory, and to prompt endless emulation!

In the vast area between the city walls and the sea, the remains of a small temple, preserved as a Christian chapel, can still be found (*Santa Maria dei Greci*). Here, too, half-columns are beautifully combined with the ashlar blocks of the wall, and both together, are most pleasing to the eye. One senses the precise point at which the Doric order achieved perfection in its proportions.



‘Temple ruins overlooking a bay’ - Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (German, 1749–1832)
Klassik Stiftung Weimar, Museen (Inv. GGz/1327)
Digital reproduction · See Art. L. 111-1 CPI and § 68 UrhG

We glanced, superficially, at various unassuming ancient remains, then, with greater attention, at the present method of storing wheat underground, in large, brick-lined vaults. The good old man told me quite a bit about the state of the town and the church. I heard of nothing that was even remotely progressive. The conversation was quite fitting standing as we were amidst ruins subject to the relentless forces of decay.

The layers of shell-bearing limestone all slope towards the sea. Wondrously eroded, below and behind, the rock faces are partially preserved, their upper and front portions resembling drooping fringes.

Hatred, it appears, is directed towards the French for making peace with the people of the Barbary coast; they are accused of thereby betraying the Christians to the infidels.

An ancient gate was hewn into the rocks on the seaward side. The extant walls were built, in stages, on the rocks themselves. Our guide here was Don Michael Vella, an antiquarian, who lodges with Master Gerio near Santa Maria.

To plant broad beans, they proceed as follows: They make holes in the ground at a suitable distance from each other, place a handful of manure in each hole, wait for rain, and then plant the beans. They burn the bean-straw, and use the resulting ash to wash linen. No soap is employed. They also burn the outer shells of almonds and use them instead of soda. First, they wash the laundry with water, and then with this lye solution.

The crops they cultivate in rotation are beans, wheat, and *tumminia* (*an ancient variety of durum wheat*), primarily cultivated in Sicily; in the fourth year, they leave the ground to lie fallow. Here, 'beans' refers to broad beans. Their wheat is exceptionally beautiful. Tumminia, whose name is said to derive from 'bimenia' or 'trimenia,' is a magnificent gift from Ceres (*the Roman goddess of agriculture*): it is a type of summer crop that ripens in three months. They sow it from the first of January until June, when it ripens, reliably, at the appointed time. It needs little rain, but does require heat; initially, its leaves are very delicate, but it grows alongside the wheat, and eventually becomes quite robust. The wheat they sow in October and November, to ripen in June. Barley sown in November is ripe by the first of June, earlier on the coast, later in the mountains.

The flax is already ripe. The acanthus has unfolded its magnificent leaves. Salsola soda (*agretti, saltwort*) grows lushly.

Sainfoin grows abundantly on uncultivated hills. Some of it is cultivated on leased land, and brought to the city in bundles. They also sell oats, which they sow amidst the wheat fields, in bundles.

They make neat furrows with rims in the soil where they desire to plant cabbage, for the purpose of irrigation.

The fig-trees had lost all their leaves, and the fruit had begun to set. They will ripen around St. John's Day (*June 24th*), and then the tree will produce another crop. The almond-trees were laden with fruit; a pruned carob-tree bore a vast supply of pods. Grapes for eating are trained on arbours, supported by tall pillars. Melons are planted in March and ripen in June. They thrive in the ruins of the Temple of Olympian Zeus without a trace of moisture.

The vetturino ate raw artichokes and kohlrabi (*turnip cabbage*) with great relish; admittedly, much juicier and tenderer than ours. The farmers let people eat as many young broad beans as they like, when crossing fields, for instance.

When I remarked on various solid, black stones that resembled pieces of lava, the antiquarian told me they were from Mount Etna, and that there were similar ones at the harbour, or rather the landing place.

There are not many birds in this country: quails are the most common. Nightingales, larks, and swallows are migratory visitors. *Rinnine*, small black birds that come from the Levant, breed in Sicily and then continue their journey or return (*probably swifts*). *Ridene*, which come from Africa in December and January, land on Mount Akragas, and then migrate to the mountains (*probably raptors*).

A word more about the cathedral calyx-krater (*attributed to the 'Berlin Painter' or his circle, and now in the Pietro Griffo Regional Archaeological Museum in Agrigento, which probably depicts a scene from the Trojan War*). On it stands a hero in full armour, as if arriving before a seated old man, identified as a king by his wreath and sceptre. Behind him stands a woman, her head bowed, her left hand under her chin; her posture attentive and thoughtful. Opposite, behind the hero, is another old man, also wreathed, speaking to a pike-bearer, who may be a member of the royal guard. The old man seems to have introduced the hero, and to be saying, to the guard: 'Let him address the king; he is a good man.'

The red appears to be the base colour of the krater, with the black overlaid. Only on the woman's garment does the red seem to overlay the black.

Agrigento, Friday, April 27, 1787.

If Kniep is to carry out all his plans, he must draw and sketch incessantly, while I wander about with the little old guide. We therefore took a stroll towards the sea, from which Agrigento, as the ancients assure us, appeared well-sited. My gaze was drawn to the height of the waves, and my guide drew my attention to a long bank of cloud that, seemed like a mountain ridge, on the horizon to the south: this, he said, indicated the African coast. I myself noted another interesting phenomenon; it was a narrow rainbow, formed amidst light clouds, and arched high against the blue, otherwise perfectly clear, sky; one foot rested on Sicily, the other end seeming to rest on the sea to the south. Beautifully coloured, created by light from the setting sun, it was a sight to the eye as strange as it was pleasing. I was assured that this motionless arc of light was pointing directly towards Malta, and its other foot may well have rested above that island; such a phenomenon frequently occurs it seems. It would be most peculiar if the force of attraction between the two islands were to manifest itself in the atmosphere in this way.

This conversation rekindled the question of whether I was correct to abandon my intention of visiting Malta. However, the difficulties and dangers of the trip, which I had previously considered, remained the same, and we resolved instead to hire our vetturino to drive us as far as Messina.

But here, too, a certain stubbornness of mine, and proneness to whims, came into play. I had seen few grain-rich areas so far on my journey in Sicily, and the horizon was everywhere limited by mountains near and distant, so that the island seemed to lack any true cultivation at all, and I failed to understand how Ceres could have favoured this land so exceptionally. When I inquired about the matter, I was told that to gain an understanding, instead of travelling on via Syracuse, I should cross the

island, where I would then encounter plenty of wheat-fields. I succumbed to the temptation to abandon Syracuse, knowing full well that little more than its magnificent name remained of that once glorious city. At any rate, it was easily accessible from Catania.

Caltanissetta

Saturday, April 28, 1787

Today, I can say that I have finally gained a clear and vivid understanding of how Sicily earned the honorary title of Italy's bread-basket. A short distance after leaving Agrigento, an intensely cultivated region began. It is not a vast expanse, but a series of gently undulating ridges of mountains and hills, planted throughout with wheat and barley, offering an uninterruptedly-fertile landscape. The soil, well-suited to the crops, is so carefully tended and maintained that one sees not a single tree; indeed, even the little villages and dwellings are situated on the crests of the hills, where the continuous line of limestone cliffs renders the soil unusable. The women live there year-round, occupied with spinning and weaving, while the men, during the season of fieldwork, only join them on Saturdays and Sundays, spending the rest of the days at a lower level, and sleeping in thatched huts at night. Thus, my desire to comprehend was fulfilled to the point of utter weariness; I would have employed Triptolemus' winged chariot, gladly, to escape the monotonous view.

We drove through the desolate, yet fertile, landscape in hot sunshine, and were pleased to arrive, at last, at the well-sited, and well-built town of Caltanissetta, where, however, we once again searched in vain for decent lodgings. The mules occupy magnificent vaulted stables, the farmhands sleep on the clover intended for the animals, but the stranger has to establish his household anew. Any room available must first be cleaned. There are no chairs or benches; one sits on low but sturdy, wooden trestles, while tables are nowhere to be found.

If you wish to turn the trestles into bed-supports, you go to the carpenter and borrow as many boards as needed for a certain rental fee. The large leather bag Hackert lent us came in handy at this time, and was temporarily filled with straw.

Above all, arrangements had to be made regarding food. We had bought a hen on the way, and the vetturino had procured rice, salt, and spices, but since he has not been here before, it took a long while before we could find somewhere to do the cooking, as there was no opportunity for this in the inn itself. Finally, an elderly citizen deigned to lend us a stove, and kitchen and table utensils, and sell us some wood, for a small fee.

While our dinner cooked, he showed us around the town, ending at the market, where the most respected inhabitants sat about in the ancient manner, conversing and hoping to be entertained by us.

I had to relate the history of Frederick the Second, and their interest in this great king was so lively that I concealed the news of his death, lest we become hated by delivering the sad tidings to our hosts.

Caltanissetta, Saturday, April 28, 1787.

Various geological observations, penned in retrospect. From Agrigento, descending the limestone cliffs, a whitish soil is revealed, the explanation of which became clear later: one finds the more ancient limestone again, with gypsum immediately adjacent. The valleys are wide and flat, with arable farming extending to the summits, and often across them; the older limestone mixed with weathered gypsum. Now looser, yellowish, weathered, and less ancient limestone appears: in the ploughed fields, its colour is clearly visible, often tending towards a darker, even violet, hue. A little over halfway down, the gypsum reappears. On it, a beautiful violet, almost rose-red sedum frequently grows, and on the limestone cliffs, an attractive yellow moss.

The weathered limestone appears more frequently, and most strongly, towards Caltanissetta, where it lies in deposits containing individual shells; then it appears reddish, almost like red-lead, with a little violet, as noted above at San Martino.

The only quartz boulders I found, were about halfway along a small valley which, closed on three sides, was open towards the east, and thus the sea.

To the left in the distance, the tall mountain ridge near Cammarata was salient, while a second mountain looked like a truncated cone. For a good half of the journey, not a single tree was visible. The crops were splendid, though not as tall as at Agrigento, or by the shore, but as unmarred as could be; in the endless wheat fields, there was scarcely a weed. At first, we saw nothing but green fields, then ploughed ones, and in damp places, patches of meadow. Poplars also grow here. Just beyond Agrigento, we found apple and pear trees, and, occasionally, some fig-trees, on the heights and near the few villages.

For thirty miles, along with everything I could discern to the right and left, the stone consisted of older and newer limestone, with gypsum in between. The soil owes its fertility to the weathering, and mixing, of these three. It must contain a little sand; it grinds under the teeth. My conjecture concerning the ‘Achates’ River (*the Dirillo*) will be confirmed or not tomorrow.

The valleys have a beautiful shape, and though their floors are not entirely level, one sees few traces of heavy rainfall; only small, barely perceptible streams, trickling along, all flowing directly seawards. Red clover is scarce, and the dwarf palm is less apparent, as are all the flowers and shrubs of the southwestern side of the isle. Thistles are only allowed to command the tracks; everything else belongs to Ceres. Incidentally, the area bears a strong resemblance to the hilly and fertile regions of Germany, for example, the area between Erfurt and Gotha, especially when one looks towards Gleichen. Many things came together to make Sicily one of the most fertile countries in the world.

Horses have rarely been encountered on the entire tour; the farmers plough with oxen, and there is a prohibition against slaughtering cows and calves. We encountered many goats, donkeys, and mules. The few horses are mostly dapple greys with black lower legs, manes, and tails, and one finds the most magnificent stables with brick-paved and vaulted stalls. The land is fertilised with beans and lentils; the other crops are sown after the summer harvest. Bunches of sprouting, as yet still green, barley, and red clover, are offered for sale to passers-by.

On the hill above Caltanissetta, we encountered solid limestone containing fossils: the larger ones lowermost, the smaller on top. In the town's pavement, we found the limestone embedded with pectinites (*fossilised scallop shells*).

The same date, April 28, 1787.

Beyond Caltanissetta, the hills drop steeply to numerous valleys, which drain their waters into the River Salso (*the Imera Meridionale*). The soil is reddish, and loamy; much of it lies fallow, while the cultivated areas yield fairly good harvests, though still lagging behind those of the earlier regions.

Castrogiovanni (*Enna*)

Sunday, April 29, 1787.

Today we observed even greater fertility, and a greater scarcity of people. Rainy weather had set in, making travel most unpleasant, since we had to cross several swollen bodies of water. At the Fiume Salso, where one searches in vain for a bridge, we were surprised at the curious arrangement for fording the stream. A team of powerful fellows stood at the ready; they grasped the mule, rider, baggage and all, two on each side, and thus lead it through the deep section of the river to a large bank of gravel at the centre of the flow. Once the entire party had gathered there, they

proceeded to cross the second branch of the river in the same manner, the men keeping the animal on course amidst the current, through pushing and straining. There were bushes along the water, but these disappeared immediately inland. The Fiume Salso contains granite, a transition to gneiss; breccia; and monochromatic marble.

We now saw before us the solitary ridge on which Castrogiovanni (*called Enna, since 1926*) is sited, lending the area a strange and sombre character. As we rode up the long path that wound its way up the slope, we found the mountain composed of shell-bearing limestone; large, calcined shells were piled in heaps. Castrogiovanni is not visible until one reaches the very top of the ridge, since it lies on a rocky slope facing north. The curious little town itself, with its tower (*Torre di Federico II*), and, some distance to the north, the village of Calascibetta stand starkly opposite one another. In the plain between, the beans were in full bloom, but who could take pleasure in such a sight! The roads were dreadful, even more so in that they had once been paved, and it rained incessantly. Ancient Enna gave us a very unfriendly welcome: an attic room with shutters and no windows, so that we either had to sit in the dark, or endure the drizzle we had just escaped. We consumed some of the remaining provisions for our journey, and spent a miserable night. We made a solemn vow never again to choose our destination based on a mythological name.

Monday, April 30, 1787.

From Castrogiovanni, a rough, and unpleasant track descended; we were obliged to lead the horses. The sky before us was shrouded in low cloud, revealing a wondrous phenomenon in the zenith. It was striped white and grey and appeared to be something corporeal; but how could something corporeal reach the heights! Our guide explained that our astonishment was due to it being a side-view of Mount Etna visible through the broken cloud: alternating stripes of snowfields and mountain ridges formed the pattern, and what we could see was not even the highest peak.

The steep cliffs of ancient Enna lay behind us now, and we travelled through long, empty valleys; uncultivated and uninhabited they were left to the grazing cattle, which were not very large, with short horns, and were quite charming, slender, lively as fawns, and coloured a fine shade of brown, These excellent creatures had enough pasture, certainly, but it was nonetheless interspersed and overarched by enormous masses of thistles. They had found there the perfect opportunity to reproduce, and spread their numbers wide; they occupied a vast area, enough to graze the herds from several large estates. Since thistles are not perennials, they would be quite easy to eradicate if mowed down, now, before they flower.

While we were seriously considering these plans for an agricultural war against the thistles, we had to note, to our shame, that the plants were not entirely useless after all. At a solitary inn, a couple of Sicilian noblemen arrived, as we were feeding our animals. They were travelling across country to Palermo to attend a legal case. We watched in astonishment as these two grave individuals stood before a clump of thistles and, wielding sharp pocketknives, cut off the tops of those upright plants. They then grasped their prickly prizes with their fingertips, peeled the stems, and ate the pith with relish. They occupied themselves in this manner for a long time, while we refreshed ourselves with wine, this time unmixed, and excellent bread. The vetturino prepared some thistle pith for us, and assured us it was a healthy, cooling food, but we disliked it as much as we disliked the raw kohlrabi at Segesta.

San Paolo Valley, then via the coast, to Catania

April 30th.

Upon reaching the valley through which the San Paolo River meanders, we found the soil to be composed of reddish-black, weathered limestone. The valley itself was beautiful, the atmosphere pleasant thanks to the river; there was much fallow land, and wide fields. The well-mixed, loamy soil layer is sometimes twenty feet deep, and mostly uniform throughout. The aloes had sprouted vigorously. The crops looked well, though sometimes marred, and, on the south side, as yet undeveloped. Here and there, were small dwellings; but no trees except immediately below Castrogiovanni. Along the riverbanks, there was plentiful pasture, constrained only by the enormous masses of thistles. In the riverbed, quartz rock appeared once more, partly simple, partly breccia-like.

Molimenti is a new village, cleverly laid out amidst beautiful fields, on the banks of the river. The wheat nearby was incomparably ripe, and will be ready for harvest as early as the twentieth of May. The entire area shows no trace of volcanic activity; the river itself is free of glacial deposits. The soil, well-mixed, rather heavy than light, is generally a coffee-brown to violet colour. All the mountains to the east, enclosing the river, are of limestone and sandstone, the alternation of which I could not observe, but which, through weathering, have created the deep, consistently fertile soil of the lower valley.

Tuesday, May 1st, 1787.

We rode down through an unevenly cultivated valley, though one destined by Nature to fertile soil throughout, gripped by a certain degree of weary irritation, in that after the hardship we had endured, nothing at all suited our wish for the picturesque. Kniep had sketched a rather substantial background, but because the centre and foreground were quite dreadful, he added, in whimsical mood, a version of the latter, á la Poussin, which required no creative effort, and turned the sheet into a rather pretty little picture. How many picturesque travel illustrations contain such half-truths?

To dispel our irritable mood, our courier promised us excellent lodgings for the night. He did indeed lead us to an inn built only a few years ago, which, being situated at a reasonable distance from Catania, was obliged to provide a decent welcome for travellers. There, we settled into a tolerably decent room and, after twelve days hard travel, felt reasonably comfortable once again. However, we found an intriguing inscription on the wall, written in pencil in elegant English script, which read: 'Traveller, whoever you are, beware the Golden Lion in Catania; tis worse than falling into the clutches of the Cyclopes, Sirens, and Scylla together.' Although we suspected the well-meaning warning might be exaggerating the danger with its mythological threat, we nevertheless firmly resolved to avoid the Golden Lion, described, thus, as a fierce creature indeed. So, when the muleteer asked us where we intended to stay in Catania, we replied: 'Anywhere but the Golden Lion!' He then suggested we stay at the inn where he stabled his mules, provided we ate there also, as we had done before. We were all happy: escaping the lion's jaws was our only wish.

Near Ibla Major, lava boulders appear, carried down from the north by the water. Above the ferry-landing, one finds limestone, embedded in which are various types of boulders, made of chert, lava, and the limestone itself, and then hardened volcanic ash covered with tufa. The mixed gravel hills continue all the way to Catania; lava flows from Mount Etna can be found at, and above there. A probable crater appeared to the east. (Just below Molimenti, farmers were pulling flax.) How Nature loves colour is evident here, where the valley delights in blackish blue-grey lava; bright yellow moss covers it, a beautiful red sedum grows lushly, and other lovely violet flowers. Careful cultivation is evident in the plantings of cacti and grapevines. Now immense lava flows hemmed us in. Motta is a beautiful, and striking, rock formation. Here, the beans grow as high as very tall shrubs. The soil is variable, sometimes very gravelly, sometimes a finer mix.

The vetturino, who apparently had not seen the Spring vegetation of the southeast coast for a long time, burst into loud exclamations regarding the beauty of the crops and asked us, with an air of smug patriotism, whether there were any such crops in our country. Everything here has been sacrificed to them; one sees few, if any trees. A

lovely girl with a fine, slender figure, an older acquaintance of the vetturino, walked along beside his mule, chattering away while spinning thread as gracefully as possible. Now yellow flowers began to reign supreme. Towards Misterbianco, the cacti were growing in the hedges once more; these hedges, moreover, composed entirely of these wondrously- shaped plants, become ever more frequent, and more beautiful as we neared Catania.

Catania

Wednesday, May 2, 1787.

Our lodgings were truly wretched. The food, the way the muleteer was able to prepare it, was far from the best. Chicken with boiled rice would not have been too bad, had the rice not been so yellow with excess saffron that it was inedible. The most uncomfortable of beds had almost forced us to bring out Hackert's leather sack again, so we spoke early the next morning to the friendly innkeeper. He regretted that he could not provide anything better: 'But, over there, is a house where strangers are well looked after, and find every reason to be content.' He pointed to a large corner-house, the side facing us promising much. We hastened there at once, and found an energetic fellow who introduced himself as the innkeeper's servant, in whose absence, he showed us to a pleasant room next to a hallway, assuring us that we would be served at the lowest possible price. We promptly inquired, as was customary, what the charge was for lodgings, table-service, wine, breakfast, and other foreseeable costs. Everything was inexpensive, and we hastily brought over our belongings and arranged them in the spacious, gilded chests of drawers available. Kniep had his first opportunity to spread out his portfolio. He arranged his drawings, and I, my notes. Then, delighted by the excellent rooms, we stepped out onto the balcony of the hall to enjoy the view. After we had contemplated and praised it sufficiently, we turned to recommence our tasks, and lo and behold! There, high above our heads, was a large golden lion. We looked at each other thoughtfully, smiled, and then laughed. From then on, however, we kept a lookout, wondering if one of Homer's terrifying mythological figures might be lurking somewhere.

Nothing of the sort was to be seen; however, we found a pretty young woman in the hall, playing with a child of about two years old, though she was immediately reprimanded, and harshly, by the roving deputy innkeeper: she should leave, he said, she had no business being there. — 'It is hard that you're chasing me away,' she said, 'the child can't be quietened when you're gone, and I'm sure the gentlemen will allow me to soothe the little one in your presence.' The husband refused to let it pass, and

tried to get rid of her; the child cried, pitifully, in the doorway, and we finally had to demand, earnestly, that the pretty young lady stay.

Having been warned by the Englishman's note, it was easy to see through the charade; we played the newcomers, the innocents, while the deputy played the loving father to the best of his ability. The child was actually at its quietest with him; the supposed mother had probably given it a pinch behind the door.

And so, looking completely innocent, when the man left to deliver our letter of recommendation to the domestic chaplain of Prince Biscari (*Vincenzo Paternò-Castello Morso, VI Prince of Biscari*), she lingered until he returned. He indicated that the abbé himself would appear to discuss the details.

Catania, Thursday, May 3, 1787

The Abbé, who greeted us last night, re-appeared early this morning, and led us to the palace, which is built on a high, single-story base. We viewed the museum, first, where marble and bronze statues, vases, and every kind of antiquity are housed together. Here was another opportunity to expand my knowledge, and I was particularly captivated by a torso of Jupiter (*now in the Museo Civico Castello Ursino, in Catania*), a cast of which I already knew from Tischbein's workshop, and which possessed greater merit than I was capable of judging. A member of the household provided the necessary historical information, and then we entered a large, high-ceilinged hall. The many chairs along the walls indicated that large gatherings sometimes took place there. We sat down, anticipating a favourable reception. A pair of women entered, and paced the length of the hall. They were talking animatedly to each other. When they noticed us, the Abbé stood up, and I did the same; we bowed. I asked who they were and learned that the younger woman was the princess (*Francesca Paternò Castello, V Baronessa della Sigona*), the older a noblewoman from Catania. We seated ourselves again, while they paced back and forth as if in the marketplace.

We were introduced to the prince, who, as I had already been told, would show us his coin collection as a particular favour indicating his trust in us, since apparently his father (*Ignazio Paternò-Castello, V Prince of Biscari, archaeologist and patron of the arts*), and he himself, had lost many items during such showings, somewhat diminishing his usual willingness to share them. As regards these objects, I was now able to appear somewhat more knowledgeable, having learned a great deal from examining the collection of Prince Torremuzza (*Gabriele Lancillotto Castello, Prince of Torremuzza and Marquis of Motta d'Affermo, antiquarian, and numismatist*). I was acquiring further knowledge and, guided by that enduring thread with which Winckelmann leads me through the various labyrinthine epochs of art, was able to

proceed quite well. The prince, fully informed about these matters, seeing before him not experts but attentive enthusiasts, was happy to instruct us as regards everything we inquired about.

After devoting some time, but still too little, to these matters, we were about to take our leave, when he led us to meet his mother (*Anna Maria Morso*), and to show us various other smaller works of art.

We were introduced to a handsome, innately noble woman who greeted us with the words: 'Look around me, gentlemen, you will find everything here just as my late husband collected and arranged it. This I owe to the piety of my son, who not only allows me to live in his best rooms, but also does not permit me to move or remove the least thing that his late father acquired and displayed; thus I have the twofold advantage of both being able to live in the way I have been accustomed to for so many years, and also being able to see and get to know, as always, the distinguished visitors who come from far and wide to admire our treasures.'

She then unlocked the glass cabinet, herself, in which pieces of amber were kept. Sicilian amber differs from northern amber in that it ranges from the transparent and opaque wax and honey colours through all shades of saturated yellow to the most beautiful hyacinthine red. There were carved urns, cups, and other objects sometimes composed of large, admirable pieces of the material. The lady took particular delight in these objects, as well as in carved shells like those cut in Trapani, and also select ivory carvings, and she had many an intriguing story to tell about them. The prince drew our attention to the more serious objects, and so several hours passed pleasantly and informatively.

Meanwhile, the Princess, learning that we were German, inquired about Von Riedesel (*Johann Herman von Riedesel, see his 'Travels through Sicily', 1773, mentioned earlier*), Bartels (*Johann Heinrich Bartels, see his 'Letters Regarding Calabria and Sicily', 1787*), and Münter (*Friedrich Münter, scholar and theologian, see his informative books on Sicily, published 1790*), all of whom she knew and, having discerned their various characters and conduct, was able to appreciate severally. We were reluctant to part from her, and she seemed reluctant to let us go. The isolated life always conveys a certain loneliness, refreshed and sustained as it is only by transient company.

The priest then led us to the Benedictine monastery, to the cell of a brother whose melancholy and withdrawn appearance, despite his moderate age, hardly promised joyful company. He was, however, a skilled individual who alone knew how to tame the church's immense organ. Surmising rather than waiting to hear, our wishes, he fulfilled them silently; we entered the spacious church, whereupon, tackling that

magnificent instrument, he filled the vault to its furthest corners with the softest of whispers as well as the most powerful of sounds.

Anyone who had not seen him before would have thought he was a giant wielding such force; but since we were already aware of his character, we simply marvelled that he had not been destroyed, already, in the contest.

Catania, Friday, May 4, 1787.

Shortly after dinner, the Abbé arrived in a carriage, as he was to show us the more distant parts of the city. As we were settling therein, a curious dispute over rank arose. I had mounted first, and was about to seat myself to his left, when he, as he mounted in turn, expressly demanded that I shift around, and have him on my left. I begged him to refrain from such formalities. 'Forgive me,' he said, 'for seating us thus, but if I take my place to your right, everyone will think that I am riding with you; but if I sit to your left, it is implied that you are riding with me — that is, the person who is showing you the city in the name of the prince.' I had, of course, no objection to this, and so it was done.

We drove along streets where the lava, which destroyed a large part of this city in 1669, remains visible to this day. The solid, fiery flow was utilised like any other rock formation; roads had even been marked out thereon, and partially built. I chipped off an indisputable piece of the molten rock, mindful that before my departure from Germany, the debate about the volcanic nature of basalt had already begun. And I did the same in several places, in order to take samples of the variations in form.

If, however, the locals were not themselves the friends of their region, if they had not themselves striven, either for scientific purposes or for personal gain, to gather information on what was remarkable in their territory, we foreigners would have had to spend a fair amount of time in doing so. Already in Naples, the trader in lava specimens had greatly assisted me; here, to a far greater degree, Count Giuseppe Gioeni (*Chair of Natural History at the University of Catania*) did so. In his rich, most elegantly-arranged collection, I found specimens from Mount Etna, from the basalts at its foot, more or less recognisable as metamorphosed rocks; everything was shown to me in a most generous manner. Most of all, I admired the zeolites from the rugged, sea-bound cliffs below Acireale.

When we asked the count about the ways and means of climbing Mount Etna, he refused to countenance anything as risky as our attempting to reach the summit, especially at the present time of year. 'In general,' he said, apologetically, 'foreigners arriving here take things far too lightly; we who are neighbours of the mountain are content to seize the perfect opportunity once or twice in our lives to attain the summit.

Patrick Brydone, who first kindled the desire to climb the fiery peak, with his descriptions of the volcano (*see 'A Tour through Sicily and Malta', 1773*), never made the ascent; Michal Jan Borch (*see his 'Lettres sur la Sicile et sur L'île de Malthe', 1785*) leaves the reader in suspense, as he too only reached a certain altitude, and I could say the same for several others. At the moment, the snow still extends quite far down the slopes, and presents an insurmountable obstacle. If you seek my advice, ride tomorrow, weather permitting, to the foot of Monte Rosso *(named for the red coloration of the soil, the volcanic cone was formed during Etna's eruptions of 1329*) and climb to its summit; from there you will enjoy the most magnificent of views, and at the same time be able to observe the lava from the eruption of 1669, which unfortunately flowed towards the city. The view is clear and splendid; it is best if I leave others to tell you more.'



'View from Mount Etna towards the Bay of Taormina' - Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (German, 1749–1832)
Klassik Stiftung Weimar, Museen (Inv. GGz/0574)
Digital reproduction · See Art. L. 111-1 CPI and § 68 UrhG

Monte Rosso

Saturday, May 5, 1787.

Following good advice, we set off early on our mules, and, forever gazing behind us, reached the region of the lava flows, still uneroded by time. Jagged lumps and slabs stared back at us, through which the animals forged a path haphazardly. We halted at

the first significant rise. Kniep sketched what lay ahead, with great precision: the masses of lava in the foreground, the twin peaks of Monte Rosso to the left, and directly above us the forests of Nicolosi, from which the snow-covered, barely smoking summit emerged. We drew nearer to the red mountain, and I climbed the slope: it is entirely composed of red volcanic scree, ash, and stones. It would have been easy to circumnavigate the mouth of the lava flow had a violently-stormy, morning wind not made every step uncertain. In order to make any progress at all, I had to remove my coat, but now my hat was in danger of being blown into the crater at any moment, and I along with it. So, I sat down to compose myself, and survey the area; but even this position was of no use: the gale was blowing directly from the east over the magnificent landscape that stretched below me, near and far, all the way to the sea. Before my eyes lay the whole shore from Messina to Syracuse, with its curves and bays, either completely exposed or only partially covered by rocks. When I descended, quite dazed, I saw that Kniep had used his time well, and sheltered from the wind, had captured, in delicate lines on paper, what the raging storm had barely allowed me to see, much less record.

Having returned to the jaws of the Golden Lion, we sought out the servant whom we had, with some difficulty, persuaded to stay with us. He praised us for abandoning the summit, but earnestly suggested a sea voyage to the cliffs of Aci for the next day: it was, he said, the most delightful excursion one could undertake from Catania! We should take food and drink, and perhaps even some cooking utensils. His wife offered to accompany us if needed. Furthermore, he recalled the jubilation of some English travellers, who had apparently even hired a boat with musicians for accompaniment — a delight beyond all imagination.

The cliffs of Aci exerted a powerful pull on me; I had a great desire to extract some fine examples of zeolites for myself after seeing the like at Count Gioeni's. I was tempted to decide in favour, merely declining the offer of his wife accompanying us. But the cautionary spirit of that Englishman's note, which I mentioned previously, prevailed; we renounced the zeolites and felt quite proud of ourselves for our abstinence.

Catania, Sunday, May 6, 1787

Our clerical companion arrived promptly. He led us on a visit to various remnants of ancient architecture, which require a considerable talent for imaginative recreation on the visitor's part. We were shown the remains of water reservoirs, which had hosted naumachias (*mock naval battles*), and other such ruins, which, however, were so thoroughly buried and submerged during the city's repeated destruction through lava

flows, earthquakes, and war that only the most knowledgeable expert on ancient architecture could derive any enjoyment or insight from them.

The priest declined to pay his respects to the prince again, and we parted with both sides expressing heartfelt gratitude and goodwill.

Taormina

Monday, May 7, 1787

Thank heavens, everything we saw today has already been sufficiently described, more so in that Kniep has resolved to spend the entire day tomorrow sketching, from above. Having climbed to the summit of the cliffs that rise steeply near the seashore, one finds two rocks connected by a semicircle. Whatever natural form the area may have had, art has intervened and transformed it into an amphitheatre-like semicircle, in which to accommodate spectators; adjoining walls and other brick structures once providing the necessary passageways and halls. At the foot of the stepped semicircle, the stage was built transversely, connecting the two rocks and completing this most tremendous natural and artistic spectacle.

If one now sits where the uppermost spectators once sat, one must admit that no theatre audience has ever had such objects before them. To the right, castles rise on higher rocks; further down lies the city, and although these structures are more recent, similar ones likely stood on the same spot in ancient times. Now one can see the entire long ridge of Mount Etna, and to the south the coast as far as Catania, even Syracuse; the immense, steaming volcano closes the wide, broad panorama, but not terrifyingly, as the softening effect of the atmosphere makes it appear more distant and gentler in nature than it actually is.

Turning from this view to the passage at the rear of the viewing platform, one sees all the rock faces to the north-east, the road to Messina winding its way between them and the sea. Rock formations and ridges dot the sea itself, and the coast of Calabria stretches into the far distance, distinguishable only by gentle rising clouds.

We descended towards the theatre, lingered among its ruins, among which a skilled architect should at least attempt to demonstrate his skill at imaginative restoration on paper, and then tried to forge a path through the gardens towards the city. But here we learned what an impenetrable bulwark a fence of agave plants, planted side by side, truly is: one can see through the interlocking leaves and even believe one can penetrate them, but the strong spines along the leaf-edges are tricky obstacles; if one steps onto such a colossal leaf, hoping it will support one, it collapses, and instead of reaching

open ground, one falls into the arms of a neighbouring plant. Finally, we managed to navigate this labyrinth, and found little to enjoy in the town, but were unable to leave before sunset. It was infinitely beautiful to watch how this land and seascape, fascinating in every respect, gradually sank into darkness.

Below Taormina, by the sea, Tuesday, May 8, 1787.

Kniep, whom I was fortunate enough as to encounter on my travels, I cannot praise highly enough, for he has relieved me of a burden that would have proved unbearable, and restored to me my own true nature. He departed so as to draw, in detail, what we saw yesterday. He will have to sharpen his pencils a few times, and I know not when he will finish, but his sketches will provide the means to view it all again! At first, I wished to go with him, but then was tempted to stay here; I sought privacy like a bird that wants to build its nest. In a poor, neglected cottage garden, I seated myself on orange-tree branches, and absorbed myself in reverie. Orange-tree branches, as seats, sounds rather strange, but becomes quite natural when one knows that the tree, left to its own devices, soon divides above the root into branches that, in time, become distinct limbs.

And so, I sat, and further developed the plot of my 'Nausicaa,' a dramatic condensation of the Odyssey. I regard it as an achievable project, but one has to consider, in depth, the fundamental difference between drama and the epic.

Kniep descended, and has brought back two enormous sheets of paper, containing meticulous sketches, and is satisfied and cheerful. He will colour both of them for me, as an eternal memento of this glorious day.

Then we shall not forget that we once gazed down upon this beautiful shore, under the clearest sky, from a small balcony, and saw roses, and heard nightingales. The latter, we were assured, sing here for six months of the year.

The Idea of Writing a 'Nausicaa' – Later Note

Having been assured, through the presence and activity of a skilled artist and through my own, albeit limited and lesser, efforts, that I would be left with firm, well-chosen images of the most interesting regions and their parts, sketched out and, if I wished, executed in detail, I all the more readily yielded to the gradually awakening urge: to enliven the magnificent surroundings — the sea, the islands, the harbours — with poetically worthy figures and create a composition for myself, set here, and in a manner, and with a tone, such as I have not yet produced. The clarity of the sky, the

breeze off the sea, the mists that merge mountain slopes, sky, and sea to create a single element — all this nourished my intent. And as I wandered the beautiful public gardens among flowering hedges of oleander, through arbours of fruit-bearing orange and lemon trees, and lingered among other trees and shrubs unknown to me, I felt their foreign influence in the most pleasant way.

Having convinced myself that there could be no better 'commentary' on the Odyssey than the precise and vivid environment here, I had obtained a copy, and had read it, in my own manner, with incredible interest. But I was soon inspired to create something of my own, which, however strange an idea it may have seemed at first, grew ever dearer to me, and finally occupied my mind completely. I adopted the idea of treating the subject of Nausicaa as a tragedy.

I could not foresee myself what might come of it, but soon settled on a plan of work. The main idea was this: to portray Nausicaa as a fair maiden, courted by many, who, lacking any inclination, had thus far rejected all suitors, but, attracted by a stranger, emerged from her passive state, and compromised herself through a rash expression of affection, which rendered the situation utterly tragic. This simple story was to be made enjoyable by a richness of subordinate motifs, and especially by the setting of sea and island as a component of the actual execution and an influence on the individual tone of the piece.

The first act began with the ball game. The unanticipated meeting occurs, and her hesitancy regarding her leading the stranger to the city personally, already foreshadows a budding attraction.

The second act revealed the house of Alcinous, the characters of the suitors, and ended with the entrance of Ulysses.

The third was entirely devoted to the significance of that adventurer, and I hoped to achieve something artful and enjoyable in the monologue narrating his adventures, which would be received quite differently by the various listeners. During the narration, Nausicaa's passion intensifies, and her lively interest in the stranger is finally brought to light through action and reaction.

In the fourth act, Ulysses displays his bravery offstage, while the women remain behind, giving free rein to their desires, hopes, and tender feelings. Given the great advantage the stranger now enjoys, Nausicaa becomes even less composed and compromises herself irrevocably among her compatriots. Ulysses, who, part-guilty, part-innocent, instigates all this, is ultimately forced to announce his departure, leaving the poor girl no choice but to seek death in the fifth act.

There was nothing in this composition that I could not paint from Nature based on my own experiences. Even though travelling, and on the journey finding myself at risk

of arousing feelings that, while not ending tragically, could nevertheless be painful, dangerous, and harmful enough; even though in depicting distant objects, adventures and the events of my life for the entertainment of society, at this great distance from home, I might be considered a demigod by the young, and a braggart by more established people; even experiencing both undeserved favours and unexpected obstacles as a result — I still felt such an attachment to the plan, and my intent, that I spent my time in Palermo, indeed most of our Sicilian journey so far, daydreaming about it. Which is why I felt little discomfort in tackling the subject, since I felt myself on classical ground, and in a poetic mood, in which I could grasp everything I experienced, viewed, noticed, and encountered, and preserve it all in a delightful form.

Following my commendable, or perhaps uncommendable, habit, I wrote little or nothing down, but worked through most of it in my mind to the last detail, where it was then pushed to the background by subsequent distractions, and neglected, until I now recall only a fleeting memory of it.

May 8th. On the way to Messina.

To the left are high limestone cliffs. They become more colourful, forming beautiful bays; then comes a type of rock that one might call clay-slate or greywacke. Granite boulders can already be found in the streams. The yellow apples of the solanum and the red blossoms of the oleander add cheer to the landscape. The Nisi River (*Fiumedinisi*) carries mica schist, as do the streams thereafter.

Wednesday, May 9, 1787.

Assailed by an easterly wind, we rode along between the surging sea on our right, and the cliffs from which we had looked down the day before yesterday, constantly encountering flows of water. We crossed countless streams, among which a larger one, the Nisi, bears the honorary title of a river. But these waters, as well as the gravel they carry, were easier to cross than the pools of seawater, the waves rising fiercely, and in many places breaking over the path, topping the cliffs, and splashing back onto the track. It was a magnificent sight and the experience, though strange, justified our suffering the discomfort.

At the same time, our mineralogical observations were not neglected. The enormous limestone cliffs collapse on weathering, their softer sections worn away by the motion of the waves, leaving behind the admixture of harder rock, and thus the entire beach is covered with colourful, chert-like flint, several samples of which I collected.

Messina

Thursday, May 10, 1787.

And so, we arrived in Messina, and, since we knew of no other opportunity, decided to spend the first night in our vetturino's lodgings, intending to look for better accommodation the following morning. This decided, upon entering the city we immediately received the most dreadful impression, since we rode for a quarter of an hour past ruin after ruin before we came to the inn, which alone amidst the entire district had been rebuilt and offered as our view from the windows of the upper floor only an irregular wasteland of such ruins. Beyond the perimeter of the building, one sensed neither people nor animals; at night, there was simply a dreadful silence. The doors could neither be closed nor locked; it was as ill-equipped for human guests as the various post-houses, and yet we slept peacefully on a mattress that the obliging vetturino had persuaded the innkeeper to grant us.

Friday, May 11, 1787.

Today we parted ways with that stalwart guide; a generous tip rewarded him for his diligent services. We said our farewells amicably, after he had first arranged for a servant to take us on to the best inn, and show us all the remarkable sights of Messina. The innkeeper, eager to see that wish fulfilled as quickly as possible, helped us move our boxes and all our luggage to a comfortable apartment closer to the busier part of the city, that is to say, outside the city itself. The situation is as follows: after the immense disaster that befell Messina (*in 1783*), twelve thousand inhabitants having perished, there was no accommodation left for the thirty thousand who had survived: since most of the buildings had collapsed, and the shattered walls of those that remained offered no shelter. Therefore, a makeshift township was hastily erected on a large meadow north of Messina. Anyone who has strolled through Frankfurt's Römerberg (*the town-hall square*) during the fair, or Leipzig's Marketplatz, will quickly grasp its character, as all the shops and workshops open onto the street, and much of the activity takes place outdoors. Consequently, there are few larger buildings, and none are particularly closed off from the public, allowing the inhabitants to spend much of their time in the open air. They have lived like this for four years now, and their makeshift, hut-like, even tent-like existence has had a decisive influence on the character of the inhabitants. The horrors of that tremendous event, and their dread of a similar one, leads them to enjoy the pleasures of the moment with good-natured cheerfulness. The fear of a new calamity was renewed on April 21st, twenty days ago,

when a noticeable tremor shook the ground once more. We were shown a small church where a crowd of people, gathered at that very moment, felt the tremor. Some of the people who had been inside seemed not to have recovered from their shock.

While searching for and examining these objects, we were guided by a friendly consul who, without being asked, took considerable care of us — to be gratefully acknowledged in this wasteland of ruins more than anywhere else. At the same time, learning that we wished to depart as soon as possible, he introduced us to the captain of a French merchant ship about to sail to Naples; which was doubly welcome, since a white flag (*the primary naval flag of France at that time, under the Ancien Régime)* offers protection against pirates.

We had just expressed to our kindly guide our wish to see inside one of the larger, albeit only single-story, huts, and view its furnishings, and temporary household arrangements, when an amicable fellow joined us, who promptly identified himself as a French language teacher. After completing our walk, the consul informed him of our wish to see such a home, requesting that he allow us to visit his own, and introduce us to his family.

We entered the hut made of boards, and thatched. The impression gained was exactly like that of a fairground booth where wild animals or other curiosities are exhibited for money: the timber framing of the walls and roof was plainly visible; a green curtain partitioned the front room, which, lacking flooring, seemed like a beaten threshing ground. There were chairs and tables, but no other furniture. The space was illuminated from above through chance openings in the boards. We conversed for a while, and I found myself gazing at the green curtain and the roof beams visible above it, when suddenly two charming little girls' faces peeked out from behind the curtain, black-eyed beneath black curls, and full of curiosity. But as soon as they realised they had been seen, they vanished like lightning. At the consul's request, however, after enough time had passed to adorn themselves, they reappeared, looking neat, sweetly dressed and, in their colourful clothes, appearing quite dainty against the green backcloth. From their questions, it seemed they took us for fabulous beings from another world, a charming misconception that our answers only reinforced. The consul delivered a humorous account of our sudden appearance as if in a fairy-tale; the conversation was delightful, and it was hard to tear ourselves away. Only when we reached the door did we realise that we had failed to view the interior rooms, and had neglected to ask about the house's structure and its inhabitants.

Messina, Saturday, May 12, 1787.

The consul advised us, among other matters, that though not absolutely necessary it was advisable to pay homage to the governor (*Giovanni O'Dea, a Field-Marshal of Ireland*), who, being a peculiar old man, could do us as much harm as good, depending on his whims and prejudices; it was to the consul's advantage if he were to present any important foreigners to him, and a newcomer never knew whether he would need aid from the governor, in some way or another. To please my friend, I accompanied him on a visit.

Entering the antechamber, we heard a truly dreadful commotion. A courier, making Pulcinello-like gestures, whispered in the consul's ear: 'A bad day! A dangerous time!' But we entered and found the ancient governor, his back to us, seated at a table near the window. Large piles of old yellowed letters lay before him, from which he was calmly cutting out the blank portions, thus revealing his thrifty nature. During this peaceful activity, he cursed and swore terribly at a respectable man who, judging by his clothing, might have been something to do with Malta and who was defending himself with great composure and exactness, though he was given scant opportunity to do so. Scolded and railed-at he tried to dismiss, in a calm manner, a suspicion that the governor held, it seemed, that he had repeatedly gone to and fro without authorisation. The man referred to his passport and known connections in Naples, but all to no avail; the governor continued cutting up his old letters, carefully removing the blank parts, while raging continuously.

Besides the two of us, a dozen, or so, other people were standing in a wide circle, witnessing this savage duel, probably envying our spot by the door, seeing it as providing a good opportunity for escape should the enraged man decide to raise his walking stick, and lay about him. The consul's features had noticeably lengthened during this scene; I was comforted, whenever I occasionally glanced behind me, by the comical expressions of the courier, who was making all sorts of faces, positioned as he was beyond the threshold, as if none of it amounted to much.

The dreadful affair was resolved quite mildly; the governor concluded by saying that while nothing prevented him having the offender taken into custody, and keeping him in jail, on this occasion his behaviour would be ignored. He could remain in Messina for a few days, the number of which he would decide, then he must pack his bags and never return. Quite calmly, without altering his expression, the gentleman excused himself, and greeted the assembly politely, ourselves in particular, whom he had to pass among to reach the door. When the governor turned away angrily, intending to reprimand him further, he saw us, immediately composed himself, beckoned to the consul, and we approached.

A man of very advanced age, head bowed, casting deep, dark glances from beneath grey, bristling eyebrows; he was now quite a different person than he had been but a moment before. He invited me to sit next to him, and, continuing without further interruption in his task, asked me about various things, to which I replied. Finally, he added that as long as I remained, I was invited to dine at his table. The consul, as pleased as I was, indeed even more so because he possessed a better understanding of the danger we had escaped, flew down the stairs, while I lost all desire to ever set foot in that lion's den again.

Messina, Sunday, May 13, 1787

Although we awoke to bright sunshine in a pleasant apartment, we still found ourselves in ruined Messina. Our view, a most unpleasant sight, is of the so-called Palazzata (*the Palazzata di Simone Gulli, partially destroyed in the earthquake of 1783*), a crescent-shaped row of veritable palaces, that encircles and defines the harbour for a distance of about half a mile or so. All are four-storey stone buildings, several of which still are completely intact up to the main cornice, while others are shattered as far down as the third, second, and even first floor, so that this former splendid row now appears most sadly fissured, and riddled with gaps, the blue of the sky apparent through almost every window. The actual apartments inside have all collapsed.

The reason for this strange phenomenon is that the architectural magnificence initiated by the wealthy tempted less affluent neighbours, to vie with them, in appearance at least, hiding their old houses — cobbled together from larger and smaller rubble, and copious amounts of limestone — behind new ashlar facades. These already-insubstantial structures were bound to collapse when impacted and destroyed by the immense shock of the quake. Among the tales of various miraculous rescues that occurred, the following is told: the inhabitant of one of these buildings, at the moment of disaster, stepped into a window-recess, the house behind him collapsing completely. Stranded high above, he calmly awaited the moment of his liberation from his aerial prison. That poor construction of this kind, resulting from the lack of readily available quarry-stone, was primarily responsible for the utter ruin of the city is demonstrated by the resilience of more solid buildings. The Jesuit College and adjacent Church (*San Giovanni Battista, destroyed with the college in the 1908 earthquake*), built of sturdy stone blocks, still stand intact in their original strength. Be that as it may, however, Messina's present appearance is extremely disheartening, and reminiscent of ancient times when the indigenous Sicani and Sicels left this troubled area to settle in and cultivate the west coast of Sicily.

After spending our morning thus, we went off to the inn to partake of a simple meal. We were still seated together, quite merrily, when the consul's servant burst in and announced, breathlessly, that the governor was seeking me throughout the city; he had invited me to dinner, and I had failed to appear. The consul respectfully requested that I attend immediately, regardless of whether I had missed the appointment through forgetfulness or by design, and whether I had eaten or not. Only then did I grasp the degree of recklessness with which I had dismissed the Cyclops' invitation, glad at having escaped him previously. The servant granted me no quarter; his entreaties were urgent and compelling, the consul fearing that the despot, in his rage, would turn him on him, and the entire population.

While tidying my hair and clothes, I took courage, and followed my guide, composedly, summoning the aid of Ulysses as my patron saint, and requesting his intercession with Pallas Athena.

Arriving at the lion's den, I was led by the courier into a large dining hall, where some forty people were seated at an oblong table, in total silence. The seat to the governor's right was free, and the courier escorted me there.

After greeting the host and guests with a bow, I sat down beside him, apologising for my absence by citing the sprawling nature of the city, and the errors into which the local way of telling the time had already led me on several occasions. He replied, with a fiery look, that one should inquire about, and adapt to, the local customs in foreign lands. I responded that it was ever my aim, but had found that, despite one's best intentions, one commonly makes certain errors during one's first few days, when a place is still new to one, and the circumstances unfamiliar. These errors would indeed be unforgivable, were it not for the valid excuses of travel fatigue, and the distraction provided by other matters, for example one's concern to find suitable accommodation, or arrange onward travel.

He asked how long I intended to stay. I replied that I wished to stay for a good while, so that I might show my gratitude for the favour granted me by strictly obeying his commands and instructions. After a pause, he then asked what I had seen of Messina. I recounted my morning, commenting briefly, and adding that I was most impressed by the cleanliness and order in the streets of the ruined city. And indeed, it was admirable how all the streets had been cleared of rubble, the debris having been tossed into the ruined buildings, the fallen stones piled against the houses, and the centres of the streets reopened to trade and commerce. Here I was able to flatter the governor with the truth, assuring him that all the grateful Messinesi recognised their debt to him for this act of generosity. — 'They acknowledge it, do they?' he grumbled. 'They complained enough about being coerced to labour for their own benefit.' I spoke of the government's wise intentions, of higher purposes that might only be understood

and appreciated later, and the like. He asked if I had seen the Jesuit church, which I said I had not; whereupon he promised to have it, and all its appurtenances, shown to me.

During this conversation, interrupted only by a pause or two, I noted that the rest of the party sat in profound silence, moving no more than was necessary to carry their food to their mouths. When the table was cleared and coffee served, they stood all around the walls like wax figures. I approached the chaplain, who was to show me the church, to thank him in advance for his efforts; he moved away from the wall, humbly assuring me that he had nothing in mind now but His Excellency's orders. I then addressed a young stranger standing nearby, who, though French, also seemed uneasy; he too had fallen silent and stood petrified, like the rest of the party, among whom I recognised several who had chanced to witness my scene of yesterday with our Knight of Malta.

The governor departed, and after some time the priest told me it was time to leave. I followed him; the rest of the party having silently dispersed. He led me to the portal of the Jesuit church, which, in the renowned architectural style of those fathers, rises magnificently, and imposingly into the sky. A porter was already approaching, ready to invite us within, but the priest restrained me, saying we must first await the governor. The latter soon arrived, halted in the square near the church, and beckoned us, whereupon the three of us attended upon his carriage. He ordered the porter not only to show me around the church, in every aspect, but also to recount in detail the history of the altars and other endowments; furthermore, he was to unlock the sacristies and draw my attention to everything noteworthy contained therein. I was a person he wished to honour, a man who should be granted every reason to speak laudably of Messina in his homeland. 'Do not fail,' he said, turning to me with a smile, insofar as his features were capable of one, 'do not fail, while you are here, to attend the table at the proper hour; you will always be well received.' I had scarcely had time to utter a respectful reply, when the carriage moved on.

From that moment, the chaplain appeared more cheerful, and we entered the church. The castellan, as he might well be called in this damaged, but magical palace, was preparing to fulfil the duty strongly-recommended to him, when Kniep together with the consul rushed into the sanctuary, embraced me, and expressed their passionate joy at seeing me again, whom they had already believed to be in custody. They had waited in utter terror until the nimble courier, doubtless well-paid by the consul, appeared and recounted the happy ending to my adventure in a series of anecdotes, whereupon a joyful mood had overtaken the pair, who sought me out immediately when they learned of the governor's instructions regarding the church.

Meanwhile, we stood before the high altar, listening to the history of the church's ancient treasures: columns of lapis lazuli, fluted with bronzed or gilded rods; pilasters and panels inlaid in the Florentine style; magnificent Sicilian agates in abundance, the bronzing and gilding repeated and uniting all.

Then, a wonderful contrapuntal fugue ensued, as Kniep and the consul narrating the details of my embarrassing adventure, intertwined with the chaplain's presentation of the treasures in their still well-preserved splendour, both parties being deeply immersed in their respective subjects; whereupon I had the dual pleasure of feeling the full worth of my fortunate escape and at the same time viewing the products of the Sicilian mountains, which I had already gone to much trouble to collect and label, used architecturally.

A precise knowledge of the individual components of which this splendour was composed, led me to discover that the so-called lapis lazuli of those columns was actually only calcara, but of a beautiful colour I had never seen before, and magnificently composed. Even so, the columns were praiseworthy in themselves; since they had required an immense quantity of material to be produced, in order to allow the selection of pieces of so fine and uniform a colour, and then the effort involved in cutting, grinding, and polishing was equally substantial. But what was ever insurmountable for those Jesuit fathers?

The consul, meanwhile, continued to advise me of my perilous situation. The governor, displeased with himself in that I had witnessed his violent treatment of the quasi-Maltese upon my very first audience, had resolved to bestow a special honour on me, and had devised a plan to that end, a plan which had been thwarted at the outset by my absence. Having finally seated himself at the dinner table after a long wait, the despot had been unable to conceal his impatience and displeasure, and the company had stood in fear of witnessing a scene either upon my arrival, or when the meal had ended.

Meanwhile, the sacristan tried, repeatedly, to add his comments, while opening various private rooms, built according to decent proportions, well, even splendidly, decorated, and containing movable church furnishings, carved and polished to match the overall style. I saw nothing in the way of precious metals, nor of any genuine works of art, old or new.

Our Italian-German fugue, for the chaplain and sacristan sounded in the former language, Kniep and the consul in the latter, was drawing to a close when an officer joined us whom I had seen at the banquet. He belonged to the governor's retinue. This again caused some concern, especially since he offered to lead me to the harbour, where he intended to show me round various places otherwise inaccessible to

strangers. My friends exchanged glances, but I was undeterred from accompanying him. After a trivial conversation, I began to address him familiarly and confessed that I had noted, quite clearly, at the banquet that several otherwise silent companions had indicated to me, by friendly gestures, that I was not alone among strangers, but among friends, indeed brothers, and therefore had nothing to fear. I considered it my duty to thank him, and to request that he extend the same thanks to the other friends. He replied that they had tried all the more to reassure me because, knowing their superior's temperament, they had actually held no fear for myself; an outburst like the one against the Maltese was rare, and it was because of his occasional outbursts that the worthy old man would, after reproaching himself, restrain himself for a long time, then live for a while in a calm execution of his duty, until, surprised by some unexpected incident, he would again be swept away by a new tide of vehemence. The stalwart friend added that nothing would be more desirable to him and his companions than to establish a closer connection with me, and asked if I would be so kind as to introduce myself at dinner, as a better opportunity for doing so would arise that evening. I politely evaded his request by asking him to forgive me my whim: namely, that I wished to be regarded simply as an anonymous traveller; if I could arouse trust and gain their sympathy as such, it would be agreeable and desirable to me; various reasons forbade me from entering into any other kind of relationship.

I had no wish to press the matter, since I had declined to reveal the reason. But it seemed remarkably fine to me how these well-meaning men, under a despotic regime, had forged an alliance, in all innocence, for their own protection and that of strangers. I did not conceal the fact that I was quite familiar with their friendship towards other German travellers, and I elaborated on the laudable nature of the aim achieved by doing so, while my insistence on remaining unknown increasingly astonished him. He tried everything possible to pierce my incognito, but failed, partly because, having escaped one danger, I refused to enter pointlessly into another, and partly because I had observed that the views of these steadfast islanders were clearly so different from my own that closer association would bring them neither joy nor comfort.

By way of contrast, I spent several hours that evening with the active and interested consul, who then clarified the incident with the Maltese. He explained that the latter was not exactly an adventurer, but rather a restless wanderer. The governor, from a large family, revered for his seriousness and competence, and valued for his significant service, nevertheless had a reputation for boundless self-will, unbridled vehemence, and an iron stubbornness. Suspicious, being an old man and a despot, and concerned, though not convinced, that he had enemies at court, he hated such vagrant figures, whom he considered spies. This time, the redcoat had crossed his path once again,

when, after a considerable pause, he felt the need to vent his anger, to clear his liverishness.

Messina, and at sea, Monday, May 13, 1787.

We both awoke with a like feeling of annoyance, in that, spurred by impatience after our first desolate view of Messina, we had decided to complete our return journey on board the French merchant vessel. Since the adventure with the governor had been, and following my visit to my banker, who lived in a most pleasant country area, a most agreeable time might have been anticipated, during a longer stay in Messina. Kniep, well entertained by a few pretty girls, desired nothing more than that the otherwise detested headwind prolonged its efforts. However, the situation was awkward; everything had to stay packed, and we were obliged to be ready to depart at any moment.

Around noon, the summons came; we hurried on board, our good consul being among the crowd gathered on the quay, from whom we gratefully took our leave. The sallow courier also pressed forward to collect his tip. He was rewarded, and instructed to inform his master of our departure, and excuse our absence at dinner. 'He who sets sail is thereby excused!' he exclaimed; then, turning around with an odd little leap, he vanished.

Aboard the ship, the view seemed different than from the Neapolitan corvette; and, as we gradually moved away from shore, we were captivated by the magnificent sight of the semi-circular Palazzata, the citadel, and the mountains rising behind the city. Calabria lay on the far side of them. Now, an unobstructed view stretched north and south into the strait, its expansive width revealing a beautiful shoreline on both sides. As we gazed at the scene, we were shown a circular motion of the water, some way away to port, and to starboard, somewhat closer, a rock standing out from the shore — the former being Charybdis, the latter Scylla (*see the 'Odyssey', Charybdis being a whirlpool, Scylla a multi-headed sea-monster*). Observing these two remarkable sights, so far apart in Nature yet brought closer together by the poet, people have complained about Homer's over-inventiveness, failing to consider that the imagination of all peoples, in conceiving such objects of significance, tends to see them as taller and less far apart, thereby lending the images more character, seriousness, and dignity. A thousand times I have heard the complaint that the description of an object known through some work of literature no longer satisfies people these days; the cause is always the same: imagination and the present-day are like poetry and prose, the former conceiving of objects as powerful and angular, the latter always spreading them flat. Landscape painters of the sixteenth century, compared to our

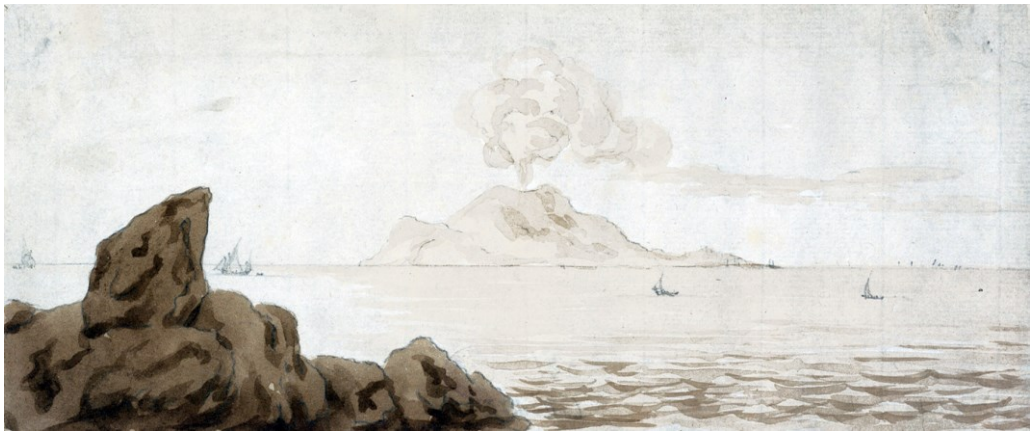
own, provide the most striking example. A drawing by Joos de Momper next to one by Kniep serves to make the entire contrast visible.

We occupied ourselves with these and similar topics, since, even for Kniep, the coastlines, which he had been preparing to sketch were not charming enough.

However, I was once again overcome by seasickness, and the uncomfortable sensation was not alleviated by isolated comfort as it had been during the crossing; the cabin was large enough to accommodate several people, and there appeared no shortage of good mattresses. I resumed the horizontal position, Kniep thoughtfully providing me with red wine and good bread. In this state, our entire Sicilian journey seemed to appear to me in a decidedly unfavourable light. We had, in fact, seen nothing but the efforts of humankind to preserve itself, in vain, against the violence of Nature, the vile treachery of time, and the rancour of humankind's own hostilities. The Carthaginians, Greeks, and Romans, and many subsequent peoples, have built and seen their efforts destroyed here. Selinunte was systematically razed; two millennia have proved insufficient to demolish the temples of Agrigento, yet Catania and Messina were devastated in a matter of hours, if not mere moments. I refused to allow the reflections of a seasick individual, tossed to and fro on the sea of life, to gain control.

At sea, Tuesday, May 13, 1787.

My hopes of reaching Naples more swiftly this time, or of being freed from seasickness sooner, were not fulfilled. Several times, encouraged by Kniep, I made a few sallies on deck, but enjoyment of the view's manifold beauty was denied me; only a few passing incidents enabled me to forget my vertigo. The entire sky was covered with a whitish haze of clouds, through which the sun, without its image being discernible, lit the sea, which was of the most beautiful blue imaginable. A school of dolphins accompanied the ship, swimming past and leaping, always keeping pace with us. It seemed to me that they had mistaken the vessel, which appeared to them amidst the waves, and from a distance, as merely a black dot, some sort of prey, and a welcome source of food. By the ship's crew, at least, they were not treated as escorts, but enemies: one was struck by a harpoon, but not brought aboard.



‘Stromboli smoking beyond a rocky shore’ - Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (German, 1749–1832)
Klassik Stiftung Weimar, Museen (Inv. GGz/0321)
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The wind remained unfavourable, and our ship, blown in various directions, could only tack to and fro. Several experienced travellers asserted, impatiently, that neither the captain nor helmsman understood their calling; the former might be considered a mere merchant, the latter alone a sailor, but neither was fit to be in charge of so many people and such valuable goods.

I begged these otherwise decent folk to keep their concerns to themselves. The number of passengers was large, including women and children of various ages, for everyone had crowded onto the French vessel, without further consideration, considering only the security offered by the French flag against pirates. I suggested that mistrust and anxiety would place everyone in the most embarrassing situation, since until now everyone had seen their salvation in that colourless, unemblazoned pennant.

And indeed, between sky and sea, that white flag is a remarkable talisman. Just as those leaving and those left behind signal to each other by waving white handkerchiefs, thereby confirming a mutual feeling of friendship and affection on being divided for some time, so too the custom is sanctified by this simple flag; as if someone were to attach their handkerchief to a pole, in order to announce to the whole world that a friend was arriving from overseas.

Refreshed, from time to time, by Knief’s supply of wine and bread, much to the chagrin of the captain, who demanded that I eat what I had paid for, I was able, eventually, to sit on deck and participate in conversation. Kniep knew how to cheer me up, not by gloating, triumphantly, over the excellent food as he had on the corvette, but rather by praising my fortunate lack of appetite.

Monday, May 14, 1787.

So, the afternoon passed without us having entered the Gulf of Naples as we had hoped. Instead, we were driven westward, and the ship, approaching the island of Capri, sailed further and further from Cape Minerva (*Punta Campanella*). Everyone was irked, and filled with impatience, but we two, who viewed the world with an eye for the picturesque, were quite content; for, at sunset, we enjoyed the most magnificent sight afforded us during the entire voyage. Cape Minerva, with the mountains adjoining it, lay before our eyes decked in the most brilliant array of colours, while the cliffs stretching southward had already taken on a bluish hue. From the cape, the entire coastline, illuminated by the dying rays, extended as far as Sorrento. Vesuvius was visible to us, an immense cloud of vapour hanging above it, from which a long streak stretched far to the east, leading us to surmise that a powerful eruption had occurred. To the left lay Capri, rising steeply; we could distinguish the outlines of its cliffs, perfectly, despite the transparent bluish haze. Beneath a perfectly clear, cloudless sky, the tranquil, almost motionless sea shimmered like a clear pond, with the complete absence of wind. We were delighted by the sight; Kniep lamented that all the artistry ever deployed in the use of colour would not suffice to reproduce this harmonious view, just as the finest English pencil would not allow even the most skilled hand to trace its lines. I, on the other hand, convinced that a far lesser memento than that which an infinitely-skilled artist would have been able achieve would be most desirable to refer to in future, encouraged him to exert his hand and eye one last time. He allowed himself to be persuaded and produced one of his most accurate drawings, which he later coloured, proving that the well-nigh impossible can be achieved through pictorial representation. We followed the transition from evening to night with equally attentive eyes. Capri now lay before us, in complete darkness, when, to our astonishment, the cloud over Vesuvius as well as the strip of cloud emerging from it turned more and more fiery, until finally we saw a considerable extent of sky in the background illuminated, yes, and complete with lightning flashes.

Observing the scene, which we found welcome to our eyes, we were unaware that great misfortune threatened us; but a commotion among the passengers failed to leave us in uncertainty for long. They, more knowledgeable about maritime matters than ourselves, bitterly reproached the ship's captain and his first mate, claiming that their ineptitude had caused them to miss the entry to the bay, and that the people, goods, and all, entrusted to them were in danger of perishing. We asked about the cause of this unrest, failing to understand how calamity could be feared amidst a complete calm. But it was precisely the calm that filled them with despair. 'We are already caught in the current that swirls around the island,' they said, 'and, driven by a dangerous swell, are being pulled slowly yet surely toward the rocky cliffs, where not a foot's breadth of ledge or cove offers refuge.'

Attentive to their words, we now contemplated our fate with horror; for although the night obscured the growing danger, we nevertheless noticed that the ship, pitching and tossing, was approaching the rocks, which rose ever darker before us, though a faint evening glow still lingered over the sea. Not the slightest movement could be observed in the air: everyone held handkerchiefs and light ribbons aloft, but not a hint of the desired breeze appeared. The crowd of passengers grew ever louder and angrier. The women and their children did not kneel on deck in prayer, because the space was too cramped to move about, but lay huddled together. They, even more than the men, who as yet anticipated a favourable outcome, cursed and raged against the captain. Now he was accused of everything that had been silently reflected on throughout the entire voyage: a poor cabin at a high price, meagre provisions, and a demeanour that, while not unfriendly, was nonetheless taciturn. He had given no account of his actions to anyone; indeed, even last evening, he had maintained a stubborn silence about his manoeuvring of the vessel. Now he and the first mate were called mere adventurers who, lacking any knowledge of seamanship, had managed to acquire a vessel out of pure self-interest and were now, through their incompetence and clumsiness, guaranteeing the ruin of all those entrusted to their care.

The captain remained silent, and still seemed to be contemplating our survival; but as for myself, for whom anarchy has ever seemed, since my youth, more vexatious than death itself, it was impossible to remain silent any longer. I stood before them, and spoke to them with as much composure as I had the rogues in Malcesine. I explained to them that at this very moment their noise and shouting were dulling the ears and minds of those from whom, alone, salvation could still be hoped for, such that they could neither think nor understand one another. ‘As for yourselves,’ I exclaimed, ‘collect yourselves, and address fervent prayers to the Mother of God, whom we depend upon to intercede with her Son, that he may do for you what he did for his apostles when, on the stormy Sea of Tiberias, the waves were already beating against their vessel, while the Lord slept. When the helpless and comfortless awakened him, he immediately commanded the wind to be still, just as he can now command the air to stir if it is his will to do so.’

My speech produced the greatest of effects. One of the women, with whom I had previously discussed moral and spiritual matters, exclaimed: ‘Ah! Il Barlume! Benedetto il Barlume!’ (*‘Ah! The Light, Blessed be the Light!’*) and indeed, since they were already on their knees, they began to pray with more fervour than usual. They were able to do so with all the more reassurance because the sailors were attempting a visible and active manoeuvre: they lowered the boat, which admittedly could only hold six to eight men, and secured it with a long cable to the ship, which the sailors now sought to haul along, vigorously plying their oars. For a moment, it even seemed as if

they were moving it against the current, and one hoped to soon see the manoeuvre take effect. Whether these efforts actually added to the force of the current, or no, the boat and its crew were flung backward, suddenly, in an arc toward the ship, held by the long rope, much in the manner of the crack of a whip when the coachman gives it a flick.

Even this hope was abandoned! Prayer and lamentation alternated, and the situation grew all the more dreadful when, high on the rocks, some goatherds, whose fires had long been seen, cried out that a ship below was in danger of stranding! They shouted aloud many unintelligible words to one another, in which some, familiar with the language, thought they could hear them rejoicing at the prospect of plunder the next morning. Even a moment of doubt as to whether the ship was truly approaching the menacing reefs was, sadly, all too soon dispelled, and the crew were obliged to seize long poles, to force the vessel from the rocks, should the situation so demand, so long as their poles remained intact, and all was not lost. The ship rocked ever more violently, the foam seemed to increase, and my recurring seasickness, brought on by all this, compelled me to descend to the cabin. I lay down on my mattress, dimly aware of events, and with a strangely pleasant sensation that seemed to emanate from those thoughts of Lake Tiberias; for the image from Matthaus Merian's illustrated Bible floated quite clearly before my eyes. And thus, one finds that the power of sensory and moral impressions proves strongest whenever a person is left entirely to their own thoughts. How long I lay there in this half-conscious state, I cannot say, but I was awakened by a violent roar above me; I could clearly hear large cables being dragged back and forth across the deck; this gave me hope that the sails were being deployed. After a short while, Kniep appeared, and announced to me that we were safe, that the slightest of breezes had arisen; that, at that very moment, the crew had completed raising sail, and that he himself had not failed to lend a hand. We were already, visibly, moving away from the rocks, and though not yet completely out of the current, the captain expected to overcome it. All was quiet above; then several of the passengers entered, announced the happy outcome, and lay down to rest.

When I awoke early on the fourth day of our voyage, I felt refreshed and healthy, just as I had been during the crossing at the same stage; so that on a longer sea voyage I would probably have paid my dues with only a like three-day long indisposition.

From the deck, I saw with pleasure that the island of Capri lay at a considerable distance, and our ship was heading in such a direction that we could hope to enter the gulf, a hope which was soon fulfilled. Now, after a harsh night, we had the pleasure of admiring the same sights that had delighted us the previous evening, but in a different light.

We quickly left that dangerous rocky island behind us. Having admired the east side of the gulf from afar yesterday, the castles and the town now appeared directly before us, while to the west lay the Posillipo peninsula and the promontories stretching towards Procida and Ischia. Everyone was on deck, led by a Greek priest, deeply enamoured of the Orient, who, when asked by the locals — who greeted their glorious homeland with rapture — how Naples compared to Constantinople, replied with great pathos: 'Anche questa è una città!'— 'That too is a city!'

We arrived at the port at the appointed time, and were surrounded by people; it was the liveliest moment of the day. No sooner had our trunks, and other belongings been unloaded, and set down on shore, than two porters seized them, and scarcely had we announced that we would be lodging with Moriconi than they ran off with the load as if it were booty, such that we lost sight of them as they vanished amidst the crowded streets, and over the bustling square. Kniep held his portfolio under his arm, and we would at least have saved his sketches if those porters, less honest than the poor Neapolitan devils, had robbed us of what the surf had spared.

At Naples Once More

To Herder.

Naples, May 17, 1787.

Here I am again, dear friend, refreshed and sound. The journey through Sicily was swift and easy; when I return, you shall judge how well I have carried out my observations. The fact that I am now used to looking closely at everything, and filling my memory with the details, has given me an incredible ability to decipher them without notes, and I think myself most fortunate, now, to hold a great, beautiful, and incomparable image of Sicily so clearly, completely, and purely in my mind. There remains no object of longing, since I am also returned from a visit to Paestum yesterday. The sea and the islands have given me both pleasure and pain, and I return satisfied. Let me save every detail until I am home. There is to be no lingering here in Naples; I will now sit down and describe this place to you in fuller detail than in my first letters. On the first of June, I will travel to Rome, unless some higher power prevents me, and at the beginning of July, I intend to depart again. I must see you all again as soon as possible; I hope it will prove a good sojourn. I am completely overwhelmed and need peace and quiet to process it all.

For all the kind and good things that you do, as regards my writings, I thank you a thousand times. I forever desire to create something even finer for your enjoyment.

Whatever word I have from you, wherever it arrives from, it will be welcome. We are as close in our ways of thinking as is possible without being one and the same person, and closest of all in the main points. If you have produced much yourself during this time, then I have won much here, and we can hope for a profitable exchange.

As you say, my understanding is very much tied to the present, for the more I see of the world, the less I expect that humanity will ever become wise, intelligent, and happy, en masse. Perhaps among the billions of worlds there is some species that can boast that distinction; but given the nature of our society, I have as little hope for it, as I have for Sicily, given its nature.

In an accompanying sheet I will say something about the road to Salerno, and about Paestum itself; it has granted me the last and, I would almost say most splendid, image, that I will carry with me, in its entirety, on my northward journey. In my opinion, the central temple is to be preferred to everything else one sees in Sicily.

As for Homer, it is as if a veil has been lifted from my eyes. The descriptions, the similes, and so on, seem poetic to us, yet are unremittingly natural, and certainly drawn with a purity and intimacy that is startling. Even the strangest most fabricated of events possess this naturalness. I have never felt them as much as when close to the things they describe. Let me briefly express my thoughts, thus: the ancients depicted the existent, we commonly depict its effects; they described the dreadful, we describe dread; they depict the pleasant, we describe pleasantness, and so on. From this come all kinds of exaggeration, mannerism, artifice, and bombast. For if one strives for and works toward effect, one finds one cannot render it sufficiently palpable. If what I am saying is not new, I have nevertheless felt it vividly on recent occasions. Now that I have all these coasts and promontories, gulfs and bays, islands and headlands, rocks and sandbars, bushy hills, gentle pastures, fertile fields, decorated gardens, well-tended trees, hanging vines, mountains of clouds and ever-serious plains, cliffs and shores, and the all-encompassing sea, with their many variations and diversity present in my mind, only now is the Odyssey a living reality to me.

Furthermore, I must confide to you that I am very close to the secret of plant generation, and organisation, and it is the simplest thing imaginable. Under this sky, one can make the finest observations. I have found the main point wherein the germ of all lies, quite clearly, and without doubt; I already see the rest in its entirety, and only a few things need to be clarified. The primal plant (*Urpflanze*) will be the most wondrous creature in the world, for which Nature herself should envy me. With this model, and the key to it, one can then invent plants ad infinitum, plants that would be consistent, that is, plants that, even if they do not exist, could exist, not merely picturesque or poetic shadows and illusions, but possessing an inner truth and necessity. The same kinds of laws must apply to all other living things.

Naples, May 18, 1787.

Tischbein, who has returned to Rome, has, as we have seen, worked so diligently on our behalf here, in the meantime, that we are hardly aware of his absence. He seems to have instilled so much confidence in all his friends here, regarding ourselves, that they are all open, friendly, and proactive towards us, which I especially need in my current situation, since not a day goes by when I am not obliged to call on someone for some kind of favour or assistance. I am currently in the process of drawing up a summary list of what I still wish to see, since the brevity of my time here will impose a limit, and also indicate what can in fact be executed later.

Naples, May 22, 1787.

Today I encountered a pleasant adventure that has given me much to think about and is worth relating. A lady who had already shown me much favour during my first stay asked me to visit her at five in the evening: an Englishman wished to speak to me who had something to say to me about 'Werther'.

Six months ago, even if it had been twice as worthwhile, her request would certainly have been met with a negative response; but the fact that I agreed meant that my Sicilian journey has had a positive effect on me, and I promised to attend at five sharp.

Unfortunately, the city is so large and there are so many things to do that I climbed the stairs a quarter of an hour late and was just standing on the rush mat before the closed door, ready to ring the bell, when the door opened and a handsome, middle-aged man stepped out, whom I immediately recognised as an Englishman. He had scarcely looked at me when he said: 'You are the author of *Werther*!' I confessed and apologised for not having arrived sooner.

'I am unable to wait a moment longer;' he replied, 'what I have to say to you is very brief and could just as easily be said here. I have no wish to repeat what you've heard from thousands of others before, nor did the work affect me as strongly as it has others; but whenever I think about what it took to write it, I am always amazed anew.'

I was about to give him my thanks, when he forestalled me, exclaiming: 'I cannot delay a moment longer; my wish to tell you myself is fulfilled. Farewell, and all happiness!' And with that, he descended the steps. I stood for some time pondering his honourable gesture, and finally rang the bell. The lady was delighted to hear of our meeting and recounted many favourable things about this rare, and unusual fellow.

Naples, Friday, May 25, 1787

I imagine I shall never see my carefree little princess again; she has actually gone to Sorrento and, before her departure, did me the honour of scolding me for preferring stony and desolate Sicily to herself. Several friends gave me information about this peculiar person. Born into a good, but impoverished, family and raised in a convent, she agreed to marry an old but wealthy prince, and it was all the easier to persuade her because Nature had made her a good person, but utterly incapable of love. In this situation, of wealth, though a highly-restricted one due to family circumstances, she sought to avail herself of her intellect and, since she was hindered in her actions and commissions, at least to give free rein to her tongue. I was assured that her actual conduct was quite irreproachable, but that she seemed firmly resolved to flout all circumstances with her displays of unrestrained speech. It was jokingly remarked that no censorship could have allowed her discourses to pass, if they had been written down, because they contained absolutely nothing except whatever offended religion, the state, or morality.

The most wonderful and charming stories were told about her, one of which may be included here, although it is not the most decent of tales.

Shortly before the earthquake that struck Calabria, she had removed to her husband's estate there. Near the castle, a small house had been built — a wooden, single-storey structure erected on bare ground; though it was, incidentally, wallpapered, furnished, and charmingly decorated. At the first warning signs of the earthquake, she fled there. She was sitting on the sofa, sewing, her small sewing table before her and an abbé, an elderly chaplain, seated opposite. Suddenly, the ground trembled, and the building collapsed on her side of the room, while the opposite side rose, lifting the abbé, and the table with him. 'Ah!' she cried, leaning her head back against the sloping wall, 'is this befitting such a venerable man as yourself? You look as if you're about to leap upon me, which is completely against all custom and propriety.'

Meanwhile, the house had settled again, and she could barely cease laughing at the foolish, lecherous figure the good old man was supposed to have presented, and seemed not to feel the slightest unhappiness at the event, not even about the great loss that had affected her family, and so many thousands of others. She is a miraculously happy character, who even managed to mount a farce, thus, when the earth threatened to swallow her up.

Naples, Saturday, May 26, 1787

On closer consideration, one must surely approve of the existence of so many saints; now, every believer can choose their own and turn with complete confidence to the one who truly appeals. Today is dedicated to the Saint I have selected, a day which I have therefore celebrated, devoutly and cheerfully in his honour, according to his custom and teachings.

Saint Philip Neri is held in high esteem, and remembered with joy; one is edified and delighted to hear of him and his profound piety, yet one also hears much about his good humour. From his earliest youth, he felt the most fervent religious impulses, and in the course of his life, the highest gifts of religious enthusiasm developed within him: the gift of involuntary prayer, of deep, wordless adoration, the gift of tears, of ecstasy, and finally even of rising from the ground and hovering above it, which is considered above all to be the most elevated gift.

To so many mysterious and singular inner qualities he added the clearest common sense, the purest appreciation, or rather, the most profound devaluation, of earthly things, and the most active devotion to his fellow human beings as regards their physical and spiritual needs. He rigorously observed all the duties required of a devout, churchgoing man, including those at festivals, church services, prayer, fasting, and so on. He also devoted himself to the education of youth, to their musical and rhetorical training, presenting not only spiritual but also intellectually- stimulating topics and initiating lively discussions and debates. Perhaps the most remarkable aspect of all this is that he performed and accomplished it of his own volition on his own authority, pursuing his path steadily for many years without belonging to any order or congregation, indeed, without having received ordination.

It is especially noteworthy that this occurred in Luther's day, and that, in the heart of Rome, a capable, God-fearing, energetic, and active man likewise conceived the idea of uniting the spiritual, indeed the sacred, with the secular, of introducing the heavenly to his age, and thereby also preparing the ground for reformation. For here alone lies the key that can unlock the prison of the Papacy and restore God to the free world.

The Papal Court, however, having so influential a man at hand, in the diocese of Rome and under its purview, did not relent until he, who was already leading a religious life, frequenting the monasteries, teaching there, and encouraging others, was finally persuaded, just he was about to found not an order, but a free assembly, to take ordination, and receive all the benefits that he had so far lacked on his path through life.

Even if one were to doubt his physical, and wondrous, ability to levitate, as is rational, he was nevertheless in spirit far above this world, and therefore nothing was so repugnant to him as vanity, pretence, and arrogance, which he always worked

vigorously against, they being the greatest obstacles to a truly godly life, and, as many stories tell us, behaving always with good humour.

He was, for example, at the Pope's side when the latter was informed of a nun in the neighbourhood of Rome who was exhibiting signs of possessing remarkable spiritual gifts. Neri was tasked with investigating the veracity of these tales. He immediately mounted his mule and, despite the very bad weather and road conditions, soon arrived at the convent. Once there, he conversed with the abbess, who, in a spirit of complete openness, gave him a thorough account of all these marks of grace. The nun entered at his request, and he, without further greeting, handed her his muddy boots, requesting that she clean them. The holy virgin, in her pristine garb, stepped back in alarm, and expressed her outrage at this imposition with vehement words. Neri rose, calmly, mounted his mule, and found himself before the Pope before the latter anticipated his return, as significant precautions are prescribed for Catholic confessors, requiring of them the utmost thoroughness when examining claims concerning spiritual gifts, for, while the Church acknowledges the possibility of such heavenly favours, it does not accept their reality without the most exacting examination. Neri revealed the result to a startled Pope: 'She is no saint,' he exclaimed, 'she performs no miracles! For she lacks the essential quality for doing so: humility.'

This maxim can be considered the guiding principle of his entire life; for, to recount a further story: after he had founded the Congregation of the Padri dell'Oratorio, which soon garnered great prestige and inspired many to wish to become members, a young Roman prince came seeking admission, to whom the novitiate and the garb assigned to it were granted. However, when he requested actual admission after some time, it was said that he first had to pass various tests; to which he agreed. Neri produced a long fox's tail and demanded that the prince attach it to the back of his long robe, and walk about, in a solemn manner, through the streets of Rome. The young man was horrified, much like the nun mentioned earlier, and declared that he had come forward not to seek shame, but honour. Father Neri then remarked that this was not the aim among their circle, where the highest renunciation remained the first law. Whereupon the young man took his leave.

In a short motto, Neri expressed his main doctrine (*also associated with Saint Bernard*): '*Spernere mundum, spernere te ipsum, spernere te sperni*: to disdain the world, to disdain yourself, to disdain your own disdain.' And certainly, in saying that, all is said. A hypochondriac might think to fulfil the first two points, but to even consider the third, one would need to be on one's way to becoming a saint.

Naples, May 27, 1787.

I received all your delightful letters from the end of last month, yesterday, all at once, sent on from Rome via Count Fries (*Joseph Johann von Fries a wealthy Austrian banker, and art collector, who was in Rome from 1785 to 1787 on his Grand Tour*), and thoroughly enjoyed reading and rereading them. The eagerly awaited little box was also included, and I thank you a thousand times for everything.

But now it is almost time for me to flee from here; for as much as I wish to contemplate Naples and its surroundings, fully, and to renew my impressions and come to terms with certain things, the daily current sweeps me away, and distinguished people have joined me, both old and new acquaintances, whom I cannot readily dismiss. I encountered a charming lady with whom I had spent a few most pleasant days last summer in Carlsbad (*Karlovy Vary*). How many hours we have robbed the present days of, lost in the happiest of reminiscences! All our dear and cherished ones came to mind again, above all the cheerful humour of our dear Prince. She still possessed the poem with which the girls from Engelhaus (*Andelska Hora village near Karlovy Vary; the ruined castle of Engelsburg is sited on a rocky summit nearby*) surprised him as he rode away. We recalled amusing scenes, witty bouts of teasing and mystification, and our ingenious attempts at exercising our right to retaliate against one another. We felt as if transported swiftly to that German-speaking locale, amidst the best of German company, hemmed in by walls of rock, united by being in a strange place, but even more so by respect, friendship, and affection. However, as soon as we stepped to the window, the Neapolitan current raced on again, with such force that those peaceful memories were wrenched from our grasp.

No more could I avoid the acquaintance of the Duke and Duchess of Ursel (*Wolfgang-William, 3rd Duke d'Ursel a Belgian nobleman, and his wife Princess Flore d'Arenberg*). They were excellent people of high moral character, pure in their natures and humanity, with a decided love of art, and goodwill towards all they met. Our continued and repeated conversations were most enticing.

Sir William Hamilton and his fair friend continued their kindness towards me. I dined with them, and towards evening Miss Hart again displayed her musical and melodic talents.

At the urging of my friend Philipp Hackert, who was growing fond of me and wished to share everything remarkable with me, Sir William led us to his secret vault, containing artistic odds and ends. There was quite a jumble; the work of all eras was haphazardly heaped together: busts, torsos, vases, bronzes, all sorts of household ornaments made from Sicilian agates, even a small chapel, carved and painted, and whatever else he had happened to acquire. In a long chest on the floor, whose broken lid I curiously pushed aside, lay two truly magnificent bronze candelabras. With a nod,

I drew Hackert's attention to them, and whispered to him the question of whether these were not quite similar to those at Portici. He, however, signalled me to silence; they might indeed have found their way there from Pompei. Because of such happy acquisitions, and others like them, the knight has good reason to allow only his closest friends to view these hidden treasures.

What struck me most was an upright box, open at the front and painted black inside, framed in the most magnificent gold. The space was large enough to accommodate a standing human figure, and accordingly, we learned its purpose. The art lover — and enthusiast for young ladies — not content with the beautiful form of each mobile statue he 'acquired', also wished to delight in her when seen as a colourful, and inimitable painting, and so, sometimes within this gold frame, he would have her imitate a figure from the ancient wall-paintings of Pompeii, and even more recent masterpieces, while dressed in a multitude of hues against the black background. That era now seemed to be over, and besides, the apparatus was difficult to transport and illuminate properly; thus, we were unable to witness such a spectacle.

Here is the place to mention yet another decided passion of the Neapolitans in general: the Nativity scenes (*presepi*), which can be seen in all the churches at Christmas. These scenes, more or less complete, depict the Adoration of the Shepherds, Angels, and Magi, richly and lavishly grouped together. In cheerful Naples, such displays even appear on the flat rooftops of houses, where, a light, hut-like framework is erected and adorned with evergreen trees and shrubs. The Virgin Mary, the Christ Child, and all the figures standing or hovering around are lavishly decorated, representing a substantial household expenditure. But what truly glorifies the whole scene is the backdrop, encompassing Mount Vesuvius and its surroundings.

Sometimes, living figures are mixed in among the plaster ones, and gradually, the performance of worldly scenes, whether from history or poetry, in the palazzos, as an evening attraction has become one of the most important forms of entertainment for noble and wealthy families.

If I may venture a remark, that a guest so well-treated should perhaps refrain from? I must confess that our beautiful entertainer (*Emma Hart*) strikes me as a rather soulless creature, who may reward her audience with her looks, but is unable to assert her personality through her soulful expressions of voice and language. Even her singing lacks a certain fullness.

And so, perhaps, is ultimately the case with all such frigid forms. Beautiful people are everywhere, but deeply sensitive people who also possess a gift for language are much rarer, and those who, in addition to these qualities, also have a captivating personality are the rarest of all.

I am very much looking forward to Herder's third volume (*of his 'Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit': 'Ideas on the Philosophy of the History of Mankind', the third volume published 1787*). Keep it for me, until I can say where I am able to receive it. He will surely have justified, in fine style, Humanity's beautiful wish that better things will come to pass one day. And, I too, in fact, believe that Humanity will finally prevail; only I fear that at the same time the world will be one great hospital, in which each will be another's tender nurse.

Naples, May 28, 1787

Johann Jacob Volkmann's fine, and extremely useful work nonetheless obliges me to depart from his opinion, from time to time. He says, for example, that thirty to forty thousand idlers can be found in Naples, and who does not repeat it after him! I suspected, however, soon after gaining a little knowledge of conditions in the south, that this was merely a northerner's view, whereby anyone who fails to toil anxiously all day is considered an idler. I therefore paid particular attention to the people, whether they were in motion or resting, and while I did notice a great many poorly-dressed folk, I failed to note any who were unemployed.

Therefore, I asked some friends about these countless idlers, whom I desired to encounter too; however, no one could show me any such, and so, since the investigation was directly related to my observations of the city, I went hunting for them myself.

I began to familiarise myself with the various figures amidst the vast crowd, judging and classifying them according to their appearance, clothing, behaviour, and occupation. I found the task easier here than elsewhere because the people here are more independent, and display external signs of their social standing. I began my observation early in the day, and all the people I found standing still, or resting here and there, were people whose profession demanded it at that moment: porters, who command privileged sites in various places, and simply wait until someone wishes to employ them; chauffeurs, their servants, and their lads, who stand by their one-horse carriages (*calesi or calashes*) in the large squares, tending to their horses, and at the service of anyone who requests them; boatmen smoking their pipes on the pier; and fishermen, lying in the sun, perhaps because an unfavourable wind is blowing that prevents them from setting out to sea. I also saw many another walking about, here and there, but each usually revealed some sign of their occupation. None of the beggars I saw were aged, incapacitated, or crippled people. The more I looked about me, the more closely I observed the passers-by, the fewer true idlers I could find of any age or

gender, whether of the lower or middle classes, either in the morning or, indeed, during the rest of the day.

Let me add further details to render my assertion more vivid and credible. The youngest children are occupied in various ways. A large number of them carry fish from Borgo Santa Lucia to sell in the city; others are often seen in the vicinity of the arsenal, or wherever else carpentry work is being done, which produces wood shavings, or even on the shore where brushwood and smaller pieces are cast up, gathering even the tiniest pieces in their baskets. Children of a few years old, who simply crawl about on the ground, accompanied by older boys of five or six, engage in this little trade. Afterwards, they enter deeper into the city, carrying their baskets, and set up a kind of market with their little piles of wood. The craftsmen, and the lesser citizens, buy from them, burning what they buy on tripods to warm themselves, or using it in their frugal kitchens.

Other children bear water from the sulphur-springs to sell, which is drunk particularly in Springtime. Others gain a small profit by buying fruit, whipped-honey, cakes, and sweets, and then, as childish traders, offering and selling their purchases to other children, thus perhaps obtaining their own share for free. It is truly charming to watch such a lad, whose only possessions are a board and a knife, bringing a watermelon or half a roasted pumpkin, a group of children gathering around him, setting down his board, and slicing the fruit into small pieces. The buyers wait with serious expressions, wondering how much they will receive for their small copper coin, and the little trader handles the affair with equal care facing the eager buyers, lest he be cheated out of a single piece. I am convinced that with a longer stay, one could gather many more examples of such occupations involving children.

A large number of people, some middle-aged, some lads, most of them very poorly dressed, are employed to carry refuse out of the city on donkeys. The surrounding countryside is nothing but a kitchen garden, and it is a joy to see the indescribable amounts of produce that arrives each market-day, and how the industrious people immediately return the surplus fragments, discarded by the cooks, to the fields, to accelerate the growth of their vegetables. Given the incredible consumption of such vegetables, the stalks and leaves of cauliflowers, broccoli, artichokes, cabbage, lettuce, and garlic make up a large part of the Neapolitan refuse piles, and are particularly sought after. Two large, flexible baskets are strapped to a donkey's back, and not only filled to the brim but also, with a particular display of skill, others are piled on top. No market-garden can exist without such a donkey. A servant, a lad, sometimes even the owner himself, hasten to and from the town as often as possible during the day, since it provides a rich treasure trove for them at all hours. One can imagine how eagerly these collectors attend to the dung from horses and mules. They are reluctant to leave

the road even at nightfall, and the wealthy driving home from the opera after midnight probably never suspect that, even before daybreak, some busy worker will be carefully searching for whatever their horses have left behind. I have been assured that a few such men, joining forces, buying a donkey, and leasing a small plot of farmland from some larger landowner, are soon able to expand their business considerably, through persistence and diligence in this happy clime where the growth of crops is barely interrupted.

I would be straying too far from my topic if I were to speak here of the many street-vendors that one observes with pleasure in Naples, as in every other large city; yet I must speak here of the peripatetic traders, because they especially belong to that class of people. Some go about with small barrels of ice-water, glasses, and lemons, so that they can make lemonade anywhere, a drink that even the poorest cannot do without; others with boards on which bottles of various liqueurs and conical glasses are secured from falling by use of wooden rings; others carry baskets full of all kinds of pastries, sweets, lemons, and other fruit, for it seems that everyone wishes to participate in, and add to, the great feast that is celebrated every day in Naples.

Just as active as these peddlers, are the many small-time vendors who likewise wander around, offering their wares plainly, on a board, in a box lid, or even directly on the ground in the public squares. One is not speaking of individual items that one could also find in the larger shops; it is actual junk. Not a single piece of iron, leather, cloth, linen, felt, and so on, exists here that does not reappear on the market as second-hand goods, to be repurchased by one person or another. Many people of the lower classes are also employed by merchants and craftsmen as assistants and labourers.

It is true that one can hardly take a step without encountering some poorly-dressed, even ragged, person, but that scarcely renders them idlers or loafers! Indeed, I would almost venture to suggest a paradox: that in Naples, perhaps the greatest industry is found among the lowest classes. Of course, one should not compare it with northern industry, which has to allow not only for the passing day and hour, but also on fine and sunny days for the poor and gloomy ones, and in summer for the advent of winter. Because northerners are compelled by nature to provide for their needs and organise their lives — because the housewife must salt and smoke food to supply the kitchen year-round, and because her husband must not neglect to store fruit and firewood, and fodder for his livestock, and so on — the finest days and hours are lost to enjoyment and devoted to work. For several months at a time, people gladly retreat from the open air and shelter in their houses from storm, rain, snow, and cold. The seasons follow one another inexorably, and anyone who prefers not to perish must become a steward of their resources. For the question here is not whether one can choose to do without; one must seek not to go without, since doing without is not an option; Nature compels

one to produce, to look ahead. Without a doubt, these natural forces, unchanged for millennia, have shaped the character of the Nordic nations, and in many respects in admirable ways. By contrast, we judge the southern peoples, upon whom heaven looks so mildly, too harshly. What Cornelius de Pauw dares to express in his 'Recherches sur les Grecs,' (*1787*) when speaking of the Cynic philosophers, fits perfectly here. One cannot, he believes, gain a truly accurate understanding of the condition of such people from our perspective; their principle of doing without everything was greatly favoured by a climate that provides everything. A poor person, who is wretched among us, could not only satisfy the most basic and immediate needs in these southern regions, but also enjoy the world in the most pleasant manner; likewise, a beggar, so-called, in Naples would readily disdain the position of Viceroy of Norway, and refuse the honour if the Empress of Russia were to entrust him with the governorship of Siberia.

Certainly, a Cynic philosopher would not fare well in our regions, whereas in southern countries Nature practically invites such a life. Here, the ragged person is nonetheless still clothed; someone who neither owns a house nor rents a room, but spends the night in summer under the eaves, or on the steps of palaces, churches, or public halls, or finds shelter somewhere for a small fee in bad weather, is not therefore a miserable outcast; a person is not poor simply because they have not provided for the following day. If one considers the abundance of food offered by the sea, rich in fish, on which these people must, by law, sustain themselves for several days a week; and that all kinds of fruit and garden produce are available in abundance at any time of year, the fact being that the area around Naples has earned the name *Terra di Lavoro* (meaning not 'the land of work', but 'the land of agriculture') and the entire province has borne the honorary title of the happy region (Campagna Felice) for centuries, it is easy to understand how easy the life here can be.

The paradox I have ventured to set forth above would, in general, give rise to a wealth of other similar observations if someone were to undertake a comprehensive study of Naples; for which, of course, no small amount of skill and many years of investigation would be required. One would then perhaps notice that, on the whole, the so-called 'lazzarone' (*lowest class of person*) is no less inactive than any other class of individual, but at the same time perceive that all, in their own way, do not work merely to live, but also to enjoy life, and that they even seek to find joy in their work. It explains a great deal: why their craftsmen, almost always, lag far behind those in northern countries; why factories fail to materialise; why, apart from lawyers and doctors, little learning is apparent in relation to the vast majority of people, however dedicated various individuals may be; why no painter of the Neapolitan school has ever been thoroughly great, or achieved great success; why the clergy here are comfortable

in their idleness, and why the upper classes direct their wealth only towards sensual pleasure, pomp and splendour, and various distractions.

I am well aware that this is a broad generalisation, and that the characteristics of each class can only be fully understood after closer acquaintance and observation; however, I believe that overall, one would arrive at these conclusions.

I return once more to the ordinary inhabitants of Naples. One notices in them, as in cheerful children given a task, that while they carry it out, they also make a jest of it. They are very lively, in general, and possess a free and clear perspective on life. Their language is often described as figurative, their wit sharp and biting. Ancient Atella (*the source of Atellan Farce*) was not far from Naples, and just as their beloved Pulcinello still embodies the spirit of those Oscan games, so the ordinary folk here still participate in that form of wit.

In the third book, fifth chapter (*see paragraphs 39-42*) of his 'Natural History,' Pliny deems Campania alone worthy of extensive description. 'So happy, graceful, and blessed are those regions,' he says, 'that one recognises that Nature has rejoiced in her work there. Such life-giving air, such an ever-salutary mildness of the skies, such fertile fields, such sunny hills, such gentle woodlands, such shady groves, such useful forests, such breezy mountains, such expansive fields, such an abundance of vines and olive-trees, such fine fleeces, such thick-necked bullocks, so many lakes, such a wealth of flowing rivers and springs, so many bays, so many harbours! The land itself, which everywhere opens itself to trade and, as if eager to assist humankind, stretches out its arms to the sea.'

I have not even mentioned the people's abilities, their customs, their strengths, nor the many peoples they have conquered through their military efforts and their language.

The Greeks, accustomed to excessive self-praise, passed the most honourable judgement on this land by calling it, in part, Magna Graecia (*Greater Greece*).

Naples, May 29, 1787

Everywhere one finds a wonderful cheerfulness, accompanied by a fullness of shared pleasures. The multi-coloured flowers and fruits with which Nature adorns herself seem to invite the people to decorate themselves and all their belongings with the most vibrant colours possible. Silk scarves and bandanas, and flowery hats decorate everyone who is even remotely able to procure them. Chairs, and chests of drawers, in the humblest houses are painted with colourful flowers on gilded backgrounds; even the calashes are painted bright red, the carvings gilded, the horses pulling them

adorned with artificial flowers, bright-red tassels, and tinsel, some bearing plumes, others even small flags, on their heads that flutter with every movement. We tend to call a fondness for bright colours barbaric and tasteless; it can be so, and is so, to a degree, but beneath a clear, blue sky, nothing is too colourful, since nothing can outshine the brilliance of the sun rays, and their reflections in the sea. The most vibrant colours are muted by the intense light, and because all colours — every shade of green in the trees and plants, and the yellows, browns, and reds of the earth — strike the eye with their full force, even the most colourful flowers and garments achieve a harmony. The scarlet waistcoats and skirts worn by the women of Nettuno, adorned with broad gold and silver, the other colourful national costumes, the painted ships — everything seems to strive to stand out, beneath the brilliance of sky and sea.

And as they live, so they bury their dead; no slow, dark funeral procession disturbs the harmony of this happy world. I saw a child being carried to its grave. A large, red velvet carpet, embroidered with gold, covered a wide bier. On it stood a carved, heavily-gilded and silvered casket, in which the white-clad deceased lay, completely covered with rose-coloured ribbons. At the four corners of the casket were four angels, each about two feet tall, holding large bunches of flowers over the dead child. Because they were only attached at the foot by wires, they swayed as the bier moved, releasing a mildly invigorating floral fragrance, and swayed all the more violently as the procession sped along the streets, the priests and candle-bearers running rather than walking.

There is no time of year when one is not surrounded by food everywhere, and the Neapolitans not only enjoy eating, but also wish their produce to be well-presented for sale.

At Santa Lucia, the fish are usually arranged, according to their kind, in clean and attractive baskets; crabs, oysters, shellfish, and small mussels are presented individually, on green leaves. The shops selling dried fruit and legumes are decorated in the most elaborate ways. The oranges and lemons of all varieties, heaped amidst striking green foliage, are a delight to the eye. But nothing is more elaborately decorated than the meat products, to which passing eyes are particularly drawn, since the people's appetites are further stimulated by periodic abstinence.

On the meat-stalls, the cuts of beef, veal, and mutton are never displayed without a plump side, or leg, being heavily gilded. Several days of the year, especially during Christmas, are renowned as feasts; then a universal *Cuccagna* (*Cockaigne, 'Land of Plenty'*), is created, half a million people pledging their support. At that time, the Via Toledo and several adjacent streets and squares are decorated in the most appetising manner. The shops selling groceries, in which raisins, melons, and figs are displayed, are a most delightful sight. Foodstuff hangs in garlands over the streets, including huge

paternosters of gilded sausages tied with red ribbons, and Italian poultry, each bird with a red flag tucked under its tail. It is said that thirty thousand such birds have been eaten, on occasion, not counting those folk had fattened at home. Besides this, a great many donkeys, laden with vegetables, capons, and young lambs, are driven through the city, to market, and the heaps of eggs, seen here and there, are vast beyond imagining. And not only is all this consumed, but every year a police officer rides through the city with a trumpeter, and announces, in all the squares and at the crossroads how many thousands of oxen, calves, lambs, pigs, etc., the Neapolitans have devoured. The people listen attentively, rejoice immoderately at the vast numbers, and fondly remember their own share of the feast.

As to the wheat and dairy products that our cooks are so adept at preparing, those who prefer a simple approach to such matters, or lack well-equipped kitchens, are doubly provided for. Macaroni, a delicate, thoroughly-worked, cooked dough, of fine durum flour, pressed into certain shapes, is readily available everywhere in all varieties for a small price. It is usually simply boiled in water, while grated cheese melts over, and seasons, the dish. Almost on every main street corner, bakers with pans full of boiling oil are busy, especially on fast days, preparing fish and pastries for anyone who desires them. They do extremely well, and many thousands carry away their lunch and dinner in a piece of paper.

Naples, May 30, 1787.

Strolling through the city, at night, I reached the pier (*the Molo*). There, I looked upwards, to observe the moon, its glow lighting the edges of the clouds, the path created by its reflected rays swaying gently on the water, more brightly and more vividly at the crest of each oncoming wave. And I gazed at the stars in the sky, the lighthouse-beacon, Vesuvius' flames, its reflection in the water, and the countless individual lights scattered among the ships. I would have liked to see how Van der Neer (*Aert van der Neer, the Dutch painter, noted for his moonlit scenes*) would have tackled such a multifaceted artistic challenge.

Naples, Thursday, May 31, 1787.

I had focused my thoughts so firmly on the Corpus Christi festival in Rome, and especially the tapestries, woven after Raphael, displayed at that time, that I refused to allow myself to be distracted by such natural phenomena, however magnificent, even though they are unparalleled elsewhere, but rather continued, stubbornly, with my preparations for the journey. A passport had been ordered, and the vetturino had handed over his retainer, since here, for the security of travellers, things are the reverse

of what is done at home. Kniep, meanwhile, was busy moving into his new quarters, which were much more spacious, and in a better location, than formerly.

Even before the move was underway, my friend had repeatedly pointed out to me that it was rather unpleasant and, in a way, unfitting to take up occupancy of a place without introducing anything of one's own; even a bed-frame commands a certain amount of respect from one's hosts. As we walked through the endless clutter of the Castle's outer-bailey today, I noticed a few iron bed-frames, painted to look like bronze, which I immediately haggled over, and then presented to my friend as forming the future foundation for a peaceful and solid bed. One of the ever-available porters carried them, along with the necessary boards, into the new quarters. This arrangement pleased Kniep so greatly that he immediately decided to leave me and move in, readily acquiring the large drawing boards, paper, and other materials that he needed. As agreed, I gave him a number of the sketches drawn in both Sicilies.

Naples, June 1, 1787.

The arrival of the Marquis Lucchesini (*Girolamo Lucchesini, a Prussian diplomat*) has delayed my departure by a few days; I have greatly enjoyed getting to know him. He seems to me to be one of those people who possess a good moral constitution, enabling them to always partake at the great worldly table, instead of the likes of us, who, like ruminants, sometimes overeat, and then cannot absorb anything more until we have completed a repeated chewing of the cud, and further digestion. I also like his wife (*Charlotte von Tarrach*) quite well; she is a truly Germanic character.

I am now glad to leave Naples; indeed, I must go. These last few days, I have indulged the pleasure of seeing people; the individuals I have met have proved mostly interesting, and I am content with the hours I have devoted to them, but another two weeks of such would lead me further and further from my purpose. And then one becomes ever more inactive here. Since my return from Paestum, I have seen little apart from the treasures of Portici, and much still remains to be seen, which I don't feel like lifting a foot for. Nonetheless, the museum is the be-all and end-all of collections of antiquities; there one can see how far ahead the ancient world was in its joyous appreciation of art, even if it lagged far behind us in rigorous craftsmanship.

The same date, June 1, 1787.

The clerk who delivered my certified passport, while expressing his regret at my departure, told me that a large lava flow, erupting from Vesuvius, was making its way to the sea; it had almost descended the steeper slopes of the mountain, and would

likely reach the shore in a few days. I found myself, now, in a sad situation. Today was devoted to farewell visits, which I owed to the many kind and supportive people, here; I already know how tomorrow must go. One cannot completely escape people on one's journey, yet whatever they offer us ultimately distracts from our serious goals, without our advancing theirs in any way. I am extremely disgruntled.

The same day, at evening.

However, my visits of thanks were not without pleasure and enlightenment too; I was kindly shown many things that had previously been deferred or neglected. Cavaliere Venuti (*Marquis Domenico Venuti, Director of Excavations*) even allowed me to see various hidden treasures. I once again contemplated with great reverence his priceless, though mutilated, Ulysses. As a farewell gesture, he took me to the porcelain factory, where I tried my best to memorise the form of the Hercules, and once again feasted my eyes on the collection of Campanian vessels.

Truly moved by the occasion, while taking his leave in a friendly manner, he confided to me one last time what it was that was really affecting him, and said that he wished for nothing more than that I could stay there a while longer. My banker, at whose house I arrived around lunchtime, would not let me go; all of which would have been fine, had the lava not captured my imagination. Amidst various tasks, the payment of debts, and packing, night fell, and I hastened to the pier.

There I gazed at all the lights, the fires, and their reflections, shimmering in a livelier manner on the choppy sea; now at the full moon in all its glory not far from the volcano's plume, and now at the lava flow, which had been absent the other day, moving solemnly on its glowing way. I could have voyaged further, but the preparations would have proved too lengthy; I would not have arrived until morning, nor did I wish my impatience to prevent me enjoying the present view, so I seated myself on the jetty until, despite the ebb and flow of the crowd, and their loud interpretations, pronouncements, comparisons, and arguments about which direction the lava flow would take, and other such nonsense, my eyes began to close.

Naples, Saturday, June 2, 1787.

And so, I have spent this beautiful, enjoyable and productive day, with excellent people, but entirely against my wishes, and with a heavy heart. I gazed longingly at the cloud of vapour, which, drifting slowly down the mountain towards the sea, marked the path the lava was taking hour by hour. My evening, too, was fated not to be free. I had promised to visit the Duchess of Giovane (*Juliane Giovane, a German writer, and*

lady-in-waiting to Queen Maria Caroline), who resided in the Castle, where I was made to ascend many steps through various corridors, the uppermost of which proved narrow due to the presence of various chests, cupboards, and all the other unpleasant trappings of a court wardrobe. In a large, high-ceilinged room with no particular view, I found a young lady, with an attractive figure, with a very delicate and refined mode of conversation. As a native German, she was well aware of how our literature had progressed towards a freer, more expansive expression of humanism; she greatly admired Herder's work and that of others which resembled it, also the clear intellect of Christian Garve (*the Enlightenment philosopher*) had also deeply appealed to her. She sought to keep pace with other female German writers, and it was quite notable that she wished to wield a practised and lauded pen. Her conversations revolved around this topic and simultaneously revealed her desire to influence the daughters of the upper classes; such conversation knows no bounds. Dusk had already fallen, and no candles had yet been brought in. We paced the room, and she, approaching a wall of windows closed by shutters, pushed one open, and I beheld something one sees only once in a lifetime. If she did so intentionally, to surprise me, she achieved her purpose perfectly. We stood at a window on the upper floor, Vesuvius directly before us; the flowing lava, its flames already glowing brightly, the sun having set some time ago, beginning to gild its accompanying vapour; the mountain raging violently, with, above it, an immense, stationary cloud, its various masses illuminated with each flash of light, distinct and corporeal. From there to the sea, a strip of heat and glowing vapour; meanwhile, sea and earth, rock and vegetation were clearly visible in the twilight, bright yet peaceful, in the magical stillness. To take all this in at a glance, and see the full moon emerging from behind the mountain ridge as the fulfilment of that most wondrous scene could no other than cause astonishment (*the moon was completely full on May 31st, but still ninety-eight per cent illuminated on June 2nd*)

From our vantage point, the eye could encompass everything at once, and even if unable to examine the individual objects in detail, never lost sight of the grand scheme of things. Though our conversation was interrupted by this spectacle, it took an even happier turn. We now had before us a 'text' that it would take a thousand years to comment on fully. The deeper the darkness, the more the landscape seemed to gain in clarity; the moon shone like a second sun; the columns of vapour, their streaks and masses were illuminated minutely; indeed, one could almost discern, with eyesight alone, the glowing clumps of rock ejected into the night from the cone. My hostess — which is what I will call her, since she had gone to the trouble of providing a delicious supper for me — saw that the candles were placed on the opposite side of the room, and the lovely woman, illuminated by the moon, in the foreground to this incredible scene, seemed to me to grow ever more beautiful; indeed, her beauty was especially enhanced by listening to her pleasant German dialect in this southern paradise.

I forgot the lateness of the hour, such that she had to remind me, finally, that it was necessary for her to dismiss me, albeit reluctantly, as the hour was approaching when her galleries would be closed like convent cloisters. And so, I departed, hesitantly, from both the near and the distant view, blessing my fate, which had rewarded me this evening in repayment for the day's reluctant courtesies. Once in the open air, I told myself that, in the vicinity of this larger lava flow, I would only have experienced a repetition of the smaller one, and that such a view, such a farewell to Naples, could not have been experienced in any other way. Instead of going home, I set my steps towards the Molo, to see the grand spectacle, only with a far different foreground; yet I know not whether it was my fatigue after such a full day, or a feeling that I should not blur that last, beautiful image, that drew me back to Moriconi, where I found Kniep, who had decided to pay me an evening visit, after settling in to his newly acquired lodgings. Over a bottle of wine, we discussed our future arrangements; I was able to assure him that as soon as I could present some of his work in Germany, he would be recommended to the excellent Ernst II, Duke of Saxe-Gotha-Altenburg, and would certainly receive commissions from him. And so, we parted with heartfelt joy and the confident prospect of a mutually beneficial collaboration in future.

Naples, Sunday, June 3, 1787. Trinity Sunday.

I drove, half-dazed, through the bustling life of this incomparable city, which I am probably destined never to see again; but glad that I had left no trace of either regret or pain behind me. I thought of the good Kniep, and promised him, even from afar, my best care.

At the outermost suburban police checkpoint, I was momentarily troubled by a marshal who looked at me in a kindly manner, and quickly moved away. The customs officers had not yet finished with the vetturino when Kniep emerged from the coffee-shop door, carrying the largest of china cups, full of black coffee, on a serving tray. He approached the carriage door slowly with a serious expression that, arising from the heart, suited him very well. I was astonished and touched; I felt such appreciative attention to be unparalleled. 'You have, shown me,' he said 'so much affection and kindness, such as to adorn my whole life, that I wished to offer you a simple token of how much I owe you.'

Since I am always at a loss for words on such occasions, I simply stated, laconically, that through his actions he had already rendered me indebted, and that through the employment and perfecting of our shared gains he would bind me even more closely.

We parted as people, briefly connected by chance, rarely do. Perhaps we would win far more gratitude and benefit in life if we were to speak frankly to one another about

our expectations. Once that is accomplished, both parties are satisfied, and the feeling of friendship, which is ultimately the most important thing, appears as a bonus.

On the road, June 4th, 5th and 6th.

Since I am travelling alone this time, I have had ample time to recall the impressions of the past months; which I have done, and with great pleasure. And yet, the incompleteness of my observations is quite apparent, and while a journey seems to flow by in a continuous stream to the one who undertakes it, appearing in the memory as a regular sequence, one nevertheless feels that true communication of it is impossible. The narrator must present everything piece by piece: how can a whole be formed from this in the mind of some third party?

Therefore, nothing more comforting and gratifying could have come my way than the assurances in your last letters that you are studying the subjects of Italy and Sicily with diligence, reading travelogues, and examining engravings; the evidence that my letters benefit from your doing so is my greatest consolation. Had you explained what you were doing, or simply mentioned it earlier, I would have been even more zealous than I was. The fact that excellent men like Bartels, Münter, and other architects of various nations preceded me, who certainly pursued their objective goals more diligently than I, who have only had the most subjective ones in mind, has often reassured me when I felt my own efforts as insufficient.

In sum, if every person may be considered merely a supplement to all others, and so appears most useful and endearing when he or she presents themselves as such, then this must be especially true of travellers and their travelogues. Personality, purpose, circumstance, the favourable or unfavourable nature of chance events — everything manifests itself differently in each individual. If I know my predecessors, I may also know how to appreciate them, utilise them, and await their successors, who, should I have been fortunate enough to visit the region myself in the meantime, I shall treat, equally, as friends.

The End of Goethe's 'Italian Journey' Part VIII

Part IX: Second Stay in Rome – 1787, June to December

Second Stay in Rome – 1787, June to December

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

'May she last long, and rule a conquered world;
All subject, from the rising to the setting sun.'

(*Ovid's 'Fasti': Book IV, lines 823-824*)

Rome, June 8, 1787

The day before yesterday, I arrived back here happily, and yesterday the solemn Feast of Corpus Christi immediately reinstated me as a Roman. I will confess, gladly, that my departure from Naples caused me some distress; not so much at the loss of that magnificent landscape as leaving behind the tremendous lava flow that, from the summit of Vesuvius, was making its way towards the sea, an event which I had wished to observe closely, and of whose nature, about which so much has been read and told, I had hoped to gain experience.

Today, however, my longing for the splendid local scene here has been fulfilled; not by the pious festive clamour, which, despite the imposing whole, occasionally offends the inner sense with its tasteless details, but rather the display of tapestries, based on Raphael's cartoons, which has returned me to a more elevated contemplation. The finest of them, those most certainly inherited from him, are shown together; others, probably created by his pupils, contemporaries, and fellow artists, adjoin them, not unworthily, and cover the endless spaces.

Rome, June 16.

Let me address you again, my dear friends. I am very well; I find myself learning, more and more, how to distinguish between what is my own, and what is foreign to me. I am working diligently, absorbing experiences from all sides, growing and developing from within. These past few days I have visited Tivoli and witnessed one of the finest of natural spectacles. The waterfalls there, the ruins, and the entire landscape, are among those things acquaintance with which enriches us to the very core.

On the last day of my trip, I forgot to write. I wearied myself at Tivoli, from walking and drawing in the heat. I was out with Philipp Hackert, who shows incredible skill in capturing Nature, and giving immediate form to a sketch. I learnt a great deal from him during those few days; more I cannot say. Here is yet another summit to be climbed on this earth. The very complexity of the neighbouring scenery, delivers the most wonderful effects.

Hackert praised me, and criticised me, and helped me further. Half-jokingly, half-seriously, he suggested I stay in Italy for eighteen months and practise working in accord with the best principles; after that time, he promised, I would find joy in my work. I also understand well what, and how, one must study in order to overcome certain difficulties beneath whose burden one otherwise crawls during one's entire life.

One more remark. Only now are the trees, the rocks, indeed Rome itself, beginning to grow dear to me; until now I have always perceived them as foreign; by way of contrast, I was delighted by insignificant objects that resembled those I saw in my youth. Now I must, first of all, become at home here, and yet I shall never feel as intimately at home as I did with those first objects of life. I have various thoughts concerning art and imitation at the moment.

During my absence, Tischbein discovered a painting by Daniele da Volterra in the monastery (*of Santa Maria del Popolo*) at the Porta del Popolo. The clergy were willing to part with it for a thousand scudi, a sum which Tischbein, being a poor artist, could not raise. He therefore made a proposal to Angelika Kaufmann via Meyer (*Johann Heinrich Meyer, the Swiss art historian, scholar, painter and engraver*), which she agreed to. She paid the clergy, took possession of the painting, and Tischbein later purchased her contractually-agreed half-share, for a consideration. It was an excellent painting, depicting the Entombment, with many figures. A drawing after it, carefully done by Meyer, still exists.

Rome, June 20th.

I have viewed various excellent works of art here, again, and my mind is being gradually cleansed and clarified. But I need at least another year alone in Rome, so as to employ the time in my own way, for as you know I am unable to employ it in any other manner. If I leave now, I will only have experienced what has not yet fully dawned on me, but that must suffice for now.

The Farnese Hercules has gone; I saw him standing on his original legs, which had been restored to him after many a long year. Now one cannot understand how the first ones, fashioned by Guglielmo della Porta, could have been thought fine for so long. The Hercules is now one of the most perfect works of art from ancient times. In Naples,

the king is having a museum built where everything he owns in the way of art — the Herculaneum Museum, the paintings from Pompeii, the paintings from Capo di Monte, the entire Farnese legacy — will be displayed together. It is a grand and wonderful undertaking. Our countryman Hackert is the driving force behind this project. Even the Farnese Bull is to be moved to Naples and erected on the promenade there. If they could take the Carracci Gallery from the palace with them, they would.

Rome, June 27.

I was with Hackert at the Galleria Colonna, where works by Poussin, Claude, and Salvator Rosa are displayed alongside each other. He spoke to me in an insightful and well-argued manner about these paintings; copied some of them and studied others thoroughly. I was pleased to find that, by and large, they impressed me in the same way, during my first visits to the gallery. What he said to me, rather than altering my understanding only broadened and refined it. If one were to look again at Nature, rediscover it, and read there what those artists found, and more or less imitated, surely doing so would expand and purify the soul, ultimately granting it a most elevated, yet most intuitive understanding of Nature and Art. I will strive till nothing remains within me but living concepts. From my youth, this has been my desire and my torment; now that maturity is here, I wish, at least, to achieve what is achievable, and do what is doable, having so long endured, both deservedly and undeservedly, a fate combining those of Sisyphus and Tantalus.

Love, and have faith in, me still. Now, amongst these people, I live in a tolerably good and open manner; I am well, and I enjoy the passing day.

Tischbein is very organised, but I fear he will never achieve a state of mind whereby he can work in joy and freedom. More about this wonderful man when we speak. My portrait is turning out well; the likeness is good, and all are pleased by the composition. Angelika is painting my portrait, too, but nothing will come of it. It greatly annoys her that it does not resemble me, or capture my look. The fellow is certainly handsome, yet there is not a trace of myself in him.

Rome, June 30.

The great Feast of Saint Peter and Saint Paul finally arrived; yesterday we saw the dome illuminated and fireworks launched from the castle. Lit in that manner, the scene was like one from a fairy-tale; one could hardly believe one's eyes. Since I now only see things that are, and not, as I did before, things that are not, such dramatic spectacles are needed for me to feel joy. I have witnessed half a dozen extraordinary

scenes on my travels, and this certainly ranked among the very best. To view the beautiful form of the colonnade, the church, and especially the dome, first in fiery outline and then, at the end of an hour, glowing en masse, was a unique and magnificent experience. When one considers that the enormous building serves, at that time, only as a scaffolding for the night's display, one comprehends why nothing quite like this event can be matched elsewhere in the world. The sky was clear and bright, the moon shone, and softened the glow from the lights, but finally, when all was ablaze after the second part of the display, the moonlight itself was dimmed. The fireworks were splendid because of the location, but not nearly as impressive as the illumination of the scene. We shall be able to view both again, tonight…

…that event too is over. The sky was beautifully clear, and the moon full, which once more softened the effects of the illumination, and the scene looked, once more, like something out of a fairy-tale. To see the beautiful form of the church and its dome outlined in flame, is a magnificent and enchanting sight.

Rome, the end of June.

I have entered too great a college to be allowed to abandon the course too early. My artistic skills, my meagre talent, must be fully developed and matured in this place, otherwise I will be bringing back to you but half a friend, and the yearning, striving, stumbling, and crawling will begin anew. This letter would never be finished, if I were to tell you in detail how well everything has gone this month, indeed, how all I could have wished for has been presented to me on a platter. I have excellent quarters, and fine hosts. Tischbein is off to Naples, and I am taking up residence in his study, which is a large, pleasantly cool room. When you think of me, think of me as a fortunate fellow; I intend to write often, so that we are, and will remain, joined in friendship.

I have plenty of fresh thoughts and ideas; left to my own devices, I am recovering my early youth, down to the smallest detail, and then the heightened nobility of all that is around me, bears me again as high and far as the limits of my existence allow. My eye for things is developing incredibly, nor will my hand lag entirely behind. There is only one Rome in all the world, and I find myself here like a fish in water. I float like a bullet in a bath of mercury, which would sink in any other fluid. Nothing clouds the atmosphere of my thoughts except my inability to share my happiness with those dear to me. The sky is now gloriously clear; Rome sees mist only in the mornings and evenings, while in the hills — around Albano, Castel Gandolfo, Frascati — where I spent three days last week, the air is always clear and pure. There, Nature can indeed be studied.

A Later Note Regarding My Use of Others' Letters.

Though structuring my account according to the conditions, impressions, and feelings of the day, extracting, to that purpose, the passages of wider interest from my own letters — which, indeed, captured the essence of the moment more truly than a narrative penned later — I realise that letters from my friends may serve this purpose even better. So, I have decided to include extracts from such letters, here and there, and will begin, at once, by introducing Tischbein's vivid account of his departure from Rome, and his arrival in Naples. It offers the advantage of transporting the reader to that region, immediately, and revealing the immediate circumstances of the people, while illuminating, in particular, the character of our artist, who has worked so extensively, for so long, and who, though he may sometimes appear somewhat eccentric, ever deserves grateful remembrance for both his endeavours and his achievements

Tischbein to Goethe.

Naples, July 10, 1787.

'Our journey from Rome to Capua was a very happy and pleasant one. At Albano, Hackert joined us; in Velletri, we dined at Cardinal Stefano Borgia's and visited his museum (*the Museo Borgiano featured Egyptian statuary, Etruscan antiquities, Coptic manuscripts, and, unique Chinese items*), much to my delight, as I noticed many things I had overlooked the first time. At three in the afternoon, we departed again, traversing the Pontine Marshes, which I found much more agreeable this time than in winter, as the green trees and hedgerows lend these vast plains a graceful variety. We found ourselves shortly before dusk in the midst of the region, where the posts exchange mail. While the postilions were employing all their eloquence in hopes of extorting money from us, a courageous white stallion found an opportunity to break free and race away; this made for a spectacle that gave us great pleasure. He was a beautiful, snow-white horse of magnificent build; he broke the reins that tied him, lashed out with his front hooves at anyone who tried to curb him, kicked out behind, and made such a racket with his neighing that everyone stood aside in fear. Then he leapt the ditch and galloped over the field, constantly snorting and neighing. His tail and mane fluttered high in the air, and his form in free motion was so fine that we all exclaimed: 'Oh! What beauty! What beauty!' Then he ran back and forth beside another ditch, searching for a narrow place to jump across so as to reach the foals and mares, hundreds of which were grazing on the other side. Finally, he managed to do so and set down among the mares, who were grazing peacefully. They were frightened by his wild cries, and ran, in a long line, fleeing from him over the level field ahead; he followed behind, always seeking to rear.

Finally, he drove a mare aside; she then fled to another field to join another large gathering of mares. These too, seized by terror, bolted towards the first group. Now the field was black with horses, all in wild terror, the white stallion constantly leaping among them. The herd ran back and forth across the field in long lines, the air and earth roared and thundered as the heavy and powerful creatures swept by. We watched for a long time with pleasure as the troop, numbering many hundreds, galloped around, sometimes in a tight group, sometimes divided, now scattering individually, now running in long lines over the ground.

Finally, the darkness of approaching night robbed us of the unique spectacle, and by the time the brightest moon rose behind the mountains, the light of our coach lanterns had guttered. But since I had long enjoyed their gentle glow, I could no longer resist sleep, and, though fearing the unhealthy air, I slept for more than an hour, not waking till we arrived at Terracina, where the horses were changed.

There the postilions were very well-behaved, because of the fear instilled in them by the Marchese Lucchesini; they gave us the best horses and guides, because the path between the high cliffs and the sea is dangerous. Many accidents have occurred here, especially at night when the horses easily become skittish. While they were being harnessed and while our passport was being shown to the last official of Rome, I walked between the high cliffs and the sea and beheld the greatest of effects: the dark rocks brilliantly illuminated by the moon, which cast a vivid, shimmering trail across the blue sea, the path of light flickering even over the waves lapping at the shore.

High on a craggy pinnacle, to the east, stood the ruins of Genseric's crumbling castle, in the blue twilight (*Castello Frangipane, twelfth century, and not attributable to Genseric or Gaiseric, King of the Vandals in the fifth century*); it made me think of times past, evoking the unfortunate Conradin's longing to save himself (*Conradin, Duke of Swabia, and nominal King of Jerusalem and Sicily, failed to reclaim the Kingdom of Sicily for the Hohenstaufen dynasty and was beheaded, in 1268*), which was akin to that of Cicero (*who owned a villa at Formiae, modern Formia, on the same coast, where he was assassinated in 43BC*) and Marius, (*Gaius Marius the Roman general was detained in the marshes at Minturnae, modern Minturno, a little further along the shore, in 88BC*), who all encountered adversity on this coast.

It was beautiful to continue along the mountain track, driving in the moonlight between the large, tumbled boulders at the sea's edge. The groups of olive trees, palms, and pines near Fondi were clearly illuminated; but the lemon groves lacked beauty, since they only display their full splendour when the sun shines on their yellow fruit. We then crossed the mountain, where many olive and carob trees grow, and it was already daybreak when we arrived at the ruins of the ancient city, where the remains of many tombs are located. The largest of these is said to have been erected for Cicero,

on the very spot where he was murdered. We had already experienced several hours of daylight when we reached the delightful bay of Mola di Gaeta. The fishermen were already returning with their catch, rendering the scene on the beach very lively. Some carried away the fish and seafood in baskets, while others prepared their lines for the next catch. From there we drove to the River Garigliano, where Marquis Domenico Venuti (*the Director of Excavations at Naples*) was supervising the work. Hackert left us there, and hastened on to Caserta, while we walked down from the road to the sea, where a breakfast had been prepared for us, which might readily have been considered a lunch. Various excavated antiquities were stored there, though they were pitifully broken. Among other beautiful objects was a leg, from a statue that rivals that of the Apollo Belvedere. It would be wonderful if the rest of it could be found.

We lay down for a while due to tiredness, and when we awoke found ourselves in the company of a pleasant family who live in this area who had come there to prepare our lunch; a courtesy we felt we certainly owed to Philipp Hackert, who had already departed however. So, once again, a meal was set out; but I could neither eat nor remain seated, however pleasant the company, and instead went for a walk by the sea among the rocks, some of which were quite peculiar, and many riddled with holes made by marine creatures, some of which looked like sponges.

Here too I encountered something quite delightful: a goatherd had driven his goats to the shore; the goats stepped out into the water to cool off. Then a swineherd joined them, and while the two herds refreshed themselves in the waves, both herdsmen sat down in the shade, and made music; the swineherd on the flute, the goatherd on the *zampogna* (*Italian bagpipes*). Finally, a grown boy rode up, naked, and waded so deep into the water that the horse swam with him aboard. It was a beautiful sight when the handsome lad came so close to shore that his whole body was visible, and then returned to the deep sea, where one could see nothing more than the head of the swimming horse, and the lad visible to below the shoulders.

At three in the afternoon, we continued on our way, but three miles beyond Capua, an hour after nightfall, the back wheel of our carriage broke. This delayed us for several hours while it was replaced. After this was done, and we had covered a few more miles, the axle broke. This was a great annoyance; we were so close to Naples and yet could not reach our friends. Finally, we arrived, several hours after midnight, where we found as many people in the streets as one would scarcely find in any other city at noon.

Here I found all our friends safe and sound, and they were all delighted to hear the same of you. I am staying at Hackert's house; the day before yesterday I was with Sir William Hamilton at the Posillipo pleasure pavilion. There is truly nothing more splendid to behold on God's earth. After dinner, a dozen boys swam in the sea; it was

a beautiful sight. The many groupings and poses they adopted! He pays them to enjoy this pleasure every afternoon. I like Hamilton immensely; I spoke with him a great deal, both here at the house, and when we were at the coast. I was extremely pleased to learn so much about him, and hope for more good things from this man. Please write and tell me the names of your other friends here, so that I may meet and know them also. You will soon hear more from here. Give my regards to all my friends, especially Angelika and Reiffenstein.

P.S. I find it much hotter in Naples than in Rome, with the only difference being that the air is healthier and there is a constant, somewhat fresh, breeze, though the sun is much stronger; for the first few days I found it almost unbearable. I lived solely on ice and melted snow.'

Later, no date.

'Yesterday I wished you were here in Naples: I have never experienced such noise, such a crowd, all there simply to buy food; and you have never seen so much food gathered together. The main street, Via Toledo, was almost covered with every kind of goods. Here you get a real sense of a people inhabiting a fortunate region, where the seasons bring forth fruit daily. Imagine half a million people feasting, in the Neapolitan style, today. Yesterday and today, I was at a table where people ate so much that I was astonished; there was a sinful abundance. Kniep was there too, and he overdid things, eating so much of all the delicious dishes that I was afraid he would burst; but he was unmoved, and was ever talking of the appetite he had enjoyed on the ship and in Sicily, while you, for all you had paid for your meals, fasted, and were as good as starving, partly out of ill-temper, he says, partly as a cure.

Today everything bought yesterday has already been eaten, and they say tomorrow the street will be just as crowded as it was. Via Toledo is like a theatre-stage where abundance is on full display. The shops are all decorated with foodstuffs, some even hanging in garlands across the street, the sausages partly-gilded and tied with red ribbons; the Italian poultry birds, thirty thousand of which were sold yesterday without mentioning those that people fatten up at home, all have a red flag stuck in their rear ends. The number of donkeys laden with capons, and others burdened with small oranges, is astounding; the large piles of such golden fruits heaped on the pavement are startling. But the most beautiful shops are surely those selling greenery, and those displaying raisins, figs, and melons: all arranged so elegantly that it delights the eye and the spirit. Naples is a place where God frequently bestows his blessing on all the senses (*note Goethe's use of this passage earlier*).

Later, no date.

Here you have a drawing of a number of Turks being held captive here. It was not the *Hercules* as it was initially rumoured, which captured them, but rather a ship that was escorting the coral-fishers. The Turks spotted a Christian vessel and set about taking it, but they were deceived; for the Christians were stronger, and so they were overwhelmed and brought here as prisoners. There were thirty men on the Christian ship, twenty-four on the Turkish vessel; six Turks died in the fighting, one was wounded. Not a single Christian survived; the Madonna protected them.

The captain made a great haul; he found a deal of money and goods, silk and coffee, also a rich set of jewellery which belonged to a young Moorish woman.

It was strange to see the many thousands of people sailing about in boats to gaze at the prisoners, especially at the Moorish woman. Several suitors wanted to buy her, and offered a high price, but the captain refused to let her go.

I went there every day, and on one occasion met Sir William Hamilton and Miss Hart, who was very moved and weeping. When the Moorish woman saw this, she too began to weep; Miss Hart wanted to buy her, but the captain stubbornly refused to give her up. Now they are no longer here; my sketch tells you the rest.'

The Papal Tapestries

The great sacrifice I decided to make, leaving behind the lava flowing from Vesuvius almost to the sea, was richly rewarded by achieving my goal, a sight of the tapestries which, hung aloft on Corpus Christi, remind us, brilliantly, of Raphael, his pupils, and his times.

In the Netherlands, carpet weaving with a standing warp, called *hautelisse* (*high-warp, using a vertical loom*), had already reached its highest level. I know a little of how carpet production gradually developed and was improved. In the twelfth century, individual pieces showing figures may still have been finished by embroidery or some other method, and then assembled using specially-crafted linking pieces. One still finds similar examples above the choir stalls of old cathedrals, bearing some resemblance to stained-glass windows, where the images were also initially composed from very small pieces, in their case of coloured glass. In tapestry, needle and thread replaced strips of lead or tin. All early beginnings in the arts and crafts are of a similar kind; I have seen valuable Chinese carpets that had been made in the same way.

Probably inspired by Oriental patterns, the intricate techniques had already been perfected in the trade-rich and opulent Netherlands by the beginning of the sixteenth century; such work was already being exported again to the Orient, and was certainly

known in Rome as well, probably based on imperfect patterns and drawings designed in the Byzantine style. The great and, in many ways, aesthetically free-spirited Pope Leo X wished what he could see depicted on the walls to be rendered in tapestry, equally freely and on a grand scale, in his various surroundings; at his instigation, Raphael produced the required cartoons, choosing a fortunate subject, that of depicting Christ's relationship to his Apostles and the impact of those gifted men after their Master's death.

On Corpus Christi, the true purpose of the tapestries is finally revealed; here they transform colonnades and open spaces into magnificent halls and walkways, demonstrating, in a decisive manner, the skill of that most gifted artist, and granting us sight of a most happy example of art and craft meeting in mutual perfection, and at their highest level of development.

The Raphael cartoons, still preserved in England (*in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, on loan from the Royal Collection since 1865*), remain the object of the world's admiration; some certainly originate from the master alone, others may be based on his drawings or instructions, and still others perhaps were made after his death. All testify to a great, and unified artistic vision, and artists of all nations flocked here to elevate their minds and enhance their skills.

This prompts me to note the tendency of German artists to show high regard and affection for Raphael's early works, of which even then faint traces could be observed.

One feels closely related, whatever one's artistic field, to a talented, sensitive young man, drawn to the gentle, graceful, and natural in life; even if one dares not compare oneself with him, one silently competes, hoping to achieve for oneself the perfection he attained.

One cannot however, with a like ease, feel the same towards a mature artist, who has perfected his or her work; for we sense the severe constraints which even the most determined nature must overcome to attain the ultimate success possible, and if we do not want to despair of ourselves, we must retreat, and compare ourselves humbly with artists who are yet striving and developing.

That is the reason why German artists were inclined to show their veneration for, and trust in, the past, and in imperfect works, since they too could consider themselves destined to achieve what was special, and flatter themselves with the hope of achieving, in their own persons, what requires nonetheless the work of successive centuries.

Let us return to Raphael's cartoons and state that they are all manly conceptions; moral seriousness and a sense of foreboding prevail everywhere, and although obscure here and there, they become perfectly clear to those who are sufficiently instructed

from Holy Scripture concerning the departure of the Redeemer, and the wondrous gifts he left to his disciples.

Let us first consider the humiliation and punishment of Ananias (*'The Death of Ananias'*), since the small copperplate engraving, not unreasonably attributed to 'Marcantonio' (*Marcantonio Raimondi*), based on a detailed drawing by Raphael, the reproduction of the cartoons by Sir Nicolas Dorigny, and a comparison of both, will be of sufficient service to us.

Few compositions can be compared to this; here is a superb concept, action of the utmost significance as regards its details, presented perfectly clearly in all its diversity: the Apostles, expecting everyone's property to be presented in common as a pious offering; the faithful bringing it forward on the one side, the needy receiving it on the other, and in the middle the one who withheld his property, horribly punished: an arrangement the symmetry of which arises from the act of donation, and which is not so much subordinated as enlivened, by the requirements of what was required to be depicted; just as the indispensable symmetrical proportion of the human body only gains compelling interest through manifold living gestures and movements.

Though, on viewing this work of art, once could make no end of observations, I will highlight one more important merit of the composition here. Two men, approaching carrying sacks of goods, necessarily belonging to Ananias; but it is impossible to discern from this alone that some were withheld, and the commons robbed of it. However, our attention is drawn to a young, and attractive woman, who, with a keen expression, is counting with her left hand the coins in her right; and immediately we recall the generous saying: 'The left hand should be unaware of what the right hand gives,' and can have no doubt that this refers to Sapphira (*the wife of Ananias*), who is counting out the money to be presented to the Apostles, yet intending to keep some for herself, as her quietly cunning expression seems to suggest. The idea is astounding, and terrifying, when one considers it carefully. Before us, the husband, already punished, dying, writhes on the ground, his convulsions horrific; to his right, his wife, heedless of his fate, plotting maliciously to defraud the divine power, and oblivious to the punishment that awaits her. Indeed, this image stands before us like some eternal problem, which we admire the more as its difficulties becomes possible of solution, and clearer to us. A comparison between the Marcantonio engraving, after a drawing of a similar size by Raphael, and the larger engraving by Nicolas Dorigny, after the cartoon itself, leads us once more to contemplate the subject deeply, and appreciate the wisdom and skill with which Raphael, in a second treatment of the same composition, implemented various alterations and enhancements. Let me gladly acknowledge that a considered study of the work has served as among my greatest joys in life.

Rome, July 5, 1787.

This current life perfectly resembles my youthful dream; let us see whether I am destined to enjoy it, or to learn that, like so much else, it is mere vanity. Tischbein is gone, his apartment tidied, dusted, and cleaned, so that I am now happy to occupy it. How necessary it is to have a comfortable home at this season. The heat is intense. In the morning, at sunrise, I rise and visit the Fonte del Acqua Acetosa, a mineral spring, a good half hour's walk from where I am living (*Via del Corso, 18*), and drink the water, which tastes like a weaker version of the spring-water at Bad Schwalbach, but is very effective in this climate. Around eight, I am back home and industrious in whatever way my mood allows. I am quite well. The heat drains everything fluid, and drives whatever is acrid in the body to the surface of the skin, and it is always better to itch than have something poison one's innards.

I continue to draw and sketch, cultivating my taste and educating my hand. I have begun to pursue architecture more seriously, and it has all begun to seem astonishingly easy for me (the concept, that is, since its practice requires a lifetime). The best thing is: I have dispensed with arrogance or pretensions. I demanded nothing when I arrived, and now insist on ignoring only the names, and the texts. What is considered beautiful, grand, worthy of note, I wish to see and 'recognise' with my own eyes. Without imitation, this is not possible. Now I must sit down to the plaster heads; the correct method is being shown to me by various artists. I concentrate my efforts as best I can. At the beginning of the week, I simply could not refuse to dine here and there. Now they want me at this and that place; I ignore it all, and keep my silence. Karl Moritz, some fellow countrymen living in the same house, and a stalwart Swiss are my usual companions. I also visit Angelika Kaufmann and Councillor Reiffenstein; everywhere I go I display a contemplative expression, and there is no one to whom I am committed. Jerome Lucchesini is here again, he who receives the whole world and is received by everyone. A man effective in his role, if I am not very much mistaken. Soon I shall write to you about some people I hope to soon become acquainted with.

'Egmont' (*his play, influenced by Shakespearian tragedy*) is in progress, and I have hopes it will turn out well; at least, I always feel while writing it that I am not deceiving myself. It is quite strange that I have so often been prevented from finishing the thing, and that it will now be completed in Rome. The first act is polished and ready for publication; there are entire scenes in the play that require nothing further.

I have so extensive an opportunity to think about all sorts of things that my 'Wilhelm Meister' ('*Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre': 'Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship', his second novel, published in 1821*) is really growing. But now I must lay what it is old

aside; I am quite old enough myself, and if I wish to achieve something more, I must not delay. As you can easily imagine, I have a hundred new things in my head, but life must be about doing, not thinking; it's a cursed business, arranging things so that they end up exactly as they should be. I would like to talk a great deal about various works of art, but without the relevant pieces here, what can one say? I hope to move beyond trifles, so allow me the time I am spending here, so wonderfully and strangely; and grant me the benefit of your love.

I must close now, against my will, and leave the rest of the page blank. The heat of the day has been intense, and I fell asleep towards evening.

Rome, July 9.

I intend to write a little each week so that neither the heat of the day, nor some other distraction prevents me from reaching the post-office and sending you a sensible word or two. Yesterday I viewed and reviewed many things; I must have been in a dozen churches, all with the most beautiful altarpieces.

Then I went with Angelika Kauffman to see the Scottish artist Jacob More, a landscape painter whose works are brilliantly conceived. Among others, he has painted a deluge scene which is quite unique. Instead of other artists who depict an open flooded area, suggesting a vast but not elevated body of water, he has depicted a deeply enclosed mountain valley into which the rising waters plunge. You can see from the contours of the rocks that the water is approaching the valley's upper reaches, and because it is blocked in the foreground, the cliffs being steep, the effect created is terrifying. It is painted, as it were, only in shades of grey; the dark, churning water, and the dripping spray are intimately intertwined. The water plunges and drips from the rocks as if the immense masses wished to dissolve into the universal element, while the sun, like a dimmed moon, peeks through the sea of water without illuminating it, and yet it is not night. In the centre of the foreground is a flat, isolated rock slab, on which some helpless people are taking refuge, as the level rises and the deluge threatens to engulf them. The whole thing is extremely well conceived. The picture is large. It must be seven to eight feet long, and five to six feet tall (*see 'The Deluge', 1787, Tate Britain, London*). On two other pictures of his, a wonderfully beautiful 'Morning', and a splendid 'Evening' (*1785, both in the Kelvingrove Gallery, Glasgow*), I shall not comment.

For three full days, a festival was held at the Basilica of Santa Maria in Aracoeli celebrating the beatification of two saints from the Order of Saint Francis. The church's decoration, music, illuminations, and nocturnal fireworks drew large crowds. The nearby Capitoline Hill was also illuminated, and fireworks were set off in Capitoline

Square (*Piazza del Campidoglio*). The whole event was very beautiful, even though it was only a postlude to St. Peter's. On such an occasion, the ladies of Rome, accompanied by their husbands or friends, appear at night, dressed all in white with a black belt, looking beautiful and behaving decorously. More folk are seen walking about, or driving along, the promenade at night, at the moment, people choosing not to leave their homes during the day, and the heat is quite bearable then, since a cool breeze has been blowing these past few days. I remain in my equally cool room, quiet and content.

I am working hard, on 'Egmont', which is progressing well. It is odd that they are now staging the play in Brussels exactly as I wrote it twelve years ago; much of it will now be mistaken for a pasquinade (*harsh satire; in 1787, Brussels was the focal point of intense resistance against Austrian rule, serving as a prelude to the Brabant Revolution*).

Rome, July 16.

It is already late at night, though you would scarcely know it, because the street is full of people walking up and down, singing, and playing zithers and violins, change and change about. The nights are cool and refreshing, the days not unbearably hot.

Yesterday I was with Angelika Kauffman at the Villa Farnesina, where the fable of Psyche is frescoed (*in the Loggia, by the School of Raphael*). How often, in how many different circumstances, have I looked at the coloured copies of those paintings with you in my rooms! I was quite struck by them, since I know their details almost by heart, precisely because of those copies. The Loggia, or rather gallery, is decorated most beautifully, and indeed is the most beautiful I have ever seen, even though much of it has been damaged and restored.

Today there was an animal hunt inside the Mausoleum of Augustus (*on the Campus Martius*). This large, empty, roofless, completely circular building is now deployed as an arena, a kind of amphitheatre for bull-baiting. It can hold four to five thousand people. The spectacle itself was of no particular interest to me.

On Tuesday evening, July 17th, I visited Carlo Albacini, the restorer of ancient statues, to view a torso, found among the Farnese possessions being sold to Naples. It is a torso of a seated Apollo, and its beauty is perhaps unparalleled; at the very least, it can be ranked among the earliest artefacts to survive from antiquity.

I dined with Count Josef von Fries. Abbé Giovanni Battista Casti (*the satirist, and writer of comic operas*), who travels with him, recited one of his works, 'The Archbishop of Prague,' which is not very kind, but extraordinarily beautiful, written in

ottavo rime. I already knew him to be the author of my beloved 'Il Re Teodoro in Venezia' (*the opera, music by Giovanni Paisiello, 1784*) He has now written an 'Il Re Teodoro in Corsica,' of which I have read the first act — also a most delightful work.

Count Fries purchases many works of art, among others, for six hundred *zecchini* (*gold pieces*), a 'Madonna' by Andrea del Sarto (*'The Fries Madonna', National Trust, Collection, Ascott Estate, Buckinghamshire, England*). Last March, Angelika had already bid four hundred and fifty zecchini and would have given the whole sum if her cautious husband had not objected. Now they both regret the fact. It is an extremely beautiful painting; one cannot really appreciate it until one has seen it.

And so, every day something new appears, which, combined with what is old and enduring, provides great pleasure. My eye for art objects is developing apace; in time, I might become a connoisseur.

Tischbein complains in a letter about the terrible heat in Naples. It is indeed intense here. On Tuesday, it was said to be hotter than anything foreigners have been experiencing in Spain and Portugal.

'Egmont' has already progressed as far as the fourth act; I hope you will enjoy it. I expect to be finished in three weeks or so, and shall send it straight to Herder.

I have also a deal of sketching and colouring underway. One cannot leave the house, not even take the shortest stroll, without encountering the worthiest objects. My imagination, my memory, are filled with infinitely beautiful things.

Rome, July 20, 1787.

I have recently become aware of two cardinal sins of mine, which have haunted and tormented me all my life. One is that I have never sought to learn the technique of anything I wished to pursue, or ought to pursue. That is why, despite no lack of natural talent, I have accomplished so little. I either succeeded by sheer will-power, as luck and chance would have it, or, in trying to execute something well, and thoughtfully, found myself too timid and failed to complete the task. The other, closely-related sin is of never being prepared to devote as much time to the task or undertaking as it required. Since I enjoy the good fortune of being able to consider and combine a great deal of material in a short time, a step-by-step approach seems tedious to me and I find it unbearable. Now, I think, it is time, since I have the opportunity, to correct myself. I am in the realm of the arts; let me work my way through its various branches so that I can enjoy peace and happiness for the rest of my life, and equally move on to other things.

Rome is a wonderful place for doing so. Not only are there all kinds of interesting objects here, but also all manner of serious people, who walk the true path, and with whom one can easily and quickly make progress in conversation. Thank God, I am beginning to learn from, and accept things from, others.

So, I feel happier in body and soul than ever! Would you could but see it in what I produce, and could praise my absence, and my sojourn here. In all I do and think, I unite with you; incidentally, I am quite alone and have to urge myself to indulge in conversation. But that is easier here than anywhere else, because there is always something interesting to talk about with everyone I encounter.

Anton Mengs (*the artist*) said somewhere, of the Apollo Belvedere, that a statue which combined high style with the greatest physical truth would be the greatest thing one could imagine. In that torso of Apollo or Bacchus which I have already mentioned, his wish, his prophecy, seems fulfilled. My eye is not well-enough trained to judge of so complex a question; but I myself am inclined to consider this sculptural remnant the most beautiful thing I have ever seen. Unfortunately, it is not even a complete torso, the surface, the epidermis, has been eroded in many places; it must have stood beneath a gutter.

Sunday, July 22.

I dined at Angelika's; it has become a custom for me to be a guest of hers on Sundays. Beforehand, we went to the Palazzo Barberini to see the excellent Leonardo (*perhaps the painting of 'Leda and the Swan' created by a follower of Leonardo, often attributed to Cesare da Sesto, and now in the Galleria Borghese*), and Raphael's portrait of his lover (*Margherita Luti, the subject of 'La Fornarina: Portrait of a Young Woman,' 1518/19).* It is very pleasant to look at paintings with Angelika, as her eye is well-trained and her knowledge of artistic technique extensive. At the same time, she is very sensitive to all that is beautiful, true, and delicate, and extremely modest withal.

In the afternoon I visited the Chevalier d'Agincourt (*Jean Baptiste Louis d'Agincourt*), a wealthy Frenchman who devotes his time and money to writing a history of art (*'Histoire de l'Art par les Monumens, Depuis sa Décadence au IVe Siècle jusqu'à son Renouvellement au XVIe', published 1811-23*) from its decline to its revival. The collections he has assembled are extremely interesting. They show how the human mind was ever active even during those dark and gloomy times. When the whole work is complete, it will be quite remarkable.

Now I have something to do that is teaching me a great deal; I have invented and sketched a landscape, which a skilled artist, Albert Christoph Dies, is colouring in my

presence; this helps my eye and mind to become increasingly familiar with colour and harmony. All in all, it is going well. Anyway, I am, as always, working hard. My greatest joy is that my eye is familiarising itself with shapes and contours, and readily developing a sense of form and proportion, and that my old feeling for composition and wholeness is returning quite vividly. Everything now depends on practice.

Monday, July 23.

In the evening, I climbed Trajan's Column to enjoy the inestimable view. From the summit, with the sun setting, the Coliseum looks magnificent, with the Capitoline Hill close by, the Palatine Hill beyond, and the city stretching out before one. I walked back through the streets, late in the evening, slowly. The Piazza del Monte Cavallo with its obelisk is a curious sight.

Tuesday, July 24.

Written after visiting Villa Patrizzi, to watch the sunset, to enjoy the fresh air, to truly fill my mind with the image of the great city, to broaden and simplify my understanding of perspective through the city's extended lines, and to enrich it with the many, beautiful and varied objects. This evening I visited the square containing the Antonine Column (*Piazza Colonna, with its second-century Column of Marcus Aurelius, previously named the Antonine Column*), and the Palazzo Chigi, which was illumined by the moon; the column itself, blackened by age, rose against the bright night sky, its pedestal gleaming white. How many other countless, beautiful individual objects one encounters on such a walk! And how much it takes to appreciate even a small part of it all! It takes a lifetime, indeed, the lifetimes of many people, forever learning from one another, step by step.

Wednesday, July 25.

I went with Count Fries to view a collection of gems belonging to the Prince of Piombino (*Antonio II Boncompagni Ludovis*i).

Friday, the 27th.

By the way, all the artists, old and young, are helping me to hone and expand my talent. I have made progress in my study of perspective and architecture, and also in landscape composition. I have not moved forward as regards living creatures; there is

a gap in my knowledge there, but with seriousness and practice, I could make further progress.

I forget whether I mentioned the concert I organised at the end of last week. I invited all those who have given me so much pleasure here, and asked the singers from the comic opera (*opera buffa*) to perform the best of the recent *intermezzi* (*interludes*). The audience were pleased and satisfied.

My room is now beautifully tidy, and adorned; it is most pleasant to inhabit in the warm weather. We have had a gloomy day, a rainy day, a thunderstorm, and now several bright, not too hot days.

Sunday, July 29, 1787.

I visited the Rondanini Palace with Angelika. You will remember from my first Roman letters the 'Medusa', which made such a strong impression me then, and now gives me the greatest joy. Simply to know that something like this exists in the world, that it was possible to create something so fine, makes one feel doubly human. How gladly I would say something about the work, if everything that can be said about such a thing was not merely empty rhetoric. Art is there so that it may be seen not talked about, except perhaps in its presence. How ashamed I am of all the artistic chatter I once took part in. If it is possible to have a good plaster cast made of this Medusa, I will bring it home with me, but it needs to be recast, as the ones for sale here I dislike; they mar the idea rather than retaining and conveying the concept. The mouth, in particular, is ineffably and inimitably great.

Monday the 30th, a full moon.

I stayed in all day, and was busy. 'Egmont' is nearing completion; the fourth act is practically done. As soon as it has been copied, I shall send it by post. What a joy it would be to hear from you that you applaud the work! I felt, and feel, quite young again, writing it. I want it to make a fresh impression on the reader, too. In the evening, there was a small gathering in the garden behind the house, a ball to which I was also invited. Although it is not the season for dancing, everyone was quite merry. The Italian 'mice' (*young girls*) are not without their charms; ten years ago, a few might have attracted me, but now that vein is dry, and the little celebration hardly inspired enough interest in me to endure it to the end. The moonlit nights are incredibly beautiful; the rising orb, before it has worked its way through the mist, is yellow and warm, like an English sun; the rest of the night is clear and pleasant. A cool wind blows, and everything comes alive. Until morning, there are always groups in the street

singing and playing music; you hear all sorts of duets, so beautiful, even more so than at an opera or concert.

Tuesday, July 31.

Some moonlit sketches were committed to paper, today, and then all sorts of other fine artistic subjects were pursued. In the evening, I went for a walk with a fellow countryman, and we argued about the merits of Michelangelo versus Raphael; I championed the former, he the latter, and we finally concluded in mutual praise of Leonardo da Vinci. How happy I am now that all these names have ceased to be mere names, and my vital appreciation of the worth of those excellent men has gradually become complete.

At night, I attended the opera buffa. A new intermezzo, 'L'Impresario in Angustie' *('The Impresario in Distress', Domenico Cimarosa's farsa per musica, with Italian libretto by Giuseppe Maria Diodati, of 1786, which was performed in a translation by Goethe, at Weimar, in 1791*) is quite excellent and will entertain us many a night, despite the heat of the theatre. The quintet, in which the poet reads his play, while the impresario and the *prima donna* applaud him on one side, and the composer and the *seconda donna* criticise him on the other, ultimately leading to a universal dispute, is truly delightful. The castrati, disguised as women, are doing better and better in their roles and becoming increasingly popular. For a small summer troupe that have only just joined together, they are quite well-organised. They perform with great naturalness and good humour. The poor devils are suffering miserably, however, from the heat.

A Scientific Report

In order to introduce the subject that I wish to discuss, properly, I deem it necessary to repeat here some passages of earlier date which, may, in the course of events, have escaped attention, and by doing so, once more recommend the matter, so important to me, to the friends of Natural Science:

Palermo, Tuesday, April 17, 1787.

'It is a true misfortune to be haunted, and tempted by, so many spirits of creation! This morning, with the firm and calm intention of continuing my poetic dreams, I visited the public garden, but before I knew it, another spectre, one that had been stalking me for the past few days, seized me. The many plants that I am otherwise only accustomed to seeing in tubs and pots, indeed, for most of the year only behind

glass, stand here cheerful, and fresh, under the open sky, and in fulfilling their development perfectly, their structure becomes clearer. In the face of so many new and renewed forms, my old whim returned: could I discover the structure of the primal plant among this multitude? Surely such a thing must exist! How else would one recognise that this or that form was a plant, if they were not all formed according to some pattern?

I endeavoured to investigate the features that distinguished the many divergent forms from one another. And I found, more and more, that the plants were similar rather than different, yet, though I tried to apply my botanical terminology, which seemed perfectly possible, my investigation proved fruitless; it unsettled me, without aiding me at all. My fine poetic intentions were disrupted; Alcinous's garden had vanished, while the earthly garden had opened before me. Why are we moderns so variable in our thinking, why so prone to pursue disparate aims we cannot approach let alone fulfil!'

Naples, May 17, 1787.

'Furthermore, I must confide to you that I am very close to the secret of plant generation, and organisation, and it is the simplest thing imaginable. Under this sky, one can make the finest observations. I have found the main point wherein the germ of all lies, quite clearly, and without doubt; I already see the rest in its entirety, and only a few things need to be clarified. The primal plant (Urpflanze) will be the most wondrous creature in the world, for which Nature herself should envy me. With this model, and the key to it, one can then invent plants ad infinitum, plants that would be consistent, that is, plants that, even if they do not exist, could exist, not merely picturesque or poetic shadows and illusions, but possessing an inner truth and necessity. The same kinds of laws must apply to all other living things.'

Now, let me state this, to prepare the ground for a deeper understanding: it has dawned on me that in that organ of the plant which we commonly call a leaf, a true Proteus (*the shape-shifting Greek Sea-God*) lies hidden, capable of concealment or revelation in every possible form. In every aspect, the plant is always only a leaf, so inextricably united with the germ of development that one cannot conceive of one without the other. To grasp the concept, to support the idea, to locate it in Nature, is a task that places me in a painfully joyous state.

Intriguing Observations of Nature

Anyone who has experienced what an idea rich in consequences may mean, whether it originates from within themself or is communicated to, and instilled in, them by others, will confess what a passionate state of mind it induces, and how inspired one feels as one anticipates, in its entirety, all that may subsequently develop from it, all, that is, to which the developed state may lead. Considering this, I concede I was seized, and have been driven by, just such an idea as if by a passion, and, throughout my life, I have felt obliged to concern myself with its implications, even if unable to spend my time exclusively on the matter.

However much the passion has gripped me inwardly, there could be no question of regular study in that field after my return to Rome; poetry, art, and antiquity — each has demanded my full attention, and I have rarely, if ever, spent busier, more laboriously occupied, days in all my life. Experts may find it rather naive of me, if I recount how, day after day, amidst every garden, on every walk, on every brief pleasure trip, I have taken samples of the plants I noticed beside me. I thought it particularly important at what point the seeds began to ripen, and to observe how the shoots emerged to the light of day. Thus, I turned my attention to the germination of *Cactus opuntia* (*prickly-pear cactus*), which is ungainly during its growth, and have watched with pleasure as it reveals itself quite innocently, in the form of two delicate dicotyledons, but then, after further growth, develops its future misshapen form.

I also encountered something remarkable regarding several seed pods of Acanthus mollis (*Bear's breeches*) which I had brought back, and placed in an open box; one night I heard a crackling sound and, soon afterward, a pattering sound, as of tiny bodies striking the ceiling and walls. I failed to understand for a moment what had occurred, but then found the pods had burst, and the seeds lay scattered about. The dryness of the room had brought them to that elastic state in only a few days.

Among the many seeds I observed behaving in this manner, over a shorter or longer period of time, I must mention some, which, as I recall, they germinated in ancient Rome. Pine nuts sprout in a most peculiar way; they rise as if enclosed in an egg-shape, but soon shed this cap and, with a sheaf of green needles, already show the beginnings of their future form.

While the previous digression is focused on propagation by seed, I was no less made aware of propagation by cuttings, specifically by Johann Reiffenstein, who, on his walks, would break off a branch here and there, insisting, pedantically, that if planted in the ground, each one would immediately begin to grow. As decisive proof, he displayed such cuttings, which he had established, quite successfully, in his garden. How significant such widespread propagation may subsequently become for horticulture, is something I hope to see.

What struck me most, however, was a shrub-like, upright carnation. The tremendous vitality and propagating power of this plant are well known; its shoots are packed with buds, knot on knot; this vitality is further intensified hereabouts by their being long-lasting, so that the buds are driven from a narrow compass to the greatest possible height, until the fully mature flower finds four more, fully mature, flowers rising from the stem beneath.

Seeing no other way to capture this wondrous structure, I undertook to draw it precisely, thereby gaining ever greater insight into the fundamental concept of metamorphosis. However, the distractions presented by my many other obligations becomes ever more intrusive, and so my stay in Rome, which I foresaw drawing to an end, becomes ever more painful and burdensome.

July – Later Notes

Having kept quietly to myself for some time, absenting myself from the various social gatherings, I made a mistake that drew the attention of the entire neighbourhood, and no less so of those who always look for new and strange occurrences. The case was as follows: Angelika never attended the theatre, we knew not why; but since, as passionate theatre-goers, we could never praise the grace and skill of the singers enough, as well as the effectiveness of Cimarosa's scores, and desired nothing more than to share such delights with her, one thing led to another: our young people, especially Freidrich Bury (*the artist*), who was on excellent terms with the singers and musicians, managed to persuade them, in a happy moment, to offer to play and sing in my salon, on occasion, before an audience of ourselves, who were their warm friends and enthusiastic supporters. This plan, often discussed, proposed, and delayed, finally came to fruition at the behest of the younger participants. Concertmaster Kranz (*August Friedrich Ernst von Kranz, musician and composer*), an accomplished violinist in the service of the Duke of Weimar, who was on leave studying in Italy, finally initiated a swift decision through his unexpected arrival. His talents tipped the scales for the music lovers among us, and we found ourselves in the position of being able to invite Angelika, her husband Antonio Zucchi, Court Councillor Johann Reiffenstein, along with Thomas Jenkins (*the English art dealer, banker, and antiquarian*), Giovanni Volpato (*the Italian engraver, and art dealer*), and all the others to whom we owed a courtesy, to an actual performance. Various Jewish decorators and upholsterers had adorned the salon, the local coffee-house owner had taken care of the refreshments, and so a splendid concert was given, on the most beautiful of summer nights, a large crowd gathering beneath the windows and, applauding the singing heartily, as if they were at the opera.

What was most striking was a large carriage, filled with an orchestra of musical amateurs, then making its nocturnal rounds of the city for pleasure, which stopped beneath our windows. After granting lively applause to our efforts on high, a fine bass voice could be heard, singing one of the most popular arias from the very opera excerpts which we were performing, and accompanied by all their instruments. We returned the enthusiastic applause, the people clapped along, and everyone assured us that they had participated in many a night-time revelry but never one so perfectly, and serendipitously, successful.

Suddenly, my respectable but quiet apartment opposite the Rondanini Palace attracted the attention of all the Corso. A wealthy gentleman, it was said, must have taken up residence, but no one could locate or identify him among the well-known visitors. It is true, of course, that had such a celebration been financed by some other, what was actually organised by artists for the sake of artists, and could therefore be carried out with only a modest expenditure, would have incurred a significant cost. I continued my previous quiet life, but could no longer shake the popular prejudice that I was wealthy and of noble birth.

The arrival of Count Fries, however, gave new cause for more lively socialising. He was accompanied by L'Abbate Casti who aroused great enthusiasm by reading aloud his then-unpublished amatory tales (‘*Novelle Galanti', published 1802*); his cheerful, free-flowing recitation brought those witty, exceptionally-ingenious stories to life, perfectly. We only regretted that such a well-intentioned, wealthy art-lover was not always served by the most reliable of people. His purchase of a forged intaglio gave rise to much argument and vexation. He was, however, quite pleased at acquiring a beautiful statue which depicts Trojan Paris, or, according to others, the god Mithras (*now in the British Museum, acquired from Rome in 1825*). Its counterpart is in the Museo Pio-Clementino; both were excavated together from the same sandpit. But it was not only art dealers who lay in wait for him; he survived many an adventure. And since he knew no way to spare himself during the hot season, it was inevitable that he would be afflicted by various ailments, which embittered the last days of his stay. It was all the more painful for me, as I owed him many favours; having had the opportunity to view the excellent gem collection belonging to the Prince of Piombino with him.

Besides art dealers, Count Fries' establishment was frequented by literary figures of the kind who wander about here in aristocratic garb. Conversation with them was always awkward. No sooner had one begun to discuss the country's poetry, and seek to learn something, than one was immediately, and unhesitatingly, confronted with the question of whether one thought Ariosto or Tasso the greater poet. If one answered — ‘Let us give thanks that God and Nature granted a single country two such brilliant

men, each of whom, according to his time and circumstances, situation and sentiment, has given us the most glorious moments, calmed and delighted us.' — this perfectly reasonable statement would be met with indifference. The one they had chosen was then praised more highly, while the other was further denigrated in equal measure. At first, I attempted to defend the latter poet and emphasise his merits; but all to no avail. One's addressee had taken sides, and remained steadfast in his opinion. Since the same question was forever repeated, and I thought it too serious a subject for a dialectical debate about the matter, I avoided such conversations, especially since I knew the words were uttered and the claim asserted without any real interest in the subject.

But things were far worse whenever Dante was mentioned. A young man of rank and intellect, and with genuine interest in that extraordinary poet, did not rate my applause and approval, quite openly asserting that every foreigner was obliged to forgo understanding so extraordinary a mind, one that even Italians could not comprehend in all its aspects. After some to-ing and fro-ing, I finally wearied, and confessed that I was inclined to agree with his remarks, for I had never been able to comprehend how one could possibly engage with the Commedia, and that I found the 'Inferno' utterly repulsive, the 'Purgatory' ambiguous, and the 'Paradiso' tedious; at which he was pleased, using it as evidence for the correctness of his assertion: this very fact demonstrating that I could not grasp the depth and loftiness of the poem. We parted the best of friends. He even promised to share and explain various difficult passages which he had mulled over for many a day and whose meaning he had finally decided on.

Sadly, my conversations with artists and art-lovers were no more edifying. However, one eventually forgave others the fault one had to admit to in oneself. Sometimes it was Raphael, sometimes Michelangelo, who was given preference, from which, in the end, the only conclusion emerging was that human beings are so limited that, even if their minds are open to greatness, they will never attain the ability to appreciate and acknowledge the various manifestations of it equally.

Though I miss Tischbein's presence and influence, he compensates for it as much as possible with his lively letters. Besides some wittily conceived tales of curious incidents and ingenious insights, I have learned more about a painting he is working on, through his various drawings and sketches (*'Orestes and Iphigenia', 1788, at Bad Arolsen, Foundation of the Princely House of Waldeck and Pyrmont*). A half-length representation, it depicts Orestes, recognised by Iphigenia at the sacrificial altar, with the Furies who have been pursuing him about to turn away. Iphigenia is a remarkably accurate likeness of Emma Hart, who is at the height of her beauty and prestige. One of the Furies, too, is enhanced by her resemblance, as she is considered the archetype

for all heroines, muses, and demi-goddesses. The artist capable of such work is most welcome in the distinguished social circle of her knight, Sir William Hamilton.

August 1, 1787.

I have been quietly busy all day, because of the temperature. My greatest joy in this great heat is the conviction that you will also be having a fine summer in Germany. Watching the hay being harvested here is the greatest of pleasures, since there is no rain at all at the moment, thus the fields can be mown at will, where there are fields.

In the evenings, people bathe in the Tiber, in secure, well-designed bathing huts; then they stroll to Trinità dei Monti and enjoy the fresh air, in the moonlight. The moonlight here is just as I imagined or fancied it to be.

The fourth act of 'Egmont' is complete; in my next letter I hope to announce the conclusion of the play.

August 11th.

I will remain in Italy until next Easter. I cannot quit my apprenticeship now. If I persevere, I will surely reach the point where I can bring pleasure to my friends. You shall continue to receive letters from me; my works will emerge gradually, so you will be able to think of me as someone alive but absent, since you have so often pitied me as someone present but seemingly dead. 'Egmont' is done, and will be ready for publication at the end of this month. I shall eagerly await your verdict.

Not a day goes by that I do not grow in my knowledge and practice of art. Just as a bottle without a cap easily fills when you plunge it water, so too one can easily fill one's mind here, if one is receptive and prepared; the artistic element presses in from all sides.

I predicted the wonderful summer you are experiencing. We have the same clear skies, here, and, at mid-day, terrible heat, which I mostly escape, in the coolness of my room. I intend to spend September and October in the country, drawing from Nature. Perhaps I shall return to Naples and benefit again from Hackert's lessons. In the two weeks I spent with him in the countryside there, he helped me progress further than I would have in years on my own. I am not sending you anything yet, but am holding back a dozen small sketches to send you nicely packaged and all at once.

This week has passed quietly and diligently. I have learned a great deal, especially about perspective. Maximilian von Verschaffelt the artist son of the Mannheim Academy director (*Peter Anton von Verschaffelt*), has thoroughly considered the

subject and shares his technical knowledge with me. Several moonlight sketches were created and inked, along with some other works that are almost too fantastic to share.



'Italian coast by full moon' - Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (German, 1749–1832)
Klassik Stiftung Weimar, Museen (Inv. GGz/1951)
Digital reproduction · See Art. L. 111-1 CPI and § 68 UrhG

Rome, August 11, 1787.

I have written to the Duchess (*Anna Amalia of Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel, Dowager Duchess of Saxe-Weimar-Eisenach*). a long letter advising her to postpone her trip to Italy for another year. If she visits in October, she will arrive in this beautiful country just as the weather is about to deteriorate, and will have an unpleasant time. Should she follow my advice in this, and other matters, she will enjoy herself, if fortune is also on her side. I sincerely wish her well on the trip.

My needs and those of others are met, and I await the future calmly. No one can change their nature, or escape their fate. Attached to this very letter, you will receive my plan of work and, hopefully, approve. I will add nothing here.

I will write often and be with you, in spirit, throughout the winter. Tasso will be with you after the New Year. Faust, as courier, will announce the arrival with a sweep of his cloak. I will then have completed a major phase, brought it to a tidy end, and can begin anew, and keep a watching eye where necessary. I feel lighter, and am almost another person than I was a year ago.

I live amidst a richness and abundance of all that is dear and precious to me, and have only truly enjoyed these past few months here. For now, things are unfolding, and art is becoming second nature to me, born, like Athene from the head of Zeus, or rather from the heads of the greatest of humankind. It will provide you all with entertainment for days, perhaps years, to come.

I wish you all a fine September. At the end of August, when all our birthdays coincide (*Goethe was born on the 28th of August 1749*), I will remember you, diligently. As the day's heat subsides, I go out into the Campagna to sketch, meanwhile I often pause for a break and perform whatever tasks need to be done around the house. In the evenings, one must be especially careful to avoid catching a chill.

Rome, August 18, 1787.

This week I have had to scale back my Northern desire for exertion somewhat; the first few days were simply too hot. So, I failed to achieve as much as I had hoped. For the last two days, though, the most beautiful Tramontane winds have brought us wonderfully clear air. September and October are bound to be delightful months.

Yesterday I drove to Acqua Acetosa before sunrise; it is truly inspiring to see the clarity, the diversity, the misted transparency, and heavenly colour of the landscape, especially in the distance.

Karl Moritz is now studying antiquities too, and will humanise them for the use of young people, indeed every thinking person, purging them of all traces of bookish decay, and scholarly dust. He has a truly happy, and correct, way of looking at things; I hope he will take the time to be thorough as well. We go out for a stroll in the evenings, and he tells me what he has pondered over during the day, and what he has read of the various authors, and so a gap is filled, which I myself am obliged to leave unfilled, due to my other pursuits, and could otherwise only make up for by keeping late hours, and with some difficulty. Meanwhile, I gaze at the buildings, streets, the surrounding area, and the various monuments, and when I arrive home in the evening, some image that has particularly caught my eye is lightly sketched on paper amidst all our chatter. I am enclosing an effort from last night. It is an approximate idea of what the Capitol looks like when approached from the rear.

On Sundays, I went with dear Angelika to see the paintings of Prince Aldobrandini (*Giovanni Battista Borghese Aldobrandini*) especially a splendid Leonardo da Vinci (*'Christ Among the Doctors', now attributed to Bernardino Luini, but possibly from a Leonardo design, National Gallery, London, England*). She is not as happy as she deserves to be, given her immense talent and her wealth that accumulates daily. She is tired of painting for money, and yet her elderly husband finds it all too wonderful that

so much profit arises from often easy work. She would like to work for her own enjoyment now, with more leisure time for proper study, and indeed she could. They have no children, live well within their income, and she can earn enough each day through only a moderate amount of work. But that is not how it is, and it seems will not be. She speaks very frankly to me; I have told her my opinion, given her my advice, and raise her spirits when I am with her. People may well point to others' want and misery when even those who have more than enough wealth cannot employ and enjoy it! She has an incredible talent, a truly outstanding one amongst the men. One must see and appreciate what she creates, not what she fails in. How many artists' works survive a calculation of what is lacking!

And so, my dear friends, Rome, the spirit of Rome, and the world of art, and artists, are becoming ever more familiar to me, and I understand my surroundings; they have become close and natural to me through living amidst them, and wandering to and fro. Every social visit, however brief, confuses my mind. They wish to lure me from my peaceful and orderly style of living, and draw me into their world, yet I protect myself as best I can. I promise, then delay and evade, and promise again, and play at being an Italian with these Italians. The Cardinal Secretary of State, Buoncompagni (*Ignazio Boncompagni Ludovisi*), has even suggested it to me over-strongly, but I will evade them yet, until I move to the countryside in mid-September. I shy away from these gentlemen and ladies as from an unpleasant illness; it even pains me watching them depart.

Rome, August 23, 1787

I received your delightful letter, numbered twenty-four, the day before yesterday, just as I was leaving for the Vatican, and read it on the way, and in the Sistine Chapel — and again and again, whenever I rested from seeing and contemplating the place. I cannot express how much I longed for you to all be with me, so that you might have some idea of what a single, talented person can do and accomplish; without having seen the Sistine Chapel, one cannot form a concrete understanding of what humans being are capable of. One hears and reads of many great and worthy artists, but here the work is still vividly before one's eyes, directly above one's head. I thought of you all a great deal, and wished it were all written in letter form. You want to know about myself! How much I might tell you! For I am truly reborn, renewed, and fulfilled. I feel that the sum of my powers is well-nigh available to me, and I hope to accomplish something yet. I have been thinking, seriously, about landscape and architecture during this period, and have attempted a few things, and I see now where it all leads and how far it could be developed.

Now, finally, the very essence of all forms known to us, the human figure, has touched my mind, and I it, and I say: 'Lord, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me, even if I be lamed' (*see Genesis 32:25*). Sketching the human form is completely impossible for me, and so I have decided to take up modelling in clay, which seems workable. At least I have come up with an approach that renders many aspects easier for me. It would require too lengthy a letter to address the details, and it is better to work at it than talk. Suffice it to say, it boils down to the fact that my persistent observation of Nature, and the care with which I have studied comparative anatomy, now enables me to see in Nature, and in antiquity, many things as a whole that artists find difficulty in realising in detail, things which, when they finally attain them, they possess only for themselves, and are unable to share with others.

I have retrieved all my physiognomic bits and pieces, which I had thrown down in a corner, as one does a trump card tossed on the table, and they are coming in handy. I have started a head of Hercules; if it turns out well, I shall continue.

I am now so far removed from the world, and all worldly things, that it seems quite wonderful to me when I read a newspaper. The fashion of this world is passing away; I wish to concern myself only with what constitutes lasting relationship, and thus, according to the teachings of *** (*Johann Gottlieb Fichte, the philosopher*), attain eternity for the spirit.

Yesterday I saw many drawings at the home of Sir Richard Worsley (*7th Baronet of Appuldurcombe*), who has travelled in Greece (*in 1785*), Egypt (*in the Spring of 1787*), and elsewhere. What interested me most were various drawings after bas-reliefs from the frieze of the Temple of Minerva in Athens (*the Parthenon*), the work of Phidias. One can imagine nothing more beautiful than these few simple figures. Incidentally, there was little charm in the sketches of many of the sites depicted; the landscapes were less than ideal, and the architecture could have been captured better. Farewell for today. I am having my portrait bust done, and that has cost me three mornings this week.

August 28, 1787.

I have encountered many good things these past few days, and today, on this festive occasion (*Goethe's birthday*), Herder's little book ('*Gott: Einige Gespräche über Spinoza's System', 1787*), full of worthy thoughts about God, has arrived. It was comforting and refreshing to read them, pure and beautiful as they are, amidst this Babel, the mother of so much deceit and error, and to think that now is indeed the time when such sentiments, such ways of thinking, can and should be spread. I will read

and reflect on his little book often in solitude, and also make notes on it that may lead to future discussion.

These last days I have been increasingly absorbed in art, and now can see almost the entire course of study I still have to complete; though even when it is completed, nothing will have been done. Perhaps there will be other occasions to do, better and more easily, that for which my talent and skill were destined.

The French Academy in Rome (*housed in the Palazzo Mancini from 1737 to 1793*) has mounted an exhibition of its works; there are some interesting pieces among them. Pindar, pleading with the gods for a happy end, falls into the arms of a boy he loves dearly, and so dies. There is much merit in the painting. An architect has executed a very clever idea: he has drawn a view of present-day Rome, from a direction, that shows all its districts clearly. Then, on another sheet, he has depicted ancient Rome, as if viewed from the same vantage point. The locations where the ancient monuments stood are known, as are most of their forms; ruins of many still remain. He has excluded everything that is new and imagined the old, as it might have appeared in the time of Diocletian, showing as much taste as technique, and most charmingly coloured. What I can do, I do, and I am accumulating as many ideas and skills as possible, retaining what is most real.

Have I told you already that Alexander Trippel is creating my portrait bust? The Prince of Waldeck (*Christian August*) has commissioned it. It is almost finished, is progressing nicely, and is in a very solid style. Once the model is complete, he'll make a plaster cast of it, and then begin at once to carve it in marble (*the marble bust, of 1789, is now located in the Residenz, Bad Arolsen*), intending to finish sculpting it from life; for what can be achieved in that medium cannot be achieved in any other.

Angelika is now painting a picture that will be very successful: 'Cornelia, Mother of the Gracchi, Pointing to Her Children as Her Treasures' (*the painting, of 1788, is now in the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond, United States*). The composition is natural, and very effective.

How wonderful it is to sow so that you may reap! I completely forgot to mention that today is my birthday, and when I rose, wondered if I might receive a gift from home to celebrate the event. And, lo and behold, your package has been delivered, which fills me with unspeakable joy. I immediately sat down to read your letters, and now I have finished and am sending my most heartfelt thanks.

Now I would like to be with you all, so we might have a conversation, and discuss some of the points I have mentioned. Enough, it will happen, and I thank you sincerely that we have set down a marker by which I can now measure the distance. I will gladly join you from the realms of Nature and Art, through which I am striding briskly.

I have reconsidered the situation today, after receiving your letter, and still insist: my art studies, my writing — everything demands that I spend the proper amount of time here. In art, I must reach the point where everything becomes intuitive knowledge, and nothing is derived merely from tradition or some past name, and I will do so in these next six months; indeed, it can only be done in Rome. I must at least complete my little projects (for they seem diminutively small to me) in an atmosphere of composure and joy.

Then everything will draw me back to my homeland. And even if I were to lead an isolated, private life, I have so much to catch up on, and reconcile, that I see no chance of rest for ten years or more.

As regards Natural History, I shall be bringing you things you cannot anticipate. I believe I am getting very close to understanding how the organism works. You should contemplate these manifestations (not fulgurations) of God with joy, and then tell me who, in ancient or modern times, has discovered or conceived the same idea, and has viewed it from the same or a slightly different perspective.

August – Later Notes

At the start of this month, an intention matured in my mind, of remaining in Rome for the winter; the feeling, rather the insight, that it would be premature to depart in my current state of knowledge, and that I would find nowhere such peace and freedom for the completion of my work, finally decided me; and once I had informed those back at home of my decision, I embraced my new period of occupancy.

The intense heat which, increasing gradually, set limits to any overly-intense activity, made places where one could spend one's time productively, in coolness and peace, pleasant and desirable. The Sistine Chapel provided the finest opportunity for this. It is precisely at this time that Michelangelo had once again won the veneration of artists; in addition to his other great qualities, he was deemed to be unsurpassed in his use of colour, and it has become fashionable to dispute whether he or Raphael possessed greater genius. The latter's 'Transfiguration' (*now in the Pinacoteca Vaticana in Vatican City*) has been criticised harshly, and the 'Disputation of the Holy Sacrament' (*in the Stanze di Raffaello, Apostolic Palace, the Vatican*) called his best work; thus, a predilection for works of the older artist was already foreshadowed, a view which the detached observer must regard as a symptom of superficial and limited knowledge, and cannot embrace.

It is so difficult to comprehend a single great talent, let alone two at once. The task is made easier for us through natural bias; hence, the appreciation of specific artists and writers always fluctuates and, generally, of any two, one or the other always

dominates. Such disputes fail to unsettle me, as I ignore them and occupy myself in direct contemplation of everything worthy and worthwhile. My predilection for the great Florentine was soon shared by artists and art-lovers, since at that very time Friedrich Bury and Johann Lips were commissioned by Count Fries to make watercolour copies of the Sistine Chapel frescoes. The custodian was well paid; he let us enter through the rear door next to the altar, and we made ourselves at home there as we pleased. There was no shortage of food, and, weary from the intense heat of the day, I recall yielding to a midday nap on the papal throne.

Careful sketches of the lower heads and figures of the altarpiece, which could be reached with a ladder, were made, first with white chalk on black woven frames, then with red chalk on large sheets of paper.

As the focus shifted to the older masters, Leonardo da Vinci became equally famous, and I viewed, with Angelika, his highly esteemed painting, 'Christ Among the Doctors', in the Aldobrandini Gallery (*now attributed to Bernardo Luini, see earlier*). It became customary for her to arrive at my house on Sundays at noon, with her husband Antonio Zucchi, and Johann Reiffenstein, and for us to proceed, with as much composure as possible, through the sweltering heat to some art collection or other, spend a few hours there, and then return to her home for a well-attended luncheon. It was exceptionally instructive, in the presence of such major works of art, to discuss matters with these three individuals, each of whom was knowledgeable in their own way — theoretically, practically, aesthetically, and technically.

Sir Richard Worsley, who had visited Greece, kindly allowed us to view his sketches, among which the reproductions of Phidias's works from the fronton (*pediment*) of the Acropolis left a strong and indelible impression on me, all the stronger because, prompted by Michelangelo's powerful figures, I had devoted more attention and study to the human body than before.

A significant era in the vibrant art scene, however, was inaugurated by the French Academy in Rome's exhibition at the end of the month. Jacques-Louis David's 'Oath of the Horatii' (*1784, Louvre, Paris*) shifted the balance of opinion in favour of the French. This painting had prompted Tischbein to begin his life-size painting 'Hector Admonishes Paris for His Idleness and Exhorts Him to Go to War' (*1786, Augusteum, Oldenburg*) Through François-Hubert Drouais, Bénigne Gagneraux, Jean-Baptiste Desmarais, Louis Gauffier, and Jean-Pierre Saint-Ours (*Swiss by origin*), the French reputation for excellence was maintained, while Pierre-Jean Boquet, gained a name for himself as a landscape painter in the tradition of Poussin.

Meanwhile, Karl Moritz was studying ancient mythology; he had come to Rome to finance his travels, in the manner of earlier times, by writing a travelogue. A bookseller

had agreed an advance; but during his stay in Rome, Moritz soon realised that a light, loosely-written diary could not be published without risk. Through daily conversation, and the contemplation of the many significant works of art around him, he had the idea of writing a treatise on the ancient deities, from a purely human point of view, and to publish such works in the future, with instructive descriptions based on lithographs. He worked diligently on this, and our society did not fail to engage in meaningful discussion with him about it.

I had a most pleasant and instructive conversation with the sculptor Alexander Trippel in his workshop, as he was modelling my bust, which he was to sculpt in marble for the Prince of Waldeck. There could hardly be a better opportunity to study the human form, and to learn about its proportions, both as standard and in its variations. The opportunity was doubly interesting because Trippel had learned of a head of Apollo (*a Roman copy, in marble, now in the British Museum, London, which is modelled on the Apollo Belvedere,*) that had previously remained unnoticed in the collection of the Palazzo Giustiniani. He considered it one of the finest works of art, and hoped to purchase it, but was unsuccessful. This antique has since become famous and later was purchased for the art-collection, at Neuchâtel, of James-Alexandre de Pourtalès (*Comte de Pourtalès-Gorgier, a Swiss-French banker, diplomat and art collector*).

But just as someone who ventures to sea finds their course is determined by wind and weather, taking one now this direction, now that, so it was with me. Verschaffelt (*Peter Anton von Verschaffelt, the Flemish sculptor and architect*) started a course on perspective, to which we gathered in the evenings, where a large group listened to his teachings and put them immediately into practice. The best thing about it was that one learned precisely what was needed, and no more.

I was like to have been torn from this contemplative, yet engrossed repose. Our unfortunate concert had been widely discussed in Rome, where, as in smaller towns, the to and fro of daily gossip is a customary pursuit; attention had fallen on me, and my literary work; I had read ‘Iphigenie’ and other works to my friends, which were further discussed. Cardinal Buoncompagni demanded to see me, but I remained firmly in my well-known seclusion, and I was able to do so all the more readily because Johann Reiffenstein maintained, stubbornly and firmly that since I had not allowed him to present me to the cardinal, no one else could. This worked very much to my advantage, and I took advantage of his attitude to maintain my chosen, express, seclusion.

September 1, 1787

Today, I can say, 'Egmont' is complete; I have been working on it, now and then, all this time. I am sending it via Zurich, because I hope Christoph Kayser will compose interludes for it, and whatever else is needed musically. Then I wish you enjoyment of it.

My art studies are progressing well; my approach is universally applicable and opens up everything to me. All that artists have to painstakingly piece together individually now lies openly and freely before me. I now see how little I know as yet, but the path is open to grasping and understanding the whole.

Moritz is very much taken with Herder's doctrine of God; it is certainly delineating an epoch in his life. His mind was inclined towards it, having profited from association with myself; like well-dried wood his mind immediately burst into bright flame.

Rome, September 3rd.

Today marks the anniversary of my departure from Carlsbad. What a year! And what a strange moment this day betokens for me, being the Duke of Saxe-Weimar's birthday (*Karl August was born on that date in 1757*) and marking the birth of a new life for me. How well I have used this year, for myself or for others, I cannot as yet determine; I hope the time will come, the fortunate hour, when together we can determine the sum.

My studies are only just beginning here, and I would not truly have seen Rome at all if I had left earlier. One cannot imagine all that there is to see and learn here; one cannot possibly grasp the totality from afar.

I have returned to matters Egyptian. These past few days I have visited, on several occasions, that huge obelisk, which lies broken among the rubble and dung of a courtyard. It is the obelisk of Psamtik II, erected in Rome in honour of Augustus, and stood as the pointer of the great sundial marked on the ground of the Campus Martius. This oldest and most magnificent of many monuments is now in pieces, some of its sides disfigured (probably by fire). And yet it is there still, and the undamaged sides are still as fresh as if carved yesterday, and of the finest workmanship (of its kind). I am now having moulds taken of a sphinx near its summit, and the faces of sphinxes, human beings, and birds, so as to produce plaster casts. Priceless things must be preserved, especially since it is said that the Pope wants to have it erected (*it was re-erected, in 1792, in the Piazza di Montecitorio*), as the hieroglyphs will no longer be accessible. I intend to do the same with the finest Etruscan artefacts, and others. I am currently modelling the impressions in clay, so as to render everything truly my own.

September 5th.

I must write on a morning that will be a festive one for me. For today, 'Egmont' is almost completely ready for publication. The title page and character list are written, and some gaps I had left have been filled; now I am already looking forward to the hour when you will receive and read it. Some drawings will also be enclosed.

Thursday, September 6th, 1787.

I had intended to write a great deal, and tell you all sorts of things in my last letter, but was interrupted, and tomorrow I am off to Frascati. This letter must go on Saturday, and I will say only a few words of farewell for now. You probably have the same beautiful weather we are enjoying under this clearer sky. I am constantly full of new ideas, and since there are a thousand things around me, they have awakened me to this thought: from many directions, all seems to have converged on a single point; indeed, I can say that I now see the light as regards the path on which I and my abilities are heading. One has to have reached a certain age to have gained even a passable idea of one's situation. So, it's not just the Swabians who need forty years to become wise ('*Mit vierzig Jahren werden die Schwaben gescheit', a Swabian proverb*).

I hear that Herder is ill, and am concerned; I hope to hear better news soon. I myself remain well, both physically and mentally, and can almost hope for a radical cure; everything comes easily to me, and sometimes a breath of youth wafts over me. 'Egmont' is following this letter, but will arrive later, as I am sending it via the postal service. I am quite curious and eager to hear what you will think of it.

Perhaps it would be as well to print it soon. I would be delighted if the work could reach the audience fresh from the pen. See if you can manage it so; I shall not be far behind with the rest of the book.

Herder's book on God and Spinoza provides me with the best company. Moritz has been truly edified by it; all that was missing for him, as it were, was this work, which now serves as the capstone to his thoughts, which had always threatened to fall apart. Things are turning out quite well. He has encouraged me to delve further into Nature, where, especially in botany, I have come across a principle that astounds me; how far it can be extended, I cannot as yet see.

My practice of engaging with artworks, and absorbing, in one go, the issues and solutions artists and connoisseurs have been grappling with, and studying, since the renaissance of art, I find more valid with every application. It is somewhat like the tale of Christopher Columbus standing an egg on end by tapping it and breaking the tip

(*that is, a result which seems simple after the fact*). Without claiming to possess the master key, I now discuss various works with the artists from a practical viewpoint, to see how far they have progressed, what they have achieved, and where they have encountered obstacles. The door, then, is open. I stand on the threshold, but sadly, from here I will only be able to look around the temple, and then depart.

This much is certain: the ancient artists possessed just as profound a knowledge of Nature, and just as sure a grasp of what can be imagined, and how it ought to be developed, as Homer. Unfortunately, there are far too few first-class works of art. Yet when one views them, few though they are, one desires only to 'recognise' them fully and then depart in peace. These great works of art, like the highest works of Nature, though produced by humans were created according to true and natural laws. Everything arbitrary and fanciful has been banished; all is necessity, all is God.

In a few days I will be permitted to see the work of a talented architect (*Louis-François Cassas*) who has himself visited Palmyra (*in 1785*) and drawn the objects there, with great intelligence and taste. I will let you know my impressions, immediately and will eagerly await your thoughts on those important ruins.

Rejoice with me that I am happy; indeed, I can truly say I have never been so happy: to be able to satisfy an innate passion in the greatest peace, free of distraction, and to anticipate a lasting benefit from such sustained pleasure, is surely no small thing. If only I could share some of my enjoyment and these feelings with my beloved friends.

I hope the dark clouds on the political horizon will dissipate (*the Prussian invasion of Holland to suppress the 'Patriot' uprising and restore the Stadtholder William V*). Our modern wars make many unhappy while they last, and none happy when they are over.

September 17, 1787.

It seems, my dear friends, that I am a person destined to live by toil. These past few days I have again been labouring more than enjoying myself. Now the week is near its end, and you shall have a letter.

It is a pity that the aloes on the Belvedere (*del Gianicolo, the Janiculum Hill*) chose the year when I was absent to bloom. In Sicily, it was too early. Only one is blooming here this year, not a large one, and is so high up that it is impossible to reach. It is probably a plant of India, not really native to these regions.

The Englishman's observations give me little pleasure. Clergymen in England must be very guarded, lest they drive away the public, even free Englishmen are obliged to exercise considerable restraint in their moral writings.

The ‘men with tails’ don’t surprise me; based on the description, it must be a natural phenomenon. Far more wonderful things are immediately before our eyes every day, which we fail to notice because they are not so closely related to ourselves.

That B… like many people who have never had a feeling for the genuine worship of God during their lives, but become pious in their old age, is fine, as they say, as long as one is not expected to be edified by the fact.

I spent a few days at Frascati, with Johann Reiffenstein; Angelika came to collect me on Sunday. It is a paradise.

‘Erwin and Elmire’ (*an opera in two acts by Duchess Anna Amalia of Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel, libretto by Goethe, after Oliver Goldsmith’s ballad of Edwin and Angelina, ‘The Hermit’, in ‘The Vicar of Wakefield’*) is already half re-written. I tried to breathe more interest and life into the little piece, and did away with the extremely flat dialogue completely. It is student work, or rather scribble. The pretty songs, on which everything revolves, all remain, of course.

The arts are also being pursued with gusto, such that my studies roar along.

My bust has turned out very well; everyone is pleased with it. It is certainly carved in a fine and elegant style, and I have no objection to the idea persisting that I might well have looked like that. It will now be translated to marble and finished from life. Transporting such an item is troublesome; otherwise, I would send you a cast right away. Doubtless it will be shipped someday, since I will eventually have to pack several crates with my possessions.

Has Kranz (*Johann Friedrich Kranz, the composer*) not arrived yet, to whom I gave a box for the children?

There is now a truly graceful operetta being performed at the Teatro Valle, after two disastrous ones. The singers are performing with great enthusiasm, and the whole thing is most harmonious. Soon we will be heading to the countryside. It has rained a few times, the weather is cooler, and the landscape turning green again.

The newspapers will have told you, or will tell you, about the great eruption of Mount Etna (*early June to August, 1787*).

September 15th.

Now, I too have read Trenck’s life (*Friedrich Freiherr von der Trenck, the Prussian officer, adventurer, and author, see his autobiography, published 1787, ‘Friedrichs Freyherrn von der Trenck merkwürdige Lebensgeschichte’*). It is interesting enough, and there is plenty there to reflect on.

My next letter will tell of my meeting with a notable traveller, which is arranged for tomorrow.

Rejoice, with me, in my stay here! Rome now feels completely familiar, and there is almost nothing now which overwhelms me. My surroundings have gradually elevated my mind. I enjoy things in a purer way, and with ever-increasing knowledge; may good fortune continue to guide me.

Enclosed is a copy I made of a drawing, to share with my friends. Another reason why my stay in Rome is so interesting is because Rome is the central point around which so much revolves. Louis-François Cassas, the traveller I mentioned, has brought back with him some exceptionally beautiful sketches. So, I have mentally stolen some of them from him, wishing to return with them, for you to see.

I am always busy. I have drawn a little head, from a plaster cast, to see if my principle holds. I think it works perfectly and makes the process surprisingly easy. People did not believe I created it, and yet it is nothing. Now I shall see how far it could be taken with a little more application.

On Monday I am returning to Frascati. I will make sure to post you a letter, this day week. Then I shall probably go to Albano. I shall be drawing, diligently, from Nature. I don't seek to learn anything more now, only to produce something, and exercise my mind fully. I have suffered from this illness since my youth, and God grant that it will one day be cured.

September 22.

Yesterday there was a procession in which they bore a phial containing the blood of Saint Francis; I gazed at heads and faces as the lines of priests passed by

I have acquired a collection of two hundred of the finest antique-gem impressions. They are most beautiful examples of ancient craftsmanship, in part chosen for their exquisite qualities. One cannot carry away anything more precious from Rome, especially since the impressions are so exceptionally clear and sharp.

I shall return with many good things when I dock my little boat with you, but above all a joyful heart, one more capable of enjoying the happiness that love and friendship have in store for me. I simply must not undertake anything again that lies beyond the scope of my abilities, where I would merely toil away without achieving anything.

September 22.

One more page, my dear friends, I must urgently send you with this post. Today was a remarkable day for me. Letters from my many friends, one from the Dowager-Duchess, news of the celebration of my birthday, and finally my collected works.

It feels truly strange to me that these four relatively slim little volumes (*published by Georg Joachim Göschen, in Leipzig, 1787*) the output of half a lifetime, have found me in Rome. I can honestly say that there isn't a single word in them that has not been lived, felt, enjoyed, suffered, and thought about, and now they speak to me all the more vividly. My only concern, and hope, is that the four that are destined to follow, will not fall short of these. I thank you for everything you have done in this connection, and I hope they bring joy to you as well. Please take the same care for the volumes that will follow, and with the same loyal hearts!

You are annoyed with regard to my using the term 'provincial', and I confess, the expression is most inaccurate. You see, from it, how people in Rome have become accustomed to thinking of everything in grandiose terms. It really does seem that I am becoming naturalised, because the Romans are blamed for only seeking to know of, and talk about, grand matters (*cose grosse*).

I am always diligent, and now am focussed on the human figure. Oh, how vast and expansive art is, and how infinite the world becomes when one grasps the finite rightly.

On Tuesday the 25th, I am off to Frascati, and will toil and labour there too. Things are finally starting to go better. If only they would go right for once.

I have noticed that in a large city, amidst a wide circle, even the poorest, the lowliest feel something, while in a small place even the best, the richest among us can barely feel at all, cannot even catch their breath.

Frascati, September 28, 1787.

I am very happy here; all day long, and into the night, we sketch, paint, ink, and collage, practising our crafts and art with true professional skill. Johann Reiffenstein, our host, keeps me company, and we are lively and cheerful. In the evenings, we visit the villas by moonlight, and even sketch the most striking motifs in the half-light. I have already conceived some projects, that I only seek an opportunity to execute. I hope that the time for that will come. One's aims only seem unachievable if one looks too far ahead.

Yesterday we drove to Albano and back; many a winged idea was downed along the way. Here, where one is truly surrounded by abundance, one can indulge one's flights of fancy, and I am burning, with true passion, to appropriate everything, and feel that

my taste is becoming more refined as my mind absorbs more. If only, instead of all this talk, I could send you something excellent for once! A few small items are being sent by a fellow countryman.

I will probably have the pleasure of seeing Kayser (*Philipp Christoph Kayser, the composer and poet*) in Rome, and so music will complete the circle the arts have drawn around me, as though they want to prevent me from seeing my friends. And yet I can scarcely touch upon the subject of how alone I often feel, and the longing that grips me to be with you all again. I am, in essence, living in a daze, unable and unwilling to think further.

I spend some truly pleasant hours with Karl Moritz, and have started explaining my theory of plants to him, noting, in his presence, each time, how far we have advanced. In this way, I have been able to put some of my thoughts down on paper. How comprehensible even the most abstract aspects of my system become when presented in the right way to a receptive mind, I see from my new student's response. He takes great pleasure in it all, and advances his own conclusions. However, it is difficult to present in writing, and impossible to grasp from merely reading the result, no matter how accurately and precisely everything is penned.

Thus, I live happily, inasmuch as I am a part of what belongs to the Creator. Greet all who wish me well, and aid, support, and sustain me, directly or indirectly!

September – Later Notes

The third of September was many times worthy of celebration. It was the birthday of my prince (*Karl August, Duke of Saxe-Weimar*), who has repaid my loyal affection in many kind ways, and it was also the anniversary of my Hegira from Carlsbad, though I was not allowed to appreciate fully what experiencing a completely new state of being has worked in me, delivered to me, and gifted me with; having little time that day for reflection

Rome has the distinct advantage of being a centre of artistic activity. Educated travellers agree on owing a great deal to their sojourns here, whether short or long; they travel on, labouring, and collecting, and when they return home enriched, they consider it an honour and a joy to display what they have acquired, and offer a token of gratitude to their teachers, near and far.

The French architect Louis-François Cassas has returned from his journey to the Orient (*see his 'Voyage Pittoresque de la Syrie, de la Phénicie, de la Palestine et de la Basse-Égypte', 1799*); he has surveyed the most important ancient monuments, especially those of which details have not yet been published, and has also sketched

the places as they should be viewed, pictorially displayed the no less ancient, but decayed and destroyed, conditions of life, and outlined half a score of his drawings with the pen, showing great precision and taste, and enlivened them with watercolours, before presenting the following to his audience.

1. The Seraglio of Constantinople from the shore, showing part of the city and the Hagia Sophia Mosque. On the most charming tip of Europe, the residence of the Sultan is constructed in a manner that is as whimsical as one could imagine. Tall, inviolate trees stand in large, mostly-interconnected groups, while beneath them one sees not great walls and palaces, but small buildings, trellis-work, passages, kiosks, and carpets spread out and mingled together, in so domestic, detailed, and friendly a manner, that it is all a delight. Since the drawing is executed in colour, it creates a most pleasant effect. A fine stretch of sea washes against the thus-burdened coastline. Opposite lies Asia Minor, and one can follow the strait that leads to the Dardanelles. The drawing is about seven feet long and three to four feet high.

2. A general view of the ruins of Palmyra, to the same scale. He showed us a plan of the city beforehand, which he had traced amidst the rubble. A colonnade, an Italian mile (*a little shorter than an English mile*) long, ran through the city, from the gate to the Temple of the Sun (*the Temple of Bel*), not in a perfectly straight line, but making a gentle bend in the middle. The colonnade had four rows of columns, each column ten diameters high. It does not appear that the top was permanently covered; he believes this was achieved with stretches of tapestry. In the drawing, part of a colonnade appears still standing upright in the foreground. A caravan crossing the scene is happily placed. In the background stands the Temple of the Sun, and on the right a large stretch of ground across which several Janissaries are advancing. The most interesting phenomenon depicted is a blue line, like to the horizon at sea, that borders the background. He explained to us that the desert horizon, which appears blue in the distance, bounds the scene completely, just as the sea does, deceiving the eye immersed in Nature just as it initially deceived me in viewing the picture, and intrigued me, knowing that Palmyra was far from the sea.

3. The Tombs of Palmyra.

4. A Restored View of the Sun Temple at Baalbek, also a landscape with the ruins as they currently exist.

5. The Great Mosque (*the Al-Aqsa Mosque*) in Jerusalem, built on the foundations of Solomon's Temple.

6. The ruins of a small temple in Phoenicia.

7. A region at the foot of Mount Lebanon, as charming as one imagines, showing a pine-grove, a body of water, weeping willows, with graves beneath them, and the mountain in the distance.

8. Turkish graves. Each gravestone bears the deceased's main adornment, and since Turks are distinguished by their head-gear, the dignity of the deceased is immediately apparent. Flowers are cultivated with great care over the graves of virgins.

9. The Egyptian Pyramids with the Great Sphinx. According to Cassas, it was carved from a limestone rock, and since the rock was cracked and uneven, the colossus was covered with stucco and painted, as can still be seen in the folds of the head-dress. One section of the face is about ten feet high. He could have easily walked, he said, on its lower lip.

10. A pyramid, restored according to documents, observations, and conjectures. It has halls projecting on four sides, with obelisks standing beside them; leading from the halls are passageways adorned with sphinxes, such as those still found in Upper Egypt. This drawing is the most prodigious architectural idea I have ever seen, and I believe it cannot be surpassed.

In the evening, after we had contemplated, at leisure, all these beautiful things, we visited the gardens on the Palatine Hill, which render the spaces between the ruins of the imperial palaces a delightful green. There, in a communal space where, beneath magnificent trees, fragments of decorated capitals, smooth or fluted columns, broken bas-reliefs, and other such things have been laid out in a wide circle, as one sets up tables, chairs, and benches for a cheerful outdoor gathering, we enjoyed a delightful time, to our hearts' content. And as we surveyed the many and varied views at sunset, with newly-clarified vision and freshly-educated minds, we confessed that the scene was quite comparable to all the other Oriental views revealed to us that day. Drawn and coloured in an identical style to that of Cassas, it would rouse delight anywhere. And so, through artistic works, our eyes are gradually attuned to, and become ever more receptive to, the presence of Nature, and ever more open to the beauties it offers.

Yet the next day, we found an opportunity for light-hearted comments, since precisely what we had seen depicted by the traveller and artist — all that was great and boundless — was now about to lead us into an unworthy space less than great, and closely confined Those magnificent Egyptian monuments reminded us of the mighty obelisk which had been erected by Augustus on the Campus Martius, had served as a giant gnomon, but now lay broken in pieces, enclosed in a wooden shed, awaiting, in a wretched corner, the bold architect who might be summoned to resurrect it (*which was achieved in 1792, see above*). It was hewn from the finest Egyptian granite, and covered everywhere with delicate figures and hieroglyphs, in the familiar style. It was

remarkable to see, on standing beside its erstwhile summit pinnacle, the most delightful depictions of sphinx after sphinx on the surfaces of the tapering column, which had previously been invisible to close inspection, being open then only to the sun's rays. Here we encountered a case of art in its religious aspect, designed for other than its effect on the human eye. We made arrangements to have casts taken of these sacred images so that we could examine more closely what had once been directed towards the sky.

In that awkward and unpleasant space in which we found ourselves, beside a noble work of art, we could not help but view Rome as a quodlibet (*a medley*), but a unique one of its kind: for even viewed in that manner, the immense city possesses the greatest of merits. Here, nothing was created by chance, only the accidents of time have destroyed; everything that still stands upright is magnificent, everything that is shattered is venerable, the formlessness of the ruins still points to an ancient regularity of form that re-emerged in the grand new architecture of the churches and palaces.

The casts, quickly taken, reminded me that in the large Dehn collection of plaster casts (*that of Christian Dehn, the German artisan and agent*), from which impressions are available for purchase in whole or in part, there were also some Egyptian pieces to be seen; and, one thing having led to another, I selected the finest casts from the said collection and purchased fresh copies from the owners. Such impressions are the greatest of treasures that amateurs, of limited means, can acquire for the foundation of their collections, providing a great and manifold resource for future study.

The first four volumes of my writings having been received from Georg Göschen, the magnificent set was immediately given into the hands of Angelika, who trusted she would find a new reason to praise her mother tongue therein.

But I will not dwell on the reflections that vividly presented themselves to me in looking back on my earlier work. I saw not then how far my chosen path would lead me; nor could I know to what extent that earlier endeavour would succeed, or how the fulfilment of my longing, and the success of this journey of mine would reward the effort expended.

I had neither the time nor the space, at that moment, to look back for long, or think. The ideas about organic Nature, of formation and transformation, which had been instilled in me, as it were, allowed no pause, and as one thought after another unfolded within me, I needed some kind of communication with another, daily and hourly, to aid my education. I attempted it with Moritz, explaining my theory regarding the metamorphosis of plants to him as best I could; and he, a foreign vessel, always empty

and in need of content, yearning for whatever he could appropriate, joined in honestly, at least as long as I retained the courage to continue my lectures.

Then, however, a curious book came to my attention — I am unable to say whether it helped the theory, but it certainly provided significant inspiration for myself — namely Herder's text, which, under a laconic title, endeavoured to present his various views on God and divine matters in dialogue form. The work transported me back to those times when I often sought to converse about such subjects in person with my excellent friend. Meanwhile, his volume, involving the nature of the highest contemplative piety, contrasted notably with the feast of one particular saint which took place at that time.

On September 21st, the memory of Saint Francis was venerated, and a phial of his blood was carried through the city amidst a long procession of religious persons, and the faithful. I was struck by the passing of so many monks, whose simple robes drew the eye to their heads and faces. It struck me to what degree hair and a beard are often involved in forming one's first impression of a man. First with attention, then with a degree of astonishment, I studied the line passing before me, and was delighted to find that a face framed by hair and beard looked quite different from these beardless people. And I could see that such faces, depicted in paintings, are bound to exert an ineffable charm on the viewer.

Johann Reiffenstein, who is thorough in exercising his duty of guiding and entertaining foreigners, soon realised in doing so that those who visited Rome for no more purpose than sightseeing and amusing themselves often suffered from the most grievous boredom, since, in a foreign country, they lacked entirely their usual resources for filling their leisure time. Being a practical judge of character, he is also well aware of how tiring mere observation can be, and how necessary it is to entertain and soothe his friends through some other form of activity. He therefore identified two pursuits to which he usually directs their efforts: wax-painting and plaster cast-production. The art of using a wax-based medium as a binder for paint had only recently been revived, and since the main concern in the art world is to keep artists employed in some way, a fresh way of performing something familiar always gains attention, and provides a lively reason to attempt something in a new manner that one would not be inclined to attempt in the old.

An audacious undertaking, that of creating a copy of Raphael's Vatican loggias, for Empress Catherine II of Russia, while replicating the architecture with its abundance of ornamentation, entire, in St. Petersburg, was facilitated by this new technique; indeed, it may not have been possible without it. Identical panels, wall-sections, plinths, pilasters, capitals, and cornices, crafted from the strongest lengths and blocks of durable chestnut wood, covered with canvas which was then primed, served as a

secure base for the encaustic. This work, on which Christoph Unterberger (*born in the Italian Tyrol, and trained in Vienna*), in particular, had been working for several years under Johann Reiffenstein's guidance, and had executed with great conscientiousness, had already been completed when I arrived, and I could only observe and study what remained of that great undertaking.

Now, through such efforts, encaustic has risen to great prominence; foreigners of some talent became acquainted with its practise; ready-made pigments were available at a low price; one could even produce one's own wax medium; in short, there was always something to do and spend time on, whenever a spare moment presented itself. Even merely-aspiring artists were employed as teachers and assistants, and I have indeed seen several foreign visitors who happily packaged up the former's Roman encaustic works, as if they were of their own creation, on returning to their homeland.

The other occupation, manufacturing plaster casts, was more often indulged in by men. A large, old vaulted kitchen in the Reiffenstein quarter of the city, provided the perfect environment. Here, there was more than enough space for such a task. The refractory and infusible mass, is pulverised and sifted to the finest powder; the dough kneaded from it is pressed into moulds, carefully dried, and then, placed in an iron ring, set in the embers. Plaster of Paris is then poured into the moulds, and eventually a small work of art, delighting whoever owes it to the work of their own hands, is revealed.

Johann Reiffenstein, who willingly and diligently introduced me to these activities, soon realised that such employment did not suit, and that my true inclination was to develop my manual skill and employ my eyesight, as far as possible, by copying things from Nature, and art objects. The intense summer heat had scarcely subsided when he led me, in the company of several artists, to Frascati, where we found lodging and immediate necessities in a well-furnished private house. Having spent the entire day outdoors, we enjoyed gathering in the evenings around a large maple-wood table. Johann Georg Schütz, a Frankfurt native, a skilful artist but without eminent talent, and devoted more to a secure and comfortable existence than sustained artistic activity — which is why the Romans called him 'Il Barone' (*the Baron*) — accompanied me on my wanderings, and proved invaluable to me in many ways. When one considers that centuries have been spent here in the noblest architectural pursuits, and that the mighty structures that remain highlight and present to the eye the artistic ideas of outstanding minds, one will understand how both mind and eye find delight, in any light, in observing their manifold, thousandfold, horizontal and vertical lines, intercepting and adorning them, in silent harmony, and how everything that is small and limited within one is stirred and expelled, though not without pain. The abundance of moonlit views is particularly notable, in which the individually-

entertaining, perhaps even disturbing, details wholly recede, and only the vast masses of light and shadow present to the eye immensely graceful, symmetrically-harmonious, and colossal forms. By way of contrast, there was no shortage of instructive, often playful, entertainment in the evenings.

It cannot be concealed that the younger artists, knowing and noting the peculiarities of our stalwart Reiffenstein, commonly called weaknesses, often discussed these traits quietly, jokingly, and mockingly. Now, one evening, the subject of the Apollo Belvedere, that inexhaustible source of artistic conversation, arose again, and upon the remark that the ears on that excellent head were not particularly well-carved, the discussion naturally turned to the question of the dignity and beauty of those organs, and the difficulty of finding an attractive one in Nature and of reproducing it artistically, with perfect symmetry. Since Georg Schütz was known for his handsome ears, I asked him to sit by the lamp, opposite me, while I sketched, with care, an exceptionally well-formed one of his — it was doubtless the more perfect one. He found himself seated, in a rigid pose, directly opposite Johann Reiffenstein, from whom he was not to, and must not, divert his gaze. Johann began to present his oft-commended maxim: one should not turn directly to the finest works of art, but should start with those by Annibale Carraci, specifically those in the Farnese Gallery, then move on to Raphael's works, and end by sketching the Apollo Belvedere so often that one comes to know it by heart. Thereafter there would be little more to wish or hope for.

The good Schütz was seized by an inner fit of laughter, which he could scarcely contain, and the effort of doing so increased the longer I sought to have him sit still. Thus, the teacher, and benefactor, should forever expect but mocking ingratitude and unjust treatment, on account of their individual, and habitual quirks of mind.

A magnificent, though not unexpected, view greeted us from the windows of Prince Aldobrandini's villa at Frascati. He, being at this time in the countryside, kindly invited us, and entertained us festively, at his well-laden table, in the company of his clerical and secular household. As one can imagine, the house was designed in such a way as to allow one to survey the splendour of the hills, and the surrounding countryside, at a glance. There is much talk of pleasure-palaces; but one has only to gaze from there, to be convinced that a villa could hardly be situated more delightfully.

Here, however, I find myself compelled to add a remark whose seriousness and significance I feel able to recommend. It sheds light on what has been said and will illuminate what follows; moreover, many a fine, but as yet still developing mind, may find cause for self-examination therein.

Individuals with a lively, inquisitive mind are not content with mere pleasure; they demand knowledge. This drives them to independent activity; while however successful one is, one ultimately feels that one can only truly judge what one is able to produce oneself. Yet this is not readily understood, and from the fact arise certain misguided endeavours, which become all the more troublesome the more honest and the purer the intention. During this period, doubts and suspicions began to arise within me, unsettling me even amidst my pleasant situation; for I was soon obliged to acknowledge that the true desire and purpose of my being here would hardly be fulfilled.

After several enjoyable days, we returned to Rome, where we were compensated for the freedom of the open air we now lacked by a new, and most charming opera performed in a bright, packed hall. The German artists' row of seats, one of the front ones in the stalls, was as usual densely occupied, and once again there was no shortage of applause and acclaim, for both present and past delights. Indeed, we managed to silence the entire, loudly- chattering, audience by means of a concerted, first soft, then louder, finally commanding, murmur of 'Zitti!' ('Quiet!') uttered at the ritornello of an approaching popular aria, or some other pleasing passage. For this reason, our friends on stage were kind enough to direct the most interesting aspects of their performance towards us.

Frascati, October 2nd.

I must start my little letter soon, if you are to receive it on time. In fact, I have both too much and too little to say. I draw and sketch constantly, and think of my friends, silently, while doing so. These days I have again felt a great longing for home, precisely perhaps because I am so comfortable here, and yet feel that I miss what is dearest to me.

I am in a rather peculiar state, but just need to gather myself together, make the most of each day, do what needs to be done, and work my way through the winter.

You would not believe how useful, but also how difficult, it has been for me to live entirely among strangers this whole year, especially since Tischbein — I tell you this between ourselves — has not made the impression on me I had hoped for. He is a genuinely decent fellow, but not as straightforward, natural, or open as his letters suggest. I can only describe his character verbally to you, so as not to do him an injustice, and what good is a description rendered in that manner! A person's life reveals their character. Now I hope to have Christoph Kayser for company; he will prove a great joy to me. May heaven grant that nothing comes between us!

My primary concern is, and always will be, to achieve a certain level of skill at drawing, with which one can create with ease, without having to relearn anything, nor remain stranded for as long as I have unfortunately done, and so missed out on the best years of life. But I must excuse myself. To draw for the sake of drawing would have been like speaking for the sake of speaking. If I had nothing to express, if nothing inspired me, if I first had to seek, laboriously for worthwhile subjects, indeed, if even after all my searching I could scarcely find any, where was the urge to draw supposed to come from? In these realms, however, one must become an artist; everything forces itself upon one, and one becomes more and more filled with the desire, nay, compelled, to create. Based on my aptitude, and my knowledge of the path, I am convinced that I could make great strides here, given a few years residency.

You demand, my dear friends, that I write about myself, and behold, I do so; when we meet again, you shall hear much. I have had ample opportunity to reflect on myself and others, on the world and on history, and I will share much of what I find excellent, if not new, in my own good time. Finally, everything will be gathered together, and embodied in 'Wilhelm Meister.'

Karl Moritz remains my favoured companion so far, though I feared, and still do fear, that he only wants to become wiser from my company, not more correct, nor better, nor happier, which is the concern that always holds me back from being completely open with him.

In general, living amidst several people suits me quite well. I observe each person's temperament and way of behaving. One plays his part, another not; one will advance himself, another hardly at all. One gathers in, another scatters. One is satisfied with everything, another with nothing. One has talent and fails to employ it, another has none and yet is diligent, and so on. I see all this, and remain at the centre; it amuses me and, since I have no real role in these people's lives, nothing to answer for as regards them, it fails to leave me in an ill humour. Only, my dear friends, when everyone acts according to their own wish, yet pretends that a whole will ultimately evolve, establish itself, and remain in existence, while taking its *raison d'être* from oneself alone, there is no recourse but to part, lest one is driven mad.

Albano, October 5, 1787.

I wish to be sure of sending this letter to Rome by the morning post, so can only say a thousandth of what I have to say, on this sheet.

I received your package yesterday, at the same time as the 'Scattered' (or rather 'Collected') papers, and the 'Ideas,' (*Herder's 'Zerstreute Blätter': Scattered Leaves' and 'Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit': 'Ideas for the Philosophy*

of History of Mankind') and the four Moroccan-leather bound volumes, just as I was about to leave Frascati. They are now a treasure to me, a testament to the entire *villeggiatura* (*trip*).

I read 'Persepolis' (*Herder's 'Persepolis: Eine Muthmaassung': 'Persepolis: A Conjecture'*) last night. It delights me immensely, and I can add nothing, for such style and artistry are lacking here. I now wait to see the aforementioned books in some library and thank you again. Continue, I beg you, continue because you must. Illuminate everything with your light!

The 'Ideas,' the poems, are still untouched. My writing may now continue; I will advance, loyally. The four copperplate engravings for the completed volumes shall be done here.

With those persons mentioned earlier, the relationship was merely a good-natured truce on both sides; I knew that, but only what can happen, will happen. There will be ever-increasing sense of distance and finally, if things go extremely well, a quiet, easy separation. The one is a fool, brimming with pretentious simplicity. 'My mother has geese' (*'Meine Mutter hat Gänse', a folk lullaby*) is certainly sung with a more comforting naiveté than 'To God alone on high be glory.' (*'Allein Gott in der Höh' sei Ehr', a sixteenth-century Lutheran hymn*). He is, once and for all — the singer of: 'They'll let not the hay and the straw, the hay and the straw, go astray,' (*'Sie lassen sich das Heu und Stroh, das Heu und Stroh nicht irren', a folk song*) and the like. Away with these people! Their first ingratitude is preferable to their last. The other, behaves as if he has come from a foreign country to that which is truly his own, and has come to a people who are searching for themselves without being prepared to admit it. He will find himself a stranger here, and perhaps fail to know why. If I am not very much mistaken, the magnanimity attributed to Alcibiades is a sleight of hand by 'the Zurich prophet' (*Johann Kaspar Lavater, the Swiss poet, writer, philosopher, physiognomist and theologian, who in his 'Essays on Physiognomy,'1797, attributed Alcibiades' facial features to a combination of magnanimity, terror, and volatility*), who is clever and agile enough to juggle large and small spheres with incredible dexterity, and mingle them together, in order to make truth and falsehood stand or disappear according to his theologically poetic mind. May the Devil take him, or preserve him, who always was a friend of lies, demonology, premonitions, longings, and so on from the very beginning!

Now, I must take a new sheet and ask you to read in the same way I write, with your mind more than your eyes, as I do with my soul more than my hands.

Continue, dear brother, to find, to unite, to compose, to write, without concerning yourself with others. Each must write as he lives: first for his own sake, and then for kindred spirits.

Plato said 'Let none ignorant of geometry enter here' (*Ageōmétrētos mēdeìs eisítō*). If I were capable of leading a school, I would deny entry to anyone who had not, seriously and genuinely, studied some kind of Natural Science. Recently, I came across the nonsensical words, written in a tiresomely-apostolic, Capuchin-style declamatory manner by the Zurich prophet: 'Everything that has life lives through something outside itself.' Or something in that vein. Now, every pagan convert will repeat it, and not a benevolent spirit in sight to nip their effort in the bud whenever they so revisit it. They have failed to grasp the most basic, fundamental truths of Nature, and yet would love nothing more than to sit around the 'throne' on chairs on which others should be seated, or no one at all. Leave all that alone, as I do, though I certainly have an easier task at the moment!

I prefer not to describe my life; it would appear far too pleasant. I am mainly occupied with landscape drawing, for the benefit of which this land and sky make exceptionally inviting subjects. I have even found a few idyllic corners. What am I not able to create here! I see it all clearly; one just needs to surround oneself with fresh scenes to feel content.

Farewell and be happy, and if things should offend you, just feel that you are together and rightly so, and feel what you are to each other, while I, exiled of my own volition, deliberately erring, unwise as a matter of expediency, everywhere a stranger, yet everywhere at home, allow my life to drift rather than direct it, not knowing in any event where it is headed.

Farewell, and commend me to the Duchess. I have planned, with Johann Reiffenstein, her entire stay in Frascati. If everything goes well, we will have created a masterpiece. We are currently negotiating for a villa, which has, after a fashion, been sequestrated, and must therefore be rented out, instead of for some other either occupied or ceded by a noble family simply as a favour, which would lead to arrangements and obligations having to be entered into. I will write as soon as I have anything more certain to report. In Rome, fine, secluded quarters, with a garden, are also ready prepared for her. I wish her to feel at home everywhere, for otherwise she will enjoy nothing; time passes, money is spent, and one gazes around, sadly, as if seeking a bird that has escaped one's hand. If I can arrange everything for her so that her foot never stumbles over a pebble, I will do so.

I must cease writing now, even though there is still room on the page. Farewell, and forgive these hasty lines.

Castel Gandolfo, October 8th.

Though it is now the 12th, this week having passed without my finding an opportunity to write. Thus, this little letter is hurrying to Rome so that it may still reach you.

We live here as one would live in a spa town, except that I take time off in the morning to draw, which means, in other words, that I have to mingle with others all day, a thing that suits me quite well for this brief while; it means also that I have contact with others, many at once, without losing too much time on each.

Angelika is here too, living nearby; then there are some lively girls, some women, and Anton von Maron (*the Austrian portrait painter*), who is Anton Mengs' brother-in-law, with his wife (*Meng's sister Therese*), some from the house, some from the neighbourhood; the company is a merry one, and there is always something to laugh about. In the evenings, we attend a comedy, where Pulcinello is the main character, and then spend the whole day reminiscing about the previous evening's witticisms. Just like at home — only under a bright and pleasant sky. Today a wind has risen that keeps me at home. If one were able to draw me out of myself, these days would serve to do so, but I always retreat into myself, my whole inclination being directed toward art. Every day a new light dawns for me, and it seems as if I am at least learning to see.

'Erwin and Elmire' is almost done; it only needs a few mornings' effort; everything has been thought through.

Herder has asked me to provide questions and suggestions for Georg Forster's 'A Voyage Round the World' *('A Voyage Round the World in H.M.S Resolution, 1772-1775', published in English 1777, translated into German as 'Reise um die Welt', 1778-1780*)**.** I don't know where I shall find the time and composure, even though I would like to. We shall see.

You are probably already suffering from cold, dreary days; we are hoping for another whole month of walks. I cannot express how much Herder's 'Ideas' delights me. Since I am not expecting the Messiah, it is the dearest of gospels to me. Give my regards to everyone; I am always thinking of you; and love me.

I failed to send a letter in the last mail, my dear friends; the activity in Castel Gandolfo has been far too intense lately, and I wished to do some drawing too. It was like being at the spa back home, and since I was staying in a house always full of people, I had to play my part. On this occasion, I met more Italians than I have to date this year, and was quite pleased by the experience.

I was particularly interested in a Milanese lady during her week's stay; she was distinguishable from the Roman women on account of her naturalness, common-

sense, and good-naturedness. Angelika was, as she always is, understanding, kind, obliging, and courteous. One cannot be aught but her friend; and one can learn a great deal from her, especially in terms of diligence; it is incredible what she accomplishes.

The weather has been cool these last few days, and I am more than happy to be back in Rome. Last night, as I went to bed, I truly felt the pleasure of being here. It was as if I were about to lie down on a stretch of solid ground.

I would like to discuss his book *'God: some Conversations'* with Herder. One major point I must note: his little volume, like many others, is taken for soup, when it is actually simply the bowl. Those who put nothing in will find it empty. Let me continue allegorising a little further, and Herder will best explain the allegory. With rollers and levers, one can move considerable loads; to move the sections of that obelisk, one will need windlasses, pulleys, and so on. The greater the load, or the more delicate the action (as in a clock, for example), the more complex, or intricate, the mechanism has to be, and yet it will possess the greatest internal unity. Just such are all hypotheses, or rather, all principles — those who have a light load to move reach for the lever and disdain the pulleys; what use is a worm-gear to a stonemason? When Johann Lavater (*the theologian and poet*) exerts all his energy trying to realise a myth, when Jacobi (*Friedrich Jacobi, the philosopher*) toiling away, idolises a meaningless, infantile sensation, when Clodius (*Christian August Clodius, poet and philosopher, a critic of Goethe's work*) being no more than a messenger aspires to be an evangelist, it is evident that they abhor everything that unlocks the depths of Nature. Would the first, otherwise, dare to say, with impunity: 'Everything that has life lives through something outside itself.' Would the second not be ashamed of his conceptual confusion, his conflation of knowledge and faith, of tradition and experience? Would the third not be obliged to descend several levels lower, if he ceased striving with all his might to arrange the chairs around the throne of the Lamb; all three being more than careful not to set foot on firm ground and embrace the natural world, where each one of us is simply what we are, and where all have equal rights?

If, on the other hand, one considers the third part of Herder's 'Ideas,' and first observes what is there, and then asks whether the author could have written it without a concept of God, the answer is 'Never'; for precisely what is genuine, great, and intrinsic, which it possesses, it possesses in, from, and through, his concept of God and the world.

So, if something is lacking, it is not in the product, but the purchaser; not in the machinery, but in those who seek to use it. I always look on with a quiet smile when others refuse to take me seriously during metaphysical discussions; since I am an artist, it matters not to me. In fact, I prefer that the principle by which, and through

which, I work, remains hidden. I leave everyone to their own levers, having long made use of the worm-gear, and now with even more pleasure and ease.

Castel Gandolfo, October 12, 1787.

To Herder

Just a fleeting word, and first and foremost, my warmest thanks for the 'Ideas'! They are to me like the most delightful of gospels, within which all the most interesting studies of my life converge. What one has toiled over for so long is now presented fully. How much joy, that joy in all good things, you have granted and renewed in me through your writings! I am still but halfway through. I beg you, have the passage from Petrus Camper (*the Dutch physician, anatomist, and anthropologist*) that you quote on page 159 (*which discusses the facial angle in human beings, and other creatures*) written out in full for me as soon as possible, so that I may see which rules of the Greek artistic ideal he has discovered. I recall only his demonstration of human profiles from copperplate engravings. Write to me about it, and quote anything else you think useful, so that I may know the ultimate extent of such speculation; for I am always like a newborn child. Does Lavater's 'Physiognomy' (*'Physiognomische Fragmente zur Beförderung der Menschenkenntnis und Menschenliebe', 1775-1778*) offer anything insightful on the subject? I will gladly obey your request regarding Georg Forster, even though I do not quite see yet how it will be possible; since I am unable to ask specific questions, but must first fully elaborate and present my hypothesis. You know how tedious I find the writing of it. Just tell me the final deadline, when this must be submitted, and where it should be sent. I am currently swamped with reeds for a reed-pipe, but can't make music yet, as I am still cutting them. When I do attempt what you seek, I must have recourse to dictation; for I actually see it as a sign telling me to put my affairs in order, and close my books.

What will be hardest for me is that I have to derive absolutely everything from memory; I have not a single sheet of my collection, not a drawing, with me, and all the latest books are completely lacking here.

I shall probably stay another two weeks in Castel Gandolfo and enjoy the lakeside life. In the mornings I draw, then it is all people. I enjoy seeing them together; individually it would be a huge bore. Angelika is here and helps with everything.

The Pope (*Pius VI*) is said to have received word that Amsterdam has been captured by the Prussians (*which had occurred on October 10th*). The next newspapers will bring confirmation. It would be the first expedition in which our century reveals itself in all its enlightened greatness. Now that's what I call a feat! Without a sword stroke,

with a little shelling, and nothing further! Farewell. I am a child of peace, and will keep peace forever with the world, once having achieved peace with myself.

Rome, October 27, 1787.

I have returned to the enchanted circle, and find myself under its spell once more, and am contentedly, and quietly working away, forgetting everything beyond myself, except my friends' visits to me shedding peace and kindness. I have spent these first few days writing letters, and reviewing the sketches I made in the countryside; next week I will begin fresh work. It is too flattering to relay what hopes Angelika has for my landscape-drawings, given certain conditions. I want to continue, and at least approach what I will likely never achieve.

I eagerly await the news that 'Egmont' has arrived, and of how you have received it. Did I already write that Christoph Kayser is coming? I expect him in a few days, with the now-completed score of Scapin's capers. You can imagine what a celebration that will be! Work will immediately begin on a new opera, and 'Claudine von Villa Bella' and 'Erwin and Elmire' (*Goethe's 'Singspiele', musical plays*), will be improved in his presence and with his advice.

I have now finished reading Herder's 'Ideas', and was extremely pleased with the book. The conclusion is wonderfully true, and refreshing, and, like the book itself, will truly benefit people in time, perhaps under a different title. The more this way of thinking gains acceptance, the happier thoughtful people will be. This year, I have also observed the behaviour of persons previously unknown to me, and found that all truly wise human beings, to a greater or lesser degree, and more or less circuitously, arrive at, and insist upon the idea that the moment is all, and that the only merit a rational person gains is by behaving in such a manner that their life, insofar as it depends on them, contains the greatest possible number of happy and rational moments.

I would have to write a book myself if I were to say what I thought while reading that book, or the other. I am now rereading certain passages as I open the volume, delighting in every page, because it is truly delightfully conceived and written.

I find the 'Greek Age' particularly beautiful; that, to me, the 'Roman Age' lacks a certain substantiality, if I may put it that way, is perhaps something you can infer without my saying so. It is only natural that I feel so. At present, what occupies my mind is the solidity the State represented, in and of itself; to me, it resembles a homeland, something exclusive. Yet one would have to determine the weight of its individual existence in relation to the immensity of the whole world at that time, whereby many things would, of course seem smaller, and vanish like smoke. Thus, the Coliseum always seems imposing to me, even more so, if one considers the time when

it was built, when the Roman people who filled that enormous oval were no longer the ancient Romans.

A book about painting and sculpture in Rome has also reached us. It is a German effort, and, what is worse, the work of a German gentleman, apparently the work of a young man full of energy but brimming with pretension, who has gone to great lengths to wander about, take notes, listen, pay attention, and read. He has managed to give the work a semblance of wholeness; it contains much that is true and good, alongside much that is false and absurd, much that is thoughtful and much that is mere parroting, many a dull passage and many a flight of fancy. Anyone who glances through it, even from afar, will soon realise what a monstrous hybrid somewhere between a compilation and an original work his voluminous opus represents.

The arrival of 'Egmont' with you, pleases and reassures me, and I long for a few words about it, which I expect are now on their way. The morocco-bound copy has arrived; I have gifted it to Angelika. We intend to handle Christoph Kayser's opera more circumspectly than we were advised to; your suggestion is excellent — when Kayser arrives, you shall hear more.

The review turns out to be very much in the old style, both too much and too little is said. My only concern now is to create, since, even if the end result is not perfect, there are millennia which can be spent reviewing what I have created — that is, its existence at least will be spoken of.

Everyone is amazed at how I have managed to exist without paying tribute to society; though equally they are unaware of how I acted so as to achieve it. Our October has not been of the best, even though we have had some heavenly days.

A new era is beginning for me now. My outlook has been broadened by observing and acquiring knowledge of so many things, and I must now apply myself to some concentrated work. A person's individuality is a curious thing; I have truly come to comprehend my own, having on the one hand spent this year focused solely on myself, and on the other having been obliged to deal with foreigners strange to me.

October – Later Notes

At the beginning of this month, in mild, thoroughly cheerful, and glorious weather, I enjoyed a formal visit to Castel Gandolfo, which allowed me to become initiated into, and settled in the heart of, that incomparable region. Thomas Jenkins, the wealthy English art dealer, was staying there in a very stately building (*the Villa dei Gesuiti on Via Ercolano*), the former residence of the General of the Jesuits (*Gian Paolo Oliva, in the seventeenth century*), where numerous friends lacked neither rooms for

comfortable accommodation, nor halls for cheerful gatherings, nor arcades for lively strolls

One can best understand such an autumn stay by imagining it as a stay in a spa town. People with absolutely no prior connection to one another are brought into close proximity, instantly, and by chance. Breakfast and lunch, walks, leisurely excursions, serious and playful conversation quickly lead to acquaintance and familiarity; indeed, it would be a wonder if, especially here, where not even illness or a spa treatment offers any kind of diversion, here, in the most perfect idleness, the most decisive elective affinities should not emerge immediately. Johann Reiffenstein had deemed it advisable, and rightly so, that we set out early to gain the needed time for our walks, and our other artistic excursions into the mountains, before the throng pressed in and called us to participate in communal entertainment. We were out first, and never failed to take a thorough look around, following the lead of our experienced guide, and therefore reaped the greatest pleasure and insight from doing so.

After some time, I noticed that a very pretty young lady from Rome, who lived not far from us on the Corso, had joined the company accompanied by her mother. Since my arrival in Rome, they had both returned my greetings in a kindlier manner than usual, but I had not spoken to them, even though I often passed close enough when they were sitting in front of the villa in the evenings; for I had remained perfectly true to my vow not to let such circumstances distract me from my main purpose. Now, however, we suddenly met again, like old acquaintances; the concert provided fine material for our first conversation, and there is surely nothing more pleasant than a woman of Rome of this kind, who happily abandons herself to natural conversation, and expresses a lively attention to real life, with graceful references to herself, speaking quickly yet clearly in the melodious Italian of the city; indeed, in that refined dialect that serves even to elevate the middle class, and lends a certain nobility to the most natural indeed commonplace comments. I was familiar with these characteristics and traits, but I had never found them displayed in such a pleasing manner.

At the same time, they introduced me to a young woman from Milan who was with them, the sister of a clerk working for Thomas Jenkins, her brother being a young man highly regarded by his employer for his skill and integrity. They seemed to be very close friends.

These two beauties — and they truly deserved to be called beautiful — provided a striking contrast in looks, though in no way a harsh one: the lady from Rome had dark brown hair, the Milanese lady's was light brown; the Roman woman had a dark complexion, the Milanese woman fair, delicate skin; the Roman almost blue eyes, the Milanese brown eyes; the woman of Rome was somewhat serious and reserved, the Milanese woman was of an open, enquiring, though not overly-inquisitive nature. I sat

between the two, playing a sort of lottery game, and had already shared winnings with the Roman lady. As the game progressed, it so happened that I also tried my luck with the Milanese lady as partner, placing bets and so on. Suffice it to say, the relationship developed there too, though in my innocence I failed at first to realise that a shared interest in both was displeasing to the mother, until, after the game had ended, seeing me alone for a moment, politely, but with true matronly seriousness, she assured 'the esteemed stranger' that, since he had shown some attention to her daughter, it was improper to enter into similar association with another; rather, it was considered the custom, on such a trip, for persons who had once kept company, to a certain degree, to remain in that state, engaging in an innocent and charming exchange of favours. I apologised most sincerely, but added that it was difficult for a foreigner to acknowledge such an obligation, since it was customary in our country to show courtesy and be obliging to every lady in society, one after another, and that this applied all the more here, since we were talking about two such intimate friends.

But alas! While I was trying to excuse my behaviour, in this way, I felt that my affection for the Milanese woman had already been decided in the most wondrous way, swiftly and emphatically enough, as is the way with an idle heart that, in complacent, calm confidence, fears nothing, desires nothing, and yet comes very close, suddenly, to what is most desirable. For in such a moment one overlooks the danger that threatens behind those bewitching features.

The following morning, the three of us found ourselves alone, and the balance of power shifted even further in favour of the Milanese lady. She had the great advantage over her friend that a certain personal aspiration was noticeable in her pronouncements. She complained, not about a neglected, but rather an overly cautious upbringing: 'They fail to teach us to write,' she said, 'because they fear we will employ our pen in scribbling love letters; they prevent us from reading unless we occupy ourselves with the prayer book; nor would they even consider teaching us a foreign language; I would give anything to be able to speak English. I often hear Signore Jenkins, my brother, Signora Angelica, Signore Zucchi, the Signori Volpato and Camuccini (*Vincenzo Camuccini the Neoclassical painter*), conversing amongst themselves in English, with a feeling akin to envy: and a wealth of newspapers lie before me on the table, containing news from all over the world, as I am aware, yet I know nothing of what they are saying.'

'That is all the more a pity,' I replied, 'in that English is so easy to learn; you would be able to grasp and understand it in a short time. Let us attempt it now,' I continued, picking up one of the many English newspapers that were, as usual, lying around.

I glanced at it, quickly, and found an article about a woman who had fallen into the water, but was fortunately rescued and returned to her family. The circumstances

surrounding the incident were complicated and interesting; it remained unclear whether she had thrown herself into the water in an act of suicide, and also which brave suitor — the favoured or the spurned — had saved her. I pointed out the passage, and asked her to look at it carefully. Then I translated all the nouns for her, and questioned her to see if she had retained their meaning. She soon grasped the position of the main and primary forms of the words, and familiarised herself with the place they occupied in the structure of each sentence. I then moved on to the verbs, and adverbs, and then the adjectives pointing out how these enlivened the whole thing, expounding on them until, finally, unprompted, she read the entire passage to me as if it were written in Italian on the page, which she could not do without her whole person expressing pleasure. I have rarely seen such heartfelt joy as that which she showed when offering me her warmest thanks for this insight into a new field of knowledge. She could scarcely contain herself, seeing the imminent possibility of fulfilling her most ardent wish, which was already tentatively achieved.

The company had increased, amongst whom Angelika was now present. At the large table, already set, I was seated to her right. My fair student, who was on the opposite side of the table, without a moment's hesitation, while the others jostled for places, made her way round the table, and seated herself next to me. Angelika appeared to note this with a degree of surprise, nor did it take a discerning woman's eye for her to realise that something had occurred, and that her friend who had previously distanced himself from women to the point of utter rudeness now found himself finally tamed and captive.

Although I held up quite well, outwardly, my inner turmoil was rather evident in a certain embarrassment as I shared the conversation with my neighbours, while seeking to entertain my older, sensitive, and now silent friend, and trying to appease the other, who, absorbed by her new-found skill in a foreign language, was in the state of someone who, seizing on a course long-desired, is suddenly blinded by the dawning light, and unable to address those around them in a friendly, calm, and interested manner.

This excited state, however, was immediately subject to a remarkable transformation. Seeking out the young women towards evening, I found the older ones in a pavilion, from which the eyes were drawn to the most magnificent of views. My gaze swept around, but something other than the picturesque landscape was before them; a hue tinted the whole area that could be attributed neither to the setting sun alone, nor the evening breeze. The glow of the high points, the cool blue shadows of the depths, seemed more magnificent than ever they had in oil or watercolour. I could have gazed, happily, at the landscape forever, yet felt a desire to leave the spot, and rejoin my own little group of travellers paying homage to the sun's dying light.

Sadly, I was unable to decline the invitation from the mother and her neighbours to remain there, especially since they had made room for me by the window which commanded the most beautiful view of all. As I listened to their conversation, I realised that they were talking about a dowry, a recurring and inexhaustible topic. They examined every conceivable aspect: the number and nature of the various gifts expected, family presents, the numerous contributions made by friends, some even in secret, and I felt obliged to listen, patiently, to all the details recounted the while, the ladies having committed me to a stroll later.

Finally, the conversation turned to the groom's merits; he was described favourably enough, but they did not seek to hide his shortcomings, hoping, confidently, that the bride's grace, intelligence, and amiability would be sufficient to mitigate or correct them after their marriage.

Finally, growing impatient, as the sun sank into the distant sea, offering a delightful glimpse of its orb, amidst the long shadows, and subdued yet powerful glare, I asked, in a most modest way, who the bride might be. They replied with astonishment, realising I was unaware of what was common knowledge; and only then did it occur to them that I was not a member of their circle, but a stranger.

It is hardly necessary to describe the horror that gripped me when I learned it was none other than the fair student I had so recently grown fond of. The sun was setting, and I managed to extricate myself, under some pretext, from the group who, without realising it, had dealt me so cruel a blow.

That when one finally awakes from one's reverie, inclinations that have been carelessly indulged in for a time, are replaced by a most painful state of mind is a well-known and commonplace experience, but perhaps my case is slightly more interesting because of the fact that a lively, mutual goodwill was destroyed at the very moment of its germination, and with it the premonition of a future imagined happiness. I arrived home late, and early the next morning, with my portfolio under my arm, set out on a long excursion, using it as an excuse not to join the breakfast table.

I was old and experienced enough to gather myself together, immediately, painful though it felt. 'It would be ridiculous enough,' I exclaimed, 'if a Werther-like fate were to befall you in Rome and ruin so significant, and hitherto well-composed, a stay.'

I turned once more, and swiftly, to the view, which I had neglected meanwhile, and sought to recreate it as faithfully as possible; but succeeded only in seeing it with clearer eyes. The little technique I possessed was barely sufficient to capture even the slightest outline, but the abundant features the region offers, in the form of rocks and trees, ascents and descents, calm lakes, and lively streams were almost more palpable

to my eye than usual, and I could not ignore the pain that had sharpened my inner and outer senses so.

From this point, however, I need only be brief; a multitude of visitors filled the house, and those of the neighbourhood, so one could avoid another person without awkwardness, while well-intentioned courtesy, to which such an inclination leads us, is everywhere well-received in society. My behaviour was acceptable to all, and there was no unpleasantness, no difficulty except in a single instance, and for another reason, with our host, Thomas Jenkins.

I had brought back the most appetising mushrooms from my long hike amidst the mountains and forests, and had handed them to the cook, who, delighted by a dish, rare but prized in the area, prepared them in a most delicious manner and served them at table. Their excellent taste was remarked on by all, but when it was revealed, by way of honouring me, that I had brought them back from my walk, our English host, though only in private, was incensed that a stranger had contributed a dish of which the host knew nothing, and which he had not ordered or approved. It was considered unfitting to surprise someone at their own table, and serve a dish of which they could not give account. Of all this Johann Reiffenstein had to inform me, diplomatically, after dinner, to which I, who was inwardly suffering from a far more serious ailment than that which could be caused by a mere fungus, replied, humbly, that I had assumed the cook would report it to her master, and assured him that if I should again come across such delicacies on my travels, I would present them to our excellent host himself for examination and approval. For, to be fair, one must admit that his annoyance stemmed from the fact that this perilous dish had appeared on the table without proper inspection. The cook, however, had assured me, and also reminded her master, that such items, while not frequently served, were traditionally presented at this time of year as a special rarity, often to great acclaim.

This culinary adventure gave me cause to reflect to myself, with quiet humour, that, afflicted with my individual case of poisoning, I had in addition been suspected of trying to poison the entire party through a like display of carelessness.

It was easy to continue my established course. I immediately sought to avoid giving English lessons by leaving early in the morning and never knowingly approaching my pupil, and the object of my secret affection, except in the company of several other people.

This situation, too, soon retreated to the back of my greatly-occupied mind, and in a charming manner. As I viewed her as a bride, as a future wife, she was elevated in my eyes above the carefree state of girlhood. And though I still felt the same affection toward her, but in a higher, and selfless sense, I, as one no longer in his frivolous youth,

was soon in a warm but merely friendly relationship with her. My service, if one may term such unattached attention so, was entirely unobtrusive and characterised rather by a sort of reverence, whenever I encountered her. She, moreover, who was now well aware that her imminent marriage had become known to me, showed herself perfectly satisfied with my behaviour. The rest of the world, for I conversed with everyone, had noticed nothing, or took no offence, and so the days and hours passed in a peaceful and comfortable manner.

Much could be said about our diverse forms of entertainment. Suffice it to say, there was also a theatre there, where Pulcinello, whom we so often applauded during the Carnival, but who otherwise practised the shoemaking trade and appeared here as a respectable citizen, entertained us skilfully, with his pantomimic, mimetic, and laconic absurdities, transporting us to a pleasant state of nothingness.

Letters from home had, however, made me realise that my journey to Italy, so long planned, constantly postponed, and finally and suddenly undertaken, had aroused a degree of unease and impatience among those left behind, even in some cases a desire to follow me, and enjoy the same happiness of which my cheerful, and it seems informative, letters had given the most favourable impression. Of course, in the intellectually stimulating and art-loving circle of our Duchess Amalie, it was customary for Italy to always be regarded as the new Jerusalem of true culture, and a lively yearning for it, such as only a 'Mignon' could express, was always maintained in heart and mind. The dam had finally broken, and it gradually became quite clear that Duchess Anna Amalia and her entourage were making serious preparations to cross the Alps from one direction, and Herder and the younger Dalberg (*Karl Theodor von Dalberg, intellectual, statesman, and churchman*) from the other. My advice was that they should let the winter go by, and reach Rome in the middle of the season, and then enjoy, gradually, all the good things that the area around Rome, and then the southern part of Italy, could offer.

This advice of mine, honest and fitting as it was, was nonetheless less also offered for my own benefit. For some months now I had lived in a manner new to me, in a foreign country, surrounded by complete strangers, and had rediscovered the true human condition; a fact, which, through chance and coincidence, I had recently become most aware of. A closed home circle, however, a life among completely familiar and kindred people, ultimately places one in a most peculiar predicament. It is here, where, through mutual suffering and endurance, sympathy and deprivation, a certain middling state of resignation occurs, in which, through habit and convention, pain and joy, vexation and contentment, mutually cancel each other out. A common mean is created, as it were, which completely negates the true character of individual events,

so that in the end, in the pursuit of comfort, one surrenders oneself freely to a condition which is neither painful nor joyful.

Overwhelmed by such feelings and premonitions, I was determined not to await my friends' arrival in Italy; since I saw, all the more clearly, that my way of seeing things would not, suddenly, be theirs, for I had spent a year escaping the Cimmerian ideas and modes of thought of the North, and grown accustomed to looking around me, and breathing more freely under an azure canopy. At the same time, new arrivals from Germany had proved extremely troublesome to me; they sought me out for what I wished them to forget, and failed to recognise what they had long desired though it was before their very eyes. I myself still found it arduous enough to remain, by thought and action, on the path I now acknowledged as being the true one.

I could avoid German travellers barely known to me, but the presence of deeply-connected, personally- revered, people dear to me would disturb and hinder me through their own errors of thinking, and their limited awareness, indeed, even by influencing my own thoughts. Northern travellers believe they visit Rome to experience an augmentation of their existence, to provide a something that they lack; and only gradually do they come to realise, with great unease, that they must completely change their mental framework, and begin again from scratch.

However clear this may have seemed to me, I wisely suspended the day and hour for acting upon it, continuing to spend my time carefully on independent reflection, listening to the views of others, observing their artistic endeavours, and indulging in my own practical experiments continuously alternated, or rather, mutually intertwined.

In this regard, I was particularly helped by the participation of Heinrich Meyer of Zurich, whose conversations, although infrequent, were very beneficial to me, as he, being a diligent and self-controlled artist, knew how to employ his time in a more useful manner than the circle of younger folk, who believed, frivolously, that they could combine serious progress in concept and technique, with a tumultuous life of pleasure.

Rome, November 3, 1787.

Christoph Kayser has arrived, and a week has gone without my informing you of the fact. He is now tuning the pianoforte, and the opera will gradually emerge. His presence again makes for a strange time, yet I see that I should simply continue on my path calmly; the days will roll by for better or worse,

The reception of my 'Egmont' has rendered me happy; I hope it will not lose impact on re-reading, for I know what I have introduced there, which cannot all be discerned

at once. What is praised in it, at home, is precisely what I intended to create; if you say it is accomplished, then I have achieved my ultimate goal. It was an unspeakably difficult task, which I could never have completed without immeasurable freedom, both of life and mind. Consider what it means: to undertake a work that was written twelve years earlier, and complete it without rewriting it in its entirety. The particular circumstances here made the work both more difficult and easier. Now two more such mighty boulders lie before me: 'Faust' and 'Tasso.' Since the merciful gods seem prepared to release me hereafter from the punishment of Sisyphus, I hope to roll those lumps of rock up the mountain also. Once I am at the top, I can begin anew, and shall do my utmost to earn your applause, since you all grant, and I receive, your love without possessing any merit for my part.

I don't quite understand what you say about Clara (*Egmont's mistress in Goethe's tragic play*) and await your next letter. It seems that you are missing the nuance, the middle-ground between the mistress and the goddess; for I have kept her relationship with Egmont an exclusive one; I have based her love more on the concept of the beloved's perfection, and her rapture more on the enjoyment of the fact, incomprehensible, to her that this man belongs to her, than on sensuality; I have her appear as a heroine; she pursues her beloved with the most profound feeling of the eternal nature of love, and is finally, by a transfiguring dream, glorified before his soul. I don't know how otherwise to stress her intermediate role, though I confess that, due to the necessity of dramatic structure, the elements I have described above are perhaps too separate and unconnected, or rather, linked by too subtle a series of allusions; perhaps a second reading will help, perhaps your next letter will tell me something more.

Angelika designed the title engraving for 'Egmont', which Johann Lips engraved, that would otherwise not have been designed or engraved, at least not in Germany.

Rome, November 3rd.

Sadly, I now have to put my artistic efforts on hold, completely, otherwise I will be unable to finish my dramatic works, which require their own hours of composure and careful work if they are to amount to anything. 'Claudine von Villa Bella' is currently in progress, being completely reworked, so to speak, and the old chaff of my existence is being swept away.

Rome, November 10th.

Kayser is here now, and we shall have a triple dose of entertainment, now music has been added to the scene. He is a truly excellent man, and a perfect match for us, who live as genuinely natural a life as is possible on this earth. Tischbein is on his way back from Naples, and unfortunately, my accommodation and everything else will have to be changed, yet, being as good-natured as we are, everything will be back on track in a week or so.

I proposed to the Dowager Duchess that she allow me to spend the sum of two hundred *zecchini*, a little at a time, on various minor works of art for her. Please support the proposal, as expressed in my letter to her; I do not require the money all at once. It is an important matter, the full scope of which you will grasp instantly, and still more would you recognise the necessity and usefulness of my advice, and the offer, if you knew the detailed situation here, which is as known to me as my own hand. Small items, selected by myself, will give her great pleasure, and when she sees, little by little, the things I have acquired here, it will satisfy the desire for possession that arises in every newcomer, whoever they may be, which can only be suppressed with a painful degree of resignation, or satisfied at great expense and inconvenience. Whole pages could be written on the subject.

Rome, the same date, November 10th.

That my 'Egmont' is garnering acclaim pleases me greatly. I have never written for the theatre with more freedom of spirit, and more conscientiously than I have this, yet it is difficult, when one has written previous works, to satisfy readers; they always demand something in the same vein.

Rome, November 24th.

In your last letter you asked about the colours of the landscape in this region. I would say that on clear days, especially in autumn, it is so colourful that it needs to appear vibrant in any reproduction of it. I hope to send you some drawings in a while, made by a German artist who is currently at Naples; the watercolours fall far short of the brilliance of Nature, and yet you will think that impossible. The most beautiful thing as regards the scenery is that these vivid colours are softened, even seen close to, by the ambient light, and the contrast between cold and warm tones (as they are termed) is plainly visible. The clear blue shadows stand out, charmingly, against the illuminated greens, yellows, reds, and browns, and blend with the bluish, misted distance. There is a brilliance to the view, and at the same time a harmony, a gentle gradation throughout, of which one has no conception further north. At home,

everything is either harsh or murky, colourful or monotonous. At least I rarely recall seeing individual effects that gave me a taste of what I see here, daily and even hourly. Perhaps now that my eye is more practised, I would find more beauty in our northern landscapes.

Apropos of that, I can relay that I can almost see and recognise now the true, direct path in all the fine arts, but also now comprehend their vastness, and the distance to perfection, all the more clearly. I am already too old to do more than dabble; I see how others work, and find many on the right path, but none making great strides. It is like happiness or wisdom, of which only the ideal image floats before us, the hem of whose garments we touch, at most.

Kayser's arrival, and the time it took to create a degree of domestic order for him, threw me somewhat off balance; my work stalled. Now things are progressing well once more, and my Singspiel are nearing completion. He is very considerate, understanding, organised and composed, and as firm and confident in his art as any artist can be — one of those people whose very presence makes you feel better. At the same time, he possesses a kind heart, and a genuine understanding of life and society, which softens his otherwise strict character, and lends his interactions with others a unique grace.

November – Later Notes

Just when I was thinking of gradually and quietly distancing myself from society, an old bond was renewed by the appearance of an excellent former friend, Christoph Kayser, a native of Frankfurt, who arrived on the scene at the same time as Klinger (*Friedrich Maximilian von Klinger, the dramatist and novelist, was a childhood friend of Goethe. His play 'Sturm und Drang: Storm and Stress', 1776, gave its name to the epoch*) and the rest of us. Naturally endowed with a unique musical talent, he had already begun years before, while composing 'Jest, Cunning, and Revenge' ('*Scherz, List und Rache', a Singspiel, libretto by Goethe*) to provide music suitable for 'Egmont.' I had informed him from Rome that his original score had been mislaid, but that a copy remained in my possession. Instead of a lengthy correspondence on the matter, it was agreed that he should come immediately; and since he brooked no delay, flying through Italy by express coach, he soon arrived and was warmly received into the circle of artists who had established their headquarters, like myself, on the Corso, opposite Palazzo Rondanini.



'Profile portrait of Friedrich Maximilian Klinger with his signature reproduced below' - Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (German, 1749–1832)
Wikimedia Commons

But instead of a much-needed composure and unity, fresh distractions and disorganisation rapidly transpired.

Several days passed, at first, before a pianoforte was procured, tested, tuned, and positioned according to the will and desire of our headstrong artist, and even then, there was still a failure, it seems, to meet his wishes and demands. However, the effort and delay were soon rewarded with the effortless performance, by that highly talented individual perfectly suited to our age, of even the most difficult works of the moment. So that the connoisseur of musical history may immediately understand what I speak of, note that at this time Schubart (*Christian Friedrich Daniel Schubart, composer, organist, and poet*) was considered unsurpassable, and the performance of a set of variations was regarded as the supreme test of a skilled pianist, whereby the audience were eventually allowed to regain their breath on hearing the apparently natural reappearance of the simple initial theme, only after its development in the most artful manner.

He brought with him the score of 'Egmont', and encouraged my further endeavours in that direction, which aimed more than ever at musical drama, out of necessity and desire.

'Erwin and Elmire' and 'Claudine von Villa Bella' were also due to be despatched to Germany; however, the standard I demanded of myself was so much higher, given my adaptation of 'Egmont', that I could not bring myself to release them in their initial form. Much of the lyric material they contained was dear to me; it testified to many hours spent foolishly, yet happily, as well as to the pain and sorrow to which youth,

with its boundless vivacity, is exposed. The dialogue, on the other hand, which was prosaic and overly reminiscent of those French operettas deserving of our fondest memories, since they were the first to bring a cheerful, and singable quality to our theatre, was now no longer satisfying to me as a naturalised Italian, who wished the melodic singing interwoven, at least, with recitative, and a declamatory element.

Both operas will now be found to have been amended in that manner; their compositions have given pleasure, here and there, and so they too have floated past borne on the dramatic current of their day.

Italian librettos are usually criticised, in terms thoughtless people repeat; they are certainly light and cheerful, and make no more demands on the composer and the singer than both are willing to commit to. Without entering into too much detail, I might mention here the libretto of 'The Secret Marriage'. Who wrote it is unknown to me ('*Il Matrimonio Segreto' is a dramma giocoso, music by Domenico Cimarosa, libretto by Giovanni Bertati, based on the 1766 play 'The Clandestine Marriage' by George Colman the Elder and David Garrick. It was first performed in 1792*), but he is one of the most skilful to have worked in this field, whoever he may be. To act in that same spirit, to work with equal freedom while aiming at a specific result, was my intention, though I myself cannot say to what extent I came close to achieving my goal.

Unfortunately, my friend Kayser and I had been involved for some time in an undertaking that felt increasingly more dubious and less feasible. One must recall that innocent era of German opera, when even a simple intermezzo, like Pergolesi's 'La Serva Padrona,' *('The Maid Turned Mistress', of 1733, by Giovanni Battista Pergolesi to a libretto by Gennaro Federico, after the play by Jacopo Angello Nelli*) found acceptance and applause. At that time, a German *basso buffo* named Berger, with a pretty, stately, and agile wife, performed various light-hearted and entertaining shows in various German towns and villages, often with minimal use of stage-costume, and indifferent musical accompaniment; shows which, inevitably seemed to culminate in the deception and humiliation of an old, lovelorn dandy.

I envisioned a third, tenor voice, easy to cast, and so, years ago, the Singspiel 'Scherz, List und Rache' was written, and sent to Kayser in Zurich. However, Kayser, being a serious, and a conscientious fellow, attacked the task too rigorously, and treated the work too elaborately. I myself had already extended it beyond the scope of an intermezzo, and the seemingly petty subject matter unfolded into so many arias, duets and trios, that even with a shorter and sparser score, three performers would scarcely have been able to complete the performance. However, Kayser had treated the arias extensively, according to the old style, and in places, one must say, quite successfully, the whole thing not lacking a certain charm.

But how and where was it to be performed? Unfortunately, following earlier principles that leant towards moderation, it suffered from vocal thinness; it could never rise above a trio, and one almost wished to bring the doctor's flasks of theriac (*a medicinal compound*) to life, so as to create a chorus (*the Singspiel's plot, involves a young couple, Scapin and Scapine, who employ trickery to win back an inheritance stolen by the greedy old doctor*). All our efforts, therefore, confined to a bounded simplicity, went for naught when Mozart appeared. 'The Abduction from the Seraglio' (*'Die Entführung aus dem Serail' or 'Il Seraglio', 1782*) crushed our hopes, and our carefully crafted piece has never, to date, been seen on stage again.

Kayser's presence heightened and broadened our love of music, which until then had been limited to theatrical performances. He was meticulous in bringing church festivals to our notice, and we were prompted to attend the solemn music performed on such days, alongside him. We found it, to be honest, almost wholly secular, and with a full orchestral accompaniment, though the singing still predominated. I remember hearing on St. Cecilia's Day (*November 22nd*), a bravura aria with a participating chorus, for the first time; it had an extraordinary effect on me, as such arias still do on opera audiences whenever they occur.

Besides all this, Kayser possessed another virtue. Because he was deeply interested in early music, he also felt it his duty to research the history of it, most seriously, and thus he consulted the libraries extensively; indeed, his diligent efforts found a particularly good reception and support later in the periodical Minerva *('A Journal of Historical and Political Content', founded by Johann Wilhelm von Archenholz in 1792*). His research there had the effect of drawing our attention to the older copperplate engravings of the sixteenth century, and he never failed to remind us of, for example, the 'Speculum Romanae Magnificentiae' (*'The Mirror of Roman Magnificence', prints of art-works, published by Antonio Salamanca and Antonio Lafreri, 1553-1563*), Gian Paolo Lomazzo's 'Trattato Dell' Arte Della Pittura, Scultura Ed Architettura' (*1585*) and not least the later 'Admiranda Romae,' (*'Admiranda Romanarum ac Veteris Sculpturae Vestigia', 'The Marvels of Ancient Rome', etchings of ancient reliefs, sarcophagi, and sculpture etc. produced by the draughtsman and engraver Pietro Santi Bartoli and the scholar Giovanni Pietro Bellori, published in Rome, c.1693 by Giovanni Giacomo de Rossi*). These collections of books and leaflets, to which we others made pilgrimages too, are especially valuable when viewed in fine reproduction: they bring to mind that earlier time when antiquity was regarded with seriousness and reverence, and its ruins were described in a dignified manner. So, one approached, for example, the Colossi, as they still stood on their original spot in the Colonna Garden; the semi-ruin of the Temple of Septimius Severus which still gives an idea of that vanished building; St. Peter's Basilica without its facade, the large

central building without a dome; the old Vatican, in whose courtyard tournaments could still be held – all of this recalled ancient times and at the same time made abundantly clear the various changes that the following two centuries had brought about and how, despite significant obstacles, they had endeavoured to restore what had been destroyed, and to repair what had been neglected.

Heinrich Meyer of Zurich, whom I have often had reason to mention, however secluded a life he was seeking to maintain, and however busy he was, was nevertheless rarely absent whenever there was something significant to see, experience, or learn; for others sought him out, desirous of his company, as he proved himself to be both modest and full of knowledge. He calmly followed the clear path opened up by Winckelmann and Mengs, and because he knew how to depict antique busts with sepia in the commendable style of Seydelmann (*Jakob Crescenz Seydelmann, the graphic artist and illustrator, born in Dresden*) none had more opportunity than he to examine and learn about the subtle gradations of earlier and later art.

When we made our preparations to pay a torchlit visit to the museums of both the Vatican and the Capitol, a visit desired by all travellers; artists, connoisseurs, and laymen, alike; he joined us; and I find among my papers one of his essays, in which a delightful encounter with the magnificent remnants of ancient art, leaving a series of images that hover before the soul like the scenes of a delightful, slowly-fading dream, also acquires a lasting significance through its beneficial effects on one's knowledge and insight. I quote as follows:

'The practice of viewing the great Roman museums, for example the Museo Pio-Clementino in the Vatican, the Capitoline Museum, and so on, by the light of wax torches seems to have been quite new in the 80's of the last century, though I know not when it actually began.

The advantages of viewing by such a light are that each piece is seen individually, isolated from all others, and the viewer's attention remains focused solely there; also, in the bright, and very effective torchlight, all the delicate nuances of the work are far more evident, all distracting reflections (particularly troublesome as regards highly-polished statues) are eliminated, the shadows are more clearly defined, and the illuminated parts are highlighted more intensely. Another major advantage, moreover, is that pieces positioned unfavourably are thereby given their due. For example, the Laocoön can only be seen properly, in the niche where it stands, by torchlight, because no daylight falls there, only reflected rays from the small, round courtyard of the Belvedere, surrounded by its colonnade; the same is true of the Apollo Belvedere and the so-called Antinous (*the Belvedere Hermes*). Torch lighting was even more necessary to see the sculptured Nile, and the Meleager, and to appreciate their merits. Torchlight is advantageous to no antiquity more than to the so-called Phocion, because

only then, and not under ordinary light, when it is unfavourably illuminated, can one perceive the wondrously delicate parts of the body that shine, almost translucently, through the simple garment. The excellent torso of a seated Bacchus also appears in all its beauty, as does the upper part of a standing Bacchus with a fine head, and the half-figure of a Triton, but above all, the wonder of art, the famous Belvedere Torso, which can never be praised enough.

While the monuments in the Capitoline Museum are, in general, less important than those in the Pio-Clementine Museum, there are some of major significance, and to appreciate their merits properly, it is advisable again to view them by torchlight. The so-called Pyrrhus (*the colossal Statue of Mars Ultor*), exquisitely crafted, stands on the steps and receives no daylight at all; while on the gallery in front of the columns is a beautiful half-figure, believed to be a clothed Venus, which receives dim light from three sides. The nude Capitoline Venus, the finest statue of its kind in Rome, does not appear to advantage in daylight, as it is placed in a corner room, and the so-called beautifully clothed Juno stands against the wall between windows, where it is grazed by only a few rays; even the famous head of Ariadne in the Miscellany Room cannot be seen in its full glory except by torchlight. Several other pieces in this museum are similarly unfavourably-positioned, making torchlight absolutely necessary if one is to properly view and appreciate them.

As so much that is done to follow fashionable usage is misused, so too is torch lighting. It can only be beneficial if its purpose is understood. It is necessary for viewing items that, as I have already mentioned, receive only a mediocre amount of daylight, as it allows for a more accurate perception of height and depth and the transitions between the different parts. Above all, however, it is advantageous for viewing works from the very best period of art (provided that both the torch-carrier and the viewer understand what is important); it will better reveal their dimensions, and highlight the most delicate nuances of a work. Works in the oldest artistic styles, on the other hand, even those in a powerful and noble style, have little to gain if they are seen in a bright light. For since the artists of the time were not yet knowledgeable as regards light and shadow, how could they have calculated their work based on it? The same is true of things completed in a later age, when artists grew more careless, since taste had declined so much that the effects of light and shadow in sculpture were considered unimportant, and the principles of mass and proportion forgotten. What purpose could torchlight serve as regards works of that kind?'

On such a solemn occasion, it is fitting to remember Aloys Hirt (*the art historian, and archaeologist of architecture*) who has been useful and beneficial to society in more ways than one. Born in Fürstenberg, near Hüfingen, in 1759, after studying the ancient texts, he felt an irresistible urge to visit Rome. He arrived there (*in 1782*) a few

years before I did and had thoroughly familiarised himself with the ancient and modern buildings, and the sculptures of every kind, proving himself an instructive guide to inquisitive visitors. He extended this same courtesy to me with selfless devotion.

His main field of study was architecture, though he never neglected the classical sites or the numerous other curiosities. His theoretical views on art provided ample opportunity for lively discussion in contentious and partisan Rome. From diversity of opinion arises a great deal of conversational to-ing and fro-ing, particularly when art is the subject, which stimulates and promotes intellectual development, especially in the presence of important works. Aloys Hirt's theories rest on his derivation of Greek and Roman architecture from the oldest, most essential forms of construction in wood, and upon this he bases his praise and criticism of more recent efforts, employing historical examples most skilfully. Others, however, maintain that in architecture, as in every other art, questions of fancy and taste occur, which must never be forgone, since, in the varied cases encountered, the architect must sometimes resort to one style, sometimes another, and is compelled to deviate from strict rule.

With regard to beauty, he often came into conflict with other artists, in that he argued its basis lay in the character of the work, since he agreed with those convinced that character must, of necessity, be the basis of every artistic effort, but insisted that the detailed treatment, obliged to render character in an appropriate as well as graceful fashion, should pay regard to taste and our sense of beauty. Though, since art consists in doing and not talking, and yet people will always talk more than do, such conversations were as endless then as they are now.

While the differing opinions of the various artists gave rise to all kinds of awkwardness, even estrangements between them, it also happened, though rarely, that amusing incidents occurred. The following may serve as an example.

A number of artists had spent the afternoon in the Vatican and, to avoid a lengthy walk through the city to their lodgings, and arriving late, headed out of the gate by the Colonnade, past the vineyards, and on to the Tiber. They argued along the way, arrived at the riverbank still arguing, and continued the lively conversation during the ferry crossing. Disembarking by the Via Ripetta, they might have separated, stifling the remaining points on both sides, and rendering the discussion superfluous. Instead, they therefore agreed to stay together, and cross the river, riding the swaying ferry back and forth, so as to allow the dialectic to continue. But the second trip proving insufficient, they demanded of the ferryman several more crossings. He, too, was pleased enough, since each trip back and forth earned him a *baiocco* (*a copper coin of the Papal States, one hundredth of a silver scudo*), earning him an amount he had scarcely expected so late in the day. Therefore, he fulfilled their wish, in silence; and

when his young son asked him, in a voice full of wonder: ‘What are they doing?’, he answered calmly: ‘I haven’t a clue, they’re quite mad.’

Around this time, I received the following letter, only in French, in the packet from home:

‘Sir, I am not surprised that you have few readers; so many people prefer to talk rather than feel, but one must pity them, and be glad not to be like them. — Truly, Sir, I owe to you the best deed I have ever enacted in my life, which will prove the basis of many others, and your book has therefore benefited me. If it were my good fortune to live in the same country as yourself, I would come and embrace you, and tell you the details, for, sadly, I live in a place where no one would ever believe the reason I have been prompted to take the course I have. Be satisfied, sir, that you have been able, at a distance of almost nine hundred miles from him, to draw a young man’s heart back to honesty and virtue, such that an entire family is at peace, while my heart rejoices in a fine deed executed. If I had talent, knowledge, or rank such that I might influence the fate of others, I would tell you my name, but I am nothing, and not what I would seek to be. I hope, sir, that you will remain youthful, and maintain the urge to write, that you will be the husband of a ‘Lotte’ who never encountered a ‘Werther’, and will be the happiest of men, since I believe that you love virtue.’

Rome, December 1.

This much I can assure you: I am more than certain regarding the most important points, and though the acquisition of knowledge extends endlessly, I nonetheless have a secure, indeed clear and communicable, concept of that finite infinite. I still have the most wondrous things planned, and am holding back my powers of learning to some extent so that only my active powers progress. For there are wonderful things to be achieved, as easy to comprehend as the flat of one’s hand, once one grasps them.

Rome, December 7, 1787.

This week has been spent drawing, as I seemed unable to take the poetry further; one must observe and search out, making use of every hour. Our ‘academy at home’ continues, and we are trying to rouse old Angantyr (*a tragic figure in Norse saga. Herder translated a poem about Angantyr in his ballad collection ‘Volkslieder’*) from his slumber; perspective occupies us in the evenings, and I am forever trying to learn how to draw certain parts of the human body better, and more confidently. But anything done thoroughly is all too difficult, and demands great skill in execution.

Angelika is so good and kind, I am indebted to her in every way. We spend Sundays together, and during the week I see her once in the evening. She creates so much, and so well, one scarcely knows how, and yet she always seems to be doing nothing.

Rome, December 8th.

How delighted I am that you liked my little song, you can't imagine how happy it makes me to find a voice that captures your mood. That is precisely what I wished for 'Egmont 'of which you say so little, and rather seem as if it causes you pain rather than pleasure. Oh, I know well enough that one can hardly pitch such a large composition in the perfect key throughput; after all, no one truly understands the difficulty of art except the artist themself.

There is far more positive – I mean teachable and transmittable – material in art than is commonly believed; and there are many techniques by which one can produce the most intelligent effects (that is always assuming an intelligent audience). If one knows these little tricks, much that appears wondrous is mere play, and nowhere do I believe one can learn more of matters both high and low, in the arts, than in Rome.

Rome, December 15th.

I am writing to you late, but am at least writing something. I have spent the week very happily. Last week did not go well, with one thing and another, and since the weather was so beautiful on Monday and my knowledge of the cloud pattern led me to hope for a few fine days, I set off with Christoph Kayser and my second 'Fritz' (*Friedrich Bury, the portraitist; the first 'Fritz' being Fritz von Stein, Charlotte Stein's son to whom Goethe was tutor. Fritz is a diminutive of Freidrich*) and from Tuesday till this evening we visited the places I already knew, and various areas I had not yet explored.

On Tuesday evening we reached Frascati. On Wednesday we visited the most beautiful villas, and especially the delightful bust of Antinous at Villa Mondragone (*near Monte Porzio Catone*). On Thursday we went from Frascati to Monte Cavo (*in the Alban hills*) via Rocca di Papa, of which you must acquire drawings someday, for words and description are nothing; then down to Albano. On Friday Kayser, who was not feeling too well, left us, and I went with 'Fritz II' to Aricia, Genzano, along Lake Nemi, and back to Albano. Today we went to Castel Gandolfo and Marino and from there back to Rome. The weather was incredibly kind; it was almost the best of the whole year. Besides the evergreen trees, some oaks still have their leaves, and the young chestnut trees too, albeit yellowing. The landscape is a palette of the most

beautiful colours, and magnificent, grand forms appear in the darkness of night! I had a great time, in which I was with you from afar. I have been very happy and well.

Rome, December 21.

That I draw and study art enhances my poetic abilities rather than hindering them; since I need little time to write, but a great deal to draw well. I wish I could only share with you the knowledge of visual art that I now possess; however subordinate it may still be, it is still gratifying because it is true and always leads further. The degree of intelligence and persistence of the great masters is incredible. If I felt reborn upon my arrival in Italy, I now begin to feel as if I have been re-educated.

What I have sent so far are just reckless attempts. With Tourneisen (*Johann Jakob Torneisen, of Basel, the Swiss publisher*) I am sending a sheaf the best of which are foreign scenes that will delight you.

Rome, December 25th.

This year Christ has been born amidst thunder and lightning; we had a severe storm around midnight.

The splendour of the greatest works of art no longer dazzles me; I now walk about in a state of contemplation, of true discernment and knowledge. How much I owe, as regards this, to a quiet, solitary, diligent Swiss man named Heinrich Meyer, I cannot say. He was the first to open my eyes to the detail, to the various qualities of individual forms, and initiated me into the actual process of their creation. He is frugal, and modest in his possessions. He actually takes more pleasure in works of art than the great collectors who barely understand them, and more pleasure than those artists who are driven, in a state of anxiety, by the desire to imitate the unattainable. He possesses a heavenly clarity as regards concepts, and an angelic kindness of heart. He never speaks to me without my wanting to write down everything he says, so definite and correct are his words, which describe the only true path. His instructions grant me what no other human being could, and he will be irreplaceable when he leaves. In his presence, I still hope to reach, in time, a level of drawing that I can scarcely imagine myself capable of now. All that I learned, undertook, and thought in Germany relates to his guidance as the bark of a tree does to the core of its fruit. I have no words to express the quiet, active bliss with which I now begin to contemplate works of art; my mind has expanded enough to grasp them, and is constantly developing its powers of appreciation.

There are visitors here again, with whom I sometimes go to view a gallery; they seem to me like wasps in a room, flying against the windows, and mistaking the bright panes of glass for the open air, bouncing off them and buzzing against the walls.

I would not wish an enemy to be in so silent and withdrawn a state. Yet to be considered moody and insular, as others usually consider me, is less appropriate than ever. So, my dear friend, think, act, and work on my behalf in the best manner possible, and so preserve my life, which otherwise will perish without benefiting anyone. I must say, I have indeed been very deficient this year, socially. I stood alone for a time, completely cut off from the world. Now a close circle surrounds me once more, the members of which are excellent, all on the right path, and that they can bear to be with me, that they like me, and find joy in my presence, is a strong indication that they too are on the right road as regards thought and action. For I am mercilessly intolerant of all those who wander along, or stray from, the path, and yet wish to be considered as messengers and true travellers. I make jest of them and mock them until they alter their lives, or we part ways. Here, of course, I speak only of decent, upright people; half-wits and dolts are immediately sieved out, without further ado. Two people have already thanked me for causing their change of heart, and manner of living, indeed three, who will, I trust, thank me for it throughout the rest of their lives. There, where I am making an impact, I feel my soundness and expansiveness; my feet only become sore when the shoes pinch while, placed in front of a wall, I can see nothing.

December – Later Notes

The month of December began with bright and fairly consistent weather, which gave rise to an idea destined to provide many a pleasant day for our happy company. We said: 'Imagine we've just arrived in Rome and, as travellers in haste, must learn as swiftly as possible about the most important things to be viewed here. Let's plan a venture to that effect, such that what we know already will be renewed, mentally and spiritually.'

The execution of the idea was thus begun immediately, and carried out with some consistency, though, sadly, little remains of the many good ideas that were noted and considered on that occasion. The letters, notes, drawings, and details of our planned visits, drafted at the time, are almost entirely lost, though a few of the locations are presented here briefly:

In an area of Rome near the Tiber, stands a moderately-sized church (*Santi Vincenzo e Anastasio alle Tre Fontane*), within the site of the Abbazia delle Tre Fontane whose 'Three Springs', it is said, arose from the blood of Saint Paul who was beheaded at that place, and which still pour forth to this day.

The church I refer to is situated on a low-lying site, and the water welling in its interior naturally contributes to the humid atmosphere. The interior is sparsely decorated, almost bare, though maintained in a state of cleanliness, albeit a somewhat musty one, to provide for the rare occasions on which worship takes place. Its greatest adornments, however, are the life-size, colourful paintings of Christ and his twelve Apostles, said to be after designs by Raphael, arranged in a row on the pillars of the nave. That extraordinary artist elsewhere presented those pious men in a group, dressed uniformly, while each one is shown here, separately and individually, not as if in the Lord's retinue, but as if, after the Ascension, he has had to stand on his own two feet, and now live and endure life, according to his own character,

However, to allow us to appreciate the merits of these images even from afar, engravings, by Marcantonio Raimondi's faithful hand, of such Raphael designs have survived (*designs said to have been created for the Sala dei Palafrenieri in the Vatican; a set of the Marcantonio engravings is in the Royal Collection, United Kingdom*) which have often provided me with an opportunity and occasion to refresh my memory and pen my observations (see the article that was published in the journal 'Der Neue Teutsche Merkur' in 1791).

From this small, unassuming church, it is not far to a larger building dedicated to the noble Apostle, namely the Church of St. Paul Outside the Walls, a large and artistically-constructed monument assembled from ancient, and magnificent remnants. Entering this church makes for a sublime impression; rows of mighty columns support the heights of painted wall which, surmounted by the interlocked timber-framing of the roof, present a barn-like appearance to our sophisticated eyes, though the whole thing, if the beams were hung with tapestries on festive days, would have an incredible effect. Many a wonderful remnant of highly-ornamented architecture, including the capitals, is found here, properly preserved, taken from the once colossal ruins nearby, of the now almost entirely vanished Palace of Caracalla.

The Circus, which still bears the name of that emperor (*now known as the Circus of Maxentius*) though largely in ruins, still gives an idea of that immense space. If an onlooker were to stand on the north side of the track, they would see, to the south, high above the now-shattered rows of seats for spectators, the tomb of Cecilia Metella amidst its more recent surroundings, from which the line of the former seats would extend to infinity, while in the distance, impressive villas and pleasure palaces would be visible. Returning to the view before us, the ruins of the Spina (*the barrier running down the centre of the course*), can still be clearly traced directly ahead, and anyone of an architectural fancy can grasp to some degree the exuberant nature of the design. The scene, in ruins, as it now lies before us, would still make for a pleasing image,

should a skilful and knowledgeable artist wish to undertake it, though the sketch would have to be twice as long as it is high.

The Pyramid of Cestius was, on this occasion, viewed only from the outside, and the ruins of the Baths of Caracalla (*the Antonine Baths*), which Piranesi has so vividly re-imagined (*see the series of engravings 'Vedute di Roma', 'The Views of Rome', by Giovanni Battista Piranesi, 1748-88*), could scarcely offer any satisfaction to even the most artistically accustomed eye. Yet, here, the memory of Hermann von Swanevelt (*the Dutch painter, who trained in Rome under Claude Lorrain*) should be revived, who, with his delicate etching-needle, expressing the purest feeling for Nature and Art, knew how to bring the monuments of the past to life, indeed, to transform them into the most graceful pillars of the living present.

In the square in front of San Pietro in Montorio, we greeted the torrent of water from the Fontana dell' Acqua Paola, which, via the gates and portals of a triumphal arch, fills a large, relatively large basin to the brim, its water delivered in five streams. This torrent, carried by an aqueduct restored by Paul V, traces a twenty-five-mile path from behind Lake Bracciano, via a curious zigzag course of varying elevation, to this spot, supplying the needs of various mills and factories before spreading into Trastevere.

Here, our friends of architecture praised the happy idea of having provided these waters with a clearly visible, triumphal entrance. Columns and arches, cornices and attics remind us of those magnificent gateways through which warlike conquerors once entered; here, the most peaceful of providers enters with equal power and might, and immediately receives thanks and admiration for the effort involved in its long journey. The inscriptions also reminded us that the providence and benevolence of a pope from the Borghese family (*Paul V was born Camillo Borghese*) have made here, as it were, an eternal, uninterrupted, and stately entrance.

A new visitor from the North, who had arrived shortly before, suggested that it would have been better to set a heap of rocks here to give the water a natural emergence to the light. He was countered with the argument that this was not a natural water source, but an artificial one, whose arrival they were quite justified in embellishing in a similar manner.

But no agreement was reached on this point, just as there was no agreement about the magnificent image of the 'Transfiguration', which one has the opportunity to admire in the nearby church (*Raphael's 'Transfiguration' was previously installed by Cardinal Giulio Medici, later Clement VII, who had commissioned it, over the high altar of San Pietro in Montorio. After removal to France under Napoleon, it was returned and housed, as now, in the Pinacoteca Vaticana*). There was much talk; the

calmer members, however, were annoyed to see the old criticism of the dual sections of the composition repeated. It would only be natural, in this world of ours, if a worthless coin, set beside a valuable one, counted as currency, to a degree, especially if the transaction was carried out quickly, and an obligation fulfilled without lengthy deliberation or hesitation. It remains remarkable, however, that anyone has ever dared to criticise the greatness of so unified a creation as that of Raphael. Depicted in the lower part, a pair of despondent parents present their son, who is possessed, to the Lord's disciples, whose Master is absent; they may well have already attempted to banish the evil spirit; a book has been consulted to see if some traditional formula effective against the child's madness might be found; but in vain. At this moment, the sole Powerful One, transfigured, and acknowledged by his ancestors, appears; hastily, one figure points upward to the vision as the sole source of salvation. How, then, can one separate the upper and lower parts of the painting? Both are one: below, the suffering and needy; above, the powerful bringing aid, both relating to one another, and interacting with each other. To express my meaning in another way, can the composition be other than that of the ideal in relation to the actual?

The like-minded individuals among us reinforced that conviction: 'Raphael,' they said, 'was distinguished precisely by the exactness of his thinking, and yet that divinely gifted artist, whose work is recognised for that quality, is supposed to have thought and acted inexactly in the prime of his life? No! He is forever right, like Nature, and most thoroughly and correctly where we least comprehend him.'

That idea of ours, to gain a brief overview of Rome, united in excellent company, could not be carried out in complete isolation, as was originally the intention; one or two were absent, perhaps due to unforeseen circumstances, while others joined us, wanting to view this or that along the way. Nevertheless, the main group stayed together, choosing to absorb others, separate from them, lag behind, or race ahead. Occasionally, however, some rather odd expressions were heard. There is a certain kind of empirical judgement, which has recently gained greater traction, especially among English and French travellers; people express their immediate, unconsidered opinion without considering that every artist is influenced in multiple ways: by the nature of their particular talent, by their predecessors and masters, by the place and time, by their patrons and the commissioners of their work. None of that, which is consequently necessary for a clear appreciation, is considered however, and thus an ugly mix of praise and blame, affirmation and denial, arises, amidst which every interesting feature of the work in question actually vanishes.

Our good Johann Volkmann (*Johann Jacob Volkmann's 'Historisch-Kritische Nachrichten von Italien': 'Historical and Critical Account of Italy', 1778, was the standard guide-book*), otherwise so attentive and helpful as a guide, seems to have

yielded entirely to such foreign judgements, which is why his own assessments appear so odd. Could one, for example, express oneself more unfortunately than he does regarding the church of Santa Maria della Pace?

'Over the first chapel, Raphael painted some Sibyls, which have suffered greatly. The drawing is correct, but the composition is weak, which must doubtless be attributed to the awkwardness of the space to be filled. The second chapel is decorated with arabesques based on drawings by Michaelangelo; these are highly regarded but not straightforward enough in their execution. Beneath the dome, one notices three paintings: the first, 'The Visitation of Mary' by Carlo Maratti, is painted in a cold style but well composed; the second, 'The Birth of Our Lady' by Rafaello Vanni, in the manner of Pietro da Cortona; and the third, 'The Death of Mary' by Giovanni Maria Morandi. The arrangement is somewhat confused and crude. On the vault above the choir, Francesco Albani has depicted 'The Assumption of Mary' in weak colours. His frescoes on the pillars below the dome are better. Bramante designed the courtyard of the monastery belonging to this church.'

Such inadequate, lukewarm judgements certainly confuse the reader who chooses such a book as a guide. Some things are indeed utterly wrong, for example, what is said here about the Sibyls. Raphael was never embarrassed by the space that architecture offered him; rather, it is part of the greatness and elegance of his genius that he knew how to fill and adorn every such space with the utmost grace, as he so clearly demonstrated in the Farnesina. Even the magnificent paintings of the 'Mass at Bolsena,' the 'Liberation of Saint Peter,' and the 'Parnassus' would not be conceived as so ingeniously and incomparably composed without the remarkable constraints of the space utilised. Likewise, in the Sibyls, the effortless symmetry, upon which everything depends in composition, asserts itself in a most skilful manner; for just as in the forms of Nature, so too in Art, it is within the most precise of limits that the perfect expression of life reveals itself.

Be that as it may, the manner in which one perceives and judges works of art should be left entirely to each individual. During these visits, I grasped a feeling, concept, perception of what one might, in the highest sense, call the presence of the Classical foundations. I might term this the sensual, and spiritual, conviction that greatness has been, is now, and will always be, here on earth. That the greatest and most glorious things should pass from us is inherent in the nature of time, and the mutually irreconcilable interaction of intellectual and physical elements. In conducting a general survey, we could not ignore, sadly, what had been destroyed; rather, we had reason to rejoice that so much has been preserved, and restored, more magnificently and more extensively than before.

St. Peter's Basilica was certainly conceived to be as grand, and probably larger and bolder, than any of the ancient temples, for not only the partial ruins of two thousand years lay before our eyes, but also what increased knowledge has been able to add.

Even the fluctuation in artistic taste, a striving for the grand but simple, a return to the small but complex, all pointed to life and movement; art history and human history stood synchronistically displayed before our eyes.

We should not be discouraged by the observation that greatness is transient; rather, if we find that the past contained great things, it should inspire us to accomplish something of significance ourselves, something that will inspire our successors even in its ruin, encouraging us to noble activity, something our ancestors never lacked.

These instructive and uplifting thoughts were, I scarcely dare say disturbed and interrupted, but nevertheless mingled with painful feelings that accompanied me everywhere; for I learned that the fiancé of the charming Milanese woman, had retracted his promise, on I know not what pretext, and had broken off the engagement. While I considered myself fortunate, on the one hand, to have not yielded to my affections and to have very quickly withdrawn myself from the dear girl's presence — and indeed, after the most thorough inquiry, to have established that any relationship between us of that kind had not been considered — it was nevertheless extremely distressing for me to find that the pleasant image that had so cheerfully and kindly accompanied me thus far was now harmed and distorted; for I heard that the lady, from her pain and distress at this event, had fallen into a violent fever, which gave cause to fear for her life. Through enquiring as to the state of her health daily, in fact twice a day for the first few days, I was tormented by my imagination seeking to conjure up the unimaginable: that those cheerful features belonging solely to the open, joyful light of day, that expression of her free, calm progression through life, were now clouded by tears, and disfigured by illness, and that her youthful features had been rendered, prematurely, pale, her body frail, through inward and outward suffering.

In such a frame of mind, of course, the counterweight of viewing a sequence of great and significant things, which sufficiently employed the eye with their existence, and the imagination with their everlasting nobility, was highly desirable, though nothing was more natural than to gaze at them with a degree of heartfelt sadness.

While the ancient monuments had mostly crumbled into formless masses after so many centuries, one had also to lament the decline of so many noble families in later times, even when surrounded by their more recent, yet magnificent buildings; indeed, even those still freshly preserved seemed to be suffering from a secret sickness; for how could worldly lineages, lacking in actual physical strength, sustain themselves,

these days, solely through moral and religious props? And just as a cheerful spirit can bring ruins to life, in the way fresh, ever-renewed vegetation revives crumbling walls and scattered blocks of stone, so a melancholy spirit will strip life of its finest adornments and willingly impose upon us a naked skeleton.

I could not bring myself even to undertake a mountain trip, which I had planned to make in cheerful company before the winter, until, certain of her recovery, and her health being secured by loving care and attention, I had received news of that recovery, in the very place where I had met her cheerful and charming self, during those most beautiful autumn days.

The very first letters from Weimar concerning 'Egmont' contained several criticisms of this and that; at which, my old observation resurfaced that the unpoetic art-lover, comfortably ensconced in bourgeois complacency, usually takes offence whenever the poet has sought to resolve, gloss over, or hide a problem. Everything, according to the complacent reader, should flow naturally; yet even the unexpected can be natural, although it may not seem so to someone who clings to their own opinions. A letter of that nature arrived; I took it up, and went off to the Villa Borghese; there I read that some scenes were considered too long. I pondered this, but still knew not how I might have shortened them, since various important motifs within them had required development. But what seemed most objectionable to my female friends were the laconic words with which Egmont commends Clara to Ferdinand's care (*See Act V Scene IV*).



'Tree-lined avenue in the Villa Borghese gardens, Rome' - Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (German, 1749–1832)
Klassik Stiftung Weimar, Museen (Inv. GGz/1955)
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An excerpt from my reply at the time will provide the best insight into my thoughts and situation. 'How I wish I could fulfil your wish, and make some modification to Egmont's statement! I hurried to the Villa Borghese one fine morning with your letter, and spent two hours thinking through the plot, characters, and relationships, and could find nothing to shorten. How I would love to pen for you all my considerations, all the pros and cons; they would fill a book, and contain a dissertation on the necessary length of my play. On Sunday, I visited Angelika and presented the question to her. She has a copy which she has studied. If only you could have been present, and heard how delicately she gave her feminine view of it all, and how it boils down to this: that what you wished the hero to explain verbally was implicitly contained in his dream (*see the end of Act V Scene IV*). Angelika said that the dream-vision represents what is taking place in the mind of the sleeping hero, and that he could not express more strongly in words how much he loves and cherishes her than is witnessed by his dream. What he does, is to raise the beloved creature, not merely to his level, but above him. Indeed, it pleased her that the hero who, throughout his entire life, has spent his life as if in a waking dream, cherishing life and love more than anything else, or rather, cherishing them only by way of enjoyment, should at last wake from his dream, and tell us quietly told how deeply his beloved dwells in his heart and what a noble and lofty place she occupies therein. She added a further consideration, namely that in Egmont's scene with Ferdinand, Clara could only be recalled in a subordinate role, so as not to diminish the significance of the farewell to his young friend, who, in any case, was incapable of hearing or understanding anything at that moment as regards Egmont's love for her.

Moritz As an Etymologist

A wise man long ago uttered the truth: 'A person whose powers are insufficient for what is necessary and useful, happily occupies themself with what is unnecessary and useless!' Perhaps some might wish to judge the following in this way.

Our companion Karl Moritz never ceased to ponder and speculate about the inner nature of human beings, their predispositions and development, while amidst examples of the highest art, and amidst the beauties of Nature; thus, he devoted himself in particular to the general principles underlying our use of language.

At that time, following Herder's prize essay 'On the Origin of Language' (*'Abhandlung uber den Ursprung der Sprache', 1770*) and in accordance with the prevailing view, the idea gained ground that human beings had not spread across the entire earth arising from a single pair in the East, but rather that in a remarkably productive era in world history, after Nature had gradually attempted to bring forth

the most diverse animals, here and there, under various favourable circumstances, the human race had emerged, more or less fully developed. Language, it was believed, was innate to humans, intrinsically linked to both our physical and mental faculties. No supernatural guidance was needed, nor any tradition. And in this sense, a universal language existed, which every indigenous group had attempted to manifest. The kinship of all languages lay in the idea that a shared creative force had formed humankind and its abilities. Thereafter, partly driven by inner impulse, partly by external influence, the strictly limited number of possible vowels and consonants had been used consistently or inconsistently to express our feelings and ideas; thus, it was natural, indeed inevitable, that diverse indigenous languages had partly converged on and partly diverged from the original, and this or that language had consequently been either impoverished or enriched. What is true of the root language was also true of each of its derivatives, that of being a means by which the relationships between individual concepts and ideas could be expressed, and designated more precisely. This, is all fine, though remaining something unprovable, and thereby incapable of being determined with any certainty.

I found the following among my papers:

'I am pleased that Moritz is turning from his brooding indolence, discontent, and self-doubt, to some kind of activity, for when he does so he becomes a delight to be with. His daydreaming then has a solid foundation, and his reveries possess purpose and meaning. Now he is occupied with an idea, which I have also embraced and which entertains us both greatly. It is difficult to share, because it sounds rather odd. But I will try:

He has invented an alphabet of thought and feeling, claiming that the letters are not arbitrary, but are grounded in human nature and belong to certain regions of inner meaning, which, when spoken, they express. Now, languages can be judged, he claims, according to this alphabet, and he finds that every group of human beings has tried to express themselves according to this inner meaning, but all have been led astray by chance and arbitrary. Consequently, we must seek out in any language the words that are most happily chosen; sometimes one word has this feature, sometimes another; if not we must alter a word until it seems right to us, or create a new one. Indeed, if we play the game correctly, we must create names for individuals, and investigate whether this or that name truly belongs to this person or no, and so on.

This etymological game has already occupied the minds of a number of our company, and gives us plenty to do by way of entertainment. As soon as we gather together, we play as if each word were a chess move, hundreds of combinations being tried, so that anyone who chanced to overhear us would think us mad. I would only

confide the nature of it to my closest friends. Enough said, but it is the most amusing game in all the world, and exercises one's feeling for language most thoroughly.'

The End of Part IX of Goethe's 'Italian Journey'

Part X: Second Stay in Rome – 1788, January to April

Second Stay in Rome – 1788, January to April

Rome, January 5, 1788.

Forgive me for writing so little today. This year has begun in a state of earnestness and diligence, and I scarcely have time to look around me.

After a period of stagnation lasting several weeks, during which I have suffered, I am once again experiencing the most beautiful, I may well call them, revelations. I am being allowed to glimpse the essence of things and their relationships, opening depths of great richness to me. This is the consequence, for my mind, of constantly learning, and learning from others moreover. When one teaches oneself, the effort of instructing and processing the instruction falls on the same person, and progress is of necessity slower, and takes place in smaller increments.

The study of the human body now absorbs me, utterly. Everything else pales by comparison; a strange state of mind that I have experienced, now and again, throughout my life, and which appertains now. There is no point in discussing it further; time will tell what I am to do next.

Opera no longer entertains me; only what is profoundly and eternally true now brings me joy.

I feel that an epoch of my life will come to a head around Easter; what will happen, I know not.

Rome, January 10th.

'Erwin and Elmire' reaches you with this letter; may you enjoy that little trifle! However, a good operetta libretto never satisfies on its own; music must be added to fully express the concept the poet envisioned. 'Claudine von Villa Bella' will follow soon. Both pieces are more meticulously crafted than may be apparent, because I have been studying the Singspiel form, especially with Kaysern.

My work of drawing the human body continues diligently, as do the evening classes in perspective. I am preparing for my departure, which the gods have decreed for Easter, so that I may yield to it with a confident heart. May it be for the best.

My interest in the human form now overrides everything else. I felt it strongly, yet always shied away from it as if from the blinding sun; moreover, every attempt to study

the subject somewhere other than Rome is in vain. Without the guiding thread, the clew, which only here can one learn how to spin, one cannot find one's way out of the labyrinth. Sadly, my ball of thread is not long enough, but it helps me traverse the initial passages.

If my writing continues to be influenced in the same manner as before, it seems I will be obliged to fall in love with a Princess this year in order to progress 'Tasso,' and submit to the Devil in order to progress 'Faust,' though I have little desire to do either. So far, this is how things have gone. To render my 'Egmont' interesting, the Holy Roman Emperor (*Joseph II*) sparked unrest in Brabant, and to grant my operas a degree of perfection, Christoph Kayser (*an alternative spelling of 'Kaiser', meaning 'Emperor'*) came from Zurich to Rome! That is what Herder calls being a 'distinguished Roman', and I find it quite amusing to be the 'final cause' ('*ultimate goal' in philosophy*) of actions and events that were not at all intended for my benefit. That one might call my good luck. So, I shall await, with patience, the Princess and the Devil.

Rome, January 10th.

To Herder

Here comes another sample of German art and tradition, from Rome, 'Erwin and Elmire'. It was finished before 'Claudine von Villa Bella', though I have a wish to see it printed first.

You will soon realise that everything in it is geared towards the needs of the lyric stage, which I have only had the opportunity to study here: which are, to keep all the characters occupied, in a particular sequence, and to a specific extent, so that each singer has enough moments to rest the voice, and so on. There are a hundred things to observe, to achieve which Italians sacrifice the whole meaning of the libretto. I hope that I have succeeded in satisfying the musical and theatrical requirements, with a little trifle that is not entirely nonsensical. I also took into consideration that both operettas must be readable too, so that they would not bring shame upon their neighbour, 'Egmont.' No one reads an Italian libretto except on the evening of the performance, and to bind it up with a tragedy would be considered as impossible, in this country, as singing in German.

Regarding 'Erwin and Elmire,' I must add that you will frequently find I have employed the trochaic metre, especially in the second act; this is not accidental, or a matter of habit, but rather adopted from Italian examples. The metre is exceptionally well-suited to music, and the composer can vary it, through the use of a different time

signature, or rhythm, in such a way that the listener is never aware of it. Indeed, the Italians generally adhere exclusively to smooth, simple metres and tempos.

Young Camper (*The son of Petrus Camper, Adriaan Gilles Camper, mathematician, physicist, and editor of his father's posthumous anatomical and paleontological work, was on a Grand Tour of France, Italy, and Switzerland*) is a whirlwind of energy, who knows a lot, grasps things easily, but glosses over things.

Congratulations on the fourth part of 'Ideas'! The third is like a sacred book to me, which I keep locked away; only now has Moritz read it, and he considers himself fortunate to live in this era of human knowledge and education. He greatly enjoyed the book, and was absolutely taken by the ending.

If I could only entertain you on the Capitol, in return for all the good you have done me. It is one of my dearest wishes.

My titanic ideas were merely phantoms, presaging a more serious epoch. I am now truly immersed in the study of the human form, which is the ultimate expression of all human knowledge and action. My diligent preparation in the study of all of Nature, especially osteology (*the study of bones and the skeletal system*), has helped me to make strides. Now I can truly see and enjoy the noblest works of art remaining from antiquity: the statues. Indeed, I fully understand how one could study a subject for a whole lifetime and still, in the end, exclaim: 'Now I see, now I truly enjoy.'

I am gathering everything together that I can, to bring to a close a certain period of my life, as far as I can, by Easter, so that I can leave Rome without reluctance, and be able, as I hope, to continue my various studies in Germany, in comfort, and with greater thoroughness, though doubtless slowly enough. Here, the current carries you away as soon as you board the boat.

January – Later Notes.

'Cupid, you, willful, endlessly obstinate, boy!
You asked for shelter, you said, for just a few hours.
Yet many a night, you've stayed, and many a day!
Imperious, as if you were lord of my home!

From my broad bed I'm ousted, and driven away,
To sit on the ground, spending my nights tormented;
While you stoke the fire, as you wish, flame upon flame,
Consume my winter fuel, and scorch me poor wretch.

You've rummaged, and rearranged all my possessions;
Now I, simply, search around, blind and bewildered.

You make such a dreadful row; I fear that my soul
Must flee, escape you, so, and abandon this house.'

(*From 'Claudine von Villa Bella'*)

If one avoids taking the little song literally, and thinks not of that demonic spirit commonly called Amor, but instead imagines a gathering of active minds addressing one, beckoning, pulling this way and that, and thereby confusing one's innermost being, then one may participate symbolically in the state in which I found myself, sufficiently illustrated by the preceding excerpts from letters, and my later notes; and will doubtless readily concede that a mighty effort was required to maintain oneself against it all, work on tirelessly, and not become complacent as regards learning new things.

Admission to the Society of Arcadians

As early as the end of last year, I was repeatedly assailed by a proposal, which I also saw as a consequence of that unfortunate concert due to which I had recklessly revealed my incognito. However, there may have been other reasons why several interested parties sought to persuade me to be received in 'Arcadia' as a prominent shepherd. I resisted for a long time, but finally had to yield to my friends, who seemed to attach a special importance to the matter. What this Arcadian society consists of is generally known; however, it is probably not uninteresting to hear something about it.

During the course of the seventeenth century, Italian poetry had deteriorated, in many ways; for towards the end of the century, educated, and well-meaning men claimed its content wholly neglected what was then called 'inner beauty'; it was also, they said, reprehensible with regard to form, to 'external beauty', since it had, through employing barbaric expressions, unbearably harsh rhymes, faulty images and tropes, and particularly by the continual use of excessive hyperbole, metonymy and metaphor, completely forfeited the grace and sweetness in which one takes pleasure when appreciating outward form.

However, those who were involved in such misguided efforts dismissed, as is ever their wont, what was excellent and genuine criticism, such that their abuses continued unrestrainedly. This defiance could no longer be tolerated by sensible and educated folk, so that in 1690 a number of prudent and capable men met, and resolved to take a different path.

In order that their meetings might not attract attention, or provoke a reaction, they gathered outdoors, in rural gardens, of which Rome herself, within her walls, possessed and enclosed a sufficient number. This afforded them the benefit of being closer to Nature, in the fresh air, invoking the primal spirit of poetry. There, in randomly chosen spots, they occupied the grass, and seated themselves on the architectural ruins and stone blocks, even the cardinals present honoured only by a softer cushion. There they discussed their convictions, principles, and plans privately, among themselves; and there they read their poems which sought to revive the spirit of classical antiquity, the spirit of the noble Tuscan school. One of them exclaiming in rapture: 'Here, is our Arcadia!' his thought gave their society its name (*the 'Accademia degli Arcadi'*) as well as describing the idyllic nature of its organisation. No patronage provided by some great and influential man was to protect them; they refused to acknowledge a leader or president. A *Custos* (*custodian*) would open and close the 'Arcadian gatherings' (*they found a permanent summer home in the 'Bosco Parrasio', the 'Parrhasian Woods', on the Janiculum Hill, in 1725*), and in specific matters, would be assisted by a council of elected elders.

Here the name Giovanni Mario Crescimbeni (*the poet and literary historian*) is to be revered, he being regarded as a co-founder, who faithfully performed his duties as the first *Custos* for several years, monitoring the revival of a finer, purer style, which increasingly achieved the suppression of its barbaric predecessors.

His dialogues, '*Bellezza della Volgar Poesia,'* of 1700, which is not to be translated as 'the beauty of popular verse' but rather as 'the beauty of poetry befitting a people, practised by truly gifted individuals, and not distorted by the whims and idiosyncrasies of isolated madmen,'; his dialogues, in which he presents their superior doctrine, clearly a product of Arcadian conversations, are of paramount importance when considering our own new aesthetic endeavours. The poems of 'The Arcadia' a volume which he edited and published (*in 1711*) also deserve our full attention; I will only venture the following remarks:

Those esteemed shepherds, lounging about outdoors on the green grass, had intended to draw closer to Nature, within whose realm love and passion are, it must be confessed, likely to stir the human heart; but the society consisted of members of the clergy, and other worthy folk, who were forbidden to associate with the Cupid of the Roman triumvirate (*Ovid, Propertius, and Tibullus*), whom they therefore expressly ignored. Therefore, since love is utterly indispensable to the poet, nothing remained but to turn to otherworldly and, in a sense, Platonic longing, and no less to the allegorical, which is how their poems acquired a truly notable and distinctive character, wherein they could, at any rate, follow in the footsteps of their great predecessors Dante and Petrarch.

This society, when I arrived in Rome, had been in existence for almost a hundred years, and in its outward form had always maintained itself with decorum, if not with tremendous prestige, through its various changes of location and attitude, while no important visitor was allowed to remain in Rome without being enticed to attend a meeting, all the more so since the custodian of this poetic realm could only support himself, in a modest way, by so doing.

The ceremony itself proceeded as follows: in the anterooms of a respectable building (*the Teatro degli Arcadi within the Palazzo Salviati, the winter home of the Academy*), I was introduced to a distinguished member of the clergy, who was introduced to me as the person who would initiate me, as my guarantor or godfather, so to speak. I entered a large, already fairly-full hall, and sat down in the first row of chairs, directly in the centre, facing a tall lectern. More and more of the audience approached; on the seat to my right, which had been empty, a handsome elderly man seated himself, who, judging by his attire and the reverence shown to him, must be a cardinal.

The custodian gave a general introductory speech, from the lectern, calling on several people to speak, who gave utterance some in verse, some in prose. After a good amount of time had passed thus, one of them began a speech, the content and delivery of which I will omit, as it corresponded entirely to the diploma I received and intend to present here. Thereupon, I was formally declared one of their own, and received and acknowledged, with great applause.

My godfather, so-called, and I had risen meanwhile and thanked him with many a bow. He then gave a well-chosen, not over-long, and very proper speech, which was once again met with general applause. After the applause had died down, I took the opportunity to thank each person individually, and take my leave. The diploma, which I received the following day, follows here, in translation, though it loses its distinctive character in a language other than Italian. Meanwhile, this new member of the company endeavoured to place himself on the best of terms with the custodian.

C.U.C.
(*Universal Commander of the Company*)
Nivildo Amarinzio
General Custodian of Arcadia

'There happening to be, on the banks of the Tiber, one of those first-rate Geniuses who flourish in Germany today, the Illustrious and Erudite Signore von Goethe, current State Councillor to His Serene Highness the Duke of Saxe-Weimar, who, though concealing from us, with the modesty of an ancient philosopher, the nobility of his Birth, his Office, and his Virtues, has not been able to hide the light shed by his

highly learned productions, both in Prose and Poetry, for which he has become famous throughout the Literary World, therefore, the aforementioned, renowned Signore von Goethe, having been pleased to attend one of our public gatherings of the Academy, at the very moment of his appearance, like a new star from a foreign sky among our woods and fields, and be received into one of our Meetings of Genii, attended by the Arcadians in great number, with marks of sincere Jubilation, and applause distinguishing him as the author of so many celebrated works, and verbally numbering him among the most illustrious members of this Pastoral Society under the name of Megalius, the members also wish to assign to him the possession of the Melpomenian Fields sacred to the Tragic Muse, thereby declaring him an Arcadian Pastor of Note. At the same time, the Universal Commander orders the General Custodian to register this public and solemn act of welcome among the fasti (*records*) of Arcadia, and to present to the Most Illustrious New Pastoral Member, Megalius Melpomenius, this Diploma as a sign of highest esteem, so as to preserve a perpetual memory of this, our Pastoral Literary Republic of clear and noble intellects. Given at the shepherd's hut (*winter session*), of the Bosco Parrasio, this first day of the month Poseideôn, Olympiad DCXLI, Year II, being Olympiad XXIV, Year IV since the revival of Arcadia. Sealed this day, by general acclaim.'

Nivildo Amarinzio, General Custodian.
Corimbo, Melicronio, Florimonte, and Egiréo: Sub-Custodians.

The seal features a wreath, half-laurel, half-pine, with a Pan-pipe in the centre, and 'Gli Arcadi' (*'The Arcadians'*) below. (*Note that the above grants a pleasantly amusing second meaning to the motto 'I too, am in Arcadia,' with which Goethe began the text of the 'Italian Journey'.*)

The Roman Carnival

(*January 31st 1788, 'Giovedì Grasso', or 'Fat Thursday' to, February 5th, 'Martedi Grasso', Shrove Tuesday*)

In attempting to describe the Roman Carnival, I anticipate the objection that such a celebration cannot reasonably be described at all. Such a large, sensory mass of living objects in motion, before one's very eyes, requires to be viewed and comprehended by every person in their own way

The objection is even more troubling in that I myself am forced to admit that the Roman Carnival grants the visitor, seeing it for the first time, who desires and is able

to see it, neither a unified nor a harmonious impression, failing to delight the eye particularly, nor satisfy the mind.

The long, narrow Corso, teeming with countless people, is impossible to miss; one can scarcely discern anything clearly visible amidst the throng. The commotion is monotonous, the noise deafening, the conclusion of the day's affairs desultory. However, such concern will soon be dispelled, if I explain the event in more detail; the primary question then being whether the description itself is worthwhile.

The Roman Carnival is a festival that is not actually held for the benefit of the people, but rather one that the people mount themselves.

The State makes little effort, scarcely any at all. The cycles of pleasure move of their own accord, and the police officials govern them with only a gentle hand.

It is not a festival that, like many of the other religious festivals of Rome, dazzles the eyes of the spectator; there is no fireworks display, offered in a sudden burst from the Castello Sant'Angelo; there is not that illumination of Saint Peter's Basilica and its Dome which attracts and satisfies the many visitors from every land; it lacks a splendid procession at whose approach people are meant to marvel, and kneel in prayer; here, instead, the sign is simply given for everyone to be as madly foolish as they wish, and, apart from blows of the fist and stabbings with a knife, almost everything is permitted.

The difference between high status and low seems momentarily forgotten: people mingle with one another, and embrace, happily, whomever they encounter, and the mutual sense of audacity and freedom is kept in hand by the universal good mood of all involved.

Even in our day, the Romans are content that the Birth of Christ may have postponed the festival of Saturnalia and its privileges by a few weeks but has failed to abolish it.

I will endeavour to bring the delight and revelry of these days before the reader's imagination. I also flatter myself that it may enable those who have attended the Carnival themselves, to revive a vivid recollection or two of that time; and prove no less useful to those for whom the experience still lies ahead, and for whom my description may serve as a general view of what is to the people an overwhelmingly pleasurable but fleeting joy.

The Corso

The Roman Carnival gathers in the Corso. The street defines and limits the public festivities during this period of time. In any other location, it would be a very different celebration; and therefore, we must first and foremost describe the Corso itself.

It received its name, like several long streets in Italian cities, from the horse-race with which every Carnival evening in Rome concludes, as do various celebrations elsewhere, such as the festival of a patron saint or the consecration of a church.

The perfectly straight street runs from the Piazza del Popolo to the Palazzo Venezia. It is approximately four thousand nine hundred feet long, and is lined with tall, mostly magnificent buildings. Its width is disproportionate to its length and the height of the buildings. Raised pavements limit the width for pedestrians to about six to eight feet on each side. In the centre, only twelve to fourteen feet remain for carriages in most places, and it is easy to see that at most three vehicles can pass each other simultaneously.

During the Carnival, the obelisk in the Piazza del Popolo marks the lower end of this street, the Palazzo Venezia the upper end.

A Stroll Along the Corso

Every Sunday, and on holidays throughout the year, the Roman promenade is in full flow. The more distinguished and wealthier Romans take a stroll here for an hour, or an hour and a half, before nightfall; a long line of carriages descends the Corso from the Palazzo Venezia, keeping to the left hand side of the street, and, if the weather is fine, the carriages drive past the obelisk, out through the gate, and onto the Flaminian Way, sometimes as far as Ponte Molle (*the Ponte Milvio bridge*). Those who return, sooner or later, keep to the other side, the right; thus, the two lines of vehicles approach each other in good order.

Envoys have the right to travel up and down between the two lines. The Young Pretender (*Charles Edward Stuart, 'Bonnie Prince Charlie'*), who resided in Rome under the name of the Count of Albany, had likewise been granted this right (*he died on January 31st, 1788*).

As soon as night falls, the ordered lines are broken; everyone goes where they please, seeking the nearest route, often to the inconvenience of other carriages, which are thereby hindered and delayed in the narrow street.

This evening drive, which is a splendid sight in all major Italian cities, and imitated in every small town, even if with only a few carriages, attracts many pedestrians to the promenade; everyone comes to see or be seen.

Carnival, as we will soon reveal, is really just a continuation, or rather the culmination, of those ordinary Sunday and holiday pleasures; it is nothing new,

nothing strange, nothing unique, but simply a natural extension of the Roman way of life.

Masks and Religious Vestments

It seems equally natural to see a host of masks worn in the open air, since one is accustomed to seeing many and varied scenes of life occurring beneath the bright, and cheerful sky throughout the year. At every festival, tapestries, scattered flowers, and stretched-out cloths transform the streets into large halls and galleries.

Likewise, nobody is buried unaccompanied by a masked escort from one of the brotherhoods; while the many monastic robes accustom the eye to strange and peculiar figures. It seems like Carnival all year round, with the abbots in black clothing, amidst the other religious masks, playing the role of Carnival nobles in *tabarros* (*Venetian long cloaks*).

The First Stages of the Carnival

The theatres have been open since the New Year, and Carnival has begun. Here and there in the boxes, one sees a beautiful woman, dressed as an officer, proudly displaying her epaulettes to the people. The parades are becoming more frequent; but everyone's anticipation is focused on the final eight days.

Preparations for the Concluding Days.

Various preparations announce these paradisiacal days to the public. The Corso, one of the few streets in Rome that are kept clean all year round, is now being swept and cleaned even more carefully. Work is underway to remove the beautiful paving stones, composed of small, square, fairly uniform pieces of basalt, wherever they appear to be slightly out of place, and to replace the basalt wedges.

Besides this, there are also vivid harbingers of what is to come. Every Carnival evening concludes, as we have already mentioned, with a horse-race. The horses kept for this purpose are mostly small but robust, and because of the North African origin of the best breeds among them, they are called Barberi.

Each little horse, covered with a blanket of white linen that fits snugly around its head, neck, and body, and is adorned with colourful ribbons along the seams, is led to the spot in front of the obelisk where the race will later finish. It is trained to stand for a while with its head facing the course, then gently led along the street, and fed a few

handfuls of oats at the top, near the Palazzo Venezia, to encourage it to complete the race more quickly.

Since this exercise is repeated with each of the horses, of which there are often fifteen to twenty in number, and as the promenade is always accompanied by a number of cheerful lads shouting loudly, one has a foretaste already of the greater noise and jubilation soon to follow.

In earlier times, the wealthiest Roman households kept such horses in their stables; it was considered an honour if one of these horses won the prize. Bets were placed, and the victory was celebrated with a feast. In recent times, however, this practice has greatly diminished, and the desire to achieve fame through the success of one's horses has descended to the middle, and indeed every, class.

The custom may have persisted, from those times, that the troop of horsemen, accompanied by trumpeters, who now display around Rome the prizes to be won, ride into the courtyards of the nobility and receive a reward after a trumpet piece has been played.

Each prize consists of a piece of gold or silver fabric about seven feet long and not quite two feet wide, suspended from a colourful pole, and much like a flag, with the woven image of some galloping horses at its lower end.

This prize is called the Palio, and for as many days as the Carnival lasts, that is how many of these quasi-standards are displayed during the procession through the streets of Rome.

Meanwhile, the parade route is also modified to suit; the obelisk now marks the end of the street. In front of it, scaffolding with many rows of seats is being erected, facing directly onto the parade route. Barriers are built in front of the scaffolding, between which the horses will henceforth be led, to the starting place.

Furthermore, large scaffolded structures are built on both sides, adjoining the first houses along the promenade thus extending the street into the square itself. On both sides of the barriers are small, raised and covered arches for the people who regulate the flow of horses.

Further along the promenade, scaffolding can also be seen erected in front of various houses. The squares of San Carlo al Corso, and of the Antonine Column (*Piazza Colonna, with its second-century Column of Marcus Aurelius, previously named the Antonine Column*), are separated from the street by barriers, such that everything indicates that the entire festivities should, and will be, confined to the long, narrow promenade.

Finally, the middle of the street is sprinkled with *pozzolana* (*volcanic ash*) to prevent the horses from slipping on the smooth cobblestones.

The Signal for Complete Carnival Licence

Thus, anticipation is maintained and nourished, every day until finally, a little after noon, a bell from the Capitol gives the signal that one is permitted to go mad in public.

At this moment, serious Romans, who spend the rest of the year guarding themselves from every mishap, suddenly abandon their seriousness and air of deliberation.

The workmen, who clatter away until the very last moment, pack up their tools and jokingly bring their labours to an end. All the balconies and windows are hung with carpets, chairs are placed on the raised stone pavements on either side of the street, while the lesser residents, and all the children throng the street, which now ceased to be one, resembling instead a vast banqueting hall, an immense decorated gallery.

For just as all the windows are hung with carpets, so too all the scaffolding is covered with old woven hangings; the many chairs outside reinforce the idea of a gallery, while the benign sky occasionally reminds one that it lacks a roof.

Gradually, the street seems to become more and more habitable. Stepping outside, one feels not outdoors among strangers, but in a hall among acquaintances.

The Military Guard

Meanwhile, as the promenade becomes increasingly lively, and a Pulcinello appears here and there among the host of people strolling about in their everyday clothes, a military squad assembles in front of the Porta del Popolo. Led by a general on horseback, they march, in good order, dressed in new uniforms, and with a band playing, along the promenade and immediately occupy all the entrances to the Corso, post a few guards in the main squares, and assume responsibility for maintaining order throughout the entire proceedings.



‘Evening at the Muro Torto by the Porta del Popolo, Rome’ - Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (German, 1749–1832)
Artvee
Public domain.

The renters of chairs, and of seats on the scaffolding, call out loudly to the passers-by: ‘Luoghi! Luoghi, Padroni! Luoghi!’ (‘Seats, seats!’)

The Masks

Now the maskers begin to multiply. Young men, dressed as lower-class women in festive clothes, are usually the first to appear, exhibiting bared chests and brazen effrontery. They embrace the men they meet, act openly and familiarly with the women as if they were of their gender, and otherwise do whatever their whim, wit, or wanton manners dictate.

I recall, among others, a young man who played, superbly, the role of a passionate, quarrelsome, and militant woman, loudly making his way down the entire promenade, picking a fight with everyone he met, while his companions seemed to make every effort to restrain him.

Here comes a Pulcinello, a large horn dangling from colourful cords about his hips. With a slight movement, as he converses with the women, he boldly imitates the figure of the ancient god of the gardens of sacred Rome (*Priapus*), his light-hearted pose arousing delight rather than resentment. Here comes another of his kind, more modest and placid, bringing his beautiful partner with him.

Since the women are as eager to show themselves in men’s clothes as the men are to display themselves in the women’s, the former adapt Pulcinello’s attire, and it must be admitted that they often succeed in appearing all the more charming in that androgynous form.

With swift steps, a lawyer pushes his way through the crowd, declaiming as if in court; he calls to the windows above and, grabbing masked and unmasked passers-by, threatens everyone with a lawsuit, now accusing some person of a long tale of ridiculous crimes they are supposed to have committed, now listing the precise details of their debts for another. He berates the women for their *cicisbei* (*admirers, male escorts*), the girls for their lovers; he refers to a portfolio he carries, produces documents from it, and all this in a penetrating voice and with a fluent tongue. He seeks to shame and embarrass everyone. Just when one thinks he is about to cease, he starts up again only more so; just when one thinks he is about to depart, he turns back; he advances on one person without speaking, he seizes another who has already passed by; and if a fellow lawyer happens to be coming towards him, his madness attains its highest degree.

But none of this holds the onlooker's attention for long; the most impressive of sights is immediately swallowed up by the sheer quantity and variety of people and activity.

The Quacqueri (*Quakers*), while not making as much noise, attract just as much attention as the lawyers. The Quacquer persona seems to have become widespread due to the ease with which their quaint, old-fashioned clothing can be found in the flea markets.

The main requirements for this mask are that the clothing, while old-fashioned, be well-preserved and of fine fabric. These men are rarely seen dressed in anything other than velvet or silk; they wear brocade or embroidered waistcoats, and a Quacquer must be of a stout build; his face mask is solid, with chubby cheeks and small eyes; his wig is peculiarly braided; his hat is small and usually trimmed.

One notes that this persona closely resembles the 'Buffo caricato' of comic opera, and just as the latter usually represents a silly, lovesick, easily-deceived fool, so these characters too appear as dandies lacking in taste. They hop back and forth on their toes with great ease, and carry a pair of large black hoops without lenses instead of a lorgnette, with which they peer into all carriages and look up at all windows. They usually make a stiff, deep bow, and express their joy, whenever they meet one another, by repeatedly jumping upwards feet together, and uttering a bright, piercing, inarticulate sound combined with the consonant 'brr'.

They often signal to each other by uttering this cry, and the ones nearby respond, so that in a short time, the shrill sound runs back and forth along the entire procession. Meanwhile, mischievous boys blow into large, twisted shells, offending the ear unbearably.

It soon becomes clear that, given the confined space and the similarity of so many costumes (for there must be several hundred Pulcinellos, and around a hundred Quacqueri, at any one time, continually racing up and down the parade route), few have a real intent to cause a stir, or be noticed. Moreover, those who wished to do so would have to arrive at the parade route early enough. Rather, everyone is simply out to enjoy themselves, indulge their follies, and make the most of the freedom allowed.

During this time, the women and girls especially seek out ways to make fun of others. Everyone wants to be outdoors, disguised in some way, and because few can afford to spend much on doing so, they are inventive enough in devising all sorts of schemes to hide rather than adorn themselves.

Beggar-like masks are very easy to make; a mass of fine hair is essential, along with a completely white face- mask, an earthenware pot hanging from a coloured ribbon, a staff, and a hat. They approach the windows, and everyone in the street, with humble gestures and receive sweets, nuts, and whatever else one likes to give instead of alms.

Others make themselves more comfortable, wrapped in furs or dressed in neat domestic attire but with a face mask. These mostly walk about alone, carrying a small broom, made from reeds with feathery blossom, as both an offensive and defensive weapon. With this, they fend off bothersome individuals, or, quite deliberately, tickle the faces of acquaintances and strangers without masks who approach.

If someone targeted by these girls gets caught amidst four or five of them, he is at his wits' end. The dense crowd prevents him from escaping, and wherever he turns, he feels their brooms under his nose. Seriously resisting them, or any other form of their teasing, would be very risky, because the maskers are deemed invulnerable, and the guards ordered to assist them.

Likewise, day to day clothing worn by any social class may serve the masker. Stable-hands with their curry brushes rub anyone's back whenever they please. The vetturini (*carriage drivers*) offer their services with their usual importunity. More ornate are the masks of country girls, Frascati women, fishermen, Neapolitan boatmen and *sbirri* (*police officers*), and Greeks.

Sometimes a mask is imitated from the theatre. Others make themselves very comfortable by wrapping themselves in carpets or sheets, which they tie together above their heads.

A white figure often steps into other people's paths, and leaps about in front of them, imitating a ghost. Some are distinguished by their peculiar composition, while the *tabarro* is always considered the noblest mask being not at all distinctive.

Witty and satirical masks are quite rare, since they have a specific aim, and are meant to be noticed. However, there was one Pulcinello dressed as a cuckold. His horns were movable; he could retract them like a snail. When he stepped under the window of some newlyweds, and let just a sliver of one horn show, or when he stretched both horns out fully before another, the bells attached to the tips jingling merrily, the audience would momentarily take notice, and sometimes burst into copious laughter.

A conjuror mingles with the crowd, shows the people a book of numbers, and reminds them of his passion for playing the lottery.

A man with two faces is lodged amongst the throng: one knows not which is his front, which is his back, or whether he is coming or going.

Strangers must also accept being mocked at this time. The long robes of the Northerners, their large buttons, their peculiar round hats, catch the Romans' attention, and so the stranger too becomes a mask to them.

Because the visiting artists, especially those who study landscapes and buildings, sit and draw in public everywhere in Rome, they are also imitated among the Carnival crowds, appearing as very busy, with large portfolios, long surtouts, and colossal drawing-pencils.

The German bakers' apprentices are often seen drunk in Rome, and they are also imitated, staggering around with a bottle of wine in their actual, or somewhat embellished, traditional dress.

I recall a single, very suggestive mask. An obelisk was due to be erected in front of the Trinità de' Monti church. The public was less than taken with the idea, partly because the space was narrow and cramped, and partly because an extremely tall pedestal had to be built to support the small obelisk and raise it to the required height. One wit had therefore seized an opportunity to wear a large white pedestal on his head, like a cap, to the top of which a tiny reddish obelisk was attached. Large letters were daubed on the pedestal, the meaning of which was opaque perhaps to all but a few.

The Carriages

Meanwhile, as the number of masks increases, carriages gradually enter the street, in the same order as we described above when discussing the Sunday and holiday promenades, except that these carriages descending from the Palazzo Venezia, on the left hand side, turn around where the promenade ends, and immediately drive back up on the other side. I have already noted above that, if you subtract the raised

pavements for pedestrians, the road is little more than three carriage-widths across in most places.

The pavements are all encumbered with scaffolded seating, and occupied by chairs, and many spectators have already taken their places. A line of carriages runs along the scaffolding and chairs, very close to the paving, and another line runs up the other side. The pedestrians on each side are confined to a space of no more than eight feet, pushing and shoving as best they can, and from every window and balcony, a dense throng looks down on the crush.

In the first few days, one usually sees only ordinary carriages; since everyone saves for the following days whatever elegant or magnificent display they might wish to present. Towards the end of the Carnival, more open carriages appear, some of which are six-seaters: two ladies sit facing each other on a raised platform, so that their entire figures can be seen, four gentlemen occupy the four remaining seats in the corners, the coachmen and servants are masked, and the horses are adorned with ribbons and flowers.

Often a beautiful, white poodle, adorned with rose-coloured ribbons, stands between the coachman's feet, bells jingling on its collar, and the attention of the public is fixed on the group for a few moments.

As may easily be supposed, only the most beautiful women dare to display themselves so prominently before the entire crowd, while only a truly beautiful woman would show herself without a mask. But whenever such a carriage approaches, travelling slowly enough most often, all eyes are fixed on it, and its fair occupant has the pleasure of hearing from many sides: 'O quanto è bella!' (*Oh, how lovely she is!)*

Formerly, these magnificent carriages are said to have been far more common, more expensively adorned, and more interesting too, due to many a mythological or allegorical representation; but recently, for whatever reason, the more distinguished people seem content to lose themselves amidst the masses, preferring to enjoy the pleasure they find in this ceremony rather than distinguish themselves from others.

The further the carnival progresses, the more amusing the carriages which appear. Even serious people, seated within and unmasked, allow their coachmen and servants to disguise themselves. The coachmen mostly choose women's clothing, and in recent days it has seemed as if only women were in charge of the horses. They are decently, even charmingly, dressed in general; while in contrast, some broad-chested, ugly fellow in utterly newfangled finery with a tall hairstyle and feathers, offers a striking caricature; and while the beautiful women heard themselves praised, so he must endure having someone rise in his face and shout: 'O fratello mio, che brutta puttana sei!' ('Oh, my brother, what an ugly whore you are!')

The coachman usually does a favour for one, or even a couple, of his girlfriends, if he encounters them in the crowd, by lifting them up onto the box. They then usually seat themselves at his side, dressed in men's clothing, dangling their neat little legs and feet, their high heels floating above the heads of passers-by.

The servants do the same, taking their friends and girlfriends up, at the rear of the carriage, and even seating them on top of the box, as on English country coaches.

The gentry themselves seem happy to see their carriages fully occupied; everything is permitted, and deemed acceptable at this time.

The Crowd

Now take a look across the long, narrow Corso, where from every balcony and window, over lengths of colourful carpet, tightly-packed spectators look down on the scaffolded seats filled with spectators, and at the long rows of fully-occupied chairs on both sides of the street. The two lines of carriages move slowly through the centre ground, while the space that a third carriage might occupy is completely filled with people, not walking back and forth, but pushing and shoving against each other. Since the carriages, as far as possible, always keep a little distance from each other so as not to collide at every halt, many pedestrians, merely to gain some breathing space, venture out of the crush into the centre, between the wheels of the carriage in front and the horses and shaft of the one behind, and the greater the trouble and risk for the pedestrians, the more their spirits and boldness seem to rise.

Since most pedestrians, who pass between the two rows of carriages carefully avoid the wheels and axles, to protect their limbs and clothing, they usually leave more space between themselves and the carriages than is necessary; whoever can no longer bear to travel along with the slowly moving mass, and has the courage to slip between the wheels and the pedestrians, between the danger and those who are avoiding it, can cover a great distance in a short time, until they find themself halted again by another obstacle.

Now my narrative will seem to stray beyond the bounds of credibility, and I would scarcely dare continue were it not for the fact that many who have attended the Roman Carnival can attest to the fact that I have adhered precisely to the truth, and were it not for the fact again that the festival is repeated annually and can be viewed by anyone, in future with my text in hand.

For what will my readers say if I explain that everything recounted so far is merely the first stage of the crush, commotion, noise, and revelry?

The Governor and Senator's Procession

By moving forward only slowly, and halting when things ahead come to a standstill, the carriages inconvenience the pedestrians in various ways.

The Papal guard ride back and forth through the throng, individually, during the occasional disturbances and conflicts, so as to bring the carriages into line, and when a pedestrian avoids the carriage-horses, they may well feel, the head of a riding horse at their neck before they know it; yet a greater inconvenience follows.

The Governor, in a large State carriage with an entourage of several coaches, passes down the centre of the Corso between the two rows of carriages. The Papal guard, and the attendants, warn the people ahead to make way, and the procession momentarily occupies the entire width of the street that had, moments before, been reserved for the pedestrians. They push their way, as best they can, between the other carriages, and, in one way or another, reach the pavement. Then just as water, when a vessel passes by, parts for a moment but immediately merges again behind its passage, so too does the mass of masked figures and other pedestrians immediately coalesce behind the procession. Before long, however, a fresh movement disturbs the crowded gathering.

The Senator approaches with similar priority; his large State carriage and the carriages of his retinue float as if over the heads of the crushed crowd, and if the native Roman or visitor is captivated and charmed by the amiability of the present senator, Prince Rezzonico (*Abbondio Rezzonico, a nephew of Pope Clement XIII*), nonetheless this is an instance where the mass of people considers itself fortunate as he departs.

Once these two carriage trains carrying Rome's supreme lords of the judiciary and the police, had pushed through the promenade on that first day, the Duke of Albany, much to the inconvenience of the crowd, was also accustomed to travel the route daily, reminding Rome, the ancient ruler of kings, at that time of general masquerade, of the Carnival nonsense of his royal pretensions.

The envoys, who possess the same right, use it sparingly and with thoughtful discretion.

Society at the Ruspoli Palace

But it is not only these carriages that interrupt and hinder the flow along the promenade; at and near the Palazzo Ruspoli (*at Via del Corso 418*), where the road is no wider, but the pavements on both sides are raised, the fashionable set gathers, and all the chairs there are soon occupied or spoken for. The most beautiful middle-class women, charmingly-masked, surrounded by their companions, display themselves there to the passing, curious eye. All who draw near the area linger to look through the

well-dressed rows; each is curious to note the women among the many male figures who are sitting there, or discover in a handsome officer the object of their desire. Here, at this spot, the procession first comes to a standstill, while the carriages linger as long as they can, and when one is finally brought to a halt, one prefers to remain amidst that pleasant company.

The Confetti

If our description so far has given the reader an idea of one's constrained, indeed almost troubled, situation, it will grant an even stranger impression if I further recount how this merry throng is agitated by a kind of petty, mostly light-hearted but sometimes all too serious, war.

It is quite likely that, on some past occasion, it chanced that a beautiful woman, attempting to attract the attention of her friend passing amidst the masked crowd, threw some sugar-coated seeds at him, it being only natural, that the man would then turn around, and discover his charming friend in her. This became a common custom, and one often sees a pair of faces, familiar to each other, meet after the seeds are thrown. However, people were too frugal to waste real eatables, and their misuse necessitated a larger, and cheaper supply.

It is now a trade in its own right to carry large baskets of plaster pellets, which have the appearance of dragees and are produced from a funnel, for sale amidst the crowd.

No one is safe from attack; everyone is on the defensive, and so, whether out of malice or necessity, a duel, a skirmish, or a battle breaks out here or there. Pedestrians, carriage-drivers, and spectators, from the windows, scaffolded seats, and chairs, attack and defend each other in turn.

The ladies carry gilded, or silvered, baskets full of these pellets, while the men are fiercely protective of their lovely companions. With carriage windows lowered, they await the assault, joking with their friends and stubbornly defending themselves against strangers.

Nowhere, however, are the battles more serious and widespread than in the vicinity of the Palazzo Ruspoli. All the masked figures who have settled there are equipped with baskets, pouches, and handkerchiefs full of the things. They attack more often than they are attacked; no carriage passes by unpunished, that is without at least a few masks scattering something at it. No pedestrian is safe from them; if an abbot, in particular, appears in his black robe they throw things at him from every direction, and because plaster and chalk stain wherever they land, the individual assailed is soon covered in grey and white specks. Moreover, these disputes often become more serious

and widespread, and one gazes with astonishment as jealousy and personal hatred are allowed to run free.

A hooded figure will creep up unnoticed and, with a handful of confetti, strike one of the first of these beauties so hard, and so precisely, that her mask rattles, and her lovely neck is marked. Her companions on either side are greatly aroused, and hurling the contents of their bags and baskets, rush furiously upon the attacker; but he is often so well disguised, so heavily armoured, that he fails to feel their repeated attacks. The more confident he becomes, the more fiercely he continues his own assault; the defenders cover the women's flanks with their *tabarros*, and because the attacker, in the heat of battle, also causes injury to their neighbours, and generally offends all around with his rudeness and impetuosity, those seated nearby join the fight, and spare not their pellets of plaster, commonly keeping somewhat larger pieces of ammunition in reserve for such cases, items roughly the size of sugared almonds, whereby the attacker is ultimately so attacked and assailed from all sides that nothing but retreat remains, especially if he has almost expended his shot.

Usually, someone embarking on such an adventure has a second with him, who slips him more ammunition, while the men who deal in such plaster confetti are busy with their baskets during the fight, hurriedly weighing out as many pounds for each man as he desires.

I myself witnessed such a dispute nearby, in which, in the end, the combatants, lacking fresh ammunition, threw the gilded baskets at each other's heads, and were not deterred by the warnings of the guards, who themselves were struck all over.

Certainly, many such exchanges would end in knife fights if it weren't for the lengths of rope, well-known instruments of punishment employed by the Italian police, strung up at several corners, reminding everyone in the midst of their revelry that it was risky to resort to dangerous weapons at that time. These disputes are countless, and most are more comical than serious.

For example, an open wagon full of Pulcinellos approaches Ruspoli. They intend to strike everyone in turn as they drive past the spectators; unfortunately, the crowd is too dense, and the wagon becomes stuck in its midst. The entire throng suddenly decides to go into action, and a hail of pellets rains down on the wagon from all sides. The Pulcinellos expend their ammunition, then remain exposed to the crossfire from all sides, for a good long while, so that in the end, the wagon, covered as if with a fall of hail and snow, slowly departs amidst general mockery and hoots of disapproval.

A Verbal Exchange at the Upper End of the Procession

Meanwhile, while these lively and vigorous antics occupy a large part of the *beau monde* in the centre of the parade, another section of the audience finds a different kind of entertainment at its upper end.

Not far from the French Academy, the so-called Capitano of the Italian theatre, dressed in Spanish garb with a feathered hat, sword, and large gloves, suddenly appears amidst the masks watching from the scaffolding and begins recounting his great deeds on land and sea in an emphatic tone. It is not long before a Pulcinello rises to oppose him, raising doubts and objections, and, while seemingly accepting everything, ridicules the hero's boastfulness with wordplay, and interposed platitudes.

Here, too, every passer-by stops to listen to the lively exchange.

The Pulcinello King

Often a new set of entrants swell the crowd. Here, a dozen Pulcinellos band together, choose a king, crown him, hand him a sceptre, accompany him with music, and lead him, with loud cries, along the parade route seated on an ornate cart. As the procession moves forward, all the Pulcinello rush forward, increasing the number of participants, and forging a path with shouts and the waving of their hats.

Only then does one notice how they have chosen to vary the common mask. One wears a wig, another a woman's hood over his blackened face, a third has a cage on his head instead of a cap, in which a pair of birds, dressed as an abbot and a lady, hop back and forth on their perches.

The Side Streets

The dreadful crush, which I have tried to convey to the reader as vividly as I can, naturally forces a large number of masks out of the parade and into the neighbouring streets. There, pairs of lovers walk together more privately and quietly, and there too, wilder people find space to indulge in all sorts of wondrous performances

A group of men in common Sunday best, wearing short doublets over gold-trimmed waistcoats, their hair tied in long, flowing nets, are strolling back and forth with youngsters dressed as women. One of them appears to be heavily pregnant; they are walking up and down peacefully. Suddenly, the men quarrel, a lively exchange ensues, the women join in, the argument grows increasingly heated, and finally, the combatants pull out large knives made of silver-plated cardboard and attack each other. The women, with dreadful cries, keep them apart, pulling one this way, another that, while the onlookers participate as if it were a real battle, trying to appease each

side. Meanwhile, the pregnant woman is feeling unwell from the fright; a chair is brought to her, the other women attend to her, she moans piteously, and before anyone knows it, she 'gives birth' to an un-shapely doll to the great amusement of the onlookers. The play is over, and the troupe moves on to perform the same or a similar farce elsewhere.

The Romans, in whose minds tales of murder always lurk, like to toy with the idea, at every opportunity. Even the children have a game they call 'Chiesa,' (*'Church'*) where one takes the role of a murderer who is fleeing to the church for sanctuary, while the others imagine themselves as police officers, and attempt to catch hold of the first, any way they can, before the 'murderer', can reach the place of refuge. So, things are quite lively in the side streets especially the Via del Babuino, and in the Piazza di Spagna.

The Quacqueri also arrive in droves to display their gallantries more freely. They have a manoeuvre that makes everyone laugh. They march about in groups of twelve, with small, quick steps while standing on tiptoe, in a solid row; when they reach a square, they suddenly form a line, turning right, or left, and then tiptoeing away one after the other. Suddenly, they will re-establish the row by each turning to the left, or right, and off they go down another street; then, before you know it, they turn right, or left, in a line again: the column pushes through a door as if strung on a skewer, and the fools vanish.

Evening

Now evening approaches, and everyone heads, increasingly, towards the Corso. The lines of carriages have long since been brought to a standstill; indeed, two hours before nightfall, it may be the case that not a single carriage can move.

The Papal Guard and the foot soldiers now busy themselves moving all the carriages, as far as possible, away from the centre of the street, and forming them into a perfectly straight line and, given the crowd, there is much trouble and annoyance. A deal of kicking, pushing, and pulling ensues, and when one horse kicks, everything behind has to back up, until finally some carriage gets so wedged that the driver has to steer his team into the centre of the street again. Then the scolding of the guards, and the cursing and threats of the foot soldiers re-commence.

It is in vain for the unfortunate coachman to demonstrate the obvious impossibility of his moving; he is scolded and threatened, and either has to comply, or, if a side street is nearby, he is forced out of the line through no fault of his own. Usually, the side streets are also occupied by a queue of carriages that have arrived too late and, because the procession has already slowed to a halt, can no longer join the line.

The Preparations for the Race

The time for the horse-race to start is now drawing ever nearer, on which many thousands of people are intent, who are eagerly anticipating the moment.

The renters of chairs, and of seats on the scaffolding, are now increasing their cries of offers: 'Luoghi! Luoghi avanti! Luoghi Nobili! Luoghi, Padroni!' The aim is to ensure that, in these final moments, all the seats are filled, even if at a lower price.

Fortunate it is if a space is to be found here and there; for the general, now riding along accompanied by a squadron of the guards, proceeds down the street between the twin rows of carriages, driving the pedestrians from the only space left for them. Everyone then tries to find a chair, a seat on the scaffolding, on board a carriage, between the vehicles, or at a friend's window, all such now being full of spectators.

Meanwhile, the area in front of the obelisk has been completely cleared of people and perhaps offers one of the finest sights in the world today.

Three facades of scaffolded seating, hung with tapestries as described above, border the square. Thousands of heads peer out one above the other, producing the appearance of an ancient amphitheatre or circus. Above the central scaffolding, the entire obelisk rises into the air, the scaffolding itself doing no more than hide the pedestal, and only now does one truly appreciate its immense height, as indeed it serves to measure that of the crowd seated beneath.

The open space offers the eyes a brief respite, as the onlooker gazes, full of anticipation, at the empty course, with its barriers of taut rope.

Now the general descends the Corso, as a sign that the course has been cleared, while the guards behind him ensure no one steps out from the line of carriages. He takes a seat in one of the boxes.

The Horse-Race

The horses are led by well-dressed stable-lads into the pens behind the ropes, in randomly selected order. They have no tack or covering on their bodies. Spiked balls are attached to them, here and there, with cords, and the area from which they will start is hung with leather until all are ready; large sheets of tinsel are also stuck to them.

They are usually restless and impatient when brought into line, and the stable-lads need all their force and skill to restrain them.

Their eagerness to begin the race makes them difficult to restrain, while the presence of so many people makes them shy. They often strike the neighbouring barrier, often rear beyond the ropes, and this turbulence and disorder intensifies the anticipation, at every moment.

The stable-hands are extremely tense and attentive, because at the moment when they start, the skill of the person releasing the reins, as well as chance circumstance, can decide the thing in favour of one horse or the other.

Finally, the starting-rope is dropped, and the horses are away. In the open space they still try to gain an advantage over one another, but once they enter the narrow space between the two lines of carriages, all competition is normally in vain.

The few ahead exert all their strength. Despite the scattered *pozzolana*, sparks fly from the ground, manes swirl, the tinsel rustles, and they are barely seen before they are past. The rest of the horses, pushing and shoving, hinder one another; now and then a trailing horse gallops by, while individual pieces of torn tinsel flutter on the deserted track. Soon the horses vanish from sight, as the crowd surges forward, filling the street again.

Other stable-hands are already waiting at the Palazzo Venezia for the leaders to arrive. They know how to catch them, and restrain them safely, in an enclosed area. The winner will soon be awarded the prize.

Thus, one's last instantaneous impression of the celebrations is of a violent, lightning-fast event, which the many thousands of people have been eagerly awaiting, for quite some time, though few can account for why they are prepared to wait so patiently, and why they revel in it so.

From my description, it is easy to see that the event carries risk for both animals and humans. Let me cite just a few examples: a single rear wheel may protrude slightly into the narrow space between the carriages, and by chance a somewhat wider space may appear to be have been left. A race-horse, rushing on, bunched with others, in trying to utilise the wider space, leaping forward, may collide directly with the protruding wheel.

I myself witnessed a case where one horse fell after such a shock, three of the horses following stumbled over the first, and somersaulted, while the later runners jumped over the fallen, and continued the race.

Often such a horse dies instantly, while spectators have lost their lives in such circumstances on several occasions. Likewise, great harm can occur if the horses behind try to turn back.

It has also happened that, when a horse has gained a considerable lead, people have struck it in the face with their coat, out of malice or spite, forcing it to turn around or swerve. Even worse is when the horses are not caught and held, safely, in the Piazza Venezia; they then, inevitably, return, and because the track is already crowded with people again, they cause much mischief that either goes unnoticed or is ignored.

Order is Abandoned

The horses usually only begin the race at nightfall. Once they reach the Palazzo Venezia at the top of the Corso, small mortars are fired; this signal is repeated in the middle of the promenade and, for the last time, near the obelisk.

At that moment the guards abandon their posts, order is no longer maintained as regards the lines of carriages, and indeed, it constitutes a troubling moment, causing anxiety even for a spectator standing calmly at a window, and justifies a remark or two.

We have already seen before that the onset of darkness, which determines so much in Italy, also disrupts the customary Sunday and holiday processions. There are no guards or watchmen; it is an ancient custom, a common convention, that folk proceed to depart in proper order. But as soon as the Ave Maria bell rings, no one relinquishes their right to turn back whenever and however they wish. Since the Carnival procession takes place on the same street and according to a similar rule, though the crowds and other circumstances render the issue more difficult, no one wishes to relinquish the right to break ranks, as night falls.

Looking back towards the tremendous throng, and finding the race-course, which had only been cleared briefly for the race itself, immediately flooded with people once more, logic and fairness seem to dictate that each carriage, in turn, should simply try to reach the nearest convenient alleyway, and drive away.

However, immediately after the signals are fired, some vehicles insist on steering into the centre of the Corso, hindering and confusing the foot-soldiers, and when one decides to descend, and other to ascent the street, in the confined space, neither can move, and often the more sensible drivers who have remained in line, are thereby prevented from departing.

If a stray horse happens to encounter such a knot of carriages, the risk of misfortune, and the degree of vexation caused are increased on every side.

Night

And yet the confusion is later, and most often happily, resolved. Night falls, and everyone longs for some peace, or entertainment.

Theatre

Face masks are removed from that moment on, and a large number of the spectators hurry towards the theatre. Only in the boxes does one see, if at all, *tabarros,* and ladies in masked costumes; the people in the stalls are once more dressed in ordinary attire.

The Teatro Aliberti (*the Teatro delle Dame, not extant*) and the Teatro Argentina (*in the square Largo di Torre Argentina*) present serious operas, with ballets interspersed; Teatro Valle (*extant, but currently inactive*) and Teatro Capranica (*in Piazza Capranica, housed in the Palazzo Capranica*) both stage comedies and tragedies, with comic operas as intermezzos; the Teatro Pace (*near Piazza Navona, now a hotel*) imitates them, albeit imperfectly, and there are many subordinate theatrical stagings down to the level of puppet shows and the performances in tightrope walkers' booths.

The grand Teatro Tordinona (*near Ponte Sant'Angelo, Longotevere Tordinona*), which burned down (*in 1781*) and, after being rebuilt, immediately collapsed, unfortunately no longer entertains the people with its major State and other fine performances (*it was rebuilt once more, and reopened in 1795*).

The Romans have a great passion for theatre, a passion formerly even more ardent during Carnival season, as that was the only time when it could be fully indulged. Nowadays, at least one theatre remains open during the summer and autumn, allowing the public to satisfy its wish, to some extent, for most of the year.

It would be too much of a distraction from my purpose to delve into a lengthy description of the theatres and of what might be special about those in Rome. The reader will recall that the subject has been discussed elsewhere.

Festini (Masked Balls)

Likewise, I will have little to say about the so-called *festini*; these are large masked balls, held on several occasions in the beautifully-lit Teatro Aliberti.

Here too, *tabarros* are considered by both men and women to be the most suitable costume, and the whole hall is filled with figures robed and masked in black; a few colourful character masks are mingled amongst them.

The interest is all the greater, since various noble persons attend, though now more rarely, wearing masks in the style of various artistic periods, and imitating, masterfully, a number of statues located in Rome. Thus, when I was present, Egyptian deities, priestesses, Bacchus and Ariadne, the Tragic Muse (*Melpomene*), the Muse of History (*Clio*), a symbolic township, Vestal Virgins, and a Consul were depicted, more or less effectively according to the appropriateness of the costume.

The Dancing

The dances at these festivals are usually conducted in line, in the English style; they differ only in that in a few figures they often mime some characteristic scene; for example, two lovers are seen to part then reconcile, they separate then find each other again.

The Romans, accustomed to highly expressive gestures in their pantomime ballets, also favour, in their social dancing an expressiveness that seems exaggerated and affected to us. No one readily dares to dance except those who have learned the art; the minuet, in particular, is regarded as a true work of art, and performed by only a select few couples. Such a couple is then enclosed in a circle by the rest of the party, receiving admiring applause at the end.

Next Morning

While the fashionable crowd enjoys themselves in this manner until morning, work is already underway at dawn to clean and tidy the Corso. Particular care is taken to ensure that the *pozzolana* in the middle of the street is spread evenly and neatly.

Before long, stable-hands lead the racehorse that performed least well the day before to the obelisk. A small boy is seated astride, and another rider with a whip drives it forward, and forces it to exert all its strength in completing the course as swiftly as possible.

Each day, at about two in the afternoon, after the bell has been rung, the festive cycle, as already described, begins again. Strollers gather, the guard assembles, balconies, windows, and scaffolding are draped with carpets and tapestries, the masks multiply and perform their antics, the carriages drive up and down, and the street is more or less crowded, depending on whether the weather or other circumstances are favourable or no. Towards the end of the Carnival, naturally, the number of spectators, masks, floats, and decorations, and the level of noise increase. But nothing compares to the crush and excess of the last day, and evening.

The Last Day (Shrove Tuesday)

Usually, the lines of carriages fall silent two hours before nightfall; no carriage can move, none can enter from the side streets. The scaffolded seating and chairs are occupied earlier than usual, even though the seats are expensive; everyone tries to find a place as quickly as possible, and the horse-race is awaited with greater expectancy even than before.

Finally, the moment arrives when the signal is given that the festival is over; but neither the carriages, nor the masks, nor the spectators move from their spots. Everything is calm, everything is still, as twilight gently deepens.

The Festa dei Moccoletti (Festival of the Little Candles)

As soon as it is dark in the narrow street, little lights can be seen appearing here and there, moving behind the windows, and amidst the seating, and in a short time, more and more being lit, the whole street is illuminated by burning wax candles.

The balconies are decorated with translucent paper lanterns, and everyone holds a candle out of the window, all the scaffolding is illuminated, and one can often see into the various carriages, from whose ceilings inside hang small crystal chandeliers revealing the occupants; while, in others, ladies with colourful candles in their hands seem to invite one's contemplation of their beauty.

The servants attach candles to the rims of the carriage roofs, open wagons with colourful paper lanterns appear, some pedestrians are seen with a tall pyramid of lights on their head, others have set their lights on reeds fastened together to make a rod, often reaching, by means of such tall holders, a height of two or three stories.

Now it becomes every person's duty to carry a lit candle in their hand, and the Romans' favourite curse 'Sia ammazzato' can be heard being repeated from all corners. 'Sia ammazzato chi non porta moccolo!' 'Death to whoever carries no candle!' one shouts to another, while trying to blow out the other's light. Lighting and blowing out other people's candles, and the unrestrained cries of 'Sia ammazzato!' soon brings life, movement, and common purpose to the vast crowd.

Regardless of whether one encounters acquaintances or strangers, one seeks only to extinguish the nearest light, or relight one's own, and in doing so, extinguish that of the one who helped re-light it. And the more loudly the cries of 'Sia ammazzato' echo from all sides, the more the phrase loses its darker meaning, and the more one forgets

that one is still in Rome, where that curse can be fulfilled against one person or another simply over some trifle or other.

Gradually the original sense of the expression fades away completely. And just as we often hear curses and indecencies used as signs of admiration and joy in other languages, so 'Sia ammazzato' becomes the evening's password, a cry of joy and the refrain added to every joke, compliment, or tease.

Thus, one hears, in a mocking tone: 'Sia ammazzato, il Signore Abbate, che fa l'amore (*the lovemaker*)' Or a call to a good friend passing by: 'Sia ammazzato, il Signore Filippo.' Or flattery and compliment combined in: 'Sia ammazzata, la bella Principessa! Sia ammazzata, la Signora Angelika, la prima pittrice del secolo (*the finest painter of the age*).'

All these phrases, are shouted out loudly and rapidly, with a long, sustained note on the penultimate or ante-penultimate syllable. Amidst this incessant shouting, the blowing-out and lighting of candles continues unabated. Whether encountering someone in the house, on the stairs, in a group gathered in a room, or leaning from one window towards the next, everywhere people try to gain the upper hand, and extinguish a candle.

All classes and ages do battle, they clamber onto the steps of the carriages; no chandelier, scarcely even the lanterns being safe; the son extinguishes his father's light, continually shouting: 'Sia ammazzato, il Signore Padre!' In vain does the old man rebuke him for his lack of respect; the lad is asserting his freedom for the evening, and only 'curses' his father all the more vehemently. Though the tumult soon fades away at both ends of the Corso, it becomes all the more unrestrained amidst the throng nearer the centre, while the crush there defies all comprehension, indeed, is greater than even the most vivid memory can recall.

No one can move from their position; the warmth of the many people, the lights, the smoke from so many repeatedly extinguished candles, the shouts of the multitude who roar all the more vehemently the less they are able to stir a limb, finally renders even the soundest of minds dazed; it seems impossible for some misfortune not to occur, the carriage horses to break free, or someone be squeezed, crushed, or otherwise harmed.

And yet, because everyone eventually longs to escape, and each person takes to a side-street or seeks clear air, and a chance to breathe, in the nearest square, this central crowd also dissolves, melting away from the ends towards the centre, and this festival of universal freedom and liberation, this modern Saturnalia, ends in general numbness.

Ordinary folk now hurry away, to revel in a long-prepared feast of soon-to-be-forbidden meat, until midnight, while the more refined crowd head to the theatres to bid farewell to the now heavily-abridged plays, but even these pleasures are brought to an end by the approach of midnight.

Ash Wednesday

Thus, the extravagant festival passes like a dream, like a fairy-tale, and perhaps less of it remains in the mind of its participants than in the mind of the reader, to whose imagination and comprehension I have presented the whole, in context.

If, during the course of these follies, Pulcinello has reminded us, crudely and excessively, of those joys of love to which we owe our existence, if Baubo (*the sacred female fool of Greek mythology*) has profaned the secrets of women in labour, in the public square, at a time of night when the many lit candles remind us that there will come an end to all celebration, then, amidst all that nonsense, we at least have been made aware of the most significant moments of our lives.

The long, narrow, crowded street reminds us, even more cogently of the ways of this world, where every spectator of and participant in life, bare-faced or behind a mask, sees only a little space in front of, and around them, from the balcony or seated amidst the scaffolding, and in a carriage or on foot only progresses a yard at a time, is driven forward rather than strides ahead, is supported more than stands upright on their own, ever more eagerly seeking a place where all is better and happier, and even there finding themself in trouble, and ultimately pushed aside.

If I may continue speaking in this more serious vein than the subject seems to justify, let me observe that the liveliest and highest pleasures, like horses speeding by, last only for a moment, stir us, yet scarcely leave a trace in the mind; that freedom and equality seem only ever to be enjoyed in moments of intoxication and madness; and that the greatest pleasure is most stimulating only when it borders on danger, and greedily, but still anxiously, enjoys the sweet sensory delights in its vicinity.

And so, without deliberately intending them, we may well conclude our Carnival with a reflection or two, on Ash Wednesday, without fear of saddening the reader. Rather, let me wish that everyone of us, though life as a whole, like the Roman Carnival, remains overwhelming fraught, indeed troublesome, may be reminded by this carefree, masked gathering of the importance of every momentary, often seemingly insignificant, pleasure in life.

Rome, Friday, February 1st, 1788, midway through the Carnival

How glad I will be when all this foolishness ends next Tuesday evening. It is a dreadful nuisance to see others running mad when you are not infected yourself

As much as possible, I continued my studies. 'Claudine von Villa Bella' has also progressed, and unless all the genii fail to offer their help, the third act will be completed and off to Herder this day week, and thus I will be rid of the fifth volume. Then a new predicament will arise, in which no one can advise or help me. 'Tasso' must be reworked; what is written is useless. I can neither end it as it is, nor throw it all away. Such labour has God granted humankind!

The sixth volume will probably contain 'Tasso', and two Singspiele 'Lila' and 'Jery and Bätely', all three reworked and elaborated to such an extent that one would no longer recognise them.

At the same time, I have gone through my short poems and thought about the eighth volume, which I might publish before the seventh. It is a strange thing, drawing up such a summation of one's life. How little trace remains of anyone's existence!

Here they are pestering me with translations of 'Werther,' showing them to me, and asking which one is the best and whether everything in the tale is true! It is a plague of sorts that would haunt me all the way to India, if I travelled there trying to escape it.

Rome, February 6

Here is the third act of 'Claudine von Villa Bella'; I hope you are even half as much pleased with it as I am to have finished it. Now that I understand the needs of lyric theatre more precisely, I have tried, through a measure of sacrifice, to accommodate both the composer and the performers. The fabric on which embroidery is to be worked should always be of broader thread, yet for a comic opera must absolutely be woven like Marli (*a fine, open-work net, often used as a base for intricate embroidery*). And with this work, as with 'Erwin and Elmire,' I have also been obliged to keep the reader in mind. Enough, I have done what I could.

I am quite quiet and clear-minded, and, as I have already assured you, ready for, and devoted, to any summons. I am too old for the fine arts, so whether I dabble in them a little less or a little more is of no consequence. My thirst is quenched, I am on the right path, that of contemplation and study, and peaceful and content in my enjoyment of them. In all this, grant me your blessing. I have nothing more to do now than to finish these last three works. Then I shall be on to 'Wilhelm Meister' and other things.

Rome, Thursday, February 9th

The revellers were still making a tremendous racket on Monday and Tuesday (*Shrove Tuesday*). Especially Tuesday evening, when the revelry with the *moccoletti* candles was in full swing. On Wednesday (*Ash Wednesday*), they gave thanks to God and the Church for the fast. I did not attend any *festini* (that's what they call the masquerades); I am working hard, as much as my brain will allow. Now the fifth volume is done, I simply wish to work through some art studies, then go straight on to the sixth. I have been reading Leonardo da Vinci's treatise on painting (*'Trattato della Pittura', a collection of Leonardo's notes on painting, first published in 1651*) these past few days, and now understand why I could grasp little of the matter before.

Oh, how happy an audience is! They think themselves so clever, they think they know what is good. So do the enthusiasts, and the connoisseurs. One can scarcely believe how complacent a bunch they are, while the good artist must always remain humble. Yet lately I have developed a disgust for hearing judgement passed by someone who is not an artist themself, so much so that I can barely express it. Like tobacco smoke, such talk makes me instantly uncomfortable.

Angelika has treated herself to two paintings. One by Titian (*the 'Cornaro Triple Portrait', National Gallery of Art, Washington DC*) the other by Paris Bordone (*'Christ Taking Leave of His Mother', Philadelphia Museum of Art*). Both at a high price. Since she is so wealthy that she never spends her income, and earns more each year, it is good that she acquires things that bring her pleasure, and augment her artistic zeal. As soon as she had the paintings in the house, she began to paint in a new manner, seeking to adopt certain qualities of those masters. She is tireless not only in her work but also in her studies. It is a great pleasure to view art in her presence.

Christoph Kayser is also a most worthy artist. His music for 'Egmont' is progressing rapidly. I have not listened to the whole yet, but it all seems perfectly suited to its final purpose. He will also compose music for 'Cupid, you, willful, endlessly obstinate, boy!' (*see above, from 'Claudine von Villa Bella'*). I shall send it to you right away so that it can be sung often, in memory of me. It is also my favourite song from the piece.

My mind is in a whirl from all the writing, doing, and thinking. I am no wiser, rather I am still demanding too much of myself, and taking too much on.

February 16

I recently received a letter from our Duke (*Karl August of Saxe-Weimar*) via the Prussian courier. It was so friendly, kind, genuine, and delightful — a rare thing. Since he was able to write unreservedly, he described the entire political situation, his own, and others. He spoke most affectionately as regards myself.



'The Roman House in Weimar (1794)' - Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (German, 1749–1832)
Klassik Stiftung Weimar, Museen (Inv. GGz/1166)
Digital reproduction · See Art. L. 111-1 CPI and § 68 UrhG

February 22

This week we had a case that has saddened the entire artistic community. A Frenchman named Jean-Germain Drouais, a young man of about twenty-five, wealthy and well-educated, the only son of a loving mother, and considered the most promising of all the artists studying here, has died of smallpox. It has caused widespread grief and dismay. In his deserted studio, I saw a painting of a life-size figure of Philoctetes (*'Philoctetes on the Island of Lemnos', Musée des Beaux-Arts de Chartres*), cooling the pain of his wound, by waving the wing of a slain bird of prey. A beautifully conceived image, with much merit in its execution; sadly, it was the artist's last completed work.

I am diligent and cheerful, and await the future thus. It becomes clearer to me daily that I was indeed born to write poetry, and that I should cultivate that talent, so as to create something worthwhile during the next ten years, which is the maximum time I may have left to work, for it was the fire of youth that allowed me to achieve as much as I have without extensive study. My extended stay in Rome has had the advantage of teaching me to forgo the visual arts.

Angelika complimented me, saying she knows few in Rome who have a better eye for art than I do. I know quite well how, and in what way, my eye fails, and feel that I am still constantly improving, and also what would be needed to see even further into the subject. Enough, I have achieved my wish: to grope my way blindly no longer, through a region to which I feel passionately drawn.

I shall send you a poem, 'Cupid as a Landscape Painter,' (*'Amor als Landschaftsmaler'*) as soon as possible and wish it good luck. I have tried to arrange my little poems into a certain order; they seem rather odd together. The poems on Hans Sachs *('Hans Sachsens Poetische Sendung', 1776, written on the two hundredth anniversary of the Meistersinger's death*) and on the death of Mieding (*'Auf Mieding's Tod', 1782. Mieding was the Court carpenter*) conclude the eighth volume, and thus my writings, for now. If, however, they lay me to rest at the Pyramid of Cestius (*near the Protestant cemetery, established in 1716*), then these two poems can serve to witness my identity and origin.

Tomorrow morning there is a service at the Papal Chapel, and the famous old music will begin, music which later reaches its peak of popularity during Holy Week. I intend to go every Sunday morning to familiarise myself with the style. Kayser, who actually studies these things, will surely explain their meaning to me. We expect a printed copy of the Maundy Thursday music from Zurich, where Kayser left it, with every mail. It will be played first on the piano and then heard in the chapel.

February 1788 – Later Notes

When one is born an artist, certain subjects appeal to the contemplative eye, and this worked to my advantage amidst the hustle and bustle of the Carnival follies and absurdities. It was the second time I had witnessed the Carnival, and it was soon apparent to me that this folk festival, like any other recurring cycle of life, followed its own decided course.

This reconciled me to all the commotion; I viewed it as one more significant natural phenomenon, and national event. I took an interest in it all, in that sense, carefully observing the course of the follies and how it unfolded in a certain manner and with a certain degree of decorum. I then noted the individual incidents in sequence, preliminary work which I later used for my essay. At the same time, I also asked our housemate, Georg Schütz, to sketch and colour the individual masks, which he did with his usual helpfulness.

These drawings were subsequently etched in quarto by Georg Melchior Krause of Frankfurt am Main, director of the Weimar Princely Free Drawing Institute (*Fürstliche freie Zeichenschule Weimar*), and illuminated from the originals for the first edition by Unger (*Johann Friedrich Gottlieb Unger, engraver and publisher*), which is now rare.

For the aforementioned purpose, I had to push in among the masked crowd more than usual, which, despite my artistic purpose, often left a distasteful and sinister impression. Accustomed to the noble subjects with which I had occupied myself

throughout the year in Rome, my mind seemed to be aware, at times, that it was to some degree out of its proper sphere.

But as regards my inner peace, an event guaranteed to revive me was imminent. In the Piazza Venezia, where various carriages, before rejoining the lively procession, are wont to halt to gaze at the passers-by, I saw Angelika's carriage, and stepped forward to greet her. After leaning forward to acknowledge me in her usual friendly manner, she moved back a little so that I could greet the lady from Milan seated beside her, and now fully recovered. I found her looks unchanged, for youth, once recovered, quickly regains its strength. Indeed, her eyes seemed fresher and brighter as they looked at me, with a joyfulness there that pierced me to the very core. We remained thus speechless for a while, until Angelika spoke and, as the other woman bent forward, said to me: 'I must only act as interpreter, for I see that my young friend cannot express what she has so long desired, what she has so often intended to say, and what she has repeatedly told me: how deeply she is indebted to you for the support you have shown her during her illness, and your interest in her fate. The first thing that comforted her upon returning to life, and had a healing and restorative effect on her, was the support of her friends, and especially your friendship; from the deepest solitude she suddenly found herself once more among a host of good people, and in the fairest circle.'

'All that is true, indeed,' said the lady, reaching over her friend, and offering me her hand, which I could fittingly touch with my own, though not with my lips.

With quiet satisfaction I withdrew back into the madcap throng, with the tenderest feeling of gratitude towards Angelika, who knew how to comfort the good girl immediately after the accident and, what is rare in Rome, had taken a previously unknown woman into her distinguished circle, a kindness which moved me all the more as I flattered myself that my part in the girl's recovery had carried no small weight in that regard.

The sole Senator of Rome, Prince Abbondio Rezzonico (*Venetian nobleman and politician, and nephew of Pope Clement XIII*), had previously visited me upon his return from Germany. He had established a close friendship with Wilhelm Christoph Diede zum Fürstenstein and his wife, and brought me warm greetings from these esteemed patrons and friends; but, as was my custom, I declined any closer relationship, though I it was inevitable that I would be drawn into their circle eventually.

The husband and wife paid their esteemed companion a return visit, and I could hardly resist accepting an invitation, especially since the lady (*Louise Diede zum Fürstenstein, musician and composer*) who was renowned as a pianist, had agreed to perform during a concert at the Senator's Capitoline residence (*Palazzo Senatorio*),

and our comrade Christoph Kayser, whose own pianistic skill had become well-known, had received a flattering invitation to participate in the same. The incomparable sunset view towards the Coliseum from the Senator's rooms, with all that adjoins that structure on its other sides, certainly provided the artistic eye with a most magnificent spectacle, which, however, one could not over-indulge in lest one appeared disrespectful and discourteous to the company. Madam Diede then gave a noteworthy performance, displaying considerable merit, and shortly afterwards our friend followed her, assuming a place of which he seemed more than worthy, if one can trust the applause he won. Their performances continued alternately for a while, a lady also sang a favourite aria, and finally, when it was Kayser's turn once more to play, he based his offering on a graceful theme which he then varied in the most diverse ways.

Everything had gone well, and the Senator said many kind things to me, in conversation, but could not help assuring me, half-regretfully, in that soft Venetian manner of his, that he was actually no lover of such variations, but was always completely delighted by the lady's most expressive adagios.

Now, I would not seek to claim that the yearning tones which are usually present in adagios and largos have ever been repugnant to me, but I have always loved the more positive aspects of music, since our own feelings, our own reflections on loss and failure, all too often threaten, to drag us down, and overwhelm us.

On the other hand, I could not object to the Senator's opinion; indeed, I was obliged to concede the kindness which led him to give ear, willingly, to those same variations, and assure him of my gratitude that he had entertained a performance by my beloved and highly esteemed friend, in this, which was surely the most splendid residence in all the world.

For the German attendees in particular, it was an invaluable pleasure to be able, as I did, while listening to that distinguished, well-known, and highly-esteemed lady elicit the most delicate tones from the instrument, to gaze down, at that moment, from the window, over that unique earthly landscape and survey, in the evening glow of the sun, with barely a turn of my head, the vast panorama that stretched on the left from the Arch of Septimius Severus across the Campo Vaccino (*the Forum*) to the remains of the Temple of Minerva (*Forum of Nerva*) and the Temple of Peace, and then to the Coliseum in line of view, after which, turning my gaze to the right, the eye glided back past the Arch of Titus, to become confused and linger amidst the labyrinth of the Palatine ruins, their desolation adorned with cultivated gardens, and wild vegetation. Here I request that the reader inspects the etching 'Northwestern View of Rome Taken from the Capitoline Tower', drawn and engraved, in 1824, by Ernst Fries and Joseph Thürmer (*see, for example, the print 'Nord-Westliche Uebersicht von Rom, Genommen von dem Thurme des Capitols' in the British Museum, London*); the view

is from several stories higher, and based on the more recent excavations, while at that time I saw it bathed in evening light and shadow, so that the glowing colours and shadowy-blue contrasts, and all the magic that arises from them, would of course need to be added.

While there, we were fortunate enough to be able to contemplate, quietly, perhaps the most magnificent picture that Anton Mengs ever painted, the portrait of Pope Clement XIII Rezzonico (*created 1758, Museo del Settecento Veneziano, Ca' Rezzonico, Venice*), who later appointed his nephew our patron, to his Senatorial post (*in 1766*), a painting whose value is attested by a passage from our friend's diary, which I quote, in conclusion:

'Among the portraits painted by Anton Mengs, in which his skill asserted itself most completely, is the portrait of Pope Rezzonico. In this work, the artist imitated the Venetian masters in technique and use of colour, and achieved a happy success; the colour tones are true and warm, and the expression of the face animated and intelligent; the curtain of gold fabric, against which the head and the rest of the figure stand out beautifully, is considered a daring touch, but succeeds superbly, giving the picture a rich, harmonious appearance, pleasing to the eye.'

Rome, Saturday, March 1

To Herder

Last Sunday I visited the Sistine Chapel, where the Pope and the Cardinals were attending Mass. Since the Cardinals were dressed in violet, not red, for Lent, it was a spectacle new to me. A few days earlier I had seen some paintings attributed to Albrecht Dürer and was delighted to encounter something similar in real life. The whole thing was uniquely grand yet simple, and I am not surprised that strangers who visit during Holy Week, when all comes together, are often overwhelmed. I know the Sistine Chapel itself quite well; I had lunch there last summer, and took my midday rest on the Pope's throne, and I know the paintings almost by heart. And yet, when everything that serves its true purpose is brought together, it becomes something else entirely, and one hardly recognises it oneself.

An old motet, composed by a Spaniard named Morales (*Cristóbal de Morales, early sixteenth century*), was sung, and granted us a taste of what was to come. Christoph Kayser believes, also, that this music should only be heard here, partly because nowhere else are singers trained in such a style, without organ or instrumental accompaniment, and partly because it uniquely complements the antique adornments of the Papal chapel and the ensemble of Michelangelo's works, the 'Last Judgement',

the ‘Prophets’, and paintings of Biblical history. Kayser will one day write a definitive account of all this. He is a great admirer of early music, and studies everything related to it, diligently.

In consequence we have a remarkable collection of psalms at home; they are settings of versions of the Psalms of David in Italian verse (*translated from the Latin of the Vulgate by the poet Girolamo Ascanio Giustiniani*), composed at the beginning of this century by a Venetian nobleman, Benedetto Marcello. For some, he adapted Sephardic Jewish cantillation melodies, part Spanish, part German, to provide his motifs; others, he based on ancient Greek melodies, executing them with great intelligence, artistry, and restraint. They are set partly as solos, partly as duets, and partly as choral pieces, and are extremely original, though one must first acquire some understanding of them. Kayser greatly appreciates them and will copy some of them. Perhaps one day we will be able to acquire the complete work, which was printed in Venice in 1724 *(‘Estro Poetico Armonico’, printed by Domenico Lovisa, 1724-26*) and contains the first fifty psalms. Herder should check his catalogues; he might find this interesting work in one or another.

I have found the courage to reconsider my last three volumes, taken together, and now know exactly what I wish to achieve; may Heaven grant me the mood, and the good fortune, to do so. It was a frantic week, which in retrospect feels like a month.

First, the plan for ‘Faust’ (*Faust Part I*) was drawn up, and I hope the undertaking has been successful. Of course, it is quite another matter to develop the thing further, now and not fifteen years ago; yet I think it will lose nothing in the process, especially since I believe I can now pick up the threads. As for capturing the previous tone, I am also relieved; I have already completed a fresh scene, and if I darken the paper a little, no one I think would be able to discern it from the old ones. Now this long period of rest and seclusion has restored my true sense of being, it is remarkable how much I resemble my former self, and how little it has altered for the worse despite all the years and events. The old manuscript gives me pause for thought, now and then, when I place it before me. It is the first version, indeed, written, in the main, without any amendment at all; now it is so yellowed with age, so worn (the pages were never sewn together), and so brittle and torn at the edges, that it really does look like the fragment of an old codex, and, just as I then transported myself, by means of my senses and intuition, to an earlier world, I am now required to transport myself back to a past that I myself have lived.



‘Faust confronting the Earth Spirit’ - Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (German, 1749–1832)
Wikimedia Commons

The plan for ‘Tasso’ is also sound, and the various miscellaneous poems for the final volume are mostly complete and in their final form. ‘The Artist’s Earthly Wanderings’ (*‘Des Künstlers Erdewallen’, 1774*) will be reworked, and his ‘Apotheosis’ (*‘Des Künstlers Apotheose, 1789’*) added. I have only just begun to study these youthful fragments again, and all the ideas and details are now quite vivid in my mind. I am looking forward to the task, and have the highest hopes for the last three volumes; I can already see them standing before me in their entirety and only wish for enough leisure and peace of mind to carry out my thoughts step by step.

For the arrangement of the various short poems, I have used your various collections of ‘Scattered Leaves’ (*‘Zerstreute Blätter’*) as a model, and hope to have found a good means for connecting such disparate things, as well as a way to make the overly-personal pieces, and those purely of the moment, somewhat more palatable.

Following these reflections, the new edition of Mengs’ writings arrived, a volume that now holds immense interest for me because I possess the sensory perception that is a necessary requirement for gaining a true understanding of even a single line of the work. It is, in every sense, an excellent book; not a page but offers definite value. I also owe happy insights to his ‘Thoughts on Beauty in Painting,’ (‘*Gedanken über die Schönheit und über den Geschmack in der Malerei’, 1762*) which may seem obscure to some.

Furthermore, I have a theory of sorts regarding colours, which are of great interest to me because this is the aspect of art I understand the least, so far. I see that with

some practice and continued thought, I will also be able to appreciate this lovely aspect of the world's surfaces.

I spent a morning in the Borghese Gallery, which I had not visited for a year, and found, to my delight, that I saw it with much more discerning eyes. Prince Borghese (*Marcantonio Borghese IV*) possesses indescribably valuable art treasures.

Rome, March 7

Another good, fulfilling, and peaceful week has come to an end. On Sunday, I forewent the Papal chapel, but Angelika and I saw a very beautiful painting that is often mistaken for a Correggio (*possibly the 'Danaë', which is in fact by Correggio, now in the Borghese Gallery, after its wanderings*).

I visited the collection of the Accademia di San Luca, where Raphael's skull is kept, This, relic seems to me beyond doubt. A splendid skeletal structure in which a beautiful soul could comfortably rest (*the actual skull was exhumed, as part of his intact skeleton, from the Pantheon, Santa Maria Rotonda, in 1833*). The Duke of Saxe-Weimar has requested a cast of it, which I will probably be able to obtain. The self-portrait of Raphael (*in his 'Saint Luke Painting the Virgin'*) which can be seen in the same hall, is worthy of it.

I also visited the Capitol again, and some other things that I had omitted, especially the house of Bartolomeo Cavaceppi (*the sculptor*), which I had delayed seeing. Among many delightful things, I was particularly pleased by two casts of the heads of the colossal statues on Monte Cavallo. They can be seen at Cavaceppi's in all their size and beauty. Unfortunately, the finest one has lost almost a straw's thickness of smooth facial surface due to time and weathering, and seen near to it looks as if is badly disfigured by smallpox.

Today I witnessed the funeral service for Cardinal Visconti (*Antonio Eugenio Visconti, who had died on March 4*) at the Church of Santi Ambrogio e Carlo al Corso. Since the Papal chapel choir were singing, we went there, at High Mass, to cleanse our ears for tomorrow. A Requiem was sung by two sopranos, the strangest thing one could hear. Note that there was neither organ nor any other music.

And what a tiresome instrument the organ is; I was struck by the thought last night in the choir of Saint Peter's, where it accompanied the singing at Vespers; it blends so poorly with the human voice, and is so powerful. How charming the music of the Sistine Chapel is, by contrast, where the voices are unaccompanied.

The weather has been overcast, and mild for the past few days. The almond trees have mostly finished blooming, and are now green, with only a few blossoms still

visible at the top. The peach trees follow, their beautiful colour adorning the gardens. Viburnum tinus (*laurestine*) is blooming on all the ruins, the dwarf-elder bushes in the hedges are showing fresh shoots, and others which I failed to recognise are also in bloom. The walls and roofs are greening, and wildflowers are appearing on some. From my new study, to which I have moved because we are expecting Tischbein back from Naples, I have a varied view of countless little gardens, and the rear galleries of many houses. It is quite delightful.

I have started doing a little modelling in clay. As far as knowledge is concerned, I proceed very clearly and confidently, but in the active application of it, I remain a little confused. That is how things are for me, and all my brethren alike.

Rome, Friday, March 14th

There is nothing to be thought about, or done here next week; one must go with the festive flow. After Easter, I shall see what remains, tie up any loose ends, settle my debts, pack my things, and set off with Kayser. If everything goes as I hope and plan, I shall be in Florence at the end of April. You will hear from me again in the meantime.

It was strange that, due to external circumstances, I was obliged to adopt various measures which involved me in fresh relationships, thereby making my stay in Rome ever more pleasant, useful, and happy. Indeed, I can say that I have enjoyed the greatest satisfaction of my life in these last eight weeks, and now at least have a highest thermometer reading by means of which I can, henceforth, determine the temperature of my inner being.

This week, despite the foul weather, has passed off well. On Sunday, we heard a motet by Palestrina in the Sistine Chapel. On Tuesday, we were fortunate enough to hear various parts of the Holy Week music sung in a hall in honour of a foreign lady. We thus listened in utmost comfort and, having sung it so often at the piano, were able to confirm our preliminary impressions. It is an incredibly great, but simple work of art, whose ever-renewed performance could probably not have been preserved anywhere else but in this place, and under these circumstances. On closer hearing, of course, most of the vulgar tradition that considers it marvellous and unprecedented is found to be worthless, yet with all this, it remains something extraordinary, and a completely new concept to me. Kayser will one day be able to give you an account of it. He will be granted the privilege of listening to a rehearsal in the chapel, something which no one else is allowed to attend.

In addition, this week I modelled a foot in clay, after a prior study of the bones and muscles, and my teacher praised me. Anyone who modelled the entire body in this way would be considerably wiser; in Rome, of course, with all the necessary aids, and a

good deal of expert advice. I now possess a cast of a skeletal foot, a beautiful piece of anatomy done from Nature, half a dozen casts of the finest antique feet, and some poorer ones — some for me to copy, some to remind me what to avoid — and then I can consult Nature also. In every villa I enter, I find an opportunity to look at these appendages; the paintings show me what painters have designed and achieved. Three or four artists visit my room daily, whose advice and comments I make use of, though among them, after closer observation, Heinrich Meyer's advice and assistance are the most helpful. If a vessel was unable to progress with so favourable a following wind, it must either lack sails or be steered by a crazed helmsman. Having gained a general overview of art, I needed now to approach individual aspects of it, with attention and diligence. It is pleasant to make progress even on an endless journey.

I continue to wander about, observing things I have neglected. Yesterday, for the first time, I visited Raphael's Villa (*destroyed in 1849, the Casino di Raffaello, or Casino Olgiati, a 16th-century building in the Villa Borghese gardens, was believed to have been inhabited or decorated by Raphael*) where, at the side of his lover, he preferred the enjoyment of life to all art and fame. It is a sacred monument. Prince Doria (*Andrea IV Doria Pamphilj Landi*) has acquired it, and seems to intend to treat it as it deserves to be treated. Raphael portrayed his lover twenty-eight times on the wall in all sorts of dresses and costumes; even in the historical compositions, the women resemble her. The location of the house is very beautiful. It will be pleasanter to describe it verbally than write a description here. One must cover all the detail. Then, I visited Villa Albani (*on Via Salaria*) and just had a general look around. It was a glorious day.

It rained heavily last night, but now the sun is shining again, and there's a paradise outside my window. The almond tree is completely green, the peach blossoms are already starting to fall, and the lemon blossoms are bursting open at the top of the tree.

My imminent departure from here deeply saddens three people. They say they will never again find what they have possessed in me; I shall part from them with sorrow. In Rome I have found myself; for the first time I have been truly happy, in control, and in harmony with myself, and as such, these three people, in different ways and to varying degrees, have known, possessed, and enjoyed my company and myself.

Rome, Saturday, March 22

Today I will not visit Saint Peter's, but write a little something. Holy Week, with its wonders and afflictions, is now over; tomorrow we receive a blessing, and then my thoughts will turn to a different life completely.

Through the favour and effort of some good friends, I was able to see and hear everything; in particular, permission to view 'the washing of the feet', and 'the feeding of pilgrims', was obtained though only through persistent urging and pressure.

The chapel music is unimaginably beautiful. Especially Allegri's 'Miserere', and the 'Improperia' so-called, the reproaches that the crucified God makes against his people. They are sung early on Good Friday. The moment when the Pope, stripped of all his splendour, descends from the throne to venerate the Cross, while everybody else remains in place and is silent, and the choir begins: 'Populus meus, quid feci tibi?' ('My people, what have I done to you?'), is one of the most beautiful moments of all these remarkable acts of devotion. All of this shall be presented to you by word of mouth, and Kayser will bring you whatever of the music he can. I enjoyed everything that was to be enjoyed, as regards the various services, as I desired, and reflected silently on the rest. Nothing had any great effect on me, one might say, nothing truly impressed me, but I admired it all, for it must be said of the participants that they have thoroughly mastered the Christian tradition. As regards the Pope's involvement, especially in the Sistine Chapel, every aspect of Catholic worship that might otherwise seem uncongenial is performed with great taste and perfect dignity, though these qualities can only be present in places where the arts have been exercised in full for centuries.

The details are too numerous to recount now. Had I not, given the inducement, kept quiet meanwhile, and trusted myself to a longer stay, I might have been ready to leave next week. But this suits me best. I have used the time for further extensive study, and the period of my life I had anticipated, has been completed and draws to a close. It is always a strange feeling, of course, to depart suddenly from the path one has been striding down with such vigour, but one must adjust to it, and not make too much of it. In every major departure lie the seeds of madness; one must be careful not to let things fester or brood over them.

I have received some fine drawings from Naples, from Christoph Kniep, the artist who accompanied me to Sicily. They are some of the delightful, lovely fruits of my journey, and will please you; for what one can place before someone's eyes, provides the best witness. Some of them, judged by their colour, have turned out quite exquisitely, and you will scarcely believe the world is so beautiful.

I can say this much: I have become ever happier in Rome, and my pleasure grows with each passing day; and if it might seem sad that I should leave now, when I am most deserving of a longer stay, it is nevertheless a great comfort that I have been able to remain long enough to have attained this state of mind.

March 23, Easter Sunday

The Lord Christ has just risen, amidst dreadful noise, the castle firing its cannon, all the bells ringing, and everywhere the sound of firecrackers, flares, and rifle-volleys, at eleven in the morning.

March 1788 – Later Notes

I recall that Saint Philip Neri often made it his duty to visit the seven principal churches of Rome, thereby giving clear proof of his fervour as regards devotion. It must be noted here, however, that a pilgrimage to these churches is required of every pilgrim arriving for the Jubilee and, due to the remote location of these stations, is equivalent to a further strenuous journey if the pilgrimage is to be completed in a day.

The seven churches are: Saint Peter in the Vatican, Saint Mary Major, Saint Lawrence Outside the Walls, Saint Sebastian Outside the Walls, Saint John Lateran, the Basilica of the Holy Cross in Jerusalem, and Saint Paul Outside the Walls.

Local devotees also engage in the practice during Holy Week, especially on Good Friday. Since the pleasure of physical exercise is added to the spiritual benefit that these souls acquire and enjoy, through the associated religious indulgence, the purpose and end are rendered even more appealing.

Those who, after completing their pilgrimage, enter, at last, the gates of Saint Paul Outside the Walls, bearing the appropriate credentials, receive a ticket there, allowing them to participate in a public feast, held for the pious at the Casino di Villa Mattei (*now re-named the Villa Celimontana, lying in the valley between the Caelian and Aventine hills*) on certain days. Those admitted receive a collation of bread and wine, accompanied by cheese or eggs; they dine in the garden, primarily in the small amphitheatre located there. Opposite, in the Casino, high society gathers: cardinals, prelates, princes, and lords, to enjoy the spectacle, and contribute their donations to that of the Mattei family.

I watched a procession of boys, about ten to twelve years old, arrive in pairs, dressed not in clerical garb, but as one might expect apprentice craftsmen to appear on a feast day, in clothes of identical colour and cut; there must have been forty of them. They sang, piously, and recited their litanies to themselves, as they walked along quietly and chastely.

An old man of robust, artisan bearing walked alongside them, apparently ordering and directing the whole procession. It was striking to see the well-dressed line, as they passed, joined by half a dozen beggar-like children, ragged and barefoot, who nevertheless progressed with the same discipline and decorum. Enquiry revealed that the man, a shoemaker by trade and childless, had felt compelled, at one time, to take

a poor boy under his wing, as his apprentice, clothing him with the help of other benefactors, and guiding him on his journey. By setting such an example, he had succeeded in persuading other master craftsmen to take in children, in a similar manner, whom he then took it upon himself to promote along with his own apprentice. In this way, a small group had formed, whom he constantly encouraged to perform pious acts, so as to avoid a harmful state of idleness on Sundays and holidays, even requiring them to visit the seven widely-separated churches in a single day. In this way, the pious institution had continued to expand. He maintains the meritorious pilgrimages, and since more and more flock to such a clearly useful institution than can be accommodated, he uses this means to arouse wider charity by including the children who still need to be cared for and clothed in his procession, thereby always succeeding in obtaining sufficient donations to provide for both.

While I was being informed of all this, one of the older, boys approached us, offered a plate, and, with well-chosen words, asked, humbly, for a donation for the naked and shoeless. He received a generous contribution, not only from ourselves, foreign visitors moved by their plight, but also from the otherwise-stingy Romans who stood nearby, who, in addition to a modest donation, added a pious weight of words in blessing and recognition of the lad's merit.

People were made aware that the pious 'father' of these children always allowed his pupils to benefit from the donations, after taking part in the pilgrimage, so there was never a lack of reasonable income for his noble purpose.

Rome, April 10

I am still in Rome physically, though not emotionally. As soon as I had made the decision to leave, I lost all interest, and would have preferred to have gone two weeks ago. Actually, I am staying for Christoph Kayser's sake and for Friedrich Bury's. The former still has to complete some studies that he can only undertake here in Rome, and collect various musical scores; the latter still has to finalise the drawing for a painting based on my design, and he needs my advice on the matter. But I have set April 21st or 22nd as my departure date.

Rome, April 11th.

The days pass, and I can do nothing further. I scarcely take the time to view things anymore; honest Meyer is still with me, and I am enjoying his instructive company for one last time. If I did not have Kayser with me, I would have brought him along. If I had only had his assistance for a year, I would have progressed far enough for my

satisfaction. In particular, he would have helped me overcome, and soon, all my scruples as regards drawing heads.

This morning I was with my good friend Meyer at the French Academy, where casts of the finest statues of antiquity are housed together. How could I express the feeling I had there, as if offering my farewell? In such company, one becomes more than one is; one feels that the most valuable thing one can concern oneself with is the human form, which one perceives here in all its manifold splendour. Yet who, at such a sight, does not immediately feel their own inadequacy? Even prepared for the moment, one stands annihilated. I had clarified the principles of proportion, anatomy, and natural poise for myself, to some extent, but there it struck me, all too clearly, that form ultimately encompasses everything: the purposefulness, proportion, character, and beauty of human limbs.

Rome, April 14th.

The confusion here could not be greater! As I continued working on that cast of a foot, it dawned on me that I ought to tackle 'Tasso' directly, and my thoughts immediately turned to him — a welcome companion for the upcoming journey. Meanwhile, packing is taking place, and it is only at such a moment that one realises, suddenly, the mass of what one has gathered and dragged around behind one.

April – Later Notes

My correspondence of the last few weeks offered little of significance; my situation was too complicated, caught between art and distant friends, between achievement and aspiration, between a familiar present and a future I needed to adjust to once more. In such circumstances, my letters could contain little of interest; the anticipated joy of seeing my old, tried friends again was only mutedly expressed, while the pain of parting was barely concealed. Therefore, in these belated notes, I must summarise a great deal, and include only what has been preserved for me, from that time, partly through documents and mementos, and partly from memory

Tischbein was still in Naples, even though he had repeatedly announced that he would return in the Spring. Otherwise, he was easy to live with, but that quirk of his became tiresome after a while. He left his plans in a state of vagueness, often causing others inconvenience and displeasure, though without any real ill-intent. This was the case with me, also; since he had seemed about to return, I had to change my accommodation, so we could all be comfortably settled, and as the upper floor of the

house was becoming vacant, I had not hesitated to rent and move in, so that he would find everything ready for him on the lower floor, upon his arrival.

The upper rooms were similar to the lower, but the rear had the advantage of a most delightful view over the garden and others of the neighbourhood which, since the house was a corner house, extended in all directions.

Here one could see the most diverse plots, separated regularly by walls, and maintained and planted, in endless variety. To glorify this verdant and blooming paradise, simple elegant architecture was evident everywhere: garden houses, balconies, terraces, even, on the higher houses to the rear, open loggias, amidst all the tree and plant species of the area.

In our garden, an elderly clergyman tended a number of well-maintained orange and lemon trees, of moderate height, planted in ornate earthenware vases. They enjoyed the open air in summer but were taken indoors during the winter. Once perfectly ripe, the fruits were picked carefully, each individually wrapped in soft paper, packed, and shipped. They are popular in the trade due to their exceptional quality. Such an orangery is treated like capital by middle-class families, earning them a certain interest each year.

The same windows from which, while undisturbed one could contemplate the gracious scene, and under the clearest skies, also provided excellent light for viewing works of art. Kniep had just sent, as agreed, several watercolour drawings, executed from outlines he had sketched during our journey through Sicily, which now, bathed in the most favourable light, brought joy to, and elicited admiration from, all who visited and viewed them. Perhaps no one has achieved a better clarity and airiness of composition than Kniep, who has devoted himself so wholeheartedly to the task. Viewing these drawings was truly enchanting, for one felt as if one were seeing and experiencing again the dampness of the sea, the blue shadows of the rocks, the yellowish-red hues of the mountains, and the background distances fading into the most brilliant of skies. But not only were the drawings favoured by the light; any painting on the easel, in that same location, appeared more effective and striking. I remember how, on several occasions as I entered the room, such an image seemed to magically confront me.

The secret of favourable or unfavourable, direct or indirect, atmospheric lighting had not yet been fully explored at that time, but the effect was certainly felt and admired, though regarded as merely accidental and inexplicable.

My new apartment now provided an opportunity to arrange, in pleasant order and good light, a number of plaster casts that had gradually accumulated around me, and I finally enjoyed those things, which are truly worth possessing. When, as is the case

in Rome, one is constantly surrounded by sculptures created by the ancients, one feels in the presence of Nature as if before something infinite and unfathomable. The impression of the sublime, the beautiful, however beneficial it may be, unsettles us; we long to put our feelings, our perceptions, into words. But to do so, we first have to recognise, understand, and comprehend; we begin to classify, to distinguish, to order, and even this we find, if not impossible, then extremely difficult, and thus we finally return to contemplative and appreciative admiration.

This, above all, is the most decisive effect of all works of art: that they transport us to the time and situation of the individuals who produced them. Surrounded by antique statues, one feels immersed in a vibrant natural world; one becomes aware of the diversity of human form, and one is ultimately returned to the purest state of human existence, thereby making the viewer themself feel alive and purely human. Even clothing, if harmonising with Nature and even, to some degree, emphasising the form, is beneficial in a general sense. In enjoying such surroundings, daily, in Rome, one simultaneously develops a yearning for such works of art; one desires to place those creations near oneself, and good plaster casts, as the truest facsimiles, provide the best opportunity for doing so. When one opens one's eyes in the morning, one feels moved by the most exquisite things; all one's thoughts and feelings are accompanied by admirable forms, and it becomes impossible to relapse into barbarism.

The Juno Ludovisi (*the marble head, now in the Palazzo Altemps, Museo Nazionale Romano, with a number of casts housed elsewhere*) claimed first place among us, all the more highly valued and revered because the original is only rarely seen, and then only by chance, and so one considered it a stroke of luck to have a cast of the work constantly before one's eyes; for none of our contemporaries, standing before it for the first time, claimed to be equal to the sight.

Several smaller casts of Juno stood beside it, for comparison, and most notably various busts of Jupiter and, alongside other things, a fine old cast of the Medusa Rondanini (*the original is now in the Glyptothek in Munich*); a wondrous work which, expressing the dissonance between life and death, pleasure and pain, exerts an ineffable influence on us like any other deep symbol.

I must also mention a Hercules Anax (*Hercules as king or leader*), represented as being as strong and tall as intelligent and gentle, and then a most beloved Mercury, the originals of both of which are now in England (*the British Museum houses a number of original representations of both subjects*).

Half-height works, and earthenware casts of some beautiful items, including Egyptian ones taken from the summit of the great obelisk, and other fragments some of which were of marble, stood neatly lined up all around.

I speak of these treasures, which were housed in the new apartment for only a few weeks, like someone contemplating his will, who gazes at the possessions around him with composure, yet also with emotion. Issues of inconvenience, effort and expense, and a certain awkwardness in such matters, prevented me from immediately consigning the most prized items to Germany. The Juno Ludovisi I intended for the noble Angelika, a few others for nearby artists, some still belonged to the Tischbein family's possessions, and other items were to remain untouched and be used in his own way by Bury, who moved into the apartment after me.

In writing this, my thoughts return to the earliest part of my youth, and various occasions are evoked that acquainted me, initially, with such subjects, arousing interest and exuberant enthusiasm in a completely unformed mind, which resulted in my boundless longing for Italy.

In those days, I noticed little that was sculptural in my hometown, Frankfurt am Main; in was in Leipzig, that a cast of the Dancing Faun (*the original is in the Uffizi Gallery, Florence*), first made a deep impression upon me, seemingly stamping while about to strike together the cymbals he clasps, one in each hand, such that I can still imagine the individual cast in its setting. After a long while, I was plunged suddenly into the full ocean of art when I found myself amidst the Mannheim collection in its well-lit hall.

Afterwards, makers of plaster casts arrived in Frankfurt, having crossed the Alps with some of their original output, which they then made moulds of, selling the original casts for a reasonable price. Thus, I acquired a rather good head of Laocoön, a cast of Niobe's daughters, a small head later mistaken for a Sappho, and a few other pieces. These excellent pieces were a kind of secret antidote, working on me when things weak, false, and affected threatened to gain the upper hand. But in reality, I always felt the inner pain of an unsatisfied longing, a yearning for the unknown, often subdued, yet always rekindled. Great, therefore, were the painful feelings when, on leaving Rome, I was obliged to part with what I had so fervently hoped for and had finally won.

My theory of the principles governing plant organisation, which resulted from my observations in Sicily, occupied me constantly, as is the way with inclinations that seize hold of one's mind while simultaneously proving consistent with one's abilities. I visited the botanical garden, which, limited in what it offered, in its outdated state, exerted little charm, nevertheless had a favourable influence on me, for what I found there seemed new and unexpected to me. I therefore took the opportunity to gather some of the rarer plants around me, as well as those I had cultivated from seeds and kernels, and continue my observations.

Several friends wished to share news of one item in particular, after I left. I had planted an already somewhat mature pine sapling, a presage of the future tree, in Angelika's garden, where it grew to a considerable height over many years. Visitors who had met me there, had a great deal to say about it, much to our mutual amusement, as well as of the memories of my visit. Sadly, the new owner, who occupied the house (*at Via Sistina 72, which Anton Mengs had owned prior to Angelika and her husband's occupancy*) after the death of that invaluable friend of mine (*she died in 1807*), found it inappropriate that an out-of-place pine tree was flourishing in his flowerbed. Later, well-meaning travellers who inquired about it found the spot empty, and the traces of at least one gracious existence extinguished.

More fortunate were some palms I had grown from date pits. I had observed their remarkable development by sacrificing several specimens, from time to time; the remaining, newly-sprouted ones I gave to a Roman friend, who planted them in their garden on Sistina Street, where they are still alive, having grown to the height of a man, as a distinguished traveller had the grace to assure me. May they not become a nuisance to their owners, and may they continue to flourish, grow, and thrive in my memory!

On the list of things still be seen before leaving Rome, two final items were quite different in character: the Cloaca Maxima and the Catacombs of Saint Sebastian. The former certainly heightened the sense of the colossal that Piranesi grants us; however, my visit to the latter did not go so well, for the first steps into that murky space immediately aroused such unease in me that I promptly re-emerged into the daylight, and waited there, in an unfamiliar, and remote part of the city, for the return of the rest of the group, who, more composed than I, were able to tolerate the conditions there, calmly.

In that great work 'Roma Sotterranea', by Antonio Bosio (*published posthumously in 1632*) I later studied at length everything I would have seen there, or perhaps failed to see, and believed myself to be sufficiently compensated by doing so.

I undertook another pilgrimage, however, of more benefit and consequence: it was to the Academy of San Luca to show my veneration for the skull of Raphael, which is kept there as a relic since it was removed from the tomb of that extraordinary man, which had been opened during a building project, and brought there. (*Raphael's actual skull was exhumed, in 1833, from the Pantheon, as noted earlier*)

A truly wondrous thing! A skull so beautifully formed and rounded, without a trace of those bumps, bulges, and lumps which, observed on other skulls, became so significant in Franz Joseph Gall's later theory. I could not tear myself away from the sight, and remarked as I was leaving how important it might be for lovers of Nature

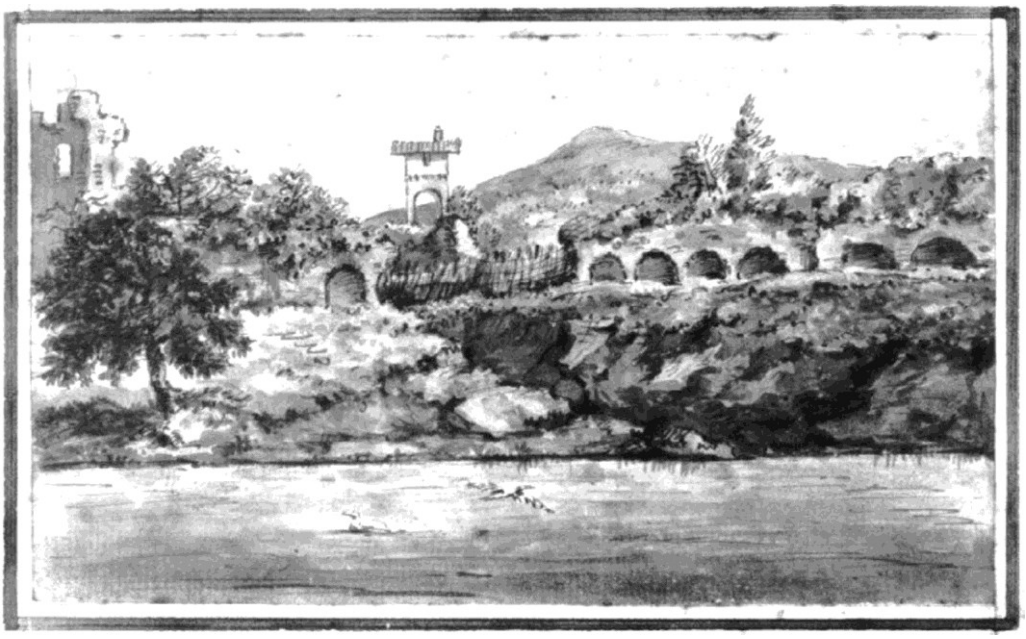
and Art to view a cast of it, if it could be arranged. Joseph Reiffenstein, my influential friend, gave me hope of that being possible, and fulfilled it later by sending a cast to me in Germany, the sight of which still often inspires me to the most varied of contemplations.

The charming image, by Raphael's hand, of Saint Luke, to whom the mother of God appears so that he might depict her in her full divine majesty and grace (*see earlier*), offered a most pleasing sight. In the painting, Raphael portrayed himself, still young, standing at a distance, watching the Evangelist at work. One could hardly express and profess a more graceful calling to a profession to which one feels summoned.

Pietro da Cortona, it is said, was formerly the owner of this work and bequeathed it to the Academy. It is admittedly damaged and restored in places, but it remains a painting of considerable value.

During this time, however, I was subjected to a particular temptation that threatened to thwart my journey and bind me to Rome anew. Signore Antonio Rega, an artist and art-dealer, came from Naples to visit my friend Heinrich Meyer, announcing privately that he had arrived by ship, and was moored off the river-port of Ripa Grande, and that he invited Signore Meyer to come aboard. He explained that he had with him a significant antique statue, that of a dancer or muse, which, along with others, had stood in a niche in the courtyard of the Palazzo Caraffa di Colombrano, in Naples, for ages, and was considered a truly fine work. He wished to sell it, but discreetly, and therefore inquired whether Signore Meyer himself, or one of his trusted friends, might be willing to undertake the transaction. He offered the exquisite artwork at the very reasonable price of three hundred *zecchini*, a price that would undoubtedly have been set higher if there had not been reason to proceed with discretion, in consideration of both the seller and the buyer.

I was immediately informed of the matter, and we hurried to the landing-place, which was quite a distance from our house. Rega at once lifted the lid of a crate that was standing on deck, and we saw a charming little head, which had never parted from the rest of the statue, looking out from beneath carved curls of loose hair, and gradually, as was revealed bit by bit, a lovely, and lively statue, dressed in the most respectable attire, and only slightly damaged, one hand being perfectly preserved.



‘The Tiber downstream of Rome’ - Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (German, 1749–1832)
Klassik Stiftung Weimar, Museen (Inv. GGz/1280)
Digital reproduction · See Art. L. 111-1 CPI and § 68 UrhG

I immediately remembered having seen the statue in Naples, without suspecting that it would ever be offered for sale.

It occurred to me to say, for who would not have thought the same: ‘Indeed, if one spent a whole year digging, at great expense, and finally stumbled upon such a treasure, one would consider oneself extremely fortunate.’ We could hardly tear ourselves away from contemplating the piece, for we had probably never before seen such a well-preserved antiquity, in such an easily-restorable condition. So, we departed intending and promising to give a reply as soon as possible.

We were both engaged in a genuine struggle, for it seemed financially unwise, in many respects, for us to make the purchase; we therefore decided to report the situation to our good friend Angelika, as she was wealthy enough to do so and, through her connections in restoration work, and other related fields, sufficiently qualified to judge the statue’s value and the costs involved. Heinrich Meyer took on the task of informing her, as he had previously done regarding the painting by Daniele da Volterra, and we hoped for the best. However, the prudent wife, and even more so her frugal husband, declined the transaction, explaining that while they had invested considerable sums in paintings, they could by no means bring themselves to commit to buying statues.

After this negative answer, we were roused again to further consideration; the chance seemed quite unique; Meyer examined the treasure once more and convinced himself that the work, based on its overall characteristics, was, in all probability, of

ancient Greek origin, dating to a considerable time before Augustus, perhaps even to Hiero II of Syracuse.

I had sufficient credit to acquire an important work of art; Rega even seemed willing to receive payment in instalments, and there was a moment when I actually thought I now owned the statue, and was envisaging it displayed, well-lit, in my large salon.

But as is often the case in converting a passionate romantic inclination into a firm marriage contract, so it was here, and I could not undertake such a union without the advice and consent of our noble artistic collaborators, Antonio Zucchi and his well-intentioned wife Angelika, for it was a marriage in the idealistic sense, à la Pygmalion, and I cannot deny that the idea of possessing the thing had taken deep root in me. Indeed, as proof of how much I flattered myself as regards my artistic perception, I confess that I saw the event as a sign from the higher powers, who intended to keep me in Rome, and actively suppress the many reasons that had decided me on leaving.

Fortunately, we were already of an age when reason tends to support intellect in such cases, and so artistic inclination and acquisitiveness, and whatever else supported them — dialectic, and superstition — had to yield to the prudent guidance that our noble friend Angelika, full of both commonsense and goodwill, was inclined to direct our way. Through her representation, all the difficulties and concerns that stood in the way of such a transaction became clearly apparent. Private individuals, men devoted to the study of art and antiquity, were now intervening in the art market, and had aroused the jealousy of those traditionally entitled to transact such business. The difficulties of restoration were manifold, and it was questionable to what extent it would be executed fairly and honestly. Furthermore, even if everything went as smoothly as possible, obstacles could still arise regarding the export permit for such a work of art, preventing its despatch, and further difficulties might well be encountered concerning its passage, landing, and arrival back home. She said that professional art dealers disregarded such considerations, believing that both the effort and risk were acceptable within the wider context of the market, whereas an individual undertaking this kind of thing would inherently incur risk.

Through her advice, our desire, wish, and intention became gradually tempered, and weakened, though never entirely extinguished, especially since the work finally achieved great honour; for it currently stands in the Museo Pio-Clementino in a small, adjoining cabinet (*La Salle de la Muse*) connected to the main museum, where the floor is inlaid with a beautiful mosaic of masks and foliage. The remaining group of statues in that cabinet consists of: 1) a Crouching Venus seated on her left heel, at whose base the name of Bupalus (*the 6th-century BC, Greek sculptor from Chios*) is engraved; 2) a very fine little Ganymede; 3) the beautiful statue of a youth, to whom, I

know not if correctly, the name Adonis has been given; 4) a faun in Rosso Antico marble; 5) a Discobolus standing calmly at rest.

Visconti (*Ennio Quirino Visconti politician, antiquarian, art historian, and Papal Prefect of Antiquities*) described the sculpture in the third volume of his '*Museo Pio-Clementino*' (*1790*), dedicated to the aforementioned museum, in his own manner, and it is depicted on the thirtieth plate of that volume; thus, every art lover can join us in regretting that we did not succeed in bringing it to Germany, and adding it to one of our great national collections.

It should be noted that I, quite naturally, did not forget that charming Milanese woman during my farewell visits. Over time, I had heard many pleasant things about her: how she had become ever closer to Angelika and how she behaved most becomingly in the noble society she had entered. The suspicion and wish were also nurtured that a wealthy young man, who was on excellent terms with Signore and Signora Zucchi, was perhaps not unmoved by her charms, and might not be averse to pursuing a more serious intention.

I found her in bright morning dress, just as I had first seen her at Castel Gandolfo; she received me with a gracious openness and, with natural elegance, expressed most amiably her repeated thanks for the concern I had shown. 'I shall never forget,' she said, 'that, recovering from my distress, I heard your name mentioned among the names of beloved and revered people enquiring after my health; I enquired myself several times as to whether it was indeed true. You continued your enquiries for several weeks until at last my brother was able to visit you and thank you on both our behalf. I do not know if he conveyed it as I instructed him; I would gladly have visited with him, if it had been appropriate.' She asked which route home I intended to take, and on telling her of my plans, she replied: 'You are fortunate to be so wealthy that you have no need to deny yourself anything; the rest of us must accept the place God and his saints assign to us. For a long while now, I have watched the ships coming and going, unloading and loading, from my window; it is entertaining, and I sometimes wonder, where do they all come from and where are they going?' The windows overlooked the steps of the Porto di Ripetta (*the stepped harbour built in 1704, and destroyed in the late nineteenth century*), and the activity there was quite lively.

She spoke of her brother with tenderness, being pleased at managing his household properly, and making it possible for him, despite a modest salary, to still invest something in a profitable business venture; in fact, she allowed me to become quite familiar with her circumstances. I enjoyed her talkativeness; for I actually cut a rather peculiar figure, being compelled to relive, swiftly, every moment of our tender relationship from the very first to the very last. Then her brother entered, and the farewell concluded in friendly, measured prose.

When I reached the door, ready to depart, I found my carriage lacking its coachman, whom an active lad had run off to find. She leaned out of the window of the mezzanine floor which they occupied in the stately building; it was not very high up, such that it looked possible to stretch out an arm, and touch hands.

'They object to taking me from you, you see,' I exclaimed, 'they know, it seems, that I am reluctant to leave.'

What she replied, what I countered, the course of that most graceful conversation, which, free from all constraints, revealed the inner lives of two people who were only half-consciously in love, I do not wish to desecrate through its repetition, and my retelling; it was a wonderful, accidentally-initiated, laconic, concluding confession of a most innocent and tender mutual affection, elicited by an inner impulse, which is why it has never left my mind and soul.

My departure from Rome was to be announced in a particularly solemn manner; three nights prior (*April 20th*), the full moon had stood in the clearest sky, and the spell, so often felt before, cast on the immense city was now, as a result, most intensely palpable. The great illuminated masses, clear as if lit by mild daylight, their contrasting depths of shadow, penetrated, here and there, by reflected rays, and hinting at individual details, rendered me like to a being inhabiting some simpler, grander world.

After two more days, spent in a distracted, and sometimes embarrassed state, I passed some time alone with a few friends. Having wandered the length of the Corso, doubtless for the last time, I climbed the Capitoline Hill, which rose like a palace of faery amidst a wasteland. The equestrian statue of Marcus Aurelius brought to mind the Commander in Mozart's 'Don Juan', and made it clear to the wanderer that he was involved in something unusual. Nevertheless, I descended the rear staircase. Quite dark, and casting a sombre shadow, the Arch of Septimius Severus stood before me, the otherwise familiar objects appearing strange and ghostly, amidst the solitude of the Via Sacra. And as I approached the sublime remains of the Coliseum and peered through the grating into its locked interior, I cannot deny that a shiver ran through me, hastening my return.

Everything which is on a massive scale produces a unique impression, simultaneously sublime yet comprehensible, and amidst such I drew up, as it were, an incalculable summation of my entire stay. This, deeply and profoundly felt, in an agitation of spirit, produced a mood in me that I may call heroic-elegiac, from which an elegy sought to rise and take shape in poetic form.

How too could Ovid's elegy not return to my mind, at such a moment, he who destined for exile left Rome on just such a moonlit night? 'Cum repeto noctem!' (*'When I recall that night!'*) his poem of recollection, composed far away on the Black Sea

shore, in a state of mourning and lamentation, would not leave my mind. I repeated the verses, which rose, vividly, in memory, but which, in truth, confused my thoughts, and prevented me creating my own poem; which even when attempted later, never came to fruition.

‘Cum subit illius tristissima noctis imago,
Quae mihi supremum tempus in urbe fuit,
Cum repeto noctem, qua tot mihi cara reliqui,
Labitur ex oculis nunc quoque gutta meis…

Iamque quiescebant voces hominumque canumque
Lunaque nocturnos alta regebat equos.
Hanc ego suspiciens et ad hanc Capitolia cernens,
quae nostro frustra iuncta fuere Lari….’

‘When that saddest of memories comes to mind,
Of that night, my last hour in the city;
When I recall that night, relinquishing so much
So dear to me; tears, even now, fall from my eyes…

For, then, the cries of men and dogs grew silent:
The Moon, on high, steered her midnight course;
I, gazing at her and, by her light, the Capitol,
To which my spirit was joined now, in vain…’

(*Ovid: Tristia, Book I: III, Lines 1-4 and 27-30*)

The End of Part X, and of Goethe’s ‘Italian Journey’