CHAPTER IX

1842–43

FOREIGN TRAVEL

Soon after my return home from Taymouth it was settled that I should go abroad and spend the winter in Rome. My father asked Howson to remain as my tutor till I should come of age, whilst he also looked out for a medical man to accompany me on the Continent. In this capacity it was fortunate for me that he secured the services of a man who became one of my dearest and most intimate friends during the remainder of his life, and for a very long period of my own. This was Dr. W. F. Cumming, a younger son of the Cummings of Logie, a small estate on the banks of the Findhorn in Morayshire. He had been an army surgeon in India, where his health had broken down, and he had retired on a pension from the East India Company. He had spent much of his time in travelling all over Europe, in Egypt, in America, and in the West Indies, and had published a pleasant book called 'Notes of a Wanderer in Search of Health,' about which and some of its peculiarities there was endless chaff between us. He had previously travelled with my cousin, young John Campbell of Islay, and was well known and well loved by all that family. I had myself only seen him once before he came to me, but I soon became strongly attached to him, as everyone did who came to know him well. With a strong, simple, and manly character, he had a somewhat stiff and formal manner on first acquaintance, and a deep bass voice like a trombone. This, together with a tall,

thin, and very gaunt figure, a slow and very distinct pronunciation, and a punctilious regard for the most correct grammar, so often compromised by slovenly colloquialisms, gave a rather formidable first impression. But the moment the ice was broken, he was always felt to be the most delightful of companions, full of playfulness, and with a fund of quotations from Shakespeare and from Pope. He soon became as much attached to me as I was to him, though neither of us ever said one single word of compliment or sentiment to each other. I soon found that 'the doctor' was known in every capital of Europe where there was any English society, and that he was always hailed with a heartiness which showed no common recognition of his fine but very peculiar character.

It is strange to me now to remember how absolutely different everything then was in the life of travelling from that which it has since become. Our first step was to buy in London a large yellow chariot carriage, roomy enough to hold three sitting side by side. Fortunately, we had all thin figures, and what the doctor always called a 'dilly' was procured, which held our party of three quite comfortably. In this carriage we posted to Dover, and from Calais posted all the way, first to Paris, and then through France to Marseilles. It is needless to give any details, though the kind of travelling, alike in its inconveniences and in its delights, is unknown to this generation.

There are, however, some incidents in that journey which are deeply graven in my memory. The first was the strong feeling of aversion with which I saw Paris. I had been reading much about the great Revolution, and I had a vivid sense of the hideous exhibition of human passion and wickedness which had been developed then. This feeling was so strong in me that it poisoned any pleasure I might have had in the beauty of the city or of its contents. It pursued me when I went to see Fontainebleau and Versailles; the vision of Marie Antoinette, as described in the

passionate and touching oratory of Burke, floated before me when I looked at the Petit Trianon, and an intense hatred and disgust of the brutality of her gaolers and her butchers filled me to the brim. The only thing I saw with pleasure was the Forest of Fontainebleau, where the stately beeches and oaks recalled to me the loveliest scenes at home. In the beautiful glades of that forest I felt as if I had escaped for a moment from the polluted atmosphere of revolutionary France.

During our journey southward as far as Lyons, I was disappointed by the tameness of the scenery, unrelieved by the woods and hedgerows which redeem the flattest scenery in England; whilst the long, straight chaussée roads, bordered by a wearisome perspective of Lombardy poplars, were a painful contrast to the winding woodland ways by which I had been accustomed to post at home. We took the journey by easy stages, some fifty or sixty miles a day, and rested every night at a comfortable inn. A lovely though small cathedral at Auxerre—and this only—still dwells in my memory.

Any tedium in our journey was relieved by some reading, and by many games of chess, in which the doctor and I were about fairly matched. At Lyons I was laid up with a severe bronchial cold, which gave the doctor his first opportunity of exercising his professional skill upon me. He administered what has never been given to me either before or since—namely, a dose of morphia, under which my cold disappeared. Of course I saw nothing of Lyons, except that on the first day of our arrival we visited the citadel. There for the first time I saw a massive bit of Roman masonry, with the beautiful herring-bone brickwork which is so characteristic of their work. It was like feeling the first sensible touch of Roman power, and that is one of the most interesting experiences of life. Fresh from the pages of Gibbon and of Arnold, I looked with reverence on the remains of one of the great settlements in Gaul. But the cold,

raw, and foggy weather natural to the confluence of two great rivers determined us to hurry on to the sunny South. Accordingly, our 'dilly' was embarked overnight on one of the steamers for Avignon, and very early in the morning, before sunrise, we went on board. There the sight of two bearded Frenchmen kissing and hugging each other, like two big babies, threw me into such convulsions of laughter that I had to rush upstairs from the cabin to escape observation. There had been floods for some time both in the Rhone and in the Saône, and the flat country on the left bank of the united rivers was more or less under water as far as the eye could reach.

Soon after we started on the rapid and sweeping waters of the Rhone, the eastern sky began to be deeply tinted with those wonderful colours which have been one of the favourite images of poetry since poetry was born. I was watching them intently, so different from the equally glorious but very different colours of the sunset. The wintry branches of the trees in the flooded country showed a rich and warm brown against the rising bands of crimson. A low margin of deep purple-blue began to be distinguishable from a bank of unillumined clouds. Then suddenly I saw rising out of the low purple rim a small but conspicuous projection with a sharp conical point, the whole very much like the outline of a shark's tooth. I saw it was a hill, but it was impossible to judge of the distance or the size. So, going up to the steersman, with whom I was nearly alone on deck, I asked him if he knew what hill that was. His answer was prompt: 'Monsieur, c'est Mont Blanc.' Impressed as I was at the time by this great interest added to the peculiarity and beauty of the scene, I am not sure that I have not been even more impressed ever since by the recollection of it. Not often have we such an object-lesson read to us on what we call the stupendous mountains of the world. I stood gazing on Mont Blanc with intense interest till it was

hid from our view as we descended the Valley of the Rhone. One thing indeed very remarkable about its appearance was that, however small and insignificant it might be on the scale of the earth's surface, it was indeed the 'monarch of mountains' in Europe. Not one of the other Alpine summits, which in Switzerland look so nearly rivals—not one of them was even visible against the dawn of that splendid sunrise. They were merged and dwarfed in one indistinguishable mass of smaller crumplings on the horizon.

It is at Avignon that a traveller from the North of Europe first breathes the balmy air and sees the glorious light and sunshine of the South. The rush into that change of climate from the cold raw fogs of Lyons was my first experience of a transition which has ever since made me feel almost an ecstasy of delight as often as I have made the journey. From Avignon we posted to Marseilles, reaching that city so late in the evening that my attention was much drawn to the constellation of Orion, from the great increase of brilliancy with which all the heavenly bodies are seen in the less vaporous atmosphere of the Mediterranean shores. Again embarking our 'dilly' aboard a steamer for Genoa, we took our passage by the same route.

I was enraptured by the intense blue of the Mediterranean, so entirely different from the colour of our own seas. I had admired much the green pellucid waters at Iona, and the surface reflections of any thin tint of blue. But the pure and soft cobalt of the Mediterranean was absolutely new to me. I sat all day looking into it over the side of the vessel, and at night I watched it not less intently on account of the beautiful luminosities which shone in the broken water of the paddle-wheels. Besides innumerable sparkles of light, there were great globes and balls of pale phosphorescent fire continually shining and disappearing. I did not then know to what cause this phenomenon was due, and it engaged all my curiosity and attention.

It is not a favourable way of seeing a new and beautiful coast, to see it from the sea. All the picturesqueness of details is wanting, both as to forms and as to colour. On the other hand, some general features are better seen in this way than in any other. Two of these features struck me much: the first was the stony nakedness of the great background of the Maritime Alps; and the other was the way in which all the old towns were perched on the very tops of the lower and more wooded range. A moment's reflection, however, explained the cause. This choice of situation was a relic of the military ages, when communities thought above all things of safety from the ravages of war, or from the attacks of pirates, in the case of coast towns.

The vessel reached Genoa during the night, and it was not until I came on deck on a sunny morning that I knew what it was to see an Italian city in its own brilliant atmosphere. I remember feeling literally dazzled, and on landing I was not less delighted by the incomparable street architecture of the Genoese palaces. Returning to the vessel, we pursued our way to Civita Vecchia, whence we posted to Rome. The approach to Rome from the west is not the most favourable. The country is without feature, and yet the elevation is so considerable that Rome is lower, and nothing but the upper half of the dome of St. Peter's is visible, till one comes close to the descent behind the Vatican. The only thing which delighted me in the drive was the evergreen scrub of myrtle, box, and other shrubs which covered most of the country. Its peculiar scent also attracted my attention, and do not all such odours so associated become delicious? Whenever in later life I have caught a chance whiff from a planted box-tree, that first drive in sunny Italy rises before me in the happy eyes of memory.

We spent three months in Rome, in a lodging in the Via Due Macelli, a street that runs westward out

of the Piazza di Spagna. Rome in the pontificate of Gregory XVI. was a very different place from the Rome of Leo XIII. and of King Humbert. The Government, though sleepy, was at least respectable. The city was quiet, and the people peaceable. There was none of the stir of life inseparable from a modern political capital. The society was chiefly foreign—foreign, I mean, to Italy. There was, as always, a large contingent from England, and a less considerable one from America. But during my visit there was not a single man or woman whose acquaintance exercised any influence upon me. My own aunt, Lady Charlotte Bury, with her only daughter by her second marriage, was then resident in Rome, and I had often pleasant evenings with them. To the last days of her existence she had great remains of her early beauty, an extraordinary charm of manner, and no small knowledge of literature and of art. The house of the American sculptor Story was also an agreeable resort. But on the whole my stay in Rome had but one great joy to me, and that was our drives in the Campagna. Neither architecture nor painting gave me one-half the same pleasure. I was soon tired by the galleries, but never tired of that wonderful plain to the east and south of Rome, which, with its exquisite colouring, backed by the soft blue outline of the Alban Hills, is at once the most interesting historically and the most beautiful view in Europe. I had imbibed a good deal of Arnold's passion for the history of Rome, and for that masterful people who had subdued the world. I used to gaze and gaze with intense delight on those outlines of hill and plain which were the daily vision of Cæsar and of Cicero, of Trajan and of the Antonines. Nor did I forget that although a holier land and a very different kind of landscape were the home of the New Testament, yet that view from Rome was the view on which St. Paul looked when he lived three years in the city, and taught, 'no man forbidding him.' I was never tired of driving to and fro on the Appian Way.

It must have been the teaching of Niebuhr reproduced in Arnold that led me habitually to go back in reverie to that earlier time when Rome was still a village on small, inconspicuous hills in the Campagna, and the Romans were only one among the tribes of Latium. I used to look with frequent and imaginative interest on that lovely mountain, 3,000 feet high, where the tribes went up to worship their own Jupiter Latiaris, and I used to wonder how Alba Longa may have looked from the future site of her imperial descendant. Yet I was young enough to be immensely amused by the fooleries of the carnival, to admire the long gay perspective of the Corso during that festival, with its balconies and windows like a garden of brilliant colours. The musical cry, 'Ecco fiori!' seems still ringing in my ears as I recall the scene, and I can smell the delicious violets—new to me in such richness and profusion.

As spring began we made an excursion to Tivoli and Albano. Near the site of Hadrian's Villa, at the foot of the hills, I saw for the first time the ground covered with violets, which seemed wild and entirely uncultivated. On the road above it I saw, also for the first time, fine specimens of the olive-tree, with the great trunks like enormous elephantine growths, grotesque, but beyond everything picturesque. Nothing in the way of vegetation had so delighted me. I admired not less the graceful curves of all the boughs and the twigs, and the subdued green and silver of its foliage. We drove for some miles up the Valley of Tivoli, and I was specially interested in some remains of cyclopean walls on the desolate mountain-slopes above the road. There was to me something most impressive in that kind of masonry, even when only fragments of it have survived, and when the nature and purpose of the building remain absolutely unknown.

The view of the Campagna from Tivoli is much less beautiful than the view of it from Rome. The plain is not vast enough to be sublime, and its western

boundary behind the Tiber is a line of poor and inconspicuous elevations. On the Alban Hills themselves, I admired most the long terraced road round the southern brim of the ancient crater which contains the Lake of Albano. Fine old ilexes overshadowed it, whilst the bright blue waters some hundreds of feet below, and partial glimpses of the northern Campagna through the evergreen foliage, made a combination which left a permanent impression upon me as one of the loveliest bits of scenery which I saw in Italy. I was delighted, too, with the small wild pink cyclamens which were coming up under the oak-copse which clothed the steep sides of the lake. There are no gregarious wild flowers in any part of Europe which are to be compared with our own hyacinths and primroses, but it is a pleasure always to meet with one which is new to our eyes.

Early in spring we re-embarked in our old 'dilly,' and posted by easy stages to Naples. Only two things on that journey linger in my memory—one is the copious and pellucid spring of water which gushes and rushes in river-like abundance out of the living rock by the side of the road near the site of the ancient Præneste; the other is the first sight I had of fireflies in the orange-garden at Mila de Gaeta. As regards the famous fountain, besides the wonderful beauty of the water, it has the interest of a natural phenomenon, which seems to mark and mock the fleeting life of human generations. If, as I believe, there is no doubt about the identification of that spring with the Bandusian fountain which is sung by Horace, it is impossible to look at the joyful welling of its waters out of their subterranean caverns, without thinking of the contrast with the life even of the most powerful empires. As regards the fireflies, I was delighted with their beauty, and did not fail to think of the profound mystery attaching to so small an organism being enabled to set up special vibrations in that incomprehensible medium which is the only vehicle of light.

It carried with it, too, a new expression of that sense of joy which is one of the great sources of our instinctive, though often our unconscious, pleasure in the aspects of Nature. The recollection of that orange-garden in a balmy Italian night, with the stars above and the happy fireflies below, is one which I often recall with immense pleasure.

We spent some weeks in Naples and its neighbourhood —one of special delight at Castellamare, in company with Mr. and Mrs. Callander of Craigforth and Ardkinglas. They were old friends of the doctor, and our nearest neighbours at Inveraray. She was a beautiful and very charming woman, a daughter of Lord Erskine, who had been our Minister at the Court of Dresden. Callander was a man who took a keen enjoyment in everything, and was especially excited when late one evening our Italian courier entered the room with the exclamation, 'Voila Mont Vesuve qui commence faire éruption.' It turned out, however, to be a false alarm, and so we escaped all chance of sharing the fate of the entombed city which lay so near us. As a sight, I was disappointed with Pompeii,—with the smallness of the rooms, and the lowness of the walls of the ancient houses. To me, the most touching and impressive sight in Pompeii was the paving-stones made of blocks of lava, and deeply rutted by the wheels of the ancient chariots. That was a visible and striking relic of the daily lives of a long vanished world.

But there was one thing that did not disappoint me, and that was the great culprit of that catastrophe—Vesuvius itself. The first sight of a living volcano is an epoch in one's life. The central crater was at that time about 300 feet deep, and by no means inactive. A small cone at the bottom was every now and then the seat of explosions, which threw up bombs or clouds of smoke to a very considerable elevation, whilst pungent vapours were often caught by gusts of wind, and enveloped us in their suffocating wreaths. The roaring, hissing, and bellowing which accom-

panied these discharges, and which echoed round the containing walls, seemed to me to be the most truly awful sounds I had ever heard. They carried with them the impression not only of unimaginable force, but of that force being uncontrollable and unforseeable in the manifestations of its energy. I could not help feeling that, for aught anyone could tell, the hot and sulphurous cake on which we stood might sink in a moment into the incandescent lavas which were undoubtedly boiling underneath us. I was therefore glad to get away from such an image of the infernal regions.

I can never adequately express the admiration with which I every day gazed on one or other of the exquisite views from the beautiful promontory between Castellamare and Sorrento. Monte St. Angelo is one of the most beautiful mountains in Europe, and every detail of its complicated structure—the ravines, the precipices, and the forest slopes—is beautiful in various degrees. There was one steep and narrow folding in its rocks very near the hotel, to which I often walked, to see the rich underwood of fine tall arbutus which covered the ground. The bark, the leaves, the flowers, and the berries, were all lovely in my eyes, to whom the plant was not absolutely new, but new in this robustness and perfection of growth, of foliage, of flower, and of fruit.

At that time there was no carriage-road to Amalfi. It was inaccessible except by difficult mule-tracks across the mountains. We therefore went to Salerno, and hired a rowing-boat to take us along the precipitous coast to that famous medieval nest, where tradition says that the Pandects of Justinian were discovered. Beautiful as every spot must be on that lovely coast, I was not attracted to Amalfi as even a conceivable residence. It requires robust health and accustomed limbs to live in a place where one cannot walk in any direction without climbing precipitous surfaces by steps cut in the living rock. A fine road has now been

cut from Salerno to Amalfi, and that road, which I have not seen, must be among the most beautiful in Europe.

My great preference for the aspects of Nature over the works of man had stood the test even of St. Peter's, as compared with the Campagna of Rome and the encircling mountains of the ancient Latium. But there was one scene in the Neapolitan region which tried this preference very hard, and that scene was the Temples of Pæstum, to which we drove in magnificent weather from Salerno. No other triumph of human architecture has ever had the same effect upon me. Those three solitary temples—perfect in external preservation, exquisite in a tint of golden yellow, standing in an absolutely deserted plain covered with a low growth of evergreen, of box and myrtle, with a fine strip of the ineffable Mediterranean blue on the horizon line to the east—are a sight never to be forgotten. It is true that in this case some of the greatest charms of Nature and of Art are inseparably blended. On the one hand, the colouring of Nature is magnificent. On the other hand, the buildings in themselves, and in their associations, are of surpassing interest. The largest of the three temples—dedicated to Poseidon the Sea-god—has stood in the simple majesty of its repose for not less than 2,300 years. It is the most perfect example existing in the world of the earliest Doric architecture of Greece. It is the relic of a people which, besides other claims upon our gratitude, was the first to teach the world how to colonize, as distinguished from merely conquering, other countries than their own. The absolute desolation of the surrounding plain, so far as human habitations are concerned, is a feature all the more striking when one knows that Pæstum was one of the most flourishing cities of Magna Græcia. But, after all, the interest centres in the grand, simple, and masterful masonry of the temple, with its noble and perfect columns and its wonderful expression of massiveness and repose.

Returning to Naples, we embarked in a steamer for

a short visit to Malta, stopping at Messina and at Syracuse on our way. In Stromboli I saw a small but very active volcano, and in Etna a mighty one, which seemed very nearly asleep. A fiery glow came from Stromboli, and only a long thin ribbon of smoke from Etna. But a mountain cone of 10,000 feet must always be a stupendous object.

Howson was more interested in Syracuse than I was, thinking as he did of Thucydides and the famous siege. There are no architectural remains worth seeing, but the great excavation of the open quarries is very curious.

At Malta I stayed only a few days, and was entertained with great honour by the officers of the 42nd Highlanders, whose Colonel was then Colonel Macdougall, a younger brother of Macdougall of Gallanach, who was one of my father's oldest friends. At the dinner given to me no less than sixteen pipers played 'The Campbells are coming,' which I should have expected to be rather a trial. But they played so beautifully together, and the room was so lofty and spacious, that the effect was less formidable than might have been expected. I was surprised by the magnificence of the palaces of the old Knights of Malta. They are certainly among the very handsomest in Europe. The story of the Knights Templars is one of the strangest episodes in medieval history. The island itself, with its interminable stretches of glaring white stone dikes enclosing tiny fields, did not attract me, and the only thing I saw which was beautiful was a basket of newly-caught fish on a woman's head. They seemed to be all of the most brilliant colours, like a number of precious stones, and entirely unlike the fish of our more Northern seas. Some of these, indeed, as the herring and the mackerel, show the finest colours of the iridescent class. But many of the Mediterranean fish are splendidly coloured in ordinary light, and do not depend on mere glances. This is partly due to the abundance of species belonging to the wrasse family, many of which

are brilliantly coloured in blues, greens, and reds. A few of these, though not common, are found in our seas; one especially, a specimen of which I have seen caught at Tobermory, was of a golden yellow, variegated with a fine cobalt blue.

It was no part of our plan to go farther east than Malta. Our intention was to visit some of those fair regions of Italy which lie between the Alps and Rome, but which we had missed by adopting the sea-route from Marseilles to Civita Vecchia. I cannot leave this record of our stay in Rome without mention of a circumstance which gave me great pleasure at the time, and has remained a pleasant spot in memory ever since. One day in the middle of winter—I think in January, 1843—I was walking on the Pincio, when I saw and heard the movement of wings in the olives and other evergreens of the gardens there. On watching more closely, I was greatly surprised to see a number of birds, which could be nothing else than willow-wrens, disporting themselves in the sunshine and catching flies. No bird was more familiar to me, and none so inseparably connected with my earliest and most happy associations. In my Ardencaple days the willow-wren was always the first herald of the spring, before the swallow or any other of the migratory group. There was a clump of larches in a very sheltered sunny spot, on which the lovely green pencils of the larch buds were always the first to appear, and there I used to go every year about the middle of April, to see if the willow-wren had come. And there, accordingly, I always had first heard that gentle and delicious song which I fear escapes most ears altogether. I had supposed that, like most of our summer birds of passage, the willow-wren wintered in Africa, and not in any part of Europe. It was, therefore, with infinite delight that I recognised my favourite on the Pincian Hill at Rome. Those who have never had a passion for any branch of natural history can hardly understand the delight which this discovery gave me.

It found expression in the first tolerable verses I ever wrote. They have since been published in my later years, and are included in the volume of poems entitled 'The Burdens of Belief.' The song of the willow-wren is too low a warble to attract general attention, but to me it carries with it an expression of love, gentleness, and pure enjoyment, such as no other song conveys.

Beginning our journey homewards when the spring of 1843 was well advanced, we posted to Florence, stopping for a day and night at Perugia for the purpose of seeing Assisi. With the famous church there and the tomb of St. Francis I was much impressed. The low, rather dark, vaulted church beneath, containing the tomb, with the elaborate allegorical frescoes painted by Giotto and his contemporaries, and then the tall Gothic church above, struck me much as a most unusual and a most beautiful combination, and inspired me with such a sense of interest and admiration that I began and soon finished a short poem in blank verse of the Wordsworthian type, which Howson pronounced to be 'well and worthily written in that style.' I remember now only some portions of it. One passage, describing the contrast between the lower and the upper church, has so dwelt in my memory, that in later years I have often found myself repeating it. I therefore will give the lines here:

'And as we passed
From those low arches to the upper shrine,
High drawn in loftiness and full of light,
It seemed as if we followed still the way
Of emblematic feeling, and the course
Of things yet unfulfilled; for even as
The solemn place which we had left did seem
To symbolize the quietness of Death,
Its vaulted calmness, and its sacred rest,
So those tall columns and high pointing roof,
Ascending, still ascending, seem to speak
That glorious hope—the Resurrection.'

There could be no doubt in this case as to the impressiveness of the whole, or as to the singular harmony between the forms of art and the emotions of religion. The lower church was essentially tomb-like, appropriate to the feelings with which we contemplate the dead,—their 'vaulted calmness' and their 'sacred rest.' And not less appropriate was the upper church, with its beautiful ascending lines, and in the blaze of light, to the resurrection hopes of Christian belief. The whole was unique in beauty and impressiveness, and I have ever since remembered it as such.

It was at Florence, however, that I really felt for the first time that high enjoyment of pure art which nothing but a gradual education in it can develop. St. Peter's at Rome never did give me any feeling except that of vastness. It never struck me as suggestive of any religious emotion whatever; and though its proportions are of course fine, they had not, on me, the effect of beauty. But the moment I turned the corner of the narrow street which opens in Florence upon the great Piazza, in which I saw at a glance Brunelleschi's Duomo, Giotto's Campanile, and the Baptistery, I felt at once that I was in the presence of the power of pure beauty, which art had never made me feel before. There is, so far as I know, only one other group of buildings in the world which can rival, or even approach, that matchless heart and centre of consummate art. All else in the way of architecture, always with the same one exception, is by comparison of an almost boundless inferiority. I did not, indeed, then feel, nor do I now feel, that this incomparable group of buildings appealed to any religious emotion, or was associated with any spiritual aspiration. It was simply a vision of matchless beauty—in form, in proportion, and in colour—the triumph of unrivalled art. I used to go back, over and over again, to the corner of the Piazza from which the grouping is best, and gaze and gaze in a sort of trance of pleasure.

There is one point only which that group possesses

in common with many others, and that is the effect of a great dome lifted into the sky as the crown and consummation of a great structure. And in this one feature the Duomo of Florence asserts, in my opinion, its immense superiority over all others, on account of the curvature of the dome. It has always appeared to me that the peculiar curve of that dome is by far the most beautiful in the world. Our own St. Paul's Cathedral has a very beautiful dome, but Wren's creation is not so beautiful as Brunelleschi's. The dome of St. Peter's at Rome is very inferior and not so effective.

For the galleries of Florence I cared comparatively little, my art education not having yet advanced so far as to enable me to appreciate as some do, and as many more, perhaps, pretend to do, the pictures and frescoes of the early Italian schools. As to the famous Venus de Medici, I could not admire it, and never have succeeded in doing so. I thought, if that were the type of an ideal beauty, it was a mercy that no woman was ever really like it. There was indeed one work of art, or rather one group of works of art, by which I was much impressed, and that was the famous group of figures on the tomb of the Medici by Michael Angelo. They are veritably superhuman—Titanic creatures of the imagination—but expressive of nothing, as it seemed to me, except enormous power. That group is undoubtedly one of the wonders of the world of art, although the attitudes of the figures are too violent to be natural, and give one the idea of the artist having revelled in the mere wantonness of his strength. But from the galleries I always escaped as soon as possible to indulge my old passion for landscape beauty, and assuredly the Val d'Arno did much to satisfy my tastes.

It is one of the peculiarities of Florence that the same wonderful group of buildings dominates the city from every point of view. Exquisite as they are in themselves, they are not less lovely when seen from a distance, crowning the whole city with a diadem of beauty. I

was particularly delighted with the old eagle's nest from which Florence had originally come—the beautiful Fiesole, with its massive and prehistoric walls of defence on the northern escarpment of its hill. The view thence of the Valley of the Arno, from far above Florence on the east to far down the river on the west, is one of the historic landscapes of the world, though not comparable either in beauty or in interest with the views on the Roman Campagna.

Before leaving Florence the doctor advised me to see a museum of anatomical models executed in wax, which, he said, were famous. It was there I saw a model of which I have made much use in later years. It was the model of the voltaic battery with which the torpedo fish —a skate well known in the Bay of Naples—discharges electric shocks for the capture of its prey, and for its own defence. This was all in the line of my father's old pursuits—namely, animal mechanics, and the structure of living organs for the discharge of function. The only unusual circumstance in this case was the great peculiarity of the function, and the consequent equally great peculiarity of the apparatus constructed for its discharge. Of course in every glass case which I saw there were wonderful apparatuses displayed, some of them with almost inconceivable complexities of structure. But, somehow, there was not one of them which struck me so much; none of them seemed, as it were, so obviously artificial, so purely mechanical, as the electric battery of this fish. It lay in two great masses, one on each shoulder, on either side of the spine, and they so closely resembled the structure of the batteries constructed by man for chemical and mechanical work that it was impossible not to see the identity of principle, and even of details, between the two. I did not then know how much it meant, or the use to which I should be able to apply it in far-distant years.

From Florence we went to Pisa, posting all the way down the Val d'Arno. The group of buildings at

Pisa challenges some comparison with that at Florence. It does not come up to the same high standard. Nothing does. The Leaning Tower of Pisa exceeded my expectations as to the extent of its departure from the perpendicular, and I was much amused to find that, in running up the circular stairs to the top, the effect of the leaning was unpleasantly apparent in the sense of precipitation felt when one's body follows the declining turn of the steps. The same force or swing which is needed to take one up the ascending turn is considerably more than enough to take one up the down-hill turn, and this produces a somewhat headlong feeling which is not agreeable. As regards the cathedral, indeed, though it has no external feature like the Florentine Duomo, yet its interior is far the more beautiful of the two. I thought it then by far the most beautiful church I had yet seen, and I still think of it as the most perfect specimen of purely Italian Church architecture in the world.

It is one of the great delights of travelling in Italy that almost every considerable town one comes to is remarkable for some one or more events famous in the history of civilization, of science, and of literature. The whole country is covered with spots which are, as it were, spots of light, from which some special radiance has gone forth to illuminate the world. Of no other country in the world can this be said, excepting only, and that in a supreme degree, the small country which we justly call the Holy Land.

I looked with immense curiosity on the beautiful pendant lamp of wrought bronze hanging in the transept of the cathedral at Pisa, which is said to have first attracted the attention of Galileo to the laws governing the swinging of a pendulum, whilst the experiments of the same great man in gravitation are not improbably connected with the Leaning Tower. With the famous Campo Santo of Pisa I was, I must confess, disappointed. A large square is enclosed by cloisters, with no ornament

whatever of the central space. The cloister arches are not lofty or impressive, and the whole is destitute even of any tombs of remarkable beauty. One monument only arrested my attention, and has ever since dwelt in my memory as a vivid representation of a great name in the Middle Ages. That monument is remarkable for its severe simplicity. There is an entire absence of ornament. It is a statue of the German Emperor who died at Pisa during one of his invasions of Italy. It is a simple figure of the Emperor, representing him as lying dead on a pallet. The face is not idealized. It is a large-featured, almost a coarse face. But it is an unmistakable portrait, true to life, and, above all, true to death and to the expression of an ended power.

But, after all, I am not sure that what struck me most at Pisa was not its comparative desertedness. Although empire has long departed from Italy, even the empire of letters and of art, its principal capitals still feel the stir of human life. In Rome there was the bustle of a large moving population, as in Naples and in Florence. But at Pisa in 1843 the streets seemed silent, and even single footfalls were audible among them. Internecine strife—fierce and devastating wars—were the great cause of its decline. In this it only shared in the great characteristic of medieval Italy—a strange mixture of the highest civilization in art and the utmost barbarism in factious hatreds. But there was another cause affecting Pisa which was not shared by others. Pisa is one of the few cases in which the fate of cities has been changed for the worse in historical times by the operation of geological causes. The Arno at Florence does not generally seem a very powerful river. Yet the mass of mud which it carries down with it from year to year, from the rich valley through which it runs, has been sufficient to make Pisa an island instead of a maritime city, and to reduce the once proud rival of Genoa to the condition almost of a stranded town. I understand that the new con-

ditions of our modern life have brought its currents back to this lovely old centre of Italian genius. It is the seat of a thriving University, and railways are a substitute for the sea, so that it has a rapidly increasing and prosperous population.

Returning to Florence, we posted to Bologna—from Bologna, by Ferrara and Padua, to the place of embarkation for Venice. It was from the hills above Bologna that I first saw the Plain of Lombardy, undoubtedly one of the most striking of all the landscapes of Europe. At that moment in the full burst of spring, it was glorious indeed, with its enormous expanse of rich and wooded land and its encircling boundary of the glittering Alps. At Ferrara, even more than at Pisa, I was struck by the atmosphere of desertion, and not less by the beauty of the brickwork ornamentation in some of its ancient buildings. I had read a good deal of the palmy days when Renée, Duchess of Ferrara, had sheltered and encouraged the earliest standard-bearers of the Reformation, so that its empty streets and vacant palaces seemed doubly melancholy to me. At Padua I saw for the first time, in the cathedral there, the influence of Byzantine forms on the classical architecture of Italy, and I confess I did not admire it. The substitution of a number of small stumpy cupolas for one great dome destroys all grandeur and simplicity of effect.

I have ever since remembered with great pleasure that I approached and arrived at Venice in the old way, when as yet no railway viaduct spanned her ancient inviolable lagune. Her dream-like beauty rose gradually out of the glassy water as we neared the outskirts and entered the Grand Canal, in that most dreamy of all conveyances, the smooth and silent gondola. It was in the early sunshine of a glorious day. No description can ever quite prepare one for the singular loveliness of Venice. It was richer, fuller, more enchanting, than anything I had imagined—every boat's-length seeming more beautiful than that

George Douglas, 8th Duke of Argyll K.G.
from a drawing by George Richmond R.A.

preceding, until the glorious pageant ended in our being landed at the Piazza of St. Mark in a blaze of blinding sunshine. Nothing that has ever happened to me in the way of seeing has approached the impression of that moment. In describing my sense of beauty on first seeing the great group of the Florentine Piazza, I made one exception as to immense superiority to any other buildings in the world. That exception was intended to refer to Venice, and especially to the Doge's Palace and the Church of St. Mark. Of course, between two styles of architecture so absolutely different there can be no common standard of comparison. But the two groups are alike in this—that they are both absolutely perfect, each in its own way; they both at once silence criticism, and fill us with a sense of beauty entirely satisfied. Such, at least, was my feeling about them. As creations of art they are both unique. On the whole I am still, as I was then, disposed to assign the palm to Venice, in spite of there being, perhaps because of there being, a certain element of comparative barbarism in the Oriental translation of Gothic feeling.

On leaving Venice, we travelled leisurely through Lombardy on the great road to Milan, stopping at all the old cities on the way, and at one place which was not a city, but which gave me, perhaps, more pleasure than any other; this was Desenzano, a village at the southern end of the Lago di Garda. This was my first view of any of the Italian lakes, and its beautiful peculiarities did not escape my notice. Stretching away northward into the Alpine ranges, but not wholly surrounded by or embosomed in them, it enjoys at its southern end a wide and a comparatively low horizon; whilst the perspective of its distant shores, lost in blue and purple valleys, is a worthy setting for its exquisitely coloured waters. This was a colour I had never seen before—a green which seems peculiar to streams flowing from the melting of glaciers, when all their mud has had space and time to settle. It is a

different green from that of our own western shores, as it appears, for example, in perfection at Iona. It is a paler, as it were a more opalescent, green, and when mingled with the blue reflections of an Italian sky, its tones are exquisite indeed. We did not fail to drive to the neighbouring famous promontory of Sirmio, the site of the famous villa of Catullus. No more beautiful spot can be conceived, and I enjoyed immensely a long lounge in the grass and under the olives of a garden which, with whatever loss of classic ornaments, was still the scene which inspired the passionate love of one of the best of the old Roman poets. On another day we took a drive to the little town of Salo, situated on the western shore of the lake, close to where it passes into the mountain country leading towards the great rift occupied by the Valley of the Adige.

It was a beautiful drive, passing at one point under a ridge crowned by one of those vast medieval castles which are the most striking among the many links of history in that most historic land. On our drive we met many country carts, with peasants taking their produce to market in the larger towns, and were surprised to see them all salute us with a kindly greeting, although they must have seen that we were complete strangers. This great courtesy of manner is, I think, peculiar to the peasantry of Italy, and it is pleasant to think that it is one of the signs of their very ancient civilization.

At Salo we visited a silk factory, and there I saw what I had never seen before, and have never seen since—the process of winding off the raw silk from the cocoons of the caterpillar which spins the thread from which the most precious of human attire is woven. The cocoons were thrown into tanks containing hot water, which seemed to dissolve or loosen the glutinous matter by which they were held together; and the end of the thread being caught, it was reeled off by women into balls of the most lustrous golden yellow. It seemed to me that no dye was ever half so

beautiful, and I felt inclined to wish that all silken garments were made of the raw material. It is the value of the cocoon, which this caterpillar weaves for its own abode during the mysterious processes of metamorphosis, that determines one of the great peculiarities of the rich and beautiful Plain of Lombardy—namely, the almost universal cultivation of the mulberry-tree. Pollard mulberries line the roads; they line the ditches; they line the divisions of the little fields in which the crops are cultivated; they are the standards to which the vines are attached, as they are festooned from one to another in graceful wreaths. The rich colouring of blue lupines and of scarlet clovers, with the young green of various cereals, under an open but an almost continuous forest of leafage, all one ceaseless sheet of careful cultivation, make Lombardy in early summer a joyous and delicious land to see. And if the eye is ever wearied by a monotony even of richness, we have generally not far to go for glimpses of the glorious Alpine ranges to the north, or of the softer blue mountain outlines to the south. Then, besides all this, there was the general impression of a thoroughly well-governed country and of a prosperous, contented people. It must be recollected that I am speaking of 1843, when as yet all the political passions reawakened in 1848 were at least sleeping, if not extinct.

If ever the dominion of one race over another seemed justified by at least material prosperity, it was the dominion of the Austrian Empire over its Italian provinces at that time. There was no offensive parade of military repression. Austrian bands discoursed sweet music in the Piazza of St. Mark at Venice, and in the other leading garrisoned towns. But beyond that, the military uniform was never obtruded on the view. The roads were magnificent. The posting arrangements were admirable. The whole face of the people and of the country was the face of pleasantness and peace. One boatman, indeed, on Lago Maggiore, spoke to us of the 'bruti Tedeschi.' But it seemed

rather like an outburst of racial dislike than any expression of political discontent. Indeed, however strange it may now sound to say so, it was impossible at that time to think or speak of Italy as a nation. The famous saying of Prince Metternich, which I have since often heard quoted with ridicule or with indignation, that Italy was 'nothing but a geographical expression,' was a saying literally and absolutely true. Although marked off from the rest of Europe by physical features more definite than those which separate any other of its divisions—although, too, its people have come to be not less distinct, with a substantial unity of race language—yet nevertheless it was then strictly true that historically it had never been a nation. When it formed part of the greatest empire the world has ever seen, the name of Italy was never used even as a geographical expression. Natural boundaries had no existence in the magnificent conception of that wonderful people, whose centre of dominion was, not Italy, but an Imperial City. The Alps were to them no more than a range of molehills across a field. And so they ranked one of the largest and richest provinces of the Italian peninsula as merely one of the divisions of Gaul. And when that empire fell to pieces, Italy had fallen to pieces with it, and for fourteen hundred years had been the prey of furious factions and of bloody wars between all its cities, many of them eager to receive the protection of the Teutonic monarchs whose sovereignty they accepted, and whose emblems they were proud to bear.

It is one of the wonders of the world's history that, nevertheless, under such conditions, the Italian cities developed a civilization in literature and in art which has never been equalled or approached. Mere soldiers of fortune and successful civic leaders rose to be munificent Princes and patrons of every kind of genius. They lived a brilliant, tempestuous and voluptuous life for a time, and then disappeared for ever. But they have left monuments of beauty, in architecture

and in painting, which are the delight and admiration of mankind. Nothing I saw in Italy struck me more than the beautiful remains left by Princes, whose picturesquely battlemented towers and walls proclaimed their long allegiance to Teutonic Sovereigns.

Of all Italian cities, the one which struck me as the most beautiful was Verona, with the Adige rushing through it, from that long and deep valley which gave easy access to Teutonic invaders of the Lombard Plain. And in that city no remains struck me so much as the tombs of the Scaligeri family, whose sumptuous Court gave refuge to Dante in his exile. In that brilliant age of Italian history it was no reproach to the greatest of her Princes that he was the type of those who leaned on the great German Empire behind the Alps, nor could Dante even think of Italy as a country or as a nation to which any such dependence was forbidden as disloyal. In the magnificent lines in which the poet celebrates his host, Can Grande, he never thinks of him as an Italian, a name which would then have had no significance. The nationality he assigns to his host, as the greatest he could give him, was 'il gran Lombardo.' There is something marvellous in the contrast between the unhappy political conditions of Italy all through the Middle Ages and the splendour and intensity of its civic and provincial life. The churches which were built, the palaces raised in the streets, the tombs under which the dead were laid, the town-halls in which business was conducted, even the towers and walls of defence, were all beautiful exceedingly, yet all various and original.

In 1843 Ruskin had not yet risen above the horizon, to tell us in his perfervid oratory what exactly we are to admire most, and why we ought to do so. But before his teaching I was able to appreciate and to enjoy intensely such churches as St. Zeno at Verona, and the exquisite monuments in the same city of the great House of Scala. My own early education in landscape had prepared me well for the exquisite

colouring and forms of the Alpine ranges, seen through vistas over a rich country covered with villas, with the distances well set back by the powerful colouring of the magnificent cypress-trees which adorn some of the gardens of Verona.

At Milan, indeed, I was greatly disappointed with the far-famed cathedral. It was almost with disgust that I saw the vaulted ceiling to be only painted, and although, no doubt, the exterior has considerable beauty of proportion and great richness, from the elaboration of its Gothic pinnacles and innumerable statues and statuettes, its general effect seemed altogether wanting in dignity, solemnity, or repose.

But although the famous Duomo of Milan gave me little pleasure, there were two things of beauty which I saw in and from that city which did really answer to the description of being 'a joy for ever.' One of these belonged to Nature, whilst the other belonged to Art. The first of these was the view of the snowy Alps fringing the northern sky in magnificent perspective to the east. For this view there is no other city in the great Lombard Plain so favourably situated as Milan. Some of those cities are too near, and the high central ranges are hidden behind the lower hills. Others, again, are too far off. One of them, Turin, is too much itself encircled by mountains of nearly Alpine elevation to see the monarchs of the chain. But Milan is so placed, both as to distance and as to angular position, with reference to the leading peaks, that on a fine clear day, such as I had, the eye can take in at a glance that magnificent mountain chain of eternal snows. Monte Rosa was conspicuous, comparatively near, and its glorious dome against a luminous sky of pale green-blue answered well to that beautifully descriptive name. Seen over the tender tints of the lower ranges and the rich purples of the Lombard Plain, this view of the Alps made an impression on me which I have never forgotten.

The other vision which, in the world of art, made a

similar impression was that of the famous Cenacolo, or fresco of 'The Last Supper,' by Leonardo da Vinci. It is indeed a shadow, but it is so majestic a shadow as to be divine. No picture which I had then seen, and only one since, has had a similar effect upon me. The grouping of the figures, the eagerness and variety of the action, with the solemn calmness and sorrow expressed in the attitude of the Saviour—all this is wonderful and unique.

If anybody travelled now as I travelled in 1843, it would be absurd to cumber even the pages of an autobiography with any details of our journey home through Switzerland and down the Rhine. But our route and our methods of proceeding are now as antiquated as the dodo. Of course, it is true that only the comparatively wealthy classes could post in a comfortable carriage all over Europe, resting every night as they pleased at well-appointed inns, and taking little-frequented roads whenever they led through any particularly lovely bits of country. Those who could never afford either the money or the time for such travelling have gained immensely by the modern railway system. But the complete desertion of large areas of most beautiful and interesting country which has been the result of the new routes which all traffic is now compelled to follow, and, above all, the universal spirit of haste which has seized upon us all, has made travelling infinitely less enjoyable and less improving than it used to be. When I was last on the continent under the new conditions, I passed through almost the whole length of Italy, from Brindisi to Turin, with only a few hours of evening light in the south, and a few hours of morning light in the north. Most of the country was traversed in the dark, and with glimpses only of innumerable most interesting and picturesque towns, villages, and castles, all of which it would have been a joy to see. Even stopping at Turin was unusual, due to indisposition, and the rest of my party rushed on to Paris. This is the habit of our

time. The change has been so great and so universal that some few notes on my journey home fifty-four years ago may not be without interest to the younger generation now.

In posting from Milan to Como, we stopped at Monza to see the famous iron crown of Lombardy and the relics of Queen Theodalinda. Monza has an air of antiquity about it which carries us back to that dim time when the Western Empire had lately fallen, and when semi-barbaric kingdoms were being established on its ruins. No time, perhaps, in European history is so difficult to realize as the sixth and two following centuries. I was interested in seeing the rude ornaments which had belonged to one of those few famous women whose charms were such as to subdue even barbarian Kings, and to send down a sweet-smelling savour through many centuries of time.

We spent a few days on the Lake of Como—chiefly at Bellagio—the point where the lake bifurcates into two branches. Such a sheet of water lying among such fine mountains and under an Italian sun cannot be otherwise than beautiful. But I confess that to my eye it wanted shadow and variety. The mountains were destitute of any wood large enough to produce the least effect. Except where orange-trees and evergreens rose from gardens near the shores, there was nothing but scattered and scanty coppices of oak to clothe the nakedness of the rocky walls. The general effect was somewhat garish, and I felt I should soon be tired of it. One object of natural history, however, attracted my curiosity and attention. At breakfast we were supplied with a most delicious fish, called the *agoni*, and the taste told me at once that it must be a near relation of the Loch Fyne herring of my home. Further inquiry then and since has led to a very interesting conclusion, bearing on the geological history of Northern Italy. The *agoni* is a true herring, and structurally is identical with the shad, a member of the herring tribe which has the habit of ascending

rivers from the sea, and returning again by the way it came. But the *agoni* now never leaves the Como Lake, and never can, because the rivers communicating with the Po do not afford a safe or steady means of communication with the Adriatic. The *agoni* is, therefore, shut up and debarred from access to the sea. It has changed its form, but not its specific character. It is still a shad, but confined to fresh water, and modified accordingly.

From Como we drove to Lugano, and to this day that drive remains in my memory as the most beautiful I had ever seen. It has all the verdure which I had so much missed on Como, the road passing under fine woods of walnut, and of other trees with luxuriant foliage. The lake, though much smaller than Como, is far more varied in the character of its shores, its innumerable bays and promontories having, indeed, every kind and intricacy of structure, from rocky headlands to wooded creeks. Vistas, too, are not wanting of far-off aerial Alps. From Lugano we again posted across the hills which separate that lake from the much larger sheet of water that constitutes the Lago Maggiore. On the tableland over which we passed I saw, to my infinite delight, that rare sight in any part of Southern Europe—fields of rich grass like our own pastures at home. Those I saw had abundance, too, of the common purple orchids, all which so delighted me that I longed to stop the carriage and roll in the delicious herbage of the spring. Our destination was Magadino, an hotel charmingly situated amid woods of fine chestnut-trees, then just coming into full leaf. There is no handsomer tree than the sweet-chestnut, its bark, its limbs, its foliage, and its flower, being all beautiful. Enchanting as I thought that wood, it was with some satisfaction that I noticed no individual tree which quite equalled in size or magnificence some of the specimens we had at home. But although it grows splendidly in all sheltered places in Argyllshire, its fruit never ripens in our climate, whereas, as is well

known, it forms one of the principal articles of food in some parts of Italy and Switzerland.

Immediately opposite to Magadino, on the western side of the lake, the little town of Locarno, the capital of the Canton of Ticino, was perched on a shelf on the steep mountain-side, embowered in groves of chestnut, walnut, and oak. We heard that next day there was to be a great rifle-shooting match, called a 'tiro,' at Locarno, and we determined to go across in a boat and see the fun. I was at that time rather a good shot with the rifle, up to the standard of ordinary Highland sport. We had then no red-deer at Inveraray, but many roe-deer, and my father had taught me never to shoot roe with small shot, but always and only with the rifle. At the range of about 150 yards I seldom missed a roe. On the other hand, I had never practised at a target, and it is curious how seldom the two kinds of shooting are successfully combined. Thinking vaguely that possibly I might have some opportunity of shooting on the Continent, I had taken a new double-barrelled Purdey with us in the carriage. So this English weapon was taken out of its case, and we had a lovely row across Lago Maggiore to the foot of the mountain opposite. The path was very steep up to the little town, but beautiful. We found the town full of fine handsome youths from all parts of the Canton, picturesquely dressed, and armed with very long-barrelled rifles, slung by a belt round the shoulders. I do not remember exactly what the bore was, but it was smaller than that of the ounce rifle of Purdey. Whatever difference existed between those rifles and my own I soon found was all in their favour for target-work. I cannot now recollect exactly what the range was, but, to my dismay, I found it was greatly longer than any at which I had ever practised. The shooting was excellent, and I had no chance with them. I was told that their rifles were all of native make. On our way back to Magadino we took some of those fine fellows in our boat, and they were very curious to

know what the price was of my English rifle. When I told them 'settanta luigi d' oro,' their astonishment was unbounded, for I suppose that from five to ten napoleons would fully represent the cost of their very effective weapons. I did feel more than ever the absurdity of London prices. Although the purely Italian Canton of Ticino was a late addition to the famous and very curious old Swiss Confederation, the men I saw at Locarno were typical specimens of that race of mountain soldiers which on both sides of the great Alpine chain attained such a high military reputation in medieval Europe, and as stipendiary soldiers were celebrated for being as faithful as they were brave.

After a short but delicious time spent among the chestnut-groves of Magadino, we descended to the southern end of the Lago Maggiore, and crossed the Alps, by the Simplon Pass, into the upper valley of the Rhone, and went down that valley to the Leman Lake, visiting in turn Chillon, Lausanne, and Geneva. The perfect flatness of that Rhone valley, and the wall-like sides of mountain which shut it in, left on me a disagreeable impression, although one view from the citadel of Sion, commanding a fine perspective to its further end, and to some of the great snowy peaks of the Bernese Oberland, was so singularly beautiful that I have several times tried in vain to paint it from a sketch taken at the time. But the wider horizons enjoyed by Lausanne and Geneva were like a return to life and light after the oppression of the Alpine approaches. The whole country was in the full gush of spring, and I thought it the perfection of a happy land. The lovely rushing of the transparent Rhone, when it issues from the lake under the bridge at Geneva, was indeed a wonderful contrast to the milk-white muddiness of the same river before it entered the great reservoir where its sediment was deposited. There is no colour in Nature more beautiful than that of perfectly transparent water when it is tinted by greens and blues, or, best of all, by both in changing

and interchanging gleams. I could have gazed all day long into the Genevan Rhone.

As I was anxious to see Mont Blanc at nearer quarters, we drove up the valley to Chamounix, whence I visited the Mer de Glace. The first sight of a glacier is an epoch in the life of everyone who is an admirer or a student of Nature. It surprised me very much. It was less beautiful but more awful than I had expected. Its surface, dirtied by detritus from the rocks under which it passed, was nowhere brilliant. But the reverberations, like those of thunder, which rose from its crevasses as fragments were constantly falling into them, gave one the impression of a constant and an unknown danger. What astonished me most at Chamounix was the apparent want of elevation in Mont Blanc. The weather was splendid—not a cloud in the sky; and the top of the mountain, with its spotless snow, seemed so near, and was so absolutely clear, that it appeared to me as if a mouse upon it would have been a visible object from our hotel. It was a signal proof to me how absolutely the effect of mountain scenery depends, not on measurable height, but on atmosphere. Ben Cruachan on Loch Awe in Scotland, which is only 3,600 feet high, had always seemed to me far loftier and more inaccessible than Mont Blanc, which was more than four times that height, appeared to be. I could not help remembering how insignificant it had seemed to me some months before, when, at the distance of fifty miles, I saw it at Lyons breaking the crimson streaks of sunrise; and now, here again at its very feet, the same impression arose from a totally different cause.

On leaving Chamounix, we took rather an unusual route home, determined by my great desire to see my father's old friend Mademoiselle de la Chaux, who was still alive, and resided at Yverdun, a small town on the Lake of Neufchâtel. In 1843 it was just forty years since that clever and excellent woman had devised and carried into execution the plan of my

father's escape from the clutches of the First Consul. Not only from the interest I had always felt in that story, but on account also of the vivid recollection which I had retained from childhood of her face—a face full of vivacity, force, and benevolence—I was very desirous of seeing her. We therefore returned through Geneva to Lausanne, glad of an opportunity of again enjoying the extraordinary beauty of that place.

After a short stay at Lausanne we posted to Yverdun, where I met with a disappointment. Mademoiselle de la Chaux was now very aged and very feeble, and was confined to bed. She saw Dr. Cumming, but nothing would induce the old lady to see me. However, I did not regret the route we took, although its first inducement had failed. The whole way to the Rhine at Schaffhausen, through the defiles of the Jura, was beautiful and very curious. It led through passes in a series of steep ridges of hill all covered with forest, and with lovely varieties of clear and rapid trout streams.

The falls of the Rhine at Schaffhausen, though certainly beautiful, as every rush of a great mass of water must be, did not greatly impress me. In such things as waterfalls I have always found that one's imagination is very apt to outrun reality. At Basle I was greatly interested and amused by seeing for the first time that curious and picturesque bird the stork, the very partial distribution of which in Europe is one of the puzzles of ornithology. I never quite understand on what they feed. So large a bird must consume a good deal of something, yet, so far as I know, they cannot catch fish as herons do, nor do they subsist on worms. Frogs, no doubt, would be a suitable provision, but I do not know any place in Europe where frogs are so abundant as to afford a good living to even a few storks. However this may be, they are striking and handsome birds, and their attachment to man, shown by their feeding and breeding on the tops of houses in towns and cities, is a habit peculiar to themselves among all their congeners in the world.

As it was my desire to see a little of Holland, we descended the Rhine by steamer all the way to Rotterdam. With Holland I was both delighted and amused. Its fanatical cleanliness is almost comical. Continual jets of water are being thrown against the windows to keep them sparkling and free from dust. Any step in the stairs in the hotels is as clean as a dining-table. The streets of all the towns, the barges along the quays, are as tidy as a new pin. It is all very pleasant and very pretty. But what delighted me most was the great grassy meadows, with beautiful cows browsing, udder-deep, in luxuriant grass. The Hague I thought quite charming, with its mixture of fine foliage and handsome houses, pleasant gardens, and fine public buildings. It interested me much to notice how the human mind adapts itself to external conditions in its instinctive love of ornament and beauty. In a country so flat that distant prospects are impossible, where, indeed, the range of sight is limited to some narrow foreground, the whole idea of ornamentation is bounded by the possibilities of the case, as in rooms these possibilities limit us everywhere to floors and walls. In Holland the very ditches of stagnant water are pressed into the service of decoration. The water-weeds which accumulate on their surface are cut away in shapes and patterns which leave spaces of an intense black divided by shaped compartments of a vivid green. The effect is undoubtedly pretty.

Our visit to Holland was shorter than I should have liked, and I have often intended to return. But I have never been able to do so, although still the memory of that strange land, to whose power we and Europe owe so much, is as green in my mind as her own delicious meadows and her umbrageous trees.

The journey and changes of scene and air had acted most beneficially on my always rather delicate health, but the doctors strongly advised that I should go abroad again the following winter.