

CHAPTER XV.

THE THIRD TRIP TO EUROPE, 1859.

THIRD VISIT TO EUROPE.--LADY BYRON ON "THE MINISTER'S WOOING."--
SOME

FOREIGN PEOPLE AND THINGS AS THEY APPEARED TO PROFESSOR STOWE.-
-A

WINTER IN ITALY.--THINGS UNSEEN AND UNREVEALED.--SPECULATIONS
CONCERNING SPIRITUALISM.--JOHN KUSKIN.--MRS. BROWNING.--THE
RETURN TO
AMERICA.--LETTERS TO DR. HOLMES.

Mrs. Stowe's third and last trip to Europe was undertaken in the summer of 1859. In writing to Lady Byron in May of that year, she says: "I am at present writing something that interests me greatly, and may interest you, as an attempt to portray the heart and life of New England, its religion, theology, and manners. Sampson Low & Son are issuing it in numbers, and I should be glad to know how they strike you. It is to publish this work complete that I intend to visit England this summer."

The story thus referred to was "The Minister's Wooing," and Lady Byron's answer to the above, which is appended, leaves no room for doubt as to her appreciation of it. She writes:--

LONDON, May 31, 1859.

DEAR FRIEND,--I have found, particularly as to yourself, that if I did not answer from the first impulse, all had evaporated. Your letter came by the Niagara, which brought Fanny Kemble, to learn the loss of her best friend, that Miss Fitzhugh whom you saw at my house.

I have an intense interest in your new novel. More power in these few numbers than in any of your former writings, relatively, at least to my own mind. More power than in "Adam Bede," which is the book of the season, and well deserves a high place. Whether Mrs. Scudder will rival Mrs. Poyser, we shall see.

It would amuse you to hear my granddaughter and myself attempting to foresee the future of the "love story," being quite persuaded for the moment that James is at sea, and the minister about to ruin himself. We think that she will labor to be in love with the self-devoting man, under her mother's influence, and from that hyper-conscientiousness so common with good girls,--but we don't wish her to succeed. Then what is to become of her older lover? He--Time will show. I have just missed Dale Owen, with whom I wished to have conversed about the "Spiritualism." Harris is lecturing here on religion. I do not hear him praised. People are looking for helps to believe everywhere but in life,--in music, in architecture, in antiquity, in ceremony,--and upon all is written, "Thou shalt not believe." At least, if this be faith, happier the unbeliever. I am willing to see through that

materialism, but if I am to rest there, I would rend the veil.

June 1. The day of the packet's sailing. I shall hope to be visited by you here. The best flowers sent me have been placed in your little vases, giving life, as it were, to the remembrance of you, though not to pass away like them.

Ever yours, A. T. NOEL BYRON.

The entire family, with the exception of the youngest son, was abroad at this time. The two eldest daughters were in Paris, having previously sailed for Havre in March, in company with their cousin, Miss Beecher. On their arrival in Paris, they went directly to the house of their old friend, Madame Borione, and soon afterwards entered a Protestant school. The rest of the family, including Mrs. Stowe, her husband and youngest daughter, sailed for Liverpool early in August. At about the same time, Fred Stowe, in company with his friend Samuel Scoville, took passage for the same port in a sailing vessel. A comprehensive outline of the earlier portion of this foreign tour is given in the following letter written by Professor Stowe to the sole member of the family remaining in America:

CASTLE CHILLON, SWITZERLAND, September 1, 1859.

DEAR LITTLE CHARLEY,--We are all here except Fred, and all well. We have had a most interesting journey, of which I must give a brief

account.

We sailed from New York in the steamer Asia, on the 3d of August [1859], a very hot day, and for ten days it was the hottest weather I ever knew at sea. We had a splendid ship's company, mostly foreigners, Italians, Spaniards, with a sprinkling of Scotch and Irish. We passed one big iceberg in the night close to, and as the iceberg wouldn't turn out for us we turned out for the iceberg, and were very glad to come off so. This was the night of the 9th of August, and after that we had cooler weather, and on the morning of the 13th the wind blew like all possessed, and so continued till afternoon. Sunday morning, the 14th, we got safe into Liverpool, landed, and went to the Adelphi Hotel. Mamma and Georgie were only a little sick on the way over, and that was the morning of the 13th.

As it was court time, the high sheriff of Lancashire, Sir Robert Gerauld, a fine, stout, old, gray-haired John Bull, came thundering up to the hotel at noon in his grand coach with six beautiful horses with outriders, and two trumpeters, and twelve men with javelins for a guard, all dressed in the gayest manner, and rushing along like Time in the primer, the trumpeters too-ti-toot-tooting like a house a-fire, and how I wished my little Charley had been there to see it!

Monday we wanted to go and see the court, so we went over to St. George's Hall, a most magnificent structure, that beats the Boston State House all hollow, and Sir Robert Gerauld himself met us, and

said he would get us a good place. So he took us away round a narrow, crooked passage, and opened a little door, where we saw nothing but a great, crimson curtain, which he told us to put aside and go straight on; and where do you think we all found ourselves?

Right on the platform with the judges in their big wigs and long robes, and facing the whole crowded court! It was enough to frighten a body into fits, but we took it quietly as we could, and your mamma looked as meek as Moses in her little, battered straw hat and gray cloak, seeming to say, "I didn't come here o' purpose."

That same night we arrived in London, and Tuesday (August 16th), riding over the city, we called at Stafford House, and inquired if the Duchess of Sutherland was there. A servant came out and said the duchess was in and would be very glad to see us; so your mamma, Georgie, and I went walking up the magnificent staircase in the entrance hall, and the great, noble, brilliant duchess came sailing down the stairs to meet us, in her white morning dress (for it was only four o'clock in the afternoon, and she was not yet dressed for dinner), took your mamma into her great bosom, and folded her up till the little Yankee woman looked like a small gray kitten half covered in a snowbank, and kissed and kissed her, and then she took up little Georgie and kissed her, and then she took my hand, and didn't kiss me.

Next day we went to the duchess's villa, near Windsor Castle, and had a grand time riding round the park, sailing on the Thames, and eating

the very best dinner that was ever set on a table.

We stayed in London till the 25th of August, and then went to Paris and found H. and E. and H. B. all well and happy; and on the 30th of August we all went to Geneva together, and to-day, the 1st of September, we all took a sail up the beautiful Lake Lemman here in the midst of the Alps, close by the old castle of Chillon, about which Lord Byron has written a poem. In a day or two we shall go to Chamouni, and then Georgie and I will go back to Paris and London, and so home at the time appointed. Until then I remain as ever, Your loving father, C. E. STOWE.

Mrs. Stowe accompanied her husband and daughter to England, where, after traveling and visiting for two weeks, she bade them good-by and returned to her daughters in Switzerland. From Lausanne she writes under date of October 9th:--

MY DEAR HUSBAND,--Here we are at Lausanne, in the Hotel Gibbon, occupying the very parlor that the Ruskins had when we were here before. The day I left you I progressed prosperously to Paris. Reached there about one o'clock at night; could get no carriage, and finally had to turn in at a little hotel close by the station, where I slept till morning. I could not but think what if anything should happen to me there? Nobody knew me or where I was, but the bed was clean, the room respectable; so I locked my door and slept, then took a carriage in the morning, and found Madame Borione at breakfast. I write to-

night, that you may get a letter from me at the earliest possible date after your return.

Instead of coming to Geneva in one day, I stopped over one night at Macon, got to Geneva the next day about four o'clock, and to Lausanne at eight. Coming up-stairs and opening the door, I found the whole party seated with their books and embroidery about a centre-table, and looking as homelike and cosy as possible. You may imagine the greetings, the kissing, laughing, and good times generally.

From Lausanne the merry party traveled toward Florence by easy stages, stopping at Lake Como, Milan, Verona, Venice, Genoa, and Leghorn. At Florence, where they arrived early in November, they met Fred Stowe and his friend, Samuel Scoville, and here they were also joined by their Brooklyn friends, the Howards. Thus it was a large and thoroughly congenial party that settled down in the old Italian city to spend the winter. From here Mrs. Stowe wrote weekly letters to her husband in Andover, and among them are the following, that not only throw light upon their mode of life, but illustrate a marked tendency of her mind:--

FLORENCE, Christmas Day, 1859.

MY DEAR HUSBAND,--I wish you all a Merry Christmas, hoping to spend the next one with you. For us, we are expecting to spend this evening with quite a circle of American friends. With Scoville and Fred came

L. Bacon (son of Dr. Bacon); a Mr. Porter, who is to study theology at Andover, and is now making the tour of Europe; Mr. Clarke, formerly minister at Cornwall; Mr. Jenkyns, of Lowell; Mr. and Mrs. Howard, John and Annie Howard, who came in most unexpectedly upon us last night. So we shall have quite a New England party, and shall sing Millais' Christmas hymn in great force. Hope you will all do the same in the old stone cabin.

Our parlor is all trimmed with laurel and myrtle, looking like a great bower, and our mantel and table are redolent with bouquets of orange blossoms and pinks.

January 16, 1860.

MY DEAR HUSBAND,--Your letter received to-day has raised quite a weight from my mind, for it shows that at last you have received all mine, and that thus the chain of communication between us is unbroken. What you said about your spiritual experiences in feeling the presence of dear Henry with you, and, above all, the vibration of that mysterious guitar, was very pleasant to me. Since I have been in Florence, I have been distressed by inexpressible yearnings after him,--such sighings and outreachings, with a sense of utter darkness and separation, not only from him but from all spiritual communion with my God. But I have become acquainted with a friend through whom I receive consoling impressions of these things,--a Mrs. E., of Boston, a very pious, accomplished, and interesting woman, who has had a

history much like yours in relation to spiritual manifestations.

Without doubt she is what the spiritualists would regard as a very powerful medium, but being a very earnest Christian, and afraid of getting led astray, she has kept carefully aloof from all circles and things of that nature. She came and opened her mind to me in the first place, to ask my advice as to what she had better do; relating experiences very similar to many of yours.

My advice was substantially to try the spirits whether they were of God,--to keep close to the Bible and prayer, and then accept whatever came. But I have found that when I am with her I receive very strong impressions from the spiritual world, so that I feel often sustained and comforted, as if I had been near to my Henry and other departed friends. This has been at times so strong as greatly to soothe and support me. I told her your experiences, in which she was greatly interested. She said it was so rare to hear of Christian and reliable people with such peculiarities.

I cannot, however, think that Henry strikes the guitar,--that must be Eliza, Her spirit has ever seemed to cling to that mode of manifestation, and if you would keep it in your sleeping-room, no doubt you would hear from it oftener. I have been reading lately a curious work from an old German in Paris who has been making experiments in spirit-writing. He purports to describe a series of meetings held in the presence of fifty witnesses, whose names he

gives, in which writing has come on paper, without the apparition of hands or any pen or pencil, from various historical people.

He seems a devout believer in inspiration, and the book is curious for its mixture of all the phenomena, Pagan and Christian, going over Hindoo, Chinese, Greek, and Italian literature for examples, and then bringing similar ones from the Bible.

One thing I am convinced of,--that spiritualism is a reaction from the intense materialism of the present age. Luther, when he recognized a personal devil, was much nearer right. We ought to enter fully, at least, into the spiritualism of the Bible. Circles and spiritual jugglery I regard as the lying signs and wonders, with all deceivableness of unrighteousness; but there is a real scriptural spiritualism which has fallen into disuse, and must be revived, and there are, doubtless, people who, from some constitutional formation, can more readily receive the impressions of the surrounding spiritual world. Such were apostles, prophets, and workers of miracles.

Sunday evening. To-day I went down to sit with Mrs. E. in her quiet parlor. We read in Revelation together, and talked of the saints and spirits of the just made perfect, till it seemed, as it always does when with her, as if Henry were close by me. Then a curious thing happened. She has a little Florentine guitar which hangs in her parlor, quite out of reach. She and I were talking, and her sister, a very matter-of-fact, practical body, who attends to temporals for her,

was arranging a little lunch for us, when suddenly the bass string of the guitar was struck loudly and distinctly.

"Who struck that guitar?" said the sister. We both looked up and saw that no body or thing was on that side of the room. After the sister had gone out, Mrs. E. said, "Now, that is strange! I asked last night that if any spirit was present with us after you came to-day, that it would try to touch that guitar." A little while after her husband came in, and as we were talking we were all stopped by a peculiar sound, as if somebody had drawn a hand across all the strings at once. We marveled, and I remembered the guitar at home.

What think you? Have you had any more manifestations, any truths from the spirit world?

About the end of February the pleasant Florentine circle broke up, and Mrs. Stowe and her party journeyed to Rome, where they remained until the middle of April. We next find them in Naples, starting on a six days' trip to Castellamare, Sorrento, Salerno, Paestum, and Amalfi; then up Vesuvius, and to the Blue Grotto of Capri, and afterwards back to Rome by diligence. Leaving Rome on May 9th, they traveled leisurely towards Paris, which they reached on the 27th. From there Mrs. Stowe wrote to her husband on May 28th:--

Since my last letter a great change has taken place in our plans, in consequence of which our passage for America is engaged by the Europa,

which sails the 16th of June; so, if all goes well, we are due in Boston four weeks from this date. I long for home, for my husband and children, for my room, my yard and garden, for the beautiful trees of Andover. We will make a very happy home, and our children will help us.

Affectionately yours,

HATTY.

This extended and pleasant tour was ended with an equally pleasant homeward voyage, for on the Europa were found Nathaniel Hawthorne and James T. Fields, who proved most delightful traveling companions.

While Mrs. Stowe fully enjoyed her foreign experiences, she was so thoroughly American in every fibre of her being that she was always thankful to return to her own land and people. She could not, therefore, in any degree reciprocate the views of Mr. Ruskin on this subject, as expressed in the following letter, received soon after her return to Andover:--

GENEVA, June 18, 1860.

DEAR MRS. STOWE,--It takes a great deal, when I am at Geneva, to make me wish myself anywhere else, and, of all places else, in London; nevertheless, I very heartily wish at this moment that I were looking

out on the Norwood Hills, and were expecting you and the children to breakfast to-morrow.

I had very serious thoughts, when I received your note, of running home; but I expected that very day an American friend, Mr. S., who I thought would miss me more here than you would in London; so I stayed.

What a dreadful thing it is that people should have to go to America again, after coming to Europe! It seems to me an inversion of the order of nature. I think America is a sort of "United" States of Probation, out of which all wise people, being once delivered, and having obtained entrance into this better world, should never be expected to return (sentence irremediably ungrammatical), particularly when they have been making themselves cruelly pleasant to friends here. My friend Norton, whom I met first on this very blue lake water, had no business to go back to Boston again, any more than you.

I was waiting for S. at the railroad station on Thursday, and thinking of you, naturally enough,--it seemed so short a while since we were there together. I managed to get hold of Georgie as she was crossing the rails, and packed her in opposite my mother and beside me, and was thinking myself so clever, when you sent that rascally courier for her! I never forgave him any of his behavior after his imperativeness on that occasion.

And so she is getting nice and strong? Ask her, please, when you

write, with my love, whether, when she stands now behind the great stick, one can see much of her on each side?

So you have been seeing the Pope and all his Easter performances? I congratulate you, for I suppose it is something like "Positively the last appearance on any stage." What was the use of thinking about him? You should have had your own thoughts about what was to come after him. I don't mean that Roman Catholicism will die out so quickly. It will last pretty nearly as long as Protestantism, which keeps it up; but I wonder what is to come next. That is the main question just now for everybody.

So you are coming round to Venice, after all? We shall all have to come to it, depend upon it, some way or another. There never has been anything in any other part of the world like Venetian strength well developed.

I've no heart to write about anything in Europe to you now. When are you coming back again? Please send me a line as soon as you get safe over, to say you are all--wrong, but not lost in the Atlantic.

I don't know if you will ever get this letter, but I hope you will think it worth while to glance again at the Denmark Hill pictures; so I send this to my father, who, I hope, will be able to give it you.

I really am very sorry you are going,--you and yours; and that is

absolute fact, and I shall not enjoy my Swiss journey at all so much as I might. It was a shame of you not to give me warning before. I could have stopped at Paris so easily for you! All good be with you! Remember me devotedly to the young ladies, and believe me ever affectionately yours,

J. RUSKIN.

In Rome Mrs. Stowe had formed a warm friendship with the Brownings, with whom she afterwards maintained a correspondence. The following letter from Mrs. Browning was written a year after their first meeting.

ROME, 126 VIA FELICE, 14 March, 1861.

MY DEAR, MRS. STOWE,--Let me say one word first. Your letter, which would have given me pleasure if I had been in the midst of pleasures, came to me when little beside could have pleased. Dear friend, let me say it, I had had a great blow and loss in England, and you wrote things in that letter which seemed meant for me, meant to do me good, and which did me good,--the first good any letter or any talk did me; and it struck me as strange, as more than a coincidence, that your first word since we parted in Rome last spring should come to me in Rome, and bear so directly on an experience which you did not know of. I thank you very much.

The earnest stanzas I sent to England for one who wanted them even more than I. I don't know how people can keep up their prejudices against spiritualism with tears in their eyes,--how they are not, at least, thrown on the "wish that it might be true," and the investigation of the phenomena, by that abrupt shutting in their faces of the door of death, which shuts them out from the sight of their beloved. My tendency is to beat up against it like a crying child. Not that this emotional impulse is the best for turning the key and obtaining safe conclusions,--no. I did not write before because I always do shrink from touching my own griefs, one feels at first so sore that nothing but stillness is borne. It is only after, when one is better, that one can express one's self at all. This is so with me, at least, though perhaps it ought not to be so with a poet.

If you saw my "De Profundis" you must understand that it was written nearly twenty years ago, and referred to what went before. Mr. Howard's affliction made me think of the MS. (in reference to a sermon of Dr. Beecher's in the "Independent"), and I pulled it out of a secret place and sent it to America, not thinking that the publication would fall in so nearly with a new grief of mine as to lead to misconceptions. In fact the poem would have been an exaggeration in that case, and unsuitable in other respects.

It refers to the greatest affliction of my life,--the only time when I felt despair,--written a year after or more. Forgive all these reticences. My husband calls me "peculiar" in some things,--peculiarly

lâche, perhaps. I can't articulate some names, or speak of certain afflictions;--no, not to him,--not after all these years! It's a sort of dumbness of the soul. Blessed are those who can speak, I say. But don't you see from this how I must want "spiritualism" above most persons?

Now let me be ashamed of this egotism, together with the rest of the weakness obtruded on you here, when I should rather have congratulated you, my dear friend, on the great crisis you are passing through in America. If the North is found noble enough to stand fast on the moral question, whatever the loss or diminution of territory, God and just men will see you greater and more glorious as a nation.

I had much anxiety for you after the Seward and Adams speeches, but the danger seems averted by that fine madness of the South which seems judicial. The tariff movement we should regret deeply (and do, some of us), only I am told it was wanted in order to persuade those who were less accessible to moral argument. It's eking out the holy water with ditch water. If the Devil flees before it, even so, let us be content.

How you must feel, you who have done so much to set this accursed slavery in the glare of the world, convicting it of hideousness! They should raise a statue to you in America and elsewhere.

Meanwhile I am reading you in the "Independent," sent to me by Mr. Tilton, with the greatest interest. Your new novel opens beautifully.

[Footnote: The Pearl of Orr's Island.]

Do write to me and tell me of yourself and the subjects which interest us both. It seems to me that our Roman affairs may linger a little (while the Papacy bleeds slowly to death in its finances) on account of this violent clerical opposition in France. Otherwise we were prepared for the fall of the house any morning. Prince Napoleon's speech represents, with whatever slight discrepancy, the inner mind of the emperor. It occupied seventeen columns of the "Moniteur" and was magnificent. Victor Emmanuel wrote to thank him for it in the name of Italy, and even the English papers praised it as "a masterly exposition of the policy of France." It is settled that we shall wait for Venice. It will not be for long. Hungary is only waiting, and even in the ashes of Poland there are flickering sparks. Is it the beginning of the restitution of all things?

Here in Rome there are fewer English than usual, and more empty houses. There is a new story every morning, and nobody to cut off the head of the Scheherazade. Yesterday the Pope was going to Venice directly, and, the day before, fixed the hour for Victor Emmanuel's coming, and the day before that brought a letter from Cavour to Antonelli about sweeping the streets clean for the feet of the king. The poor Romans live on these stories, while the Holy Father and king of Naples meet holding one another's hands, and cannot speak for sobs. The little queen, however, is a heroine in her way and from her point of view, and when she drives about in a common fiacre, looking very

pretty under her only crown left of golden hair, one must feel sorry that she was not born and married nearer to holy ground. My husband prays you to remember him, and I ask your daughters to remember both of us. Our boy rides his pony and studies under his abbé, and keeps a pair of red cheeks, thank God.

I ought to send you more about the society in Rome, but I have lived much alone this winter, and have little to tell you. Dr. Manning and Mr. DeVere stay away, not bearing, perhaps, to see the Pope in his agony.

Your ever affectionate friend,

ELIZABETH B. BROWNING.

Soon after her return to America Mrs. Stowe began a correspondence with Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes, which opened the way for the warm friendship that has stood the test of years. Of this correspondence the two following letters, written about this time, are worthy of attention.

ANDOVER, September 9, 1860.

DEAR DR. HOLMES,--I have had an impulse upon me for a long time to write you a line of recognition and sympathy, in response to those that reached me monthly in your late story in the "Atlantic" ("Elsie

Venner").

I know not what others may think of it, since I have seen nobody since my return; but to me it is of deeper and broader interest than anything you have done yet, and I feel an intense curiosity concerning that underworld of thought from which like bubbles your incidents and remarks often seem to burst up. The foundations of moral responsibility, the interlacing laws of nature and spirit, and their relations to us here and hereafter, are topics which I ponder more and more, and on which only one medically educated can write well.

I think a course of medical study ought to be required of all ministers. How I should like to talk with you upon the strange list of topics suggested in the schoolmaster's letter! They are bound to agitate the public mind more and more, and it is of the chiefest importance to learn, if we can, to think soundly and wisely of them. Nobody can be a sound theologian who has not had his mind drawn to think with reverential fear on these topics.

Allow me to hint that the monthly numbers are not long enough. Get us along a little faster. You must work this well out. Elaborate and give us all the particulars. Old Sophie is a jewel; give us more of her. I have seen her. Could you ever come out and spend a day with us? The professor and I would so like to have a talk on some of these matters with you!

Very truly yours, H. B. STOWE.

ANDOVER, February 18, 1861.

DEAR DOCTOR,--I was quite indignant to hear yesterday of the very unjust and stupid attack upon you in the----. Mr. Stowe has written to them a remonstrance which I hope they will allow to appear as he wrote it, and over his name. He was well acquainted with your father and feels the impropriety of the thing.

But, my dear friend, in being shocked, surprised, or displeased personally with such things, we must consider other people's natures. A man or woman may wound us to the quick without knowing it, or meaning to do so, simply through difference of fibre. As Cowper hath somewhere happily said:--

"Oh, why are farmers made so coarse,
Or clergy made so fine?
A kick that scarce might move a horse
Might kill a sound divine."

When once people get ticketed, and it is known that one is a hammer, another a saw, and so on, if we happen to get a taste of their quality we cannot help being hurt, to be sure, but we shall not take it ill of them. There be pious, well-intending beetles, wedges, hammers, saws, and all other kinds of implements, good--except where they come in the way of our fingers--and from a beetle you can have only a beetle's

gospel.

I have suffered in my day from this sort of handling, which is worse for us women, who must never answer, and once when I wrote to Lady Byron, feeling just as you do about some very stupid and unkind things that had invaded my personality, she answered me, "Words do not kill, my dear, or I should have been dead long ago."

There is much true religion and kindness in the world, after all, and as a general thing he who has struck a nerve would be very sorry for it if he only knew what he had done. I would say nothing, if I were you. There is eternal virtue in silence.

I must express my pleasure with the closing chapters of "Elsie." They are nobly and beautifully done, and quite come up to what I wanted to complete my idea of her character. I am quite satisfied with it now.

It is an artistic creation, original and beautiful.

Believe me to be your true friend,

H. B. STOWE.