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Paris, 18th March 1839 Monday Evening.

My dear Girls.

By the heading of this letter, you see I have arrived at Paris; and by way of redeeming my promise of writing you occasionally, - a promise which so far has been very badly kept - I allow, - I am about to address to you the first sheet of my journal from France. You must know that I arrived here on Saturday evening last, about half past six o'clock, when having no time to look up private lodgings I stopped at the Hotel de Lille et d'Albion, pres le Palais Royal; there I remained until to-day, when I engaged cheaper lodgings in that part of the town where I expect to be most engaged. I am now at the Hotel de L'Empereur Joseph II; Rue Tournon pres le Palais du Luxembourg. Here I have been established for about half an hour, and my first business shall be to fill this sheet for you. I suppose I must begin at the beginning and tell you how I came here. Voila. I left London at nine o'clock in the morning of the 14th Inst. (Thursday) stopping on my way to the Steam-boat which was to take me to Boulogne to leave a parcel of letters at Mr. Putnam's office to be forwarded to dear friends at home. It was a nasty rainy morning; and our boat was, as indeed I expected, not very comfortable. The Cabin was well enough but much too small for the accommodation of some 50 or 60 persons, and there was no covering to the deck, nor any deck-cabin, except two dirty little places for the poorer passengers who were not allowed the use of ours; so we had our choice the whole day between the soaking in the rain upon deck and the close atmosphere of the crowded cabin. Of course I was vibrating between the two dilemmas the whole day, but took as much pains as I could to keep dry. The only thing I saw worthy of notice as we went down the Thames was Greenwich Hospital; of which I will perhaps send a print. I should add also Chalk-cliffs &c. for I never before saw rocks and hills of chalk. In the afternoon, as we had fairly got into the channel a thick fog came on, the Captain lost his way and seemed to fear he should run the boat upon the sands. So he dropped anchor about five in the afternoon. We were to have arrived at Boulogne at 9 that evening. But as I saw there was no great chance of our moving for some time, I set about making amend for

my loss of sleep the previous night, I took possession of two-thirds of a hard sofa, and wrapped in my cloak was soon in a comfortable doze. I awoke late in the evening; and such a sight as there was before me! It seems that there was no accommodation for sleeping on board, or next to none, and the passengers, men, women & children were indiscriminately but thickly strown over the sofas, chairs, and even over the whole floor, with notwithstanding great coats and whatever they could find for pillows, attempting to secure such rest as they might. Some six, seven or more crowded into a space not larger than the Cabin of one of our ferry-boats. As if this was not enough some women put their heads into my arms, and their heads to be sea-sick, for we were still at anchor, and there was a considerable swell on the water; one such example by mere sympathy I suppose set half the rest a-going, and my ears and nostrils were assailed with sounds and odors quite sufficient to murder sleep. But I was too drowsy to mind it much, and soon fell asleep again, but awoke in the morning with swollen eyes and complaining bones. The boat was moving again; and it was raining as hard as ever. The distant Coast of France soon came in view, and at half-past ten we were landed at Boulogne. We were escorted to the Custom House, where baggage we had brought in our hands was closely examined by the Officers, an ill-looking, vagabond set. Our Passports were taken from us and a provisional one given which permitted us to go on to Paris, for which we each had to pay two francs; we were then allowed to go to an Hotel and get our breakfast, a privilege which most of us were not slow to avail ourselves of. I made a hearty meal of cold roast beef, Calf's head, excellent bread and delicious butter (which two last I have found ever since I have been in France). I gave my key to the Commissaire of the Hotel to get my luggage through the Custom house, and my place being taken on the Diligence for Paris at two o'clock, having nothing else to do I went down to the Custom-house to see the examination of the luggage. Lazy Custom-house officers and gals I arrived were lounging about while the heavy carts loaded with baggage were drawn up from the boats by women! - and this while it was raining hard, and the poor creatures were without hats or bonnets, and had only a handkerchief or a bit of cloth tied over their heads. So much for this self-styled most refined and

polite nation! I noticed the poor things when their task was done and they were waiting to carry the trunks &c. from the Custom-house to the various Hotels. Some were chatting in groups, apparently quite content with their lot; a few were sleeping, and many with the characteristic industry of their sex, busied their knitting-work from their pockets and were busily employed with a more appropriate and feminine employment. I was quite amused at the distrust with which these exceedingly unpleasant looking fellows searched all our baggage, that of the ladies not less than of the men. Little parcels were opened, dirty linen was overhauled and most minutely inspected: the whole scene would have made a fit subject for the pencil of Hogarth. My travelling bag was examined from top to bottom, and I began to fear for my trunk which I had packed with care, would be badly damaged, but they contented themselves with cutting open a packet of seeds I was taking from the Horticultural Society to be Calcutta, and with seizing as a great prize my rather formidable parcel of letters of introduction: this was near causing me to be detained until the next diligence; but the Commissaire succeeded in getting them sent up to the Inspector in another part of the town, upon whom we called, where after due explanation made and one or two of the letters being read they were formally delivered back to me.

I can tell you what a French Diligence is like. It is just like one of the Rail-Road Cars (about three apart) made of the Heavily Rail-rod, for example, mounted on coach wheels; the horses are small, lean, shaggy and ugly, and some seven of these beasts are fastened, three abreast and one for a leader, with ropes to the said Diligence; but how such beasts contrive to draw such a cumbersome vehicle, loaded with seventeen persons and their baggage besides a driver and a conductor, I don't well understand, although the beasts are changed ever five or six miles; but some how we got over the ground pretty fast, and came to Paris, over 140 miles, in a little less than 30 hours, although it rained all the first day and part of the second, and the road was extremely muddy. We arrived just before night-fall at Montreuil a fine old fortified French town situated on the summit of a hill and overlooking a broad valley which in summer must be quite beautiful: here we dined, and were charged four francs, for our dinner, besides some sous to the garcon.

I slept pretty well in the night, during which we passed Abbeville, where there is said to be a fine church. We breakfasted at the queer old town of Beauvais, where there is a fine Cathedral, of which I had a pretty good view. My breakfast (*dejeuner a la fourchette*, which is the next thing to a dinner) cost 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ francs, for on this route you must with very English charges! I wished to say something about the country, but have not room. Suffice it to say that we passed through the town of St. Denis late in the afternoon, where I did not even get a glimpse of the very ancient Cathedral, and arrived at Paris just before night-fall. After dinner, in company with a fellow-passenger, a young Englishman, I gratified a long-felt curiosity by strolling through Palais Royal and some of the principal streets of Paris. On Sunday I attended church in the morning (after a vain attempt to find the American Chapel) at the Rev. Mr. Lyster's English Episcopal Chapel, where I heard a good sermon; and in the evening at the Methodist Chapel, where the Rev. Mr. Toase preached a truly excellent discourse from *Lev. 8: 13*. All the shops were open just as on any other day, and the gardens and parks were all crowded. This morning I went down to the *Jardin des Plantes*, stopping by the way to see the ancient church of Notre-Dame, where I heard a portion of the Catholic service chanted, and saw quite as much heathen worship as I desired. At last, after looking at many other buildings and objects of curiosity about which I will tell you more presently, I reached the garden, found DeBaisne, who could speak no English, and I almost no French; so he took me to Ad. Jussieu, who makes out to speak very tolerable English, and to understand me pretty well. I left soon to call on Mr. Webb who is an Englishman, for whom I had a letter from Hooker; thence after looking in vain for "apartements garnis" in Rue de l'Odéon, Place de l'Odéon &c. I secured my lodgings here, where I shall be obliged to hear nothing but French, and where, I hope I may catch some of the language, and after dining at the Ordinary at the Hotel de Lille &c. where English is spoken, I transferred myself to my present quarters. But my sheet is full. I will give you another very soon. Till then, mes chères petites sœurs, Adieu.



Gray, Asa. 1839. "Gray, Asa Mar. 18, 1839 [to Torrey]." *Asa and Jane Gray travel correspondence*

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