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Avignon, 18<sup>th</sup> April, Thursday Evening,

My dearest Friend

I feel some little satisfaction at addressing this letter to you from a place once of great consequence from which I venture to suppose you have never yet received a letter. I write from Provence, the land of the Troubadours, from the city which so long belonged to the Roman See, and <sup>was</sup> besides ~~and~~ as you know, for many years the residence of a line of Opposition Popes, to the great botheration of all good Catholics then and since, who have been sadly puzzled to know which race were the infallible pontiffs! the true viceregents. But let me go back to Monday Morning and tell you in as few words as may be how I have been occupied since that time. I worked very hard to finish packing up at Paris, to dispatch my boxes to New York &c. - which I just accomplished and no more I had intended to have made that day besides a parting visit to the Jardin des Plantes, taken another and a better look at the grand Bibliothèque du Roi, having procured for the purpose a private letter to the Chief Librarian. All this I was unable to do. On the Saturday previous I was also obliged to give up two things, viz: a visit to the Chamber of Deputies for which Delessert had given me tickets, and another to the Gobelin tapestry manufactory. From all this I was kept back by the fault of other people, - the great botheration and delay in getting the requisite signatures to my passport. However I ought to be pretty well satisfied with what I was enabled to accomplish at Paris, and so indeed I am, but I should have liked a week longer, which I could have spent to advantage. But weeks make months and - - - I know there is an apt line in one of your favorite poets, and I have the sentiment in my head, but the words have flown. Well I got my boxes to the Roulage, my luggage to the Bureau des Postes in good time. DeBaisne was to have come and dine with me, but was prevented, so I dined alone, but DeBaisne came to bid good-bye at the Bureau. At six o'clock precisely the mail-coaches for every part of France began to leave one after the other: that for Lyons came up, our baggage all in, our seats selected and arranged for us; in ten seconds we were in our places and before the word Adieu was fairly beyond my lips we were off at full speed. We took the route by Burgundy, passed Paris in the night, breakfasted at six next morning at Auxerre, and during the day should have passed through Autun, but I believe we did not, passed Chalons -



sur Voane at dusk and arrived at Lyons at 6 precisely the next morning, a rather fatiguing ride, but I saved much time over the diligence, which would have been even more fatiguing. The mail coach takes four passengers only, three inside, and one with the Conductor; it is drawn by seven horses guided by a postilion in boots almost as high as himself, and the horses are changed every five miles or thereabouts. The time it took to change the horses I believe was exceeded a minute. I timed them once or twice by the watch, and we were moving again before the expiration of the minute. The Country, which we passed, was more fertile and in better cultivation than what I saw of Normandy; it was beautiful but monotonous, except the latter part which grew quite picturesque as we approached the Rhone and the river fell into it. I wrote a hurried letter from Lyons to Dr. F. V. yourself, informing you of the boxes I had sent, and referring to the letters contained therein, most hurried letters they are. I left Lyons this morning before the opening of the Post Office, and was obliged therefore to give the letter to the waiter at the Hotel du Nord to pay the postage to Dr. F. V. If you do not receive the letter you may have the satisfaction of knowing that the garçon has put the money I gave him in his pocket and abandoned the letter to its fate. But I hope not. I think I had scarcely room to tell you then what I had been occupied with then the day.

Lyons is finely situated just above the confluence of the Saone and the Rhone, occupying the space between the two rivers and also the other bank of the former. It has two beautiful and very steep hills, between which the Saone winds, which add much to its appearance.

[April 25<sup>th</sup>. I broke off here some time ago, and left a space which I intended to fill up the first spare moment, by telling you what I saw at Lyons, what kind of a town it is; how I might possibly have seen Mont Blanc from it had it not been a rainy day, - how I called on Serape, saw the little Botanical Garden, took notice of many little curiosities, particularly the way he keeps the aquatic plants wet; how he went with me to the Academie of Lyons, the branch of the University of Paris, saw the Drawing Class, more than one hundred taking drawing lessons at once, some copying pictures or statues, but many groups around some little workmen who sat as a model subject, &c. - This branch is very much encouraged, & the instruction perfectly free, because it is turned to good account by selling the

young painters to preparing designs for silks, calicos and other stuffs manufactured here, - how I saw the Natural History Museum, the antiquarian relics found in the neighborhood - the gallery of paintings, one of which, I believe the best of the collection, which represented some scripture scene, in which there were several angels, some playing on guitars, which is just so bad, but others are actually furnished with fiddles. I could also describe the manufacture of velvet, which I also saw, - but for all these things time does not permit; a good opportunity of sending to New-York occurring to-morrow morning. So I must leave the hiatus.]



I was called this morning at a quarter before four: went down the steam-boat which was to start promptly at five, but which did not until half an hour later: a narrow comfortless vessel, with no awning or protection for the decks, in which point, and in the lack of all comfortable arrangements it is just like every other steam-boat I have seen since I left New York (those between Liverpool & Glasgow alone excepted). The Rhone even at Lyons and far below merits pretty well the epithets applied to it when it "leaves the bosom of its nursing lake". - The blue rushing of the arrowy Rhone; for it is rapid the whole course and at Lyons has ~~the~~ a blue tint like that of oceans, though not so deep. Well, we were off at length, and aided by the current we made very satisfactory progress. The distance by post between Lyons and Arignon is 167 miles, but including all the turnings of the river it must be much more: however at six o'clock and a quarter the spires and battlements of Arignon lighted by the setting sun were in sight, and a beautiful sight it was as we drew near. The wall of the city built by Pope Innocent VI. in the 12<sup>th</sup> Century is still perfect, and very pretty, the architecture being what I should have thought Moorish (judging from pictures nearly). The numerous spires of this very ecclesiastical town rising above them, the huge rocky elevation next the river, the site of the ancient fortress, and of old temples, churches &c. - and not least the ruined bridge, ~~that~~ of very ancient date, ~~that crosses the~~ that still throws its beautiful arches half across the river, the lovely Italian landscape around, so fresh and green, the distant mountains encircling the whole, made it altogether as delightful a scene as one could wish to behold. But you must know that I am now in the region of the olive and myrtle, and have in the short space of three days concentrated as it were the pleasure we experience in watching the gradual approach of summer. The season is said to be later than usual at Paris. - it is like April, early April, in New York; a few warm days, but the evenings all chilly and most of the day raw and unpleasant. The Horse-chestnut trees of the Tuileries were just bursting their buds: but every hour since, and particularly to-day, I have have noticed little by little the advance: Here nearly all the trees have assumed their foliage, that fine and delicate vernal foliage which we always so much admire but which you enjoy very much to come upon it in the way I have done, instead of waiting week after week, with nay now and then a snow-storm just to keep winter in remembrance. But I must not forget that I have seen snow also to-day. The summit of Mont Ventoux, which we have had in full sight since twelve o'clock is covered with the snow, its <sup>brilliant</sup> whiteness contrasting finely with the craggy brown mountains of lesser elevation



as with the green fields and tender foliage of the valleys. There is nothing very grand in the scenery of the Rhone from Lyons to this place. The upper portion is very much like the Hudson between New York and the Highlands, but I think scarcely as fine, if you make due allowance for the effect of the old villages &c. (not half so comfortable as ours surely, but much better adapted to improve the beauty of the landscape), with now and then a grey ruin, which is a vast improvement. But from Tournon quite to Arignon, the scenery far surpasses the Hudson, and exhibits such variety moreover that you are charmed continually, now bold and magnificent even; again picturesque, particularly where the basaltic rocks (for it is wholly a volcanic country) form parapets like the Palisades but much more curious and diversified; the more friable material being worn away in places, leaving columns and salient portions in all fantastic shapes. And again, especially in the lower portion ~~we have~~ we see the hills widely separated, leaving most beautiful broad valleys between, with high mountains for a distant background. At St Esprit we passed under the curious old bridge built in the 11<sup>th</sup> century, which is still in as perfect a state apparently as if finished yesterday. It is 3000 feet long (said to be the longest bridge in Europe) consists of 26 arches and each abutment has also a little arch above it. We passed other very pretty or striking views of which I should like vastly to have good prints, but I do not know whether any person has of late been illustrating the Rhone. But I must come to a close, not to fatigue you longer. I arrived at the most excellent Hotel de Palais Royal (recommended by Bentham) just in time for the Table d'hôte at 7 o'clock, and after dinner sallied out with a guide to conduct me to see Requien (to whom Bentham had given me a letter; found him a prompt man, and in almost 10 words we settled my plan for to-morrow, which is to start in a Cabriolet for Vaucluse at 5 o'clock in the morning, arrive at 8, spend two hours, breakfast, and return here by one o'clock, spend the afternoon and evening in seeing the most interesting objects in town, looking at his collections, his pictures &c. &c. What would you give to see Vaucluse? I have many doubts whether it will equal my expectations, which are raised by the description; - according to the accounts it must be very curious & strange, apart from the associations of the place, which have passed for little with me, as I feel no interest at all in Petrarch or Laura whoever she may have been. But good-night.



Arignon, Friday Evening 19<sup>th</sup> April, 1839, 2 past 8 o'clock.

I think you will scarcely call me an idler here. It was about midnight when I went to bed last night; I was called this morning at half past four; a few minutes past five I was on my way in a cabriolet for Vauluse, with a very lazy horse, so that it was nine o'clock when I arrived. I visited the famous fountain, admired the rock &c., collected a few plants, poor however, took my breakfast, a very substantial one, consisting in part of delicate trout from the stream which issues from the fountain; left at 11, arrived at Arignon again at half past two, saw with Regnier the Museum of Antiquities, which is rich, the paintings, the little Botanical Garden, saw also Regnier's library, and collection of plants &c. made arrangements for correspondence, climbed the rocky hill which overlooks the town & river, enjoyed the view, visited the cathedral (a small affair) which stands upon it, saw the old papal palace now converted into a prison, returned to Hotel Palais Royal (a most excellent hotel it is, which I hope you will patronize the first time you come to Arignon), dined at seven, having first secured a place in the diligence for Nîmes at 10 o'clock this evening, when I hope to arrive by day light and be ready to follow the same day to Montpellier, where I prefer to pass the Sabbath. Now I think this is doing pretty well.

Vauluse has far surpassed my expectations; it is altogether a most strange and striking sight! The fountain is the source of quite a river (the Vigne) rising at the foot of a paper-mill's wall of rock 600 feet high, - a mountain cleft to be sure as it were; the whole scene is very picturesque, but I should spoil it by attempting a description. Arignon is a fine specimen of a town of the middle ages. It is by no means handsome within the walls, but many buildings, as to their exterior, nor courts are handsome and very pleasant, these courts being planted with trees and laid out into gardens. The whole paper have fled, yet the town is very Catholic; the priest & priestlings are met at every corner. Images of the Virgin are stuck up in the walls of almost every house. It is altogether well worth passing a day or two here, but even a single day if one be very industrious is fully enough. - But I have my baggage to arrange for my next journey. Good-night.

Montpellier, Saturday Evening, 20<sup>th</sup> April, 1839.

As it is getting late I must be content to give you a very desultory sketch of the last twenty-four hours, which have been to me very interesting. I left ~~Arignon~~ Arignon for Nîmes (or Nîmes) in the diligence at ten o'clock precisely, and having a whole seat to myself I pulled on a night-cap, wrapped myself in my cloak, stretched myself out and fell to sleep immediately. The motion of the carriage was so easy that I slept almost undisturbed and quite soundly until our arrival at Nîmes at 3 o'clock in the morning; a distance of about 20 or 30 miles. I immediately took a cabriolet of the town, saw the famous Roman Amphitheatre, - in fact in view only to the Coliseum, but in much better preservation; the Roman temple, which is in more complete preservation than any other Roman work, - the fountain, the baths of the priests, the ruins of the temple of Diana, I then ascended the steep hill to the Tour Magne on its summit, took a view of the town & the country around, descended, walked through the streets of the town, and took my breakfast. I was greatly disappointed in this place which I supposed was only interesting for its antiquities. I found it a very pleasant place as to situation &c. and with the most beautiful park and garden I had ever seen I was truly charmed with it. At my place being secured in the diligence for Montpellier for twelve o'clock I again set out to take a more careful and lengthened survey of the remarkable objects. I visited first the Amphitheatre, - a truly majestic edifice which gives you some idea of Roman power; as well as of the customs of the people. It has the elliptical form used in such structures, and measures in its longest diameter 440 feet, and it is 70 or 80 feet high. The stones of which it is built are some of them enormous and the walls are of astonishing thickness. After walking leisurely around it I entered the interior, passed under the massive arches, saw the doors in which the wild beasts were confined, and then stood in the arena, where the combats took place: from this about thirty rows of seats, all formed of immense blocks of stone, rise one above the other to the height of the walls, and these were capable of accommodating 17,000 spectators, all of whom could have the most perfect view of the arena beneath. While standing here it requires no great stretch of the imagination to resemble the amphitheatre with the ancient inhabitants of Nîmes and to fill the arena with savage beasts tearing each other in pieces for the amusement of the assembled multitude. I climbed to the summit of the wall, threaded the galleries which pass around beneath the seats, and spent nearly two hours in this interesting place which made a very strong impression upon me. I then took a more careful view of the "Maison Carrée" as it is called, a



beautiful temple of the Corinthian order, not very large, but prob-  
ably the most perfectly preserved of any <sup>of the</sup> old Roman edifices. The  
ruins of the Temple of Diana and the baths of Augustus, are within the  
beautiful public garden, at the foot of the abrupt hill, whose slope  
covered with trees and plants and laid out in lovely walks, forms a  
part of the garden, and gives you from its summit a most enchanting  
view, the fountain, almost as large as that of Vaucluse, just beneath  
you, close by the gray ruins of the temple I have mentioned, the water  
runs into the baths of Augustus, the foundations of which are all  
ancient, but they have been ~~re~~ restored throughout in the original  
style as far as can be guessed at, adorned with statues surrounded  
with fine plants all in full bloom, and from this the little  
river as it may be called is conducted by winding canals to  
embellish the garden below, in which under shade of the trees  
and surrounded with beautiful flowers I spent an hour, -  
and thence distributed through the town. I can give you no idea  
of the beauty and interest of this place, which I enjoyed the more  
as I was wholly unprepared for it. At twelve o'clock I left  
Nismes, rode through a highly fertile and level country, mostly  
occupied with vineyards, getting now and then a distant view of  
the Mountains of Cevennes on the right, and soon of the  
Pic San-Lien, by which I knew we were not very far from  
Montpelier, and at this last place we arrived at five o'clock  
precisely, and here I am quartered at the most comfortable hotel  
imaginable, the Hotel du Midi; all my stopping places being indi-  
cated to me by Bentham, there no difficulty in choosing where  
to stop. Here you are not put into a little 7 by 9 chamber  
up five pairs of stairs as is the inevitable lot of a single  
man travelling in the United States, but I have a room  
like a large parlor, airy, the two windows looking into a pretty  
shady garden, a sofa, cushioned chairs and every convenience  
you can think of. The town itself has nothing pleasant except  
its situation, but there are in it two delightful spots, which  
I sought out at once, after having taken my dinner, - the Caplan-  
ade, very near me, an elevated plateau ~~which~~ planted with  
trees, from which you have an extensive view of the country around.  
From this I had my first view of the Mediterranean, distant  
I suppose about 8 miles. At the opposite side of the town is the  
Place du Peyrou, one of the finest squares in the world, on a  
fine elevation, descending by bold terraces into the country around - the  
green fields coming up on one side close to the parapet. The view  
is beautiful and very extensive, the Mediterranean on one side,  
the San-Lien, the Mountains of Cevennes on the other, while toward  
the south it is said the Pyrenees may be seen in very clear  
weather. From this point I discovered the Botanic Garden,



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The oldest in Europe, and in many respects still the finest. So I descended, sought out Delite the director, who it seems expected me, and expressed his delight in a most exaggerated and truly French manner. I stayed with him until 9 o'clock, returned here, commenced this, but being fatigued soon gave it up and went to bed.

Monday Morning 22<sup>nd</sup> April.

Nearly all of the foregoing has been written this morning; but I can not stay longer, as I should be stirring. There are many Protestants in Montpellier, it is said, but I fancy that they are chiefly not very pious, and as I should not understand the language well ~~enough~~ enough to be benefitted, I thought it better to spend the Sabbath by myself. This is the first Sabbath on land in which I have not attended Divine worship conducted in the English language.

Tuesday Morning 23<sup>rd</sup> April

As early as possible in the morning <sup>(Saturday)</sup> I called on Lady Bentham, (the mother of my good friend who has taken so much pains to aid me) and her daughter, Madame Duchesnil; they live quite retired, and are occupied in directing the education of the son of Madame Duchesnil, a fine lad of about thirteen. The history of the Bentham family is very singular, and in some respects melancholy. I can not write, but hope ere long to tell you something about it. The ladies received me with great cordiality, I prolonged my call to an hour, and accepted an invitation to take tea with them this evening. I found here a letter for me from Bentham himself, which of course I was very glad to receive. It contained no personal news of our friends, except that Dr. Booth had been quite sick, but was fast recovering; and that the vessels for the British Antarctic expedition were commissioned, Joseph Hooker appointed to the place he wished, and it was expected they would set out in the month of July. I went to the Garden, called upon Mr. Dunal, the best botanist here, who having lived single to the age of, I should say fifty, years has found out that it is not good to be alone, and has just taken a wife. I did not stay very long as I found when I called that he was not in his study, but I suppose in his drawing-room, and I could not be so cruel as to keep him from the company of his beloved. But this reminds me of a little matter I forgot to mention when at Paris. A year ago or more DeKay showed me a letter from his friend Valenciennes, announcing his marriage to what he was pleased to term an angel, of whom he wrote in the most extravagantly fond manner. Will you ask Dr. T. to tell DeKay, when he meets him,



that it is a great pity she is not a bona-fide angel, that she might escape out of his clutches, for it is generally reported that he abuses her shockingly and is altogether an unworthy fellow.

Scalded next upon Delile, but as he was not in I spent a long time in looking over the garden, noticing all the little details and arrangements that it would be useful for me to know. On his return we spent the remainder of the afternoon in looking over his plants collected in America: I dined with him at six o'clock, and spent nearly all the evening.

In speaking of the beautiful Place de Payrou, I think I forgot to mention its greatest ornament, the water-temple, a fine Corinthian edifice, placed at the farther end, which is elevated a little more than the other extremities; This receives the water from the magnificent aqueduct which is brought across the valley on a noble tier of bold arches, one above the other, which is almost half a mile in length and is the most striking object in the town. This terminates in the Chateau d'eau in a beautiful fountain, and on three sides the water descends from this over a kind of rock-work into a broader fountain at its base, which furnishes the jet d'eau on each of the terraces and also supplies the whole town. They have not water enough however to supply the Botanic garden sufficiently, which has a very barren soil and in this dry climate where it seldom rains from this time to October, it suffers greatly. The first view of this garden is very striking, but upon a more careful observation I see less to admire. Still I learn something from any garden I visit.

Previously to calling on Lady Bentham I had accepted an invitation to dine this evening with Capt. Gordon, a retired officer of the British Army residing here, a friend of the Bentham family, who hearing from Lady Bentham and Delile that I was soon expected here, called Jean Bazard at the Hotel du Midi, to request that they would send him word when I arrived, for finding me he insisted on dining with him this evening. I have this moment while I was writing received a note from Lady Bentham, asking me to call on her this morning, saying she has a collection of plants made by her son George at some interesting locality among the mountains, a set of which she is to have ready for me, knowing as she says that George would surely offer them to me. Although I had arranged my time a little differently, of course I shall call immediately after breakfast. Lady B. who is now very aged, is evidently a very superior woman. She is a very good botanist also, where, as I do not know the plants of the South of Europe very well, I am a little afraid of her.

Marseilles, 25<sup>th</sup> April, Thursday Evening.

I broke off my narrative on Tuesday morning, ten days ago. I must continue my brief account, and then close my letter to send from this post. After breakfast, Capt. Gordon called on me, and we went together to Lady Bentham. We found his dinner hour so late that we were obliged to give up the expectation of returning to take tea with the ladies here. Delile joined us, and soon after I went with him to see the museum of painting & sculpture, which by a curious circumstance is the richest in France except Paris. There are not a few originals of great masters, - two or three Raphael's - as many of Salvator Rosa, Rubens, Broussin, Carlo Dolce &c, many of which I knew from engravings.

The next next to the medical school, which occupies the former palace of the Archbishop, who was ousted at the time of the Revolution, this is one of the oldest Medical Schools and for a long time very celebrated. It is declining now they have no professor of any great talent at present, except Callemant. I was shown the gallery of portraits of the professors from the commencement almost, a prodigious number, and some of the old fellows very queer to look at. I saw also the library, the collection of Manuscripts, Classical, theological, a few Persian, Arabic &c which was very fine, also a cabinet of sketches &c. - which fell into their hands some years ago.

Then we went to the garden, looked at plants, but did not get on very much, Delile being under of telling long stories of complaining all the while, how much he is pressed by his (various) means of working hard. I then arranged my baggage, took a place in Diligence for Marseilles ~~arrived~~ called again on Lady Bentham to take leave, - dined with Capt. Gordon. Returned, went to bed.

Rose on Wednesday (yesterday) morning at half past four, took Diligence at 5, arrived at Arles at 10<sup>1/2</sup>, had time to take another survey of the Amphitheatre, the Maison Carree & so forth, took breakfast at half past eleven. - At again at twelve, passed in sight of Beaucaire and Tarascon, crossed the Rhone (near a large town) near its mouth in Arles, a curious old town which has nothing midway about it, and thus was again in Provence. The Count of Constantine the Great was for several years at Arles, which was celebrated for its refinement, and the women and children are said to be still handsome and graceful. Certainly nearly all I saw, young or old were comely and many handsome. They



are all brunettes, and not a little sun-burnt; but their black hair, large dark eyes and long eye-lashes, appear to advantage. We were soon on the road again, travelled over an immense plain, bordered on the north by a long ridge of mountains, composed of naked jagged rocks, a picturesque range, in fine contrast to the fertile plain from which it abruptly rises. They are I believe the Mountains of the Durance. At length the plain became as ~~barren~~ barren as the mountains; night came on; and rather late in the evening we reached Aix, took our supper. I slept pretty well, and when I awoke we were in sight of the town and bay of Marseilles. The latter superb as seen from the elevated place of our view; but the town did not present such an imposing view as I had been taught to expect. But I must leave all I have to say until tomorrow, when I am like to have time enough on board the Steam-boat. I went down to the harbor almost at once, and it was not long before I had the pleasure to distinguish an American ship, which I knew at first sight by its neat appearance, and taper masts and spars. — went on board the *Ciramba* (?) found she was bound for New York, in about a fortnight. — I next took my passage in the Steam-boat *Francois* 1<sup>re</sup> — for *bivita Vecchia* (near Rome) (I give up Naples tho' I am ~~strongly~~ strongly tempted, but I am anxious to return as soon as possible, and going to Naples would make some difference), which sails early tomorrow morning. — The remainder of the day I have been looking about the town at whatever was most curious, and this evening have made two packages to put on board the ship for New York, early in the morning; both are addressed to Wiley & Putnam, with my mark added thus . The larger contains a few books for Michigan, some pamphlets from Seringe & Delile (not of much consequence) & a few specimens (mostly for you) collected as *Souvenirs* at <sup>a few portraits</sup> *Vaucluse* & *Arles*. These are put into the pamphlets. — also a little handful of plants from Delile. The smaller, which is marked "For Dr. Torrey" the Silk-velvet which I wrote you from Lyons. I had bought these for you. I think very fine, and have no doubt it will please you; — also a few prints; and a few land-shells. Also two pairs of open-work thread (or twine) slippers, which I think very pretty, and hope you will think so too. They will fit you I think, — perhaps one pair will fit Jane also. They would be cool enough in summer if you could adapt a kind of sole to them. This I believe is all in the parcel.



After writing as I have been obliged to do  
 my hand is so painful and exhausted that it  
 absolutely refuses to do a jot more. - and I  
 fear you will never read what I have attempted  
 to write you, I send this by the ship that  
~~brings~~ takes the parcels. I am not much fa-  
 tired except my hand, which is used up. Take  
 it as it is. You know what I would add if I could.  
 Love to all, - a sweet kiss for Herbert. While  
 I am journeying you are all constantly on my  
 mind. I shall find opportunity to send other  
 letters from Italy. I am getting on at  
 the most rapid rate, tarrying as little as possible  
 and looking anxiously forward to the not dis-  
 tant day when, God's gracious goodness  
 preserving and enabling me, I may set out for  
home! -  
 Ever, your pray



Did you get  
my letter from  
Lyons?

Dr. John Torrey

No. 30 Macdougall St.

New York

Marseilles-  
Mr. Brissac

for Mrs. T.





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

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