With the compliments of
Stanley Williams

UNPUBLISHED LETTERS OF WASHINGTON IRVING

SUNNYSIDE AND NEW YORK CHRONICLES

By STANLEY T. WILLIAMS

THESE letters depict an interlude. They were written when Washington Irving's literary fame was a commonplace, and just prior to his ambassadorship to Spain. A second group of unpublished letters to appear later in THE YALE REVIEW will describe his Spanish experiences.

In 1841 Irving was living quietly at "Sunnyside," his country home near Tarrytown on the Hudson, with no intimation of the somewhat harassed term in Madrid, or the intense creative effort to be expended on his last history, for which he was just beginning to gather materials. Few letters in all his vast correspondence show him more at peace with the world than these records of his life with his intimate friends, among whom were the Brevoorts, Paulding, Philip Hone, West, the painter, and William Astor.

He had learned how to turn off a graceful letter when he was a gay youngster in the society of New York and Philadelphia. Since then he had lived, at different times, nineteen years abroad, many of them in that mood of observation, musing, and leisurely writing which was so strongly a part of his nature. As will be seen in these pages, he never could allow events or persons to interrupt his romantic appreciations. He is now, when he writes the first of these letters, nearly fifty-seven years old, but the mood is still the same; and surely never were conditions more favorable for its indulgence.

Without the cottage were the scenes he loved best;

within, the nieces, six of them, and their friends—all, for the most part, happy and devoted. Tarrytown, he notes elsewhere, has mounted the hill, has an Episcopalian church with an organ, boasts music on the harp and piano, carriages, yachts, and picnics. "I do not know," he adds, "when I have seen more delightful little parties, or more elegant little groups of females." A favorite word—"elegant"! The notebooks which he kept betray a more forceful Irving, quite able to give and take in the world. But these letters lend countenance to a tradition which was true to one side of his nature: his love of domestic life, gossip, whim-whams.

Few writers as prolific as Irving escaped as easily as he the weight of writing. This was so, at least, up to the time which these letters reflect. Then the least shadow of compulsion drove him from his desk. In these years, he wrote little save for his friend Gaylord's "Knickerbocker Magazine" and the sublimated friendship book, typical of his age, the "Memoir of Margaret Davidson." He was merely happy, and good company—except that he missed his favorite niece, Sarah Storrow, the only surviving daughter of his sister Catherine. She and her husband sailed on May 1, 1841, to live in Paris. One suspects that beneath Irving's ease of intercourse with all manner of people were a few bonds of affection which gave him deep joy and commensurate pain. In any case, Mrs. Storrow, whom he never forgets, whom he mentions constantly, elicited from him his most intimate letters. It is his thought of her comprehension that has given us these reflections on family affection, on birds, and on house-parties; as well as the humor of the thunderstorm and the gossip of society in the New York of the 'forties, including the "terrible feud between Mrs. Mary Jones and Mrs. Doctor Mott."

These persons and a score of others prominent in Irving's world now reappear. They are not heralded by annotation, but readers interested in the life of the period may recog-

w 34416

nize them, and still enjoy Irving's harmless satire. Far more important than these in the letters is Irving himself. On solitude, on writing, on the France of his youth, on America in 1841, he has still something to say.

Except for a few minor alterations in punctuation and spelling, these passages from Irving's correspondence, here for the first time published, have been printed exactly as they stood in the original manuscripts now in the Yale University Library. The first letter bears the superscription, "To my Six Nieces"; all the others in this group are addressed to Sarah Storrow.

New York, Feb. 4th 1840

My dear girls,

I write to let you know that it is quite uncertain when I shall return home. I am leading a very busy and dissipated life and am now writing in bed at four o'clock in the morning, having no leisure in the day time. And now for Gossip, which I know is what you all dearly love. Pierre and Helen like the birds, are looking out for a new nest at the approach of Spring time. They seem bothered to decide between two excellent places, Miss Seton's in the upper part of the city, and Miss Laidlaw's in Warren Street, and having thus got into a state of indecision are likely to remain there for some time to come. Helen shewed me a letter from Julia, who appears to be enjoying herself very rationally at Washington. She had not been out much as gaieties had not commenced, but had been with Mrs Paulding leaving cards and paying visits. She was to dine in the course of a day or two at the President's. She found Mrs Paulding an invaluable guide and companion to pilot her through the perplexities of a first launch in Washington. I have not been able to get to Auntabby's [*sic*] until yesterday. All are well there. Carry Blackwell is on a visit to your cousin Abby, and the young folks appear to be enjoying themselves mightily. Your Auntabby is on the point of losing all her good servants, for which I am very sorry.

I saw Mrs Constant several days since looking like herself again —which you know is every thing that is lovely and lovable. She is passing her time very pleasantly in New York, and so is the Judge

and so is Willie. I met the Judge at dinner at Mr Cary's where I also met Mr Ludlow, so that Westchester was ably represented there. The Judge complains of the severe duties of the knife and fork which he has to perform, yet he appears to thrive in spite of hard work. One gentleman at table (Mr March) asked me about my *handsome* niece. I asked him which of the six he meant, as they all come under that description.

On Sunday I took a family dinner at Mr Schermerhorn's, and in the evening there was a gathering there from Treat's and the General's. It was very pleasant. The three establishments being so near together enables them to meet often and promptly at each other's houses and renders them quite independent of Society at large. Mr Schermerhorn's new house is extremely commodious. He has fitted it up with much taste. Annie's room, which during the occupancy of Mr Ruggles was painted in fresco by Brijaldi, is elegantly furnished, and is altogether, I should think, the most beautiful bed chamber in New York.

On Monday evening I was at Mr Sam Ward's (who married Miss Astor). He has commenced housekeeping in Bond Street, in very pretty style. There was no company there excepting Mr William Astor's family and three or four foreign artists and literati, beside Mr Longfellow. We had some exquisite music from a young German performer, a successor to Schlessinger, and, to my taste, superior to him. Mrs Ward sang two or three things very well. She has taken great pains with herself and is constantly improving in her singing.

Today I take a ghostly dinner with my pious and reverend friend Dr Wainwright, and tomorrow I take a sympathizing dinner with the "Vidder and the fatherless"—so you see what an edifying life I am leading.

I enclose you cards of invitation for the great Brevoort Fancy ball, which is convulsing the whole fashionable world. If any of you are inclined to go, I will take you there. No extra expense of any consequence need be incurred (and I will bear it) as a few ribbands fancifully disposed can constitute a passable fancy dress. I think Kate might arrange a primitive dutch dress and go as Katrina Van Tassel, just from the Van Tassel cottage.

As Kate says "the carriage is at the door" so I must conclude with love to the Lady Abbess.

Your affectionate uncle

W. I.

W 34416

Sunnyside Cottage Saturday May 8th 1841

I wrote to you a few days since, my dear Sarah, while I was in town, and my letter was to go by the Havre packet. I forgot to mention among my town gossip that I was at a musical soiree at Mrs Brevoort's, which was conducted in very elegant style, and where we had an agreeable assemblage and very good music both vocal and instrumental. Julia Grinnell and her husband were there and were much pleased. Among the guests was Mrs Hammersley. It was the first time I had met her in public since her father's death. She greeted me very cordially and we had much conversation together. I was delighted with her appearance and manners, so lovely in person, and then so amiable, quiet and ladylike. I was more than usually pleased and interested with her because she talked of you so sweetly and kindly and seemed to appreciate your character so justly. I was grieved, however, to see that there was no intercourse between her and her sisters, though in the same room and not far from each other. I presume they had spoken to each other when they met, but I observed no communication between them throughout the evening. And yet you remember how closely and tenderly they were but recently entwined together in sisterly affection. I cannot conceive any excuse sufficient for such alienation—at least none that I hear suggested. What are the sordid considerations of pounds, shillings and pence to these dearer concerns of the heart: and what have the jars and janglings of husbands to do with the affections of sisters that have sprung up from the cradle and should continue to the grave. Good heavens what contradictory mortals we are! we grieve and repine at the separation that death and distance effect between kindred hearts—and here are sisters, but five paces asunder, yet apparently as severed in all the sweetest sympathies of our nature as if half the world were thrust between them!

The evening before last I returned to the dear little family circle at Sunnyside, and found all well, and as cheerful as the continued bad weather would permit. Your mother had taken advantage of two transient intervals of sunshine to drive to Eliza's, and had enjoyed her drive and her visits. She sleeps very well, and keeps up her usual tone of spirits. I long for genial settled weather that she may drive out daily and enjoy the opening season.

This is a bright Sunday morning—one of the very, very few real spring mornings we have had this season. For the first time this year the girls have sallied out after breakfast without hat and shawl, and loitered around the porch; and admired the honeysuckles; and played with the dogs and pigeons and strolled arm in arm about the grass plots. As I gazed on the well known scene I felt my heart and my eyes filling, and found myself humming the burden of the song "But where art thou!—oh where art thou!" But I checked the feeling, and reproached myself, when so many were left for me to love, and, I trust, to love me, at repining so meanly [?] that one should be separated from the domestic group. Still it takes time, when one like myself is "in the sere, the yellow leaf," to get over these sudden loppings off. . . .

As we were not to go to church until afternoon, and as this lovely Sabbath morning was too precious to be wasted, I have taken the girls out to enjoy it, as profitably I trust as between church walls, in strolling about the walks and glens and green banks, and inhaling the blessed breath of Spring, which is sufficient to thaw the inmost fountains of the heart and set all the affections in a flow. I do not know when I have been more sensible of this tender influence of the weather; but in fact all nature, which during this cold, tardy, hard-hearted season, has remained spell bound, seemed to start into life this morning. The birds, which hitherto have only now and then ventured a few dubious half melancholy notes, now warbled out boldly in the sunshine; the bees hummed about the scantily opened blossoms, and the pigeons in their frolick morning flights, swept down to the river banks and then circled among the tree tops. The Tappan Sea too had put on all its atmospherical charms. There was scarce a ripple in its surface, and its sundry fleet of sloops gleamed here and there about its wide sunny reaches, or faded away into the blue distance. . . .

As Kate is writing to you I trust to her to give you whatever I may omit of domestic news. Yet what news have we to furnish from our quiet little home, where one day passes so much like another, especially at this season, when we are almost entirely shut up within ourselves and have no visitors! For my part, as I before observed, I keep out doors, and busy myself about the garden and the fields all day, whenever not absolutely driven in

W 34416

by the rain—so that when evening comes I am completely fagged, and am apt to doze over my book in the drawing room; but then I gain a good night's sleep, and that is always worth working for. In the meantime, in spite of wind and weather, the Spring is advancing; the trees are every day putting out their leaves more and more, and the blossoms beginning to open. We have occasional gleams of sunshine and intervals of warmth, and I think we feel them more sensibly this season on account of their rarity. Within these three days the little Boblinks [*sic*] have begun their tinkling songs among the apple trees and the cat birds are whisking and pecking and carolling about the cottage, and as these are warm weather birds, we hail them as harbingers of sunshine. The nest of the little Phoebe bird under the porch, however, remains unoccupied. This is the second season it has been deserted, but I won't allow it to be disturbed—It shall always remain ready for her—*The Phoebe bird will come back again!*

I am writing before breakfast and I hear the ringing of the breakfast bell and the pattering of footsteps. The sun is shining in at my window and promising a fine day. If it keeps its promise I will turn out horse and vehicle and make the first irruption [?] this spring into Sleepy Hollow. The little valley must be by this time in blossom, and it is a long while since the girls have had a real excursion for pleasure. By the time this reaches you the garden of the Tuilleries will be in all its beauty, and I can fancy your delight in strolling through its noble alleys, and about its terraces and fountains. How many a delightful morning I have passed there with your poor uncle Peter. Versailles, S' Cloud, S' Germain, also, thanks to the rapidity of railroads, will now be close at hand; with their glorious parks and gardens. With such resorts at command what a residence is Paris! . . .

With kindest remembrances to Mr Storrow I remain my dear Sarah ever most affectionately your uncle

W. I.

Hellgate, July 11th 1841

My dear Sarah,

. . . Kate wrote to you by the last packet, and gave you a chronicle of the events at the Cottage, which as usual, have nothing in them very striking. The fourth or rather 5th of July

was celebrated at Mrs Colford Jones' by fireworks, a supper &c at which most of the neighborhood were present, with some few guests from town. The fireworks went off better than last year, but the fête generally, not as well. We missed you and Mrs Constant and I think your absence had a dampening effect with many. It certainly had with me. I never feel your absence more my dear Sarah, than when I mingle in these little gatherings of the neighborhood, to which you always accompanied me. I feel now how much of my pleasure was reflected from your own happy looks, and from the animated part you took in the social scene. Mrs Sheldon was among the guests at Mrs Jones'. She is gradually getting better of her lameness—but very slowly. I had not much to say to her, nor indeed to any one else on that occasion, for I was not in a talkative mood. I do not find any disposition in the neighborhood to get up musical meetings this season; nor is there any talk of picnics. I have not stirred in the matter myself; for I have not felt much inclination. I have satisfied myself with rural occupations about my place, and with occasional long drives about the country; for which the occasional cool delightful days which we have had this summer have been very favorable. All I want in these drives is a bright communicative companion, that will respond to my feelings and remarks—and this unluckily is a perpetually recurring want that makes me feel your loss.

I suppose Kate has informed you that we are to lose the Perrys from our neighborhood. Capt. Perry has been ordered to take command at the navy yard at Brooklyn; where a house is provided for him. This will fix him for three or four years, after which he will probably be ordered to Sea. Finding there was no likelihood of his being able for several years, to reside at the rural establishment he had just set up; he has offered it either for sale or to rent for a term of years. We all regret this circumstance extremely, for we were highly pleased with the Perrys and hoped to be very intimate with them.

Among the 4th of July guests at Mrs Colford Jones' was my friend West the painter. He passed three or four days there, and was frequently at the Cottage. He intends making Mrs Jones another visit soon, after which I expect to make an excursion with him to the Highlands. I received a letter not long since from

W 3441d

Gouverneur Kemble urging me to make him a visit. He has resumed his station as president of the company, and keeps up his old establishment. His sister Mary has been rather out of health ever since the death of poor Mrs Paulding. I fear I shall find a visit there very melancholy. There are too many associations with that place, that will now be extremely painful to me. I rather think I shall stop there but for a day or so, and make the most of my Highland visit at Brevoort's; who has taken the old Beverley house; (a mile or two below Mr S Gouverneur's) which formerly belonged to the family of the Robinsons, and is associated with the history of the Arnold treason. It is a fine old country seat, with venerable trees, and commands a noble prospect. Mr Brevoort has urged West and myself to pass some days with him.

I am just now on a brief visit to Mr Astor. I came here yesterday (Saturday) and think I shall return home tomorrow. I presume you have heard of the trouble in Mr A's family; arising from a clandestine marriage of his grand daughter, Miss Louisa Langdon, with young Kane. Mrs Langdon had set her face against this match and had thought she had prevented it, she was therefore excessively indignant at being deceived, and departed for Europe without seeing her daughter, or becoming in any degree reconciled to her. She even went so far as to prevail upon Mr Astor to disinherit her. I presume, however, that this affair will end in the usual way—by a forgiveness of the parties, after many unkind things have been said and done that will be hard to be forgotten. What constant troubles and heart-burnings, and dissensions are occuring in these *rich* families—let us congratulate ourselves, my dear girl, that the curse of wealth has never fallen, nor is likely to fall, on our numerous connexion.

I presume before this you have received the volume containing Miss Davidson's memoir and poetical remains, as I directed one to be forwarded to you. It has met with great success; which I do not attribute to any merit of mine: but to the extreme interest and pathos of the materials placed in my hands. I remitted to the mother the note of hand given by the booksellers for the edition, and transferred to her the copyright, reserving merely [the] right to publish at any time, the memoir, in connexion with my o[ther] writings. I am occasionally exercising my pen in rearranging and modifying old articles, some of which have already ap-

peared in periodical publications. I do this more to get myself into a literary vein, and in hopes that I may, after a time, strike into something new. Oh! if I could only have a "run of luck" as gamblers say, it would quite set me up again; but I am so pestered with petty cares and concerns, most of them about the affairs of others, and am so taken up and interrupted by all kinds of interruptions and engagements, that I am like a poor fly in a cob web that can neither move leg nor wing and can do nothing but buz.

July 13. I did not return home yesterday; but accompanied Mr Astor in an excursion on the water. We embarked at Hellgate Ferry on board of a sloop hired for the purpose and intended to make a cruise to the Hook; but light baffling winds and calms prevented our getting farther than Corlears Hook and the Navy Yard. Still it was a pleasant and an interesting excursion to me. The day was splendid, and quite cool and temperate. We coasted along those beautiful shores which you have occasionally coasted with me in sail boats and as I saw the old Jones country seat peering through the trees, with its half ruined out houses and weedy garden, I recalled our stroll about its haunted grounds. So you see my dear Sarah: go where I may, you are associated in my mind with every scene.

I am glad to find you were about to undertake the study of the French language in good earnest. It will be an occupation for your lonely hours, and will enable you to enjoy every thing around you. . . . You will now be for a time at least, a good deal alone. This at first will be irksome, but *it is good to be alone.* It is necessary for the full development of mind, and the acquisition of habits of meditation and reflection and after a while, we come to understand and feel the delights of occasional solitude.

And now I must bring this somewhat prosy letter to a close as I am about to descend to breakfast, after which I shall set off for town and shall have no leisure to add anything further. . . .

Your afft uncle

Washington Irving.

Sunnyside Cottage Sunday July 18th 1814 41.

My dear Sarah:

We have this day received your letters by the Havre Packet, giving an account of your arrival at Havre & your journey to

W34418

Paris. . . . Did you notice what a perfect city of Parrots Havre is? Scarcely a house but has one or more of these birds of abomination perched on its window sills, or swinging in a ring, or clambering with beak and claws up and down its wire cage and chattering and squalling like a very imp of Satan. These horrid birds were first brought to Havre in its colonial ships, and now the place seems to have become a mart for them from whence all France is supplied. I ought to have given you a little itinerary of the Seine; up which your uncle Peter and I have so often voyaged and the banks of which we have so often explored. . . .

To come to home affairs—I wrote to you a few days since from Mr Astor's where I was paying a visit. I returned home on Tuesday last and found all well at the Cottage. Your mother really has been quite animated and active of late; paying visits and taking long drives, which she relished greatly. On Wednesday evening "Kate & I" accompanied the Mrs Jones' on a visit to the Howlands. We all went in Mrs Colford Jones' Omnibus; Mrs Mary Jones & I on the back seat, Mrs Colford & Kate on the middle seat; Mary and Helen Jones on the front seat; and William the coachman and Peter the African imp on the Dickey. We had a delightful drive, and made a charming visit. Mrs Howland kept us to tea, which was served up at table in the good old rural style. We loitered about the place until flying clouds and a muttering of thunder behind the hills warned us that a shower might be gathering. The carriage was therefore summoned, we all embarked, and drove off merrily—chatting and laughing, and felicitating each other on our happy excursion. As we ascended the heights on the cross road, however, just past the old hermit basket maker's, the looks of the weather began to grow wild. The clouds seemed to gather up from all quarters: lightning played in every direction, but there was as yet no thunder, and not a drop of rain. William pushed his horses: we hoped to get home before the storm began; but the air had the chill feeling of approaching rain; it was growing dark; and the lightning became more and more vivid. By the time we passed the Presbyterian church it began to patter, and before we reached Stevens Inn (The Dobbs Ferry post office) we had a rattling shower. The ladies proposed to stop until the shower should be over. We accordingly alighted at the Inn and sent the carriage

to take shelter in the barn or under the shed. And now came on, not a shower, but a deluge—torrents of rain, sheets of lightning, peals of thunder—now and then it would pause a few moments to take breath and then begin again with redoubled fury. There we sat, in the back parlour of the little tavern, illumined by a small lamp and a tallow candle and decorated with rueful engravings of all the presidents, beside a forlorn likeness of myself. What was to be done? The storm seemed likely to last all night; it was either a glare of lightning or pitchy darkness. The Mrs Jones' were inclined to pass the night in the Inn, though poor Mrs Mary dreaded the horrors of a country feather bed. At length, about ten o'clock, there was a kind of intermission—It did not rain "cats and dogs" but only small kittens. Councils were held; a thousand minds were made up and as soon changed—The coachman was consulted. He changed his mind a dozen times to suit his mistress. I was appealed to, but could only answer that, for myself, I should not have the least hesitation to set out, but then I was not a proper person to consult as "I never knew when there was any danger." At last it was determined to tempt the elements—This consultation exhausted a great part of the interval of the storm. The difficulty now was to get the carriage from the stable. Peter had disappeared—he was a "perfect pest" "never at hand when wanted" &c &c. At length he was found—the carriage was summoned and drawn up to the door: but it had been too long to go under the shed, the rain had beat in it and the bottom was full of water—Mrs Mary had got in but scrambled out again dripping from every feather. Then there was mopping, and rubbing and scrubbing until it was tolerably dry—then dry shoes were borrowed of the landlady; and lanterns provided to be held up by Peter & the coachman. At length, having nearly exhausted the interval of calm we set out. "Now William! take care William! Drive slow William—Hold up the lantern Peter! Are you sure you see the road William? Oh yes ma'am—Oh William! William! a little more to the left William!—Now William—William a little more to the right—are you sure you are in the road?" &c &c &c—Kate laughed. "How can you laugh?" exclaimed Mrs Mary "it's really tempting Providence." For my own part I sat mute. I dared not say I was not afraid, lest it should be taken unkindly. On we went

W 3441 f

at a smart pace: claps of thunder, sheets of lightning; deluges of rain: Every now and then there was a scream, and at the least jolt Mrs Mary was in an agony. When we reached [illegible] hill, the little African imp was made to alight and go ahead like a Jack o'lantern, to shew the way. "Turn the light this way Peter—Do you see the road William—Yes Ma'am—Better than before—Yes Ma'am—Ah, that's right. Keep ahead Peter—Never mind the rain—Peter—Oh after all Peter is a good boy—never mind your shoes Peter—you shall have a new pair tomorrow—hold up the light Peter—Ah well—Peter is a good boy after all" &c &c. At length we reached Mrs Colford's about eleven at night; where I deposited Kate, and, borrowing a pair of India rubber overshoes and an umbrella made the best of my way home. The Jones' now give a history of the evening's adventures to all their friends, and consider that they escaped miraculously from all kinds of deaths and dislocations. I am sorry to say that their gratitude to the redoubtable Peter like the vows of tempest tost mariners to the saints, was forgotten as soon as the Danger was over—he is doomed to be turned off forthwith, having by dint of indulgent treatment, become a perfect little scamp. I had nearly forgot to mention that a good natured bare legged servant girl at the Inn was very kind & attentive to the ladies; and that on parting Miss Mary Jones rewarded her magnificently by giving her her French silk ridicule [*sic*].

This morning we were at church at the Dobbs Ferry church. Quite a full congregation, all the neighbors, and several persons from town. Mr Constant was there. Mrs Constant who is still at Rockaway begins to find benefit from the sea air and ventures to bathe a little, though she will not venture to take the surf. She was terrified by her first trial of it, when the water was very rough. The Irishman who officiates to take care of the ladies in the surf was quite indignant—"By the powers" said he "I have bathed ladies without number. I have bathed *queens* among the rest—but I never bathed any one that behaved so bad."

The sweet briars which you and David planted, and which you inquire about, are flourishing finely. You need not fear that they will not be taken care of. We value too highly every thing that reminds us of you. All our clambering vines have been very luxuriant this season, and are gradually clothing the cottage with

verdure. Some of the trumpet creeper too begins to flower; and by another year we shall have the east wall quite gorgeous.

July 21—*On board of the Steamboat bound to New York*—I am making preparations for an excursion to the Highlands in company with Mr West—to pass a few days with General Kemble & Mr Brevoort. I believe I informed you in a former letter that Mr Brevoort has hired the Beverley House, in the Highlands, ready furnished, for the summer. How much I shall miss you in this annual visit, in which of late years you have always accompanied me! . . . I shall not set out for two or three days yet, and shall return to the cottage this evening. Mrs Colford Jones and her young flock set off for Niagara next week. The good lady is full of anticipations of all kinds of difficulties and bothers on the road; having no one to take the lead; Mrs Mary Jones, who has usually been her protector & dictator, intending to open a campaign with Miss Mary at Saratoga Springs. I make no doubt I shall have a whole chronicle to relate to you hereafter of the summer adventures of this most eventful family. Miss Mary has at present a devoted admirer in young Harmony, nephew of the rich old bachelor merchant, Peter Harmony (alias Ximenes) of Cadiz. The young gentleman appears to be well received by the family; makes frequent visits to "Silver Spring" and ruralizes and sylvanizes with Miss Mary about the glades and groves. He is a pleasant, good looking, good natured fellow, and, should [he] be given her hand I hope he may become a good protestant, a rich heir and an excellent husband; and that the Jones family in general, may be all the happier for having *Harmony* among them. Excuse the pleasantry.

Tomorrow I dine with Mr Henry Sheldon, who has a gentleman's party to meet old Mr Gallatin at present on a visit to him. . . . A few evenings since I set out alone on foot to pay a visit to the [Hamiltons]. I do not know what possessed me after all the experience I have had, to try a short cut across the fields, instead of going by the road or the aqueduct. Such a time as I had —our memorable expeditions through brake and bramble were nothing to it. I lost my way in ploughed grounds and cornfields; tumbled down a ravine; pulled down a stone wall on my heels and finished by jumping into the midst of a quickset hedge, set up by the illstarred Captain Rocket. I arrived at the Hamiltons'

W34419

utterly kilt as an Irishman would say; but recovered sufficiently to pass a very pleasant evening. Mary played for me most charmingly. Bo sang his best and all the rest were as affable and agreeable as usual. In the course of the evening Schuyler and Alexander Hamilton came straggling in from one of those fortuitous voyages incident to the family. They had come up in a steam ferry boat, just built by Schuyler and on a voyage of experiment; had been put ashore at some miles distance from the house, and reached there dusty, hungry but as usual in high spirits. The Dream has been fitted up anew this year and carries an immense press of canvas; but from some defect in her trim, disappoints them all in her sailing. I have not been on board of her. She bore down to the cottage in gallant style on the fourth of July; displayed all her colours and fired us a salute. There is quite a mania for yachts this season, and they are beautiful objects on the river. . . .

Ever affectionately your uncle
Washington Irving

After the visit to Gouverneur Kemble, which Irving anticipates in his letter of July 11, he joined William E. West, the painter. Together they lingered at the home of Henry Brevoort, with whom Irving had been friends since boyhood. Irving's friendship with Brevoort was, perhaps, the most enduring of his life; and their letters to each other are an invaluable source of knowledge of Irving and of their times.

Saturday
Honesdale, July 31. 1841

My dear Sarah,

I left Cold Spring on Monday afternoon, in company with Mr Brevoort and Mr West, for Mr Brevoort's residence at the old Beverley House, about a couple of miles below Mr Gouverneur's. It was a fine evening and we had a delightful drive through scenes which you will well recollect, and which, on our first visit to the Highlands, made such a vivid impression on you. I thought of you (but when do I not think of you!) as we crossed the Indian

Brook; one of your favorite resorts: and I really had a sad twinge at the heart as we drove by the spot where, on our memorable expedition by land, I left you by the road side, seated by the wreck of our waggon, when I went in quest of aid. I cannot tell you, my dear Sarah, how sweet yet sad these scenes and memorials of our past companionship are to me. They constantly make me feel how precious you were to me, and what I have lost in losing you.

After passing by the road leading down to Mr Gouverneur's we continued parallel to the view, though nearly a mile from it; with a range of woody mountains on our left. The road ran through the property of Mr Arden, and became grass grown, crossed occasionally by gates and bars, and shaded by magnificent trees: oaks and elms of immense size; with here and there a neglected avenue; speaking of former style but latter decay. It was about dusk when we arrived at Beverley. It is an irregular old mansion; part of it intended as a polite residence, the rest a mere farm house. It has never had any pretension to architectural merit; though the pannel'd wainscots, tiled chimney pieces, in some of the rooms have an air of respectability and quaintness. The chief interest about it is, its having been the house at which Arnold received the letter from André, apprising him that his treason was discovered, and from which he made his hairbreadth escape. We drank tea in an old room, with low ceiling and beams overhead, in which Arnold was at breakfast when the letter was delivered him; and the foot path is still shewn, by which he escaped through the woods to the river side. The old mansion is in a very lonely situation, just at the foot of the mountains, out of sight of the river; and out of the way of travel. The Brevoorts have half furnished it, in a very simple style; they have their harp and piano and plenty of books; their swing under lofty trees &c, and are perfectly enchanted with their rural retreat. They really are quite the kind of people to enjoy the country; living very much out of doors; rambling about the woods and fields, and casting off all the commonplace of city life. I was quite sorry that I could not pass a few days with them in this old haunt of treason; but Brevoort and myself had arranged to set off the following morning on our expedition up the river to meet the Directors of the Delaware & Hudson Canal company. Our

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evening was very pleasant. Mrs Brevoort and Laura gave us some excellent music and we had some very agreeable conversation. The next morning, leaving Mr West in charge of the family, Mr Brevoort and myself crossed the river to West Point and there got on board of an Albany Steamboat, which after a very fine sail up the river landed us at Kingston. By some mistake we arrived at the place of rendezvous three or four hours after the Directors had set off in the canal boat so we had to get a carriage and endeavour to overtake them. The object of their expedition was an annual visit along the line of the canal and to the coal mines among the mountains. We had a splendid drive of twenty five miles through glorious mountain scenery: the Catskill Mountains on the North, the Shawangunk Mountains on the South, and a beautiful wild river the Rondout winding through a romantic valley equal to the Ramapough. It was after dark before we overtook the canal boat, where we were most cordially welcomed by the Directors, among whom was Mr Philip Hone. The canal boat was fitted up with every convenience & well supplied with *provant* for the expedition: we accordingly had a very social and merry time of it: one night we slept on board, and twice on shore: but the scenery through which we passed was beyond my most sanguine anticipations. You remember the glorious variety of mountain, and forest, and deep rich valley and shining rivers, which we traversed on our memorable return from the Western part of the state. Fancy a succession of such scenery for upward of a hundred miles. For a great part of the way we tracked the course of the Rondout: then the Delaware; then the Lackawaxen &c. The canal truly was like a beautiful winding river: but at times it was for many miles, built along the face of perpendicular rocky cliffs; with great precipices beetling over head, with immense trees growing out of every fissure, while far below, at the foot of an artificial wall, roared along the Delaware. I think I never in my life have been more impressed with natural scenery; probably from its being so unexpected:—and then the stupendous works of art I was contemplating—this daring enterprize of building such an immense watry high way along perpendicular mountains and through the heart of an almost impracticable wilderness. We reached this place yesterday morning. It is the great coal deposit; whither the coal is brought from the mines

(16 miles distant) in cars along a railroad and whence it is transported in the canal boats. The place is new but very bustling, and promises to rise to importance. It is well laid out and prettily built, and is named after Philip Hone who has been one of the most efficient persons in promoting this great enterprize. What I have continually felt throughout this journey was the want of some companion to whom I could express my delight, and who could sympathize in my impressions. My fellow travellers were all men of business: with the exception of Brevoort, who was unusually obtuse, and Hone, who was in general too much taken up with himself. But I have been spoiled of late years by having you so much with me in my excursions after the picturesque, and accustoming myself to turn to you on all occasions when I wanted some one to help me to enjoy a landscape.

Saturday August 1. We have been overtaken by an easterly storm and have to postpone our expedition by rail road to the coal mines until tomorrow. What a contrast between the Sunday I am passing at this place and that which you are contemplating at Paris. Here it is literally a day of rest. A mere repose from labor; a universal stillness, but an absence of all enjoyment. Nothing can be more dull and monotonous than a Sunday in one of these little, commonplace, orderly country towns. I have been to a commonplace little church of white boards, and seen a congregation of commonplace people and heard a commonplace sermon, and now cannot muster up anything but commonplace ideas; so that I will forbear writing any more for the present. Good lord deliver me from the all pervading commonplace which is the curse of our country. It is like the sands of the desert, which are continually stealing over the land of Egypt and gradually effacing every trace of grandeur and beauty and swallowing up every green thing. I must confess I envied you your half wicked Parisian Sunday; at church in the morning and at S'Cloud in the afternoon.

Aug. 3. Carbondale. If I have wished for you repeatedly on former parts of my route I have been well satisfied you were not with me on the journey from Honesdale to this place, and yet it has been one of the most striking and interesting parts of the whole expedition; we have come entirely by rail road, in rough cars or boxes, made for the transportation of coal, fitted up with

W 3441

rude benches, with buffalo skins thrown over them. We were drawn by horses, but came at the rate of little more than two miles an hour. . . .

We have now got through with our examination of the various parts of this great mining enterprise, and this afternoon we turn our faces homeward. This evening we shall reach Honesdale; thence we take an extra stage to Goshen, and thence I shall shape my course either by Newburgh to the Highlands; or by the rail road to Tappan, and so to the cottage. I long to get back to little Sunnyside, from whence my absence has been most unexpectedly prolonged by this wild expedition, and from whence I have heard nothing since my departure and shall hear nothing until my return. I find the Great Western has arrived. There are therefore letters from you, to some of the family if not to myself. . . .

New York, Aug. 6th—We left Carbondale on the afternoon of the 3d and had a fine drive through the mountains to Honesdale, where we were warmly welcomed. Indeed I was quite surprised by the cordial attention I experienced in these villages in the wilderness, and by a compliment that had been paid me during my absence. On Sunday afternoon I had rambled with some of my fellow travellers to the summit of a peculiar and very picturesque cliff on the crest of a woody height, that overlooks the pretty village of Honesdale and its romantic valley; and had returned home by a beautiful walk along the foot of the mountains, overhung with rocks and trees, with thickets of Kalmias, Rhododendrons &c and a wild little river babbling along, and dividing it from the village. It was a perfect green alley carpeted with verdure, one of the most delightful walks I had ever seen in the vicinity of a village. Several of the young people of the village were taking their Sunday's stroll in it. I expressed my hope that so charming a promenade might never be laid desolate by the hand of improvement but might be kept up as a public resort and suggested that it might be called [Ladywood?] lane; to secure for it the all potent protection of the ladies. On our return from Carbondale, the two rival newspapers of Honesdale were [put into?] my hand, in which I found my sojourn in the village mentioned at large, my visit to the cliff etc. and that the latter had been named Irving's cliff in memorial of my visit, and the beautiful green alley had received the name of Ladywood

lane—I furthermore heard before my departure that in the course of the week the ladies were to have a rural fête in the lane by way of conferring on it its name in style. . . .

And now my dear Girl I must conclude this rambling letter which, for the most part is about scenes in the wilderness, which will not interest you so much as home scenes: but I could not help still taking you with me on my travels. . . .

Your affectionate uncle

Washington Irving

For the visit to Honesdale Irving paid heavily in illness. On the last day of his excursion he sat outside beside the driver, to see the mountain scenery. The exposure in the hot sun, after other fatigues, it was thought, caused a severe fever.

Sunnyside Cottage, Sept. 1, 1841.

My dear Sarah,

. . . During an early stage of my illness I received your long delightful letter written at different dates; the last the 31st July. Your animated descriptions of the fêtes of Paris, and of your excursions to places in the vicinity bring up the most pleasing recollections. I am continually gratified to find how much we coincide in our impressions of scenes and places; and how much we are struck and pleased with the same circumstances. I agree with you as to the view from the terrace at S'Germain—it is vast diversified and noble, but by no means so beautiful as that from Richmond. Meudon was a favorite resort of mine when I sojourned part of one summer at the village of Auteuil. I used to stroll there on foot and from thence to S'Cloud. The prospect from the terrace at Meudon is indeed superb. The village of Meudon was classic ground to me having been the residence of Rabelais an old French writer of admirable wit and humor, though too gross and obscene for female perusal.

Sept. 2d. Has your mother given you an account of the maritime invasion of the cottage by that crack brained navigator Capt. Fatio? You no doubt recollect this odd genius: and his tour through the country as a strolling lecturer. It seems [the] govern-

ment has given him the command of a revenue cutter, and he is a complete beggar on horseback. His first move was to take himself a wife; whom he married at Washington, rather a pleasing genteel looking person, whom he presents as Mrs America Fatio. She for the present presides over the cabin of the cutter, the Captain treating her to a cruise during the Honey Moon. In the course of this matrimonial cruise he came up into the waters of the Tappan Sea; intending to proceed up to West Point, make a grand flourish and fire a salute for the military academy. His swaggering cruise was suddenly checked by orders which overtook him to return to New York. He anchored off Tarrytown; visited Eliza, invited her and several others to a breakfast on board of the cutter and sent me an invitation to the same effect. A freak of bad weather prevented his fête and I hoped we were rid of him; but lo, in the afternoon he appeared off the cottage; dropped anchor, displayed his colours and fired a salute. A couple of boats were then manned for shore, in one of which came the captain, inviting us all to tea with Mrs America Fatio. Fred and Philip Paulding and Irving Van Wart were on board. There was no such thing as parrying the Captain's importunities; and as I thought a visit on board the cutter might be curious and amusing to the girls I took Kate and Julia with me. Such a time as we had with the overpowering civilities and the perpetual fuss of the Captain. His wife was well bred and pleasing enough but the Captain hardly gave her an opportunity to say a word. He was interfering in every thing and bothering every body with his commands from the sailors on the rigging to the poor devil who waited on table. And then such an arrant drawer of the long bow; such stories about his exploits; and such a gross hyperbolical flatterer. The malady which was to pull me down was working in my veins; I was nervous and impatient; and in this state had for three mortal hours to endure the incessant palaver and overpowering blarney of this poetical vagabond. I was several times tempted to jump overboard and swim ashore or be drowned. To finish our entertainment in style, just as we made a move to depart the music of the Cutter, a cursed drum and fife, struck up and for half an hour played a variety of tunes enough to drive one mad. The Captain was vain of his drummer; he was a chimney sweep he had picked up in the streets and meant

to make a first rate musician of him. I wished the Captain were up the chimney and the drummer sweep at the bottom; to drum there to all eternity. We got ashore between nine and ten o'clock: the Captain and his drum haunted my dreams all night and I believe this nautical regale contributed to hurry me into a fever. The Captain weighed anchor the next morning—he is destined to cruise on the Florida coast. I hope [the] government will keep him there and that we may never see his flag again in the Tappan Sea.

Sept. 3. The weather continues bright and beautiful. I presume your mother gives you an account of the visitors at the cottage. They have been numerous during my illness; and have been very kind in their enquiries. . . .

Farewell my dear Sarah; give my kind remembrance to Mr. Storrow.

Ever your affectionate uncle

Washington Irving

New York, Sept. 23d 1841

My dear Sarah,

. . . Since I wrote to you last I have quite recovered my health, and almost entirely my strength, and have again been able to make excursions and attend the social gatherings of our neighborhood. . . .

I am scrawling this hasty line at your uncle's country [torn away] and in a great hurry—It is a mere apology for a letter—I will write a longer one at a quieter moment. Yesterday there was a grand opening of the Hudson and Erie rail road, from the great Pier opposite the cottage to Goshen—a distance of about 45 miles. I was invited to attend, and crossed in my boat from the cottage to the Pier head. About ½ past ten in the morning a steam boat arrived from New York, laden with invited guests—about 500. It seemed as if every gentleman that I knew in New York was there. We started forthwith in the cars; which are spacious and convenient, and had a splendid drive through the valley of the Ramapo, and a succession of that Romantic scenery through which you and I passed on our delightful tour from the Highlands to Hoboken—at Goshen there was all the country assembled; and one of the most enormous dinners I ever was

present at—tables being spread in temporary buildings, and in the Rail road Hotel—We returned on the cars in the evening and I continued down to New York in the steam boat, and am scribbling this letter with all the irritation of nerves consequent to such an expedition and such a tumultuous festival. Which I give as an excuse for this letter, not being much longer and much better

Remember me affectionately to Mr Storrow
ever my dear Sarah your affectionate uncle

W. I.

New York, Oct. 3d 1841

My dear Sarah,

I have been passing a few days partly in town on business and partly at Mr Astor's, and am writing this, on a rainy Sunday morning, at Mr Grinnell's. The evening before last I was at Mrs Frederick Rhinelander's: it was a delightful visit, though it brought up many half melancholy recollections of former times, and of visits that we have made there together. You were spoken of repeatedly, in the kindest and most affectionate terms; but it is needless for me to dwell on this visit as it is probable this letter will be delivered to you by Mary Rhinelander (Mrs King) herself, who sails for Havre in the packet of the 8th inst. What a joyful meeting you will have with this warm hearted generous spirited little being. I think you will like her husband also, who appears to be frank, manly and amiable. Our little friend Posey, whom you may recollect with her blooming cheeks and pink ribbons, has grown up into a lovely girl; as fresh, as sweet and artless as ever; with a stock of natural, unassisted beauty, that would furnish a capital for half a dozen Parisian belles.

I was at a little evening party at Mrs Constant's, a few days before I left the country. She is looking very lovely, and her general health is much improved. I trust her tour in Europe will effectually restore it. When last I saw him Mr Constant was in doubt whether to sail in the Havre Packet of the 25th of this month, or to wait and sail with Captain Funk on the 1st of November. The worthy little captain is a great favorite with both Mr & Mrs Constant.

You will soon have a little home circle of friends forming

around you, and will cease to feel lonely and a stranger in Paris. . . .

I saw yesterday little Abby for the first time since her return, looking fresh as a rose and plump as a little partridge. She gave me many very interesting particulars about you, and spoke with delight of her sojourn at Paris, which she would be rejoiced to revisit. She and her mother are in town taking care of old Mr Furman who is ill of an intermittent fever, but on the recovery. She tells me that you confidently expect me at Paris this autumn, and some of your letters intimate the same expectation. My dear Girl *it is out of the question.* I cannot consult my own wishes in this matter. I must stay at home and endeavor to take care of those about me. Mr Van Wart has signified to your uncle E. I. that his agency must come to a close. This leaves him for the present without any means of support; and what new mode he is to devise at his time of life and with his infirmities, it is difficult to imagine. How I shall be able to keep all afloat with my cramped and diminished means, and with debts incurred on behalf of others hanging over and threatening me is an equally harrassing question. These things break my rest and disturb my waking thoughts; they haunted me sadly during my illness. However, as poor Scott said, "I have a good deal of work in me yet." If I can but fairly get my pen under way I may make affairs wear a different aspect: but these cares and troubles bear hard upon the capability of a literary man "who has but his good spirits to feed and clothe him." The Doctor who attended upon me in my illness and who was curious in studying my constitution, said "I had a large heart that acted powerfully on my system." God knows I have need of a stout heart at times, but I certainly have always found it rally up to the charge in time of danger or difficulty. On that I will still rely.

I am writing a brief and uncomfortable letter; but my mind is so much ocupied just now by a variety of matters that I have no mood nor time for cheerful gossip. I will soon write to you again and I trust in a brighter vein.

Remember me kindly to Mr. Storrow

Your affectionate uncle,

W. I.

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New York, Dec. 1, 1841.

My dear Sarah

. . . I am passing a few days in town at Mr Astor's, having brought Julia & Mary on a visit to Julia Grinnell's. . . .

The town has been running mad (or foolish) about two or three distinguished visitors: the Prince de Joinville, Lord Morpeth &c &c. and there has been nothing but public dinners, balls, routs &c &c. As yet I have steered clear of them all but today I am to meet Lord Morpeth at dinner at Mrs Hone's, and in the evening at a ball at Mrs Mary Jones'. By the way, there has arisen a terrible feud in the crambo fashionable world of New York, between Mrs Mary Jones and Mrs Doctor Mott, in consequence of Mrs Doctor Mott omitting to invite Mrs Mary Jones and Miss Mary Jones to a ball which Mrs Doctor Mott gave to the Prince de Joinville and at which all the fashionable world was present. Mrs Doctor Mott did it avowedly in revenge of some "airs" which she said Mrs Mary Jones and Miss Mary Jones gave themselves towards herself and her daughter on divers occasions. Mrs Mary Jones and Miss Mary Jones have been eloquent in assuring the whole world how little they cared for Mrs and Miss Doctor Mott and their party, and to prove it, are this evening to give a ball to the whole world to which Mrs and Miss Doctor Mott will be most particularly uninvited. I cannot but observe, however, that in this momentous affair Mrs Doctor Mott has shewn herself a great general. She has for some time past been endeavoring to get a stand in the fashionable world, with but limited success but this double achievement of having the Prince de Joinville at the ball, and cutting Mrs Mary Jones and Miss Mary Jones has established her house forever. I am told now wherever she goes she is pointed out as the lady who cut Mrs Mary and Miss Mary Jones, whereupon every body begs to have the honor of being introduced to her.

You ask me in one of your letters whether I received the one containing a copy of a note from my excellent friend Rogers. I did so and read it with heart full of affection towards him for his delicate attention to you. I can assure you of a most kind reception from him when you revisit England. . . .

Your mother is looking extremely well and appears to enjoy her residence in town. She is in the midst of her connexions, and

has visits in the course of the day which serve to enliven and amuse her. Upon the whole I now think her coming to town a good move. She will pass her time more cheerfully than in the confinement of a winter residence in the country and will doubly enjoy the cottage, returning to it in the time of the birds and flowers.

Give my kindest remembrances to Mr Storrow—as well as to Mrs Constant and Mrs King, who I trust are with you at present.

Your affectionate uncle

W. I.

P. S. I ought to have told you that the ball at Mrs Mary Jones' was very choice and brilliant. Lord Morpeth and several distinguished strangers were there, but not the Prince de Joinville, who had sailed. Julia & Mary made their appearance there and looked very well and enjoyed themselves. Mrs Doctor Mott & Miss Doctor Mott were not invited.

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