

Copy of Uncle Washington's letter.

Madrid June 21st 1843.

My dear Sister

I have again to thank you for kind and cheering letters, full of precious home details. I am sorry I can make but such poor returns; but though my malady has ceased in its violence I find writing still irksome to me, and indeed am prohibited by my physician from indulging in it. It is a great privation and reduces me to a state of idleness foreign to my habits and inclinations. The doctor would also if he could put a stop to my almost incessant reading, as he thinks that any fixed attention for a length of time wears the brain and in some degree produces those effects on the system which originated my complaint; but I cannot give up reading in my ~~current~~ otherwise listless state. He has been very urgent for me to travel, not merely for a change of air, but because the succession of scenes and incidents amused without fatiguing the mind and thus operates healthfully upon the system. I have been recovering so much of late, however, that I hope to be able to dispense with this part of his advice, and to continue at my post. I should be loth to leave it in the present critical state of the country; when insurrections are breaking out in various parts of the Kingdom and Spain is once more threatened with civil war. My illness has prevented me from giving you a detail of the political events of the country; which has of late assumed an alarming aspect. A coalition of various factions (opposite in their views and doctrines and no one of them of sufficient magnitude to form a majority) has united in a vehement attempt to pull down the Regent and to end to the existing Government. For this purpose insurrections have been stirred up in various parts of the country; and lately in Barcelona, that old seat of rebellion. To day the Regent sallied forth from the Capital to put himself once more at the head of his troops and endeavor to quell these insurrections. I heartily pray for his success, for should he fail, and should he be ejected from power, a fearful state of anarchy would ensue. The very coalition now combined against him would break into warring factions, each striving for the ascendancy, and we might have civil war of the worst kind. I have just returned from attending a levee held by the Regent at 12 o'clock preparatory to his departure. He made a frank and manly address to the diplomatic corps, declaring his disposition to cultivate cordial relations with all countries, but particularly with those who have representations at this court, and who recognized the constitution of Spain, the throne of Isabella II and his Regency. He is loyal devoted to the constitution and the throne and ^{his} sole and uniform ambition to place the reins of Government in the hands of the youthful queen on the 10 of October 1844 when she should have completed her minority; and to place under her command a peaceful prosperous and happy country; but he expressed at the same time his determination to resist every attempt to throw the country into a state of anarchy; and to defend the throne of Isabella and the constitution of 1837 like a good soldier. At four o'clock a general review

of the National Militia takes place in the Prado, as on a former occasion, when the Regent, as before, will no doubt make them a speech, confiding the safety of the city and of the youthful queen and her sister to their patriotism and loyalty. At 5 o'clock he takes his departure. I cannot but feel that he sallies forth, this time, with much more doubtful prospects than in his former expedition against Barcelona. The spirit of rebellion is more widely diffused, and is breaking forth at various points. A few days, or a very few weeks, at furthest, will decide his fate; and determine whether he is to maintain his post and keep up some form of government for the remainder of the minority of the queen (about 15 months and a half) or whether his power, if not himself, is to be annihilated and every thing for a time thrown into chaos. In these critical times, when every thing threatens a tempest, I feel more and more solicitude about the little queen, whose fortunes are so much at the mercy of events. I lately had a most interesting conversation about her with her guardian the good Arquerles. He speaks English very fluently, though with something of an accent, and always mentions the little queen and her sister as "these two young ladies" giving a sharp sound to the S, as if it were a C. According to his account every hour of this time is most profitably employed in the study of languages, of history, geography, mathematics, and the acquisition of various accomplishments. He extols the amiable disposition of the little queen; the total absence of all pretensions or superiority in her intercourse, not merely with her sister, but with some of the young people, daughters of the Camaristas and others of the household, who occasionally join in the amusements. The ductility of the charitable disposition of the queen & her sister, their monthly allowance for spending money, instead of being laid out in finery, or playthings, is devoted to private charities, when they walk out petitions are often presented to them and applications made for relief. They take note of all these and cause them to be engaged into, once a month they have their sitting day, when, like two little women of business, all these claims are canvassed; they look personally into each one, decide on its merits, and determine what sum shall be disposed to the applicant. I am told it is quite interesting and touching to see the manner in which they acquit themselves on this occasion. Since my partial recovery I have seen the little queen two or three times in public. She has grown very much of late and really begins to look somewhat womanly. I saw her on the 10th of the last October when she went in state, passed up through the center of the Senate Chamber, escorted by the Regent, her train born by ladies in waiting, and took her seat alone on the throne, was quite charming. It was observed that her eyes were continually turning to a tribune on one side of the Senate Hall, in which was seated her little sister; it was the only time they had ever been separated. On Sunday evening last I attended the soiree held weekly at the Regent's. It was the only one I have been able to attend for upwards of four months; and I was anxious to go to it, as it would be the last before the departure of the Regent. It was thickly attended and I remarked a general gloom on the faces of those attached to the Regent, or whose interests were connected with his fortunes. The Regent did not appear, being engaged in a Cabinet Council. The Duchess was pale, and had a dejected air, complaining of rheumatic aches. I rather fear it was heart ache, for she feels their hazardous position and the pitfalls which surround them. She is an amiable and a lovely woman, and her dejected air ~~notwithstanding~~ ^{beauty in my eyes} I had not seen her since my illness, and I had to thank her for many kind enquiries she had made after my health, sending one of the Dukes ~~and~~ ^{aid de camp} for the purpose. It will be a joyful hour for her I am convinced when the Duke lays down his Regency and returns to the quiet and serenity of private life. It is said she will accompany the Duke on his present expedition; rather than remain alone, in the magnificent palace of Brown Vista, exposed to the vicissitudes and hazards of this critical juncture. Certainly if any smile should befall the Duke in his expedition her situation here would be painful and precarious. I have not been able to ascertain, however, whether she accompanies him or not. I doubt whether she will go immediately. She may give him some days hence. I have seen a letter, however, than I have any idea of accomplishing him must conclude. Tell Eliza Roney, I am sorry to hear that I have received their letters giving me most acceptable cottage news and beg them to write on, without waiting for replies. I cannot write letters at present - indeed I must not. Every thing concerning dear little Sunnyside is interesting to me. My heart dwells on that blessed little spot, and I greatly believe that when I die I shall haunt it, but it will be as a good spirit, that no one need be afraid of. Though I cannot enjoy its delights in person at present, I enjoy them at second hand, by the accounts given by others. When I think of America my thoughts all center there, and I believe that even though veiled from it, a great portion of my actual enjoyment in life, is hearing and thinking about it, picturing it in my thoughts, dreaming about it, and flattering myself with the hope that I shall return and end my days there. Thank God, it is a happy home for my dear brother and his family.

Ever my dear sister

Most affectionately, your brother
Washington Irving