

Madrid Wednesday Ev. 1

October 4th 1843.

My dearest Mr. I have been so much accustomed of late to scribble to some members of the family every two or three days, that it appears a long time since I wrote last; tho I believe it is little more than a week. I know that I suffered the last French Courier to go away with only a note to Mr. Irving, which is quite contrary to my usual practice: by the next I must write for the steamer of 19th and then begin to you my notices.

My arrangements are made; bargain struck; & tomorrow morning at 7, precisely I set off for — The Escorial: much ado about nothing, you'll say, after passing a year within 20 miles of it, and to tell the simple truth I cannot quite account for it myself; but I have deferred it from time to time for good weather and good company and now I hope I have secured both: neither is it such an easy matter as (it would appear) in your land of "People's Emancipation" & no more holy; here you must hire a most antiquated looking thing called a "Carrovela", and you must have relays on your route; and after all you must occupy 6 or 7 hours in reaching your destination. My party consists of the Brazilian Secretary Mr. Liguera a very amiable young gentleman; and a Belgian attaché: they breakfast with me, and at half past six, we set out in Mr. Irving's carriage, for the Puerta San Vicente, where our friend Stead, Mayoral & Zagal, will be in

waiting on the road: - We remain at the Escorial tomorrow and return on Friday afternoon for the French Courier of Saturday and a "diner monstre" at the Danish Representation - I have been studying the "Guia del Escorial" until I am bewildered with the Statues, pictures, Courts and fountains - There is moreover (I believe I've not mentioned it before) a real Alcoran; one of the two or three sacred copies extant about which there is a singular anecdote: ~~a Turkish document~~ it was captured at the Battle of Lepanto, when it was in the Admiral's galley as a sort of charm against the infidels, and when it was afterward exhibited to a Turkish Ambassador at the Escorial, he fell on his knees before it - went through divers contortions and finally clasping it to his breast, placed himself in the midst of his suite who with drawn swords were about to force their way out, with the book as a trophy - the halbardiers were called and the Christian dogs made the true believers yield their prize - Since then to guard against such accidents, a copy has been made which is exhibited to the multitude as the real original, Sarley, which ~~the~~ ^{all the} ~~whole~~ is "safely" under double locks - I have a note as an "open Sesame" to see the book, and shall tell you what it looks like.

I have just returned from a pleasant visit to your friends, the Calderons, who are now established at the other end of the town, near the Albuquerques. Don Angel was very anxious to obtain a number of the National Intelligencer, which contained a notice of his: books and as it arrived this morn'g I carried it to him - He seems a very amiable individual, but something of a proser, and I've an idea Madame is a little bit of that same opinion - He is lively and agreeable, and makes a favorable impression upon every body - the notice I have mentioned is supposed to be by Prescott, very flattering, or as MacGrawther would call it, in the "flattering style" -

I have letters from W. J. at Versailles, not encouraging. The

malady was brought ^{back} again with some violence by the journey, so that he had not left the house in ten days, save in a carriage - he intends putting himself under the care of the best advice in Paris - Brewster had been out to see him from Paris before leaving for England -

We are in pretty much the same ^{state} as when I last wrote; the city being a sort of Entrenched Camp - The Puerta del Sol is occupied every night in force; sentinels posted; occasionally cannon placed to rake the approaches, and all the precautions taken as if in front of a vigilant enemy - notices were placed forbidding the formation of groups after dark and Staveley is reported to have ordered the troops to fire whenever a crowd was collected; the ^{last} I cannot believe - an attempt was to have been made to raise the alarm & give the signal of insurrection, by ringing the bells of all the Churches - orders have been issued in consequence forbidding the ringing of bells at night even in case of fire; so there is now the choice between being burnt up or blown up - The poor soldiers have hard duty marching & countermarching at all hours of day & night, but as they have such excellent bands, I cannot find it in my heart to pity them - There is no doubt ample reason for all this display of force in the well known hostility of a great part of the National Guard to the present Ministry and especially to the Christiano Generals who support it, and the plots and conspiracies which are openly talked of; for it is one of the many extraordinary points in this country that a political movement is generally known some time before it takes place, by way of notice to those whom it threatens and who are usually not a jot the better prepared for it - Good night - I am tired with running about a good deal today and must prepare for starting fresh early in the morn'g - A.M. - Saturday afternoon - I returned last ev'g from the Escorial by moonlight without having met with any adventures and after accomplishing all the sights connected with the Convent Church & Palace all in one building - You know the story about the origin - Philip 2nd's gratitude to San Lorenzo, for whose day he gained the battle of St. Quintin, to whom he promised a building in which they should live together and he certainly gave the saint the better part of the building: It is a grand pile, about 800 by 600 feet, in the

form of a prison (to commemorate the broiling of the saint) of which Philip modestly occupied the handle - the exterior is gloomy; the windows small and generally grated give it a good deal the appearance of a prison: There are 10,000 or some odd hundred windows in all - The principal Church is magnificent and the effect as fine as in any I have seen - Saturday Ev. 10. p.m. - I was obliged to stop here in order to dress for D'Alborge's dinner - having been occupied great part of the morning with the first despatch under my own sign manual to the Secretary, the hours passed away more rapidly than I supposed. - the dinner was terrible; only 34. at table - Ministers of State, Diplo: met, & grandees in rather too close company for 3. mortal hours on a warm Ev. & for altho we are beginning October, the sun is very hot & white pants the order of the day, or midday, at least - M. & Mad. D'Albuquerque; our half countryman, Casa-Suyo; whose father married a daughter of Judge McKean of Pennsylv^a; Duke D'Assuna and a sprinkling of Counts & Marquises, all very fine folks in their way - after the heat & discomfort I have been enjoying a drive on the solitary Prado, by the light of a full moon, in a cloudless sky - very pretty & picturesque - and have just returned to make up my package. -

I have ^{many} letters from Mr. Irving at Versailles in which he mentions the return of his malady, - probably brought on by travelling night and day, - and his intention to place himself under the best advice in Paris. - Jasper Livingston is coming on here in two or three weeks as Attaché - I don't know him but hear he is gentlemanlike & quiet: - good taste he can't have, as he does not admire Miss Angelica -

By the bye I have hardly said anything about the Escorial, but descriptions are bad unless very good, & I shall bring you my guide book: however I will mention one or two points in relation to Philip 2nd. - On a level with the first platform below the high altar is a small door with lights, which leads to a very small apartment or box, & thence to his old palace - here he lay ill with the gout a year & died on sight of the altar; from his couch he could see the Mass & ~~monks~~ ^{priests} ~~monks~~; ^{whom} from ^{whom} he was only distant 20 feet. - with the general views of his character, one would suppose he got as near to the Church as possible to escape the devil. - In the choir, where the carved seats of the monks range round the wall, he occupied one in the corner with a concealed door in the wainscot that he might enter unobserved - he was seated here during Mass, when a messenger whispered in his ear the news of the victory of Lepanto - he dismissed the officer