

HUY, 12<sup>th</sup> September 1815.

MY DEAR SISTER— I did not write to you from Brussels as I had intended, finding that my wife was preparing a despatch for Kirkham from thence, by which you would learn that we were so far advanced without mishap. Our progress was never rapid, and in England, where the roads are tolerable, one may easily make the days' journeys twice as long as here, so much time is lost in changing, and the driving is so slow. We did not, however, make any great efforts to advance — the country and everything in and about it was new to us, and our curiosity was all alive; we therefore indulged it in the early part of the day, and for three or four days did not start till noon or later. As for me, I was up and dressed, had seen the inside of some churches and the general appearance of the towns before the whole of the party were ready for breakfast. The edge is now rather worn off, and I can lie awake in bed after six o'clock without putting any great restraint upon myself. The churches were the first objects that raised our curiosity, and we did well to begin there, for those at Bruges and Ghent are superior to any we have seen since, both in their architecture and paintings. The Cathedral at Ghent is particularly handsome. The Academies of Painting also engaged our attention, though we are none of us connoisseurs. Every town of note almost has its Academy — that of Ghent has four hundred students. So general is the study that almost all the youth make it a part of their education; and, as they set scientifically about it and have the advantage of seeing great variety of excellent paintings, both in public and private collections, and of hearing their merits and characters discussed and descanted on by men of taste and science — who are not rare in any range of society, as we are informed — it is scarce possible that real talent should escape discovery and development. In this point Flanders resembles Italy, and several living artists of high and acknowledged merit keep up the character of the Flemish school. Ghent and Bruges are also in other respects superior to any of the towns we have seen : they are well built, though old fashioned; the streets are good, and kept very clean, and leave Brussels far behind, in my eyes, for, excepting the Place Royale and the part of the town immediately adjoining the Park, I think it a disagreeable place. Of course we saw Waterloo, and were much interested, but I could tell you little that you have not read over and over, and that little would not be calculated to give you pleasure. Success and victory are terms that rouse agreeable sensations, but they resemble prospects which, when seen from a distance, are beautiful, but the component parts of which, when; considered singly and close at hand, are diseasing, and excite horror and loathing frequently than any other sensation. The contradictions too in the details are innumerable, but in the material circumstances there is not much discordance.

We left Brussels this morning, spent three hours on the field of battle, and did not get into Namur before dusk. Namur lay out of our road, and we only took this direction as it took us across the field of the events of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> (June), and saved us time, in fact, as we should otherwise have bestowed a day on this object. The drive from Namur to this place along the banks of the Meuse is very beautiful, and I do not recollect one to compare with it, especially if the extent be considered. Forty miles we keep to this sweet valley, *i.e.* from Namur to Liege, and the half which we have in reserve for tomorrow is superior, I am told, to what we have passed. Our hotel at this place is, however, a very miserable one, and makes some of us look rather woful; it is, therefore, not without some little alarm that I look forward to the night, as we have need of rest to prepare us for a hard day's work to-morrow. John is the best traveller of the children; Anne looks poorly, but bears up and is in good spirits; William is to-day, rather indisposed, but\_ he is at present comfortable asleep, and I hope will rise to-morrow well. My wife is not without her ailments occasionally, but I think on the whole she has been better since our journey commenced than for some time before, and I am well. Skinner, I think, is a little fagged with travelling; but a little repose at Frankfurt will, I trust, prepare us all for the remainder of our long journey. The roads in the Low Countries are excellent, though paved, and as much superior to your Lancashire and Cheshire paved roads as the Cathedral of Ghent is to the parish church at Kirkham.

From the coast to Brussels the country is nearly a dead level, and, from the nature of it, it is evident that the materials must be brought from a distance and at great expense, yet they are throughout as well and as carefully laid as the best street in London, and I think it extremely probable that from their good and careful construction they will be infinitely more durable, and in the end far less expensive, than our jolting pavements, which are laid almost entirely with round stones. But as you are not likely to be soon made surveyor of the highroads the subject will not be very interesting, and I will put up my paper till I have something further to tell of our proceedings.

AIX-LA-CHAPELLE, 14<sup>th</sup> September.

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<sup>1</sup> Comprising pages 19 - 29

The day after we left Huy, William felt so languid and tired that we proposed only to go on to Liege, but when we got there about noon he was so much better and so desirous himself of getting on that we determined on pushing on for this place, though aware that we should be later than we could have wished.

The country proved more mountainous than we expected, and we were late. Our invalid became for the last hour or two very feverish, and our accommodation proved very uncomfortable. William continued very feverish all night and this morning, so that I thought it advisable to seek out a physician, who has prescribed for him, and brought him into a nice perspiration, which I hope will relieve him and set him on his legs again. In the meantime we shall not move from hence till we can do it without uneasiness, We have obtained better apartments too, so that we are not ill off, though the house is not well regulated. William's attack seems similar to that he had on the eve of our leaving Kirkham. You will be anxious for us, but I trust I am encouraged by the doctor to hope that it will not be of any importance, nor require much delay. I was lucky in my researches to hit upon this son of Æsculapius, who studied and took his degree in Edinburgh, speaks English very well, seems to have sense and much information, and is withal modest and natural in his manner. If any of your friends should be visiting Aix-la-Chapelle, pray recommend them, if they want a physician, to call in Doctor Reumont.

Our road from Huy to Liege resembled that of the day before, but the valley opened out and became softer. Here we left the Meuse, which turns to the north, but in rising the hills we had a parting and very extensive view of its further course by way of a *bonne bouche*. From thence to this place the country-or as much of it as we could see before it became dark-very much resembled England, and I assure you was not the less admired for that resemblance. Some of the baths here are fitted up with great elegance. The warmth of the water at one of the springs in the town was such that I could not bear to keep by finger in it. In the town the baths are not so warm, yet warmer than warm baths are ever taken *chez nous* – they are suffered to cool something before using. I have \_taken a dip this morning, and could not help baking comparisons with Buxton. At Buxton I vowed never to bathe there again -here I shall probably never bathe again, but I shall often long for an Aix bath. For the present, good night ; I hope to give you a better account of William before I make up my letter.

COLOGNE, 16<sup>th</sup> September.

William seemed entirely relieved of his feverish symptoms, though still languid, we therefore contrived to pass away another day at Aix, and only set out again this morning. The early part of the day passed off well, and we were both pleased and abused with the great similarity of some parts of the ride to our old neighbourhood at Burscough -- in short, both the fields with their enclosures, the wood, the houses, and the inhabitants would not have raised the least suspicion of their being strangers, if by the help of Aladdin's lamp one could have placed them in Lancashire for your inspection. Before we reached Julie's the scene changed entirely, the day became hotter far than the one on which we set out on our Scotch journey, and the road, which is of gravel, was so loose and finely pulverised that we were almost unremittingly for the rest of the day enveloped in a cloud of dust. At length we got out of the dust and into the streets of Cologne, sometimes called the Rome of Germany.

I believe you have passed through Burscough Street on your way to Liverpool– the best street in this great town is, I verily believe, not wider than that pride of Ormskirk. If it should ever be your chance to pass through Cologne, do not make your entry on a Saturday afternoon. They are laudably fond of cleanliness at Cologne, and make special preparations for Sunday. A supply of water is thrown into the channels on each side of the street at a fixed hour, and all the housemaids in Cologne step forth armed with besoms, and line the streets as regularly as a file of soldiers. As we entered they were in full activity, passing the collected filth of the week from hand to hand, till, by some open or covert way, it finds its way into the Rhine. If smells could be described–!! In this ecclesiastical city, as in the neighbourhood of St. Paul's, the streets and inns are all *Paternosters* or *Ave Marias*. We have got into the Sign of the Holy Ghost, which, though one of the best inns in the place, is very dirty. We have, however, got hold of the best rooms in the house, and have no reason to complain. We look upon the river, which is, Skinner says, not more than two-thirds the width of the Thames at Blackfriars. The town of Deutz, on the opposite, bank, is the counterpart of the Borough, but the bridge of boats destroys the resemblance.

The children, as well as older ones, were quite knocked up with the heat and dust ; but they have refreshed themselves, and are quietly asleep without any return of William's fever, and to-morrow morning we all propose to wash off the dust in a warm bath, and towards noon shall make a short day's journey to Bonn. Two days, or three, more will bring us to Frankfurt, from whence you will hear of us through the medium of a despatch from Skinner to his father. And I shall in the meantime begin another sheet, which will probably be ready for you by the time we reach Switzerland.

My wife and Skinner join in kind regards to all your family, as well as to all our other friends at Kirkham. –  
Adieu, dear sister, yours affectionately, **THO. LANGTON.**