

A GRAND TOUR BY W.H. HYETT OF PAINSWICK

The extracts which follow are taken verbatim from the letters of W.H. Hyett of Painswick to his mother while he was touring Europe. William Henry Hyett, was the eldest son of the Rev. H. Cay and Frances Adams, being born at Shrewsbury on 2nd September, 1795. He succeeded to Benjamin Hyett's estates in 1810, and in 1813 assumed the name and arms of Hyett. He went to Westminster School, and was a Gentleman Commoner at Christ Church for two years.

He believed in self education, and as soon as Europe opened in 1815 travelled extensively. He was on the field of Waterloo before the burial of the dead was completed, and in Valenciennes before it had been evacuated by General Rapp. He stayed three months in Paris during the occupation by allied armies.

In 1817 he left home for a more extended tour and spent summer in Switzerland, autumn in Italy and winter in Rome; in the following year he travelled through Western Calabria by Reggio to Sicily, passed the summer at Sienna and again wintered in Rome. In 1819 he went by Eastern Calabria to Otranto, Jorfu and Albania, where he visited Ali Pasha, spent two months at Athens, visited the Plains of Troy and swam across the Hellespont from Sestos to Abydos, not following the short course taken by Lord Byron but the longer one attributed by tradition to Leander. This feat he accomplished in 1 hour 50 minutes. On leaving the Dardanelles he went by way of Constantinople, the Black Sea and the Danube to Vienna.

July 6th, 1815

Antwerp Cathedral - "little disfigured by the miserable superstition of the people". "The organ is very fine and the chanting fine but the effect much spoiled by half-a-dozen scraping fiddles which accompany the organ."

"I wish that we could get out of this shoal of Englishmen. We learn no French and see nothing of the people."

"There is a fascinating manner about the peasants which it is impossible to describe. Their women very pretty - brunettes with sparkling black eyes which they roll about without much mercy."

Borghenop Zoom - Citadel built by Bonaparte - 3,000 wounded from Battle of Waterloo. "We passed a large unfinished building in which lay the poor wounded French upon straw to the number of 800 together in two rooms - officers and soldiers all together. I walked through one and never was so shocked in my life."

July 13th, 1815

"We have seen Waterloo. The road passes through an immense forest, through which the wounded were obliged to return - and every step bears traces of their sufferings - hundreds of helmets and caps lie scattered by the roadside, the only memorials of their death. The earth is scarcely raised enough to point one the place - every body where it expired is covered with a very little mound - so little that now and then an arm or a leg was seen stretched above ground where dogs or cats have scratched them up."

July 16th, 1815, Brussels

"Though the modern beauties abound in this place there are very few remains of antique grandeur - no fine Cathedrals or Palaces - no Gateways or Fortifications - everything of antiquity which is now visible consists in narrow dirty streets and small paltry houses - the inhabitants are dirty - and there is not much distinction of rank. The women are all the same type of beauty - short with black eyes, with a good deal of expression but no figure. The men are fat and shabby looking - few at all handsome and none commanding".

July 19th, 1815

Brussels

"On Monday evening we went to the Comedie Francaise to hear Catalaine sing - it is impossible to describe the effect of her voice. It is something beyond pleasure. She really shivers with ecstasy. She sang God Save the King in compliment to some English Officers who called for it rather vociferously. An Englishman must sometimes blush a little for the bluntness of his countrymen - their enthusiasm was their only excuse."

July 30th, 1815,

"..... and proceeded to Valenciennes. We had expected to find the siege carried on with some vigour but the town had hoisted the white flag for two days and the troops were withdrawn from before the walls. We should like to have seen a bombardment - but we were very glad to find it at an end".

Valenciennes

"We entered the town and found the Bourbon flag flying from every window, and the streets crowded by disappointed French officers and soldiers. The inhabitants seem (but seem in France does not prove!) to be in favour of Louis, but the military were

certainly attached to Bonaparte. The town had not suffered much from the bombardment".

"I had heard of the number of beggars on the continent but could not have considered it possible that there should be so many. At every place we stopped ten or a dozen regularly arranged themselves in rows at the hotel door and all supplicate in the same key. On every rising ground the children follow the carriage and persecute the travellers till they get something".

"On the 1st August, 1815, entered Paris. And as I believe first impressions be pretty correct, I shall relate mine now without waiting till we have seen more of the great city. The ancient part of the City is excessively disgusting in every point of view, but the modern surpasses anything I could have considered - the profusion of magnificence in the Thuilleries and their gardens in the Louvre and the Place de Louis XV is unrivalled".

"L'Hopital des Invalides was the first Gothic building the inside of which we inspected. It is an institution similar to those of Greenwich and Chelsea and is made to contain about 6,000 disabled soldiers, and seemed in every respect to answer its end. The ornamental parts of this building are superb. There was a beautiful dome but is considerably spoiled on the exterior by being gilt - the inside is most magnificent, very much after the style of the Radcliffe library in Oxford, but on a far grander scale. There are some pictures in the roof which have a good effect, but they are at too great distance to be valued for their merits. There are six chapels attached to this dome and all beautiful. The only fault that the most difficult critic might find with the building is that it is too tawdry and tinseld".

"The Palais de Louvre was our next labour - to get through such an immense collection is an excessive labour. To explain the contents of this wonderful palace it would take a year - all the best Roman sculpture is here preserved and perhaps half the remaining productions of the best painting in all ages are collected here. To describe these it would require knowledge and time infinite, neither which I have for such an unprofitable undertaking. The gallery itself appropriate to the painting, magnificent in size and furniture - and built on purpose so that every end as to light and position for pictures has been studied to the greatest advantage".

"The instances and confidence in the English particularly are numerous and remarkable. The Banker here when I was introduced to him without a letter of credit offered and even pressed upon me what money I wanted".

May 24th, 1817, Paris

"I forgot whether I gave you an account of our quadrille at Abbeville. We danced with the landlady, three daughters and fat cook to the great amusement of a French fiddler and two English country bumpkins.... Now you must know the landlady served as a soldier under General without her sex being discovered. She stands 6' 2" high, has a black beard, and with her daughters we danced!!! How like the resemblance was between them and their mother, I will not presume to say; let it suffice we thought them sufficiently pretty and had as much pleasure in dancing a quadrille with them as if they had been so many beauties."

"The English are very much hated. I entered a coffee room where three minutes before a Frenchman had declared that he would tear off the head of any Englishman who thought he had more liberty than himself, and every opportunity of quarrelling with Englishmen is caught at with the greatest quickness. I cannot guess why unless they are jealous of our superior liberality, riches and honour."

July 29th, 1817, Geneva

"Geneva is by far the pleasantest place I ever was in. There are balls and parties without end, and the best society English or French that you can wish to meet with. I am very happy where I am and shall not be completely overwhelmed if I am obliged to remain here all the winter, though I confess my Italian expedition will be given up with the greatest reluctance. This evening I visited Ferney, the chateaux of Voltaire. There is nothing very remarkable in itself, except his picture which is reckoned widely like. His chamber is shown in the exact state that he left it at his death, except that the Austrians in 1814 have cut the curtains in half and left the upper part hanging. Mont Blanc from his terrace was most remarkable at the evening's sunset. He stands frowning at the distance of sixty miles in the East. The Jura mountains skirt the West about ten miles in our rear.... The sun had set behind the Jura and charmed the valley below and the lesser hills, but the sovereign of the Alps with his glittering diadem of snow will shine with a brightness which is only equalled by the colour of the richest clouds in the evening."

"We shall go to Chamonix the beginning of next week and hope to have fine weather. I understand every house, even those of the lowest peasants, are filled by English parties of pleasure. I shall have some grouse shooting here I hope soon, we mean to consecrate the Alps in the presence of ourselves, our dogs and our guns on the Regent's birthday."

October 15th, 1817, Geneva

"I am very happy to hear you were able to go so often to the concerts and that Sally came off to such advantage on her first appearances. I would have given anything for a bird to carry me into your new room at Gloucester, and wonder how she performed. I thought of her every day; while you were hearing the Messiah, I was sailing on by far the most beautiful lake in Switzerland. It is very ungrateful of her when I was all the time occupied in thinking of her that she has not sent me a very long account of the music meeting [Three Choirs Festival]. Who were her partners? Who was there? For every woman thinks that important information to communicate. Who are the next Stewards Mary's letter contains a great deal more about Barton Fair than the Music Meeting!"

November 17th, 1817, Florence

'At last I am in Italy in passing the Simplon it was clear and bright as one could wish it. I was disappointed in the scenery, though however the descent into Italy in parts is very marked, passing through rocks for some distance almost perpendicular on either side, and bursting suddenly from these savage mountains upon rich Italian vineyards. The passage of the Simplon as a work of man's hand and head is beyond conception wonderful; it takes a day to pass it, and eight horses to mount The road is nowhere steep and no obstacle has even turned the engineer 500 yards out of his way, that is to say he has cut through rocks and thrown bridges over chasms sooner than give any more than a very easy and gradual gentle inclination throughout."

"On the lake stands Isola Bella, the sound of the name would tell you if the sense did not that it is the beautiful island. The Prince Charles or rather St. Charles Borromeo (though wonderful to relate he was both) has built a palace on this island and made out of a ragged, shapeless rock those gardens whose beauty has given it the name which it so deservedly possesses. The palace stands upon the brink of the lake and the whole of the island - about four or five hundred foot square is occupied by the gardens and resemble at a distance a pyramid on the sides of which are a series of terraces to the number eight or ten, one above the other, all shaded by orange and lemon trees, interspersed with innumerable marble statues, under the terraces are greenhouses, and all the parterres are watered by artificial fountains."

"But to give you an account of everything we saw between there and Geneva in serious and proper way would be to write as Mr. Eustace has done before me four volumes of four hundred pages each."

by the "Tell Clifton we were drawn by oxen harnessed
which was travelling classically
Nor Alps, Nor Appenines can keep us out,
Nor fortified redoubt."

and that I am at this moment sitting in an inn more noisy than the King's Head at an election and looking out of the window on the classically romantic Arno, which is ten times more muddy and dirty than Severn at spring tide."

December 2nd, 1817, Rome

"I had not arrived a moment before I started for the Capitol, the ancient Forum, the Colosseum, etc. I mention all these places that you may amuse yourself some Christmas evening in looking over the Piranesi beautiful prints of all these remains of sylvan antiquity and imagining yourselves with me."

"As for health I am perhaps better than I was. The pain in my side is gone but I have caught another cough, which hangs on me uncomfortably. However as my travelling for the winter is at an end, I shall dare say get rid of all inconvenient and troublesome symptoms."

"I was extremely grateful to Sally for her excellent account of the impression which the death of Princess Charlotte made on the English people. Independent of every private and personal feeling for the misfortunes of the Royal family this must have thrown a general gloom over the whole nation and indeed I fear with too much cost. I am almost afraid to anticipate the mischievous consequences which may result from a quick succession of monarchy."

February 19th, 1818, Rome

"Will you send me the exact size of your little chesstable, that is of the square of the chess-board? I pick up at every place I go to, at least every remarkable place, bits of marble, and mean to have them cut into small squares, all about $1\frac{3}{4}$ " square, have them polished and inlaid. There is a great variety of different dark coloured marbles, as well as white and light yellow, which will make a very pretty chessboard, and especially when one remembers that this bit was found in Cicero's theatre, that in Horace's Villa, and a third the Colosseum. I think this rather a pretty idea and I mean to make you a present of it. You must be very particular about size. I shall bring the pieces home loose. They will take scarcely any room and have them very easily inlaid in England."

March 7th, 1818, Rome

"The time is past that Phillpotts ought to have sent me my letter of credit and I have received no letter or intimation of any sort, and am in a sad state of anxiety. I have been obliged to live on some little of Walter's money and his is come to an end, therefore I am reduced to the necessity, if it does not arrive within the week, of drawing a bill upon Child in London. I wish you would let Child have £200 or £250 and desire Phillpotts in case I am obliged to draw it to pay you the moment it is drawn. Whether Phillpotts did not receive my letter, has forgot me, or his letter has miscarried, I cannot conceive. But nothing should have induced me to make this request to you but being absolutely left without a farthing. Do not let a day pass without giving Child advice, for in case my bill is protested, I shall pass for a swindler here."

"I have given up all intention of leaving Italy this summer on account of economy. I shall live at Siena, a small town between this and Florence, in an Italian family and work at the language, though I am proficient already in reading, having finished my translation of Dante's chief tome "The Inferno", which is reckoned the most difficult in the language, and is almost as long as Paradise Lost, a pretty laborious undertaking for an idle man like oneself, considering I have at the same time produced lighter and more trivial studies."

March 31st, 1818, Naples

"Safe and sound under the nose of Vesuvius; she has not yet honoured my arrival by even a whiff of smoke. But the calm precedes the storm, and I hope for a magnificent eruption before I quit Naples. We had a very narrow escape on the road of being dashed to atoms - coming down a hill some of the harness of a blind horse broke. He took fright. The Postillion could not stop him. The horses were precipitated over the parapet of a bridge to the rocky bed of a dry mountain stream, some 15 or 20 feet high. The Postillion fell first on the grassy bank on the side of the stream and was I hope not much hurt though a great deal frightened. They carried him back to the Post House we had left, and I shall soon receive a letter to hear how he is. One of the horses was almost dashed to pieces, though he was not dead, and they would not kill him. The other was very little injured. The carriage was stopped by the parapet and every connection between it and the horses was broke in the moment that they fell. The carriage was not even upset. Two capsizes in a month are one man's share. However I am very thankful for my escape, and if it ever is to happen again, I would compromise for divided ribs, once out of such falls."

April 7th, 1818, Naples

"The poor Postillion is dead. He died the next day from some internal condition. I am sure I ought to be thankful; the narrow escapes which I have had lately have been too marked to pass without a good deal of reflection."

"I went yesterday to Pompeii, a Roman city covered by the lava of Vesuvius about 70 years after the birth of Christ, and lately excavated. Everything, when it was first discovered, was as it was left by the Romans, though within these few years it has suffered a great deal from the air. That is the paintings and inscriptions which were perfect and copied when first opened are crumbling fast to dust. However, houses, streets, theatres and tombs still remain like an uninhabited modern town, and there is an air of desolation and magnificence of melancholy and grandeur which produce an indescribable effect; one almost expects to find a ghost of some ancient Roman flit round the corners of his own house. At one of the gates of the city were found the skeletons of several men and women trying to escape. At the door of one man's home, he was found with the key and a purse of money in his hand. In a dark cell amongst some houses that are supposed a kind of barracks, two men were found ironed and in the stocks. In one shop was found a half finished statue, and the tools of a sculptor, in another a quantity of oil jars all arranged in a row. Over several doors we could read the owner's name, written in red paint, and in one place there is a very distinct inscription in red paint intimating that on such a day there would be an exhibition of gladiators and hunting the wild beasts, and awnings over the top of the ampitheatre. In another the corn mills and ovens in which they baked the bread are left quite perfect."

"I think the quantity of English here is still greater than at Rome for besides those who have left Rome, and sailed on in the shoal of travellers, there is a colony of English residents who live exactly as the inhabitants of Cheltenham or any other English watering place upon balls and promenades."

April 18th, 1818, Naples

"I have been to the summit of Vesuvius, and though there was no eruption, I was more struck than by anything I have ever seen" "As usual descending I got a fall. My mule upset me, fairly threw me off his back, and hurt my back a little. In every other respect I am very well and mean to start next week for Sicily. I eat strawberries and figs today of this year's growth in the open air. I suspect you won't have them for some time yet."

April 27th, 1818, Naples

"You would be astonished to see me now. The Bible says that wise is the father that knoweth his own son, or something like it, but it would be more odd still to find the mother that did not, which would be almost your case if you was to meet me, in my grey trousers and black neckcloth, and brown face, and military great coat, and long wild hair, but before our six weeks is over, I expect to be a perfect mulatto and savage."

May 3rd, 1818, Cosenza

"I am now in the capital of Calabria, without doubt the wildest country I have ever seen. The Alps and Northern Appenines are not to be compared to the mountains that surround us, and the inhabitants barbarous and uncivilised to the greatest degree. Everybody travels with an escort, sometimes of 15 armed men, for fear of bandits, of whom there are not a few. We however have not encountered any although we have only taken an escort twice, and never more than 5 men, and are now under the special care of the Commandant of the district, and has promised us orders for escorts, whenever they are the least necessary. We had letters to him from the Commandant-in-Chief of the army at Naples, and he has been beyond every expectation kind and civil. He has billeted us upon one of the richest inhabitants, asked us to dine today, and will probably see us part of our road tomorrow."

"The heat is so excessive that I soon shall be unable to travel in the middle of the day but be obliged to take what the Italians call a siesta, or I believe the Spanish, for I do not think it is strict Italian, it means however a nap in the middle of the day."

"I suppose that the Cricket Club, if they still exist, are just thinking of beginning to play. I should like very much to be of their party, for I am at present most terribly homesick. I was not sorry to leave Naples just before all my countrymen are starting for old England. I should have envied them most bitterly and perhaps have joined someone who was to post all the way without stopping and astonished you in person instead of a letter, but I am afraid that must be yet awhile. Another long year and then for the "blue hills that I have loved so well." I shall expect to find my sisters married and John preaching."

"I have assumed moustaches and a military air, which would entertain some of my Gloster friends, but shall doff my lion's skin when I return amongst inhabitants of a fashionable country."

May 14th, 1818, Messina

"In Messina there is not much to be seen and therefore not much to be said. In 1783 it was overwhelmed by an earthquake, and rebuilt in a cleaner and more regular fashion than most other towns, chiefly of cane and wood, to prevent in some degree the horrid death which its inhabitants might be in danger of from any future earthquake, for very few years lapse without feeling a slight one."

"I hope our tour in Sicily will be as prosperous and interesting as that in Calabria which is just over, and that we may be driven back to Naples in as short a time as wind and weather will allow. Yesterday we crossed the straits again to Reggio, almost the southernmost point of Italy and back again. Whether the appearance of Scylla and Charybdis, formerly so terrible to the ancients, is changed by some internal commotion, or worn away by the continual rolling of waters, whether the ancients were very great exaggerators and very bad sailors, while we are very good ones, I cannot pretend to decide, but even to my inexperienced eye as a sailor, the whirlpool of Charybdis is not so tremendous as the passage of London Bridge and the rocks of Scylla are not as dangerous as those of Newnham. So much for the description you will find in the Twelfth Book of Pope's *Odyssee*, and in the 3rd of Dryden's *Virgil*."

"We were very near however encountering a danger of a more serious kind. We saw a custom house boat pursuing a smuggler and would needs see the fun, and kept pretty close to the latter. The moment the smugglers landed on the beach, three or four soldiers jumped out from the hiding place, and shot at the smugglers, their balls whizzed about in the water, but luckily took no effect, either on us or them. They then put off again, and serried by a fire from the other boat, and then surrendered, and we proceeded unmolested on our voyage. We are terribly behind in English news, and know no more what is going on in London than in Pekin."

June 30th, 1818

"Yesterday we heard that Parliament was dissolved and at Naples I picked up a flying report that Frederick Berkeley had offered himself for Gloucester. Extraordinary as it is, I am not at all astonished at it. I always saw a very little encouragement would draw him into offering himself. It was a very bold step for any man but doubly so for one who bears the name of Berkeley, and who has not one farthing to support a contested election. I

fear for these reasons he will not succeed. I am certain that his principles as far as they relate to public affairs are much more straightforward and honest than his brother, which people will scarcely be inclined to credit. It must be all over by this time and I sadly fear, let him gain the election or not, both he and Webb will ruin themselves."

July 9th, 1818 (Siena)

"As to any mention that may have been made of my name as a candidate, I cannot think it flattering or an honour as money seems to be the only requisite and my personal ambition is not to be considered an appendage to my fortune - not but I confess in any way I should have been proud of being unable by a vote in the House of Commons to have opposed a system of administration which must inevitably reduce the country to ruin."

July 31st, 1818

"Study prospers, Siena is cool and delightful and my cottage answers every need. It costs me nine dollars a month, neatly furnished, bed linen and table linen all into the bargain. I have my dinner sent me from a neighbouring hotel at about 1s. 10d. a day and my bottle of wine, which costs exactly 2½d, and is excellent withall, not unlike cyder, and when I sit at my little vine covered window eating my fowl or boiled beef, I often think of your song about "gilded roof" and "simple is the food I eat" but about this same hermit's fare, you need not talk in England, your Gloucestershire squires do not know what a magnificent dinner a man may have for two shillings a day in this part of the world, and philosopher as I think myself, I cannot stand being laughed at."

"Poor Berkeley. I remember the last Gloucester meeting but one, he said to me "misfortunes come not as single spies, but in battalions." It is true with respect to himself. His brother's election lost, his own trial to be lost, and the Berkeley Canal carried in spite of every effort of his 'thro Sharpness Point, very much injuring the whole of his estate, perfectly spoiling one of the prettiest places I ever saw."

October 15th, 1818

"My Grecian plans are not yet fixed. They depend entirely on the plague [in Athens]. I have written to our Consuls at Leghorn and Naples and expect an answer every day. They can answer every question. You may be sure I shall not go further if there is any danger, for how much soever I might be inclined to

brave the plague, I shall not have courage to undergo sixty days quarantine in a Lazaretto. I hope however these frightful reports are not true. Indeed I do not believe they are. However my intention is this - to go to Sir Thomas Maitland at Corfu, and if I find Greece impracticable to coast along the shore of Dalmatia by Spalatro, Pola and Trieste to Venice where there are some of the finest remains of Antiquity in the world."

February 21st, 1819, Barletta

"Our Grecian expedition begins to look a little probable; we sail today for Corfu the most perilous part of the journey is past - the district of Calabria and Apulia between this and Naples is so infested by brigands that the country may almost be said to be in a state of rebellion. A few days before we past, a major, a sergeant, two corporals and some dragoons were killed in an engagement with a band of these bandits. However we escaped and sail in a vessel they call a Trabacola, named the Maria of Barletta, and hope to arrive at Corfu in three or four days. Yesterday we passed over the field of battle of ancient Cannae."

March 17th, 1819, Corfu

"I have been enjoying lately some very singular sites - Ali Pacha, the despot of all the provinces of Albania and the most celebrated parts of ancient Greece, has been encamped on the opposite coast in order to carry some negotiations with Sir Thomas Maitland, the Governor of these Islands. I have been present at his Court and Levee, have smoked and drank coffee, and been to a wild boar hunt with his horse called Pacha and a Vizier. About a week ago he was expected and Sir Thomas went over to meet him with his suite and our English band. As he came winding down the rocky mountain in his Palankeen with 2,000 soldiers in the Turkish and Albanian costume, the band struck up the march in Bluebeard. He was sumptuously dressed and has one of the finest, most venerable countenances I ever saw, notwithstanding the atrocious character which it conceals. We were presented to him, he ordered us jupes and coffee after the Eastern custom, sitting on his ottoman crosslegged, was astonished to hear we were going to visit his country, and could not at all understand our objects."

"We who had guns chose to try to shoot, not knowing there was to be a magnificent feast in the boats, which though I did not partake of, I arrived at the top of the rooks above just in time to see finished. It was all served in gilt and silver plate, about forty covers, and with all this magnificence, the Pacha eat with his fingers and then passed the dishes to all the party, who

did the like it consisted chiefly of rice boiled in oil, a lamb roasted whole with a certain quantity of garlick and cakes of honey."

June 20th, 1819, Constantinople

"About a fortnight ago we left Athens and after visiting Troy we were nearly lost at the entrance of the Dardanelles, our vessel running aground in a tremendous storm. About an hour after sunset we were endeavouring to enter the mouth of the Hellespont on the European side and it was so calm that we made no way against the current. In a moment however a thunder and lightning storm came on, with a hurricane so violent that with all our sails but the foresail already down, we were carried at the rate of seven or eight miles an hour directly upon the Asiatic shore. It was so dark that our only knowledge of the direction of the shore was from the lightning, the sea beat over us and we must have been beat to pieces in less than half-an-hour. The Captain said we were lost, my Italian servant knelt down and said his prayers, and I undressed myself to swim ashore with a rope. The wind however followed the thunder clouds, turned in an opposite direction, and beat the vessel off, I suppose I have seldom had a narrower escape and am very thankful for it. We stayed the day after at the town of the Dardanelles and I swam across the Hellespont from Sestos to Abydos. Constantinople is by far the most beautiful place I ever saw but we mean to leave it on our way to Vienna in four or five days."

December 8th, 1819

"I shall probably go by Ostend and Ramsgate, though the uncertainty of the packet there almost tempts me to try Calais, which is perhaps a day and a half longer. I shall travel with all haste as I believe Lord Stewart, the Ambassador, means to give me dispatches for Lord Castlereagh."

B. TAYLOR