

◎ AT HOME AND ABROAD,

OR

THINGS AND THOUGHTS

IN

America and Europe.

BY

(Sarah)

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THIRD EDITION.

BOSTON:
CROSBY, NICHOLS, AND COMPANY.

LONDON:
SAMPSON LOW, SON, & CO.

1856.

Geog 4228.56

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CAMBRIDGE:

STEREOTYPED AND PRINTED BY METCALF AND COMPANY.

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1857
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PART II.

THINGS AND THOUGHTS IN EUROPE.

LETTER XXXI.

The French Treason at Rome. — Oudinot. — Lesseps. — Letter of the Triumvirate. — Reply of Lesseps. — Course of Oudinot. — The Wounded Italians. — Garibaldi. — Italian Young Men. — Military Funeral. — Havoc of the Siege. — Courage of Mazzini. — Falseness of the London Times.

Rome, June 10, 1849.

WHAT shall I write of Rome in these sad but glorious days? Plain facts are the best; for my feelings I could not find fit words.

When I last wrote, the French were playing the second act of their farce.

In the first, the French government affected to consult the Assembly. The Assembly, or a majority of the Assembly, affected to believe the pretext it gave, and voted funds for twelve thousand men to go to Civita Vecchia. Arriving there, Oudinot proclaimed that he had come as a friend and brother. He was received as such. Immediately he took possession of the town, disarmed the Roman troops, and published a manifesto in direct opposition to his first declaration.

He sends to Rome that he is coming there as a friend; receives the answer that he is not wanted and cannot be trusted. This answer he chooses to consider as coming from a minority, and advances on Rome. The pretended majority on which he counts never shows itself by a single movement within the walls. He makes an assault, and is defeated. On this subject his despatches to his government are full of falsehoods that would disgrace the lowest pickpocket, — falsehoods which it is impossible he should not know to be such.

The Assembly passed a vote of blame. M. Louis Bonaparte

writes a letter of compliment and assurance that this course of violence shall be sustained. In conformity with this promise twelve thousand more troops are sent. This time it is not thought necessary to consult the Assembly. Let us view the

SECOND ACT.

Now appears in Rome M. Ferdinand Lesseps, Envoy, &c. of the French government. He declares himself clothed with full powers to treat with Rome. He cannot conceal his surprise at all he sees there, at the ability with which preparations have been made for defence, at the patriotic enthusiasm which pervades the population. Nevertheless, in beginning his game of treaty-making, he is not ashamed to insist on the French occupying the city. Again and again repulsed, he again and again returns to the charge on this point. And here I shall translate the letter addressed to him by the Triumvirate, both because of its perfect candor of statement, and to give an idea of the sweet and noble temper in which these treacherous aggressions have been met.

LETTER OF THE TRIUMVIRS TO MONSIEUR LESSEPS.

“ May 25, 1849.

“ We have had the honor, Monsieur, to furnish you, in our note of the 16th, with some information as to the unanimous consent which was given to the formation of the government of the Roman Republic. We to-day would speak to you of the actual question, such as it is debated in fact, if not by right, between the French government and ours. You will allow us to do it with the frankness demanded by the urgency of the situation, as well as the sympathy which ought to govern all relations between France and Italy. Our diplomacy is the truth, and the character given to your mission is a guaranty that the best possible interpretation will be given to what we shall say to you.

“ With your permission, we return for an instant to the cause of the present situation of affairs.

“ In consequence of conferences and arrangements which took place without the government of the Roman Republic ever being

called on to take part, it was some time since decided by the Catholic Powers, — 1st. That a modification should take place in the government and institutions of the Roman States; 2d. That this modification should have for basis the return of Pius IX., not as Pope, for to that no obstacle is interposed by us, but as temporal sovereign; 3d. That if, to attain that aim, a continuous intervention was judged necessary, that intervention should take place.

“We are willing to admit, that while for some of the contracting governments the only motive was the hope of a general restoration and absolute return to the treaties of 1815, the French government was drawn into this agreement only in consequence of erroneous information, tending systematically to depict the Roman States as given up to anarchy and governed by terror exercised in the name of an audacious minority. We know also, that, in the modification proposed, the French government intended to represent an influence more or less liberal, opposed to the absolutist programme of Austria and of Naples. It does none the less remain true, that under the Apostolic or constitutional form, with or without liberal guaranties to the Roman people, the dominant thought in all the negotiations to which we allude has been some sort of return toward the past, a compromise between the Roman people and Pius IX. considered as temporal prince.

“We cannot dissemble to ourselves, Monsieur, that the French expedition has been planned and executed under the inspiration of this thought. Its object was, on one side, to throw the sword of France into the balance of negotiations which were to be opened at Rome; on the other, to guarantee the Roman people from the excess of retrograde, but always on condition that it should submit to constitutional monarchy in favor of the Holy Father. This is assured to us partly from information which we believe we possess as to the concert with Austria; from the proclamations of General Oudinot; from the formal declarations made by successive envoys to the Triumvirate; from the silence obstinately maintained whenever we have sought to approach the political question and obtain a formal declaration of the fact

proved in our note of the 16th, that the institutions by which the Roman people are governed at this time are the free and spontaneous expression of the wish of the people inviolable when legally ascertained. For the rest, the vote of the French Assembly sustains implicitly the fact that we affirm.

“In such a situation, under the menace of an inadmissible compromise, and of negotiations which the state of our people no way provoked, our part, Monsieur, could not be doubtful. To resist,—we owed this to our country, to France, to all Europe. We ought, in fulfilment of a mandate loyally given, loyally accepted, maintain to our country the inviolability, so far as that was possible to us, of its territory, and of the institutions decreed by all the powers, by all the elements, of the state. We ought to conquer the time needed for appeal from France ill informed to France better informed, to save the sister republic the disgrace and the remorse which must be hers if, rashly led on by bad suggestions from without, she became, before she was aware, accomplice in an act of violence to which we can find no parallel without going back to the partition of Poland in 1772. We owed it to Europe to maintain, as far as we could, the fundamental principles of all international life, the independence of each people in all that concerns its internal administration. We say it without pride,—for if it is with enthusiasm that we resist the attempts of the Neapolitan monarchy and of Austria, our eternal enemy, it is with profound grief that we are ourselves constrained to contend with the arms of France,—we believe in following this line of conduct we have deserved well, not only of our country, but of all the people of Europe, even of France herself.

“We come to the actual question. You know, Monsieur, the events which have followed the French intervention. Our territory has been invaded by the king of Naples.

“Four thousand Spaniards were to embark on the 17th for invasion of this country. The Austrians, having surmounted the heroic resistance of Bologna, have advanced into Romagna, and are now marching on Ancona.

“We have beaten and driven out of our territory the forces of

the king of Naples. We believe we should do the same by the Austrian forces, if the attitude of the French here did not fetter our action.

“We are sorry to say it, but France must be informed that the expedition of Civita Vecchia, said to be planned for our protection, costs us very dear. Of all the interventions with which it is hoped to overwhelm us, that of the French has been the most perilous. Against the soldiers of Austria and the king of Naples we can fight, for God protects a good cause. But we *do not wish to fight* against the French. We are toward them in a state, not of war, but of simple defence. But this position, the only one we wish to take wherever we meet France, has for us all the inconveniences without any of the favorable chances of war.

“The French expedition has, from the first, forced us to concentrate our troops, thus leaving our frontier open to Austrian invasion, and Bologna and the cities of Romagna unsustained. The Austrians have profited by this. After eight days of heroic resistance by the population, Bologna was forced to yield. We had bought in France arms for our defence. Of these ten thousand muskets have been detained between Marseilles and Civita Vecchia. These are in your hands. Thus with a single blow you deprive us of ten thousand soldiers. In every armed man is a soldier against the Austrians.

“Your forces are disposed around our walls as if for a siege. They remain there without avowed aim or programme. They have forced us to keep the city in a state of defence which weighs upon our finances. They force us to keep here a body of troops who might be saving our cities from the occupation and ravages of the Austrians. They hinder our going from place to place, our provisioning the city, our sending couriers. They keep minds in a state of excitement and distrust which might, if our population were less good and devoted, lead to sinister results. They do *not* engender anarchy nor reaction, for both are impossible at Rome; but they sow the seed of irritation against France, and it is a misfortune for us who were accustomed to love and hope in her.

“We are besieged, Monsieur, besieged by France, in the name

of a protective mission, while some leagues off the king of Naples, flying, carries off our hostages, and the Austrian slays our brothers.

“ You have presented propositions. Those propositions have been declared inadmissible by the Assembly. To-day you add a fourth to the three already rejected. This says that France will protect from foreign invasion all that part of our territory that may be occupied by her troops. You must yourself feel that this changes nothing in our position.

“ The parts of the territory occupied by your troops are in fact protected ; but if only for the present, to what are they reduced ? and if it is for the future, have we no other way to protect our territory than by giving it up entirely to you ?

“ The real intent of your demands is not stated. It is the occupation of Rome. This demand has constantly stood first in your list of propositions. Now we have had the honor to say to you, Monsieur, that is impossible. The people will never consent to it. If the occupation of Rome has for its aim only to protect it, the people thank you, but tell you at the same time, that, able to defend Rome by their own forces, they would be dishonored even in your eyes by declaring themselves insufficient, and needing the aid of some regiments of French soldiers. If the occupation has otherwise a political object, which God forbid, the people, who have given themselves freely these institutions, cannot suffer it. Rome is their capital, their palladium, their sacred city. They know very well, that, apart from their principles, apart from their honor, there is civil war at the end of such an occupation. They are filled with distrust by your persistence. They foresee, the troops being once admitted, changes in men and in actions which would be fatal to their liberty. They know that, in presence of foreign bayonets, the independence of their Assembly, of their government, would be a vain word. They have always Civita Vecchia before their eyes.

“ On this point be sure their will is irrevocable. They will be massacred from barricade to barricade, before they will surrender. Can the soldiers of France wish to massacre a brother people whom they came to protect, because they do not wish to surrender to them their capital ?

“There are for France only three parts to take in the Roman States. She ought to declare herself for us, against us, or neutral. To declare herself for us would be to recognize our republic, and fight side by side with us against the Austrians. To declare against us is to crush without motive the liberty, the national life, of a friendly people, and fight side by side with the Austrians. France *cannot* do that. She *will not* risk a European war to depress us, her ally. Let her, then, rest neutral in this conflict between us and our enemies. Only yesterday we hoped more from her, but to-day we demand but this.

“The occupation of Civita Vecchia is a fact accomplished ; let it go. France thinks that, in the present state of things, she ought not to remain distant from the field of battle. She thinks that, vanquishers or vanquished, we may have need of her moderate action and of her protection. We do not think so ; but we will not react against her. Let her keep Civita Vecchia. Let her even extend her encampments, if the numbers of her troops require it, in the healthy regions of Civita Vecchia and Viterbo. Let her then wait the issue of the combats about to take place. All facilities will be offered her, every proof of frank and cordial sympathy given ; her officers can visit Rome, her soldiers have all the solace possible. But let her neutrality be sincere and without concealed plans. Let her declare herself in explicit terms. Let her leave us free to use all our forces. Let her restore our arms. Let her not by her cruisers drive back from our ports the men who come to our aid from other parts of Italy. Let her, above all, withdraw from before our walls, and cause even the appearance of hostility to cease between two nations who, later, undoubtedly are destined to unite in the same international faith, as now they have adopted the same form of government.”

In his answer, Lesseps appears moved by this statement, and particularly expresses himself thus :—

“One point appears above all to occupy you ; it is the thought that we wish forcibly to impose upon you the obligation of receiv-

ing us as friends. *Friendship and violence are incompatible.* Thus it would be *inconsistent* on our part to begin by firing our cannon upon you, since we are your natural protectors. *Such a contradiction enters neither into my intentions, nor those of the government of the French republic, nor of our army and its honorable chief."*

These words were written at the head-quarters of Oudinot, and of course seen and approved by him. At the same time, in private conversation, "the honorable chief" could swear he would occupy Rome by "one means or another." A few days after, Lesseps consented to conditions such as the Romans would tolerate. He no longer insisted on occupying Rome, but would content himself with good positions in the country. Oudinot protested that the Plenipotentiary had "exceeded his powers,"—that he should not obey,—that the armistice was at an end, and he should attack Rome on Monday. It was then Friday. He proposed to leave these two days for the few foreigners that remained to get out of town. M. Lesseps went off to Paris, in great seeming indignation, to get *his* treaty ratified. Of course we could not hear from him for eight or ten days. Meanwhile, the *honorable* chief, alike in all his conduct, attacked on Sunday instead of Monday. The attack began before sunrise, and lasted all day. I saw it from my window, which, though distant, commands the gate of St. Pancrazio. Why the whole force was bent on that part, I do not know. If they could take it, the town would be cannonaded, and the barricades useless; but it is the same with the Pincian Gate. Small parties made feints in two other directions, but they were at once repelled. The French fought with great bravery, and this time it is said with beautiful skill and order, sheltering themselves in their advance by movable barricades. The Italians fought like lions, and no inch of ground was gained by the assailants. The loss of the French is said to be very great: it could not be otherwise. Six or seven hundred Italians are dead or wounded. Among them are many officers, those of Garibaldi especially, who are much exposed by their daring bravery, and whose red tunic makes them the natural mark of the enemy. It

seems to me great folly to wear such a dress amid the dark uniforms; but Garibaldi has always done it. He has now been wounded twice here and seventeen times in Ancona.

All this week I have been much at the hospitals where are these noble sufferers. They are full of enthusiasm; this time was no treason, no Vicenza, no Novara, no Milan. They had not been given up by wicked chiefs at the moment they were shedding their blood, and they had conquered. All were only anxious to get out again and be at their posts. They seemed to feel that those who died so gloriously were fortunate; perhaps they were, for if Rome is obliged to yield, — and how can she stand always unaided against the four powers? — where shall these noble youths fly? They are the flower of the Italian youth; especially among the Lombards are some of the finest young men I have ever seen. If Rome falls, if Venice falls, there is no spot of Italian earth where they can abide more, and certainly no Italian will wish to take refuge in France. Truly you said, M. Lesseps, "Violence and friendship are incompatible."

A military funeral of the officer Ramerino was sadly picturesque and affecting. The white-robed priests went before the body singing, while his brothers in arms bore the lighted tapers. His horse followed, saddled and bridled. The horse hung his head and stepped dejectedly; he felt there was something strange and gloomy going on, — felt that his master was laid low. Ramerino left a wife and children. A great proportion of those who run those risks are, happily, alone. Parents weep, but will not suffer long; their grief is not like that of widows and children.

Since the 3d we have only cannonade and skirmishes. The French are at their trenches, but cannot advance much; they are too much molested from the walls. The Romans have made one very successful sortie. The French availed themselves of a violent thunderstorm, when the walls were left more thinly guarded, to try to scale them, but were immediately driven back. It was thought by many that they never would be willing to throw bombs and shells into Rome, but they do whenever they can. That generous hope and faith in them as republicans and brothers,

which put the best construction on their actions, and believed in their truth as far as possible, is now destroyed. The government is false, and the people do not resist; the general is false, and the soldiers obey.

Meanwhile, frightful sacrifices are being made by Rome. All her glorious oaks, all her gardens of delight, her casinos, full of the monuments of genius and taste, are perishing in the defence. The houses, the trees which had been spared at the gate of St. Pancrazio, all afforded shelter to the foe, and caused so much loss of life, that the Romans have now fully acquiesced in destruction agonizing to witness. Villa Borghese is finally laid waste, the villa of Raphael has perished, the trees are all cut down at Villa Albani, and the house, that most beautiful ornament of Rome, must, I suppose, go too. The stately marble forms are already driven from their place in that portico where Winckelmann sat and walked with such delight. Villa Salvage is burnt, with all its fine frescos, and that bank of the Tiber shorn of its lovely plantations.

Rome will never recover the cruel ravage of these days, perhaps only just begun. I had often thought of living a few months near St. Peter's, that I might go as much as I liked to the church and the museum, have Villa Pamfili and Monte Mario within the compass of a walk. It is not easy to find lodgings there, as it is a quarter foreigners never inhabit; but, walking about to see what pleasant places there were, I had fixed my eye on a clean, simple house near Ponte St. Angelo. It bore on a tablet that it was the property of Angela — ; its little balconies with their old wooden rails, full of flowers in humble earthen vases, the many bird-cages, the air of domestic quiet and comfort, marked it as the home of some vestal or widow, some lone woman whose heart was centred in the ordinary and simplest pleasures of a home. I saw also she was one having the most limited income, and I thought, "She will not refuse to let me a room for a few months, as I shall be as quiet as herself, and sympathize about the flowers and birds." Now the Villa Pamfili is all laid waste. The French encamp on Monte Mario; what they have done there is not known yet. The cannonade reverberates all day under the

dome of St. Peter's, and the house of poor Angela is levelled with the ground. I hope her birds and the white peacocks of the Vatican gardens are in safety ;— but who cares for gentle, harmless creatures now ?

I have been often interrupted while writing this letter, and suppose it is confused as well as incomplete. I hope my next may tell of something decisive one way or the other. News is not yet come from Lesseps, but the conduct of Oudinot and the formation of the new French ministry give reason to hope no good. Many seem resolved to force back Pius IX. among his bleeding flock, into the city ruined by him, where he cannot remain, and if he come, all this struggle and sorrow is to be borne over again. Mazzini stands firm as a rock. I know not whether he hopes for a successful issue, but he *believes* in a God bound to protect men who do what they deem their duty. Yet how long, O Lord, shall the few trample on the many ?

I am surprised to see the air of perfect good faith with which articles from the London Times, upon the revolutionary movements, are copied into our papers. There exists not in Europe a paper more violently opposed to the cause of freedom than the Times, and neither its leaders nor its foreign correspondence are to be depended upon. It is said to receive money from Austria. I know not whether this be true, or whether it be merely subservient to the aristocratical feeling of England, which is far more opposed to republican movements than is that of Russia ; for in England fear embitters hate. It is droll to remember our reading in the class-book,

“ Ay, down to the dust with them, slaves as they are ” ;—

to think how bitter the English were on the Italians who succumbed, and see how they hate those who resist. And their cowardice here in Italy is ludicrous. It is they who run away at the least intimation of danger, — it is they who invent all the “ fe, fo, fum ” stories about Italy, — it is they who write to the Times and elsewhere that they dare not for their lives stay in Rome, where I, a woman, walk everywhere alone, and all the little children do the same, with their nurses. More of this anon.