

Geneva Sunday Aug. 10th. 1850

If ever you should come to Geneva,
 Where, among other wonders, you may see -
 Mont Blanc in plaster (but it is not the true one),
 Stop at a hotel near the Western gate,
 Lodged in of old by a green young American,
 Ask him the braying of that ass there!

My dear Lizzie, did you ever hear an ass bray? I quite startled Dr. Gray the other day by my consternation in the street when I first heard one; I thought it some most horrible sound of distress. I don't wonder the fable in the fable was so frightened. It was a long while before I could hear it quietly, & now it is never lost upon me - such, such a noise! Every morning it is generally the first morning sound I hear, for they draw the carts to market which come in with early produce - Now the whole donkey breast is poured into it - And how marvellous that such little creatures can produce such a sound!

But to leave so unpoetical a subject & return to my journal, which at the close of my last letter left me on the top of the diligence on my way to Chamouni - It looked cloudy & threatening as we left Geneva, & veiled completely all distant views. We soon were stopped at the frontier of Savoy, & an officier having taken all the passports, there was a general request to descend; Dr. Gray told me to keep quiet, & the gentlemen having got down, up came the Conducteur with a ladder, & said, "Madame faut descendre!" I said "no, no," & objected, but he insisted upon it, & down I must come - it my great annoyance, you may believe, for it was something to be perched up so high, & not so agreeable to climb down a ladder before all the passengers. But one must submit, & to add the ridiculous form of unlocking carpet-bags & going through the ceremony of pouring into them, for in truth they make no search - A few miles farther on we were stopped to receive our passports at another station-house, & here there was quite a fuss, for two of the passengers had not their passports properly filled. They threatened to throw them back &c. &c. But, as a young Englishman decried with us in the Cabriolet reported, "it resolved itself into a matter of 4 francs + 20 sous!" The locked that official condescended to write his name for the passenger inside for 4 francs, & for the poorer fellow above, 20 sous!!

As we went on it began to brighten, & though the distant mountains were veiled, the sun shone on the hills & in the valleys round us. It was a very interesting ride, for we were winding through valleys following up the coast of the Aro, & high mountains, the rising clouds & mist making them look still higher as sometimes the summits peeped through, were sometimes veiled, on each side of us. Sometimes the valley widened into broad fields, then narrowed, bringing green hills, so steep for houses, close upon us. We were beset by beggars; everytime there was a hole where the horses must walk, they thronged around. But begging seems such a regular trade here that I have not the smallest movement of compassion. The little children run out of the cottages, clasp their hands, & look by your side saying "four shante, madame", suddenly as such a matter of habit, that it only makes me laugh. One little black-eyed thing slunk behind several times to conceal her smiles when Dr. Gray looked reproachfully at her, & at last could stand it no longer, & burst into a broad laugh & had to run away, as if it were indeed a joke. Then all misfortunes are made such a market of! Any deformity becomes a public show, & is held up by the side of the carriage or laid by the road side; & cretins & hideous porters are displayed as a sort of merchandise. I really felt only disgust & no desire to give my mite to encourage such habits. But I am afraid, dear papa, you would be ruined travelling in Europe! - What with pretty things to buy, & the objects of misery that always touch you so much - You are too kind hearted to withstand the wretches, & the bright-eyed children, (too plainly dressed in rag for the occasion) as I did or say so resolutely "non, non!" - The scenery increased in interest as we went on, for the road

to Chamoung lies up the valley of the Aro, between high hills & mountains. At Bonneville, ^(where the diligences stopped for those who desired to dejeuner a la fourchette, or dine as you choose, is called it) we began to pass round the foot of the mole; & a mountain rising directly from the road to 5,800 ft. high; & on the other side across the Aro were the Biyons, almost as high, with great precipices of rock near their summits & too steep in many places for anything but a bird to find a resting place. At Cluse the road climbed suddenly & passed through a narrow gorge between the rocks for many miles. Sometimes the rocks hung overhead again they separated & left green fields between their bases. So high they were that trees looked like tufts upon their tops. Soon, now & then came a little cascade tumbling down, all foam. We passed one which is quite famous, that of Sopona. The stream is small, & the descent so great that half way down it is a mere cloud blown to one side or the other by the wind, & it is curious to see it condensing again towards the bottom trickling in a hundred threads over the rocks, & at last all running into one stream again, that poor little thing, after such a tossing & battering life, gets again together & runs again ^{down} (making a brook about as large as the one at Bonneville) to join the turbid water of the Aro. - I had supposed the Aro coming so directly from the glaciers would

be particularly clear. Quite the contrary; for the glacier scours as a vast mill for grinding rocks in the bed, & the streams coming from them are so thick with this impalpable powder, that they are almost of the consistency & colour of milk, only not very white. Before reaching Salanches the valley widens a great deal; & from the bridge across the Aro here, is a most magnificent view of Mt. Blanc - the clouds had been rising all the morning, & glimpses of high peaks broke now & then through the mist, & when we were upon the bridge through white clouds shone sometimes whiter, then dark ridges, then this beautiful mass of white again, you hardly knew which was mountain. Which myself it was 12 miles off! - I think one reason I could not persuade myself in the grandeur of the impression, is that I cannot persuade myself of their size & distance; the mountains seem so distinct, so clear, so very close upon you, that you feel as if looking on a white cloud nearby, it seems just over the opposite nose, & if you only had a ladder long enough you could be reaching in its soft white in a moment, and you do not realize at all that it is overhanging the field some 5 or 6 miles off. - And so the mountains are so very sharp & distinct & bright, that ^{at any view of them they} appear very near; & the white breaks & snow, great precipices, look like cliffs upon their sides. At Salanches Dr. Gray & I, & a young Englishman, ^(I saw with me at 31) who had not sufficient appetite at Bonneville, dined. He was unpleasant, & gentlemanly, young man, with the one who had been with us in the Sabriot & another, we were in company all the afternoon; for at Salanches we left the diligences the road becoming too steep, & we took chais a banc. And our two chais were the only ones that stopped - the chais are 1/4 of a small omnibus on 4 wheels - holding 3 people to the other; there are leather curtains all round, which are either all up, or as you please - a comical vehicle to look at, but quite convenient & comfortable. I think - The road was chiefly very steep, ascending mountains, or passing through narrow gorges, the Aro roaring below - it was exceedingly picturesque, at times grand & wild, at times beautiful, as you climbed, or wound through narrow defiles, or came into more open valleys with cultivated fields & pretty chalets. The Swiss houses lost in the fields & hill sides, or at a little distance, just as they do in the little models we see. And you may sometimes, since they were only put upon a spot to look picturesque, & would be taken up & put away again when the travelling season was over & winter came; but they are generally better at a distance than close by, for our ideas of realness & theirs do not correspond. The dairy is always conspicuous near the house - finds my nose mightily if it does not the inhabitants, & often the barn is under the same roof, indeed I may say generally; & often the same apartment is used in the rear-dress. But the chalets looked unusual, & the houses & mills in the early so near mountain high collard decorated with brass, & a great deal of brass on their harnesses. It is quite showy.

The bad, gloomy views of Mt. Blanc, until entering the valley of Chamouni; from there you can no longer see the summit, ^{you are too close beneath the mountains,} but one of the many peaks around - Mt. Blanc is the highest point of the chain, lying almost the farthest west; & particularly towards the East are sharp peaks, so sharp that the snow cannot rest upon them, & called Aiguilles; below these are green mountains - those higher are bare rock, being above all vegetation. Between these Aiguilles run down the glaciers, mostly commencing in the more level plains of perpetual snow just ^{below} ~~around~~ the ^{caused} summit of Mt. Blanc, which is the highest of all, & from its slopes always covered with snow - just between this ridge & another, which is not high enough to be covered always with snow, (though any storm may be snow there, melting soon however in a summer's sun) but still the summits above vegetation, lie the valley of Chamouni - I wish I could give you some idea how flat the valley lies, with its green fields & highly cultivated, & on each side rising so steeply & suddenly these high mountains, so mild & grand! And glaciers coming down occasionally, quite into the midst of cultivation - As for glaciers I can only say the pictures give me a very good idea of them - Indeed they looked almost too much like the pictures - And sometimes I would shut my eyes & open them again to try & persuade myself as I looked from some height, that I was not looking at a picture - The sun was setting as we rode along the valley to the valley de Chamouni, or le Saucé - for in truth the little village, from which the valley has taken its name, derived its name & soil from a convent of monks here - And among early records ^{is} that of a ^{visit of} Bishop of Geneva to this "Cruce" in 1420, before America was discovered! So long has this little mountain valley been settled - The rose coloured glow on the white mountain tops was most beautiful; and we arrived at our Hotel, too much delighted & interested to be tired, at about 7 1/2, though we had been on the road since 6 o'clock - Messrs. Choate, Bell & George Curtis with Mr. Timber of Philadelphia, who says, dear father he knows both you & Mr. very well, had overtaken us at Long & we made quite a procession the last part of the way - Sunday I staid very quietly after dinner Dr. Jay & I went to walk up the valley & met George Curtis - Dr. Jay had been planning an excursion with Mr. Timber, ^{the} next morning to the garden. I had to go with them to the mountain top where they would leave me for their long & fatiguing expedition over the glaciers, & Mr. Curtis promised to escort me down again - George Curtis had received the latest letters from home, & told us of the appointment of the cabinet, & other late news, & of the refusal by the Council of Dr. Webster's petition - Oh how terrible all that is! - And now, had I time to escape all the excitement, & conversation, & painful time you must all feel - Let do not think me selfish - No one sympathized more heartily or deeply than I do with the wretched man & his most unhappy family - But the questions we meet with from so many are enough, without the still deeper excitement there, must be with those - So directly in the midst! - We met Mr. Choate & Mr. Bell - But Mr. Choate had been suffering from an attack of ague, & looked quite sick & seemed quite in the dumps - After Dr. Jay had escorted me back, we were joined by the young Englishman who had been making a most successful application to the "ardin", he went to make arrangements with Mr. Timber for, mules, mules, &c.

to riding the mule, so he was driven in front - It rather makes one's knees tremble,
soaking down a steep mountain side: And I was obliged every now & then to sit down
& rest - Then I talked French with my guide, enlightened him on the subject of
America on return for all his information about the object round - The view down
into the valley was beautifully as we descended, and I realized the height more as
I saw how small the objects below us appeared - The contrast ^{was very striking} between the perfect
cultivation of the fields below, all without fences, all the lines marked by the different
sorts of cultivation, the roads tracked through, the little houses & churches of the
different hamlets, all looking rich & cheerful, & the rough mountain on each side,
steep, & covered at their base with trees, gradually rising above them into the high pastures,
& at last into the bare rocks - As I was sitting & resting myself one time, I was
quite startled by seeing Dr. Gray coming towards me - His trouble still continued,
& finding his strength giving way, he thought it more prudent to return, leaving Mr
Kimber to go on alone with the guide - I was very glad he did, for I felt quite un-
willing to have him go on, when I knew he was not well, & it was a good 12 hours
hard walking & climbing - We got down quite safely, and Dr. Gray taking a dose
of brandy & going to bed for the afternoon - was quite well next morning, - when
we planned ascending the Brevent - It rained very hard Thursday afternoon, indeed
we had some showers in the morning - But as the mer de glace is a near view,
it did not trouble us - But Tuesday morning the mists & clouds did not look
very promising for seeing mountain peaks - The Brevent is one of the peaks of the
range of mountains lying on the side of the valley opposite the St. Etienne chain; &
from its summit is a very fine view of Mt. Blanc & its aiguilles, lying on a map
as it were held up just before you - At length we decided to try our luck - Mr
Kimber had descended the mountain on his return from the Jardin in quite a
violent storm, but after a night's sleep felt bright & ready to accompany us, so he & I
mounted on our mules, with a good store of cold meat, bread, wine &c. packed in
knapsacks for our two guides to carry when we must leave the mules, & a little
try to take charge meantime of the animals, & Dr. Gray Alpenstock in hand, we
commenced the ascent - An Alpenstock is a stout staff, some 6 feet long, with a sharp
iron point of two or three inches at the bottom, & is most useful in all mountain ex-
cursions to a pedestrian - I was rather startled when the guide turned from the
road & began to lead the mule up a steep, rocky pasture, with scarcely any percep-
tible path, but if I thought that steep, I soon began to find it much steeper - I thought
Lizzie, if you & Susan could only have stood where you could have seen me ascending that
would you have said! Sometimes the path led through woods, you would call it a narrow,
poor, foot path, then on the bare hill side; ~~on a side~~ below as steep as it could be & not be
a precipice, above the same so steep you could scarcely find footing - Then zig zags so
sharp that - as one mule was going one way, the other went contrary - Then the
guide would plant his alpen-stock & clamber directly up dragging the mule after, & I would
be obliged to lean clear forward & hold tight on to the saddle to keep on, "Comme un mouches"
as I said to the great amusement of the guide - Then across a mountain toward, two or three
wands, legs rather, side ^{side} side, or across one of the fearful slides where rain & torrents of water carry in

earth & stones & devastation in their train, have poured down the mountain side,
leaving only a bed of loose, small stones - I must confess my heart went pit a pat
But the mules went securely on, sometimes lurching their noses down as if smelling
the path, sometimes snorting a little as if they thought it rather rough - Gradually
we rose above trees, & nearing the lower summit it grew less steep, but, save down for
mountain pastures, loose rocks lay tumbled in a rough mass, but the mules mind
nothing, over these went where I could not have believed any four-footed ani-
mal could find its way - I am quite convinced this could climb a ladder!
It had been raining hard a good part of the way, & what with the slip of the
trees, though the guides knothed the branches as they passed on, it is not to be
of some of the waterfalls met, & thank - had a large share, & was quite wet &
flat to arrive at the little mountain chalet, which presents a ^{late} appeared though
the mist - We alighted & went in to dine - It was a nice summer but (which
they desert in winter; but in ^{late} spring the cows are driven up to save to pass the
summer, & then they take up their lodgings in look after the cows, make butter &
cheese, & so pass the summer till the cold weather drives them down into
the valley again - It is built with loose stones, the walls are & very thick stables
all under one roof, & a wall about 6 feet high separating the ^{the} stable & the human,
& that one had all the advantage of vicinity with them - except eight over the stable
were two cots climbed into by a ladder which answered for beds, so that the other
side was left unencumbered - In one corner in ^{one} part there was the fire, with
out chimney, the smoke ⁱⁿ ^{the} ^{fire} ^{was} ^{very} ^{over} ^{and} ^{above} ^{the} ^{door} - I don't
remember any window - The furniture was a stool or two, a rough bench, &
a sort of wooden table, bails, tubs, churn, &c. &c. &c. They put fresh wood on the
fire for us, ^{stack} ^{of} ^{wood} an alpenstock into the stable & so made a house for dry shawls &c., &
moved a bench in front so that I could sit & dry my dress, bonnet, &c. &c. Then
they gave us some most delicious cream & milk, & with one of the little rolls
produced from one of our knap-sacks I made a very good lunch out of one of
the earthen mugs with an iron spoon - Meanwhile it rained hopelessly
There were in the chalet a little goat-herd come to dry himself, who drove his
goats from a village below every morning & drove them back at night - And a
man who came every morning ^{from the mountain} & returned every evening with the goats of
the village! - Think of such a chair every day! He wore 3 shoes ascending! I
wish you could see the shoes they wore - The soles were broad studded with nails
& bound round the edge with iron - very stout scather tops, double where they were
a foot! - The rain continuing, though occasionally the clouds cleared a little,
Mr. Kimber grew impatient, & decided to go down - So he took a mule & one guide
to ride down, but Dr. Gray was anxious to wait an hour or two & see if we could not
get some view - After a while it grew milder - The little goat-herd shouldered his
knapsack & went to look for his goats - And after an hour or so, he had raised down
it rained every now & then, every now & then pieces appearing through the mist, he
decided to go - I prepared for walking, for it was too steep to ride, as the mule was
sent with the mule by the way he came, & we were to take a shorter path on the other

side - It was too wet ^{to} climb to the summit, some thousand feet higher, so we went
to a high point & scaled ourselves, & in reward for our patience, the sun came
out & mists rolled away, sometimes showing two peaks, sometimes more; now
one of the peaks peered its tall head through, then we saw Aquille, Vert, & Trigilles.
Some like the towers of a cathedral, & the battlemented sides - then one glacier
would show itself, then mists rolled up the valley & wrapped it up, & another
glacier through the other end & seeing first me then another, but never all together,
all but Mt. Blanc, which being highest refused to show its veil - It was very
grand & beautiful - At last the mists settled hopelessly again, & we began
our descent - It was too steep & poor a bet for mules, so you may imagine
what walking it was - But the guide gave me his arm, & in difficult places
would plant his foot for me to put mine against with every step, so that
I got on very nicely - We came down in an hour or a half - He met part way
down our white goat herd, & learned from me in the time, he began to call his
goats together & drive them down - A little lower was a young woman with a
large basket ^{of} well laden, strapped on her back ^{with} on her head up with provisions &c.
to the chalet - I was well tired & trembling when I got down, & quite dripping,
for it rained hard the last of the way - But after changing my dress had
a fine appetite for a late dinner - I wish I had time to put in the funny things
we overheard of poor Englishmen's attempts to make the French Chambermaid understand
English - But I am so much behind hand I must hasten ^{to} ^{the} ^{next} ^{morning} ^{at} ^{6 1/2}

We were to go next morning at 6 1/2 - But when we were called at ⁷ it rained
very hard, so we said "we cannot go on mule back today, we must keep quiet"
& so went to bed & sleep again. On waking at 7, it had cleared finely, & we could
see the top of the Cervent with snow in its crevices, for the rain had been snow
on all the mountains - He breakfasted, packed, & at 8 o'clock were on our mules
ready to set off - Incautious, an unfortunate mistake, the clouds had settled
down again - If there were good prospect of a view, we were to ascend & pass
to Martigny by the Col de Balme, for from there is a very fine view of Mt. Blanc,
& we had been so unfortunate; otherwise we were to take the Tete-rouge, a
less difficult path not so much ascent, & more beautiful in near occurrence all the
way - Before we got to the forking of the roads it began to rain very steadily - The
valley grew colder as we ascended to the top, we passed through mild groves
of fruit, by the foot of the glaciers des Fours & Propentieres, crossed over the miles
above, saw ^{at} the pits out on the rough hill side guarding ^{her} cows, provided
from the weather with a black hat & a cape of goat skin; a little farther on the
I note of her little fire rising up against the hill side; came in view of the
finances du Tour ^{du} ^{Mont}, & coming to the forking of the road decided, the rain
seemed so hopeless, so take the Tete-rouge - The soon ascended rapidly, & now wild
the valley had steep mountains on each side, too high for trees, almost too bare for
pasturing, & the road at times scarcely marked as we passed our way over the peaks
& across a little stream which pender to gather its threads together at length in all its winding
is seen the theme before entering Lake Lemane. In passing crossed a col ^{of} the streams with the other direction.