

Paris - 9 Rue Richemont. May 14. '51

Dear Charles,

I left my journal just as I was going to dine with Mr. Webb having deposited all our luggage at our 'apartements'. Mr. W. lives almost out of Paris quite up in the Champs Elysees, but it was too late to see anything of the pretty garden behind the house - He found quite an assemblage there - Mr. Jay & his son - Mr. Jay is an old friend & acquaintance of Dr. Jay's & talks a little English - But I bravely dashed into French with him - The son talks English quite well - Mr. Graves who is Chief under the Minister of Finance & who has a very interesting face, intelligent & sober - He is fond of botany as an amateur; Dr. Montaigne the numismatist; a young Spaniard from the Canary Isles, a handsome young fellow, & a young German - None of these spoke English - Then a M. et Madame Duval - He is I believe English, but they have lived a long while in Brazil - She is French, but talks English very well & many other languages - We had a very pleasant dinner, entirely in French style, & everything excellent of its kind, for Mr. Webb understands all matters of the table very well - The French fashion is for ladies & gentlemen to leave the table together, so about 9 o'clock we all moved again into the Salon - The house seems prettily but not showily furnished, & the rooms are not large - And in no true French house do you find the floors entirely carpeted - Here the dining-room was as usual, a waxed floor - I had eaten more variety than usual for dinner & drank more wine than I commonly do, for I could not get the water conveniently, & after we were in the salon again 'Cafe noir' was handed round - Now 'Cafe noir' you must know, is the very quintessence of coffee! & one generally takes a little once cup with a great deal of sugar & without cream - I innocently drank a cup of it, & presently when talking with Mr. Duval began to feel very uncomfortable & strange - I seem bound to distinguish myself in foreign lands, but for the first time in my life I felt faint, & the first thing I knew Mr. Duval was touching Dr. Jay on the shoulder & he came & led me out of the room - It was soon over, but they thought it more prudent to keep quiet, so I had the satisfaction of passing the remaining 1/2 hour in the ante-room hearing the merry laughs & gaily voices in the salon - We got back to our lodgings about 10 1/2 & I must confess my heart had been sinking about them all day, I was afraid we had not been particular enough in our bargains as the lady seemed keen & quick, & the French have such a reputation of making the most of you - Then as the rooms looked only into the courtyard I feared they would be dark & dreary, I wish you could see them: they are so truly French; all elegance, but don't go too close behind the scenes - However we find things on the whole quite comfortable, the landlady seems very obliging & anxious we should have what we want, & I am willing to bear with some inconveniences for the sake of the advantages in many ways, the little peep into French life & the great advantages

begin in learning to talk French, in which I assure you I have made some progress. But I must give some description of our rooms. I have told you before how the French houses are built on such a great scale surrounding a court yard, & with fine large windows, & each family occupies but one floor, we are in the second - that is up two flights, for the lowest is shops & others or something of the sort, in this case stables. You enter by one of the ~~double~~ doors painted to look like bronze, for all the doors to show in the suite of apartments are double, opening in the middle, & one half generally kept shut, any other door is covered with the same paper as the rest of the room, & therefore invisible as it were, & turning about to your right you find yourself at another door & enter our salon. The floor is nicely covered over of the first hands I ever saw. A servant is constantly brushing it diligently with a short stiff brush on her foot with which she polishes it all over. The room is lit by windows with two large French windows, between them & a small arched alcove calls it; namely a high pier-table decorated with two heavily carved vases a great china machine for making coffee, the chairs are upholstered with red morocco seats, & the opposite of this table is filled up by what Madame calls the "canapé" a long cushion - Sunday little tables in the corners complete the furniture, & in this room we are provided with two cupboards or shelves in the wall, where some of our numerous articles are deposited. - Passing through this room to the next facing, one ~~finds~~ the salon bed-chamber for Mrs. and only a dressing & parlour with a bed in it. It is a square room, also two windows which of course are contained in both rooms with music in a wooden dashboard, which is also the cover of the furniture. - The view of a carpet blown over eyes (by the way, waxed floors are old things for French houses, though dummies would admire them they are a nest). Between the windows is a little writing table like your's, but only not so pretty, & which serves as toilet-table & bureau, the walls are hung with pictures & tapestries, & opposite the window is a large book-case. On one side is a handsome four place with six broad marble mantel-piece decorated with two straight dome columns of sculpture, & if Mr. Jay is asking what they are meant for? I say for ornament. There rather ducky glass vase, & a sword box in the centre. I am particular, but all these things are put down in the inventory when we take the count, so as to make sure we don't run off with anything or hide it because we have broken it, there is a large handsome mirror over the mantel-piece which answers for the useful purposes of showing & dressing ourselves, & two nice little fancy standing desks, a bench, arm chairs, &c. &c.

about - But you will ask what makes it a hot room? & on the opposite side is a French bed with white muslin curtains, of pointed top to the roof, & in one corner corner is the mounted of French wash stands, small tables drawn round, but which Madame thinks afford wonderful accommodations, inasmuch as it has a "baignoire" basin added to its own bath, but as the French basins are all of porcelain, you may imagine their grandeur is not the most impressive thing to be found here - Of course in the alcove of the room is some what disarranged by my trunk & carpet bag, & one or two chairs must fill the place of ~~bedsteads~~ ^{chairs} - But I love quite in French style, & receive my guests in our chamber because it is the most comfortable room & where we have the fire - But don't imagine a French fire is the most comfortable thing we imagine by a fire, that would shock ideas of French economy. - In turn the mantel-piece is wonderfully large & heavy, but ^{though very low} gradually diminishes with each fancy until you get a small opening upon the hearth, about the feet square, a huge stone back-top, & a little one pair of andirons make your establishment. The custom it never to remove the ashes & cinders all winter, but they are heaped to one side or upon the left - & you may imagine by degrees how the fire, which is made by laying a block of wood upon the ashes & adorns a pile in a few coals, is gradually pushed out into the room, & it becomes a wicked matter to light it successfully without being smothered with smoke - But a fire is an expensive luxury, over which one never dwells - There can you ~~see~~ imagine ourselves? I did not know whether to laugh or cry in surveying them the first. But I got soon to bed - that had a bad night from my indignation, but my feelings were soon what cheered on opening my eyes in the morning, to see that a stream of sunshine fell on our windows in the north, creeping over the opposite side of the house, as we are on the back of the Court yard - And then my eyes turned on the distant voices around the ceiling, & I came to the conclusion the combination was too absurd - I did not hurry myself about getting up in the night, & Mr. Jay went out to breakfast on his way to the garden des Plantes, & when I was ready I saw for the tea he had ordered for me. - I was a little disappointed when it was brought in - A small waiter, a little tea set as large as a large coffee ~~but~~ upon it, a tea-cup & saucer, a bowl standing on a plate with a large spoon, & a little, & a great sauce-pan full of boiled milk, a sugar bowl & a long roll of bread. - I immediately contented myself with the tea-cup, making helpings myself with a tea-spoon from the sauce-pan, & took a little out of the

roll. The boiled-milk looked more appropriate when Dr. Gray had it with his coffee next morning, but we are now so far civilized as to have the milk in a little pitcher. Dr. Gray has the bowl & great spoon for his coffee, I take the tea-cup, & of late we have got so far as to have plates for our roll & butter. But the coffee is good, the rolls very nice, the butter excellent, & as Pat says, 'looks is nothing 'tween us & everything.' - But this breakfast you see is not French fashion - Madame has her cup of coffee in bed in the morning. When she gets up or not as she pleases, but at 10 $\frac{1}{2}$ or 11 she has her breakfast a "cotelette" a "biftik", &c. & wine, a sort of small dinner, & then she dines again at 6 - And this is the general French custom. She is sure I don't eat enough - I ought to have a "biftik" for breakfast - I spent the day in unpacking & getting things when we could put their hand upon them, with occasional flying visits & offers of assistance from Madame - And when Dr. Gray came back we went out to get our first dinner at a restorator. I felt shy & was very particular before I would go in, but so it turned out we chose the first one, & had a very good & simple dinner - You can choose just what you please at a restorator, & so regulate the expense as you please by the number of dishes & their prices, which are set down against them in the carte from which you choose, & as we dine now every day at the restorator unless we have an invitation out to dine, we have got to know them very well, & I feel quite at my ease, there is a good deal of difference as to expense, you can go to the Café de Paris & have an elegant dinner from 12 fr. upwards, or you may dine most nicely in the Place of the Madeleine for 4 - When people go together, you ask for two people a portion for one, for 3 for 2, & so on, only if you have not quite dinner enough you order a course or plat as they call it more. For ~~dishes~~ you order some meat cooked with vegetables, each vegetable is a separate course - I mean to make you a list out, Charlie, against you come to Paris of good places & good dishes for dinner. Almost every stranger makes the mistake at first of ordering too much - And it takes some little habit to know what the dishes are, & how to combine them judiciously - It is very amusing for awhile, but I should tire of it had it to last long - And I think for a permanent English cooking the best, but I should like to engraft some of the French dishes - We passed the evening pretty much on the Boulevards, which are always a gay sight with their crowds of well dressed people & the gay displays in the shop windows - For if that display the French have certainly the secret.

Thursday, May 18 -

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The next morning brought me an enclosure from the bankers with the welcome letters which I acknowledged in my last letter, from Charlie & Sue. I mean to enlighten you all a little on the subject of postage, concerning which you seem wonderfully ignorant. Know therefore all letters coming across the Atlantic & going over England, France, Switzerland & Germany are regulated as to postage entirely by weight. Italy I believe not, for there an envelope is charged as a double letter, but in the other places you may use as many or as few sheets as you please, provided you don't overstep bounds. England allows the same weight as we do, $\frac{1}{2}$ an oz., & you can ^{use} for two good thick sheets with that & an envelope, & with this thin paper I can put three. Now as to your combining on the other side of the Atlantic to save your own pockets I must leave that to your own wisdom; if Canada all our letters being forwarded by our bankers, we must pay English postage on them, but as that is only a penny the half oz. it is not a thing to be thought of. But France is a different matter. In France you pay 16 sous under a $\frac{1}{4}$ oz., if up to the $\frac{1}{4}$ oz. more, & over a $\frac{1}{4}$ oz. double. And though $\frac{1}{2}$ an oz. holds a good deal, it is astonishing how soon the snark comes down to the $\frac{1}{4}$. So you see in writing on to the continent heavy or light paper does make a great deal of difference, especially if you have a number to come from one place at once. As our letters do from Liverpool. This week for instance Sue & Charlie's came by the oz., 1 postage, & one week it was three. Uncle Lowell said their postage used to average \$3.00 a week on the letters they received. ^{Because each person sent a separate letter, & generally on our heavy paper, one sheet of paper with envelope is over the $\frac{1}{4}$ only!} If you write direct to Germany you have more weight allowed, but anything that goes through France shares the French regulations, & so Italy & many places the mails are regularly through France, unless you write other directions on the cover. Now I don't write this for my own benefit, for by the time you get this we may be back in England, & the few cents a week are nothing, & do not compensate for the trouble to you to write on thin paper or the effort of reading. But for the advantage of future correspondents, & to prove that I am not a humbug, as Patrick & Charles say.

1 o'clock - I cannot say how vexed I am that my morning has gone! But Madame. came in for her usual morn'g. talk, & said I was writing & she would not stay. But we got talking, & I was interested in trying to explain to her some things, & give her better ideas, for truly it is sad to me to see how, though I think many souls seek after it in France, how little they understand the highest & noblest ideas of life - High morality, high spiritual faith! - Sometime I must give you an account of her, for she is really an interesting woman; & one hardly knows how great, how forcible, how de-

just language may be useful, they hear an intelligent French man talk -
You cannot but admire the language - So got back however to Saturday
a fortnight ago, now I am behind-hand. He dined with Dr. Jay, & had a
very pleasant time. He rose invited to meet a Madame Blouin, & her
husband, he is quite distinguished, an horticulturist, & he & his wife
have been making investigations for some years in the varieties of straw-
berries, a very learned work, in which Madame B. has shown great ability
& makes all the drawings for her husband. He gave told us as something
very remarkable that she was nursing her youngest child, & so we must be
punctual as she must be early, but still I imagined a middle aged
French woman, with her quick, black eye, & sharp speech, especially a flame
devotee - But I have not this power of knowing just how people should look,
& when a little, plump, sweet, soft, delicate little woman came in, with soft
black eyes, round face, pink childlike in its youthfulness & modest innocent
expression, which was so well set off by her deep purple hair & cap with the
orbulet of ribbon in her dark hair giving her such a look of purity & whiteness,
I could not get quite reconciled at once, & suddenly went on out of ideas &
patted down to build up another, her manners were equally soft, gentle &
simple, & yet so naturally enthusiastic & earnest - Her husband has a
handsome face & dark, but is lame & can move only with crutches - She
tells me almost Spanish they are so dark - I, complete the circle to show
me there, Mrs Webb, & Dr Jay & his son, with whom I had a good deal of lady
talk in English - We had a pleasant dinner, & then after Madame B.
morning left, for it seems she had come from some distance in the
country to see us, & brought her baby to pass the night in Paris. After the
morning the gentlemen had some botanical discussion over some
specimens of straw berry plants Dr. Blouin had brought for Dr Jay
to see - He is anxious to get specimens of all the varieties peculiar to
America, & I am going to try, dear papa, to notice any fine plants
you have this summer, of any seedling & any other American varieties
I stick something in to mark them, & then next autumn I shall be
the gatherer of taking up pieces of those plants to send to Dr. Blouin -
I may as well add at the same time something request - Some of our
English friends are anxious for specimens of the beans we raise for
table with their names - So I have with make a petition to Tenney & Rich-
field, for specimens, this summer, of all sorts, & carefully labelled by the true
names - I want also the handsomest specimens of varieties of Indian corn

very thoroughly dried, for some of the English botanical museums -
Also, squash seeds, with their names - I speak thus early because
the season for these things is upon us sooner than one imagined - We
have even stramonies at the restorators ever since we have been in
Paris, but not so cheap that we can afford to indulge in them -
Got - They ask 1.50 - 2. or 3 francs for little pots that hold perhaps
5 or 6 of the large English variety! -

Saturday Dr. Jay & I went up to call on Madame. Found Paris, & some
big back came down the Champs Elysees, where they were making
grand preparations for the next day's fete, the anniversary of the
declaration of the French republic, & another much more in-
teresting work to us - Our manager - Dr Jay says which will last
the longest if one may judge by sincerity & intention, our's should,
for the condition was "till death do you part." But if we may be
true themselves, many signed the French Constitution as a com-
mit present arrangement, for as far as I am in it I want see much as
possible the French, as far as I have opportunities to see - But they
were making splendid preparations for this fete of & down the great
avenue of the Champs Elysees, which is a fine row with this enormous
wide road, bordered with trees leading through it, the vista at one end
terminated by the insignificant Cord de Clerville, & the other looking across
the Place de la Concorde the obelisk of Luxor in the center, up the
central avenue of the garden of the Tuilleries to the palace itself - I
suppose no other city can even a more magnificent place - Not a side
side they were raising enormous statues of distinguished men in
France, made of plaster, the inside stuffed with straw, & the
effect was very well of bodies without legs & legs without bodies,
& then sticking out for fingers &c. &c. - For Sunday's fete I must
wait until the next, only thanking you & Lizzie for last week's
letter Lizzie particularly for her account of Mary's paper - Father, Charles
& Lue for this week,

& with many respects for my neglected correspondence,
I am always most truly, Jeanie -

H. S. Humphreys

Prof. C. V. R. C. W. Davis

Boston

United States

Canada

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Gray, Jane Loring. 1851. "Gray, Jane May 9, 1851 [to Loring]." *Asa and Jane Gray travel correspondence*

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