

Good Friday having been already lost.
Promised to sail to-morrow. I con-
sulted Amer. Consul, who said the
sea would continue rough for a
day or two, advised taking Monday's
steamer, - by which time I hoped
Jane would be much better to bear
such voyage as it might be. I
so decided. The Schuyleris decided
to go on, with plenty of fellow
New Yorkers.

So we settled up, took light luggage
and the railway drove along the
coast, more picturesque even than
Corniche road, tho' less grand, - sea
on one side and opposite Calabrian
Coast, ragged mountains and wild
ravines on the other, not bare as in
Egypt, but covered with *Opuntia* cactus,
green valley rocks or slopes here and
there, and more flowers, 100 fold, even
at this early season than we saw
in all Egypt, - ground all carpeted or
spangled with them in many places,
Sweet Alyssum from every crevice in the
rocks. At 5½ reached Giardini,
right on the shore, barely room
for road & houses, mountain rising
behind in terrace after terrace: jumped
into a 1 horse carriage and wound
on hour up the mountain by a good zigzag

28.
Taormina (ancient Taormenium)
Sicily, March 25, 1889, Evening.

I must do this part of Journal,
leaving it for Jane, now snug in
bed, at the first opportunity to fill up
the hiatus, the broad chasm, between
the pyramids glistening in a glowing
sun and Etna robed in snow and
reflecting the pale moonlight.

My letter to William just despatched
from Messina gave report of our doings
and adventures. But I briefly rehearse.

I went down to Alexandria in morning,
and Jane, Olivia & the Schuyleris, under
Charles' escort followed in a later train,
on Thursday, March 18. That morning
we drove round town a little, Jane
and I, with Dr. Gailletot, a French
physician and botanist, - the main
things to see being Pompey's Pillar (a
fine looking thing than I had thought,
- just like the pictures indeed but
looking grander and of beautiful
proportions) and the obelisk known
as Cleopatra's needle. Soon after
noon we were on board the French
steamer Peluse, and bidding good
bye to Charles who went back to
Cairo for a week or 10 days more,
we started for Europe in what seemed
beautiful weather, expecting to land
in 3 days at Messina. But the wind
blew and the waves rolled, or rather

gyrated in a strange way, and made
us all sick, and great discomfort
we had till on the morning of
the fourth day (Tuesday) we entered the
straits of Messina, and landed at
Messina at 7 o'clock, A.M. As to
the motion it may be best described
in the words of an old sailor on board,
"Why, you see, first she is hit on the
larboard, then astern, then she
gets it a starboard, and on the
quarter, and she don't know what
to do. And Mr. Stearns (son of Brewster
of Amherst College, who had made
30 voyages and never was sea-
sick or experienced really bad
weather, and so prophesied smooth
things for us, confessed that he
was thoroughly uncomfortable.
One day a heavy sea came over
the quarter, knocked in several
boards and panned down the hatch.
I thought it would stay in the
passage way, but our boots &
shoes taking to navigation around
the state-room, disclosed the true
state of things, and you may
imagine the condition we were in,
and what a sad thing all this wet
and cold and turmoil, was to poor
Jane, used to the warm dry air
of Egypt, and debilitated by the sickness

that prevented her from keeping
down any nourishment. She
was landed just prostrated, and
in a condition which made me
reconciled at first to the news
that we had lost the proper steamer
for Naples, and must wait 2
days for the next. That day
Jane passed in her room on
a sofa, the next (yesterday) all
day in bed, with distressing pain
and aches in back, and finally
everywhere else. - rheumatism, we
think, from the exposure to cold
and wet and great change of
climate, with other ailments
and prostration. However, toward
evening she got some relief, &
considering the circumstances,
had a fair night, and was able
this morning to enjoy breakfast
in bed with some appetite, and
consider what was best to be
done. Well, the steamer, after
putting off decision to 11 - then to 12
o'clock, at last decided not to go
that day, so grievously disappointing
at least 40 passengers. Also saw
some of whom saw their last hopes
vanish of reaching Rome for Easter.

(Sketch, sketched by Romans) on a height between the town & sea. Saw the sunrise out of the sea below Calabria, but soon dimmed with light clouds. Splendid view of Etna in its whole extent on this side, and line of coast as far as the long Cape of Sci Reale. Peak of Etna free from cloud, except soon after the sun touched it a small white cloud formed over it. Jane (at 7½) still in bed, where she had best remain till the day warms up.

Afternoon. Jane took her breakfast in bed, and announced that I must do all the sight-seeing alone, except what could be seen from the house. So I went my way sorrowing. With Salvatore for guide - tho' now was needed & his knowledge is slim, after looking into the "Cathedral" took the stiff climb up to Mola, over 2000 feet, grand views all the way, especially of Etna, and a fine study of it from the very

summit. The sky then good as far as it was concerned, tho' cloudy generally with breaks of sunshine. Then descended on to the peak on which the old Castle of Taormina stands, ~~over~~ beehiving over the little town. Splendid view seaward & coastwise, and the amphitheatre looked right down upon. Now the clouds came lower & obscured Etna, mainly. - Home to a pleasant dinner here. And now we are ready to descend to the shore below us and take the train as it passes for Catania - one of the warmest places in Sicily, and so likely to make a good ~~rest~~ resting-place for Jane - for a day or so.

Catania, Easter Sunday. Reached here an hour after dark a Friday, and I ran about, in my way all day Saturday, spending an hour or two in the little Botanic Garden - where I introduced myself to the Prof. the Abbe Tornabene, who knows a little botany, not much. In

when the city, but stopped short at this place on having the veil of St. Agatha (patron saint of the city) shaken at it. The town covers ruins of older towns buried under lava. The whole region here is built up of lava of various ages, - and there is old Etna, looking as pure and innocent as a young bride, seemingly unconscious of all the mischief she has done and is still brewing. I came home to the hotel, leaving me at the door of the cathedral, which is chiefly very modern, but with old apses at the 2 ends, like those of early ^{Byzantine} Greek churches. I staid through high mass, and never did it seem so weak & unimpressive, though celebrated by the Arch bishop, with 8 or 9 suffragan bishops - I suppose - as they all wore mitres - assisting. I had an early dinner, and off at 4 o'clock a very pleasant journey to Messina - rail-way carriage of 1st class all to ourselves - as usual, - a good view of all the country we had lost by darkness in going down, and some more, - good views of Etna on the Val de Nave side, partly wrapped in clouds, and what fields of lava, a good deal of it - did as it is, - not yet covered with vegetation, or only with Cactus, the great growth of this region. Here we are in a nice room yet at Hotel Victoria, our tall window looking out right on the quay & water, & shipping, the moon rising opposite over Appennine, as I did the sun this morning (Monday), & all betides a nice day and a pleasant voyage to Naples. So may it prove.

Tuesday, 30 March. Naples, Hotel Di Russie. Left Messina at 1 1/2 yesterday; favorable wind but too much of it, but got on comfortably for me, uncomfortably for Jane, who took to her bed before dinner, ate nothing, and had a sickish nasty night, head winds during the night [fine & last view of Etna all late afternoon]. I got up as we passed in to bay between Capri & Sorrento at day break; all dull & not handsome. I thought little of Vesuvius, but as we reached Naples, just after the sunrise it looked better, and perhaps we should think it equal and the whole surroundings equal to what all say of it. But there was a bother to get rooms, altho' bespoken, and poor Jane had full 3 hours to wait in Salon, - getting some breakfast meanwhile.

and is now at length taking some
needed rest. We expect the Schuy-
lers up from Sorrento at noon. I
want to Bankers, get welcome
letters from Catherine & Lizzie P. -
who will come on to-morrow, and bring
with them a heap of letters which have
accumulated at Rome for us, and
then we shall know all about
home, from which we have long
been separated.

With this Jane will send
merely a note to Susan. -
Ever
A. May

out to the great Benedictine Convent³
in the outskirts of the town. - now sup-
posed, mine is the pity. Expected to
hear the fine organ at the Land,
before mass, but the organist was
sick, & so High Mass & the whole
service for Easter was omitted! - only
low mass going on at a side chapel.
Very shabby. However the great
church is worth seeing, especially the
chancel with its fine carved stalls &c
which the Benedictine monks used to
fill. The Monastery is really a palace,
had lay revenues, & was frequented by
rich families. They could accommodate
a hundred or two, but kept the number
down to 40. Now even these are disper-
sed. We saw only one solitary old
fellow, dim vestige and shadow of the
~~past~~ ^{past}, moving silently in the great
corridors. The library said to be a
very fine one. The room very fine. -
the Museum we did not look into. -
but gazed out upon the wall of
Lava of 1863, which was about to



1869. "Mar. 25, 1869 [travel journal]." *Asa and Jane Gray travel correspondence*

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