

Nelson, when on business,—particularly in private—shows infinite fire. And his decision, and not knowing difficulties, has gained him the real merit and enabled him to effectuate the infinite good he has done in this part of the world. Besides his victories, he has animated the Councils, and directed the operations which have lately been successful. And to him and to his officers it is due, that no more mischief has happened in the South of Italy, and that the minds of the people—especially in Sicily—have been kept tolerably steady. His reputation has literally been a very real support to the Common Cause.”

CHAPTER III

NEARING THE DESTINATION

OUR party are now approaching Constantinople, to the Court of which Lord Elgin had been accredited as Ambassador Extraordinary.

The appointment was primarily for the purpose of exchanging ratifications of a treaty, allowing for the English flag the freedom of the Black Sea.¹ This treaty had been negotiated by Mr John Spenser Smith, Agent of the Levant Company, who had been advanced temporarily to the rank of British Minister Plenipotentiary to the Porte.

After Lord Elgin's arrival, Mr Smith (who was a brother of Sir Sydney Smith, the British Admiral) was given the rank of Honorary Secretary to the Embassy Extraordinary—while retaining his pay from the Levant Company.

On entering the Dardanelles, the Elgins were met by the Captain Pasha.

Kuchuk Hussein, who held this appointment, was High Admiral of the Turkish Fleet, an office to which he had become elevated without having served in any subordinate position in it whatsoever. He, however, displayed great zeal and ability in improving the Service. He was originally a Georgian slave, but had become a great friend of the Sultan's.

Prior to Lord Elgin's arrival at Constantinople, he had received despatches from General Koehler. This officer had been sent to the East by the English

¹ In a private letter, Lord Elgin says that his nomination was professedly an experiment, occasioned by the unexpected invasion of Egypt by the French.

Government towards the end of 1798, at the head of a Military Mission of seventy-six persons.

The instructions of the Mission were to co-operate with the Turks against the Common enemy—the French.

General Koehler died in Syria towards the close of 1800.

No. 5. PALERMO, *Sunday, Oct. the 6th 1799.*

MY DEAR MOTHER,

I had hardly time to seal my last letter. I was very anxious to send it by the first conveyance, and I had but a few moments notice of that. I hope the Duke de Bronte would not open it, as I fear he would not think it very flattering; he is here really what one may call adored, I never saw anything at all equal to the fuss he is made with;—enough to turn anybody's head.

He has told everybody he is to be back in three weeks; if he returns he is undone, for Lady H. makes him do such exceeding ridiculous things, he must in time quite lose himself. Elgin thinks he now sees the absurdity of his conduct and has broken; but to tell you the truth I think she has got so tight a hold that he will come back. The Queen whenever she has any point to carry, sends Lady H. some diamonds. I am told positively she has given her to the amount of £15,000 worth; the quantity of jewells here is quite astonishing.

Perhaps you have not yet heard that Captain Troubridge¹ has taken Rome and signed the capitulation on board the *Culloden* man-of-war. A few days

¹ Captain Troubridge was instrumental in saving many treasures from removal by the French. This so gratified the Pope that he bestowed upon him the right to bear the Keys of St Peter on his arms.

A ring with the Keys engraved on it, is still worn by Captain Troubridge's descendants.

ago whilst the Russian ships were laying here, and a party of the crews on shore, a dispute arose between them and the Sicilians, in which the latter massacred about 120 Turks. No satisfaction having been given for this murder to the Turks, they mutinied and have carried away their ships contrary to the Admiral's orders. They locked him up in his cabin. The morning we came on shore, the people on board saw one man stab another, and another was flung overboard. Sir William tells me that ever since he has lived in Italy, upon quite a moderate computation there are never less than 4000 people killed privately by the stiletto every year.

We dined at Mrs Lock's to-day, and I have discovered Mrs L. is not the affected Miss O. but her sister. I like her very much, she has been extremely obliging to me and is to get several jobs done for me.

Now Mother, listen with attention to what I am going to say and write me an immediate answer because it is of consequence. I must begin, that silk here is as cheap as dirt!—Do you remember the blue silk chairs I shewed you at Broomhall?¹ Now give me your opinion and lose no time about it, for I cannot settle without you.

Do you not think it would be extremely handsome to hang the walls with blue silk, the same pattern with a gold border round it, both for the drawingroom and breakfast room?—I see Elgin is rather anxious you should not mention our having had Dr Thompson.

Wednesday 9th.—Our ship is under weigh; Hall is much better this morning, I'm in a great hurry to get off to Mon Reale; I am told it is a fine sight.

Goodbye my Dear Mother, kind love to my Father, Lady Robert, Bluey, and Rex. In my last letter I

¹ Broomhall, Lord Elgin's home in Scotland.

think I left gaps of the size of our magnificent room—fill them up 76 foot long and 25 wide.

Your Most affectionate Daughter,

M. ELGIN.

No. 6.

MESSINA, Oct. 17th 1799.

OH MOTHER,

What a real longing I have taken to have you and my dear Father. In spite of Elgin's kindness and affection for me, when we are sitting alone, we begin talking of Archerfield and we figure to ourselves what you are all about. Oh pray, my dear Mother come to us soon, and then everything will be comfortable.

I am just returned from dining at Il Principe di Crito's who is the great man here, and whose visiting card I humbly beg to present you with. I am tired to death with the dinner. It was such a long business, dish after dish, *walking* round the table. And if perchance the thing one wishes to munch, is exactly before one, one dare not help oneself till its turn of *walking* takes place. It is indeed a desperate business. Only think of sitting whilst 26 dishes go round and everybody eats; it is beyond conception the quantity they consume, and the immense quantity of wine the ladies drink. I eat of a dozen dishes I believe, and yet they made such a splutter about my not eating, that I and Elgin had to apologize on account of my bad cold. They were quite surprised, and poor I was bursting! Oh how your poor Mary wished for her bit of Archerfield mutton.

Mother, you know this is a private letter so I may acknowledge my faults; sometimes when I have to sit down to my bad breakfasts without cream, butter, or bread that I could eat, I have actually felt the tears get somehow or another down my

cheeks and then my poor Eggy looks so miserable. . . . Elgin has just flung his letter that he is writing to Dad on mine—(oh! Don't blot me Mama!) . . . he has just written as far as the ill spelt word. He has a famous collection of very bad stories just suited for Dad; but he is a little frightened for you, and immensely alarmed at Lady Robert. However I am trying to reassure him.

I am just going to the opera with the Marquise di Palermo, a nice lively little woman almost inclined to be pretty, and the Marquis is handsome! Elgin is in sad danger if I may believe even half what I am told—but I fancy *half* is the computation for cold Englishmen, and certainly half a quarter is enough to believe here.

But they have even had the complaisance to tell me how uncommonly handsome Elgin is. He really whistles a sweet thing in French à merveille.

We dined yesterday at Col. Graham's, and so we do tomorrow. You cannot imagine the feel it gave me; as soon as he came on board he asked, "how Mr and Mrs Nisbet were?" Dear Dear Fellow.

In my last letter to you from Palermo, I asked you for your opinion about Broomhall. However for fear of that letter being lost, I must repeat my query about which I am exceedingly anxious. It is, do you think the hanging the drawingroom with blue silk (like the chairs) with a broad gold border round it, would be prettier than paper? I am very much caught with that idea. And then should not the bow window room be done the same as the drawing-room? I think those two rooms done the same way would look extremely handsome. We have almost talked ourselves into having the wings, you know I always liked them.

Saturday Morning.—Only think of McLean and Morier¹ having been to the very top of Mount Etna. You and I will do as much on our return from Constanti. We have got a famous painter.² I never in my life saw anything so beautiful as his drawings. My Father would be delighted with them—so very superior to any we saw in London. I have not time to write any more. I must go on board.

No. 7. On Board the *Phaeton*, October y^e 30th 1799.

MY DEAR MOTHER,

It was not my intention to have written to you again from on board the *Phaeton*, but the Fates have decreed it otherwise. My last letter to you was from Messina, I also wrote to Lady Robert but I only directed it to her without putting any place on it, meaning to enclose it to you. But I was so extremely unwell the morning I left Messina that I forgot to enclose it, which makes me very anxious to know whether she has received it.

We departed from Messina, Saturday Oct. the 19th, and sailed at a most amazing rate, 9 & 10 Notts an hour to the Archipelago, the tossing was dreadful; I was all but dead! We have had contrary gales since we have been in the Archipelago and a great deal of roling which has been sad work for poor me. We are now lying at anchor off Tenedos as it is impossible to get up the Dardanel, and here we may remain this month.

I have done nothing since I left England but tell you of my disappointments; now I shall croak more than ever, for of all places, the Archipelago least answers the descriptions given of it. There are

¹ John Philip Morier—one of Lord Elgin's Secretaries.
² Don Tita Lusieri—the artist Lord Elgin engaged in Sicily, and commissioned to proceed to Athens in connection with his scheme for studying the Arts in Greece.

plenty of islands, but Mytilene is the only one that had any green trees on it, all the others look a dismal brown burnt up desert. This is certainly not the time of year to see them to advantage, but at best they never can be beautiful, as there are hardly any trees, and poor tame islands without cliffs, rocks etc. to give a picturesque appearance. There are plenty of hares and partridges on the islands. Elgin and his suite landed at Thermia the other day, and promised to bring me some game. From their own confession the partridges flew close to them, they fired, but alas! not one did they kill, I told them how differently I should have been treated had my Dad been there! However they caught a turtle sleeping on the water, and brought him home in triumph, but that did not make their peace with me, it was a fine lively fellow and attacked bonny Boxer most dashingly.

Yesterday we landed at Tenedos, the Consul took me to his house and his wife came in, a very pretty woman like Joan Scott, but her things were all raged and her husband very smart; I was surprized they were Greeks, and much they spoke against the Turks. We desired him not to tell the great Turk who was sitting in a fine dress, and attendants, who we were, as we had no presents for them; they have been expecting us some time and are very anxious for our arrival at Constantinople. The wine of the Island of Tenedos is the most famous of all the islands; we tasted the two sorts at the Consul's, one sort is very good.

This morning the Consul has sent me a present of a flask of the finest wine and a sheep, the most beautiful creature you ever saw; the length of its coat is wonderful, quite like silk, it is quite tame poor thing, I wish you had it at Archerfield. I saw several of the

Turkish ladies walking about, quite at liberty, dressed exactly as you see in the pictures; only their eyes visible and their nails painted a deep red. All the Turks on the island were dressed very handsomely; we walked by two of their coffee rooms, and they looked as comfortable as possible smoking and drinking coffee, our men went in and drank with them. They are very fond of the English and carried a great quantity of wine to our boat and bid the sailors drink as much as they liked; the wine is very strong. We walked to the Fort which they have newly repaired for fear of the French.

This morning the wind being against us, Elgin, etc. are set off to search Troy, it is 12 miles from the shore. They are to ride there so I had prudence enough to remain here, I hope you give me credit. They are gone in a Turkish boat, I don't expect they will see anything. I am now going on deck for a little air before dinner. Goodbye.

Saturday November the 2nd.—How shall I ever tell you half the wonders I have seen my Dear Mother—but I am determined to go scientifically to work, so I must first bring back our Heroes from Alexandria Troas (not old Troy)—from their account a most enchanting spot.

They wandered over an immense quantity of ruins, all of fine marble, and about that place there were a good many trees. Some people have mistaken this for Troy, but I fancy without doubt that is not the case.

The wind proving fair for us we entered the Dardanelles, and are now alongside of the Captain Pasha's ship, 132 Guns. He sent his head man here early this morning to say he was coming to pay his respects to our Excellency; we saluted him, 19 Guns, and then Elgin went with Isaac Bey, the Pasha's Great Man.¹ I had said I wished to go on board, so

¹ Isaac Bey is described later on as being a Prince.

in about half an hour after Elgin was gone, my friend Isaac came in the finest gilt boat, with gold stuff cushions. Isaac Bey is fortyeight he has travelled all about for 18 years and speaks French perfectly—remarkably polite. He was in England for a few weeks; on his return from his travels he was banished to one of the islands in the Archipelago and a man sent with him who had orders to hide his body and bring back his head!

Fortunately for him they were taken by the Algerines, and in this Sultan's time he is in the highest favor. I cannot resist giving you his private history, which he told us on board the *Phaeton* with tears in his eyes, and spoke of the Turkish Government as most cruel and uncertain, for they are never sure of their heads for a day.

Well, but now hear my story. I dressed myself smart, and away in this fine Turkish boat did I sally (I took Masterman with me). On coming to the *Selim*, I found the best accommodation ladder I ever met with; Isaac handed me up; on deck I found all the troops drawn out for *Ambassadors Poll*, as somebody dares to call me; they presented their arms and play'd English music—fifes and drums.

At the door of the cabin the Pasha and Elgin came to meet me, but all possible description must fall short of the magnificence of his cabin, beautiful embroidered sofas, made of yellow silk richly worked over with gold, guns, pistols, and swords, and other arms embossed with gold. E. said he never saw anything to equal the sharpness of the swords; how I longed to have had you with me, for it is impossible to form an idea of the thing, and the attention and civility to us was beyond all conception.

I said I wished extremely to see the ship,¹ which

¹ The *Selim* was built at Constantinople by one Le Brun.

delighted the *Shaw*,¹ he got up and took us all over it, you may have some notion of the size of the ship from thinking of the *Queen Charlotte*; no drawingroom could be cleaner than every part of it. He made them exercise the guns, which part of the performance I resign all knowledge of; but even Captain Morris said nothing could equal the order every thing was done with; 1200 men on board, and their dresses made it quite superb,—the Captain Pasha saying he was indebted to the English for all his knowledge. After we had seen everything, he conducted us to his cabin again and in came coffee in beautiful Dresden china, excellent coffee and fine sugar for me, one attendant brought a large silver tray with a dozen diamond cups—(like what we have) only all rose diamonds.

Pipes were then brought for E. and the Shaw, but for all I could say, Shaw would not smoke, saying he was sure it must be disagreeable to me. By dint of entreaty I at last prevailed on him to take it, but he would only give one or two whiffs; we sat some time and then they brought in lemonade. During the whole time I can assure you the conversation was very lively and pleasant; he kept begging we would not go, and at last said that if I had no objection to return to his ship again and dine and sup with him, it would be doing the greatest favor in the world, etc.

The temptation was so great I confess I could not resist it, tho' the wind was fair and the *Phaeton* ready to sail the instant we returned. A thousand apologies were made for the sort of dinner we should get, but Isaac said he would make the cook dress some French dishes, and that every thing should be done to make it as comfortable as possible, and that we should have wine.

We then took our leave and returned to the

¹ *Shaw*—abbreviation for Pashaw.

Phaeton, Isaac said he would call for us in an hour. I was annoy'd I could not get at my gold muslin, but there being no help for that, I contented myself with putting on my diamond cross letting it hang on the outside of my handkerchief. When Isaac came back for us, E., Captain Morris, I, and Morier went with him, but I must not forget to tell you the Shaw saluted us with 19 Guns, and all the men and music were drawn out to receive us again.

When we entered his cabin he said this day must be a day of state; and that he would come and return our visit.

However Captain Morris was alarmed at the idea of his coming on board the *Phaeton* till she is cleared, so E. put off his intended visit, but made him a thousand pretty speeches all of which my friend Isaac translated; I am sure they lose nothing from him, for well he knows how to turn a compliment.

Only think of my amazement when I saw a table and chairs set with a nice table cloath, knives and forks, wine on the table and glasses, and the most beautiful set of Dresden for dinner and desert I ever beheld; all this was compliment, for he told me they allways eat with their fingers. Presently the door opened, an innumerable number of attendants entered with the dishes. I really felt uncomfortable at Isaac and a Prince waiting behind us; the Prince is now aiming at the Government of some place—I have forgot what—if his head is not chopped off, it is supposed he will get it, and then he will be one of the greatest despots in the Kingdom.

But to return to the dinner; I was in a sad hobble for I could hardly swallow anything, every thing was so oily; one dish was small mouthfuls of meat with strong butter and onions, there were not many dishes, but they seemed quite distressed at my not eating

more. At the desert the sweetmeats were good some quince *you* would have liked, and famous pears—a very particular flavor.

The moment we had done the desert, he asked me if I would get up, which we did, and went and sat on fine embroidered cushions (on the floor) in the stern gallery; coffee was brought and pipes; after we had sat some time, we returned into the cabin, and perfumes were brought and burnt.

We were shewed all the pretty things in the cabin, which really surpass everything in magnificence—the sophas of beautiful coloured damask, with cushions embroidered with gold. He had two Japan cabinets and the most elegant candlesticks, and two large glass bowls with gold fish. He then shewed his arms, and such a sword as he wore himself I fancy was never seen.

Isaac then went and got some of my favorite little round perfumes, he spoke to the Capt. Pasha who got up and went to a cabinet which he opened, took out a pretty gold enamelled box which he filled with perfumes and which he brought and presented to me. We sat a little longer, and when we took our leave, the Pasha said I had not enough on, as it was cold; he sent for a new Indian shawl, not like Mrs Hepburn's, but a red colour richly embroidered, very ugly, but very valuable; they cost a great deal of money and are difficult to be got. You would have been delighted at his manner of giving me these things, it was not like giving presents, but as the conversation turned upon perfumes, and cold, he produced these different things. Isaac took us back to the *Phaeton* in the State Barge; and now I shall take leave of you my dear Mam. We sail tomorrow at 6 o'clock.

Monday the 4th.—We are now very very near our journey's end; it is unfortunately a foggy day and

rather inclined to a calm which I fear will prevent our arriving at Constantinople today, as we wish to enter by day light, and we are to salute at the Seraglio point, 21 Guns.

Yesterday morning by peep of day, Isaac Bey came on board with a message from the Pasha to E. and a present from him to me, of some new bread and a black velvet box covered with rich gold embroidery.

He then took his leave but returned soon with a present of 25 sheep for the ship; the Pasha had ordered 6 oxen, but we were under weigh and could not wait; nothing could equal the civility shewn us. We saluted the Pashaw 19 guns which he returned. The salutations were most incessant; I own I was tired of them.

Upon reading over my letter, I find I have missed giving you an account of one day's adventures which was Friday the 1st, when the wind failed us just at the entrance to the Dardanelles, so we agreed to land.

We took a basket of cold meat and eat our luncheon at 12 o'clock at a village called Sigamon¹; from thence, E. and I, Captain Morris, Major Fletcher (who came with letters from General Koehler to E.), Masterman, Carlyle, Hunt, Morier, MacLean, and the Greek servant, mounted on asses. I could not get my own saddle so I was forced to ride on a Turkish one. We took guides, and off we set to the supposed site of ancient Troy; we rode ten miles across the plain, saw camels grazing, and arrived at a romantic spot where they shewed us the ruins of the outside walls.

And compleat ruins it is, for there are not two stones left one upon another, only it is visible there has been a great quantity of building. The Learned Men had taken Homer with them, and from examining the spot they agreed there was every appearance of its being the place. There being no twilight, we

¹ Sigamon—probably Sigæum.

were caught in the dark, but only think of my riding 22 miles on a Turkish saddle too, without really being tired. We did not get back to the ship till 9 o'clock, and never was I so hungry, for we had not a bit of anything to eat from 12 till past 9 at night, and we had a bad passage in the boat from the shore to the ship. The surf was so high, they thought every moment it would have come into the boat; however I have felt no one bad effect from all my fatigues and feel better today than I have done since I saw you; I believe the idea of being so near Constantinople adds a little to my happiness.

I have just read over this long letter and really I feel the greatest inclination to pop it into the fire, the descriptions are so miserable; tho' I endeavoured to write plain matters of fact, yet they fall so far short of my wish that I am perfectly disgusted with what I have said. Yet I should not feel contented were I not to send you an account of all I see, but you can make nothing of it I am sure. All the descriptions in books of the different places I have been at, are completely unlike what I have found the places. I only permit Dad, Lady Robert, Rex, Bluey and Mag to hear my descriptions, because they will judge with mercy. Adieu, I shall finish this at Constantinople.

CONSTANTINOPLE, *Thursday Nov. 7th*.—We arrived here yesterday evening, and I do not suppose any Creature was ever more grateful for being at their journey's end, than I am.

The entrance to this place is certainly the finest and most beautiful view in the world, it surpasses all my expectation; on my getting out of the boat, I found a fine gilt chair with 6 men to carry it, waiting for my arrival. I was very happy to find it, for the streets are sad walking. I am exceedingly tired for I have been routing all over our Palace to arrange the apartments.

It is a most excellent house; and I assure you there is a very nice apartment for you, which will be kept sacred—nobody admitted into it, don't be allarmed I will take care it shall be thoroughly aired. I am a going to set about papering and furnishing some rooms that want it immediately; it is an immense house, one room has beautiful velvet gilt chairs: the canopy belonging to the French Ambassador is left up, and much more magnificent it is than ours.

We are going to a ball at the Imperial Minister's tonight, I would rather have remained quiet for some days. Mr Smith is a very polite little man, he does not appear forward, and she is a remarkable quiet wee bit thing. I am sadly disappointed at finding no letters; the post is expected in every hour.

Now my dear Dear Mother my whole thoughts are taken up with the hopes of getting you and Dad here, every thing would then be comfortable. I am certain if my Father could conceive how my heart is set upon having you here, he could not resist setting off directly; when once I get the letter to say you have really started, then I shall be happy, and not till then. You will have a bedroom and dressingroom, and my Father a dressingroom next you. Elgin has settled everything for you, he wants my Father sadly to have some fun with; he endeavours to take him off in his dancing etc., but it is sometimes a serious joke to me, for I am not always able to keep up, when I see him. Masterman is come to inform me I must dress.

Saturday.—A Great Man arrived this morning from the Captain Pasha, with 90 attendants carrying round trays covered with beautiful flowers and quantities of fruit; they placed the flowers and fruit on each side of our hall and made two rows from top to bottom; the Great Man then came into the room followed by 8 trays with five pieces of fine Berlin china on each, filled with

different sorts of preserves, and painted handkerchiefs over each, 4 trays for me, and 4 for E. The Shaw also sent me a fine letter of compliments.

The china is exceedingly pretty. This, the man said, was merely a little compliment; in a few days he hopes to have the pleasure of seeing us. Oh Mam, how I long for his arrival, he is to take me to his Sultana and then what pretty things I shall get. I would give the world you could peep at the hall, it is a perfect curiosity, we may cram ourselves and all the servants with the finest fruit.

I have got a letter from the General the 10th of Sept: one from Lady Elgin, and one from Susan. I could not have heard from you in Scotland by the last post.

My Dear Mother I am now going to give you some commissions of things I wish you to bring out with you. In the first place bonny Boxer has lost his collar, please bring him another. If you wish for green sattin for your London drawingroom curtains, or if you want any sort of silk, bring the patterns with you, and you will get it as cheap as dirt! I wish you would bring me small pieces of fine deepish coloured light blue, yellow, pink and green silks; I merely want scraps only; get fine coloured ones, for I intend them as patterns for lining Broomhall beds. I am told a very acceptable present to the Sultanas would be a box like the one we saw at Maillerdets, with a bird popping out and singing; now if you could get me two I should like it.

Sunday Morning.—I am happy to tell you they are famous Whist players here, we play every evening. The post leaves this tomorrow, but there is a Messenger going off tonight which will make an immense difference in the time, for you will receive this 12 days sooner than if it went by the post. I have written one dispatch, and one long letter for Elgin. I am tired of

scribbling. I have also written a few lines to Bluey and directed them to Grosvenor Square, in case they have left you. With what anxiety I expect the next post, for by that I hope to hear from my dear Dear Mother.

Your Dutiful and truly Affectionate Daughter,
M. ELGIN.

PERA: 1799, 10th Nov.