

Barcelona, Wednesday 12th April 1815

My dear Parents,

Perhaps nothing increases our veneration and affection for beloved parents so much as absence. If the sentiment is not general, I beg you to believe that I draw from an individual, and that individual is myself. But I have neither time nor room for such sentiments, and I believe their (sic) is at least one among your family who is by no means fond of sermons except from the pulpit. In these circumstances therefore, I must proceed to history rather than sentiment. I wrote you some time ago from Toulouse informing you of my intention of going to the frontiers of Spain along with Montgomery and leaving Mrs Hart and the young ladies in France till we should see how providence should unravel his intentions with respect to a fluid and trembling Europe. It was with very great reluctance that I questioned Mrs Hart for I saw evidently that there was no immediate pressing reason for my flight and also that both Mrs Hart's health and that of her invalid daughter suffered much from the state of anxiety in which she has been for several weeks, and I thought I might predict that that anxiety would not lessen when both her son and I should be removed from her. Upon the eve of our departure I asked her if she did not think it would be preferable for the whole family to go to Spain as many English families had done and there together wait the course of events. She assented to it immediately on my representations, and we left Toulouse on Thursday 30 ultimo about 3 o'clock in the afternoon, in the Diligence (a stage coach) for Perpignan. We travelled the whole night of Thursday, breakfasted at Carcassonne on Friday morning and arrived at Narbonne in the afternoon of the same day. Immediately after dinner we hastened to bed, slept a few hours and at one Saturday morning set off for Perpignan where we are arrived about 10 AM. Still in France, any anxiety was not entirely destroyed particularly as Perpignan is a very formidable city and the troops ready for revolt. All the authorities were faithful to their King and treated us with much attention. The remainder of Saturday and all Sunday was employed in making preparations for the remainder of our voyages. We hired the covered carts, one for our baggage and another for the gentleman, and two execrable gigs for the ladies. I ought to have said that we were joined at Narbonne by a Mr Dick, an English clergyman and his lady, and at Perpignan by Captain Hale of the Navy who being fugitives as ourselves soon became friends. On Monday morning then, 3rd instant behold us at midday enjoying the mountain scenery of the Pyrenees, and at last without accident, safe in Spain. We arrived at Figueres the same night and remained there till Friday morning last. Mounted, if possible, in more execrable carriages than ever, after a journey of three days we arrived here on Sunday evening where we have met with above 100 Englishmen fugitives like ourselves. I can send you no news from Boney for we know none and I believe you are certainly more able to inform us in that particular than I am. The part of France we passed through from Toulouse to the frontiers is delightful. The roads excellent, the fields covered with grain already shot and flowering and with many vegetables, which can only be seen within the hot houses of Scotland. The Pyrenees, composed of immense swathes of oak, are completely covered with wood and are beautifully romantic. The large towns I have mentioned above are very neat and tidy, but when I say neat you are not to conceive that I mean clean. Cleanliness is a very rare commodity. I ...

you in France. When we entered Spain, however, the scene was completely changed. We were now travelling in the most romantic country I have ever seen, I had almost said the most romantic country in the world. The roads are the most execrable in Christendom, and our carriages little better than a dung cart. If you had seen us I believe with the aid of your spectacles you might almost have seen our bones peeping through our skins at the end of our journey. To remove despair, however, we were every now and then saluted by the fragrance of orange and lemon trees in full blooming, by the most romantic and elegant and neat and clean villages in the world and by thousands of people who when they learned we were not Frenchmen smiled upon us gaily. The Spanish ladies dress almost exactly like the English with this difference, they all wear veils and constantly black gowns. Everything French is execrated in this country and well may be for we passed through villages totally consumed by the French, bridges blown up, country houses destroyed and every mark of war, which either fire or sword could leave behind. The Spanish army is expected to march into France soon and woe, woe, woe to the retaliation they may expect. But I must be direct, all they can do will at least not exceed what the French have done to them. I am not over fond of the Spanish cookery or the Spanish accommodations, tho now and then we meet with Inns of the most elegant kind. The country may well be called the paradise of the world but the inhabitants are scarcely able to enjoy the blessings such as paradise affords. I must say nothing of this only because I cannot say enough. It is uncommonly splendid. Some of the public buildings exceed anything my poor imagination ever formed of wonderful and beautiful. There is one immense house I have seen in the Subrends which we are told was built in 8 days. If I were once safe in Scotland I shall be able to waste a few winter evenings in seeking out superlatives, for assuredly I am not able to describe almost anything without them. When that time shall arrive, however, I can by no means inform you at present. Our intention is, if everything should succeed to our wishes in France, to return from this place by sea to Montpellier, and there pass next winter. As soon as the sun of Spring should have lightened the world we will set off on the wings of desire to happy old England and I do assure you we will greet her home with such feeling as one who has not left his native land never can experience. There are two of the sweetest words in our language which the French cannot express in theirs, namely Home and Comfort. The reason is, because they have never had the idea of them in their heads. Form the wildest conceptions you can of the most fickle and versatile objects in nature and you will have the character of the French. At one moment you will see them wringing their hands and exclaiming the deepest agony. My God, My God, what a visitation is this! In the next you may see them dancing and laughing and looking all around them over the most terrific scenes with an indifferent eye, nay with an eye of perfect gaiety. Search into their hearts and you will there find the cause of all. Completely void of everything like either moral or religious beauty, they cannot conceive what virtue or honour is. They no longer profess that chivalrous spirit of honour which was founded either on virtue or its semblance, and of course they are twisted round like the fane (sic) upon a church spire, with every wind that blows. Oh that they possessed a little of the stability of that building which supports that fane, that church which in its own defence has witnessed its members perish on the scaf

fold, by the faggot and on the cross. O for a Deity to teach them one single fact, namely that their blood is not their own but their countries. On the morning of the day after we passed through Perpignan the tricoloured flag was hoisted there. We have been all congratulating ourselves upon the escape we made, but I know there are other Englishmen have passed through to that place unmolested since. I have in my hatred to the French character forgotten, I perceive to mention, that very probably we may return to England in August, and if we do I am much afraid poor Jane's health will not be mended and assuredly we shall be deprived of the most interesting part of our tour, namely seeing Paris. I know not when this sheet may reach your hands, perhaps never. I am afraid to send it by Paris as I believe all communications are cut off there. I intend to send it by an English vessel which proposes to come from this place to England in a very few days, perhaps tomorrow. Of course she will sail by Cadiz or Gibraltar. The only safe way, if indeed that is safe that I can send you a sheet occasionally is via Lisbon but I am afraid that you will not be able to write to me. If anything should occur which you wish to communicate to me, you will address me Mr Campbell, Hostal de la Bona Sort, Barcelona.¹ That is the name of our present hotel in Spanish, and I shall have word with the innkeeper to let me have any that may come under such address. We have not as yet taken lodgings, in truth these are not easily to be got here. All the English are living in hotels and we wish if possible to get into lodgings, as these must be cheaper than living in a hotel. Our tongues are tied and much more are our pens in this country, therefore you need not expect any news, I am, however, perfectly well and am enjoying as much as possible the delicious climate of Spain. Every day since our arrival, we have had green peas to dinner and today we had strawberries. Today likewise has produced the first rain the natives have observed for four months past. Prayers have been said in all the Churches for some time past for rain, and on the night of our arrival here, we noticed a procession for rain. It is now come and is no doubt considered as a miracle by many. The Theatre was shut some days ago, not to be opened till rain came. I leave you to make your own aberrations over these things. I presume you cannot have received any tidings of John since his departure. I have this moment heard that all letters from France are stopped, and unless the events are different we shall have no communication. The last letter I sent you from Toulouse I sent by Bordeaux to Mr Hart in London by using fugitives from France. I hope you will have received it, for tho it contained little of interesting matter, is useful tidings of my safety, yet I hope that was enough to hinder you from grudging the postage. I am in great haste to have this concluded and on that account alone you will excuse the shortness of the present sheet and not attribute it to any other things, for I assure you that I am ever and ever your truly dutiful and most affect love. James. My dearest love to all at home. I have not room enough to tell the two little ones I have not yet had an opportunity of eating fruggets.

Envelope addressed
Mr William Campbell
Carsphairn
Ayr
GB
Stamped Add1/2

1. Still there, see: [Hostal de la Bona Sort - Barcelona - Santa Caterina - Pobles de Catalunya](#)