

Transcript of excerpts from Italy in Henry Beresford's European tour diary, 1839 [ZBA 20/1/13]

On leaving England

"Thursday March 7th 1839: I sailed from London accompanied by my friend Tucker. In the Menai Steam Boat for Antwerp. I felt much at parting with my affectionate family & friends, as of course every youth does, when he sets out in life, and leaves those who are most dear to him for the first time. However the anticipation of a most agreeable tour with a most agreeable person, gave me a sort of feeling that I had still a friend whom I had known before at my elbow, and it also tendered to take off my melancholy feeling at parting with my relations."

Hadrian's Villa, Tivoli

"Wednesday 12th [June] We left Rome this morning at six o'clock for Tivoli... which is about 18 miles from Rome... Adrian himself was the architect of this Celebrated Villa which was three miles in length and one in breadth, and contained Temples, Theatres, Baths, etc, adorned the chef d'oeuvre of painting & sculpture. He named the different buildings, after the most remarkable edifices in the world; calling one, The Lyceum of Aristotle, another the Academia of Plato, a third the Prytanium of Athens etc etc. Traces of the Greek and Latin theatre are still here, The Nymphaeum can also be traced. The Pecile also, which was originally, an oblong building with a Portico round it and ornamented with double row of columns. The temple of the Stoics, in the form of a hemicycle, with niches for statues. The Maritime theatre also, The Imperial apartment which was very large, and had two stories. The Barracks for the Pretorian Guards, where 124 different rooms are to be seen; the Naumachia, probably a Ciscus.- The Serapeum of Canopus, imitated from Canopus in Egypt, and the Vale of Tempe, which extended for two miles, and had a small rivulet running through it... The view from here was very pleasing, and altogether it affords a great deal of curiosity & wonder to anyone traversing the ruins of this once magnificent villa. Most of the famous statutes have been found in the villa which possesses such exquisite works of art..."

Climbing Mount Vesuvius

"Friday 21st [June]: Friday Evening - At 10 o'clock this evening, Charles, Marmaduke Wyville & myself started in a Carriage for Resina.. for the purpose of ascending Vesuvius.... We wrote our names down in the Book & our party consisted of the following ...besides a numerous cavalcade amounting to about 40 people!! & all this going on at Night was capital fun- Miss Milnes was carried up in a Portatine, the rest of the party rode upon Donkeys & Horses excepting Mr. DeVere, who walked all the way from the Bay, to the summit and Back!! We went two and two & made a capital army, ascending the rugged paths. We left Resina about 10 O Clock. We arrived at the Hermitage at 2 O Clock, & here was a capital

picture-- all the ciccarios & servants, with their red caps & (raffish) dress, contrasted with their dark complexion, lighting torches, for one further ascent, as it became more rugged & steep. After about one hours ride, from the Hermitage, after forming a very beautiful cavalcade of torches, the whole way we dismounted; & then ... each with a torch (beacon) some way in front, began to climb and scramble this wonderful Mount. Nothing but Lava and cinders, in some places quite hot. The Bridles were taken off the Donkeys with four legs & put round the Bodies of those with two, and the Ladies by thus holding on, were pulled up.

... The night was hot. & altogether not unpleasant. The stars Brilliant, the moon about half & very bright. Well, after a long scramble, we arrived at the top at about half past 3. The old crater is entirely filled up, & the one made this year, by the last eruption, still smokes but nothing very considerable. The smell of the sulphur was very stifling, We were walking about the top of crater for ½ an hour & then was glorious sunshine which we had worked our way to the top for. Nothing could have been more splendid or great. The fine bright globe of fire, rising slowly & majestically from behind the mountains in the East... we sat down among the cinders & had an early breakfast of beef, lamb, chickens, Wine of different sorts etc....

... walked to the highest summit of Vesuvius & here had as magnificent view, as Nature can afford !! We met again all together at the bottom of our hill, & the descent, to where we left the donkeys was but five minutes we could hardly believe that we had come down so quick – We were knee deep in soft ashes the whole of the way, & the dust we kicked up, was like a flock of sheep!!

... We got back to Resina, by eleven o'clock, just as the Sun, was beginning to be very powerful. A happier a pleasanter or more agreeable excursion, I may safely say I never made. Or with nicer people.... I arrived here by ½ past twelve, and had a cup of tea and jumped into bed & there slept until ½ past three when I awoke refreshed for dinner.

Excerpts taken from a transcript of the diary made by volunteers from The Arts Society, Hambleton at the County Record Office during 2022-2023.