

Letter 1

To Mrs. Saville, England.

St. Petersburg, Dec. 11th, 17—.

You will rejoice to hear the news. No disaster has accompanied the commencement of my enterprise. I arrived here yesterday, and my first task is to assure my dear sister of my welfare.

I am already far north of London. As I walk in the streets of Petersburg, I feel a cold northern breeze. It plays upon my cheeks, and fills me with delight. Do you understand this feeling? This breeze gives me a foretaste of icy climes. My daydreams become more fervent and vivid. I try in vain to think that the pole is the seat of frost and desolation. It presents itself to my imagination as the region of beauty and delight. There, Margaret, the sun is for ever visible. There snow and frost are banished.

It is a country of eternal light. I shall satiate my ardent curiosity with the sight of a part of the world never before visited. These are my enticements, and they are sufficient to conquer all fear of danger or death. I commence this laborious voyage with the joy a child feels when he embarks in a little boat. I want to discover a passage near the pole to those countries, to reach which at present so many months are requisite.

My heart glows with an enthusiasm which elevates me to heaven. Nothing contributes so much to tranquillise the mind as a steady purpose. This expedition has been the favourite dream of my **early years**¹. I have read with ardour the accounts of the various voyages through the seas which surround the pole. A history of all the voyages composed the library of our good Uncle Thomas. **My education was neglected**², but I liked to read. These volumes were my study day and night. But my father forbid my uncle to allow me **to embark in a seafaring life**³.

Famous poets entranced my soul and lifted it to heaven. I also became a poet and for one year lived in a paradise of my own creation. I imagined that I also might obtain a niche in the temple

¹ **early years** — юность

² **my education was neglected** — моим образованием не занимались

³ **to embark in a seafaring life** — отправиться в море

of Homer and Shakespeare. Then I bore the disappointment. But just at that time I inherited the fortune of my cousin.

Six years have passed since I made a decision. I can, even now, remember the hour from which I dedicated myself to this great enterprise. I accompanied the whale-fishers on several expeditions to the North Sea. I voluntarily endured cold, famine, thirst, and want of sleep. I often worked harder than the common sailors during the day. I devoted my nights to the study of mathematics, the theory of medicine, and branches of physical science. Twice I actually hired myself as an **under-mate**¹. I felt a little proud when my captain liked my services.

And now, dear Margaret, I deserve to accomplish some great purpose. My life can pass in ease and luxury, but I prefer glory to wealth. My courage and my resolution are firm. I shall proceed on a long and difficult voyage.

This is the most favourable period for travelling in Russia. I fly quickly over the snow in my sledges; the motion is pleasant. The cold is not excessive. I have no ambition to lose my life between St. Petersburg and Archangelsk.

I shall depart for the latter town in a fortnight or three weeks. My intention is to hire a ship there. I do not intend to sail until the month of June; and when shall I return? Ah, dear sister, how can I answer this question? If I succeed, many, many months, perhaps years, will pass before you and I may meet. If I fail, you will see me again soon, or never.

Farewell, my dear Margaret. Thank you for all your love and kindness.

Your affectionate brother,
R. Walton

Letter 2

To Mrs. Saville, England.
Archangelsk, 28th March, 17—.

How slowly the time passes here! Yet I have hired a vessel. I am collecting my sailors. But I have no friend, Margaret. No one will sustain me in dejection. I shall commit my thoughts to

¹ **under-mate** — подшкипер

paper, it is true. But that is not enough. I desire the company of a man who can sympathise with me, whose eyes can reply to mine. You may deem me romantic, my dear sister, but I really need a friend. I have no one near me, gentle yet courageous, whose tastes are like my own, to approve or amend my plans. Such a friend can repair the faults of your poor brother! I am too impatient. But it is a still greater evil to me that I am self-educated. Now I am twenty-eight and am in reality more illiterate than many schoolboys of fifteen.

Well, these are useless complaints. I shall certainly find no friend on the wide ocean, nor even here in Archangelsk, among merchants and seamen. My lieutenant, for instance, is a man of wonderful courage. He is madly desirous of glory. He is an Englishman, and retains some of the noblest endowments of humanity. I first became acquainted with him on board a whale vessel. I found that he was unemployed in this city. I easily engaged him to assist in my enterprise.

The captain is a person of an excellent disposition and is remarkable in the ship for his gentleness and the mildness of his discipline. His dauntless courage made me very desirous to engage him. My youth, my best years, passed in solitude, under your gentle and feminine fosterage. I distaste the usual brutality. I shall do nothing rashly: you know me sufficiently to confide in my prudence and considerateness.

I cannot describe to you my sensations. It is impossible to tell you about the trembling sensation, half pleasurable and half fearful. I am going to unexplored regions, to “the land of mist and snow”. But I shall kill no albatross. There is something in my soul which I do not understand. I am practically industrious — but besides this there is a love for the marvellous, a belief in the marvellous.

Shall I meet you again, when I return from Africa or America? Write to me **by every opportunity**¹: I may receive your letters when I need them most. I love you very tenderly.

Your affectionate brother,
Robert Walton

¹ **by every opportunity** — при каждой возможности

Letter 3

To Mrs. Saville, England.

July 7th, 17—.

My dear Sister,

I write a few lines to say that I am safe. This letter will reach England by a **merchantman**¹ now on its homeward voyage from Archangelsk. It is more fortunate than I, who may not see my native land, perhaps, for many years. I am, however, in good spirits: my men are bold and firm. We have already reached a very high latitude. It is summer, although not so warm as in England.

No incidents have hitherto befallen us.

Adieu, my dear Margaret. I will not rashly encounter danger. I will be cool, persevering, and prudent. Heaven bless my beloved sister!

R.W.

Letter 4

To Mrs. Saville, England.

August 5th, 17—.

A very strange accident has happened to us. Last Monday (July 31st) we were nearly surrounded by ice, which closed in the ship on all sides. Our situation was dangerous, especially as we met a very thick fog. Will some change take place in the atmosphere and weather?

About two o'clock the mist cleared away. We beheld vast and irregular plains of ice, which seemed to have no end. Some of my comrades groaned, and my own mind was watchful with anxious thoughts. Suddenly a strange sight attracted our attention. We perceived a low carriage, at the distance of half a mile. We noticed the shape of a man, but apparently of gigantic stature. The man sat in the sledge and guided the dogs. Soon the traveller went away.

¹ **merchantman** — торговое судно

This appearance excited our wonder. We were many hundred miles from any land. It was impossible to follow the traveller's track.

About two hours after this occurrence we heard the sea. Before night the ice broke and freed our ship. In the morning, as soon as it was light, I went upon deck. All the sailors were talking to someone in the sea. It was, in fact, a sledge, which drifted towards us in the night on a large fragment of ice. Only one dog remained alive; but there was a human being within it. The sailors were persuading him to enter the vessel.

When I appeared on deck the sailors said, "Our captain will not allow you to perish on the open sea."

The stranger addressed me in English, although with a foreign accent.

"Before I come on board your vessel," said he, "will you have the kindness to inform me where you are going?"

You may conceive my astonishment. Such a question from a man on the brink of destruction! I replied, however, that we were going towards the northern pole.

The man was satisfied and consented to come on board. Good God, Margaret! His limbs were nearly frozen, and his body dreadfully emaciated by fatigue and suffering. I never saw a man in so wretched a condition. We carried him into the cabin, but he fainted. We brought him back to the deck and restored him to animation. As soon as he showed signs of life we wrapped him up in blankets and placed him near the chimney of the kitchen stove. Then he recovered and ate a little soup, which restored him wonderfully.

Two days passed before he was able to speak. When he recovered, I removed him to my own cabin and **attended on him**¹. I never saw a more interesting creature. But he is generally melancholy and despairing, and sometimes he gnashes his teeth. The weight of woes oppresses him.

When my guest was a little recovered I had great trouble to keep off the men, who wished to ask him a thousand questions. Once, however, the lieutenant asked why he came so far upon the ice in so strange a vehicle.

The stranger replied, "To seek one who fled from me."

¹ **attended on him** – ухаживал за ним

“And did the man whom you pursued travel in the same fashion?”

“Yes.”

“Then I think we saw him. The day before we picked you up we saw some dogs and a sledge, with a man in it, across the ice.”

The stranger asked many questions about the route and the demon, as he called him. Soon after, when he was alone with me, he said,

“I have, doubtless, excited your curiosity. But you are too considerate to make inquiries. You rescued me from a strange and perilous situation. You have benevolently restored me to life.”

From this time a new spirit of life animated the stranger. He wanted to be upon deck to watch for the sledge. But I persuaded him to remain in the cabin. I promised to give him instant notice if any new object appeared in sight.

The stranger has gradually improved in health but is very silent and appears uneasy when someone enters his cabin. Yet his manners are conciliating and gentle. I begin to love him as a brother. His constant and deep grief fills me with sympathy and compassion.

August 13th, 17—.

My affection for my guest increases every day. He excites my admiration and my pity. He is so gentle, yet so wise. When he speaks, his words flow with rapidity and eloquence.

He is now continually on the deck, watching for the sledge that preceded his own. He knows my feelings. How gladly I shall sacrifice my fortune, my existence, my every hope, to the furtherance of my enterprise! One man's life or death are a small price to pay for the acquirement of the knowledge which I seek.

And I told him about it. As I spoke, a dark gloom spread over my listener's countenance. At first I perceived that he tried to suppress his emotion. He placed his hands before his eyes; a groan burst from his breast. I paused. At length he spoke:

“Unhappy man! Do you share my madness? Hear me; let me reveal my tale!”

Such words, you may imagine, strongly excited my curiosity.

“We are helpless creatures,” said the stranger; “we need someone wiser, better, dearer than ourselves. I once had a friend, the most noble of human creatures. But I have lost everything and cannot begin life anew.”

His grief touched me to the heart. But he was silent and retired to his cabin.

August 19th, 17—.

Yesterday the stranger said to me,

“You may easily perceive, Captain Walton, that I have suffered great misfortunes. Will the memory of these evils die with me? No. You seek for knowledge and wisdom, as I once did. I ardently hope that the gratification of your wishes may not be a serpent to you. I do not know if the relation of my disasters is useful to you. Yet I imagine that you may deduce an apt moral from my tale, one that may direct you and console you in case of failure. Prepare to listen to my story.

I wanted to hear the promised narrative, partly from curiosity and partly from a desire to ameliorate his fate. I expressed these feelings in my answer.

“I thank you,” he replied, “for your sympathy, but it is useless; my fate is nearly fulfilled. I wait but for one event, and then I shall repose in peace. I understand your feeling, but you are wrong, my friend. Nothing can alter my destiny. Listen to my history.”

He wanted to commence his narrative the next day. I resolved every night to record what he related. This manuscript will doubtless give you the greatest pleasure. His story is strange and harrowing and frightful.

Chapter 1

I was born in Naples, Italy, and my family is one of the most distinguished Swiss families. There was a considerable difference between the ages of my parents, but this circumstance united them only closer.

When I was about five years old, my parents passed a week on the shores of the Lake of Como. They often entered the cottages of the poor. This, to my mother, was more than a duty; it was a necessity, a passion. One day my mother found a peasant and his wife and five hungry babes. Among these there was a girl which attracted my mother. This child was thin and very fair. Her hair was the brightest living gold. Her brow was clear and ample, her blue eyes cloudless, and her lips and her face expressive of sensibility and sweetness.

The peasant woman eagerly communicated her history. She was not her child, but the daughter of a Milanese nobleman. Her mother died. The infant was with these good people to nurse. The father of that girl wanted to obtain the liberty of his country. He became the victim of its regime. His property was confiscated; his child became an orphan and a beggar.

When my father returned from Milan, my parents adopted that girl. They loved the sweet orphan very much. Elizabeth Lavenza became my sister.

Chapter 2

We lived together. Harmony was the soul of our companionship. Elizabeth was calm and concentrated. While my companion contemplated with a serious and satisfied spirit of things, I wanted to investigate their causes. The world was to me a secret which I desired to understand.

On the birth of a second son, my parents came to their native country. We possessed a house in Geneva, and a villa on the eastern shore of the lake. I was indifferent to my school-fellows in general; but I had a friend among them. Henry Clerval was the son of a merchant of Geneva. He was a boy of talent and fancy. He loved enterprise, hardship, and even danger. He composed heroic songs and began to write knightly tales.

My temper was violent, and my passions vehement. I wanted to learn. It was the secrets of heaven and earth, the physical secrets of the world that I desired to learn.

Meanwhile Clerval occupied himself with the **moral relations of things**¹. The busy stage of life, the virtues of heroes, and the actions of men were his theme. The saintly soul of Elizabeth shone in our peaceful home. Her sympathy was ours; her smile, her soft voice, the sweet glance of her celestial eyes, were there to bless and animate us.

Natural philosophy has regulated my fate. I liked to read the works of Agrippa, Paracelsus and Magnus. I read and studied the works of these writers with delight; they appeared to me treasures. I believed them, and I became their disciple. Under the guidance of my new preceptors I began to look for the philosopher's stone and the elixir of life. I wanted to banish disease from the humankind and save the people from death!

My favourite authors promised to call the ghosts or devils. If my incantations were always unsuccessful, I attributed the failure to my own inexperience and mistake.

¹ **moral relations of things** – нравственные проблемы

When I was about fifteen years old we moved to our house near Belrive. My tormenting studies led to the evil. Destiny was potent, and its immutable laws decreed my terrible destruction.

Chapter 3

When I was seventeen I became a student at the university of Ingolstadt. My departure was fixed, but then the first misfortune of my life occurred — an omen of my future misery.

Elizabeth **caught the scarlet fever**¹. Her illness was severe, and she was in danger. My mother could not control her anxiety. She attended her sickbed. Elizabeth was saved, but the sickness was fatal to her saviour. On the third day my mother sickened. On her deathbed this best of women joined the hands of Elizabeth and myself.

“My children,” she said, “Alas! I regret that I go away from you. Love each other, I hope to meet you in another world.”

She died calmly. The day of my departure for Ingolstadt at length arrived. Clerval spent the last evening with us. He persuaded his father to permit him to accompany me and to become my fellow student, but in vain. His father was a trader.

My journey to Ingolstadt was long and fatiguing. At length I saw the high white steeple of the town. The next morning I delivered my **letters of introduction**² and paid a visit to some professors. Chance — or rather the Angel of Destruction — led me to M. Krempe, professor of natural philosophy. He was an uncouth man, but an excellent scientist. He wrote down a list of several books on natural philosophy for me to read.

M. Krempe gave me information about the lectures of M. Waldman. So I went into the lecturing room, which M. Waldman entered shortly after. This professor was very unlike his colleague. He was about fifty. A few grey hairs covered his temples. His person was short but remarkably erect and his voice was sweet.

“The ancient teachers of this science,” said he, “promised impossibilities and performed nothing. The modern masters

¹ **caught the scarlet fever** — заболела скарлатиной

² **letters of introduction** — рекомендательные письма

promise very little. They know that metals cannot be transmuted and that the elixir of life is a chimera but these philosophers have indeed performed miracles. They penetrate into the recesses of nature and show how it works. They ascend into the heavens. They have discovered how the blood circulates, and the nature of the air we breathe.”

Such were the professor’s words. Soon my mind was filled with one thought, one conception, one purpose. The soul of Frankenstein exclaimed: I will achieve more, far more. I will explore unknown powers and unfold to the world the deepest mysteries of creation.

I did not close my eyes that night. After the morning’s dawn, sleep came. I awoke. I wanted to return to my ancient studies. On the same day I visited M. Waldman. His manners were even more mild and attractive. He smiled at the names of Cornelius, Agrippa and Paracelsus. He said,

“These men helped modern philosophers a lot. They left to us an easy task. The labours of men of genius lead to the advantage of mankind.”

I asked him about the books to read.

“I am happy,” said M. Waldman, “to have a disciple. If your application equals your ability, I have no doubt of your success. If you wish to become a real scientist and not merely an experimentalist, I advise you to study every branch of natural philosophy, including mathematics.”

He then took me into his laboratory and explained to me the uses of his various machines. He also gave me the list of books. That day decided my future destiny.

Chapter 4

From this day natural philosophy, and particularly chemistry, became my sole occupation. I read with ardour those works, I attended the lectures. In M. Waldman I found a true friend. In a thousand ways he smoothed for me the path of knowledge and made the most abstruse inquiries clear and facile.

My progress was rapid. Two years passed in this manner, during which I did not come to Geneva. I hoped to make great discoveries.

One of the phenomena which peculiarly attracted my attention was the structure of the human body. Whence, I often asked myself, did the principle of life come? It was a bold question. I began to study physiology. My application to this study was irksome and almost intolerable. To examine the causes of life, we must first examine death. I studied the science of anatomy, but this was not sufficient. I must also observe the natural decay and corruption of the human body!

I was not afraid of darkness, and a churchyard was to me merely the receptacle of bodies, which became food for the worm. Now I wanted to examine the cause and progress of this decay and spent days and nights in vaults. I saw how the fine form of man was degraded and wasted. I beheld the corruption of death; I saw how the worm inherited the eye and brain.

Remember, I am not a madman. After days and nights of incredible labour and fatigue, I discovered the cause of life. Moreover, I knew how to animate the lifeless matter.

The astonishment soon gave place to delight and rapture. This discovery was great and overwhelming.

I see, my friend, that you expect to hear that secret. That cannot be. Listen patiently until the end of my story, and you will easily perceive why not.

I found a power within my hands. But where to employ it? I could animate a lifeless body. How to prepare a frame for it? With all its intricacies of fibres, muscles, and veins. I wanted