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ITALIAN LETTERS OF A DIPLOMAT'S WIFE

January — May, 1880
February — April, 1904

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ILLUSTRATED FROM DRAWINGS
AND PHOTOGRAPHS

SMITH, ELDER & CO.
LONDON 1905

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CONTENTS

NOTE	2
PART I. ITALY IN THE EIGHTIES.....	3
PART II. ITALY REVISITED.....	189

NOTE

In December, 1879, M. William Henry Waddington resigned the Premiership of France, and the following month, accompanied by his wife, left Paris for a winter of rest and recreation in Italy, chiefly in Rome. The letters from Madame Waddington to her mother and sister, which constitute "Part I" of this volume, describe this journey and residence. Those forming "Part II" relate the incidents of a similar Roman sojourn some twenty years later, M. Waddington having died in the meantime. The two series together compose a picture of life and society in the Italian capital with a wide range of contrast and comparison, corresponding with those of London and Moscow in the well-known "Letters of a Diplomat's Wife" by the same writer.

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PART I.

ITALY IN THE EIGHTIES

To G. K. S¹

31, Rue Dumont d'Urville, Paris,
January 10, 1880.

Well, dear, here I am back again in my little hotel, and very small and uncomfortable it looks — like a doll's house after the enormous rooms of the Quai d'Orsay — however I am very glad to be a *private* individual once more (no longer a “femme publique” as our friend used to say). Our departure was hurried, as once W². had made up his mind and resigned he wanted to get away at once. We got off in two days, which I thought quite wonderful. Of course ever since the opening of the session in November it was evident that he couldn't stay. He and his Ministers were hardly ever agreed on any point, and it wasn't worth while for him to spend his energy and intelligence in trying to carry out a policy which neither the Chamber nor the country apparently desired. There were endless conferences all through December, but it was clear that it was time for him to go.

The weather was something awful — bitterly cold — the Seine frozen tight, booths and games established, and everybody sliding about and trying to skate — but that was under difficulties as the ice was rough and uneven. I walked over with Francis³, that he might say he had walked across the Seine. We had great difficulty in warming the house — many trains with wood and coal were blocked just outside Paris, and nothing could get in. I don't know what we should have done, but hap-

¹ Mrs. Eugene Schuyler, née King.

² W. here and throughout these letters refers to M. William Henry Waddington, Madame Waddington's husband.

³ Francis, son of M. and Madame Waddington.

pily the Ministre de la Guerre gave us an order to take some wood from some dépôt in Paris where they had a provision; so for the two days before we moved in great fires were going in the calorifère. I really think the only person who hated to leave the Quai d'Orsay was Francis. He was furious at seeing all his things packed up, and was carried out to the carriage kicking and screaming — “veux pas quitter ma maison — veux pas aller vilaine petite maison.” The huissiers (6, all standing solemnly in a row to say good-bye) were much impressed, and the old grey-headed Pierson who has been there for years and seen many Ministers depart, remarked — “au moins Monsieur Francis est désolé de partir.” It seemed funny to drive out of the big gates for the last time. I wonder if I shall ever go through them again. Things go so quickly in France now.

You can't conceive anything more uncomfortable than this house to-day — no carpets down nor curtains up; all the furniture, books, rugs, dumped in the middle of the rooms, and the hall and corridors full of trunks and boxes. W. has had a steady stream of people ever since we arrived — some to condole — some (old friends) to congratulate him upon no longer serving such an infecte government — some a little embarrassed to explain that, though they regret him extremely, still... they must serve their country, and hope he won't take it amiss if they make up to the rising sun (in the shape of Freycinet, who has taken W.'s place). I expect we shall have some curious experiences. When one is no longer in power it is surprising how things change their aspect. I had to settle the salons as soon as I could as I had invited a big party for Francis's Christmas Tree, thinking it would be at the Quai d'Orsay. I didn't want to put the people off — particularly the diplomatists who have all been most civil and proper — so after a consultation with Krufft — (chef du matériel at the Quai d'Orsay) who had already begun to make his preparations, I decided to have it here, and Krufft and one of his men came and helped dress it. Of course the tree had to be cut at the top — our rooms are fairly high, but nothing like the Quai d'Orsay naturally — but it looked rather prettier, quite covered with toys and shiny ornaments. Francis had beautiful presents — a hand-organ with a monkey on top from Madame Sibbern, the wife of the Swedish Minister, from