

Florence. March 29. 1866

My dear Mamma

This morning I received yours of 24th enclosing the B.P.B. also J.L.P.s of 21st and C.E.'s of - without any date! The English post has twice lately been 24 hours late.

I hope whenever you go to Oxford you will get lodgings in some more airy and cheerful locality than John Street; I should think it would be no harm to be a little further from the Radcliffe. I think Kate Taylors Italy is rubbish ; I looked over it when at Pisa.

The weather has at last cleared up and since Sunday we have had magnificent bright spring weather. Very few of the trees here are out yet. A Mr and Mrs Hyland (the Dublin, the German) who had been here left on Tuesday; they were very pleasant people and I am sorry they are gone. The two Russian young ladies are a great addition as I now have some inducement to talk French. A Mr and Mrs Stone, Americans, have arrived, a Mr and Mrs Denny from Quebec, an American named Kate Curtis from Colorado, and two English

ladies, so the party is large. I believe the house is a very elastic one.

Sometimes in the evenings there is a sort of musical reunion in the ~~S~~ Salon a few strangers being asked. Madame Barbensi herself plays and sings splendidly.

The view up and down the Arno (i.e. the Duas) is magnificent, hills and snowy Appennines towering up in the distance; I cannot remember ~~any~~ many inland cities in such a fine situation.

I forget if I mentioned about the "Florence Improvements"; they are going to throw down the walls and make a fine boulevard in their place.

It will alter the city very much for the better. The "Florence flask" is visible here in every size from the small ones we see in England up to huge monsters twice the size of an ordinary decanter.

I often ^{see} cartloads of them; it is wonderful how much knocking about such delicate articles will stand. They are much used here for wine and the way they cork them is by putting in a little oil over

the wine and then a rough stopper of
pushes over all. Almost all the cabs
and carts have breast bands for their
horses instead of collars.

Madame Barbensi tells me that there
was a Captain (Naval) Prendergast stay-
-ing here with his wife a few years ago,
she thinks they were English, but I
fancy they must have been Americans?
On Tuesday I walked out with Mr and Mrs
Dick to the Certosa (Monastery) about
three miles from this; she had to wait
in a ~~plain~~ ladies room outside the walls
but we were admitted. It is a fine
building on the top of a hill ~~range~~
which rises up in a valley at the junction
of two streams. It is large, but only
has 30 monks in it now, all Italian
except one Irishman named, as well as
I could make out from the Italian of
the monk who showed us over, McComas,
it would have been no use to ask to see
him as they are not allowed to talk
to strangers except when on "custode duty."
Ladies are only admitted by an order from

the Archbishop. There is a good deal to see inside, some well sculptured ~~monuments~~ monuments and a fine painting by Perugino. Monday I went out to Fiesole and saw in the Cathedral four small columns said to be Etruscan. There are still good remains of the old unsemented Etruscan walls. This morning I took a turn down to the Cascina, it was very pleasant there, shade or sun as one liked, ~~but~~ and actually plenty of small birds singing. Glaring and dusty as it is here in fine weather I like the climate better than that of Rome, which did not suit me at all. People cut this place in June generally, when the heat becomes excessive.

Col. Grove and C^o leave this on Monday en route for the Lake of Geneva.

I wish to get everything possible in the way of introductions to any people here, at ^x Leghorn, Pisa, Genoa or ~~x~~ in this part of Italy & as I might ~~thus~~ get to hear of some work out here. Your affect. son
Francis E. Prendergast

x Monday might know some Leghorn folk?