

1 Antwerp. May 27, 1869.

2

3 My dear Harry

4 I was sorry not to find time to answer before leaving London your very pleasant
5 & kind note. But our last days in England were crowded with pleasures & affairs,—and a
6 way had to be opened with vigorous hands through the thicket of engagements [^]in_^
7 which we found ourselves entangled. It was really hard to say Good bye to such friends
8 as we left behind, & my heart was rather heavy as the odours of the London smoke grew
9 fainter & fainter as we steamed down the river last Tuesday. The East Wind set itself
10 against our going, & turned the North Sea into an ocean of discomfort. Poor Susan &
11 Grace passed most wretched nights, & were pretty well exhausted when we reached here
12 in the early morning.

13 Mackay came most pleasantly from the Hague to be with us here, & we have
14 enjoyed these two days greatly.

15 The Cathedral tower is one of the noblest pieces of Gothic construction &
16 proportion that I know. It dominates the picturesque & prosperous city, reinforcing its
17 character, turning its pleasant, cleanly, streets into pathways of poetry, & redeeming even
18 the vulgarity of the petty tradesmen. I begin to wonder when Americans will ever build
19 anything half so fine.

20 Rubens is in great force here. His pictures positively ~~compel~~ intrude upon you,
21 however quietly disposed you may be. They are like blasts of a trumpet. I am glad there
22 are no more of them. I admit their power,—but power is very little in comparison with
23 some other qualities of imagination.

24 Tomorrow morning we go to Cologne. On Monday or Tuesday I hope we shall reach
25 Bâle, and there I trust we may find a note from you. I shall probably see you (if you still
26 remain at Geneva) about a week hence. I think I must go to look for myself for our
27 summer quarters. If you hear of any pleasant pensions near Geneva, or Lausanne, or
28 Vevay, I shall be very glad to know of them. What we require are bracing air, a pleasant
29 neighborhood, a healthy situation, and quiet, with as much economy as is compatible
30 with these advantages. We shall try a “pension” rather than housekeeping. I thank you
31 heartily for all your most kind offers of service, & I accept them as far as possible.

32 I hope you are feeling strong.

33 All join in love to you, & I am

34 Your faithful & affectionate friend

35 C. E. Norton.

Notes

4-5 your very pleasant & kind note. • Henry James to Charles Eliot Norton, from Geneva, [18 May 1869]

10 Susan • Susan Sedgwick Norton (1838-1872)

11 Grace • Grace Norton (1834-1926), Charles Norton's sister and a lifelong correspondent and friend of Henry James

13 Mackay • Baron Donald Mackay, Scottish nobleman in the Dutch diplomatic service who had visited the Nortons in Cambridge

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