

A Diplomatic Mission, 1868 with various diversions to some capital cities of Europe

Edward James Standen (1836-1921)



Edward James Standen made some brief notes which record a journey across Europe in late 1868 in order to obtain the signatures of various Heads of State on a contract which guaranteed a loan which was raised by the Danube Commission to finance essential works.

Sunday 20th December 1868

Embarked on board the "Messina", Austrian Lloyd's boat at 10 o'clock, evening.

Monday 21st December

Started at 7 a.m., thick fog on river, reached Toultscha at 3 p.m. waited there an hour and a half then steamed on, brought up by thick fog and lay 4 miles below Toultscha.

Tuesday 22nd December

Thick fog, got up steam and started at 10.30 a.m., at 12 ran ashore on a bend but got off easily. Reached Sulima at 4 p.m. Harry came off to meet me. Great excitement at Sulima. Many Greeks leaving. About 40 came on board, bound for the Islands. Mr. Viscovitch joined as on his way to Trieste. Stayed 2 hours at Sulima and then put to sea at 6pm. Lovely night, quite calm.

Wednesday 23rd December

In morning brisk south wind sprang up. Lovely day and mild, reached Bourgas at 7 p.m., would not grant quarantine so had to anchor for the night.

Thursday 24th December

Very lovely morning. Brisk south breeze blowing, the country looking very bright and inviting. Owing to a tiff between the Quarantine doctor and the Lloyds Agent we did not get our clearance papers till midday. The Captain naturally very indignant prepared a protest for the "direction". The wind south-west and very favourable we hoisted all sail and ran through the water at 10 knots, the "Messina's" average speed being 7 only. A delightful run all day. At 6 pm. saw the Akbourian light and at 9 p.m. the Bosphorus light. Entered the Bosphorus by moonlight at 10.30 that evening and anchored a mile down at the Cavate light.

Friday December 25th - Christmas Day

Most lovely bright and warm morning. South-west wind. Steamed down the Bosphorus at 8 a.m. and anchored in the Golden Horn at 10. Went up to Misseris, Breakfast and then to the Memorial Church, saw Mr Curtis in the vestry after Church. About 17 people at service. Had luncheon with the Misseris who were taking their Christmas dinner early with a few friends, then crossed the Bosphorus at 4 and under the escort of Miss Page arrived safely at the Christian's who were delighted to see me and just in time for their Christmas dinner. The Pages, (Mr and Mrs and two Miss Pages) the two Miss Wards, Mr Todd and myself were the guests, and the cosy little party of 10 sat down to a capital dinner, a very pleasant evening, Mrs Page and Miss M. Ward indulging us with music.

Saturday 26th December

Crossed the Bosphorus and to the Hotel. Then paid a visit to the Embassy. The Ambassador's son having just arrived from England prevented him granting me an interview then, but he asked me to see him the following day. In the evening to Opera, "Il Prophete".

Sunday 27th December

In the morning to the Embassy Chapel, very well attended but singing poor. After service went to see Mr Elliot who received me very cordially and on my leaving asked me to dine the following evening. Called on the Italian Ambassador who received me well, and on the French Ambassador who was at the Serai.

Monday 28th December

Called on the French Ambassador, found him at home. Rather shorter in his manner but still very civil and gave me a letter to Khalib Bey who could assist one at the Porte with Safvil Pasha. Went to luncheon at Mr Curtis' and then for a walk with him round Galata to see several curious buildings. At 7 to dinner at the Embassy. Captain Vyner, who was staying at the hotel went with me. Made the acquaintance of Mrs Elliott who was remarkably kind in her manner to me. The Oriental Secretary, Attaches, Capt. Vyner and myself were the guests. Mrs Elliott placed me at her left hand at dinner. The service all silver and very handsome. After dinner to the billiard room for a smoke. His Excellency had a game with the Oriental Secretary, then adjourned to the drawing room where Mrs Elliott presided at the tea table. We sat round, enjoyed a cup of tea and chat. At 10.30 the Ambassador retired and we left shortly after. Miss Elliott and her governess, Miss Brunswick, had joined our party in the drawing room.

Tuesday 29th December

Left cards at the Embassy, went for a long stroll in the Bazaars calling first at the Bank to see Mr Christian, and then paid a visit to Mr Gilbertson. At the Bazaars bought two hunting knives. Returned to Hotel at 4. Found a letter from Count Pisani asking me to call at the Embassy the following morning. Strolled out again and took a stall at the Opera. Dinner at Hotel and then to see the "Barbieri", Figaro, Don Basilio and Dr Bartolo all very good indeed.

Wednesday 30th December

Went to Embassy, appointment with Count Pisani at 12. Drove with him to the Porte. Interview with Safvel Pasha, Guarantee signed and sealed by him. Returned to Pera, sent off telegram to Commission at Galatz. Down to Bank and crossed to Kadikenoï with Mr Christian, spent the evening there and returned with him the following morning.

Thursday 31st December

Called at Embassy. Stroll in gardens with Mr Saurin (attaché). Took leave of Mr Elliott, messengers' passport. To Municipality to see Constant. Took ticket by Lloyds steamer 'Austria' for Corfu. Met Mr Christian and went over to Kadikenoï. The Miss Wards to dinner and Mr and Mrs Walker, Mr and Mrs Page, Mr Todd, Miss Page in evening. Music and singing, very pleasant evening. Broke up at 2.30.

Friday 1st January 1869

Went to the Scutari burial ground for a walk. Miss M Ward, Mr and Mrs Walker, Miss Page and self, delightful walk. Made the acquaintance of S. Hynes and family, said goodbye to Kadikenoï and crossed to Galata. Met Mr Christian on bridge and said goodbye. Dined at Hotel and in evening to Alcazar and Cafe.

Saturday 2nd January

Went on board the "Austria" at 9 o'clock, anchor fouled, did not start till 11. Lovely weather, reached Syra at 5 the following evening, made the acquaintance of Mr Callinates and Cretan companions. Started from Syra, (where Admiral Hobart was at anchor with frigate, 2 iron-clads and 2 despatch boats) at 3.30 a.m. on Monday 4th.

Tuesday 5th January

At 2 o'clock entered Corfu Harbour. Took luggage on board Adriatic-Italian boat, went in carriage for a drive round the town of Corfu and out to the one gun battery. Returned to steamer at 4. Dinner and started at 6 p.m. At 8 wind freshened and we began to knock about, awful rolling the whole night, queer but not sick. Early morning Wednesday 6th steamed into Brindisi harbour. Took baggage up to Hotel d'Orient and visited the two churches and the prison (Bagno) during the day. Dined at 4.30 and then to railway station. Started for Florence at 6.45. Reached Ancona at 9.20 a.m. Thursday 7th and Bologna at 2.30. Here parted with Mr Callinates and his Sphakiotte companion. Reached Florence at 8.30 Thursday evening drove to Hotel de Paix, bath and tea and bed

Friday 8th January

To breakfast at restaurant, then with a Commissioner visited the Church of St Lorenzo - Academy of Arts, Modern Paintings - Museum National, Pretorial Palace, Mosaic Museum and St Marco-the Duomo, Campanile and Baptistry. Called on His Excellency, Sir Augustus Paget. Dined at Hotel and in evening to Dong's Cafe.

Saturday 9th January

The Uffizi Gallery, Corsini Palace Gallery.

Sunday 10th January

Across from the Uffizi Gallery to the Pitti Palace, by the Bridge Gallery-Tapestry. Pitti Palace Gallery, Boboli Gardens, Church of St Croce, St Maria Novella and Annunziata. Promenade, Pergola Theatre

Monday 11th January

Palazzo Vecchio, Hall of Deputies and reading rooms. Interview with Count Menabrea and Monsignor Peirollni. Buonarrotti Gallery and Museum of Natural History, Galileo Tribune etc. Academy of Arts-Oil Paintings.

Tuesday 12th January

Uffizi and Pitti Galleries. Foreign Office and called on Mons Peirolini, no reply to telegrams. Bought some photographs of pictures and views. Band at Palace square-Cafe de Paris. Wrote to Colonel Stokes.

Wednesday 13th January

To Palazzo Vecchio, saw Mons Peirolini, contract guarantee signed the previous evening, last look at Uffizi galleries - To Pagliano Opera house. Bad Orchestra and bad company, "Trovatore" miserably given.

Thursday 14th January

Morning, start in rain for Paris. Snow storm over Appenines, Turin at night, sleep and early morning to Susa. Felli Railway over Mt Cenis. Lovely weather and charming trip across. Reach Paris Saturday morning. Bad cold and fearful headache.

Sunday 17th January

In bed with bad headache and cold, sent to Embassy and to Baron d'Avril. The latter called at 12 o'clock and took Contract. Embassy sent for despatches.

Monday 18th January

Up after breakfast, short walk, Palais Royal. The Emperor opens chambers. Dined at Hotel and wrote to Dick, to Mrs Stokes and Mr Christiaian.

Tuesday 19th January

Cold still very heavy, short walk to Railway Station. Dine in Restaurant. At 8.30 to spend evening at Baron d'Avril, made Madame's acquaintance. Two or three old swells looked in, the last at 12.30 to spend the evening when I left.

Wednesday 20th January

Contract guarantee signed. Left for Berlin at 5 o'clock, cold night and no sleep. Cold very bad. Reached Cologne early morning, waited there 2 hours and then on at 7.45 a.m. At about 3 p.m. snowing a little, found that the frosts had been very severe in these parts for 3 days, ice 4 inches thick. Reached Berlin, Hotel de Russie at 9.45. Tea and to bed, bad headache and cold still very heavy.

Friday 21st January

Slept till 11 o'clock. Breakfasted. Called on Lord Loftus, very amiable, he forwarded me to Mons. Thille. The latter appointed an interview at 1 the following day. Called on Mr Gill and went with him for a stroll to the Tier Garten to see the skating, very gay sight, nearly as many ladies on skates as gentlemen. Saw some clever things done that would astonish our English club. In the evening went to the Concert Haus. Some very well selected pieces and all well played. The Ladies mostly had their needlework, knitting and crochet with them. Refreshments of all kinds, a charming place to chat and spend the evening.

Saturday 23rd January

Went at 10.30 by appointment to Mr Gill's office and then with him to see the Museum. There till 1.30 and then to Foreign Office with Contract. Saw Mons. Thille the Director who promised that the signature of Mr Bismark should be given on Monday. Requested me to call on that day at 2 o'clock. Snow falling all day from early morning till 5 o'clock. At 3 table d'hote at Hotel. Head aching so all day that I did not feel up to going out in evening, tea and early to bed. Cold still awfully heavy and headache neuralgic.