

Book One

March 17 to April 15, 1823

FRANCE AND ENGLAND

SINCE MY Shipwreck on the Coast of France in July last and my long confinement on the Downs, I have kept no Journal of my proceedings, for most of the time I have been in the City of Paris & so engaged as to make it altogether inconvenient.¹ I however have kept a Memoranda & at some future day shall put my thoughts upon paper. I left Paris about 10 days ago in the "Diligence" for Boulogne S. Mer where I remained 4 days in a very pleasant family of my acquaintance. No Boat about sailing for Dover I left there for Calais & arrived at 11 oclk.AM. where I remained 'til the next day, & took passage in the Steam Boat "Dart"² & after a pleasant sail of 3½ hours, we were landed safe at Dover,—the first time I ever set my foot upon English ground. The day was remarkably fine & the French Coast was plainly seen from this side of the Channel.—I went to the "Green Inn"

1. For an account of his shipwreck and confinement, see the Introduction. "Downs" refers to a sandy beach (French, *les dunes*) where JCB was held for twenty days in a quarantine hut. This sandy tract, nine miles south of Boulogne, is not to be confused with "the Downs," chalk hills in southeastern England.

2. Paddlewheel steamboats crossing the Strait of Dover were put into service shortly after the end of the Napoleonic wars.

where I had been recommended by friend Farq.³ After some little refreshment I went to visit the Castle of Dover, situated on the heights near the town. This is a very strong fortress & of great antiquity, but many of the guns are dismounted & the garrison is now very small. A part of this building is the work of the Romans, at the time they first landed in Britain. With the exception of the Castle, there appeared to me to be nothing particularly interesting in this place, the Town well known to be supported principally by the Packets. At the Castle I saw the famous "Pocket peice of Queen Anne," a Brass Cannon 24 ft in length.⁴

The next day, the 18 after the breakfast I took a Seat on the top of one of the Coaches for London. I preferred this place as you then have a very fine view of the Country, tho' are exposed to the rain if there be any. This was the case to day, for we had hardly started before the atmosphere became very thick & rain followed soon after, notwithstanding this I kept my seat 'til we arrived at Canterbury, where I concluded to stop for the day, to avoid the bad weather & also to visit the famous Cathedral. In fact I was anxious to have a pleasant day to make my first entrance into

3. A probable reference to Farquhar Jameson, manager of Hottinguer & Cie.'s branch bank in Le Havre. Jameson was married to Anna Hottinguer (1794–1886) whose father, founder of the bank, had been one of JCB's hosts in Paris during the autumn and winter of 1822–1823. See above, p. xlv. n. 52.

4. The long brass cannon at Dover Castle bore several names. Cast in Utrecht early in the sixteenth century, later presented to Elizabeth I by the Dutch States General, it became known as "Queen Elizabeth's Pocket Pistol." Its original name was engraved on the barrel in a verse: (as translated from the Dutch) "O'er hill and dale I throw my ball/Breaker, my name, of mound and wall."

London. This building is perhaps one of the most famous in all England, at least of the Church kind, for it was here Thomas A. Becket was killed in the reign of Henry 2d—the very spot was shewn me, & I also saw the Tomb of Edward the Black Prince with the very armour & shield he wore at the battle of Poitiers. Various other Monuments & Tablets were also pointed out. I will not be silly enough to attempt to describe this building, or any other, for of what use is the best description without engravings—you have just as good an idea when you get through as when you commence. At 3 Oclk P.M. I attended service in a small Chapel, attached to the Cathedral, which I understood was formerly one of the Cloisters of the old Monks; but it was a most ridiculous exhibition indeed—a complete burlesque on religious exercises. A few young, jolly, port wine faced looking fellows rattled thro' the service, laughing & grinning all the while, & they seemed to try to see which could get thro' with his part the quickest. As to audience there was no body present excepting a poor miserable old beggar & myself. I retired from this scene of folly & I might say of iniquity, with disgust; for who can be more depraved than those who professing to teach the gospel, make such a mockery of it.

In this Church are some very fine specimens of painted Glass. One can form some idea of its immense size from its being 560 ft in length. Canterbury all together is a very pleasant inland town, adorned with a fine public walk, & the houses well built. I was comfortably lodged that night, & the next morn'g. resumed my seat on the Coach. The Country thro' which we passed appeared well cultivated & the roads remarkably fine, & above

all, the Coaches & horses. What a contrast between them & the French Diligences! But the weather was not pleasant & my object in stopping at Canterbury was defeated, for as I approached the great City the fog & smoke increased, & the number of Coaches which drove in all directions appeared to me to be almost innumerable. Being entirely alone, or more properly having no companions with me, & knowing none in London, I at first was at a loss where to go, accordingly I continued in the Coach, which drove across London Bridge, to Grace Church St. & then wheeled short into a back yard full of Stable boys, Porters, Coachmen & Coaches from every quarter. I at first thought of the England Coffee House; but also having often heard persons speak of Dicks C.H. I decided upon the latter, had a coach called & drove off.⁵ Fortunately I arrived in time to take the last room in the house, & was very glad to get into some good quarters, after riding all day in the cold & wet. I must confess that I felt very lonesome, being in such an immense place, without a single companion, altho' I had been travelling so much, since leaving home & had resided in the great City of Paris. In fact to make travelling agreeable, a pleasant, intelligent, companion having the same views with yourself, is necessary. But to stroll around a large Town entirely alone, without any person to communicate with, is rather disheartening, at least it is so to me.

5. Opened in 1680, "Dick's [or Richard's] Coffee House" was located on Fleet Street near Temple Bar. Favored by country gentlemen, it stood there until 1899. There is no record of an "England Coffee House." JCB might have meant the "British Coffee House" in Charing Cross.

I dined to day at 7 & afterwards took a walk out altho' it was dark & rainy, but I was careful not to lose my way. The brilliancy of some of the Shops in the Strand attracted my attention & on my return homeward, I was accosted by some of the numerous prostitutes with which this great City abounds. Altho' I declined their solicitations, I could do no otherwise than give the poor creatures some pence to buy Gin, to keep out the cold. As it is probable that I shall now reside for a few weeks in London, I shall endeavor to note down, as occasion may offer, some of the daily occurrences. As to attempting to give a description of every thing wonderful in this mighty Town, I shall not do it; it would be too laborious, & I do not love labor & toil sufficiently well, to undertake such a herculean task.

March 19th. The weather continued unpleasant to day, but after breakfast I called at Messrs. Dickason's Counting House in West Broad St.⁶ Knowing nothing of the City, I to day made use of Coach, so as to save time & not to lose my way.—Mr. D. was not within, but I saw Mr Nevett his partner, who received me very politely. After some conversation, in which he imparted a good deal of advice necessary to a stranger, we walked to my lodgings, where Mr N. introduced me to Mr Dorr, of Boston but who has resided in Europe many years. He is a bachelor & completely a man of the World. At the same time I became acquainted with Mr

6. Dickason and Company was the principal London correspondent of Brown and Ives. From the time of JCB's shipwreck in 1822 to the time of his departure from England in 1824, Dickason's business letters to Providence regularly carried brief reports on his activities.