

## **Various entries from the journals of Maria Mitchell**

*Note: In cases of misspellings, punctuation errors, etc., no corrections have been made to Mitchell's words.*

December 2nd 1857

“I spent all of Yesterday in seeing the outside of Paris. First in a carriage, then on foot, then in a carriage again: from ten in the morning till ten at night I was sightseeing. It is really a magnificent city. Edinburgh is picturesque but Paris is splendid. The streets like the Champs Elysees and Rue Rivoli are beautiful now, and in the summer must be charming. . .”

*Maria's journal entry about her visit to Trinity College in Cambridge at the Master's Lodge for dinner:*

November 1, 1857

“ . . . I had to make a special point of getting a glass of water and was afraid I might drink all there was on the table. I think no one but Prudie and myself took a drop. The servants stood in array just outside of the dining room door as we entered all in livery. . . . Before the dessert came on, saucers were placed before each guest and a little rose water dipped from a silver basin into them, and then each guest washed his face. . . the gentleman next to me Prof. (Robert) Willis, told me that it was a custom peculiar to Cambridge and dating from its earliest times.”

*Maria's journal entry about her last day aboard the Steamship Arabia which brought her to Europe in 1857:*

Friday July 31, 1857

“They say that we shall visit the coast of Ireland tomorrow, and every heart rejoices, for tho' the passage has been very fine, we are weary of our close quarters and long for the sights of green fields, and indeed of any objects of any kind to look upon. . .”

*Maria's description of the solar eclipse in Burlington Iowa. She took several of her Vassar students with her to observe it:*

August 7, 1869

“Light clouds had for some time seemed to drift toward the sun; the Mississippi assumed a leaden hue; a sickly green spread over the landscape; Venus shone brightly on one side of the sun, Mercury on the other; Arcturus was gleaming overhead, Saturn was rising in the east; the neighboring cattle began to low; the birds uttered a painful cry; fireflies winked in the foliage, and when the last ray of light was extinguished, a wave of sound came up from the villages below, the mingling of the subdued voices of the multitude.

Instantly the corona burst forth, a glory indeed: it encircled the sun with a soft light, and it sent forth streamers of millions of miles into space! And now it was quick work! To see what could be seen.”

*Maria's description of Vassar College in Poughkeepsie, New York:*

May 20, 1882

“Vassar is getting pretty. I gathered lilies of the valley this morning. The young robins are out in a tree close by us, and the Phoebe built, as usual, under the front steps. I am rushing dome poetry, but so far show no alarming symptoms of brilliancy.”

March 31, 1857,

“We are at length in New Orleans, and up three flights of stairs at the St. Charles, in a dark room, at the pretty price of three dollars a day... The peculiarities of the city dawn upon me very slowly, I first noticed the showy dress of the children, white waists and fancy skirts - then the turbaned heads of the black women in the streets, and the next bouquet-selling boys with their French phrases.”

1858

“I took my map today and my guide book and found the Roman Forum. . . It seemed to me as if I dreamed and as if these proofs of the existence of highly cultivated people so many centuries ago could not be actually existing except in my recollections of what I had read... I was not sorry to be alone for I felt the solemnity of Rome and it seemed to me that a conception of time and of the world's age was born, filled my mind for the first time in my life. . .”

August 1st 1873

“St. Petersburg is exceedingly strange. It is as if we had dropped down upon another planet.”

1857

“Savannah. . . Everywhere one thing is admitted, that Massachusetts educates her people better than do the other states. Everywhere Yankee energy is acknowledged, but nowhere is Massachusetts loved out of its own borders and its own people. There seems to be a feeling that its people are assuming, self-righteous, and obstinate. I can see the self control practiced in my presence, when the state is named. . .”

*Maria's description of her trip to Mammoth Cave, A large cave system in Kentucky*  
*May, 1857:*

“I was a little doubtful about the propriety of going into Mammoth Cave without a gentleman as a protector, but if two ladies travel alone they must have the courage of men.”

*Maria Mitchell discussing her potential entry into the Vatican Observatory, something no woman had done before:*

March, 1858

“I am working to get admitted to see the observatory, but it cannot be done without special permission from the pope, and I don't like to be 'presented.' If I can get permission without the humbug of putting on a black veil and receiving a blessing from pius, I shall; but I shrink from the formality of presentation. I know thou'd say 'be presented.'”