

I wish I could fill my sheet, in return for your five pages. The only thing you will care for knowing is, that I never saw Mrs. D. better in her life, nor look so well. You may trust me, who am so apt to be frightened about her.

L E T T E R XCII.

Strawberry-hill, September 27, 1774.

I SHOULD be very ungrateful indeed if I thought of complaining of you, who are goodness itself to me: and when I did not receive letters from you, I concluded it happened from your eccentric positions. I am amazed, that, hurried as you have been, and your eyes and thoughts crowded with objects, you have been able to find time to write me so many and such long letters, over and above all those to lady A——, your daughter, brother, and other friends. Even lord Strafford brags of your frequent remembrance. That your superabundance of royal beams would dazzle you, I never suspected. Even I enjoy for you the distinctions you have received—though I should hate such things for myself, as they are particularly troublesome to me, and I am particularly awkward under them, and as I abhor the king of Prussia, and, if I passed through Berlin, should have no joy like avoiding him—like one of our countrymen, who changed horses at Paris, and asked what the name of that town was? All the other civilities you have received I am perfectly happy in. The Germans are certainly a civil well-meaning people, and I believe one of the least corrupted nations in Europe. I don't think them very agreeable; but who, do I think are so? A great many French women, some English men, and a few English women—exceedingly few French men. Italian women are the grossest, vulgarest of the sex. If an Italian man has a grain of sense, he is a buffoon—So much for Europe.

I have already told you, and so must lady A——, that my courage fails me, and I dare not meet you at Paris. As the period is arrived when the gout used to come, it is never a moment out of my head. Such a suffering, such a helpless condition as I was in for five months and a half two years ago, makes me tremble from head to foot. I should die at once if seized in a French inn; or what, if possible, would be worse, at Paris, where I must admit every body.—I, who you know can hardly bear to see even you
when

when I am ill, and who shut myself up here, and would not let lord and lady Hertford come near me—I, who have my room washed though in bed, how could I bear French dirt? In short, I, who am so capricious, and whom you are pleased to call a philosopher, I suppose because I have given up every thing but my own will—how could I keep my temper, who have no way of keeping my temper but by keeping it out of every body's way! No, I must give up the satisfaction of being with you at Paris. I have just learnt to give up my pleasures, but I cannot give up my pains, which such selfish people as I, who have suffered much, grow to compose into a system, that they are partial to because it is their own. I must make myself amends when you return: you will be more stationary, I hope, for the future; and if I live I shall have intervals of health. In lieu of me you will have a charming succedaneum, lady — —. Her father, who is more a hero than I, is packing up his decrepit bones, and goes too. I wish she may not have him to nurse, instead of diverting herself.

The present state of your country is, that it is drowned and dead drunk; all water without and wine within. Opposition for the next elections every where, even in Scotland; not from party, but as laying out money to advantage. In the head quarters, indeed, party is not out of the question: the day after to-morrow will be a great bustle in the city for a lord mayor*, and all the winter in Westminster, where lord Mahon and Humphrey Cotes oppose the court. Lady — is saving her money at Ludlow and Powis castles by keeping open-house day and night against sir Watkin Williams, and fears she shall be kept there till the general election. It has rained this whole month, and we have got another inundation. The Thames is as broad as your Danube, and all my meadows are under water. Lady Browne and I, coming last Sunday night from lady Blandford's, were in a piteous plight. The ferry-boat was turned round by the current, and carried to Isleworth. Then we ran against the piers of our new bridge, and the horses were frightened. Luckily my cicisbea was a catholic, and screamed to so many saints, that some of them at the nearest alehouse came and saved us, or I should have had no more gout, or what I dreaded I should; for I concluded we should be carried ashore somewhere, and be forced to wade through the mud up to my middle. So you see one may wrap one's self

* When Mr. Wilkes was elected.

up in flannel and be in danger, without visiting all the armies on the face of the globe, and putting the immortality of one's chaife to the proof.

I am ashamed of sending you but three fides of smaller paper in answer to seven large—but what can I do? I see nothing, know nothing, do nothing. My castle is finished, I have nothing new to read, I am tired of writing, I have no new or old bit for my printer. I have only black hoods around me; or, if I go to town, the family-party in Grosvenor-street. One trait will give you a sample of how I pass my time, and made me laugh, as it put me in mind of you, at least as it was a fit of absence, much more likely to have happened to you than to me. I was playing at eighteenpenny tredrille with the duchess of Newcastle and lady Browne, and certainly not much interested in the game. I cannot recollect nor conceive what I was thinking of, but I pushed the cards very gravely to the duchess, and said, *Doctor*, you are to deal. You may guess at their astonishment, and how much it made us all laugh. I wish it may make you smile a moment, or that I had any thing better to send you. Adieu, most affectionately.

Yours ever,

HOR. WALPOLE.

LETTER XCIII.

Strawberry-hill, Sept. 28, 1774.

LADY Ailesbury brings you this¹, which is not a letter, but a paper of directions, and the counterpart of what I have written to madame du Deffand. I beg of you seriously to take a great deal of notice of this dear old friend of mine. She will perhaps expect more attention from *you*, as my friend, and as it is her own nature a little, than will be quite convenient to you: but you have an infinite deal of patience and good nature, and will excuse it. I was afraid of her importuning lady A——, who has a vast deal to see and do, and therefore I have prepared mad. du D.

¹ Mr. Conway ended his military tour at Paris, whither lady Ailesbury and Mrs. Damer went to meet him, and where they spent the winter together.

and

and told her lady A. loves amusements, and that, having never been at Paris before, she must not confine her: so you must pay for both—and it will answer: and I do not, I own, ask this only for madame du Deffand's sake, but for my own, and a little for yours. Since the late king's death she has not dared to write to me freely, and I want to know the present state of France exactly, both to satisfy my own curiosity, and for her sake, as I wish to learn whether her pension, &c. is in any danger from the present ministry, some of whom are not her friends. She can tell you a great deal if she will—by that I don't mean that she is reserved, or partial to her own country against ours—quite the contrary; she loves me better than all France together—but she hates politics; and therefore, to make her talk on it, you must tell her it is to satisfy me, and that I want to know whether she is well at court, whether she has any fears from the government, particularly from M^{re} Repas and Nivernois; and that I am eager to have monsieur de Choiseul and *ma grandmaman* the duchess restored to power. If you take it on this foot easily, she will talk to you with the utmost frankness and with amazing cleverness. I have told her you are strangely absent, and that, if she does not repeat it over and over, you will forget every syllable: so I have prepared her to joke and be quite familiar with you at once. She knows more of personal characters, and paints them better than any body: but let this be between yourselves, for I would not have a living soul suspect that I get any intelligence from her, which would hurt her; and therefore I beg you not to let any human being know of this letter, nor of your conversations with her, neither English nor French.

Mad. du Deffand hates les philosophes, so you must give them up to her. She and madame Geoffrin are no friends: so, if you go thither, don't tell her of it. Indeed you would be sick of that house, whither all the pretended beaux esprits and faux sçavants go, and where they are very impertinent and dogmatic.

Let me give you one other caution, which I shall give lady A—— too. Take care of your papers at Paris, and have a very strong lock to your porte-feuille. In the hotels garnis they have double keys to every lock, and examine every drawer and paper of the English that they can get at. They will pilfer too whatever they can.—I was robbed of half my clothes

there the first time, and they wanted to hang poor Louis to save the people of the house who had stolen the things.

Here is another thing I must say. Mad. du Deffand has kept a great many of my letters, and, as she is very old, I am in pain about them. I have written to her to beg she will deliver them up to you to bring back to me, and I trust she will. If she does, be so good to take great care of them. If she does not mention them, tell her just before you come away, that I begged you to bring them; and if she hesitates, convince her how it would hurt me to have letters written in very bad French, and mentioning several people, both French and English, fall into bad hands, and, perhaps, be printed.

Let me desire you to read this letter more than once, that you may not forget my requests, which are very important to me; and I must give you one other caution, without which all would be useless. There is at Paris a m^{lle} de l'Espinasse, a pretended bel esprit, who was formerly an humble companion of mad. du Deffand; and betrayed her and used her very ill. I beg of you not to let any body carry you thither. It would disoblige my friend of all things in the world, and she would never tell you a syllable; and I own it would hurt me, who have such infinite obligations to her, that I should be very unhappy if a particular friend of mine showed her this disregard. She has done every thing upon earth to please and serve me, and I owe it to her to be earnest about this attention. Pray do not mention it: it might look simple in me, and yet I owe it to her, as I know it would hurt her: and at her age, with her misfortunes, and with infinite obligations on my side, can I do too much to show my gratitude, or prevent her any new mortification? I dwell upon it, because she has some enemies so spiteful that they try to carry all English to mad. de l'Espinasse.

I wish the duchess of Choiseul may come to Paris while you are there; but I fear she will not: you would like her of all things. She has more sense and more virtues than almost any human being. If you choose to see any of the savants, let me recommend monsieur Buffon. He has not only much more sense than any of them, but is an excellent old man, humane, gentle, well-bred, and with none of the arrogant pertness of all the rest. If he is at Paris, you will see a good deal of the comte de Broglie at mad. du Deffand's. He is not a genius of the first water, but lively and some-
times

times agreeable. The court, I fear, will be at Fontainebleau, which will prevent your seeing many, unless you go thither. Adieu! at Paris! I leave the rest of my paper for England, if I happen to have any thing particular to tell you.

LETTER XCIV.

Strawberry-hill, Sunday, October 16, 1774.

I RECEIVED this morning your letter of the 6th from Straßburg; and before you get this you will have had three from me by lady Ailesbury. One of them should have reached you much sooner; but lady A. kept it, not being sure where you was. It was in answer to one in which you told me an anecdote, which in this last you ask if I had received.

Your letters are always so welcome to me, that you certainly have no occasion for excusing what you say or do not say. Your details amuse me, and so would what you suppress; for, though I have no military genius or curiosity, whatever relates to yourself must interest me. The honours you have received, though I have so little taste for such things myself, gave me great satisfaction; and I do not know whether there is not more pleasure in *not* being a prophet in one's own country, when one is almost received like Mahomet in every other. To be an idol at home, is no assured touchstone of merit. Stocks and stones have been adored in fifty regions, but do not bear transplanting. The Apollo Belvedere and The Hercules Farnese may lose their temples, but never lose their estimation, by travelling.

Elections, you may be sure, are the only topic here at present—I mean in England—not on this quiet hill, where I think of them as little as of the spot where the battle of Blenheim was fought. They say there will not be much alteration, but the phoenix will rise from its ashes with most of its old plumes, or as bright. Wilkes at first seemed to carry all before him, besides having obtained the mayoralty of London at last. Lady M—— told me last Sunday, that he would carry twelve members. I have not been in town since, nor know any thing but what I collect from the papers; so, if my letter is opened, M. de Vergennes will not amass any very authentic intelligence from my *dispatches*.

What I have taken notice of, is as follows: For the city Wilkes will have but three members: he will lose Crosby; and Townsend will carry Oliver. In Westminster, Wilkes will not have one; his Humphrey Cotes is by far the lowest on the poll; lord Percy and lord T. Clinton are triumphant there. Her grace of Northumberland sits at a window in Covent-garden, harangues the mob, and is "Hail, fellow, well met!" At Dover, Wilkes has carried one, and probably will come in for Middlesex himself with Glynn. There have been great endeavours to oppose him, but to no purpose.—Of this I am glad, for I do not love a mob so near as Brentford, especially as my road lies through it. Where he has any other interest I am too ignorant in these matters to tell you. Lord John Cavendish is opposed at York, and at the beginning of the poll had the fewest numbers. C—— F——, like the ghost in Hamlet, has shifted to many quarters; but in most the cock-crew, and he walked off. In Southwark, there has been outrageous rioting; but I neither know the candidates, their connections, nor success. This, perhaps, will appear a great deal of news at Paris: here, I dare to say, my butcher knows more.

I can tell you still less of America. There are two or three more ships with forces going thither, and Sir William Draper as second in command.

Of private news, except that Dyson has had a stroke of palsy, and will die, there is certainly none; for I saw that shrill Morning Post, lady G——, two hours ago, and she did not know a paragraph.

I forgot to mention to you M. de Maurepàs. He was by far the ablest and most agreeable man I knew at Paris: and if you stay, I think I could take the liberty of giving you a letter to him; though, as he is now so great a man, and I remain so little an one, I don't know whether it would be quite so proper—though he was exceedingly good to me, and pressed me often to make him a visit in the country.—But lord Stormont can certainly carry you to him—a better passport.

There was one of my letters on which I wish to hear from you. There are always English coming from Paris, who would bring such a parcel; at least you might send me one volume at a time, and the rest afterwards; but I should not care to have them ventured by the common conveyance. Mad. du Deffand is negotiating for an enamel picture for me; but if she obtains

obtains it, I had rather wait for it till you come. The books I mean, are those I told you lady A. and Mrs. D. would give you a particular account of, for they know my mind exactly. Don't reproach me with not meeting you at Paris. Recollect what I suffered this time two years; and if you can have any notion of fear, imagine my dread of torture for five months and a half! When all the quiet of Strawberry did but just carry me through it, could I support it in the noise of a French hotel! and, what would be still worse, exposed to receive all visits? for the French, you know, are never more in public than in the act of death. I am like animals, and love to hide myself *when I am dying*. Thank God, I am now two days beyond the crisis when I expected my dreadful periodic visitant, and begin to grow very sanguine about the virtue of the bootikins. I shall even have courage to go to-morrow to Chalfont for two days, as it is but a journey of two hours. I would not be a day's journey from hence for all lord Clive's diamonds. This will satisfy *you*. I doubt madame du Deffand is not so easily convinced: therefore pray do not drop a hint before her of blaming me for not meeting you; rather assure her you are persuaded it would have been too great a risk for me at this season. I wish to have her quite clear of my attachment to her; but that I do not always find so easy. You, I am sure, will find her all zeal and *empressement* for you and yours. Adieu!

L E T T E R XCV.

Strawberry-hill, October 29, 1774.

I HAVE received your letter of the 26^d, and it certainly overpays me, when you thank instead of scolding me, as I feared. A passionate man has very little merit in being in a passion, and is sure of saying many things he repents, as I do. I only hope you think that I could not be so much in the wrong for every body; nor should have been perhaps even for you, if I had not been certain I was the only person, at that moment, that could serve you essentially: and at such a crisis, I am sure I should take exactly the same part again, except in saying some things I did, of which I am ashamed!

* This relates to Mr. Walpole having resented of a seat in parliament at the general election, in a very warm manner, some neglect on the which took place in the year 1774. E.
part of his friends which deprived Mr. Conway

I will

I will say no more now on that topic, nor on any thing relating to it, because I have written my mind very fully, and you will know it soon. I can only tell you now, that I approve extremely your way of thinking, and hope you will not change it before you hear from me, and know some material circumstances. You and lady A. and I agree exactly, and she and I certainly consider only *you*. I do not answer her last, because I could not help telling you how very kindly I take your letter. All I beg is, that you would have no delicacy about my serving you any way. You know it is a pleasure to me: any body else may have views that would embarrass you; and therefore, till you are on the spot, and can judge for yourself (which I always insist on, because you are cooler than I, and because, though I have no interests to serve, I have passions which equally mislead one), it will be wiser to decline all kind of proposals and offers. You will avoid the plague of contested elections and solicitations; and I see no reasons, at present, that can tempt you to be in a hurry.

You must not expect to be madame du Deffand's first favourite. Lady Ailesbury has made such a progress there, that you will not easily supplant her. I have received volumes in her praise. You have a better chance with madame de C——, who is very agreeable; and I hope you are not such an English husband as not to conform to the manners of Paris while you are there.

I forgot to mention one or two of my favourite objects to lady A. nay, I am not sure she will taste one of them, the church of the Celestines. It is crowded with beautiful old tombs: one of Francis II. whose beatitude is presumed from his being husband of the martyr Mary Stuart. Another is of the first wife of John duke of Bedford, the regent of France. I think you was once there with me formerly. The other is Richelieu's tomb, at the Sorbonne—but that every body is carried to see. The hotel de *Carnavalet*^{*}, near the Place royale, is worth looking at, even for the façade, as you drive by. But of all earthly things the most worth seeing is the house at Versailles, where the king's pictures, not hung up, are kept. There is a treasure past belief, though in sad order, and piled one against another. Monsieur de Guerchy once carried me thither; and you may

^{*} Where madame de Sevigné resided.

certainly

certainly get leave. At the Luxembourg are some hung up, and one particularly is worth going to see alone: it is the Deluge by Nicolo Poussin, as winter. The three other seasons are good for nothing—but the Deluge is the first picture in the world of its kind. You will be shocked to see the glorious pictures at the Palais royal transplanted to new canvasses, and new painted and varnished, as if they were to be scenes at the opera—at least, they had treated half a dozen of the best so, three years ago, and were going on. The prince of Monaco has a few fine, but still worse used; one of them shines more than a looking-glass. I fear the exposition of pictures is over for this year; it is generally very *diverting*. I, who went into every church of Paris, can assure you there are few worth it, but the Invalids—except the *scenery* at St. Roch, about one or two o'clock at noon, when the sun shines; the Carmelites, for the Guido and the portrait of madame de la Valiere as a Magdalen; the Val de Grace, for a moment; the *treasure* at Notre Dame; the Sainte Chapelle, where in the anti-chapel are two very large enamelled portraits; the tomb of Condé at the Great Jesuits in the rue St. Antoine, if not shut up; and the little church of St. Louis in the Louvre, where is a fine tomb of cardinal Fleury, but large enough to stand on Salisbury-plain. One thing some of you *must* remember, as you return; nay, it is better to go soon to St. Denis, and madame du Deffand must get you a particular order to be shown (which is never shewn without) the effigies of the kings. They are in presses over the treasure which is shown, and where is the glorious antique cameo-cup; but the countenance of Charles IX. is so horrid and remarkable, you would think he had died on the morrow of the St. Barthelemi, and waked full of the recollection. If you love enamels and exquisite medals, get to see the collection of a monsieur d'Henery, who lives in the corner of the street where sir John Lambert lives—I forget its name. There is an old man behind the rue de Colombier, who has a great but bad collection of old French portraits; I delighted in them, but perhaps you would not. I, you may be sure, hunted out every thing of that sort. The convent and collection of St. Germain, I mean that over against the hotel du Parc royal, is well worth seeing—but I forget names strangely.—Oh! delightful—lord Cholmondeley sends me word he goes to Paris on Monday: I shall send this and my other letter by him. It was him I meant; I knew he was going, and had prepared it.

* He means from their extreme bad-taste.

Pray take care to lock up your papers in a strong box that nobody can open. They imagine you are at Paris on some commission, and there is no trusting French hotels or servants. America is in a desperate situation. The accounts from the Congress are not expected before the 10th, and expected very warm. I have not time to tell you some manœuvres against them that will make your blood curdle. Write to me when you can by private hands, as I will to you. There are always English passing backwards and forwards.

• L E T T E R X C V I .

Strawberry-hill, November 12, 1774.

I HAVE received a delightful letter from you of four sheets, and another since. I shall not reply to the campaigning part (though much obliged to you for it), because I have twenty other subjects more pressing to talk of. The first is to thank you for your excessive goodness to my dear old friend—she has some indiscretions, and *you must not have any to her*; but she has the best heart in the world, and I am happy, at her great age, that she has spirits enough not to be always upon her guard. A bad heart, especially after long experience, is but too apt to overflow *inwardly* with prudence. At least, as I am but too like her, and have corrected too few of my faults, I would fain persuade myself that some of them flow from a good principle—but I have not time to talk of myself, though you are much too partial to me, and give me an opportunity; yet I shall not take it.

Now for English news, and then your letter again.

There has been a great mortality here; though death has rather been *pride* than a volunteer. ———, as I told lady Ailesbury last post, shot himself. He is dead, totally undone. Whether that alone was the cause, or whether he had not done something worse, I doubt. I cannot conceive that, with his resources, he should have been hopeless—and to suspect him of delicacy, impossible!

A ship is arrived from America, and I doubt with very bad news, for none but trifling letters have yet been given out—but I am here, see nobody
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that knows any thing, and only hear by accident from people that drop in. The sloop that is to bring the result of the general assembly is not yet come. There are indeed rumours, that both the non-importation and even non-exportation have been decreed; and that the flame is universal. I hope this is exaggerated! yet I am told the stocks will fall very much in a day or two.

I have nothing to tell lady Ailebury, but that I hear a deplorable account of the opera. There is a new puppet-show at Drury-lane, as fine as scenes can make it, called The Maid of the Oaks, and as dull as the author could not help making it¹.

Except M. D'Herouville I know all the people you name. C. I doubt by things I have heard formerly, may have been a *concessionnaire*. The duke, your *protecteur*², is mediocre enough: you would have been more pleased with his wife. The chevalier's³ bon-mot is excellent, and so is he. He has as much bouffonnerie as the Italians, with more wit and novelty. His impromptu verses often admirable. Get madame du Deffand to show you his Embassy to the princess Christine, and his verses on his eldest uncle, beginning, *Si monsieur de Veau*. His second uncle has parts, but they are not so natural. Madame de Caraman is a very good kind of woman, but has not a quarter of her sister's parts. Madame de Mirepoix is the agreeable woman of the world, when she pleases—but there must not be a card in the room. Lord — has acted like himself; that is, unlike any body else. You know, I believe, that I think him a very good speaker; but I have little opinion of his judgment and knowledge of the world, and a great opinion of his affectation and insincerity. The abbé Raynal, though he wrote that fine work on the commerce des deux Indes, is the most tiresome creature in the world. The first time I met him was at the dull baron d'Olbach's: we were twelve at table: I dreaded opening my mouth in French, before so many people and so many servants: he began question-

¹ Mr. Walpole's opinion of this author totally changed upon the appearance of The Heiress, which he always called "the genteel comedy" in the English language. E.

² The duc de la Veliere; of whom Mr. Conway had said, that, when presented to him, "his

reception was what might be called good, but rather *de protection*. E.

³ The chevalier de Boufflers, well known for his Letters from Switzerland, addressed to his mother; his Reine de Golconde, a tale; and a number of very pretty vers de société. E.

ing me, cross the table, about our colonies, which I understand as I do Coptic. I made him signs I was deaf. After dinner he found I was not, and never forgave me. Mademoiselle Raucoux I never saw till you told me madame du Deffand said she was *demoniaque sans chaleur*! What painting! I see her now. Le Kain sometimes pleased me, oftener not. Molè is charming in genteel, or in pathetic comedy, and would be fine in tragedy, if he was stronger. Preville is always perfection. I like his wife in affected parts, though not animated enough. There was a delightful woman who did the lady Wishforts, I don't know if there still, I think her name mademoiselle Drouin; and a fat woman, rather elderly, who sometimes acted the soubrette. But you have missed the Dumenil, and Caillaut! What irreparable losses! Madame du Deffand, perhaps—I don't know—could obtain your hearing the Clairon—yet the Dumenil was infinitely preferable.

I could now almost find in my heart to laugh at you for liking Boutin's garden¹. Do you know, that I drew a plan of it, as the completest absurdity I ever saw. What! a river that wriggles at right angles through a stone-gutter, with two tanfy puddings that were dug out of it, and three or four beds in a row, by a corner of the wall, with samples of grass, corn, and of en friche, like a taylor's paper of patterns! And you like this! I will tell Park-place—Oh! I had forgot your audience in dumb show—Well, as madame de Sevigné said, Le roi de Prusse, c'est le plus grand roi du monde still². My love to the old parliament: I don't love new ones.

I went several times to madame de Monçonseil's, who is just what you say. Mesdames de Tingri & de la Vauguion I never saw: madame de Noailles once or twice, and enough. You say something of madame Mallet,

¹ See another ludicrous description of this garden in a letter to Mr. Chute.

² This alludes to Mr. Conway's presentation to the king of France, Louis XVI. at Fontainebleau, of which in his letter to Mr. Walpole he gives the following account: E.

"On St. Hubert's day in the morning I had the honour of being presented to the king: 'twas a good day and an excellent deed. You may be sure I was well received, the French are so

polite! and their court so polished!—The emperor indeed talked to me every day; so did the king of Prussia regularly and much: but that was not to be compared to the extraordinary reception of his most christian majesty, who, when I was presented, did not stop, nor look to see what sort of an animal was offered to his notice, but carried his head as it seemed somewhat higher, and passed his way."

which

which I could not read; for, by the way, your brother and I agree that you are grown not to write legibly: is that lady in being? I knew her formerly. Madame de Blot I know, and monsieur de Paulmy I know, but for heaven's sake who is col. Conway¹? Mademoiselle Sanadon is *la sana donna*, and not mademoiselle *Celadon*², as you call her. Pray assure my good monsieur Schoualow of my great regard: he is one of the best of beings.

I have said all I could, at least all I should. I reserve the rest of my paper for a postscript; for this is but Saturday, and my letter cannot depart till Tuesday: but I could not for one minute defer answering your charming volumes, which interest me so much. I grieve for lady Harriet's³ swelled face, and wish for both their sakes she could transfer it to her father. I assure her I meant nothing by desiring you to see the verses to the princess Christine⁴, wherein there is very profane mention of a pair of swelled cheeks. I hear nothing of madame d'Olonne⁵.—Oh! make madame du Deffand show you the sweet portrait of madame de Prie, the duke of Bourbon's mistress⁶. Have you seen madame de Monaco, and the remains of madame de Brionne? If you wish to see Mrs. A——, ask for the princesse de Ligne. If you have seen monsieur de Maurepas, you have seen the late lord Hardwicke⁷. By your not naming him, I suppose the duc de Nivernois is not at Paris. Say a great deal for me to M. de Guisnes. You will not see my passion, the duchess de Chatillon. If you see madame de Nivernois, you will think the duke of Newcastle is come to life again. Alas! where is my postscript?

¹ An officer in the French service.

² Mademoiselle Sanadon, a lady who lived with madame du Deffand.

³ Lady Harriet Stanhope, afterwards married to lord Foley, was at this time at Paris with her father the earl of Harrington.

⁴ By the chevalier de Boufflers.

⁵ The beautiful enamel miniature of madame d'Olonne, now at Strawberry-hill.

⁶ This portrait is now at Strawberry-hill.

⁷ He means from their personal resemblance.

LETTER XCVII.

Arlington-street, November 27, 1774:

I HAVE received your ~~delightfully~~ plump packet with a letter of six pages, one from madame du Deffand, the Eloges, and the Lit de justice. Now observe my gratitude: I appoint you my resident at Paris; but you are not to resemble all our ministers abroad, and expect to live at home, which would destroy *my lord Castlecomer's*¹ view in your staying at Paris. However, to prove to you that I have some gratitude that is not totally selfish, I will tell you what little news I know, before I answer your letter; for English news, to be sure, is the most agreeable circumstance in a letter from England.

On my coming to town yesterday, there was nothing but more deaths—don't you think we have the plague? the bishop of Worcester, lord Breadalbane, lord Strathmore. The first fell from his horse, or with his horse, at Bath, and the bishoprick was incontinently given to bishop North.

America is still more refractory, and I doubt will outvote the ministry. They have picked general Gage's pocket of three pieces of cannon, and intercepted some troops that were going to him. Sir William Draper is writing plans of pacification in our newspapers; and lord Chatham flatters himself that he shall be sent for when the patient is given over; which I don't think at all unlikely to happen. My poor nephew² is very political too: so we shall not want mad-doctors. A propos, I hear Wilkes says he will propose M—— for speaker.

The ecclesiastical court are come to a resolution that the duchess of Kingston is Mrs. Hervey; and the sentence will be public in a fortnight. It is not so certain that she will lose the estate. Augustus³ is not in a much more pleasant predicament than she is. I saw lord Bristol last night: he looks perfectly well, but his speech is much affected, and his right hand.

¹ A cant phrase of Mr. Walpole's, which took its rise from the following story:

The tutor of a young lord Castlecomer, who lived at Twickenham with his mother, having broke his leg, somebody pitying the poor man, to the mother, lady Castlecomer, she replied,

"Yes, indeed, it is *very inconvenient* to my lord Castlecomer." E.

² George Walpole, earl of Orford.

³ Augustus Hervey, to whom she was first married.

Lady Lyttelton, who, you know, never hears any thing that has happened, wrote to me two days ago, to ask if it would not be necessary for *you* to come over for the meeting of the parliament. I answered, very gravely, that to be sure you ought: but though *sir James Morgan* threatened you loudly with a petition, yet, as it could not be heard till after Christmas, I was afraid you would not be persuaded to come sooner. I hope she will inquire who *sir James Morgan* is, and that people will persuade her she has made a confusion about *sir James* ———. Now for your letter.

I have been in the *chambre de parlement*, I think they call it the *grande chambre*; and was shown the corner in which the monarchs sit, and do not wonder you did not guess where it was they sat. It is just like the dark corner, under the window, where I always sat in the house of commons. What has happened, has passed exactly according to my ideas. When one king breaks one parliament, and another another, what can the result be but despotism? or of what else is it a proof? If a tory king displaces his father's whig lord chamberlain, neither lord chamberlain has the more or the less power over the theatres and court-mourning and birth-day balls. All that can arrive is, that the people will be still more attached to the old parliament, from this seeming restitution of a right—but the people must have some power before their attachment can signify a straw. The old parliament too may some time or other give itself more airs¹ on this confession of right; but that too cannot be but in a minority, or when the power of the crown is lessened by reasons that have nothing to do with the parliament. I will answer for it, they will be too *grateful* to give umbrage to their restorer. Indeed I did not think the people would be so quick-sighted at once, as to see the distinction of old and new was without a difference. Methinks France and England are like the land and the sea; one gets a little sense when the other loses it.

I am quite satisfied with all you tell me about my friend. My intention is certainly to see her again, if I am able; but I am too old to lay plans, especially when it depends on the despot gout to register or cancel them. It is even melancholy to see her, when it will probably be but once more; and still more melancholy, when we ought to say to one another, in a different sense from the common, *à revoir!* However, as mine is a pretty cheerful

¹ We have seen these *airs* not only the cause of its own destruction, but of one of the greatest revolutions that ever took place in Europe. E.

kind of philosophy, I think the best way is to think of dying, but to talk and act as if one was not to die; or else one tires other people, and dies before one's time. I have truly all the affection and attachment for her that she deserves from me, or I should not be so very thankful as I am for your kindness to her. The ~~Choiseuls~~ will certainly return at Christmas, and will make her life much more agreeable. The duchess has as much attention to her as I could have; but that will not keep me from making her a visit.

I have only seen, not known, the younger madame de Boufflers. For her musical talents, I am little worthy of them—yet I am just going to lady Bingham's to hear the Bastardella, whom, though the first singer in Italy, Mrs. Yates could not or would not agree with¹; and she is to have twelve hundred pounds for singing twelve times at the Pantheon, where, if she had a voice as loud as lord Clare's, she could not be heard. The two bons-mots you sent me are excellent; but, alas! I had heard them both before: consequently your own, which is very good too, pleased me much more. M. de Stainville I think you will not like: he has sense, but has a dry military harshness, that at least did not suit me—and then I hate his barbarity to his wife².

You was very lucky indeed to get one of the sixty tickets³. Upon the whole, your travels have been very fortunate, and the few mortifications amply compensated. If a duke⁴ has been spiteful when your back was turned, a hero-king has been all courtesy. If another king has been silent, an emperor has been singularly gracious. Frowns or silence may happen to any body: the smiles have been addressed to you particularly.—So was the ducal frown indeed—but would you have earned a smile at the price set on it? One cannot do right and be always applauded—but in such cases are not frowns tantamount?

As my letter will not set forth till the day after to-morrow, I reserve the rest for any additional news, and this time *will* reserve it.

¹ To sing at the opera.

² Upon a suspicion of gallantry, she was confined for life.

³ To see the lit de justice held by Louis XVI. when he recalled the parliament of Paris banished

ed by Louis XV. at the instigation of the chancellor Maupou, and suppressed the new one of their creation. E.

⁴ The duke de Choiseul.

St. Parliament's day, 29th, after breakfast.

THE speech is said to be firm, and to talk of the *rebellion* of our province of Massachusetts. No sloop is arrived yet to tell us how to call the rest. Mr. Van is to move for the expulsion of Wilkes; which will distress, and may produce an odd scene. Lord Holland is certainly dead; the papers say, Robinson too, but that I don't know:—so many deaths of late make report kill to right and left.

L E T T E R XCVIII.

Arlington-street, December 15, 1774.

AS I wrote to lady Ailesbury but on Tuesday, I should not have followed it so soon with this, if I had nothing to tell you but of myself. My gout is never dangerous, and the shades of them not important. However, to dispatch this article at once, I will tell you, that the pain I felt yesterday in my elbow made me think all former pain did not deserve the name. Happily the torture did not last above two hours; and, which is more surprising, it is all the real pain I have felt; for though my hand has been as sore as if flayed, and that both feet are lame, the bootikins demonstrably prevent or extract the sting of it, and I see no reason not to expect to get out in a fortnight more. Surely, if I am laid up but one month in two years, instead of five or six, I have reason to think the bootikins sent from heaven.

The long expected sloop is arrived at last, and is indeed a *man of war*! The general congress have voted,

A non-importation.

A non-exportation.

A non-consumption.

That, in case of hostilities committed by the troops at Boston, the several provinces will march to the assistance of their countrymen.

That the cargoes of ships now at sea shall be sold on their arrival, and the money arising thence given to the poor at Boston.

That

That a letter, in the nature of a petition of rights, shall be sent to the king; another to the house of *commons*; a third to the people of England; a demand of repeal of all the acts of parliament affecting North America passed during this reign, as also of the Quebec-bill: and these resolutions not to be altered till such repeal is obtained.

Well, I believe you do not regret being neither in parliament nor in administration! As you are an idle man, and have nothing else to do, you may sit down and tell one a remedy for all this. Perhaps you will give yourself airs, and say you was a prophet, and that prophets are not honoured in their own country.—Yet, if you have any inspiration about you, I assure you it will be of great service.—We are at our wit's end—which was no great journey.—Oh! you conclude lord Chatham's crutch will be supposed a wand, and be sent for—They might as well send for *my* crutch; and they should not have it; the stile is a little too high to help them over. His lordship is a little fitter for raising a storm than laying one, and of late seems to have lost both virtues. The Americans at least have acted like men, gone to the bottom at once, and set the whole upon the whole. Our conduct has been that of pert children: we have thrown a pebble at a mastiff, and are surprised it was not frightened. Now we must be worried by it, or must kill the guardian of the house, which will be plundered the moment little master has nothing but the old nurse to defend it. But I have done with reflections; you will be fuller of them than I.

LETTER XCIX.

Arlington-street, December 26, 1774.

I BEGIN my letter to-day, to prevent the fatigue of dictating two to-morrow. In the first and best place, I am very near recovered; that is, though still a mummy, I have no pain left, nor scarce any sensation of gout except in my right hand, which is still in complexion and shape a lobster's claw. Now, unless any body can prove to me that three weeks are longer than five months and a half, they will hardly convince me that the bootikins are not a cure for fits of the gout, and a very short cure, though they cannot prevent it: nor perhaps is it to be wished they should; for, if the gout prevents every thing else, would not one have something that does? I have
but

but one single doubt left about the bootikins, which is, whether they do not weaken my breast: but as I am sensible that my own spirits do half the mischief, and that, if I could have held my tongue, and kept from talking and dictating letters, I should not have been half so bad as I have been, there remains but half due to bootikins on the balance: and surely the ravages of the last long fit, and two years more in age, ought to make another deduction. Indeed, my forcing myself to dictate my last letter to you almost killed me; and since the gout is not dangerous to me if I am kept perfectly quiet, my good old friend must have patience, and not insist upon letters from me but when it is quite easy to me to send them. So much for me and my gout. I will now endeavour to answer such parts of your last letters as I can in this manner, and considering how difficult it is to read *your* writing in a dark room.

I have not yet been able to look into the French harangues you sent me. Voltaire's verses to Robert Covelle are not only very bad, but very contemptible.

I am delighted with all the honours you receive, and with all the amusements they procure you, which is the best part of honours. For the glorious part, I am always like the man in Pope's Donne,

“ Then happy he who shows the tombs, said I.”

That is, they are least troublesome there. The *serenissime*¹ you met at Montmorency is one of the least to my taste; we quarrelled about Rousseau, and I never went near him after my first journey. Madame du D. will tell you the story, if she has not forgotten it.

It is supposed here, that the new proceedings of the French parliament will produce great effects: I don't suppose any such thing. What America will produce I know still less; but certainly something very serious. The merchants have summoned a meeting for the second of next month, and the petition from the congress to the king is arrived. The heads have been shown to lord D——; but I hear one of the agents is against presenting it: yet it is thought it will be delivered, and then be ordered to be laid before parliament. The whole affair has already been talked of there on the army

¹ The prince de Conti.

and navy-days; and Burke, they say, has shone with amazing wit and ridicule on the late inactivity of Gage, and his losing his cannon and straw; on his being intrenched in a town with an army of observation; with that army being, as sir William Meredith had said, an asylum for magistrates, and to secure the port: Burke said, he had heard of an asylum for debtors and whores, never for magistrates; and of ships, never of armies, securing a port. This is all there has been in parliament, but elections. C—— F——'s place did not come into question. Mr. ——, who is one of the new elect, has opened, but with no success. There is a seaman, Luttrell, that promises much better.

I am glad you like the duchess de Lauzun¹: she is one of my favourites. The hotel du Chatelet promised to be very fine, but was not finished when I was last at Paris. I was much pleased with the person that slept against St. Lambert's poem: I wish I had thought of the nostrum, when Mr. ——, a thousand years ago, at Lyons, would read an epic poem to me just as I had received a dozen letters from England. St. Lambert is a great jackanapes, and a very tiny genius. I suppose the poem was *The Seasons*, which is four fans spun out into a Georgic.

If I had not been too ill, I should have thought of bidding you hear midnight mass on Christmas-eve in madame du Deffand's tribune, as I used to do.

¹ She became duchesse de Biron upon the death of her husband's grandfather, the marechal duc de Biron.

This amiable, interesting, and virtuous woman, the purity of whose character, even under all the unfavourable circumstances of an ill-suited marriage and a husband's strange neglect, neither French profligacy nor French levity had ever dared asperse, having twice fled to this country, after the revolution in her own, to avoid that violence and those persecutions to which her noble birth and great personal fortune could alone make her liable, unadvisedly returned to Paris in the spring of the year 1794, deluded by fallacious promises of security, and by hopes of preserving some of the very large fortune to which she was heiress, to assist those of her friends and dependants, who, involved in the

same circumstances with herself, had no such resources of their own.

This amiable Being, in the prime of life, and unaccused of any crime, was first confined in her own house, then sent to a common jail, and soon after fell an undistinguished victim to the bloody and ruthless tyranny of Robespierre.

That there may have perished, in the course of his indiscriminate slaughter, many victims equally innocent, is hardly to be doubted; but those who were personally acquainted with the mild unmeddling character, the quiet unassuming sense, and the modest diffident manners of the duchesse de Biron, can never figure her to themselves, hurried by ruffians to a prison, and perishing publicly on a scaffold, without peculiar sentiments of horror, melancholy, and disgust.

E.
To

To be sure, you know that her apartment was part of madame du Montepan's, whose arms are on the back of the grate in madame du Deffand's own bed-chamber. A-propos, ask her to show you madame de Prie's picture, M. le Duc's mistress—I am very fond of it—and make her tell you her history.

I have but two or three words more. Remember my parcel of letters from madame du D. and pray remember this injunction, not to ruin yourselves in bringing presents. A very slight fairing of a guinea or two obliges as much, is more fashionable, and not a moment sooner forgotten than a magnificent one; and then you may very cheaply oblige the more persons: but as the sick fox, in Gay's Fables, says (for one always excepts oneself),

“A chicken too might do me good—”

I allow you to go as far as three or even five guineas for a snuff-box for me: and then, as ———— told the king, when he asked for the reversion of the Light-house for two lives, and the king reproached him with having always advised him against granting reversions; he replied, “Oh sir, but if your majesty will give me this, I will take care you shall never give away another.”

Adieu, with my own left hand,

HOR. WALPOLE.

LETTER C. . .

Arlington-street, December 31, 1774.

NO child was ever so delighted to go into breeches, as I was this morning to get on a pair of cloth shoes as big as Jack Harris's: this joy may be the spirits of dotage—but what signifies whence one is happy? Observe too that this is written with my own *right* hand, with the bootikin actually upon it, which has no distinction of fingers: so I no longer see any miracle in Buckinger, who was famous for writing without hands or *feet* [as if it was

indifferent which one uses, provided one has a pair of either]. Take notice, I write so much better without fingers than with, that I advise *you* to try a bootikin. To be sure, the operation is a little slower; but to a prisoner, the duration of his amusement is of far more consequence than the vivacity of it.

Last night I received your very kind, I might say *your* letter tout court, of Christmas-day. By this time I trust you are quite out of pain about me. My fit has been as regular as possible; only, as if the bootikins were post-horses, it made the grand tour of all my limbs in three weeks. If it will always use the same expedition, I am content it should take the journey once in two years. You must not mind my breast: it was always the weakest part of a very weak system; yet did not suffer now by the gout, but in consequence of it; and would not have been near so bad, if I could have kept from talking and dictating letters. The moment I am out of pain I am in high spirits; and though I never take any medicines, there is one thing absolutely necessary to be put into my mouth—a gag. At present the town is so empty that my tongue is a fine-cure.

I am well acquainted with the Bibliothèque du Roi, and the medals, and the prints. I spent an entire day in looking over the English portraits, and kept the librarian without his dinner till dark night, till I was satisfied. Though the Choiseuls¹ will not *acquaint* with you, I hope their abbé Barthélemi² is not put under the same quarantine. Besides great learning, he has infinite wit and polissonnerie, and is one of the best kind of men in the world. As to the grandpapa³, il ne nous aime pas nous autres, and has never forgiven lord Chatham. Though exceedingly agreeable himself, I don't think his taste exquisite.—Perhaps I was piqued; but he seemed to like — better than any of us. Indeed I am a little afraid that my dear friend's impetuous zeal may have been a little too prompt in pressing you upon them d'abord:—but don't say a word of this—it is her great goodness.—I thank you a million of times for all yours to her:—she is perfectly grateful for it.

¹ Mr. Conway and the ladies of his party had met with the most flattering and distinguished reception at Paris from every body but the duc and duchesse de Choiseul, who rather seemed to decline their acquaintance. E.

² The author of the *Voyage du jeune Anacharsis*.

³ A name given to the duc de Choiseul by madame du Deffand.

The chevalier's¹ verses are pretty enough. I own I like Saurin's² much better than you seem to do. Perhaps I am prejudiced by the curse on the chancellor at the end.

Not a word of news here. In a sick-room one hears all there is, but I have not heard even a lie: but as this will not set out these three days, it is to be hoped some charitable christian will tell a body one. Lately indeed we heard that the king of Spain had abdicated; but I believe it was some stock-jobber that had deposed him.

Lord George Cavendish, for my solace in my retirement, has given me a book, the History of his own Furness-abbey, written by a Scotch ex-jesuit. I cannot say that this unnatural conjunction of a Cavendish and a jesuit has produced a lively colt; but I found one passage worth any money. It is in an extract of a constable's journal kept during the civil war; and ends thus: "And there was never heard of such troublesome and distracted times as

¹ Verses written by the chevalier de Boufflers, to be presented by madame du Deffand to the duke and duchess of Choiseul. They are mere vers de societé, and would not be tolerable out of the society for which they were written. E.

² They were addressed to Mr. de Maleherbes, then premier president de la cour des aides; since still more distinguished by his having been the intrepid, though unsuccessful advocate chosen by the unfortunate Louis XVI. on his trial. He soon after perished by the same guillotine, from which he could not preserve his ill-fated master. E.

The verses were as follow:

Sur monsieur de Maleherbes, premier president de la cour des aides.

O! qu'on aime la bonhomie
Qui dans ta grande ame s'allie
Aux grands talents!

Tout Paris fête Maleherbes,
Le plus grand et le moins superbe
Des revenans³.

Jadis l'orateur qu'on renomme,
De l'exil revenu à Rome,
Eût même accueil:
Mais le Ciceron de la France
De l'autre a toute l'éloquence
Sans son orgueil.

Amis, sa gloire l'embarasse,
Il faudra pourtant qu'il s'y fasse:
Mais filons doux,
Et nous reposons sur l'histoire;
Sans plus lui parler de sa gloire,
Buvons y tous—

À celui qui si bien conseille
Son maître, dont il a l'oreille⁴,
Buvons aussi
A sa santé—Je vous la porte,
Mais disons que le diable emporte
On sçait bien qui!

³ The members of the recalled parliament were called *les revenans*.

⁴ Le duc de Choiseul.

these five years have been, *but especially for constables.*" It is so natural, that *inconvenient to my lord Castlecomer* is scarce a better proverb.

Pray tell lady A. that though she has been so very good to me, I address my letters to you rather than to her, because my pen is not always upon its guard, but is apt to say whatever comes into its nib; and then if she peeps over your shoulder, I am censured not to know it. Lady Harriet's wishes have done me great good: nothing but a father's gout could be obdurate enough to resist them. My Mrs. D. says nothing to me; but I give her intentions credit, and lay her silence on you.

January 1, 1775; and a happy new year!

I WALK! I walk! walk alone!—I have been five times quite round my room to-day, and my month is not up! The day after to-morrow I shall go down into the dining-room; the next week to take the air; and then if Mrs. ——— is very pressing, why, I don't know what may happen. Well! but you want news—there are none to be had. They think there is a ship lost with Gage's dispatches. Lady Temple gives all her diamonds to miss Nugent. Lord Pigot lost 400 pounds the other night at princess Amelia's. Miss Davis has carried her cause against Mrs. Yates, and is to sing again at the opera. This is all my coffee-house furnished this morning.

LETTER CI.

Arlington-street, January 15, 1775:

YOU have made me very happy by saying your journey to Naples is laid aside. Perhaps it made too great impression on me; but you must reflect, that all my life I have satisfied myself with your being perfect, instead of trying to be so myself. I don't ask you to return, though I wish it: in truth, there is nothing to invite you. I don't want you to come and breathe fire and sword against the Bostonians, like that second duke of Alva the inflexible lord, G—— G——; or to anathematize the court and all its works, like the incorruptible B. who scorns lucre, except when he can buy an hundred thousand acres from naked Caribs for a song. I don't want you to do any thing like a party-man. I trust you think of every party as I do,

6

with

with contempt, from lord Chatham's mustard-bowl down to lord Rockingham's hartshorn. All perhaps will be tried in their turns; and yet, if they had genius, might not be mighty enough to save us—From some ruin or other I think nobody can, and what signifies an option of mischiefs?

An account is come of the Bostonians having voted an army of sixteen thousand men, who are to be called *minute-men*, as they are to be ready at a minute's warning. Two directors or commissioners, I don't know what they are called, are appointed. There has been too a kind of mutiny in the 5th regiment. A soldier was found drunk on his post. Gage, in this time of *danger*, thought rigour necessary, and sent the fellow to a court-martial. They ordered 200 lashes. The general ordered them to improve their sentence. Next day it was published in the Boston Gazette. He called them before him, and required them on oath to abjure the communication: three officers refused. Poor G. is to be scape-goat, not for this, but for what was a reason against employing him, incapacity. I wonder at the precedent! Howe is talked of for his successor.—Well, I have done with *you*!—Now I shall go gossip with lady A——.

You must know, madam, that near Bath is erected a new Parnassus, composed of three laurels, a myrtle tree, a weeping-willow, and a view of the Avon, which has been new christened Helicon. Ten years ago there lived a madam ——, an old rough humourist who passed for a wit; her daughter who passed for nothing, married to a captain ——, full of good-natured officiousness. These good folks were friends of miss Rich¹, who carried me to dine with them at ——, now Pindus. They caught a little of what was then called taste, built and planted, and begot children, till the whole caravan were forced to go abroad to retrieve. Alas! Mrs. —— is returned a beauty, a genius, a Sappho, a tenth muse, as romantic as mad^{lle} Scuderi, and as sophisticated as Mrs. V——. The captain's fingers are loaded with cameos, his tongue runs over with virtù; and that both may contribute to the improvement of their own country, they have introduced bouts-rimés as a new discovery. They hold a Parnassus-fair every Thursday, give out rhymes and themes, and all the flux of quality at Bath contend for the prizes. A Roman vase dressed with pink ribbands and myrtles receives

¹ Daughter of sir Robert Rich, and sister to the second wife of George lord Lyttelton.

the poetry, which is drawn out every festival: six judges of these Olympic games retire and select the brightest compositions, which the respective successful acknowledge, kneel to Mrs. Calliope —, kiss her fair hand, and are crowned by it with myrtle, with—I don't know what. You may think this a fiction, or exaggeration.—Be dumb, unbelievers! The collection is printed, published—Yes, on my faith! there are bouts-rimés on a buttered muffin, by her grace the duchess of Northumberland; receipts to make them by Corydon the venerable, alias —; others very pretty, by lord P—; some by lord C—; many by Mrs. — herself, that have no fault but wanting metre; and immortality promised to her without end or measure. In short, since folly, which never ripens to madness but in this hot climate, ran distracted, there never was any thing so entertaining, or so dull—for you cannot read so long as I have been telling.

January 17.

BEFORE I could finish this, I received your dispatches by sir T. Clarges, and a most entertaining letter in three tomes. It is being very dull not to be able to furnish a quarter so much from your own country—but what can I do? You are embarked in a new world, and I am living on the scraps of an old one, of which I am tired. The best I can do is to reply to your letter, and not attempt to amuse you when I have nothing to say. I think the parliament meets to-day or in a day or two—but I hope you are coming—Your brother says so, and mad. du Deff. says so; and sure it is time to leave Paris, when you know ninety of the inhabitants. There seems much affectation in those that will not know you¹; and affectation is always a littleness—it has been even rude; but to be sure the rudeness one feels least is that which is addressed to one before there has been any acquaintance.

Ninon came², because, on mad. du D.'s mentioning it, I concluded it a new work, and am disappointed. I can say this by heart. The picture of mad. de Prie³, which you don't seem to value, and so mad. du D. says, I believe I shall dispute with you: I think it charming, but when offered to me years ago, I would not take it—it was now given to you a little à mon intention.

I am sorry that, amongst all the verses you have sent me, you should have

¹ The duke de Choiseul.

² The Life of Ninon de l'Enclos.

³ It is now at Strawberry-hill.
forgotten

forgottein what you commend the most, *Les trois exclamations*; I hope you will bring them with you. Voltaire's are intolerably stupid, and not above the level of officers in garrison. Some of M. de Pezay's are very pretty, though there is too much of them; and in truth I had seen them before. Those on mad. de la Valiere pretty too, but one is a little tired of Venus and the Graces. I am most pleased with your own—and if you have a mind to like them still better, make mad. du D. show you mine³, which are neither French, nor measure, nor metre. She is unwilling to tell me so; which diverts me. Yours are really genteel and new.

I envy you the Russian anecdotes⁴ more than M. de Chamfort's fables, of which I know nothing; and as you say no more, I conclude I lose not much. The stories of sir Charles⁵ are so far not new to me, that I heard them of him from abroad after he was mad: but I believe no mortal of his acquaintance ever heard them before; nor did they at all correspond with his former life, with his treatment of his wife, or his history with Mrs. Woffington, qui n'étoit pas dupe. I say nothing on the other stories you tell me of billets dropped⁶, et pour cause.

I think I have touched all your paragraphs, and have nothing new to send you in return. In truth, I go no where but into private rooms; for I am not enough recovered to re-launch into the world, when I have so good an excuse for avoiding it. The bootikins have done wonders; but even two or three such victories will cost too dear. I submit very patiently to my

² They were the following lines, sent with a porcelaine déjeuner to the vicomtesse de Cambis at the beginning of the new-year, when it was the universal custom at Paris to interchange small presents known by the name of *etrennes*. E.

L'etrenne qu'on vous offre ici
N'est rare ni mignonne;
Mais les vetilles ont du prix
Quand c'est le cœur qui donne.

De plus encor pour satisfaire
Au scrupule le plus severe,
Il faut penser qu'en acceptant
C'est vous qui faites le present.

³ These lines do not appear.

⁴ The account of the revolution in Russia which placed Catherine II. on the throne, by M. de la Rulhiere, now published. Mr. Conway had heard it read in manuscript in a private society. E.

⁵ Sir Charles Hanbury Williams.

⁶ This alludes to circumstances Mr. Conway mentions as having taken place at a ball at Versailles.

lot. I am old and broken, and it never was my system to impose upon myself when one can deceive nobody else. I have spirits enough for my use, that is, amongst my friends and contemporaries: I like young people and their happiness for every thing but to live with; but I cannot learn their language, nor tell them old stories, of which I must explain every step as I go. Politics, the proper resource of age, I detest—I am contented, but few that are so—and I never will be led by any man's self-interest. A great scene is opening, of which I cannot expect to see the end; I am pretty sure not a happy end—so that, in short, I am determined to think the rest of my life but a postscript: and as this has been too long an one, I will wish you good night, repeating what you know already, that the return of you three is the most agreeable prospect I expect to see realized. Adieu!

L E T T E R CII.

Strawberry-hill, July 9, 1775.

THE whole business of this letter would lie in half a line. Shall you have room for me on Tuesday the 18th? I am putting myself into motion that I may go farther. I told madame du Deffand how you had scolded me on her account, and she has charged me to thank you, and tell you how much she wishes to see you too. I would give any thing to go—But the going!—However, I really think I shall—but I grow terribly affected with a *maladie de famille*, that of taking root at home.

I did but put my head into London on Thursday, and more bad news from America. I wonder when it will be bad enough to make folks think it so, without going on! The stocks indeed begin to grow a little nervous, and they are apt to affect other pulses. I heard this evening here that the Spanish fleet is sailed, and that we are not in the secret whither—but I don't answer for Twickenham gazettes, and I have no better. I have a great mind to tell you a Twickenham story; and yet it will be good for nothing, as I cannot send you the accent in a letter. Here it is; and you must try to set it to the right emphasis. One of our maccaronis is dead, a captain M——, the tea-man's son. He had quitted the army, because his comrades

comrades called him captain Hyson, and applied himself to learn the classics and free-thinking; and was always disputing with the parson of the parish about Dido and his own soul. He married miss Paulin's warehouse, who had six hundred a year; but, being very much out of conceit with his own canister, could not reconcile himself to her riding-hood—so they parted beds in three nights. Of late he has taken to writing comedies, which every body was welcome to hear him read, as he could get nobody to act them. Mrs. M—— has a friend, one Mrs. V——, a mighty plausible good sort of body, who feels for every body, and a good deal for herself, is of a certain age, wears well, has some pretensions that she thinks very reasonable still, and a gouty husband. Well! she was talking to Mr. Rastor about captain M—— a little before he died. Pray, sir, does the captain ever communicate his writings to Mrs. M——?—Oh dear, no, madam; he has a sovereign contempt for her understanding.—Poor woman!—And pray, sir,—give me leave to ask you: I think I have heard that they very seldom sleep together?—Oh, never, madam! Don't you know all that?—*Poor woman!*—I don't know whether you will laugh; but Mr. Rastor, who tells a story better than any body, made me laugh for two hours. Good night.

LETTER CIII.

Paris, September 8, 1775.

THE delays of the post, and its departure before its arrival, saved me some days of anxiety for lady A——, and prevented my telling you how concerned I am for her accident; though I trust by this time she has not even pain left. I feel the horror you must have felt during her suffering in the dark, and on the sight of her arm^{*}; and though nobody admires her needle-work more than I, still I am rejoiced that it will be the greatest sufferer.—However, I am very impatient for a farther account. Madame du Deffand, who you know never loves her friends by halves, and whose impatience never allows itself time to inform itself, was out of her wits because I could not explain exactly how the accident happened, and where. She wanted to write directly, though the post was just gone; and as soon as I could make her easy about the accident, she fell into a new distress about her fans for

* Lady Ailsbury had been overturned in her carriage at Park-place, and dislocated her wrist.

madame de Marchais, and concludes they have been overturned and broken too. In short, I never saw any thing like her—She has made engagements for me till Monday se'night; in which are included I don't know how many journeys into the country; and as nobody ever leaves her without her engaging them for another time, all these parties will be so many polypuses, that will shoot out into new ones every way. Madame de Jonsac, a great friend of mine, arrived the day before yesterday, and madame du Deffand has pinned her down to meeting me at her house four times before next Tuesday, all parentheses, that are not to interfere with our other suppers; and from those suppers I never get to bed before two or three o'clock. In short, I need have the activity of a squirrel, and the strength of a Hercules, to go through my labours—not to count how many *demêlés* I have had to raccommode, and how many *memoires* to present against Tonton¹, who grows the greater favourite the more people he devours. As I am the only person who dare correct him, I have already insisted on his being confined in the Bastile every day after five o'clock. T'other night he flew at lady Barrymore's face, and I thought would have torn her eye out; but it ended in biting her finger. She was terrified; she fell into tears. Madame du Deffand, who has too much parts not to see every thing in its true light, perceiving that she had not beaten Tonton half enough, immediately told us a story of a lady, whose dog having bitten a piece out of a gentleman's leg, the tender dame, in a great fright, cried out, "Won't it make my dog sick?"

Lady Barrymore has taken a house. She will be gluttoned with conquests: I never saw any body so much admired. I doubt her poor little head will be quite overset.

Madame de Marchais is charming: eloquence and attention itself. I cannot stir for peaches, nectarines, grapes and bury-pears. You would think Pomona was in love with me. I am not so transported with N——cock and hen. They are a tabor and pipe that I do not understand. He mouths and she squeaks, and neither articulates. M. d'Entragues I have not seen. Upon the whole, I am much more pleased with Paris than ever I was; and, perhaps, shall stay a little longer than I intended. The Harry

¹ A favourite dog of madame du Deffand's.

Grenvilles' are arrived. I dined with them at madame de Viry's*, who has completed the conquest of France by her behaviour on madame Clotilde's wedding, and by the fêtes she gave. Of other English I wot not, but grieve the Richmonds do not come.

I am charmed with doctor Bally; nay, and with the king of Prussia—as much as I can be with a northern monarch. For your Kragen, I think we ought to procure a female one, and marry it to Ireland, that we may breed some new islands against we have lost America. I know nothing of said America. There is not a Frenchman that does not think us distracted.

I used to scold you about your bad writing, and perceive I have written in such a hurry and blotted my letter so much, that you will not be able to read it: but consider how few moments I have to myself. I am forced to stuff my ears with cotton to get any sleep.—However, my journey has done me good. I have thrown off at least fifteen years. Here is a letter for my dear Mrs. D—— from madame de ——, who thinks she dotes on you all. Adieu!

P. S. I shall bring you two eloges of marshal Catinat, not because I admire them, but because I admire him, because I think him very like you.

LETTER CIV.

Paris, October 6, 1775.

IT will look like a month since I wrote to you; but I have been coming, and am. Madame du Deffand has been so ill, that the day she was seized I thought she would not live till night. Her Herculean weakness, which could not resist strawberries and cream after supper, has surmounted all the *ups and downs* which followed her excess; but her impatience to go every where and do every thing has been attended with a kind of relapse, and

* Henry Grenville, brother to the first earl Temple. He married miss Margaret Banks, the celebrated beauty.

* Miss Harriet Speed. She had married M. le

comte de Viry when he was minister at London from the court of Turin. She is one of the ladies to whom Gray's long story is addressed. E.

another

another kind of giddiness: so that I am not quite easy about her, as they allow her to take no nourishment to recruit, and she will die of inanition, if she does not live upon it. She cannot lift her head from the pillow without étourdissemens; and yet her spirits gallop faster than any body's, and so do her repartees. She has a great supper to-night for the duc de Choiseul, and was in such a passion yesterday with her cook about it, and that put Tonton into such a rage, that nos dames de saint Joseph thought the devil or the philosophers were flying away with their convent! As I have scarce quitted her, I can have had nothing to tell you. If she gets well, as I trust, I shall set out on the 12th; but I cannot leave her in any danger—though I shall run many myself, if I stay longer. I have kept such bad hours with this *malade*, that I have had alarms of gout; and bad weather, worse inns, and a voyage in winter, will ill suit me. The fans arrived at a propitious moment, and she immediately had them opened on her bed, and felt all the patterns, and had all the papers described. She was all satisfaction and thanks, and swore me to do her full justice to lady A—and Mrs. D—. Lord Harrington and lady Harriet are arrived; but have announced and persisted in a strict invisibility.

I know nothing of my chere patrie, but what I learn from the London Chronicle; and that tells me, that the trading towns are suing out lettres de noblesse, that is, entreating the king to put an end to commerce, that they may all be gentlemen. Here agriculture, œconomy, reformation, philosophy, are the bon-ton even at court. The two nations seem to have crossed over and figured in; but as people that copy take the bad with the good, as well as the good with the bad, there was two days ago a great horse-race in the plain de Sablon, between the comte d'Artois, the duc de Chartres, monsieur de Conflans, and the duc de Lauzun. The latter won by the address of a little English postillion, who is in such fashion, that I don't know whether the Academy will not give him for the subject of an eloge.

The duc de Choiseul, I said, is here; and as he has a second time put off his departure, cela fait beaucoup de bruit. I shall not be at all surpris'd if he resumes the reins, as (forgive me a pun) he has the *Reine* already. Messrs. de Turgot and Maleherbes certainly totter—but I shall tell you no more till I see you; for, though this goes by a private hand, it is so private, that I don't know it, being an English merchant's, who lodges in this hotel,
and

TO THE HON. HENRY SEYMOUR CONWAY. 191

and whom I do not know by sight: so perhaps I may bring you word of this letter myself. I flatter myself lady A——'s arm has recovered its fraightness and is cunning.

Madame du Deffand says I love you better than any thing in the world. If true, I hope you have not less penetration: if you have not, or it is not true, what would professions avail?—So I leave that matter in suspense. Adieu!

October 7.

MADAME du Deffand was quite well yesterday; and at near one this morning I left the duc de Choiseul, the duchess de Grammont, the prince and princess of Beauveau, princess of Poix, the marechale de Luxembourg, duchess de Lauzun, ducs de Gontaut et de Chabot, and Caraccioli, round her chaise longue; and she herself was not a dumb personage. I have not heard yet how she has slept, and must send away my letter this moment, as I must dress to go to dinner with monsieur de Maleherbes at madame de Ville-gagnon's. I must repose a great while after all this living in company; nay, intend to go very little into the world again, as I do not admire the French way of burning one's candle to the very snuff in public. Tell Mrs. D——, that the fashion now is to erect the toupée into a high detached tuft of hair, like a cockatoo's crest; and this toupée they call *la physionomie*—I don't guess why.

My laquais is come back from saint Joseph's, and says Marie de Vichy¹ has had a very good night and is quite well.—Philip², let my chaise be ready on Thursday.

LETTER CV.

Strawberry-hill, June 30, 1776.

I WAS very glad to receive your letter, not only because always most glad to hear of you, but because I wished to write to you, and had absolutely nothing to say till I had something to answer. I have lain but two nights in town since I saw you, have been else constantly here, very

¹ The maiden name of madame du Deffand.

² Mr. Walpole's valet de chambre.

much employed, though doing, hearing, knowing exactly nothing. I have had a gothic architect from Cambridge to design me a gallery, which will end in a mouse, that is, in an hexagon closet of seven feet diameter. I have been making a beauty-room, which was effected by buying two dozen of small copies of sir Peter Lely, and hanging them up; and I have been making hay, which is not made, because I put it off for three days, as I chose it should adorn the landscape when I was to have company; and so the rain is come, and has drowned it.—However, as I can even turn calculator when it is to comfort me for not minding my interest, I have discovered that it is five to one better for me that my hay should be spoiled than not; for, as the cows will eat it if it is damaged, which horses will not, and as I have five cows and but one horse, is not it plain that the worse my hay is, the better? Do not you with your refining head go, and, out of excessive friendship, find out something to destroy my system. I had rather be a philosopher than a rich man; and yet have so little philosophy, that I had much rather be content than be in the right.

Mr. — and lady — have been here four or five days—so I had both content and exercise for my philosophy. I wish lady — was as fortunate! The Pembrokes, Churchills, Le Texier, as you will have heard, and the Garricks, have been with us. Perhaps, if alone, I might have come to you—but you are all too healthy and harmonious. I can neither walk nor sing—nor, indeed, am fit for any thing but to amuse myself in a sedentary trifling way. What I have most certainly not been doing, is writing any thing: a truth I say to you, but do not desire you to repeat. I deign to satisfy scarce any body else. Whoever reported that I was writing any thing, must have been so totally unfounded, that they either blundered by guessing without reason, or knew they lied—and that could not be with any kind intention; though saying I am going to do what I am not going to do, is wretched enough. Whatever is said of me without truth, any body is welcome to believe that pleases. In fact, though I have scarce a settled purpose about any thing, I think I shall never write any more. I have written a great deal too much, unless I had written better, and I know I should now only write still worse. One's talent, whatever it is, does not improve at near sixty—yet, if I liked it, I dare to say a good reason would not stop my inclination:—but I am grown most indolent in that respect, and most absolutely indifferent to every purpose of vanity. Yet without vanity I am become still prouder and more contemptuous. I have a contempt

tempt for my countrymen that makes me despise their approbation. The applause of slaves and of the foolish mad is below ambition. Mine is the haughtiness of an ancient Briton, that cannot write what would please this age, and would not if he could. Whatever happens in America, this country is undone. I desire to be reckoned of the last age, and to be thought to have lived to be superannuated, preserving my senses only for myself and for the few I value. I cannot aspire to be traduced like Algernon Sydney, and content myself with sacrificing to him amongst my lares. Unalterable in my principles, careless about most things below essentials, indulging myself in trifles by system, annihilating myself by choice, but dreading folly at an unseemly age, I contrive to pass my time agreeably enough, yet see its termination approach without anxiety. This is a true picture of my mind; and it must be true, because drawn for you, whom I would not deceive, and could not if I would. Your question on my being writing drew it forth, though with more seriousness than the report deserved—yet talking to one's dearest friend is neither wrong nor out of season. Nay, you are my best apology. I have always contented myself with your being perfect, or, if your modesty demands a mitigated term, I will say, unexceptionable. It is comical, to be sure, to have always been more solicitous about the virtue of one's friend than about one's own—yet I repeat it, you are my apology—though I never was so unreasonable as to make you answerable for my faults in return: I take them wholly to myself—But enough of this. When I know my own mind, for hitherto I have settled no plan for my summer, I will come to you. Adieu!

 LETTER CVI.

Thursday, 31.

THANK you for your letter. I send this by the coach. You will have found a new scene—not an unexpected one by you and me, though I do not pretend I thought it so near. I rather imagined France would have instigated or winked at Spain's beginning with us. Here is a solution of the Americans declaring themselves independent. Oh! the folly, the madness, the guilt of having plunged us into this abyss! Were we and a few more endued with any uncommon penetration?—No—They who did

¹ On the opening of the parliament in the year 1776.

not see as far, *would* not. I am impatient to hear the complexion of to-day. I suppose it will on the part of administration have been a wretched farce of fear daubed over with airs of bullying. You ~~I~~ do not doubt, have acted like yourself, feeling for our situation, above insulting, and unprovoked but at the criminality that has brought us to this pass. Pursue your own path, nor lean to the court that may be paid to you on either side, as I am sure you will not regard their being displeased that you do not go as far as their interested views may wish.

If the court should receive any more of what they call good news, I think the war with France will be unavoidable. It was the victory at Long Island, and the frantic presumption it occasioned, that has ripened France's measures—And now we are to awe them by pressing—an act that speaks our impotence!—which France did not want to learn!

I would have come to town, but I had declared so much I would not, that I thought it would look as if I came to enjoy the distress of the ministers—but I do not enjoy the distress of my country. I think we are undone—I have always thought so—whether we enslaved America or lost it totally—So we that were against the war could expect no good issue. If you do return to Park-place to-morrow, you will oblige me much by breakfasting here: you know it wastes you very little time.

I am glad I did not know of Mrs. D——'s fore throat till it is almost well. Pray take care and do not catch it.

Thank you for your care of me: I will not stay a great deal here, but at present I never was better in my life—and here I have no vexatious moments. I hate to dispute; I scorn to triumph myself, and it is very difficult to keep my temper when others do. I own I have another reason for my retirement, which is prudence. I have thought of it late, but at least I will not run into any new expence. It would cost me more than I care to afford to buy a house in town, unless I do it to take some of my money out of the stocks, for which I tremble a little. My brother is seventy; and if I live myself, I must not build too much on his life; and you know, if he fails, I lose the most secure part of my income. I refused from lord Holland, and last year from lord North, to accept the place for my own life; and having never done a dirty thing, I will not disgrace myself

myself at fifty-nine. I should like to live as well as I have done; but what I wish more, is to secure what I have already saved for those I would take care of after me. These are the true reasons of my dropping all thoughts of a better house in town, and of living so privately here. I will not sacrifice my health to my prudence; but my temper is so violent, that I know the tranquillity I enjoy here in solitude, is of much more benefit to my health, than the air of the country is detrimental to it. You see I can be reasonable when I have time to reflect; but philosophy has a poor chance with me when my warmth is stirred—and yet I know, that an angry old man out of parliament, and that can do nothing but be angry, is a ridiculous animal.

LETTER CVII.

Strawberry-hill, July 10, 1777.

DON'T be alarmed at this thousandth letter in a week. This is more to lady Hamilton¹ than to you. Pray tell her I have seen *monfieur la Bataille d'Azincourt*². He brought me her letter yesterday: and I kept him to sup, *sleep* in the modern phrase, and breakfast here this morning; and flatter myself he was, and she will be, content with the regard I paid to her letter.

The weather is a thought warmer to-day, and I am as busy as bees are about their hay. My *haystacks*³ have cost me as much as if I had hired them of the landgrave.

I am glad your invasion⁴ is blown over. I fear I must invite those flat-bottomed vessels hither, as the Swissess Necker has directed them to the port of Twickenham. Madame de Blot is too fine, and monsieur Schomberg one of the most disagreeable, cross, contemptuous savages I ever saw. I have often supped with him at the duchess de Choiseul's, and could not bear him; and now I must be *charmé* and *penetré* and *comblé* to see him:

¹ The first wife of sir William Hamilton, envoy extraordinary at the court of Naples.

² M. le chevalier d'Azincourt, a French antiquary, long settled in Italy.

³ Hessian.

⁴ A party of French nobility then in England, who were to have made a visit at Park-place.

and I shall act it very ill, as I always do when I don't do what I like. Madame Necker's letter is as affected and *précieuse*, as if Marmontel had written it for a Peruvian milk-maid. She says I am a philosopher, and as like madame de Sevigné as two peas—who was as unlike a philosopher as a gridiron. As I have none of madame de Sevigné's natural easy wit, I am rejoiced that I am no more like a philosopher neither, and still less like a *philosophe*; which is a being compounded of D'Urfey and Diogenes, a pastoral coxcomb and a supercilious brute.

• L E T T E R C V I I I .

Tuesday evening, Sept. 16, 1777.

I HAVE got a delightful plaything, if I had time for play. It is a new sort of camera-obscura^{*} for drawing the portraits of persons, or prospects, or insides of rooms, and does not depend on the sun or any thing. The misfortune is, that there is a vast deal of machinery and putting together, and I am the worst person living for managing it. You know I am impenetrably dull in every thing that requires a grain of common sense. The inventor is to come to me on Friday, and try if he can make me remember my right hand from my left. I could as soon have invented my machine as manage it; yet it has cost me ten guineas, and may cost me as much more as I please for improving it. You will conclude it was the dearness tempted me. I believe I must keep an astronomer, like Mr. Beauclerc, to help me to play with my rattle. The inventor, who seems very modest and simple, but I conclude an able flatterer, was in love with my house, and vowed nothing ever suited his camera so well. To be sure, the painted windows and the prospects, and the gothic chimneys, &c. &c. were the delights of one's eyes, when no bigger than a silver penny. You would know how to manage it, as if you had never done any thing else. Had not you better come and see it? You will learn how to conduct it, with the pleasure of correcting my awkwardness and *unlearnability*. Sir Joshua Reynolds and West have each got one; and the duke of Northumberland is so charmed with the invention, that I dare say he can talk upon and explain it till I should understand ten times less of the matter than I

^{*} The machine called a delineator.

do. Remember, neither lady A. nor you, nor Mrs. D. have seen my new diving closet, nor the billiard-sticks with which the countess of Pembroke and Arcadia used to play with her brother sir Philip; nor the portrait of la belle Jennings in the state bedchamber. I go to town this day se'nnight for a day or two; and as, *to be sure*, Mount-Edgcumbe has put you out of humour with Park-place, you may deign to leave it for a moment. I never did see Cotchel', and am sorry. Is not the old wardrobe there still? There was one from the time of Cain; but Adam's breeches and Eve's under petticoat were eaten by a goat in the ark. Good-night.

LETTER CIX.

October 5, 1777.

YOU are exceedingly good, and I shall assuredly accept your proposal in the fullest sense, and, to ensure Mrs. D——, beg I may expect you on Saturday next the 11th. If lord and lady William Campbell will do me the honour of accompanying you, I shall be most happy to see them, and expect miss Caroline*. Let me know about them, that the state bed-chamber may be aired.

My difficulties about removing from home arise from the consciousness of my own weakness. I make it a rule, as much as I can, to conform wherever I go. Though I am threecore to-day, I should not think that an age for giving every thing up; but it is for whatever one has not strength to perform. You, though not a vast deal younger, are as healthy and strong, thank God, as ever you was: and you cannot have ideas of the mortification of being stared at by strangers and servants, when one hobbles, or cannot do as others do. I delight in being with you, and the Richmonds, and those I love and know; but the crowds of young people, and Chichester folks, and officers, and strange servants, make me afraid of Goodwood, I own. My spirits are never low, but they will seldom last out the whole day; and though I dare to say I appear to many capricious, and different from the rest of the world, there is more reason in my behaviour than there seems. You

* The old residence of the family of Edgcumbe, 12 miles distant from Mount Edgcumbe.

* Miss Caroline Campbell, eldest daughter of lord William Campbell.

know in London I seldom stir out in a morning, and always late ; and it is because I want a great deal of rest. Exercise never did agree with me ; and it is hard if I do not know myself by this time ; and what has done so well with me will probably suit me best for the rest of my life. It would be ridiculous to talk so much of myself, and to enter into such trifling details, but *you* are the person in the world that I wish to convince that I do not act merely from humour or ill-humour ; though I confess at the same time that I want your bonhomie, and have a disposition not to care at all for people that I do not absolutely like. I could say a great deal more on this head, but it is not proper ; though, when one has pretty much done with the world, I think with lady Blandford that one may indulge one's self in one's own whims and partialities in one's own house. I do not mean, still less to profess, retirement, because it is less ridiculous to go on with the world to the last, than to return to it : but in a quiet way it has long been my purpose to drop a great deal of it. Of all things I am farthest from not intending to come often to Park-place, whenever you have little company ; and I had rather be with you in November than in July, because I am so totally unable to walk farther than a snail. I will never say any more on these subjects, because there may be as much affectation in being over-old, as folly in being over-young. My idea of age is, that one has nothing really to do but what one ought, and what is reasonable. All affectations are pretensions ; and pretending to be any thing one is not, cannot deceive when one is known, as every body must be that has lived long. I do not mean that old folks may not have pleasures, if they can ; but then I think those pleasures are confined to being comfortable, and to enjoying the few friends one has not outlived. I am so fair as to own, that one's duties are not pleasures. I have given up a great deal of my time to nephews and nieces, even to some I can have little affection for. I do love my nieces, nay like them ; but people above forty years younger are certainly not the society I should seek. They can only think and talk of what is, or is to come ; I certainly am more disposed to think and talk of what is past : and the obligation of passing the end of a long life in sets of totally new company is more irksome to me than passing a great deal of my time, as I do, quite alone. Family love and pride make me interest myself about the young people of my own family—for the whole rest of the young world, they are as indifferent to me as puppets or black children. This is my creed, and a key to my whole conduct, and the more likely to remain my

creed,

creed, as I think it is *raisonné*. If I could paint my opinions instead of writing them, and I don't know whether it would not make a new sort of alphabet, I should use different colours for different affections at different ages¹. When I speak of love, affection, friendship, taste, liking, I should draw them rose colour, carmine, blue, green, yellow, for my cotemporaries: for new comers, the first would be of no colour; the others, purple, brown, crimson, and changeable. Remember, one tells one's creed only to one's confessor, that is *sub sigillo*. I write to you as I think; to others as I must. Adieu!

LETTER CX.

July 3, 1778.

I HAVE had some conversation with a ministerial person, on the subject of pacification with France; and he dropped a hint, that as we should not have much chance of a good peace, the opposition would make great clamour on it. I said a few words on the duty of ministers to do what they thought right, be the consequence what it would. But as honest men do not want such lectures, and dishonest will not let them weigh, I waved that theme, to dwell on what is more likely to be persuasive, and which I am firmly persuaded is no less true than the former maxim; and that was, that the ministers are *still* so strong, that if they could get a peace that would save the nation, though not a brilliant or glorious one, the nation in general would be pleased with it, and the clamours of the opposition be insignificant.

I added, what I think true too, that no time is to be lost in treating; not only for preventing a blow, but from the consequences the first misfortune would have. The nation is not yet alienated from the court, but it is growing so; is grown so enough, for any calamity to have violent effects. Any internal disturbance would advance the hostile designs of France. An insurrection from distress would be a double invitation to invasion; and, I am sure, much more to be dreaded, even personally, by the ministers, than the ill-humours of opposition for even an inglorious peace. To do the opposition justice, it is not composed of incendiaries. Parliamentary speeches

¹ This whimsical appropriation of colours to those acquainted with Mr. Walpole's particular opinion of particular colours. E.

raise no tumults; but tumults would be a dreadful thorough basis to speeches. The ministers do not know the strength they have left (supposing they apply it in time), if they are afraid of making any peace. They were too sanguine in making war; I hope they will not be too timid of making peace.

What do you think of an idea of mine, of offering France a neutrality? that is, to allow her to assist both us and the Americans. I know she would assist only them: but were it not better to connive at her assisting them, without attacking us, than her doing both? A treaty with her would perhaps be followed by one with America. We are sacrificing all the essentials we *can* recover, for a few words; and risking the independence of this country, for the nominal supremacy over America. France seems to leave us time for treating. She made no scruple of begging peace of us in 63, that she might lie by and recover her advantages. Was not that a wise precedent? Does not she *now* show that it was? Is not policy the honour of nations? I mean, not morally, but has Europe left itself any other honour? And since it has really left itself no honour, and as little morality, does not the morality of a nation consist in its preserving itself in as much happiness as it can? The invasion of Portugal by Spain in the last war, the partition of Poland, have abrogated the law of nations. Kings have left no ties between one another. Their duty to their people is still allowed. He is a good king that preserves his people; and if temporising answers that end, is it not justifiable? You, who are as moral as wise, answer my questions. Grotius is obsolete. Dr. Joseph¹ and Dr. Frederic², with four hundred thousand commentators, are reading new lectures—and I should say, thank God, to one another, if the four hundred thousand commentators were not in worse danger than they. Louis XIV. is grown a casuist compared to those partitioners. Well, let us simple individuals keep our honesty, and bless our stars that we have not armies at our command, lest we should divide kingdoms that are at our bienséance! What a dreadful thing it is for such a wicked little imp as man to have absolute power!—But I have travelled into Germany, when I meant to talk to you only of England; and it is too late to recall my text. Good-night.

¹ The emperor of Germany.

² Frederic II. king of Prussia.

LETTER CXI.

Saturday, July 18, 1778.

YESTERDAY evening the following notices were fixed up in Lloyd's coffee-house:

That a merchant in the City had received an express from France, that the Brest fleet, consisting of 28 ships of the line, were sailed, with orders to burn, sink, and destroy.

That admiral Keppel was at Plymouth, and had sent to demand three more ships of the line to enable him to meet the French.

On these notices the stocks sunk $3\frac{1}{2}$ per cent.

An account I have received this morning from a good hand says, that on Thursday the Admiralty received a letter from admiral Keppel, who was off the Land's End, saying, that the Worcester was in sight; that the Peggy had joined him, and had seen the Thunderer making sail for the fleet; that he was waiting for the Centaur, Terrible, and Vigilant; and that having received advice from lord Shulldham that the Shrewsbury was to sail from Plymouth on Thursday, he should likewise wait for her. His fleet will then consist of 30 ships of the line; and he hoped to have an opportunity of trying his strength with the French fleet on our own coast: if not, he would seek them on theirs.

The French fleet sailed on the 7th, consisting of 31 ships of the line, 2 fifty gun ships, and 8 frigates.

This state is probably more authentic than those at Lloyd's.

Thus you see how big the moment is! and, unless far more favourable to us in its burst than good sense allows one to promise, it must leave us greatly exposed. Can we expect to beat without considerable loss?—and then, where have we another fleet? I need not state the danger from a reverse.

The Spanish ambassador certainly arrived on Monday.

VOL. V.

D d

I shall

I shall go to town on Monday for a day or two ; therefore, if you write to-morrow, direct to Arlington-street.

I add no more : for words are unworthy of the situation ; and to blame now, would be childish. It is hard to be gamed for against one's consent ; but when one's country is at stake, one must throw one's self out of the question. When one is old, and nobody, one must be whirled with the current, and shake one's wings like a fly, if one lights on a pebble. The prospect is so dark, that one shall rejoice at whatever does not happen, that may. Thus I have composed a sort of philosophy for myself, that reserves every possible chance. You want none of these artificial aids to your resolution. Invincible courage and immaculate integrity are not dependent on the folly of ministers or on the events of war. Adieu !

L E T T E R CXII.

Strawberry-hill, August 21, 1778.

I THINK it so very uncertain whether this letter will find you, that I write it merely to tell you I received yours to-day.

I recollect nothing particularly worth seeing in Sussex that you have not seen (for I think you have seen Coudray and Stansted, and I know you have Petworth), but Hurst Monceaux near Battle ; and I don't know whether it is not pulled down. The site of Arundel castle is fine, and there are some good tombs of the Fitzalans at the church, but little remains of the castle ; in the room of which is a modern brick-house ; and in the late duke's time the ghost of a giant walked there his grace said—but I suppose the present duke has laid it in the Red Sea—of claret.

Beside Knowle and Penshurst, I should think there were several seats of old families in Kent worth seeing ; but I do not know them. I poked out Summer-hill for the sake of the *Babylonienne* in Grammont ; but it is now a mere farm-house. Don't let them persuade you to visit Leeds castle, which is not worth seeing.

You have been near losing me and half-a-dozen fair cousins to-day. The Goldsmiths

Goldsmiths company dined in Mr. Shirley's field, next to Pope's. I went to Ham with my three Waldegrave nieces and miss Keppel, and saw them land, and dine in tents erected for them from the opposite shore. You may imagine how beautiful the sight was in such a spot and in such a day! I staid and dined at Ham, and after dinner lady Dyfart with lady Bridget Tollemache took our four nieces on the water to see the return of the barges, but were to set me down at lady Browne's. We were, with a footman and the two watermen, ten, in a little boat. As we were in the middle of the river, a larger boat full of people drove directly upon us on purpose. I believe they were drunk. We called to them, to no purpose; they beat directly against the middle of our little skiff—but, thank you, did not do us the least harm—no thanks to them. Lady Malpas was in lord Strafford's garden, and gave us for gone. In short, Neptune never would have had so beautiful a prize as the four girls.

I hear an express has been sent to — to offer him the mastership of the horse. I had a mind to make you guests, but you never can—to lord Exeter.

Pray let me know the moment you return to Park-place.

L E T T E R CXIII.

October 23, 1778.

—having thus told you all I know, I shall add a few words, to say I conclude you have known as much, by my not having heard from you. Should the post-office or secretary's office set their wits at work to bring to light all the intelligence contained under the above hiatus, I am confident they will discover nothing, though it gives an exact description of all they have been about themselves.

My personal history is very short. I have had an assembly and the rheumatism—and am buying a house—and it rains—and I shall plant the roses against my treillage to-morrow. Thus you know what I have done, suffered, am doing, and shall do. Let me know as much of you, in quantity, not in quality! Introductions to and conclusions of letters are as much out of fashion, as *to*, *at*, &c. on letters. This sublime age reduces every

thing to its quintessence: all periphrases and expletives are so much in disuse, that I suppose soon the only way of making love will be to say "*Lie down.*" Luckily, the lawyers will not part with any synonymous words, and will, consequently, preserve the redundancies of our language—Dixi.

LETTER CXIV.

Arlington-street, January 9, 1779.

YOUR flight to Bath would have much surprised me, if Mr. C. who, I think, heard it from Stanley, had not prepared me for it. Since you was amused, I am glad you went, especially as you escaped being initiated in Mrs. ———'s follies at ———, which you would have mentioned. She would certainly have sent some trapes of a muse to press you, had she known what good epigrams you write.

I went to Strawberry partly out of prudence, partly from ennui. I thought it best to air myself before I go in and out of hot rooms here, and had my house thoroughly warmed for a week previously, and then only stirred from the red room to the blue on the same floor. I staid five days, and was neither the better nor the worse for it. I was quite tired with having neither company, books, nor amusement of any kind. Either from the emptiness of the town, or that ten weeks of gout have worn out the patience of all my acquaintance, but I do not see three persons in three days. This gives me but an uncomfortable prospect for my latter days: it is but probable that I may be a cripple in a fit or two more, if I have strength to go through them; and as that will be long life, one outlives one's acquaintance. I cannot make new acquaintance, nor interest myself at all about the young, except those that belong to me; nor does that go beyond contributing to their pleasures, without having much satisfaction in their conversation—But—one must take every thing as it comes, and make the best of it. I have had a much happier life than I deserve, and than millions that deserve better. I should be very weak, if I could not bear the uncomfortableness of old age, when I can afford what comforts it is capable of. How many poor old people have none of them! I am ashamed whenever I am peevish, and recollect that I have fire and servants to help me!

I hear

I hear admiral Keppel is in high spirits with the great respect and zeal expressed for him. In my own opinion, his constitution will not stand the struggle. I am very uneasy too for the duke of R——, who is at Portsmouth, and will be at least as much agitated.

Sir ——— has written a large pamphlet, and a very good one. It is to show, that whenever the Grecian republics taxed their dependents, the latter resisted, and shook off the yoke. He has printed but twelve copies: the duke of G. sent me one of them. There is an anecdote of my father, on the authority of old Jack White, which I doubt. It says, he would not go on with the excise scheme, though his friends advised it. I cannot speak to the particular event, as I was then at school; but it was more like him to have yielded against his sentiments, to Mr. Pelham and his candid—or say, plausible and timid friends. I have heard him say, that he never did give up his opinion to such men, but he always repented it. However, the anecdote in the book would be more to his honour. But what a strange man is sir ———! I suppose now he has written this book, he will change his opinion, and again be for carrying on the war—or, if he does not know his own mind for two years together, why will he take places, to make every body doubt his honesty?

L E T T E R CXV.

Arlington-street, May 22, 1779.

IF you hear of us no oftener than we of you, you will be as much behind hand in news as my lady Lyttelton. We have seen a traveller that saw you in your island¹, but it sounds like hearing of Ulysses.—Well! we must be content. You are not only not dethroned, but owe the safety of your dominions to your own skill in fortification. If we do not hear of your extending your conquests, why, it is not less than all our modern heroes have done, whom prophets have foretold and gazettes celebrated—or who have foretold and celebrated themselves. Pray be content to be cooped up in an island that has no neighbours, when the Howes and Clin-

¹ Mr. Conway was now at his government, Jersey.

tous, and Dunmores and Burgoynes and Campbells are not yet got beyond the great river—Inquiry¹! To-day's papers say, that the *little prince of Orange*² is to invade you again—but we trust sir James Wallace has clipped his wings so close, that they will not grow again this season, though he is so ready to *fly*.

Nothing material has happened since I wrote last—so, as every moment of a civil war is precious, every one has been turned to the interest of diversion. There have been three masquerades, an installation, and the ball of the knights at the Haymarket this week; not to mention Almack's, Festino, lady Spencer's, Ranelagh and Vauxhall, operas and plays. The duchess of Bolton too saw masks—so many, that the floor gave way, and the company in the dining-room were near falling on the heads of those in the parlour, and exhibiting all that has not yet appeared in Doctor's Commons. At the knights' ball was such a profusion of Strawberries, that people could hardly get into the supper-room.—I could tell you more, but I do not love to exaggerate.

Lady A. told me this morning, that lord Bristol has got a calf with two feet to each leg—I am convinced it is by the duchess of Kingston, who has two of every thing, where others have but one.

Adieu!—I am going to sup with Mrs. Abington—and hope Mrs. Clive will not hear of it.

Yours ever,

HOR. WALPOLE.

¹ The parliamentary inquiry which took place in the house of commons on the conduct of the American war.

² The prince of Nassau, who had commanded

the attack upon Jersey, claiming relationship to the great house of Nassau, Mr. Walpole calls the "*little prince of Orange*." E.

LETTER CXVI.

Strawberry-hill, Saturday June 5, 1779.

I WRITE to you more seldom than I am disposed to do, from having nothing positive to tell you, and from being unwilling to say and unsay every minute something that is reported positively. The confident assertions of the victory over D'Estaing are totally vanished—and they who invented them, now declaim as bitterly against Byron, as if he had deceived them—and as they did against Keppel. This day se'nnight there was a great alarm about Ireland—which was far from being all invention, though not an absolute insurrection, as was said. The case, I believe, was this: The court, in order to break the volunteer army established by the Irish themselves, endeavoured to persuade a body in lady Blayney's county of Monaghan to enlist in the militia—which they took indignantly. They said, they had great regard for lady Blayney and lord Clermont; but to act under them, would be acting under the king, and that was by no means their intention. There have since been motions for inquiries what steps the ministers have taken to satisfy the Irish—and these they have imprudently rejected—which will not tend to pacification. The ministers have been pushed too on the article of Spain, and could not deny that all negotiation is at an end—though they will not own farther. However, the Spanish ambassador is much out of humour. From Paris they write confidently of the approaching declaration; and lord Sandwich, I hear, has said in a very mixed company, that it was folly not to expect it. There is another million asked, and given on a vote of credit; and lord North has boasted of such mines for next year, that one would think he believed next year would never come.

The inquiry^{*} goes on, and lord Harrington did himself and Burgoyne honour. Barré and governor Johnstone have had warm words, and Burke has been as frantic for the Roman catholics as lord George Gordon against them. The parliament, it is said, is to rise on the 21st.

You will not collect from all this that our prospect clears up. I fear there is not more discretion in the treatment of Ireland than of America.

^{*} Into the conduct of the American war.

The court seems to be infatuated, and to think that nothing is of any consequence but a majority in parliament—though they have totally lost all power but that of provoking. Fortunate it had been for the king and kingdom, had the court had no majority for these six years! America had still been ours!—and all the lives and all the millions we have squandered! A majority that has lost thirteen provinces by bullying and vapouring, and the most childish menaces, will be a brave countermatch for France and Spain, and a rebellion in Ireland! In short, it is plain that there is nothing a majority in parliament can do, but outvote a minority; and yet by their own accounts one would think they could not do even that. I saw a paper the other day that began with this *Iriscism*, “As the minority have lost us thirteen provinces, &c.” I know nothing the minority have done, or been suffered to do, but restore the Roman catholic religion—and that too was by the desire of the court.

This is however the present style. They announced with infinite applause a new production of Tickell:—it has appeared, and is a most paltry performance. It is called the *Cassette verte* of M. de Sartine, and pretends to be his correspondence with the opposition. Nay, they are so pitifully mean as to laugh at doctor Franklin, who has such thorough reason to sit and laugh at them. What triumph it must be to him to see a miserable pamphlet all the revenge they can take! There is another, still duller, called *Opposition Mornings*, in which you are lugged in. In truth, it is a compliment to any man to except him out of the number of those that have contributed to the shocking disgraces inflicted on this undone country! When lord Chatham was minister, he never replied to abuse but by a victory.

I know no private news: I have been here ever since Tuesday, enjoying my tranquillity, as much as an honest man can do who sees his country ruined. It is just such a period as makes philosophy wisdom. There are great moments when every man is called on to exert himself—but when folly, infatuation, delusion, incapacity and profligacy fling a nation away, and it concurs itself, and applauds its destroyers, a man who has lent no hand to the mischief, and can neither prevent nor remedy the mass of evils, is fully justified in sitting aloof and beholding the tempest rage with silent scorn and indignant compassion. Nay, I have, I own, some comfortable reflections.

reflections. I rejoice that there is still a great continent of Englishmen who will remain free and independent, and who laugh at the impotent majorities of a prostitute parliament. I care not whether general Burgoyne and governor Johnstone cross over and figure in, and support or oppose; nor whether Mr. Burke, or the superior of the jesuits, is high commissioner to the kirk of Scotland. My ideas are such as I have always had, and are too plain and simple to comprehend modern confusions; and, therefore, they suit with those of few men. What will be the issue of this chaos, I know not, and, probably, shall not see. I do see with satisfaction, *that what was meditated* has failed by the grossest folly; and when one has escaped the worst, lesser evils must be endured with patience.

After this dull effusion, I will divert you with a story that made me laugh this morning till I cried. You know my Swift David, and his incomprehensible pronounciation. He came to me, and said, "Auh! dar is meses — wants some of your large flags to put in her great O." With much ado I found out that Mrs. — had sent for leave to take up some flags out of my meadow for her grotto.

I hope in a few days to see lady A—— and miss J—— here; I have writ to propose it.—What are your intentions? Do you stay till you have made your island impregnable? I doubt it will be our only one that will be so.

L E T T E R CXVII.

Strawberry-hill, June 16, 1779.

YOUR countess was here last Thursday, and received a letter from you, that told us how slowly you receive ours. When you will receive this I cannot guess; but it dates a new æra, which you with reason did not care to look at as possible. In a word, behold a Spanish war! I must detail a little to increase your wonder. I heard here the day before yesterday that it was likely; and that night received a letter from Paris, telling me (it was of the 6th) that monsieur de Beauveau was going, they knew not whither, at the head of 25,000 men, with three lieutenant-generals and six or eight *marechaux de camp* under him. Yesterday I went to town, and T. W. happened

to call on me.—He, who used to be informed early, did not believe a word either of a Spanish war or a French expedition. I saw some other persons in the evening as ignorant. At night I went to sup at Richmond-house. The duke said the Brest fleet was certainly sailed, and had got the start of ours by twelve days; that monsieur de Beauveau was on board with a large sum of money, and with white and red cockades; and that there would certainly be a Spanish war. He added, that the opposition were then pressing in the house of commons to have the parliament continue sitting, and urging to know, if we were not at the eve of a Spanish war; but the ministers persisted in the prorogation for to-morrow or Friday, and would not answer on Spain.

I said I would make you wonder——But no—Why should the parliament continue to sit? Are not the ministers and the parliament the same thing? And how has either house shown that it has any talent for war?

The duke of R. does not guess whither the Brest fleet is gone.—He thinks, if to Ireland, we should have known it by this time. He has heard that the prince of Beauveau has said he was going on an expedition that would be glorious in the eyes of posterity.—I asked, if that might not mean Gibraltar? The duke doubts, but hopes it, as he thinks it no wise measure on their side; yet he was very melancholy, as you will be, on this heavy accession to our distresses.

Well! here we are, aris et focus and all at stake! What can we be meaning? Unable to conquer America before she was assisted—scarce able to keep France at bay—are we a match for both, and Spain too?—What can be our view? nay, what can be our expectation? I sometimes think we reckon it will be more creditable to be forced by France and Spain to give up America, than to have the merit with the latter of doing it with grace.—But, as Cato says,

I am weary of conjectures—This must end them;

that is, the sword:—and never, I believe, did a country plunge itself into such difficulties step by step, and for six years together, without once recollecting that each foreign war rendered the object of the civil war more unattainable; and that in both the foreign wars we have not an object in prospect. Unable to recruit our remnant of an army in America, are we to
make

make conquests on France and Spain? They may choose their attacks: we can scarce choose what we will defend.

Ireland, they say, is more temperate than was expected. That is some consolation—yet many fear the Irish will be tempted to unite with America, which would throw all that trade into their convenient harbours: and I own I have apprehensions that the parliament's rising without taking a step in their favour, may offend them. Surely at least we have courageous ministers. I thought my father a stout man:—he had not a tithe of their spirit.

The town has wound up the season perfectly in character by a fête at the Pantheon by subscription. Le Texier managed it; but it turned out sadly. The company was first shut into the galleries to look down on the supper, then let to descend to it. Afterwards they were led into the subterraneous apartment, which was laid with mould, and planted with trees, and crammed with nosegays: but the fresh earth, and the dead leaves, and the effluvia of breaths made such a stench and moisture, that they were suffocated; and when they remounted, the legs and wings of chickens and remnants of ham (for the supper was not removed) poisoned them more. A druid in an arbour distributed verses to the ladies; then the Baccelli and the dancers of the opera danced; and then danced the company; and then it being morning, and the candles burnt out, the windows were opened; and then the stewed danced assembly were such shocking figures, that they fled like ghosts as they looked.—I suppose there will be no more balls unless the French land, and then we shall show we do not mind it.

Thus I have told you all I know. You will ponder over these things in your little distant island, when we have forgotten them. There is another person, one doctor Franklin, who, I fancy, is not sorry that we divert ourselves so well.

L E T T E R CXVIII.

Strawberry-hill, Sept. 13, 1779.

I AM writing to you at random; not knowing whether or when this letter will go: but your brother told me last night that an officer, whose

name I have forgot, was arrived from Jersey, and would return to you soon. I am sensible how very seldom I have written to you—but you have been few moments out of my thoughts. What *they* have been, you who know me so minutely may well guess, and why they do not pass my lips. Sense, experience, circumstances, can teach one to command one's self outwardly, but do not divest a most friendly heart of its feelings. I believe the state of my mind has contributed to bring on a very weak and decaying body my present disorders. I have not been well the whole summer; but for these three weeks much otherwise. It has at last ended in the gout, which, to all appearance, will be a short fit.

On public affairs I cannot speak. Every thing is so exaggerated on all sides, that what grains of truth remain in the sieve would appear cold and insipid; and the great manœuvres you learn as soon as I. In the naval battle between Byron and d'Estaing, our captains were worthy of any age in our story.

You may imagine how happy I am at Mrs. D——'s return, and at her not being at Naples, as she was likely to have been, at the dreadful explosion of Vesuvius. Surely it will have glutted Sir William's rage for volcanos! How poor lady Hamilton's nerves stood it I do not conceive.—Oh, mankind! mankind!—Are there not calamities enough in store for us, but must destruction be our amusement and pursuit?

I send this to Ditton¹, where it may wait some days; but I would not suffer a sure opportunity to slip without a line. You are more obliged to me for all I do not say, than for whatever eloquence itself could pen.

P. S. I unseal my letter to add, that undoubtedly you will come to the meeting of parliament, which will be in October. Nothing can or ever did make me advise you to take a step unworthy of yourself.—But surely you have higher and more sacred duties than the government of a molehill!

¹ Where lord Hertford had then a villa.

LETTER CXIX.

January 3, 1781.

AFTER I had written my note to you last night, I called on ———, who gave me the dismal account of Jamaica; that you will see in the gazette, and of the damage done to our shipping. Admiral Rowley is safe; but they are in apprehensions for Walsingham. He told me too what is not in the gazette; that of the expedition against the Spanish settlements, not a single man survives! The papers to-day, I see, speak of great danger to Gibraltar.

————— repeated to me his great desire that you should publish your speech¹, as he told you. I do not conceive why *he* is so eager for it; for he professes total despair about America. It looks to me as if there was a wish of throwing blame somewhere—but I profess I am too simple to dive into the objects of shades of intrigues; nor do I care about them. We shall be reduced to a miserable little island; and from a mighty empire sink into as insignificant a country as Denmark or Sardinia! When our trade and marine are gone, the latter of which we keep up by unnatural efforts, to which our debt will put a stop, we shall lose the East Indies as Portugal did; and then France will dictate to us more imperiously than ever we did to Ireland, which is in a manner already gone too! These are mortifying reflections, to which an English mind cannot easily accommodate itself—But, alas! we have been pursuing the very conduct that France would have prescribed, and more than with all her presumption she could have dared to expect. Could she flatter herself that we would take no advantage of the dilatoriness and unwillingness of Spain to enter into the war? that we would reject the disposition of Russia to support us? and that our still more natural friend Holland would be driven into the league against us? All this has happened; and, like an infant, we are delighted with having set our own frock in a blaze!—I sit and gaze with astonishment at our phrensy—Yet why? Are not nations as liable to intoxication as individuals? Are not predictions founded on calculation oftener rejected than the prophecies

¹ Introductory of a motion “for leave to “jestly to send out commissioners with full
“bring in a bill for quieting the troubles that “power to treat with America for that pur-
“have for some time subsisted between Great “pose.”
“Britain and America, and enabling his ma-

of dreamers? Do we not act precisely like C—— F——, who thought he had discovered a new truth in figures, when he preached that wise doctrine, that nobody could want money that would pay enough for it?—The consequence was, that in two years he left himself without the possibility of borrowing a shilling. I am not surprised at the spirits of a boy of parts—I am not surprised at the people—I do wonder at government, that games away its consequence. For what are we now really at war with America, France, Spain, and Holland?—Not with hopes of reconquering America, not with the smallest prospect of conquering a foot of land from France, Spain, or Holland—No; we are at war on the defensive, to protect what is left, or more truly to stave off, for a year perhaps, a peace that must proclaim our nakedness and impotence. I would not willingly recur to that womanish vision of, Something may turn up in our favour! That something must be a naval victory that will annihilate at once all the squadrons of Europe—must wipe off forty millions of new debt—reconcile the affections of America, that for six years we have laboured to alienate—and that must recall out of the grave the armies and sailors that are perished—and that must make thirteen provinces willing to receive the law, without the necessity of keeping ten thousand men amongst them. The gigantic imagination of lord Chatham would not entertain such a chimera. Lord ——— perhaps would say he did, rather than not undertake; or Mr. Burke could form a metaphoric vision, that would satisfy no imagination but his own: but I, who am nullius addictus jurare in verba, have no hopes either in our resources or in our geniuses, and look on my country already as undone!—It is grievous—but I shall not have much time to lament its fall!

LETTER CXX.

Strawberry-hill, Sunday evening, May 6, 1781.

I SUPPED with your countess on Friday at lord Frederic Campbell's, where I heard of the relief of Gibraltar by Darby. The Spanish fleet kept

¹ It may be some comfort, in a moment no less portentous and melancholy than the one here described, to recollect the almost unhopèd-for recovery of national prosperity, which took place from the peace 1782 to the declaration of war against France in the year 1793. May our exertions procure the speedy application of a similar remedy to our present evils, and may that remedy be productive of equally good effects! E. March 1798.

close

close in Cadiz :—however, he lifted up his leg, and just squirted contempt on them. As he is disembarassed of his transports, I suppose their ships will scramble on shore rather than fight. Well, I shall be perfectly content with our fleet coming back in a whole skin. It will be enough to have out-quixoted Don Quixote's own nation. As I knew your countess would write the next day, I waited till she was gone out of town and would not have much to tell you—not that I have either; and it is giving myself an air, to pretend to know more at Twickenham than she can at Henley. Though it is a bitter north-east, I came hither to-day to look at my lilacs, though à la glace, and to get from Pharaoh, for which there is a rage. I doted on it above thirty years ago; but it is not decent to sit up all night now with boys and girls. —, the banker à la mode, has been demolished. He and his associate sir — — went early tother night to Brookes's, before C. F. and F. who keep a bank there, were come. But they soon arrived, attacked their rivals, broke their bank, and won above 4000*l*. “There,” said F. “so should all usurpers be served!”—He did still better; for he sent for his tradesmen, and paid as far as the money would go.—In the mornings he continues his war on lord North—but cannot break *that* bank. The court has carried a secret committee for India affairs—and it is supposed that Rumbold is to be the sacrifice :—but as he is near as rich as lord Clive, I conclude he will escape by the same golden key.

I told you in my last, that Tonton¹ was arrived. I brought him this morning to take possession of his new villa; but his inauguration has not been at all pacific. As he has already found out that he may be as despotic as at saint Joseph's, he began with exiling my beautiful little cat;—upon which, however, we shall not quite agree. He then flew at one of my dogs, who returned it, by biting his foot till it bled; but was severely beaten for it. I immediately rung for Margaret² to dress his foot; but in the midst of my tribulation could not keep my countenance; for she cried, “Poor little thing, he does not understand my language!”—I hope she will not recollect too that he is a papist!

¹ Madame du Deffand's dog, which she left by will to Mr. Walpole.

² Mr. Walpole's housekeeper.

Berkeley-square, Tuesday, May 8.

I CAME before dinner, and find your long letter of the 3d. You have mistaken Tonton's sex, who is a cavalier, and a little of the mousquetaire still; but if I do not correct his vivacities, at least I shall not encourage them like my dear old friend.

You say nothing of your health: therefore, I trust, it is quite re-established. My own is most flourishing for me.

They say the parliament will rise by the birth-day—not that it seems to be any grievance or confinement to any body. I hope you will soon come and enjoy a quiet summer under the laurels of your own conscience. They are at least as spreading as any body's else; and the soil will preserve their verdure for ever. Methinks we western powers might as well make peace, since we make war so clumsily.—Yet I doubt the awkwardness of our enemies will not have brought down our stomach. Well, I wish for the sake of mankind there was an end of their sufferings! Even spectators are not amused—the whole war has passed like the riotous murmurs of the upper gallery before the play begins—they have pelted the candle-snuffers, the stage has been swept, the music has played, people have taken their places—but the deuce a bit of any performance!—And when folks go home, they will have seen nothing but a farce, that has cost fifty times more than the best tragedy!

L E T T E R CXXI.

Berkeley-square, May 28, 1781.

THIS letter, like an embarkation, will not set out till it has gotten its complement; but I begin it, as I have just received your second letter. I wrote to you two days ago, and did not mean to complain; for you certainly cannot have variety of matter in your sequestered isle: and since you do not disdain trifling news, this good town, that furnishes nothing else, at least produces weeds, which shoot up in spite of the *Scotch thistles*, that have choked all good fruits. I do not know what lady C. designs to do with her play; I hope, act it only in private; for her other was mur-

From Jersey.

dered, and the audience did not exert the least gallantry to so pretty an authoress, though she gave them so fair an opportunity. For my own play, I was going to publish it in my own defence, as a spurious edition was advertised here, besides one in Ireland.—My advertisement has overlaid the former for the present, and that tempts me to suppress mine, as I have a thorough aversion to its appearance. Still, I think I shall produce it in the dead of summer, that it may be forgotten by winter; for I could not bear having it the subject of conversation in a full town. It is printed; so I can let it steal out in the midst of the first event that engrosses the public; and as it is not quite a novelty, I have no fear but it will be still-born, if it is twin with any babe that squalls and makes much noise.—At the same time with yours I received a letter from another cousin at Paris, who tells me Necker is on the verge; and in the postscript says, he has actually resigned. I heard so a few days ago; but this is a full confirmation. Do you remember a conversation at your house, at supper, in which a friend of yours spoke very unfavourably of Necker, and seemed to wish his fall? In my own opinion, they are much in the wrong. It is true, Necker laboured with all his shoulders to restore their finances; yet I am persuaded that his attention to that great object made him clog all their military operations. They will pay dearer for money; but money they will have—nor is it so dear to them; for, when they have gotten it, they have only not to pay. A monsieur Joly de Fleury is comptroller-general. I know nothing of him—but as they change so often, some able man will prove minister at last—and there they will have the advantage again.

Lord Cornwallis's courier, Mr. Broderic, is not yet arrived; so you are a little precipitate in thinking America so much nearer to being subdued, which you have often swallowed up as if you were a minister; and yet, methinks, that æra has been so frequently put off, that I wonder you are not cured of being sanguine—or rather, of believing the magnificent lies that every trifling advantage gives birth to. If a quarter of the Americans had joined the royalists, that have been said to join, all the colonies would not hold them. But, at least, they have been like the trick of kings and queens at cards; where one of two goes back every turn to fetch another. However, this is only for conversation for the moment. With such aversion to disputation, I have no zeal for making converts to my own opinion, not even on points that touch me nearer.