

bow as low to him at every word as if his name was Sultan Amurat. You would take his first minister for only the first of his slaves.—I hope this example, which they have been so good as to exhibit at the opera, will contribute to civilise us. There is indeed a perfect young gentleman, who a little discomposes this august ceremonial. His name is count Holke, his age three-and-twenty; and his post answers to one that we had formerly in England, many ages ago, and which in our tongue was called the lord high favourite. Before the Danish monarchs became absolute, the most refractory of that country used to write libels, called *North Danes*, against this great officer; but that practice has long since ceased. Count Holke seems rather proud of his favour, than shy of displaying it.

End of Volume the first.

I hope, my dear lord, you will be content with my Danish politics, for I trouble myself with no other. There is a long history about the baron de Bottetourt, and sir Jeffery Amherst, who has resigned his regiment; but it is nothing to me, nor do I care a straw about it. I am deep in the anecdotes of the new court; and if you want to know more of count Holke or count Molke, or the grand vizier Bernsdorff, or mynheer Schimmelman, apply to me and you shall be satisfied.—But what do I talk of? You will see them yourself. Minerva, in the shape of count Bernsdorff, or out of all shape in the person of the duchess of —, is to conduct Telemachus to York races; for can a monarch be perfectly accomplished in the mysteries of kingcraft, as our Solomon James I. called it, unless he is initiated in the arts of jockeyship? When this northern star travels towards its own sphere, lord Hertford will go to Ragley. I shall go with him; and if I can avoid running foul of the Magi that will be thronging from all parts to worship that star, I will endeavour to call at Wentworth castle for a day or two, if it will not be inconvenient. I should think it would be about the second week in September; but your lordship shall hear again, unless you should forbid me, who am ever

Lady Strafford's and your lordship's most faithful humble servant,

LETTER XXII.

Strawberry-hill, Monday October 10, 1768.

I GIVE you a thousand thanks, my dear lord, for the account of the ball at Welbeck. I shall not be able to repay it with a relation of the masquerade to-night; for I have been confined here this week with the gout in my foot, and have not stirred off my bed or couch since Tuesday. I was to have gone to the great ball at Sion^a on Friday, for which a new road, paddock and bridge were made, as other folks make a desert. I conclude lady Mary^b has and will tell you of all these pomps, which health thinks so serious, and sickness with her grave face tells one are so idle. Sickness may make me moralize, but I assure you she does not want humour. She has diverted me extremely with drawing a comparison between the repose (to call neglect by its dignified name) which I have enjoyed in this fit, and the great anxiety in which the whole world was when I had the last gout three years ago—You remember my friends were then coming into power. Lord W.—— was so good as to call at least once every day, and enquire after me; and the foreign ministers insisted that I should give them the satisfaction of seeing me, that they might tranquillize their sovereigns with the certainty of my not being in any danger. The duke and duchess of Newcastle were so kind, though very nervous themselves, as to send messengers and long messages every day from Claremont. I cannot say this fit has alarmed Europe quite so much. I heard the bell ring at the gate, and asked with much majesty if it was the duke of Newcastle had sent? No, sir, it was only the butcher's boy. The butcher's boy is indeed the only courier I have had. Neither the king of France nor king of Spain appears to be under the least concern about me.

My dear lord, I have had so many of these transitions in my life, that you will not wonder they divert me more than a masquerade. I am ready to say to most people, "Mask, I know you."—I wish I might choose their dresses!

^a The villa of the duke of Northumberland near Brentford.

^b Lady Mary Coke, sister to lady Strafford.

When

When I have the honour of seeing lady Strafford, I shall beseech her to tell me all the news; for I am too high and too far to know any. Adieu, my dear lord!

Yours most sincerely,

HOR. WALPOLE.

LETTER XXIII.

Arlington-street, July 3, 1769.

WHEN you have been so constantly good to me, my dear lord, without changing, do you wonder that our friendship has lasted so long? Can I be insensible to the honour or pleasure of your acquaintance? When the advantage lies so much on my side, am I likely to alter the first? Oh, but it will last now! We have seen friendships without number born and die. Ours was not formed on interest, nor alliance; and politics, the poison of all English connections, never entered into ours. You have given me a new proof by remembering the chapel of Luton. I hear it is to be preserved; and am glad of it, though I might have been the better for its ruins.

I should have answered your lordship's last post, but was at Park-place. I think lady A—— quite recovered; though her illness has made such an impression that she does not yet believe it.

It is so settled that we are never to have tolerable weather in June, that the first hot day was on Saturday—hot by comparison; for I think it is three years since we have really felt the feel of summer. I was, however, concerned to be forced to come to town yesterday on some business; for, however the country feels, it looks divine, and the verdure we buy so dear is delicious. I shall not be able, I fear, to profit of it this summer in the loveliest of all places, as I am to go to Paris in August. But next year I trust I shall accompany Mr. Conway and lady A—— to Wentworth-castle. I shall be glad to visit Castle Howard and Beverley; but neither would carry me so far, if Wentworth-castle was not in the way.

The

The Chatelets are gone, without any more battles with the Russians*. The papers say the latter have been beaten by the Turks; which rejoices me, though against all rules of politics: but I detest that murderer, and like to have her humbled. I don't know that this piece of news is true: it is enough to me that it is agreeable. I had rather take it for granted, than be at the trouble of enquiring about what I have so little to do with. I am just the same about the City and Surrey petitions. Since I have *dismembered* myself, it is incredible how cool I am to all politics.

London is the abomination of desolation; and I rejoice to leave it again this evening. Even Pam has not a levée above once or twice a week. Next winter I suppose it will begin to be a fashion to remove into the city; for, since it is the mode to choose aldermen at this end of the town, the macaronis will certainly adjourn to Bishopsgate-street, for fear of being fined for sheriffs. Mr. J—— and Mr. B—— will die of the thought of being aldermen of Grosvenor-ward and Berkeley-square-ward. Adam and Eve in their paradise laugh at all these tumults, and have not tasted of the tree that forfeits paradise; which I take to have been the tree of politics, not of knowledge. How happy you are not to have your son Abel knocked on the head by his brother Cain at the Brentford election! You do not hunt the poor deer and hares that gambol around you.—If Eve has a sin, I doubt it is angling; but as she makes all other creatures happy, I beg she would not impale worms nor whisk carp out of one element into another. If she repents of that guilt, I hope she will live as long as her grandson Methuselah. There is a commentator that says *his* life was protracted for never having boiled a lobster alive. Adieu, dear couple, that I honour as much as I could honour my first grandfather and grandmother!

Your most dutiful

HOR. JAPHET.

* The duc de Chatelet, the French ambassador, had affronted comte Czernicheff the Russian ambassador at a ball at court for precedence; and a challenge ensued: but their meeting was prevented. E.

² Mr. Walpole means, since he quitted parliament.

LETTER

LETTER XXIV.

Paris, September 8, 1769.

T^OOTHER night at the duchess of Choiseul's at supper the intendant of Rouen asked me, if we have roads of communication all over England and Scotland?—I suppose he thinks that in general we inhabit trackless forests and wild mountains, and that once a year a few legislators come to Paris to learn the arts of civil life, as to sow corn, plant vines, and make operas. If this letter should contrive to scramble through that *desert* Yorkshire, where your lordship has *attempted* to improve a dreary hill and uncultivated vale, you will find I remember your commands of writing from this capital of the world, whither I am come for the benefit of my country, and where I am intensely studying those laws and that beautiful frame of government, which can alone render a nation happy, great and flourishing; where lettres de cachet soften manners, and a proper distribution of luxury and beggary ensures a common felicity. As we have a prodigious number of students in legislature of both sexes here at present, I will not anticipate their discoveries; but, as your particular friend, will communicate a rare improvement on nature, which these great philosophers have made, and which would add considerable beauties to those parts which your lordship has already recovered from the waste, and taught to look a little like a christian country. The secret is very simple, and yet demanded the effort of a mighty genius to strike it out. It is nothing but this: Trees ought to be educated as much as men, and are strange awkward productions when not taught to hold themselves upright or bow on proper occasions. The academy de belles lettres have even offered a prize for the man that shall recover the long lost art of an ancient Greek, called *le sieur Orphée*, who instituted a dancing-school for plants, and gave a magnificent ball on the birth of the dauphin of Thrace, which was performed entirely by forest trees. In this whole kingdom there is no such thing as seeing a tree that is not well behaved. They are first stripped up and then cut down; and you would as soon meet a man with his hair about his ears as an oak or ash. As the weather is very hot now, and the soil chalk, and the dust white, I assure you it is very difficult, powdered as both are all over, to distinguish a tree from a hair-dresser. Lest this should sound like a travelling hyperbole, I must advertise your lordship, that there is

little

little difference in their heights; for a tree of thirty years growth being liable to be marked as royal timber, the proprietors take care not to let their trees live to the age of being enlisted, but burn them, and plant others as often almost as they change their fashions. This gives an air of perpetual youth to the face of the country, and if adopted by us would realize Mr. Addison's visions, and

Make our bleak rocks and barren mountains smile.

What other remarks I have made in my indefatigable search after knowledge must be reserved to a future opportunity; but as your lordship is my friend, I may venture to say without vanity to you, that Solon nor any of the ancient philosophers who travelled to Egypt in quest of religions, mysteries, laws and fables, ever sat up so late with the ladies and priests and *presidents de parlement* at Memphis, as I do here—and consequently were not half so well qualified as I am to new model a commonwealth. I have learned how to make remonstrances, and how to answer them. The latter, it seems, is a science much wanted in my own country—and yet is as easy and obvious as their treatment of trees, and not very unlike it. It was delivered many years ago in an oracular sentence of my namesake—

Odi profanum vulgus, & arceo.

You must drive away the vulgar, and you must have an hundred and fifty thousand men to drive them away with—that is all. I do not wonder the intendant of Rouen thinks we are still in a state of barbarism, when we are ignorant of the very rudiments of government.

The duke and duchess of Richmond have been here a few days, and are gone to Aubigné. I do not think him at all well, and am exceedingly concerned for it, as I know no man who has more estimable qualities. They return by the end of the month. I am fluctuating whether I shall not return with them, as they have pressed me to do, through Holland. I never was there, and could never go so agreeably; but then it would protract my ab-

* Alluding to the number of remonstrances many other corporate bodies, on the subject of under the name of petitions, which were presented this year from the livery of London and the Middlesex election. E.

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fence three weeks, and I am impatient to be in my own cave, notwithstanding the wisdom I imbibe every day. But one cannot sacrifice one's self wholly to the public: Titus and Wilkes have now and then lost a day. Adieu, my dear lord! Be assured that I shall not disdain yours and lady Strafford's conversation, though you have nothing but the goodness of your hearts, and the simplicity of your manners, to recommend you to the more enlightened understanding of

Your old friend,

HOR. WALPOLE.

LETTER XXV.

Strawberry-hill, July 9, 1770.

I AM not going to tell you, my dear lord, of the diversions or honours¹ of Stowe, which I conclude lady Mary has writ to lady Strafford. Though the week passed cheerfully enough, it was more glory than I should have sought of my own head. The journeys to Stowe and Park-place have deranged my projects so that I don't know where I am, and I wish they have not given me the gout into the bargain; for I am come back very lame, and not at all with the bloom that one ought to have imported from the Elysian-fields². Such jaunts when one is growing old is playing with edged-tools, as my lord Chesterfield, in one of his Worlds, makes the husband say to his wife, when she pretends that grey powder does not become her. It is charming at twenty to play at Elysian-fields, but it is no joke at fifty; or too great a joke. It made me laugh as we were descending the great flight of steps from the house to go and sup in the grotto on the banks of Helicon: we were so cloaked up, for the evening was very cold, and so many of us were limping and hobbling, that Charon would have easily believed we were going to ferry over in earnest. It is with much more comfort that I am writing to your lordship in the great bow window of my new round room, which collects all the rays of the south-west sun, and composes a sort of summer; a feel I have not known this year, except last Thursday. If the rains should ever cease, and the weather settle to fine, I shall pay you my visit at Wentworth-castle; but hitherto the damps

¹ Princess Amelia was there.

² At Stowe.

have

have affected me so much, that I am more disposed to return to London and light my fire, than brave the humours of a climate so capricious and uncertain, in the country. I cannot help thinking it grows worse: I certainly remember such a thing as dust; nay, I still have a clear idea of it, though I have seen none for some years, and should put some grains in a bottle for a curiosity, if it should ever fly again.

News I know none. You may be sure it was a subject carefully avoided at Stowe; and Beckford's death had not raised the glass or spirits of the master of the house. The papers make one sick with talking of that noisy vapouring fool, as they would of Algernon Sidney.

I have not happened to see your future nephew, though we have exchanged visits. It was the first time I had been at Marble-hill, since poor lady Suffolk's death; and the impression was so uneasy, that I was not sorry not to find him at home. Adieu, my good lord! Except seeing you both, nothing can be more agreeable than to hear of yours and lady Strafford's health, who, I hope, continues perfectly well.

Your most faithful humble servant,

HOR. WALPOLE.

LETTER XXVI.

Arlington-street, October 16, 1770.

THOUGH I have so very little to say, it is but my duty, my dear lord, to thank you for your extreme goodness to me and your inquiring after me. I was very bad again last week, but have mended so much since Friday night, that I really now believe the fit is over. I came to town on Sunday, and can creep about my room even without a stick, which is more felicity to me than if I had got a white one. I do not aim yet at such preferment as walking up stairs; but having moulted my stick, I flatter myself I shall come forth again without being lame.

* John, second earl of Buckingham, married to his second wife a daughter of lady Anne Connolly, sister of lord Strafford.

The few I have seen tell me there is nobody else in town. That is no grievance to me, when I should be at the mercy of all that should please to bestow their idle time upon me. I know nothing of the war-egg¹, but that sometimes it is to be hatched, and sometimes to be addled. Many folks get into the nest and sit as hard upon it as they can, concluding it will produce a golden chick. As I shall not be a feather the better for it, I hate that game-breed, and prefer the old hen Peace and her dunghill brood. My compliments to my lady and all her poultry.

I am, my dear lord,

Your infinitely obliged and faithful humble servant,

HOR. WALPOLE.

LETTER XXVII.

Strawberry-hill, June 20, 1771.

I HAVE waited impatiently, my dear lord, for something worth putting into a letter; but trees do not speak in parliament, nor flowers write in the newspapers; and they are almost the only beings I have seen. I dined on Tuesday at Notting-hill² with the countesses of Powis and Holderness, lord and lady Pelham, and lord Frederic Cavendish—and Pam; and shall go to town on Friday to meet the same company at lady Holderness's; and this short journal comprises almost my whole history and knowledge.

I must now ask your lordship's and lady Strafford's commands for Paris. I shall set out on the seventh of next month. You will think, though you will not tell me so, that these are very juvenile jaunts at my age. Indeed I should be ashamed if I went for any other pleasure but that of once more seeing my dear blind friend³, whose much greater age forbids my depending on seeing her often. It will indeed be amusing to change the scene of politics; for though I have done with our own, one cannot help hearing them

¹ Alluding to the dispute with Spain about the affair of Falkland island. E.

² The villa of lady Mary Coke near Kensington.

³ Madame du Deffand.

—nay reading them ; for, like flies, they come to breakfast with one's bread and butter. I wish there was any other vehicle for them but a newspaper ; a place into which, considering how they are exhausted, I am sure they have no pretensions. The duc d'Aiguillon I hear is minister. Their politics, some way or other, must end seriously, either in despotism, a civil war, or assassination. Methinks it is playing deep for the power of tyranny. C—— F—— is more moderate : he only games for an hundred thousand pounds that he has not.

Have you read the Life of Benvenuto Cellini, my lord ? I am angry with him for being more distracted and wrong-headed than my lord Herbert. Till the revival of these two, I thought the present age had borne the palm of absurdity from all its predecessors. But I find our contemporaries are quiet good folks, that only game till they hang themselves, and do not kill every body they meet in the street. Who would have thought we were so reasonable ?

Ranelagh, they tell me, is full of foreign dukes. There is a duc de la Tremouille, a duc d'Arenberg, and other grandees. I know the former, and am not sorry to be out of his way.

It is not pleasant to leave groves and lawns and rivers for a dirty town with a distier ditch, calling itself the Seine ; but I dare not encounter the sea and bad inns in cold weather. This consideration will bring me back by the end of August. I should be happy to execute any commission for your lordship. You know how earnestly I wish always to show myself

Your lordship's most faithful humble servant,

HOR. WALPOLE.

LETTER XXVIII.

Paris, August 25, 1771.

I HAVE passed my biennial six weeks here, my dear lord, and am preparing to return as soon as the weather will allow me. It is some comfort

to

to the patriot-virtue, envy, to find this climate worse than our own! There were four very hot days at the end of last month, which you know with us northern people compose a summer: it has rained half this; and for these three days there has been a deluge, a storm, and extreme cold. Yet these folks shiver in silk, and sit with their windows open till supper-time.—Indeed, firing is very dear, and nabobs very scarce. Oeconomy and retrenchment are the words in fashion, and are founded in a little more than caprice. I have heard no instance of luxury but in mademoiselle Guimard, a favourite dancer, who is building a palace: round the *sale à manger* there are windows that open upon hot-houses, that are to produce flowers all winter.—That is worthy of ———. There is a finer dancer whom Mr. H—— is to transplant to London; a mademoiselle Heinel or Ingle, a Fleming. She is tall, perfectly made, very handsome, and has a set of attitudes copied from the classics. She moves as gracefully slow as Pygmalion's statue when it was coming to life, and moves her leg round as imperceptibly as if she was dancing in the zodiac.—But she is not Virgo.

They make no more of breaking parliaments here than an English mob does of breaking windows. It is pity people are so ill-sorted. If this king and ours could cross over and figure in, Louis XV. would dissolve our parliament if Polly Jones did but say a word to him. They have got into such a habit of it here, that you would think a parliament was a polypus: they cut it in two, and by next morning half of it becomes a whole assembly. This has literally been the case at Besançon. Lord and lady Barrymore, who are in the highest favour at Compiègne, will be able to carry over the receipt.

Every body feels in their own way. My grief is to see the ruinous condition of the palaces and pictures. I was yesterday at the Louvre. Le Brun's noble gallery, where the battles of Alexander are, and of which he designed the ceiling, and even the shutters, bolts and locks, is in a worse condition than the old gallery at Somerset-house. It rains in upon the pictures, though there are stores of much more valuable pieces than those of Le Brun. Heaps of glorious works by Raphael and all the great masters are piled up and equally neglected at Versailles. Their care is not less destructive in private houses. The duke of Orleans's pictures and the prince of Monaco's have been cleaned, and varnished so thick that
you

you may see your face in them; and some of them have been transported from board to cloth, bit by bit, and the seams filled up with colour; so that in ten years they will not be worth sixpence. It makes me as peevish as if I was posterity! I hope your lordship's works will last longer than these of Louis XIV. The glories of his *siècle* hasten fast to their end, and little will remain but those of his authors.

I am, my dear lord,

Your most faithful humble servant,

HOR. WALPOLE.

LETTER XXIX.

Strawberry-hill, Sept. 24, 1773.

THE multiplicity of business which I found chalked out to me by my journey to Houghton, has engaged me so much, my dear lord, and the unpleasant scene opened to me there struck me so deeply, that I have neither had time nor cheerfulness enough to flatter myself I could amuse my friends by my letters. Except the pictures, I found every thing worse than I expected, and the prospect almost too bad to give me courage to pursue what I am doing. I am totally ignorant in most of the branches of business that are fallen to my lot, and not young enough to learn any new lesson well. All I can hope is to clear the worst part of the way; for in undertaking to retrieve an estate, the beginning is certainly the most difficult of the work. It is fathoming a chaos. But I will not unfold a confusion to your lordship which your good sense will always keep you from experiencing—very unfashionably; for the first geniuses of this age hold, that the best method of governing the world is to throw it into disorder. The experiment is not yet complete, as the re-arrangement is still to come.

I am very seriously glad of the birth of your nephew¹, my lord. I am going this evening with my gratulations; but have been so much absent, and

¹ A son of John earl of Buckingham's, who died young.

so hurried, that I have not yet had the pleasure of seeing lady Anne^t, though I have called twice. To Gunnersbury I have had no summons this summer: I receive such honours, or the want of them, with proper/respect. Lady —, I fear, is in chace of a *Dulcineus* that she will never meet. When the ardour of peregrination is a little abated, will not she probably give into a more comfortable pursuit; and, like a print I have seen of the blessed martyr Charles I. abandon the hunt of a *corruptible* for that of an *incorruptible crown*? There is another beatific print just published in that style: it is of lady Huntingdon. With much pompous humility, she looks like an old basket-woman trampling on her coronet at the mouth of a cavern.—Poor Whitfield! If he was forced to do the honours of the *spelunca*!—Saint Fanny Shirley is nearer consecration. I was told two days ago that she had written a letter to lady Selina that was not intelligible. Her grace of Kingston's glory approaches to consummation in a more worldly style. The duke is dying, and has given her the whole estate, 17,000*l.* a year. I am told she has already notified the contents of the will, and made offers of the sale of Thoresby. Pious matrons have various ways of expressing decency.

Your lordship's new bow-window thrives.—I do not want it to remind me of its master and mistress, to whom

I am ever the most devoted humble servant,

HOR. WALPOLE.

LETTER XXX.

Arlington-street, Nov. 15, 1773.

I AM very sorry, my dear lord, that you are coming towards us so slowly and unwillingly. I cannot quite wonder at the latter. The world is an old acquaintance that does not improve upon one's hands:—however, one must not give way to the disgusts it creates. My maxim, and practice too, is to laugh, because I do not like to cry. I could shed a pail-full of tears over

^t Lady Anne Conolly.

^c all

all I have seen and learnt since my poor nephew's misfortune—the more one has to do with men the worse one finds them.—But can one mend them?—No.—Shall we shut ourselves up from them?—No.—We should grow humourists—and of all animals an Englishman is least made to live alone. For my part, I am conscious of so many faults, that I think I grow better the more bad I see in my neighbours; and there are so many I would not resemble, that it makes me watchful over myself. You, my lord, who have forty more good qualities than I have, should not seclude yourself. I do not wonder you despise knaves and fools; but remember, they want better examples. They will never grow ashamed by conversing but with one another.

I came to settle here on Friday, being drowned out of Twickenham. I find the town desolate, and no news in it, but that the ministry give up the Irish tax—some say, because it will not pass even in Ireland; others, because the city of London would have petitioned against it; and some, because there were factions in the council—which is not the most incredible of all. I am glad, for the sake of some of my friends who would have suffered by it, that it is over. In other respects, I have too much private business of my own to think about the public, which is big enough to take care of itself.

I have heard of some of lady,——'s mortifications. I have regard and esteem for her good qualities, which are many—but I doubt her genius will never suffer her to be quite happy. As she will not take the psalmist's advice of not putting trust, I am sure she would not follow mine; for, with all her piety, king David is the only royal person she will not listen to, and therefore I forbear my sweet council. When she and lord H—— meet, will not they put you in mind of count Gage and lady Mary Herbert, who met in the mines of Asturias after they had failed of the crown of Poland?—Adieu, my dear lord! Come you and my lady among us. You have some friends that are not odious, and who will be rejoiced to see you both—witness, for one,

Yours most faithfully,

HOR. WALPOLE.

¹ The insanity of George earl of Orford.

LETTER XXXI.

Strawberry-hill, Nov. 11, 1774.

I AM sorry there is still time, my dear lord, to write to you again; and that though there is, I have so little to amuse you with. One is not much nearer news for being within ten miles of London than if in Yorkshire; and besides, whatever reaches us, lady Greenwich catches at the rebound before me, and sends you before I can. Our own circle furnishes very little. Dowagers are good for propagating news when planted, but have done with sending forth suckers. Lady Blandford's coffee-house is removed to town, and the duchess of Newcastle's is little frequented, but by your sister Anne, lady Browne and me. This morning indeed I was at a very fine concert at old Franks's at Isleworth, and heard Leoni, who pleased me more than any thing I have heard these hundred years. There is a full melancholy melody in his voice, though a falsetta, that nothing but a natural voice almost ever compasses. Then he sung songs of Handel in the genuine simple style, and did not put one in pain like rope-dancers. Of the opera I hear a dismal account; for I did not go to it to sit in our box like an old king dowager by myself. Garrick is treating the town, as it deserves and likes to be treated, with scenes, fire-works, and his own writing. A good new play I never expect to see more, nor have seen since *The Provoked Husband*, which came out when I was at school.

—— is dead, they say by his own hand: I don't know wherefore. I was told it was a great political event. If it is, our politics run as low as our plays. From town I heard that lord Bristol was taken speechless with a stroke of the palsy. If he dies, madam Chudleigh must be tried by her peers, as she is certainly either duchess or countess.

Mr. Conway and his company are so pleased with Paris, that they talk of staying till Christmas. I am glad; for they will certainly be better diverted there than here.

Your lordship's most faithful servant,

HOR. WALPOLE.

LETTER

LETTER XXXII.

Strawberry-hill, November 2, 1776.

THOUGH inclination, and consciousness that a man of my age, who is neither in parliament nor in business, has little to do in the world, keep me a good deal out of it, yet I will not, my dear lord, encourage you in retirement, to which for the interest of your friends you have but too much propensity. The manners of the age cannot be agreeable to those who have lived in something soberer times; nor do I think, except in France, where old people are never out of fashion, that it is reasonable to tire those whose youth and spirits may excuse some dissipation. Above all things it is my resolution never to profess retirement, lest, when I have lost all my real teeth, the imaginary one, called a colt's, should hurry me back and make me ridiculous. But one never outlives all one's contemporaries; one may assort with them. Few Englishmen, too, I have observed, can bear solitude without being hurt by it. Our climate makes us capricious, and we must rub off our roughnesses and humours against one another. We have too an always increasing resource, which is, that though we go not to the young, they must come to us: younger usurpers tread on their heels, as they did on ours, and revenge us that have been deposed. They may retain their titles, like queen Christina, sir M—— N——, and lord R——; but they find they have no subjects. If we could but live long enough, we should hear lord C——, Mr. S——, &c. complain of the airs and abominable hours of the youth of the age. You see, my dear lord, my easy philosophy can divert itself with any thing, even with visions; which perhaps is the best way of treating the great vision itself, life. For half one's time one should laugh *with* the world; the other half, *at* it—and then it is hard if we want amusement.

I am heartily glad, for your lordship's and lady Anne Conolly's sakes, that general Howe is safe. I sincerely interest myself for every body you are concerned for. I will say no more on a subject on which I fear I am so unlucky as to differ very much with your lordship, having always fundamentally disapproved our conduct with America. Indeed the present prospect of war with France, when we have so much disabled ourselves, and are exposed in so many quarters, is a topic for general lamentation, rather than

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for canvassing of opinions, which every man must form for himself: and I doubt the moment is advancing when we shall be forced to think alike at least on the present.

I have not been yet above a night at a time in town—but shall be glad to give your lordship and lady Strafford a meeting there whenever you please.

Your most faithful humble servant,

HOR. WALPOLE.

LETTER XXXIII.

Strawberry-hill, June 12, 1780.

MY DEAR LORD,

IF the late events had been within the common proportion of news, I would have tried to entertain your lordship with an account of them; but they were far beyond that size, and could only create horror and indignation. Religion has often been the cloak of injustice, outrage and villainy: in our late tumults, it scarce kept on its mask a moment; its persecution was downright robbery; and it was so drunk, that it killed its banditti faster than they could plunder. The tumults have been carried on in so violent and scandalous a manner, that I trust they will have no copies. When prisons are levelled to the ground, when the bank is aimed at, and reformation is attempted by conflagrations, the savages of Canada are the only fit allies of lord George Gordon and his crew. The Tower is much too dignified a prison for him—but he had left no other.

I came out of town on Friday, having seen a good deal of the shocking transactions of Wednesday night—in fact, it was difficult to be in London and not see, or think some part of it in flames—I saw those of the King's Bench, New prison, and those on the three sides of the Fleet-market, which united into one blaze. The town and parks are now one camp—the next disagreeable sight to the capital being in ashes. It will still not have been a fatal tragedy, if it brings the nation *one* and all to their senses. It will still be not quite an unhappy country, if we reflect that the old constitution, exactly as it was in the last reign, was the most desirable of any in the universe.

verse. It made us *then* the first people in Europe—we have a vast deal of ground to recover—but can we take a better path than that which king William pointed out to us? I mean the system he left us at the revolution. I am averse to *all* changes of it—it fitted us just as it was.

For some time even individuals must be upon their guard. Our new and now imprisoned apostle has delivered so many congenial saint Peters from jail, that one hears of nothing but robberies on the highway. Your lordship's sister, lady Browne and I have been at Twickenham-park this evening, and kept together and had a horseman at our return. Baron d'Aguilar was shot at in that very lane on Thursday night. A troop of the fugitives had rendezvoused in Combe-wood, and were dislodged thence yesterday by the light-horse.

I do not know a syllable but what relates to these disturbances. The newspapers have neglected few truths. Lies, without their natural propensity to falsehoods, they could not avoid, for every minute produces some, at least exaggerations. We were threatened with swarms of good protestants *à bruler* from all quarters, and report sent various detachments from the metropolis on similar errands; but thank God they have been but reports!—Oh! when shall we have peace and tranquillity? I hope your lordship and lady Strafford will at least enjoy the latter in your charming woods. I have long doubted which of our passions is the strongest—perhaps every one of them is equally strong in some person or other—but I have no doubt but ambition is the most detestable, and the most inexcusable; for its mischiefs are by far the most extensive, and its enjoyments by no means proportioned to its anxieties. The latter, I believe, is the case of most passions—but then all but ambition cost little pain to any but the possessor. An ambitious man must be divested of all feeling but for himself. The torment of others is his high road to happiness. Were the transmigration of souls true, and accompanied by consciousness, how delighted would Alexander or Croesus be to find themselves on four legs, and divested of a wish to conquer new worlds, or to heap up all the wealth of this! Adieu, my dear lord!

I am most gratefully your lordship's obedient humble servant,

HOR. WALPOLE.

LETTER XXXIV.

Strawberry-hill, September 9, 1780.

I AM very happy at receiving a letter from your lordship this moment, as I thought it very long since we had corresponded, but am afraid of being troublesome; when I have not the excuse of thanking you, or something worth telling you, which in truth is not the case at present. No soul, whether interested or not, but deafens one about elections. I always detested them, even when in parliament; and when I lived a good deal at White's, preferred hearing of Newmarket to elections; for the former, being uttered in a language I did not understand, did not engage my attention; but as they talked of elections in *English*, I could not help knowing what they said. It does surprise me, I own, that people can choose to stuff their heads with details and circumstances, of which in six weeks they will never hear or think more. The weather till now has been the chief topic of conversation. Of late it has been the third very hot summer; but refreshed by so little rain, that the banks of the Thames have been and are, I believe, like those of the Manzanares. The night before last we had some good showers, and to-day a thick fog has dissolved in some as thin as gauze. Still I am not quite sorry to enjoy the weather of a duff climates without their tempests and insects.—Lady Cowper I lately visited, and but lately: if what I hear is true, I shall be a gainer, for they talk of lord D—— having her house at Richmond: like your lordship, I confess I was surprised at his choice. I know nothing to the prejudice of the young lady—but I should not have selected, for so gentle and very amiable a man, a sister of the empress of fashion, nor a daughter of the goddess of wisdom.

They talk of great dissatisfactions in the fleet. Geary and Barrington are certainly retired. It looks, if this deplorable war should continue, as if all our commanders by sea and land were to be disgraced or disgusted.

The people here have christened Mr. Shirley's new house, *Spite-hall*¹. It is dismal to think that one may live to seventy-seven, and go out of the world doing as ill-natured an act as possible! When I am reduced to detail the gazette of Twickenham, I had better release your lordship—but either

¹ Because built (it was said) on purpose to intercept a view of the Thames from his opposite neighbour. E.

way it is from the utmost attention and respect for your lordship and lady Strafford, as I am ever

Most devotedly and gratefully yours,

HOR. WALPOLE.

LETTER XXXV.

Strawberry-hill, June 13, 1781.

IT was very kind, my dear lord, to recollect me so soon: I wish I could return it by amusing you; but here I know nothing, and suppose it is owing to age that even in town I do not find the transactions of the world very entertaining. One must sit up all night to see or hear any thing—and if the town intends to do any thing, they never begin to do it till next day.

Mr. Conway will certainly be here the end of this month, having thoroughly secured his island from surprise, and it is not liable to be taken any other way. I wish he was governor of this bigger one too, which does not seem quite so well guaranteed.

Your lordship will wonder at a visit I had yesterday: it was from Mr. ———, who has passed a day and night here. It was not from my being a fellow-scholar of Vestris, but from his being turned antiquary; the last patina I should have thought a Macaroni would have taken. I am as proud of such a disciple as of having converted Dicky Bateman from a Chinese to a Goth. Though he was the founder of the Sharawadgi taste in England, I preached so effectually that his every pagoda took the veil. The methodists say, one must have been very wicked before one can be of the elect—yet is that extreme more distant from *the ton*, which avows knowing and liking nothing but the fashion of the instant, to studying what were the modes of five hundred years ago? I hope this conversion will not ruin Mr. ———'s fortune under the lord lieutenant of Ireland. How his Irish majesty will be shocked, when he asks how large prince B——'s shoe-buckles are grown, to be answered, he does not know, but that Charles Brandon's coat-piece at the last birth-day had three yards of velvet in it! and that the
duchess

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duchess of Buckingham thrust out her chin two inches farther than ever, in admiration of it! and that the marchioness of Dorset had put out her jaw by endeavouring to imitate her!

We have at last had some rains, which I hope extended to Yorkshire, and that your lordship has found Wentworth-castle in the bloom of verdure. I always, as in duty bound, wish prosperity to every body and every thing there, and am

Your lordship's ever devoted and grateful humble servant,

HOR. WALPOLE.

LETTER XXXVI.

Strawberry-hill, August 31, 1781.

YOUR lordship's too friendly partiality sees talents in me, which I am sure I do not possess. With all my desire of amusing you, and with all my sense of gratitude for your long and unalterable goodness, it is quite impossible to send you an entertaining letter from hence. The insipidity of my life, that is passed with a few old people that are wearing out like myself, after surviving so many of my acquaintance, can furnish no matter of correspondence. What few novelties I hear, come stale, and not till they have been hashed in the newspapers; and though we are engaged in such big and wide wars, they produce no striking events, nor furnish any thing but regrets for the lives and millions we fling away to no purpose! One cannot divert when one can only compute; nor extract entertainment from prophecies that there is no reason to colour favourably. We have indeed foretold success for seven years together, but debts and taxes have been the sole completion.

If one turns to private life, what is there to furnish pleasing topics? Dissipation without object, pleasure, or genius, is the only colour of the times. One hears every day of somebody undone, but can we or they tell how, except when it is by the most expeditious of all means, gaming? And now,

now, even the loss of an hundred thousand pounds is not rare enough to be surprising. One may stare or growl, but cannot relate any thing that is worth hearing. I do not love to censure a younger age; but, in good truth they neither amuse me nor enable me to amuse others.

The pleasantest event I know, happened to myself last Sunday morning, when general Conway, very unexpectedly, walked in as I was at breakfast, in his way to Park-place. He looks as well in health and spirits as ever I saw him; and though he staid but half an hour, I was perfectly content, as he is at home.

I am glad your lordship likes the fourth book of *The Garden*, which is admirably coloured. The version of *Fresnoy* I think the finest translation I ever saw. It is a most beautiful poem extracted from as dry and prosaic a parcel of verses as could be put together: Mr. Mason has gilded lead, and burnished it highly. Lord and lady Harcourt I should think would make him a visit, and I hope for their sakes will visit Wentworth-castle. As they both have taste, I should be sorry they did not see the perfectest specimen of architecture I know.

Mrs. D—— certainly goes abroad this winter. I am glad of it for every reason but her absence. I am certain it will be essential to her health; and she has so eminently a classic genius, and is herself so superior an artist, that I enjoy the pleasure she will have in visiting Italy.

As your lordship has honoured all the productions of my press with your acceptance, I venture to inclose the last, which I printed to oblige the L——s. There are many beautiful and poetic expressions in it. A wedding to be sure is neither a new nor a promising subject, nor will outlast the favours: still I think Mr. Jones's ode is uncommonly good for the occasion; at least, if it does not much charm lady Strafford and your lordship, I know you will receive it kindly as a tribute from Strawberry-hill, as every homage is due to you both from its master.

Your devoted humble servant,

HOR. WALPOLE.

¹ The marriage of lord Althorp with miss Bingham.

LETTER XXXVII.

Berkeley-square, November 27, 1781.

EACH fresh mark of your lordship's kindness and friendship calls on me for thanks and an answer : every other reason would enjoin me silence. I not only grow so old, but the symptoms of age increase so fast, that, as they advise me to keep out of the world, that retirement makes me less fit to be informing or entertaining. The philosophers who have sported on the verge of the tomb, or they who have *affected* to sport in the same situation, both tacitly implied that it was not out of their thoughts—and however dear what we are going to leave may be, all that is not particularly dear must cease to interest us much. If those reflections blend themselves with our gayest thoughts, must not their hue grow more dusty when public misfortunes and disgraces cast a general shade? The age, it is true, soon emerges out of every gloom, and wantons as before.—But does not that levity imprint a still deeper melancholy on those who do think? Have any of our calamities corrected us? Are we not revelling on the brink of the precipice? Does administration grow more sage, or desire that we should grow more sober? Are these themes for letters, my dear lord? Can one repeat common news with indifference, while our shame is writing for future history by the pens of all our numerous enemies? When did England see two whole armies lay down their arms and surrender themselves prisoners? Can venal addresses efface such stigmas, that will be recorded in every country in Europe? Or will such disgraces have no consequences? Is not America lost to us? Shall we offer up more human victims to the dæmon of obstinacy—and shall we tax ourselves deeper to furnish out the sacrifice? These are thoughts I cannot stifle at the moment that enforces them; and though I do not doubt but the same spirit of dissipation that has swallowed up all our principles, will reign again in three days with its wonted sovereignty, I had rather be silent than vent my indignation.—Yet I cannot talk, for I cannot think, on any other subject. It was not six days ago, that in the height of four raging wars I saw in the papers an account of the opera and of the dresses of the company; and thence the town, and thence of course the whole nation, were informed that Mr. F—— had very little powder in his hair. Would not one think that our newspapers were penned by boys just come from school for the information

of

of their sisters and cousins? Had we had Gazettes and Morning Posts in those days, would they have been filled with such tittle-tattle after the battle of Agincourt, or in the more resembling weeks after the battle of Naseby? Did the French trifle equally even during the ridiculous war of the Fronde? If they were as impertinent then, at least they had wit in their levity. We are monkeys in conduct, and as clumsy as bears when we try to gambol. Oh! my lord! I have no patience with my country! and shall leave it without regret!—Can we be proud when all Europe scorns us? It was wont to envy us, sometimes to hate us, but never despised us before. James the first was contemptible, but he did not lose an America! His eldest grandson sold us, his younger lost us—but we kept ourselves. Now we have run to meet the ruin—and it is coming!

I beg your lordship's pardon, if I have said too much—but I do not believe I have. You have never sold yourself, and, therefore, have not been accessory to our destruction. You must be happy *now* not to have a son, who would live to grovel in the dregs of England. Your lordship has long been so wise as to secede from the follies of your countrymen. May you and lady Strafford long enjoy the tranquillity that has been your option even in better days!—and may you amuse yourself without giving loose to such reflections as have overflowed in this letter from

Your devoted humble servant,

HOR. WALPOLE!

LETTER XXXVIII.

Strawberry-hill, August 16, 1782.

IF this letter reaches your lordship, I believe it must be conveyed by a dove; for we are all under water, and a postman has not where to set the sole of his foot. They tell me, that in the north you have not been so drowned: which will be very fortunate; for in these parts every thing is to be apprehended for the corn, the sheep, and the camps—but, in truth, all kinds of prospects are most gloomy, and even in lesser lights uncomfortable. Here we cannot stir, but armed for battle. Mr. Potts, who

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lives

lives at Mr. Hindley's, was attacked and robbed last week at the end of Gunnersbury-lane, by five footpads who had two blunderbuffes. Lady Browne and I do continue going to Twickenham-park; but I don't know how long it will be prudent, nor whether it is so now.

I have not been at Park-place, for Mr. Conway is never there, at least only for a night or two. His regiment was reviewed yesterday at Ashford-common, but I did not go to see it.—In truth, I have so little taste for common fights, that I never did see a review in my life. I was in town last week, yet saw not monsieur de Graffe; nor have seen the giant or the dwarf.

Poor Mrs. Clive is certainly very declining, but has been better of late, and, which I am glad of, thinks herself better. All visions that comfort one are desirable—the conditions of mortality do not bear being pryed into; nor am I an admirer of that philosophy that scrutinizes into them: the philosophy of deceiving one's self is vastly preferable. What signifies anticipating what we cannot prevent?

I do not pretend to send your lordship any news, for I do not know a tittle, nor inquire. Peace is the sole event of which I wish to hear. For private news I have outlived almost all the world with which I was acquainted, and have no curiosity about the next generation, scarce more than about the 20th century. I wish I was less indifferent for the sake, of the few with whom I correspond, your lordship in particular, who are always so good and partial to me, and on whom I should indubitably wait, were I fit to take a long journey; but as I walk no better than a tortoise, I make a conscience of not incommodating my friends, whom I should only confine at home. Indeed both my feet and hands are so lame, that I now scarce ever dine abroad. Being so antiquated and insipid, I will release your lordship, and am, with my unalterable respects to lady Strafford,

Your lordship's most devoted humble servant,

HOR. WALPOLE.

LETTER

LETTER XXXIX.

Strawberry-hill, October 3, 1782.

I DID think it long since I had the honour of hearing from your lordship; but conscious how little I could repay you with any entertainment, I waited with patience. In fact, I believe summer-correspondences often turn on complaints of want of news. It is unlucky that that is generally the season of correspondence as it is of separation. People assembled in a capital contrive to furnish matter, but then they have not occasion to write it. Summer being the season of campaigns, ought to be more fertile—I am glad when that is not the case, for what is an account of a battle but a list of burials? Vultures and birds of prey might write with pleasure to their correspondents in the Alps of such events—but they ought to be melancholy topics to those who have no beaks or talons. At this moment, if I was an epicure among the sharks, I should rejoice that general Elliot has just sent the carcases of 1500 Spaniards down to market under Gibraltar—but I am more pleased that he dispatched boats and saved some of those whom he had overfet. What must a man of so much feeling have suffered at being forced to do his duty so well as he has done! I remember hearing such another humane being, that brave old admiral sir Charles Wager, say, that in his life he had never killed a fly.

This demolition of the Spanish armada is a great event—a very good one, if it prevents a battle between lord Howe and the combined fleets, as I should hope; and yet better if it produces peace; the only political crisis to which I look with eagerness. Were that happy moment arrived, there is ample matter to employ our great men, if we have any, in retrieving the affairs of this country, if they are to be retrieved.—But though our sedentary politicians write abundance of letters in the newspapers, full of plans of public spirit, I doubt the nation is not sober enough to set about its own work in earnest. When none reform themselves, little good is to be expected. We see by the excess of highwaymen how far evils will go before any attempt is made to cure them. I am sure, from the magnitude of this inconvenience, that I am not talking merely like an old man. I have lived here above thirty years, and used to go every where round at all hours

hours of the night without any precaution. I cannot now stir a mile from my own house after sun-set without one or two servants with blunderbusses. I am not surprised your lordship's pheasants were stolen: a woman was taken last Saturday night loaded with nine geese, and they say has impeached a gang of fourteen house-breakers—but these are under graduates—when they should have taken their doctor's degrees, they would not have piddled in such little game. Those regius-professors the nabobs have taught men not to plunder for farthings.

I am very sensible of your lordship's kindness to my nephew Mr. C—. He is a sensible, well-behaved young man, and, I trust, would not have abused your goodness.

Mr. Mason writes to me, that he shall be at York at the end of this month. I was to have gone to Nuneham; but the house is so little advanced, that it is a question whether they can receive me. Mason, I doubt, has been idle there. I am sure, if he found no muses there, he could pick up none at Oxford, where there is not so much as a bed-maker that ever lived in a muse's family.

Tonson begs his duty to all the lambs, and trusts that lady Strafford will not reject his homage.

I am ever her ladyship's and your lordship's

Most devoted humble servant,

HOR. WALPOLE.

LETTER XL.

Strawberry-hill, June 24, 1783.

THOUGH your lordship's partiality extends even to my letters, you must perceive that they grow as antiquated as the writer. News are the soul of letters: when we give them a body of our own invention, it is as unlike to life as a statue. I have withdrawn so much from the world, that the newspapers know every thing before me, especially since they have usurped the province

province of telling every thing, private as well as public; and consequently a great deal more than I should wish to know, or like to report. When I do hear the transactions of much younger people, they do not pass from my ears into my memory; nor does your lordship interest yourself more about them than I do. Yet still, when one reduces one's department to such narrow limits, one's correspondence suffers by it. However, as I desire to show only my gratitude and attachment, not my wit, I shall certainly obey your lordship as long as you are content to read my letters, after I have told you fairly how little they can entertain you.

For imports of French, I believe we shall have few more. They have not ruined us so totally by the war, much less enriched themselves so much by it, but that they who have been here, complained so piteously of the expensiveness of England, that probably they will deter others from a similar jaunt—nor, such is their fickleness, are the French constant to any thing but admiration of themselves. Their Anglomanie I hear has mounted—or descended—from our customs to our persons. English people are in fashion at Versailles. A Mr. ———, who wrote some pretty verses at Bath two or three years ago, is a favourite there. One who was so, or may be still, the *beau Dillon*, came upon a very different errand—in short, to purchase at any price a book written by Linguet, which was just coming out, called *Antoinette*. That will tell your lordship why the *beau Dillon* was the messenger.

Monfieur de Guignes and his daughters came hither—but it was at eight o'clock at night in the height of the deluge. You may be sure I was much flattered by such a visit! I was forced to light candles to show them any thing; and must have lighted the moon to show them the views. If this is their way of seeing England, they might as well look at it with an opera glass from the shore of Calais.

Mr. Mason is to come to me on Sunday, and will find me mighty busy in making my lock of hay, which is not yet cut. I don't know why, but people are always more anxious about their hay than their corn, or twenty other things that cost them more. I suppose my lord Chesterfield, or some such dictator, made it fashionable to care about one's hay.—Nobody betrays solicitude about getting in his rents.

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We have exchanged spring and summer for autumn and winter, as well as day for night. If religion or law enjoined people to love light and prospects and verdure, I should not wonder if perverseness made us hate them—no, nor if society made us prefer living always in town to solitude and beauty.—But that is not the case. The most fashionable hurry into the country at Christmas and Easter, let the weather be ever so bad—and the finest ladies, who will go no whither till eleven at night, certainly pass more tiresome hours in London alone than they would in the country.—But all this is no business of mine: they do what they like, and so do I—And I am exceedingly tolerant about people who are perfectly indifferent to me. The fun and the seasons were not gone out of fashion when I was young—and I may do what I will with them now I am old: for fashion is fortunately no law but to its devotees. Were I five-and-twenty, I dare to say, I should think every whim of my cotemporaries very wise, as I did then. In one light I am always on the side of the young; for they only silently despise those who do not conform to their ordonnances; but age is very apt to be angry at the change of customs, and partial to others no better founded. It is happy when we are occupied by nothing more serious. It is happy for a nation, when mere fashions are a topic that can employ its attention; for though dissipation may lead to graver moments, it commences with ease and tranquillity; and they at least who live before the scene shifts are fortunate, considering and comparing themselves with the various regions who enjoy no parallel felicity. I confess my reflections are *couleur de rose* at present. I did not much expect to live to see peace, without far more extensive ruin than has fallen on us. I will not probe futurity in search of less agreeable conjectures. Prognosticators may see many seeds of dusky hue—but I am too old to look forwards. Without any omens, common sense tells one, that in the revolution of ages nations must have unprosperous periods.—But why should I torment myself for what may happen in twenty years after my death, more than for what may happen in two hundred? Nor shall I be more interested in the one than in the other. This is no indifference for my country.—I wish it could always be happy—But so I do to all other countries. Yet who could ever pass a tranquil moment, if such future speculations vexed him?

Adieu, my good lord!—I doubt this letter has more marks of senility than the one I announced at the beginning. When I had no news to send you, it was no reason for tiring you with common places.—But your lord-

ship's indulgence spoils me. Does not it look as if I thought, that, because you commend my letters, you would like whatever I say? Will not lady Strafford think that I abuse your patience?—I ask both your pardons—and am to both

A most devoted humble servant,

HOR. WALPOLE.

LETTER XLI.

Strawberry-hill, August 1, 1783.

IT would be great happiness indeed to me, my dear lord, if such nothings as my letters could contribute to any part of your lordship's; but as your own partiality bestows their chief merit on them, you see they owe more to your friendship than to the writer. It is not my interest to depreciate them; much less to undermine the foundation of their sole worth. Yet it would be dishonest not to warn your lordship, that if my letters have had any intrinsic recommendation, they must lose of it every day. Years and frequent returns of gout have made a ruin of me. Dullness, in the form of indolence, grows upon me. I am inactive, lifeless, and so indifferent to most things, that I neither enquire after nor remember any topics that might enliven my letters. Nothing is so insipid as my way of passing my time. But I need not specify what my letters speak.—They can have no spirit left—and would be perfectly inanimate, if attachment and gratitude to your lordship were as liable to be extinguished by old age as our more amusing qualities. I make no new connections; but cherish those that remain with all the warmth of youth and the piety of grey hairs.

The weather here has been, and is, with very few intervals, sultry to this moment. I think it has been of service to me; though by overheating myself I had a few days of lameness. The harvest is half over already all round us, and so pure, that not a poppy or cornflower is to be seen. Every field seems to have been weeded like B——'s bowling-green. If Ceres, who is at least as old as many of our fashionable ladies, loves tricking herself out in flowers as they do, she must be mortified; and with more reason;

for she looks well always with top-knots of ultramarine and vermilion, which modern goddeses do not for half so long as they think they do. As providence showers so many blessings on us, I wish the peace may confirm them! Necessary I am sure it was—and when it cannot restore us, where should we have been, had the war continued! Of our situation and prospect I confess my opinion is melancholy—not from present politics, but from past. We flung away the most brilliant position—I doubt, for a long season! With politics I have totally done. I wish the present ministers may last; for I think better of their principles than of those of their opponents (with a few salvoes on both sides), and so I do of their abilities.—But it would be folly in me to concern myself about new generations.—How little a way can I see of their progress!

I am rather surpris'd at the new countess of ———. How could a woman be ambitious of resembling Prometheus, to be pawed and clawed and gnawed by a vulture? I beg your earldom's pardon; but I could not conceive that a coronet was so very tempting!

Lady Browne is quite recovered—unless she relapses from what we suffer at Twickenham-park from a lord N——, an old seaman, who is come to Richmond on a visit to the duke of Montrose. I think the poor man must be out of his senses—at least he talks us out of ours. It is the most incessant and incoherent rhapsody that ever was heard. He sits by the card-table, and pours on Mrs. N—— all that ever happened in his voyages or his memory. He details the ship's allowance, and talks to her as if she was his first mate. Then in the mornings he carries his daughter to town to see St. Paul's, and the Tower, and Westminster-abbey; and at night disgorges all he has seen; till we don't know the ace of spades from queen Elizabeth's pocket-pistol in the armory. Mercy on us!—And mercy on your lordship too! Why should you be stunned with that alarum? Have you had your earthquake, my lord? Many have had theirs. I assure you I have had mine. Above a week ago, when broad awake, the doors of the cabinet by my bed-side rattled, without a breath of wind. I imagined somebody was walking on the leads, or had broken into the room under me. It was between four and five in the morning. I rang my bell. Before my servant could come it happened again; and was exactly like the horizontal tremor I felt from the earthquake some years ago. As I had rung once, it is plain I
was

was awake. I rang again; but heard nothing more. I am quite persuaded there was some commotion; nor is it surprising that the dreadful eruptions of fire on the coasts of Italy and Sicily should have occasioned some alteration that has extended faintly hither, and contributed to the heats and mists that have been so extraordinary. George Montagu said of our last earthquake, that it was so tame you might have stroked it. It is comfortable to live where one can reason on them without dreading them! What satisfaction should you have in having erected such a monument of your taste, my lord, as Wentworth-castle, if you did not know but it might be overturned in a moment and crush you? Sir William Hamilton is expected: he has been groping in all those devastations.—Of all vocations I would not be a professor of earthquakes! I prefer studies that are *coulour de rose*—nor would ever think of calamities, if I can do nothing to relieve them. Yet this is a weakness of mind that I do not defend. They are more respectable who can behold philosophically the great theatre of events—or rather this little theatre of ours! In some ampler sphere, they may look on the catastrophe of Messina as we do on kicking to pieces an ant-hill.

Bless me! what a farrago is my letter! It is like the extracts of books in a monthly magazine—I had no right to censure poor lord N——'s ramblings! Lady Strafford will think he has infected me. Good-night, my dear lord and lady!

Your ever devoted

HOR. WALPOLE.

LETTER XLII.

Strawberry-hill, Sept. 12, 1783.

YOUR lordship tells me you hope my summer has glided pleasantly, like our Thames. I cannot say it has passed very pleasantly to me, though, like the Thames, dry and low; for somehow or other I caught a rheumatic fever in the great heats, and cannot get rid of it. I have just been at Park-place and Nuneham, in hopes change of air would cure me; but to no purpose. Indeed, as want of sleep is my chief complaint, I doubt I must make use of a very different and more disagreeable remedy, the air of London, the only place that I ever find agree with me when I am out of

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order.

order. I was there for two nights a fortnight ago, and slept perfectly well. In vain has my predilection for Strawberry made me try to persuade myself that this was all fancy; but I fear, reasons that appear strong, though contrary to our inclinations, must be good ones. London at this time of year is as nauseous a drug as any in an apothecary's shop. I could find nothing at all to do, and so went to Astley's, which indeed was much beyond my expectation. I do not wonder any longer that Darius was chosen king by the instructions he gave to his horse; nor that Caligula made his consul. Astley can make his dance minuets and hornpipes; which is more extraordinary than to make them vote at an election, or act the part of a magistrate, which animals of less capacities can perform as dextrously as a returning officer or a master in chancery.—But I shall not have even Astley now. Her majesty the queen of France, who has as much taste as Caligula, has sent for the whole dramatis personæ to Paris.

Sir William Hamilton was at Park-place, and gave us dreadful accounts of Calabria: he looks much older, and has the patina of a bronze.

At Nuneham I was much pleased with the improvements both within doors and without. Mr. Mason was there; and, as he shines in every art, was assisting Mrs. Harcourt with his new discoveries in painting, by which he will unite miniature and oil. Indeed, she is a very apt and extraordinary scholar. Since our professors seem to have lost the art of colouring, I am glad at least that they have ungraduated assessors.

We have plenty and peace at last! consequently leisure for repairing some of our losses, if we have sense enough to set about the task. On what will happen I shall make no conjectures, as it is not likely I should see much of what is to come. Our enemies have humbled us enough to content them; and we have succeeded so ill in innovations, that surely we shall not tempt new forms in haste.

From this place I can send your lordship nothing new or entertaining, nor expect more game in town, whither nothing but search of health should carry me. Perhaps it is a vain chace at my age—but at my age one cannot trust to nature's operating cures without aiding her—it is always time enough to abandon one's self, when no care will palliate our decays. I hope your lordship and lady Strafford will long be in no want of such attentions;

tentions: nor should I have talked so much of my own cracks, had I had any thing else to tell you. It would be silly to aim at vivacity when it is gone: and though a lively old man is sometimes an agreeable being, a pretending old man is ridiculous. Aches and an apothecary cannot give one genuine spirits. 'Tis sufficient if they do not make one peevish. Your lordship is so kind as to accept of me as I am, and you shall find nothing more counterfeit in me than the sincere respect and gratitude with which I have the honour to be

Your lordship's most devoted humble servant,

HOR. WALPOLE.

L E T T E R XLIII.

Strawberry-hill, October 11, 1783.

MY rheumatism, I thank your lordship, is certainly better, though not quite gone. It was very troublesome at night till I took the bark; but that medicine makes me sleep like opium—But I will say no more about it, nothing is so troublesome as to talk of chronical complaints: has one any right to draw on the compassion of others, when one must renew the address daily and for months?

The aspect of Ireland is very tempestuous. I doubt they will hurt us materially without benefiting themselves. If they obtain very short parliaments, they will hurt themselves more than us, by introducing a confusion that will prevent their improvements.—Whatever country does adopt short parliaments, will, I am entirely persuaded, be forced to recur to their former practice—I mean, if the disorders introduced do not produce despotism of some sort or other. I am very sorry Mr. Mason concurs in trying to revive the associations. Methinks our state is so deplorable, that every healing measure ought to be attempted instead of innovations. For my own part, I expect nothing but distractions, and am not concerned to be so old. I *am* so old, that, were I disposed to novelties, I should think they little became my age. I should be ashamed, when my hour shall come, to be

be caught in a riot of country 'squires and parsons, and haranguing a mob with a shaking head. A leader of faction ought to be young and vigorous. If an aged gentleman does get an ascendant, he may be sure that younger men are counting on his exit, and only flatter him to succeed to his influence, while they are laughing at his misplaced activity. At least, these would be my thoughts, who of all things dread being a jest to the juvenile, if they find me out of my sphere.

I have seen lord C——'s play, and it has a great deal of merit—perhaps more than your lordship would expect. The language and images are the best part, after the two principal scenes, which are really fine.

I did, as your lordship knows and says, always like and esteem lady F——. I scarce know my lord; but, from what I have heard of him in the house of lords, have conceived a good opinion of his sense: of his character I never heard any ill—which is a great testimonial in his favour, when there are so many horrid characters, and when all that are conspicuous have their minutest actions tortured to depose against them.

You may be sure, my dear lord, that I heartily pity lady Strafford's and your loss of four-legged friends. 'Sense and fidelity are wonderful recommendations; and when one meets with them, and can be confident that one is not imposed upon, I cannot think that the two additional legs are any drawback. At least I know that I have had friends who would never have vexed or betrayed me, if they had walked on all-fours.

I have no news to send your lordship—indeed I inquire for none, nor wish to hear any. Whence is any good to come? I am every day surprised at hearing people eager for news. If there is any, they are sure of hearing it.—How can one be curious to know one does not know what—and perpetually curious to know? Has one nothing to do but to hear and relate something new?—And why can one care about nothing but what one does not know?—And why is every event worth hearing, only because one has not heard it? Have not there been changes enough? divorces enough? bankruptcies and robberies enough?—and, above all, lies enough?—No; or people would not be every day impatient for the newspaper.

paper. I own, I am glad on Sunday when there is no paper, and no fresh lies circulating. Adieu, my good lord and lady! May you long enjoy your tranquillity, undisturbed by villainy, folly and madness!

Your most faithful servant,

HOR. WALPOLE.

LETTER XLIV.

Berkeley-square, November 10, 1783.

IF I consulted my reputation as a writer, which your lordship's partiality is so kind as to allot me, I should wait a few days till my granary is fuller of stock, which probably it would be by the end of next week—but in truth, I had rather be a grateful, and consequently a punctual correspondent, than an ingenious one; as I value the honour of your lordship's friendship more than such tinsel bits of fame as can fall to my share, and of which I am particularly sick at present, as the Public Advertiser dressed me out t'other day with a heap of that dross, which he had pillaged from some other strolling playwrights, who I did not desire should be plundered for me.

Indeed, when the parliament does meet, I doubt, nay hope it will make less sensation than usual. The orators of Dublin have brought the flowers of Billingsgate to so high perfection, that ours comparatively will have no more scent than a dead dandelion. If your lordship has not seen the speeches of Mr. F—— and Mr. G——, you may perhaps still think that our oyster-women can be more abusive than members of parliament.

Since I began my letter, I hear that the meeting of the delegates from the volunteers is adjourned to the first of February. This seems a very favourable circumstance. I don't like a reformation begun by a popish army! Indeed I did hope that peace would bring us peace, at least not more than the discords incidental to a free government: but we seem not to have attained that æra yet! I hope it will arrive, though I may not see it. I shall not easily believe that any radical alteration of a constitution that preserved us so long and carried us to so great a height, will recover our affairs.

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There is a wide difference between correcting abuses, and removing landmarks. Nobody disliked more than I the strides that were attempted towards increasing the prerogative; but as the excellence of our constitution above all others, consists in the balance established between the three powers of king, lords, and commons, I wish to see that equilibrium preserved. No single man, nor any private junto, has a right to dictate laws to all three. In Ireland, truly, a still worse spirit I apprehend to be at bottom—in short, it is phrensy or folly to suppose that an army composed of three parts of catholics can be intended for any good purposes.

These are my sentiments, my dear lord, and, you know, very disinterested. For myself, I have nothing to wish but ease and tranquillity for the rest of my time. I have no enmities to avenge. I do hope the present administration will last, as I believe there are *more* honest men in it, than in any set that could replace them, though I have not a grain of partiality more than I had for their associates. Mr. Fox I think by far the ablest and soundest head in England, and am persuaded that the more he is tried the greater man he will appear.

Perhaps it is impertinent to trouble your lordship with my creed—it is certainly of no consequence to any body—but I have nothing else that could entertain you—and at so serious a crisis, can one think of trifles? In general I am not sorry that the nation is most disposed to trifle—the less it takes part, the more leisure will the ministers have to attend to the most urgent points. When so many individuals assume to be legislators, it is lucky that very few obey their institutes.

I rejoice to hear of lady Strafford's good health, and am her and your lordship's

Most faithful humble servant,

HOR. WALPOLE.

LETTER

LETTER XLV.

Berkeley-square, Dec. 11, 1783.

YOUR lordship is so partial to me and my idle letters, that I am afraid of writing them—not lest they should sink below the standard you have pleased to affix to them in your own mind, but from fear of being intoxicated into attempting to keep them up to it, which would destroy their only merit, their being written naturally and without pretensions. Gratitude and good breeding compel me to make due answers; but I entreat your lordship to be assured, that however vain I am of your favour, my only aim is to preserve the honour of your friendship; that it is all the praise I ask or wish; and that, with regard to letter-writing, I am firmly persuaded that it is a province in which women will always shine superiorly; for our sex is too jealous of the reputation of good sense, to condescend to hazard a thousand trifles and negligences, which give grace, ease and familiarity to correspondence.—I will say no more on that subject, for I feel that I am on the brink of a dissertation—and though that fault would prove the truth of my proposition, I will not punish your lordship only to convince you that I am in the right.

The winter is not dull or disagreeable: on the contrary, it is pleasing, as the town is occupied on general subjects, and not, as is too common, on private scandal, private vices and follies. The India bill, air-balloons, Vestris and the automaton, share all attention. Mrs. Siddons, as less a novelty, does not engross all conversation. If abuse still keeps above par, it confines itself to its prescriptive province, the ministerial line. In that walk it has tumbled a little into the kennel—The low buffoonery of lord —, in laying the caricatura of the Coalition on the table of your lordship's house, has levelled it to Sadler's Wells; and Mr. —, the pillar of invective, does not promise to re-erect it—not, I conclude, from want of having imported a stock of ingredients, but his presumptuous debut on the very night of his entry was so wretched, and delivered in so barbarous a brogue, that I question whether he will ever recover the blow Mr. Courtenay gave him. A young man may correct and improve, and rise from a first fall; but an elderly formed speaker has not an equal chance. Mr. H—, lord A—'s heir,

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but by no means so laconic, had more success. Though his first essay, it was not at all dashed by bashfulness—and though he might have blushed for discovering so much personal rancour to Mr. Fox, he rather seemed to be impatient to discharge it.

Your lordship sees in the papers, that the two houses of Ireland have firmly resisted the innovations of the volunteers. Indeed it was time for the protestant proprietors to make their stand; for though the catholics behave decently, it would be into their hands that the prize would fall. The delegates, it is true, have sent over a most loyal address—but I wish their actions may not contradict their words! Mr. —'s discomfiture here will, I suppose, carry him back to a field wherein his wicked spirit may have more effect. It is a very serious moment!—I am in pain lest your county, my dear lord (you know what I mean), should countenance such pernicious designs.

I am impatient for next month, for the pleasure of seeing your lordship and lady Strafford, and am of both.

The devoted humble servant,

HOR. WALPOLE.

L E T T E R XLVI.

Strawberry-hill, August 6, 1784.

I AM very sorry, my dear lord, that I must answer your lordship's letter by a condolence. I had not the honour of being acquainted with Mrs. V——, but have heard so much good of her, that it is impossible not to lament her.

Since this month began, we have had fine weather, and 'twere great pity if we had not, when the earth is covered with such abundant harvests! They talk of an earthquake having been felt in London. Had sir W. Hamilton been there, he would think the town gave itself great airs. He I believe is *putting*,

ting up volcanos in his own country. In my youth, philosophers were eager to ascribe every uncommon discovery to the deluge—now it is the fashion to solve every appearance by conflagrations. If there was such an inundation upon the earth, and, such a furnace under it, I am amazed that Noah and company were not boiled to death. Indeed I am a great sceptic about human reasonings. They predominate only for a time, like other mortal fashions, and are so often exploded after the mode is passed, that I hold them little more serious, though they call themselves wisdom. How many have I lived to see established and confuted! For instance, the necessity of a southern continent as a balance was supposed to be unanswerable—and so it was, till captain Cook found there was no such thing. We are poor silly animals: we live for an instant upon a particle of a boundless universe, and are much like a butterfly that should argue about the nature of the seasons and what creates their vicissitudes, and does not exist itself to see one annual revolution of them!

Adieu, my dear lord!—If my reveries are foolish, remember, I give them for no better. If I depreciate human wisdom, I am sure I do not assume a grain to myself, nor have any thing to value myself upon more than being

Your lordship's most obliged humble servant,

HOR. WALPOLE.

L E T T E R XLVII.

Strawberry-hill, September 7, 1784.

THE summer is come at last, my lord, dressed as fine as a birth-day, though not with so many flowers on its head. In truth, the sun is an old fool, who apes the modern people of fashion by arriving too late: the day is going to bed before he makes his appearance; and one has scarce time to admire his embroidery of green and gold. It was cruel to behold such expanse of corn every where, and yet see it all turned to a water-souchy. If I could admire Dante, which, asking Mr. Hayley's pardon, I do not, I would have written an olio of Jews and Pagans, and sent Ceres to reproach master Noah with breaking his promise of the world never being drowned again.—

But this last week has restored matters to their old channel; and I trust we shall have bread to eat next winter, or I think we must have lived on apples, of which to be sure there is enough to prevent a famine. This is all I know, my lord; and I hope no news to your lordship. I have exhausted the themes of air-balloons and highwaymen; and if you *will* have my letters, you must be content with my common-place chat on the seasons. I do nothing worth repeating, nor hear that others do: and though I am content to rust myself, I should be glad to tell your lordship any thing that would amuse you. I dined two days ago at Mrs. Garrick's with sir William Hamilton, who is returning to the kingdom of cinders. Mrs. Walsingham was there with her son and daughter. He is a very pleasing young man; a fine figure; his face like hers, with something of his grandfather sir Charles Williams, without his vanity; very sensible, and uncommonly well bred. The daughter is an imitatrix of Mrs. D——, and has modelled a bust of her brother. Mrs. D—— herself is modelling two masks for the key-stones of the new bridge at Henley. Sir William, who has seen them, says they are in her true antique style. I am in possession of her sleeping dogs in terra cotta. She asked me if I would consent to her executing them in marble for the 'duke of Richmond'—I said, Gladly; I should like they should exist in a more durable material—but I would not part with the original, which is sharper and more alive. Mr. Wyat the architect saw them here lately; and said, he was sure that if the idea was given to the best statuary in Europe, he would not produce so perfect a groupe. Indeed, with these dogs and the riches I possess by lady Di', poor Strawberry may vie with much prouder collections.

Adieu, my good lord! When I fold up a letter I am ashamed of it—but it is your own fault. The last thing I should think of would be troubling your lordship with such insipid stuff, if you did not command it. Lady 'Stratford will bear me testimony how often I have protested against it.

I am her ladyship's and your lordship's obedient humble servant,

HOR. WALPOLE.

* The number of original drawings by lady Diana Beauclerc, at Strawberry-hill.

LETTER

LETTER XLVIII.

Strawberry-hill, August 29, 1786.

SINCE I received the honour of your lordship's last, I have been at Park-place for a few days. Lord and lady F—— C—— and Mrs. D—— were there. We went on the Thames to see the new bridge at Henley; and Mrs. D——'s colossal masks. There is not a sight in the island more worthy of being visited. The bridge is as perfect as if bridges were natural productions, and as beautiful as if it had been built for Wentworth-castle; and the masks, as if the Romans had left them here. We saw them in a fortunate moment; for the rest of the time was very cold and uncomfortable, and the evenings as chill as many we have had lately. In short, I am come to think that the beginning of an old ditty which passes for a collection of blunders, was really an old English pastoral, it is so descriptive of our climate:

Three children sliding on the ice
All on a summer's day—

I have been overwhelmed more than ever by visitors to my house. Yesterday I had count Oghinski, who was a pretender to the crown of Poland at the last election, and has been stripped of most of a vast estate. He had on a ring of the new king of Prussia—or I should have wished him joy on the death of one of the plunderers of his country.

It has long been my opinion that the out-pensioners of Bedlam are so numerous, that the shortest and cheapest way would be to confine in Moorfields the few that remain in their senses, who would then be safe; and let the rest go at large. They are the out-pensioners who are for destroying poor dogs! The whole canine race never did half so much mischief as lord George Gordon; nor even worry hares, but when hallooed on by men. As it is a persecution of animals, I do not love hunting; and what old writers mention as a commendation, makes me hate it the more, its being an image of war. Mercy on us! that destruction of any species should be a sport or a merit! What cruel unreflecting imps we are! Every body is unwilling to die, yet sacrifices the lives of others to momentary pastime, or to the still emptier vapour, fame! A hero or a sportsman who wishes for longer life,

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is desirous of prolonging devastation. We shall be crammed, I suppose, with panegyrics and epitaphs on the king of Prussia—I am content that he can now have an epitaph. But, alas! the emperor will write one for him probably in blood! and, while he shuts up convents for the sake of population, will be stuffing hospitals with maimed soldiers, besides making thousands of widows!—I have just been reading a new published history of the colleges in Oxford by Anthony Wood, and there found a feature in a character that always offended me, that of archbishop Chicheley, who prompted Henry V. to the invasion of France, to divert him from squeezing the overgrown clergy. When that priest meditated founding All Souls, and “consulted his friends (who seem to have been honest men) what great matter of piety he had best perform to God in his old age, he was advised by them to build an hospital for the wounded and sick soldiers, that daily returned from the wars then had in France”—I doubt his grace’s friends thought as I do of his artifice—“But,” continues the historian, “*disliking those motions*, and valuing the welfare of the deceased more than the wounded and diseased, he resolved with himself to promote his design—which was, to have masses, said for the king, queen, and himself, &c. while living, and for their souls when dead.”—And that mummery the old foolish rogue thought more efficacious than ointments and medicines for the wretches he had made! And of the chaplains and clerks he instituted in that dormitory, one was to teach grammar, and another, prick-song—How history makes one shudder and laugh by turns!—But I fear I have wearied your lordship with my idle declamation, and you will repent having commanded me to send you more letters; and I can only plead that I am

Your (perhaps too) obedient humble servant,

HOR. WALPOLE.

LETTER XLIX.

Strawberry-hill, July 28, 1787.

ST. SWITHIN is no friend to correspondence, my dear lord. There is not only a great sameness in his own proceedings, but he makes every body else dull—I mean, in the country, where one frets at its raining every

every day and all day. In town he is no more minded than the proclamation against vice and immorality. Still, though he has all the honours of the quarantine, I believe it often rained for forty days long before St. Swithin was born, if ever born he was; and the proverb was coined and put under his patronage, because people observed that it frequently does rain for forty days together at this season. I remember lady Suffolk telling me, that lord Dyfart's great meadow had never been mowed but once in forty years without rain. I said, "all that that proved was, that rain was good for hay," as I am persuaded the climate of a country and its productions are suited to each other. Nay, rain is good for haymakers too, who get more employment the oftener the hay is made over again. I do not know who is the faint that presides over thunder; but he has made an unusual quantity in this chill summer, and done a great deal of serious mischief, though not a fiftieth part of what lord George Gordon did seven years ago—and happily he is fled.

Our little part of the world has been quiet as usual. The duke of Queensberry has given a sumptuous dinner to the princess de Lamballe—*et voilà tout*. I never saw her, not even in France. I have no particular penchant for sterling princes and princesses, much less for those of French plate.

The only entertaining thing I can tell your lordship from our district is, that old madam French, who lives close by the bridge at Hampton-court, where, between her and the Thames, she had nothing but one grass-plot of the width of her house, has paved that whole plot with black and white marble in diamonds, exactly like the floor of a church; and this curious metamorphosis of a garden into a pavement has cost her three hundred and forty pounds:—a tarpaulin she might have had for some shillings, which would have looked as well, and might easily have been removed. To be sure this exploit, and lord Dudley's obelisk, *below* a hedge, with his canal at right angles with the Thames, and a sham bridge no broader than that of a violin, and *parallel* to the river¹, are not preferable to the monsters in clipt yews of our ancestors;

Bad taste expellas furcâ, tamen usque recurret.

¹ *And* these circumstances actually existed till within these five years, at the villa of the late viscount Dudley and Ward, at Teddington.

On the contrary, Mrs. Walsingham is making her house at Ditton (now baptized Boyle-farm) very orthodox. Her daughter miss Boyle⁴, who has real genius, has carved three tablets in marble with boys designed by herself. Those sculptures are for a chimney-piece; and she is painting panels in grotesque for the library, with pilasters of glass in black and gold. Miss Crewe, who has taste too, has decorated a room for her mother's house at Richmond, which was lady Margaret Compton's, in a very pretty manner. How much more amiable the old women of the next age will be, than most of those we remember, who used to tumble at once from gallantry to devout scandal and cards! and revenge on the young of their own sex the desertion of ours. Now they are ingenious, they will not want amusement.

Adieu, my dear lord! I am most gratefully

Your lordship's very faithful humble servant,

HOR. WALPOLE.

LETTER L.

Strawberry-hill, Tuesday night, June 17, 1788.

I GUESS, my dear lord, and only guess that you are arrived at Wentworth-castle. If you are not, my letter will lose none of its bloom by waiting for you; for I have nothing fresh to tell you, and only write because you enjoined it. I settled in my Lilliputian towers but this morning. I wish people would come into the country on May-day, and fix in town the first of November. But as they will not, I have made up my mind; and having so little time left, I prefer London when my friends and society are in it, to living here alone, or with the weird sisters of Richmond and Hampton. I had additional reason now, for the streets are as green as the fields: we are burnt to the bone, and have not a lock of hay to cover our nakedness: oats are so dear, that I suppose they will soon be eaten at Brooks's and fashionable tables as a rarity. The drought has lasted so long, that for this fortnight I have been foretelling hay-making and winter, which June generally produces; but to-day is sultry, and I am not a pro-

⁴ Since married to lord Henry Fitzgerald.

phet worth a straw. Though not resident till now, I have flitted backwards and forwards, and last Friday came hither to look for a minute at a ball at Mrs. Walsingham's at Ditton; which would have been very pretty, for she had stuck coloured lamps in the hair of all her trees and bushes, if the east wind had not danced a reel all the time by the side of the river.

Mr. Conway's play¹, of which your lordship has seen some account in the papers, has succeeded delightfully both in representation and applause. The language is most genteel, though translated from verse; and both prologue and epilogue are charming. The former was delivered most justly and admirably by lord Derby, and the latter with inimitable spirit and grace by Mrs. Damer. Mr. Merry and Mrs. Bruce played excellently too.—But general Conway, Mrs. Damer, and every body else are drowned by Mr. Sheridan, whose renown has engrossed all fame's tongues and trumpets². Lord Townshend said he should be sorry were he forced to give a vote directly on Hastings, before he had time to cool; and one of the peers saying the speech had not made the same impression on him, the marquis replied, a seal might be finely cut, and yet not be in fault for making a bad impression.

I have, you see, been forced to send your lordship what scraps I brought from town: the next four months, I doubt, will reduce me to my old sterility; for I cannot retail French gazettes, though as a good Englishman bound to hope they will contain a civil war. I care still less about the double imperial campaign, only hoping that the poor dear Turks will heartily beat both emperor and empress. If the first Ottomans could be punished, they deserved it—but the present possessors have, as good prescription on their side as any people in Europe. We ourselves are Saxons, Danes, Normans—our neighbours are Franks, not Goths—who the rest are, Goths, Gepidæ, Heruli, Mr. Gibbon knows—and the Dutch usurped the estates of herrings, turbot, and other marine indigence.—Still, though I do not wish the hair of a Turk's beard hurt, I do not say that it would not be

¹ A comedy translated from L'Homme du Jour of Boissy. It was first acted at the private theatre at Richmond-house, and afterwards at Drury-lane.

² From the speech he made in Westminster-hall, on bringing the charge of cruelty to the Begums of the province of Benares, in the trial of Mr. Hastings.

amusing to have Constantinople taken—merely as a lusty event—for neither could I live to see Athens revive, nor have I much faith in two such bloody-minded vultures, cock and hen, as Catherine and Joseph, conquering for the benefit of humanity; nor does my christianity admire the propagation of the gospel by the mouth of cannon. What desolation of peasants and their families by the episodes of forage and quarters!—Oh! I wish Catherine and Joseph were brought to Westminster-hall and worried by Sheridan! I hope too, that the poor Begums are alive to hear of his speech—it will be some comfort, though I doubt nobody thinks of restoring them a quarter of a lac!

Adieu, my dear lord!

Yours most faithfully,

HOR. WALPOLE.

LETTER LI.

Strawberry-hill, August 2, 1788.

MATTER for a letter, alas! my dear lord, I have none—but *about* letters I have great news to tell your lordship, only may the goddess of post-offices grant it be true! A miss S—— of Richmond, who is at Paris, writes to Mrs. B——, that a baron de la Garde (I am sorry there are so many *a*'s in the genealogy of my story) has found in a *vieille armoire* five hundred more letters of madame de Sevigny, and that they will be printed, if the expence is not too great. I am in a taking lest they should not appear before I set out for the Elysian fields; for though the writer is one of the first personages I should enquire after on my arrival, I question whether St. Peter has taste enough to know where she lodges: he is more likely to be acquainted with St. Catherine of Sienna and St. Undecimillia; and therefore I had rather see the letters themselves. It is true I have no small doubt of the authenticity of the legend; and nothing will persuade me of its truth so much as the non-appearance of the letters—a melancholy kind of conviction. But I vehemently suspect some new coinage, like the letters of Ninon de l'Enclos, pope Ganganeli, and the princess Palatine. I have lately been reading some fragments of letters of the duchess of Orleans, which are certainly genuine, and contain some curious circumstances; for though she was a simple gossiping old gentlewoman, yet many little facts she could not help learning:

learning : and to give her her due, she was ready to tell all she knew. To our late queen she certainly did write often ; and her majesty, then only princess, was full as ready to pay her in her own coin : and a pretty considerable treaty of commerce for the exchange of scandal was faithfully executed between them ; insomuch that I remember to have heard forty years ago, that our gracious sovereign entrusted her royal highness of Orleans with an intrigue of one of her women of the bed-chamber, Mrs. S. to wit ; and the good duchess entrusted it to so many other dear friends, that at last it got into the Utrecht Gazette, and came over hither, to the signal edification of the court of Leicester-fields. This is an additional reason, besides the internal evidence, for my believing the letters genuine. This old dame was mother of the regent : and when she died, somebody wrote on her tomb, *Cy gist l'Oisiveté*. This came over too ; and nobody could expound it, till our then third princess, Caroline, unravelled it—Idleness is the mother of all vice.

I wish well enough to posterity to hope that dowager highnesses will imitate the practice, and write all the trifles that occupy their royal brains ; for the world so at least learns some true history, which their husbands never divulge ; especially if they are privy to their own history, which their ministers keep from them as much as possible. I do not believe the present king of France knows much more of what he, or rather his queen, is actually doing, than I do. I rather pity him ; for I believe he means well, which is not a common article of my faith.

I shall go about the end of this week to Park-place, where I expect to find the druidic temple from Jersey erected. How dull will the world be, if constant pilgrimages are not made thither ! where, besides the delight of the scenes, that temple, the rude great arch, lady A——'s needle-works, and Mrs. D——'s Thame and Isis on Henley-bridge, with other of her sculptures, make it one of the most curious spots in the island, and unique. I want to have Mr. Conway's comedy acted there ; and then the father, mother and daughter would exhibit a theatre of arts as uncommon. How I regret that your lordship did not hear Mrs. D—— speak the epilogue !

I am, my dear lord, your lordship's most faithful humble servant,

HOR. WALPOLE.

LETTER LII.

Strawberry-hill, September 12, 1788.

MY late fit of gout, though very short, was a very authentic one, my dear Lord, and the third I have had since Christmas. Still, of late years I have suffered so little pain, that I can justly complain of nothing but the confinement and the debility of my hands and feet, which however I can still use to a certain degree; and as I enjoy such good spirits and health in the intervals, I look upon the gout as no enemy: yet I know it is like the compacts said to be made with the devil (no kind comparison to a friend!), who showers his favours on the contractors, but is sure to seize and carry them off at last.

I would not say so much of myself, but in return to your lordship's obliging concern for me—yet, insignificant as the subject, I have no better in bank—and if I plume myself on the tolerable state of my outward man, I doubt your lordship finds that age does not treat my interior so mildly as the gout does the other. If my letters, as you are pleased to say, used to amuse you, you must perceive how insipid they are grown, both from my decays, and from the little intercourse I have with the world. Nay, I take care not to aim at false vivacity: what do the attempts of age at liveliness prove, but its weakness? What the Spectator said wittily, ought to be practised in sober sadness by old folks: when he was dull, he declared it was by design. So far, to be sure, we ought to observe it, as not to affect more spirits than we possess. To be purposely stupid, would be forbidding our correspondents to continue the intercourse; and I am so happy in enjoying the honour of your lordship's friendship, that I will be content (if you can be so) with my natural inanity, without studying to increase it.

I have been at Park-place, and assure your lordship that the Druidic temple vastly more than answers my expectation. Small it is, no doubt, when you are within the inclosure, and but a chapel of ease to Stonehenge; but Mr. Conway has placed it with so much judgment, that it has a lofty effect, and infinitely more than it could have had, if he had yielded to Mrs. D——'s and my opinion, who earnestly begged to have it placed within the inclosure of the home-grounds. It now stands on the ridge of the high hill.

hill without, backed by the horizon, and with a grove on each side at a little distance; and being exalted beyond and above the range of firs that climb up the sides of the hill from the valley, wears all the appearance of an ancient castle, whose towers are only shattered, not destroyed; and devout as I am to old castles, and small taste as I have for the ruins of ages absolutely barbarous, it is impossible not to be pleased with so very rare an antiquity so absolutely perfect, and it is difficult to prevent visionary ideas from improving a prospect.

If, as lady Anne Conolly told your lordship, I have had a great deal of company, you must understand it of my house, not of me; for I have very little. Indeed, last Monday both my house and I were included. The duke of York sent me word the night before, that he would come and see it, and of course I had the honour of showing it myself. He said, and indeed it seemed so, that he was much pleased; at least, I had every reason to be satisfied; for I never saw any prince more gracious and obliging, nor heard one utter more personally kind speeches.

I do not find that *her grace* the countess of Bristol's will is really known yet. They talk of two wills—to be sure, in her double capacity; and they say she has made three coheiresses to her jewels, the empress of Russia, lady Salisbury, and the whore of Babylon. The first of those legatees, I am not sorry, is in a piteous scrape: I like the king of Sweden no better than I do her and the emperor: but it is good that two destroyers should be punished by a third, and that two crocodiles should be gnawed by an insect. Thank God! we are not only at peace, but in full plenty—nay, and in full beauty too. Still better; though we have had rivers of rain, it has not, contrary to all precedent, washed away our warm weather. September, a month I generally dislike for its irresolute mixture of warm and cold, has hitherto been peremptorily fine. The apple and walnut trees bend down with fruit as in a poetic description of Paradise.

I am with great gratitude, my dear lord,

Your lordship's devoted humble servant,

HOR. WALPOLE.

* The duchess of Kingston.

LETTER.

LETTER LIII.

Strawberry-hill, June 26, 1790.

MY DEAR LORD,

I DO not forget your lordship's commands, though I do recollect my own inability to divert you. Every year at my advanced time of life would make more reasonable my plea of knowing nothing worth repeating, especially at this season. The general topic of elections is the last subject to which I could listen: there is not one about which I care a straw: and I believe your lordship quite as indifferent. I am not much more *au fait* of war or peace; I hope for the latter, nay and expect it, because it is not yet war. Pride and anger do not deliberate to the middle of the campaign; and I believe even the great incendiaries are more intent on making a good bargain than on saving their honour. If they save lives, I care not who is the better politician: and as I am not to be their judge, I do not inquire what false weights they sling into the scales. Two-thirds of France, who are not so humble as I, seem to think they can entirely new-model the world with metaphysical compasses, and hold that no injustice, no barbarity need to be counted in making the experiment. Such legislators are sublime empirics, and in their universal benevolence have very little individual sensibility.—In short, the result of my reflections on what has passed in Europe for these latter centuries is, that tyrants have no consciences, and reformers no feeling—and the world suffers both by the plague and by the cure.—What oceans of blood were Luther and Calvin the authors of being spilt! The late French government was detestable—yet I still doubt whether a civil war will not be the consequence of the revolution—and then what may be the upshot? Brabant was grievously provoked—is it sure that it will be emancipated? For how short a time do people who set out on the most just principles, advert to their first springs of motion, and retain consistency? Nay, how long can promoters of revolutions be sure of maintaining their own ascendant? They are like projectors, who are commonly ruined, while others make fortunes on the foundation laid by the inventors.

I am always your lordship's very devoted humble servant,

HOR. WALPOLE.

LETTER

LETTER LIV.

Strawberry-hill, Aug. 12, 1790.

I MUST not pretend any longer, my dear lord, that this region is void of news and diversions. Oh! we can innovate as well as neighbouring nations. If an earl S——, though he cannot be a tribune, is ambitious of being a plebeian, he may without a law be as vulgar as heart can wish; and though we have not a national assembly to lay the axe to the root of nobility, the peerage have got a precedent for laying themselves in the kennel. Last night the earl of Barrymore was so humble as to perform a buffoon dance and act Scaramouch in a pantomime at Richmond for the benefit of Edwin, jun. the comedian: and I, like an old fool, but calling myself a philosopher that loves to study human nature in all its disguises, went to see the performance.

Mr. Gray thinks that some Milton or some Cromwell may be lost to the world under the garb of a ploughman. Others may suppose that some excellent jack pudding may lie hidden under red velvet and ermine. I cannot say that by the experiment of last night the latter hypothesis has been demonstrated, any more than the inverse proposition in France, where, though there seem to be many as bloody-minded rascals as Cromwell, I can discover none of his abilities. They have settled nothing like a constitution; on the contrary, they seem to protract every thing but violence, as much as they can, in order to keep their louis a day, which is more than two-thirds of the assembly perhaps ever saw in a month—I do not love legislators that pay themselves so amply! They might have had as good a constitution as twenty-four millions of people could comport. As they have voted an army of an hundred and fifty thousand men, I know what their constitution will be, after passing through a civil war—in short, I detest them; they have done irreparable injury to liberty, for no monarch will ever summon *états* again; and all the real service that will result from their fury will be, that every king in Europe, for these twenty or perhaps thirty years to come, will be content with the prerogative he has, without venturing to augment it.

The empress of Russia has thrashed the king of Sweden; and the king of Sweden has thrashed the empress of Russia. I am more glad that both are
beaten

512 LETTERS FROM THE HON. HORACE WALPOLE.

beaten than that either is victorious; for I do not, like our newspapers, and such admirers, fall in love with heroes and heroines who make war without a glimpse of provocation. I do like *our* making peace, whether we had provocation or not.

I am forced to deal in European news, my dear lord, for I have no homespun.

I don't think my whole inkhorn could invent another paragraph, and therefore I will take my leave with (your lordship knows) every kind wish for your health and happiness.

Your most devoted humble servant,

HOR. WALPOLE.

L E T T E R S .

FROM

THE HON. HORACE WALPOLE

TO

THE RIGHT HON. MARY LEPEL LADY HERVEY,

From the Year 1758 to the Year 1766.

VOL. V.

U u u



Hath Sculp.

Miss Lepel afterwards Lady Hervey.

Published as the Act directs May 1798. by C.C. & J. Robinson Paternoster Row London.

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From the Year 1758 to the Year 1766.

L E T T E R I.

TO THE RIGHT HON. MARY LEPEL LADY HERVEY.

Strawberry-hill, September 13, 1757.

MADAM,

AFTER all the trouble your ladyship has been so good as to take voluntarily, you will think it a little hard that I should presume to give you more; but it is a cause, madam, in which I know you feel, and I can suggest new motives to your ladyship's zeal. In short, madam, I am on the crisis of losing mademoiselle de l'Enclos's picture, or of getting both that and her letters to lady Sandwich*. I inclose lord Sandwich's letter to me, which

* Lady Hervey was only daughter of brigadier-general Nicholas Lepel. She was maid of honour to queen Caroline, and was married in 1720 to John lord Hervey, eldest son of John earl of Bristol, by whom she had four sons and four daughters.—Lord Hervey was vice-chamberlain and privy-seal to George II. and

well known by his eloquence, writings, duel with Mr. Pulteney, and the satires of Pope. He died in 1744. Lady Hervey died of the gout in 1767.

2 Daughter to the famous Wilmot earl of Rochester.—She had been long settled at Paris, and died there in the year 1755. E.

will explain the whole. Madame Greffini, I suppose, is madame Graphigny; whom some of your ladyship's friends, if not yourself, must know; and she might be of use, if she could be trusted not to detain so tempting a treasure as the letters. From the effects being sealed up, I have still hopes; greater, from the goodness your ladyship had in writing before. Don't wonder, madam, at my eagerness: besides a good quantity of natural impatience, I am now interested as an editor and printer. Think what pride it would give me to print original letters of Ninon at Strawberry-hill! If your ladyship knows any farther means of serving me, *of serving yourself, good Mr. Welldone*, as the widow Lackit says in *Oroonoko*, I need not doubt your employing them. Your ladyship and I are of a religion, with regard to certain saints, that inspires more zeal than such trifling temptations as persecution and faggots infuse into bigots of other sects. I think a cause like ours might communicate ardour even to my lady Stafford¹. If she will assist in recovering *Notre Dame des Amours*, I will add St. Raoul² to my calendar.

I am hers and your ladyship's

Most obedient and faithful humble servant,

HOR. WALPOLE.

LETTER II.

Arlington-street, October 17, 1758.

YOUR ladyship, I hope, will not think that such a strange thing as my own picture seems of consequence enough to me to write a letter about it: but obeying your commands does seem so; and lest you should return and think I had neglected it, I must say that I have come to town three several times on purpose, but Mr. Ramsay (I will forgive him) has been constantly out of town.—So much for that.

¹ Her maiden name was Cantillon. At the death of her husband, the title went to lord Stafford's uncle, who dying without children, the earldom became extinct, but the barony fell into abeyance among the three sisters of the nephew, lady Anastasia and lady Anne Stafford, and lady Mary Chabot: the two first were nuns.—Lady

Mary married the father of the present duc de Chabot.

One of the nuns is still living. At her death the barony devolves to sir William Jerningham, of Gossey in Norfolk, through his mother, who was niece to the late earl of Stafford.

² A favourite cat of lady Stafford's. E.

I would

I would have sent you word that the king of Portugal coming along the road at midnight, which was in his own room at noon, his foot slipped, and three balls went through his body; which, however, had no other consequence than giving him a stroke of a palsy, of which he is quite recovered except being dead¹. Some indeed are so malicious as to say, that the Jesuits, who are the most conscientious men in the world, murdered him, because he had an intrigue with another man's wife: but all these histories I supposed your ladyship knew better than me, as, till I came to town yesterday, I imagined you was returned. For my own part, about whom you are sometimes so good as to interest yourself, I am as well as can be expected after the murder of a king, and the death of a person of the next consequence to a king, the master of the ceremonies, poor sir Clement², who is supposed to have been suffocated by my lady M——'s³ kissing hands.

This will be a melancholy letter, for I have nothing to tell your ladyship but tragical stories. Poor Dr. Shawe⁴ being sent for in great haste to Claremont—(it seems the duchess had caught a violent cold by a hair of her own whisker getting up her nose and making her sneeze)—the poor doctor, I say, having eaten a few mushrooms before he set out, was taken so ill, that he was forced to stop at Kingston; and, being carried to the first apothecary's, prescribed a medicine for himself which immediately cured him. This catastrophe so alarmed the duke of Newcastle, that he immediately ordered all the mushroom-beds to be destroyed, and even the toadstools in the park did not escape scalping in this general massacre. What I tell you is literally true. Mr. Stanley, who dined there last Sunday, and is not partial against that court, heard the edict repeated, and confirmed it to me last night. And a voice of lamentation was heard at Ramah in Claremont, *Chloe*⁵ weeping for her mushrooms, and they are not!

After all these important histories, I would try to make you smile, if I was not afraid you would resent a little freedom taken with a great name.—May I venture?

¹ Alluding to the incoherent stories told at the time of the assassination of the king of Portugal.

² She had been a common woman.

³ Physician to the duke and duchess of Newcastle.

⁴ Sir Clement Cotterel.

⁵ The duke of Newcastle's cook.

Why Taylor the quack calls himself *chevalier*,
 'Tis not easy a reason to render;
 Unless blinding eyes, that he thinks to make clear,
 Demonstrates he's but a *pretender*.

A book has been left at your ladyship's house; it is lord Whitworth's account of Russia: Monsieur Kniphausen has promised me some curious anecdotes of the czarina Catherine—so my shop is likely to flourish.

I am your ladyship's most obedient servant,

HOR. WALPOLE.

LETTER III.

Feb. 20, 1759.

I MET with this little book¹ t'other day by chance, and it pleased me so much, that I cannot help lending it to your ladyship, as I know it will amuse you from the same causes. It contains many of those important truths which history is too proud to tell, and too dull from not telling.

Here Grignon's soul the living canvas warms;
 Here fair Fontange assumes unfading charms:
 Here Mignard's pencil bows to female wit;
 Louis rewards, but ratifies Fayette:
 The philosophic duke, and painter too,
 Thought from her thoughts—from her ideas drew.

LETTER IV.

POOR ROBIN'S ALMANACK.

Saturday, Nov. 3d.
 1759.

Thick fogs, and some wet.
 Go not out of town. Gouts and rheumatisms are abroad. Warm clothes, good fires, and a room full of pictures, glasses, and scarlet damask, are the best physic.

¹ "Divers portraits de quelques personnages de la cour" [de Louis XIV.] by madame de la Fayette. E.

In short, for fear your ladyship should think of Strawberry on Saturday, I can't help telling you that I am to breakfast at Petersham that day with Mr. Fox and lady Caroline, lord and lady Waldegrave. How did you like the farce? George Selwyn says he wants to see High life below stairs, as he is weary of Low life above stairs.

LETTER V.

Jan. 12, 1760.

I AM very sorry your ladyship could doubt a moment on the cause of my concern yesterday. I saw you much displeased at what I had said; and I felt so innocent of the least intention of offending you, that I could not help being struck at my own ill-fortune, and with the sensation raised by finding you mix great goodness with great severity.

I am naturally very impatient under praise; I have reflected enough on myself to know I don't deserve it; and with this consciousness you ought to forgive me, madam, if I dreaded that the person whose esteem I valued the most in the world, should think that I was fond of what I know is not my due. I meant to express this apprehension as respectfully, as I could, but my words failed me—a misfortune not too common to me, who am apt to say too much, not too little! Perhaps it is that very quality which your ladyship calls wit, and I call tinsel, for which I dread being praised. I wish to recommend myself to you by more essential merits—and if I can only make you laugh, it will be very apt to make me as much concerned as I was yesterday. For people to whose approbation I am indifferent, I don't care whether they commend or condemn me for my wit; in the former case they will not make me admire myself for it, in the latter they can't make me think but what I have thought already. But for the few whose friendship I wish, I would fain have them see, that under all the idleness of my spirits there are some very serious qualities, such as warmth, gratitude and sincerity, which ill returns may render useless or may make me lock up in my breast, but which will remain there while I have a being.

Having drawn you this picture of myself, madam, a subject I have to say so much upon, will not your good nature apply it as it deserves, to what passed yesterday? Won't you believe that my concern flowed from being disappointed