

Memoirs of the Court of St. Cloud (Being secret letters from a gentleman at Paris to a nobleman in London) — Volume 3 eBook

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Being Secret Letters from a Gentleman at Paris to a Nobleman in London

Volume 3

LETTER XXIII.

Paris, August, 1805.

My lord:—No Sovereigns have, since the Revolution, displayed more grandeur of soul, and evinced more firmness of character, than the present King and Queen of Naples. Encompassed by a revolutionary volcano more dangerous than the physical one, though disturbed at home and defeated abroad, they have neither been disgraced nor dishonoured. They have, indeed, with all other Italian Princes, suffered territorial and pecuniary losses; but these were not yielded through cowardice or treachery, but enforced by an absolute necessity, the consequence of the desertion or inefficacy of allies.

But Their Sicilian Majesties have been careful, as much as they were able, to exclude from their councils both German Illuminati and Italian philosophers. Their principal Minister, Chevalier Acton, has proved himself worthy of the confidence with which his Sovereigns have honoured him, and of the hatred with which he has been honoured by all revolutionists—the natural and irreconcilable enemies of all legitimate sovereignty.

Chevalier Acton is the son of an Irish physician, who first was established at Besancon in France, and afterwards at Leghorn in Italy. He is indebted for his present elevation to his own merit and to the penetration of the Queen of Sardinia, who discovered in him, when young, those qualities which have since distinguished him as a faithful counsellor and an able Minister. As loyal as wise, he was, from 1789, an enemy to the French Revolution. He easily foresaw that the specious promise of regeneration held out by impostors or fools to delude the ignorant, the credulous and the weak, would end in that universal corruption and general overthrow which we since have witnessed, and the effects of which our grandchildren will mourn.

When our Republic, in April, 1792, declared war against Austria, and when, in the September following, the dominions of His Sardinian Majesty were invaded by our troops, the neutrality of Naples continued, and was acknowledged by our Government. On the 16th of December following, our fleet from Toulon, however, cast anchor in the Bay of Naples, and a grenadier of the name of Belleville was landed as an Ambassador of the French Republic, and threatened a bombardment in case the demands he presented in a note were not acceded to within twenty-four hours. Being attacked in time of peace, and taken by surprise, the Court of Naples was unable to make any



resistance, and Chevalier Acton informed our grenadier Ambassador that this note had been laid before his Sovereign, who had ordered him to sign an agreement in consequence.

When in February, 1793, the King of Naples was obliged, for his own safety, to join the league against France, Acton concluded a treaty with your country, and informed the Sublime Porte of the machinations of our Committee of Public Safety in sending De Semonville as an Ambassador to Constantinople, which, perhaps, prevented the Divan from attacking Austria, and occasioned the capture and imprisonment of our emissary.



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Whenever our Government has, by the success of our arms, been enabled to dictate to Naples, the removal of Acton has been insisted upon; but though he has ceased to transact business ostensibly as a Minister, his influence has always, and deservedly, continued unimpaired, and he still enjoys the just confidence and esteem of his Prince.

But is His Sicilian Majesty equally well represented at the Cabinet of St. Cloud as served in his own capital? I have told you before that Bonaparte is extremely particular in his acceptance of foreign diplomatic agents, and admits none near his person whom he does not believe to be well inclined to him.

Marquis de Gallo, the Ambassador of the King of the Two Sicilies to the Emperor of the French, is no novice in the diplomatic career. His Sovereign has employed him for these fifteen years in the most delicate negotiations, and nominated him in May, 1795, a Minister of the Foreign Department, and a successor of Chevalier Acton, an honour which he declined. In the summer and autumn, 1797, Marquis de Gallo assisted at the conferences at Udine, and signed, with the Austrian plenipotentiaries, the Peace of Campo Formio, on the 17th of October, 1797.

During 1798, 1799, and 1800 he resided as Neapolitan Ambassador at Vienna, and was again entrusted by his Sovereign with several important transactions with Austria and Russia. After a peace had been agreed to between France and the Two Sicilies, in March, 1801, and the Court of Naples had every reason to fear, and of course to please, the Court of St. Cloud, he obtained his present appointment, and is one of the few foreign Ambassadors here who has escaped both Bonaparte's private admonitions in the diplomatic circle and public lectures in Madame Bonaparte's drawing-room.

This escape is so much the more fortunate and singular as our Government is far from being content with the mutinous spirit (as Bonaparte calls it) of the Government of Naples, which, considering its precarious and enfeebled state, with a French army in the heart of the kingdom, has resisted our attempts and insults with a courage and dignity that demand our admiration.

It is said that the Marquis de Gallo is not entirely free from some taints of modern philosophy, and that he, therefore, does not consider the consequences of our innovations so fatal as most loyal men judge them; nor thinks a sans-culotte Emperor more dangerous to civilized society than a sans-culotte sovereign people.

It is evident from the names and rank of its partisans that the Revolution of Naples in 1799 was different in many respects from that of every other country in Europe; for, although the political convulsions seem to have originated among the middle classes of the community, the extremes of society were everywhere else made to act against each other; the rabble being the first to triumph, and the nobles to succumb. But here, on the contrary, the lazzaroni, composed



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of the lowest portion of the population of a luxurious capital, appear to have been the most strenuous, and, indeed, almost the only supporters of royalty; while the great families, instead of being indignant at novelties which levelled them, in point of political rights, with the meanest subject, eagerly embraced the opportunity of altering that form of Government which alone made them great. It is, however, but justice to say that, though Marquis de Gallo gained the good graces of Bonaparte and of France in 1797, he was never, directly or indirectly, inculpated in the revolutionary transactions of his countrymen in 1799, when he resided at Vienna; and indeed, after all, it is not improbable that he disguises his real sentiments the better to, serve his country, and by that means has imposed on Bonaparte and acquired his favour.

The address and manners of a courtier are allowed Marquis de Gallo by all who know him, though few admit that he possesses any talents as a statesman. He is said to have read a great deal, to possess a good memory and no bad judgment; but that, notwithstanding this, all his knowledge is superficial.

LETTER XXIV.

Paris, August, 1805.

My lord:—You have perhaps heard that Napoleon Bonaparte, with all his brothers and sisters, was last Christmas married by the Pope according to the Roman Catholic rite, being previously only united according to the municipal laws of the French Republic, which consider marriage only as a civil contract. During the last two months of His Holiness's residence here, hardly a day passed that he was not petitioned to perform the same ceremony for our conscientious grand functionaries and courtiers, which he, however, according to the Emperor's desire, declined. But his Cardinals were not under the same restrictions, and to an attentive observer who has watched the progress of the Revolution and not lost sight of its actors, nothing could appear more ridiculous, nothing could inspire more contempt of our versatility and inconsistency, than to remark among the foremost to demand the nuptial benediction, a Talleyrand, a Fouche, a Real, an Augereau, a Chaptal, a Reubel, a Lasnes, a Bessieres, a Thuriot, a Treilhard, a Merlin, with a hundred other equally notorious revolutionists, who were, twelve or fifteen years ago, not only the first to declaim against religious ceremonies as ridiculous, but against religion itself as useless, whose motives produced, and whose votes sanctioned, those decrees of the legislature which proscribed the worship, together with its priests and sectaries. But then the fashion of barefaced infidelity was as much the order of the day as that of external sanctity is at present. I leave to casuists the decision whether to the morals of the people, naked atheism, exposed with all its deformities, is more or less hurtful than concealed atheism, covered with the garb of piety; but for my part I think the

noonday murderer less guilty and much less detestable than the midnight assassin who stabs in the dark.

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A hundred anecdotes are daily related of our new saints and fashionable devotees. They would be laughable were they not scandalous, and contemptible did they not add duplicity to our other vices.

Bonaparte and his wife go now every morning to hear Mass, and on every Sunday or holiday they regularly attend at vespers, when, of course, all those who wish to be distinguished for their piety or rewarded for their flattery never neglect to be present. In the evening of last Christmas Day, the Imperial chapel was, as usual, early crowded in expectation of Their Majesties, when the chamberlain, Salmatoris, entered, and said to the captain of the guard, loud enough to be heard by the audience, "The Emperor and the Empress have just resolved not to come here to-night, His Majesty being engaged by some unexpected business, and the Empress not wishing to come without her consort." In ten minutes the chapel was emptied of every person but the guards, the priests, and three old women who had nowhere else to pass an hour. At the arrival of our Sovereigns, they were astonished at the unusual vacancy, and indignantly regarded each other. After vespers were over, one of Bonaparte's spies informed him of the cause, when, instead of punishing the despicable and hypocritical courtiers, or showing them any signs of his displeasure, he ordered Salmatoris under arrest, who would have experienced a complete disgrace had not his friend Duroc interfered and made his peace.

At another time, on a Sunday, Fouche entered the chapel in the midst of the service, and whispered to Bonaparte, who immediately beckoned to his lord-in-waiting and to Duroc. These both left the Imperial chapel, and returning in a few minutes at the head of five grenadiers, entered the grand gallery, generally frequented by the most scrupulous devotees, and seized every book. The cause of this domiciliary visit was an anonymous communication received by the Minister of Police, stating that libels against the Imperial family, bound in the form of Prayer-books, had been placed there. No such libels were, however, found; but of one hundred and sixty pretended breviaries, twenty-eight were volumes of novels, sixteen were poems, and eleven were indecent books. It is not necessary to add that the proprietors of these edifying works never reclaimed them. The opinions are divided here, whether this curious discovery originated in the malice of Fouche, or whether Talleyrand took this method of duping his rival, and at the same time of gratifying his own malignity. Certain it is that Fouche was severely reprimanded for the transaction, and that Bonaparte was highly offended at the disclosure.

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The common people, and the middle classes, are neither so ostentatiously devout, nor so basely perverse. They go to church as to the play, to gape at others, or to be stared at themselves; to pass the time, and to admire the show; and they do not conceal that such is the object of their attendance. Their indifference about futurity equals their ignorance of religious duties. Our revolutionary charlatans have as much brutalized their understanding as corrupted their hearts. They heard the Grand Mass said by the Pope with the same feelings as they formerly heard Robespierre proclaim himself a high priest of a Supreme Being; and they looked at the Imperial processions with the same insensibility as they once saw the daily caravans of victims passing for execution.

Even in Bonaparte's own guard, and among the officers of his household troops, several examples of rigour were necessary before they would go to any place of worship, or suffer in their corps any almoners; but now, after being drilled into a belief of Christianity, they march to the Mass as to a parade or to a review. With any other people, Bonaparte would not so easily have changed in two years the customs of twelve, and forced military men to kneel before priests, whom they but the other day were encouraged to hunt and massacre like wild beasts.

On the day of the Assumption of the Holy Virgin, a company of gendarmes d'Elite, headed by their officers, received publicly, and by orders, the sacrament; when the Abbe Frelaud approached Lieutenant Ledoux, he fell into convulsions, and was carried into the sacristy. After being a little recovered, he looked round him, as if afraid that some one would injure him, and said to the Grand Vicar Clauset, who inquired the cause of his accident and terror: "Good God! that man who gave me, on the 2d of September, 1792, in the convent of the Carenes, the five wounds from which I still suffer, is now an officer, and was about to receive the sacrament from my hands." When this occurrence was reported to Bonaparte, Ledoux was dismissed; but Abbe Frelaud was transported, and the Grand Vicar Clauset sent to the Temple, for the scandal their indiscretion had caused. This act was certainly as unjust towards him who was bayoneted at the altar, as towards those who served the altar under the protection of the bayonets.

LETTER XXV.

Paris, August, 1805.

My lord:—Although the seizure of Sir George Rumbold might in your country, as well as everywhere else, inspire indignation, it could nowhere justly excite surprise. We had crossed the Rhine seven months before to seize the Duc d'Enghien; and when any prey invited, the passing of the Elbe was only a natural consequence of the former outrage, of audacity on our part, and of endurance or indifference on the part of other Continental States. Talleyrand's note at Aix-la-Chapelle had also informed Europe that we had adopted a new and military diplomacy, and, in confounding power with right, would



respect no privileges at variance with our ambition, interest or, suspicions, nor any independence it was thought useful or convenient for us to invade.



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It was reported here, at the time, that Bonaparte was much offended with General Frere, who commanded this political expedition, for permitting Sir George's servant to accompany his master, as Fouche and Real had already tortures prepared and racks waiting, and after forcing your agent to speak out, would have announced his sudden death, either by his own hands or by a coup-de-sang, before any Prussian note could require his release. The known morality of our Government must have removed all doubts of the veracity of this assertion; a man might, besides, from the fatigues of a long journey, or from other causes, expire suddenly; but the exit of two, in the same circumstances, would have been thought at least extraordinary, even by our friends, and suspicious by our enemies.

The official declaration of Rheinhard (our Minister to the Circle of Lower Saxony) to the Senate at Hamburg, in which he disavowed all knowledge on the subject of the capture of Sir George Rumbold, occasioned his disgrace. This man, a subject of the Elector of Wurtemberg by birth, is one of the negative accomplices of the criminals of France who, since the Revolution, have desolated Europe. He began in 1792 his diplomatic career, under Chauvelin and Talleyrand, in London, and has since been the tool of every faction in power. In 1796 he was appointed a Minister to the Hanse Towns, and, without knowing why, he was hailed as the point of rally to all the philosophers, philanthropists, Illuminati and other revolutionary amateurs, with which the North of Germany, Poland, Denmark, and Sweden then abounded.

A citizen of Hamburg—or rather, of the world—of the name of Seveking, bestowed on him the hand of a sister; and though he is not accused of avarice, some of the contributions extorted by our Government from the neutral Hanse Towns are said to have been left behind in his coffers instead of being forwarded to this capital. Either on this account, or for some other reason, he was recalled from Hamburg in January, 1797, and remained unemployed until the latter part of 1798, when he was sent as Minister to Tuscany.

When, in the summer of 1799, Talleyrand was forced by the Jacobins to resign his place as a Minister of the Foreign Department, he had the adroitness to procure Rheinhard to be nominated his successor, so that, though no longer nominally the Minister, he still continued to influence the decisions of our Government as much as if still in office, because, though not without parts, Rheinhard has neither energy of character nor consistency of conduct. He is so much accustomed, and wants so much to be governed, that in 1796, at Hamburg, even the then emigrants, Madame de Genlis and General Valence, directed him, when he was not ruled or dictated to by his wife or brother-in-law.



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In 1800 Bonaparte sent him as a representative to the Helvetian Republic, and in 1802, again to Hamburg, where he was last winter superseded by Bourrienne, and ordered to an inferior station at the: Electoral Court at Dresden. Rheinhard will never become one of those daring diplomatic banditti whom revolutionary Governments always employ in preference. He has some moral principles, and, though not religious, is rather scrupulous. He would certainly sooner resign than undertake to remove by poison, or by the steel of a bravo, a rival of his own or a person obnoxious to his employers. He would never, indeed, betray the secrets of his Government if he understood they intended to rob a despatch or to atop a messenger; but no allurements whatever would induce him to head the parties perpetrating these acts of our modern diplomacy.

Our present Minister at Hamburg (Bourrienne) is far from being so nice. A revolutionist from the beginning of the Revolution, he shared, with the partisans of La Fayette, imprisonment under Robespierre, and escaped death only by emigration. Recalled afterwards by his friend, the late Director (Barras), he acted as a kind of secretary to him until 1796, when Bonaparte demanded him, having known him at the military college. During all Bonaparte's campaigns in Italy, Egypt, and Syria, he was his sole and confidential secretary—a situation which he lost in 1802, when Talleyrand denounced his corruption and cupidity because he had rivalled him in speculating in the funds and profiting by the information which his place afforded him. He was then made a Counsellor of State, but in 1803 he was involved in the fraudulent bankruptcy of one of our principal houses to the amount of a million of livres—and, from his correspondence with it, some reasons appeared for the suspicion that he frequently had committed a breach of confidence against his master, who, after erasing his name from among the Counsellors of State, had him conveyed a prisoner to the Temple, where he remained six months. A small volume, called *Le Livre Rouge* of the Consular Court, made its appearance about that time, and contained some articles which gave Bonaparte reason to suppose that Bourrienne was its author. On being questioned by the Grand Judge Regnier and the Minister Fouce, before whom he was carried, he avowed that he had written it, but denied that he had any intention of making it public. As to its having found its way to the press during his confinement, that could only be ascribed to the ill-will or treachery of those police agents who inspected his papers and put their seals upon them. "Tell Bonaparte," said he, "that, had I been inclined to injure him in the public opinion, I should not have stooped to such trifles as *Le Livre Rouge*, while I have deposited with a friend his original orders, letters, and other curious documents as materials for an edifying history of our military hospitals during the campaigns of Italy and Syria all authentic testimonies of his humanity for the wounded and dying French soldiers."



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After the answers of this interrogatory had been laid before Bonaparte, his brother Joseph was sent to the Temple to negotiate with Bourrienne, who was offered his liberty and a prefecture if he would give up all the original papers that, as a private secretary, he had had opportunity to collect.

“These papers,” answered Bourrienne, “are my only security against your brother’s wrath and his assassins. Were I weak enough to deliver them up to-day, to-morrow, probably, I should no longer be counted among the living; but I have now taken my measures so effectually that, were I murdered to-day, these originals would be printed to-morrow. If Napoleon does not confide in my word of honour, he may trust to an assurance of discretion, with which my own interest is nearly connected. If he suspects me of having wronged him, he is convinced also of the eminent services I have rendered him, sufficient surely to outweigh his present suspicion. Let him again employ me in any post worthy of him and of me, and he shall soon see how much I will endeavour to regain his confidence.”

Shortly afterwards Bourrienne was released, and a pension, equal to the salary of a Counsellor of State; was granted him until some suitable place became vacant. On Champagny’s being appointed a Minister of the Home Department, the embassy at Vienna was demanded by Bourrienne, but refused, as previously promised to La Rochefoucauld, our late Minister at Dresden. When Rheinhard, in a kind of disgrace, was transferred to that relatively insignificant post, Bourrienne was ordered, with extensive instructions, to Hamburg. The Senate soon found the difference between a timid and honest Minister, and an unprincipled and crafty intriguer. New loans were immediately required from Hanover; but hardly were these acquitted, than fresh extortions were insisted on. In some secret conferences Bourrienne is, however, said to have hinted that some douceurs were expected for alleviating the rigour of his instructions. This hint has, no doubt, been taken, because he suddenly altered his conduct, and instead of hunting the purses of the Germans, pursued the persons of his emigrated countrymen; and, in a memorial, demanded the expulsion of all Frenchmen who were not registered and protected by him, under pretence that every one of them who declined the honour of being a subject of Bonaparte, must be a traitor against the French Government and his country.

Bourrienne is now stated to have connected himself with several stock-jobbers, both in Germany, Holland, and England; and already to have pocketed considerable sums by such connections. It is, however, not to be forgotten that several houses have been ruined in this capital by the profits allowed him, who always refused to share their losses, but, whatever were the consequences, enforced to its full amount the payment of that value which he chose to set on his communications.

A place in France would, no doubt, have been preferable to Bourrienne, particularly one near the person of Bonaparte. But if nothing else prevented the accomplishment of his wishes, his long familiarity with all the Bonapartes, whom he always treated as equals,

and even now (with the exception of Napoleon) does not think his superiors, will long remain an insurmountable barrier.



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I cannot comprehend how Bonaparte (who is certainly no bad judge of men) could so long confide in Bourrienne, who, with the usual presumption of my countrymen, is continually boasting, to a degree that borders on indiscretion, and, by an artful questioner, may easily be led to overstep those bounds. Most of the particulars of his quarrel with Napoleon I heard him relate himself, as a proof of his great consequence, in a company of forty individuals, many of whom were unknown to him. On the first discovery which Bonaparte made of Bourrienne's infidelity, Talleyrand complimented him upon not having suffered from it. "Do you not see," answered Bonaparte, "that it is also one of the extraordinary gifts of my extraordinary good fortune?"

"Even traitors are unable to betray me. Plots respect me as much as bullets." I need not tell you that Fortune is the sole divinity sincerely worshipped by Napoleon.

LETTER XXVI.

Paris, August, 1805.

My lord:—Joseph Bonaparte leads a much more retired life, and sees less company, than any of his brothers or sisters. Except the members of his own family, he but seldom invites any guests, nor has Madame Joseph those regular assemblies and circles which Madame Napoleon and Madame Louis Bonaparte have. His hospitality is, however, greater at his countryseat Morfontaine than at his hotel here. Those whom he likes, or does not mistrust (who, by the bye, are very few), may visit him without much formality in the country, and prolong their stay, according to their own inclination or discretion; but they must come without their servants, or send them away on their arrival.

As soon as an agreeable visitor presents himself, it is the etiquette of the house to consider him as an inmate; but to allow him at the same time a perfect liberty to dispose of his hours and his person as suits his convenience or caprice. In this extensive and superb mansion a suite of apartments is assigned him, with a valet-de—chambre, a lackey, a coachman, a groom, and a jockey, all under his own exclusive command. He has allotted him a chariot, a gig, and riding horses, if he prefers such an exercise. A catalogue is given him of the library of the chateau; and every morning he is informed what persons compose the company at breakfast, dinner, and supper, and of the hours of these different repasts. A bill of fare is at the same time presented to him, and he is asked to point out those dishes to which he gives the preference, and to declare whether he chooses to join the company or to be served in his own rooms.

During the summer season, players from the different theatres of Paris are paid to perform three times in the week; and each guest, according to the period of his arrival, is asked, in his turn, to command either a comedy or a tragedy, a farce or a ballet. Twice in the week concerts are executed by the first performers of the opera-bouffe; and

twice in the week invitations to tea-parties are sent to some of the neighbours, or accepted from them.



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Besides four billiard-tables, there are other gambling-tables for Rouge et Noir, Trente et Quarante, Faro, La Roulette, Birribi, and other games of hazard. The bankers are young men from Corsica, to whom Joseph, who advances the money, allows all the gain, while he alone suffers the loss. Those who are inclined may play from morning till night, and from night till morning, without interruption, as no one interferes. Should Joseph hear that any person has been too severely treated by Fortune, or suspects that he has not much cash remaining, some rouleaux of napoleons d'or are placed on the table of his dressing-room, which he may use or leave untouched, as he judges proper.

The hours of Joseph Bonaparte are neither so late as yours in England, nor so early as they were formerly in France. Breakfast is ready served at ten o'clock, dinner at four, and supper at nine. Before midnight he retires to bed with his family, but visitors do as they like and follow their own usual hours, and their servants are obliged to wait for them.

When any business calls Joseph away, either to preside in the Senate here, or to travel in the provinces, he notifies the visitors, telling them at the same time not to displace themselves on account of his absence, but wait till his return, as they would not observe any difference in the economy of his house, of which Madame Joseph always does the honours, or, in her absence, some lady appointed by her.

Last year, when Joseph first assumed a military rank, he passed nearly four months with the army of England on the coast or in Brabant. On his return, all his visitors were gone, except a young poet of the name of Montaigne, who does not want genius, but who is rather too fond of the bottle. Joseph is considered the best gourmet or connoisseur in liquors and wines of this capital, and Montaigne found his Champagne and burgundy so excellent that he never once went to bed that he was not heartily intoxicated. But the best of the story is that he employed his mornings in composing a poem holding out to abhorrence the disgusting vice of drunkenness, and presented it to Joseph, requesting permission to dedicate it to him when published. To those who have read it, or only seen extracts from it, the compilation appears far from being contemptible, but Joseph still keeps the copy, though he has made the author a present of one hundred napoleons d'or, and procured him a place of an amanuensis in the chancellory of the Senate, having resolved never to accept any dedication, but wishing also not to hurt the feelings of the author by a refusal.



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In a chateau where so many visitors of licentious and depraved morals meet, of both sexes, and where such an unlimited liberty reigns, intrigues must occur, and have of course not seldom furnished materials for the scandalous chronicle. Even Madame Joseph herself has either been gallant or calumniated. Report says that to the nocturnal assiduities of Eugene de Beauharnais and of Colonel la Fond-Blaniac she is exclusively indebted to the honour of maternity, and that these two rivals even fought a duel concerning the right of paternity. Eugene de Beauharnais never was a great favourite with Joseph Bonaparte, whose reserved manners and prudence form too great a contrast to his noisy and blundering way to accord with each other. Before he set out for Italy, it was well known in our fashionable circles that he had been interdicted the house of his uncle, and that no reconciliation took place, notwithstanding the endeavours of Madame Napoleon. To humble him still more, Joseph even nominated la Fond-Blaniac an equerry to his wife, who, therefore, easily consoled herself for the departure of her dear nephew.

The husband of Madame Miot (one of Madame Joseph's ladies-in-waiting) was not so patient, nor such a philosopher as Joseph Bonaparte. Some charitable person having reported in the company of a 'bonne amie' of Miot, that his wife did not pass her nights in solitude, but that she sought consolation among the many gallants and disengaged visitors at Morfontaine, he determined to surprise her. It was past eleven o'clock at night when his arrival was announced to Joseph, who had just retired to his closet. Madame Miot had been in bed ever since nine, ill of a migraine, and her husband was too affectionate not to be the first to inform her of his presence, without permitting anybody previously to disturb her. With great reluctance, Madame Miot's maid delivered the key of her rooms, while she accompanied him with a light. In the antechamber he found a hat and a greatcoat, and in the closet adjoining the bedroom, a coat, a waistcoat, and a pair of breeches, with drawers, stockings, and slippers. Though the maid kept coughing all the time, Madame Miot and her gallant did not awake from their slumber, till the enraged husband began to use the bludgeon of the lover, which had also been left in the closet. A battle then ensued, in which the lover retaliated so vigorously, that the husband called out "Murder! murder!" with all his might. The chateau was instantly in an uproar, and the apartments crowded with half-dressed and half-naked lovers. Joseph Bonaparte alone was able to separate the combatants; and inquiring the cause of the riot, assured them that he would suffer no scandal and no intrigues in his house, without seriously resenting it. An explanation being made, Madame Miot was looked for but in vain; and the maid declared that, being warned by a letter from Paris of her husband's jealousy and determination



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to surprise her, her mistress had reposed herself in her room; while, to punish the ungenerous suspicions of her husband, she had persuaded Captain d' Horteuil to occupy her place in her own bed. The maid had no sooner finished her deposition, than her mistress made her appearance and upbraided her husband severely, in which she was cordially joined by the spectators. She inquired if, on seeing the dress of a gentleman, he had also discovered the attire of a female; and she appealed to Captain d' Horteuil whether he had not the two preceding nights also slept in her bed. To this he, of course, assented; adding that, had M. Miot attacked him the first night, he would not then perhaps have been so roughly handled as now; for then he was prepared for a visit, which this night was rather unexpected. This connubial farce ended by Miot begging pardon of his wife and her gallant; the former of whom, after much entreaty by Joseph, at last consented to share with him her bed. But being disfigured with two black eyes and suffering from several bruises, and also ashamed of his unfashionable behaviour, he continued invisible for ten days afterwards, and returned to this city as he had left it, by stealth.

This Miot was a spy under Robespierre, and is a Counsellor of State under Bonaparte. Without bread, as well as without a home, he was, from the beginning of the Revolution, one of the most ardent patriots, and the first republican Minister in Tuscany. After the Sovereign of that country had, in 1793, joined the League, Miot returned to France, and was, for his want of address to negotiate as a Minister, shut up to perform the part of a spy in the Luxembourg, then transformed into a prison for suspected persons. Thanks to his patriotism, upwards of two hundred individuals of both sexes were denounced, transferred to the Conciergerie prison, and afterwards guillotined. After that, until 1799, he continued so despised that no faction would accept him for an accomplice; but in the November of that year, after Bonaparte had declared himself a First Consul, Miot was appointed a tribune, an office from which he was advanced, in 1802, to be a Counsellor of State. As Miot squanders away his salary with harlots and in gambling-houses, and is pursued by creditors he neither will nor can pay, it was merely from charity that his wife was received among the other ladies of Madame Joseph Bonaparte's household.

LETTER XXVII.

Paris, August, 1805.

My lord:—Notwithstanding the ties of consanguinity, honour, duty, interest, and gratitude, which bound the Spanish Bourbons to the cause of the Bourbons of France, no monarch has rendered more service to the cause of rebellion, and done more harm to the cause of royalty, than the King of Spain.

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But here, again, you must understand me. When I speak of Princes whose talents are known not to be brilliant, whose intellects are known to be feeble, and whose good intentions are rendered null by a want of firmness of character or consistency of conduct; while I deplore their weakness and the consequent misfortunes of their contemporaries, I lay all the blame on their wicked or ignorant counsellors; because, if no Ministers were fools or traitors, no Sovereigns would tremble on their thrones, and no subjects dare to shake their foundation. Had Providence blessed Charles IV. of Spain with the judgment in selecting his Ministers, and the constancy of persevering in his choice, possessed by your George III.; had the helm of Spain been in the firm and able hands of a Grenville, a Windham, and a Pitt, the Cabinet of Madrid would never have been oppressed by the yoke of the Cabinet of St. Cloud, nor paid a heavy tribute for its bondage, degrading as well as ruinous.

“This is the age of upstarts,” said Talleyrand to his cousin, Prince de Chalais, who reproached him for an unbecoming servility to low and vile personages; “and I prefer bowing to them to being trampled upon and crushed by them.” Indeed, as far as I remember, nowhere in history are hitherto recorded so many low persons who, from obscurity and meanness, have suddenly and at once attained rank and notoriety. Where do we read of such a numerous crew of upstart Emperors, Kings, grand pensionaries, directors, Imperial Highnesses, Princes, Field-marsals, generals, Senators, Ministers, governors, Cardinals, *etc.*, as we now witness figuring upon the theatre of Europe, and who chiefly decide on the destiny of nations? Among these, several are certainly to be found whose superior parts have made them worthy to pierce the crowd and to shake off their native mud; but others again, and by far the greatest number of these ‘*novi homines*’, owe their present elevation to shameless intrigues or atrocious crimes.

The Prime Minister—or rather, the viceroy of Spain, the Prince of Peace—belongs to the latter class. From a man in the ranks of the guards he was promoted to a general-in-chief, and from a harp player in antechambers to a president of the councils of a Prince; and that within the short period of six years. Such a fortune is not common; but to be absolutely without capacity as well as virtue, genius as well as good breeding, and, nevertheless, to continue in an elevation so little merited, and in a place formerly so subject to changes and so unstable, is a fortune that no upstart ever before experienced in Spain.



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An intrigue of his elder brother with the present Queen, then Princess of Asturia, which was discovered by the King, introduced him first at Court as a harp player, and, when his brother was exiled, he was entrusted with the correspondence of the Princess with her gallant. After she had ascended the throne, he thought it more profitable to be the lover than the messenger, and contrived, therefore, to supplant his brother in the royal favour. Promotions and riches were consequently heaped upon him, and, what is surprising, the more undisguised the partiality of the Queen was, the greater the attachment of the King displayed itself; and it has ever since been an emulation between the royal couple who should the most forget and vilify birth and supremacy by associating this man not only in the courtly pleasures, but in the functions of Sovereignty. Had he been gifted with sound understanding, or possessed any share of delicacy, generosity, or discretion, he would, while he profited by their imprudent condescension, have prevented them from exposing their weaknesses and frailties to a discussion and ridicule among courtiers, and from becoming objects of humiliation and scandal among the people. He would have warned them of the danger which at all times attends the publicity of foibles and vices of Princes, but particularly in the present times of trouble and innovations. He would have told them: "Make me great and wealthy, but not at the expense of your own grandeur or of the loyalty of your people. Do not treat an humble subject as an equal, nor suffer Your Majesties, whom Providence destined to govern a high-spirited nation, to be openly ruled by one born to obey. I am too dutiful not to lay aside my private vanity when the happiness of my King and the tranquillity of my fellow subjects are at stake. I am already too high. In descending a little, I shall not only rise in the eyes of my contemporaries, but in the opinion of posterity. Every step I am advancing undermines your throne. In retreating a little, if I do not strengthen, I can never injure it." But I beg your pardon for this digression, and for putting the language of dignified reason into the mouth of a man as corrupt as he is imbecile.

Do not suppose, because the Prince of Peace is no friend of my nation, that I am his enemy. No! Had he shown himself a true patriot, a friend of his own country, and of his too liberal Prince, or even of monarchy in general, or of anybody else but himself—although I might have disapproved of his policy, if he has any—I would never have lashed the individual for the acts of the Minister. But you must have observed, with me, that never before his administration was the Cabinet of Madrid worse conducted at home or more despised abroad; the Spanish Monarch more humbled or Spanish subjects more wretched; the Spanish power more dishonoured or the Spanish resources worse employed. Never, before the treaty with France of 1796, concluded by this wiseacre

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(which made him a Prince of Peace, and our Government the Sovereign of Spain), was the Spanish monarchy reduced to such a lamentable dilemma as to be forced into an expensive war without a cause, and into a disgraceful peace, not only unprofitable, but absolutely disadvantageous. Never before were its treasures distributed among its oppressors to support their tyranny, nor its military and naval forces employed to fight the battles of rebellion. The loyal subjects of Spain have only one hope left. The delicate state of his present Majesty's health does not promise a much longer continuance of his reign, and the Prince of Asturia is too well informed to endure the guidance of the most ignorant Minister that ever was admitted into the Cabinet and confidence of a Sovereign. It is more than probable that under a new reign the misfortunes of the Prince of Peace will inspire as much compassion as his rapid advancement has excited astonishment and indignation.

A Cabinet thus badly directed cannot be expected to have representatives abroad either of abilities or patriotism. The Admiral and General Gravina, who but lately left this capital as an Ambassador from the Court of Spain to assume the command of a Spanish fleet, is more valiant than wise, and more an enemy of your country than a friend of his own. He is a profound admirer of Bonaparte's virtues and successes, and was, during his residence, one of the most ostentatiously awkward courtiers of Napoleon the First. It is said that he has the modesty and loyalty to wish to become a Spanish Bonaparte, and that he promises to restore by his genius and exploits the lost lustre of the Spanish monarchy. When this was reported to Talleyrand, he smiled with contempt; but when it was told to Bonaparte, he stamped with rage at the impudence of the Spaniard in daring to associate his name of acquired and established greatness with his own impertinent schemes of absurdities and impossibilities.

In the summer of 1793, Gravina commanded a division of the Spanish fleet in the Mediterranean, of which Admiral Langara was the commander-in-chief. At the capitulation of Toulon, after the combined English and Spanish forces had taken possession of it, when Rear-Admiral Goodall was declared governor, Gravina was made the commandant of the troops. At the head of these he often fought bravely in different sorties, and on the 1st of October was wounded at the re-capture of Fort Pharon. He complains still of having suffered insults or neglect from the English, and even of having been exposed unnecessarily to the fire and sword of the enemy merely because he was a patriot as well as an envied or suspected ally. His inveteracy against your country takes its date, no doubt, from the siege of Toulon, or perhaps, from its evacuation.

When, in May, 1794, our troops were advancing towards Collioure, he was sent with a squadron to bring it succours, but he arrived too late, and could not save that important place. He was not more successful at the beginning of the campaign of 1795 at Rosa, where he had only time to carry away the artillery before the enemy entered. In August, that year, during the absence of Admiral Massaredo, he assumed ad interim the

command of the Spanish fleet in the Mediterranean; but in the December following he was disgraced, arrested, and shut up as a State prisoner.



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During the embassy of Lucien Bonaparte to the Court of Madrid, in the autumn of 1800, Gravina was by his influence restored to favour; and after the death of the late Spanish Ambassador to the Cabinet of St. Cloud, Chevalier d' Azara, by the special desire of Napoleon, was nominated both his successor and a representative of the King of Etruria. Among the members of our diplomatic corps, he was considered somewhat of a Spanish gasconader and a bully. He more frequently boasted of his wounds and battles than of his negotiations or conferences, though he pretended, indeed, to shine as much in the Cabinet as in the field.

In his suite were two Spanish women, one about forty, and the other about twenty years of age. Nobody knew what to make of them, as they were treated neither as wives, mistresses, nor servants; and they avowed themselves to be no relations. After a residence here of some weeks, he was, by superior orders, waylaid one night at the opera, by a young and beautiful dancing girl of the name of Barrois, who engaged him to take her into keeping. He hesitated, indeed, for some time; at last, however, love got the better of his scruples, and he furnished for her an elegant apartment on the new Boulevard. On the day he carried her there, he was accompanied by the chaplain of the Spanish Legation; and told her that, previous to any further intimacy, she must be married to him, as his religious principles did not permit him to cohabit with a woman who was not his wife. At the same time he laid before her an agreement to sign, by which she bound herself never to claim him as a husband before her turn—that is to say, until sixteen other women, to whom he had been previously married, were dead. She made no opposition, either to the marriage or to the conditions annexed to it. This girl had a sweetheart of the name of Valere, an actor at one of the little theatres on the Boulevards, to whom she communicated her adventure. He advised her to be scrupulous in her turn, and to ask a copy of the agreement. After some difficulty this was obtained. In it no mention was made of her maintenance, nor in what manner her children were to be regarded, should she have any. Valere had, therefore, another agreement drawn up, in which all these points were arranged, according to his own interested views. Gravina refused to subscribe to what he plainly perceived were only extortions; and the girl, in her turn, not only declined any further connection with him, but threatened to publish the act of polygamy. Before they had done discussing this subject, the door was suddenly opened and the two Spanish ladies presented themselves. After severely upbraiding Gravina, who was struck mute by surprise, they announced to the girl that whatever promise or contract of marriage she had obtained from him was of no value, as, before they came with him to France, he had bound himself, before a public notary at Madrid, not to form any more connections, nor to marry any other woman, without their written consent. One of these ladies declared that she had been married to Gravina twenty-two years, and was his oldest wife but one; the other said that she had been married to him six years. They insisted upon his following them, which he did, after putting a purse of gold into Barrois's hand.



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When Valere heard from his mistress this occurrence, he advised her to make the most money she could of the Spaniard's curious scruples. A letter was, therefore, written to him, demanding one hundred thousand livres—as the price of secrecy and withholding the particulars of this business from the knowledge of the tribunals and the police; and an answer was required within twenty-four hours. The same night Gravina offered one thousand Louis, which were accepted, and the papers returned; but the next day Valere went to his hotel, Rue de Provence, where he presented himself as a brother of Barrois. He stated that he still possessed authenticated copies of the papers returned, and that he must have either the full sum first asked by his sister, or an annuity of twelve thousand livres settled upon her. Instead of an answer, Gravina ordered him to be turned out of the house. An attorney then waited on His Excellency, on the part of the brother and the sister, and repeated their threats and their demands, adding that he would write a memorial both to the Emperor of the French and to the King of Spain, were justice refused to his principals any longer.

Gravina was well aware that this affair, though more laughable than criminal, would hurt both his character and credit if it were known in France; he therefore consented to pay seventy-six thousand livres more, upon a formal renunciation by the party of all future claims. Not having money sufficient by him, he went to borrow it from a banker, whose clerk was one of Talleyrand's secret agents. Our Minister, therefore, ordered every step of Gravina to be watched; but he soon discovered that, instead of wanting this money for a political intrigue, it was necessary to extricate him out of an amorous scrape. Hearing, however, in what a scandalous manner the Ambassador had been duped and imposed upon, he reported it to Bonaparte, who gave Fouche orders to have Valere, Barrois, and the attorney immediately transported to Cayenne, and to restore Gravina his money. The former part of this order the Minister of Police executed the more willingly, as it was according to his plan that Barrois had pitched upon Gravina for a lover. She had been intended by him as a spy on His Excellency, but had deceived him by her reports—a crime for which transportation was a usual punishment.

Notwithstanding the care of our Government to conceal and bury this affair in oblivion, it furnished matter both for conversation in our fashionable circles, and subjects for our caricaturists. But these artists were soon seized by the police, who found it more easy to chastise genius than to silence tongues. The declaration of war by Spain against your country was a lucky opportunity for Gravina to quit with honour a Court where he was an object of ridicule, to assume the command of a fleet which might one day make him an object of terror. When he took leave of Bonaparte, he was told to return to France victorious, or never to return any more; and Talleyrand warned him as a friend, “whenever he returned to his post in France to leave his marriage mania behind him in Spain. Here,” said he, “you may, without ridicule, intrigue with a hundred women, but you run a great risk by marrying even one.”



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I have been in company with Gravina, and after what I heard him say, so far from judging him superstitious, I thought him really impious. But infidelity and bigotry are frequently next-door neighbours.

LETTER XXVIII.

Paris, August, 1805.

My lord:—It cannot have escaped the observation of the most superficial traveller of rank, that, at the Court of St. Cloud, want of morals is not atoned for by good breeding or good manners. The hideousness of vice, the pretensions of ambition, the vanity of rank, the pride of favour, and the shame of venality do not wear here that delicate veil, that gloss of virtue, which, in other Courts, lessens the deformity of corruption and the scandal of depravity. Duplicity and hypocrisy are here very common indeed, more so than dissimulation anywhere else; but barefaced knaves and impostors must always make indifferent courtiers. Here the Minister tells you, I must have such a sum for a place; and the chamberlain tells you, Count down so much for my protection. The Princess requires a necklace of such a value for interesting herself for your advancement; and the lady-in-waiting demands a diamond of such worth on the day of your promotion. This tariff of favours and of infamy descends 'ad infinitum'. The secretary for signing, and the clerk for writing your commission; the cashier for delivering it, and the messenger for informing you of it, have all their fixed prices. Have you a lawsuit, the judge announces to you that so much has been offered by your opponent, and so much is expected from you, if you desire to win your cause. When you are the defendant against the Crown, the attorney or solicitor-general lets you know that such a *douceur* is requisite to procure such an issue. Even in criminal proceedings, not only honour, but life, may be saved by pecuniary sacrifices.

A man of the name of Martin, by profession a stock-jobber, killed, in 1803, his own wife; and for twelve thousand livres—he was acquitted, and recovered his liberty. In November last year, in a quarrel with his own brother, he stabbed him through the heart, and for another sum of twelve thousand livres he was acquitted, and released before last Christmas. This wretch is now in prison again, on suspicion of having poisoned his own daughter, with whom he had an incestuous intercourse, and he boasts publicly of soon being liberated. Another person, Louis de Saurac, the younger son of Baron de Saurac, who together with his eldest son had emigrated, forged a will in the name of his parent, whom he pretended to be dead, which left him the sole heir of all the disposable property, to the exclusion of two sisters. After the nation had shared its part as heir of all emigrants, Louis took possession of the remainder. In 1802, both his father and brother accepted the general amnesty, and returned to France. To their great surprise, they heard that this Louis had,



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by his ill-treatment, forced his sisters into servitude, refusing them even the common necessaries of life. After upbraiding him for his want of duty, the father desired, according to the law, the restitution of the unsold part of his estates. On the day fixed for settling the accounts and entering into his rights, Baron de Saurac was arrested as a conspirator and imprisoned in the Temple. He had been denounced as having served in the army of Conde, and as being a secret agent of Louis XVIII. To disprove the first part of the charge, he produced certificates from America, where he had passed the time of his emigration, and even upon the rack he denied the latter. During his arrest, the eldest son discovered that Louis had become the owner of their possessions, by means of the will he had forged in the name of his father; and that it was he who had been unnatural enough to denounce the author of his days. With the wreck of their fortune in St. Domingo, he procured his father's release; who, being acquainted with the perversity of his younger son, addressed himself to the department to be reinstated in his property. This was opposed by Louis, who defended his title to the estate by the revolutionary maxim which had passed into a law, enacting that all emigrants should be considered as politically dead. Hitherto Baron de Saurac had, from affection, declined to mention the forged will; but shocked by his son's obduracy, and being reduced to distress, his counsellor produced this document, which not only went to deprive Louis of his property, but exposed him to a criminal prosecution.

This unnatural son, who was not yet twenty-five, had imbibed all the revolutionary morals of his contemporaries, and was well acquainted with the moral characters of his revolutionary countrymen. He addressed himself, therefore, to Merlin of Douai, Bonaparte's Imperial attorney-general and commander of his Legion of Honour; who, for a bribe of fifty thousand livres—obtained for him, after he had been defeated in every other court, a judgment in his favour, in the tribunal of cassation, under the sophistical conclusion that all emigrants, being, according to law, considered as politically dead, a will in the name of any one of them was merely a pious fraud to preserve the property in the family.

This Merlin is the son of a labourer of Anchin, and was a servant of the Abbey of the same name. One of the monks, observing in him some application, charitably sent him to be educated at Douai, after having bestowed on him some previous education. Not satisfied with this generous act, he engaged the other monks, as well as the chapter of Cambrai, to subscribe for his expenses of admission as an attorney by the Parliament of Douai, in which situation the Revolution found him. By his dissimulation and assumed modesty, he continued to dupe his benefactors; who, by their influence, obtained for him the nomination as representative of the people to our First National



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Assembly. They soon, however, had reason to repent of their generosity. He joined the Orleans faction and became one of the most persevering, violent, and cruel persecutors of the privileged classes, particularly of the clergy, to whom he was indebted for everything. In 1792 he was elected a member of the National Convention, where he voted for the death of his King. It was he who proposed a law (justly called, by Prudhomme, the production of the deliberate homicide Merlin) against suspected persons; which was decreed on the 17th of September, 1793, and caused the imprisonment or proscription of two hundred thousand families. This decree procured him the appellation of Merlin Suspects and of Merlin Potence. In 1795 he was appointed a Minister of Police, and soon afterwards a Minister of Justice. After the revolution in favour of the Jacobins of the 4th of September, 1797, he was made a director, a place which he was obliged by the same Jacobins to resign, in June, 1799. Bonaparte expressed, at first, the most sovereign contempt for this Merlin, but on account of one of his sons, who was his aide-de-camp, he was appointed by him, when First Consul, his attorney-general.

As nothing paints better the true features of a Government than the morality or vices of its functionaries, I will finish this man's portrait with the following characteristic touches.

Merlin de Douai has been successively the counsel of the late Duc d' Orleans, the friend of Danton, of Chabot, and of Hebert, the admirer of Murat, and the servant of Robespierre. An accomplice of Rewbell, Barras, and la Reveilliere, an author of the law of suspected persons, an advocate of the Septembrizers, and an ardent apostle of the St. Guillotine. Cunning as a fog and ferocious as a tiger, he has outlived all the factions with which he has been connected. It has been his policy to keep in continual fermentation rivalships, jealousies, inquietudes, revenge and all other odious passions; establishing, by such means, his influence on the terror of some, the ambition of others, and the credulity of them all. Had I, when Merlin proposed his law concerning suspected persons, in the name of liberty and equality, been free and his equal, I should have said to him, "Monster, this, your atrocious law, is your sentence of death; it has brought thousands of innocent persons to an untimely end; you shall die by my hands as a victim, if the tribunals do not condemn you to the scaffold as an executioner or as a criminal."

Merlin has bought national property to the amount of fifteen million of livress—and he is supposed to possess money nearly to the same amount, in your or our funds. For a man born a beggar, and educated by charity, this fortune, together with the liberal salaries he enjoys, might seem sufficient without selling justice, protecting guilt, and oppressing or persecuting innocence.

LETTER XXIX.



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Paris, August, 1805.

My lord:—The household troops of Napoleon the First are by thousands more numerous than those even of Louis XIV. were. Grenadiers on foot and on horseback, riflemen on foot and on horseback, heavy and light artillery, dragoons and hussars, mamelukes and sailors, artificers and pontoneers, gendarmes, gendarmes d'Alite, Velites and veterans, with Italian grenadiers, riflemen, dragoons, *etc.*, *etc.*, compose all together a not inconsiderable army.

Though it frequently happens that the pay of the other troops is in arrears, those appertaining to Bonaparte's household are as regularly paid as his Senators, Counsellors of State, and other public functionaries. All the men are picked, and all the officers as much as possible of birth, or at least of education. In the midst of this voluptuous and seductive capital, they are kept very strict, and the least negligence or infraction of military discipline is more severely punished than if committed in garrison or in an encampment. They are both better clothed, accoutred, and paid, than the troops of the line, and have everywhere the precedency of them. All the officers, and many of the soldiers, are members of Bonaparte's Legion of Honour, and carry arms of honour distributed to them by Imperial favour, or for military exploits. None of them are quartered upon the citizens; each corps has its own spacious barracks, hospitals, drilling-ground, riding or fencing-houses, gardens, bathing-houses, billiard-table, and even libraries. A chapel has lately been constructed near each barrack, and almoners are already appointed. In the meantime, they attend regularly at Mass, either in the Imperial Chapel or in the parish churches. Bonaparte discourages much all marriages among the military in general, but particularly among those of his household troops. That they may not, however, be entirely deprived of the society of women, he allows five to each company, with the same salaries as the men, under the name of washerwomen.

With a vain and fickle people, fond of shows and innovations, nothing in a military despotism has a greater political utility, gives greater satisfaction, and leaves behind a more useful terror and awe, than Bonaparte's grand military reviews. In the beginning of his consulate, they regularly occurred three times in the month; after his victory of Marengo, they were reduced to once in a fortnight, and since he has been proclaimed Emperor, to once only in the month. This ostentatious exhibition of usurped power is always closed with a diplomatic review of the representatives of lawful Princes, who introduce on those occasions their fellow-subjects to another subject, who successfully has seized, and continues to usurp, the authority of his own Sovereign. What an example for ambition! what a lesson to treachery!

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Besides the household troops, this capital and its vicinity have, for these three years past, never contained less than from fifteen to twenty thousand men of the regiments of the line, belonging to what is called the first military division of the Army of the Interior. These troops are selected from among the brigades that served under Bonaparte in Italy and Egypt with the greatest eclat, and constitute a kind of depot for recruiting his household troops with tried and trusty men. They are also regularly paid, and generally better accoutred than their comrades encamped on the coast, or quartered in Italy or Holland.

But a standing army, upon which all revolutionary rulers can depend, and that always will continue their faithful support, unique in its sort and composition, exists in the bosom as well as in the extremities of this country. I mean, one hundred and twenty thousand invalids, mostly young men under thirty, forced by conscription against their will into the field, quartered and taken care of by our Government, and all possessed with the absurd prejudice that, as they have been maimed in fighting the battles of rebellion, the restoration of legitimate sovereignty would to them be an epoch of destruction, or at least of misery and want; and this prejudice is kept alive by emissaries employed on purpose to mislead them. Of these, eight thousand are lodged and provided for in this city; ten thousand at Versailles, and the remainder in Piedmont, Brabant, and in the conquered departments on the left bank of the Abine; countries where the inhabitants are discontented and disaffected, and require, therefore, to be watched, and to have a better spirit infused.

Those whose wounds permit it are also employed to do garrison duty in fortified places not exposed to an attack by enemies, and to assist in the different arsenals and laboratories, foundries, and depots of military or naval stores. Others are attached to the police offices, and some as gendarmes, to arrest suspected or guilty individuals; or as garnissaires, to enforce the payment of contributions from the unwilling or distressed. When the period for the payment of taxes is expired, two of these janissaires present themselves at the house of the persons in arrears, with a billet signed by the director of the contributions and countersigned by the police commissary. If the money is not immediately paid, with half a crown to each of them besides, they remain quartered in the house, where they are to be boarded and to receive half a crown a day each until an order from those who sent them informs them that what was due to the state has been acquitted. After their entrance into a house, and during their stay, no furniture or effects whatever can be removed or disposed of, nor can the master or mistress go out-of-doors without being accompanied by one of them.

In the houses appropriated to our invalids, the inmates are very well treated, and Government takes great care to make them satisfied with their lot. The officers have large halls, billiards, and reading-room to meet in; and the common men are admitted into apartments adjoining libraries, from-which they can borrow what books they contain, and read them at leisure. This is certainly a very good and even a humane institution, though these libraries chiefly contain military histories or novels.



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As to the morals of these young invalids, they may be well conceived when you remember the morality of our Revolution; and that they, without any religious notions or restraints, were not only permitted, but encouraged to partake of the debauchery and licentiousness which were carried to such an extreme in our armies and encampments. In an age when the passions are strongest, and often blind reason and silence conscience, they have not the means nor the permission to marry; in their vicinity it is, therefore, more difficult to discover one honest woman or a dutiful wife, than hundreds of harlots and of adulteresses. Notwithstanding that many of them have been accused before the tribunals of seductions, rape, and violence against the sex, not one has been punished for what the morality of our Government consider merely as bagatelles. Even in cases where husbands, brothers, and lovers have been killed by them while defending or avenging the honour of their wives, sisters, and mistresses, our tribunals have been ordered by our grand judge, according to the commands of the Emperor, not to proceed. As most of them have no occupation, the vice of idleness augments the mass of their corruption; for men of their principles, when they have nothing to do, never do anything good.

I do not know if my countrywomen feel themselves honoured by or obliged to Bonaparte, for leaving their virtue and honour unprotected, except by their own prudence and strength; but of this I am certain, that all our other troops, as well as the invalids, may live on free quarters with the sex without fearing the consequences; provided they keep at a distance from the females of our Imperial Family, and of those of our grand officers of State and principal functionaries. The wives and the daughters of the latter have, however, sometimes declined the advantage of these exclusive privileges.

A horse grenadier of Bonaparte's Imperial Guard, of the name of Rabais, notorious for his amours and debauchery, was accused before the Imperial Judge Thuriot, at one and the same time by several husbands and fathers, of having seduced the affections of their wives and of their daughters. As usual, Thuriot refused to listen to their complaints; at the same time insultingly advising them to retake their wives and children, and for the future to be more careful of them. Triumphant, as it were, in his injustice, he inconsiderately mentioned the circumstance to his own wife, observing that he never knew so many charges of the same sort exhibited against one man.

Madame Thuriot, who had been a servant-maid to her husband before he made her his wife, instead of being disgusted at the recital, secretly determined to see this Rabais. An intrigue was then begun, and carried on for four months, if not with discretion, at least without discovery; but the lady's own imprudence at last betrayed her, or I should say, rather, her jealousy. But for this she might



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still have been admired among our modest women, and Thuriot among fortunate husbands and happy fathers; for the lady, for the first time since her marriage, proved, to the great joy and pride of her husband, in the family way. Suspecting, however, the fidelity of her paramour, she watched his motions so closely that she discovered an intrigue between him and the chaste spouse of a rich banker; but the consequence of this discovery was the detection of her own crime.

On the discovery of this disgrace, Thuriot obtained an audience of Bonaparte, in which he exposed his misfortune, and demanded punishment on his wife's gallant. As, however, he also acknowledged that his own indiscretion was an indirect cause of their connection, he received the same advice which he had given to other unfortunate husbands: to retake, and for the future guard better, his dear moiety.

Thuriot had, however, an early opportunity of wreaking his vengeance on this gallant Rabais. It seems his prowess had reached the ears of Madame Baciocchi, the eldest sister of Bonaparte. This lady has a children mania, which is very troublesome to her husband, disagreeable to her relations, and injurious to herself. She never beholds any lady, particularly any of her family, in the way which women wish to be who love their lords, but she is absolutely frantic. Now, Thuriot's worthy friend Fouche had discovered, by his spies, that Rabais paid frequent and secret visits to the hotel Baciocchi, and that Madame Baciocchi was the object of these visits. Thuriot, on this discovery, instantly denounced him to Bonaparte.

Had Rabais ruined all the women of this capital, he would not only have been forgiven, but applauded by Napoleon, and his counsellors and courtiers; but to dare to approach, or only to cast his eyes on one of our Imperial Highnesses, was a crime nothing could extenuate or avenge, but the most exemplary punishment. He was therefore arrested, sent to the Temple, and has never since been heard of; so that his female friends are still in the cruel uncertainty whether he has died on the rack, been buried alive in the oubliettes, or is wandering an exile in the wilds of Cayenne.

In examining his trunk, among the curious effects discovered by the police were eighteen portraits and one hundred billets-doux, with medallions, rings, bracelets, tresses of hair, *etc.*, as numerous. Two of the portraits occasioned much scandal, and more gossiping. They were those of two of our most devout and most respectable Court ladies, Maids of Honour to our Empress, Madame Ney and Madame Lasnes; who never miss an opportunity of going to church, who have received the private blessing of the Pope, and who regularly confess to some Bishop or other once in a fortnight. Madame Napoleon cleared them, however, of all suspicion, by declaring publicly in her drawing-room that these portraits had come into the possession of Rabais by the infidelity of their maids; who had confessed their faults, and, therefore, had been charitably pardoned. Whether the opinions of Generals Ney and Lasnes coincide with



Madame Napoleon's assertion is uncertain; but Lasnes has been often heard to say that, from the instant his wife began to confess, he was convinced she was inclined to dishonour him; so that nothing surprised him.



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One of the medallions in Rabais's collection contained on one side the portrait of Thuriot, and on the other that of his wife; both set with diamonds, and presented to her by him on their last wedding day. For the supposed theft of this medallion, two of Thuriot's servants were in prison, when the arrest of Rabais explained the manner in which it had been lost. This so enraged him that he beat and kicked his wife so heartily that for some time even her life was in danger, and Thuriot lost all hopes of being a father.

Before the Revolution, Thuriot had been, for fraud and forgery, struck off the roll as an advocate, and therefore joined it as a patriot. In 1791, he was chosen a deputy to the National Assembly, and in 1792 to the National Convention. He always showed himself one of the most ungenerous enemies of the clergy, of monarchy, and of his King, for whose death he voted. On the 25th of May, 1792, in declaiming against Christianity and priesthood, he wished them both, for the welfare of mankind, at the bottom of the sea; and on the 18th of December the same year, he declared in the Jacobin Club that, if the National Convention evinced any signs of clemency towards Louis XVI., he would go himself to the Temple and blow out the brains of this unfortunate King. He defended in the tribune the massacres of the prisoners, affirming that the tree of liberty could never flourish without being inundated with the blood of aristocrats and other enemies of the Revolution. He has been convicted by rival factions of the most shameful robberies, and his infamy and depravity were so notorious that neither Murat, Brissot, Robespierre, nor the Directory would or could employ him. After the Revolution of the 9th of November, 1799, Bonaparte gave him the office of judge of the criminal tribunal, and in 1804 made him a Commander of his Legion of Honour. He is now one of our Emperor's most faithful subjects and most sincere Christians. Such is now his tender conscientiousness, that he was among those who were the first to be married again by some Cardinal to their present wives, to whom they had formerly been united only by the municipality. This new marriage, however, took place before Madame Thuriot had introduced herself to the acquaintance of the Imperial Grenadier Rabais.

LETTER XXX.

Paris, August, 1805.

My lord:—Regarding me as a connoisseur, though I have no pretensions but that of being an amateur, Lucien Bonaparte, shortly before his disgrace, invited me to pass some days with him in the country, and to assist him in arranging his very valuable collection of pictures—next our public ones, the most curious and most valuable in Europe, and, of course, in the world. I found here, as at Joseph Bonaparte's, the same splendour, the same etiquette, and the same liberty, which latter was much enhanced by the really engaging and unassuming manners and conversation of



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the host. At Joseph's, even in the midst of abundance and of liberty, in seeing the person or meditating on the character of the host, you feel both your inferiority of fortune and the humiliation of dependence, and that you visit a master instead of a friend, who indirectly tells you, "Eat, drink, and rejoice as long and as much as you like; but remember that if you are happy, it is to my generosity you are indebted, and if unhappy, that I do not care a pin about you." With Lucien it is the very reverse. His conduct seems to indicate that by your company you confer an obligation on him, and he is studious to remove, on all occasions, that distance which fortune has placed between him and his guests; and as he cannot compliment them upon being wealthier than himself, he seizes with delicacy every opportunity to chew that he acknowledges their superiority in talents and in genius as more than an equivalent for the absence of riches.

He is, nevertheless, himself a young man of uncommon parts, and, as far as I could judge from my short intercourse with the reserved Joseph and with the haughty Napoleon, he is abler and better informed than either, and much more open and sincere. His manners are also more elegant, and his language more polished, which is the more creditable to him when it is remembered how much his education has been neglected, how vitiated the Revolution made him, and that but lately his principal associates were, like himself, from among the vilest and most vulgar of the rabble. It is not necessary to be a keen observer to remark in Napoleon the upstart soldier, and in Joseph the former low member of the law; but I defy the most refined courtier to see in Lucien anything indicating a *ci-devant sans-culotte*. He has, besides, other qualities (and those more estimable) which will place him much above his elder brothers in the opinion of posterity. He is extremely compassionate and liberal to the truly distressed, serviceable to those whom he knows are not his friends, and forgiving and obliging even to those who have proved and avowed themselves his enemies. These are virtues commonly very scarce, and hitherto never displayed by any other member of the Bonaparte family.

An acquaintance of yours, and--a friend of mine, Count de T----, at his return here from emigration, found, of his whole former fortune, producing once eighty thousand livres—in the year, only four farms unsold, and these were advertised for sale. A man who had once been his servant, but was then a groom to Lucien, offered to present a memorial for him to his master, to prevent the disposal of the only support which remained to subsist himself, with a wife and four children. Lucien asked Napoleon to prohibit the sale, and to restore the Count the farms, and obtained his consent; but Fouche, whose cousin wanted them, having purchased other national property in the neighbourhood, prevailed upon Napoleon to forget his promise, and the farms were sold. As soon as



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Lucien heard of it he sent for the Count, delivered into his hands an annuity of six thousand livres—for the life of himself, his wife, and his children, as an indemnity for the inefficacy of his endeavours to serve him, as he expressed himself. Had the Count recovered the farms, they would not have given him a clear profit of half the amount, all taxes paid.

A young author of the name of Gauvan, irritated by the loss of parents and fortune by the Revolution, attacked, during 1799, in the public prints, as well as in pamphlets, every Revolutionist who had obtained notoriety or popularity. He was particularly vehement against Lucien, and laid before the public all his crimes and all his errors, and asserted, as facts, atrocities which were either calumnies or merely rumours. When, after Napoleon's assumption of the Consulate, Lucien was appointed a Minister of the Interior, he sent for Gauvan, and said to him, "Great misfortunes have early made you wretched and unjust, and you have frequently revenged yourself on those who could not prevent them, among whom I am one. You do not want capacity, nor, I believe, probity. Here is a commission which makes you a Director of Contributions in the Departments of the Rhine and Moselle, an office with a salary of twelve thousand livres but producing double that sum. If you meet with any difficulties, write to me; I am your friend. Take those one hundred louis d'or for the expenses of your journey. Adieu!" This anecdote I have read in Gauvan's own handwriting, in a letter to his sister. He died in 1802; but Mademoiselle Gauvan, who is not yet fifteen, has a pension of three thousand livres a year—from Lucien, who, has never seen her.

Lucien Bonaparte has another good quality: he is consistent in his political principles. Either from conviction or delusion he is still a Republican, and does not conceal that, had he suspected Napoleon of any intent to reestablish monarchy, much less tyranny, he would have joined those deputies who, on the 9th of November, 1799, in the sitting at St. Cloud, demanded a decree of outlawry against him. If the present quarrel between these two brothers were sifted to the bottom, perhaps it would be found to originate more from Lucien's Republicanism than from his marriage.

I know, with all France and Europe, that Lucien's youth has been very culpable; that he has committed many indiscretions, much injustice, many imprudences, many errors, and, I fear, even some crimes. I know that he has been the most profligate among the profligate, the most debauched among libertines, the most merciless among the plunderers, and the most perverse among rebels. I know that he is accused of being a Septembrizer; of having murdered one wife and poisoned another; of having been a spy, a denouncer, a persecutor of innocent persons in the Reign of Terror. I know that he is accused of having fought his brothers-in-law; of having ill-used his mother, and of an incestuous commerce with his own sisters.

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I have read and heard of these and other enormous accusations, and far be it from me to defend, extenuate, or even deny them. But suppose all this infamy to be real, to be proved, to be authenticated, which it never has been, and, to its whole extent, I am persuaded, never can be—what are the cruel and depraved acts of which Lucien has been accused to the enormities and barbarities of which Napoleon is convicted? Is the poisoning a wife more criminal than the poisoning a whole hospital of wounded soldiers; or the assisting to kill some confined persons, suspected of being enemies, more atrocious than the massacre in cold blood of thousands of disarmed prisoners? Is incest with a sister more shocking to humanity than the well-known unnatural pathic but I will not continue the disgusting comparison. As long as Napoleon is unable to acquit himself of such barbarities and monstrous crimes, he has no right to pronounce Lucien unworthy to be called his brother; nor have Frenchmen, as long as they obey the former as a Sovereign, or the Continent, as long as it salutes him as such, any reason to despise the latter for crimes which lose their enormity when compared to the horrid perpetrations of his Imperial brother.

An elderly lady, a relation of Lucien's wife, and a person in whose veracity and morality I have the greatest confidence, and for whom he always had evinced more regard than even for his own mother, has repeated to me many of their conversations. She assures me that Lucien deploras frequently the want of a good and religious education, and the tempting examples of perversity he met with almost at his entrance upon the revolutionary scene. He says that he determined to get rich 'per fas aut nefas', because he observed that money was everything, and that most persons plotted and laboured for power merely to be enabled to gather treasure, though, after they had obtained both, much above their desert and expectation, instead of being satiated or even satisfied, they bustled and intrigued for more, until success made them unguarded and prosperity indiscreet, and they became with their wealth the easy prey of rival factions. Such was the case of Danton, of Fabre d'Eglantine, of Chabot, of Chaumette, of Stebert, and other contemptible wretches, butchered by Robespierre and his partisans—victims in their turn to men as unjust and sanguinary as themselves. He had, therefore, laid out a different plan of conduct for himself. He had fixed upon fifty millions of livres—as the maximum he should wish for, and when that sum was in his possession, he resolved to resign all pretensions to rank and employment, and to enjoy 'otium cum dignitate'. He had kept to his determination, and so regulated his income that; with the expenses, pomp, and retinue of a Prince, he is enabled to make more persons happy and comfortable than his extortions have ruined or even embarrassed. He now lives like a philosopher, and endeavours to forget the past, to delight in the present, and to be indifferent about futurity. He chose, therefore, for a wife, a lady whom he loved and esteemed, in preference to one whose birth would have been a continual reproach to the meanness of his own origin.



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You must, with me, admire the modesty of a citizen sans-culotte, who, without a shilling in the world, fixes upon fifty millions as a reward for his revolutionary achievements, and with which he would be satisfied to sit down and begin his singular course of singular philosophy. But his success is more extraordinary than his pretensions were extravagant. This immense sum was amassed by him in the short period of four years, chiefly by bribes from foreign Courts, and by selling his protections in France.

But most of the other Bonapartes have made as great and as rapid fortunes as Lucien, and yet, instead of being generous, contented, or even philosophers, they are still profiting by every occasion to increase their ill-gotten treasures, and no distress was ever relieved, no talents encouraged, or virtues recompensed by them. The mind of their garrets lodges with them in their palaces, while Lucien seems to ascend as near as possible to a level with his circumstances. I have myself found him beneficent without ostentation.

Among his numerous pictures, I observed four that had formerly belonged to my father's, and afterwards to my own cabinet. I inquired how much he had paid for them, without giving the least hint that they had been my property, and were plundered from me by the nation. He had, indeed, paid their full value. In a fortnight after I had quitted him, these, with six other pictures, were deposited in my room, with a very polite note, begging my acceptance of them, and assuring me that he had but the day before heard from his picture dealer that they had belonged to me. He added that he would never retake them, unless he received an assurance from me that I parted with them without reluctance, and at the same time affixed their price. I returned them, as I knew they were desired by him for his collection, but he continued obstinate. I told him, therefore, that, as I was acquainted with his inclination to perform a generous action, I would, instead of payment for the pictures, indicate a person deserving his assistance. I mentioned the old Duchesse de -----, who is seventy-four years of age and blind; and, after possessing in her youth an income of eight hundred thousand livres—is now, in her old age, almost destitute. He did for this worthy lady more than I expected; but happening, in his visits to relieve my friend, to cast his eye on the daughter of the landlady where she lodged, he found means to prevail on the simplicity of the poor girl, and seduced her. So much do I know personally of Lucien Bonaparte, who certainly is a composition of good and bad qualities, but which of them predominate I will not take upon me to decide. This I can affirm—Lucien is not the worst member of the Bonaparte family.

LETTER XXXI.

Paris, August, 1805.



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My lord:—As long as Austria ranks among independent nations, Bonaparte will take care not to offend or alarm the ambition and interest of Prussia by incorporating the Batavian Republic with the other provinces of his Empire. Until that period, the Dutch must continue (as they have been these last ten years) under the appellation of allies, oppressed like subjects and plundered like foes. Their mock sovereignty will continue to weigh heavier on them than real servitude does on their Belgic and Flemish neighbours, because Frederick the Great pointed out to his successors the Elbe and the Tegel as the natural borders of the Prussian monarchy, whenever the right bank of the Rhine should form the natural frontiers of the kingdom of France.

That during the present summer a project for a partition treaty of Holland has by the Cabinet of St. Cloud been laid before the Cabinet of Berlin is a fact, though disseminated only as a rumour by the secret agents of Talleyrand. Their object was on this, as on all previous occasions when any names, rights, or liberties of people were intended to be erased from among the annals of independence, to sound the ground, and to prepare by such rumours the mind of the public for another outrage and another overthrow. But Prussia, as well as France, knows the value of a military and commercial navy, and that to obtain it good harbours and navigable rivers are necessary, and therefore, as well as from principles of justice, perhaps, declined the acceptance of a plunder, which, though tempting, was contrary to the policy of the House of Brandenburg.

According to a copy circulated among the members of our diplomatic corps, this partition treaty excluded Prussia from all the Batavian seaports except Delfzig, and those of the river Ems, but gave her extensive territories on the side of Guelderland, and a rich country in Friesland. Had it been acceded to by the Court of Berlin, with the annexed condition of a defensive and offensive alliance with the Court of St. Cloud, the Prussian monarchy would, within half a century, have been swallowed up in the same gulf with the Batavian Commonwealth and the Republic of Poland; and by some future scheme of some future Bonaparte or Talleyrand, be divided in its turn, and serve as a pledge of reconciliation or inducement of connection between some future rulers of the French and Russian Empires.

Talleyrand must, indeed, have a very mean opinion of the capacity of the Prussian Ministers, or a high notion of his own influence over them, if he was serious in this overture. For my part, I am rather inclined to think that it was merely thrown out to discover whether Frederick William III. had entered into any engagement contrary to the interest of Napoleon the First; or to allure His Prussian Majesty into a negotiation which would suspend, or at least interfere with, those supposed to be then on the carpet with Austria, Russia, or perhaps even with England.

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The late Batavian Government had, ever since the beginning of the present war with England, incurred the displeasure of Bonaparte. When it apprehended a rupture from the turn which the discussion respecting the occupation of Malta assumed, the Dutch Ambassadors at St. Petersburg and Berlin were ordered to demand the interference of these two Cabinets for the preservation of the neutrality of Holland, which your country had promised to acknowledge, if respected by France. No sooner was Bonaparte informed of this step, than he marched troops into the heart of the Batavian Republic, and occupied its principal forts, ports, and arsenals. When, some time afterwards, Count Markof received instructions from his Court, according to the desire of the Batavian Directory, and demanded, in consequence, an audience from Bonaparte, a map was laid before him, indicating the position of the French troops in Holland, and plans of the intended encampment of our army of England on the coast of Flanders and France; and he was asked whether he thought it probable that our Government would assent to a neutrality so injurious to its offensive operations against Great Britain.

“But,” said the Russian Ambassador, “the independence of Holland has been admitted by you in formal treaties.”

“So has the cession of Malta by England,” interrupted Bonaparte, with impatience.

“True,” replied Markof, “but you are now at war with England for this point; while Holland, against which you have no complaint, has not only been invaded by your troops, but, contrary both to its inclination and interest, involved in a war with you, by which it has much to lose and nothing to gain.”

“I have no account to render to anybody for my transactions, and I desire to hear nothing more on this subject,” said Bonaparte, retiring furious, and leaving Markof to meditate on our Sovereign’s singular principles of political justice and of ‘jus pentium’.

From that period Bonaparte resolved on another change of the executive power of the Batavian Republic. But it was more easy to displace one set of men for another than to find proper ones to occupy a situation in which, if they do their duty as patriots, they must offend France; and if they are our tools, instead of the independent governors of their country, they must excite a discontent among their fellow citizens, disgracing themselves as individuals, and exposing themselves as chief magistrates to the fate of the De Witts, should ever fortune forsake our arms or desert Bonaparte.

No country has of late been less productive of great men than Holland. The Van Tromps, the Russel, and the William III. all died without leaving any posterity behind them; and the race of Batavian heroes seems to have expired with them, as that of patriots with the De, Witts and Barneveldt. Since the beginning of the last century we read, indeed, of some able statesmen, as most, if not all, the former grand pensionaries have been; but the name of no warrior of any great eminence is recorded. This scarcity,



of native genius and valour has not a little contributed to the present humbled, disgraced, and oppressed state of wretched Batavia.



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Admiral de Winter certainly neither wants courage nor genius, but his private character has a great resemblance to that of General Moreau. Nature has destined him to obey, and not to govern. He may direct as ably and as valiantly the manoeuvres of a fleet as Moreau does those of an army, but neither the one nor the other at the head of his nation would render himself respected, his country flourishing, or his countrymen happy and tranquil.

Destined from his youth for the navy, Admiral de Winter entered into the naval service of his country before he was fourteen, and was a second lieutenant when the Batavian patriots, in rebellion against the Stadtholder, were, in 1787, reduced to submission by the Duke of Brunswick, the commander of the Prussian army that invaded Holland. His parents and family being of the anti-Orange party, he emigrated to France, where he was made an officer in the legion of Batavian refugees. During the campaign of 1793 and 1794, he so much distinguished himself under that competent judge of merit, Pichegru, that this commander obtained for him the commission of a general of brigade in the service of the French; which, after the conquest of Holland in January, 1795, was exchanged for the rank of a vice-admiral of the Batavian Republic. His exploits as commander of the Dutch fleet, during the battle of the 11th of October, 1797, with your fleet, under Lord Duncan, I have heard applauded even in your presence, when in your country. Too honest to be seduced, and too brave to be intimidated, he is said to have incurred Bonaparte's hatred by resisting both his offers and his threats, and declining to sell his own liberty as well as to betray the liberty of his fellow subjects. When, in 1800, Bonaparte proposed to him the presidency and consulate of the United States, for life, on condition that he should sign a treaty, which made him a vassal of France, he refused, with dignity and with firmness, and preferred retirement to a supremacy so dishonestly acquired, and so dishonourably occupied.

General Daendels, another Batavian revolutionist of some notoriety, from an attorney became a lieutenant-colonel, and served as a spy under Dumouriez in the winter of 1792 and in the spring of 1793. Under Pichegru he was made a general, and exhibited those talents in the field which are said to have before been displayed in the forum. In June, 1795, he was made a lieutenant-general of the Batavian Republic, and he was the commander-in-chief of the Dutch troops combating in 1799 your army under the Duke of York. In this place he did not much distinguish himself, and the issue of the contest was entirely owing to our troops and to our generals.

After the Peace of Amiens, observing that Bonaparte intended to annihilate instead of establishing universal liberty, Daendels gave in his resignation and retired to obscurity, not wishing to be an instrument of tyranny, after having so long fought for freedom. Had he possessed the patriotism of a Brutus or a Cato, he would have bled or died for his cause and country sooner than have deserted them both; or had the ambition and love of glory of a Caesar held a place in his bosom, he would have attempted to be the chief of his country, and by generosity and clemency atone, if possible, for the loss of liberty. Upon the line of baseness,—the deserter is placed next to the traitor.



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Dumonceau, another Batavian general of some publicity, is not by birth a citizen of the United States, but was born at Brussels in 1758, and was by profession a stonemason when, in 1789, he joined, as a volunteer, the Belgian insurgents. After their dispersion in 1790 he took refuge and served in France, and was made an officer in the corps of Belgians, formed after the declaration of war against Austria in 1792. Here he frequently distinguished himself, and was, therefore, advanced to the rank of a general; but the Dutch general officers being better paid than those of the French Republic, he was, with the permission of our Directory, received, in 1795, as a lieutenant-general of the Batavian Republic. He has often evinced bravery, but seldom great capacity. His natural talents are considered as but indifferent, and his education is worse.

These are the only three military characters who might, with any prospect of success, have tried to play the part of a Napoleon Bonaparte in Holland.

LETTER XXXII.

Paris, August, 1805.

My lord:—Not to give umbrage to the Cabinet of Berlin, Bonaparte communicated to it the necessity he was under of altering the form of Government in Holland, and, if report be true, even condescended to ask advice concerning a chief magistrate for that country. The young Prince of Orange, brother-in-law of His Prussian Majesty, naturally presented himself; but, after some time, Talleyrand's agents discovered that great pecuniary sacrifices could not be expected from that quarter, and perhaps less submission to France experienced than from the former governors. An eye was then cast on the Elector of Bavaria, whose past patriotism, as well as that of his Ministers, was a full guarantee for future obedience. Had he consented to such an arrangement, Austria might have aggrandized herself on the Inn, Prussia in Franconia, and France in Italy; and the present bone of contest would have been chiefly removed.

This intrigue, for it was nothing else, was carried on by the Cabinet of St. Cloud in March, 1804, about the time that Germany was invaded and the Duc d'Enghien seized. This explains to you the reason why the Russian note, delivered to the Diet of Ratisbon on the 8th of the following May, was left without any support, except the ineffectual one from the King of Sweden. How any Cabinet could be dupe enough to think Bonaparte serious, or the Elector of Bavaria so weak as to enter into his schemes, is difficult to be conceived, had not Europe witnessed still greater credulity on one side, and still greater effrontery on the other.



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In the meantime Bonaparte grew every day more discontented with the Batavian Directory, and more irritated against the members who composed it. Against his regulations for excluding the commerce and productions of your country, they resented with spirit instead of obeying them without murmur as was required. He is said to have discovered, after his own soldiers had forced the custom-house officers to obey his orders, that, while in their proclamations the directors publicly prohibited the introduction of British goods, some of them were secret insurers of this forbidden merchandise, introduced by fraud and by smuggling; and that while they officially wished for the success of the French arms and destruction of England, they withdrew by stealth what property they had in the French funds, to place it in the English. This refractory and, as Bonaparte called it, mercantile spirit, so enraged him, that he had already signed an order for arresting and transferring en masse his high allies, the Batavian directors, to his Temple, when the representations of Talleyrand moderated his fury, and caused the order to be recalled, which Fouché was ready to execute.

Had Jerome Bonaparte not offended his brother by his transatlantic marriage, he would long ago have been the Prince Stadtholder of Holland; but his disobedience was so far useful to the Cabinet of St. Cloud as it gave it an opportunity of intriguing with, or deluding, other Cabinets that might have any pretensions to interfere in the regulation of the Batavian Government. By the choice finally made, you may judge how difficult it was to find a suitable subject to represent it, and that this representation is intended only to be temporary.

Schimmelpenninck, the present grand pensionary of the Batavian Republic, was destined by his education for the bar, but by his natural parts to await in quiet obscurity the end of a dull existence. With some property, little information, and a tolerably good share of common sense, he might have lived and died respected, and even regretted, without any pretension, or perhaps even ambition, to shine. The anti-Orange faction, to which his parents and family appertained, pushed him forward, and elected him, in 1795, a member of the First Batavian National Convention, where, according to the spirit of the times, his speeches were rather those of a demagogue than those of a Republican. Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity were the constant themes of his political declamations, infidelity his religious profession, and the examples of immorality, his social lessons; so rapid and dangerous are the strides with which seduction frequently advances on weak minds.

In 1800 he was appointed an Ambassador to Napoleon Bonaparte and Charles Maurice Talleyrand. The latter used him as a stockbroker, and the former for anything he thought proper; and he was the humble and submissive valet of both. More ignorant than malicious, and a greater fool than a rogue, he was more laughed at and despised than trusted or abused.



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His patience being equal to his phlegm, nothing either moved or confounded him; and he was, as Talleyrand remarked, “a model of an Ambassador, according to which he and Bonaparte wished that all other independent Princes and States would choose their representatives to the French Government.”

When our Minister and his Sovereign were discussing the difficulty of properly filling up the vacancy, of the Dutch Government, judged necessary by both, the former mentioned Schimmelpenninck with a smile; and serious as Bonaparte commonly is, he could not help laughing. “I should have been less astonished,” said he, “had you proposed my Mameluke, Rostan.”

This rebuke did not deter Talleyrand (who had settled his terms with Schimmelpenninck) from continuing to point out the advantage which France would derive from this nomination. “Because no man could easier be directed when in office, and no man easier turned out of office when disagreeable or unnecessary. Both as a Batavian plenipotentiary at Amiens, and as Batavian Ambassador in England, he had proved himself as obedient and submissive to France as when in the same capacity at Paris.”

By returning often to the charge, with these and other remarks, Talleyrand at last accustomed Bonaparte to the idea, which had once appeared so humiliating, of writing to a man so much inferior in everything, “Great and dear Friend!” and therefore said to the Minister:

“Well! let us then make him a grand pensionary and a locum tenens for five years; or until Jerome, when he repents, returns to his duty, and is pardoned.”

“Is he, then, not to be a grand pensionary for life?” asked Talleyrand; “whether for one month or for life, he would be equally obedient to resign when, commanded; but the latter would be more popular in Holland, where they were tired of so many changes.”

“Let them complain, if they dare,” replied Bonaparte. “Schimmelpenninck is their chief magistrate only for five years, if so long; but you may add that they may reelect him.”

It was not before Talleyrand had compared the pecuniary proposal made to his agents by foreign Princes with those of Schimmelpenninck to himself, that the latter obtained the preference. The exact amount of the purchase-money for the supreme magistracy in Holland is not well known to any but the contracting parties. Some pretended that the whole was paid down beforehand, being advanced by a society of merchants at Amsterdam, the friends or relatives of the grand pensionary; others, that it is to be paid by annual instalments of two millions of livres—for a certain number of years. Certain it is, that this high office was sold and bought; and that, had it been given for life, its value would have been proportionately enhanced; which was the reason that Talleyrand endeavoured to have it thus established.



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Talleyrand well knew the precarious state of Schimmelpenninck's grandeur; that it not only depended upon the whim of Napoleon, but had long been intended as an hereditary sovereignty for Jerome. Another Dutchman asked him not to ruin his friend and his family for what he was well aware could never be called a sinecure place, and was so precarious in its tenure. "Foolish vanity," answered the Minister, "can never pay enough for the gratification of its desires. All the Schimmelpennincks in the world do not possess property enough to recompense me for the sovereign honours which I have procured for one of their name and family, were he deposed within twenty-four hours. What treasures can indemnify me for connecting such a name and such a personage with the great name of the First Emperor of the French?"

I have only twice in my life been in Schimmelpenninck's company, and I thought him both timid and reserved; but from what little he said, I could not possibly judge of his character and capacity. His portrait and its accompaniments have been presented to me; such as delivered to you by one of his countrymen, a Mr. M—— (formerly an Ambassador also), who was both his schoolfellow and his comrade at the university. I shall add the following traits, in his own words as near as possible:

"More vain than ambitious, Schimmelpenninck from his youth, and, particularly, from his entrance into public life, tried every means to make a noise, but found none to make a reputation. He caressed in succession all the systems of the French Revolution, without adopting one for himself. All the Kings of faction received in their turns his homage and felicitations. It was impossible to mention to him a man of any notoriety, of whom he did not become immediately a partisan. The virtues or the vices, the merit or defects, of the individual were of no consideration; according to his judgment it was sufficient to be famous. Yet with all the extravagances of a head filled with paradoxes, and of a heart spoiled by modern philosophy, added to a habit of licentiousness, he had no idea of becoming an instrument for the destruction of liberty in his own country, much less of becoming its tyrant, in submitting to be the slave of France. It was but lately that he took the fancy, after so long admiring all other great men of our age, to be at any rate one of their number, and of being admired as a great man in his turn. On this account many accuse him of hypocrisy, but no one deserves that appellation less, his vanity and exaltation never permitting him to dissimulate; and no presumption, therefore, was less disguised than his, to those who studied the man. Without acquired ability, without natural genius, or political capacity, destitute of discretion and address, as confident and obstinate as ignorant, he is only elevated to fall and to rise no more."



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Madame Schimmelpenninck, I was informed, is as amiable and accomplished as her husband is awkward and deficient; though well acquainted with his infidelities and profligacy, she is too virtuous to listen to revenge, and too generous not to forgive. She is, besides, said to be a lady of uncommon abilities, and of greater information than she chooses to display. She has never been the worshipper of Bonaparte, or the friend of Talleyrand; she loved her country, and detested its tyrants. Had she been created a grand pensionary, she would certainly have swayed with more glory than her husband; and been hailed by contemporaries, as well as posterity, if not a heroine, at least a patriot,—a title which in our times, though often prostituted, so few have any claim to, and which, therefore, is so much the more valuable.

When it was known at Paris that Schimmelpenninck had set out for his new sovereignty, no less than sixteen girls of the Palais Royal demanded passes for Holland. Being questioned by Fouche as to their business in that country, they answered that they intended to visit their friend, the grand pensionary, in his new dominions. Fouche communicated to Talleyrand both their demands and their business, and asked his advice. He replied:

“Send two, and those of whose vigilance and intelligence you are sure. Refuse, by all means, the other fourteen. Schimmelpenninck’s time is precious, and were they at the Hague, he would neglect everything for them. If they are fond of travelling, and are handsome and adroit, advise them to set out for London or for St. Petersburg; and if they consent, order them to my office, and they shall be supplied, if approved of, both with instructions, and with their travelling expenses.”

Fouche answered his colleague that “they were in every respect the very reverse of his description; they seemed to have passed their lives in the lowest stage of infamy, and they could neither read nor write.” You have therefore, no reason to fear that these belles will be sent to disseminate corruption in your happy island.

ETEXT EDITOR’S BOOKMARKS:

As confident and obstinate as ignorant
Bonaparte and his wife go now every morning to hear Mass
Bourrienne
Distinguished for their piety or rewarded for their flattery
Extravagances of a head filled with paradoxes
Forced military men to kneel before priests
Indifference about futurity
Military diplomacy
More vain than ambitious
Nature has destined him to obey, and not to govern
One of the negative accomplices of the criminal



Promises of impostors or fools to delude the ignorant
Salaries as the men, under the name of washerwomen
“This is the age of upstarts,” said Talleyrand
Thought at least extraordinary, even by our friends