
LETTERS

OF the RIGHT HONOURABLE

Lady M---y W----y M-----e.

VOL. II.

L E T T E R S

Of the RIGHT HONOURABLE

Lady M---y W----y M-----e :

Written during her TRAVELS in

EUROPE, ASIA AND AFRICA,

TO

Persons of Distinction, Men of Letters, &c.
in different PARTS of EUROPE.

WHICH CONTAIN

Among other CURIOUS RELATIONS,
ACCOUNTS of the POLICY and MANNERS
of the TURKS ;

Drawn from Sources that have been inaccessible to
other Travellers.

A NEW EDITION.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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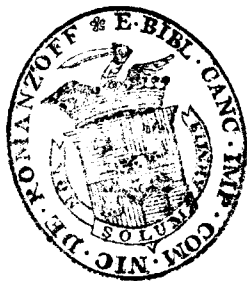
L E T T E R XXXVI.

To Mr. Pope.

Belgrade-Village, June 17, O. S.

I HOPE, before this time, you have received two or three of my letters. I had your's but yesterday, though dated the third of February, in which you suppose me to be dead and buried. I have already let you know that I am still alive ; but to say truth, I look upon my present circumstances to be exactly the same with those of departed spirits. The heats of Constantinople have driven me to this place, which perfectly answers the description of the Elysian fields. I am in the middle of a wood, consisting chiefly of fruit trees, watered by a vast number of fountains, famous for the excellency of their water, and divided into many shady walks, upon short grass, that seems to me artificial ; but, I am assured, is the pure work of nature—within view of the Black Sea, from whence we perpetually enjoy the refreshment

VOL. II.



ment of cool breezes, that make us insensible of the heat of the summer. The village is only inhabited by the richest amongst the Christians, who meet every night at a fountain, forty paces from my house, to sing and dance. The beauty and dress of the women, exactly resemble the ideas of the antient nymphs, as they are given us by the representations of the poets and painters. But what persuades me more fully of my decease, is the situation of my own mind, the profound ignorance I am in, of what passes among the living (which only comes to me by chance) and the great calmness with which I receive it. Yet I have still a hankering after my friends and acquaintances left in the world, according to the authority of that admirable author,

*That spirits departed are wondrous kind
To friends and relations left behind,*

Which no body can deny.

Of which solid truth I am a dead instance. I think Virgil is of the same opinion, that in
human

human souls there will still be some remains of human passions :

—*Cura non ipsæ in morte relinquunt.*

And 'tis very necessary to make a perfect Elysium, that there should be a river Lethe, which I am not so happy as to find. To say truth, I am sometimes very weary of the singing and dancing, and sunshine, and wish for the smoke and impertinencies in which you toil ; though I endeavour to persuade myself that I live in more agreeable variety than you do ; and that Monday, setting of partridges ; Tuesday, reading English ; Wednesday, studying in the Turkish language, (in which, by the way, I am already very learned ;) Thursday, classical authors ; Friday, spent in writing ; Saturday, at my needle, and Sunday, admitting of visits and hearing of music, is a better way of disposing of the week, than Monday at the drawing-room ; Tuesday, Lady Mohun's ; Wednesday, at the opera ; Thursday, the play ; Friday, Mrs. Chetwynd's, &c. a perpetual
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round of hearing the same scandal, and seeing the same follies acted over and over, which here affect me no more than they do other dead people. I can now hear of displeasing things with pity and without indignation. The reflection on the great gulph between you and me, cools all news that come hither. I can neither be sensibly touched with joy or grief, when I consider that, possibly, the cause of either is removed, before the letter comes to my hands. But (as I said before) this indolence does not extend to my few friendships. I am still warmly sensible of yours and Mr. Congreve's, and desire to live in your remembrance, though dead to all the world beside.

I am, &c. &c.

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L E T T E R XXXVII.

To the Lady ———.

Belgrade-Village, June 17, O. S.

I HEARTILY beg your ladyship's pardon; but I really could not forbear laughing heartily at your letter, and the commissions you are pleased to honour me with. You desire me to buy you a Greek slave, who is to be mistress of a thousand good qualities. The Greeks are subjects, and not slaves. Those who are to be bought in that manner, are such as are taken in war, or stolen by the Tartars, from Russia, Circassia or Georgia, and are such miserable awkward poor wretches, you would not think any of them worthy to be your house-maids. 'Tis true, that many thousands were taken in the Morea; but they have been most of them redeemed by the charitable contributions of the Christians, or ransomed by their own relations at Venice. The fine slaves, that wait upon the great ladies, or

B 3 serve

serve the pleasures of the great men, are all bought at the age of eight or nine years old, and educated with great care to accomplish them in singing, dancing, embroidery, &c. they are commonly Circassians, and their patron never fells them, except it is as a punishment for some very great fault. If ever they grow weary of them, they either present them to a friend, or give them their freedom. Those that are exposed to sale at the markets, are always either guilty of some crime, or so entirely worthless, that they are of no use at all. I am afraid you will doubt the truth of this account, which, I own, is very different from our common notions in England; but it is no less truth for all that.—Your whole letter is full of mistakes from one end to the other. I see you have taken your ideas of Turkey from that worthy author Dumont, who has writ with equal ignorance and confidence. 'Tis a particular pleasure to me here, to read the voyages to the Levant, which are generally so far removed from truth,

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and so full of absurdities. I am very well diverted with them. They never fail giving you an account of the women, whom, 'tis certain they never saw, and talking very wisely of the genius of the men, into whose company they are never admitted; and very often describe Mosques, which they dared not even ~~peep~~ into. The Turks are very proud, and will not converse with a stranger, they are not assured is considerable in his own country. I speak of the men of distinction; for, as to the ordinary fellows, you may imagine what ideas their conversation can give of the general genius of the people.

As to the balm of Mecca, I will certainly send you some; but it is not so easily got as you suppose it, and I cannot in conscience advise you to make use of it. I know not how it comes to have such universal applause. All the ladies of my acquaintance at London and Vienna, have begged me to send pots of it to them. I have had a present of a small quantity

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tity (which I'll assure you is very valuable) of the best sort, and with great joy applied it to my face, expecting some wonderful effect to my advantage. The next morning the change, indeed was wonderful; my face was swelled to a very extraordinary size, and all over as red as my Lady H——'s. It remained in this lamentable state three days, during which you may be sure I passed my time very ill. I believed it would never be otherwise; and to add to my mortification, Mr. W——y reproached my indiscretion without ceasing. However, my face is since in *statu quo*; nay, I'm told by the ladies here, that 'tis much mended by the operation, which I confess I cannot perceive in my looking-glasses. Indeed, if one was to form an opinion of this balm from their faces, one should think very well of it. They all make use of it, and have the loveliest bloom in the world. For my part, I never intend to endure the pain of it again; let my complexion take its natural course, and decay in its own due

due time. I have very little esteem for medicines of this nature; but do as you please, Madam; only remember, before you use it, that your face will not be such as you will care to shew in the drawing-room for some days after. If one was to believe the women in this country, there is a surer way of making one's self beloved, than by becoming handsome, though you know that's our method. But they pretend to the knowledge of secrets, that by way of enchantment, give them the entire empire over whom they please. For me, who am not very apt to believe in wonders, I cannot find faith for this. I disputed the point last night with a lady, who really talks very sensibly on any other subject; but she was downright angry with me, in that she did not perceive she had persuaded me of the truth of forty stories she told me of this kind; and, at last, mentioned several ridiculous marriages, that there could be no other reason assigned for. I assured her, that in England, where we

were

were entirely ignorant of all magick, where the climate is not half so warm, nor the woman half so handsome, we were not without our ridiculous marriages; and that we did not look upon it as any thing supernatural, when a man played the fool for the sake of a woman. But my arguments could not convince her against (as she said) her certain knowledge. To this she added, that she scrupled making use of charms herself; but that she could do it whenever she pleased; and staring me in my face, said, (with a very learned air) that no enchantments would have their effects upon me, and that there were some people exempt from their power, but very few. You may imagine how I laughed at this discourse: but all the women are of the same opinion. They don't pretend to any commerce with the devil, but only that there are certain compositions adapted to inspire love. If one could send over a ship-load of them, I fancy it would be a very quick way of raising an estate.

estate. What would not some ladies of our acquaintance give for such merchandize? Adieu, my dear lady—I cannot conclude my letter with a subject that affords more delightful scenes to the imagination. I leave you to figure to yourself, the extreme court that will be made to me, at my return, if my travels should furnish me with such a useful piece of learning. I am, dear Madam,

Your, &c. &c.

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L E T T E R XXXVIII.

To Mrs. T.

Pera of Constantinople, Jan. 4, O. S.

I A M infinitely obliged to you, dear Mrs. T——, for your entertaining letter. You are the only one of my correspondents that have judged right enough, to think I would gladly be informed of the news amongst you. All the rest of them tell me (almost in the same words) that they suppose I know every thing. Why they are pleased to suppose in this manner, I can guess no reason, except they are persuaded that the breed of Mahomet's pigeon still subsists in this country, and that I receive supernatural intelligence. I wish I could return your goodness with some diverting accounts from hence. But I know not what part of the scenes here would gratify your curiosity, or whether you have any curiosity at all, for things so far distant. To say the truth, I am,
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at this present writing, not very much turned for the recollection of what is diverting, my head being wholly filled with the preparations necessary for the increase of my family, which I expect every day. You may easily guess at my uneasy situation. But I am, however, comforted in some degree, by the glory that accrues to me from it, and a reflection on the contempt I should otherwise fall under. You won't know what to make of this speech; but, in this country, 'tis more despicable to be married and not fruitful, than 'tis with us to be fruitful before marriage. They have a notion, that whenever a woman leaves off bringing forth children, 'tis because she is too old for that business, whatever her face says to the contrary. This opinion makes the ladies here so ready to make proofs of their youth, (which is as necessary in order to be a received beauty, as it is to shew the proofs of nobility, to be admitted Knights of Malta) that they do not content themselves with using the natural
means,

means, but fly to all sorts of quackeries to avoid the scandal of being past child-bearing, and often kill themselves by them. Without any exaggeration, all the women of my acquaintance have twelve or thirteen children; and the old ones boast of having had five and twenty or thirty apiece, and are respected according to the number they have produced.—When they are with child, 'tis their common expression to say, They hope God will be so merciful as to send them two this time; and when I have asked them sometimes, how they expected to provide for such a flock as they desire? they answer, that the plague will certainly kill half of them; which indeed, generally happens without much concern to the parents, who are satisfied with the vanity of having brought forth so plentifully. The French Ambassadess is forced to comply with this fashion as well as myself. She has not been here much above a year, and has lain in once, and is big again. What is most wonderful,

is,

is, the exemption they seem to enjoy from the curse entailed on the sex. They see all company on the day of their delivery, and at the fortnight's end return visits, set out in their jewels and new clothes. I wish I may find the influence of the climate in this particular. But I fear I shall continue an English woman in that affair, as well as I do in my dread of fire and plague, which are two things very little feared here. Most families have had their houses burnt down once or twice, occasioned by their extraordinary way of warming themselves, which is neither by chimnies nor stoves, but by a certain machine called a Tendour, the height of two feet, in the form of a table, covered with a fine carpet or embroidery. This is made only of wood, and they put into it a small quantity of hot ashes, and sit with their legs under the carpet. At this table they work, read, and, very often, sleep; and if they chance to dream, kick down the Tendour, and the hot ashes commonly set the house

house on fire. There were five hundred houses burnt in this manner about a fortnight ago, and I have seen several of the owners since, who seem not at all moved at so common a misfortune. They put their goods into a Bark, and see their houses burn with great philosophy, their persons being very seldom endangered, having no stairs to descend.

But having entertained you with things I don't like, 'tis but just I should tell you something that pleases me. The climate is delightful in the extreme degree. I am now sitting, this present fourth of January, with the windows open, enjoying the warm shine of the sun, while you are freezing over a sad sea-coal fire; and my chamber is set out with carnations, roses, and jonquils, fresh from my garden. I am also charmed with many points of the Turkish law, to our shame be it spoken, better designed, and better executed than ours; particularly, the punishment of convicted liars (triumphant criminals in our country,

country, God knows :) They are burnt in the forehead with a hot iron, when they are proved the authors of any notorious falsehoods. How many white foreheads should we see disfigured? How many fine gentlemen would be forced to wear their wigs as low as their eye-brows, were this law in practice with us? I should go on to tell you many other parts of justice, but I must send for my midwife.

L E T T E R XXXIX.

To the Countess of —.

Pera of Constantinople, March 10, O. S.

I HAVE not written to you, dear Sister, these many months—a great piece of self-denial. But I know not where to direct, or what part of the world you are in. I have received no letter from you since that short note of April last, in which you tell me, that you are on the point of leaving England, and promise me a direction for the place you stay in; but I have, in vain, expected it till now, and now I only learn from the Gazette, that you are returned, which induces me to venture this letter to your house at London. I had rather ten of my letters should be lost, than you imagine I don't write; and I think it is hard fortune, if one in ten don't reach you. However, I am resolved to keep the copies, as testimonies of my inclination to give you, to the utmost of my power, all the diverting part of my travels,

while

while you are exempt from all the fatigues and inconveniencies.

In the first place then, I wish you joy of your niece; for I was brought to-bed of a daughter * five weeks ago. I don't mention this as one of my diverting adventures; tho' I must own, that it is not half so mortifying here as in England; there being as much difference, as there is between a little cold in the head, which sometimes happens here, and the consumption coughs so common in London. No body keeps their house a month for lying-in; and I am not so fond of any of our customs, as to retain them when they are not necessary. I returned my visits at three weeks end, and about four days ago crossed the sea which divides this place from Constantinople, to make a new one, where I had the good fortune to pick up many curiosities. I went to see the Sultana Hafiten, favourite of the late Emperor Mustapha, who, you know, (or perhaps you don't know) was deposed by his bro-

* The present Countess of Bute.

ther, the reigning Sultan, and died a few weeks after, being poisoned, as it was generally believed. This lady was immediately after his death, saluted with an absolute order to leave the Seraglio and choose herself a husband among the great men at the Porte. I suppose you may imagine her overjoyed at this proposal.——

Quite the contrary.——These women, who are called and esteem themselves Queens, look upon this liberty as the greatest disgrace and affront that can happen to them. She threw herself at the Sultan's feet, and begged him to poignard her, rather than use his brother's widow with that contempt. She represented to him, in agonies of sorrow, that she was privileged from this misfortune, by having brought five princes into the Ottoman family; but all the boys being dead, and only one girl surviving, this excuse was not received, and she was compelled to make her choice. She chose Bekir Effendi, then secretary of state, and above four-score years old, to convince the

the world that she firmly intended to keep the vow she had made, of never suffering a second husband to approach her bed; and since she must honour some subject so far, to be called his, she would chuse him, as a mark of her gratitude, since it was he that had presented her at the age of ten years to her last lord. But she never permitted him to pay her one visit; though it is now fifteen years she has been in his house, where she passes her time in uninterrupted mourning, with a constancy very little known in Christendom, especially in a widow of one and twenty, for she is now but thirty-six. She has no black Eunuchs for her guard, her husband being obliged to respect her as a Queen, and not to enquire at all, into what is done in her apartment.

I was led into a large room, with a sofa the whole length of it, adorned with white marble pillars like a Ruelle, covered with pale blue figured velvet, on a silver ground, with cushions of the same, where I was desired to repose till the Sultana appeared, who had con-

trived this manner of reception to avoid rising up at my entrance, though she made me an inclination of her head when I rose up to her. I was very glad to observe a lady that had been distinguished by the favour of an Emperor, to whom beauties were, every day, presented from all parts of the world. But she did not seem to me, to have ever been half so beautiful, as the fair Fatima I saw at Adrianople; though she had the remains of a fine face, more decayed by sorrow than time. But her dress was something so surprizingly rich, that I cannot forbear describing it to you. She wore a vest called Dualma, which differs from a Caftan by longer sleeves, and folding over at the bottom. It was of purple cloth, strait to her shape, and thick set, on each side down to her feet and round the sleeves, with pearls of the best water, of the same size as their buttons commonly are. You must not suppose that I mean as large as those of my Lord —, but about the bigness of a pea; and to these buttons, large loops of diamonds, in the form of those gold loops, so
common

common on birth-day coats. This habit was tied at the waist, with two large tassels of smaller pearls, and round the arms embroidered with large diamonds. Her shift was fastened at the bottom, with a great diamond, shaped like a lozenge; her girdle as broad as the broadest English ribband, entirely covered with diamonds. Round her neck she wore three chains, which reached to her knees; one of large pearl, at the bottom of which hung a fine coloured emerald as big as a turkey-egg; another, consisting of two hundred emeralds, close joined together, of the most lively green, perfectly matched, every one as large as a half-crown piece, and as thick as three crown pieces, and another of small emeralds perfectly round. But her ear-rings eclipsed all the rest. They were two diamonds shaped exactly like pears, as large as a big hazle-nut. Round her Talpoche she had four strings of pearl—the whitest and most perfect in the world, at least enough to make four necklaces, every one as large as the Duchefs of Marlborough's, and of
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the same shape, fastened with two roses, consisting of a large ruby for the middle stone, and round them twenty drops of clean diamonds to each. Besides this, her head-dress was covered with bodkins of emeralds and diamonds. She wore large diamond bracelets, and had five rings on her fingers (except Mr. Pitt's) the largest I ever saw in my life. 'Tis for jewellers to compute the value of these things; but, according to the common estimation of jewels in our part of the world, her whole dress must be worth a hundred thousand pounds sterling. This I am sure of, that no European Queen has half the quantity, and the Empress's jewels, though very fine, would look very mean near hers. She gave me a dinner of fifty dishes of meat, which (after their fashion) were placed on the table but one at a time, and was extremely tedious. But the magnificence of her table answered very well to that of her dress. The knives were of gold, and the hafts set with diamonds. But the piece of luxury which grieved my eyes, was the table cloth and napkins,

kins, which were all tiffany embroidered with silk and gold, in the finest manner, in natural flowers. It was with the utmost regret that I made use of these costly napkins, which were as finely wrought as the finest handkerchiefs that ever came out of this country. You may be sure, that they were entirely spoiled before dinner was over. The sherbet (which is the liquor they drink at meals) was served in china bowls; but the covers and salvers massy gold. After dinner, water was brought in gold basins, and towels of the same kind with the napkins, which I very unwillingly wiped my hands upon, and coffee was served in china with gold Soucoups*.

The Sultana seemed in a very good humour, and talked to me with the utmost civility. I did not omit this opportunity of learning all that I possibly could of the Seraglio, which is so entirely unknown amongst us. She assured me that the story of the Sultan's throwing a handkerchief

* Saucers.