

The SAINT JOHN GAZETTE.

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THE SECRET HISTORY OF THE
COURT AND CABINET OF ST. CLOUD.
*In a series of Letters from a resident in Paris to a Noble-
man in London, written during the months of
August, September and October, 1805.*

LETTER XIII.

Paris, August, 1805.

MY LORD,

NO Queen of France ever saw so many foreign princes and princesses in her drawing-rooms as the first Empress of the French did last year at Mentz; and no Sovereign was ever before so well paid, or accepted with less difficulty donations; and presents for her gracious protection. Madame Napoleone herself, on her return to this capital last October, boasted that she was ten millions of livres (420,000*l.*) richer in diamonds; two millions of livres (52,000*l.*) richer in pearls, and three millions of livres (125,000*l.*) richer in plate and china, than in the June before, when she quitted it. She acknowledged that she left behind her some creditors and some money at Aix la Chapelle; but at Mentz she did not need to borrow, nor had time to gamble; the gallant *ultra Rhonians* provided every thing even to the utmost extent of her wishes; and she, on her part, could not but honour those with her company as much as possible, particularly as they required *nothing else* for their civilities. Such was the Empress's expression to her lady in waiting, the handsome Madame Seran, with whom no confidence, no tale, no story, and no scandal expires; and who was in a great hurry to inform, the same evening, the tea party at Madame de Beauvais of this good news; complaining at the same time of not having had the least share in this rich harvest.

No where indeed were bribery and corruption carried to a greater extent, or practised with more effrontery, than at Mentz. Madame Napoleone had as much her fixed price for every favourable word she spoke, as Talleyrand had for every line he wrote. Even the attendants of the former, and the clerks of the latter, demanded or rather extorted douceurs from the exhausted and almost ruined German petitioners; who in the end were rewarded for all their pains and expenses with promises of half the new plan of supplementary indemnities, which every day proposed for its final arrangement, postponed by the desire of the Emperor of the French until further orders. This provoking delay could no more be foreseen by the Emperess than by the minister, who in return for their presents and money, almost overpowered the German Princes with his procrellations of regret at their disappointments. Nor was Madame Buonaparte less sorry or less civil. She sent her chamberlain, Daubusson la Feuillad, with regular compliments of condolence, to every Prince who had enjoyed her protection. They returned to their homes, therefore, if not wealthier, at least happier; flattered by assurances and condescensions, confiding in hope as in certainties. Within three months, however, it is supposed that they would willingly have disposed both of promises and expectations, at a loss of fifty per cent.

By the cupidity and selfishness of these and other German Princes, and their want of patriotism, Talleyrand was become perfectly acquainted with the value and production of every principality, bishopric, county, abbey, barony, convent, and even village in the German Empire; and though most national property in France was disposed of at one or two years purchase, he required five years purchase-money for all the estates and lands on the other side of the Rhine; of which, under the name of indemnities, he stripped the lawful owners, to gratify the ambition or avarice of intruders. This high price has cooled the *claims* of the bidders, and the plan of the supplementary indemnities is still suspended, and probably will continue to until our minister lowers his terms. A combination is supposed to have been entered into by the chief demanders of indemnities, by which they have bound themselves to resist all further extortions. They do not, however, know the man they have to deal with; he will, perhaps, find out some to lay claim to their own private and hereditary property, whom he will produce and support, and who certainly will have the same right to pillage them, as they had to the spoils of others.

It was reported in our fashionable circles last autumn, and *smiled at* by Talleyrand, that he promised the Countess de L. an abbey, and the Baroness de S—z, a convent, for certain personal favours, and that he offered a bishopric to the Princess of H— on the same terms; but this lady answered, “that she would think of his offers after he had put her husband in possession of the Bishopric.” It is not necessary to observe that both the Countess and the Baroness are yet waiting to enjoy his liberal donations and to be indemnified for their prostitution.

Napoleone Buonaparte was attacked by a fit of jealousy at Mentz. The young nephew of the Elector Arch Chancellor, Count de L—ge, was very assiduous about the Empress, who, herself, at first mistook the motive. Her confidential secretary, Deschamps, however, afterwards informed her, that this Nobleman wanted to purchase the place of a coadjutor to his uncle, so as to be certain of succeeding him. He obtained, therefore, several private audiences, *no doubt* to regulate the price; when Napoleone put a stop to this secret negotiation, by having the Count carried by *gens d'armes, with great politeness*, to the other side of the

Rhine. When convinced of his error Bonaparte asked his wife what sum had been proposed for her *protection*, and immediately gave her an order on his minister of the treasury, Marbois, for the amount. This was an act of justice, and a reparation worthy of a *great and tender* husband; but when, the very next day, he recalled this order, threw it into the fire before her eyes, and confined her for six hours in her bed room, because she was not dressed time enough to take a walk with him on the ramparts, one is apt to believe that military despotism has erased from his bosom all connubial affection; and that a momentary effusion of kindness and generosity can but little alleviate the frequent pangs caused by repeated insults and oppression. Fortunately, Madame Napoleone's disposition is proof against rudeness as well as against brutality. If what her friend and *consoler*, Madame Dulacay, reports of her is not exaggerated, *her tranquillity is not much disturbed, nor her happiness affected, by these explosions of passionate authority; and she prefers admiring in undisturbed solitude her diamond box to the most beautiful prospects in the most agreeable company; and the insects with more pleasure in confinement her rich wardrobe, her beautiful china, and her heavy plate, than she would find satisfaction, surrounded with crowds, in contemplating nature even in its utmost perfection.* "The paradise of Madame Napoleone," says her friend, "must be of metal, and lighted by the lustre of brilliants, else the world would decline it for a hell, and accept Lucifer himself for a spouse! It would glow with fire in its infernal domains, though the world were even to be scorched by its heat."

LETTER XIV.

Paris, August, 1805.

MY LORD,

I believe that I have mentioned to you, when in England, that I was an old acquaintance of Madame Napoleone, and a visitor at the house of her first husband. When introduced to her after some years absence, during which, fortune had treated us very differently, she received me with more civility than I was prepared to expect; and would, perhaps, have spoken to me more than she did, had not a look of her husband glanced between us. Madame Bonaparte, what I had not forgotten, how she was seated, when a child, on my lap, and played on my knees with her doll. Thus they behaved to me, when I saw them for the first time in their present elevation; I found them afterwards in their drawing-rooms, or at their routes and parties, more shy and distant. This change did not much surprise me, as I hardly knew any one, that had the slightest pretension to their acquaintance, who had not troubled them for employment, or borrowed their money; at the same time that they complained of their neglect, and their breach of promises. I continued, however, as much as etiquette and decency required, assiduous, but never familiar; if they addressed me, I answered with respect, but not with fervidity; if not, I bowed in silence when they passed. They might easily perceive that I did not intend to become an intruder, nor to make the remembrance of what was past an apology or a reason for applying for preferential favours. A lady, on intimate terms with Madame Napoleonic, and once our common friend, informed me, shortly after the untimely end of the lamented Duke of Engghien, that she had been asked, whether she knew any thing that could be done for me, or whether I would not be flattered by obtaining a place in the Legislative Body, or in the Tribunal? I answered as I thought, that were I fit for a public life, nothing could be more agreeable, or suit me better; but having hitherto declined all employments, that might restrain that independence, to which I had accustomed myself from my youth, I was now too old to enter upon a new career. I added, that though the Revolution had reduced my circumstances, it had not entirely ruined me. I was still independent, because my means were the boundaries of my wants.

A week after this conversation, General Murat, the governor of this capital, and Buonaparte's favourite brother-in-law, invited me to a conversation, in a note delivered to me, by an aide-de-camp, who told me that he was ordered to wait for my company; or, which was the same, he was ordered not to lose sight of me, as I was his prisoner. Having nothing with which to reproach myself, and all my written remarks being deposited with a friend, whom none of the Imperial functionaries could suspect, I entered a hackney coach without any fear or apprehension; and we drove to the governor's hotel.

From the manner in which General Murat addressed me, I was soon convinced, that if I had been accused of any error or indiscretion, the accusation could not be very grave in his eyes. He entered with me into his cabinet, and inquired whether I had any enemies at the police office?—I told him not, to my knowledge.—"Is the police minister and senator Fouché, your friend," continued he?—"Fouché," said I, "has bought an estate that formerly belonged to me: may he enjoy it with the same peace of mind as I have lost it. I have never spoken to him in my life." "Have you not complained at Madame de la Force's, of the execution of the *ci-devant* Duke of Enghien, and agreed, with the other members of her coterie, to put on mourning for him."—"I have never been at the house of that lady since the death of the Prince; nor more than once in my life."—"Where did you pass the even-

ing last Saturday?"—"At the hotel, and in the assembly, of Princess Louis Buonaparte."—"Did the see you?"—"I believe that she did, because she returned my salute."—"You have known her Imperial Highness a long time?"—"From her infancy."—"Well, I congratulate you.—You have in her a generous protectress. But for her, you would now have been on the way to Cayenne. Here you see the list of persons condemned yesterday, upon the report of Fouché, to transportation. Your name is at the head of them. You were not only accused of being an agent of the Bourbons, but of having intrigued to become a member of the Legislature, or of the Tribunate, that you might have so much the better opportunity to serve them. Fortunately for you, the Emperor remembered that the Princess Louis had demanded such a favour for you, and he informed her of the character of her *protegee*. This brought forward your innocence, because it was discovered that, instead of asking for, you had declined, the offer he had made you through the Empress.—Write the Princess a letter of thanks.—You have indeed had a narrow escape, but it has been so far useful to you, that government is now aware of your having some secret enemy in power, who is not delicate about the means of injuring you."

In quitting General Murat, I could not help deploring the fate of a despot, even while I abhorred his unnatural power. The curses, the complaints, and reproaches for all the crimes, all the violence, all the oppression perpetrated in his name, are entirely thrown upon him; while his situation and occupation do not admit the seeing and hearing every thing and every body himself; he is often forced therefore to judge, according to the report of an impoller; to function with his name the hatred, malignity or vengeance of culpable individuals; and to sacrifice innocence to gratify the vile passions of his vilest slave. I have not so bad an opinion of Buonaparte, as to think him capable of wilfully condemning any person to death or transportation, of whose innocence he was convinced, provided that person stood not in the way of his interest and ambition; but suspicion and tyranny are inseparable companions, and injustice their common progeny. The unfortunate beings on the long list General Murat shewed me, were, I dare say, most of them as innocent as myself, and all certainly condemned unheard, ~~but on mourning for a prince of the blood, and for a prince of the blood, and for a prince of the blood, and for a prince of the blood,~~ and their imprudence deserve the same punishment as the deed of the robber, the forger, or the house-breaker; and indeed it was more severe than what our laws inflict on such criminals, who are only condemned to transportation for some few years, after a public trial and conviction; while the exile of these unconvicted, untried, and most probably innocent persons, is continued for life, on charges as unknown to themselves, as their destiny and residence remain to their families and friends. Happy England! where no one is condemned unheard, and no one dares attempt to make the laws subservient to his passions or caprices.

As to Fouché's enmity, at which General Murat so plainly hinted, I had long apprehended it, from what others, in similar circumstances with myself, had suffered. He has, since the Revolution, bought no less than sixteen national estates, seven of the former proprietors of which have suddenly disappeared since his ministry, probably in the manner he intended to remove me. This man is one of the most immoral characters the Revolution has dragged forward from obscurity. It is more difficult to mention a crime that he has not perpetrated than to discover a good or just action that he ever performed. He is so notorious a villain, that even the infamous National Convention expelled him from its bosom and since his ministry no map has been found base enough, in my debased country, to extenuate, much less to defend, his past enormities. In a nation so greatly corrupted and immoral, this alone is more than negative evidence.

As a friar before the Revolution, *he has answered*, in his correspondence with the National Convention, that he never believed in a God; and as one of the first public functionaries of a Republic, he has *officially denied* the existence of virtue. He is therefore as unmoved by tears as by reproaches, and as inaccessible to remorse as hardened against repentance. With him interests and bribes are every thing, and honour and honesty nothing. The suppliant, or the pleader, who appears before him with no other support than the justice of his cause, is fortunate indeed, if, after being cast, he is not also confined or ruined, or perhaps both; while a line from one of the Buonapartes, or a purse of gold, changes black to white, guilt to innocence, removes the scaffold waiting for the assassin, and extinguishes the faggots lighted for the parricide. His authority is so extensive, that, on the least signal, with one blow, from the extremities of France to her centre, it crushes the cot and the palace; and his decisions, against which there is no appeal, are so destructive, that they never leave any traces behind them, and Buonaparte, Buonaparte alone, can prevent or arrest their effect.

Though a traitor to his former benefactor, the ex-Director Barras, he possesses now the unlimited confidence of Napoleon Buonaparte, and, as far as is known, has not yet done any thing to forfeit it; if private acts of cruelty cannot, in the agent of a tyrant, be called breach of trust or infidelity. He shares with Talleyrand the fraternity of the vigilante, immoral and tormenting secret police; and with Real and