

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 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 Befancon 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 councillor and an able minister. As loyal as wife, he was from 1789 an enemy to the French Revolution. He easily forebore 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 grand-children 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 Bellville 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 in 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 Semouville as an ambassador to Constantinople; which, perhaps, prevented the Divan from attacking Austria, and occasioned the capture and imprisonment, of our emissary.

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 Buonaparte 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 of 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 Buonaparte's private admonitions in the diplomatic circle, and public lectures in Madame Buonaparte'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 Buonaparte 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 refuted 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 fanciful Emperor more dangerous to civilized society than a fanciful sovereign people.

It is evident, from the names and rank of its partizans, 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 every where 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 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 Buonaparte and of France in 1797, he was never directly or indirectly inculcated 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 Buonaparte, 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, *aliquid in omnibus et nihil in toto*.

LETTER XXIV.

Paris, August, 1805.

MY LORD,

You have perhaps heard, that Napoleone Buonaparte, 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 two last 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 the actors, nothing could appear more ridiculous, nothing could inspire more contempt of our verbiage and inconsistency, than to remark among the foremost to demand the nuptial benediction, a Talleyrand, a Fouché, a Real, an Augereau, a Chaptal, a Reubel, a Lafres, a Bessieres, a Thuriot, a Treillard, a Merlin, with a hundred other equally notorious revolutionists, who were, twelve or fifteen years ago, were 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.

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.

Buonaparte 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 no where 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 Buonaparte's spies informed him of the cause; when, instead of punishing the despicable and hypocritical courtiers, or shewing 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, Fouché entered the chapel in the midst of the service, and whispered to Buonaparte, 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 brevaires, twenty-eight were volumes of novels, sixteen of poems, and eleven of 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 Fouché, or whether Talleyrand took this method of duping his rival, and at the same time of gratifying his own malignity. Certain it is, that Fouché was severely reprimanded for the transaction, and that Buonaparte was highly offended at the disclosure.

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 gaze at others, or to be gazed 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 an 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 Buonaparte'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, Buonaparte 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 gens-d'armes d'Elite, headed by their officers, received publicly, and by orders, the sacrament: when the Abbe Frelaud approached towards 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 Claufet, who inquired the cause of his accident and terror: "Good God! that man who gave me, on the 2d of September 1792, the five wounds in the convent of the Carenes, 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 Buonaparte, Ledoux was dismissed; but Abbe Frelaud was transported, and the grand vicar Claufet sent to the Temple, for the scandal their indiscretion had caused. This act was certainly as unjust towards him who was bayoneted to 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 every where else, inspire indignation, it could no where justify excite surprise. We had crossed the Rhine, seven months before, to seize the Duke of 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, or any independence it was thought useful or convenient for us to invade.

It was reported here, at the time, that Buonaparte was much offended with General Frere, who commanded this political expedition, for permitting Sir George's servant to accompany his master; as Fouché 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