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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 XXVI.

Paris, August, 1805.

MY LORD,

JOSEPH BUONAPARTE leads a much more retired life, and fees 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 Napoleone and Madame Louis Buonaparte have. His hospitality is, however, greater at his country seat, 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 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 suit 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 chuses 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 Buffa; and twice in the week invitations to tea parties are sent to some of the neighbours, or accepted from them.

Besides four billiard tables, there are other gambling tables for *Rouge et Noir*, *Trente et Quarante*, *Pharo*, *La Roulette Biribi*, 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 Napoleone's d'ors are placed on the table of his dressing room, which he may use or leave untouched, as he judges proper.

The hours of Joseph Buonaparte 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 notices it to his 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 Bourgogne 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 Napoleone's d'ors, and procured him a place of an amanuensis in the Chancellery of the Senate, having resolved never to accept any dedication, but wishing also not to hurt the feelings of the author by a refusal.

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 affluities of Eugenius de Beauharnois, and of Colonel la Fond-Blanc, she is exclusively indebted for the honour of maternity, and that these two rivals even fought a duel con-

cerning the right of paternity. Eugenius de Beauharnois, never was a great favourite with Joseph Buonaparte, 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 Napoleone. To humble him so much the more, Joseph even nominated La Fond-Blanc 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, or such a philosopher as Joseph Buonaparte. 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, 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 any body previously to disturb her. With great reluctance, Madame Miot's maid delivered the key of her rooms, while she accompanied him with a light.

The anti-chamber he found a hat and a great-coat, and in the closet adjoining the bed-room, 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 his 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 Buonaparte 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 repressing 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 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 Buonaparte. 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 of 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 Buonaparte 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 Buonaparte'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.

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 cha-

rafter, 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 that judgment in selecting his ministers, and that constancy in persevering in his choice, as 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, no where 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 marshals, generals, senators, ministers, governors, cardinals, &c. 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 shameful 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 anti-chambers, 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 to 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.

An intrigue of his elder brother with the present Queen, then Princess of Asturias, which was discovered by the late 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 a 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 the 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 expence 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 shewn himself a true patriot, a friend of his own country, and of his too liberal Prince, or even of monarchy in general, or of any body 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 wretch (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