Richard Bull to Thomas Pennant

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From: Richard Bull
To: Thomas Pennant
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Dear Sir

North Court, Isle of Wight. Sept:[r] 2. 1789

'Tis a shame to write you my nonsense, unfrank'd, but 'twould be a burning shame to hold my tongue any longer, and not thank you for so kind a letter as your last. we felt ourselves much oblig'd by your good wishes, and desire to return the same to you, and yours, sincerely, and in earnest. I am still very lame,, & not equal to the exercise I used to take in better days, and of course, not in rampant Spirits. The first franking visitor I have, shall return the two proof sheets of the *London*, to your hands, & I hope safe; I was much pleased with them, but no wonder, for you treat every Subject you take in hand, in a way nobody thought of before. "Pereant, qui ante nos, nostra dixerunt,[2] ought never to be quoted by you in anger, because your ideas are original, and all your own, and was you to write the history of Tom Thumb, we should find new anecdotes to amuse and instruct us, and every body would wonder where the Devil You pick'd 'em up. I am sorry I can't send you the information I was made to expect, relative to the new River company, for upon inquiry, I find Alderman Skinner, has just as much knowlegde in that business, as you would suppose an Auctioneer to have. He only sold a few shares some time ago, for about 9000£ a share, but they are now done at 10,000£, and increasing, because their profits increase, upon which their Dividends are grounded. The managers are very cautious in answering questions, and the secrets lie in the breasts of a few interested proprietors. There are 72 Shares, the half of which are call'd Kings shares, and are in less estimation than the others, because subject to a Grant of £500 a year, made so long back as the reign of James the first (I can't learn in what year) when the water was first brought to London, or very soon afterwards. I was quite astonish'd at what you tell me about your countryman Sir Watkin; I knew he lived well, and with hospitality, but good housekeeping never ruin'd a great Estate without the help of Vices. We were saying the day before your letter came, (Storer and I,) what a fortune that young Welchman will have to spend, if he has the prudence, and oeconomy of his Father. Delme, another thoughtless man, with a princely fortune, much, I believe, superior to Sir Watkin's is dead almost in indigence, and in good time for his family. his eldest son, and his second son are provided for, the rest must gamble, or go to service; Lady Betty has only a thousand per ann[m]. jointure, and tho it is not poverty, 'tis a a great change from the Splendor, and extravagance She has been accustom'd to. besides his lawfull wife, and family, he had a left handed one, and three children, who have nothing but the parish, and providence, to trust to. – Sir William Burrell, is come into a large Fortune by the death of his mother, which I believe he did not wish, and I am sure he did not want. London, as well as all Europe besides, is fill'd with the unfortunate nobles of France. Madame de Polignac was supposed to be in Germany, and at Strasborg, our beautiful countrywoman, M[rs] Trevor, was mistaken for her, and had like to have been shaved, whip'd, and hang'd, and Prince Boothby. was taken at Paris, for a marchand de Bled,[3] and escap'd with great difficulty. a friend of mine, now at Spa writes me word, that the Compte D'Artois, was two days in their hotel, unknown to any body, even of his own party, that the doors of his room were nail'd up, and the window shutters closed, and he had no provision, except what he brought with him, but when he ~~went~~ was gone, the Host was paid very liberally, by a person so muffled up, 'twas impossible to see his face. How will this end? Such sudden, and rough Reformations, shock one's feelings[4]

when so much is done in so little time, a great part certainly must be done wrong, 'tho' when the hour of violence is over, some good will arise from the anarchy and confusion, one shudders to think of. I have a Sister,[5] who has been these two years at paris, and who lives within a stones throw of the Bastile, and was witness to the whole attack, and defence there, and has since visited the Cells, above, and underground, which She writes me word, are not so dreadfull as have been represented, tho dismall enough in all conscience, but they are spacious, and airy enough not to be unwholesome. neither herself, nor any one of the party with her, have met with the least incivility, or insult, and the order in the Streets, has been as extraordinary as the tumults, occasion'd by the total subversion of Government.[6]

My daughters[7] have ^been at Sea, these three days, and I know no more than You, in what latitude they are at present, or when they mean to return, however, ~~[illegible]~~sink or Swim, they are in good company, and I trust they are safe. I hope M^rs^ Pennant has recovered her fall, and that you are all well, and happy. I was made to believe that ~~M^rs^ Moy~~ your relation M^rs^ Mostyn meant the bulk of her fortune for your children,[8] Why am I quite disappointed? – as I shall not be in town till near christmas, perhaps Moses had better not send the drawings till he hears of my being there, but if he will remit me the account I will readily pay it en avance.[9] Carter has been with me for a little while, & has made me some drawings, which pleasure me, and honor him. I wish you would actually survey the Isle of wight, and take your Meridian from Northcourt, which you would find very comfortable, if for no other reason, but because you would be very welcome. like a simpleton, I have expended this summer, and the last, above seven hundred pounds here, and few Gentlemen are better lodg'd than I am, but I am liable to the Caprice of my Landlord, and may be turn'd adrift, at a years notice, in the mean time we enjoy ourselves completely.[10]

I am Dear Sir, with best good wishes to the House of Pennant, yours faithfully, & sincerely.

Rich^d^: Bull

Stamp: (postmark) SE 3 89

Stamp: (handstamp) ISLE OF WIGHT

Thomas Pennant Esq:^r^ | Downing | Flintshire

By London

Marginalia

Sir J. Hawkwood | Rymer. VII [1]

Editorial Notes

[1] 'May they perish, who said first what we were going to say'.

[2] 'corn merchant'.

[3] The page is torn here at the seal and a final 's' and full stop ('feelings.') are probably missing. Cf. see marginalia to 1086, where similar words are jotted down by Bull.

[4] This may refer to Bull's younger sister, Kitty.

[5] Accounts by British visitors of Paris after the fall of the Bastille are numerous. For a recent study of such material see George Cadogan Morgan and Richard Price Morgan, *Travels in Revolutionary France and A Journey Across America* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2012), ed. by Mary-Ann Constantine and Paul Frame.

[6] Elizabeth and Catherine Bull. Bull's stepdaughter, Levinia Luther, may also be implicated in this reference.

[7] David, Arabella, Sarah and Thomas, junior.

[8] 'in advance'.

[9] Bull purchased North Court in 1795.