

Thomas Pennant to Richard Bull

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From: Thomas Pennant
To: Richard Bull
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Dear Sir

Downing Oct^r 24th 1791.

Our mail coach affair is in a good train.¹ I have only one point to insist on; the injustice of its exemption from Tolls. The rich districts may bear it: but the poorer cannot. It is impossible that the house of commons can refuse attention; else they may ^with justice be branded as swindlers: to give a security: & then dexterously to contrive to lessen it.

Let some other Drawcansir² take up the affair of barbarity to men & to horses. what multitudes of our own species have perished or been maimed since the invention of mail coaches. our old Jehus³ may have killed their thousands, but the mails may, like king David, boast of their ten thousands.⁴

Their guards too from their liveries seem to clame more than royal priveleges: their sport (on our roads) is to shoot at every thing they see. at the human race they shoot powder for the fun of frightening poor people. By this fun a m^r John Bulkley a clergyman was flung out of his whisky, & lost his life in consequence.⁵ a poor woman was about the same time flung from her horse & broke her leg. many more instances may be adduced. last spring a poor Gatekeeper was shot dead near Conwy; & no inquisition made. & within this ^month The Prince of Wales*¹ threatening to blow out a Gate keepers brains & shooting his dog was apprehended by order of my worship & brought before me to the quarter where I gave a long lecture on mail coaches and scouting the idea of their being sanctuaries, have laid it down that they might be stopt in various cases as readisafely as a [illegible] higlers cart. This was strange Doctrine! but it was high time to inculcate it. m^r Palmer bounced: threatend to take away our mail – I knew he did not dare to do it from a trail of road that now boasts of commerce inferior to very few in england. Holywell with the old trade of Flintshire lead. has now more than a million stock. But his wor[illegible]ship has bodderd you sufficiently. I have [illegible]been thirty six years an active Justice – wish to retire: but I fear I shall make a gap: till my son fills^it whom I made ^to take out his dedimus at the age of 22 ^supplies my place life without use is nothing worth. all the effusions of my pen are amusing vanities!

I [illegible]was neither art or part in Boydel's inclosed:⁶ but c^d not refuse him a little [of] scribble as a neighbor or country man. [to] as [thro'] the acc^t of it. The *Bible* [found] you [this]⁷ mention is too big in size & price. I suppose you know Fittlers little but elegant undertaking of a *small Bible*. That is a species of reading, 67 should think of & I do, It's contents are the [illegible] simplest. yet the finest that we can apply to for the rule of life.

I expect my David on wednesday. he landed about ten days ago: but staid with his good aunt & to refit, the intervening days. I am very sorry to hear of miss C. Bulls illness. health & happiness attend them & yourself: [illegible]

Adieu

Y^{rs} most truely

T Pennant

Editorial Notes

¹ See [1138](#) and [1139](#).

² Drawcansir is the name of a character in George Villiers's burlesque *The Rehearsal* (1672), who in the last scene is made to enter a battle and to kill all the combatants on both sides. The word is 'Used allusively and attrib. to designate a blustering, bragging person'. *OED*.

³ See 2 Kings ix. 20: 'the driving is like the driving of Jehu the son of Nimshi, for he driveth furiously'. *OED* defines 'Jehu' as 'A fast or furious driver'; 'A driver, a coachman', with examples dating 1682–1876.

⁴ 1 Samuel 18:7 'The women sang as they played, and said, "Saul has slain his thousands, And David his ten thousands"'.

⁵ See the account in *A letter ... on mail-coaches* (1792), p. 16, where Pennant reports how, in an incident in Anglesey, a mail-coach guard 'discharged his pistol wantonly in the face of a chaise horse, drawing his master, the Rev. John Bulkely, who was flung out, and died either on the spot or soon after.'

⁶ The enclosure is not preserved with the manuscript letter.

⁷ The words set in brackets in this section (of, to, thro', for, found, this) are inserted in pencil between the ink used by Pennant. Their presence distorts what is otherwise sound prose.

Authorial Notes

¹ *a Guard from his beauty & fine person so calld.