

Richard Bull to Thomas Pennant

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From: Richard Bull
To: Thomas Pennant
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Dear Sir

Northcourt, Isle of Wight. September 23. 1792

Altho' I do not plume myself upon being a good correspondent, or even a punctual one, I think it incumbent upon me, to give an answer of some sort, and immediately, to your very kind, and as usual, very friendly letter. It reach'd my hands last night only, having been as great a rambler as myself, for I have been in England several times since my first Journey hither. – no wonder your letter could not find me ^at Brighthelmstone, for we left the place a week before it's arrival, and that town is growing like ^a little Bath for magnitude, so that such an unimportant Individual as myself, had a little chance of being remember'd.

We hope now to be stationary here, till the middle or end of November, having little other pleasure to look forward to in London, than the hopes of finding a good deal of Moses's *Arctic Zoology* there, upon our return, and perhaps some few Drawings relative to *your London*. As you seem so amazingly deep, in China,¹ I ought not to omit telling you, that M^r. Penruddock Wyndham, an exotic Inhabitant of this Island, like myself, and now amongst my visitors at Northcourt, has brought for our inspection, and amusements, two very large Plans, one of *Canton*, the other of *Peking*, laid down with extreme precision, and taking in the vast suburbs of both Cities, the latter of which is said to be thirty miles round, within the Walls. They seem to me, to be drawings in Indian Ink, but in very high preservation, and every street ^and temple seems to have its peculiar discription, for there ^are abundant references upon the margin of each Plan, in chinese characters.

M^r. Wyndham told us, He became possess'd of them, by inheritance from the late Lord Melcombe, in whose family they had been (I think I dont lie) for near an hundred years back. As you and your labors are never out of my mind upon these occasions, I could not help expressing a wish that Faden might be allow'd to copy them for *your book*, tho I doubt the expense would [illegible] amount to a world of money, if finish'd like the originals. Wyndham is a very sensible, liberal minded Man, & I dare believe would not object to it, unless Lord ^+ Macartney takes them along with him to china, for whose use they are^were brought hither by Wyndham, that his^+ Interpreters might inspect them, before they sail'd from Spithead, where the Lion Man of War, and an India-Man have been at anchor some time, in readiness for a three years expedition to china - & India. Lord Macartney takes his passage in the latter, with every convenience, and accommodation on board, that human invention could contrive. The Lion is painted in a very peculiar manner, red & brown, like a chinese Junk, and intended to look as unlike a man of war as possible, for fear of offending the natives.

You tell me, I can't live out of a gay tempest;² it is very much malgré moi,³ if I do so, and very unbecoming a deaf old man of 71, but the truth is, that half the world have taken it into their noddles to visit the Isle of wight, and who ever we know, or whoever we don't know in their kindness, and in their Idleness, call upon us for want of having

something better to do, and I might almost as well keep the Bull's head at once. during the last week we have had nineteen beds occupied, every night.

Do you imagine the present storms in Europe can ever subside again? it is my opinion that another age of Barbarism is at hand, and that another Race, not of Goths, and Vandals, but of Russians, will overwhelm all arts and Sciences, and that 500 years hence, they will begin to rise again: France has reach'd the Summit of her Elegance, her Luxury, and irreligion, and will fall first; England, her rival in each will sink under her prodigious Vices next, and so on with the rest of Europe. – We talk of the Savages in America, but their Hatchets, and Tomahawks, are Instruments of Mercy, compared to the Pikes in the hands of a french Barbarian: many People are content to become Scholars to the Devil, but the Jacobins are fit to be his masters. —

It is said, and believ'd here, that the Palace of winchester is to be fitted up, so as to contain some thousands of the miserable Emigrants from France, but what is to become of the rest, who have no money, and won't starve? Portsmouth and Southampton, I know, swarm with them, and I believe it is the same all over the Sea Coasts. Rainsford writes me word that a rough Calculation was made, (by order of Council, a fortnight ago,) of the numbers in, and about London, and that they then amounted to about 50,000. and are now supposed to be doubled.⁴ Some of them are respectable persons, and bring wealth along with them, but many are such wretched objects, not of Charity but of fear, that Newgate would bar her doors against them.

I have been very well all the Summer, as it is called, but not felt, and my good Daughters,⁵ the comforts of my fast declining life, have been equally so. we all join in our best remembrances, and in all manner of good wishes to you, and all the House of Downing, and I hope you will think of me, as I am,

Dear Sir, yours faithfully, and
affectionately.

Rich^d: Bull

Marginalia

Endorsement at the bottom of the page, in Thomas Pennant's hand:

Ans^d

Editorial Notes

¹ For Pennant's engrossment in work on China for his 'Outlines of the Globe', see [1155](#).

² See [1155](#).

³ 'in spite of myself'.

⁴ The numbers of refugees arriving from Revolutionary France accelerated during the final months of 1792, with daily arrivals of men, women and children throughout September and October. Kirsty Carpenter, *Refugees of the French Revolution: Émigrés in London, 1789–1802* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999), pp. 29–48.

⁵

Elizabeth and Catherine Bull.