

Thomas Pennant to Richard Bull

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From: Richard Bull
To: Thomas Pennant
Date: 1792-11-28
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Dear Sir,

North Court, Isle of Wight
November 28. 1792

We are just going to make our Journey to London, and having a Franker at my elbow, it will cost you nothing to be told so,, which in truth, is the sole purpose of my writing now, except to thank you for your last letter, which requir'd no answer, else you should have had it before this time.

I hope your little girl is quite recover'd, and that all is well at Downing; Stet Fortuna Domus!¹ -----

An Evil Spirit is gone forth throughout all the regions of Europe, and I dread its influence upon our happy Country, which, in spite of the necessary reforms w^h.. it certainly has need of, enjoys [illegible] enjoys ^the wisest sistem of Government, ever contriv'd by man. Tom Paine is the Beelzebub of the times, and it grieves me to find my worthy and agreeable friend Erskine, lowering himself to be his prime minister.. I think the French nation began well, and had not massacrés, and crimes one shudders to think on,, stain'd with blood, every subsequent action, we should have look'd up with reverence, to a great nation, nobly struggling for liberty, under the most oppressive, if not the most tyrannical Government, that ever existed.

The mob at Sheffield declare openly, against Kings and Nobles, and I suppose you heard they stop'd Lord Fitzwilliams carriage, and taking away two of his horses, made him proceed with a pair, telling him nobody should pass through their town, with more. At Birmingham they roasted an An ass,, with a label inscrib'd George Whelp, and some of the Savages tore out the heart, and devour'd it raw – Some of the miserable Emigrants have straggled hither. they seem a quiet well meaning set of Priests,² quite ignorant of any World, except what they found in their own Cloysters. A whole Convent of Nuns, landed at Shoreham a little time since, determin^ging all to live, or to perish together;³ the Lady Abbess was more than 90 years old, and stone blind, none of the Nuns younger than 60. A person who saw, and reliev'd them, told me it was impossible to describ[illegible]e their seeming distress, and patient suffering. – my letters from London mention that suspicion and despondency hang upon the Countenance of every body, but I am among those, who call even Croakers, bad subjects – nil desperandum Turo Duce –⁴ in the mean time, we enjoy Peace and quietness here, with a few pleasant friends, and our daily toast is: "Confusion to all those who wish for it."

I am Dear Sir, always sincerely yours

Rich: Bull

Marginalia

On top of page, in Thomas Pennant's hand:

Answ^d

Editorial Notes

¹ 'Let the fortune of the house endure'.

² French priests refusing to take the oaths associated with the Civil Constitution of the Clergy (July 1790) were from as early as November 1791 subject to expulsion from their communes; from May 1792 to deportation under specific conditions; and from March 1793 to automatic deportation. The greater number left France between August 1792 and March 1793 and there were between six and seven thousand exiled clergymen in Britain (including the Channel Islands) by December 1792. Dominic Aidan Bellenger, *The French Exiled Clergy in the British Isles after 1789* (Bath, 1986), pp. 2, 3.

³ Nuns from a convent at Montargis, south of Paris, arrived at Shoreham in West Sussex on 17 October 1792, and were greeted with sympathetic treatment. See Carpenter, *Refugees of the French Revolution*, pp. 31–2.

⁴ Part of a line from the Ode 'Ad Munatium Plancum' by Horace. 'Teucro duce nil desperandum': 'Never despair with Teucer as leader'.