

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. July 31. 1793.

I have not troubled you with my letters, since we parted last, but you have been, and I trust, ever will be, one of the first in my remembrance.

My time has by no means pass'd pleasantly of late; my poor ailing daughter Catherine came hither, extremely unwell, and lives in such pain, that her life is becoming a Burthen to her; D^r. Turton, and a very intelligent Apothecary here, assure me her life is in no present Danger, in the mean time she grows worse, and worse, and is thinner than air, with as little corporal substance, but her spirits, when out of actual pain, are wonderful.

We go to Bath in the Autumn, and if, as is imagin'd her complaints arise from the digestive faculties being impair'd, she may recover, but my own opinion is, that the cause lies much deeper. – but enough, and too much upon a subject, which I dare believe interests you, but about which, there is no occasion I should worry my friends.

How are your little Girls eyes? and ~~how~~ are all the rest of your family, tutti quanti,¹ in good health?

I have been to pass three days, at Colonel Stuart's at High Cliff, (the late Lord Butes Villa) grown up to be a vast castle – with 3 Acres of exotic Garden, and a preservatory for fruit 240 feet long. the Books and MSS. are exceeding fine and numerous – one room of 36 feet is fill'd from top to bottom with reading books, and prints; of the latter there are 300 Volumes, and upwards, large Folio bound in Russia, and in the room over it, of the same Dimensions, are many hundred Volumes, of the finest Drawings of flowers, fruits, and plants that you can conceive, by every artist, ancient, and modern. I used to rise by day light to see as much as I could, and I wish'd for you with me often and often, every day.

My curiosity carried me to Portsmouth, to view the cleopatra, as soon as possible after her arrival. I counted all her shot holes, which made her appear almost like a collander, and her stern was intirely beaten in.. an intelligent officer on board, show'd me the Bulk head, on which her gallant captain was leaning, when he received his Death wound; the ball enter'd at the opposite port hole, and passing clear through her sides, in its way Struck upon the Bar, that served to lock down the bulk head, and forcing it into his side, did his business completely. the disorder the vessell was in, and the marks of clotted blood made such a land lubber as I am, ready to Phylosophize – surely, surely,, thought I, the pattes of military honor, are cut through the Bowels of humanity. The Nymphe lay by her side, and I was surpris'd to see so little difference in their respective size – She too was cut to pieces, but is already repair'd, and going out again.²

My nephew & M^{rs} Luther's, (the son of M^r Bennett) was on board the Iris frigate, when she engag'd a french frigate off Lisbon, big enough to swallow her up, masts, and all, and the poor lad had his thigh broke in two places, and his

knee pan dislocated.³ He behaved very Gallantly, and would be carried again upon Deck after the thigh was set. Lord Chatham has recommended him to Lord Hood, who takes him on board the victory, and the young man, will be a post Captain very soon. a Sea life was his choice, tho' he is an only son, and heir to a large Estate. – but you will be bother'd with ^me & my family concerns, so no more about either.

Yours

R. B.

Editorial Notes

¹ 'everyone'.

² This relates to an engagement between the French frigate *La Cléopâtre* and the British frigate *Nymphe*, which took place off Start Point in Devon on 18 June 1793. The former was taken by Edward Pellew, first Viscount Exmouth (1757–1833), its captain, Jean Mullan, killed. *ODNB* s.n. Edward Pellew. The story was reported in several British newspapers, including the *Derby Mercury*, 27 June 1793, which printed a letter from Pellew recounting the event.

³ See the *Derby Mercury*, 11 July 1793, for an account of the arrival of the *Iris* frigate in Gibraltar 'under jury masts, having had an engagement with a French frigate, which left them in the night. The *Iris* had 7 killed, and 30 wounded.'