

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 20. 1798

Altho' I do not make it a practice to write to you when I have nothing to say, and without a frank, I should hold myself unpardonable, if I did not make some enquiries after the health, and welfare of you, and yours, at a time when our little Island is over-run with members of parliament, belonging to different regiments of militia. I had four of them dining here yesterday, and tho some of them cannot read, or write, ut Clerici,¹ they can all set their marks, and my daughter and I make them ^pay for their Table d'Hôte at NorthCourt, in Franks.

I was pleased to read of your long table of 110 fine fellows; rustic festivity on the part of Gentlemen, is well return'd by affection and attachment from their tenants, & neighbors; had an enemy landed on your coast on that day, not a man of them, but who would have fought, and bled at your side. We are a noble people, and the Great Nation will find it a tough business to subdue this small nation of Free-men; the military flame, and the joyous feelings of Liberty, and independency exercised with due restrictions, have spread over every part of the Kingdom, and one scouts of Invasions, and Gun boats; the affair at S^t. Marcou has settled all that Matter.² it is however right to be prepar'd at all points. There are four Camps in the Isle of Wight at present, and more than eight thousand men in arms, with a large train of Artillery, and Mortars. until very lately this country, a very strong one by nature, was open to any insult from an invading Enemy, and Government had received very undoubted information that a descent was intended. it is now presumed to be perfectly secure, which is a comfortable consideration to the quiet inhabitants, tho' the Army is eating us up, and we are forc'd to scramble for our daily bread. offer up your prayers for the preservation of my hares and Pheasants, many of which die suddenly every night.

Lord Bolton, our Patriotic, and respectable Governor, gave a dinner lately at his Castle of Carisbrooke, (now turn'd into a pleasant Baronial Mansion;) which cost not much short of £1000. The occasion, was the consecration of pair of beautiful embroider'd Colours, he had presented to the Island=Volunteers, the whole of whom, after the usual Show, and platoon-firings &^c. had a dinner, upon the Platforms of the Castles, to the number of 3000, and the Gentry of the Island, and Strangers, here visiting their different acquaintances, were invited the same day to a magnificent entertainment in the various apartments within doors, where the Guests amounted to 200. The common people had also good care taken of them, and it is supposed that in the whole 5000 were that day fed, at the Expense of the Governor. I don't think there exists in the Kings dominions, a situation where such a fête could be exhibited with such effect. The Glacis of the Castle held completely the 3000 volunteers, their arms, and regimentals were new, and afforded a very military appearance. the spectators were seated upon the rising banks all round, and the Ladies being in general dress'd in white, with ribbands in their hats of every possible color, and contrasted with the green verdure of the banks they set upon, the tout ensemble was beyond description, beautiful and striking. the shew finish'd by a tripple discharge of ~~the~~ all the Cannon upon the ramparts, follow'd by a general feu de joie of the Infantry, and an

hundred Rifle men, placed upon the highly elevated keep of the castle. This was answer'd by the cannon, and small arms of 5000 regulars, encamp'd upon the forest two miles off, but in full view of the rejoicings at the Castle.

This subject luckily fell in my way, and I found it, else I am sure I should have been hard driven to fill my unimportant letter decently full, where you have no ~~con~~ concerns, you can have no interest, and where no events ever happen how can one record them. I have nothing to add, except the best and the warmest good wishes, of my daughter and myself, to all of the house of Pennant. – my dinner bell rings,

and I remain, my dear Sir, with every proper regard and esteem, yours, Impransus,³

Rich^d: Bull

General Rainsford is at my elbow, and begs, I will bring him to your remembrance.

Marginalia

Endorsement in Thomas Pennant's hand:

answ^d. Aug 11th.

Editorial Notes

¹ 'as clergy'.

² Further on this, see [1220](#) n. 2.

³ 'for lunch'.