

broke through the ceiling of his dining-room, and fell in upon the table. The court then began to apply very considerable sums to the purpose of erecting proper dwellings, for the great number of persons that flock to the place where the sovereign resides; near ten thousand are supposed to live here two or three months in spring; the king keeps one hundred and fifteen sets of mules, which require a legion of men to take care of them. Half a million sterling has been laid out at Aranjuez, since the year 1763; and it must be acknowledged, that wonders have been performed; several fine streets drawn in strait lines with broad pavements, a double row of trees before the houses, and a very noble road in the middle; commodious hotels for the ministers and embassadors; great squares, markets, churches, a theatre, and an amphitheatre for bull feasts, have been raised from the ground. Neatness and convenience have been more studied and sought for than shew in the architecture, but altogether the place has something truly magnificent in the coup-d'œil.

This afternoon we had a very pretty entertainment on the river. The prince of Asturias, and his attendants, embarked in a galley richly decorated, preceded and followed by other smaller barges, adorned in a less splendid, though still a very gay manner. They rowed from his banqueting-house up into the woods, where

the meandrings of the river are exceedingly beautiful, forming fine sweeps and reaches with green banks, shaded by aged trees that hang in various clumps over the stream. Crowds of holiday-folks in their best apparel, lined both sides of the Tagus, and were no small addition to the rural shew.

The pleasures of Aranjuez are walking or riding in the morning, going to court, dining at some of the open tables kept by the great officers of state, a game at cards, a drive along the avenue, and the Italian opera. The ministers are quite easy in their behaviour, and their houses free from ceremony and restraint; that of the prime minister, the marquis Grimaldi, is superlatively so: he keeps an open house, where we are always sure of meeting with a numerous company, cards, and conversation; the master of it is always glad to see us, and shew us every civility the place admits of: I am afraid we do not attend as much perhaps as we are in gratitude bound; for there are so many temptations at our own ambassador's, that it is with difficulty we can bring ourselves to sacrifice the pleasures we find at his house to the duties imposed upon us by society. The easy frankness, affability, and friendship, with which Lord G. treats us, make us loath to waste elsewhere the hours we can pass so agreeably under his roof.

L E T T E R

L E T T E R XXXIX.

Aranjuez, May 6, 1776.

WE have just finished our round of presentations, which in so numerous a royal family, is a work of more days than one; as I know you expect a minute account of each of those that compose it, I am sorry I am incapable of satisfying your curiosity, in as ample a manner as I could wish; you shall have a description of their persons, and as much of their characters, as I have learned from well-informed people, in whose judgment I can confide. I beg you will consider how hard it is to discern the true character of the great, as your intelligence can only flow to you through the suspicious channel of many jarring passions and interests. It is impossible for a stranger to seize a good likeness in so short a time, and to transmit to others a faithful representation, of a prince, that does not admit him to a familiar intercourse. I don't know but sovereigns are the most difficult characters to define in a whole nation; for all princes appear pretty nearly alike; their mode of life is uniform; by seeing none but inferiors about them, they acquire a great indifference in their manner.

manner, and seldom betray in their countenance any of those strong emotions that mark the various feelings of men obliged to bustle through the world; their passions lack the relish which arises from delays and difficulties; what the French call *Ennui*, wearisomeness, is, methinks, the grand malady of princes, and therefore amusement is their main pursuit in life. In the princes of the House of Bourbon, the passion of fowling predominates; yet in the Spanish royal family, there are some who toil at the gun with more reluctance than the farmer's boy does at the plough; have a taste for arts and sciences, and wish for nothing more than to be freed from the obligation of following the diversion.

The ceremony of presentation is performed as the king rises from table. Charles the third is a much better looking man than most of his pictures make him; he has a good-natured laughing eye; the lower part of his face, by being exposed to all weather, is become of a deep copper colour; what his hat covers, is fair, as he naturally has a good skin; in stature he is rather short, thickly built about the legs and thighs, and narrow in the shoulders. His dress seldom varies from a large hat, a plain grey Segovia frock, a buff waistcoat, a small dagger, black breeches, and worsted stockings; his pockets are always stuffed with knives, gloves, and shooting tackle. On Gala days, a fine suit is hung upon his shoulders,

shoulders, but as he has an eye to his afternoon sport, and is a great œconomist of his time, the black breeches are worn to all coats. I believe there are but three days in the whole year that he spends without going out a shooting, and those are noted with the blackest mark in the calendar; were they to occur often, his health would be in danger, and an accident that was to confine him to the house, would infallibly bring on a fit of illness. No storm, heat, cold, or wet, can keep him at home; and when he hears of a wolf being seen, distance is counted for nothing; he would drive over half the kingdom rather than miss an opportunity of firing upon that favorite game. Besides a most numerous retinue of persons belonging to the hunting establishment, several times a year all the idle fellows in and about Madrid, are hired to beat the country, and drive the wild boars, deer, and hares, into a ring, where they pass before the royal family. A very large annual sum is distributed among the proprietors of land about the capital, and near the country palaces, by way of indemnification for the damage done to the corn. I was assured that it costs seventy thousand pounds sterling for the environs of Madrid, and thirty thousand for those of Saint Ildefonso. In order to be entitled to this reimbursement, the farmers scatter just as much seed-corn over their grounds, as will grow up into something like a crop; but

but they do not always give themselves the trouble of getting in the scanty harvest, being sufficiently paid for their labour by the royal bounty.

Being naturally of an even phlegmatic temper, the king is sure to see events on their favorable side only; and whenever he has determined in his own mind that a measure is proper to be pursued, he is an utter enemy to alteration. As far as I can judge, by comparing the different accounts I have had, he is a man of the strictest probity, incapable of adopting any scheme, unless he is perfectly satisfied in his conscience that it is just and honourable; of such immoveable features, that the most fortunate or the most disastrous occurrences are alike unable to create the smallest variation in them: rigid in his morals, and strenuously attached to his religion; but he does not suffer his devotion to lay him open to the enterprizes of the court of Rome, or the encroachments of his own clergy; on the contrary, they have frequently met with rougher usage at his hands than they might have expected from a free-thinker. The regularity of his own life renders him very strict about the conduct of his children, whom he obliges to be out fishing or shooting as long as he is absent on the same business; this he does to prevent their having time or opportunity to harbour bad thoughts; and truly I believe he goes out so constantly himself, in order to
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keep down the vigour of his own constitution. He seldom addresses himself to any young men of his court; but delights in conversing and joking with elderly persons, and such as are of his own age, especially monks and friars. He is very partial to Naples, and always speaks of that country with great feeling.

Since his accession, many great works have been completed; noble roads made to all the palaces round the metropolis; several others undertaken in more remote provinces: he has finished the palace at Madrid, and added considerably to those of the Pardo and Aranjuez; built new towns at Aranjuez, the Escorial, and Saint Ildefonso; and planted a great deal at Aranjuez. The marquis of Grimaldi has the merit of having suggested and conducted most of these improvements, and of having urged on the king, who, although he has naturally no great relish for the arts, thinks it the duty of a sovereign to encourage them.

The prince of Asturias is of an athletic make, his countenance rather severe, and his voice harsh. He seemed in a great hurry to get away from us; but the princess stayed chatting a great while. She is not handsome, being very sickly, but seems lively, and genteely shaped, with a very fine hand and arm. If she lives to be queen, I dare say she will render this court a very gay one; for she appears to like to go abroad, and con-

verse with strangers. When she walks out, all persons that have been presented, and chance to be in the way, are expected to join her company, and escort her as long as she thinks proper. Her mildness and good-nature have softened much of her husband's roughness of manner; and of late he seems to have more pleasure in sitting with her in a domestic way, than in trudging over the heath in quest of game.

Don Gabriel is a tall well-looking man, but timid to excess. He possesses many talents, but his constant avocations out of doors prevent his applying to study as much as he could wish. I have seen some good pictures done by him with the flock of cloth, and have heard much of his classical learning, and turn for mathematics.

Don Antonio appears to be very well pleased with the active life of a sportsman.

The Infanta Maria Josepha has reason to envy every country wench she sees roaming at liberty; for confinement, etiquette, and celibacy, are likely to be her lot during life.

Don Lewis, the king's brother, after having been a cardinal and an archbishop, is now on the eve of matrimony with a pretty Arragonesa girl, whom he took a fancy to last year, as she was running across the fields after a butterfly. As he has made a collection of natural

ral history, this simularity of taste made a great impression upon him. This wedding, which the king has consented to with reluctance, has produced a total revolution in the marriage-laws of Spain. A new pragmatica or edict is published, to prevent all matches betwixt persons of unequal rank and quality; by this decree, the old custom is abrogated. Heretofore it was out of the power of parents to hinder their children from marrying whom they liked, and the church interposed to oblige them to make a suitable settlement upon the young couple.

Don Lewis's bride is not to be allowed the title or rank of a princess of the blood, nor are her children to be deemed qualified to succeed to the crown; he is to reside near Talavera, where I make no doubt but he will lead a happy life, as he has a great taste for music and natural history; his cabinet already contains a very valuable collection of rarities, especially such as are found in the Spanish dominions. This prince is cheerful, humane, affable, and full of pleasantry; good qualities that render him the darling of the nation.

The king and all the males of his family wear the ensigns of a great variety of military orders. On their left breast is a row of stars like the belt of the constellation of Orion: they are also decorated with the blue ribband of the French order of the Holy Ghost, and

the insignia of the Burgundian golden fleece. They have besides the Neapolitan red sash of Saint Januarius, the red crosses of Calatrava, founded in 1158, of Saint Iago, dating from 1175, and of Montesa, instituted in 1317, and the green cross of Alcantara, invented in 1176. After all these badges, comes the blue and white ribband of the Conception or Carlos tercero, established by the present king, on the birth of the late son of the prince of Asturias.

L E T T E R XL.

Aranjuez, May 28, 1776.

IN the course of last week, we saw the king's stallions, some of which are beautiful creatures. Before I came into Spain, I thought handsome horses were to be met with in every part of the kingdom, but to my great surprize, found them very rare in all the provinces; so little attention has there been paid to the breed of that generous animal, formerly the boast of Spain.

At Villamejor, a few miles from hence down the
Tagus,

Tagus, his majesty has a stable of a less noble, but not less useful race of stallions, that of Jack-asses. These beasts are of a shape and size you can have no idea of: they are fourteen hands high, and have such monstrous large heads, thick legs, and rough coats of long hair over their whole body, that scarce a trace remains of the figure of an animal. They say these *Garranones*, as the Spaniards term them, are extremely furious in the covering season; I am sure at present, they are the most stupid of their dull species. Each ass covers twenty mares, and costs near thirty thousand reals, about two hundred and eighty pounds sterling. They are bred in the mancha.

The way to Villamejor lies along the vale through a considerable new farm, called the *Campo flamenco*, lately taken in by the marquis Grimaldi, and laid out in a grand scale. On an eminence stands the farmhouse, with large rooms for the royal family to take a hunter's repast in. The road up to it is a shewy, royal work, but might have been spared had the building been erected a little lower, or had it been intended for the reception of none but common husbandmen.

In our return in the evening we overtook the bulls intended for the next day's feast or fight. They appeared very peaceable and tractable. Whatever may be said of their ferocity, when irritated in the *arena* by darts, fire, and lances, I am apt to think they can never

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ver be so terrible or dangerous as our vicious bulls in England. Those I have seen wanted size and weight, and did not appear to me to have any real fury in their nature, 'till it is raised by repeated provocations, and the desultory attacks of so many adversaries. To bring them quietly along the roads from their pasture, the drovers employ certain white oxen, trained up to be decoys; these go along with the bulls, 'till they lead them into the stables under the amphitheatre.

I have now been a spectator of several *Fiestas de Toros*, but cannot bring myself to have any relish for the diversion. Whatever they may have been in former times, they are certainly but a poor exhibition at present, though the crowds of people assembled in a circle, and agitated in a most tumultuous manner, must be allowed to be an interesting and curious spectacle. None of the royal family ever appear at these favorite amusements of the Spanish nation: the nobility no longer pique themselves upon their strength, courage, or dexterity, in these rough exercises; and the fair condescend to yield up their hearts and persons to lovers that have given no proofs of their prowess, but in combats of a softer nature: the consequence is, a total want of emulation: no gentleman cares to hazard his life in a trial of skill that promises no advantage to him of any kind. The shew is conducted with great œconomy and niggardliness; none but the worst of horses are bought for the

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