

trances and ground-floor appear more like those of some mighty fortrefs, than of the peaceable habitation of a powerful monarch, an hundred leagues removed from his frontiers. The range of large glazed arches round the inner court, refembles the infide of a manufactory: this is the more unpardonable, as they had at no great diftance in the Alcazar of Toledo, as elegant a colonnade as the nicest critic could defire. The beautiful circular court of Granada might have fugged noble ideas to the architect, but probably at that time, the very exiftence of fuch a thing was a fecret at Madrid.

The ftair-cafe was meant to be double, but it was afterwards judged more convenient to fhut up one flight, as the remaining half answered every purpofe. At the foot of the ftairs I fhall leave all my spleen, and prepare myfelf with unfeigned fatisfaction to describe to you the beauty and grandeur of the upper apartments. I know no palace in Europe, fitted up with fo much true royal magnificence. The ceilings are chef-d'œuvres of Mengs, Corrado, and Tiepolo. The richeft marbles are employed with great tafte in forming the cornices and focles of the rooms, and the frames of the doors and windows. What enhances the value of thefe marbles, is the circumftance of their being all produced in the quarries of Spain, from whence

it is the opinion of a learned writer, that ancient Rome was supplied with many of the precious materials that enriched her porticoes and temples. At least, there is no presumption in asserting, that the bowels of the earth in Spain contain most of those species of marbles, alabasters, &c. that are to be seen in the ruins of the mistress of the world, whatever might be the countries from which they were drawn. Porphyry is found near Cordova; the finest jasper near Aracena; the mountains of Granada furnish a beautiful green, those of Tortosa a variety of brown marbles; Leon and Malaga send alabaster; Toledo, Talavera, Badajoz, and Murviedro, abound in marbles of different colours; and most parts of the kingdom afford some specimen or other of jasper, besides the amethyst and its radix, for which Spain is celebrated above most other countries.

The great audience chamber is one of the richest I know. The ceiling, painted by Tiepolo, represents the triumph of Spain; round the cornice the artist has placed allegorical figures of its different provinces, distinguished by their productions, and attended by several of their inhabitants in the provincial habit; these form a most uncommon picture, and a curious set of *Costumi*. The walls are incrustated with beautiful marble, and all round hung with large plates of looking-glass

in rich frames. The manufactory of glafs is at Saint Ildefonso, where they cast them of a very great fize; but I am told they are apt to turn out much rougher and more full of flaws than thofe made in France.

A collection of pictures, by the greateft mafters of the art, adorns the walls of the inner apartments; but even this vaft fabric does not afford room for all the riches his Catholic Majefty poffeffes in this branch. The detail and catalogue of a number of paintings is fure to fatigue a reader who has never feen, nor can ever rationally expect to fee them; therefore it is incumbent upon me to felect only a few of my favorites from my memorandums.

The gallery of the Efcurial is faid to be ftill more valuable, efpecially as the famous picture of Raphael of the carrying the crofs, called the Spafimo di Sicilia<sup>32</sup>; remains in this palace unplaced, and confequently unfeen.

Of the works of Titian, the moft remarkable are, a Bachanalian woman lying on her back, afleep; the liquor has diffufed a glow over her beautiful face, and her body is divinely handsome; one of the greateft painters of the age has often declared, he never paffed before this picture without being ftruck with admira-

<sup>32</sup> Raphael painted it for the Church of the Madonna dello Spafimo, or the mother of Dolours, in Sicily.



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tion. Some boys playing, full of grace and a charming variety of attitudes.

Rubens: Christ and St. John Baptist, lovely children. A priest on horseback, carrying the viaticum to a sick person, accompanied by Rodolph earl of Hapsburgh, one of the master-pieces of his pencil.

Murillo: A vintager, wineseller, holy family, two boys; all in their different characters, excellently painted with a rich mellow colour.

Vandyke: The seizing of Christ in the garden, a strong composition; several portraits absolutely alive.

Spagnolet: Isaac feeling Jacob's hands; very capital.

Velasquez: Many portraits. His genius shines most conspicuous in the equestrian figure of the Conde Duque Olivarés, prime minister of Philip the fourth, which I really think the best portrait I ever beheld: I know not which most to admire; the chiaro scuro, the life and spirit of the rider, or the natural position and fire of the horse. Another of a young prince also on horseback, is a beautiful piece: the little cavalier sits upright, and seems proud of his exalted station; but the fixed serious cast of his features, betrays the apprehension he feels of his prancing steed. The water-feller of Saville, an admirable old figure; some women spinning; and Velasquez himself drawing the portrait of an Infanta.

Mengs:



Mengs: Many fine things, which, even in this rare collection, do not seem intruders; most of them represent devout lugubrious events, the most gloomy of which, such as the flagellation and crucifixion, have been chosen by the king to adorn his bed-chamber. Among the profane and allegorical subjects he has treated, I was much delighted with four light airy genii over the doors, representing the different parts of the day.

The last pictures I shall mention, in order to close my catalogue with éclat, are an holy family, and a Christ praying in the garden, by Correggio, not inferior to any of the small-sized works of that child of the graces. Of the last-mentioned piece I have seen more than one repetition. In the Capodimonte collection near Naples, is one exactly similar.

I have passed over many excellent pictures by a crowd of Italian and Flemish painters, that would hold the first rank in most other galleries.

In the magazines and store-rooms lie unsorted, a number of pictures, sufficient to furnish such another suite of apartments.

At the bottom of the palace-yard is an old building, called the Armeria, containing a curious assortment of antique arms and weapons, kept in a manner that would have made poor Cornelius Scriblerus swoon at every step;

no notable house-maid in England has her fire-grates half so bright as these coats of mail; they shew those of all the heroes that dignify the annals of Spain; those of St. Ferdinand, Ferdinand the Catholic, his wife Isabella, Charles the fifth, the great captain Gonsalo, the king of Granada, and many others. Some suits are embossed with great nicety. The temper of the sword-blades is quite wonderful; for you may lap them round your waist like a girdle. The art of tempering steel in Toledo, was lost about seventy years ago, and the project of reviving and encouraging it, is one of the favourite schemes of Charles the third, who has erected proper works for it on the banks of the Tagus.

As the new palace stands on the brow of a steep hill, and is hemmed in very close behind by the buildings of the town, it became necessary to open a communication with the vale of Mançanarés below, that his Majesty might go into the country without passing through the whole city of Madrid. In order to effect this, they have cut a broad road, with an easy ascent from the river to the palace, and adorned it at the foot of the hill with a kind of triumphal arch, dedicated to St. Vincent. This expence might have been saved, as well as the many thousands of dollars buried in the vaults and substructions that serve as foundations to the ponderous mass of buildings which compose the palace,  
had



had the kings thought proper to re-build or embellish their house at the Buenretiro, on the hill east of Madrid <sup>33</sup>. Instead of being cramped for room, even for a walk or a terrace, they would there have had a large garden ready planted, and space behind to stretch out

<sup>33</sup> The finishing and fitting up of the new palace has, in all probability, saved Madrid from ruin, by fixing the court of Spain to this spot. The king intended to have removed it for ever to Seville and the southern provinces, after the sedition of Madrid, when the populace rose in consequence of the order for cleaning the streets, and the prohibition of slouched hats and large cloaks. His surprize, resentment, and indignation, would certainly have induced him to retire for ever from so barbarous a metropolis, to the milder climate of Andalusia, had not his minister, unwilling that so much treasure should have been lavished in the improvements of the palaces in Castile to no manner of purpose, and loath to abandon to destruction so many darling creations of his own, prevailed on his royal master to conquer his anger, and alter his determination. But the king still retains so much spleen against Madrid, as to dislike to sojourn in it; and indeed, he escapes from it as often as decency will allow him. It was said at the time, that many persons of rank were mingled in disguise among the mob, to encourage them to proceed to extremities; but this seems a groundless report. It is very remarkable, that during the greatest ferment of the sedition, all parties retired, as if by mutual consent, about dinner-time, to take their usual nap or meridia; after which they returned to the charge with fresh vigour, and redoubled fury, resumed their clamours, and repeated their outrages. The military force finally quelled the tumult, and the king carried his point. Every blackguard now loiters about with his hat pinned up triangularly; but the moment he gets out of town, and beyond the bounds of the proclamation, he indulges himself in flapping it down on all sides.

their improvements as many miles as they could wish. The air in both situations must be equally good, and for any thing there is to see in the adjacent country, which is the only difference the new palace can boast of, I should think it rather a disadvantage than a recommendation: surely the view from the retiro towards the best part of the city, with a full command of the public walks, is much grander and more agreeable than a stretch over twenty leagues of ill-cultivated depopulated hills.

The palace of the Buenretiro is now stripped of all its best pictures and furniture. The buildings are poor, and unworthy of a sovereign, so that few parts of it could have been preserved in any judicious plan. The only remarkable things about it are the theatre, where Farinelli sang before a court, which he may be said to have governed as prime minister; a bronze statue of Charles the fifth; and an equestrian one of Philip the fourth, cast by Tacca at Florence; the posture of the horse curvetting, supported by his hind feet and tail, is very ingenious; and it appears difficult to conceive how the artist could contrive to preserve the equilibrium of such a mass, entirely thrown out of its perpendicular. The gardens are agreeable, and open to the public; one of the great ornaments of Madrid, is the fine iron railing that divides them from the walks  
of



of the Prado, and the road up the hill to the gate of Alcala, a new arch designed by Sabatini; this gate is rather heavy, but perhaps its situation requires the parts to be very solid, in order to produce a grand effect from the proper point of view; at least it ensures to them, an almost eternal duration.

In the shallow vale between the retiro and the town, which has not the least suburb of any kind belonging to it, the present king has finished the Prado, which in a few years, provided they manage the trees properly, will be one of the finest walks in the world. Its length and breadth are great, the avenues drawn in an intelligent noble style, the foot paths wide and neat, the iron railing and stone seats done in a grand expensive manner. All the coaches in Madrid drive in the ring here; and though the absence of the court lessens the appearance more than two-thirds, yet last night I counted two hundred carriages following each other. On the declivity of the retiro, they mean to plant a botanical garden.

The view from this walk is, as it should be, confined; for the winds are so sharp and boisterous, and the landscape so horrid all round the city, that no place of public resort could be comfortable, unless it were, like this, shut in from all distant views, and sheltered by the hills from the blasts that sweep over the highlands of Castille. To

the west, it has the town, the three principal streets of which terminate in the Prado; there are three noble openings, excellently paved, and clean even to a nicety, indeed so are most of the streets of Madrid since the edict for paving and cleaning them; the foreigners that resided here before that time, shudder at the very recollection of its former filth. Some of the natives regret the old stinks and nastiness, as they pretend that the air of Madrid is so subtle, as to require a proper mixture of a grosser effluvia to prevent its pernicious effects upon the constitution. The extremes of cold and heat are astonishing in this place, and the winds so searching, that all the Spaniards wear leathern under-waistcoats to preserve their chests, for they pervade every other kind of cloathing. In summer the dust is intolerable.

To the east and north the heights of the retiro defend the Prado from cold. The walk extends from the gate of Saint Barbara to that of Atocha, and there joins an older avenue of trees, which reaches down to the new canal and the banks of the Mançanarés. This canal is a late undertaking, that has hitherto answered very well: near two leagues of it down the valley is navigable; and the transporting of lime, stones, and other materials for building, the plantations of mulberries and other trees, and the sale of a right of angling



angling, have already produced substantial advantages. The king has almost completed his communication highway between the Aranjuez road and the gate of Saint Vincent. It crosses the ends of the bridges called, on account of the places they lead to, the bridges of Toledo and Segovia; they are long and lofty, but decorated in the most wretched of all tastes; many writers have ridiculed them as immense piles of arches thrown over an insignificant rivulet, but the truth is, the Mançanarés sometimes swells to a great height, and pours down a terrible volume of water; the sands it has already washed down have almost choaked up some of the arches, and these high bridges may in time prove too low for the little brook.

In the broken banks south of the river are found large quantities of pebbles, called Diamonds of Saint Hidro. They cut them like precious stones, and ladies of the first fashion wear them in their hair as pins, or on their fingers as rings. They have little or no lustre, and a very dead glassy water. The value of the best rough stone does not exceed a few pence.

Opposite the new gate below the palace, is the royal park of the Casa del campo. The villa is a building of no consequence; the woods are wild and pleasant, though not so extensive as they might be made with a little attention: in the court is a grand equestrian statue.

tue of Philip the third, by John of Bologna; and in the rooms are many pictures, among others the original of Callot's temptation of Saint Anthony. In the menagery are some Vicuñas or Peruvian sheep, from whose wool a very fine filky cloth is woven, and made up into winter cloaths without being dyed; it is of a rich brown colour, and sells very dear.

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## L E T T E R XLII.

Madrid, June 5, 1776:

**I**T has been my constant study, during our tour round Spain, to note down and transmit to you every peculiarity that might throw light upon the distinctive turn and genius of the nation. Experience has taught me to look upon this method as the best, and indeed the only sure guide to the knowledge of a people; but at the same time, has made me sensible how imperfect an idea is to be acquired by a transitory view, in a progress of a few months. Customs that struck me at first as unaccountable, from my ignorance of motives and situations, have frequently since appeared to

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