

as beneficial to the lands they overflow as those of the Nile are to Egypt. The rich narrow vale along the banks is laid out in corn-fields and mulberry-plantations. An amphitheatre of bleak gloomy mountains shuts up the valley to the west, where the river makes its way through a narrow breach in the vast chain of rocks. Just before we entered Tortosa, we met the bishop of that see, clad in the plain simple manner of the inferior clergy of the province. His lank black hair was cut close to his ears, and covered by a great hat, squeezed up on each side into the form of a boat. The order of bishops in this kingdom leads a very exemplary life, much retired from the world, expending their great revenues in feeding the poor, building and endowing churches, convents, and hospitals, and allowing very scantily for their own expences. Their charity, however laudable as to the intention, is certainly most prejudicial to the public welfare, as it encourages beggary and idleness; for who will work in a country where he is sure of a good dinner every day at the gates of a monastery or palace, besides the chance of occasional alms; and where the softness of the climate renders cloaths and lodging objects of luxury rather than of prime necessity. Perhaps it would be better for Spain, were its prelates as extravagant as those of France, as their wealth would then be divided among the industrious and honest, and not lavished to support the existence of the idle, and often of the profligate. In spite of
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so good an example, the inferior clergy, and above all the monks, (one or two orders excepted) are notorious for the looseness of their morals. The bishopric of Tortosa is worth about thirty thousand dollars a year.

A little further on we came to a liquorice-work, carried on by an Englishman. The liquorice plant grows in great plenty on all the low grounds near the river. He employs above an hundred hands in gathering it, and about fifteen at constant work in the mills. He pays a certain sum to the proprietors of those lands; yet such is their envy, that this season they would not suffer him to pluck a single stick, though the loss falls upon themselves, and the very extraction of the root brings the ground almost to a state of cultivation. This conspiracy obliged him to send up into Arragon for liquorice, at a great additional expence. Much of it also is found about Villanova, and other places along the coast. Four hundred tons of root make fifty of cake, which in England sells at about three pounds fifteen shillings per hundred weight: this year he expects to export about that quantity.

Tortosa is an ugly town on the declivity of a hill, north of the Ebro, over which there is a bridge of boats. Its commerce in silk and corn is but at a low ebb. We purchased of some nuns the most delicate silk gloves I ever beheld, made of what they call the flower of silk.

We next traversed the rich vale of Garena, where the

olive-trees grow to a great size, their luxuriant branches not being so closely pollarded as in France. Here the peasants wear the Valencian dress, which differs totally from that of Catalonia; a monstrous slouched hat, cropped hair without a net, a short brown jacket, white waistcoat and trowsers, stockings gartered below the knee, and packthread sandals.

At the passage of the Cenia, a pretty brook in winter, but dry in summer, we entered the kingdom of Valencia. After crossing a large tract of heath, we came to the sea-shore, which is beautifully planted to the water-edge with olive, mulberry, fig, and *algarrobo* trees. We found a rich red soil, and vineyards neatly trimmed in rows, without stakes, in the district of Benicarlo, a small place entirely supported by the wine trade. Eight thousand pipes of a very strong, sweet, red wine, bought in the country at the rate of five guineas per pipe, are annually shipped in this road for Holland, Germany, and Bourdeaux, where they are mixed with the second-rate claret, to give it colour and body. The wine for Bourdeaux is conveyed along the coast to Cette, on board Spanish barks, which are exempt from all duties on exportation. By reason of their apprehensions of Moorish corsairs, and the chance of bad weather, they come to an anchor every night, and commonly make it a voyage of a month at least. At Cette these wines are put upon the great canal of Languedoc, and smuggled into Bourdeaux

deaux as high-country wines; for foreign ones are not allowed to be entered at that port. A society of mariners float all the casks from Benicarlo to the ships, and, from the time of their taking charge of them, become answerable for all losses by weather or mismanagement. A good deal of wine goes likewise from Vinaros, a neighbouring town to the north; but the quality of that wine is much inferior to those of Benicarlo and Peniscola, a town and fort situated south of Benicarlo, on a rock in the sea, where the famous antipope, Peter de Luna, took refuge.

In this plain they suffer much for want of water; the vintage is frequently diminished by the excessive heats, which dry up all the springs. It was once in agitation to bring a canal from the Ebro to water this country, but the project ended in smoke, like several others proposed for the amelioration of many parts of Spain. Wherever they can procure water from wells, by means of a wheel turned by a mule, they have fine vegetables all the year. They cut lucerne every week in spring, and every fortnight in winter, and mix it with the sweet bean of the locust, for the provender of their mules. Provisions are very scarce here, no kind of meat being killed except kid. In spring, goats milk is plentiful; but the peasants in the adjacent mountains live most part of the year upon the roasted acorns of the ever-green oak, a food which we found surprisngly savoury and palatable,

latable, but not very nourishing. The gentlemen, proprietors of vineyards, reside up in the mountain villages, in a poor style, always distressed for money, notwithstanding the sure and ready sale of their wines. The sea hereabouts is full of sharks.

From Benicarlo we had much stony road, alternately skirting the shore, or climbing up wild rocky hills. Few vales surpass in beauty that of Margal, a noble plain, full of trees, villages, and towns. The sea forms a picturesque bay before it, and the mountains run behind in a vast semicircle. The locust and olive trees are old and branchy, the soil deep, and the grounds fertile, as being well drenched with water. We dined at Castillon de la Llana, the largest and best built town in our route. The women are very ugly, and render themselves still more uncomely, by frizzling their hair all round the forehead, and twisting it on the crown of the head round a nasty brass bodkin. Villa Real is another large town, near the Mijares, a river of a green colour, in a large plain.

The moment we entered this petty kingdom of Valencia, we began to feel a sensible change in the climate: the days are troublesomely hot, the nights soft and mild, like our fine summer evenings. Early and late in the day I walk an hour or two, to enjoy the sweetness of the morning and evening breeze, and contemplate at leisure the enchanting prospects along the calm Mediterranean. The numberless creeks and bays, the bold promontories,
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with each its slender tower, of various shapes and dimensions, the green woody vales, with rocks impending over them, are scenes that can seldom be met with, and never outdone in any country, and such as no description of mine can do justice to. But, as all human pleasure is allayed with some mixture of pain and distress, these charming coasts are not without their calamities; till lately, they were cruelly infested by the Barbary rovers, who frequently cut barks out of their roads, and carried off whole families from the small villages. At present Barcelò keeps so sharp a look-out, that their appearance is less frequent in these seas. The scarcity of water is another misfortune, and severely felt almost every summer. Of the innumerable beds of rivers and torrents that we have crossed between Barcelona and Nules, six only have any water in them, viz. the Llobregat, Gaya, Francolis, Ebro, Cenia, and Mijares: two of these are dry during the hot weather. Hereabouts the little canals from the hills supply the lands with a greater plenty of water.

All these nights past we have heard the people singing doleful ditties under our windows, to the sound of a guitar, which they strike with their nails, without any notion of air, but merely as a kind of an accompaniment, sometimes high, sometimes low, but very coarse and monotonous. I can compare their music to nothing so well as to the beating of a frying-pan, to call down a swarm of bees.

LETTER

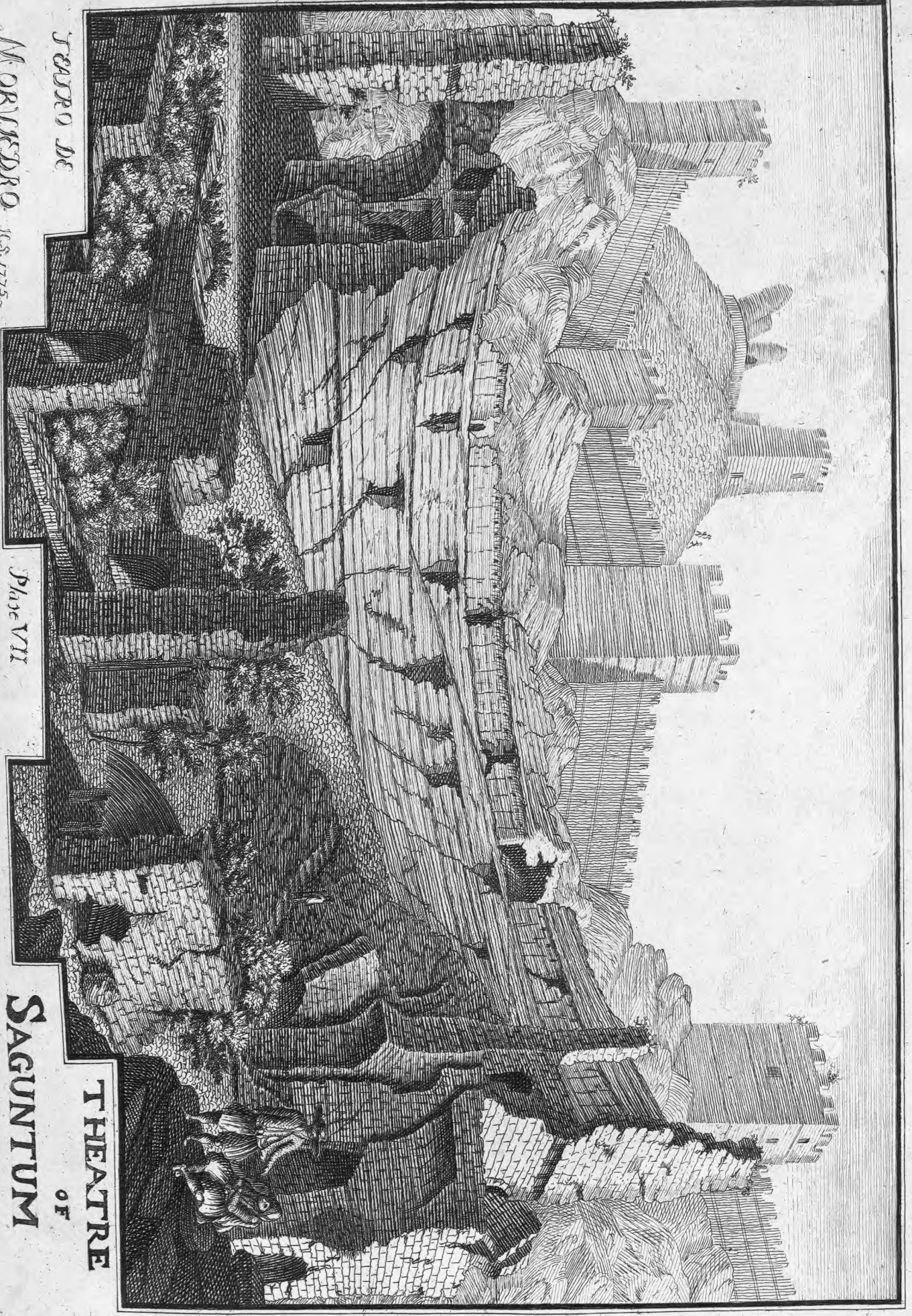
L E T T E R XII.

Valencia, November 30, 1775.

THIS morning, like many of the foregoing ones, was delicious; the sun rose gloriously out of the sea, and the air all around was perfumed with the effluvia of the aloe, as its rays sucked up the dew from the leaves.

From an eminence we had a noble view of the valley of Almenara, a kind of land bay, surrounded by lofty mountains, and adorned with six pretty towns, rising out of the bosom of a forest of dark and light greens, varied in a multitude of tints. The long range of turrets upon the hill of Murviedro (once the too faithful Saguntum) juts out towards the sea, from the chain of mountains that runs parallel with the coast, and divides the vale of Almenara from that of Valencia.

We halted at Murviedro, to view the ruins of so celebrated a city, and to take drawings of its most remarkable remains. The present town is very considerable, and seems to stand upon the same ground as the ancient Roman city, but in all probability the Saguntum which was destroyed by Hannibal was built upon the summit of the hill. That the Romans also had a fortress on the
top,



J. B. de
N. Orus 1857

Place VII

THEATRE
OF
SAGUNTUM



top, is clear, from the large stones and regular masonry, upon which the Saracens afterwards erected their castle.

Half way up the rock are the ruins of the theatre, in sufficient preservation to give a tolerable idea of its size and distribution. It is an exact semicircle, about eighty-two yards diameter from outside to outside; the length of the orchestra, or inner diameter, twenty-four: the seats for the audience, the staircases, and passages of communication, the vomitoria, and arched porticoes, are still easy to trace. The back part rests against the hill, and some of the galleries are cut out of the rock. Two walls going off at an angle serve to turn off the rain-water that washes down from the cliff behind. As the spectators faced the north and east, and were sheltered from the west and south, nothing could be more agreeable in this climate than such a place of entertainment; open to every pleasant and salubrious breeze, and defended from all winds that might bring with them heat or noxious vapours. It is computed that nine thousand persons might assist without inconvenience at the exhibitions in this theatre. I passed some time in taking an oblique drawing of the present appearance of the ruins; but, in spite of all my attention, I found it a very difficult task, the heaps of rubbish, broken porticoes, and vaults, and remnants of walls, creating such a perplexity, that my eye could scarcely distinguish the proper form and situation of each object. The silence that reigns in this

august ruin, which anciently resounded with the applauses of proconsuls, and Roman citizens, is now broken only by the *seguidillas* of a few rope-makers, who have patched up a straw shed against the stage, and spin out their work across the *proscenium*, regardless of the surrounding scenery ⁶.

From the theatre we climbed up to the summit of the mountain, which is about half a mile in length, and not a tenth part as wide; quite a narrow ridge, covered with ruins and Moorish bulwarks. A few uninteresting inscriptions, two mutilated statues, the vestiges of the floor of a temple, and some Roman arches thrown over a large cistern, are all the antiquities we found. One of the in-

⁶ In the Latin Letters of Em. Marti, dean of Alicant, written about the year 1720, is a long and learned dissertation on this theatre. He gives the following measures:—Perimeter of the semi-circle, 564 palmos; diameter, 330; diameter of the orchestra, 94; height from the orchestra to the top of the highest wall remaining, $144\frac{1}{2}$; breadth of the upper portico, $15\frac{1}{2}$; height, $12\frac{3}{4}$; distance of the pulpitum from the orchestra, 12; height of the pulpitum, $6\frac{1}{4}$; distance from the orchestra to the scena, 28; breadth of the proscenium, 12; breadth of the pulpitum, $16\frac{1}{2}$. The palmo he uses contains about nine English inches. He adds, that great part of this theatre is still entire; and that we should see it in a much more perfect state, if the barbarous hands of the Morviedrese had spared it as much as time has done; for they have purposely destroyed this ancient monument, by wrenching off all the casing-stones for the purposes of building convents. There is no doubt but they intended to demolish the whole, if the obstinate hardness of the cement had not wearied them out. Marti extorted from the magistrates a public decree, inflictive of severe penalties on all such as should injure it in any manner whatsoever.

scriptions is placed topsy-turvy over a gate. The fortifications divide the hill into several courts, with double and triple walls, erected upon huge masses of rock, laid in regular courses, by the Romans. The characteristics of the Moorish military architecture:—A wall built by means of square forms of wood, into which a mortar, composed of pebbles mixed with a strong cement, is run, and left a certain time to harden; then the boards are taken away, but the marks remain, and give the wall an appearance of regular masonry. Battlements perpendicularly placed on the wall, not projecting over, nor with borders round, as in the Norman and Gothic castles, where the hollows behind the battlements served to throw stones and combustibles through, as the enemy approached to scale them. A gateway turned in an arch, neither pointed like what we call Gothic, nor semicircular like the Grecian; but one, the parts of which resting upon the imposts, come much farther in towards each other, and form the figure of a horseshoe. Sometimes, but very seldom, the Moors employed stones of a large size, and more regular cut; and some few of their arches may be found that are sharp like the Gothic; but I suspect them to be of the latter times of the Moorish empire in Spain.

What was wanting in interesting antiquities in the castle, was amply made up to us in prospect, which was so surprisngly fine, that I dare hardly attempt to specify its beauties, lest you should think me too easily enraptured,