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The Works Of Horatio Walpole, Earl of Orford

In Five Volumes

Walpole, Horace

London, 1798

The World, No.XIV.

[urn:nbn:de:hbz:466:1-54372](https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:hbz:466:1-54372)

The WORLD.

By ADAM FITZ-ADAM.

NUMB. XIV. *Thursday, April 5, 1753.*

I DO not doubt but it is already observed that I write fewer letters to myself than any of my predecessors. It is not from being less acquainted with my own merit, but I really look upon myself as superior to such little arts of fame. Compliments, which I should be obliged to shroud under the name of a third person, have very little relish for me. If I am not considerable enough to pronounce *ex cathedra* that I Adam Fitz-Adam know how to rally the follies and decide upon the customs of the world with more wit, humour, learning and taste, than any man living, I have in vain undertaken the scheme of this paper. Who would be regulated by the judgment of a man who is not the most self-sufficient person alive? Why did all the pretty women in England, in the reign of queen Anne, submit the government of their fans, hoods, hoops and patches to the Spectator, but because he pronounced himself the best critic in fashions? Why did half the nation imbibe their politics from the Craftsman, but because Caleb d'Anvers assured them that he understood the maxims of government and the constitution of his country better than any minister or patriot of the time? Throned as I am in a perfect good opinion of my own abilities, I scorn to taste the satisfaction of praise from my own pen—and (to be humble for once) I own, if there is any species of writing of which I am not perfect master, it is the epistolary. My deficiency in this particular is happily common to me with the greatest men: I can even go farther, and declare that it is the fair part of the creation which excels in that province. Ease without affectation, the politest expression, the happiest art of telling news or trifles, the most engaging turns of senti-

ment or passion, are frequently found in letters from women who have lived in a sphere at all above the vulgar; while, on the other side, orators write affectedly, ministers obscurely, poets floridly, learned men pedantically, and soldiers tolerably, when they can spell. One would not have one's daughter write like Eloisa, because one would not have one's daughter feel what she felt; yet who ever wrote so movingly, so to the heart? The amiable madame de Sevigné is the standard of easy engaging writing: to call her the pattern of eloquent writing will not be thought an exaggeration, when I refer my readers to her accounts of the death of marshal Turenne: some little fragments of her letters, in the appendix to Ramsay's life of that hero, give a stronger picture of him than the historian was able to do in his voluminous work. If this fair one's epistles are liable to any censure, it is for a fault in which she is not likely to be often imitated, the excess of tenderness for her daughter.

The Italians are as proud of a person of the same sex: Lucretia Gonzaga* was so celebrated for the eloquence of her letters and the purity of their style, that the very notes to her servants were collected and published. I have never read the collection: one or two billets that I have met with, have not entirely all the delicacy of madame de Sevigné. In one to her footman the signora Gonzaga reprehends him for not readily obeying dame Lucy her housekeeper; and in another addressed to the same Mrs. Lucy, she says, "If Livia will not be obedient, turn up her coats and whip her till her flesh be black and blue, and the blood run down to her heels." To be sure, this sounds a little oddly to English ears, but may be very elegant when modulated by the harmony of Italian liquids.

Several worthy persons have laid down rules for the composition of letters, but I fear it is an art which only nature can teach. I remember in one of those books (it was written by a German) there was a strict injunction not to mention yourself before you had introduced the person of your correspondent; that is, you must never use the monosyllable *I* before the pronoun *You*. The Italians have stated expressions to be used to different ranks of men, and know exactly when to subscribe themselves the devoted or the most devoted slave of the illustrious or most eminent person to whom they have the honour to write.

* See her article in the General Dictionary.

It is true, in that country they have so clogged correspondence with forms and civilities, that they seldom make use of their own language, but generally write to one another in French.

Among many instances of beautiful letters from ladies, and of the contrary from our sex, I shall select two, which are very singular in their kind. The comparison, to be sure, is not entirely fair; but when I mention some particulars of the male author, one might expect a little more elegance, a little better orthography, a little more decorum, and a good deal less absurdity, than seem to have met in one head, which had seen so much of the world, which pretended so much to literature, and which had worn so long one of the first crowns in Europe. This personage was the emperor Maximilian, grandfather of Charles the fifth. His reign was long, sometimes shining, often unprosperous, very often ignominious. His sickleness, prodigality and indigence were notorious. The Italians called him *Pochi-danari*, or the *Pennyles*; a quality not more habitual to him than his propensity to repair his shattered fortunes by the most unbecoming means. He served under our Henry the eighth, as a common soldier, at the siege of Terouenne for an hundred crowns a day: he was bribed to the attempt against Pisa, and bribed to give it over. In short, no potentate ever undertook to engage him in a treaty without first offering him money. Yet this vagabond monarch, as if the annals of his reign were too glorious to be described by a plebeian pen, or as if they were worthy to be described at all, took the pains to write his own life in Dutch verse. There was another book of his composition in a different way, which does not reflect much more lustre upon his memory than his own Dutch epic; this was what he called his *Livre rouge*, and was a register of seventeen mortifications which he had received from Louis the twelfth of France, and which he intended to revenge on the first opportunity. After a variety of shifts, breach of promises, alliances and treaties, he almost duped his vain cotemporary Henry the eighth, with a proposal of resigning the empire to him, while himself was meditating, what he thought, an accession of dignity even to the imperial diadem: in short, in the latter part of his life Maximilian took it into his head to canvass for the papal Tiara. Several methods were agitated to compass this object of his ambition: one, and not the least ridiculous, was to pretend that the patriarchal dignity was included in the imperial; and by virtue of that definition he really assumed the

the title of Pontifex Maximus, copying the pagan lords of Rome on his way to the sovereignty of the Christian Church. Money he knew was the surest method, but the least at his command: it was to procure a supply of that necessary ingredient that he wrote the following letter to his daughter Margaret*, duchess dowager of Savoy, and governess of the Netherlands.

“TRES chiere & tres amee fyllle, jè entendu l'avis que vous m'avez donnè par Guyllain Pinguin notre garderobes, dont avons encore mieux pensè. Et ne trouvons point pour nulle resün bon que nous nous devons franchement marier, maes avons plus avant mys notre deliberation & volontè de jamès plus hanter faem nue. Et envoyons demain Monfr. de Gurce Evefque à Rome devers le pape pour trouver fachen que nous puyffuns accorder avec ly de nous prendre pour ung coadjuteur, affin que apres sa mort pouruns estre assurè de avoer le papat, & devenir prefter, & apres estre faint, & que yl vous fera de neceffité que apres ma mort vous serès contraint de me adorer, dont je me troverè bien glorioes. Je envoye sur ce ung poste devers le roy d'Arogon pour ly prier qu'y nous vuelle ayder pour à ce parvenir, dont il est aussy content, moynant que je refigne l'empir à nostre comun fyls Charles, de sela aussy je me fuis contentè. Je commence aussy practiker les Cardinaulx, dont ii C. ou iii C. mylle ducats me ferunt ung grand service, aveque la partialité qui est deja entre eos. Le roy d'Arogon à mandè à son ambaxateur que yl veulent favouryfer le papat à nous. Je vous prie, tenès cette materre empu secret, offi bien en brieff jours je creins que yl faut que tout le monde le fache, car bien mal esti possible de pratiker ung tel fy grand matere secretement, pour laquell yl faut avoer de tant de gens & de argent, succurs & pratike, & a Diu, faet de la main de votre bon pere Maximilianus futur pape, le xviii jour de Setembre. Le papa a encor les vyvers dubls, & ne peult longement fyvre.”

* This princess had been espoused in her nonage to Charles the eighth, but before consummation was sent back to her father. She was next contracted to the prince of Spain; but being in a great storm at sea in her passage to her bridegroom, she, according to the custom of that age, tied her chief jewels to her arm, that her body, if found, might be known; and with

great tranquillity composed and fastened with them the following dillich:

“Cy gift Margole, noble Demoiselle,
“Deux fois mariée, & morte Pucelle.”

However, she escaped, and lived to have two real husbands, the prince above mentioned, and the duke of Savoy.

This

This curious piece, which it is impossible to translate (for what language can give an adequate idea of very bad old German French?) is to be found in the fourth volume of Letters of Louis the twelfth, printed at Brussels by Fr. Foppens in 1712. It will be sufficient to inform such of my readers as do not understand French, that his imperial majesty acquaints his beloved daughter that he designs never to frequent naked women any more, but to use all his endeavours to procure the papacy, and then to turn priest, and at length become a saint, that his dear daughter may be obliged to pray to him, which he shall reckon matter of exceeding glory. He expresses great want of two or three hundred thousand ducats to facilitate the business, which he desires may be kept very secret, though he does not doubt but all the world will know it in two or three days; and concludes with signing himself *future Pope*.

As a contrast to this scrap of imperial folly, I shall present my readers with the other letter I mentioned. It was written by the lady Anne, widow of the earls of Dorset and Pembroke (the life of the former of whom she wrote) and heiress of the great house of Clifford-Cumberland, from which, among many noble reversion, she enjoyed the borough of Appleby. Sir Joseph Williamson, secretary of state to Charles the second, wrote to name a candidate to her for that borough: the brave countess, with all the spirit of her ancestors, and with all the eloquence of independent Greece, returned this laconic answer.

“ I Have been bullied by an Ufurper, I have been neglected by a Court,
but I will not be dictated to by a Subject; your man sha'n't stand.

ANNE DORSET,
PEMBROKE and MONTGOMERY.”

The