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# TOUR

THROUGH THE

WESTERN, SOUTHERN, AND INTERIOR

PROVINCES

OF

# FRANCE,

IN THE YEARS 1775, AND 1776.

BY

NATHL WILLM WRAXALL, ESQ.

*THE THIRD EDITION,*

CORRECTED AND AUGMENTED.

*LONDON:*

PRINTED FOR J. MAWMAN, IN THE POULTRY;

BY B. McMILLAN, BOW STREET, COVENT GARDEN.

1807.

Cox dates 1772

THE favorable reception which has been given to the present small work, by the sale of two editions, renders it unnecessary to offer any excuse for presenting it a third time to the public. There is however another circumstance, which may perhaps be thought to give it some additional interest in the present age. The ferocious antipathy towards Royalty, which animated and characterized the republican anarchists, who desolated France from 1791, to 1800, has spared scarcely any monument of piety, art, or magnificence, thro'out that country. It would be in vain for the traveller who now visits France, to seek for the tomb of Laura at Avignon, for that of Agnes Sorcille at Loches, or for those of Henry the second and Richard the first

first at Fontevrauld. Those savage innovators, who in their impotent rage did not respect the monuments of their own kings at St. Denis; who tore from the earth the bones of Louis the twelfth, surnamed "the "Father of his People." and threw the equestrian statue of Henry the fourth into the Seine; such men could not be expected to spare the monuments of antiquity scattered profusely over France.

Even the massy fabric of the abbey of the "Mont St. Michel," which from its solidity seemed to bid defiance to their outrages; and the majestic edifice of the castle of Blois, which presented so many affecting objects, and awakened so many interesting recollections in the beholder; have been dilapidated or deformed, in the progress of the Revolution. The Writer of this Tour, who may be said rather to have wandered, than to have travelled, over a

conside-

considerable portion of France, during that transitory, but happy period of the reign of Louis the sixteenth, which intervened between his accession, and the commencement of the American war; saw many beautiful remains of past ages, which have no longer any existence.

Those persons, therefore, who like to contemplate such a picture, may perhaps find a gratification in perusing the following sheets. They convey some imperfect idea of the aspect of the Western, Southern, and Interior Provinces of that kingdom, as they appeared to the eye of the historian and the antiquary, more than thirty years ago. Some reflections have likewise found their way into the present edition of the work, which, it is hoped, if they do not embellish, do not detract, from its original character.

*2d November*, 1807.

A

# TOUR,

*&c.*

Carenten in Low Normandy,
Saturday, 26th August, 1775.

YOU shall be obeyed, my dear Sir; and I prepare myself with pleasure, to give you the same minute narration of the events which diversify my present tour, as I did in my last, round the Baltic.

I landed in this kingdom, at Cherbourg, on Wednesday evening. The ruins of the pier, which was demolished by our troops in the late war, present a humiliating picture of devastation, as they still remain exactly in the state that they were left on the re-embarkation of the English in 1758. The town itself impresses a stranger with

no high ideas of opulence or commerce. It is a wretched collection of houses, crouded together in a sandy valley close to the shore; dirty, mean, and irregular. The situation alone, in the centre of the British channel, between the two Capes of Barfleur and La Hogue, has rendered it always important in the eye of policy.

If Havre de Grace has been ever esteemed with reason, the key of High Normandy, Cherbourg is equally so of the Lower. During the many reigns, from William the Conqueror down to John, under which it was subject to the English government, our princes appear to have been sensible of its full value. They often landed there, when called over by the revolts of their barons, or insurrections of their subjects; and we find the Norman princes in particular, who frequently resided at Winchester, usually embarking for this port, in preference to any other of their French dominions. A very strong garrison was generally maintained in it; and Charles the seventh, whose destiny it was to restore the French monarchy from the abyss of calamity, into which

which it had been plunged during the insanity of his father; terminated his long train of victories over the timid and divided counsels of our Henry the sixth, by this important conquest. It was re-annexed to the crown of France in 1450.—I am surprized to find that the French ministry have never fortified this city, which from its position must always be formidable. Charles the Bad, king of Navarre, a prince whose crimes justly merited the epithet attached to his name in history; and into whose hands Cherbourg was sequestered in the fifteenth century, surrounded it with walls in the Gothic style of defence. They remained till Louis the fourteenth's reign, who, deeply impressed with the importance of the place, dismantled it, with the intention of fortifying it anew: but the Marquis de Barbesieux, who was then the minister of that sovereign, found other more pressing demands for the public money, in the wars which opened the present century, and which shook his master's throne.

About half a mile from the town, rises a cliff or rock of prodigious height. I as-

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cended it by a long winding path, across the adjoining mountain. On the top I found a little convent of Benedictine monks, or hermits—for so they term themselves—who have chosen to quit the vale below; and having retired to the bleak summit, cultivate a few acres of ground, barren and stony, from which they procure with difficulty a miserable subsistence. One of them, the Superior, after having shewn me the little chapel and Refectory, led me to the extreme point of the cliff, on which stands a crucifix. "This," said he, "is the spot, "from whence John, king of England, is "said to have precipitated his nephew, "prince Arthur of Bretagne. Tradition "reports, that he executed the deed with "his own hand, in a tempestuous night; "and that the sea, which, tho' now it has "retreated to some distance, then washed "the foot of the rock, received the body "of the unhappy prince."

You remember, no doubt, this part of the English history, which naturally leads to many reflections. The unfortunate Arthur was unquestionably, if the rights of

lineal

lineal succession, and of representation, had been then established or respected; the lawful heir to the English crown, on the death of his uncle, Richard the first. John, like Stephen, was in fact, an usurper, tho' we do not so denominate them, or consider them. But, the valor, and even the misfortunes of Stephen, render him respectable. The pusillanimity, incapacity, and cruelty of John, have, in every period of time, justly exposed him to detestation. His nephew, if in fact he perished in the manner related, was the first prince of that great family of Plantagenet, who fell by the hands of his own relations, after their accession to the throne of England. It is, however, a very disputable fact; and there is scarcely any illustrious death commemorated in our annals, the circumstances of which are less clearly ascertained, than that in question. It is certain that prince Arthur, after having been conducted thro' several provinces of France, with ignominy, by his uncle king John, finally disappeared in 1203.—But, so far are historians from positively naming the time, or the manner of his exit, that they dis-

agree even in the place of his confinement, previous to that event; and whether he was imprisoned in the castle of Rouen, of Falaise, or in that of Cherbourg, immediately preceding his death;—for these three are all named—cannot precisely be determined.

There is another vestige of our English monarchs yet in being here, which stands, however, on incontestible authority, and can plead more proof than mere tradition. To the westward of the town, about a mile distant from it, a little rivulet empties itself into the sea, which is called the "Chantereine." In a meadow, a few paces from the shore, stands a small chapel, which was built by Matilda, daughter of Henry the first, and mother of Henry the second. History relates, that in the reign of Stephen, who, as I have already observed, usurped the throne, she passed over from Wareham into Normandy, with a view to raise fresh forces in support of her claim. Being attacked by a violent tempest at sea, she had, it is said, recourse to the same means which Philip the second used at St. Quintin, and Pope Clement the seventh

exerted

exerted at the sack of Rome, to avert the danger—I mean, prayers. It does not appear that Matilda, on this occasion, addressed herself to the Deity, or even to Jesus Christ; but, reposing her whole hope in the Virgin Mary, she made a vow that if she ever should set her foot again on land, she would sing a hymn to the Virgin, on the spot where she first alighted. Her vows were heard; the storm abated, and she arrived happily near Cherbourg. The instant that she got on shore, one of the sailors reminded her of her promise, in these words, "Chante, reine, vechi terre!" and as the words were spoken exactly at the mouth of this rivulet, they gave rise to the name which it retains to the present day. Not content with so small a mark of her gratitude to Heaven, she erected the chapel which I have mentioned, and which is called "Notre Dame du Vœu." I went into it. The story is there recorded at length. The architecture bears every mark of extreme rudeness and barbarism, such as characterized the age in which it was built. Six centuries, which have elapsed

since its construction, have loosened the stones that compose it, and begin to threaten its total demolition. As I went out, I remarked an iron box, apparently coeval with the chapel; and over it, on the wall, in characters almost erased, was perceptible an inscription, signifying, that it was intended for charitable donations towards repairing "Our Lady du Vœu."

Cherbourg pretends to very high antiquity. It is said to have been originally called Cæsarbourg. Richard the second, duke of Normandy, uncle to William the Conqueror, built a strong castle here; and having come in person to view it, was so pleased with the situation of the place, and its obvious importance for the defence of his dominions, that he exclaimed in a rapture, "Ly castel est un cher bourg per-"ami!" This trifling circumstance was the origin of its present name. Coins of several Roman emperors have been dug up here at different times; and a gentleman shewed me one, in fine preservation, of Antoninus Pius, found only a few years since. Other traditions confirm this fact; and the beau-

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tiful "Val-de-Saire," which lies in the eastern part of the Coutentin, near Cape Barfleur, is said to be a corruption of "Val-"de-Ceres," by which name the Romans called it, in honor of that goddess, from its extraordinary fertility.

I quitted Cherbourg yesterday morning, and after dining at Valognes, a considerable town, arrived here last night. I would have proceeded for Coutances this morning; but the marriage of Madame Clotilde, the king's eldest sister, to the prince of Piedmont, has left these provinces without horses, as they are ordered to Paris, in order to convey the princess and her train to Turin. I am therefore under the necessity of staying here till tomorrow; and, for want of other amusement, I have wandered over this place, and its environs.

The town of Carenten is small, but the ruins of the castle are very beautiful. It is celebrated in the civil wars under Charles the ninth, and in those of the league which followed, during the reigns of Henry the third and fourth. The architecture of the great church is elegant; it was built in the

fifteenth century, when the Gothic structures had almost attained to their highest point of beauty and perfection. There was nothing in the inside which merited attention, except an altar, and a painting dedicated to St. Cæcilia. The sweet saint appears playing on a sort of harpsichord, her fingers running negligently over the keys. A blue mantle, loosely buckled over her shoulder, exposes part of her neck to view, and her fair hair floats down her back. The balls of her eyes are thrown up to heaven, in a fine frenzy of musical enthusiasm.—If there were many such canonized beauties in the Romish calendar, it would be a dangerous religion. The heart raise altars to them without the aid of piety.

I shall continue my remarks as I proceed.

Coutances,
Monday, 28th Aug. 1775.

It is only six leagues from Carenten to this city; but the road, even at this season of the year, is so bad, that those of Westphalia and Brandenburgh are fine in comparison. The roads of Low Normandy are proverbially infamous beyond any in France; and I should never have had the boldness to venture thro' them in a carriage, if I had previously known how bad they were. Coutances has, however, in some degree, made amends for the difficulties which I found in arriving at it, and has repaid me by the objects that it affords of entertainment. It was founded by the Romans, who established a legion here, and called it "Castra Constantia." They fortified it with very strong walls, which remained till Louis the eleventh's reign; who demolished them, because the place, constituting part of the domain of his brother Charles, duke of Normandy, refused to

admit a royal garrison. Coutances stands on a hill, the sides of which descend with prodigious rapidity. Beyond the vale, a range of hills rises like a superb amphitheatre, and surrounds it on every side. The houses bear all the marks of antiquity in their structure and taste, which is rude to the greatest degree. Many of them have doubtless stood five or six hundred years; and on one, the style of which merits peculiar attention, is the date "1007" yet remaining in very legible characters.

On the summit of the hill, in the centre of the town, stands the cathedral. I have passed several hours in the examination of its architecture. There is a grotesque beauty spread over the whole; and the fantastic ornaments of Gothic building, are mixed with a wonderful delicacy and elegance in many of its parts. It was begun in 1047; and William the Conqueror, king of England, assisted in person, as duke of Normandy, at its consecration some years after. I went up to the top of the great centre tower, to enjoy one of the finest prospects imaginable. The town of Granville appears

in

in front, situate on a promontory stretching out into the sea, and beyond it are seen the little islands, or rocks of Chausey. Jersey, at the distance of seven leagues to the north, forms a noble object. The country on all sides, towards St. Lo, Avranches, and Carenten, is a garden, rich, cultivated, and shaded with woods. They say that a certain barbarous monk, named St. Ereptiole, founded this see as early as the year 430, in the reign of the emperor Theodosius the second; and under the papacy of Celestine the first.—Henry the fifth, king of England, made himself master of the city, on his second invasion of France, in the year 1418, after a short siege; but it returned to the crown of France, together with the whole province of Normandy, under the declining power of the house of Lancaster, about the middle of the fifteenth century.

Coutances is large, but the convents form a considerable part of its size; and the monks of different orders, constitute a great part of its inhabitants. As it is situated at two leagues distance from the sea, and is not built upon any navigable river,

there

there is little or no commerce; but some few provincial nobility reside in the place.

I am charmed with the Coutentin: all this part of Low Normandy is so called. From Cherbourg to Valognes, it was mountainous and heathy; but in general the country is inferior to no part of the north of Europe. Fine acclivities, clothed with wood, and rich vallies covered with harvests, form at this season a most pleasing scene. There is notwithstanding, an apparent penury in the dwellings of the people. The hand of oppression is visible in their dress, their hovels, and their whole appearance. I saw none of those neat and pretty peasants, so common in our most secluded villages.

The Coutentin has given birth to some illustrious men. Those brave and romantic heroes, so famous in ancient story, Tancred, and Robert Guiscard, who, after having expelled the Saracens from Apulia and Calabria, in the eleventh century, founded the kingdoms of Naples and Sicily, which they transmitted to their descendants; were originally Counts of Hauteville, a

little

little town not far from Valognes. History informs us, that Robert, duke of Normandy, eldest son to William the Conqueror, the most generous, and the most necessitous prince of his age, mortgaged this part of his dominions to his brother Rufus, before he went to the Holy Land. The sum, if I remember right, which he received for it, was only ten thousand marks, which the rapacious Rufus levied on his English subjects.

You see I call in history or tradition to my assistance, at every moment. Indeed, it is impossible to travel thro' this duchy, where our ancient monarchs so frequently held their residence, without being continually reminded of some of those anecdotes transmitted to us respecting them. Adieu!

In the evening I proceed to Granville.

Granville,
Wednesday, 30th Aug. 1775.

THERE is perhaps no greater gratification, than that of communicating pleasure received; and, as admiration is one of the most interesting sources from which amusement can be drawn, we usually listen with extreme readiness to whatever addresses that passion. I wish to prepare you for a recital, in which the marvellous may seem to predominate; tho' you may do me the justice to believe, that it will ever be under the guidance of truth.

Superstition, the parent of a thousand evils to mankind, has yet given rise to such extraordinary and magnificent productions of art or splendor in every age, as almost incline us to pardon her crimes and follies. I am just returned from the survey of one of these monuments, and I shall endeavor to address my imperfect description of it to your heart and affections, as well as to your understanding.

I left

I left Coutances on Monday evening. The distance to this town is only six leagues, thro' a continuation of the same agreeable country which I have already described. As I was desirous to visit the celebrated mountain, denominated the "Mont St. "Michel," I hired two horses, and set out early yesterday morning. It is situate about twenty miles from Granville, and the road lying the whole way along the sea-shore, is very pleasant. I got to Genet, a little village, before noon, from whence it is only a league to the mount; but as the passage to it is entirely across the sands, which are only passable at low tide, it becomes indispensibly requisite to procure a guide. I did so, and arrived there at one in the afternoon.

This picturesque and extraordinary rock—for such it is—rises at a distance from the shore, in the middle of the bay of Avranches. Nature has completely fortified one side, by its craggy and almost perpendicular ascent, which renders it impracticable for courage or address, however consummate, to scale or mount it. The other parts are surrounded

by

by walls, fenced with semi-lunar towers in the Gothic manner; but sufficiently strong, added to the advantages of its detached situation, to withstand any sudden attack. At the foot of the mountain, begins a street or town, which winding round its base, ascends to a considerable height. Above, extend numerous chambers, in which prisoners of state are confined; and other buildings intended for residence. On the summit is built the abbey itself, occupying a prodigious space of ground, and of a strength as well as solidity equal to its enormous size, since it has withstood all the rage of the elements, in this elevated and exposed situation, during many centuries.—I passed the whole afternoon in the different parts of this extraordinary edifice; and as the Swiss who conducted me, found that he could not gratify my curiosity too minutely, we left no apartment or chamber unseen.

The "Sale de Chevalerie," or knight's hall, reminded me of that at Marienbourg in Polish Prussia. It is equally spacious; but more barbarous and rude, because some hundred years prior in its construction.

Here

Here the knights of St. Michael used to meet in solemn convocation, on important occasions. They were the constituted defenders and guardians of this mountain and abbey; as those of the Temple, and of St. John of Jerusalem, were the protectors of the holy sepulchre.—At one end of the room hangs a painting of the archangel, the patron of their order; and in this hall Louis the eleventh first instituted the order, and invested with its Insignia, the knights of the cross of St. Michael.

We passed on thro' several lesser rooms, into a long passage, on one side of which the Swiss opened a door; and thro' a narrow entrance, perfectly dark, he led me, by a second door, into an apartment, or dungeon—for it rather merited the latter than the former appellation—in the middle of which stood a large cage. It was composed of prodigious wooden bars, fortified with iron plates; the wicket which admitted persons into it, being ten or twelve inches in thickness. I went into the inside: the space that it comprised, was only about twelve feet square, or fourteen, tho' it might

be

be nearly twenty feet in height. This engine of tyranny, the abode of many eminent victims in former ages, whose names and miseries are now forgotten, was perfectly analogous to the gloomy apartment, in the centre of which it was placed; and would have awakened sentiments of horror, mingled with indignation, in the coldest or most insensible spectator. While I stood in contemplation of it, my conductor broke silence.

"There was," said he, "towards the "latter end of the last century, a com-"piler of news in Holland, who had pre-"sumed to print some very severe reflections "on Madame de Maintenon, and on Louis "the fourteenth. Some months afterwards, "he was induced, by a person sent ex-"pressly for that purpose, to make a tour "into French Flanders. The instant that "he had quitted the Dutch dominions, he "was put under arrest, and immediately, "by his majesty's express command, con-"ducted to this place. They shut him up "in the cage which you behold, where he "lived upwards of three-and-twenty years;

"and

"and where he, at length, expired.—
"During the long nights of winter," continued the Swiss, "neither fire nor candle
"were allowed him, nor was he permitted
"to have any book, which might tend to
"diminish his wretchedness. He saw no
"human face except that of the gaoler,
"who came once every day to present him,
"thro' a hole in the wicket, his scanty
"portion of bread and wine. No instru-
"ment was put into his hands, with which
"he might find means to destroy himself;
"but he contrived at length to draw out a
"nail from the wood, with which he cut
"or inscribed on the bars of his cage, seve-
"ral fleurs de lys and coats of arms, the
"engraving of which formed his only em-
"ployment, as well as recreation."—These I saw, and they are indeed very curiously performed, with so rude a tool.

As I stood within this instrument of despotism and cruelty, it was impossible not to execrate the vengeance of the sovereign, who, for so slight a trespass, could inflict so disproportionate and tremendous a punishment; and I hastened out of this sad apart-

ment,

ment, impressed with feelings of the most painful nature.

"Fifteen years have elapsed," said the Swiss, "since a gentleman ended his days "in that cage; it was before the time when "I came to reside here; but there is one in-"stance within my own memory. Monsieur "de F——, a person of rank, was conducted "here by command of the late king, and "remained three years shut up in it. I fed "him myself every day; but he was allowed "books and candle to divert his misery; "and at length, the abbot, touched with "his deplorable calamities, requested, and "obtained for him the royal pardon. He "was set free, and is now alive in France.

"The subterranean chambers," added he, "in this mountain, are so numerous, "that we know them not ourselves. There "are certain dungeons, called "Oublicttes," "into which they were accustomed formerly "to let down malefactors guilty of very "heinous crimes: they provided these "wretches with a loaf of bread and a bottle "of wine; after which they were totally "forgotten, and left to perish by hunger

"in

"in the dark vaults of the rock. This "punishment has not however been in-"flicted by any sovereign, in the course of "the last, or the present century."

As we continued our progress thro' the abbey, he led me into a chamber, in one corner of which appeared a kind of window. Between it and the wall of the building, was a very deep space or hollow, of near a hundred feet perpendicular; and at the foot was another window, opening to the sea. It is called "le Trou de Mont-"gomeri"—Montgomeri's hole. You may recollect, that in the year 1559, Henry the second, king of France, was unfortunately killed at a tournament in Paris, by the Count de Montgomeri. The act was altogether unintentional on the part of that nobleman, who had been forced, contrary to his inclination, to push the lance against his sovereign, by his express command. Montgomeri was a Hugonot, and having escaped the massacre of Paris, in 1572, made head against the royal forces in Normandy, during the civil wars that followed; being supported by our Elizabeth

with

with arms and money. When driven from his fortresses in those parts, he retired to a rock, called the "Tombelaine." This is another insulated mountain, rising in the bay of Avranches, similar to the "Mont "St. Michel;" only three quarters of a league distant from it, and of nearly equal dimensions. At that time there stood a castle on the "Tombelaine," which was afterwards demolished, and of which scarce any traces now remain. From this place of security, only accessible at low tides, Montgomeri continually made excursions, and annoyed the enemy, who never dared to attack him. He even proceeded so far as to coin money, laid all the adjacent country under contribution, and rendered himself universally dreaded. Being desirous to surprize the "Mont St. Michel," and to gain possession of it, he found means to engage in his interests one of the monks resident in the abbey, who promised to give him the signal for his enterprize, by displaying a handkerchief. But the treacherous monk, after having made the signal, betrayed him, and armed all his associates, who waited

Mont-

Montgomeri's arrival. The Count, attended by fifty chosen soldiers, desperate, and capable of any attempt, crossed the sand, and having placed a scaling-ladder, they mounted one by one: as they came to the top, they were dispatched each in turn, without noise. Montgomeri, who followed last, at length discovered the perfidy, and escaped, accompanied by only two of his men, with whom he regained the "Tombe-"laine." They still preserve with great care, the ladders and grappling-irons used on this occasion.—You perhaps remember the subsequent fate of the Count himself. He was afterwards besieged and taken prisoner by the Marechal de Matignon, in 1574, at Domfront in Normandy; and Catherine of Medicis, who detested him for his having been, tho' innocently, the cause of her husband's death, ordered him to be immediately executed.

The church of the "Mont St. Michel" detained me a long time, and is in itself an object of great curiosity. The roof is supported by nine pillars of most enormous dimensions, which stand upon the solid

rock. I did not measure them; but, as far as the gloominess of the place would admit me to form a judgment, I apprehend that each of them must be five-and-twenty feet in circumference. Besides these, there are two others, of much inferior size, that support the centre of the church, over which is built the tower. If the prodigious incumbent weight, and the exposed nature of the situation is considered, nothing less massy could sustain the edifice. They seem as if they were designed to outlive the ravages of time, and the convulsions of nature.—But, before we enter the church itself, I must inform you of the absurd and legendary cause which first produced it.

In the reign of Childebert the second, king of France, one of the first, or Merovingian dynasty, there lived a Bishop of Avranches, named St. Aubert. To this holy man, the archangel Michael having been pleased to appear on a certain night, ordered him to repair to this rock, and there construct a church. St. Aubert, who seems to have been a little incredulous,

treated

treated it as a dream: the angel therefore came again, repeated his injunction, and not being obeyed, the third time, he, by way of imprinting it on the Bishop's memory, made a hole in his skull, by touching it with his thumb. In the treasury of the church I saw this curious skull. It is enclosed in a little shrine of gold; and a chrystal, which opens over the orifice, gratifies curiosity by the minutest examination of it. The hole is of a size and shape justly proportioned to the thumb supposed to have produced it; but, whether it has been effected with a knife, or by what other means, I cannot venture to determine. The Bishop, however, upon this sensible mark of the divine pleasure, delayed no longer; but repairing to the rock, constructed a small church, as he had been commanded.—Here fable ends; and true history, supplying its place, informs us, that in 966, Richard the second, duke of Normandy, began to build the abbey. It was completed about the year 1070, under William the Conqueror, soon after the Norman invasion; tho' many ad-

ditions were made to it by succeeding abbots and princes.

The present edifice is not however by any means so ancient. Early in the thirteenth century, the Bretons having made themselves masters of the "Mont St. "Michel," demolished the original abbey; which was reconstructed soon afterwards in the form that it still retains, by one of the greatest kings who has reigned in France, Philip Augustus.

The treasury is crouded with innumerable relics, among which some few have a real and intrinsic value, independent of superstition. There is a fine head of Charles the sixth of France, cut in chrystal, which drew my attention. They have likewise got, Heaven knows by what means, an arm of Edward the Confessor; and they shewed me another, of "St. Richard, "king of England." Who this saint and prince was, I confess, is beyond my comprehension. No king of that name occurs in our annals, between Egbert and Harold. I am sure they could not so term Richard the first, unless his Crusade

against

against Saladine wiped out all his sins, and canonized him. Richard the second has no better pretensions to sanctity. I do not mention him who fell at Bosworth; so that who this royal saint was, I must leave you to discover. As to the monks, they know nothing about it; but they were positive that he was a king of England.—An enormous golden cockle-shell, weighing many pounds, given by Richard the second, duke of Normandy, when he founded the abbey, is worth remarking. It astonished me to see that it had escaped the rapacity of more than seven hundred years.

In the middle of the choir hangs a stone, which is said to have fallen on the head of Louis the eleventh, at the siege of Besançon, without doing him the smallest injury. This escape, he conceived, and not without reason, must have been owing to some divine interposition; for the stone weighs, I should suppose, at least ten pounds. Louis, tho' one of the greatest monsters who ever filled a throne, was yet, as we know, at intervals, exceedingly

pious: he used to come often in pilgrimage to the "Mont St. Michel;" and he not only ordered this stone to be suspended by a chain in the choir, but left the income of certain lands to the abbey, for the maintenance of priests, who were to say masses in order to commemorate his preservation from so imminent a danger.

The Refectory, the cloisters, the cells of the monks, are all (or rather, they have been), very magnificent and spacious; but a vast sum of money is now wanted to put the whole structure in repair, and to reinstate what the lapse of ages defaces and deforms. One of the great towers is cracked and decayed. They have written repeatedly to the ministry, to know his majesty's pleasure respecting it; but no answer has been returned. It will probably fall soon, and must necessarily, from its prodigious height and size, draw with it a considerable part of the adjoining buildings.

The late king, Louis the fifteenth, sequestered a large portion of the revenues of the abbey, which were previously very

ample.

ample. A Prior is substituted instead of the Abbot, and the number of monks is reduced from thirty to fourteen. Perhaps a few years more may even extinguish these; and St. Michael himself, tho' composed of gold, may be melted down to support the expence of a Bal paré.—It is, indeed, at present considered chiefly as a prison of state, and will probably be repaired more on that account, than from motives of piety, or from veneration for its religious origin. The apartments are at this time occupied by many illustrious prisoners, who have been sent here by "Lettre de cachet," for crimes of state. They are detained in more strict or easy confinement, according to the royal mandate. There are at present, eight in one range of rooms, who eat at the same table together. They are allowed each a pint of wine; but neither knives nor forks are ever given them, lest they should commit suicide, in order to escape the horrors of imprisonment.

No person is permitted to enter that division of the abbey in which they live, or can

hold any conversation with them. Four of these state prisoners were sent here since the accession of his present majesty. There are others, who enjoy the liberty of going into every part of the Mount without restraint; but, to profit of this permission, they must be habited as priests, and of consequence be known to every inhabitant. To escape, seems almost impossible—but, what cannot human subtlety effect, when pushed to despair? It is only sixteen days ago, since a Monsieur de C——, who had been confined ten months, succeeded in an attempt to liberate himself. I was shewn the place from whence he let himself down by a rope: it is near a hundred feet perpendicular. He crossed the sands immediately, while the sea was low, and it is imagined that he embarked either for Jersey, or for England, as no intelligence has been received concerning him.

Some apartments are destined to a species of wretches yet more deplorable—I mean, to lunatics. There are several here who are of high rank. In the cloisters of the abbey, a person accosted me in very

polite

polite terms. He appeared to be above fifty years of age; his dress was mean, and at his button-hole hung a cross of the order of St. Michael, fantastically adorned with ribbands. His face, tho' brown and sickly, was noble, commanding, and engaging; his hair, of a deep black, mixed with grey, hung floating upon his shoulders; and over his whole person was an air of dignity in ruin. It was the Marquis de R——, a nobleman of Bretagne, who has been shut up here five-and-twenty years. He is insane, but harmless, and observes perfectly all the forms of politeness and good breeding. No others except persons of quality are ever sent here on this account.

I thought the age of pilgrimages had been nearly at an end in all European nations, and that devotion was now content with venerating its saints at home: but, will you believe it, when I assure you, that the number of pilgrims who come annually to pay their vows to St. Michael at this Mount, amounts to between eight and ten thousand? They are, it is true,

mostly peasants, and persons in mean occupations; but even among the nobility, there are not wanting those who are induced to make this journey from principles of piety. The little town at the foot of the Mount, is sometimes so crouded with them, that not a bed is to be procured. I saw at least six when I was there. They were all young men and women. Their dress exactly corresponded with our ideas of them, as drawn from ancient ballads. Their hats were laced with cockle-shells round the edges, and on the crown was a gilt coronet, above which appeared the cross. A ribband in the same form, was tied across their breast; and all over their clothes were placed little images of St. Michael vanquishing the devil. I asked them, from whence they came? they said, from Champagne; a very considerable distance, across all France. I put several questions to them, and they would willingly have followed me, when I went to the top of the steeple; but the Swiss, who was well accustomed to see these poor devotees arrive, repulsed them very roughly. "Que diable!"

says

says he, "allez, prier le bon Saint Michel, "si vous voulez! Je ne conduis pas le "menu peuple!" The poor pilgrims retired immediately, without a word.

It is said, that the late Dauphin, father of the present king, was here incognito, about nineteen or twenty years ago; and the old man who conducted me across the sands, assured me that he had the honor to be his royal highness's guide, without knowing at the time his rank. The character of the Dauphin was that of a bigot, and I am not at all surprized at such a proof of it.—Near the foot of the mountain, close to the waves of the sea, is a very fine well of fresh water; but, as possession of it might and would be undoubtedly taken by an enemy, in case of a siege, they have contrived to form cisterns in the solid rock, proportionate to every other part of the building, and capable of containing many hundred tuns of water: they say, more than twelve hundred. Indeed, to besiege the mountain, would be almost an act of madness; as, from the nature of its situation, a hundred men might defend it against ten thou-

sand assailants, and any number of vessels; nor could it be, if taken, converted to any sort of national benefit.

The town itself is almost as much an object of curiosity, as any other part of the Mount. I doubt not that there are many houses in it, above five or six hundred years old; and I did not see one, which seemed to be built since the time of Louis the eleventh. In the chamber of the inn where I took up my lodging for the night, I expected to have been devoured by the rats; who, as soon as I had extinguished my candle, left their holes, and commenced their nocturnal gambols. They were so numerous, and so troublesome, that I was glad as soon as the day appeared, to abandon my bed, and even my room; which opening on the battlements of the town, overhanging the sea, disclosed a wide and picturesque view of the bay of Avranches, of the coasts of Normandy and of Bretagne, as well as of the "Mont St. "Michel" itself, whose base is washed by the waves.

The whole number of persons resident

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in the abbey and in the town, does not exceed a hundred and eighty, in time of peace. A militia, composed of the inhabitants, mounts guard, to prevent any of the prisoners from escaping. In time of war, there are five hundred soldiers commonly maintained in garrison; and they assured me, so large and numerous are the chambers in different parts of the abbey, that thirteen thousand troops might be disposed of there, without any sort of inconvenience, or difficulty.

They sell little legendary books in the town, and I have bought them all, in hopes to find some historical anecdotes or traditions respecting the place, and the various important events or sieges which it has undergone;—but alas! this is a vain attempt. They are all stuffed with miracles and absurdities, too ridiculous to repeat; and St. Michael and St. Aubert are the only heroes who make any figure in these annals. I would most willingly have inspected the archives, which are laid up in the abbey; but this gratification is not permitted to strangers. They must form a very curious

research,

research, since it is probable that almost every king of England, from William the Conqueror down to Henry the third, must have been many times here, from motives of devotion or of curiosity.

In the year 1090, Robert, duke of Normandy, and William Rufus, king of England, sons of William the Conqueror, besieged their younger brother Henry for a long time, in the "Mont St. Michel." It must be presumed that they were masters of the foot of the rock; for otherwise it would be impracticable to invest it. The prince could never have been reduced to surrender from force: but he was in want of water, and from that necessity was on the point of yielding up the fortress; when Robert, with the benevolence and generosity which marked his character, sent him some pipes of wine; and this succour (like that which Henry the fourth permitted his troops to give the Parisians, when he besieged Paris), enabled Henry to hold out. Rufus reproached Robert for his conduct; "Shall we then," said he, "suffer our brother to die of thirst?"—And

what

what return did Robert meet with from Henry, when the latter afterwards became king of England? An imprisonment of twenty-eight years, in a vaulted chamber of Cardiff castle, where he expired.

I fear that I have tired you with so minute a description of the mountain. I left it this morning, and, being conducted by the same guide across the sands, reached the village of Genet at ten. Numbers of people are drowned every year, in passing this place. The sea comes in with a rapidity beyond any idea which you can form of it, and frequently intercepts unhappy travellers, who presume to venture without a guide. I saw, in the churchyard of Genet, a grave where five persons were buried, who perished as they attempted to pass within these few days; and similar accidents are common.—It was noon when I returned to Granville, my fancy entirely occupied with the extraordinary scenes to which I had been a witness, and which I have endeavored to describe to you without study or arrangement.

This town is situated very pleasantly on

a neck

a neck of land stretching into the sea. It is not small; but the buildings are scattered, mean, and irregular, extending near a mile from one extremity to the other, part on the rock above, and part in the vale below.—It is open to the sea, there being no bay, tho' they have constructed part of a pier, in order to shelter and protect the shipping. Some small redoubts and batteries have likewise been erected during the late war, on the eminences round the place, with a view to defend it from invasion; but they are of no strength.

It is time to conclude this long letter. My next will probably be written from some part of Bretagne. Adieu!

St. Malo,

St. Malo,
Tuesday, 4th Sept. 1775.

I ARRIVED here yesterday morning. It was very late on Saturday night when I reached Avranches; and had I been a Roman Catholic, I should certainly have put both myself and my carriage under the protection of the Virgin, or of some saint who is the tutelary patron of travellers, before I ventured into these perilous roads. The chaise once stuck fast for near an hour, and I was obliged to employ a dozen peasants, who, with the help of pick-axes, and with infinite labour, at length lifted it up by main strength.

Avranches detained me a few hours. The city is the meanest that I have yet seen in France, but its situation is very fine. The cathedral stands on a hill, which terminates abruptly, the front of the church extending to the extreme verge of it, and overhanging the precipice. It bears the marks of high antiquity, but the towers

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are decayed in many places, tho' its original construction has been wonderfully strong. While I stood contemplating it, one of the priests very politely accosted me, and offered, as I appeared to be a stranger, to give me some information respecting it.

"The cathedral," said he, "has evi-
"dently been the work of different ages;
"but the two western towers are supposed
"to be as old as the eighth century, the
"bishopric itself having been founded
"about the year 400. One of the most
"celebrated of your English kings, Henry
"the second, received absolution on this
"spot, from the papal Nuncio, for the
"murder of St. Thomas-à-Becket, in
"1172; and the stone on which he knelt
"during the performance of that solemn
"ceremony, still exists." He carried me to look at the stone. Its length is about thirty inches, and the breadth twelve. It stands before the north portal, and on it is engraved a chalice, in commemoration of the event.

The ruins of the castle of Avranches are very extensive, and beneath lies a rich ex-

tent

tent of country, covered with orchards, and abounding in grain.

I continued my journey on Sunday at noon, and quitting Normandy, reached the city of Dol in Bretagne, the same evening. At Pontorson the two provinces are separated by the little river Coesnon, which forms the boundary.—Dol must detain every person who has any veneration for the remains of antiquity. Except the episcopal palace, which is an elegant modern building, there is not a house within the walls, that does not seem to have been built in ages the most barbarous and remote. The fortifications are in the same style, and appear to have been anciently very formidable. History confirms this supposition. William the Conqueror twice laid siege to Dol, and was twice repulsed. In 1075, Philip, king of France, forced him to make a hasty retreat into Normandy; and when he again attempted to make himself master of it in 1085, Alain, duke of Bretagne, obliged him to retire with some disgrace. Henry the second,

more

more successful, carried Dol by storm in 1173.

The Norman kings, who considered themselves as conquerors, and the Angevin kings, who at first regarded themselves as strangers, in England; may be said to have divided their residence between the kingdom which they had conquered or inherited, and the beautiful portion of France which they possessed. William the first, and his two successers, were foreigners. So was Stephen, and Henry the second. Richard the first, tho' an Englishman by birth, passed almost his whole reign, either in Palestine, in an Austrian prison, or in his French dominions. It was not 'till the expulsion of John from Normandy, early in the thirteenth century, that the Angevin princes began to consider England as their principal residence. It must be owned, that Henry the second and Richard the first almost divided France, with its sovereigns of the Capetian race. The English provinces extended in an uninterrupted line, from Cape La Hogue, and the coasts

of

of the British Channel, quite to the Pyrenean mountains, and the frontiers of Navarre. In climate, soil, productions, and every thing that could render life desirable, their English possessions could enter into no competition with those on the Seine, the Loire, and the Garonne. When we reflect on these facts, we shall not wonder at the predilection which those sovereigns manifested for their French dominions. They continually visited France; which they loved as their native conntry, cherished as their aboriginal soil, and in whose bosom they desired to repose after their decease. But, these remarks will lead me too far. I return to Dol.

It was a beautiful autumnal evening, and I walked near half a league from the town, to view a singular object of curiosity. In the middle of a very large orchard stands a single stone, between forty and fifty feet high: its circumference near the base equals its height; the form is circular and conical. It is commonly denominated, "La Pierre du champ dolent."—"The "stone of the field of lamentation." There

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are no certain accounts, when, or on what occasion it was originally erected; but the traditions relative to it are equally numerous and contradictory. I had the pleasure to see and to converse with the gentleman on whose estate it is situated. He said, the most approved opinion was, that Julius Cæsar had caused it to be erected, as a trophy to mark the extent of his conquests, after a bloody engagement which he gained over the inhabitants of Armorica. The peasants are fully persuaded that the devil set it up in one of his idle hours; "but," added he, "I have myself caused "the earth to be removed round its base, "to the distance of forty feet on every "side; and I find that it joins to a pro-"digious rock, from which it seems to "have sprung; so that I am induced to "think, notwithstanding its name, that it "may be a natural production, fashioned "into its actual shape by art or labor." However caused, it is very extraordinary, and deserves an attentive investigation.

I got to this city, yesterday. The castle of St. Malo was built by the celebrated prin-

princess, Anne of Bretagne, who annexed the duchy to the crown of France, by her marriage with Charles the eighth in 1489. It is asserted, that on being asked by the engineer who constructed it, what design she would choose as its model; she replied, "My coach." To a carriage, it appears in fact to bear some degree of capricious resemblance. A large square area within, constitutes the body; two small towers in the fore-part, answer to the fore-wheels; as two others of a larger size, do to the hinder ones: a projection in front forms the pole, and an arched niche behind, corresponds to the place where the servant was used to stand. Conscious, however, that posterity might accuse her of caprice or absurdity, she has obviated their criticisms in a manner truly royal, by an inscription engraved on the wall, and very legible at this hour—

"Qui que gronde, tel est mon plaisir!"

These words, as alluding to the whimsical choice which she had made of a plan for the castle, are commonly considered as con-

containing a proof of the fact itself; namely, that it was constructed on the model of her coach. But, tho' the persuasion here is universal, I am by no means convinced of its truth. Coaches were not known, even among sovereigns, 'till near half a century after the supposed period of Anne of Bretagne's decease; which, I think, took place about the year 1514. The Bretons, who venerate her memory, as connected with the independent sovereignty of the duchy, before its incorporation with the French monarchy; will not, however, permit a suspicion to be thrown on the accuracy of the story, which they conceive to be fully authenticated by the inscription.

St. Malo is situated in an island, joined to the continent by a narrow causeway. The ancient city and bishopric were built at half a league distant, upon the main land; but in the year 1172, the Bishop, John de la Grille, having removed his residence to the little island of St. Aaron, began the town which now exists. The houses

houses are in general lofty and elegant; but the streets, owing to the want of sufficient ground, and to the number of inhabitants, are narrow, dirty, and ill pierced.

To-morrow I shall proceed to Rennes.

Nantes,
Saturday, 16th Sept. 1775.

I LEFT St. Malo, last Thursday se'n-night; slept at Hedé, a little town situated on the summit of a mountain, which commands a most extensive prospect; and got to the city of Rennes next morning. Here I had flattered myself with the pleasure of seeing the celebrated patriot and magistrate, Monsieur de la Chalotais; who, after having suffered, under Louis the fifteenth, some of the severest punishments which despotism could inflict, is now returned to pass the remainder of his life, in his native province of Bretagne. The duke d'Aiguillon, by whose orders he was committed prisoner to a fortress of state, has in his turn experienced the mutability of fortune. Exiled to his estate in Guienne, he does not carry with him, like la Chalotais, the admiration and the applauses of his countrymen. It is difficult to describe the enthusiastic veneration felt for

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la Chalotais by the Bretons, whose rights he defended against arbitrary power. I had received very particular letters to introduce me to his acquaintance; but he was gone to his seat at Caradeuc, the preceding day. To the honor of his present majesty, and of the ministry, they have endeavored to make him every possible compensation for the cruel indignities, which he met with under the late reign. The king has presented him with three hundred thousand livres, besides a pension. He is restored to his place of "Procureur general au parlement;" and his estate of Caradeuc is to be erected into a Marquisate.

I staid near two days at Rennes, which is esteemed the honorary capital of Bretagne, because the states of the province are assembled there; but, like all cities destitute of commerce, it is dull and poor. Several of the principal streets are nevertheless very handsome; a fire that happened in the year 1720, which almost reduced the whole place to ashes, having obliged the inhabitants to rebuild them with great regularity. In one of the squares, stands a fine bronze statue

of Louis the fifteenth, which was erected by the province in 1744, soon after his recovery from that dangerous illness in Flanders, which obtained him the title of "Bien aimé." Under the figure of the prince, appears on one side Hygeia, the goddess of health, with her serpent and Patera. On the other, is seen the Genius of Bretagne, kneeling on one knee, exultation and reverence finely marked in her countenance. At the foot of the pedestal is traced an inscription in Latin, which I blushed as I read, and which, from consideration for the monarch to whom it was offered, I shall not transcribe. Like his predecessor, Louis the fifteenth lived to see all these marks of national approbation cease; and, insensible to public opinion, in the arms of his mistress, a dark cloud obscured the evening of a reign, which he had opened with some applause, in the eyes of France and of Europe.

Rennes, which is situate on the little river Vilaine, was anciently very strongly fortified, but the walls are now in ruins, and the ditch is nearly filled up. The siege

of

of the city by Edward the third, king of England, in 1342, is very celebrated in history. The English and Breton army consisted of forty thousand men; and nevertheless, after having remained before it six months, were obliged to retire without success.

I arrived here on Monday last. Nantes may be esteemed a noble city, and its situation is equally advantageous and agreeable, being built on the easy declivity of a hill, descending on every side to the river. The Loire itself may almost vie with the Thames, in beauty and in magnitude. Exactly opposite to the spot on which stands the town, it is divided into several channels, by a number of small islands, most of which are covered with elegant houses. The great quay is more than a mile in length; the buildings very superb, and chiefly erected since the late peace in 1763. As its commerce is annually increasing, the city is consequently in a state of continual improvement. The Loire is notwithstanding very shallow; and all goods are brought up in large boats from Painbeuf, which is

nine leagues distant, near the mouth of the river, at which place, vessels of burden are obliged to unload. Near the eastern extremity of Nantes stands the castle, in which the ancient dukes of Bretagne commonly held their residence. It was built about the year 1000; but the duke of Mercœur, a prince of the family of Lorrain, who during the long wars of the League, in the sixteenth century, rendered himself in some degree sovereign of this province, made several considerable additions to it. In the chapel, Anne, duchess of Bretagne, widow of Charles the eighth, married Louis the twelfth in 1499; confirming for ever by this second union, the duchy to the crown of France. They shewed me the chamber in which the celebrated Cardinal de Retz was confined by order of Anne of Austria; and from which he made his escape by letting himself down with a rope into a boat, which waited for him on the Loire.

Many of the ancient dukes of Bretagne are interred in the different churches of the city. The most splendid of all the monuments erected to their memory, is that of

Francis

Francis the second, who was the last. It stands in the "Eglise des Carmes," and was raised by filial piety, his daughter Anne having caused it to be constructed, while she was queen of France. Michael Columb, a Breton by birth, was the artist whom she employed, and it must be confessed a masterpiece of sculpture. The tomb is as magnificent as any of those in the abbey of St. Denis; and not content with this proof of her attachment to her father's memory, Anne ordered her own heart to be deposited within a golden box, in the same vault.—The inscription near the tomb, is very curious. It relates that Francis the second, after having been married seven years to his first wife, without issue, as his last resource, made a vow to the Virgin Mary, that if by her power or intercession he obtained a child, he would dedicate to her an image of his own weight in gold. The holy Virgin, whether moved by the prodigious value of the present, or whether touched with pity, heard the prayer very favorably. The duke had a son, and performed his vow; tho' exigencies of state

obliged him some years afterwards, to retract the princely donation which he had made.—By his second wife, Margaret de Foix, he became father to the princess Anne, afterwards queen of France, and last duchess of Bretagne.

Nantes was anciently, like almost every considerable city in Europe, very strongly fortified. Peter de Dreux, one of the dukes of Bretagne, surrounded it with walls, which have only been demolished within these few years. The bridge, which is an object of curiosity, being near a mile and a half in length, is continued across all the little islands in the Loire, from north to south. There are besides, two other smaller rivers, that unite at this city, one of which is called the Erdre. I went up this river about two leagues yesterday, to a gentleman's Chateau, where I dined. The Meander, so famous in Grecian fable, can hardly exceed the Erdre in beauty. It winds between groves of chesnut, oak, and poplar, which cover the banks to the edge of the water, and are only broken by vineyards, gardens, and elegant Villas. About

half

half way, stand the ruins of a celebrated fortress, formerly possessed by the Hugonots, called the castle "de la Verriere;" and at the distance of a mile from the house where I passed the day, is seen an ancient mansion surrounded with thick woods, which once belonged to Peter Landais, the famous and unworthy favorite of Francis the second.

Henry the seventh, a prince who founded a new Dynasty in England, on the extinction of the Plantagenets; and who, tho' in a moral point of view, one of the worst, may be considered, in many respects, as one of the ablest sovereigns who have reigned over us; resided many years a fugitive, in Bretagne. Edward the fourth, always apprehensive of the revival of the pretensions of the house of Lancaster; pursued Henry into his retreat. Landais, who then governed both the duchy of Bretagne, and his feeble master, Francis; corrupted by the presents of Edward, agreed to deliver up the earl of Richmond, as Henry was then denominated, into the hands of persons sent by the king of England to receive him. He was

fact seized, and on the point of being sent over to London a prisoner, when he effected his escape. Landais afterwards perished in a public and ignominious manner, by the orders of the Breton nobility; who, indignant at his tyranny, rose in arms against their sovereign, and executed the unworthy minister on a gibbet.

Bretagne appears to me by no means so fertile or so cultivated a province as Normandy. The interior part is chiefly open and heathy, but the sea-coasts are more populous, and richer in soil. Round this city, and to the southward, in the "Pays "de Retz," where vines are very plentiful, they make a thin, sour wine, known by the name of "Vin Nantois."—If we compare the present situation of Bretagne, as constituting a part of the kingdom of France, with its ancient condition as an independent government, there can be no doubt that the change which incorporated it with the monarchy, has been productive of the most salutary effects. While Bretagne was under the dominion of its native sovereigns, the duchy presented a scene of continual

war,

war, bloodshed, and devastation. The dukes of Normandy, or the kings of France, were perpetually aiming at its reduction, which the former princes effected more than once. The intestine commotions which were raised by the opposite pretensions of John de Montfort, and of Charles of Blois, to the succession, in the fourteenth century, left the miserable country unpeopled, desolate, and a prey to the most severe famine. Louis the eleventh first opened the way for its incorporation with the crown. The Lady of Beaujeu, left regent at his death, in 1483, pursued her father's measures with vigor: and the narrow, parsimonious character, as well as policy of Henry the seventh, whose avarice prevented him from lending any effectual succour to Francis the second, or to his daughter Anne, conspired to complete this important acquisition.

I do not recollect many very eminent persons, whom this duchy has produced. Bertrand du Guesclin, Constable of France, so distinguished in the wars of Edward the third, and of the Black Prince, was a native of Bretagne. Abelard, Heloise's unhappy

lover, too well known by his amours and his misfortunes, was born at a village called Le Palet, only ten or twelve miles from Nantes, near the borders of Poictou. He lived in the twelfth century, under the reign of Conan the third, duke of Bretagne.

The origin of Nantes, which appears to be very uncertain, is carried back into remote antiquity. The Romans doubtless had a station here. In the year 1580, among the ruins of a tower demolished at that time, was found a stone, which, by order of the magistrates, was transferred in 1606 to the "Hotel de Ville." The inscription on it has greatly exercised the attention of antiquaries. As it is very legible, and in Roman characters, I transcribed it.

"Numinib: Augustor;
"Deo: Vol: Jano:
"M: Gemel: Secundus. et C. Sedat: Florus.
"Actor: Vicanor. Portent. Tribunal. C. M.
"Locis ex Stipe conlata posuerunt."

I cannot forbear mentioning to you one other monument equally singular. Near a bridge which crosses the Loire, called "Le

"Le Pont de la belle Croix," is seen a stone fixed in the wall, with the remains of a defaced inscription visible on it. The stone was placed there to mark the spot, where Giles, Marechal de Retz, was burnt, under the reign of Charles the seventh; as I think, about the year 1440. This nobleman was accused, and condemned to die for crimes, which were said to be of a nature and description too horrible as well as flagitious to be even mentioned. They were in fact never divulged, but covered up in darkness and mystery. A very ingenious man, to whom I am indebted for almost all the information that I have gained here, assured me that the Marechal de Retz's trial is yet preserved among the archives of the city; but that it has never been opened by the magistrates, from the same motives of horror and caution, which originally actuated his judges. He added, that the Regent duke of Orleans having heard mention made of it, and being excited by that curiosity natural to a man of an ardent mind, such as he possessed; ordered the trial to be sent up to Paris, for

his

his inspection. It was accordingly transmitted, under the seals which had been originally affixed to it in the reign of Charles the seventh; and was opened at the "Palais Royal," about the year 1720. In consequence of the inspection which it then underwent, the nature of the pretended crime itself became known. That crime was accurately stated to me by the person in question; and it certainly is of so inconceivably flagitious, as well as complicated a nature, that I am not surprized at the precautions taken by the original judges, to bury it in perpetual oblivion. The Regent having satisfied his curiosity, caused the trial to be sealed up anew, and to be restored to the magistrates of this city. For the honor of human nature, it is to be hoped that it will remain for many ages, before it is again inspected.

The environs of Nantes are so agreeable, that I should be inclined to make a longer stay here, if the advanced season did not induce me to hasten my journey. I shall set out in two hours for Rochelle. Whether I shall pursue my route from thence

to

to Bourdeaux, thro' the province of Saintonge; or may be tempted to make an excursion by Poitiers and Angoulesme, I do not yet know; but you shall hear of me as I proceed.

Rochelle,
Wednesday, 20th Sept. 1775.

I SLEPT at Aigrefeille last Saturday night, a little village on the southern confines of Bretagne, and breakfasted next morning, at Montagne, the first town in Poictou. Continuing my journey the whole day, thro' that last-mentioned province, which for the space of more than three centuries, formed a portion of the English dominions; I arrived, as the sun set, at Moreille. The evening was so uncommonly beautiful, that I should have proceeded some miles farther, if a very large convent, which stood opposite to the post-house, in one of the finest situations to be conceived, had not seemed to invite my attention. Having ordered horses therefore for the next morning, I walked out, to look at the monastery. The great gates, which were open, admitted me into a spacious court, or lawn, in front of the building. Here I met the Prior: he was a thin, spare figure, in appearance past his fiftieth

year,

year, if his monastic dress did not tend to deceive my judgment. He accosted me with great politeness; and, on my informing him that I was an English traveller, induced by curiosity to visit his convent, he conducted me into the church, and thro' the apartments. "We are," said he, "of the "Cistercian order, and owe our founda- "tion to El anor of Aquitaine, queen of "England, wife to Henry the second; "but during the unhappy wars of the "League, under Charles the ninth, the "chief scene of which lay in this part of "the kingdom, our archives were all car- "ried away, and the building itself was "defaced, by the soldiers of Coligni."—When we had finished our view of the monastery, he insisted on my company at supper. Our repast, which was served up with great elegance, was followed by a desert from the gardens of the priory, which were very extensive, and accompanied with excellent wine. Having staid till near midnight, I left my generous host with expressions of regret.

I got to Marans, Monday morning; a miser-

miserable town, situate on the river Sevre, which divides Poictou from the "Pays "d'Aunis." At a small distance from the place, on the bank of the river, towards its mouth, tradition yet points out the spot, rendered celebrated by the interview of Louis the eleventh of France, with his brother Charles, duke of Guienne. That perfidious monarch, to whom crimes were familiar, having exhausted in vain all his treacherous policy to gain over his brother; was supposed to have had recourse to poison, in order to effect his purposes. Charles expired soon afterwards; and Guienne by his decease reverted to the crown, from which it has never since been separated.

The distance is only twenty miles from Marans to Rochelle, thro' a rich country, covered with vines. This city, from which I write, so famous in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; the refuge at that time of the Hugonots, and their grand barrier against the royal power; continues still to be a commercial and populous place,

place, tho' much declined from it's ancient lustre. The port, which does not admit vessels of any considerable burden, is nevertheless well calculated for trade, being divided into three distinct parts; of which the innermost, denominated the bason, is only a quarter of a mile in circumference. At the entrance, stand two noble Gothic towers, one on each side; called the "Tour "de St. Nicolas," and the "Tour de la "Chaine." They are now in a state of decay, but were anciently designed to protect the town and harbour. Without these towers, the "Avant Port" extends for more than a league, bounded by two points of land, to the north and south. Beyond those limits is beheld the road, where the largest ships usually anchor, protected from the south-west winds by the islands of Ré, Oleron, and Aix, which may be said to separate it from the Atlantic. Previous to the cession of Canada to England, and of New Orleans to the crown of Spain, the trade of Rochelle was very lucrative, both to the river St. Laurence, and to the Missisippi. It has again revived within these

two

two last years, to the coast of Guinea, and to the East Indies.

This place cannot lay claim to any remote antiquity. Rochelle was only a little collection of houses on the shore, inhabited by fishermen, when William the ninth, last Count of Poictou, and duke of Aquitaine, rendered himself master of it in 1139. From that prince it descended to his only daughter, Eleanor; who, after her divorce from Louis the seventh of France, brought all her ample dowry in marriage to Henry the second of England.

Louis transgressed every rule of true policy, in suffering so great a princess to carry her possessions into the family of his vassal Henry, who was already too powerful. The charter of Eleanor, incorporating the town of Rochelle, still subsists in the registers of the city. She granted them many peculiar privileges, which her son Richard the first afterwards confirmed. Under John, the English affairs declined; and tho' St. Louis, actuated by scruples of honor and conscience, restored to Henry the third all Saintonge, and Aunis; yet his son, Philip the Bold,

re-

re-conquered them again some years afterwards. The battle of Poitiers, which took place under Edward the third, in 1356, was followed by the surrender of all the adjoining provinces and cities to England. Rochelle constituted part of the French dominions given to the Black Prince by his father; but the period of his administration was very short, and he lived to see them again reunited to France by Charles the fifth, in the latter years of Edward's reign.

The Reformed religion, which was first introduced into the kingdom about 1540, met with a most favourable reception here; and this city became, under Charles the ninth, the grand asylum of the Protestants. The massacre of Paris was soon followed by the memorable siege of Rochelle, which began in November, 1572, and was raised in June, 1573. Enthusiasm supplied the besieged with constancy and courage, which rendered them superior to the assailants; and the duke of Anjou, afterwards Henry the third, who commanded the royal army, was happy to find a pretext in his election to the crown of Poland, for withdrawing

his

his shattered troops, after having lost twenty-two thousand men before the place. This success conduced towards inspiring them with resolution to withstand Louis the thirteenth, in 1627; but Richlieu's genius was not to be awed into submission. After having precluded every source of assistance by sea and land, and having invested the place for thirteen months, Rochelle surrendered to the mercy of the king. The calamities which the garrison endured from famine, are only to be compared with those of Jerusalem under Titus, and perhaps even exceeded them. It was the last regular effort of religious opposition to the Crown, and may be considered as the æra which established an unlimited royal power throughout the kingdom.

I went twice yesterday, to view the celebrated mound or dyke erected by Richlieu. When the sea retires, it is still visible; and I walked out upon it above three hundred feet, as it extends from side to side, across the whole harbour, nearly an English mile in length. Its breadth is, at this time, more than one

hundred

hundred and fifty feet, and it widens continually towards the base. No effort of art or magnificence can impress the mind with so vast and sublime an idea of the genius of Richlieu, as does this bulwark formed against the Atlantic. While I stood upon it, in the middle of the port, between the waves which rolled on either side, and contemplated its extent, as well as strength, I was almost inclined to suppose this astonishing work to be superior to human power. A small opening of about two hundred feet, left by Pompey Targon, the engineer who constructed it, in order to give entrance to vessels, was shut up by chains fixed across it from side to side. A tower was likewise erected at each end, no remains of which are now to be seen. Neither the duke of Buckingham, nor the earl of Lindsey, who were successively sent from England to the aid of the besieged, by Charles the first, dared to attack this formidable barrier: they retired, and left Rochelle to its fate. In all probability, a thousand years, aided by storms, and all the fury of the sea, will make

little

little or no impression on this mound, which is designed to endure as long as the fame of the Cardinal, it's author.

From the northern point of the harbour, I enjoyed a fine view of the three islands, Ré, Oleron, and Aix. It was on the former of these, that the duke of Buckingham landed, and, after his fruitless attempt on the citadel of St. Martin, was repulsed with the loss of eight thousand men. This little island, which is only six leagues in length, is separated from the main land by a channel of three miles broad. It contains, I am assured, twenty thousand inhabitants, and is better cultivated than the finest provinces of France, ; while Oleron, which is more than double its size, has not near that number of people, and is neither in the same state of cultivation or of improvement. This contrast is the result of their different political immunities, the island of Ré being free, and exempt from all duties or taxation.

On the southern side of the port stands a convent of Minims, erected by Louis the thirteenth, after the siege in 1628, to

pray

pray for the souls of those who perished before Rochelle. When Charles the ninth began to invest it in 1572, there were at that time, seventy-two thousand persons in the city. In the second siege, they had diminished to twenty-eight thousand; and at present, the inhabitants are only between seventeen and eighteen thousand; of which scarcely two thousand are Hugonots.—Religious zeal and animosity have entirely subsided: the citizens are esteemed to be as well attached to the crown, as any in France; and Louis the fifteenth permitted the inscriptions engraven on copper, which were affixed by Richlieu on either side the doors of the monastery I mentioned, to be taken down a few years since, solemnly broken, and thrown into the sea.—I purpose to leave Rochelle tomorrow, and shall take the road to Rochfort and Saintes.

A gentleman with whom I supped last night, assured me that the family of d'Olbreuse still exists, and that they reside near Chateauneuf upon the Charente, in the province of Angoumois. He added,

 that

that their circumstances were narrow, almost to a degree of distress. You will perhaps recollect, that this house is allied to the blood royal of England. George-William, the last duke of Zell, married Mademoiselle d'Olbreuse, at Breda, about the middle of the last century. They had only one daughter, the beautiful and unhappy Sophia, so well known for her confinement and misfortunes, mother to his late majesty, George the second.

The weather here is the most serene and delightful that can be imagined. The vintage is already begun round the city, and the peasants are engaged in all that happy festivity, natural to the season and the employment. I shall have the pleasure of seeing this scene continued, quite to the foot of the Pyrenees, as they do not begin their vintage in Guyenne and Gascony, till the middle, or end of October.

Saintes,
Sunday, 24th September, 1775.

The distance from Rochelle to Rochfort is seven leagues, the first four of which are exceedingly pleasant, the road lying along the sea-shore, in view of the islands of Oleron and Aix, which appear at a small distance. It is now almost a century, since Louis the fourteenth constructed Rochfort in the midst of marshes, which were expressly drained for that purpose. Colbert, who was then first minister of the finances, is said to have called it "La Ville d'Or," from the prodigious sums which his master had expended on this enterprize. Time has however fully evinced the utility of the project, the port being almost as necessary and important to the crown of France, as either Brest, or Toulon. It is situated on the river Charente, about five leagues from its mouth. I passed several hours, on Friday morning, in the different maga-

zines and dock-yards. Every thing appears to be under admirable regulation, and the several branches of naval equipment are carried on with the utmost vigor and dispatch. A grand object of attention with the present ministry, seems to be to restore the navy, which was almost totally destroyed during the late war with England.

The number of workmen commonly employed at Rochfort, is about nine hundred, and to these are added six hundred galley slaves, who are occupied in the most painful and laborious branches of service. They are chained, two and two, with heavy fetters, constantly guarded, and confined in a long building erected for that purpose, in the centre of the yard. Some of these wretches are thus detained for a term of years; others, during life. The precautions used to prevent their escape are excellent, and improved on continually by experience; yet, in spite of every obstacle, they are continually eluded.

The armoury, the rope-walks, the storehouses of every kind, are all in the best order, and kept with prodigious neatness.

Louis

Louis the fourteenth fortified the city, at the time that he constructed it; but its situation, at so considerable a distance from the sea, rendering it sufficiently secure from any hostile attack, they have therefore lately closed up the battlements, and neglected the fortifications. Rochfort is laid out with great beauty and elegance. The streets, which are all very broad and strait, extend thro' the whole place from side to side; but the buildings do not correspond with them in this respect, being mostly low and irregular.

The province of Saintonge, of which the city of Saintes is the capital, begins at a small distance from Rochfort; and the antiquities which this place still contains, have chiefly detained me here since yesterday morning. It was a Roman colony, and those conquerors of the earth, who polished the nations that they subdued, have left behind them the traces of their magnificence. In a hollow valley between two mountains, almost adjoining to one of the suburbs, are seen the ruins of the amphitheatre. Tho' now in the last stage of

decay, its appearance is august and venerable. In some parts, scarcely any of the arches are to be discerned; but the east end is still in a great degree of preservation. Its situation in a valley, and the existing ruins of an aqueduct, which conveyed water to the town from near three leagues distance, have induced antiquaries to suppose that Naumachiæ were represented in it; but this opinion amounts only to conjecture. A triumphal arch, on which is remaining an inscription in Roman letters, merits likewise attention. It was erected to Germanicus, on the news of his death, so universally lamented thro'out the empire, and which has been pathetically recorded by Tacitus.

The river Charente surrounds this city, as the Severn does that of Shrewsbury, describing the form of a horse-shoe. I have been walking in the beautiful meadows which border it, from whence the buildings of the town have a fine effect. Tho' the Charente cannot compare with the Loire or the Rhone, in size and depth, yet the actions which have been performed

on

on its banks in different ages, render it immortal in history. At Taillebourg, only six miles from hence, nearer to its mouth, was fought the battle between Henry the third of England and St. Louis, about the middle of the thirteenth century, where the latter was conqueror. In this action, Louis, who was not less brave than pious, gave proofs of undaunted intrepidity, by defending almost alone, like Horatius Cocles in antiquity, the passage of a bridge against the English army, during some minutes.

The defeat of Taillebourg has been so completely obliterated by the three victories of Cressy, Poitiers, and Agincourt, that we scarcely know of its existence. Every Englishman recollects that Henry the sixth was acknowledged and crowned king of France, in Paris: but, few remember that Louis the eighth, in 1216, was equally recognized for a short time, king of England, and crowned in London. Nations, like individuals, easily and willingly forget the events that wound their pride, or that humiliate their vanity.

Francis the first, one of the greatest

and most accomplished princes who has reigned in France, was born in 1494, at the castle of Cognac, only seven leagues higher up on the Charente. Two leagues beyond Cognac, still nearer its source, is the famous plain of Jarnac, where the Hugonots were defeated in 1569, by the duke of Anjou, afterwards Henry the third; and where the great Louis, first prince of Condé, was assassinated by Montesquiou. I am told that the present Count de Jarnac has caused a monument to be erected within these few years, over the spot where perished that magnanimous prince. I intended to have gone along the banks of the Charente, thro' both these last mentioned places, to Angoulesme: but the difficulties are almost insuperable, as there is no post road yet established; and I am therefore obliged to pursue the strait route to Bourdeaux, through Pons and Blaye.

Except the remains of Roman grandeur still visible at Saintes, the place contains very few objects to detain or amuse a traveller. It is built with great irregularity; the streets are narrow and winding, the houses

houses mean, and almost all of them are some centuries old. The cathedral has been repeatedly defaced and destroyed by Normans and Hugonots, who made war alike on every monument of art or piety. One tower only has escaped their rage, which is said to have been built as early as the year eight hundred, by Charlemagne. It is of an enormous magnitude, both as to height and circumference. These circumstances have probably conduced more to its preservation, during the fury of war, than any veneration for the memory of its founder, or for the sanctity of its institution.

The Reformed Religion seems to be far on the decline in this province, where anciently it had gained so many votaries. There is now only one Protestant family, as I am assured, remaining in Saintes: the reason is evident; the fervors of devotion, warm and animated in the beginning, are nourished by persecution; but, unhappily become languid and extinct in an age of more mild and tolerating principles. Interest is ever present, ever intimately felt

 by

by mankind. The Established Religion holds out offices and honors; Protestantism is barren: her rewards are in another world. Can you wonder that it loses ground continually? Adieu!

Bourdeaux,

Bourdeaux,
Friday, 7th October, 1775.

CONTINUING my journey from Saintes, last Sunday se'nnight, I slept at Pons, a small town agreeably situated on a mountain. Near the summit, in the centre of the place, stands an ancient castle belonging to the Prince de Marsan, which commands an extensive and luxuriant prospect of the vales of Saintonge and Angoumois, covered with vines, and watered by two or three fine rivulets, which lose themselves, after many windings, in the Charente. I entered the province of Guyenne, the next day, and arrived at Blaye, on the northern bank of the Garonne, on Tuesday morning; from whence I came up to this city by water; a distance of about seven leagues. At Blaye, the river is above four miles in breadth, but it gradually diminishes on approaching Bourdeaux. Nearly half way between the two places, at a spot called "le Bec d'Ambez," I passed the mouth

of the river Dordogne, which after running thro' the provinces of Limousin and Perigord, empties itself into the Garonne. The prospect at the conflux of these two streams, is wonderfully picturesque; more cultivated and pleasing, tho' less sublime and extensive, than that formed by the junction of the Vistula and the Nogat, near Marienbourg in Polish Prussia.

Our passage in remounting the Garonne from Blaye, was long, and the sun nearly sunk below the horizon, as we turned round a point of land, which opened to us the city of Bourdeaux at the distance of three miles. The effect on the spectator is exceedingly striking. It describes the figure of a crescent more than a league in length, the buildings of which near the water-side are all modern, lofty, and very elegant. I have seen no prospect so superb in Europe, except the view of Lisbon, from the tower of Belem on the river Tagus; which tho' more irregular from the nature of its mountainous situation, is perhaps superior in point of magnificence.

The favorable impression which Bourdeaux

deaux cannot fail to make on a stranger at his first arrival, is well confirmed by a residence in it. Pleasure seems indeed to have as many votaries here, as commerce; luxury and industry reign within the same walls, in the most extensive degree. The air of courts is naturally effeminate, seducing, and voluptuous. Commercial cities are usually marked by opposite manners; and the love of gain, powerful in its influence over the human heart, generally obscures or absorbs the other passions. Here, however, these rules are by no means verified. Luxury and dissipation are more openly patronized at Bourdeaux, and have made a more universal progress, than in many of the capitals of Europe. At Stockholm, scarcely the shadow of them is perceivable. Neither Copenhagen nor Vienna are yet advanced to the same point of excess, tho' aided by the presence of their sovereigns, and the pleasures which naturally follow in their train. Hamburgh, perhaps equal in size, possessing as much commerce, and as much opulence as Bourdeaux; betrays no external marks of

dissolute

dissolute manners, and punishes them with extreme severity. It is natural to seek for the reason of this extraordinary contrast. We shall find it, I apprehend, chiefly in the genius of the French nation, in the climate, and in the spirit of the government, which rather encourages, than represses luxury, among all ranks of people. Religion, the only engine capable of opposing the torrent, has ceased to produce any effect in France, where the Virgin is held in as little estimation as among us.—Divest mankind of the influence which religion, government, and decorum have over them, what restraint can be affixed to the gratification of their passions?

The ancient city of Bourdeaux, tho' considerable in point of size, was, like every other city in Europe at the accession of Louis the fourteenth, ill built, badly paved, dangerous, without police, or any of those municipal regulations, indispensibly requisite to render a city splendid or elegant. It has entirely changed its appearance within these last thirty years. The public edifices are very noble, and all

the

the streets newly built, are regular and handsome. I am never tired of walking on the banks of the Garonne. The quays extend four miles in length, and the river itself is considerably broader than the Thames at London bridge. On the opposite side, to the North, a range of hills, covered with woods, vineyards, churches, and Villas, extends beyond the view.

Almost in the centre of the town, stands a fine equestrian statue in Bronze, erected to the late king in 1743. It is very rarely that I am much affected by the inscriptions placed under the figures of princes, which usually contain only a detail of virtues and qualities that they never possessed; but there is something in this, so pathetic, so simple, and so much addressed to the heart, that I have retained it in my memory.

" Ludovico quindecimo,
" Sæpe victori, semper pacificatori;
" Suos omnes, quam late regnum patet,
" Paterno pectore gerenti;
" Suorum in animis penitus habitanti."

The beauty of the river Garonne, and the

the fertility of the adjoining country, were probably the causes which induced the Romans to lay the foundations of this city. The ruins of a very large Amphitheatre still remain, constructed under the emperor Gallienus: it is of brick, as were most of the edifices of that period, when the empire was verging to its fall, and the arts began rapidly to decline.

During the irruptions of the barbarous nations, and peculiarly in those which the Normans repeatedly made, Bourdeaux was ravaged, burnt, and almost entirely destroyed. It only began to recover again under Henry the second of England, who having united it to the crown, by his marriage with Eleanor of Aquitaine, rebuilt it; and made it a principal object of his policy, to restore the city again to the lustre from which it had fallen.

The Black Prince, who received all Guyenne, Gascony, and many inferior provinces, in full sovereignty from his father, Edward the third; brought his royal captive, John, king of France, to this city, after the battle of Poitiers in 1356: here the

prince

prince held his court and residence during eleven years. His exalted character, his uninterrupted series of good fortune, his victories, his affability, and his munificence, drew strangers to Bourdeaux from every part of Europe; but all this splendor soon disappeared. He lived to experience the ingratitude of Pedro the Cruel, to whom he had restored the kingdom of Castile; he became a prey to distempers in the vigor of life; he saw his dominions reunited again in many of their branches, to the crown of France, by Charles the fifth; he lost his eldest son, Edward, a prince of the highest expectations; and at length, overcome with sorrow at this last affliction, he quitted Bourdeaux, and embarked for England, there to expire, a memorable example of the hasty revolution of human greatness!

In 1453, Charles the seventh, king of France, re-entered the city, and subjected the whole province of Guyenne, which had been for near three centuries under the English government. Conscious of the importance of such a conquest

quest, he ordered the "Chateau Trom-"pette" to be built, in order to defend the passage of the river; and Louis the fourteenth afterwards employed the celebrated Vauban to erect a new fortress, in the modern style of military architecture, on the same spot.—Madame de Maintenon, whom fortune seemed to have chosen at different periods of life, as the object of her extremest rigor, and extremest bounty; was removed when very young, from the prisons of Niort in Poictou, where she was born, with her father the Baron d'Aubigné, to this castle, where she used to play with the daughter of the turnkey, in the utmost indigence.

Bourdeaux presents few remains of antiquity. The cathedral, which appears to be very old, has suffered considerably from the effects of time. The unfortunate Charles, duke of Guyenne, brother to Louis the eleventh, who, as the French historians all agree, was poisoned in 1473, lies buried before the high altar. The adjacent country, more particularly the "Pays de "Medoc," which produces the finest

Clarets,

Clarets, is exceedingly pleasant; and at this season, when the peasants are all engaged in the vintage, forms one of the most delicious landscapes in the world. My stay here will probably be prolonged for some days.

Ausch in Armagnac,
Saturday, 14th October, 1775.

I LEFT Bourdeaux last Tuesday morning, taking the road to Agen, along the southern bank of the Garonne. I crossed that river at Langon, a little town pleasantly situated on its banks, and stopped in the evening at La Reole. It was my intention to have proceeded farther, but the landlady was too eloquent: she offered to send her little boy, who would conduct me over the ruins of the castle, while she herself prepared a brace of partridges, and the finest desert in the world, against my return. I suffered myself to be persuaded, and walked out while supper was getting ready. The sun had set, but the sky was without a cloud, and the air perfectly serene. The castle of La Reole, which overhangs the waters of the Garonne, is reflected in its surface: time has crumbled many of the battlements into ruin, but enough yet remains to shew its former

splendor.

splendor. Catherine of Medicis resided in it some time, during one of the journies which she made into the southern provinces; and Henry the fourth, then king of Navarre, had here an interview with her, at which he fell in love with the beautiful Madamoiselle d'Ayelle, one of her maids of honor.

I dined on the ensuing day at Aiguillon. On the hill above the town, stands the Chateau of the celebrated duke d'Aiguillon, who has lived to experience the most severe reverse of fortune. After having been the minister and the favorite of Louis the fifteenth, he is now sentenced to pass the remainder of his days, an exile in his own house, deprived of power, and unaccompanied even with that compassion which often waits on illustrious persons in disgrace. He has been already here some months; happy, if the royal displeasure pursue him no farther, and if the stories of a Fouquet, or a Marechal d'Ancre, are not again renewed in him!

I reached Agen in the afternoon. The country thro' which I passed from Langon, where

where I crossed the Garonne, to the gates of that city, is fertile beyond any that I have seen in Europe. The hills are all covered with vineyards to the summit, and the vallies scarcely require the industry of the peasants, to produce in plenty whatever is necessary for their subsistence. The climate at this season is delicious; and no marks of the approach of winter appear in any of the productions of nature. Cherry trees, figs, acacias, poplars, and elms, are in full verdure; in many places, where they border on the side of the road, the vines have run up, and mixed their clusters among the boughs: this is truly beautiful, and picturesque. Milton, in his divine flights of imagination, could employ our first parents in no more delightful occupation, even in Paradise.—

" Or they led the vine
" To wed her elm; she round about him throws
" Her marriageable arms; and with her brings
" Her dower, th' adopted clusters, to adorn
" His barren leaves."

In the midst of this charming country, in

in a plain, close to the Garonne, stands the city of Agen. Behind it, to the north, rises a very high hill, called "Le Rocher "de la belle Vue." I went up to the summit, on which is built a convent. The chapel, and some of the adjoining cells, are hollowed out of the rock. It is said that these apartments are very ancient, having been made many centuries ago by hermits, who retired thither from motives of devotion and austerity. The prospect is beautiful, commanding over the "Condomois, "Agenois, and Armagnac:" beneath, lies the city of Agen, and thro' the meadows which surround it, rolls the Garonne. One of the monks shewed me the apartments of the convent; and in the recesses of the rock, he led me to a spring which is never dry, and which he assured me had been opened by miracle, at the intercession of some holy recluse in ages past. Their little Refectory was hung with portraits of the same monastic heroes, among which was a St. William, duke of Aquitaine; and at the upper end, in golden letters, was written "Silentium."

Agen,

Agen, considered in itself, is a very mean and disagreeable place; the houses being ill built, the streets narrow, crooked, and dirty. I saw only one building in it, which appeared to me deserving of notice. It is a chapel belonging to a nunnery of Carmelites. The walls are exquisitely painted in Chiaro Oscuro, and the deception of the roof, which is executed in the same manner, is admirable. The high altar, which may be termed magnificent, is adorned with a piece of painting, the subject of which is very interesting. It is a nun, sinking under the transports of holy contemplation. She appears as if incapable of supporting the divine effulgence of her celestial lover, with eyes half closed, and arms expanded. Above, descends a radiant figure, with looks of tenderness and pleasure, surrounded with the glories of the skies, too strong for mortal sight. If it had not been a religious edifice, I should have supposed it to be the story of Jupiter and Semelé, to which it bears the most apt resemblance. Near the piece is this inscription.

" Quid non conatur Amor!
" Cœlos in Terris adumbrare
" Carmeli Filiæ tentarunt,
" Anno salutis
" 1773."

Surely, you must here be struck with the justice of a remark which we have often made together, on the intimate alliance between love and devotion, when carried to excess. The same enthusiasm, the same melting language, the same overpowering delights, are common to both passions. Love, says Rousseau, in the extreme, borrows the language of Devotion; and Devotion, in her flights, adopts the expressions of attachment and fondness.

We are used to apprehend the condition of a young woman who has taken the veil, to be very miserable. Where convenience, or chagrin, or melancholy, are the motives to this act of self-dedication, I fully concur in that opinion; but there are women, I doubt not, who in the gloom of a convent, surrounded by shrines and crucifixes, are yet supremely happy. Married to a celestial spouse, and dedicated to the

 embraces

embraces of a superior and invisible being, Enthusiasm has ample room to exert her powers, and to raise her votary above the poor gratifications of earth.

> " To sounds of heavenly harps she dies away,
> " And melts in visions of eternal day."

But I return—

Agen has anciently been fortified, and the Gothic battlements and turrets yet remain almost entire round the whole place. Margaret of Valois, daughter of Henry the second of France, and wife to Henry the fourth, so renowned for her talents, her adventures, and her gallantries, kept her little court for some time at this city, during the civil wars which desolated France, and the quarrels which subsisted between her husband and brothers.—The Agenois formed part of that fine domain, which by the peace of Bretigni in 1360, was ceded to the crown of England; and it constituted part of the territories governed by Edward, the Black Prince. It followed the fate of Guyenne under Charles the seventh,

venth, who re-conquered it, and for ever re-annexed it to the dominions of France.

Continuing my journey from Agen on Thursday evening, at Layrac I once more crossed the Garonne. The passage is difficult, and sometimes dangerous, the river being very rapid, and running between high banks.—I stopt for a few hours yesterday morning, at the city of Leytoure. As it is situated on a mountain, the sides of which are very steep, I left my carriage below, and walked up alone. Here, from the summit, I had the first view of the Pyrenees, at the distance of ninety miles; their heads lost in clouds, and covered with eternal snow. While I stood gazing on these stupendous mountains, a gentleman very politely accosted me, and observing that I was a stranger, offered me his services to shew me whatever objects of curiosity the city contained.

"This place," said he, "was a Roman "colony, and called by them Lectoura. "Many antiquities have been discovered "here; and a beautiful fountain, which "springs from the side of the hill near the

" episcopal palace, is declared by imme-
" morial tradition to have been consecrated
" to Diana, who had a temple near the
" spot. In succeeding ages, Leytoure be-
" longed to the Counts of Armagnac, who
" were great vassals of the crown of
" France, and sovereigns in their own ter-
" ritories. The last of these princes, John
" the fifth, was put to death in this city.
" His history was very singular. He be-
" gan his reign in 1450. The youngest of
" his sisters, Isabella, was a princess of
" uncommon beauty and accomplishments:
" the Count conceived a criminal passion
" for her, and, unable to repress or to ex-
" tinguish it, he determined, in defiance
" of every obstacle, to make her his wife.
" He married her publicly; but the reign-
" ing Pope, justly offended at so inces-
" tuous a union, denounced against him a
" sentence of excommunication; which,
" Charles the seventh, king of France,
" prepared to enforce by the instant seizure
" of his dominions. Charles dispatched the
" Dauphin, afterwards Louis the eleventh,
" into Armagnac, for that purpose, at the
" head

" head of a body of forces. The Count,
" abandoned by his subjects, and incapable
" of resistance, fled to Fontarabia, carrying
" with him his beloved sister. Having,
" however, at the intercession of the Count
" de Foix, obtained his pardon, and the
" restoration of his possessions, he return-
" ed to Leytoure; leaving the beautiful and
" unhappy Isabel in Spain, where she
" died in the utmost obscurity.—Louis the
" eleventh, less generous and merciful
" than his father, afterwards determined
" on the Count's final destruction, from the
" desire of uniting so ample a fief to the
" crown of France. He declared war
" against John, and in 1473, an army
" under the command of Peter de Beaujeu,
" his son-in-law, was sent into Armagnac.
" John the fifth retired to Leytoure, in
" which place he was invested. He capi-
" tulated on very honorable terms, and
" on the most solemn assurances of being
" continued in the possession of his domi-
" nions. But, while the treaty was on the
" point of being signed, and the Count,
" confiding in the honor of the king, re-

 " mitted

"mitted his usual vigilance, the soldiers "broke into the town, and he was himself "murdered in his own palace. Louis im-"mediately seized on his possessions, as "escheated to the crown."

I listened to this affecting story with great attention. When the gentleman had concluded it, he conducted me to the brow of the mountain, where are still seen the remains of a castle. "In this fortress," said he, (renewing his discourse) "the noble and "unfortunate Marechal de Montmorenci, "grandson to the famous Constable of "France of the same name, was confined, "after the defeat which he sustained at Cas-"telnaudari, in 1632. So amiable was his "character, so general was the attachment "borne to him, and so detested was the Car-"dinal de Richlieu his enemy, that the la-"dies of the place attempted by a stratagem "to procure him his liberty. They sent "him, as a present, a large pye, in which "was concealed a silken ladder of ropes. "He lost no time in endeavoring to avail "himself of this instrument for his escape, "and having fixed it on the same evening,

"to

"to the window of his apartment, he or-
"dered his valet to descend first, with in-
"tent to follow him; but the servant having
"unfortunately missed his hold, fell, and
"in the fall broke his thigh. The senti-
"nels, alarmed at his cries, ran to the
"spot, and intercepted the Marechal, who
"was soon after conducted to Toulouse,
"and there put to death."

My conductor quitting me, I continued my walk round the city. Leytoure covers a level space of more than half a mile in circumference, occupying the summit of the mountain. The fortifications in many parts are yet entire; and the situation, admirably calculated for defence, was probably the motive which induced the Romans there to construct a city.

I left Leytoure at noon, and arrived here last night, the distance being only five-and-twenty miles. This place, which is the capital of Armagnac, like Leytoure, lies on the summit and declivity of a very steep hill, which is surrounded by other hills that rise at a small distance. Thro' the vale below runs a rivulet, called the

Gers. The inhabitants of Ausch are about six thousand; the buildings, modern and elegant; the streets, tho' in general narrow, yet are clean and well paved. In the centre of the city stands the cathedral, which is one of the most magnificent in France, both as to its construction, and the internal decorations. The painted windows are only inferior to those of Gouda in Holland; and the chapels, which are of equal beauty, are ornamented at a prodigious expence.

The revenues of the see of Ausch, which is archiepiscopal, amount annually to three hundred thousand livres. The palace corresponds with these ample possessions, and is a very handsome building. The apartments are furnished with a voluptuous splendor, rather becoming a temporal, than a spiritual prince; and in the chamber where the archbishop himself sleeps, I could not help smiling at a number of holy relics, which he has disposed round a bed, on which Heliogabalus might have reposed. The library is very ample, and adorned with some portraits. Among these, a fine

head

head of the Cardinal de Polignac, who was archbishop of Ausch, drew my attention. There is genius marked in the countenance. A pale face; the contour, oval; an aquiline nose, and an eye that seems to look forward into futurity. Over his scarlet robe hangs the cross of the Holy Ghost, on his breast. He was one of the many illustrious men who will for ever immortalize the age of Louis the fourteenth.

The country thro' which I have passed, to the south of the Garonne, is much more hilly, or rather mountainous, than that on the northern side of the river. It is not, however, less fertile or agreeable. Tho' I am assured that every article of life is more than doubled in price within these last ten years, yet this province is still accounted one of the cheapest in the kingdom. The common wine of Armagnac is at present only five farthings a bottle: hares, partridges, and every kind of game, are found in vast abundance. Add to these advantages, a happy climate, and a people polite as well as gay from na-

tural disposition, and you will allow that a man must be very splenetic, who would die here of ennui.

To-morrow I shall continue my journey thro' Tarbes, to Pau, the capital of Bearn.

Orthez in Bearn,
Saturday, 21st October, 1775.

ARMAGNAC is a hilly and romantic country, abounding in beautiful prospects, where rudeness and cultivation are finely blended. At Rabasteins, a little town, I entered the province of Bigorre, and got the same evening to Tarbes, which is the capital. My intention was to have visited Barege, so famous for its medicinal baths; but its situation in the midst of the Pyrenees, where the winter has already begun, and which are covered at this time with snow, has induced me to relinquish my design. I stayed a day at Bagneres de Bigorre, a place hardly less celebrated than Barege. It is only about twelve miles distant from Tarbes, and the road lies through a rich vale, at the end of which, immediately under the Pyrenean mountains, stands the town. Bagneres has been crouded with company during the summer, who are now forsaking it. Nothing can exceed the

environs in beauty. Even at this advanced season, when nature is on her decline, and the leaves begin to take the hue of autumn, the country yet retains a thousand charms. The Pyrenees, which rise above the town, and whose craggy summits are lost in clouds, form an object the most magnificent that can be imagined; while on the other side appear fertile vallies covered with vines, and interspersed with hamlets. There are many springs near Bagneres, both warm and cold, which issue out of the mountains, and are of different virtues. Those called "Les bains de "salut," are the principal; they are about half a mile from the town, and the walk to them, between the hills, is equally agreeable and romantic.

I cannot help regretting that the year is too far advanced, to permit me to pass some weeks among the Pyrenees. An admirer of nature must find ample subject for reflexion, and the greatest sources of entertainment, amidst the extraordinary scenes which present themselves in this chain of rocks, stretching from the Atlantic to the Medi-

Mediterranean. They seem as if designed to form a barrier between France and Spain, which no union of blood or policy can ever effectually surmount, notwithstanding the celebrated words of Louis the fourteenth to his grandson Philip, when ready to set out for Madrid—" Mon fils, " il n'y a plus des Pyrenees."

I left Tarbes on Wednesday last, and got to Pau in six hours, the distance not exceeding thirty miles. The province of Bearn begins about a league from Tarbes, at the ascent of a very steep and lofty mountain, which divides it from Bigorre. The city of Pau will be for ever memorable in history, since it was the birth-place of Henry the fourth. That immortal prince was born in the castle, then the usual residence of the kings of Navarre. You will not doubt that I visited it with equal pleasure and attention. It stands on one of the most romantic and singular spots that I have ever seen, at the west end of the town, upon the brow of a rock which terminates perpendicularly. Below, runs the Gave, a river, or rather a torrent, which rises

rises in the Pyrenees, and empties itself into the Adour. On the other side, about two miles off, is a ridge of hills, covered with vineyards, which produce the famous "Vin de Jorençon," so much admired; and beyond all, at the distance of nine leagues, appear the Pyrenees themselves, covering the horizon from east to west, and bounding the prospect. The castle, tho' now in a state of decay, is still habitable; and the apartments are hung with tapestry, said to be the work of Jane, queen of Navarre, mother of Henry the fourth. Gaston the fourth, Count de Foix, who married Leonora, heiress of the crown of Navarre, began the edifice in 1464; but his successor, Henry d'Albret, completed and enlarged it, about the year 1519, when he made choice of the city of Pau for his residence; where, during the remainder of his reign, he held his little court.

In a chamber, which by its size was formerly a room of state, hangs a fine whole length portrait of that Jane, queen of Navarre, whom I have just mentioned. Her dress, which is very splendid, resembles those

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in which our Elizabeth is usually painted. Her head-dress is adorned with pearls; round her neck she wears a ruff; and her arms, which are likewise covered with pearls, are concealed by her habit, quite down to the wrist. At her waist hangs by a chain, a miniature portrait. The fingers of her right hand play on the strings of a guittar; and in her left she holds an embroidered handkerchief. The painter has drawn her as young, yet not in the first bloom of youth. Her features are regular, her countenance thin, but rather inclining to long; the eyes hazel, and the eye-brows finely arched. Her nose is well formed, tho' large, and her mouth pretty. She was a great princess, of high spirit, and undaunted magnanimity. Her memory is not revered by the French historians, because she was the protectress of the Hugonots, and the friend of Coligny; but the actions of her life evince her distinguished merit.

In one of the adjoining chambers, is a portrait of Henry the fourth himself, when a boy; and on the second floor is the apartment in which he was born. The

parti-

particulars of his birth are in themselves so curious, and as relating to so great and good a prince, are so peculiarly interesting, that I doubt not you will forgive my enumerating them, even tho' you should have seen them elsewhere.—His mother Jane had already lost two sons, the duke de Beaumont, and the Count de Marle. They both perished in their infancy; the eldest having been overlaid by his governess in the night, while still at the breast. The youngest owed his death to an act of imprudence. The nurse, to whose care he was confided, playing with him, amused herself by tossing him to and fro with a gentleman of the court. In the progress of this pastime they let him fall; and the child, after languishing for some time, died of the consequences of the injury that he had received. Henry d'Albret, the father of Jane, anxious to see an heir to his dominions, enjoined her at the time when she accompanied her husband Anthony, duke of Bourbon, to the wars of Picardy, against the Spaniards; if she should prove with child, to return to Pau, and to lie-in there,

as

as he would himself superintend the education of the infant, from the moment of its birth. He threatened to disinherit her, if she failed to comply with this injunction. The princess, in obedience to the king's command, being in the ninth month of her pregnancy, quitted Compeigne in the end of November, traversed all France in fifteen days, and arrived at Pau, where she was delivered of a son, on the thirteenth December, 1553.

She had always been desirous to see her father's will, which he kept in a golden box; and he promised to shew it to her, provided that she admitted of his being present at her delivery, and would, during the pains of her labor, sing a song in the Bearnois language. Jane had courage enough to perform this unusual request; and the king being called on the first news of her illness, she immediately sung a Bearnois song, beginning, "Notre Dame du bout "du pont, aidez moi en cette heure."—As she finished it, Henry was born. The king instantly performed his promise, by giving her the box, together with a golden

chain,

chain, which he tied about her neck; and taking the infant into his own apartment, began by making him swallow some drops of wine, and rubbing his lips with a root of garlic. The manner of his being brought up was similar, and such as is almost unexampled among princes. He was sent to the castle of Coarace in Bearn, where, without any regard to his quality, he used to run about with the children of the neighbouring peasants, bare-footed and bare-headed, even in the rigors of winter. This severe education formed his body to fatigue and hardship, for the exercise of which he had no little occasion during his future life, in the course of the long wars with Henry the third, and the duke of Mayenne. They still shew a tortoise shell which served him for a cradle, and is preserved on that account.

Several of the ancient sovereigns of Navarre resided and died in the castle of Pau. Francois Phœbus, who ascended the throne in 1479, died here in 1483. He was only sixteen years of age, his mother being regent. Historians assert that the young king,

king, who was very fond of music, having taken up a flute, had no sooner applied it to his mouth, than he felt himself affected with poison in so violent a manner, that he expired in two hours. This murder, if, indeed, it can be credited, was attributed to Ferdinand, king of Arragon; a man whose character justified the worst suspicions, and who some years afterwards seized on the Spanish portion of the kingdom. Catherine de Foix succeeded her brother Francois Phœbus. She married John d'Albret, and was the last efficient queen of Navarre; little more than an empty title having remained to her successors.

In 1510, Ferdinand of Arragon availing himself of a papal bull, over-ran the kingdom of Navarre; which being principally situated to the south of the Pyrenees, surrounded by Arragon, Old Castile, and Biscay, was easily subjected to the Spanish crown. Pampelona, the ancient capital, ceased from that period to be the residence of the titular sovereigns of Navarre. They transferred their court

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to Pau and Orthez; towns which being to the north of the Pyrenees, in the principality of Bearn, had not been conquered by Ferdinand, and admitted of protection from France. But, when Jane d'Albret embraced the Calvinist faith and doctrines, she was so apprehensive of the enterprizes of Philip the second, then king of Spain; that she thought it prudent to remove to the town of Nerac in Gascony, farther from the Spanish frontiers. It is a fact, that Philip had projected to seize on queen Jane d'Albret, and to deliver her over to the Inquisition, as a heretic. Henry the fourth himself, while king of Navarre, resided as much at Nerac, as at Pau. He and his queen, Margaret of Valois, held their court alternately at both places.

Catherine de Foix is said to have died of grief for the loss of her dominions, which was chiefly caused by the incapacity and pusillanimity of her husband, John d'Albret. Her reproach to him, which is commemorated in history, was very poignant: "Dom "Jean," said she, "si nous fussions nés, "vous Catherine de Foix, et moi Dom Jean "d'Al-

"d'Albret, nous n'aurions jamais perdu
"la Navarre!"

Pau is a handsome city, well built, and contains near six thousand inhabitants. It is a place of no antiquity, having owed its existence entirely to the castle, and to the residence of the kings of Navarre.

I pursued my journey towards Bayonne, this morning. The country from Pau to Orthez is mostly level, finely cultivated, and covered with vines. The peasants speak a jargon unintelligible even to the French. Their dress too differs very much from that worn in Guyenne, and both their habit and their complexions bear a resemblance to the Spanish.—This place is a city and a bishopric, but the meanest, I believe, in France. The cathedral is a wretched edifice, very ancient, built in a barbarous style, and almost in ruins. I expected to have found in it some monuments of the kings of Navarre, but have been disappointed. The remains of the castle of Orthez are very noble; and its situation is fine, on a hill which commands

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the town, and a great extent of country. The people call it "Le Chateau de la "Reine Jeanne," because that queen resided in it during many years, in preference to the castle of Pau. Some of the apartments, tho' in ruins, may still be entered. The princess Blanche, daughter to John, king of Arragon and Navarre, was shut up, and died here, in 1464. Her brother being dead, she became heiress to the crown of Navarre; but her father having delivered her into the hands of her younger sister Leonora, Countess of Foix, she confined the unhappy Blanche in the castle of Orthez, and after an imprisonment of two years, caused her to be poisoned.

History, from its earliest commencement to the present century, presents a frightful picture of massacres and crimes, at which humanity recoils. We find ambition and subtlety too often triumphant, while innocence and the most amiable qualities, unless accompanied with vigor and capacity, frequently conduct

duct their unfortunate possessors to violent or ignominious ends.—But it is late, and I set out to-morrow for Bayonne. Probably from thence, I may send you the conclusion of this letter.

Bayonne,

Bayonne,
Wednesday, 25th Oct. 1775.

I CONTINUED my journey last Sunday morning. The province of Bearn is a fertile country, abounding in fine acclivities, and well cultivated.

I arrived at this city in the afternoon. Its situation is one of the most agreeable in France, at the conflux of two rivers, the Nive and the Adour. The latter is scarcely less considerable than the Thames at Lambeth, and across it is constructed a wooden bridge, which joins Bayonne to a suburb called "Le Fauxbourg du St. Esprit." The Nive, which is small, and rises in the Pyrenees, passes thro' the centre of the city, and resembles one of the canals in Holland. Advantageous as this situation appears for commerce, yet the trade of Bayonne is not only inconsiderable, but it yearly diminishes. The entrance of the Adour, which is about four miles below the town, is rendered both difficult and hazard-

hazardous from the sands, which having collected, form a bar across its mouth. Besides this inconvenience, the neighbourhood of Bourdeaux attracts to that city most of those articles of trade, which were formerly exported from hence. So rapidly have the commerce and population of this place declined in the course of the present century, that the former is reduced to the shadow of what it once was; and the number of inhabitants has decreased within these last twelve years, from twenty-one thousand, to less than ten thousand. Bayonne continues to be, notwithstanding these circumstances, a very agreeable place of residence, furnishing in profusion all the requisites for human life. Wild fowl is in prodigious plenty, and the flavor exceedingly delicate. The Bay of Biscay, and the river Adour, supply excellent fish. The "Vin de Cap Breton," and the "Vin "d'Anglet," which are made in the adjacent country, infinitely exceed the miserable Claret usually drank in this part of the kingdom; and those wines are sold at eight Sous a bottle. The town is surrounded

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with forests, which render fuel one of the cheapest articles; and the climate may be considered as very fine, tho' the vicinity of the Pyrenean mountains greatly increases the cold in winter.

The buildings of the city are in general of great antiquity, some of the streets, like those of Rochelle, having Porticoes constructed on either side; but the "Place de "Grammont," situate on the bank of the Adour, is adorned with very elegant modern houses and public edifices. On an eminence in the midst of the town, stands the cathedral. I could gain no other intelligence from the inhabitants respecting it, except that the English constructed it during the time that they were masters of Bayonne and Gascony. It is a venerable pile, and, to judge from the style and ornaments of the various parts, it must have been built as early as the year 1350. I have made several visits to it, in hopes of discovering some tombs or monuments of antiquity: but there is not any thing deserving attention, except the relics of St. Leo, who was put to death here in 907,

and

and whose bones are preserved in a splendid shrine over the high altar.

Bayonne, tho' still considered as a frontier city of France towards Biscay, is very ill fortified, the ramparts and fosses being equally neglected. On the north side of the Adour, Louis the fourteenth caused a citadel to be constructed by Vauban, on a hill which commands the town, and in which there is always a garrison of about a thousand soldiers. Till the year 1193, this place, and a considerable territory surrounding it, was governed by its own Viscounts. The English having rendered themselves masters of it at that time, under the reign of Richard the first, kept possession of Bayonne till 1451, when Charles the seventh's victorious arms annexed it to the crown of France. It has never been retaken since, by any foreign power; tho' Philip the third and Philip the fourth of Spain made, each of them, an attempt for that purpose. The common people are called, from the name of the province in which Bayonne is situated, "Basques." Their dress is peculiar to themselves. The women comb

up their hair on the crown of their heads, and cover it with a sort of cap exactly resembling a little turban, which has no inelegant effect. The complexions of both sexes are considerably darker than in Guyenne, and they speak a language called the Basque, which has scarce any affinity either with the French, Spanish, or even the Gascon dialect.

I had some intention, before I arrived here, of visiting Pampelona, capital of the Spanish Navarre: but the advanced season, the impediment of the Pyrenean mountains, which are very difficult to pass even in the smallest two-wheeled carriage; and above all, the mortality among the cattle, which has continued a considerable time in this, and in the adjoining provinces, are such insuperable obstacles as compel me to relinquish my design.

At this city, therefore, my journey to the southward terminates, and to-morrow I shall set out for Toulouse. You will probably be surprized, when I inform you, that I am under the necessity of taking the same route by which I came, as far as Ausch, there being

being no other post-road leading from Bayonne to Toulouse. This country, however favored by nature above England, and tho' well administered in many respects; by no means equals us in a variety of improvements that conduce to knowledge, comfort, or pleasure. Among these, may be reckoned roads. The most remote Counties of England are intersected and penetrated by cross roads, made by commissioners under acts of parliament, and which admit carriages to travel, if not always with expedition, at least with safety. Here, the crown, which solely plans, orders, and executes the roads that conduct from one extremity of the kingdom to the other; content with forming such as the government considers to be adequate to purposes of necessity, policy, or commerce; pays no further regard to the wishes and local convenience of the subject. Neither horses, drivers, nor carriages of any description, are in fact to be procured, except on those great roads that lead from one city to another. In consequence of this defect, for such it is,

France is far less pervious than England, unless by having recourse to the expedient of quitting a carriage altogether, and mounting on horseback; a circumstance often difficult or impracticable. I shall write on my arrival at Toulouse.

Toulouse,

Toulouse,
8th November, 1775.

The country from Bayonne to the passage over the river Adour, is heathy, woody, and barren; neither well-peopled nor cultivated, in comparison with the greater part of the provinces of Bearn and Bigorre. I got to Orthez in the evening. The sun had set, but, after the finest day imaginable: I walked out, and having a curiosity to look once more at the ruins of the castle, I ascended the hill on which it stands, and stayed a few minutes within the walls. The gloom of night, which began already to shade the chambers, spread an awful melancholy thro' the whole edifice. As I passed out of the great gateway into the road, on my return to the inn, an old peasant met me, and with great simplicity assured me, that it was already past the hour when the inhabitants ventured into the castle, because the apparition of a princess who had been mur-

dered in it, walked at night: adding, that he himself when young, had seen and heard things very unusual, and very terrifying, in the great tower. This tradition of a murdered princess, certainly alludes to the unfortunate Blanche of Navarre, whom I have already mentioned; and was one of those Catastrophes which naturally give birth, among the credulous and superstitious multitude, to tales of spectres, and their train of horrors.

I dined at Pau, and passed some time in the "Parc d'Henri quatre," a beautiful wood, overhanging the river Gave, and terminating at a point, from whence is seen an extensive and romantic prospect. As Henry, while he held his court in Bearn, was fond of this grove, it has retained his name. Detained by a most agreeable society, I stayed four days at Tarbes, on my return. The town stands in the midst of a finely cultivated plain, but contains very few objects of entertainment or instruction. Francis the first, at the marriage of his sister, Margaret of Valois, with Henry d'Albret, king of Navarre, bestowed on

her

her the provinces of Armagnac and Bigorre as a dowry; and that celebrated princess, so well known for her genius and her writings, died at the "Chateau d'Odos," only a league from Tarbes, in 1549; having survived her brother about two years.

I crossed all Armagnac to this city, and arrived here on the third of November. Toulouse is the least cheerful, as well as the most ill built place that I have seen in France. It forms a vast labyrinth, composed of streets so crooked, narrow, and winding, that a stranger requires a clue to conduct him thro' them. No squares, or public places, adorned with elegant buildings, or monuments of art, are found, as at Nantes or Bourdeaux, tho' it equals this last city in size. I almost accuse myself for having remained six days in a place, which presents scarcely any interesting object to the eye or the understanding; and where the imagination cannot even receive that pleasing sensation, which results from visiting the spot where illustrious actions have been performed in past ages. The annals of Toulouse are

marked with little except acts of cruelty, or of superstition; the death of a Montmorenci, or the execution of a Calas.

In the court of the Hotel de Ville, was executed the Marshal de Montmorenci, who there expiated his rebellion against the Cardinal de Richlieu, rather than against Louis the thirteenth. It is not here that the Catastrophe of the unfortunate Calas, so eloquently described by Voltaire, and which electrified all Europe when it took place; meets with compassion, or even with belief. I find great numbers of people who firmly persist in asserting that he was guilty of the crime imputed to him, for which he suffered. I have visited the cellar in which the younger Calas, his son, was found dead. And tho' my conviction of the innocence of the father is by no means shaken; yet I cannot refuse a degree of attention to the arguments and reasonings that I have heard during my stay here. There is, and will ever remain, notwithstanding the recognized bigotry of his persecutors, and the cruel nature of the proceedings instituted against the family

of

of Calas, a great uncertainty diffused over that whole transaction.

The cathedral of Toulouse, which is by no means a splendid pile of architecture, was erected by Raymond the sixth, about the year 1200. You will recollect that Languedoc was governed during several centuries, by its sovereign Counts. Jane, the daughter and heiress of Raymond the seventh, was married to Alfonso, brother of St. Lonis. By the deaths of that prince and princess without issue, who expired within a few days of each other, at Savona in Italy, immediately after St. Lonis's unfortunate Crusade and siege of Tunis; the county of Toulouse was united in 1271 to the crown of France.

The tomb of Pibrac, whose name occurs so often in the annals of France, under the reign of Henry the third, stands in the church of the "Grands Augustins." This grave magistrate, who fell violently in love with the second Margaret of Valois, queen of Navarre, wife of Henry the fourth; sacrificed, as history declares, at the treaty of Nerac, his public duties, to

his personal attachment for that princess. In a history of this city, which I procured on my arrival, a curious anecdote appears relating to Margaret herself.—Catherine of Medicis, says the author, after the conference of Nerac, retired to Toulouse, carrying with her the queen of Navarre, who was tired of her husband, and chagrined at his amours. The court, despairing of the pregnancy of Louisa, queen of France, who had been married five years to Henry the third, was very anxious that Margaret might produce children. Catherine, her mother, who was ever addicted to astrology, having heard that there resided at Castelnaudari, a woman famous for her skill in telling fortunes, and for her knowledge of futurity, went thither with her daughter, to consult this "Diseure de bonne aven-"ture." The princess was submitted in a state of nudity, to the old woman's inspection, who examined all the parts of her person with extreme accuracy. She then returned this plain answer to the queen-mother, with certain medicines which she had composed. "Madame, votre fille est

"d'une-

"d'une très-bonne constitution, et je me "promets un bon succès de mon remede, "pourvu qu'elle puisse gagner sur elle de "se tenir *chaste* tout le tems qui est mar-"qué dans le regime; car, j'apprends que "vous êtes mere et fille de grandes *cou-"reuses*." It is most probable that Margaret, whose character impelled her to pleasure, found too great difficulty in submitting to a prescription, which deprived her of those gratifications to which she was immoderately attached. Nor could the person consulted, have found out any better means of preserving her own credit, than by laying her royal patient under an injunction, which the knowledge she had of her disposition, rendered it very certain that she would infringe.

Toulouse possesses some inland commerce, by means of the famous canal cut to join the two seas; which opening into the Garonne just above the city, conveys all the articles of trade from Cette to Bourdeaux, across the provinces of Languedoc and Guyenne. This communication produces nevertheless little advantage to the

place,

place, which owes its chief gaiety to the parliament, and to the provincial nobility who reside here in winter. I leave it this afternoon, and am meanwhile,

Yours, &c.

Beziers,
Monday, 13th November, 1775.

HAVING quitted Toulouse last Thursday, I reached Castelnaudari the same night, which is near forty miles distant; a tolerable town, situated on the "Royal "Canal," made by Louis the fourteenth, to join the Mediterranean and Atlantic seas. The Saracens, who conquered that part of France during the decay of the Roman empire, are said to have been its founders. In a valley, about half a mile from the place, is the memorable spot where the unfortunate duke of Montmorenci, covered with wounds, and thrown from his horse, was taken prisoner, in 1632. It was impossible not to lament as I considered it, the fate of so heroic and so amiable a nobleman. He was the Russel of France, who fell a sacrifice to the stern and unrelenting policy of the Cardinal de Richlieu. The grandson of that Constable Montmorenci, who expired in arms for the defence of the monarchy,

narchy, under Charles the ninth, at seventy-seven years of age; son to Henry d'Amville, Constable of France under Henry the fourth; himself of a character the most elevated, munificent, and benevolent; less guilty, even in his opposition to Louis the thirteenth, than was Gaston, duke of Orleans; and, tho' an enemy of the minister, yet guiltless of intentional rebellion against his sovereign:—How many circumstances to extenuate his crime! I have ever considered this execution, as one of those which tarnish in the highest degree the reputation of Richlieu, and, notwithstanding the splendor of his public actions, force us to detest the individual.

It is about five-and-twenty miles from Castelnaudari to Carcassonne, where I staid the remainder of the ensuing day. Carcassonne consists of two distinct cities, separated by the little river Aude. The most ancient of these, called "La Haute Ville," stands on the summit of a hill; the lower town, which is situate in the plain below, is the largest, and both are surrounded with Gothic walls, battlements, and turrets, which.

which still remain in the most perfect preservation. This place bore a considerable share in that celebrated Crusade undertaken against the Albigenses, in the beginning of the thirteenth century, which forms one of the most astonishing instances of superstition, combined with atrocious barbarity, to be found in the annals of the world.

At a time when the royal power was nearly annihilated, during the reigns of the last feeble kings of the Carlovingian race in France; most of the cities of Languedoc, shaking off their subjection to the crown, erected themselves into little independent states, governed by their own separate princes. Carcassonne was then under the immediate dominion of Viscounts. Soon after the commencement of the thirteenth century, when pope Innocent the third authorized and commanded the prosecution of hostilities against the Albigenses, for the crime of heresy; Raymond, the reigning Viscount, was included in that proscription. Simon de Montfort, named general of the army of the church, invested

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the city of Carcassonne in 1209. The inhabitants, terrified at the fate of several other places, where the most dreadful massacres had been committed, demanded leave to capitulate. But, this act of mercy was only extended to them under a condition, equally cruel, incredible, and unparalleled in history, if we were not compelled to believe it by the unanimous testimony of all the contemporary writers. The people found in the place, were all obliged, without distinction of rank or sex, to evacuate it in a state of nudity; and Agnes, the Viscountess, was not exempted, tho' young and beautiful, from this ignominious and shocking punishment. "On les fit sortir "tout nuds de la Ville de Carcassonne (says "an ancient author) afin qu'ils receussent "de la honte, en montrant ces parties du "corps que la pureté de la langue n'ex-"prime point, desquelles ils avoient abusé, "et s'en étoient servis dans des crimes exe-"crables." It seems by this imputation, that the Albigeois were accused by their enemies, of committing some enormities, probably imaginary. Enormities, invented or renewed

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in the reign of Philip le bel, king of France, about a hundred years later, in order to destroy the order of Knights Templars; and similar to those which religious enmity or prejudice have attributed to the followers of Zinzendorf, in the present century!

I continued my journey on Saturday to Narbonne. The country from Toulouse to the gates of that city, is a vast plain, open, naked, and in many parts barren; where scarcely a tree is to be seen except olives, and even those are neither large nor numerous. On one hand appear the Pyrenees at a considerable distance; and on the other, the chain of rocks, called the Black Mountains, which divide Languedoc from the province of Rouergue. The weather was cold, and I found it difficult to procure a miserable fire made of vine twigs, and roots of olives. The population seemed to be very thin, and the appearance of the country is bleak and inhospitable. I went about a league out of the road near Carcassonne, to a little town called Trebé, where the "Royal Canal" passes over the river

Aude,

Aude, and arrived at Narbonne in the afternoon.

That city retains hardly any marks of its ancient grandeur. Narbonne, which pretends to the most remote antiquity under the Celtic kings, in ages anterior even to the Roman conquests; which under these latter masters, gave its name to all the "Gallia Narbonensis," and was a colony of the first consideration; is now dwindled to a wretched solitary town, containing scarcely eight thousand inhabitants, of whom three-fourths appeared to be priests and women. The streets and buildings are mean and ruinous; tho' it retains a feeble communication with the Mediterranean, from which Narbonne is only about three leagues distant, by means of a small river which intersects the place: but their commerce is very limited, consisting chiefly in grain, which they export to Cette and Marseilles. No marks of the Roman magnificence remain, except several inscriptions found in different parts of the city; and if the churches did not keep employed some hundred ecclesiastics, who are occupied

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in the beneficial duties of chanting Requiems and Vespers, it would probably cease in a few years to have any existence whatever.

The See of Narbonne, which is archiepiscopal, is said to have been founded by Charlemagne; but the present cathedral is far more modern, tho' only the choir remains entire, which is built in the finest style of the Gothic edifices. In the centre of the church, before the high altar, stands the tomb of Philip the Bold, king of France, son of St. Louis. It is composed of white marble, and the king is represented lying at full length, his head reposing on a cushion ornamented with Fleurs de lis. His face indicates a man in the prime of life, the features regular and pleasing; he has a beard on the upper lip and chin, and his hair falls in great quantity on his neck. In his right hand he grasps the Dalmatique, resembling a pastoral staff; and in the left he holds a sceptre, and a hand of justice. He wears a crown on his head, while his feet rest on a

lion.

tion. Behind, engraven in the old black letter, is this inscription.

" Sepultura bonæ Memoriæ
" Philippi,
" quondam Francorum Regis,
" Filii beati Ludovici,
" qui Perpignani, calida Febre
" ab hac Luce migravit,
" 3 Non: Octobris,
" Anno Dni 1285."

You may perhaps recollect that Philip died at forty-five years of age, on his return from an ill-concerted and unfortunate expedition against the king of Arragon. The body was brought here from Perpignan, at which place he expired; and the bones having been separated by boiling water from the flesh, were carried to St. Denis, and there interred. He was neither a prince of distinguished talents, nor of any eminent virtues.

The distance from Narbonne to this city is twenty miles. The mountain of Malpas, which was cut thro', in order to admit the passage of the " Royal Canal," lies only a mile

mile out of the road. It was impossible to pass so extraordinary and celebrated a work, without visiting it. The effect produced by it on the spectator, is very striking and sublime. Descending by a large flight of steps into the excavation, I walked thro' the mountain along the side of the canal. The length of it is exactly two hundred and ten paces, or more than six hundred feet; and the perpendicular height, from the water to the surface of the incumbent mountain, exceeds two hundred feet. A great part of the arch has been vaulted at a prodigious expence, under the apprehension of its falling in, from the pressure of the earth over head; and the annual necessary repairs amount to a large sum of money. The breadth of the canal itself is at least twenty feet; and notwithstanding that the distance which is hollowed thro' the ground is so considerable, yet the light is every where perfectly admitted. This mountain formed the greatest obstacle to completing the junction of the two seas; and its execution has immortalized the famous Riquet, whom Louis the fourteenth employed in the

the enterprize. He was made Count de Caraman, and his descendants yet enjoy the title.

I arrived here last night. Beziers is an opulent and considerable city, containing above twenty thousand inhabitants, and situated in a delicious country. It occupies all the sides of a very steep and lofty hill, on the highest point of which is built the cathedral. At the foot runs the river Orbe. The prospect is extensive and beautiful, bounded to the north by mountains, and terminated on the south by the Mediterranean. It is esteemed one of the most plentiful and eligible places of residence in the kingdom, all the necessaries and delicacies of the table being procured here at the most moderate prices.

Beziers is said to have been a "Statio Ro-"mana," and was considered by the Romans as a military post. The siege of the city which took place during the Crusade against the Albigenses, was one of the most memorable and bloody which distinguished that flagitious war. The garrison defended it with determined bravery; and every other

other means having failed in the attempt for its reduction on the part of the besiegers, a resolution was taken to storm the city. Previous to the assault, the papal Nuncio, assisted by Gusman the Spaniard, who is better known in ecclesiastical history under the name of St. Dominic, exhorted the troops to behave with courage in this pious enterprize, and promised them remission on the part of Heaven, from all their past offences. After a long and obstinate struggle, Beziers was entered by the victorious soldiery, who massacred in cold blood, sixty thousand of the wretched inhabitants, without distinction of sex, rank, or age, and afterwards reduced the city to ashes.

I leave to your own mind to make the natural reflections on this catastrophe, without permitting myself to comment on an event, to which there are but too many similar in the history of the Romish church. Any superstition must be considered as unfavorable to the happiness of the human race, which nourishes in its essence the seeds of theological controversy, and metaphysical subtilties:

tilties: disputes, which however contemptible in themselves, necessarily produce that spirit of intolerance and persecution, which uniform experience proves to be the certain consequence in modern ages, of a difference in opinion on polemical subjects. Happy in that respect, the Romans and the Greeks, who established no Crusades to convert the provinces which they subdued! who massacred no people for their adherence to the superstition of their ancestors, who knew no points of scholastic or disputative divinity: but who receiving with open arms the gods of the conquered nations, admitted Isis and the dog Anubis, to a place in the temple of Jupiter Capitolinus!

In 1355, the year before the memorable battle of Poitiers, Edward the Black Prince laid siege to Beziers, but without success. Having ravaged all this part of Languedoc, he advanced as far as Fabrigues, a little town only two leagues distant from Montpelier. There he halted; and whether from an apprehension of being intercepted in his retreat, or that his army was

satiated

satiated with booty, he began his march back into Guyenne. He burnt the suburbs of Narbonne and Carcassonne in his way, spread terror thro' all the neighbouring provinces, and re-conducted his soldiers in triumph to Bourdeaux, laden with spoils.

The cathedral of Beziers contains nothing remarkable, except the tomb of the princess Blanche of France. Philip of Valois, her father, at the age of fifty-six, had the misfortune to fall in love with Blanche d'Evreux, the most beautiful princess in Europe. She was only sixteen years old; but this disproportion in their ages did not prevent the completion of the nuptials. The king enjoyed his bride for a very short time; and died in the course of the ensuing year, of the same disease which proved fatal to one of his successors, Louis the twelfth, king of France; as well as to Don John, only son to Ferdinand and Isabel of Spain. The young queen having been left with child, brought into the world some months afterwards a daughter named Blanche, who when she had attained her twentieth year, was betrothed to the Count of Bar-

celona, but died at this city, before the consummation of her marriage, on her journey into Catalonia.

I leave Beziers this afternoon, in my way thro' Languedoc and Provence, to Marseilles.

Tarascon on the Rhone,
Tuesday, 21st November, 1775.

MONTPELIER is a delightful place of residence, which, after a stay of four days, I left with great regret. The town itself is by no means elegant, the streets being almost all narrow, winding, and badly laid out; but nature seems to have chosen the hill on which it stands, to enrich with her choicest presents. The ascent is easy and gradual on every side; and the states of Languedoc have ornamented the summit, denominated the "Peyrou," at a vast expence, in a manner where taste and magnificence are equally blended.

The prospect from this favored spot I cannot describe, tho' I studied it every day with enthusiastic pleasure. The pencil of Vernet, or of Claude Lorraine, might paint it, but not even Shakespeare's powers of description could do full justice to its beauties. The vales of Languedoc, covered

with olives, or laid out in vineyards, are finely contrasted with rude rocks to the north, and melt away into the sea to the south. Tho' winter has almost stripped the trees of their verdure, there is nothing melancholy or desart which presents itself to the eye. A sky serene and unclouded, an invigorating sun, a keen and wholesome air, spread a gaiety over November itself, which here is neither accompanied with fogs nor rain. Montpelier has notwithstanding lost, within these last thirty years, that reputation for salubrity which conduces more to the support of a place, than any real advantages which it may possess; and the number of strangers who visit it from motives of health, is said to diminish annually. Some trade is still carried on from thence, by means of a small river called the Les, which empties itself into the sea at the distance of a league; but the Mediterranean has been retiring for these three centuries, from the whole coast of Languedoc and Provence. Frejus, which is situated between Toulon and Antibes,

where

where the emperor Augustus laid up his gallies after the battle of Actium, is now become an inland city.

You doubtless remember in history the celebrated interview between Charles the fifth and Francis the first, at Aigues-mortes, in 1535. That town stands at present half a league from the shore, and has consequently lost all its ancient commerce, which was very extensive. This event, which took place early in the last century, induced the Cardinal de Richlieu, who was ever attentive to the grandeur and emolument of the state, to construct a port at Agde, which he effected. The remedy nevertheless was only temporary, as the cause still subsisted; and before the year 1670, the harbour of Agde, by the retreat of the sea, was rendered almost as useless as Aigues-mortes. Colbert, whose mind was not less active nor less enlarged than Richlieu's, then undertook to build the town of Cette; from which place all the commodities that are brought down the "Royal Canal," might be exported, and the province of Languedoc be supplied at

the same time with a port, of which otherwise it is totally destitute. I am assured, that the absolute necessity of having a maritime town at the mouth of the canal, has alone hitherto prevented Cette from sharing the fate of Agde, as the annual expence of clearing the harbour amounts to a hundred thousand Livres; and even these precautions cannot hinder the sand from obstructing the entrance, and forming a bar across it in a series of years. Montpelier owed its elevation chiefly to this very circumstance, as the Episcopal see was originally placed at Maguelonne, a town situate on the shore of the Mediterranean; but that place declining, on account of the retreat of the sea, pope Paul the third transferred it thither in 1536.

The country from Montpelier to Nismes, may be almost termed a garden, level, and every where cultivated. The peasants are just beginning to gather the olives, which are very plentiful, and the trees are planted with the same regularity as our orchards in England. I cannot help envying the inhabitants this genial climate and these fertile

plains,

plains, and am ready to accuse nature of partiality, in the infinite difference which she has placed between the peasant of Languedoc, and the boor of Sweden. In vain will you tell me that the Amor Patriæ, the attachment which we naturally bear to that country where we were born, renders them equally happy, and supersedes or extinguishes all other distinctions. I know the force of this principle; I feel and cultivate it with the greatest ardor: but it cannot blind me to the infinite superiority with which certain countries of the earth are endowed, above other less favored latitudes and regions.

I passed three days at Nismes, in the survey of those magnificent and beautiful remains of Roman greatness which yet subsist there. They have been described a thousand times, and it is not my intention to fatigue you with a repetition of them. The Amphitheatre, and the "Maison "quarrée," are known thro'out every kingdom of Europe. The first of these edifices impresses the beholder with the deepest veneration; the latter excites the most re-

fined delight. Sentiments of indignation against the barbarians who could violate and deface these glorious monuments of antiquity, will mix with the sensations of every spectator. It is difficult to believe that Charles Martel, from hatred to the Roman name, had the savage fury to fill the Corridores of the Amphitheatre with wood, to which he set fire with an intent to injure, tho' it surpassed his power to demolish, so vast an edifice. Yet, notwithstanding these attempts of the barbarous nations, notwithstanding the lapse of so many ages, and the effects of time, its appearance at present is the most august and majestic which can be presented to the mind, or to the senses. The prodigious circumference of the Amphitheatre, the solidity and strength of its construction, the awful majesty of so vast a pile, half perfect, half in ruin, impress with a tumult of sentiments which it is difficult to convey by any description.—The "Maison "quarrée," is in the most complete preservation, and appears to me to be the most perfect piece of Roman architecture

now

now existing in the world. The order is the Corinthian, and all the beauties of that elegant style seem to be exhausted in its construction. This superb temple is now converted into a chapel, dedicated to the Virgin, ornamented with gilding, and other holy finery, suitable to such an alteration.

At a quarter of a mile from the city of Nismes stands another temple, much decayed, which immemorial tradition relates to have been consecrated to Diana; but which by antiquaries is generally supposed to have been sacred to the "Dii infernales," as it is evident that no light was admitted into it; a circumstance peculiar to the temples of the infernal Gods. In the inside, are deposited numbers of mutilated statues, marbles, capitals, and inscriptions, which have been found there from time to time. Close to it rises a fountain, which may vie with that of Vaucluse in beauty, tho' not in fame. It furnishes a great quantity of water, which never diminishes in the longest droughts; but as the channel thro' which it flows, had become obstructed in a

series of ages, by sand and gravel, the inhabitants of Nismes undertook, some years ago, to cleanse and restore its course. In the progress of this work they discovered a number of Roman coins, rings, and other antiquities, several of which are equally rare and well preserved. On the summit of the rock from whence the fountain issues, stands a building which has much exercised the opinions of the learned. It is incontestibly Roman, and is vulgarly called "La Tour magne." Its exposed situation has conduced to hasten its decay; but at what time it was built, or for what purposes it served, are now totally unknown.

Nismes is an ill-built place, containing in itself nothing extraordinary or remarkable. A hundred fables are related concerning its origin, which is carried back into times anterior by many centuries to the Roman conquest of Gaul: it probably does not occupy at present, the fourth part of the ground on which it formerly stood. I left Nismes this afternoon. The distance is only twenty miles from this place; but the wind blew such a hurricane, as I scarcely

scarcely ever remember. The passage across the Rhone at Tarascon, which divides Provence from Languedoc, is over a bridge of boats; and I own I passed it with some apprehensions, as they assure me that it is not uncommon for carriages to be carried over into the river, by violent gusts of wind.

The view of the Rhone here is very picturesque. On one side, in Languedoc, stands Beaucaire, a considerable town, with a ruined castle overhanging a rock: on this side is situated Tarascon, with a correspondent castle, far more considerable, and washed by the waves. The river here is much broader than the Thames at London.

To-morrow I proceed for Aix and Marseilles, at the latter of which places I purpose to pass the winter.

Marseilles,
5th January, 1776.

I SCARCELY ever remember even in our northern climate, a colder day than that on which I continued my journey from Tarascon to this city. Winter seemed to have taken possession of the face of nature before its time. The olive-trees were covered with snow which fell very fast, and the "Bize" which blew in my face, coming from the summits of the Alps, rendered the weather extremely severe.—At St. Rèmi, a little town only four leagues from Tarascon, I drove about a mile out of the road, in order to see the remains of the monuments erected by the Consul Marius, as trophies of his victory gained over the Cimbri and Teutones. Tho' so many ages have elapsed since their construction, they still forcibly recall the idea of Rome, the conqueror of the earth, and queen of nations.

It was night when I arrived at Aix, where

where I staid three days. The city impresses with that air of silence and gloom, commonly characteristic of places destitute of commerce or industry, and forms a striking contrast to Marseilles, where opulence and population are every where visible. The warm springs from which Aix is now known and frequented, induced Sextius Calvinus to found a Roman colony there, to which he gave the name of "Aquæ Sextiæ." They were supposed, probably with reason, to possess particular virtues in cases of debility; and several altars have been dug up, sacred to Priapus, the inscriptions on which indicate their gratitude to that deity, for his supposed succour and assistance. I saw nothing in the cathedral deserving attention, except the tomb of Charles of Anjou, last of the Angevin line, kings of Naples, and Counts of Provence. He died, if I recollect right, in 1483, bequeathing both his real and titular dominions to Louis the eleventh, king of France. The claims on the Neapolitan crown derived from him, were the foundation of those long and unhappy wars begun by

Charles

Charles the eighth, and continued under his two successors, Louis the twelfth and Francis the first.

The distance from Aix to this city is only twenty miles. There is notwithstanding, a considerable difference in the climate of Marseilles, which is milder in winter, and cooler during the heats of summer, from its vicinity to the Mediterranean. Nature seems to have marked out this place for commerce, by the maritime advantages which she has bestowed on it. The entrance of the harbour, which is extremely narrow, and surrounded by lofty mountains, protects and shelters vessels during the most violent storms. The port itself forms a delightful walk at this season of the year, as it is open to the southern sun, and crouded with vast numbers of people, not only of all the European nations, but of Turks, Greeks, and natives of the coast of Barbary. The whole scene is one of the most agreeable that can be imagined, if the chains of the galley slaves, heard among the hum of business, did not tincture it with the hateful idea of slavery.

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The gallies themselves, useless and neglected, rot peaceably in their respective stations; and it is said that no others will ever be constructed to supply their place, as they have long ceased to be of any utility to the state, being scarcely even navigable in severe weather. This circumstance may appear the more extraordinary, when we reflect that Philip the second, in the sixteenth century, not only covered the Mediterranean and the Levant with his gallies; but, sent fleets of gallies as far as the islands of the Azores in the Atlantic ocean. No European prince, I believe, would now venture on so bold an experiment.

During the short residence that I have made here, I am forcibly struck with the wide difference which there appears to me, between the genius of the Provencaux, and the national character generally attributed to the French. The common people of Marseilles display a brutality and rudeness of manners, more characteristic of a republican, than of a monarchical and absolute government. Their language, so famous in ancient Romance, is a corrupt Italian, more intelligible

telligible to a Neapolitan, than to a Parisian. The women are lively, beautiful, and disposed from their complexion to gallantry. A fire, an extreme vivacity unknown to the northern nations of Europe, which results from a penetrating air, a genial sun, and skies for ever blue, is strongly discernible in their eyes, their conversation, the peculiar dances and music of the country; in all which, a warm and impassioned animation forms the predominant quality. I am afraid to express how many charms there appear to me in this gaiety of character and disposition, lest you should think that I mean to contrast it with the formality of our own country, where we seldom allow the heart to act uninfluenced by the judgment.

Marseilles pretends to the most remote antiquity, a colony of Phocians in ages unknown, having given it birth. The "old city" is one of the most ill built of any in Europe, nor have I ever had courage enough to penetrate into its recesses, which are insupportably filthy. The modern Marseilles, on the other hand, has

sprung

sprung up since the commencement of the eighteenth century, and possesses all that regularity, elegance, and convenience, which distinguish the present times. I am inclined to consider it as one of the most eligible places of winter residence in Europe, and far superior, where health is not an object of attention, to Nice, or to Montpelier. In the Carnival, I am assured, that it is uncommonly gay. The surrounding country is rocky and barren, but covered for several miles on all sides, with Villas and summer-houses, which commerce has erected.

The intention which I once had of visiting Corsica and Sardinia, I have relinquished for the present, having determined to remain here till the ensuing spring, when I shall probably return thro' the inland provinces of this kingdom, to England. Meanwhile I remain, &c.

Clermont,

Clermont, in Auvergne,
Friday, 26th of April, 1776.

After a silence of near four months, I again resume my pen from among the mountains of Auvergne, at the distance of more than a hundred leagues from Marseilles. I have now exchanged the delicious climate of Provence, its warm sun, and the shore of the Mediterranean, for a very different scene.

I quitted Marseilles on the sixth of this month, and arrived at Avignon on the evening of the ensuing day. It was impossible for me not to dedicate some time to the view of a city so renowned in past ages, the seat of the sovereign Pontiffs during more than half a century, the residence of Petrarch, and the birth-place of Laura. I felt that pleasure which results to every reflecting mind, from the consciousness of being on a spot rendered famous by poetry, or genius, or great atchievements. I compared Avignon, as it now exists, with the picture

picture which Petrarch has drawn of it in his writings; and attempted to ascertain the situation of his mistress's abode, which is yet pointed out by tradition in one of the suburbs. From thence I repaired to the church of the Cordeliers, where rest her remains. In a little dark chapel on the right hand, now disused for religious ceremonies, damp, cold, and unwholesome, beneath the arch which forms the entrance, and under a flat, unornamented stone, lies that Laura who was once so beautiful, and who can never die, while her lover's fame and works survive. Round the stone are faintly discerned some ancient Gothic characters covered with earth, and rendered illegible by time. You will perhaps recollect that Francis the first, unquestionably the most accomplished prince who ever reigned in France, and who eminently possessed the enthusiasm which usually distinguishes and characterizes genius, caused the tomb of Laura to be opened in his own presence. A wish to pervade the obscurity in which Petrarch has affected to involve the name of his mistress, and the

history

history of his own unhappy passion; added to a desire of ascertaining by some incontestible proof, the burial-place of Laura; were the motives which influenced Francis to commit this seeming violation of the repose of the dead. Some small human bones, supposed to be her's, and a leaden box which contained a scrowl of Italian verses, obscurely alluding to Petrarch's attachment to her, were all which repaid the monarch's curiosity. It is needless to remind you, that Laura died of the plague, which desolated the greater part of Europe in 1347, and the following year; and of which Boccace, in his "Decame-"ron," has drawn the most animated and distressful picture, that can be presented to the human imagination.

It seems impossible to recognize the situation, or the adjacent country of Avignon as they appear at present, under the melancholy colors with which Petrarch has shaded them. The fertile plain of the "Comtat Venaissin," in which the city stands, and the rich banks of the Rhone, are described by him as a frightful desart,

thro'

thro' which pours a river swept by continual winds and tempests. Ovid has given us the same picture of the coast of the Black Sea; a climate incontestibly one of the mildest of the earth, and blessed with an almost perpetual spring. The gloomy medium thro' which the two poets regarded every object, explains this extraordinary fact. The Roman poet, occupied with the painful recollection of the luxurious pleasures which reigned in the court of Augustus, from which he was for ever banished, had become insensible to every image of gaiety or delight. Petrarch, an exile from Italy, his native country, always cherishing the fond idea of re-visiting Florence, and despising the manners, while he detested the city of Avignon, set no bounds to his exclamations and complaints. Neither the distinguished favor of several succeeding Popes with which he was honored, nor the consideration due to the country which gave birth to his mistress, Laura, could soften or diminish his antipathy to Avignon.—For me, who viewed it impartially, and without prejudice, I confess

confess that I was charmed with the situation. The prospect from the summit of the rock in the centre of the city, is of uncommon beauty. The "Vent de Bize," which blew in my face, was indeed extremely severe: but I comforted myself with reflecting, that tho' piercing, it was yet wholesome; and that if Louis the eleventh, when in a state of bodily debility, had ordered intercessions to Heaven to avert it; Augustus, on the other hand, was so well convinced of the salubrious and invigorating qualities of that wind, that he erected an altar to it, and ordered it to be placed among the Gods.

The Rhone itself is a noble object, rolling rapidly thro' meadows covered with olive trees, and divided into two considerable channels opposite to Avignon. Across it, extend the ruinous and decayed arches of that bridge, against which Madame de Grignan was so near being lost, and of which Madame de Sevigné, in her Correspondence, makes terrified mention. It was demolished in 1699, by one of the inundations common to the Rhone. When

entire,

entire, it was not less than a quarter of a mile in length; but being so narrow as not to permit two carriages to pass in any part, it had previously become almost useless; and motives of policy prevent the construction of a new bridge, while Avignon belongs, as it still does, to the Papal See.—On the farther side of the Rhone, in Languedoc, stands Ville Neuve, a considerable town, with a magnificent monastery of Benedictins erected on a rock, similar to that on which is built the cathedral of Avignon. The high mountain of Ventoux, in the province of Dauphiné, covered with snow, which Petrarch has described, and to the summit of which he ascended, appears to the north; while the savage rocks of Vaucluse bound the view to the eastward, at the distance of fifteen miles. Beneath spreads an extensive vale, watered by several rivulets that lose themselves in the Rhone, and which is cultivated with the utmost industry.

The city of Avignon itself is in general ill built, irregular, and devoid of beauty; but the Gothic walls and ramparts with

 which

which it has been surrounded by different pontiffs, are well preserved, and are an object of high curiosity. I recollect none so perfect in any part of France. They are exceedingly picturesque, and carry the spectator back, as he contemplates them, to the ages when Avignon constituted the residence of the successors of St. Peter. I know scarcely any city, which involuntarily awakens so many historical, poetic, and interesting recollections. At every step that I advance, in almost every church or chapel that I enter, some monument arrests my attention. Several Popes and Antipopes, who during their lives shook the Romish church with violence and mutual altercation, now repose quietly near each other, in the various monasteries of the place. In that of the Cordeliers, almost opposite to Laura's, is seen the tomb of the brave Grillon, so well known for his invincible courage, as well as for his unshaken attachment to his sovereign, Henry the fourth.

You will not doubt that I visited the fountain of Vaucluse, immortalized by Petrarch,

trarch, to which he so often retired, in order to indulge his grief in solitude. It is only five leagues distant from Avignon, and as I set out early in the morning, I reached the entrance of the valley about ten o'clock. The weather being fine, I walked along the banks of the Sorgne; for so the river is called which issues from the fountain. Meadows of the most lively verdure skirt its sides, above which rise abrupt and lofty rocks, that seem as if designed to seclude it from human view. The valley, which becomes gradually narrower toward the extremity, winding continually, describes the figure of a horse-shoe. The view is at length terminated by an enormous mass of rock, forming a barrier across it, of a prodigious height, and absolutely perpendicular. Thro' its vast recesses run the streams which supply the fountain of Vaucluse; and at its foot appears a bason of water, several hundred feet in circumference, stretched like an expanse, silent and quiet. The sides are very steep, and it is said that in the middle no bottom can be discovered, tho' attempts have been often

 made

made for that purpose; a circumstance, if true, probably resulting from the violence with which the springs bubble up, and prevent any weight from descending beyond a certain depth.

Tho' the fountain is clearer in itself than crystal, yet the incumbent rock casts a continual shade, approaching to black, over its surface. The water escaping from this state of inaction by a narrow passage, is immediately precipitated in a cascade down a rocky channel, where it foams over a number of vast, detached stones, which intercept and impede its progress. They are covered with a deep green moss of many ages, and have probably tumbled from the mountains that overhang the torrent. The rocks themselves, which surround and invest this romantic spot, are worn by time, and the inclemency of the weather, into a thousand extraordinary and fantastic forms, to which imagination gives shape and figure. On one of the pointed extremities, in a situation which appears almost inaccessible, are seen the remains of an ancient castle, projecting over the water. The

peasants

peasants call it "Il castello di Petrarca," and add, with great simplicity, that Laura lived upon the opposite side of the river, under the bed of which was formed a subterranean passage, by which the two lovers visited each other. Nothing is however more certain, than that these are the ruins of the Chateau belonging to the lords, or Seigneurs of Avignon; and the Bishop of Cavaillon resided in it, during the frequent visits which he used to make to Petrarch.—The poet's dwelling was placed unquestionably much lower down, nearer to the bank of the Sorgue; as evidently appears from his minute description of it, and the relation that he gives of his quarrel with the Naiads of the stream, who encroached during the winter on his little adjoining territory. No remains of it are now to be discerned.

I sat down on the edge of the bason, to consider the scene, and to contemplate the romantic assemblage of objects which presented themselves on every side. With a mixt sensation of pleasure and of pain, I surveyed the valley and the fountain, which had been so often witnesses to Petrarch's

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complaints, and hopeless passion. I attempted to discern the cavern itself, which, during the heats of summer, when the waters of Vaucluse are low, opens into the recesses of the rock; where he used, alone, in the dead of night, as he assures us, to indulge his despair. Where is Petrarch now, said I to myself involuntarily. Does his spirit ever revisit these scenes, which he has immortalized? Is he permitted here to wander on the banks of the Sorgue, as the ancients fabled of the shades which wandered on those of the Styx? Is he united in other worlds, to that Laura whom he so purely and ardently loved while here? May he not say to her in the language of Pope,

> "Oh, ever beauteous, ever friendly, tell,
> "Is it in Heaven a crime to love too well?"

We are neither forbidden by reason, nor by religion, to hope, and even to believe, that the dissolution of the body is wholly unconnected with mental or intellectual identity and recognition. Why then should not Petrarch and Laura be invisibly present

at

at this instant? It is at least pleasing to indulge in such suppositions, which carry the human mind beyond the objects of sight, and open to the imagination sources of pleasure, at the same time that they stamp a higher interest on the rocks, and shades, and fountain of Vaucluse.

While I was lost in these reflections, the day darkened, and a sudden storm of rain, from which I was completely sheltered by the incumbent mountain, issuing from a collection of black clouds overhanging the spot, spread thro' the whole landscape a majestic and awful sublimity. When it was past, I retired, tho' reluctantly, from this beautiful and celebrated solitude.

Before I got into the carriage, the peasant who had attended me to the fountain, conducted me to a house situated in the valley, where are still preserved two portraits of the lovers, who have rendered Vaucluse immortal. My chief attention was directed to that of Laura. She appears to be in the earliest bloom of youth, such as she is described by Petrarch, on that morning when he first beheld her. An air of

playful gaiety seems diffused over her countenance. Her eyes are large, and of a deep hazel, her nose justly proportioned, and the contour of her face a perfect oval. Her hair, the color of which approaches to yellow, is confined by a fillet braided and adorned with pearls: over her neck is drawn a faint shade of gauze; her robe is of a pale red, and her arms are covered with a sort of glove which descends half way the hands. In one of them she holds an Amaranth, the emblem of immortality.—Petrarch is painted as a man in middle life, of an engaging figure, and his brows bound with laurel.

I returned to Avignon in the evening, and quitted it on the morning of the ensuing day. At Orange, where I breakfasted, it was impossible not to dedicate an hour to the remains of the Roman theatre, and the triumphal arch of Marius; edifices the most august and magnificent, tho' defaced by the lapse of near two thousand years, and of which I might be tempted perhaps to give you a description, if it had not already been done by so many preceding

ing travellers.—I continued my journey to Lyons, along the eastern bank of the Rhone. On the other side of that river appear the high mountains of the Vivarais covered with snow, and to the right are seen those of Dauphiné, extending to the Alps, with which they join. As I advanced north, the weather became more sharp and piercing, while the "Bize" blew with redoubled keenness, and chilled the spring which was just opening. I arrived at Lyons after three days' journey. My road from thence to this city, lay thro' the provinces of Beaujolois and Forez, the first of which, tho' hilly, is finely cultivated. Between Lyons and Roanne, I passed over the high mountain of Tarare, so dreaded in the last century. From its summit is beheld a prodigious prospect, only bounded towards Savoy by the Alps, which form a vast barrier covered with eternal snow. At Roanne I entered the Forez, a small province, barren, uncultivated, and thinly inhabited. A chain of lofty mountains extends quite across it: thick forests of pine and fir, that cover the steep acclivities,

afford refuge to wolves and wild boars, which are there found in great numbers. Scarcely a hamlet is seen in the course of several miles; and the silence, the depopulation, and romantic solitudes thro' which I passed, strongly reminded me of Sweden or of Finland.

I arrived on Wednesday at Thiers, a considerable town situated on the steep side of a mountain, from whence is beheld a most delicious landscape. The country extends for many leagues on all sides, in a cultivated plain, terminated by another range of mountains; and the town of Clermont itself is distinctly discerned at the distance of five-and-twenty miles. This rich tract of the Auvergne, which is denominated "La Limagne," forms a bason completely surrounded by rocks and hills. The soil is uncommonly fertile, inferior in that respect to no part of France; while several fine streams intersecting it, add to the beauty of the scene.

I got to this place yesterday. The situation of Clermont is agreeable, on a gentle eminence, the ascent to which is gradual

and

and easy. The city itself within the walls, seems to have been built in an age the most barbarous; the streets being so narrow and winding, that no carriage can enter them, and the buildings are of correspondent antiquity: but, to compensate for these inconveniences, the suburbs are charming, and the houses modern and elegant. I visited this morning the petrifying spring, which Charles the ninth of France is said to have surveyed with so much pleasure and admiration. It is distant only a quarter of a mile from the town. In the course of ages, the spring has formed a ridge of stone or incrustation, not less than sixteen feet in height, above a hundred feet long, and in some parts near ten in thickness. As it impeded, and at length totally stopped the current of a little rivulet which intersects its course, the inhabitants were obliged to dig a passage thro' it. The stream is now directed into another channel, and has begun to form a new bridge across the rivulet into which it falls.

It was my intention to have penetrated farther into this romantic and central pro-

vince, so rarely visited by English travellers: but the season is too early to permit me to ascend any of the highest mountains of Auvergne. I should however certainly have gone to Usson, which is only ten leagues distant, if any remains of the castle still existed. I scarcely need remind you that Margaret of Valois, wife to Henry the fourth, shut herself up in it during twenty years. A gentleman who resides at Issoire, near the spot, gave me this description of it.

"The castle of Usson," said he, "stood "upon the summit of an almost inaccessible rock, at the foot of which flowed a "little river. The queen, by a masterly "piece of address, having expelled the "Marquis de Canillac, to whose custody "she was confided by her brother, Henry "the third, rendered herself mistress of the "place. It has been demolished by time, "and by the rude hands of the neighbouring peasants, who have removed almost "all the stones which composed the castle. "Some ruins of it yet remain in the last "stage of decay, which the vulgar appre-

"hend

" hend to have been formerly sacred to re-
" ligious purposes, and which they deno-
" minate, ' Les Chapelles de la Reine Mar-
" guerite.' It is true that they were con-
" structed by that queen; but she had de-
" dicated them to pleasure, not to devo-
" tion, and gave rendezvous in these apart-
" ments to the neighbouring nobility of
" Auvergne. No other traces of Usson
" subsist at this time."

My letter is already of an immoderate length; I shall only add to it, that I am yours, &c.

Bourges in Berri,
6th of May, 1776.

I LEFT Clermont sooner than I had intended, in compliance with an invitation which I could not refuse, to pass some time at the Chateau de Perigeres, belonging to the Count de Laval. The house is situated in an unfrequented part of Auvergne, towards the confines of the Bourbonnois, on a rising ground, which commands an enchanting prospect. Thro' the plain below, flows the river Allier, mentioned in terms of such lively admiration by Madame de Sevigné; on whose banks, she says, might yet be discovered some of the shepherds of fiction and romance. They have disappeared since her time.

In my way from Clermont to the Chateau de Perigeres, which lay thro' a cross road, I stopped at a small inn; where arriving very hungry, I demanded some refreshment. Entering the kitchen for the purpose

purpose of inspecting the provisions which might be found in it, I saw on a table or dresser, of very ample size, in the middle of the room, a spectacle of a curious kind. Two immense heaps of frogs were piled up at each end of the board. In one heap, lay the heads, bodies, and fore-feet of the frogs; which continued still alive, the mouths gaping, opening, and closing from time to time; while their eyes were still wide open. At the other extremity of this table, lay another vast mound, consisting of the hind quarters, that is, of the legs and thighs of the same individual frogs, whose heads and fore parts were lying, only a yard or two removed from their dissevered members. It is to be observed, that only the hind quarters of the frog, are ever eaten, or indeed, contain any substance. The body and fore legs are always thrown away with the head.

While I was contemplating these two piles of frogs, the man cook approached the table with a large *poile a frite*, or frying pan in his hand. Holding it close, he swept into it some fifty or sixty of the legs

of

of the frogs, which he immediately prepared and dressed with a white batter sauce; such as we use in England for artichokes, and for various made dishes. Tho' I found other provisions at the inn, I had not the least repugnance to tasting the fried frogs. They were as white, and I think nearly as delicate as a young chicken, except that they appeared to my palate, more tasteless and insipid. But they were admirably dressed, and served up as hot as possible. It was however, impossible to forget that, like Bruce in Abyssinia, I was eating the hind quarters of these frogs, while the heads and fore quarters were actually alive.

Having finished my dinner, I continued my journey, accompanied, as I had been the whole way from Clermont, by the Abbé D'Arcy; an Englishman of a noble family, allied to the Earl of Holderness, who was tutor to the Count de Laval's children. Towards evening we got to the Chateau de Perigeres. Monsieur de Laval was not at home, but I was received by the Countess in a manner the most noble and polite. She did me the

honor

honor to detain me five days, which I passed in a way never to be erased from my remembrance. I would describe to you her person, but that I shall give you a more just idea of it, in saying that she strikingly resembled the portrait of the duchess of Mazarin, as drawn by the Abbé de St. Real. Her other accomplishments were not inferior to her beauty; and when she danced the "Bourrée" (a dance peculiar to Auvergne), I thought that Hortensia Mancini could not have been comparable to Madame de Laval. I took my leave of her with that reluctance, natural to a person impressed with pleasure and admiration.

Taking the road to Moulins, I stopped at Montpensier, to view the mount where formerly stood the castle, now totally demolished, which is rendered famous in history by the death of Louis the eighth, king of France, and father of St. Louis. He died there in 1226, on his return from the siege of Avignon; and as was commonly, tho' unjustly, supposed, of poison administered to him by the Count de Champagne. He

was

was a prince of vigor, and was surnamed "the Lion," from his personal courage, as his contemporary Richard the first obtained the denomination of "Lion's Heart," for a similar reason. Louis the eighth, while heir to the French crown, during the life of his father, Philip Augustus, had given distinguished proofs of valor and ability. He was even recognized and crowned king of England at London, in 1216: but, the death of John, whose incapacity and vices had rendered him odious to his subjects, awakening the loyalty of the English towards his young son, Henry the third, compelled the French prince to abandon his enterprize, and to return into his native dominions. In 1223, he ascended the throne. During his short reign of only three years, he continued nevertheless successfully to prosecute the great object of Philip Augustus's policy; the expulsion of the English from France. In addition to Normandy and all the other provinces on the Loire, which his father had conquered from John; Louis the eighth regained from Henry the third, the

Limou-

Limousin, Perigord, and various other portions of the duchy of Aquitaine. It is highly probable that if death had not surprized him in the full vigor of his age, he would have obtained the completest triumph over Henry the third; a prince less wicked, but scarcely less weak than John. Under these circumstances, the decease of Louis the eighth is considered by historians, as having been a great misfortune to the French monarchy.

I arrived on the ensuing day at Moulins, which stands in a fine plain close to the river Allier, along the sides of which are planted walks of elm, poplar, and aspin. The city, tho' the capital of the province of Bourbonnois, is mean and ill built. My curiosity led me immediately on my arrival, to the church of the nunnery of the Visitation, where is constructed the Mausoleum of Henry, duke of Montmorenci, whose defeat at Castelnaudari and execution, I have already had occasion more than once to mention. The monument, which was erected to his memory by the duchess, his wife, Marie Felice des Ursins,

is

is composed of the most beautiful and costly marbles. I considered it with sensations of the deepest pity for the unfortunate nobleman to whom it was raised. Castelnaudari, and Leytoure, and Toulouse, all crouded into my mind. The duke appears in a reclining attitude, his left arm supported on his helmet. By him sits his widow, her eyes directed to heaven, and her hands clasped; while over her whole figure, an expression of disconsolate sorrow is strongly impressed.

It is a delightful ride from Moulins to Nevers, thro' the provinces of Bourbonnois and Nivernois. In the centre of Nevers, on the summit of a hill, is built the palace of the ancient dukes. It appears to have been constructed in the sixteenth century; and, tho' beginning to exhibit marks of decay, is still a model of beauty and delicacy in Gothic architecture. The apartments, which are hung with tapestry of two hundred years old, have an air of grotesque and rude magnificence. I was detained in one of the chambers for some minutes, by a portrait of Madame de Montespan,

span, who appears rising from a superb couch, the curtains of which are drawn back, and supported by Cupids. Her attitude, half voluptuous, half contemplative, leaves it uncertain whether she is to be considered as the votary of love, or of reason; of pleasure, or of reflection. She is dressed in a negligent deshabille; her hair floating down over her shoulders and neck in waving ringlets. Her head, reclined, rests on her left hand, while one of her feet is concealed by her robe: the other, which is naked up to the mid-leg, and on which the painter, with great taste, has exhausted all the efforts of his art, is placed on an embroidered cushion, near which her slippers are carelessly thrown. It is impossible to be surprized, that with such personal attractions, added to the graces, wit, and accomplishments, which, as we know, characterized Madame de Montespan; she should have obtained a complete triumph over the gentle and tender, but, less elegant and improved La Valière. It is equally natural that the violence, the caprices, and the exactions of Madame de Monte-

Montespan, should have finally estranged the affections of her lover; and prepared the way for Madame de Maintenon to become the companion, the consolation, and the wife of Louis the fourteenth. These events were in the order of nature, and can excite no astonishment.

I passed the river Loire at La Charité, where I entered the province of Berri; the distance from thence to this city being about twelve leagues. The country is much inferior in beauty and cultivation, to the tract extending between Moulins and Nevers, as the far greater part consists in thick woods, or barren heaths destitute of inhabitants. Bourges is situated in the midst of a plain, open and level as the sea. The city is of a very considerable size, and of great antiquity; a claim, the validity of which most of the buildings evince by the barbarism of their construction, which marks an age of total rudeness and ignorance of the arts of elegance, and even of convenience. I have seen scarcely a house which does not appear to have stood many hundred years.—The "Hotel de Ville"

was

was built by the celebrated Jacques Cœur, so well known in the French history by his greatness, his loyalty, his exile, and his misfortunes. Over the portal, is placed a fine equestrian statue of Charles the seventh, habited in complete armour.

Jacques Cœur, who flourished under his reign, and rendered him the most distinguished services, may be considered as the Cosmo de Medicis of France. If he did not extend the same munificent protection to letters and science, which distinguished Cosmo, he equalled him in commercial enterprize, and in the love of his country. Cœur was the richest private individual of the period in which he lived, traded to every part of Europe, and is said to have employed three hundred factors, in the transaction or superintendance of his vast concerns in foreign countries. When Charles the seventh undertook the conquest of Normandy in 1449, Cœur aided him by a loan of two hundred thousand gold crowns; without which assistance, that valuable province could not have been regained, nor could the English have been expelled. Yet, in recom-

recompense for this, and other marks of affectionate loyalty, Charles shortly afterwards abandoned so meritorious a servant, to the persecution of his enemies, and the avidity of the courtiers.

There is a considerable degree of obcurity thrown over this portion of Cœur's story: but we know that on pretexts or accusations of the most doubtful or improbable nature, he was condemned, imprisoned, and his fortunes were confiscated. Having escaped from prison, by the faithful attachment of some of his own factors, he repaired to Rome, where he appears to have found more protection than among his ungrateful countrymen. He died nevertheless an exile, in the Isle of Chio, about 1456, under the reign of that very sovereign whom he had so deeply obliged, and by whom he was so cruelly treated. Charles frequently held his court at Bourges; and you will probably recollect, that during the extreme distress in which his affairs were involved at the commencement of his reign, the English, elated with their victories under Henry the fifth,

bestowed

bestowed on him the contemptuous appellation of "Le petit Roi de Bourges," from the loyal and constant attachment which the citizens expressed towards him, thro' every change of fortune.

The tower, denominated "La grosse tour," in which Louis the twelfth, king of France, when only duke of Orleans, was detained a prisoner more than two years, by the Lady of Beaujeu, regent under Charles the eighth, exists no longer. It was demolished in 1651, during the minority of Louis the fourteenth, by order of Cardinal Mazarin; and a modern building has been constructed on the spot, of the stones which composed that edifice.

During my stay here, I went to see the tomb of Jane of Valois, daughter to Louis the eleventh, and wife to Louis the twelfth, from whom he was divorced, in order to marry Anne of Bretagne, on his accession to the crown of France. The repudiated princess retired to this city, and having dedicated her remaining days to piety, died in the convent of St. Jane, which she had herself founded. One of the nuns

 shewed

shewed me, thro' the grating, her slippers and nuptial robes, which are preserved with great care; adding, that innumerable miracles had been performed by her relics and intercession.

The cathedral of Bourges forms a most magnificent edifice, tho' the external architecture does not correspond in beauty or symmetry, with the interior of the structure. The church is of prodigious dimensions, far exceeding, as I think, any cathedral that we have in England; and the quantity of painted glass which it contains, is scarcely inferior to that in the windows of the church of Gouda in Holland. John, duke of Berri, brother to Charles the fifth, king of France, lies buried in the subterranean chapel of this edifice, beneath a marble tomb of costly workmanship. He was a weak and indolent prince, well known in history, under the unhappy reign of Charles the sixth, his nephew; when the frenzy with which that unfortunate monarch was seized, gave full scope to the intrigues and ambition of his uncles.

Scarcely any other objects present themselves

selves to the eye in this city, except ruins, and I am almost afraid, as I walk thro' the narrow winding labyrinths, called streets, that the buildings will fall upon my head. If Charles the seventh could revive, I am persuaded that he would perfectly recognize the place, which appears to have undergone very little alteration, and to have received hardly any embellishment, during more than three centuries which have elapsed since his death. The local position of Bourges, placed almost in the centre of France, removed to a vast distance from the sea, and destitute even of any great communication with it, by means of such a river as the Loire, or the Garonne; these circumstances account for and explain the causes of its ruinous appearance. The inhabitants have neither commerce to vivify, nor intercourse with foreigners to enlighten and improve their city. Madrid and Prague, two capitals, similar in situation to Bourges, are, probably from their inaccessibility, and will always remain, the least improved capitals in Europe. It is the vicinity to the ocean, which in all ages

has introduced wealth, refinement, and civilization among men.

Louis the eleventh was born at Bourges, and in the "Hotel de Ville" is seen a painting descriptive of this event. France, under the figure of a female, appears rising from her throne, to receive the medallion of that monarch, which is presented to her by the Genius of Berri. It must be confessed that the sentiment of affection towards their kings, is very ardent in this country, when they can derive any pride from commemorating the birth of such a sovereign as Louis the eleventh: a prince, who for the honor of human nature, and for the felicity of mankind, it were to be wished, had expired in the cradle! It has always appeared to me, that *our* loyalty, if not so ardent as *the French*, is a far more rational and estimable principle. We naturally venerate Greenwich, because Elizabeth was there born, whose reign recals images of national glory and prosperity.

"We kneel, and kiss the consecrated earth,
"The sacred spot that gave Eliza birth."

I look

I look with similar respect on the tomb of Edward, the Black Prince, in the cathedral of Canterbury; surmounted with the spurs that he earned at Cressy, and the helmet or the gauntlets that he wore at Poitiers. But, I believe that it would never enter into our heads, as a mark of loyalty, to commemorate by painting or sculpture, the birth of John, or of king Richard the third. The French, however, it is evident, think and act differently on these subjects.

This province, tho' large, and naturally fertile, is little cultivated or improved; a circumstance, no doubt, chiefly resulting from the want of any navigable river, by which the grain and other productions of Berri, might be transported to different quarters of the kingdom.

To-morrow morning I leave Bourges. From Orleans or Blois you may expect to hear of

Yours, &c.

Blois,
Tuesday, 14th May, 1776.

I STAID some hours at Mehun-sur-Yeure in Berri, to contemplate the magnificent remains of the castle. It is only four leagues distant from Bourges, and is rendered famous in history, by the death of Charles the seventh of France, who constructed it. He died there in 1461, in consequence of a voluntary abstinence from food, caused by the apprehension of being poisoned by his own son, Louis the eleventh. Antiquity, so fertile in crimes, furnishes, I believe, no parallel case. It is in vain to look for any such, even among the Cæsars. One of the greatest and best of our own princes, Henry the second, expired indeed, of a similar disease, caused by the ingratitude and disobedience of his sons. But, the agitations of his mind, not any dread of being poisoned by them, produced his death. Louis the eleventh stands therefore alone, remote from all competition

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in this respect, ancient or modern. Even Cæsar Borgia, and Philip the second, spared their fathers.

The situation of the castle of Mehun, which is not favored by nature, corresponds ill with the grandeur of the structure. It stands in a wide-extended plain, sheltered by deep woods; and at its foot flows the little river Yeure, which dividing at the place into several streams, forms a number of marshy islands covered with willows. It is difficult to conceive what motives could have recommended the spot to Charles. Tho' the castle of Mehun has been burnt by lightning, as well as greatly injured by time, added to the depredations of the neighbouring peasants, yet its ruins are even now inexpressibly august and beautiful. I visited every part of it which was accessible. The great tower remains very perfect, and three of the apartments, which appear to have been rooms of state, might almost be inhabited at present. The chamber where, as it is said, the unhappy king expired, is in one of the smaller towers, the entrance into which is ob-

structed by the stones that have fallen from above. The whole edifice, which is composed of a stone nearly equal to marble in whiteness and durability, is surrounded by a deep ditch. In the centre stands the chapel, the workmanship and delicacy of which are astonishing. The castle itself appears to me, to exhibit one of the finest monuments now existing in Europe, of the taste and style of architecture common about the middle of the fifteenth century, when the arts began slowly to revive from their slumber of so many ages.

Charles the seventh is described by the French historians, under colors similar to those, with which Pope, in his notes on the Iliad, has drawn the portrait of Paris. Naturally brave, munificent, amiable, protecting and cultivating all the elegant occupations of a liberal mind; but, sinking continually into an indolent effeminacy, and sacrificing every grand or patriotic sentiment, to the fascinating charms of female beauty. He must nevertheless be ranked among the great kings who have reigned in France. The castle of Mehun appears

never

never to have been the favorite residence of any succeeding sovereign after the decease of Charles; perhaps, from the nature and circumstances of his death. It was neglected by the immediate successors of that prince, lost in the superior lustre of Fontainbleau and Chambord under Francis the first, and ultimately alienated by Louis the fourteenth, to support his ruinous and expensive wars in the last century.

I pursued my journey thro' the provinces of Berri and Sologne to Orleans, where I arrived on the ensuing day. The entrance is noble and striking from the south, over a fine bridge thrown across the Loire, of nine arches. The city itself is in general very meanly constructed, and the streets are narrow, one only excepted, which conducts from the bridge, composed of modern, elegant buildings. In this street stands the celebrated monument, where Charles the seventh and the Maid of Orleans are represented on their knees, before the body of our Saviour, which lies extended on the lap of the Virgin. It was erected by order of that monarch in 1458, to perpetuate his victories over the

English, and their expulsion from his dominions. All the figures are in iron. The king appears bareheaded, his helmet, which is surmounted with a crown, lying by him. Opposite to him kneels the Maid herself, in the same attitude of grateful devotion to Heaven. It may justly be esteemed a most precious and invaluable historical monument.

The more that I reflect on all the circumstances of the memorable siege of Orleans, and its termination by the sudden appearance of Joan d'Arc, the less am I able to account for it on any common principles of reason or philosophy. I well know that such a sentiment in the present age, may expose me to criticism. I am aware how much ridicule Voltaire has thrown upon the Maid, and upon every part of her history, in his inimitable, but profligate and licentious poem, of the "Pucelle." I can admit the full force of enthusiasm on one side, and of terror on the other, in an age of considerable barbarism and general superstition, such as was the period in which she appeared. But, neither

neither these circumstances, nor the assertion that she was instructed to personate the part which she performed, and consequently was only an engine of state policy, fitted to the moment in which she was brought forward:—none of these solutions can satisfy my mind on the subject.

Consider coolly the facts; they are of no common kind. Orleans, completely invested, starved, surrounded by lines of circumvallation, was reduced to extremity. Sir John Fastolfe, on whom Shakespear has exerted his powers of ridicule with as much success, as Voltaire has done on the "Pucelle;" had just gained over the French a memorable victory, known in our annals by the name of the "Battle of Herrings;" and Orleans was about to surrender. On the 29th of April, 1429, Joan d'Arc appears. From that instant, the English become paralyzed. They remain motionless, while she enters and relieves the city. In ten days more, she drives them from before the walls, and raises the siege. Far from stopping there, she conducts the king to Rheims, from Chinon

in Touraine, across one half of France. On the 17th of July, that is, in seventy-nine days from her first appearance before Orleans, Charles receives the crown, which she may, without any exaggeration, be said to have placed on his head. In a word, from the lowest and most hopeless point of depression, he becomes victorious.

It cannot be attributed to want of military talents among the English, nor to any defect of civil ability and political wisdom. John, duke of Bedford, Regent of France, was a prince of consummate capacity. Never perhaps, had we more generals of merit, experience, and reputation, than at that period. Suffolk, Warwick, Talbot, Scales, and many other famous commanders, who had served under Henry the fifth, continued to conquer under his infant son. That a village girl should, either from the impulse of loyalty and patriotic enthusiasm, or from religious delusion and fanaticism, or as a state engine instructed for the purpose; restore a monarchy under such circumstances, and in so short a space of time;

time;—I repeat it, exceeds my comprehension. We must look higher, for the explanation of the appearance and the actions of the Maid of Orleans.

In the "Hotel de Ville" is preserved a portrait of that immortal woman, which I studied long and attentively. Tho' it was not done till 1581, which was one hundred and fifty years after her execution, it is probably the oldest original picture of her, that is now existing. The painter may be supposed to have drawn a flattering resemblance, and to have conferred on his heroine imaginary charms. Her face, tho' long, is of exceeding interest, heightened by an expression of intelligence and grandeur rarely united. Her hair falls loosely down her back, and she wears on her head a sort of bonnet enriched with pearls, shaded with white plumes, and tied under her chin with a string. About her neck is fastened a little collar, and lower down, upon her bosom, hangs a necklace composed of small links. Her dress, which is that of a female, I find it difficult exactly to describe. It fits close to the body, and is cut or slashed

at

at the arms and elbows. Round her waist is buckled an embroidered girdle, and in her right hand she holds the sword, with which she expelled the enemies of her sovereign, and her country.

I am not surprized at the animated and enthusiastic attachment, which the French still cherish for her memory. The critical and desperate emergency in which she appeared; her sex, her youth, and even the very obscurity of her birth; the spotless and irreproachable nature of her conduct, during every part of her life; the unparalleled success which crowned her enterprize; the cruel and detestable sentence by which she was put to death; finally, the air of the marvelious spread over the whole narration, increased and strengthened by that veneration which time affixes to every great event: —all these united causes conspire to place her almost above mortality. Rome and Athens would undoubtedly have ranked her among their tutelary deities, and have erected temples to her honor: nor can I help being amazed, that among the almost infinite number of modern saints, who croud

croud and disgrace their churches, no Pontiff has been found to canonize her, and no altar has yet been dedicated to the Maid of Orleans.

The environs of Orleans, more especially in the province of Sologne, to the south of the Loire, are very agreeable. It is in general a level country, covered with corn and vines. I rode out during my stay, to "La Source," a Villa rendered celebrated by the abode of Henry St. John, Lord Bolingbroke, who passed the chief part of his exile in this retreat. Near the house, in a hollow dell, is seen the spring from which the place has received its name, and which may be regarded as a most extraordinary Phænomenon. The water rises out of the earth from a very narrow aperture, in a prodigious column, forming immediately a considerable river called the Loiret, which after winding its course about two leagues, is lost in the Loire. Monsieur B——, to whom the place now belongs, has deformed and totally disfigured this beautiful fountain, by an ill-judged and mistaken taste. Instead of a dark and

gloomy

gloomy hollow, shaded by deep woods, adapted to the genius of the scene, in the midst of which the spring formerly rose with violence out of the ground, he has enlarged the opening from whence it issues; and it now only appears to bubble up scarcely above the surface of the ground, in the middle of a shallow, artificial bason. No trees of any kind conceal or shelter it from view, and after first passing thro' a narrow channel, it is dispersed in the form of a looking-glass before the house. One cannot view so ridiculous and absurd a Metamorphosis, without the greatest regret, mixed with a sort of indignation.

Leaving Orleans on Sunday morning, I arrived here the same evening. Curiosity to visit the tomb of Louis the eleventh, who is interred at "Notre Dame de Clery," induced me to take the road thro' that place, tho' less direct than the ordinary route. I passed the bridge of St. Mesmin, memorable for the assassination of Francis, duke of Guise, with Brantome in my hand; and attempted, from his minute and exact description, to ascer-

ascertain the precise spot where that illustrious person was killed by Meré Poltrot, during the civil wars of France under Charles the ninth.

The church of Clery was built by Louis the eleventh, who entertained always a singular and capricious devotion for the Virgin Mary, to whom it is dedicated. He always denominated her "Ma bonne notre "Dame de Clery." From a similar superstition, he ordered his body to be interred there, under a monument, which he had himself erected. The Hugonots, in the civil wars under Catherine of Medicis, having broken open his tomb, scattered the bones about the church with savage ferocity. A similar fate attended the remains of some of our own kings, at the period of the Reformation under Henry the eighth. The bones of Henry the first, who was buried in the abbey of Reading; and those of Stephen, his successor, who was interred at Feversham, were treated with the same barbarous indignity, by the first Reformers. Louis the thirteenth caused the present monument to be constructed in

1622,

1622, which is composed of white marble, and well executed. The king is represented on his knees, in an attitude of prayer, his hands raised to Heaven. His queen, Charlotte of Savoy, was originally buried in the same tomb, and Charles the eighth caused his own heart to be deposited there, near his father's remains.

Having crossed the Loire again at Beaugency, I passed the whole afternoon in the gardens and groves of Menars. This was the seat of the celebrated Madame de Pompadour, who occupied so high a place under the late reign. She began to improve it, and at her death bequeathed it to the Marquis de Marigny, her only brother. The situation, which is on a high range of hills overhanging the Loire, is of unparalleled beauty; from whence the eye is continually entertained on every side, with a prospect the most extensive, delicious, and cultivated. Towns, and palaces, and castles, intermixed with forests, hamlets, abbeys, and vineyards, are spread below; while a noble river pouring thro' the plain, diffuses plenty and fertility in its progress.

The

The gardens are laid out with great elegance, and adorned with a number of statues, chiefly presented to the Marquis by his late majesty, Louis the fifteenth. A "Pasiphaë," lamenting Phaeton, and beginning to take root, detained me for some minutes; but I quitted this figure, to observe an "Atlas," than which nothing can be more perfect. The statue is larger than the life, and as Atlas is represented in the act of attempting to tear himself from the rock into which he is about to be transformed, all his muscles are necessarily in the most violent state of exertion. The artist has found means to give a sort of suction to the stone, which makes it appear to draw in the limbs of Atlas, and in some parts to have taken possession of them. It is a masterly production of sculpture. Monsieur de Marigny has prodigiously improved the place, since the Marchioness of Pompadour's decease. The terrace does not yield to that of Windsor, or of St. Germain; and the woods, thro' which winds a murmuring rivulet, are of the most secluded solitude. In the midst of

them,

them, concealed under a thick cover of trees, appears a Cupid, who seems as if just alighted on a pedestal covered with roses. Nothing can exceed the archness of his looks, which make one tremble;—but he has his finger on his lips.

To-morrow you shall hear more. I am fatigued, but it is the fatigue of pleasure.

Blois,
Wednesday, 15th May, 1776.

It appears to me impossible for any person to be destitute of some emotions of pleasure, at the view of a place so distinguished in history, as the city from which I write. Judge then what I experience, who cannot contemplate the spot where any great achievement has been performed in ages past, without feeling the liveliest enthusiasm; when I look upon the castle, where Louis the twelfth, justly surnamed the father of his people, was born: in which were solemnized the nuptials of Margaret of Valois, sister of Francis the first, with Henry d'Albret, king of Navarre; where Isabella of Bavaria, and Mary of Medicis, both queens of France, were imprisoned by their own sons! within whose walls, Henry, duke of Guise, and the Cardinal, his brother, were sacrificed to the vengeance of Henry the third! where died Valentina of Milan, duchess of Orleans; where

where Anne of Bretagne, and Claude, her daughter, successively queens of France, likewise expired: and to close this august series of princes, where Catherine of Medicis, so renowned for her talents and her crimes, finished her memorable career!

I tread with reverence over the ground, rendered in some degree sacred, and view with a melancholy satisfaction, the towers once inhabited by queens and monarchs, now tending to decay, or covered with ivy, which spreads a twilight thro' the apartments at noon-day. An air of departed greatness is strongly diffused thro' the whole palace, and increased by the silence which reigns universally. The cyphers and devices of succeeding princes, are faintly discerned on the front of the edifice, or traced over the gateways. I distinguish the "Porcupine" of Louis the twelfth, the "Salamander" of Francis the first, and the amorous "Crescent" of his son Henry the second. I follow the remains of the gallery constructed by Henry the fourth, and wander in the avenue of elms planted by Catherine of Medicis; or survey with regret

gret the superb and unfinished edifice begun by Gaston, duke of Orleans.—You must pardon these unconnected exclamations, which have escaped me in spite of myself. I will now endeavor to give you some more methodical and intelligible description of the place.

The castle of Blois, which stands on a rock immediately above the Loire, commands a view, hardly, if at all inferior to the prospect seen from Menars. The ancient Counts of Blois, who held their constant residence here, constructed the original castle, of which no remains now subsist, except one large round tower. Guy, the last Count of the house of Chatillon, alienated it to Louis, duke of Orleans, brother to Charles the sixth of France, who was afterwards murdered in the "Rue "Barbette" at Paris, in 1407; and from whom it descended to Louis the twelfth, his grandson. The eastern and southern sides, as they now subsist, were principally built by that king; and over the grand gateway that conducts into the court of the castle, stands an equestrian statue of Louis,

habited

habited in a coat of mail. The style of architecture, which is characteristic of the beginning of the sixteenth century, merits great attention: but some of the figures which support the windows, are of a nature so singularly indecent, that in the state of refinement to which modern manners have attained, it excites our surprize how a prince so virtuous as Louis the twelfth is represented to have been, or a woman so correct and so reserved in her manners as Anne of Bretagne, his queen, could ever have permitted them to be placed in the most conspicuous part of a royal palace. Our astonishment is however diminished, when we consider that even in edifices consecrated to piety; in churches, cloisters, and chapter houses; among monks and nuns, bound to the most rigorous observance of vows of chastity; the same, or even grosser violations of decency are found among the figures that support the roofs, or adorn the capitals. It is a striking proof of the simple, but coarse and unpolished manners of that period; when the quality which we denominate delicacy,

was unknown; and when neither the majesty of the throne, nor the sanctity of the priesthood, imposed any restraint on the ebullitions of the sculptor, or the architect.

The northern front of the castle was constructed by Francis the first, about the year 1520, soon after his accession to the throne of France. A more splendid style, a workmanship approaching in delicacy and elegance to the Greek and Roman architecture, discriminates it from the portion built by Louis the twelfth; and we evidently trace the advancement in the arts made by a more refined age. The apartments are all spacious and magnificent, tho' now dismantled and neglected. I was shewn the celebrated chamber, and the precise spot, on which Henry, duke of Guise, was assassinated in 1588, by order of Henry the third. The stones which were tinged with his blood, have been almost scraped away by the curiosity of successive travellers. As I stood between the two doors, at one of which the duke had just entered; and the piece of tapestry that covered the other of which, he

 was

was in the act of raising, as we know from Davila, when he was put to death; I could not help being carried back in imagination, to that scene and period. Here, said I to myself, fell that audacious and ambitious prince, who, neither a sovereign nor a subject, presumed to set his foot upon the throne, and upon the neck of his master. Here he expiated his criminal projects, covered with wounds, like Cæsar in the senate house. His body, disfigured and bloody, was extended on this floor, where I am standing; and it was here that Henry the third, contemplating his corpse, still impressive even in death, exclaimed, "Ah! qu'il etoit grand! "Il paroit plus grand, mort, que vivant!"

At the western extremity of the building stands a tower, denominated "La Tour "de Chateau-Regnaud," famous for having been the scene of the murder of Louis, Cardinal of Guise, brother to the duke. I went down into the dungeon where that turbulent and unfortunate prelate passed the night previous to his execution, with his companion, the archbishop of Lyons. Two doors of massy iron open into a gloomy

gloomy chamber, vaulted, into which the light is only admitted by one small window closed with iron bars. The figure of the room, which is irregular, may be about 20 feet in diameter every way. In the middle is perforated a circular hole, sufficiently large to receive the body of a man, which communicates with a room below; and under it are said to be three ranges of dungeons, one beneath the other. The Cardinal himself was put to death in a sort of recess hollowed into the wall, on the day following that of his brother, the duke of Guise. The guards of Henry executed the order with their halberds.—It must be admitted that they both perished the just martyrs of their inordinate ambition; and this assassination is, I believe, the only one recorded in history, for which, if possible, the circumstances seem almost to plead a full exculpation.

At the eastern termination of the northern front, stands the "Salle des Etats," where Henry the third assembled the States-general of France twice, during his distracted reign. It is a vast hall, now disused, and almost

in ruins. In the chimney, the bodies of the duke and cardinal of Guise, after their assassination, are said to have been consumed to ashes. You will perhaps recollect the animated Apostrophe of their mother, the duchess of Guise, addressed to the equestrian statue of Louis the twelfth, on her receiving the intelligence of the death of her two children. She was daughter to Renee of France, duchess of Ferrara, and as such, was herself grand-daughter to that monarch. Henry the third sent her a captive to the castle of Amboise, after the execution of her sons. Having embarked upon the Loire, she turned towards the palace of Blois, and invoking with lifted arms the shade of her royal ancestor, whose statue was over the portal, "Ah! grand Roi," exclaimed she, "avez vous fait batir ce "chateau, pour y faire mourir les enfans "de votre petite fille!"

The western front is the work of Gaston, duke of Orleans, son of Henry the fourth, and brother to Louis the thirteenth. It is a beautiful and magnificent edifice, but was unhappily left incomplete by his death,

death, in 1659. Mansard was the architect whom he employed in its construction; and more than three hundred thousand Livres were uselessly expended on this sumptuous building, which is uninhabitable, and already far gone in decay. Gaston himself, who foresaw the future state of neglect and ruin in which it would be left; under that conviction exclaimed as he lay expiring, "Domus mea, domus "desolationis in eternum!" All the other designs and plans of alteration which he had begun, were laid aside at his decease.

The gardens of the castle, which were formerly very extensive, are now converted into private property; and the superb gallery, which was constructed by Henry the fourth, to divide the upper and lower gardens, is only to be traced in its ruins, as it was demolished about thirteen years ago, by order of the court. The walk of Catherine of Medicis, however, still subsists; it is of a prodigious length, extending to the forest of Blois, and forming an avenue to the castle truly royal.

During the whole of the sixteenth century, and even for a considerable part of the seventeenth, this palace might be considered as one of the most frequent, as well as favorite residences of the French monarchs. Its distance from the capital of the kingdom, more than any other cause, has probably conduced to deprive it of the distinction which it had so long enjoyed. The situation, the beauty of the surrounding country, together with the Loire itself, render the position such as it is difficult to exceed, either in France, or in any other part of Europe.

I went yesterday to visit Chambord, the famous palace of Francis the first, which is about four leagues from hence, on the southern side of the Loire. It stands low, in the midst of deep woods, and has all the appearance of one of Tasso's or Ariosto's enchanted castles, raised out of the earth by magic powers. The magnitude of the whole structure, together with the numerous turrets, pinnacles, domes, and towers that crown it, over which the lapse of two centuries begins to throw an air of decay,

and

and waning splendor, produce an effect on the beholder, difficult to be described. Thick forests surround it on all sides, and in the front flows, or rather stagnates, a little river called the Cousson, black, and full of sedges. Never was any situation less favored by nature. Even Versailles is superior to Chambord in that respect. The palace, conformable to the taste of the age in which it was built, is moated round; but the architecture, tho' strictly Gothic, is full of beauty and elegance. A grand spiral stair-case, constructed of stone, in the centre of the building, leads to the different ranges of apartments: by a singular contrivance it is rendered convolvular and double, so that two persons may ascend or descend at the same time, without ever seeing or meeting each other. Tho' I cannot convey to you an exact idea how this effect is produced, yet it is curious and unique in its kind.

The chambers, which are now unfurnished, and beginning to feel the injurious effects of time, are nevertheless still extremely magnificent. Those which were

occupied by the late Marechal Saxe, are not entirely destitute of furniture, and have been in some degree modernized. In many of them, the beams which are stretched across from side to side, in order to support the ceilings, exceedingly deform the appearance of the rooms. Catherine of Medicis, who had been informed by an astrologer, that she was in danger of being crushed under the ruins of a house, caused them to be placed in this manner, to secure her from the fatal consequences of the predicton

I inquired after the pane of glass, on which were formerly seen the two lines written with a diamond, by the hand of Francis the first. They were in a little closet communicating with the chapel, but are now lost by some accident, or have probably been carried away. The lines were these :

> " Toute Femme varie.
> " Mal habil qui s'y fie !"—

Some amorous vexation, caused by his mistress's caprice or inconstancy, probably gave occa-

occasion to this severe sarcasm on a sex, to which he had been devoted during his whole life, and his fatal attachment to which produced his premature death.

Immense sums of money were expended by Francis the first in the construction of Chambord, eighteen hundred workmen having been employed during twelve years in its completion. There are said to be twelve hundred large, and four hundred smaller apartments in the palace. It was here that Francis entertained the emperor Charles the fifth, with his accustomed magnificence, during the visit which that prince paid him on the rebellion of the inhabitants of Ghent, in 1540. Henry the second made some additions to the palace. His father's device, a "Salamander in the "flames," is seen in almost every part of the building. On one small tower only, I discovered those of Henry himself, a "Cres-"cent, with the letter H."

After having passed some hours in the different galleries or apartments, I sat down on the bank of the rivulet, in front of the palace, to contemplate it at leisure. I

spread my cold provisions on the grass, under the shade of two ancient elms; and after having dined, resigned myself to all that train of reflection, naturally excited by the view of so magnificent a structure.

Since the decease of Marechal Saxe, about twenty-six years ago, Chambord is going fast to decay. Louis the fourteenth made several visits to it, to enjoy the pleasure of hunting; but his successor, the late king, totally neglected it, and many hundred thousand livres must now be expended on the palace, before it could be rendered fit to lodge and receive a sovereign. Its immense magnitude, which makes it require continual repairs, will necessarily hasten its downfall, and motives of economy will probably produce in some future time, its entire demolition.

The city of Blois is meanly built, and many of the houses are of equal antiquity with the castle itself. It lies on the declivity of the hill along the northern bank of the river, and is joined to a considerable suburb on the opposite side of the Loire, by a modern bridge. The inhabitants have

always

always been distinguished in modern times, by the amenity of their manners, and the purity of their language: circumstances which unquestionably arose from the residence, which during near two centuries, the court was accustomed to make at this place, or in its vicinity. Tho' no longer visited by their kings, yet the inhabitants still strongly retain these characteristic features. The French spoken at Blois, like the Italian spoken at Sienna, is far superior to that of any other provincial city; and it forms an additional inducement to attract, as well as to detain, foreigners. It appears to me impossible to quit Blois and its environs without regret.

No language can adequately describe the beauty of the Loire, or the fertility of the country thro' which it flows. The extreme poverty and misery of the peasants, in the midst of a delicious paradise, producing in the greatest abundance all the necessaries and elegancies of life, impresses me with pity, wonder, and indignation. I see much magnificence, bnt still more distress; one princely Chateau, surrounded with a thou-

sand wretched hamlets; the most studied and enervate luxury among the higher orders of society, contrasted with beggary and nakedness among the people: a gaiety, a softness, and an urbanity, universally characteristic of every rank, to which it is impossible to refuse attachment and admiration.

To-morrow morning I continue my progress slowly along the Loire.

Tours,

Tours,
Tuesday, 21st of May, 1776.

THE country from Blois to this city is one of the most agreeable in France, the whole road lying along the bank of the river Loire. Hills, whose sides are covered with vines; forests, among which appear spires and villas; or wide plains cultivated with the greatest industry, continually diversify and enliven the scene; almost every part of which has been dignified and immortalized by history.

I stopped during more than two hours, to view the castle of Chaumont, which is built on a high point of land about five leagues below Blois, on the southern bank of the Loire, and commanding a most extensive prospect. The pile is Gothic, and was constructed about the middle of the fifteenth century, by the Lords of the house of Amboise. The Cardinal of that name, the virtuous and incorrupt minister of Louis the twelfth, was himself born there, and

the

the devices of his family are yet distinctly to be traced on the great towers of the castle. They consist of two letters D thus interwoven, and under them appears a Volcano: this conceit, by a sort of pun which in that age was much admired, formed the word "Chau-Mont." Henry the second made a present of the castle, to his mistress, Diana de Poitiers, duchess of Valentinois, so celebrated in the annals of France. She improved and enlarged it very considerably, as is evinced by the "hunting-horn," one of her emblems, which appears in many parts of the building. On the death of her royal lover in 1559, Catherine of Medicis, who had long envied her the possession of Chaumont, rather compelled, than requested, the duchess to renounce it in her favor: but, by an act of generosity becoming a queen, she presented Diana in return, the palace of Chenonceaux-sur-Cher, distant only a few leagues from hence. Soon after the death of Catherine, which happened in 1588, Chaumont fell into the hands of the Viscount de Sardini, a Lucquese noble-

man,

man, who had married a lady of the house of Limeüil, distantly allied to that princess by blood. His descendants are now extinct. Exactly opposite to it, about a mile distant from the Loire, stands the castle of Onzain, in which Louis, first prince of Condé, who was afterwards killed at Jarnac in 1569, was imprisoned by Catherine of Medicis after the battle of Dreux, during the subsequent siege of Orleans.

Having crossed the Loire again from Chaumont, to the northern shore, I arrived at Amboise the same evening. The town is mean and ill-built, but has been rendered celebrated in history, by the conspiracy of the Protestants in 1560, which opened the fatal wars of religion in France. The castle is situated on a craggy rock, upon the southern bank of the river, extremely difficult of access, and the sides of which are almost perpendicular. At its foot flows the Loire, which is there divided into two streams by a small island. I am not surprized that Francis, duke of Guise, when he expected an insurrection among the Hugonots, chose to remove Francis the second to this fortress,

as to a place of perfect security. Only two detached parts of the ancient castle now remain, one of which was constructed by Charles the eighth, and the other by Francis the first. It is perhaps unnecessary to remind you, that the former of those princes was born and died at Amboise. Under his reign, the castle of Amboise constituted the favorite residence of the sovereign and the court. I sought in vain for the "Galerie "de Haquelabac," in which Charles the eighth expired of an apoplectic seizure, in 1498. It is now demolished. The simple and affecting description which Philip de Comines has left us of that event, was present to my memory and imagination, as I looked round me. Fancy supplied all that time had defaced or withdrawn. The confusion produced by the king's alarming attack, among the croud of courtiers and attendants: the spectacle of the queen, Anne of Bretagne, fixed and motionless with grief, at her husband's sudden death: the royal body stretched on a bed of state, surrounded with tapers, monks, and nobles: Comines himself at the foot of the bed, kneeling,

kneeling, and offering up his prayers for the repose of the soul of his departed master:—all these images, consigned to us by history, accompanied me over the mouldering towers and ruinous apartments of the castle.

Beneath the chapel, is a subterranean oratory, to which I was conducted by a winding staircase; and in which lies extended a statue representing the body of our Saviour. Drops of blood appear issuing from the side, such as we may suppose when taken down from the cross; and it is calculated to make a powerful impression on the imagination, when increased by the gloom of the place itself in which it reposes. "This chapel," said the man who accompanied me, "was peculiarly fre-
"quented by Louis the eleventh, and the
"effigy which you here see, he was accus-
"tomed to hold in high veneration. Of
"it he asked forgiveness for the executions
"which he commanded, and the crimes
"which he meditated. It has remained
"for near three hundred years, ever since
"that

"that king's death, without alteration of "any kind."

Several large iron hooks are still to be seen in the walls of the castle, on the side facing the Loire. It cannot admit of a doubt that they are those on which the bodies of the Hugonots, killed at the time of the conspiracy of Amboise, were fastened by order of the Guises. In order to impress the beholders with more terror, the bodies of the slaughtered insurgents were exhibited to general view, dressed in their clothes, booted and spurred, as they fell in action. Who that has ever perused the account which d'Aubigné has given us of his father's emotions, on surveying the mangled remains of his associates and companions, thus impaled, and abandoned to birds of prey, or bleaching in the winds; can ever forget the passage? What so striking, as the malediction which he pronounces on his son, if he shall fail to avenge the martyrs of civil and religious liberty, thus sacrificed and exposed before the eyes of their countrymen? The horror of such a sight,

could,

could, indeed, only have been exceeded by the ferocity of the age, that could exhibit it to all France. Achilles dragging the body of Hector at his chariot wheels, round the walls of Troy, is more natural, and less revolting to the human mind.

The unfortunate Mary Stuart, destined to a life of imprisonment, terminated by a scaffold and a block, was a spectatress of the vengeance exercised by her uncles, the duke of Guise and Cardinal of Lorrain, on the Hugonots. It was to Amboise that she was conveyed, with the young king of France her husband, when the intelligence of the conspiracy reached the court, and compelled him to repair thither for safety. Unhappy princess, whose beauty and accomplishments were obliterated by her errors and her crimes! In this castle she passed a considerable portion of that fugitive period, during which she was queen of France: happily unconscious of the still more sanguinary scenes reserved for her in Scotland and in England, of which she was to perform the principal part!

Such were the reflections which presented them-

themselves to my mind at Amboise. I am conscious that they have led me too far; but it was difficult to repress them, while surrounded by the objects which gave them birth. The genius of French history accompanies the traveller, at every scene, and at every step, as he proceeds along the banks of the Loire. Those of the Seine, the Rhone, and the Garonne, equally beautiful, and often more picturesque, want nevertheless this charm, which perpetually carries us back to past ages, and to remote times.

From the hill that rises behind the castle, is seen another of those enchanting landscapes, which these provinces of France continually exhibit, where the eye is delighted with a profusion of natural beauties. On the ensuing day I went to Chanteloup, the palace of the duke de Choiseul, about a mile from Amboise. After having seen only a few months ago, the castle of one disgraced and exiled statesman, on the banks of the Garonne; it was striking to visit the residence of another fallen first minister, on the banks of the Loire. The two dukes, of

Aiguillon

Aiguillon and of Choiseul, who successively, for so considerable a portion of Louis the fifteenth's reign, alternately governed France, and convulsed or tranquillized Europe; are now, if not absolutely consigned to oblivion, at least reduced to personal insignificance. They may rank with the Butes, the Rockinghams, and the Graftons of England. A far greater degree of general estimation, and a much higher portion of national respect, accompany Choiseul nevertheless, to Chanteloup, than have followed Aiguillon to the place of his banishment. Whatever sentence posterity may pass on the measures, the administration, and the enterprizes of Choiseul; it is impossible not to admit the elevation of his mind, the extent of his views, and the energy of his character. In the duke d'Aiguillon's ministry I recognize none of these qualities; nor from Bretagne to Languedoc, did I hear any expressions of regret uttered for his present fate.

Neither the situation nor the exposition of Chanteloup are, in my opinion, happily chosen. The prospect which it commands, is very limited; and the Loire, altho' it flows

flows at so inconsiderable a distance, is scarcely seen even from the upper apartments. The rooms which I was allowed to view, tho' splendid, were equally destitute of any production of painting, or of sculpture; and fell far short of the magnificent ideas, which I had been taught to preconceive of Chanteloup. The duke has notwithstanding spent immense sums on this palace, and is at present employed in constructing additional chambers, which will surpass all those already finished, in grandeur and elegance.

Continuing my journey along the Loire, I arrived at this city, which is built in a fine plain on its southern bank. The surrounding country surpasses in fertility all that I have yet seen, and every eminence within several miles of Tours, is occupied either by convents or villas. Among the former, is the celebrated monastery of Marmoutier, from whence Isabella of Bavaria, queen of Charles the sixth, who had been there confined, was carried off in 1417, by John "Sans Peur" duke of Burgundy.

I made

I made an excursion yesterday to Loches, which is ten leagues distant from this place, thro' a delicious plain watered by the Cher, the Indre, and a number of rivulets that fertilize the meadows among which they wind their course. The castle of Loches, so famous in the history of France, under the House of Valois, constituted in former ages the usual place of confinement for prisoners of the highest quality. Its origin remounts to the most remote antiquity; nor, as far as I can discover by inquiry, is there any tradition which pretends to ascertain the name of its founder, or the time of its construction. It has been enlarged, rebuilt, and fortified by successive sovereigns. Charles the seventh frequently held his court and residence there, during the former part of his reign; and René, duke of Alençon, one of the princes of the blood royal, was long detained there a prisoner by that monarch's order, on account of his treasonable practices, for the introduction of the English into the kingdom.—In one of the apartments stands the iron cage, in which Louis the eleventh confined the Car-

dinal

dinal de la Balue, during more than nine years. This inhuman engine of punishment is not above eleven feet square, and consequently of still narrower dimensions than the cage which I saw at the Mont St. Michel. The Cardinal was at length released in 1481, by the intercession of the reigning Pope, during the long state of weakness and debility, which preceded the decease of that cruel and inexorable prince, Louis the eleventh.

The English annals, tho' deeply stained with blood, under the Plantagenets and the Tudors, during successive centuries, cannot be reproached with presenting to our view any sovereign of so atrocious a character, as the last-mentioned king. He may be said to stand alone, and to look down on the croud of vulgar tyrants, whose crimes appear small on a comparison with those of Louis. John, except as the murderer of his nephew Arthur, excites contempt, rather than detestation. Edward the fourth was cruel and sanguinary: but he lived in cruel and sanguinary times, perpetually menaced in his own person

with

with the punishments that he inflicted on his opponents. The murders charged to the account of Richard the third, even if they should be admitted to have been perpetrated, which, however, is more than doubtful; yet were committed in order to attain, or to secure the crown. As a sovereign, while seated on the throne, he was just and moderate in his administration.

It is doubtless in Henry the eighth, that we shall find the nearest approach to Louis the eleventh. But even Henry, savage as he was towards his wives and his ministers; unjust and tyrannical in almost every act, from his accession to his death:—from the execution of Empson and Dudley, his father's extortioners, down to his concluding orders for the beheading of the duke of Norfolk, issued as he lay expiring:—even Henry is not to be put into competition with the tyrant of France. The former, it is true, employed the axe with wanton brutality. But, Louis, from the dark recesses of his gloomy retreat, dispersed death in every direction, concealed under every form, and pervading every portion of his dominions.

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The concluding years of his reign and life, are not to be perused without horror; nor can we, happily for the honor of human nature, find any parallel to them in the history of England, or of France. But I return from this digression, into which I have been led by the cage of the Cardinal de la Balue.

I went to view the chamber where the perfidious Ludovico Sforza, surnamed the Moor, duke of Milan, was imprisoned by Louis the twelfth, from the year 1500 to 1510. It is a large apartment, vaulted, which in that age was considered as suitable for the confinement of a sovereign prince. Only one window, secured by three gratings of iron, admits light into the room; and in the midst of summer the rays of the sun enter thro' this opening, about the hour of noon, for a few minutes. On the wall, exactly opposite to the window, are distinctly to be traced the remains of a dial, or Meridian, upon which the beams of the sun darted; and which, as constant tradition relates, was engraven by the hand of Sforza, to amuse himself in his hours of solitude.

Over

Over the chimney is seen the figure of a head, supposed to be his, surmounted with a helmet. The walls, as well as the roof, are likewise covered with characters and inscriptions, now rendered illegible by the lapse of time.

Ludovico Sforza, who ascended the ducal throne of Milan, by the murder of his nephew Galeazzo; as Richard the third is supposed to have done that of England, by the murder of Edward the fifth;—such a prince excites no interest, from the consideration of his personal sufferings, which were merited, and may justly be deemed the retribution due to his crimes. Yet is there something in the idea of captivity; of bars, and bolts, and all the apparatus of a prison, which powerfully awakens compassion for the victim, and corresponding emotions of indignation against the oppressor. I forgot in some measure, the usurpation and the crimes of Sforza, as I contemplated the walls and roof which had re-echoed his complaints, and witnessed his expiring lamentations. During the first six months of his confinement at Loches, if we may believe the tes-

timony of the French historians themselves, he was shut up in a cage; but, by a subsequent mitigation of his punishment, he was transferred to the room which I have already described.

Quitting this chamber, I descended with my guide, by the light of a torch, into the "Oublettes," or subterranean dungeons of the castle. They are Labyrinths hollowed into the earth, of a vast extent, and totally destitute of light. The air itself was so moist and unwholesome, that it almost extinguished the flambeau. The man who attended me, desired me to remark the circular holes perforated in many places of the incumbent rock, thro' which were formerly let down the victims, destined to perish in these caverns. Doors of massy iron that closed up the entrance, prevented all possibility of succour or of escape. I was glad to leave these dismal abodes of darkness and horror, to revisit the cheerful day.—The greater part of the castle of Loches lies now in ruins; but it is notwithstanding still used for the confinement of persons accused of crimes of state: and there is at present a

gentle-

gentleman shut up there, the cause of whose imprisonment is not known, who has been already immured more than three years.

In the principal church of Loches, before the high altar, is interred the celebrated Agnes Soreille, mistress to Charles the seventh, who died in 1449. The monument itself is composed of black marble, on which her effigy lies extended, cut in white alabaster. If the figure may be supposed to have resembled her person, of which it is impossible to doubt, she certainly was feminine and delicate to the utmost degree of which the human body seems to be susceptible. The face is perfectly correspondent to the other parts of her frame, and conveys an idea of uncommon loveliness, mixed with exquisite fragility. Her hands, which appear joined in the act of prayer, are models of symmetry and proportion. Round her head is tied a broad fillet, studded with pearls, and a sort of necklace composed of the same ornaments, falls on her bosom. She reposes upon an embroidered cushion: her dress is simple and modest, concealing her limbs from view, and at her

feet are placed two lambs, emblematical of her name, Agnes.

It gave me pain to see that time has begun to injure and deface the figure, as well as the tomb, in many parts. I considered it with extreme satisfaction, during some minutes; nor was it merely the recollection of the personal charms which she once possessed, that detained and affected me. The magnanimity which actuated her conduct, and which she infused into her lover, when sinking under the superior power of his enemies, the English, render her memory deservedly dear to every feeling mind: nor, among the many favorites of princes whose names history has preserved, does any one appear to have been more worthy of a monarch's attachment, and of a nation's regard, than was Agnes Soreille. How strikingly does her conduct towards Charles, contrast with the factious and treasonable machinations of the duchess d'Estampes, mistress to Francis the first; who in the midst of a foreign war, betrayed the interests of the French monarchy to the emperor Charles the fifth, in order to gratify her interests,

terests, or her vengeance! How unlike was Agnes, to the marchioness de Verneuil, who plotted against the life and the happiness of her sovereign and her lover, Henry the fourth! How superior was she to the Montespans, the Pompadours, and the Barrès, of the last, and of the present century! I would not disgrace her by a comparison with the Clevelands, the Portsmouths, or the Sedleys, of our own annals, who were destitute of any title to public gratitude or esteem. You will recollect, I doubt not, the verses of Francis the first in her honor, which particularly allude to her efforts to inspire Charles the seventh with fortitude and courage against the English, the invaders of his dominions.

A thousand fables respecting her, similar to the stories related of Rosamund Clifford, or of Jane Shore, among us; are yet preserved among the inhabitants of Loches: her beauty, her liberality, and her power over the king, form the principal subjects of these traditions. I listened to them all with the liveliest interest, and afterwards went to take a view of the tower, which is

called "La Tour de la belle Agnes;" in which, as my conductor assured me with great simplicity, Charles used, from motives of jealousy, to confine her when he went to the chace.—It is certain that she resided frequently at Beaulieu, a little town only divided from Loches by the river Indre, where are still seen the remains of a Chateau which belonged to her. As she died at the castle of Mesnil, near the abbey of Jumieges in Normandy, her body was brought by her express command to this church, which during her life-time she had enriched by very ample donations. Louis the eleventh, tho' he neither honored his father's memory, nor respected Agnes, to whom it is pretended that he once gave a blow, at Chinon in Touraine, yet protected her remains; and rejected the petition of the canons of the church, who by an act of ingratitude towards their benefactress, had requested that her tomb might be removed and demolished.

I had always read and been informed, that Ludovico Sforza, duke of Milan, of whom I have already made mention, was likewise

likewise buried in the chancel of the same church of Loches, under a plate of copper. All the French writers, even their best historians, assert it as an incontestible fact. The opinion is nevertheless unfounded, and it is one of those many errors which have been sanctioned by long prescription. The plate of copper to which I allude, indeed exists; but one of the priests obligingly read to me the inscription upon it, which is sacred to the memory of a private family. The portrait of a warrior kneeling in the act of prayer, preserved in the church of Loches, which has been always shewn as Sforza's figure, the same person assured me is that of the duke d'Epernon, the celebrated favorite of Henry the third. No traces of the interment of Sforza are to be found among the records of the church, tho' the account of that of Agnes Soreille, anterior by sixty years, yet exists. I must own that this contradiction to so received an opinion, may appear extraordinary; but, how many supposed facts of history might be found to depend upon as erroneous a foundation!

 I am

I am just returned from visiting the castle of Plessiz-les-Tours, so famous for having been the scene of the last illness and death of Louis the eleventh, in 1483. It is impossible to forget the minute and awful picture of that event, given by Comines. I felt a secret horror as I entered the court, and surveyed the walls once covered with iron spikes, where a continual guard of archers kept watch, during the concluding hours of the guilty and expiring monarch. I tried to identify the scenes so strongly described and delineated by the pen of Comines. It was on this spot, said I, that Louis, the Tiberius of France, terminated an existence marked by crimes of every description! *Here*, on this turf, were assembled the village girls who formed dances, to dissipate the terrors of his accusing conscience, recoiling from the approaches of dissolution. *Yonder* were the gates, and the wicket, that admitted entrance to the tyrant's presence. *Beneath that ruined wall*, he was accustomed to shew himself to the few courtiers or spectators whom he permitted to approach him; habited

bited in splendid robes, in order to conceal the ravages which disease had made on his person. *There* were the apartments occupied by his favorite daughter, Anne, Lady of Beaujeu, the only relative whom he allowed to attend on him, and to whom he delegated the regency at his decease. *Within a few paces of the spot on which I am standing*, he breathed his last; invoking vainly the aid of the Virgin, supplicating by turns every saint to prolong his term of life, and leaving behind him a name, which at the end of near three centuries, is still pronounced with detestation.

Plessiz is situated only half a league from this city, in a plain surrounded by woods, at a little distance from the Loire. The building, which is handsome, tho' only composed of brick, is now converted to purposes of commerce. In the chapel, on the right hand of the high altar, I was shewn a masterly and beautiful portrait of Louis the eleventh himself, dressed in complete armour. Within his left arm, which reclines on his breast, is a standard, and

 with

with his right hand he takes off his helmet, in the act of salutation to the Virgin Mary and her infant. His harsh and unpleasing features are softened into a smile of pleasure and complacency. He seems to extend his left hand towards the child, whose eye is fixed on his with eagerness. These indications of tenderness have given room to suppose, that under the figures of Mary, and of our Saviour, are designed Charlotte of Savoy, Louis's queen, and Charles the eighth his son. Her habit, which is royal, the diadem on her head, and more than all, a resemblance between the infant and the king, which is very striking, strongly confirm this supposition.

Tours, tho' situate in one of the most beautiful parts of France, close to the Loire, and offering a thousand objects of gratification to the mind and the senses; is, nevertheless, like almost every other inland provincial town of France which I have visited, very ill built. Narrow streets, a bad pavement, houses constructed in a barbarous style, and of great antiquity; such is the aspect of the place: but it will probably

be

be greatly changed in the course of a few years. A very noble bridge of fifteen arches is already built across the river, and a street is planned which will intersect the whole city. These alterations will tend much to its embellishment.

My journey begins now to draw towards a termination, but you may yet hear once or twice from

Yours, &c.

Mans,
Tuesday, 28th of May, 1776.

It is with regret that I find myself at a distance from the banks of the Loire, along which I have wandered with so sensible a pleasure. The beauty of the country on either side, the number of magnificent edifices, reflected in its surface, the solemn majesty of its course, at one time, amidst islands, woods, and delicious plains, at others, under high and hanging rocks; enhanced by the recollections which it perpetually inspires; conspire to awaken at this enchanting season, sentiments of extreme delight.

At Langeais, about seven leagues from Tours, I stopped to examine the remains of the castle, which are yet noble, tho' decayed and in ruins. It is rendered celebrated in history, by the nuptials of Anne of Bretagne with Charles the eighth, which were solemnized there in 1488. No marriage contracted by the kings of the Capetian

petian line, either previous, or subsequent, was ever so beneficial to the French monarchy, as that in question. Louis the seventh, who married Eleanor of Aquitaine, in the twelfth century, acquired, it is true, by his alliance with her, still greater territories. But he was so weak or so impolitic, as to divorce that princess a few years afterwards; and she contracted another marriage with our Henry the second. Of all the great fiefs, Bretagne alone was re-united to the crown of France by a matrimonial alliance. Guyenne, Gascony, Poictou, Burgundy, and their dependencies, were all subjected by the sword. So was Normandy. Languedoc, Provence, Dauphiné, Champagne, and Anjou, were either bequeathed by their respective princes to the French crown, or devolved to it by the extinction of the reigning family.

It is not easy to calculate the magnitude or value of the benefit conferred by Anne of Bretagne on France, in marrying, as she did successively, two kings of that country. If her espousals with the Archduke, who afterwards became the emperor

ror Maximilian; which were actually solemnized, but were never consummated; had taken place:—if, consequently, Bretagne had been in the possession of the house of Austria, by right of blood; what consequences might not have ensued? We are lost in the speculation. The want of energy, or rather, the poverty of Maximilian; added to the narrow and impolitic parsimony of our Henry the seventh, whose public cares never extended beyond the preservation of the English crown in his own person:—these circumstances enabled, and in fact compelled Anne of Bretagne, to give her hand to Charles the eighth. But I return from my political reflections.

I arrived at the city of Saumur on the same evening. You may imagine that I could not find myself within five leagues of the abbey of Fontevrauld, where Henry the second, and Richard the first of England are interred, without feeling a desire to visit the place. It is situated in a valley near the confines of Anjou, on the side of Touraine. Rocky hills which rise behind it, and thick woods that conceal it almost entirely from view,

view, seem to mark it as a spot adapted to the genius of superstition. An air of melancholy and silence reigns on all sides, peculiarly characteristic of, and suitable to, the gloomy devotion of monastic life. As I walked under the high and venerable rows of elms in the gardens of the convent, it was impossible for me not to feel in some degree those awful sensations, which are naturally inspired by these religious solitudes.

The abbey was founded in the year 1096, by Robert d'Arbrissel. Its reputation for sanctity, and its vicinity to Chinon, at which city Henry the second died, were probably the causes of his being interred at Fontevrauld; as none of his progenitors, the Counts of Anjou, had chosen it for their place of burial. You will perhaps remember, that sentiments of penitence and contrition for his filial disobedience, induced Richard the first to order in his dying moments, that his body should be laid at the feet of his father, Henry; who expired before the high altar of the church of Chinon, imprecating maledictions on the heads of his unnatural sons. Eleanor of Aquitaine,

wife

wife of the one, and mother of the other prince; lies buried in the same tomb; as do likewise Jane, queen of Sicily and Countess of Provence, daughter to Henry the second; and the beautiful Elizabeth of Angonlesme, widow to John, king of England.

The figures of all these sovereigns are carved in stone, upon the monument itself: but as that is now enclosed within the grate, in the part of the choir where the Abbess and Nuns assemble for public devotion, no interest or entreaties could possibly procure me admittance into this sacred enclosure; and I was consequently prevented from approaching the tomb so nearly, or from observing it with that minuteness and attention, which I could have wished. Four solemn Requiems and services are still said every year, for the repose of the souls of these princes; and the tomb was repaired and beautified in the year 1638, by order of the reigning Abbess, who was a natural daughter of Henry the fourth, king of France. The abbey of Fontevrauld, besides the respect derived from its antiquity, has been ever considered as one of the most honor-

able

able and important ecclesiastical benefices in France. Many princesses of the blood have successively governed it, and the revenues are immense. The number of religious of both sexes under the Abbess's direction, amount to more than two hundred, and her authority, both temporal and spiritual, is very extensive.

I returned to Saumur the same evening, and left it again last Saturday. The town is small, but pleasantly situated on the southern bank of the Loire, across which extends a long bridge, continued thro' a number of islands. Saumur constituted anciently a most important pass over the river, and of consequence was frequently and fiercely disputed by either party, during the civil wars of France in the sixteenth century. The fortifications were of great strength, and Henry the fourth, on the reconciliation which took place between him and Henry the third near Tours in 1589, demanded that Saumur should be delivered over to him, as one of the cities of security. The castle, which overlooks the town and river, is built on a lofty eminence, and retains a venerable as well

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as magnificent appearance, tho' now only used as a prison of state, where persons of rank are frequently confined. The kings of Sicily and dukes of Anjou of the house of Valois, who descended from John, king of France, made prisoner at Poitiers, often resided in the castle of Saumur, as it constituted a part of their Angevin dominions.

The distance from Saumur to Angers is about thirteen leagues, the greater part of which road lies along the banks of the Loire. Anjou, the cradle of the house of Plantagenet, appears to me not to yield in fertility or beauty to any province of the kingdom. Wines of the most delicious flavor, tho' not capable of exportation, are produced in it; among which that of Champigny, a little village near Fontevrauld, is particularly admired.—I made a stay of two days in Angers. The city stands in a plain, and is divided into "La "haute," and "La basse ville," by the river Mayenne, which winding thro' meadows, falls into the Loire five miles below the place. The castle was built by St. Louis, about the middle of the thirteenth

century.

century. The walls, fosses, and numerous towers which yet subsist, evince its former magnificence; and its situation in the centre of the city, on a rock overhanging the river, conduces to give it an imposing air of grandeur, tho' at present in total decay. It constituted the principal residence of the kings of Sicily, as dukes of Anjou, but is now in a state of ruin.

The cathedral of Angers is a venerable structure, and altho' it has undergone many alterations in the course of ages since its construction, yet the architecture is singular, and deserves attention. Here lies interred with her ancestors, the renowned Margaret, daughter of René, king of Sicily, and queen of Henry the sixth of England. She expired, after her many intrepid, but ineffectual efforts to replace her husband on the throne, on the 25th of August, 1482, at the castle of Dampierre in Anjou. The English historians seem never to have paid any attention to this illustrious princess in her retirement and obscurity, after Louis the eleventh of France had ransomed her from Edward the fourth, and

procured

procured her release from the Tower of London, to which fortress she was committed prisoner, on the loss of the battle of Tewksbury in 1471. She was the favorite child of René, who solemnly renounced in favor of the king of France, all his hereditary rights to the province of Anjou, and his claims on the duchy of Lorrain, in order to obtain her freedom. In his court, and under his protection, Margaret remained at Aix in Provence, the usual place of that prince's residence, till his death, in 1480, obliged her to return into the Angevin territories. She was there received by a gentleman named Vignole, who had been long in her father's service, and who afforded her an asylum.

Henry, earl of Richmond, afterwards victorious at Bosworth, who was then himself a fugitive in Bretagne, went from Vannes, where he usually resided, to visit her, and to ask her advice. She strongly urged him to his attempt against the house of York, which then reigned in England; but she did not survive to be a witness of his success against Richard the third. Tho' she breathed her last at the castle of

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Dampierre, one of the ancient ducal residences of her family; yet she appears to have resided principally, during the short period that elapsed between her father's death, and her own, at the castle of "Re-"culee;" a small retreat of the dukes of Anjou, built on the banks of the river Mayenne. Louis the eleventh, tho' he obtained her release from captivity, yet treated her with the utmost alienation; and is said to have left her without the pecuniary means of sustaining her dignity. Ever attentive to his own interests, he nevertheless compelled her to confirm the renunciation of the duchy of Anjou, made by her father René, in favor of the French crown.

No remains of that commanding beauty, which she had once possessed, accompanied her in the decline of life. A French writer has drawn the portrait of Margaret when near her end; and it impresses both with horror and compassion. You will not recognize the queen described by our historians in such animated language, and with such flattering colors.—"Son sang, "corrumpu par tant de noires agitations, "devint

" devint comme une poison qui infecta
" toutes les parties qu'il devoit nourrir;
" sa peau secha jusqu' à s'en aller en pous-
" siere; son estomac se retrecit, et ses
" yeux, aussi creux que s'ils eussent été
" enfoncés avec violence, perdirent tout le
" feu qui avoit servi si long temps d'inter-
" prete aux grands sentimens de son ame."

Angers is of a very considerable size, but the buildings and streets are almost as mean and as old as those of Bourges. The walls with which John, king of England, surrounded it in 1214, tho' very inferior in beauty to those of Avignon, remain nearly entire, and are of a very large circumference.

I slept last night at La Fleche, a pretty town on the confines of Anjou. In the church which formerly belonged to the Jesuits, are preserved the hearts of Henry the fourth and Mary of Medicis, which were deposited there by the express command of those princes. I could not help reflecting, as I considered the two urns in which these hearts are kept, how little they were united in life, tho' thus conjoined

joined in death. Never in fact were two hearts less formed for each other, or more dissimilar in every point. The knife of Ravaillac, which intersected Henry's heart, was even suspected by Mary of Medicis's own son, Louis the thirteenth, to have been not altogether undirected by his mother's hand. Tho' we must acquit that weak, misguided, and unfortunate princess, of any participation in, or any knowledge of, Ravaillac's design; we must still consider her as having in her whole conduct and deportment, manifested too much indifference on the occasion of Henry's assassination. If the heart of that great and amiable prince was cut in two by the knife; Mary's heart was broken by sorrow, poverty, and the accumulation of wretchedness, under which she expired at Cologne, an exile, driven out from France, and an outcast from every country of Europe. Richlieu, who persecuted her during life, and who survived her only a few months, either did not, or could not, prevent this posthumous union of the hearts of the two sovereigns, in the church of a little provincial town of Anjou.

 I en-

I entered the province of Maine, this morning. It is ten leagues from La Fleche to Mans, thro' a country much enclosed and finely wooded.—The situation of this city is very pleasant, near the junction of two little rivers which wind thro' a delicious plain. I went to the top of the cathedral, to enjoy one of the finest inland prospects to be imagined. Towards Normandy and Perche it is lost in clouds, at a great distance; and on the side of Bretagne extends the forest of Mans, the scene of that extraordinary phantom which is said to have appeared to Charles the sixth of France, and which was a principal cause of his consequent insanity. Geoffroy, Count of Anjou and Maine, father of Henry the second, from whom descended the family of Plantagenet, which for more than three centuries reigned in England, lies buried in the choir. The city of Mans is small, but preferable to Angers in elegance and regularity. It formerly constituted, together with the province of which it is the capital, a part of our Henry the second's hereditary dominions, which he

added

added to those devolved to him at king Stephen's death, in right of his mother Matilda. In the year 1216, Philip Augustus having reconquered Maine from John, annexed the province to the crown of France.

I shall continue my journey in the evening to Alençon. Adieu!

Rouen,
Monday, 3d June, 1776.

It was already late when I left Mans, and as Alençon is twelve leagues distant, I was obliged to stop at a little town named "Beaumont-Le-Viscomte," situated near the confines of Maine and Normandy, on the side of a steep hill, at the foot of which runs a rivulet, and from whence a diversified landscape is seen on all sides, richly cultivated. I got to Alençon the ensuing morning. The place is of considerable size, washed by the little river Sarte, and stands in the midst of an extensive plain. I slept at Seez, an ancient city, and continued my route next day to L'Aigle, a small town, but well known in history by its castle, tho' scarcely any traces of it now remain. Our own annals inform us that William the Conqueror frequently resided there, in his visits to these his hereditary dominions; and Charles d'Espagne de la Cerda, Constable of France in the reign of

John

John, was surprized and murdered at L'Aigle in the year 1354, by Charles the Bad, king of Navarre.

I crossed a considerable part of Normandy, from L'Aigle to the city of Evreux, which is situated in a deep vale surrounded with lofty hills; and pursuing my journey, arrived here last Friday. Rouen is too well known, and too frequently visited, to render any long description of it necessary. Nothing can exceed the beauty of the Seine, both above and below the place, covered with little islands overgrown with wood, and running at the foot of a range of lofty, picturesque mountains. Almost every part of Rouen presents to an Englishman, matter of historic recollection. From William the Conqueror, down to the final expulsion of the English, for the space of near four hundred years, Normandy was at various times united with, or subject to, our kings. Near the bank of the Seine, at one extremity of the city, are yet seen the remains of the palace which Henry the fifth of England began in 1419, and which was

completed under his unfortunate son Henry the sixth, in 1443. At a small distance from it stands the tower, called "La Tour "de la Pucelle," in which John, duke of Bedford, confined the Maid of Orleans previous to her trial. No criminal, condemned to suffer for crimes of the blackest dye, could have undergone more humiliating indignities, or more cruel treatment, than were inflicted on that distinguished woman during her confinement. Can we reflect without a degree of shame and indignation, which no lapse of time can efface or extinguish; that she was imprisoned in a cage made for the purpose, of dimensions so narrow, and so low, that she could not stand upright within it? Heavy irons were affixed about her legs and body: no woman was allowed to attend on her, the custody of her person being entrusted to eight ferocious soldiers, all Englishmen. Attempts of the most brutal kind were even made on her chastity, while thus detained a captive, from which the interposition of the earl of Warwick could scarcely protect

her.

her. It was thus that she was treated, for having delivered her sovereign and her country, from foreign invaders.

You will recollect her subsequent condemnation and death. Her conduct on that occasion, when the firmest mind might have been shaken, united the courage of a heroine, with the resignation of a martyr. There is not any thing in history, ancient or modern, that awakens more admiration, or excites more pity. She herself recoiled from the *mode* of her execution, as equally cruel, painful, and ignominious; exclaiming in the agony of her mind, when the sentence was pronounced, that she had rather submit seven times to the axe, than to be thus consumed at the stake. But, her judges, who were her persecutors, did not dare to modify her punishment, which was indispensible, in order to re-inspire the English troops with courage. To that object she was sacrificed: for it is scarcely possible that the duke of Bedford should have considered her as criminal in any other sense. He had too sound an understanding, and too accurate a knowledge of the falsity of

the pretended crimes imputed to her, to be able to persuade himself of her guilt, or of her moral turpitude. Even when the fire was lighted, and in the midst of the flames that devoured her, to the last moment of her existence, she continued to give proofs of her unshaken fortitude, and of her fervent piety. Her eyes were constantly fixed on the cross, and her expiring lips still invoked the name of Jesus.

A statue is erected to her on the spot where this inhuman sentence was executed, and an inscription engraven beneath it in her honor. Who would not almost consent to die, in order to merit two of the lines which compose it?

——"Exuit flammis quod mortale,
"Superest gloria nunquam moritura!"——

They exalt her above mortality, and inroll her to the most remote posterity, with the great spirits who in different ages have sacrificed their lives for their country. It is the highest tribute which man can pay to virtue.

Notwith-

Notwithstanding the publicity of the execution of this illustrious female, who suffered in one of the most frequented places of the city of Rouen, in the middle of the day, before an immense multitude of spectators, after being exposed for a considerable length of time, with her face uncovered, upon an elevated scaffold:—tho' the juridical inquisitions made relative to her trial and death, by order of Charles the seventh, after Rouen fell into his hands; place the fact of her having been burnt to ashes, out of all possibility of doubt:—tho' the execution of Anne Bullen, or of Lady Jane Grey, are not better ascertained; yet attempts have been made to call in question the fact of Joan d'Arc's death.

Le Pere Vignier, in the course of the last century, produced some ancient manuscripts found by him in the city of Metz, containing an account of the re-appearance of Joan d'Arc in that place. If reliance could be placed on these authorities, she was not only recognized by her two brothers, for the identical Maid of Orleans; but she was afterwards married to a gentleman

man of Lorrain, named Robert des Armoises, by whom she had children, whose descendants still existed in 1683. Pere Vignier asserts, that he found the original contract of marriage between her and Robert des Armoises, among the archives of that very family: but neither he, nor they, ever laid it before the public. He has even omitted to inform us of the date of the marriage contract: but he states the arrival, or appearance of Joan d'Arc at Metz, to have been on the 20th of May, 1436; that is, near five years after she suffered at the stake, on the 14th of June, 1431.

However curious or extraordinary this account may appear; whatever momentary astonishment it may produce; and however warmly we may wish, for the honor of human nature, and of the English nation in particular, that it were true, or even possible; yet no man can for an instant doubt of the absurdity, or fallacy of the story. The English, who considered her as acting under the influence, not of the Deity, but of magical powers; and who hoped, by reducing her to ashes, to recover their former

former ascendant over the French; were determined on her destruction, and never would have permitted her to escape, or to survive. The woman who personated her, can only be ranked with the impostors who in all ages have appeared; the Perkin Warbecks of England, the false Sebastians of Portugal, and the false Demetriuses of Russia.

I went yesterday morning to visit a little Priory, called "Notre Dame de bonnes "Nouvelles," situated on the southern bank of the Seine, which was founded by William the Conqueror, previous to his successful attempt on the English crown. It is said that his wife Matilda being at her devotions in this church, intelligence arrived that the duke of Normandy had gained the important battle of Hastings; and from this circumstance it obtained the name which it retains at present. Matilda, daughter of Henry the first, and mother of Henry the second, kings of England, who, herself, so long contested the crown with Stephen, was buried there: but six hundred years have totally erased the inscrip-

tion

tion on her tomb, of which there are now no traces discernible. This princess, as being duchess of Normandy in her own right, resided frequently at Rouen, and she constructed the ancient stone bridge across the Seine, of which very considerable ruins yet remain; tho' it began to fall as early as the year 1502, and became totally useless before the conclusion of the sixteenth century.

The cathedral, which is one of the most magnificent monuments of Gothic architecture to be found in France, was built under William the Conqueror's reign, as duke of Normandy, and entirely completed in 1063, three years previous to his invasion of England. I tread with reverence among the tombs of the numerous kings and princes, who are interred in different parts of the edifice. Here lies Rollo the Dane, founder of the Norman line, destined to ascend the English throne; a piratical hero almost lost in the barbarism and distance of the times in which he flourished! Two of his descendants, dukes of Normandy, are buried near him.—The heart of

of Richard the first, king of England, which, when dying, he ordered to be deposited in the cathedral of Rouen, as a mark of affection towards his Norman subjects, is placed on the right hand of the high altar. It was originally preserved in a shrine of massy silver; and tho' Normandy was re-conquered from Richard's brother John, only six years after the decease of the former prince, in 1205; yet the shrine appears to have been religiously respected by Philip Augustus, king of France, and by his successor Louis the eighth. But during the extreme distress occasioned by the want of money in the subsequent reign, to defray the expences of St. Louis's ransom when taken prisoner at Damietta in Egypt, this splendid repository was applied to the necessities of the state. Prince Henry, the elder brother of Richard, who died at the castle of Martel in the province of Quercy, in 1183, lies buried on the opposite side. Near these princes reposes John, duke of Bedford, son of Henry the fourth, and brother of Henry the fifth: an illustrious

name

name revered even by his enemies, and almost without a blemish, if he had not condemned to death the Maid of Orleans, the deliverer of her country.

Behind the altar, under a monument of exquisite workmanship, is interred the great Cardinal of Amboise, first minister to Louis the twelfth, whose memory France will honor as long as patriotism and integrity are cherished among men. He is represented on the tomb, kneeling and in prayer. I stood long to consider the monument of Louis de Brezé, Senechal of Normandy, and Count de Maulevrièr, who died in 1531. The figure of the Count himself, extended at full length, is one of the most masterly and beautiful productions of the chisel. On one side of the dead body stands the Virgin Mary, and on the other appears his widow, the celebrated Diana de Poitiers, afterwards so well known in the French annals, as the favorite mistress of Henry the second. She is looking down on the body of her husband; grief is marked in her features, and her

her dress is that of a mourner. The whole monument is a model of beauty and delicacy of sculpture.

Rouen, tho' large and enriched by commerce, situated on the banks of a majestic river, and in the midst of a fertile, as well as charming country, yet retains many vestiges of barbarism. If we except the quay which runs along the Seine, the other streets are almost all narrow, crooked and dirty; the pavement bad, the buildings old and irregular. It was fortified by St. Louis in 1253, but the walls are now demolished. The environs, more peculiarly the hills which overlook the Seine, are wonderfully agreeable, and covered with magnificent Villas.

My stay here will be very short, as I purpose to embark at Dieppe for England, and shall probably see you in a few days.—I have in some measure completed the design which I laid down at my setting out; that of visiting the unfrequented provinces of France. Thro'out my whole tour I have studiously endeavored to avoid the ground usually trodden by the English, in

their

their passage from Calais into Italy, as being too well known to afford you any information. It only remains for me to claim your candor and indulgence; on that I rely, and remain,

Dear Sir,

Your's, &c. &c.

NATH^L WILL^M WRAXALL.

FINIS.

Printed by B. M'Millan,
Bow Street, Covent Garden.