

St. Petersburg June 27th – 1767 –

I had the pleasure of my dearest mother and Matty's joint letter a few days ago, which gave me the same satisfaction, I usually receive from hearing of you. I rejoice (my dearest mother) extremely, that my **nursing** meets your approbation, as it is my small earnest wish every action of my life should prove worthy of it. If so, I must flatter myself that your good wishes for our happiness will prevail.

I wrote to John by a messenger who was sent by Sir George Macarthy¹ from here 7th of May also to my dear Matty by post the week before; I am much surprised at your saying my letter which you had then received, was the only long one you had got from me since we parted, as I am sure I wrote several by ship last summer; however as I believe at present you are pretty destitute of entertainment, I shall endeavour to make you spend more time in reading, if it be only the nonsense my fruitful brain produces, or the conversation of my young Russian, interspersed with an historical account of his improvements. The last letter I wrote to you was when I was much out of humour on account of the new discovery I had made of Mr. Patrick's dishonourable behaviour; I then told you, I would inform you soon of farther particulars, since which I wrote a particular account of everything to Mr. Winder, to whom I consider myself bound to be very open, as he is a truly disinterested friend, & one who's friendship may still be very serviceable to me, & I have the satisfaction to be convinced I may rely on the continuance of it. The contents of this letter, I desired him to communicate to you therefore it is unnecessary to repeat it. We are not intirely[sic] without a hope that Sir George may visit us again, If he should not he has assured us, that he will mention us in a very particular manner to whatever Minister may come in his room. If he finds it proper to get an Act of Parliament in England for Mr. Brooke, as you may see by Mr. W.'s letter he proposes, it will cost three hundred pounds, but where it will come from I am sure I do not know. This sufficiently explains my last letter to you. Two ships this summer from Dublin, & not a line by either. That from Mr. Patrick I suppose he carefully concealed the knowledge of it from you least it should save me the postage of a letter. Well I am really sorry to find myself so little of a good Christian as to

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bear malice in my heart against any body; but I certainly **carry** great abundance to him, & what is worse, the desire of revenge is so strong in me, that if I could be transformed into a man for two months, I declare solemnly I would go to Dublin for no other purpose but merely the pleasure of breaking his bones. Don't you think however I may be allowed some merit from the confession of my fault, for I really speak in the sincerity of my heart. I shall ever love my **Aunt J & Kitty**, & let them say, or think what they will of me, I shall not be angry, as I can excuse the prejudice that blinds them. Pray give my love to both; tell my Aunt I wrote to her immediately on receipt of her letter, & hope she received it; to which also I expect an answer. I might fill a volume in giving you a detail of the pleasures I lately tasted on an expedition for a week into the Country; however as it may serve to amuse you in your solitude, I will treat you with half a book, & in the manner of my sister historians, Miss Clarissa Harlowe & Miss Harriet Byron², not only give you an account of our route, & amusements, but also shall endeavour to give you some idea of the characters which formed the party, & intersperse it with some agreeable **bowing & blushing's** which **passed**. The party met here two days before, to settle preliminaries, who were as follows – Mr. & Mrs. **Jaffery**, a couple about forty years old who have lived about five and twenty in this Country universally beloved for their

¹ George Macartney, 1st Earl Macartney, was a British statesman from Loughguile County Antrim who was envoy extraordinary to Russia at the time.

² Clarissa Harlowe and Harriet Byron are the central characters of two epistolary novels by Samuel Richardson, *Clarissa* (1748) and *The History of Sir Charles Grandison* (1753) respectively

good nature, & worth; she is more lively and less vulgar, than Aunt Selby but full as good an economist, tho' she never wears green damask; He is really an Uncle Selby, & he and I, are perpetually at good humoured wars together. Miss Shults a young lady who they have adopted, having no children of their own. Mr. Cayley, one of the first merchants him – sensible & polite, with his lady, both about thirty. She has been very pretty, but the too hasty appearance of nine fine children in the space of ten years has much impaired her beauty. Her appearance however still prejudices in her favour though she looses[sic] much of her consequence in company by an over bashfulness she cannot conquer; in short they are the most dove like couple you ever knew.

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Mr. Smelt a young gentleman, he came from London last year, a relation of Mr. Cayley's, genteel, handsome, gay, extremely good humoured, & that's all.

Mr. Bourgeral a French gentleman who speaks English possesses all the vivacity & good breeding peculiar to his nation without the least mixture of its flippancy. Mr. Porter at the head of an academy him, a blunt Scotchman. He is very sensible, & has a mind much informed for a man of three and twenty, possessed of a large share of humour, sings a good song, & is really lively & entertaining; totally free from what he would call the prejudices of polite life, having no other symptoms of it, than from what proceeds from a natural good temper. The unconscious part of the World, who have not discernment enough to find out his good qualities, call him a Bear, which he laughs at. I shall conclude my criticism, with introducing to your knowledge our particular friend Mr. Bonar, who I have formerly mentioned as the Scotch gentleman who always made use of my Sunday parties, & who is really a true Israelite in whom there is no guile³: with a very enlarged[sic] and improved understanding he is as ignorant of the ways of the world as a country peasant, having by a close application to business, & study, been very much excluded from society, & though he has attained his twenty fifth year, he has not yet been laughed out of being religious, he has a heart truly humane & generous; every body loves him, tho' I believe there is not one in the World who is in love with him. With a raw boned person, near six feet high & a natural bashfulness, he has an inexpressible awkwardness, which the strong desire he has to oblige, makes more conspicuous. For example – if sitting at a tea-table, any of the company should want a servant called, he would endeavour to fly, tho' it is twenty to one, he don't overset the whole apparatus in the attempt, and then look as if he wished the ground would open, and swallow him up for the confusion he has caused. I joke with him continually on his awkwardness, which he says he is much obliged to me for, as he is sure it will improve him. I sent him a bill the other day for glasses broken by having his elbows on the table, & directed it to the Handy Scotchman, the sum total was a treat, he acknowledged the debt, & paid it, & I assure you entertained us very genteelly, tho' in setting his company down to cards, he contrived to take up two packs together which presenting to them

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to draw for places, he let slip out of his hands & caused a general scramble to gather them up again, & a number of dear ma'ams and oh sirs! Etc. etc. However, take him all in all, he is a person, my mother, you would greatly esteem, as must any one that knows him. So much for our travelling companions. It was agreed that we should go to the seat of Count Razymovsky⁴ who was chief

³ From John 1:47, KJV: "Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!"

⁴ Alexei Grigorievich Razumovsky was a peasant from what is today the Ukraine before being noticed by a Russian nobleman due to his singing voice. He was brought to St. Petersburg where he joined the choir of the Russian palace chapel. Here he came to the attention of Elizabeth Petrovna, daughter of Peter the Great and future Empress of Russia. He played an important role in the palace revolution which brought Elizabeth to

favourite of the late empress, & by many believed to be privately married to her. As he has been wise enough to keep free of all parties, he has a large independent fortune, with which he lives like an Emperor, & keeps a regular Court. As this place lies sixty miles from Petersburg, & most of the company proposing to go there in a day, I thought it best to set out an night before them and sleep on the road, half way, as young Sam had never been so long a journey; accordingly there set out on Friday evening a detached party, with a commission from the rest to prepare dinner for the next day at that place; the party consisted of Mr. Bonar, Mr. Bourgeral, Mr. Raikes, Mr. Brooke, and my Ladyship. Mr. Brooke and I with my maid, & child, & our fat cook, a good old Dutch woman, (who Mr. Raikes determined to take as a jaunt to the Country might be beneficial to her health) travelled in Mr. Raikes's Coach & arrived safe that night at about ten o'clock at our destined quarters. The next morning we walked out to take a view of the Palace, & Gardens of Peterhof, (where the Empress mostly resides during the Summer Season) which were but about half a quarter of a mile from our place of general rendezvous. We went all over the palace, the magnificence of which was a wonderful sight to ??????. At one o'clock we were joined by the rest of our party, & having dined, set forward for the Count's in grand procession, being in number four chariots, two coaches besides two Basic Carts stored with provisions, bed clothes & pillows, to sleep on. We arrived at about seven o'clock, & stopped at a house which the Count built on purpose for the reception of those who come to see his improvements

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Furnished with tables & chairs, & situated on one of the finest spots in his domains, not very far from the House, or rather Palace. We were scarcely alighted & still his Maitre D'hotel came to welcome us in his Lord's name, & not only requested that we would stay as long as we pleased, but also that we should without ceremony, send for every thing we wanted to his House. This gentleman furnished us with bedsteads for the ladies, & straw for the gentleman, & left us in quiet possession of 8 or 9 spacious apartments, all hung with damask or lattice. About 8 we had a visit from a gentleman supposed nephew to the Count, (but it is thought has besides very rich blood in his veins) with an invitation to dinner next day, which our modesty would have declined, on consideration of the largeness of our party, but making light of that, he would take no excuses, so were obliged to comply. We bowed as we sat & looked pleased at each other. We supped, after which we betook ourselves to our several nests, where we slept very comfortably, not withstanding the noise occasioned by the quarrels for room, & straw; for my part I kept myself snug having been by the care of Mr. Raikes provided with a good Feather Bed. We rose at six o'clock, & as we were informed we were to dine at twelve, we judged it highly proper to begin the operation of dressing at eight. Four hours (and who could do it less in) the haughty Celia spends in dressing⁵. Bless me! What a consumption of ends of tallow candles, & flower, was on that grand occasion, the universal desire of being good hair dryers, during those few hours, made me under some apprehension, least the company should forget to resume their characters of gentleman & ladies, at the proper time. We set out at the appointed hour, & on our arrival at the Count's, were conducted through several spacious apartments, into one where the count, with two ladies, & several gentleman were assembled. The lady who seemed to preside, was wife to the supposed nephew the other was his sister, both

power and was eventually made a Count of Russia. He remained a favourite and lover of Elizabeth throughout her reign and was nicknamed 'The Night of Emperor'. There were rumours of children and a secret marriage.

⁵ This is a reference to the opening lines of a poem by Jonathan Swift called 'The Lady's Dressing Room' (1732). "Five hours, (and who could do it less in?) / By haughty Celia spent in dressing;"

Countesses. We were most politely received, it is impossible to conceive more ease, & elegance than generally appears among the Russo nobility

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I was quite charmed with their affability & politeness. The conversation was mostly in French, as I speak more of this language than Russo. Dinner was soon served, which was sumptuous; an hundred & ten dishes, in three courses, on gilt plate; after which we had a desert of Iced Cream, melons, *etc.* We made about thirty persons at table, & each person, had a servant waiting behind their chair, besides which the Count had two pages, & several attendants out of livery waiting on him; and he has great dignity in his appearance, he might really pass for an Emperor. After dinner, they proposed we should accompany them to a fair, which was held at a town, a few miles farther in the Country, where we should have an opportunity of seeing the original manners, & customs of the Country, in great perfection, indeed it afforded high entertainment. The town though small, has great variety of inhabitants, being a mixture of Russ, German, & a people who are the descendants of the ancient Amazons, & still retain many of their customs, particularly the dress, which makes a strange uncouth appearance. The amusement, consisted chiefly of dancing, which was performed only by the Women, to their own singing; the different nations in separate parties. When the Amazonian tribe, were disposed for this kind of pastime, they set up an howl, like what I conceive the Indian War Hoop to be, on which they throw themselves into strange motions, but as unlike dancing, as any performance you ever saw of Jacob in that way. After we had amused ourselves with this scene of jollity for sometime, we returned with the Count *etc. etc.*, to our habitation, where we produced out of our several stores, a genteel, cold collation, of which they partook with much good appetite, as made some of us groan in the spirit to see what would have been a handsome allowance for four days, devoured in half an hour. I own, every slice that was taken from my Buttock went to my heart, & I doubt not, but Mrs. *Jaffery* had equal feeling for her

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ham. Mrs. Cayley indeed was the only one who inwardly rejoiced, having had the cunning to conceal her Rump from the merciless jaws of the invaders, being somewhat diffident of its complexion. They stayed with us till near twelve o'clock, when they returned, highly pleased with their entertainment & left us, to drown in sleep our cares for future days, & to dream over the pleasures of the past. The next morning being Monday, we were visited by our friend the Maitre D'Hotel, with complimentary inquiries after our health, from the palace, and a present of fish, wild fowl, butter & cream. He also informed us there was then waiting at our command, a carriage made to hold ten persons, & drawn by six horses, which as it was more calculated for seeing the Country than ours, we were at liberty to keep possession of it during our stay. A council was immediately called to settle the plan of the day, where it was unanimously agreed that we should dine at home, that immediately after we should set out to Ropshaw, the place where the late unfortunate Emperor ended his days⁶, distant from where we then were about 6 miles, & the intermediate space should be spent in viewing the improvements around us. At one we dined, a little after two set out. Some of the company on our new carriage (which was in the manner of a Chaise *Marine*, & proved a very pleasant conveyance) the rest in our other carriage, & I assure you, not even the young Russian, and his attendance, were left out of this party – *memo* – he is universally altered to be the quietest child

⁶ Peter the III of Russia was arrested on 9 July 1762 and forced to abdicate in favour of his wife Catherine II, later Catherine the Great. He was detained in Ropsha where he died, officially of hemorrhoidal colic and an apoplectic stroke, but it was widely believed he was assassinated by his guards.

in this Empire – Before I proceed to a description of this gloomy scene, I ought in the manner of other historians, invoke the assistance of some supernatural powers to give an adequate idea of its horrors. Come then Black Despair with all thy mournful train who hovers o'er those unhallowed walls & clouds the joy of all who enter! Destruction too! Whom iron hands has marked these out for certain desolation; lend your aid, & teach me how to write. The house is situated in a small wood but so thick as perfectly to

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exclude the cheerful rays of Phebus, & caste an inexpressible gloom into the apartments, which have besides a most deserted look, being at present very destitute of furniture. The room where the Emperor used to repose (if any he had during his confinement there) remains as when he occupied it, & in many places bears horrid testimony of the guilty scene. The Gardens are finely laid out, but from neglect are **entirely** run wild; and the trees close to the house, being mostly of drooping Cypress, & Birch, seem by their dejected heads, still to mourn the wretched fate of their unfortunate master. There are also variety of buildings for different Offices, which wanting necessary repairs, hasten to ruin; in short I cannot give you a better idea of it, than by saying, it looks like what it was. After we had satisfied our curiosity & refreshed ourselves with some tea, bread & butter, we hastened home where in a fit of despair, we devoured a whole Pigeon Pie, & some cold beef, and having drowned our melancholy, in a large bowl of excellent Punch, we retired to rest. On the whole – much satisfied. Tuesday, as usual at breakfast being desirous of fixing our destination for that day, we determined on making a visit to Admiral Lewis & his lady, (being some of our Petersburg acquaintances during the winter) who lived about 15 miles distance, but as we concluded the disappointment of a dish of tea, not so severe as the loss of a dinner, we judged it more prudent to undertake this expedition in the Evening, rather than the morning, lest the family should be abroad; we therefore spent the cooler part of the morning in washing, after which I entertained them with reading the English Merchant, a Play⁷. We dined & set out, as on Monday. The gentleman to whose house we were going, is an old man of 70 years old, 50 of which he has spent in this **service**. His lady also has been in this Country 30 years, (they are both English) & have several children, who are all well married & settled

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in different parts of the world. The old couple preferring in retirement to ?????, live for the most part of the year in the Country; but in the **severe** season they visit the City for a short time, when they become our near neighbours. Notwithstanding, half the company were strangers to them, they received us most cordially; & after tea proposed a walk to see their improvements, which (from our national prejudice I truly confess) I thought the finest I had seen in Russia, being so exact a representation of the Dargle, as made me for a while believe myself transported to the Island of my nativity, which brought pearly drops from my eyes – sweet apprehension – We wandered about till we were tired, & I had the satisfaction of hearing every one present, lavish in the praise of the place, which I assured them was the highest compliment they could pay me, as I could not help considering myself in Ireland. This occasioned a sneer from Uncle **Jaffery**, which brought on, an altercation between us, that might have continued sometime; had not Mrs. Lewis summoned us to attend her **in** the house, where we found an elegant collation prepared for us, of Iced Cream, Blanc-manger Tarts, **fricasseed** fruits etc., with wines of all sorts, not forgetting an excellent Syllabub. Here we feasted for an hour, after which we took our leave, & arrived safe at home, at eleven o'clock & finding ourselves somewhat fatigued with our walks we retired soon to rest. Wednesday – death to

⁷ This may refer to a 1767 play by George Colman (the Elder)

our hopes – proved dismally wet, & we were obliged to have recourse to Cards for entertainment. Thursday & Friday, we spent in visiting other parts of the Country, that we had not before seen; every part of which, we found beautiful. On Saturday evening we paid a visit, in form at the Counts to return thanks for all their favours, & take leave. They were so polite, as to thank us for our company, & assured us, we did them a favour by coming, which if we repeated would be still more pleasing. On Sunday morning we set out for St. Petersburg & arrived safe that night, without meeting any incident worthy of a place in this history. Thus have I given you a faithful detail of my
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adventure at ?????????, which if you find any entertainment in reading, I shall think myself overpaid for the trouble of writing. If not, I flatter myself the paper may be of some use it being of a soft & pliant kind. I shall add a few words more before I send this away; but not at present being quite tired – Adieu –

Since I wrote the above I have received my dear mother's letter of the 6th of June also John's but no tidings of my gown. When you send anything by ship, you should always write immediately by post the **accounts** with the name of the ship & captain. I find this last ship which is arrived, is also from Mr. Patrick; I have no doubt but all this may have a bad effect him for us, as every one honours his connections with my Father; but however I would rather receive a small **injury** from him than be under the smallest obligation. I have often inquired after Harriet **Minchin** but have never been answered. Has my Aunt **Minchin** received my letters; pray be always particular in answering my inquiries. Where is Mrs. **Baddock**? I have sent several messages to her, but have never had a return. I am sure that is not her fault. I have the pleasure to inform you that my precious child has got two teeth. Once more my dearest Matty adieu. I hope you think this letter long enough. If you do not, you must write the rest yourself. I shall answer my dear Matty's letter by Captain **Martin**. Love & **compliments** to you all. Yours most affectionately

Margaret Brooke

Sam wrote to you by post last week