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A Sentimental Journey Through France And Italy

Yorick, ...

London, 1768

The Passport. The Hotel at Paris.

urn:nbn:de:gbv:45:1-1884

THE PASSPORT.

The Hotel at Paris,

I COULD not find in my heart to torture Là Fleur's with a serious look upon the subject of my embarrassment, which was the reason I had treated it so cavalierly : and to shew him how light it lay upon my mind, I dropt the subject entirely ; and whilst he waited upon me at supper, talk'd to him with more than usual gaiety about Paris, and of the opera comique.—Là Fleur had been there himself, and had followed me through the streets as far as the bookfeller's shop ; but seeing me come

out with the young *fille de chambre*, and that we walk'd down the Quai de Conti together, Là Fleur deem'd it unnecessary to follow me a step further—so making his own reflections upon it, he took a shorter cut—and got to the hotel in time to be inform'd of the affair of the Police against my arrival.

As soon as the honest creature had taken away, and gone down to sup himself, I then began to think a little seriously about my situation.—

—And here, I know, Eugenius, thou wilt smile at the remembrance of a short dialogue which pass'd be-



twixt us the moment I was going to set out—I must tell it here.

Eugenius, knowing that I was as little subject to be overburthen'd with money as thought, had drawn me aside to interrogate me how much I had taken care for; upon telling him the exact sum, Eugenius shook his head, and said it would not do; so pull'd out his purse in order to empty it into mine.—I've enough in conscience, Eugenius, said I.—Indeed, Yorick, you have not, replied Eugenius—I know France and Italy better than you.—But you don't confider, Eugenius, said I, refusing his offer, that before I have been three days in Paris, I shall take care
to

to say or do something or other for which I shall get clapp'd up into the Bastile, and that I shall live there a couple of months entirely at the king of France's expence.—I beg pardon, said Eugenius, drily: really, I had forgot that resource.

Now the event I treated gaily came seriously to my door.

Is it folly, or nonchalance, or philosophy, or pertinacity—or what is it in me, that, after all, when La Fleur had gone down stairs, and I was quite alone, that I could not bring down my mind to think of it otherwise than I had then spoken of it to Eugenius?

C 3

—And



— And as for the Bastile! the terror is in the word—Make the most of it you can, said I to myself, the Bastile is but another word for a tower—and a tower is but another word for a house you can't get out of—Mercy on the gouty! for they are in it twice a year—but with nine livres a day, and pen and ink and paper and patience, albeit a man can't get out, he may do very well within—at least for a month or six weeks; at the end of which, if he is a harmless fellow his innocence appears, and he comes out a better and wiser man than he went in.

I had some occasion (I forget what) to step into the court-yard, as I settled
this

this account; and remember I walk'd
 down stairs in no small triumph with
 the conceit of my reasoning — Be-
 shrew the *sombre* pencil! said I vaunt-
 ingly—for I envy not its powers,
 which paints the evils of life with so
 hard and deadly a colouring. The
 mind sits terrified at the objects she
 has magnified herself, and blackened:
 reduce them to their proper size and
 hue she overlooks them — 'Tis true,
 said I, correcting the proposition —
 the Bastile is not an evil to be de-
 spised—but strip it of its towers—fill
 up the fossè—unbarricade the doors—
 call it simply a confinement, and sup-
 pose 'tis some tyrant of a distemper—
 and not of a man which holds you in



it—the evil vanishes, and you bear the other half without complaint.

I was interrupted in the hey-day of this soliloquy, with a voice which I took to be of a child, which complained “it could not get out.”—I look’d up and down the passage, and seeing neither man, woman, or child, I went out without further attention.

In my return back through the passage, I heard the same words repeated twice over; and looking up, I saw it was a starling hung in a little cage.—“I can’t get out—I can’t get out,” said the starling.

I stood

I stood looking at the bird : and to every person who came through the passage it ran fluttering to the side towards which they approach'd it, with the same lamentation of its captivity—
 “ I can't get out”, said the starling—
 God help thee! said I, but I'll let thee out, cost what it will; so I turn'd about the cage to get to the door; it was twisted and double twisted so fast with wire, there was no getting it open without pulling the cage to pieces— I took both hands to it.

The bird flew to the place where I was attempting his deliverance, and thrusting his head through the trellis, prefs'd his breast against it, as if impatient—I fear, poor creature! said I,



I cannot set thee at liberty—"No," said the starling—"I can't get out"—"—I can't get out," said the starling.

I vow, I never had my affections more tenderly awakened; or do I remember an incident in my life, where the dissipated spirits, to which my reason had been a bubble, were so suddenly call'd home. Mechanical as the notes were, yet so true in tune to nature were they chanted, that in one moment they overthrew all my systematic reasonings upon the Bastille; and I heavily walk'd up stairs, unsaying every word I had said in going down them.

Disguise



Disguise thyself as thou wilt, still
 slavery! said I—still thou art a bitter
 draught; and though thousands
 in all ages have been made to drink
 of thee, thou art no less bitter on
 that account.—'tis thou, thrice sweet
 and gracious goddess, addressing my-
 self to LIBERTY, whom all in pub-
 lic or in private worship, whose taste
 is grateful, and ever wilt be so, till
 NATURE herself shall change—no *tint*
 of words can spot thy snowy mantle,
 or chymic power turn thy sceptre
 into iron—with thee to smile upon
 him as he eats his crust, the swain
 is happier than his monarch, from
 whose court thou art exiled—Gracious
 heaven! cried I, kneeling down upon
 the last step but one in my ascent—
 grant

grant me but health, thou great Be-
flower of it, and give me but this
fair goddess as my companion —
and shower down thy mitres, if it
seems good unto thy divine provi-
dence, upon those heads which are
aching for them.

THE