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A Sentimental Journey Through France And Italy

Yorick, ...

London, 1768

Character. Versailles.

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

C H A R A C T E R.

— V E R S A I L L E S.

AND how do you find the French? said the Count de B****, after he had given me the Pafsport.

The reader may fuppose that after fo obliging a proof of courtesy, I could not be at a lofs to fay something handfome to the enquiry.

—*Mais paffe, pour cela*—Speak frankly, said he; do you find all the urbanity in the French which the



world give us the honour of?—I had found every thing, I said, which confirmed it—*Vraiment*, said the count.—*Les Francois sont polis*—To an excess, replied I.

The count took notice of the word *excesse*; and would have it I meant more than I said. I defended myself a long time as well as I could against it—he insisted I had a reserve, and that I would speak my opinion frankly.

I believe, *Monf. Le Comte*, said I, that man has a certain compass, as well as an instrument; and that the social and other calls have occasion by turns for every key in him; so
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that if you begin a note too high or too low, there must be a want either in the upper or under part, to fill up the system of harmony.— The Count de B**** did not understand music, so desired me to explain it some other way. A polish'd nation, my dear Count, said I, makes every one its debtor; and besides urbanity itself, like the fair sex, has so many charms; it goes against ~~the~~ the heart to say it can do ill; and yet, I believe, there is but a certain line of perfection, that man, take him altogether, is empower'd to arrive at —if he gets beyond, he rather exchanges qualities, than gets them. I must not presume to say, how far this has affected the French in the sub-



ject we are speaking of—but should it ever be the case of the English, in the progress of their resentments, to arrive at the same polish which distinguishes the French, if we did not lose the *politesse de cœur*, which inclines men more to human actions, than courteous ones—we should at least lose that distinct variety and originality of character, which distinguishes them, not only from each other, but from all the world besides.

I had a few king William's shillings as smooth as glass in my pocket; and foreseeing they would be of use in the illustration of my hypothesis,

I had

I had got them into my hand, when
I had proceeded so far—

See, *Monf. Le Comte*, said I,
rising up, and laying them before
him upon the table—by jingling and
ribbing one against another for seventy
years together in one body's pocket
or another's, they are become so
much alike, you can scarce distin-
guish one shilling from another.

The English, like antient medals,
kept more apart, and passing but few
peoples hands, preserve the first
sharpnesses which the fine hand of na-
ture has given them—they are not
so pleasant to feel—but in return,

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the legend is so visible, that at the first look you see whose image and superscription they bear. —But the French, *Monf. Le Comte*, added I, wishing to soften what I had said, have so many excellencies, they can the better spare this—they are a loyal, a gallant, a generous, an ingenious, and good temper'd people as is under heaven—if they have a fault—they are too *serious*.

Mon Dieu! cried the Count, rising out of his chair.

Mais vous plaisantez, said he, correcting his exclamation.—I laid my hand upon my breast, and with earnest

next gravity assured him, it was my most settled opinion.

The Count said he was mortified, he could not stay to hear my reasons, being engaged to go that moment to dine with the Duc de C****.

But if it is not too far to come to Versailles to eat your soup with me, I beg, before you leave France, I may have the pleasure of knowing you retract your opinion—or, in what manner you support it.—But if you do support it, Mons.L'Anglois, said he, you must do it with all your powers, because you have the whole world

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world against you.—I promised the
Count I would do myself the honour
of dining with him before I fet out
for Italy—so took my leave.

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