

Barcelona Wednesday the 7th June 1815

My dear friends,

Tho' I have not much time to write you by the present conveyance, yet that has not prevented me from commencing upon a pretty long sheet. The time I may occupy however in writing will serve to detail to you all the news that I have to mention. The first, and I dare swear, to you the best, I have to state is that I enjoy the most perfect health and if I could forget Scotland and all that it contains I believe I should also state that I am perfectly happy. I confess indeed that the intolerable heat we have sometimes to endure carries away from me all desire of exertion both of spirit and body by enervating and relaxing both. I am at present seated in my own room at a quarter past ten in forenoon, with all the doors and windows in my apartment open and yet I am boiling. Conceive what I have to endure about noon, when the sun is unclouded and the breezes of the north forsaken this land. We have however our cold days too, in fact the climate here is uncommonly changeable, and on that account our English invalids exclaim against the place. Before we arrived here we were informed they had had no rain for more than six months, but had just concluded their prayers for rain to Santa Madrona (the Goddess of rain in this country) by a procession and I am certain they have had their belly full since. The intolerable heat however dry up the moisture so quickly that the farmers and gardeners do not complain of the blessing of this Dear John V¹. We have had one or two thunderstorms but these are not half so frequent as I should have conjectured in so hot a climate. From the climate we proceed by an easy transition to its productions. The mutton in this country is exquisite in flavour but very high in price. Any beef we have eaten seems as if it had lived from the days of Adam to the present. The more immediate productions of the soil, I mean fruit and vegetables, are uncommonly good and very cheap. When we arrived here in the first week of April the wheat was fully in the ear and now is becoming quite yellow. We have had potatoes for more than a month about four pence the English pound. Oranges of most delicious quality for a halfpenny a piece. Cherries a penny a pound, apricots and almost any other fruit equally good and cheap. These all have been quite common for six weeks, except the apricots and we are informed that before the middle of August we shall have grapes for a penny a pound, they sell generally in Scotland 7/6. Now I am to pass on to the lords of the soil and give you a portrait of them. I am much afraid I should not use at least the same superlatives I have hitherto done. Still I believe I should trade considerably in these wares, for assuredly they deserve a few. Had I time for a learned dissertation on the subject I might institute a comparison between them and the French but I believe I should run the risk of tiring both you and myself and on that account, perhaps it is well that my time is limited. A few traits however, without engaging deeply in the subject may not be unacceptable. Of the moral and national character of the French, their late conduct speaks a language more intelligible than any delineation of mine. You shall behold a man quietly seating himself on a throne he had formerly polluted by every crime, you beholding marching almost without a comparison thro' those very fields which he had desolated by war, and stained by the blood of its inhabitants. You see some hailing the murder of their fathers, fathers almost adoring the red butcher of their sons and mothers renouncing that yearning tenderness of maternal love and offering on the altar of the man of blood, the child of her age, the only remembrance of her murdered husband, Oh! is it possible that man can renounce maternal feeling as well as burst the cords of moral obedience. Turn your eyes towards Spain you

1. Portuguese Sun King

there behold a people who, whatever be their faults, have shaken off the yolk of a detested tyrant, have purchased by their blood, and by ills of every form, alas not the indemnities they sought, not the expulsion of the tyrant. I could almost worship that daring wildness of character which like the bent bow the more it is crushed, the more tense the power. Of course while I entertain such sentiments you cannot expect that I shall have any mercy with the French. Oh! I feel as if they were unworthy to tread the same soil, to look upon the same heavens, to be warmed by the same sun, as other men. But I must leave them for fear I should loose (sic), my temper. But I left Toulouse, I used to cut them to the quick but they winced not, for they were too mean to feel. Had Boney landed in England, I told them, there would not have been a man capable of carrying a pitchfork who would not have forsaken all to attack him. But you stroll about as careless of tomorrow as if it were never to dawn. But French and Spaniards are loud in conversation. The former carry the declamation of the stage into the disputes of life, while the latter carry the long wail of nature upon the boards at the theatre. Rouse a Frenchmans lungs and he will bawl as if conversing with the moon, but see him on the stage and there he is miserably tame. I do not understand above half a dozen words of Spanish but I flatter myself I can follow the actor thro his part. The snivelling Frenchman, however, even tho' I could partly read his language, on the stage I could not decipher his tale nor the emotions on his face. I am uncommonly surprised at his lameness in assuming character for there are no people on the earth who display so much natural language. I mean grins and shrugs and muscular feeling as they. The French want dignity, the Spaniard possess haughty pride. The former are naturally gay, the latter only assume the quality. They are not at all sparing in their attempts but their activity in gaiety is generally distorted while that of the French is full force. The manners of the French are a compound of buffoonery and suppleness, those of the Spaniard stiffness and attempted ease. I confess however, I am more pleased with the latter and (*sic, maybe than*) with the former. The one is at least a century behind the English in all the arts of life while the other is again a century behind him. The national taste in France is most miserably depraved and shows itself in everything that is bizarre or whimsical in dress, and in architecture. Their houses are very often built with immense and imposing fronts while their backs are scarcely six feet high. The Spaniard possesses a much more chaste taste. The dress of the genteel part of the people is neat and elegant. Their houses are splendid and substantial but their furniture, tho' immensely rich is far from being elegant. The rich have a custom of painting the outside of their houses and you are not infrequently called to admire paintings well designed and tolerably executed in a narrow lane. The French sometimes paint theirs also but with this national and characteristic difference, the former design always grand historical or fancy subject, the latter more ribaldry and farce. We have buildings here infinitely superior to anything I have seen either in London or Bordeaux but in general the houses tho' spacious and painted show none of the solid beauty of architecture. They show few columns, no fine massive front, all is deception, for all is colour. No imagination of yours, my dear father, and no description of mine can give you any idea of the Government under which we now live. The King shuts himself up four hours every day in a female convent or a monastery. Those noble heroes who carry the scars of battle on the forehead are persecuted and banished and disgraced, while interested priests, polluted monks and friars and the whole tribe of Roman Catholic orders sell everything, either by the terrors of a horrid superstition or by the simoniacal² frauds of hypocrisy. The army is absolutely starving while the idle and dissolute monks are flocking round in luxury in hundreds. Very very often the poor soldiers scarcely eat a morsel for several days together and the officers are compelled to have recourse to the convents for a few bowls of soup

2. simoniacal - relating to or engaging in simony (the buying or selling of ecclesiastical privileges)

to sustain existence. Yesterday morning a poor soldier almost at the extremity of life went into a hotel and ordered breakfast. It was the first he had eaten perhaps for days together. He could not however pay the bill, the innkeeper complained to his Colonel and rather than appear before him and submit to punishment he blew out his brains with a pistol. This is the only instance I have heard of which ended so fatally but I could give you hundreds of misery and distrust almost unparalleled in a Christian country. I might mention instances of officers in disguise begging on the streets in the evening, of some who cannot appear outdoors for want of necessary articles of dress, of others falling down in the streets for mere want of food and of others having been found in bed after a fast of several days. But details are nothing, you must come to see the famished men themselves, and give a peseta among a whole company, then will you (see) what nowadays that tenpence trifle produces. Is it not astonishing? Are not these the same men who, not two twelvemonths ago were boiling with rage because they were under the sway of Joseph³. Under Ferdinand⁴ they submit to every thing, but they could not even enjoy happiness under Joseph. To crown all their ills, there is not a person of quality in Spain who pays a farthing of tax. It is on the merchants and mechanics and peasantry that all this falls. What! degrade a Spanish nobleman by making him pay taxes, no, no. He pays his confessions and that is enough. On the article of religion I know not what to say. Every church in Toulouse at almost every hour of the day was crowded by Women at their prayers. But here they seem disexiled. I know not how to give a reason for this. It is certain that in this country the people are completely footballs⁵ to the priesthood. It is not so in France, perhaps this is the very reason why religion is become more a rational matter in France. I doubt not that the churches are crowded here to excess at ----- hours for mass, but in France people begin to think they ----- pray without the priesthood. The Inquisition is once more -----ed here in nearly primeval power. We know nothing of the ----- they employ within its walls, but we know that there are ----- upon the tongue without. Also a man went to confession a few weeks ago and among his sins confessed he had heard a Spanish Officer say that it was ridiculous to believe that Santa Madrona could send rain when she chose. The officer in a very few hours after was within the walls of the Inquisition. I have not heard what has become of him. Before the last war the peasantry were concerned that the English soldiery bore the mark of the beast in their forehead and breathed fire from their lips. I am afraid if they did not conceive their scarlet coats was that infernal fire they would find little else at all like it. But I wrong the priesthood, perhaps they meant fire issued from the mouths of their muskets and I believe traitors found this a consuming fire. It is certain, however, that they were quite astonished at the difference between the catholic Frenchmen and the heretic Briton. The former plundered, the latter protected the natives. Their faith was a little startled, but I presume they would soon submit to their teachers. Is it not astonishing too, that some of the leading men in the Cortes⁶ were priests? have they lost their influence? or do they merely wear a character suited to their times. Every person Spanish and English with whom I converse agree in believing there will certainly be a revolution ere long if Ferdinand and his Government do not make one themselves. Is it wonderful there is a considerable French party in the country? when people reflect that they destroyed the monasteries and united their lands to the crown, and Ferdinand has unestablished them all in full force. The French are in general, however, detested in this country. They have all been, I mean all French who were established in this city, banished fifty leagues from its walls. We have the Duke D'Angouleme and his staff here. He has been to Madrid but what kind of reception he met with them has not transpired. It is impossible for that army to march which has not received a farthing of pay for a twelvemonth.

3. Joseph Bonaparte (Napoleon Bonaparte's elder brother) was King of Spain from 1808 to 1813.

4. Ferdinand VII was King of Spain in 1808 and from 1814 to 1833.

5. There is evidence that football was played at Eton as early as 1747. Westminster started two years later. Some sources say even 12th century

6. Cortes of Cadiz, the Spanish legislature at the time

Do only think for a moment of their situation. Some have had their clothes from England some four, some six years ago, their clothes have all seen actual service and you may conceive how elegant they are. As for shoes, you might almost as well look for them in a mob of native Indians. It is said that General Castanos⁷ is expected here in a few days with many to lay there in the north of Spain, and lead them to France. I hope this may be true but I am much afraid those who believe it will be disappointed and those who do not will not have the shame consequent upon judging ill.

The small remnant of my sheet must be devoted to more interesting details. I have nothing more to say of myself than I have said, only Mrs H is determined not to spend the winter in Spain. If matters go well in France we shall certainly return thither and settle for the approaching winter in Marseilles or in its neighbourhood. But if the rights of kings are not to be respected and if Boney remain on the throne then we shall go to Italy. We expect Mr H to join us sometime during the winter and if he find us in France we hope he will carry us to Italy. I have no great desire to go much anywhere, for I am so much confined that I neither mingle with man or have time...

..the country. I hope you are all happy. I am very anxious to hear from you but am afraid that any letter you send me, after having received this, will not find me at Barcelona. However, if you choose I should like you to hazard a sheet, address me by my English name, Casa Pujol y Pujol⁸ en Barcelona. I need not ask any news of John. What is become of John. What is become of Anderson! and of everybody? I am afraid I shall be so long away that Agnes will be married before I return. Tell her I am determined to be at her wedding and she must not be in any haste. Jane too must not grow so tall, else she will be apt to break her head on the doors. My kindest love to you all. I hope we shall all meet in less than a twelvemonth, happy and glad to meet after so long an absence. My kind remembrance to Mr and Mrs Currie, and to Miss Moffat, but perhaps I sin in writing Miss. And the family at Knockgray also, and to all who are pleased to hear news of me. If matters are not settled in France by the middle of July we certainly go to Pisa near Leghorn for the winter. Farewell once more.

I send this by a gentleman from Glasgow who is upon his return by sea. Perhaps it may be many a day before it reach you. But that I cannot mend. There is now a packet established but like to embrace every private possibility I can. Farewell my dear friend, ever yours JC

Envelope addressed
Mr William Campbell
Carsphairn
Ayr

7. Spanish General who won the first victory of the Spanish uprising against French rule at Baylen on 19 July 1808. Also joined Wellington on 15-16 September 1812, just in time to take part in the siege of Burgos (northern Spain).

8. Casa - Home, Pujol - Catalan surname