

William Bingham, né à Philadelphie en 1751, mort en Angleterre en 1804. Fut membre du vieux Congrès et Sénateur en 1795. Sa femme Anne Willing, fut l'une des femmes les plus remarquables de son temps par sa beauté, l'élégance de ses manières, et l'hospitalité princière de sa maison, que lui permirent les moyens de son mari, considéré comme le plus riche citoyen de ~~Philadelphie~~ la Pensylvanie. Ann Louisa, leur fille, devint la femme de Lord Ashburton.

Cette lettre est écrite à Jack Swift, son ami, alors à Lisbon, dans une maison de commerce. Il le critique fortement de son dédain pour les femmes. Parle d'un duel entre Willing et Lawrence.

1772. Bingham.
Dear Swift

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Philad^a February 27th 1772

I received your two Favours of the 9th Sept & 25 Oct^r
w^{ch} came to hand long after their Dates, this is the first
opportunity that presented since I received them;

I cannot but observe how severe you are upon the
Fair Sex; more so than is consistent with the Charac-
ter of a Gentleman (w^{ch} I know is your earnest Desire
to attain) to make known, your Reasons are really
inconclusive, the first, "because" you have suffered by
a too violent Attachment to them" will not justify
you in speaking of them in so indifferent a manner,
& the second "that they have occasioned much
Mischiefe to Mankind that you are determined to
alienate yourself from them" is high Treason
against the Sovereignty of Beauty, it argues a degree
of Insensibility that I thought was an utter Stran-
ger to you; It certainly must have been an
Escape of Fancy, for "to alienate yourself from them"
is to bid adieu to Pleasure itself, tis to resign all
those soft & tender Feelings w^{ch} are Intercourse with
them is ~~certain~~ ^{sure} to produce such a refining our Sentiments
swallow our Ideas & tends in a great measure to distin-
guish the polite Gentleman from the learned Pedant
& illiterate Clown; But I am going too far; By
discarding so much on the Powers of the Fair Sex,
you may imagine I am paying Tribute to the Smiles
of some favorite Fair one, or basking in the Sun-
shine of female Favors; but I'll spare you its by
no means, ^{the Cause} I have never as yet devoted
much of my Time to ^{the cultivation of an acquaintance with} those attractive & agreeable
Objects;

I observe that Lisbon does not seem to you as
agreeable as Novelty at first made it, your Obser-
vations on the Cause of it are very just & pertinent
Discontented with our present Situation, the
Minds pursue after Happiness, & tho' innumerable
Objects present themselves to our View, that seem
to bear that flattering appearance, we find that
appearances are mostly delusive; like an ornant
Coquette she mocks our strictest Researches & like a
Coy Poodle she baffles our most serious Enquiries;

I think I have acted upon the true principles
of the Lex Talionis, for in all your Letters you have given
me of Scissosity (a Word of her own Coining) w^{ch} I heard a
young Lady make use of on a similar Occasion, Quantum
sufficit & now I think I have given your Par pro Pare;

I received a letter the other Day from our Friend Osborne wherein he endeavors to give me a Description of the Pleasures he enjoys in London, but from his inability in doing it, they seem to quire a Description, he dwells with seeming Raptures on the striking Beauties of the Bagno & acknowledges that all he can say will give me but a faint Representation of them, I really envy him, he certainly spends his Time in all the Elegance of Employment.

Tom Morris arrived here about two Months ago, He has been a great Traveller, he has visited the interior Parts of Spain, France, Holland &c & spent some of his Time in London, From a Person who has had the opportunities of Travelling much may be expected, I shall therefore forbear giving my Judgment of his Improvements, least by setting too high a Value on the Benefits resulting from his opportunities, I should not do him Justice, He seems to set a greater Value upon those Attainments essential to a Man of Business, than upon all those superficial Qualities which in the Eye of the World constitute the polite Gentleman;

You tell me you really envy Lawrence, but there is really no Foundation for it, if on Occ^s of any Progress he has made in the Affections of Miss Galloway, for you may rest assured that there is no Likelihood of its ever being a Match, She has lately turned away a professed Admirer to Mr Keith of Johnston, such personal Qualities & such mental Accomplishments will certainly do a great Deal of Execution, Your Opinion of her is that she bids fair to be a fine Woman, ~~to make any Man happy~~, ^{if} the former I cannot with ~~any~~ ^{any} Regret, but I differ from you entirely with respect to the latter, She has really too much Wit for a Woman, too much I say to brook that Superiority ~~to which a Husband would claim as his Right,~~ & it is generally allowed that one of the capital & primary Causes of conjugal Infelicity & mutual Dissensions between a married Pair proceeds from being coupled with a witty Female, for the reason above mentioned.

Mr Sam^l Meddith is going to enter the Pale of Matrimony with our celebrated Beauty Miss Peggy Cadwallader who has long bore away the Palm of Beauty from many of her female Candidates, but she now resigns it by almost general Consent to a young Lady formerly of your Acquaintance, Surprise has always been esteemed an agreeable Emotion of the Mind, I may Judge then what Effect it will have upon you when I tell you that Mr Smith

Kitty

Kitty M Call is at present our reigning Toast, she made
her appearance at a Ball lately given in Compliment
to some Gent^l Strangers & she was generally acknow-
ledged to be the finest Figure in the Room; & for some
Time after you could go into no Company but every
Tongue was wanting in her Praise; she is not what
you may call a Critical Beauty for her Features will
not bear the Test of a severe examination, but there
is something in her Manner & Address so in-
finitely & irresistibly engaging that it commands
Respect while it engages Esteem;

It is seriously & confidently reported that the Governor
~~is going to marry Miss Montgomery~~ ~~is going to marry~~ ~~is going to marry~~
seem to confirm the Report, for he has danced with
her twice (more than he has done with any other
young Lady) ~~and~~ ^{invited her to} a Sleighting Party with her
and, but whether it is more than the Eye of the
Day or a vague Report Time will soon discover;
I think you are entirely mistaken in the Cause you
assign for Mr Willings being so unsuccessfull in his
Amour with Miss Montgomery, his Ignorance
& Ignorance; he certainly is no Tyro in the Art of Court
ship, rather an Adroit, for he has been a constant
Volant at her Service for almost four Years, I think
he must assuredly have carried her if his impor-
tent Conduct had not been so great an Obstacle;
I cannot omit informing you of a Duel between
two of your Acquaintance, Willings & Lawrence, a
trifling Accident was the Cause of it, Lawrence
gave the Challenge which was accepted, the Place
was agreed on they ^{met} ~~appeared~~ there the next Day at
the Time appointed with their Swords, the Ground
being marked out & all the ~~ornaments~~ ~~ornaments~~ ~~ornaments~~
which are required in these Cases, they appeared
to their respective Posts with the calmest Resolu-
tion of either saving their Lives or preserving
their Honor; It happily ended without any
fatal Consequences; they both fared, but neither of
their Balls took effect; Willings Conduct
was truly admirable, he behaved himself like a
Gentleman & a Man of Spirit, Lawrence with
Real Fortitude & Equanimity;

By a Letter in your Handwriting just received from Parr
& Berkeley I find you still continue with them; I won-
der you confine yourself in such a manner to Lisbon; I
suppose you will take a Trip to London before you return &
nothing would give me more pleasure than to meet you there;

I am with sincere regard, Your esteem Friend
Mr. Bingham