

**LETTERS  
OF THE RIGHT  
HONOURABLE  
LADY M—Y W—Y M—E**

**Written during her  
Travels in Europe,  
Asia and Africa**

**By Lady Mary Wortley Montagu**

Sample



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Letters of the Right Honourable Lady M—y W—y M—e:  
Written, during her Travels in Europe, Asia and Africa,  
to Persons of Distinction, Men of Letters, &c.  
in different Parts of Europe.  
Which contain, among other curious Relations,  
Accounts of the Policy and Manners of the Turks;  
Drawn from Sources that have been inaccessible  
to other Travellers.

By Lady Mary Wortley Montagu

First published 1763/1767

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A Dunyazad Digital Library book  
Selected, edited and typeset by Robert Schaechter  
First published (originally on [milletre.net](http://milletre.net)) April 2012  
Release 1.01 · April 2014

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Lady Mary Wortley Montagu (or Montague) was born as Mary Pierrepont in London on May 15, 1689, into an aristocratic family of considerable wealth. She used the library at her father's mansion, which at the time was one of the finest private libraries in England, for her own education, which included teaching herself Latin. In 1712 she married the politician Edward Wortley Montagu, grandson of the 1st Earl of Sandwich, against her father's wishes; they had a son in 1713. When her husband was appointed Ambassador to the Ottoman Porte in Constantinople in 1716, she accompanied him on his mission. In 1718, after the birth of a daughter, they returned to England. In 1739, she left her husband whom she later divorced, and went abroad, living in France and Italy. In 1762, after her ex-husband's death and on her daughter's request, whose husband was now Prime Minister, she returned to England, where she died on August 21.

In Turkey Lady Wortley Montagu learned about the inoculation against smallpox as it was practiced there, a disease from which her brother had died and which she herself had suffered in 1715, leaving her face scarred. Against severe resistance from the medical establishment, after her return she successfully promoted the introduction of smallpox inoculation in England.

Lady Wortley Montagu, "one of the most colorful Englishwomen of her time" (Encyclopedia Britannica), was a distinguished poet, essayist, satirist, writer of fiction, and letter writer. Today she is best known for her "Turkish Embassy Letters," here presented, which she collected and edited for their possible publication after her death.

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The author of the Preface “by a Lady,” signed M.A., is Mary Astell (1666–1731), an English writer who has been called the “first English feminist.”

The editor of the first edition, and author of the “Advertisement of the Editor,” is assumed to be the John Cleland (1709–1789), most famous for being the author of *Fanny Hill*.

Mr. Pope, the author of the *Verses to the Lady Mary Wortley Montague*, and as Mr. P—— the recipient of several of Lady Montagu’s letters in this collection, is the poet and translator of Homer, Alexander Pope.

## ABOUT THIS EDITION

This edition attempts to follow the original edition in three volumes from 1763 in spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and italicization, even where they seem erratic or are inconsistent. Some obvious errors that might interfere with ease of reading have been corrected.

Some further changes that have been made:

- the occasional apostrophes before plural-s were removed
- repeated opening quotation marks at each line were removed
- quotation marks around poems were removed
- occasional text markups by small caps were replaced by italics
- the numbers of the letters were changed from Roman to Arabic

Missing specifications of years in the dates of the letters have been added in square brackets. All footnotes are part of the original text.

The original edition ends with Letter 52. The following letters, the essay about marriage, and the two poems — one of them written not *by* Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, but *to* her — have first appeared in an edition from 1767. The letter that was given the number 53 in that and following editions is not included here, as its content is not in any way related to the author's travels covered in this collection.

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## PREFACE

BY A LADY.

Written in 1724.

I was going, like common editors, to advertise the reader of the beauties and excellencies of the work laid before him: To tell him that the illustrious author had opportunities, that other travellers, whatever their quality or curiosity may have been, cannot obtain; and a genius capable of making the best improvement of every opportunity. But if the reader, after perusing *one* letter only, has not discernment to distinguish that natural elegance, that delicacy of sentiment and observation, that easy gracefulness, and lovely simplicity (which is the perfection of writing) and in which these *Letters* exceed all that has appeared in this kind, or almost in any other, let him lay the book down, and leave it to those who have.

The noble author had the goodness to lend me her M.S. to satisfy my curiosity in some inquiries I had made concerning her travels; and when I had it in my hands, how was it possible to part with it? I once had the vanity to hope I might acquaint the public, that it owed this invaluable treasure to my importunities. But alas! the most ingenious author has condemned it to obscurity during her life; and conviction, as well as deference, obliges me to yield to her reasons. However, if these *Letters* appear hereafter when I am in my grave, let this attend them, in testimony to posterity, that among her contemporaries, *one* woman, at least, was just to her merit.

There is not any thing so excellent, but some will carp at it, and the rather, because of its excellency. But to such hypercritics, I shall only say \*\*\*\*\*.

I confess, I am malicious enough to desire, that the world should

see, to how much better purpose the *Ladies* travel than their *Lords*; and that, whilst it is surfeited with *Male-Travels*, all in the same tone, and stuff with the same trifles; a lady has the skill to strike out a new path, and to embellish a worn-out subject, with variety of fresh and elegant entertainment. For besides the vivacity and spirit which enlivens every part, and that inimitable beauty which spreads through the whole; besides the purity of the style, for which it may be justly accounted the standard of the English tongue; the reader will find a more true and accurate account of the customs and manners of the several nations, with whom this lady conversed, than he can in any other author. But as her ladyship's penetration discovers the inmost follies of the heart, so the candour of her temper passed over them with an air of pity rather than reproach; treating with the politeness of a court, and the gentleness of a lady, what the severity of her judgment could not but condemn.

In short, let her own sex, at least, do her justice, lay aside diabolical Envy, and its *Brother* Malice,<sup>1</sup> with all their accursed company, sly whispering, cruel back-biting, spiteful detraction, and the rest of that hideous crew, which I hope are very falsely said to attend the *Tea-Table*, being more apt to think they frequent those public places where virtuous women never come. Let the men malign one another, if they think fit, and strive to pull down merit when they cannot equal it. Let us be better natured, than to give way to any unkind or disrespectful thought of so bright an ornament of our sex, merely because she has better sense; for I doubt not but our hearts will tell us, that this is the real and unpardonable offence, whatever may be pretended. Let us be

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<sup>1</sup> This fair and elegant prefacer, has resolved, that *Malice* should be of the Masculine Gender: I believe it is both *Masculine* and *Feminine*, and I heartily wish it were *Neuter*.

better Christians, than to look upon her with an evil eye, only because the giver of all good gifts has entrusted and adorned her with the most excellent talents. Rather let us freely own the superiority of this sublime genius, as I do in the sincerity of my soul, pleased that a *woman* triumphs, and proud to follow in her train. Let us offer her the palm which is so justly her due; and if we pretend to any laurels, lay them willingly at her feet.

December 18, 1724.

M. A.

*Charm'd into love of what obscures my fame,  
If I had wit, I'd celebrate her name,  
And all the beauties of her mind proclaim.  
Till Malice, deafen'd with the mighty sound,  
Its ill-concerted calumnies confound;  
Let fall the mask, and with pale Envy meet,  
To ask and find, their pardon at her feet.*

You see, Madam, how I lay every thing at your feet. As the tautology shews the poverty of my genius, it likewise shews the extent of your empire over my imagination.

May 31, 1725.

## ADVERTISEMENT OF THE EDITOR

The editor of these Letters, who during his residence at Venice, was honoured with the esteem and friendship of their ingenious and elegant author, presents them to the publick, for the two following reasons:

*First*, Because it was the manifest intention of the late Lady M—y W—y M—e, that this *select collection* of her Letters should be communicated to the public; an intention declared, not only to the Editor, but to a few more chosen friends, to whom she gave copies of these incomparable Letters.

The *second* and principal reason that has engaged the Editor to let this collection see the light, is, that the publication of these Letters will be an immortal monument to the memory of Lady M—y W—y; and will shew, as long as the English language endures, the sprightliness of her wit, the solidity of her judgment, the extent of her knowledge, the elegance of her taste, and the excellence of her *real* character.

The *select collection*, here published, was faithfully transcribed from the original manuscript of her ladyship at Venice.

The Letters from *Ratisbon, Vienna, Dresden, Peterwaradin, Belgrade, Adrianople, Constantinople, Pera, Tunis, Genoa, Lyons* and *Paris*, are, certainly, the most curious and interesting part of this publication, and both in point of *matter* and *form*, are, to say no more of them, singularly worthy of the curiosity and attention of all *men of taste*, and even of all *women of fashion*. As to those female readers, who read for improvement, and think their beauty an insipid thing, if it is not seasoned by intellectual charms, they will find in these Letters what they seek for, and will behold in their author, an ornament and model to their sex.

## LETTER I

To the Countess of —.

*Rotterdam*, Aug. 3, O.S. 1716.

I flatter myself (dear sister) that I shall give you some pleasure in letting you know that I have safely passed the sea, though we had the ill fortune of a storm. We were persuaded by the captain of the yacht to set out in a calm, and he pretended there was nothing so easy as to tide it over; but, after two days slowly moving, the wind blew so hard, that none of the sailors could keep their feet, and we were all Sunday night tossed very handsomely. I never saw a man more frighted than the captain. For my part, I have been so lucky, neither to suffer from fear nor sea-sickness; tho', I confess, I was so impatient to see myself once more upon dry land, that I would not stay till the yacht could get to *Rotterdam*, but went in the long-boat to *Helvoetsluys*, where we had voitures to carry us to the *Briel*. I was charmed with the neatness of that little town; but my arrival at *Rotterdam*, presented me a new scene of pleasure. All the streets are paved with broad stones, and before many of the meanest artificers doors are placed seats of various coloured marbles, so neatly kept, that I'll assure you, I walked almost all over the town yesterday, *incognito*, in my slippers, without receiving one spot of dirt; and you may see the Dutch maids washing the pavement of the street, with more application than ours do our bed-chambers. The town seems so full of people, with such busy faces, all in motion, that I can hardly fancy it is not some celebrated fair; but I see it is every day the same. 'Tis certain no town can be more advantageously situated for commerce. Here are seven large canals, on which the merchants ships come up to the very doors of their houses. The shops and warehouses are of a surprising neatness and magnificence,

filled with an incredible quantity of fine merchandize, and so much cheaper than what we see in England, that I have much ado to persuade myself I am still so near it. Here is neither dirt nor beggary to be seen. One is not shocked with those loathsome cripples, so common in London, nor teized with the importunity of idle fellows and wenches, that chuse to be nasty and lazy. The common servants and little shop-women, here, are more nicely clean, than most of our ladies, and the great variety of neat dresses (every woman dressing her head after her own fashion) is an additional pleasure in seeing the town. You see, hitherto, I make no complaints, dear sister, and if I continue to like travelling, as well as I do at present, I shall not repent my project. It will go a great way in making me satisfied with it, if it affords me an opportunity of entertaining you. But it is not from Holland, that you must expect a *disinterested* offer. I can write enough, in the stile of Rotterdam, to tell you plainly, in one word, that I expect returns of all the London news. You see I have already learn't to make a good bargain, and that it is not for nothing I will so much as tell you, I am,  
Your affectionate sister.

## LETTER 2

To Mrs. S——.

*Hague*, Aug. 5, O.S. 1716.

I make haste to tell you, dear Madam, that after all the dreadful fatigues you threatened me with, I am hitherto very well pleased with my journey. We take care to make such short stages every day, that I rather fancy myself upon parties of pleasure, than upon the road, and sure nothing can be more agreeable than travelling in Holland. The whole country appears a large garden; the roads are well paved, shaded on each side with rows of trees, and bordered with large canals, full of boats, passing and repassing. Every twenty paces gives you the prospect of some villa, and every four hours that of a large town, so surprisingly neat, I am sure you would be charmed with them. The place I am now at, is certainly one of the finest villages in the world. Here are several squares finely built, and, (what I think a particular beauty) the whole set with thick large trees. The *Vour-hout* is, at the same time, the Hide Park and Mall of the people of quality; for they take the air in it both on foot and in coaches. There are shops for wafers, cool liquors, &c. I have been to see several of the most celebrated gardens, but I will not teize you with their descriptions. I dare say you think my letter already long enough. But I must not conclude without begging your pardon, for not obeying your commands, in sending the lace you ordered me. Upon my word I can yet find none, that is not dearer than you may buy it in London. If you want any India goods, here are great variety of penny-worths; and I shall follow your orders with great pleasure and exactness, being,

Dear Madam, &c. &c.

### LETTER 3

To Mrs. S. C.

*Nimeguen*, Aug. 13, O.S. 1716.

I am extremely sorry, my dear S. that your fears of disobliging your relations, and their fears for your health and safety, have hindered me from enjoying the happiness of your company, and you the pleasure of a diverting journey. I receive some degree of mortification from every agreeable novelty, or pleasing prospect, by the reflection of your having so unluckily missed the delight which I know it would have given you. If you were with me in this town, you would be ready to expect to receive visits from your *Nottingham* friends. No two places were ever more resembling; one has but to give the *Maese* the name of the *Trent*, and there is no distinguishing the prospect. The houses, like those of *Nottingham*, are built one above another, and are intermixed, in the same manner, with trees and gardens. The Tower, they call *Julius Caesar's*, has the same situation with *Nottingham* Castle; and I cannot help fancying I see from it, the *Trent-field*, *Adboulton*, places so well known to us. 'Tis true, the fortifications make a considerable difference. All the learned in the art of war, bestow great commendations on them; for my part, that know nothing of the matter, I shall content myself with telling you, 'tis a very pretty walk on the ramparts, on which there is a tower, very deservedly called the *Belvidera*, where people go to drink coffee, tea, &c. and enjoy one of the finest prospects in the world. The public walks have no great beauty, but the thick shade of the trees, which is solemnly delightful. But I must not forget to take notice of the bridge, which appeared very surprising to me. It is large enough to hold hundreds of men, with horses and carriages. They give the value of an English two-pence to get upon it,



and then away they go, bridge and all, to the other side of the river, with so slow a motion, one is hardly sensible of any at all. I was yesterday at the French church, and stared very much at their manner of service. The parson clapped on a broad-brimmed hat in the first place, which gave him entirely the air of, *what d'ye call him*, in Bartholomew fair, which he kept up by extraordinary antic gestures, and preaching much such stuff, as t'other talked to the puppets. However the congregation seemed to receive it with great devotion; and I was informed, by some of his flock, that he is a person of particular fame amongst them. I believe by this time, you are as much tired with my account of him, as I was with his sermon; but I am sure your brother will excuse a digression in favour of the church of England. You know, speaking disrespectfully of the Calvinists, is the same thing as speaking honourably of the church. Adieu, my dear S. always remember me, and be assured, I can never forget you, &c. &c.

## LETTER 4

To the Lady —.

*Cologne*, Aug. 16, O. S. 1716.

If my lady — could have any notion of the fatigues that I have suffered these two last days, I am sure she would own it a great proof of regard, that I now sit down to write to her. We hired horses from Nimeguen hither, not having the conveniency of the post, and found but very indifferent accommodations at Reinberg, our first stage; but it was nothing to what I suffered yesterday. We were in hopes to reach Cologne; our horses tired at Stamel, three hours from it, where I was forced to pass the night in my cloaths, in a room, not at all better than a hovel; for though I have my bed with me, I had no mind to undress, where the wind came from a thousand places. We left this wretched lodging at day-break, and about six, this morning, came safe here, where I got immediately into bed. I slept so well for three hours, that I found myself perfectly recovered, and have had spirits enough to go and see all that is curious in the town, that is to say, the churches, for here is nothing else worth seeing. This is a very large town, but the most part of it is old built. The Jesuits church, which is the neatest, was shewed me, in a very complaisant manner, by a handsome young Jesuit; who, not knowing who I was, took a liberty in his compliments and railleries, which very much diverted me. Having never before seen any thing of that nature, I could not enough admire the magnificence of the altars, the rich images of the saints (all massy silver) and the *enchassures* of the relics, though I could not help murmuring, in my heart, at the profusion of pearls, diamonds, and rubies, bestowed on the adornment of rotten teeth and dirty rags. I own that I had wickedness enough to covet *St. Ursula's* pearl necklace; though perhaps this

was no wickedness at all, an image not being certainly one's neighbour; but I went yet farther, and wished the wench herself converted into dressing-plate. I should also gladly see converted into silver, a great *St. Christopher*, which I imagine would look very well in a cistern. These were my pious reflections; though I was very well satisfied to see, piled up to the honour of our nation, the skulls of the Eleven Thousand Virgins. I have seen some hundreds of relics here of no less consequence; but I will not imitate the common stile of travellers so far as to give you a list of them, being persuaded, that you have no manner of curiosity for the titles given to jaw bones and bits of worm-eaten wood. — Adieu, I am just going to supper, where I shall drink your health in an admirable sort of Lorrain wine, which I am sure is the same you call Burgundy in London, &c. &c.

**End of  
sample**

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