

ROYAL WEDDING

Elizabeth Montagu (1718–1800) to Elizabeth Vesey (1715–1791)

28 January 1764

Just before Christmas I set out for London, and thought I would write to you on the road and send you a winter's pastoral in imitation of the great German genius Mr. Gesner. But alas, the hawthorns were all under water; the newborn lamb was drowned; the robin red breast would not sing his Christmas carol; all nature was drooping and forlorn; no icicles glistened on the trees, no crystallized lake or river reflected the sunbeams. We were enveloped in misty rain and in a melancholy coach and six with only my own maid; I passed eight days in the dreary journey—the roads hardly practicable, the waters hardly passable. Imagine whether at the end of such days' journeys, the sight of the red-nosed landlord and the fat landlady at the Blue Boar or Green Dragon could revive my spirits enough to make me a correspondent worthy Mrs. Vesey! When I returned to London after so long an absence, my friends visited me with assiduity, my acquaintance with curiosity, they wanted to see whether I was Germanized at Spa, Dutchified at the Hague, or Frenchified by lodging two nights at the Lion d'Argent at Calais. By this time my friends find I am not improved, and my acquaintance that I am not metamorphosed, and there is not any great demand for me, so I shall have it in my power to write often to you, and be assured that as far as extent of paper and numbers of letters can go towards it, I will discharge my debt very soon.

I suppose you had rather have an account of the health, *les dits et gestes* of Mrs. Carter, Lord Lyttelton, and our other friends than of the fine clothes at the Prince of Brunswick's wedding. Mrs. Carter has all the Greek, all the headache, and all the humility she used to have.... Lord Lyttelton had acquired all he wanted, health, and a surtout of flesh, but he had a little fever lately which has for the present impaired his health and worn his surtout a little threadbare. His speech on privilege in the House of Lords two months ago did him great honour and the cause of virtue, decency, and order great service. Lord Bath at these nuptials "has been finest at every fine show and frolicked it all the long day." There was a noble and magnificent table kept at Somerset house by the Green Cloth for the Prince of Brunswick before he was married, to this only the Lords of the Household and the great state officers were invited, except Lord Bath, whom the King ordered to be put on the list as having known and entertained his Highness abroad. Great dinners, crowded drawing rooms, and a very long day at the House of Lords on Tuesday, after Leicester House, have *in fine* given his Lordship a cold. Mr. Thomas Pitt has gained great reputation by two speeches in the House of Commons. Tomorrow Mrs. Carter, Lord Littelton, Sir James Macdonald, and Mr. Stillingfleet are to dine with me, but alas! Mr. and Mrs. Vesey, and Mr. Burke will not dine with me!... How often do we all lament your absence! It will be quite unfashionable not to say something of our Princely wedding. All the world was fine, the courtiers were fine because the King's sister was married, the War Kettle because a German hero, one who fought in our wars and did not negotiate in our peace, was to be complimented. He made a visit to Hayes' where he was received by a patriot in flannels. He made a visit at Newcastle House, where he was hugged and kissed by an old courtier, *tout patri* of courtesy. This visit was indeed owing to a personal acquaintance with the Duke and Duchess of Newcastle when they were in Germany. However, it was thought in general that the Prince coquetted with the opposition; that party wished him to stay longer in hopes of getting him to intrigue with them, but his Highness would have been more prudent, for the brother-in-law (besides being the most amiable man in the world) is of a condition more fixed and settled than ministers or favorites of the people, who are the gilded insects of a summer's day. Lady Harvey has had the gout severely.... Of all the figures in the drawing room on the wedding, the most conspicuous was our friend Monsey; he was unhouzeled, disappointed, unannealed, he looked like a *felo de se corpse* in the highway; there was a dispute whether he got his wig off a gibbet or took it from a cherry tree. But most surely he was neither in soft raiment, purple, fine linen nor in such apparel as men in kings' houses. The post bell rings, so for the present adieu my dear Madam! At the feast of shells the music of your voice, the gentle vivacity of your wit will be wanted. We will raise the song in your praise.

Reginald Blunt, ed. *Mrs. Montagu, "Queen Of The Blues:" Her Letters and Friendships from 1762 to 1800* (1923), 1:88–90.