

No. 5.—*Copy of a LETTER addressed by Lord ELGIN to the Right Honourable CHARLES LONG, in 1811;—with a Postscript added February 1816.*

SIR,

6, Park Lane, May 6th, 1811.

In requesting you to be so obliging as to offer to Parliament, in my name, a proposal for constituting my Athenian Collection national property, I feel desirous of putting you as fully as possible in possession of my ideas connected with this transfer.

The Memorandum recently published, on the subject of my pursuits in Greece (of which I did myself the honour of sending you a copy), and the inspection of my Museum, will sufficiently explain that my undertaking could have had no other object than that of endeavouring (though it never before had been found practicable) to secure, as far as it could yet be traced, a full and accurate knowledge of the School of Phidias, while he had the direction of the works of architecture and sculpture during the most brilliant period of the history of Athens.

That in the hopes, but before the existence of any favourable circumstances to which alone, however, I could look forward for a probability of success, I engaged, at my own risk, such persons as the artists in England instructed me were necessary for that object.

And that, by being thus prepared, I was enabled to complete the plan in all its details, and to an extent far beyond what could have been foreseen.

The article (Beaux-Arts) in the *Moniteur* of the 20th ultimo (which, giving an account of a translation now making in Paris of Stuart's Athens, calls the ornaments belonging to the Parthenon, the only undoubted works of Phidias in existence,) will, on the other hand, show in what estimation the Collection I have brought to England is held in France; and afford a ground of judging, far less exceptionably than on any assurances from me, whether, during my detention of three years there, it must not have been constantly in my option to have made the most advantageous terms for ceding them to the French Government. I state this, in proof that pecuniary emolument was not in my contemplation; and that it has ever been my steady purpose to render these acquisitions conducive to the advantage of my Country.

In this view, as soon as they could be at all arranged, I afforded every facility and encouragement for the inspection of them, in order that the Public might form their opinion without bias or restraint; and I accordingly have the satisfaction of receiving continually, from every artist without exception, from men of taste and men of literature, the most enthusiastic testimonies of the admiration which they feel in the contemplation of my Drawings, my Casts, Marbles, Inscriptions, and lesser Sculptures, representing various interesting scenes in private life. They trace in these, hitherto unknown works, the same superiority of intellect and genius, which characterizes all other productions of the best times of Greece; and they look to the establishment of such a school as this assemblage would furnish for the study of art and the formation of taste, as the means of giving to this Country those rational advantages, the importance of which has been of late so much brought into evidence, by the many valuable Collections of ancient art so studiously concentrated in Paris.

Such impressions, I have the strongest reason for believing, would have been found to be the sentiments of the persons of the description I allude to, who might have been called upon to report on the value of this Collection as a national acquisition. And while they would have awarded a fair reimbursement of my expenses, which the state of my family and my affairs would not justify me in foregoing; they would at the same time have stamped the transaction as wholly differing from a pecuniary bargain, and would have pronounced on the service I had been the means of conferring on the country, in a way to have presented a powerful recommendation and claim in my favour, for some mark of Royal approbation.

Such were my sentiments on the subject in question, when I was lately called to London, at the desire of the Speaker, for the purpose of concerting the mode of transferring this Collection to the Public. And I found the Speaker decidedly of opinion, that a statement of my expenses, with the interest upon them, should form the basis of the transaction; and that, beyond this, Parliament would take under consideration, as a separate subject of remuneration, the merit attending the procuring and offering these objects to the Public.

But a delay arose most unexpectedly, from an idea being entertained, that, as I, at the time, held a diplomatic appointment, I had not the full and uncontrolled right over my acquisitions: an idea, which would have given to Government a claim upon any acquisition, which not only ministers but governors abroad, naval and military commanders, and every person employed, &c. &c. might have opportunities of obtaining at their own risk and outlay and trouble, or be permitted to receive from Foreign Sovereigns. Independently, however, of plain reason and universal practice; and of the instances of Sir William Hamilton, who sold part of his Collections to Parliament, and part to individuals and foreigners; and of my predecessor Sir Robert Ainslie, whose entire property in his valuable Collections has never been interfered with; it is now known, that I engaged in the enterprise under review, only because the British Government would not have been authorized to undertake any thing of so doubtful an issue.

When this difficulty appeared to be removed, and the Speaker still adhered to the opinion he had before recommended as to the mode of proceeding, I could no longer hesitate in acquiescing in his advice; and I herewith transmit to you accordingly as ample a view of my outlay as the materials still in my possession enable me to furnish, of a transaction so peculiar in itself, and differing entirely from the circumstances attending every other Collection. Here the objects were not purchased, or got for fixed prices. They were not selected by the taste of an individual; nor were they, generally speaking, the results of accidental discovery from excavation. But, in the face of difficulties till then found insurmountable, a plan was under-

taken for securing one great series, the success of which depended upon unwearied patience, abundance of means, and the most prompt and uncalculating decision in the use of them. With all this, it must be recollected, the expenses are those of a person acting under no responsibility, with all the keenness and impetuosity which may be supposed to have animated the attempt to rescue inestimable treasures from oblivion and destruction.

The Collection I offer consists of

- 1st. The Drawings and Casts.
- 2nd. The Sculptures and Inscriptions now in England.

1st. The Drawings and Casts.

In appreciating the expenses of this article, which constituted the whole of the original plan, it must be borne in mind that the instructions I acted upon were traced by artists in England, who, on a full investigation of the existing works relating to Athens, pointed out in what respects information was further wanting from thence. Indeed, a few years before, M. de Choiseul Gouffier had taken to Turkey nearly the like establishment of draughtsmen, on a similar attempt, which, however, failed. Besides, the obstacles, the interruptions and discouragements, created by the caprice and prejudices of the Turks, even under the most favourable circumstances, are such that any undertaking in that country, when connected with their establishments, houses, &c. and requiring time, is placed in no parallel whatever with similar works carried on elsewhere. In fact, my artists were several months at Athens without being able to enter the Acropolis, unless on paying fees nearly amounting to 5*l.* sterling each visit; nor, till long after, were they permitted to erect scaffoldings.

The expense of the six artists I had, of whom four were without doubt the most eminent of their day in Italy, necessarily included their salary, board, accommodations, and attendance, and literally all their supplies, as well as the cost of all the *materials* they used; their *scaffoldings*, *packing-cases*, &c. &c. These charges may be supposed to have amounted, upon an average, as near as can be calculated, to 400*l.* for each, per annum. (The professional men in England, who had been applied to for this expedition, declined leaving their occupations in London, under towards 700*l.* per annum for *salary* alone, besides having all their expenses paid, and retaining a part of their works.)

The six artists remained together on this undertaking three years and a half; which, at 400 <i>l.</i> each per annum, would amount to	£ 8,400
<i>N. B.</i> —One continued some time longer in finishing the picturesque tour in Greece.	
One came to England, where he remained two years, for the purpose of engraving his own drawings, an intention which my detention in France defeated, incurring a further expense of	800
The conveyance of these artists from Rome to Constantinople, thence to Athens, and their journeys in general, may have been about.....	1,500
	£. 10,700

This sum may be considered as forming the cost of the Casts, Drawings, and Measurements; though the same persons, and in many respects the same expenses, were equally necessary, and contributed towards the other parts of the Collection.

2.—The Sculptures and Inscriptions, and Vases, now in England.

In alluding to some of the articles which more exclusively compose the cost attending the Marbles and Inscriptions, it is difficult, even in the most confidential communications, to enter into explanations. The case is, that the ministers of the Porte were prevailed upon, after much trouble and patient solicitation, to grant to me an authority to excavate and remove what I might discover, as well as to draw and model. It was an authority differing from those granted to other English gentlemen, then travelling in Turkey, only in the degree which the extent of the means I employed made necessary. But the plain import of such a permission in Turkey, is nothing more, than that it affords an introduction, by means of which secret negotiations may be carried on with such persons in office or in power, as have some superintendence, or immediate concern, with the objects in question. Upon such persons, it is equally undeniable, that no influence can possibly be efficient, from a Christian, excepting only *weight of gold*; and the amount of this is, in all cases, proportioned to the rank of the parties, the sacrifice to be made, and the eagerness shown for the acquisition. At the period under review I held the dignity of ambassador: I had to transact with the highest personages in the state. The objects I requested were—leave to occupy situations about the ruins, commanding the interior of Turkish houses: to remove blocks forming parts of their fortifications; and inscriptions, &c. occasionally built up in their mosques. And my perseverance under constant difficulties and disappointments, sufficiently showed to them the importance attached to my enterprise.

The above Expenses, and the numbers of Workmen employed, may be calculated at.....	£. 15,000.
It may easily be conceived what extent of manual labour was required in a country, in which the habits are those of the most obstinate listlessness and indolence: which is wholly unprovided with wheel-carriages, or mechanical instruments: when great masses of ruins were to be removed in search of hidden pieces of Sculpture; large blocks of Marble to be lowered from great heights; and so many immense weights conveyed to a distance of above four miles, along a track which had barely the appearance of a road.	
The removal of the Cases from Athens to England; for, though I received much very friendly assistance in this respect, from officers commanding King's ships, yet I employed two vessels of my own on that service, and several country ships:	£. 2,500.
The Expenses at Malta, where the cases were generally placed in deposit	
Commission and Agency; which in all instances, especially when out of the ordinary line of business, are very considerable in Turkey.....	£.
Interest on Money borrowed, which is, legally, at 12 per cent. and often much more.....	£.
A great variety of minor Expenses, inseparable from so vast an undertaking.	£.
This outlay was at a time when not more than 12 or 13 piastres could be got in exchange for the pound sterling.	
The charges thus stated for the Artists, the obtaining and removing the Collection, are.....	£. 28,200.
There was, besides the loss of my vessel (the Mentor, an English copper-bottomed yacht, which was cast away off Cerigo, with no other cargo on board than some of the sculptures. The price and charges on this vessel (which, from the nature of her voyage, could not be insured in Turkey) and the operations, which continued three years, in recovering the Marbles, cannot be stated under £.5,000.	£. 5,000.
This expenditure having been incurred between the years 1799 and 1803, leaves a claim of interest from that time.	In ^t for 14 y ^r s } 25,240. at 5 p ^r Cent. }
There has been since, the charge of landing this immense number of heavy Cases in various ports of England, transferring them to London, and placing them at the Duke of Richmond's, in Privy Gardens; removing them afterwards three times; erecting convenient and sufficient buildings where to place the Marbles; arranging the casts; attendance on the Collection, &c. &c. The expense of this part of the transaction must have been fully £. 6,000.	£. 6,000.

I have the honour to be, &c. &c. &c.
(Signed) ELGIN.

To the Right Hon. CHARLES LONG,
&c. &c. &c.

SIR,

London, February 29th, 1816.

THE above Statement refers altogether to the great body of the Collection, such as it had been laid open to public inspection in my house in Park-Lane, and in Burlington-House, from the year 1807 to 1812; consisting of all the large statues (excepting the Sternum of the colossal figure of Neptune, the group of two horses' heads, and the forehead of Minerva); eleven of the metopes; a large proportion, but not the best preserved groups of the frieze; various minor pieces of sculpture; all the moulds and casts; some specimens of architecture; all the drawings; and original inscriptions.

Towards the end of 1812, about eighty additional cases of architecture and sculpture reached England; having been collected subsequently to my departure from Turkey, and now forming part of my Collection in Burlington-House.

To these are now added a Collection of Medals.

I beg leave generally to observe, that though I had not regulated my expenses or my outlay, under any expectation of their being ever inquired into, still I brought with me from Athens an accurate and detailed journal of the daily expenditure there, down to my departure in 1803, made out by a gentleman of the strictest honour and regularity, who had the direction of all my operations, and in whom I have placed the utmost confidence. This has been lost, probably when, on my arrest as prisoner of war in France, I was under the necessity of burning my papers. But I have recently received the continuation of that journal from January 1803 to the end of 1814, together with the account current of my agent, an eminent merchant, at Malta, from October 1807 to May 1811; which documents enable me to specify the leading articles of outlay incurred since my leaving Turkey.

The Journal itself amounts to.....	Ps. 112,170
which at 16 Piastres, the average rate of Exchange, is equal to.....	£. 7,010 12 6
M. Lusieri's salary from 1803 to 1816	2,800 — —
His personal loss, during his flight from Athens	200 — —
And that part of the Account Current of the Agent at Malta, not included in	2,400 — —
M. Lusieri's Journal	£. 12,410 12 6

Besides, the Expenses at Malta before October 1807, and after May 1811.
Interest of Money.
Presents sent from England, &c. &c.

But the principal importance of these vouchers is, to show the real nature of the expenses, to which, in point of fact, this enterprise subjected me; a subject, of which nothing but an acquaintance with the habits and practices in Turkey, and the peculiar difficulties, necessities, and charges attending this undertaking,

could possibly afford any notion. These documents show, that, even when I employed only one, instead of six artists, and my endeavours and their results were reduced out of all proportion with my former efforts; yet that during so much of this period as M. Lusieri was at Athens,

1. The cost of manual labour, was.....	Ps. 37,464
2. ...D ^r . of materials, &c. &c.	23,805
3. Presents, found necessary for the local authorities, in Athens alone.....	21,902

That interest on money borrowed there, was as high as 15 and 20 per cent.

And the agency at Malta, after commission and brokerage on drafts being charged, was (6,000 on 33,663) equal to 17½ per cent.

I beg once more to repeat, that I do not offer this view of my expenses as a criterion of the intrinsic value of my Collection. I ever have been persuaded that, in justice to the Public, that should be calculated on other grounds. But it is, I trust, sufficient to prove, that in amassing these remains of antiquity for the benefit of my Country, and in rescuing them from the imminent and unavoidable destruction with which they were threatened, had they been left many years longer the prey of mischievous Turks, who mutilated them for wanton amusement, or for the purpose of selling them piecemeal to occasional travellers; I have been actuated by no motives of private emolument; nor deterred from doing what I felt to be a substantial good, by considerations of personal risk, or the fear of calumnious misrepresentations.

ELGIN.

To HENRY BANKES, Esq.
Chairman of the Committee,
&c. &c. &c.

No. 6.—LETTER from Lord ELGIN to HENRY BANKES, Esq.

SIR,

London, 13th March, 1816.

As I have been given to understand that some Members of the Committee have expressed a wish for more detailed information with respect to my expenses in Turkey, connected with my Collection of Athenian Sculpture, &c. I have thought it might be convenient for them to be in possession of the following considerations, arising out of the Italian Journal which I left with the Committee the second time I had the honour of attending them; I hope that they will assist the Committee in forming an accurate notion of the nature of the exertions and expenses which necessarily attended the prosecution of an undertaking, which, I believe, knows no parallel; and at the same time, to appreciate the extent of what must have been expended, prior to the first date occurring in that document.

But, before I enter upon this comparison, I beg to advert to the expenses incurred in England since the Marbles began to arrive, fourteen years ago, and the loss of my ship the Mentor; two items in my expenditure, not referred to in the journal.

1. The expense of landing and warehousing the cases in England; collecting them first at the Duchess of Portland's, in Privy Gardens; then transporting them to the Duke of Richmond's; afterwards to my house in Park-Lane: and finally to Burlington House (in each of which two last places I had to erect suitable buildings for the purpose of arranging and exhibiting the Statues and Bas-reliefs;) the figure-maker's labour in putting together the moulds made at Athens, a work of great nicety, and which took up nearly a whole year; attendance for the protection of the Collection, during ten years; and various incidental charges. All these sources of expense cannot, in my opinion, be calculated at a less sum than six thousand pounds.

2. The loss of the Mentor, and the expense of weighing up her cargo, consisting of large cases of Marble, being parts of the frieze and metopes, sunk in ten fathoms water (an operation which was not completed till the third year after the shipwreck), forms my second item. Before the employment of the divers, who were ultimately successful, three unavailing attempts had been made to weigh up the ship bodily. All the cases were finally recovered, and none of the contents in any way damaged. They were forwarded successively by the consul at Cerigo, some of them to Smyrna, and some to Malta, and from thence to England. This operation, with the purchase of the Mentor, and her necessary expense, I have valued at five thousand pounds.

3. The regular accounts sent home by M. Lusieri in 1815, comprise, first, the manual labour he employed, amounting to.....

.....	Ps. 37,464
2. The materials he purchased for carrying on his operations	23,805
3. Presents to the Authorities at Athens	21,902
4. Lusieri's board	24,000
5. Interest on money borrowed by him, &c.	5,000

During these expenses, which were incurred between the commencement of 1803 and the end of 1814, excepting the interval of war, M. Lusieri was alone at Athens, and procured what has been added to the Collection since 1811: they form a total of 112,000 piastres, equal, at 16 p^r to the pound sterling, to

.....	£. 7,000
To which are added the salary to the present period.....	2,800
His losses, when driven by the war from Athens	900
And the sum of	2,400

In all.....£. 12,400

being what Messrs Hayes of Malta pass in account, beyond what went through Lusieri's hands.

I value, therefore, the three articles,—Expenses in England, the loss of the Mentor, and the works since the beginning of 1803,—at.....£.6,000
 5,000
 12,000
 —————£.23,000

4. Now with respect to the works prior to 1803, I have not the same data to proceed upon. The account furnished me by M. Lusieri, on my leaving Athens, has been mislaid, or destroyed in France. I must therefore arrive at an approximation by analogy.

The mass of work done, and the difficulties surmounted prior to 1803, may be described thus:—The acquisition of all the large statues of the pediments; of eleven out of the fourteen metopes; of nearly forty out of fifty-six or fifty-eight pieces of the frieze; the colossal statue of Bacchus; the bas-reliefs of the Temple of Victory; many smaller fragments of sculpture; the greatest and most interesting part of the inscriptions; many of the architectural specimens, particularly those of the Ionic order; all the casts; all the drawings; all the medals; the procuring the artists from Rome; their conveyance by way of Messina, Malta, Girgenti, to Constantinople, and thence to Athens; their salaries, board, and absolutely every expense they incurred from the winter of 1799 to the middle of 1803; their conveyance home; the maintenance of one of them (Ittar) one year longer at Malta, in finishing his sketches; and of another (the Calmonk) for two years longer in England, for the purpose of his drawings; the purchase and construction of the materials required for the operations of the artists; the original breaking ground of the whole transaction, both in Constantinople and in Greece; the purchase of houses, and removal of large masses of ruins for the recovery of buried sculpture; the manual labour at all times of a great number of men, and very frequently of hundreds at a time, in transporting great weights from Athens to the sea; occasional presents to sailors engaged to assist of the embarkation; the conveyance of a part of the Collection to Alexandria or to Malta, in private vessels hired for the purpose; the exorbitant demands in these countries for interest, agency, and commission; and the whole performed under the disadvantage of a very inferior rate of exchange, from eleven to thirteen piastres only being then procured for the pound sterling; whereas the calculation subsequent to 1803 is founded upon the pound sterling producing sixteen piastres.

Under the foregoing considerations, I am confident that I should not materially err, if I were to state my expenses for the Collection, prior to 1803, at three times the amount of those incurred subsequent to that date. This calculation (even without taking into account the difference of 25 per cent on the exchange in favour of the latter period) would raise the expenditure, prior to 1803, to £.36,000; whereas in my letter to Mr. C. Long, I have rated it, on other grounds, only at £.28,000*. To which, and to the £.5,000 on the loss of the Mentor, I have added fourteen years' interest.

N. B.

This sum singularly coincides with the conjecture formed by Lord Aberdeen, of the nature and extent of the operations he saw going on at Athens, in 1805.

To recapitulate the above, I calculate,

£.6,000 Expenses in England.
 5,000 Loss of the Mentor, and recovery of its cargo.
 12,000 Expenses, as per Account, since January 1803.
 28,000 Ditto, prior to that period.
 23,240 Interest on £.33,000.

But, I beg leave once more to repeat, that I do not, and never have recommended my expenses as a criterion of the value of my Collection to the Public.

I have the honour to be, with great respect, Sir,

Your obedient humble Servant,

ELGIN.

HENRY BANKES, Esq.
 Chairman of the Committee,
 &c. &c. &c.

* Being the expense of the Artists, which comprises the whole of the original undertaking.... Ps. 159,000 = £. 10,700
 That of obtaining and removing the Marbles..... Ps. 224,900 = £. 17,300
 In all....Ps. 384,000 = £. 28,000