

Letter respecting an *ITALIAS PRINCE*, killed by an *ELECTRIC COMMOTION*, the cause of which resided in his own body.

We read in one of the journals of Florence, an extract of a letter from Mr. Joseph Battaglia, surgeon at Ponte Botio, which contains the following relation, as curious as it is interesting to those who apply to the study of philosophy.

Don G. Maria Bertholi, a priest, residing at Mount Valere, in the district of Livizzano, went to the fair of Filetto, on account of some business he had to transact, and after spending the whole day in going about through the neighboring country, in order to execute commissions, in the evening he walked towards Fenille, and stopped at the house of one of his brothers-in-law, who resided there. No sooner had he arrived than he desired to be conducted to his apartment, where he put a handkerchief between his shoulders and his shirt, and when every body retired, he began to repeat his breviary. A few minutes after, a loud noise was heard in Mr. Bertholi's chamber, and his cries having alarmed the family, they hastened to the spot, where they found him extended on the floor, and surrounded by a faint flame, which retired to a greater distance in proportion as it was approached, and at length disappeared entirely. Having conveyed him to bed, such assistance as seemed necessary was given him. Next morning I was called, and after examining the patient carefully, I found that the teguments of the right arm were almost entirely detached from the flesh, and hanging loose, as well as the skin of the lower part of it. In the space contained between the shoulders and the thigh, the teguments were as much injured as those of the right arm. The first thing, therefore, to be done, was to take away those pieces of skin, and perceiving that a mortification was begun in that part of the right hand which had received the greatest hurt, I scarified it without loss of time; but notwithstanding this precaution, I found it next day as I had suspected the preceding evening, entirely sphacelous. On my third visit, all the other wounded parts appeared to be in the same condition. The patient complained of an ardent thirst, and was agitated with dreadful convulsions. He voided by stool bilious putrid matter, and was distressed by a continual vomiting, accompanied with a violent fever and delirium. At length the fourth day, after a comatose sleep of two hours, he expired. During my last visit, whilst he was sunk in the comatose sleep of which I have spoken, I observed with astonishment, that putrefaction had already made so great progress, that his body exhales an insupportable smell. I saw the worms which issued from it crawling on the bed, and the nails of his fingers drop of themselves; so that I thought it needless to attempt any thing farther, whilst he was in this deplorable condition.

Having taken care to get every possible information from the patient himself respecting what had happened to him, he told me, that he had felt a stroke, as if somebody had given him a blow over the right arm with a large club, and that at the same time, he had seen a spark of fire attach itself to his shirt, which in a moment was reduced to ashes, though the fire did not in the least injure the wristbands. The handkerchief which he had placed upon his shoulders, between his shirt and the skin, was perfectly entire, without the least appearance of burning, his drawers were untouched, though a single hair of his head was not hurt.

That this flame, under the form of elementary fire, burnt the skin, reduced the shirt to ashes, and entirely consumed the night cap, without in the least touching the hair, is a fact which I affirm to be true; besides every spot that appeared on the body of the deceased, announced severe burning. The night was calm, and the circumambient air very pure; no bituminous smell could be perceived in the chamber, nor was there the least trace of fire or of smoke. A lamp, however, which had been full of oil was found dry, and the wick almost in ashes. We cannot reasonably suppose this fatal accident to have been occasioned by any external cause, and I have no doubt, that if Maffei were still alive he would take advantage of it, to support an opinion which he entertained, that lightning is sometimes kindled within the human body, and destroys it.

The above observations respecting Mr. Bertholi, naturally bring to our remembrance the fatality of the unfortunate Countess Cornelia Bandi, of Verona, concerning whom the Canon Bianchini has published the details collected by Dr. Cromwell Mortimer, Fellow of the Royal Society of London, with some similar facts, to which we may add others more recent, such as the observations which Mr. Merille and Mr. Mu-

raire inserted in the *Journal de Medicine*, for the months of February and May, 1783.

The authors of these different observations, almost of the same nature, remark that those subjected to such accidents were, for the most part advanced in years, remarkably fat, and had been much addicted to the use of spirituous liquors, either in their drink, or applied in frictions to the body; whence they have concluded, that these people had perished by their whole substance spontaneously taking fire, the principal seat of which had been the entrails of the epigastric viscera, and that the exciting cause was naturally found in the phlogiston of the animal humors, called forth by that of the spirituous liquors combined with the latter.

It is indeed known, and it is an interesting article in the doctrine of the ancient philosophers, which modern physiologists have above all well elucidated, that the material principle of animal heat is an internal fire capable of acquiring, when excited by several adventitious causes, a certain force and energy which produce a degree of deflagration in the animal body, carried sometimes even to incineration.

But the case of the unhappy Mr. Bertholi, presents particular circumstances which distinguish it from the preceding observations, and seem to refer to another principle than that of a spontaneous burning. Indeed Mr. Battaglia seems decidedly inclined to attribute this phenomenon to that cause, but to his opinion we may oppose doubts founded upon the following considerations: First, it is demonstrated, that this priest, whose age and constitution we are unacquainted with, experienced a strong electric shock; that he perceived at the same time a spark of fire, by which his shirt, his drawers, and his cap were entirely consumed, without injuring his hair, his wristbands, or the handkerchief placed between his shoulders and his shirt; that a sphacelus soon after appeared in his right hand, which had principally sustained the shock, and that there was besides a laceration of the skin of the whole arm, and the corresponding side of the body, without the least apparent symptom of pain in the patient, who was found after the accident surrounded by a light flame, which vanished on the approach of the people of the house. But these different marks indicate much less the effects of a fire kindled internally, than the destructive action of a flame coming from a highly electric atmosphere; though it is too reasonable to think, that this igneous matter, or phlogiston, which we have supposed to be the principle of animal heat, increased by the electric fire of the atmosphere and strengthened by the latter, concurred in part by its expansion to produce those effects which were observed on the body of the patient. In the second place, besides the speedy putrid degeneration of the solids and fluids, this dissolution of the vital chain, which connects the particles one with the other, or establishes their cohesion, and which in the like cases shews itself more particularly on the tissue of the flesh, was observed on Mr. Bertholi, as it has been observed on animals subjected to the electric spark, in a number of well known experiments, and particularly in those made by the illustrious Abbe Fontana.

Are there then fulminating atmospheres, or lightning without detestation, and noise, as formidable in their effects as ordinary thunder? And is this a scourge of a new kind, which man, already exposed to so many causes of destruction, which surround and attack him, has also to dread? This is a problem, the solution of which we must leave to Dr. Franklin, that eminent philosopher and politician, who drew from nature the secret of the thunder, and who, after exploring the interests of mankind, as well as the meteors of the air, was one of the grand conductors of the glory and liberty of his country.

As the following phenomenon seems to be somewhat similar to that above related, it may not be improper to subjoin it here. "On the 21st of April, 1781, the first battalion of the brigade of Savoy set out from Tortona, in order to go to Arti, at a time when the weather was excessively hot. On the 22d, having made rather a forced march, the soldiers suffered a great deal from the ardor of the sun, so that at the village of Serre, where they halted, one of them, named Boquet, a man twenty-five years of age, whose skin being hard and thick, had not perspired, sent forth a loud cry, which seemed to announce some very extraordinary commotion, and instantly fell down. Mr. Bianet, surgeon-major to the regiment, being instantly called, found the patient in convulsions. When he was carried to the hospital, the upper part of his body to the thighs, appeared to be withered and black, and in a gangrenous state. Mr. Bianet employed scarifications, but without effect; it was

impossible to make him swallow any thing, and it was found necessary to abandon him to his dismal fate. His body soon exhales a putrid smell, and he died at the end of five hours. That his disorder might not be communicated to others, he was interred, together with his clothes. Upon enquiry after his death, it was found, that this man was addicted to the constant use of spirituous liquors, and that he had even drank of them to excess during the march.

CONVEYANCER'S OFFICE.

THOMAS HERTY has opened an office a few yards from the CAPITOL, on the New Jersey Avenue, where he will attend daily till 3 o'clock during the sitting of Congress, and in the afternoon, at his office opposite the LITTLE HOTEL—Conveyances of land, wills, mortgages, leases, assignments, copartnership deeds and dissolutions, marriage settlements and separations, letters of licence and composition, bills of sale of vessels, slaves, and other chattels, bonds of conveyance, and other bonds, powers of attorney, awards, manumissions, partitions, exchanges, petitions, annuities, post obits, seamen's wills and powers, and all other instruments in the above line, are drawn according to the legal import of the same respectively, with the utmost punctuality, accuracy, secrecy, and dispatch, and on moderate terms.

Titles investigated, and opinions given where necessary.

N. B. Herty's Abridgment of the laws of Maryland, approved and sanctioned by the Attorney General and Legislature of Maryland, may be had at the above office, price Six Dollars neatly bound and lettered; also Herty's Digest of the Laws of the United States, price Three Dollars, neatly bound and lettered. December 5, 1800. twf.

RAN AWAY

FROM the Subscriber on the 10th inst. Negro FIDELIO, well known about the City, and it is thought he is lurking about Mrs. Young's where he has a wife. I will give a generous reward for having him put in jail, and One Dollar for flogging him and bringing him home. All persons are also forewarned from crediting any person on my Account, without an order from under my hand, and also from harbouring my People, or permitting them to cross the Ferries without a line from,

JAMES R. DERMOTT.

St. Elizabeth, Dec. 15, 1800. 3t

This day is Published and for Sale

BT

RAPINE, CONRAD & Co.

AT THE WASHINGTON BOOK STORE,
Corner of South B. Street and New Jersey Avenue, near the Capitol.

A FEW remarks on MR. HAMILTON's late Letter, concerning the Public conduct and character of the President, price 25 cents.

THE BEGGAR GIRL and her Benefactors 3 Vols. by Mrs. Bennet author of Welsh heirs. Juvenile indiscretions, Agnes De Courci, and Ellen Countess of Castle Howell. price 3 dollars, neatly bound.

To RENT.

A Commodious Two Story brick dwelling house on square No. 701—the lot is well enclosed and hath every necessary out house, and is very convenient for a small family—it may be entered on immediately, the terms made known and the premises shown by applying to

BENJAMIN MORE.

Washington, New Jersey Avenue, December 17, 1800. 3t

CONRAD & MUMM

HAVE opened houses of entertainment in the range of buildings formerly occupied by Mr. LAW, about two hundred paces from the Capitol, in New Jersey Avenue, leading from thence to the Eastern Branch. They are spacious and convenient, one of which is designed for stage passengers and travellers, the other for the accommodation of boarders. There is stableage sufficient for 60 horses.—They hope to merit public patronage.

City of Washington, Nov. 24, 1800.

NOTICE is hereby given to all whom it may concern, that two Tracts of land belonging to CHARLES GRANDERE lying in the County of Pickering in the Mississippi Territory, and adjoining land belonging to Adam Bigaman, are attached by a Foreign attachment at the suit of Joseph Calvet for a debt of 2063 dollars 50 cents

JOSEPH CALVET.

Nov. 28, 1800.

BOARDING AND LODGING.

FIVE or Six gentlemen can be accommodated with Genteel Board and Lodging, in a good and comfortable House, on New-Jersey Avenue, at Mr. Law's former residence. Also good Stabling wherein twenty horses can be accommodated by.

SAMUEL BOOTES.

Nov. 26th, 1800. 4t.

TO BE RENTED,

FOR a few months, a Two story brick house with 4 rooms, together with mahogany chairs, bureau sofa, bedstead, looking glasses &c. enquire of HENRY INGLE, New-Jersey Avenue, capitol hill. Who has just received a few Coal Grates in addition his assortment of Hardware.

H INGLE.

Dec 3, 1800. 2w

Kid, Eliot & co.

HAVE received by late arrivals, a general assortment of Hardware and Ironmongery, which they offer for Sale at their Store opposite the Great Hotel.

They have also on hand

Madeira,
Sherry & } Wines.
Lisbon
Cogniac Brandy.
Jamaica Spirits,
Holland Gin,
Loaf and Brown Sugar,
Tea, Coffee, &c. &c.

Washington, Dec. 18.

tf.

Notice is Given

THAT I shall attend at the Eastern Branch Ferry on Monday, the 29th inst. for the purpose of renting the Fishing Landing. If any person should want to rent it, with whom I am not acquainted, security will be required.

JOHN WALLACE, of Wm.
December 22, 1800.

Thomas Carpenter, TAYLOR,

GRATEFULLY acknowledges the numerous Favours conferred on him, and informs his friends and the public that he has entered into partnership with CHARLES VARDEN, likewise from Philadelphia, on Capitol Hill, opposite Mr. CARROLL's buildings, where, as well as in Pennsylvania Avenue, between the Presidents House and George Town, from their long and extensive experience in Military, Naval and Fancy dresses, and in Ladies Habits &c. and from their having procured the best of workmen and materials, the utmost taste and punctuality might be expected.

Two apprentices wanted.
Washington, Dec. 22.

tf.

20 Dollars Reward.

RAN away from the Subscriber, living in Frederic County, Virginia, a Mulatto boy named Tom, about twenty years of age, of a sturdy make, about five feet nine inches high, he has no particular mark.—He will endeavour to pass or a free man.—He has a mother, a black woman, slave to Mr. Frederic Conrad, living in the Federal City; where it is conjectured he will harbour. The above reward will be paid on his being brought home, or Ten Dollars if procured in any jail and information given to

A. LINDO.

December, 22.

1800

FORTY DOLLARS REWARD.

FOR Apprehending and securing in any Goal, so that the Subscriber gets him again. A NEGRO MAN named NACK, ran away some time in the month of October, aged Thirty years, about five feet high, light complexion, wears his hair queued, a well set trunked fellow. I have cause to believe he is in the City of Washington. It is unnecessary to describe his Clothing as he will have it in his power to change them. I will give TWENTY DOLLARS if ten miles from home, THIRTY DOLLARS if twenty miles, and the above reward if a greater distance.

ZACHARIAH SOTHORON.

Charles County near neck October 8, 1800

JOHN MINCHIN, BOOT MAKER

FROM PHILADELPHIA.

RESPECTFULLY acquaints his FRIENDS, CUSTOMERS, and the PUBLIC, that he has removed his BOOT and SHOE MANUFACTORY from near the Eastern Branch, to New Jersey Avenue, on the hill, near the Capitol, where he makes Gentlemen's Boots, Footers, dress and undress Shoes on the shortest notice, in the neatest manner, and of the best materials.

December 3d.

3tw.

TO JOURNEMEN SHOEMAKERS.

WANTED, a number of Journeymen Shoemakers, to whom constant employment and good wages will be given.

CITY OF WASHINGTON.

FOR SALE,

Lot No. 9, in Square 122.

THE above is inferior to few lots in this city, being but two squares west of the President's Square, commanding an extensive view of the Potomac, it is a corner lot, and front 155 feet 10 inches on F. Street, and 59 feet and an half inch on 20th Street.—An incontestable title will be given on receiving the amount of the purchase money. For terms apply to the Subscriber a few doors east of the Little Hotel.

JOHN KEARNEY.

N. B. I will also sell Lot No. 4, in Square No. 491, fronting 55 feet 3 inches on the Pennsylvania Avenue, and extending back 150 feet to an alley of 30 feet wide, with the advantage of a 15 feet alley along side of it; and Lot No. 24, in Square No. 378, fronting 51 feet 5 inches on Ninth Street, and running back 107 feet 2 inches to a 30 feet alley. West India goods will be taken in payment for a considerable part of the above property.

I. K.

November 17, 1800.