

CORRESPONDENCE WITH AND CONCERNING MONTMORT

Extract from Letter 6 of Montmort to Johann Bernoulli
15 September 1709

Die Werke von Jacob Bernoulli, Vol. 3, p. 397.

“The only defect of this work (Niklaus’ Dissertation) it is to be too short, I console myself of its brevity only by the hope that we have to see soon the great work of the late Mister your brother. I can not prevent myself praying to you a second time in the name of all the Geometers to procure the edition of it for us. This attention suits a brother and this honor is due only to the premier Geometer of Europe. You have given me the honor to write to me that you would burden yourself with it willingly, but that the heirs of Mr. your brother were not disposed to entrust to you the manuscript. I can not comprehend what could be the subject of a distrust so prejudicial to Geometers, and I know certainly that you are the only one from whom the work of Mr. your brother can receive its final perfection. For me, I totally interest myself particularly in the printing of this book, while these ideas are fresh and familiar to me; I would be delighted to see the solution of a great number of difficulties which have stopped me and that Mr. your brother will have without doubt surmounted.”

Extract from Letter 8 of Montmort to Johann Bernoulli
15 November 1709

Die Werke von Jacob Bernoulli, Vol. 3, p. 397.

“That I am annoyed, Sir, that you do not have at all in hand the work of Mr. your brother. What a pity that the learned labors are useless to the public. If those who have it in hand wished to confide it to me, I would undertake to have it printed at my expense, as I myself have already had many of them printed for the good of the public and the advancement of the sciences. If one wished likewise to draw profit from it, I would be able to compose thereupon; because I swear to you that I have an extreme avidity for the good things. If you wish even to undertake yourself, Sir, to make this proposition and if it is refused, I could at least hope that you wished to give me the pleasure to make an extract of all the propositions of this manuscript, especially the 4th part. I would be delighted to see the views that M. your brother has had, and adding his to those which I have already, I would try to set in state to profit from it for a second edition of my book. If you made me the honor of writing to me, Sir, you give me an infinite pleasure.

Extract from Letter 3 of Niklaus Bernoulli to Jakob Hermann
27 December 1709 at Padua

Die Werke von Jacob Bernoulli, Vol. 3, p. 398.

“Remond de Montmort, who has published that book about Games of Chance, has asked that uncle in a letter, that the manuscript of the treatise of my late uncle on the *Ars Conjectandi* be sent to him. He has promised, he will publish this at his own expense. I have submitted this to my cousin (Jakob’s son). But this one and his entire house bring against

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my uncle and me a stupid mistrust and become suspicious whenever something originates from us. He fears that someone would like to claim his father's inventions for himself. He replied he himself would consult with you concerning this. If now, as it seems, he will send this treatise to you, then please provide for it, that it is published soon, so that no others, who meanwhile find something similar, claim the fame of the discoverer on himself."

Extract from the Letter of Johann Bernoulli to Montmort
17 March 1710

Essai d'Analyse sur les Jeux de Hazard, Second Edition, 1713, pp. 283-298

"As I have received your beautiful Book¹ only a long time after your last Letter, I have well wished to defer the response until I have received & read it, in order to be in a state to tell you of my sentiment of it. Although a flow on the eyes, of which I am often inconvenienced, prevents much work on some things which demand long calculations, especially in the time of winter, I am not left to examine in the idle hours the principal ends of your Treatise, & to do myself, as much as the weakness of my eyes has permitted me, the calculation of the greater part of the Problems: I have found effectively many things very good & very curious for speculation, & utile for the usage that one can draw from it on occasions; but in order for you to announce the Remarks in particular that I have made here & there by reading your Work, since you wish it, here they are: . . .

[297] "But here is well enough of it, Sir, & perhaps more than it is necessary to cause you boredom; it is for this that I have not spoken to you of the defects, either of calculation, or of impression that I have encountered in some places; I pray you however to take in good part all that which I have said until here; it was for the love of truth that I have believed necessary to communicate to you my reflections with my ordinary frankness, so much more as you have demanded them of me. I do not omit to praise your Book as much as one can praise a Work which gives honor to its Author, & which indicates altogether a profound penetration of mind, & an indefatigable patience to make long & painful calculations. It would be desired that you wished to take the pain to extend your Book, & to make a Work more ample & more rich, the material would not be lacking to you, especially if you wish to enter into the moral & political, as my brother had begun to do in his Work, which according to all appearances will never appear. I hear with pleasure that Mathematics, despite the miseries of the war flourish more & more, & become even to honor in France. Here in our country we can not pride ourselves of the same prosperity. Since the departure of Mr. Hermann I know no one, excepting my nephew & very few others, from whom it may be necessary to hope of great progress in the sciences, which being considered as not being *de pane lucrando*,² one neglects them as of things dry & little use."

Extract from Letter CCXV of Johann Bernoulli to Leibniz
26 April 1710 at Basel

Leibnizens mathematische Schriften, Bd. III, pp. 846-849

"My male blood relation, concerning whom he himself should be congratulated, has a dissertation written by him which will not be displeasing to you. He departed recently, about to depart to France, after he will have remained some time in Geneva. He will find opportunity in Paris pursuing our studies further; he will see Montmort, who, regarding generally similar matter, certainly has published a book concerning games depending on

¹*Essay d'Analyse sur les Jeux de hazard*. Paris. 1708

²*Translator's note*: Of bread being about to be earned, that is, a living.

chance not long ago, but in which I have discovered nothing greatly remarkable, and indeed many things obscure and not understood except by those who have better penetrated into the thing before the Author himself; I have sent my observations about this book to the Author, because he has asked from me my judgment of it. The posthumous Work of my brother, if it had seen a last hand and seen the public light of day, would be without doubt of all, which have been published concerning this matter, the most perfected: but I doubt if at any time it will appear, I do not know through a silly suspicion of the heirs.”

Extract from a letter of Niklaus Bernoulli to Montmort

26 February 1711

Essai d'Analyse sur les Jeux de Hazard, Second Edition, 1713, pp. 308-314

[313] “For that which regards the treatise of the late Mr. my Uncle, I have proposed the offer that You have made to have this manuscript printed to my cousin the son of the deceased, who is the master of it, but as he himself defies me as well as Mr. my Uncle, (and as he was then on the point to depart for Italy, where he is arrived since some weeks, he has responded to me only in passing at Padua, he would speak on this matter to Mr. Hermann, in whom he and all those of his house set a greater confidence than in others of us);³ I have also written on this subject to Mr. Hermann, & I have prayed him to take care that this manuscript was soon printed; but I have not yet received response.

It is great loss that the fourth part of this treatise, which must be the principal, is not at all achieved, it is scarcely begun and contains only five chapters, in which there are only some general things; that which is the most remarkable in it is the last chapter, where he gives the solution of a quite curious Problem, which he has preferred even to the quadrature of the Circle, it is to find how many observations it is necessary to make in order to arrive to any such degree of probability as one will wish, and where he demonstrates at the same time, that by observations reiterated often one can find considerably to the exact the ratio that there is between the number of cases, where a certain event will arrive, and the number of cases, where it will not arrive. It would be wished that some one wanted to undertake to achieve this last part, and to treat at base the things of politics and morals, as I know no person who is more capable to succeed, than You, Sir, who have given proofs of it so excellent in Your beautiful Work, I pray you to push the views that you have on this matter, You will oblige (by it) much the public and particularly me who is with much respect & esteem, Sir, your very humble & very obedient Servant.”

Extract from Letter 4 of Niklaus Bernoulli to Jakob Hermann

26 May 1711

Die Werke von Jacob Bernoulli, Vol. 3, p. 398.

“What concerns my uncle’s posthumous work, my cousin (Jakob’s son) admittedly wrote to me, that he, as much as it lies on him, gladly lets Montmort have it. But since the mother, in whose possession is this treatise, is not of similar opinion, I asked him in a letter, he himself should negotiate on this matter with his mother, and make it clear to her, how much time through this long hesitation was lost uselessly.”

³*Translator’s note:* The words set between (and) mark those sections which appear in *Die Werke von Jacob Bernoulli*, Vol. 3, p. 398. and not in the *Jeux de Hazard*.