

a little, whom I saw put into a chair in such a fright that as she is big with child, I question whether it may not kill her.

I am

Yours ever,
T. G.

From GRAY, Wednesday 13 October 1736

Printed from MS in Waller Collection.

Dated by the postmark, which on London letters was usually the same as the date of writing (see *post* 19 Sept. 1738), and the reference to *Othello* at Drury Lane.

Address: To the Honourable Mr Horace Walpole, of King's College, Cambridge.

Postmark: 13 OC.

[London, Oct. 13, 1736.]

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I BROUGHT my neck safe to town, and, I promise you, when I break it, it shall not be after the dogs, nor from so mean an elevation as the saddle;¹ no, let me fall from Dover Cliff, or Leucate's promontory,² and if I cannot die like a hero, let it be at least like a despairing lover.³ Mem.: I won't swing in a cambric handkerchief,⁴ nor swallow verdigris. But, however, I that have preserved my neck in the country have not been able to do as much by my throat in London; which I made so sore, coming from *Othello* on Wednesday last,⁵ that I should not be easily persuaded even at this present to swallow a bumper, though it were crowned with my dear Horace's health; it has not as yet turned to an absolute squinancy,⁶ or a fever; but if you have a mind, I can very easily improve it into either of 'em. You have imitated your

1. An allusion to the equestrian tastes of Gray's uncle, Jonathan Rogers.

2. A white cliff on Cape Ducato, at the SW extremity of Santa Maura (ancient Leucas), an Ionian island. The temple of Apollo Leucatas stood on the cliff, and at the annual expiatory rites in honour of Apollo, a condemned criminal was obliged to plunge from the Leucadian rock into the sea for the sake of averting evil (Strabo, *Geogr.* X. ii. 9). Virgil (*Aeneid* iii. 274-5) speaks of its dangers to mariners.

3. Sappho, rejected by Phaon, was the first to fling herself from the Leucadian rock, according to Menander (quoted by

Strabo, loc. cit.). See *The Spectator* Nos. 223, 227, 233.

4. Perhaps an allusion to the suicide (22 May 1736) of Count Karl Heinrich Hoym (1694-1736), convicted of treason, and imprisoned in 1734 at the fortress of Koenigstein (*Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie*, Leipzig, 1875-1912). Gray might have read about it in *cm* 1736, vi. 292, where Hoym is said to have 'hanged himself on the 21st of April at night, with a handkerchief fastened to a hook in the wall.'

5. I.e., Tuesday, 5 Oct., at Drury Lane (*Daily Adv.* 5 Oct. 1736).

6. Quinsy.