

## From GRAY, Wednesday 8 July 1752

Printed from MS in Waller Collection.

Dated by Mason: 1752.

Address: To the Honourable Horace Walpole Esq. in Arlington Street, London.

Postmark: 9 IY.

Wednesday [July 8, 1752], Stoke.

I AM at present at Stoke, to which I came at half an hour's warning upon the news I received of my mother's illness, and did not expect to have found her alive; but, as I found her much better, and she continues so, I shall be very glad to make you a visit at Strawberry, whenever you give me notice of a convenient time. I am surprised at the print,<sup>1</sup> which far surpasses my idea of London graving. The drawing itself was so finished that I suppose it did not require all the art I had imagined to copy it tolerably.<sup>2</sup> My aunts<sup>3</sup> just now, seeing me open your letter, take it to be a burying ticket enclosed, and ask whether anybody has left me a ring?<sup>4</sup> and so they still conceive it to be, even with all their spectacles on. Heaven forbid they should suspect it to belong to any verses of mine: they would burn me for a poet. Mr Bentley (I believe) will catch a better idea of Stoke House<sup>5</sup> from any old barn he sees, than from my sketch,<sup>5</sup> but I will try my skill. I forbid no banns, but am satisfied if your design succeed so well as you intend it. And yet I know it will be accompanied with something not at all agreeable to me. Adieu! I am

Yours ever,

T. G.

1. The *cul-de-lampe* for the *Elegy*, representing 'a country burial. At bottom, a torch fallen into an ancient vault' ('Explanation of the Prints' in *Designs*, 1753). It was engraved by Charles Grignion (1717-1810).

2. Bentley's pen and ink drawings (sold London 1044, now wsl) are executed in such detail, and with such scrupulous care, as to make it hard to distinguish them from engravings. See illustration and *post* 20 Feb. 1753.

3. Mrs Rogers and her sister Jane Antrobus (1681-1771), m. William Olliffe. Mrs. Olliffe, who on Mrs Rogers's death in 1758 became with Gray her joint executor, is called by Gray 'an old harridan, who is the

spawn of Cerberus and the Dragon of Wantley' (*Gray's Corr.* ii. 592; see also ii. 593, iii. 1308).

4. Stoke Manor House, the 'ancient pile of building' of Gray's 'A Long Story,' to the north of the church at Stoke Poges, was completed in 1555 by the 2d Earl of Huntingdon. His son Henry Hastings (ca 1536-95), the 3d Earl, in 1594 sold the manor to Richard Branthwaite, who in turn sold it in 1599 to Sir Edward Coke, lord chief justice (*Vict. Co. Hist., Bucks* iii. 302, 306-7).

5. Gray's original pencil drawing of Stoke Manor House is now wsl. Bentley followed it in his head-piece for 'A Long Story.' See illustration.