

On the late Mr Whithed's death,² who was in treaty of marriage with Miss Nicholl, an immense fortune, Mr John Chute, as near a relation to the young lady as any she has,³ told me, that from the regard he had for me and my family, and from the good opinion he had of my nephew Lord Orford, he should be most happy, if now he had lost his own near relation and friend Mr Whithed, he could bring about a marriage between Lord Orford and Miss Nicholl, who was continually sending him complaints of the inhuman treatment she underwent from Mr and Mrs Okeover,⁴ her guardians and uncle and aunt, the latter of whom was her next heir, and who though allowed by Chancery a thousand pounds a year for her maintenance (pray, Madam, observe this article, as you will hereafter perceive how many iniquities this bait has incited) yet in three years and an half had given her but fourteen guineas and many blows, and had dealt out several of the latter on her not being able to recollect how she, a fortune of £150,000,⁵ had disposed of fourpence, a fraction of one of the aforesaid fourteen guineas. It was impossible for me not to feel all the friendship and advantage of this offer. I acquainted you, Madam, with it, I told Lord Orford of it, and from the fullness of my heart (a weakness which old age is incapable of, and incapable of resisting making advantage of) mentioned it to my Uncle Horace—an unlucky circumstance, as it gave time to muster and instruct a crew of dirty agents, attorneys and solicitors, and such like vermin,⁶ who have incomparably executed the offices for which they were so ably and aptly chosen.

It is unnecessary to repeat with what difficulty, by means of a correspondence settled between Mr Chute's servant⁷ and Miss Nicholl's woman,⁸ a person whom my uncle's agents have amply rewarded for the share she had in serving Lord Orford's interest,⁹ Miss Nicholl's es-

2. 30 March 1751 (*London Magazine* 1751, xx. 189; see also *ante* 8 Feb. 1747, n. 31).

3. An exaggeration. Mary Okeover (see below) was her aunt. Chute's mother's sister, Winifred Keck, married John Nicoll of Colney Hatch, Miss Nicoll's grandfather; thus Chute was her first cousin once removed (*Le Neve's Pedigrees of the Knights*, ed. G. W. Marshall, 1873, pp. 418-19; Daniel Lysons, *Environs of London*, 1795-6, ii. 23).

4. Leake Okeover (1701-63) of Okeover, Staffs, and his wife Mary (d. 1765), dau. of

John Nicoll, Miss Nicoll's grandfather (George Wrottesley, 'Account of the Family of Okeover of Okeover,' *Collections for a History of Staffordshire*, n.s. vii, 1904, pp. 111-14; Venn, *Alumni Cantab.*).

5. 'Above £150,000' (see *ante* i. 23-4); '£152,000' (HW to Mann 14 May 1777).

6. HW is referring especially to Francis Capper (*post* n. 18) and Thomas Nuthall (*post* n. 17).

7. Presumably 'Myrtila,' the Italian valet or footman mentioned *post* ii. 219 and 224.

8. Later identified as Mrs Gardiner.

9. Here the sarcasm, which HW uses