

Your friend the Venetian ambassadress⁵ is studying a harlequin dance with which she is to surprise the audience by way of *intermezzo* to the tragedy which is acting at Frascati by Roman princes and princesses.

TO MANN, Sunday 15 June 1755

Memoranda (by HW in pencil, on the back, *ante* 30 May 1755, for this letter):

Not interested but selfish
indolent of mind not body

Strawberry Hill, June 15, 1755.

My dear Sir,

I HAVE received your two letters relating to the Countess,¹ and I wish you joy, since she will establish herself at Florence, that you are so well with her: but I could not help smiling at the goodness of your heart and your zeal for us: the moment she spared us, you gave *tête baisée* into all her histories against Mr Shirley:² his friends say, that there was a little sleight of hand in her securing the absolute possession of her own fortune; it was very prudent at least, if not quite sentimental. I remember in a very indecent play of Lee, the Duke of Guise describing his mistress's possession of herself in the most critical moments, says, that one day even when his breeches were down, she asked him, how much the stuff cost a yard?³ You should be at least as little the dupe of her affection for her son;⁴ the only proof of fondness she has ever given for him, has been expressing great concern at his wanting taste for Greek and Latin. Indeed he has not much encouraged maternal yearnings in her: I should have thought him shocked at the chronicle of her life, if he ever felt any impressions. But to speak freely to you, my dear Sir, he is the most particular young man I ever saw. No man ever felt

with the Algerian navy in July 1755 (*Genealog. hist. Nachrichten* 1755-6 2d ser. vi. 892-3).

5. Signora Capello.

1. Margaret Rolle, widow of Robert Walpole, second Earl of Orford; she lived for the greatest part of her life in Italy and died there in 1781 (HW).

2. Sewallis Shirley, son of an Earl of

Ferrers, second husband of Lady Orford, from whom she was parted, as she had been from her first (HW). He was the son of Robert Shirley (1630-1717), cr. (1711) E. Ferrers.

3. This sentence has not previously been printed. The play is Lee's *Princess of Cleve*; the speech quoted (inexactly) by HW occurs III. i. 80-1.

4. George, third Earl of Orford (HW).