

our colonies, knowing too well the nature of mankind not to foresee that three millions of people would not submit to a few at too great a distance to command them, and equally foresaw that our enemies would foment the division, and that even our friends would not oppose it! These are reflections that must frequently and long recur to all sensible minds.

The French courier, I am told, has brought nothing of consequence this morning. I watch his arrival, being well assured that whatever ill befalls us, it will be announced by that channel long before we can hear it from England. They have already exulted more on their apparent superiority without doing anything than other nations do after a victory. Adieu, my dear Sir. I am not disposed to give you an[y] of the foolish public shows that are to be exhibited here on the opening of a new theatre.¹ The subject of it is the return of Amerigo Vespucci from the conquest of America, which is to be performed tomorrow on the Piazza di Santa Maria Novella with the greatest pomp and expense, and is to be repeated twice more in the course of this month.² Adieu! I fear that scenes of a quite different nature will be exhibited in England!

Yours ever,

H. M.

PS. I open my letter to enclose a sketch³ of the late eruption of Mount Vesuvio⁴ which I have this instant received from Naples.⁵

1. The Teatro degl' Intrepidi, called the Teatro della Palla a Corda, near the Celestine monastery of San Michele Visdomini (*L'Antiquario fiorentino*, 4th edn, 1781, pp. 39-40; *Gazzetta toscana* 31 July, xiv. 121). It opened Sunday night, 12 Sept., 'with one of the most superb balls ever given at Florence' (ibid. 18 Sept., xiv. 150). An 'elegant booklet,' *Descrizione esatta del Regio Teatro degl' Intrepidi detto della Palla a Corda, con sue misure*, etc., at half a paul, sold by Anton Giuseppe Pagani, publisher of the *Gazzetta toscana*, and also an ordinance concerning the 'Regio nuovo Teatro della Palla a Corda,' were advertised in the *Gazzetta toscana* 11 Sept., xiv. 148.

2. Along with three horse races there was to be a 'representation of the return from his third voyage to Lisbon of

Amerigo Vespucci given in the year 1501 before . . . Emmanuel the Great, King of Portugal'; the procession, led by a marshal and military band, consisted of 'the Admiral on horseback . . . with his whole train; behind him the chariot of the King and Queen of Portugal, with their Court, representing the nations of Europe; behind this one, the chariots of America, Asia, and Africa,' etc. Vespucci is called 'our most celebrated fellow-citizen,' and 'the enlarger of the terraqueous globe and the discoverer of a new universe.' The performance on 12 Sept. was repeated 21 and 29 Sept. (ibid. xiv. 121, 140, 150, 153-4, 159).

3. HW, *post* 11 Oct. 1779, speaks of it as 'in the compass of a card, excellently done.' It is presumably the small water-colour view, unsigned (see illustration)