Jan. [Feb.] 4th.

London is very perverse and will not furnish me with another paragraph: one would think it had taken spite to our immortal correspondence. Formerly after a long vacation people used to be impatient to signalize themselves by some extravagance or absurdity. They are as tame now as if the millennium was commenced.

I went out yesterday to take the air, but it fatigued me. Last night it snowed again, and I have stayed at home: but I shall recover; my appetite is perfect, and my sleep is marvellous—I don't know why I am not as sleek as a dormouse. Pray give me as good an account of yourself. Have you driven yet in your coach to the Cascines[9] or the foot of Fiesoli? or about the streets to the Duomo and Annunziata, as I used to do in the heat of the day, for the mere pleasure of looking at the buildings, when everybody else was gone into bed?—what a thousand years ago That was!—yet I recollect it as if but yesterday! I sometimes think I have lived two or three lives. My thirteen months at Florence was a pleasant youth to one of them. Seven months and half at Paris, with four or five journeys thither since, was a middle age, quite different from five and twenty years in Parliament which had preceded—and an age since! Besides, as I was an infant when my father became Minister, I came into the world at five years old,[10] knew half the remaining Courts of King William and Queen Anne, or heard them talked of as fresh; being the youngest and favourite child, was carried to almost the first operas,[11] kissed the hand of George the First[12]—and am now hearing

9. As Mann did in 1753, when he carried the Prince of Ansbach 'in my coach to the Cascines' (*ante* iv. 376). 'There is a charming ride here about a mile from the town, in a wood of the Grand Duke's, called the Cashins (where the ladies walk or go in phaetons, called here biroches)—but its chief beauty, the most enormous firs I ever beheld, are now felling' (Lady Craven to the Margrave of Brandenburg Ansbach, Florence, 12 Oct. 1785 in her *Journey through the Crimea*, 2d edn, 1789, p. 87). Patch's view of the Cascines, 1771, is *ante* vii. 301.

10. 'I almost came into the world at three years old' (*ante* vi. 484).

11. At the King's Theatre in the Haymarket ('Mr Hendel, Master of Music'), sponsored for nine seasons (1719–28) by the Royal Academy of Music, an opera society headed by the Duke of Newcastle. Sir Robert Walpole was not one of the original 62 subscribers (he was out of office 1717–21), but he probably subscribed to the opera after returning to power as prime minister (*London Stage 1660–1800*, Part 2, ed. E. L. Avery, Carbondale, Illinois, 1960, pp. lx–lxv, lxxi–lxxvi; O. E. Deutsch, *Handel*, 1955, p. 91; P. H. Lang, *George Frideric Handel*, New York, 1966, pp. 143–4, 174–88).

12. 1 June 1727 (*ante* vi. 485).