

HORACE WALPOLE'S CORRESPONDENCE

To the DUCHESS OF GRAFTON, Saturday 12
September 1761

Now first printed.

HW transcribed his 'Epigram on the Duchess of Grafton going abroad June 13th, 1761, just after the transit of Venus,' into his 'Book of Materials' 1759, p. 106, and included it in his letter to Lady Ailesbury 13 June (two days after he had written it). Cf. *HW's Fugitive Verses* 133-4:

'Ye simple astronomers, lay by your glasses;
The transit of Venus has proved you all asses:
Your telescopes signify nothing to scan it;
'Tis not meant in the clouds, 'tis not meant of a planet:
The seer, who foretold it, mistook or deceives us,
For Venus's transit is when Grafton leaves us.'

London, Sept. 12, 1761.

IF anything could make me amends, Madam, for not seeing the finest figure in the world walk at the Coronation,¹ it would be the letter and the *découpure*² that I have received from your Grace: I will carry the latter to that ceremony, to prevent the handsomest peeresses from gaining any advantage in my eyes by an absence³ that I fear they are all wicked enough to enjoy. If it was worth anybody's while to repeat to your Grace all I have said on this occasion, the Duke of Grafton,⁴ I doubt, would not have done me the honour of sending me his compliments; and your Grace, I am sure, would not have taxed me with a forgetfulness, of which all my friends may wish me a little guilty, as the word *Coronation* has never been mentioned in my hearing without producing lamentations. My friend the Duchess of Richmond⁵ will owe half her beauty that day to what

1. Of George III and Queen Charlotte, 22 Sept. 1761. Cf. *post* 9 June 1778.

2. 'Her figure cut out in card by Monsieur Hubert of Geneva, who was famous in that art' (HW's note, HW to Mann 14 Nov. 1761, MANN v. 548 n. 17); now wsl. See illustration.

3. On 13 June 1761 the Duke and Duchess of Grafton left London for Harwich to embark for Holland (HW to Lady Ailesbury 13 June 1761; *Daily Adv.* 15

June). They remained abroad a little over a year, and returned to London 1 Sept. 1762 (MANN vi. 80 n. 16).

4. Augustus Henry Fitzroy (1735-1811), styled E. of Euston 1747-57; 3d D. of Grafton, 1757; first lord of the Treasury 1766-70.

5. Lady Mary Bruce (1740-96), dau. of Charles Bruce, 3d E. of Ailesbury, by Lady Caroline Campbell, dau. of John, 4th D. of Argyll; m. (1757) Charles Len-