

with, I have submitted everything to them, and only begged they will give me nothing for my pains—which will content me at least.¹⁶ I shall go to Strawberry tomorrow, unless I hear their pleasure; and have told Mr Fitzpatrick that I think of meeting him next week at Ampthill; but I don't tell your Ladyship so, for indeed I know nothing of the matter. Just at present I suppose I am the vainest creature in the universe: Lady Di¹⁷ has drawn three scenes of my tragedy,¹⁸ which, if the subject were a quarter as good as the drawings, would make me a greater genius than Shakespear, as she is superior to Guido and Salvator Rosa. Such figures! such dignity! such simplicity! Then there is a cedar hanging over the castle, that is more romantic than when it grew on Lebanon!¹⁹—Oh! if Lord Ossory has a farthing in the world to spare, he may buy a Madonna and Child, by Vandyck at Christie's²⁰ for four thousand guineas, for which I would not give four hundred if I were as rich as General Scott.²¹ It is a fine picture, and yet I believe Vandyck was the father no more than Joseph.²²

16. See HW's correspondence with John Robinson of the Treasury, *Works* ii. 383–6. On 25 Dec. 1775 HW wrote him: 'For myself, I am persuaded that I cannot serve the public more essentially than by waiving my own interest entirely, and referring the whole disposition of the present difficulty to Lord North's discretion, and submitting myself entirely to what he shall direct' (ibid. ii. 385). Sir Horace Mann was allowed to hold the office despite his continued absence from England (HW to Mann 6 Feb. 1777).

17. Lady Diana Beauclerk.

18. *The Mysterious Mother*. Lady Diana made seven drawings altogether, 'conceived and executed in a fortnight.' In 1776 HW added the Beauclerk Closet to SH to hang them in ('Des. of SH,' *Works* ii. 503–5; HW to Mason 18 Feb. 1776, MASON i. 244, and *passim*; 'Genesis of SH' 82; *post* 20 June 1776). They were sold SH xvii. 32 for thirteen guineas to the Hon. Lionel Dawson-Damer, 3d son of the 1st E. of Portarlington, and at Christie's 1 Aug. 1885 (Property of a Gentleman), lot 74, for £37.16 to Col. Aldridge. Six of them are now wsl, purchased from Pickering and Chatto in 1962 (Mrs Steuart Erskine, *Lady Diana Beauclerk*, 1903, pp. 95, 147, 241–3; Hazen, *Cat. of HW's Lib.* 2528).

19. See illustration; cf. Ezekiel 31. 3.

20. James Christie (1730–1803), the auctioneer, whose rooms were in Pall Mall, formerly the print warehouse of James Dalton. Until 1779 the exhibitions of the Royal Academy of Arts were held there.

21. John Scott (b. 1725, d. 7 or 8 Dec. 1775) of Balcomie, Fife, notorious gambler; Maj.-Gen., 1770; M. P. Caithness-shire 1754–61, Tain burghs 1761–8, Fifeshire 1768–75. 'The late General Scott has left two infant daughters who will probably be the richest heiresses in Great Britain, as the General died worth upwards of £300,000 in money, besides a considerable property in land' (*Public Advertiser* 14, 22 Dec.; BERRY ii. 68, 258; HW to Bentley 23 Feb. 1755; *Members of Parliament; Scots Peerage* iii. 581; *Scots Magazine*, 1775, xxxvii. 695).

22. The picture had been brought to England by James Bradshaw Pierson, who said 'that he had refused two thousand pounds for it, and asked four. It was put up to auction yesterday at Christie's at one thousand. Not one shilling was bidden' (HW to Sir William Hamilton 18 Feb. 1776; Venn, *Alumni Cantab.*, *sub* Pierson; *Public Advertiser* 16–17 Feb. 1776; Lugt No. 2490). For Pierson's auction at Christie's in 1774, see HW to Mann 1 May 1774.