

HORACE WALPOLE'S CORRESPONDENCE

To LADY OSSORY, Tuesday 15 January 1788

Address: To the Countess of Ossory at Amptill Park, Bedfordshire. *Postmark:* 15 JA <88>.

Berkeley Square, Jan. 15, 1788.

ALL joy to your Ladyship on the success of your theatric campaign!¹ I do think the representation of plays as entertaining and ingenious, as choosing king and queen,² and the gambols and mummeries of our ancestors at Christmas; or as making one's neighbours and all their servants drunk, and sending them home ten miles in the dark with the chance of breaking their necks by some comical overturn. I wish I could have been one of the audience—but alas! I am like the African lamb,³ and can only feed on the grass and herbs that grow within my reach!

I can make no returns yet from the theatre at Richmond House: the Duke and Duchess do not come till the Birthday;⁴ and I have been at no <more> rehearsals, being satisfied with two of the play,⁵ and one of *The Gu<ardian,>* all the parts of which will be acted in perfection. Prologue or <epilogue> there is to be none, as neither the plays, nor the performers in general, are new.⁶ *The Jealous Wife*⁷ is to succeed, for the exhibition of Mrs Hobart, who could have no part in *The Wonder*.⁸

1. The last paragraph below implies that *High Life Below Stairs* may have been given at Amptill.

2. The 'Roi de la fève' (MANN v. 362 n. 4).

3. So in MS and so printed by Vernon Smith and Cunningham; changed in Toynbee to 'Astracan lamb,' the correct form used by HW *ante* 17 Dec. 1780.

4. The Duke and Duchess of Richmond arrived in London from Goodwood on 16 Jan. for the Queen's Birthday, 18 Jan. (*World* 17, 19 Jan.).

5. 'The rehearsal of *The Wonder* took place on Saturday [29 Dec. 1787] at Mrs Damer's. It went off with much smoothness, particularly in Mrs Damer's *Violante*, Mrs Bruce's *Flora*, and Lord H. Fitzgerald's *Felix*' (*London Chronicle* 29 Dec. 1787 - 1 Jan. 1788, lxiii. 8).

6. 'The prologue and epilogue for Richmond House are not yet known—what, and from whence they are—General Burgoyne, General Conway, Mr Walpole, and Mrs Damer herself all are talked of' (*World* 9 Jan.).

7. By George Colman.

8. Mrs Damer as *Violante* had pre-empted the part Mrs Hobart had acted in her own production of *The Wonder* at Ham Common in Nov. 1783 (unidentified newspaper cutting dated by HW 'Saturday, Nov. 8, 1783' in his 'Collection of Prologues and Epilogues . . . from the Year 1780,' now wsl). Mrs Hobart finally appeared as *Flora*: 'Mrs Bruce had the part of *Flora*, but from the loss of her uncle, her place is supplied by Mrs Hobart' (*World* 5, 8 Feb.).