

HORACE WALPOLE'S CORRESPONDENCE

From CONWAY, Tuesday 25 January 1737 OS

Printed for the first time from the MS now wsl, formerly Rutnam. The day and month are supplied by the mention in the postscript that 'this day' is the Conversion of St Paul; 1737 was the only year in which HW was at Cambridge in late January (below, n. 6). The reference to the forthcoming masquerade and Conway's usual practice of writing to HW on Tuesdays are also consistent with 1737 but not with any other year.

In dating the correspondence of 1737 we have taken into consideration the fact that the post left London for the provinces on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays and arrived from them on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays (GRAY i. 56, headnote).

At this time HW was at King's College, Cambridge, Conway was living in London while waiting for a commission, and Lord Conway was on the grand tour.

Address: To Horatio Walpole Esquire at King's College Cambridge.

Postmark: <25 J> A.

Dear Horry,

YOU'LL excuse me, I hope, if I am a little dull tonight; I am just emerged out of Rapin¹ and so bepuzzled with sieges and battles and treaties that I am become a very soldier with respect to writing, and am within an ace of scribbling intolerable nonsense with more intolerable spelin' from one corner of the paper to the other.

I could surprise you with an account of certain phenomena which have appeared here lately, I mean the return of two *stellæ crinitæ*² with fiery tails and dark heads long before the supposed time of their revolution, but however as they have always been reckoned propitious to some certain sublunary bodies, and, I believe, not pernicious to any, we have nothing to fear from their influence; to strip myself of my allegory my Lady Vene³ and Lady Pen. Chol-

1. The English translation, published 1725-31, of Paul de Rapin-Thoyras (1661-1725), *Histoire d'Angleterre*, The Hague, 1724 and later editions. It had become the standard English history.

2. Comets.

3. I.e., Vane: Frances Hawes (ca 1716-88), m. 1 (1732) Lord William Hamilton; m. 2 (1735) William Holles Vane (1714-89), 2d Vct Vane; the 'lady of

quality' whose memoirs were included in Smollett's *Peregrine Pickle*, 1751. She had eloped with one of the Shirleys; Vane advertised for her in the newspapers at the end of Jan. 1737 (CEC xii pt ii. 215, n. a). The MS might be read 'Vere' but there was no Lady Vere in 1737, and Lady Vere Beauclerk and Lady Vere Bertie can both be rejected as possibilities.