

TO CONWAY 19 JANUARY 1759

him whisper *against* all Germany. The new opera pleases universally,<sup>10</sup> and I hope will yet hold up its head. Since Vanneschi<sup>11</sup> is cunning enough to make us sing *the roast beef of old Germany*, I am persuaded it will revive: politics are the only hotbed for keeping such a tender plant as Italian music alive in England.

You are so thoughtless about your dress, that I cannot help giving you a little warning against your return. Remember, everybody that comes from abroad is *censé* to come from France, and whatever they wear at their first reappearance immediately grows the fashion. Now if, as is very likely, you should through inadvertence change hats with a master of a Dutch smack, Offley<sup>12</sup> will be upon the watch, will conclude you took your pattern from Monsieur de Bareil, and in a week's time we shall all be equipped like Dutch skippers. You see I speak very disinterestedly; for, as I never wear a hat myself, it is indifferent to me what sort of hat I don't wear. Adieu! I hope nothing in this letter, if it is opened, will affect *the conferences*, nor hasten our rupture with Holland.<sup>13</sup> Lest it should, I send it to Lord Holderness's office;<sup>14</sup> concluding, like Lady Betty Waldegrave,<sup>15</sup> that the government never suspect what they send under their own covers.

Yours ever,

HOR. WALPOLE

10. During the 1758-59 season there were 55 performances of five operas (*London Stage* Pt IV, ii. 681-2).

11. Abbate Vanneschi, an Italian, and director of the opera (HW). Francesco Vaneschi (fl. 1732-59) (MANN i. 141, n. 9, supplemented by this letter). The season 1758-9 is the last in which he is mentioned in connection with the opera in London in the *London Stage*.

12. John Offley (?1717-84), M.P. for Bedford 1747-54, Orford 1754-68, East Retford 1768-74; groom of the Bed-

chamber 1757-62. He was a man of fashion, prominent in gaming circles, and a friend of Lord Lincoln and a close connection of Newcastle (Namier and Brooke iii. 223).

13. For fear of a war with the Dutch at the time, see MANN v. 260 and n. 1, 268 and n. 1. The points in dispute were gradually adjusted during the winter and spring (ibid. v. 285-6 and n. 7, 287-8, n. 4, 290-1 and nn. 7, 8).

14. The Secretary of State's office.

15. See *ante* 1 Aug. 1758, n. 28.