

so near losing one as when you and Mr Conway were at Ragley. He so little expects the demand, that the fitch is only hung in effigy over the hall chimney, carved in wood.⁴ Are not you ashamed, Madam, never to have put in your claim? It is above a year and a day that you have been married, and I never once heard either of you mention a journey to Whichnovre. *If you quarrelled at loo every night,*⁵ you could not quit your pretensions with more indifference. I had a great mind to take my oath, as one of your witnesses, that you neither of you would, if you were at liberty, prefer anybody *else, ne fairer ne fouler*, and I could easily get twenty persons to swear the same—I could almost engage as much for my Lord and Lady Hertford—but on reflection, the utmost I would venture in conscience to depose for him, is, that though I do not believe he has wished for fewer wives, I am a little afraid he may have wished for more wives. For you two, I should not have the least doubt of your being qualified to take the oath, except from your having neglected to take it. Therefore, unless you will let the world be convinced, that all your apparent harmony is counterfeit, you must set out immediately for Mr Offley's, or at least send me a letter of attorney to claim the fitch in your names, and I will send it up by the coach to be left at the Blue Boar, or wherever you will have it delivered. But you had better come in person; you will see one of the prettiest spots in the world; it is a little paradise, and the more like the antique one, as, by all I have said, the married couple seems to be driven out of it. The house is very indifferent;⁶ behind is a pretty park; the situation, a brow of a hill, commanding sweet meadows, through which the Trent serpentizes in numberless windings and branches. The spires of the Cathedral of Litchfield are in front at a distance, with variety of other steeples, seats and farms, and the horizon bounded by rich hills covered with blue woods. If you love a prospect, or bacon, you will certainly come hither.

4. This is also mentioned in *Country Seats* loc. cit.

5. Probably an allusion to the D. and Ds of Grafton. HW told Montagu, 1 Sept., that the Duke had been unsuccessful at loo at Ragley and 'had some high words with Pam'; disputes over the Duchess's passion for deep gaming were a contributing cause to their growing estrangement and eventual separation and divorce (MONTAGU i. 293-4 and n. 3, 363-4, n. 9).

6. It had been built by Offley's father. HW commented in *Country Seats* 27: 'The house is very small, with a bit of garden with clipt hedges, and a pretty park. The situation charming, on the brow of a steep hill, the Trent serpentines extremely through a rich meadow at the foot. Litchfield, several other churches and seats, with hills and pendent woods, enrich the view.'