

TO LADY AILESBUURY, Saturday 13 June 1761

Printed from the MS now wsl; first printed, with omissions, *Works* v. 551-3, and in full Toynbee v. 65-8 and *Supp.* ii. 119. For the history of the MS see *ante* 23 Aug. 1760.

Strawberry Hill, June 13th 1761.

I NEVER eat such good snuff, nor smelt such delightful bonbons, as your Ladyship has sent me. Every time you rob the Duke's¹ dessert, does it cost you a pretty snuff-box?² Do the pastors at The Hague³ enjoin such expensive retributions? If a man steals a kiss there, I suppose he does penance in a sheet of Brussels lace. The comical part is, that you own the theft, and send it me, but say nothing of the vehicle of your repentance. In short, Madam, the box is the prettiest thing I ever saw, and I give you a thousand thanks for it. Don't trouble yourself about Delft⁴—nay, I am now afraid you should get any, lest you should pack it up in an old china jar, and really find a meaning for that strange auctioneer's word, a *rowwaggon*.⁵

When you comfort yourself about the operas, you don't know what you have lost—nay, nor I neither, for I was here, concluding that a serenata for a Birthday would be as dull and as vulgar as those festivities generally are—but I hear of nothing but the enchantment of it.⁶ There was a second orchestra in the footman's gallery, disguised by clouds, and filled with the music of the King's Chapel. The choristers behaved like angels, and the harmony between the two bands was in the most exact time. Elisi⁷ piqued himself, and beat both heaven and earth. The joys of the year do not end there. The under-actors open at Drury Lane tonight with a new comedy by Murphy⁸ called, *All in the Wrong*.⁹ At Ranelagh all is

1. The Duke of Richmond.

2. Possibly the 'fine old blue and white box and cover, a present from Lady Ailesbury' which HW placed in the China Closet ('Des. of SH,' *Works* ii. 413).

3. Lady Ailesbury remained at The Hague while Mr Conway was with the army during the campaign of 1761 (Mary Berry).

4. She sent him some 'old china' the following month (*post* 20 July 1761).

5. Unexplained.

6. This ode, written by William White-

head, the poet laureate, and set to music by Dr Boyce, master of the King's band of musicians, was performed 4 June and printed *London Chronicle* 2-4 June, ix. 534; GM 1761, xxxi. 278.

7. Filippo Elisi, first male singer at the opera for the 1760-1 season (MANN iv. 86, n. 6; v. 459 and n. 8).

8. Arthur Murphy (1727-1805), author and dramatist.

9. It opened 15 June (*London Stage Pt IV*, ii. 871). HW's copy, now wsl, is Hazen, *Cat. of HW's Lib.*, No. 1810:2:7.