

TO LADY AILESBUURY, Saturday 10 October 1761

Printed from the MS now wsl; first printed, with omissions, *Works* v. 558–60, and in full Toynbee v. 130–3 and *Supp.* ii. 123. For the history of the MS see *ante* 23 Aug. 1760.

Strawberry Hill, Oct. 10, 1761.

I DON'T know, what business I had, Madam, to be an economist: it was out of character. I wished for a thousand more drawings in that sale at Amsterdam,¹ but concluded they would be very dear, and not having seen them, I thought it too rash to trouble your Ladyship with a large commission.² As they proved so cheap, I wish I had troubled your Ladyship with a huge commission. You are so good to me, that if I had not been saving of my money, I fear I should not have been frugal of your pains. I thank you extremely for those you have bought, and shall wait for them with great patience. I suppose I writ one of the figures carelessly; it was 1229, not 1729—but it does not signify.

I wish I could give you as good an account of your commission;³ but it is absolutely impracticable. I employed one of the most sensible and experienced men in the Custom House,⁴ and all the result was, he could only recommend⁵ me to Mr Amyand as the newest and consequently the most polite of the Commissioners—but the Duchess of Richmond had tried him before—to no purpose. There is no way of recovering any of your goods, but purchasing them again at the sale.

What am I doing, to be talking to you of drawings and chintzes, when the world is all turned topsy-turvy? Peace, as the poets would say, is not only returned to heaven, but has carried her sister Virtue along with her—oh! no, Peace will keep no such company—Virtue is an arrant strumpet, and loves diamonds as well as my Lady Harrington and is as fond of a coronet as my Lord Melcomb.⁶ Worse! worse! She will set men to cutting throats, and pick their pockets at

1. Probably the sale of 4537 drawings and 70 prints, the property of Jacques-Gabriel Huquier (1695–1772), Parisian painter, engraver, print-merchant and collector, held at Amsterdam on 14 Sept. and the following days (Frits Lugt, *Répertoire des catalogues de ventes publiques*, La Haye, 1938–64, No. 1172).

2. HW's commission was apparently

sent in a missing letter, perhaps that of ca 9 Sept.

3. About her clothes (*ante* 27 Sept. 1761).

4. Perhaps Benjamin Scott (*ibid.*, n. 3).

5. MS, 'recommended.'

6. George Bubb Dodington, after a life-long ambition for a peerage, had finally been created Bn Melcombe 6 April 1761.