

TO BEAUCHAMP, Saturday 13 March 1762

Printed for the first time from the MS, now wsl. The history of the MS is untraced until its sale at Sotheby's 28 April 1937 (property of Capt. W. J. W. C. Barrow), lot 635, to Maggs for wsl.

Arlington Street, March 13, 1762.

My dear Lord,

IF the letter I have received from you had been writ to anybody but myself, I should say it was the genteelest and most charming composition of the kind I ever saw; but unluckily being sensible how little foundation there is for such compliments, your judgment loses with me as much as your art gains, and I am forced to ascribe to your good nature what your heart is too upright to let me attribute to too much civility. The book is very trifling, and so is anything I have ever writ. I only meant to try if I could not redeem antiquarian works from the deserved imputation of being the worst books that are written. If I have succeeded, I am content; if I have amused you, I am pleased.¹ I pretend to no more, nor do I think myself qualified to treat any subject of much importance. I am not serious enough, nor am I tempted to the trial. The world is not easily cured of prejudices, nor does it love truth, which I can honestly say has always been in my view. Even on idle subjects, I thought one might instill some truths. I am too grateful for the blessing of liberty not to wish to transmit it to others, and one can act on few better principles. Grave folly, error and interest will misrepresent one's motives, but worthy men in all times will do justice to the intention, and if they do not, the satisfaction of one's own mind is ample reward.

I beg your pardon for being so serious; you have made me so, and it is a pleasure to me to find that I need not much beg your pardon for it. It is rather your age than your understanding to which I should apologize. I am no solemn counsellor, and all the advice I will ever give you is to continue what you are. Continue to improve your mind, but keep your heart exactly as it is; I mean, don't let

1. A sentiment that HW repeated to Cole three years later apropos the *Castle of Otranto*: 'You will laugh at my earnestness, but if I have amused you by re-

tracing with any fidelity the manners of ancient days, I am content, and give you leave to think me as idle as you please' (COLE i. 88).