

TO LADY AILESBUURY, Monday 7 November 1774

Printed from the MS now wsl. First printed, with omissions, *Works* v. 565-7; first printed in full Toynbee ix. 81-4 and *Supp.* ii. 144-6. For the history of the MS see *ante* 23 Aug. 1760; it was marked by HW for inclusion in *Works*.

Address: À Madame Madame la Comtesse d'Ailesbury.

Strawberry Hill, Nov. 7, 1774.

I HAVE written such tomes to Mr Conway, Madam, and have so nothing new to write, that I might as well methinks begin and end like the Lady to her husband, 'Je vous écris parce que je n'ai rien à faire, je finis parce que je n'ai rien à vous dire.'¹ Yes, I have two complaints to make, one of your Ladyship, the other of myself. You tell me nothing of Lady Harriot:² have you no tongue or the French no eyes? or are her eyes employed in nothing but seeing? What a vulgar employment for a fine woman's eyes after she is risen from her toilet! I declare I will ask no more questions—what is it to me whether she is admired or not? I should know how charming she is though all Europe were blind, I hope I am not to be told by any barbarous nation upon earth what beauty and grace are!

For myself I am guilty of the gout in my elbow; the left, witness my handwriting—whether I caught cold by the deluge in the night, or whether the bootikins like the water of Styx can only preserve the parts they surround, I doubt they have saved me but three weeks, for so long my reckoning has been out.³ However as I feel nothing in my feet, I flatter myself that this Pindaric transition⁴ will not be a regular ode, but a fragment, the more valuable for being imperfect.

Now for my gazette. Marriages, nothing done. Intrigues, more in the political than civil way. Births, under par since Lady Berkeley left off breeding.⁵ Gaming, low water. Deaths, Lord Morton,⁶ Lord Wentworth,⁷ Duchess Douglas.⁸ Election stock, more buyers than

1. Recounted in *Walpoliana* i. 4.

2. Stanhope, who accompanied Lady Ailesbury to Paris; see *ante* 16 Oct. 1774, n. 1 and *post* 12, 23 Nov. 1774.

3. See *ante* 16 Oct. 1774.

4. See DALRYMPLE 61; CHATTERTON 297; BERRY i. 175.

5. A standing joke of HW's, alluding to the triplets she bore to Lord Berkeley in

1748; see *ante* 29 Aug. 1748 OS, 14 July 1761.

6. Sholto Charles Douglas (1732-25 Sept. 1774), 15th Earl of Morton, 1768. He died at Taormina, in Sicily.

7. Edward Noel (1715-31 Oct. 1774), 9th Bn Wentworth, 1745; cr. (1762) Vct Wentworth.

8. Died 24 Oct.