

the mischief, and that, if I could have held my tongue, and kept from talking and dictating letters, I should not have been half so bad as I have been, there remains but half due to bootikins on the balance: and surely the ravages of the last long fit, and two years more in age, ought to make another deduction. Indeed, my forcing myself to dictate my last letter to you³ almost killed me; and since the gout is not dangerous to me if I am kept perfectly quiet, my good old friend⁴ must have patience, and not insist upon letters from me but when it is quite easy to me to send them.⁵ So much for me and my gout. I will now endeavour to answer such parts of your last letters⁶ as I can in this manner, and considering how difficult it is to read *your* writing in a dark room.

I have not yet been able to look into the French harangues⁷ you sent me. Voltaire's verses to Robert Covelle⁸ are not only very bad, but very contemptible.

I am delighted with all the honours you receive,⁹ and with all the amusements they procure you, which is the best part of honours. For the glorious part, I am always like the man in Pope's *Donne*,

Then happy he who shows the tombs, said I.¹⁰

3. *Ante* 23 Dec. 1774 (missing).

4. Mme du Deffand.

5. Mme du Deffand had written to HW 18 Dec. 1774: 'Si vous voulez m'obliger, vous donnerez de vos nouvelles deux fois la semaine, une à moi, l'autre à votre cousin' (DU DEFFAND iv. 121). HW replied 26 Dec. 1774: 'Vous oubliez la première de toutes les règles, qui est, que c'est le malade qu'on doit ménager, et non pas le malade qui doit ménager ceux qui se portent bien' (ibid. iv. 124).

6. Missing.

7. Not found. Perhaps they were speeches delivered upon the occasion of the opening of the new parliament of Paris 28 Nov.; one delivered that day by the advocate-general Séguier 'reçut de grands applaudissements,' while another, delivered 29 Nov. by M. Target, 'fut aussi fort applaudi' (*Mercure historique* Dec. 1774, clxxvii. 690 and n., 691). The *Gazette de Leyde* 9 Dec., 'Supplément,' sub 'Versailles, le 1 décembre,' prints a complimentary 'harangue' of M. d'Aligre addressed to Louis XVI at Versailles 27

Nov. on behalf of deputations from the parliament and the cour des aides, assembled to compliment the King upon his accession to the throne.

8. A goldsmith of Geneva, who in 1764 had refused to beg forgiveness of God on his knees before the Genevan Consistory for having fathered an illegitimate child by Catherine Ferboz; Voltaire espoused his cause and celebrated him in *La Guerre civile de Genève, ou les amours de Robert Covelle. Poëme héroïque* (1768). See Jean-P. Ferrier, 'Covelle, Voltaire, et l'affaire de la génuflexion,' *Bulletin de la Société d'histoire et d'Archéologie de Genève*, Geneva, 1943-6, viii. 217-25; Voltaire, *Œuvres complètes*, ed. Moland, 1877-85, ix. 515-55.

9. Mme du Deffand wrote to HW 17 Dec. 1774 that Conway and his ladies 'plaisent généralement à tout le monde; ils doivent être contents de l'empressement qu'on leur marque' (DU DEFFAND iv. 119).

10. 'Then, happy man who shows the tombs! (said I)' (Pope, *Satires of Donne*, Satire IV, l. 102).