

Vichy<sup>23</sup> has had a very good night and is quite well.<sup>24</sup>—Philip,<sup>25</sup> let my chaise be ready on Thursday.<sup>26</sup>

### TO LADY AILESBUURY, Tuesday 12 December 1775

Printed from the MS now wsl. First printed (with omissions) *Works* v. 569; first printed in full Toynbee ix. 294 and *Supp.* ii. 148. For the history of the MS see *ante* 23 Aug. 1760; it was marked by HW for inclusion in *Works*.

*Address:* To the Countess of Ailesbury, at Park Place near Henley.

*Postmark:* RD 12 DE.

Arlington Street, Dec. 12, 1775.

**D**ID you hear that scream?<sup>1</sup>—don't be frightened, Madam; it was only the Duchess of Kingston last Sunday was sevennight at chapel:<sup>2</sup> but it is better to be prepared, for she has sent word to the House of Lords that her nerves are so bad she intends to scream for these two months, and therefore they must put off her trial.<sup>3</sup> They are to take her throes into consideration today;<sup>4</sup> and that there may be sufficient room for the length of her veil and train and attendants,<sup>5</sup> have a mind to treat her with Westminster Hall.<sup>6</sup> I hope

23. The maiden name of Madame du Deffand (HW).

24. She wrote to Mme de Choiseul 7 Oct. 'à 7 heures du matin' that 'je suis en état . . . de vous dire moi-même que je me porte mieux' (Mme du Deffand, op. cit. iii. 199).

25. Mr Walpole's valet de chambre (HW), Philip Colomb (d. 1799), who had been in HW's service since ca 1767 (MANN viii. 211, n. 5).

26. HW left Paris Thursday, 12 Oct., arriving back in London Tuesday, 17 Oct. ('Paris Journals,' DU DEFFAND v. 353).

1. An echo, perhaps, of a passage in Mme de Sévigné's letter to her daughter dated Livry 28 Oct. 1676: 'O good God! Did not you hear the scream I gave? The whole forest has repeated it . . .' (*Letters from the Marchioness de Sévigné to her Daughter*, 1763, v. 180). The original is: 'Eh, bon Dieu! n'avez-vous point entendu le cri que j'ai fait? Tout la forêt l'a répété . . .' (Mme de Sévigné, *Lettres*, ed. Monmerqué, 1862-6, v. 121).

2. The *Daily Adv.* 4 Dec. reported her as 'suddenly taken ill in the Chapel Royal, St James's, during the time of divine service,' and GM 1775, xlv. 602, sub 3 Dec., as 'suddenly seized with a fainting fit during divine service . . . and carried home speechless.'

3. For bigamy, originally appointed 20 Nov. for 18 Dec. in the House of Lords (*Journals of the House of Lords* xxxiv. 512). The Duchess petitioned the Lords 11 Dec. 'to postpone the . . . trial for two months,' pleading 'a very severe illness' (ibid. xxxiv. 527).

4. On 12 Dec. the trial was put off to 24 Jan., and again on 20 Dec. to 28 Feb. (ibid. xxxiv. 531, 539).

5. See MANN viii. 187, 192.

6. So moved 14 Dec. For further particulars of the Duchess and her trial at this time, see ibid. viii. 149-51 and nn. 1-4, 6-10. She was finally tried 15-22 April in Westminster Hall, and found guilty (ibid. viii. 192, n. 4, 195-6).