

LETTER

Horace Walpole (1717–1797), author

to Sir Horace Mann (c. 1701–1786), British Resident at Florence

Arlington Street, 1 February 1745

I am glad my letters, obscure as they of course must be, give you any light into England, but don't mind them too much—they may be partial, must be imperfect; don't *negotiate* upon their authority, but have Capello's¹ example before your eyes! How I laugh when I see him important, and see my Lady Pomfret's² letters at the bottom of his instructions! How it would make a philosopher smile at the vanity of politics! How it diverts me, who can entertain myself at the expense of philosophy, politics, or anything else! Mr. Conway³ says I laugh at all serious characters—so I do—and at myself too, who am far from being of the number. Who would not laugh at a world where so ridiculous a creature as the Duke of Newcastle⁴ can overturn ministries!

Don't take me for a partisan of Lord Granville's⁵ because I despise his rivals. I am not for adopting his measures; they were wild and dangerous. In his single capacity, I think him a great genius, and without having recourse to the Countess' *translatable* periods, am pleased with his company. His frankness charms one when it is not necessary to depend upon it, and his contempt for fools is very flattering to anyone who happens to know the present ministry. Their coalition goes on as one should expect; they have the name of having effected it; and the Opposition is no longer mentioned. Yet there is not a half-witted prater in the House but can divide with every new minister on his side, except Lyttelton,⁶ whenever he pleases. They actually do every day bring in popular bills, and on the first tinkling of the brass, all the new bees swarm back to the Tory side of the House. The other day, on the Flanders army, Mr. Pitt⁷ came down to prevent this: he was very ill, but made a very strong and much-admired speech for coalition, which for that day succeeded, and the army was voted with but one negative. But now the Emperor⁸ is dead, and everything must wear a new face. If it produces a peace, Mr. Pelham⁹ is a fortunate man! He will do extremely well at the beginning of peace, like the man in Madame de la Fayette's *Memoirs*, "Qui exerçoit extrêmement bien sa charge, quand il n'avoit rien à faire."¹⁰ However, do you keep well with them, and be sure don't write me back any treason, in answer to all I write to you: you are to please them; I think of them as they are.

The new Elector¹¹ seems to set out well for us, though there are accounts of his having taken the style of Archduke, as claiming the Austrian succession: if he has, it will be like the children's game of *beat knaves out of doors*, where you play the pack twenty times over; one gets pam, the other gets pam, but there is no conclusion of the game, till one side has never a card left.

After my ill success with the baronet,¹² to whom I gave a letter for you, I shall always be very cautious how I recommend barbarians to your protection. I have this morning been solicited for some credentials for a Mr. Oxenden.¹³ I could not help laughing—he is a son of Sir George,¹⁴ my Lady W.'s famous lover! Can he want

¹ Venetian Ambassador to Great Britain

² Henrietta Louisa Fermor (1698–1761), Countess Pomfret

³ Lieutenant-Colonel Henry Seymour Conway (1721–1795), M.P. for Higham Ferrers (1741–1747) and one of Walpole's cousins

⁴ Thomas Pelham-Holles (1693–1768), Duke of Newcastle. His younger brother, Henry Pelham, was at this time Prime Minister

⁵ John Carteret (1690–1763), Earl Granville, a significant rival of Robert Walpole

⁶ George Lyttelton (1709–1773)

⁷ William Pitt the Elder (1708–1778)

⁸ Charles VII (1697–1745), Holy Roman Emperor (1742–1745) and Elector of Bavaria (1726–1745)

⁹ Henry Pelham (1694–1754), Prime Minister (1743–1754)

¹⁰ "Whose does his duty extremely well when he has nothing to do."

¹¹ Maximilian III Joseph (1727–1777), Elector of Bavaria (1745–1777)

¹² William Maynard (1721–1772), Baronet Maynard

¹³ Henry Oxenden (1721–1803)

¹⁴ Sir George Oxenden (1694–1775), Baronet Oxenden, M.P. for Sandwich (1720–1754), and Lord of the Treasury

recommendations to Florence? However, I must give him a letter; but beg you will not give yourself any particular trouble about him, for I do not know him enough to bow to. His person is good; that and his name, I suppose, will bespeak my lady's attentions, and save you the fatigue of doing him many honors.

Thank Mr. Chute for his letter; I will answer it very soon. I delight in the article of the Mantua *Gazette*. Adieu!

The Letters of Horace Walpole, Earl of Orford (1842: Philadelphia, Lea and Blanchard), I:402–404.