

LETTER

Horace Walpole (1717–1797), author

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

Arlington Street, 28 February 1745

You have heard from your brother the reason of my not having written to you so long. I have been out but twice since my father fell into this illness, which is now near a month; and all that time either continually in his room, or obliged to see multitudes of people; for it is most wonderful how everybody of all kinds has affected to express their concern for him! He has been out of danger above this week, but I can't say he mended at all perceptibly till these last three days. His spirits are amazing, and his constitution more, for Dr. Hulse said honestly from the first that if he recovered, it would be from his own strength, not from their art. After the four or five first days, in which they gave him the bark, they resigned him to the struggles of his own good temperament—and it has surmounted! Surmounted an explosion and discharge of thirty-two pieces of stone, a constant and vast effusion of blood for five days, a fever of three weeks, a perpetual flux of water, and sixty-nine years, already (one should think) worn down with his vast fatigues! How much more he will ever recover, one scarce dare hope about: for us, he is greatly recovered; for himself

4 March 1745

I had written thus far last week, without being able to find a moment to finish. In the midst of all my attendance on my Lord and receiving visits, I am forced to go out and thank those that have come and sent; for his recovery is now at such a pause that I fear it is in vain to expect much further amendment. How dismal a prospect for him, with the possession of the greatest understanding in the world, not the least impaired, to lie without any use of it! For to keep him from pains and restlessness, he takes so much opiate that he is scarce awake four hours of the four-and-twenty; but I will say no more on this.

Our coalition goes on thrivingly; but at the expense of the old Court, who are all discontented, and are likely soon to show their resentment. The brothers¹ have seen the best days of their ministry. The Hanover troops dismissed to please the Opposition, and taken again with their consent, under the cloak of an additional subsidy to the Queen of Hungary,² who is to pay them. This has set the patriots in so villainous a light that they will be ill able to support a minister who has thrown such an odium on the Whigs after they had so stoutly supported that measure last year, and which, after all the clamor, is now universally adopted, as you see.

If my Lord Granville³ had any resentment, as he seems to have nothing but thirst, sure there is no vengeance he might not take! So far from contracting any prudence from his fall, he laughs it off every night over two or three bottles. The Countess is with child. I believe she and the Countess-mother have got it; for there is nothing ridiculous which they have not done and said about it. There was a private masquerade lately at the Venetian ambassadress' for the Prince of Wales, who named the company and expressly excepted my Lady Lincoln and others of the Pelham faction. My Lady Granville came late, dressed like Imoinda, and handsomer than one of the houris: the Prince asked her why she would not dance? "Indeed, Sir, I was afraid I could not have come at all, for I had a fainting fit after dinner." The other night my Lady Townshend made a great ball on her son's coming of age: I went for a little while, little thinking of dancing. I asked my Lord Granville why my lady did not dance? "Oh, Lord! I wish you would ask her: she will with you." I was caught, and did walk down one country dance with her; but the prudent *Signora-madre* would not let her expose the young Carteret any further.

¹ Thomas Pelham-Holles (1693–1768), Duke of Newcastle, and his brother, Henry Pelham (1694–1754), Prime Minister (1743–1754)

² Maria Theresa (1717–1780), Archduchess of Austria, Queen of Hungary, Queen of Bohemia, and Grand Duchess of Tuscany

³ John Carteret (1690–1763), Earl Granville, Secretary of State (1742–1744) and a significant rival of Robert Walpole

You say you expect much information about Belleisle,⁴ but there has not (in the style of the newspapers) the least particular transpired. He was at first kept magnificently close at Windsor; but the expense proving above one hundred pounds per day, they have taken his parole, and sent him to Nottingham, *à la Tallarde*. Pray, is de Sede with you still? His brother has been taken too by the Austrians.

My Lord Coke is going to be married to a Miss Shawe, of forty thousand pounds.⁵ Lord Hartington⁶ is contracted to Lady Charlotte Boyle, the heiress of Burlington and sister of the unhappy Lady Euston; but she is not yet old enough. Earl Stanhope,⁷ too, has at last lifted up his eyes from Euclid and directed them to matrimony. He has chosen the eldest sister of your acquaintance, Lord Haddington.

I revive about you and Tuscany. I will tell you what is thought to have reprieved you: it is much suspected that the King of Spain is dead. I hope those superstitious people will pinch the queen, as they do witches, to make her loosen the charm that has kept the Prince of Asturias from having children. At least this must turn out better than the death of the Emperor has.

The Duke,⁸ you hear, is named generalissimo, with Count Koningseg,⁹ Lord Dunmore,¹⁰ and Ligonier¹¹ under him. Poor boy! He is most Brunswickly happy with his drums and trumpets. Do but think that this sugar-plum was to tempt him to swallow that bolus the Princess of Denmark! What will they do if they have children? The late Queen¹² never forgave the Duke of Richmond for telling her that his children would take place before the Duke's grand-children.¹³

I enclose you a pattern for a chair, which your brother desired me to send you. I thank you extremely for the views of Florence; you can't imagine what wishes they have awakened. My best thanks to Dr. Cocchi for his book; I have delivered all the copies as directed. Mr. Chute will excuse me yet; the first moment I have time I will write.

I have just received your letter of 16 February, and grieve for your disorder: you know how much concern your ill health gives me. Adieu, my dear child. I write with twenty people in the room.

The Letters of Horace Walpole, Earl of Orford (1842: Philadelphia, Lea and Blanchard), I:404–406.

⁴ Charles Louis Fouquet (1684–1761), Marshal-Duke de Belleisle, a prominent French commander in the War of the Austrian Succession, had been captured by the Hanoverians in December 1744, was now a prisoner in England.

⁵ The marriage did not take place. Edward Coke (1719–1753), Viscount Coke (son of the Earl of Leicester), instead married Mary Campbell (1727–1811) in 1747 and Elizabeth Shaw married William (1722–1798), Baron Byron, the same year.

⁶ William Cavendish (1720–1764), Marquess of Hartington (1729–1755) and later Duke of Devonshire. In 1748, he wed Charlotte Boyle.

⁷ Philip Stanhope (1714–1786), Earl Stanhope. In July he wed Grizel Hamilton, the Earl of Haddington's grand-daughter.

⁸ Prince William (1721–1765), Duke of Cumberland, younger son of King George II.

⁹ Maximilian Friedrich (1708–1784), Graf von Koenigsegg-Rothenfels

¹⁰ John Murray (1685–1752), Earl of Dunmore

¹¹ Lieutenant-General Sir John Ligonier (1680–1770)

¹² Caroline of Ansbach (1683–1737), Queen-Consort of King George II

¹³ The Dukes of Richmond were the descendents of one of Charles II's illegitimate sons.