

We parted so lately and I have seen so little since, and the country is so barren of topics you can expect nothing from hence.

The worst news (and it's the fashion to have none but the worst) is that our gold-fish³ grow silver and the great big-bellied one has certainly got a tympany;⁴ we have had the advice of physicians upon her case. Our partridge are devoured by vermin and our fruit blighted. Adieu: if you can come to such a place it longs much to see you. If this finds you with Lady Mary and Mr Churchill, pray make our compliments.

Yours ever,

H. S. C.

From LADY AILESBUURY, Thursday 21 October 1756

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Park Place, October 21, 1756.

I THINK myself vastly unlucky not to meet you in town, and I was very sorry not to be able to perform my promise of coming to Strawberry, but I had no time, and Mr Conway's fit of seeing camps was then very strong;¹ if it should suit you to be there after the Birthday,² and Mr Conway should have an intermission, we will wait upon you then if you'll accept us; though I say this without having consulted him, for he is gone to shoot off his gun with Mr Freeman³ this morning.

I cannot prevail upon the Mingotti to give me an answer about the box,⁴ though I have sent messages and notes without end, all in choice Italian, not penned by myself, for then she might have been supposed not to have understood them, but by Miss Rich; all she says is that the people who took them last year have not determined

the *World* 23 Oct. 1787 (Appendix 15) mentions 'the bow-window room, the best in the house.'

3. Conway's gold-fish were a present from HW (*ante* 23 Oct. 1753; 3, 6, 7 July 1754).

4. 'Sometimes used vaguely for a morbid swelling or tumour of any kind. Common from 16th to 18th c.' (OED).

1. Camps were established at Maidstone, Winchester, Blandford, Canterbury

and Chatham during the spring and summer of 1756 (Rex Whitworth, *Field Marshal Lord Ligonier*, Oxford, 1958, p. 210).

2. The King's Birthday, 10 November (MANN v. 6, n. 19).

3. Sambrooke Freeman (ca 1721-82), of Fawley Court, Henley-on-Thames, Berks; M.P. Pontefract 1754-61, Bridport 1768-74; Conway's neighbour.

4. At the Opera.