

notice of this dear old friend of mine. She will perhaps expect more attention from *you*, as my friend, and as it is her own nature a little, than will be quite convenient to you: but you have an infinite deal of patience and good nature, and will excuse it. I was afraid of her importuning Lady A., who has a vast deal to see and do, and therefore I have prepared Madame du D. and told her Lady A. loves amusements, and that, having never been at Paris before, she must not confine her: so you must pay for both—and it will answer: and I do not, I own, ask this only for Madame du Deffand's sake, but for my own, and a little for yours. Since the late King's death she has not dared to write to me freely, and I want to know the present state of France exactly, both to satisfy my own curiosity, and for her sake, as I wish to learn whether her pension, etc. is in any danger from the present ministry, some of whom are not her friends.<sup>3</sup> She can tell you a great deal if she will—by that I don't mean that she is reserved, or partial to her own country against ours—quite the contrary; she loves me better than all France together—but she hates politics; and therefore, to make her talk on it, you must tell her it is to satisfy me, and that I want to know whether she is well at Court, whether she has any fears from the government, particularly from Maurepas<sup>4</sup> and Nivernois;<sup>5</sup> and that I am eager to have Monsieur de Choiseul and *ma grand'maman* the Duchess restored to power.<sup>6</sup> If you take it on this foot easily, she will talk to you with the utmost frankness and with amazing cleverness. I have told her you are strangely absent, and that, if she does not repeat it over and over, you will forget every syllable: so I have prepared her to joke and be quite familiar with you at once.<sup>7</sup> She knows more of personal

3. Her pension was continued.

4. Who, disgraced by Louis XV in 1749, was recalled from exile by a letter of 12 May from Louis XVI, in which the King asked him 'de m'aider de vos conseils'; he was named *chef du conseil des finances* in 1776 (*ante* 5 Dec. 1765, n. 15; MANN viii. 13, n. 5; DU DEFFAND iv. 315, 317).

5. Maurepas' brother-in-law; he did not hold office under Louis XVI at this time, but in 1781 was rumoured to be Maurepas' successor as *chef du conseil des finances*, and in 1787 became a member of the *conseil d'état du roi* as *ministre d'état* (MANN ix. 212 and n. 13; *Répertoire* . . .

*de la Gazette de France*, ed. de Granges de Surgères, 1902–6, iii. 506).

6. They never were; Choiseul had returned to Paris in June, and was received 'neither well nor ill' by the King (Stormont to Rochford 15 June, S.P. 78/292, f. 153; DU DEFFAND iv. 62).

7. Mme du Deffand wrote to HW 28 Oct. 1774, after Conway's arrival at Paris: 'Selon l'idée que vous m'en aviez donnée, je le croyais grave, sévère, froid, imposant; c'est l'homme le plus aimable, le plus facile, le plus doux, le plus obligeant, et le plus simple que je connaisse. Il n'a pas ces premiers mouvements de sensibilité qu'on trouve en vous, mais aussi n'a-t-il pas votre humeur' (*ibid.* iv. 107).