

TO CONWAY, Saturday 29 October 1774

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Strawberry Hill, October 29, 1774.

I HAVE received your letter of the 23d,¹ and it certainly overpays me, when you thank instead of scolding me, as I feared.² A passionate man has very little merit in being in a passion, and is sure of saying many things he repents, as I do. I only hope you think that I could not be so much in the wrong for everybody; nor should have been perhaps even for you, if I had not been certain I was the only person, at that moment, that could serve you essentially: and at such a crisis, I am sure I should take exactly the same part again, except in saying some things I did, of which I am ashamed!³ I will say no more now on that topic, nor on anything relating to it, because I have written my mind very fully, and you will know it soon. I can only tell you now, that I approve extremely your way of thinking, and hope you will not change it before you hear from me, and know some material circumstances. You and Lady A. and I agree exactly, and she and I certainly consider only *you*. I do not answer her last,⁴ because I could not help telling you how very kindly I take your letter. All I beg is, that you would have no delicacy about my serving you any way. You know it is a pleasure to me: anybody else may have views that would embarrass you; and therefore, till you are on the spot, and can judge for yourself (which I always insist on, because you are cooler than I, and because, though I have no interests to serve, I have passions which equally mislead one), it will be wiser to decline all kind of proposals and offers. You will avoid the plague of contested elections and solicitations; and I see no reasons, at present, that can tempt you to be in a hurry.⁵

You must not expect to be Madame du Deffand's first favourite. Lady Ailesbury has made such a progress there, that you will not easily supplant her. I have received volumes in her praise.⁶ You

1. Missing.

2. Conway was replying to HW's missing letter *ante* 3 Oct. 1774, in which he 'took all the blame' he could on himself for his recent conduct towards Hertford (see *ante* 27 Sept. 1774 *bis*, 2, 3 Oct. 1774).

3. 'A great deal of very intemperate in-

vective,' spoken in anger to Lady Ailesbury after their failure to see Hertford the night of 1 Oct. (Appendix 10).

4. Missing.

5. See *ante* 3 Oct. 1774.

6. 'Je ne saurais vous dire combien Mme Ailesbury me plaît' (Mme du Def-