

TO LADY AILESURY, Thursday 25 June 1778

Printed from the MS now wsl. First printed (with omissions) *Works* v. 570; first printed in full Toynbee x. 267–8 and *Supp.* ii. 158–9. For the history of the MS see *ante* 23 Aug. 1760; it was marked by HW for inclusion in *Works*. The first page is reproduced in W. S. Lewis, *Horace Walpole*, New York, 1961, facing p. 112.

Address: To the Countess of Ailesbury at Park Place near Henley.

Postmark: Isleworth 26 IV.

Strawberry Hill, June 25, 1778.

I AM quite astonished, Madam, at not hearing of Mr Conway's being returned!¹ What is he doing? Is he revolting and setting up for himself like our nabobs in India? or is he forming Jersey, Guernsey, Alderney and Sark into the United Provinces in the compass of a silver penny? I should not wonder if this was to be the fate of our distracted empire, which we seem to have made so large, only that it might afford to split into separate kingdoms. I told Mr C. I should not write any more, concluding he would not stay a twinkling; and your Ladyship's last² encouraged my expecting him. In truth I had nothing to tell him if I had written.

I am impatient too to know how poor Lord William does, and if you have better hopes of him.³ I long to hear that my dear Mrs Damer is well again. I hope it was nothing at all serious.

I have been in town but one single night⁴ this age, as I could not bear to throw away this phoenix June. It has rained a good deal this morning, but only made it more delightful. The flowers are all Arabian—I have found but one inconvenience, which is, the hosts of cuckoos; one would not think one was in Doctors Commons.⁵ It

1. 'On Tuesday last [30 June] General Conway arrived at his house in Warwick Street, Charing Cross, from taking his survey of the forts and garrisons in the islands of Jersey and Guernsey . . . and yesterday waited on his Majesty at the levee, and made report of the same' (*Public Advertiser* 2 July). Conway was governor of Jersey from 1772 till his death (see MANN ix. 111, n. 5). 'Le 13 juin 1778, le Général Conway, gouverneur, assiste à une séance de la Cour Extraordinaire ou du Samedi. . . . Le 17 juin . . . il est présent à une séance des États, qui lui expriment leur reconnaissance de ce qu'il

a bien voulu visiter l'île dans ce temps critique; ils le remercient aussi de tout ce qu'il a déjà fait, depuis son arrivée, pour la défense du pays' (J. A. Messervy, 'Liste des gouverneurs . . . de l'île de Jersey,' *Société jersiaise, Bulletins*, 1902–5, v. 12–13).

2. Missing.

3. Lord William Campbell, Lady Ailesbury's brother, died 4 Sept. (OSSORY ii. 50, n. 8).

4. 19 June (MANN viii. 388).

5. Location of the Bishop's or Consistory Court, where divorces were adjudged (*ibid.*