

about my eye. It is quite well again, and I hope the next attack of the gout will be anywhere rather than in that quarter.³

I did not expect Mr Conway would think of returning just now, though I am persuaded the French will not stoop to pick up such a minikin pin—but he is scrupulous even about appearances. As you have lost both Mrs Damer and Lady William,⁴ I do not see why your Ladyship should not go to Goodwood.⁵

The Baroness's⁶ increasing peevishness does not surprise me. When people will not weed their own minds, they are apt to be overrun with nettles. She knows nothing of politics, and no wonder talks nonsense about them. It is silly to wish three nations had but one neck, but it is ten times more absurd to act as if it was so, which the government has done—ay, and forgetting too that it has not a scimitar large enough to sever that neck, which they have in effect made *one*. It is past the time, Madam, of making conjectures—how can one guess whither France and Spain will direct a blow that is in their option. I am rather inclined to think that they will have patience to ruin us in detail. Hitherto France and America have carried their points by that manœuvre. Should there be an engagement at sea, and the French and Spanish fleets by their great superiority⁷ should have the advantage, one knows not what might happen—yet, though there are such large preparations making on the French coast,⁸ I do not much expect a serious invasion,⁹ as they are sure they can do us more damage by a variety of other attacks, where we can make little resistance. Gibraltar and Jamaica can but be the immediate objects of Spain.¹⁰ Ireland is much worse guarded than this island—nay, we must be undone by our expense, should the summer pass without any attempt. My cousin thinks they will try to destroy Portsmouth and Plymouth¹¹—but I have seen nothing in the present French Ministry that looks like bold enterprise. We

3. HW had suffered from the 'gout' in his left eye for four or five days at the beginning of July; he suffered a recurrence in Aug. (*ibid.* ii. 106; MANN viii. 501).

4. Who were on their way to the Continent; see next letter.

5. Seat of the Richmonds.

6. Probably Lady Greenwich; see OSBORN ii. 485 *et passim* for her 'superabundant fund of bad qualities.'

7. See MANN viii. 490-1 and nn. 2-3, and *post* 23 July 1779, n. 7.

8. See MANN viii. 496-7, n. 4.

9. However, one was planned; see A. T. Patterson, *The Other Armada*, Manchester, 1960, *passim*.

10. Spain instituted a naval blockade of Gibraltar 16 July; see MANN viii. 501, n. 5.

11. These were in fact the primary and secondary objectives of the enemy (Patterson, *op. cit.* 133 *et passim*).