

for it. Lady Hertford desires her best compliments. I remain, dear Horry,

Ever yours sincerely,

HERTFORD

TO LADY AILESBUURY, Thursday 28 October 1779

Printed from the MS now WSL; first printed Toynbee, *Supp.* i. 276–8. For the history of the MS see *ante* 23 Aug. 1760; it was marked by HW for inclusion in *Works*, but was not included.

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

Postmark: ISLEWORTH <29> OC.

Strawberry Hill, Thursday night.

I HAVE not written to your Ladyship for above a fortnight¹ from that most sovereign of reasons, that I had nothing to tell you. I was in town three days last week² and so fortunate as to find both your daughters,³ and to see one or both every day. I returned hither on Monday, and for two days have been confined with the rheumatism in my arm, for I am grown to have such a regiment of disorders, that when one goes off duty, another *relieves* it—an excellent word I have chosen truly on the occasion! I was to have dined at Ditton today,⁴ but could not get on my coat, so Lord and Lady Hertford called on me, and he told me that a sloop is ordered to bring Mr Conway over whenever he pleases—but I fear he will not send for it yet, for the combined fleets are said to be at sea, as well as ours;⁵ and though the former will certainly not deign to stoop to pick up a minikin pin, Mr Conway I am sure will stay till they are returned to their own pincushion. What horrible times, Madam! That is, how horrible they make one! The wind blustered and tempested this morning, and I instantly wished it might sink the whole hostile squadrons—that is, forty or fifty thousand men! One grows quite righteous, when one corrects one's self, and only wishes the authors

1. HW's letter is missing.

2. HW wrote to Mason from Berkeley Square (see below) Thursday, 21 Oct. 1779, that he would 'return to Strawberry on Monday [25 Oct.]' (MASON i. 470).

3. The Duchess of Richmond and Mrs Damer.

4. See *ante* 27 Oct. 1779.

5. The English fleet had sailed from Spithead 22 Oct., but the combined fleet, which had put into Brest 15 Sept., did not sail again this year (see OSSORY ii. 131, nn. 7–8; A. T. Patterson, *The Other Armada*, Manchester, 1960, pp. 210–12).