

Feb 25. 1779

Admiral Keppel to HM

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Thoughts of Admiral Keppel concerning His
situation, most humbly and respectfully
submitted to your Majesty.

Sir

The goodness with which your
Majesty has always been pleased to receive any
Observations I have taken the liberty to lay at
your Majesty's Feet concerning the situation to
which your Majesty did me the honor to call me

of Commanding the Fleet for the defence of your
Majesty's Kingdoms, makes me presume with all
possible Duty and respect to Submit the following
considerations to your Majesty's wisdom & goodness.

Your Majesty will recollect that when I
received your Majesty's Orders to take this Command
I Obey'd without difficulty, and acquainted your
Majesty that as I had no Friend among your Majesty's
Ministers to Support me, I should rely solely on your Majesty
and the good Opinion I should hope to deserve of my Country
for protection.

I beg leave to assure your Majesty that my
conduct towards your Ministers has been not only
fair & upright, but open & unreserved.

When I undertook this great trust,

I resolved not to make but to surmount Difficulties,
I made no complaints, I exposed no neglects, I divulged
no secrets. on the contrary I acted towards them with
the same confidence I would have shewn to my best Friends
and I expected a suitable return of Support.

I am sorry to inform by our Majesty that this
confidence has been ill requited.

My Return to St Helens on the 27th of June
when notwithstanding the Opinion of the first Lord of the
Admiralty communicated to me that with Twenty such
Capital Ships, after the Detachment sent with Admiral
Byrongs, I should still have under my command, I should
be a fair Match for the best Fleet; I found myself
likely to meet with a Force by one third Superior remain
to this day without a syllable of Official Apology.

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As does my taking the French Frigates, the utmost which could be got from any of them, & that not till it was extorted was a cold negative saying of Lord North in the House of commons, that the prudence & propriety of the measure exempted me from blame

The board of Admiralty have without a moment's hesitation order'd me to prepare for a trial for my life & Honor on recriminatory charges brought against me by Sir Hugh Palliser a Vice Admiral under my Command & who had first libell'd me in a common news paper. These Charges the least inquiry would have shewn to be as malicious and ill founded as they have since been adjudged.

They have made use of your Majesty's name and lodg'd Detriment to the state as Motives to

Induce me to submit to an illegal prohibition of my
producing either to my Counsel or to the Court Masters
the Instructions under which I had acted & which I had
Informed them my Counsel had required to see, as
necessary to enable them to give me the best Advice how
to make my defence. For the same persons to call an Officer
to a Trial for his life, & then to limit him in his defence
by their discretion is so glaring an injustice and also bad
an Example, that it is unnecessary for me to say it here
to your Majesty's goodness & wisdom, I am really afraid
that the precedent of my Submission may be pernicious,
but so far as related to myself, there could be no doubt
but your Majesty's name & the possibility of the production
of the Instructions being detrimental to the state would
make me forego even the most essential means

of Defence. happily I have not stood in need of my
Instructions to Obtain the most honorable Acquittal.
but the case might have been otherwise. I beg leave to add
myself to that respectable List of Admirals who have
dutifully laid before your Majesty their sense of the
prejudice which the conduct of the Admiralty may cause
to your Majesty's service.

It would be taking up a great deal too much
of your Majesty's time were I to mention every instance
in which I have experienced want of support from your
Majesty's servants. Those I have mentioned are notorious
& Altho' I shall ever place the most implicit confidence
in your Majesty's personal goodness & protection, your
Majesty must be sensible that such marks of slight
& neglect to say no worse, from your Majesty

Ministers who still enjoy your Majesty's confidence
 must render it very difficult if not impossible
 for any Officer in a command of importance to serve
 with satisfaction or credit to himself & of course
 with benefit to your Majesty's service.

Thus situated it would be presumptuous
 in me to wish to know what Dispositions your
 Majesty may have in contemplation, but I should
 be greatly wanting in the Duty I owe your Majesty,
 if at the same time that I beg leave to renew
 the most sincere professions of Duty & Loyalty
 & the most ardent wish of serving your Majesty, I did
 not humbly implore your Majesty's permission
 not to go again to sea under Men in whom
 I have learnt from Experience I cannot depend

for that Support which is necessary for every Command

I have thought it my Duty Sir to state these
Matters with all humility for your Majesty's
consideration before I went to Bath where my
Health makes it necessary for me to go. that If your
Majesty should think proper for me to Strike my
Flag, my Successor may have the more time to prepare
for service. I am ready to quit my command to
Day. or to preserve it as long as may be convenient
for your Majesty's Arrangements & consistent with
my own Honor, but I trust your Majesty will see
that my Reputation cannot continue safe in
Hands who have already done all they could to
quien it.

I beg leave to assure your Majesty that
 in all situations Public, or Private, it will ever be
 my my most Zealous Desire to prove myself, your
 Majesty.

Most Respectfull.

Dutifull, and

Loyal.

subject.

and

Servant.

th
 February 25. 1779

J. G. Ker

