

3503

Portsmouth Sept: 5th 1779

Lord Sandrich has the honour to acquaint your Majesty that he arrived at this place this morning at half past nine o'clock; by sending on his messenger in the night he apprized L^d Mulgrave that he was coming, and he found him at the Comptroliners soon after his arrival.

Lord Mulgraves opinion is that the fleet had better not have come to Spithead, for that if the enemy were enterprizing and had a fair wind they might take possession of S^t Helens; he however expresses himself very favourably with regard to Sir Charles Hardy's general conduct, & thinks it is absolutely necessary that he should be supported against the remains of Admiral Keppell's party the chiefs of which are Lewis, Mordaunt, & perhaps Sir John Rep,

tho' the latter is not violent: upon the whole
he thinks the temper of the fleet as good
as can be expected, but for many reasons
wishes them at sea with as little delay as
may be.

Lord Sandwich lost no time in going to Spithead
on board the Victory where he had a long
conversation with Sir Charles Hardy, he
pointed out to Sir Charles how much it
was to be wished that the fleet had been
at St. Helens rather than at Spithead, and
that at all events it was advisable that
they should not lose one unnecessary moment
in harbour: Sir Charles expressed the utmost
eagerness to get again to sea, and mentioned
his coming to Spithead merely as a measure
of dispatch. Lord Sandwich explained to
him many publick & private reasons
why he should not continue here, and
is certain that he left him in the determination
to get to sea without delay, as he promised
him to make a signal this night to all

ld. Sa

3
The Sh
they
sus
with
L^d Sa
you
his
eff
you
with
100
had
ag
the
w
ge
her
is
ne
Th
th

Ld Sandrich

Fortescue 2763

^{3503 (2)}
the ships to give an account of what supplies
they had received, and to send them as
fast as they were ready to S^t Helens
without waiting for the rest.

L^d Sandrich communicated to him the letter
your ^{Majesty} had done him the honour to write to
him, which seemed to have every proper
effect.

Your Majesty will observe that the coming
into Port was absolutely necessary as
some of the ships (particularly those that
had been out with Admiral Derry, & sailed
again soon after his return without reconstituting
their stock) had not above a weeks
water on board; and they had in
general in the fleet been obliged to
have recourse to their ground tier, which
is seldom done but in case of real
necessity.

There never was so healthy a fleet, only
three or four ships sickly, and as Captain

Kemperfelt assured me, these were not
of ~~from~~ any distempers occasioned by
service at sea, but from infection brought
on board by pressed men & people from
Jails that had brought infection with them
the whole number sent sick on shore
is 829, many of the ships have not
sent a single man.

Lord Sandwich questioned Captain Kemperfelt
about the propriety of coming to Spithead
rather than St. Helens, his answer was
that they could get as many things on
board in one day at Spithead as in
five at St. Helens; and that he did not
see that if an enemy was to anchor at
St. Helens that they could not go out in
line of battle from ~~Spithead~~ Spithead to
attack them.

Lord Sandwich proposes to go on board the
Victory again to morrow morning, & will
not leave this place till he sees the fleet
in motion which he hopes & believes may
be on Thursday next, if weather permits.

From the Victory Lord Sandwich went on board the Prince George, where he had an honour that certainly none of his predecessors ever had, of having his boat ordered to be manned when he was going away, by the most amiable & promising midshipman that ever yet was at sea. [^{* Prince William}]

Admiral Digby is rather uneasy at being at Spithead; upon being questioned ^{about} ~~about~~ the good humour among the officers in the fleet, he says it goes on very tolerably, and there is no appearance of disunion that deserves the least attention.

Lord Sandwich has since seen S^r John Popham, Captains Bickerton, Walsingham, Johnstone, Raynor, and many others; and the general voice is that they wish to meet the enemy, and that they are not to be beaten in a fleet so manned, and equipped in every respect.

There is no reason to doubt but that the

Arrogant will be ready to go out of the
harbour the day after to morrow, & to sail
with the fleet; the Blenheim & Bienfaisant
are both arrived here safe.

as to the want of beer no one complains
of it, Sir Charles Hardy says he knows it
is impossible to brew beer that will keep,
in the summer months, & that nine parts
in ten of what we sent out to him was
obliged to be condemned; wine & spirits
will do as well, and they have here in
store enough for 30,000 men for three
months. Sir Charles, for the greater dispatch
proposes only to take out two months instead
of four of provisions & water, which
^{Cutter} is the usual allowance for Channel
service.

Since writing thus for General Monkton is
come in to Lord Sandwich & informs him that
the signals are made on the Isle of Wight
for the appearance of an enemys fleet;
it may possibly be only a false alarm, but

35
L^d Sa
to be
you
im
con
seen
flo
exp
& a
the
for
con
Lord
him
of
Vic
If y
this
Port
obse
he

3504 (2)

L^d Sandwich has sent Sir Richard Bickerton off to Sir Charles Hardy with this account, and your Majesty may depend upon having immediate notice, if anything real is the consequence of this alarm: Sir Thomas Pye seems to think that the fleet is the wolf sloop with her convoy that was hourly expected from Plymouth; and as the Amphitrite & a cutter that were stationed to cruise at the back of the Isle of Wight to look out for the enemy are not come in, it is a confirmation of its being a false alarm.

L^d Sandwich encloses a paper delivered to him by Commissioner Kirk, giving an account of the measures that have been taken for victualling the fleet.

If your Majesty chuses to be troubled with this sort of detail while L^d S. remains at Portsmouth, he will continue to send every observation he makes, and all the intelligence he procures.

Lord Sandwich has received a paper from
L^d Mulgrave which he encloses containing
some ideas about fortifying Torbay and
some other places in the West, but particularly
Torbay, which indeed seems a matter of
much importance, and what L^d Sandwich
some time ago mentioned to L^d Amherst
as deserving his attention.

Lord Mulgrave speaks very highly of Admiral
Darby, & says he is quite adored in the fleet.

56 vol 8