

ld. Sandwich,

Fortescue 2765

3508

Portsmouth Sept: 6th 1779

Lord Sandwich has the honour to inform your Majesty that he attended this morning at the Victualling Office, and hopes he was of some use in quickening their operations, upon which alone the sailing of the fleet depends. Water is almost the only article that can occasion any delay, for they have Wine & Spirits in plenty, and it is very fortunate that (contrary to the language of last year) the fleet in general are indifferent whether they have any beer for this cruise, as they are sensible they cannot have it good at this time of the year.

The arrogant went out of the harbour this afternoon.

There are several Politicians now here

of different connections in order to make their observations & pick up intelligence; the principal of those that have come within L^d Sandrich's notice, are the Duke of Bolton, Mr Sawbridge, Mr Temple Lutterell, & Mr Keene.

It is to be feared that Admiral Graves's appointment may make some uneasiness among the flag officers; L^d Sandrich had a good deal of conversation this morning with Sir Charles Hardy upon this subject, and found him, contrary to expectation, strong in his idea that the fleet should not consist of more than three divisions; L^d Sandrich mentioned his opinion that so large a fleet should be divided into five; and indeed if this measure is not adopted it would be attended with very disagreeable consequences, as Admiral Digby would be left without the command of a division which would undoubtedly make him uneasy and prejudice the service: nothing however

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is yet concluded in this business; & L^d Mulgrave
is to go early to morrow on board the Victory
& to talk the matter closely with both Sir
Charles & Captain Kempenfelt, after which
L^d Sandwich will see them & settle it
finally as well as he can; having it strong
in his determination not to leave Digby
without a division.

The alarm of last night of an enemy's fleet
at the back of the Isle of Wight, which was
repeated again this morning from the same
quarter, proved to be the Wasp sloop with
a convoy of victuallers which came thro'
the Needles this morning to Spithead at about
eleven o'clock.

Lord Sandwich is fearful of fixing any
day for the sailing of the fleet, but his
unwearied endeavours are exerted in every
quarter to hasten their departure; he hopes
to morrow to be able to speak with a little
more precision.

The Lieutenant who commands the Nimble
cutter just arrived from the Downs, has

reported to L^d Sandwich that in his way with
he spoke with a Dutch Indiaman, who told
him that on Thursday last he passed thro'
the combined fleets, making in all 108 sail
who were then off the Lizard, and that
he was boarded by one of Mess^r: O'Neill's
Lieutenants.

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