

4297

Blackheath Sept: 2^d: 1781

Lord Sandwich takes the liberty in answer to the letter with which he was yesterday honoured to suggest to your Majesty that the sending Commissioners of the Navy to Portsmouth and Plymouth would be only taking them out of their business & could answer no purpose whatever; the only ships in question are the *Nonsuch* at Portsmouth, and the *Hercules* & *Dublin* at Plymouth, and as they are out of the shipwrights hands (except possibly a few trifling jobs afloat) their equipment depends entirely upon their Captains and the Admiral of the Port, and it is certain that ^{nothing that} can be done will be omitted on their parts.

Your Majesty knows the state of things at Sheerness, the ships there are under the immediate eye of the Comptroller of the Navy; Lord Sandwich will see him to morrow

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morning, & if he thinks his going down or
sending Mr Hunt will do any good it
shall not be omitted.

all the orders that can be given for watching
the motions of the enemy are already executed
the Minerva & Viper Sloops were sent out
by Lord Shuldham on the first news of the
enemy being near, and he is since directed
to make use of the Cerberus & Zuebe who
with the convoy for Canada are very judiciously
detained at Plymouth) for the same purpose
Admiral Darby has also a large number
of Frigates with him in Torbay which
he will of course not suffer to remain
idle.

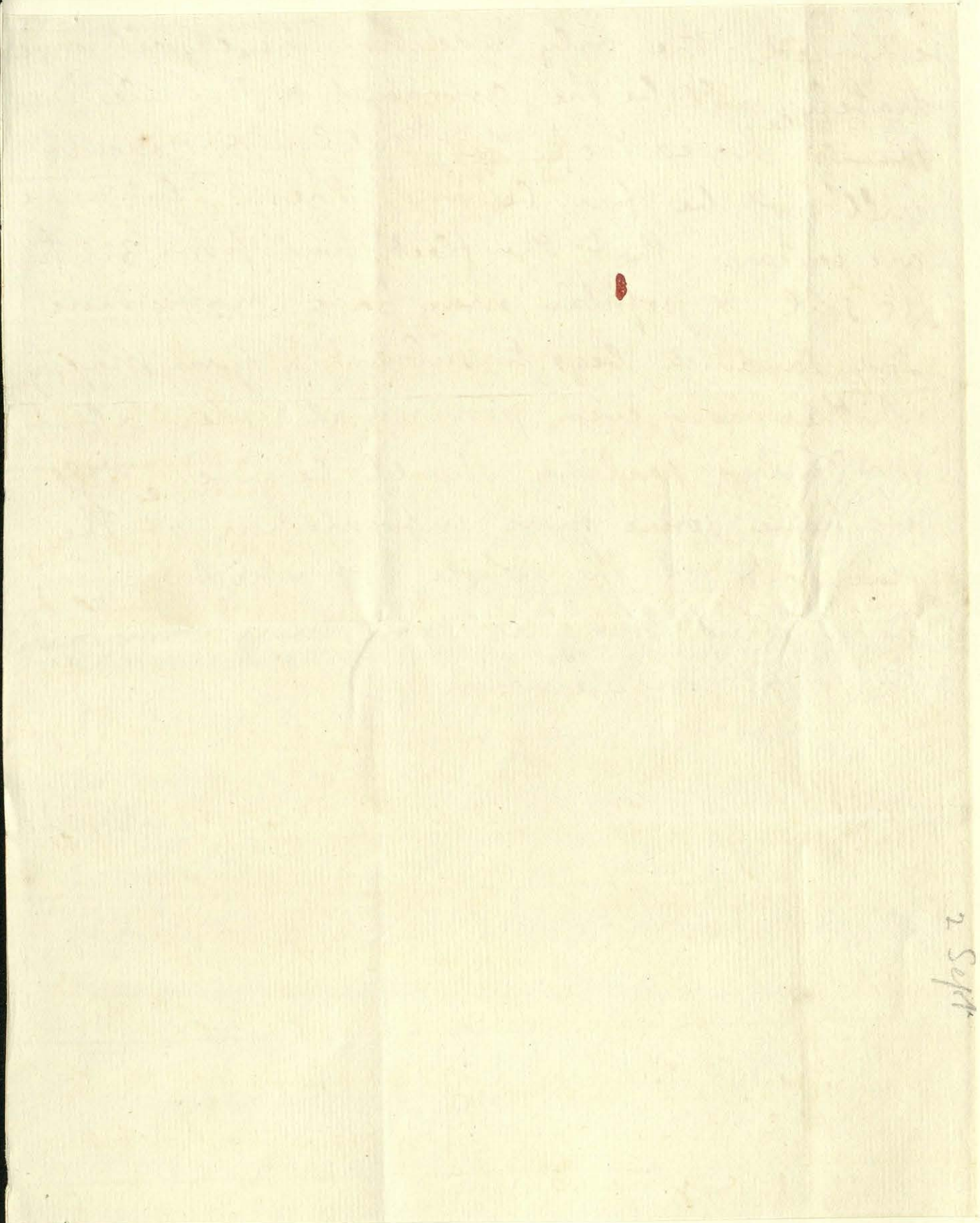
As soon as ever the real strength of the
enemy is known, which must from these
measures appear in a very short time,
your Majesty will be able to decide that
very important question whether Admiral
Darby shall proceed to sea before he is

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Fortescue 3402

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reinforced; the only addition he ^{can} expect immediately will be the arrogant & Hercules, and ~~it is to be~~ ^{it is to be} hoped that the Dublin & Newcastle will not be far behind them, but as we are certain that the fleet had from 32 to 35 sail, & possibly may have many more Lord Sandwich begs to submit to your Majesty whether any, even provisional orders about Mr Darbys sailing, should be given, till we have some more information of the real state of the whole, of which every hour must bring us something very material for our consideration.



2 Sept