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Basseterre off Cape Francois Jan<sup>r</sup> 18<sup>th</sup> 1783

My dear General

I give you many and sincere thanks for your affectionate letter of the 26<sup>th</sup> of June, which was brought me from Barbadoes, a few days ago, with above one hundred others, amongst which was a duplicate of one you had the goodness to write me on the 7<sup>th</sup> of August addressed to New York. From these letters I was somewhat consoled for my ill fortune in not having met with Vandrenil, as I have received but one short letter from any part of my family of a later date, than the end of April.

I do not yet despair of having an opportunity of paying my compliments to the noble Marquis, as I know he had not sailed from Boston on the 15<sup>th</sup> of last month.

I want words my dear General to express how much I think myself obliged, for the very kind and truly salutary advice you had the goodness to give my dear Henry, I thank you again & again, and am very sensible I can never do it sufficiently; you have saved me from ruin; I feel it very forcibly.

Upon my arrival at New York, I was accidentally informed, that I had been put in nomination for Westminister, but that my son had wisely withdrawn my name as a candidate. I instantly wrote him a few lines of the fullest approbation, without knowing at that time, how very much I stood indebted to your friendship, if I had, you would see this have received

my



my most gratefull acknowledgements, which I now beg  
you will be pleased to accept. Poor as I undoubtedly am  
my good friend, I would sooner have given 500 pounds  
than have stood a contest, even had I been sure of  
succeeding, for a tenth part of the money; A seat in the  
House of Commons I have no ambition for, and will never  
offer myself any where; if there is public spirit enough left  
in any corporation in England, to make choice of me, as  
its representative from the free will of the electors, well,  
if not, I shall be full as well satisfied; Behine me my  
Dear General, I shall studiously steer clear as far as I am  
able, of all suspicion of being a party man. For if once  
I shew myself of that frame of mind, whether for, or  
against the minister, and becoming a military servant of  
our royal and most gracious master, I from that moment  
must expect to lose all consideration in the line of my  
profession, which ~~the~~ ever has been, and ever will be, the  
first and greatest object of my wishes. I revere my King,  
I have much affection for my country, and the pride  
and glory of my remaining days, will be to assist both, with  
my feeble services, to the utmost extent of my abilities, and  
I have the vanity to think, that I am in some small degree  
glatified to fight the battles of my King & country, upon my  
own element, but confess myself totally unfit, to fight the  
battles of a minister in either house of parliament; and even  
if I had abilities equal to the task, I think it an employment  
derogatory to the character of a sea officer, whose highest  
ambition, is to stand well, in the good opinion of his Sovereign

and



and fellow subjects in his professional line. These are my sentiments, and I hope & trust I shall have fortitude enough to adhere to them; for had the free & unbiased voice of the people carried my election, against all opposition, and without a shilling expence to myself, it would have destroyed me beyond measure, with such a colleague; besides, the business of so large and populous a place as Westminster would have been more intricate & burthensome, than I could have undertaken, and have loaded me with insupportable vexation and trouble.

I am my dear general in another strong instance very highly indebted to your kind advice; I see the propriety and force of it, and hope I shall prove, that it is not thrown away upon me. But my opinion of the sad finish of the business of April the 12<sup>th</sup>, is well & fully known to every officer in the fleet, and I am confident it is by no means singular, but met by unanimously concurred in. That gallant good officer Cap<sup>t</sup> Cornwallis, can give perhaps a better & more just account of the whole transactions of that day, than any other officer, as his situation enables him to do so. There are two or three persons, of whose friendship & attachment, I have had such proof, that I thought myself bound, confidentially to make them acquainted with my sentiments - but still I see as fully & forcibly as you can wish, the very wholesome and candid advice you have had the goodness to honor me with, and which I trust I shall make a proper of, and very much attend to.

It is with the greatest truth I  
can



can assure you that Prince William is perfectly well and attends Captain Knight very closely for two hours every morning, at the mathematics and drawing, and His Royal Highness takes a pleasure in both. The Cold Bath seems to have been of great service to his shoulder, in which His Royal Highness now feels no kind of complaint.

I am grieved beyond expression to find, that notwithstanding the sacrifice the King has made, by parting with his old and faithfull servants, such cruel distraction still continues, which must infallibly sooner or later work our ruin. We have accounts of peace from various quarters, it is an event, I shall have cause to rejoice at, with respect to myself, as my slender frame is so very much shook, that I have much difficulty to keep upon my legs, and could not possibly hold out beyond the end of the present year in this country; but whether I shall have reason to do for my poor Country, I very much doubt, being clearly of opinion, considering all things, formidable as the combination is against us, we shall I fear never again be in so good a condition, for recovering the nations honor, as at this present moment, nothing is wanting I am very confident to effect it, but unanimity at home, <sup>a regard to whom the Kings fleets & armies, are trusted</sup> and without that, all is over with us, as a great & powerful Kingdom, and it matters not, whether we have peace or war, it comes to one & the same thing, with this difference only, that by peace the evil will be at somewhat a greater



greater distance, but according to my conception, sure & certain; for if it should please god, to prolong my life to another war, some years hence, I shall look to the event of it with fear & trembling, unless by the all powerful interference of the divine providence, we become an united, and rational people. After a very few years peace, we shall have scarce any Lieutenants that will know their duty, at present our situation is bad enough in that respect, it will then be abundantly worse, as we have so many ignorant Boys in that character, which from being any time on shore, will become more ignorant, and probably not so well disposed towards improvement, and the few capable Officers we now have, will then <sup>be</sup> past such active service, as will be required of them.

At midnight on the 11<sup>th</sup> of this month, I was joined by the Acteon, one of Rear Admiral Knowley's ships, which I had taken upon me to station, to the northward of the Caycos Island, to look out for the enemy, whose commander informed me, he had on the 8<sup>th</sup> in the afternoon seen a large fleet, steering for the Caycos passage, which was either french or spanish, and that he counted fifteen very large ships, and afterwards saw a frigate, bear down to two neutral vessels, which he had spoken with in the morning, with french colours hoisted - I immediately examined how the winds had  
blown



blown between the 8<sup>th</sup> & 11<sup>th</sup> and finding the fleet could not fetch Cape Francois, I concluded it would steer for Cape Nicola mole on the Point of Leogane, and bore up for those places; though I was pretty confident in my own mind, and told the Captain of the Acteon so the fleet seen, was the transports from Charles Town, going to Jamaica, but he was so positive, of its being either French or Spanish, and that fifteen ships were of the line, I was under the necessity of attending to the information but neither seeing, or hearing any trace of enemies ships, and after ordering two frigates to reconnoiter Cumberland Harbour on the Island Cuba, as the only place they could take shelter in; I got back to my station to windward of Cape Francois yesterday, and very fortunately nothing had arrived while I was away but an American frigate from Europe

Jan<sup>y</sup> 28<sup>th</sup> off Cape Tiberoon

On the 19<sup>th</sup> instant at night I received certain intelligence that the Marquis de Vaudreuil, was off the harbour of St. Johns Portorico on the 16<sup>th</sup> with ten sail of the line, I immediately did my utmost to get to windward, but both wind and current, were so strong against me, that I could gain but little ground - On the 23<sup>rd</sup> I was informed the enemy was still off St. Johns on the 25<sup>th</sup> - On the 26<sup>th</sup> at three in the morning, when I should have fetched the east end of Hispaniola a large French ship with masts, and 250 soldiers on board

came



came under the stern of my repeater, taking us for the french Squadron; She sailed from Portsmouth in New Hampshire on the 29<sup>th</sup> of last Month, with the Auguste & Pluton, and Amazon frigate, and parted company, with the two Line Battle ships, three days after they came out; on the 22<sup>d</sup> they got off S<sup>t</sup>. Johns, and were informed by a Pilot that came out, that the Marquis de Vandrevil, had bore away to seaward the night before, on being joined by the Auguste & Pluton; and upon the return of the Amazon's Boat from the shore, she bore away also, after ordering the transport into S<sup>t</sup>. Johns, but on her working up to the harbours mouth, a sudden signal carried away her maintopmast, which caused her to bear up for Cape Francois - upon receiving this intelligence. I made all possible sail to the westward, taking it for granted, that Vandrevil had gone through the Mona channel, either with a design of harbouring at Port Louis on the south side or coming round the west end of the Island to Nicola mole, unless he should go to the Havana, to join Don Solano, and come up in great force together to the Cape. And though I was well satisfied, the enemy's Squadron could not have passed me unseen, I looked into Cape Francois & the mole, as I came down.

I have now but a small chance left, for having a meeting with Vandrevil, but in order to enable the King's Squadron under my command, to keep the sea ten or twelve days longer. I waited myself of a few hours calm yesterday to distribute a little water & bread to those ships, which were  
most



most short, some had only bread for two days, and but a few tons of water - we have had no supply of the latter since the 14<sup>th</sup> of Nov<sup>r</sup>. and when we reach Jamaica not a ship will have more than three days of Bread, Pease, Rum or water. But I thank god we are in general tolerably healthy in two or three ships, the scurvy has taken root pretty strong.

On the return of the two frigates from Cumberland harbour (where they saw nothing) they got a certain account, that I was right in my conjectures, for the fleet seen & reported to me, by the Detach<sup>mt</sup>, was the transports from Charles Town, and the protection of three frigates - This will shew you, what sad consequences may arise, from a loose report of a fleet being seen, and not look'd at near enough to be sure & certain, whether it consists of men of war or merchantships. I have ordered a ship to reconnoitre Port Louis, and shall wait here till she returns unless I hear for certain that Vandrenil is gone to the Havana or harboured else where. As the refitting the King's Squadron will employ my whole time at Port Royal, I am preparing my letters, while I have leisure.

It upon Sir Richard Hughes's arrival at Barbadoes from Lord Howe, had not seem'd it necessary to keep the reinforcement to windward, and have come with, or detached it thither. St. Johns in Portorico, as well as Cape Francois, might have been guarded, which must have secured Vandrenil to us; But doubtless Admiral Pigot has good & sufficient reason from his information from home against doing either. The force to windward is 23 of the Line and the Leander of 50 guns, if therefore nothing we

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to be apprehended but from Vanderbil ten sail might have been spared, and a force left equal to him; but it was next to a certainty, that his destination was for the Cape; However the Admiral might have strong and substantial reason for expecting a very formidable force at the windward Islands, either from France or Spain; though I am free to confess my opinion, that let the enemy's force which will come from Europe, be more or less formidable, it will not touch at Martinique but come directly to the Cape - But when an officer in command does that, which human prudence, as well as sound judgement suggests, he ought to submit with all becoming fortitude, there is no guarding against misfortune

Feb<sup>y</sup> 5<sup>th</sup> 1783 Port Royal Jamaica

I am just anchored here, and as many folks are coming on board and I have many things to do, I will close my letter, a packet being about to sail.

I am with most perfect regard & esteem

my dear General

Your most faithful  
& obedient humble servant

Atty

Lord Hood

January 16. 1783



