

Battle of the Isle Navasa April 30th 1782

My Dear General

Private & confidential

On the 25th in the forenoon as I suggested I should do in my last letter which you will receive by the same conveyance this goes, I joined the Commander in Chief at his appointed Rendezvous; we proceeded together till the next day as far as Cape Tiberoon, when he parted for Jamaica, with the following Ships; Formidable Prince George, Duke, Fame, Rupsel, Hercules & Ajax and the Flora frigate, & with the Captured Ships, leaving me to cruise with 26 sail of the Line, including the Warrior, which has not yet joined, but I am sorry to say, she could not catch the Astrée, I sent her in chase of it.

So soon as I hear from Sir George Rodney I am to dispatch the Ceres, England, at least such was his determination when he left me.

How all our frigates are disposed of I cannot guess, not one has been with the Squadron but the repeaters, for a long while, and the Esydie which repeated to Mr. Drake, was sent with the Duplicates

A

of Sir George's dispatches, in consequence of our victory
on the 12th. — and though 26 sail of the Line, require
three repeaters, one for each Division, The Champion
which has all along been my repeater, is the only one
now in the Squadron, and no frigate of any sort besides
I do not feel pleasant on that score, thinking it not only
proper, but highly necessary, the combined Fleet at the
Cape, should be very closely watched, which cannot be
done, but by stout, fast sailing frigates with safety; and I
am not free from apprehensions, that if the Enemy, should
judge an attack upon Jamaica not prudent or practicable
which I think not very unlikely; The French may return
with part of their Ships & Troops, to windward, knowing as
they must, that we have no force there, to resist, whatever
they may attempt; we cannot therefore be too watchfull
in looking forward, and guarding against any feasible
plan. There is another very material object we ought
to have a carefull eye to, that, of the Enemy's proceeding
to America, by putting His Majesty's Squadron in a
condition to follow, as expeditiously as possible; at present
it

it is very far from being so, as no one ship is by any means perfect in her masts & yards, or without wants of various kinds: and I am free to confess, I can see no real use in my keeping the sea, with a Squadron crippled, and so very inferior to that of the enemy; for we have certain accounts, that there were on the 17th of this month at the Cape, thirteen Spanish & five French ships of the line, with eight thousand Spanish Troops, impatiently waiting the arrival of De Grapes's Squadron from Martinique, since which Twenty five French have joined, which make in the whole forty three and I should suppose the latter would carry about 4,000 Troops

Now had the judgement of the Commander in Chief after the enemy was so totally put to flight, bore any kind of proportion, to the high Courage, Zeal, & exertion, so very manifestly shewn by every Captain, officer & man, under his command, in the action; all difficulty would now have been at an end, and we might have done just as we pleased, and instead of being at this hour upon the defensive, a force might have been preparing, to return to the Windward Islands, for the purpose of attacking the enemy's possessions there, and with every prospect of success — Surely there never was an instance before, of a great Fleet, so beaten
and

and flying, and not pursued! So soon as the Ville de Paris
had struck Sir George's faculties, seem to have been benumbed
farther than respected that ship alone; and I am every day
more & more convinced, by the declarations of officers then
on board the formidable, that the Ville de Paris's striking, was
the sole occasion of the fleet's being brought too, and laying
too the whole night. Had it been my lot, to have
commanded His Majesty's fleet on the 12th and seized by
the opportunity of raising the glory of my country, as I am
grieved to say was done; I should have thought my head
would have been justly required, for such glaring, and
shamefull neglect. My feelings are so strong, I must
express myself ^{to you} so, to give vent to the perturbation, and anguish
of my mind; and sooner than undergo a continuance
of what I have so very painfully done, for several weeks
past, I would be content to be placed on a welch
mountain, to gather buttons as they fall from a
Goats Tail. I now hourly expect a ship from Sir George
and will keep my letter unsealed till she comes. Ever
my dear General & most affectionately yours

Saml Aroth