

Colonel Gotham to His Royal Highness Prince William,
17th May 1788.

Sir,

No Occurrence which has happened to me for some time has surprised & astonished me more than the Receipt of Mr Whitehead's Communication of Your Royal Highness's Displeasure, in His Letter of the 11th Instant, which reached my Hands this morning.

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Wishing, as I earnestly must, to wipe away any Impression on Your Royal Highness's Breast of any Inattention to My Duty on My Part, I beg leave to remind You, that I was never honoured, at any time, with any Commands from Your Royal Highness about Your Fitting out, either from Yourself, or Mr Whitehead. - The Paper of Necessaries wanted was put into my Hands by Cap^t Elphinstone, who I think said He had received it from The Duke of York; but no Explanation or Directions accompanied this Paper. - Notwithstanding my Want of Both, I did not hesitate in laying this Account before His Majesty, altho' I judged it could not be such a one as would give His Majesty much Information; as, though the Articles wanted were minutely specified, the Expense was not. - To obviate any Difficulty to the best of my Power, I desired Cap^t Elphinstone's Opinion what the whole Charge might come to. He replied, He thought it could not amount to more than between £300 & £400, at the utmost. - His Majesty receiving this Information from me, was pleased to decide upon the last mentioned Sum of £400 to be employed for this purpose.

It never occurred to me, (nor does it at this instant) that Your Royal Highness could possibly mean to employ me in procuring the things necessary for the fitting out! My total Ignorance of Naval Matters & of a Naval Life would certainly have made me humbly decline the Duty; & I hope my utter Inability would have pleaded my Excuse; & I had every Reason to suppose, that, as Your Royal Highness frequently corresponded Yourself with Cap. Ephinstone, either He or some other proper Agents would receive Your Commands upon the Occasion. —

My Department, I apprehend, must be to issue Money for the Payment of the Bills the fitting out makes due, the Instant I have received it from His Majesty; & some time ago requested Cap. Ephinstone to order all such Bills to be sent in to my Office, where I had Him I would put them into a Course of Payment. It has ever been a Rule with me, in the different Accounts His Majesty has done me the Honour to place under my Care, to keep as little Money as possible Unpaid; & I have the Comfort of being Convinced, that no Tradesman whatever has ever waited a single Day with His Bill unpaid, when I have had the Power to discharge it. —

His Majesty having been Himself pleased to fix upon the Sum He would allot, & being thoroughly apprized of the Business, my Praying for the Money would surely have been an unwarrantable Liberty in me; the rather, when could, at any rate, be no Necessity for these Tradesmen being paid, till the Goods they respectively supplied should be received by Your Royal Highness. —

I have thought it my Duty to say thus much in Exculpation of myself; that if any Delay has happened improperly, it has not happened in my

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Department; & shall only add, I feel myself most severely hurt that Your
Royal Highness should, either from Misinformation or Misapprehension,
think it necessary or proper to send me so harsh & unmerited a Rebuke,
which falls the heavier, as not coming from Your own Hand, but from
that of Your Purser; a Gentleman, to whom (except in Correspondence
of Business) I am an absolute Stranger.

I have the Honour to be, with the utmost respect,

Yr^{ty} Obed^t

No. 2.

Copy of Cardinal Wolsey's
Letter to His Royal Highness
Prince William.

17th May 1588.