

Extract of a Letter from Lieutenant
Geo. Phil. Towry, to the Earl of Shelburne,
dated, N^o 2 Golden Square 14th Dec. 1783.

I shall now my Lord trespass a little
upon your Patience in another Matter. —
That of the Non-importance of Gibraltar.
and in Order to shew your Lordship how
I happen to be qualified to speak of this Matter,
I take leave to say I am a thorough Bred
Seaman, which profession I followed for
20 years in His Majesty's Service. Three
of which I spent in and near the Gut of
Gibraltar. I am my Lord a Man
perfectly independant; If your Lordship
pleases to enquire of Lord Keppel, you will
be satisfied in every particular respecting
me. But now to the Matter in Question.

I consider my Lord that if the
relative

Mr. George Philip Townshend to Mr. Shelburne (Extract)
(See over)

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relative Riches and population of Great Britain and Ireland are equal to France and Spain United, in that case we ought not to part with Gibraltar; Because it gives the World a great Idea of our Power, and will indulge the Vanity of my Countrymen.

On the contrary, if we find we are light in the Balance, and that the House of Bourbon is linked and held together by any Tye that we can loosen and dissolve, then will it be our Interest to part with a Barren Rock, of little or no use to us either in Peace or War, and which I think I can pretty clearly make out.

Taking it however for granted that Spain will be always ready to join France, whenever the latter will promise to endeavor to draw that Thorn from her side; and which by means of impoverishing us, she will in the end most assuredly accomplish.

That the above consideration will
always

always operate on the Councils of Spain, is
obvious enough; and her late Conduct puts
the Matter entirely out of dispute. For
what else could influence her to interfere
in the present War; - the Event of which
most likely will lay the foundation of the
Independence of her own Colonies. Upon
this Supposition I will therefore presume
we may be sure Spain will for ever take
apart with any Power that is Hostile to
For the same Reason that would induce us
under circumstances similar thereto,
(such as Portland being in the hands of
any Foreign Power) to avail ourselves of every
Opportunity to distress an Enemy who
held an unprofitable Spot of our Island
to Our National discredit. — I have
written my Lord many Letters upon this
Subject for three years past, in all of which
I have maintained, that in Peace Gibraltar
is

is of no use to us, and that in War such as we may expect, that it divides our Force & occasions us to leave our valuable Islands unprotected. — That it is of more capence to us then the keeping 6 Ships of the Line more in Commission; and that if we have a naval Superiority we can navigate in the Mediterranean without it; — if we are inferior at Sea, we can not detach a sufficient Force to guard the Gut: to stop it is impracticable; and that in case of a War with France & Spain, and Gibraltar in the hands of the latter, allow us but a Naval Superiority, and we may navigate in the Mediterranean as freely as we did last War. — In such case, my Lord, Jeremy Bay near Cape Spartel is a safe and good place to anchor in for a respectable Fleet, indeed for any Number of Ships that are desirous of stopping till a Levant is over, and are destined for the Mediterranean: — and Setuan Bay is likewise a safe & good anchoring

anchoring for Ships waiting for a Levanter to
carry them into the Atlantic. — as to
Protection, they must carry that with them.
and so they must now, otherwise Gibraltar
can afford none; and we now run many
Risks we should not then do. In relieving it
this Summer we risked our all, the independence
of this Country; — and but for an ill concerted
attack made by the Enemy upon the
Garrison, a violent Storm of Wind that
disabled the Enemy, and an ill-judged
Manoeuvre of theirs to save two of their Ships
that they feared Lord Howe would pursue,
they having been driven out of the Bay in
distress, the Relief of Gibraltar would have
been extremely difficult, and might have
proved of the most ruinous consequence;
for with all the wise & prudent precautions
taken by Lord Howe, his Transports were
separated

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separated from him, missed the Anchoring
Ground at Gibraltar and but by Chance escaped
the Enemy. Add to what I have said, the
encreasing state of our Debts; the necessity
of keeping up a great Naval Force while
France and Spain continue united. The
immense expences we have been at, and must
always be, both in Peace and War to maintain
a Garrison at such a Distance; The prodigious
Number of our Transports with Ordnance
Stores that fall into the Enemy's hands, and
lighten their Expences during a Siege: and
consider how freely all other Nations Trade
in the Mediterranean, and how little is got
by a Trade carried on by means so dispro-
portioned to the Benefits accruing therefrom.
Take this too for granted that France from
its Situation must always have the
Advantage of us in the Turkey and Levant
Trade; and that a Bale of silk bought
now

now by Land through the Emperors Dominions
and coming by Sea from the Continent, altho'
worth £500 is not liable to more than £2
advance in the carriage. — Weigh all these
matters and then determine whether Gibraltar
is worth preserving. All which is Submitted
with the greatest degree of deference.