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Barfleur off the Chesapeak Sept 2d 1781

My dear General

When I joined Sir George Rodney on the 30th of June in Basseterre road St Kitts, I was under orders to proceed with 14 sail of the Line to this coast, after seeing the Jamaica Trade off Cape Tiberoon which was then to proceed on, under the Convoy of the *Sandwich*, *Hydra* & *Ranger*; but Sir George having immediately after I anchored, received intelligence, that five or six sail of the Line of French ships, were arrived at Martinique, he judged it necessary to Lessen my squadron, and to detach Rear Admiral Drake with five ships to St. Lucia.

At noon that day I took leave of the Admiral to collect the ships, I had ordered to compleat their water at old Road, that no time might be lost, in fullfilling my orders, on the arrival of the Jamaica Trade from St. Lucia, which, the *Belliqueux* and *Prince William* were ordered to bring to me, at St Eustatius.

Soon after I sailed from Basseterre the intention of my going off Tiberoon, was laid aside, and the Jamaica ships, put under convoy of the *Torbay*, *Sandwich* *Prince William*, & *Hydra*, & *Ranger*; and on Sir George Rodney's arrival at St. Eustatius the next day, he declared his intention of going for England immediately taking with him the *Gibraltar*, *Triumph*, *Panther* & *Boreas* frigate and made over to me the Command of His Majesty's Fleet on the Leeward Island Station. That same Evening I received the enclosed intelligence No. 1, and early the next morning, Sir George sent me the letter No. 2 from the Senior Captain at St. Lucia, informing him, that the ships arrived at Martinique, were two frigates & two sloops of war with about seventy sail from Marseilles; And it was recommended to me, by the Admiral, to recall the ships, which he had sent to St. Lucia with Rear Admiral Drake, and to wait their joining me, before I proceeded to this Coast. I instantly dispatched the *Sybil* on that service, with orders for their meeting me, at St. Johns Road Antigua, for which placed I sailed the next evening, with ten sail of the Line. In the night I fell in with *La Nymph* frigate, which Sir George Rodney had sent from Basseterre road, to reconnoiter Fort Royal Bay and St. Piers and being informed by her Commander that he had seen four sail of the Line at Fort Royal but that the weather was so very hazey, he could form no opinion of their force; I immediately sent *La Nymph* back, with the Letter No. 3 to Rear Adml Drake. Early the next morning, I spoke with an Armed Brig from New York, with dispatches from Sir Henry Clinton, & Rear Admiral Graves addressed to Sir George Rodney, of which No. 4.5.6.7.8 are copies. I immediately ordered the Armed Brig into Nevis road to compleat her water and then proceed to St John's Road; on the 6th she joined Me, and without wanting an hour, pushed away, on her return to New York, with Answers to the Letters she brought.

Having embarked the 40th Regt. on board His Majesty's Squadron under my command, at the request of Brigadr General Christie, to whom Sir Henry Clinton's Messenger delivered the dispatches he was charged with, for General Vaughan; I put to sea on the 10th at the dawn of day, not caring to wait any longer for the St. Lucia ships, Lest the Enemy should make this coast before me, but as I was running out Mr Drake appeared, with four ships of the Line,

having a certainty, that the enemy had no ships, Larger than a frigate at Fort Royal, and without delaying a moment, I pushed on as fast as possible on the 25th. I made the Land a little to the Southward of Cape Henry, and from thence dispatched a Frigate with the Letter No. 9 to R:A: Graves and finding no Enemy had appeared either in the Chesapeak, or Delaware, I proceeded off Sandy Hook. On the 28th in the morning I received the Letter No. 10, from Mr. Graves, which was couched in terms I did not expect, from what he had written to Sir George Rodney, and being apprehensive much inconvenience might arise, from the Squadron under my Command going within the Hook, and knowing there was not a moment to be lost, in moving with His Majesty's whole Naval force, in order to prevent a junction of the West India ships, with those at Rhode Island if possible; though the *Barfleur* was seven leagues from the place the commanding officers were to meet, I immediately gott into my Boat, and in the afternoon found the General & Admiral together, who were consulting upon an attempt, to destroy the ships at Rhode Island This was an additional Argument, in support of my opinion, against my going within the Bar, as the *Equinox* was so near at hand, and I urged the necessity, which struck me very forcibly that such of Rear Admiral Graves's ships as were ready, should immediately proceed without the Hook, whether to attend Sir Henry Clinton to Rhode Island, or to look for the Enemy at Sea, My Idea was readily acquiesced in; but that same night; intelligence was received, that the Rhode Island ships sailed on the 25th taking all their Transports with them, but without Troops. On the 31st in the evening Mr, Graves came over the Bar, with the *London, Bedford, Royal Oak, America, Europe & Adamant* (the *Robust & Prudent*, being up at New York) I was undersail to receive him and without dropping anchor, he steered to the Southward — But how unfortunate no frigate was stationed to watch the motions of the French Squadron, as I understand it had been laying in a state ready to push to sea, at the shortest notice — and upon the return of the *Concorde* frigate, which carried the Pilots to the Count De Grasse at the Cape, all the ships sailed; Now they must either be destined to make a Junction with the West India Ships, or they are going to Boston; Had a frigate been placed at Gayhead, or Block Island, and have dogged the Squadron at a distance, a few leagues, to the Eastward of Nantucket Shoals, a pretty clear judgement might have been formed, when it is gone to, at present we move totally in the dark. If it is gone to Boston, De Grasse has either Laid aside his intentions of coming to America, or his object is Halifax; one or the other seems pretty certain to my mind, but I confess I cannot think the Enemy bold enough to attempt to attempt Halifax so late in the year.

We have looked into the Delaware without gathering any intelligence of the Enemy and are now going to the Chesapeak; in case an opportunity of a conveyance for New York should suddenly arise, I will close my letter and if any material occurrence should turn up, before anything goes towards New York, I will take up my pen again

Adieu my dear General, and believe me with all truth & attachment

Your most faithfull and obedient humble servant

Saml Hood