

St. June 2

Duplicate
My Dear General.

Bay Carlisle Barbadoes
4 June 1781.

I am exceedingly sorry that Captain Reynolds, Captain Harvey, and Lord Charles Fitzgerald, should claim the Dutch Convoy to themselves, when Capt^{ro} Reynolds spoke of it to me immediately upon his coming in (for he was the man I named to Sir George Rodney, upon his asking me who he should send) I very plainly told him, I thought he was mistaken, for though the letter of the Act of Parliament may be in his favour, yet I imagined a Court of Equity, must give it against him, and I am the more concerned at it, having most earnestly wished, nothing to arise, to break in upon & interrupt, the Harmony & good understanding, which ought ever to subsist between His Majesty's Land & Sea Forces.

The three Captains remain determined not to admit Shares, in the Dutch Convoy, for so Captain Reynolds expressed himself, when he signed the letter I wrote to Sir George Rodney which I sent you in my last.

By Sir George Rodney's bringing Sir Chal: Ogle from North America, and three Brigadier Generals being made by General Vaughan, just before the Capture of St. Eustatius,

My

My share cannot be much, for as I have before observed, the Value of the Capture, will fall very short indeed of what was first talked of! However if my Conduct is fortunately approved of, by our most gracious and Royal Master, I am perfectly satisfied my first and highest Ambition being to acquit myself in my duty, deserving of His Majesty's good opinion.

I very much lament not having the Confidence of Sir George Rodney, for in all my Conduct, I have laboured for it, having invariably held his reputation & Character equally dear with my own, which I shall continue to do, and study by every means in my power, to assist his Endeavours for the Kings Service, as well as his private wishes, and though I am kept at a distance from him, I will always contrive to throw in my Sentiments, in such a manner, as he shall not know, they are mine; I love the Man from his attention to me, in my Youth, and was he but steady, and would not Act from Starts and flights, he would be one of the first Sea Officers of the Age, as such I look up to him, and admire him in many points.

I open myself to you with great Freedom, and trouble you with a detail of

things

Sun June 2

things as they happen from time to time and you may rely upon it Truth alone guides my pen.

My last letter was written on the 26th Ult. That Night a little Vessel arriv'd from Tobago, with an Account, that nine Sail of the Enemy's Ships, were approaching to make an attack upon the Island, which by a Note I got from Captain Affleck (Sir George Rodney's first Captain) seemed to be treated very lightly upon which I went on board the Sandwich and Sir George being on shore, told Captain Affleck, that it appear'd to me from examining the Master of the Vessel & his Log Book, to be a very serious business.

I afterwards found the Monarch and Belliqueux, with two Frigates were order'd to Tobago, I thought the force inadequate to the Service, and that it was subjecting His Majesty's Ships to be disabled in the Detail. Luckily before they sail'd, the Cyclops Frigate & Drake Sloop arriv'd, which had been sent, while we were between Antigua & Guadaloup, to this Island to prepare Provisions &c. against

against our arrival, but had been driven by the Current to seaward and did not come in till the 28th in the evening, they had stretched to the Southward in sight of Tobago, and Captain Robinson of the Cyclops, said, he saw nine Sail of the Enemy's Ships near the Island, and that three he was sure were of two Decks; before daylight in morning accounts were brought from St. Lucia that 20 Sail of the Line & three frigates were Cruizing between that Island & Martinique which Captain Affleck sent me word of, that a detachment was to go to Tobago, and the rest with Sir George Rodney to St. Lucia; This alarmed me most exceedingly, as I saw great danger in dividing the Squadron; and as I knew Sir George Rodney slept at the Governors, and that General Vaughan was there also, I sent a Note at daylight to General Cunningham to the following purpose.

" That I rejoiced very much we had some
" account of the Enemy's Fleet, which I supposed
" would induce Sir George Rodney to keep all his
" Ships together, that I could not help thinking

" that

" that De Grasse's appearing off St. Lucia was to
" draw Sir George's attention that way, without
" meaning to fight him, while the Ships to
" windward did their business without + + +
" interruption, and if they took Tobago, would
" probably visit Barbadoes, where little or no
" defence could be made; That as St. Lucia
" had now nothing to fear from a second attack,
" I concluded Sir George would clear the way as
" he went, and not leave an Enemy at his
" back; it therefore struck me very forcibly,
" that the whole of His Majesty's Ships in this
" Country should be kept together.

Two reasons operated very strongly in
my mind for this measure. The One, that if
the Enemy had made an attack upon, or were
hovering about the Island, every Ship must
undoubtedly be taken, by one Division
going to windward, another to Leeward and
the third to steer for the Center of the Island,
and if De Grasse should find his Bait had
not taken, by drawing Sir George Rodney towards
St. Lucia he would certainly think it an
object, to go for the protection of the Ships

with

with Troops, he had detached to Tobago; in that case Sir George Rodney would be prepared to give him a proper reception.

My other reason was that if he mett no Enemy at Tobago, and all was safe, we should most probably be able to fetch St Lucia in force, when we could not return to this Island. But when Sir George Rodney went on board, he ordered Six Sail of the Line, three frigates and three smaller Vessels to go to Tobago, under the Command of Rear Admiral Drake, and they sailed that evening the 26th, since which nothing has been heard from him; and as information has been received, that DeGrasse with his whole Fleet, was stretching to the Southeast with all the Sail he could sett, it is to be apprehended he is gone to Tobago. and our fears are alive upon that account, as Mr. Drake may get very disagreeably entangled.

When a Squadron divides in this Country, a junction of it becomes very precarious, at any given place and time, from the Strength and uncertainty of the currents, for very often, on one side of an Island it sets to the Windward, and on the other to Leeward

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and the direct contrary ways perhaps in a few days after. I am told Sir George is puzzled whether it is best to go towards Tobago, or to wait here till Mr. Drake comes back; The latter I judge most eligible, for the reasons I have stated from the uncertainty of making a junction at sea, amongst these Islands.

I am all impatience for Mr. Drake's return for when Sir George has all his Ships together I have no fear about the issue, from our meeting the Enemy. Believe me my Dear Sir the present moment is a very serious one, at least it appears so to me and will continue to be so, till I see Mr. Drake & his Squadron back, God grant, I may have that pleasure soon!

As in a former letter I made mention of Curacao, I cannot help giving you an anecdote of General Vaughan. Upon my going on board the Sandwich, when we anchored in St. Eustatius Road, The General took me aside and pressed me very strongly to speak to Sir George Rodney about going to Curacao, I replied I did not know how far his

Instructions

Instructions went, but would sound him upon the Subject, accordingly did it, and was lisened to with attention, and the next day Sir George asked me if I wished to go to Curraoe, I answered most readily, well says he, you shall have five Sail of the Line & some frigates, I replied, the force was in my opinion full sufficient, and I trusted I should be able to make a good report to him.

I immediately wrote a Note to General Vaughan to say I had succeeded with Sir George respecting Curraoe, desired he would gett what information of the Island, and use his best endeavours, by means of the people on shore to look out for Pilots. I received no answer from him, but when I next saw him, I repeated the substance of my Note, to which he answered ~~he answered~~ he had no Men,

This is very surprizing General said, I for when you urged me so pressingly to speak to Sir George upon this Subject, you did not know, but you might have mett with resistance here, and have had your force diminished, but now you have gott possession, without the loss of a Man, you fly from your proposition

which

which is what I could not have expected from General Vaughan; he made no reply, but turned and addressed himself to some one else. The Truth is I am afraid he could not bear the thoughts of leaving St. Eustatius, where there were as he thought so much riches, and I dare say he would have been at this hour, had not the arrival of the force under Delgrasse obliged him to decamp. A pretty large sum was levied upon the Inhabitants, and some of the Captains asked the Commissary General what the sum really was, he answered he could not say exactly, but something more than £100,000, and yet, there is now I am told no more than £20,000. brought to account.

The Sires of St. Eustatius were so bewitching as not to be withstood by flesh and blood. (as Lord Chive said in the House of Commons) but tempting as they were I am abundantly more happy in being at a distance, and it would doubtless have been fortunate

had

had Sir George Rodney been with his
fleet, as I am confident, he would not have
been so seaward of Martinique.

God bless you my Dear General & good Night
for it is now bed time.

Ever & Affectionately Yours.

J. Wm. Rodney

June 2. At Noon.

Mr Drake this Shipsto Leeward, a Cutter just
arrived - Delgrasse's with all his force off
Tobago. on the 31st of May. in much hurry
going to seek the Enemy - I leave this at
Barbados to be sent by the Paquet.

Ever Yours.

JH