

My dear Sir

Battle Castle Bay Barbadoes

June 26th 1781

I have been a long while in anxious expectation
of some vessel going to England, by which I should
be able to give my friends an account of my
skirmish with the French fleet under Count
Delyppe, for as yet, I have not had it in
my power to send a single line. The many
instances of your friendship & esteem I have
been honored with, lead me to flatter myself
that you will forgive my vanity in sending
you an extract from a letter, I lately received
from S^t Lucia - Indeed my dear Sir, I am not
a little proud of my conduct on the 29th & 30th of
last April, whatever may be thought of it
in

in England; but I leave you to guess the thoughts
of two great men at S.^t Eustatius, upon their
hearing of my having met the enemy in
force, when I tell you, that upon the Captain
of the Intrepid, going on board the Sandwich
General Vaughan cried out, why did Sir Samuel
Burd fight the french fleet so superior to him!
and immediately after Sir George Rodney
exclaimed with uplifted hands, what is said
of english men of war, run away from 23 french!
which he at the same time knew was not the
case, and that I courted the enemy to battle
a night & a day with 17 sail, and, till I found
myself reduced to 15, and two of those very much
injured in their masts. Sir George in his flight
of passion, wrote letters to this Island, respecting

my

my action, that will be a lasting reproach to him
I have seen those letters, yet I have been totally
silent, upon the subject of them, being determined
that nothing with the least degree of Truth & justice
shall be laid at my door, against the King's
Service being carried on, with the utmost appearance
of harmony. A few hours after the Intrepid
joined the Admiral, Captain Smith in the
Centaur did the same, and presented the minutes
he took in action being one of the repeaters.
upon which before several Captains Sir George
said, D—n your R M's & O M's go & write your
sentiments of the conduct of the Squadron
like a man - How unhandsome this! and
how unkind to forbid under pain of his
highest Displeasure, Capt. Smith & the Captain
that

that carried him home, from taking a single
line from any one! so that all my letters & my
friends and even to my wife, are still in my
possession ready for the first conveyance, by
which you will I am very sure be tired in
having so much to read from me at one time
but I have much satisfaction in giving you
a faithfull narrative of all that passes here
if you think me too troublesome, may tell
me so, and I will desist in future

Sir George is now more humble than you can
conceive, and has condescended to speak to me
upon some trifling points lately - he has had
my sentiments, with frankness & candour. His
Captain apologized to me, on the part of Sir
George, for leaving me so very uncivilly on
board

board the Sandwich, when I beg'd an explanation
of the distribution paper, he put into my hands
to communicate to the captains, and he began
to do the same himself, the first time I waited
upon him afterwards, but I immediately stoped
him, by saying, if he was convinced of any
impropriety of behaviour towards me, I was
perfectly satisfied, and desired he would not
say a word more; he then expressed himself
highly pleased at the many handsome things
which came from the mouth of every one, respecting
my conduct in, and after the action with the
French fleet, said I had behaved nobly, and
that my letter to him did me great honor,
I thought this a proper opportunity of speaking to
him, upon what he said to capt^m Smith, and
repeated

repeated his own words, as before related, and said, my mind was quite at ease, from a consciousness of having done my duty well; and that nothing gave me the least concern, but his asking the opinion of so young, and so inexperienced an officer as Captain Smith was, upon my conduct, after I had given him so particular, so candid, & so minute a detail of every circumstance he strongly denied his asking more, than the situation of the two Squadrons, which surely was very unnecessary, as my letter most fully and clearly explained it - But there is no truth in the man; - and as I wanted only, to let him see, that I felt his behaviour to me, I said not a word more, particularly, as I plainly observed, he was much dissatisfied with himself.

I will not presume to say he should have fought
the Enemy off Tobago, and dare say he has
strong & substantial reasons to give for not
doing it - But then my dear General, it would
have been better not to have vaunted so much,
The Actions, and public Declarations of men
should certainly correspond, at least I am
strongly of that way of thinking - If he had
intended to have given the Enemy battle - -
agreeably to what he told every one, he could
never expect to have done it, to more
advantage, where he went to seek them
than he certainly might have done; and had
he fortunately gone with all his force, so soon
as the Intelligence came that Tobago was
attacked, at half past 11 at night on the 26th past
he

he must have given a severe blow to, and
very much humbled, the French Flag, as the nine
Ships & Troops, by which the Island was attacked
must have fallen into our hands, two days
before De Grape made his appearance with 21
sail, and even admitting Sir George had not
seen a fair opportunity of attacking him; still
the French flag must have been disgraced; as
they could have done nothing, with all their
mighty force - and now they may almost do
as they please - I fear the loss of Tobago will be
severely felt at home - which is not to be recovered
I am with every sentiment of regard & esteem

My dear General

Your ever faithful and
obedient humble servant

Saml. Axtell

The very fortunate arrival of the Thetis, Santa Monica
 & Sybil off St. Lucia in quest of me (having heard
 of my action) most undoubtedly saved the Island
 The Thetis was lost in going into the Casenase
 by the over easiness & zeal of the pilot, to get the
 ship in as soon as possible, and to a flaw of
 wind off the high land, as a large body of troops
 were then landed, and the Island invested by
 the rest of the Line - This will be taken to England
 by the late Commander of the Thetis (Lady Wood's Brother)
 whose friends had pressed him to come home
 on account of his private affairs, which obliged
 him to decline Sir George Rodney's polite offer
 to me, of a ship of the Line for him.