

Barbours Bay, Barbadoes Road 1st Rills Feb^r 6th 1781

My dear General

1782

My last letter from Antigua, which will probably have the same conveyance with this, would fully inform you of my situation, and that of the Enemy. The views of Count DeGrasse were most certainly against Barbadoes could he have got to windward, but failing of that, owing to strong easterly winds and a lee current, he bent his course to this Island. The moment his design was clearly known to me, I quitted Carlisle Bay, and got off English Harbour, with all the dispatch in my power, where I could only hear, that a very formidable attack was made on this Island, without any certain information, either of the Land or sea force of the Enemy. The Squadron under my command having then but 14 days bread on board, and having made an equal distribution, and been at half allowance for several weeks, I anchored in 1st John's road, to get what flour I could, as a succedaneum for Bread; I sailed on the 23^d in the evening with 22 Ships of the

Line

Line, and was close in with the south east end of nevis
the next morning at daylight, when I formed the
Squadron in order of battle, with a design of attacking
the Enemy at anchor, if I saw it practicable to advantage
but I had no sooner thrown out the signal for the line
a head, than Rear Admiral Drake made that for speaking
with me, and brought too, I did the same, and soon learnt
that he only repeated the signal of the Alfred in the rear
and that, that ship, had run on board the Nymphe and
almost cut her in two: It was reported to me, each had
received so much damage, as to be unable to keep the sea,
but as I could ill spare a ship of the line, I immediately
ordered a survey on both, and was happy to find the
Alfred, could be put in a state for present service in
the course of the day & following night; but that the Nymphe
could not; I therefore shifted the troops she had on board
to another frigate, and ordered her to English harbour
where she arrived safe. That morning the look out
Frigate a head, fell in with & took, a large Kings cutter
of 16 six pounders, but seven months old, & commanded

by

by a R. of Malta. She came from Martinique the day before
and was full of shells, & other ordnance stores - In the
afternoon DeGrave quitted this road, and kept about 4
miles to leeward all night; at daylight we plainly
discerned 33 sail, 27 of which of the line, with the
experiment & Sagittaire of 50 guns - I made every
appearance of attacking, which drew the Count DeGrave
a little from the land, and as I thought I had a very
fair prospect of gaining the anchorage he left, and
well knowing it was the only chance for saving
the Islands, if it was to be saved; I pushed for it,
and succeeded, by having my rear & part of my
center only engaged; and had all the ships in the
rear, have paid strict attention to my signals for
making sail & closing the center, which were repeated &
enforced by Commodore Affleck, the enemy could not
have fired the 10th part of the shot they did; but the
Bedford, to which ship a preference was probably
given on account of the Broad Pendant, had only
one

one man killed & seven wounded, and but little hurt
in her masts & yards; her two seconds the Resolution
& Canada. by which the Commodore was well supported
did not suffer much more. I anchored the Squadron
in a line soon after sun set, but the Bedford driving
off the Bank, I ordered into the Van. Next morning
I was attacked from Van to rear, by the Enemy's whole
force, for two hours, with having the least visible
impression made upon my line; in the afternoon
a second attack was made, upon my center and
rear, with no better success than before - since
which the Count de Grape has kept out of Gun shot
many of the French Ships must have suffered very
considerably, and the Ville De Paris was upon the heel
all the next day plastering her shot holes - The loss in
His Majesty's Ships is a few more than 300 in killed
& wounded; and I have been informed from the shore

that

that the French Ships have sent to St. Eustatius above
1,000 - I think my situation perfectly secure here
against the enemy's present force superior as it is,
and by a letter I have received from Governor Shirley
I am happy to find the garrison of Brimstone hill
where his excellency retired to, is in the most perfect
security - I have not a thought of moving, and
think the Count de Grape will not venture to attack
me again, unless he should attempt something by
fire vessels, which I am prepared against as much
as possible - if therefore Brimstone hill can hold
out, the Marquis de Bouillie (who landed 8,000
men upon the Island) as well as De Grape will I
think be glad to retire - when I sent an officer
on Brimstone hill, he was accompanied by one
from General Prescott (who embarked with the 28th
Reg^t, and two companies of the 13th from Antigua)
who

who brought the following message from that brave
old soldier General Fraser: "That as he had come
with Troops to his assistance, he should doubtless be
glad of the honor of seeing him, but that he was in
no want of him or his Troops. Upon my being
made acquainted with this spirited message to Genl.
Prescott, I proposed his taking a Post on shore in
the vicinity of Papeterre, and offered to land two
Battalions of Marines of 700 each, rank & file,
with the 69th Reg^t. which with the 28th Reg^t. and the
two companies of the 13th. would make a body of
2,400 men; his answer was, he did not think it
practicable to maintain a Post, but was sanguine
in his wishes to be put on shore, with his antique
Troops & the 69th Reg^t. - They were accordingly landed on
the 28th. immediately got into action, & drove the
Enemy with considerable loss - he remained on shore

all

all night, and next morning the Marquis De Bouillie
appeared at the head of about 4,000 men, but not
caring to attack General Prescott, on a hill he possessed
just to the eastward of frigate Bay, where he landed
led his troops back to his entrenchment under
Primstone hill - and as it then appeared to me
that no solid purpose could be answered by a
continuance of the troops on shore; I submitted
it to general's consideration, whether it would not
be advisable to reembark, and he readily
concurring in that opinion, all were taken off
that evening, without the loss of a man. - The
General had about 40 killed & wounded in his
skirmish with the Irish Brigade - General Keene
landed with the 69th Reg^t and had his full share
of putting the enemy to the rout - all communication
being now cut off with Primstone hill; and it being

General

general Prescotts opinion, no Post could be taken
& held on Nevis, which I proposed to his consideration
I thought it expedient, in which the General agreed,
to send him, and the Antigua Troops back, as that Island
was striped & defenceless - and they sailed in the Convent
and Fortune the 5th Instant - The Teriphone joined me
on that day, and I immediately dispatched a Sloop to
Jamaica, with the Duplicates, Cap^t. Saumarez brought,
and I propose the Teriphone shall return to England
soon, with an account of the situation of things here.
It is impossible for me, to move hence at present, as
it is for me to entertain an Idea of going to windward
as Antigua would in that case, become an easy prey
to the enemy. Besides, the Kings Squadron is without
bread, and though we make a tollerable shift with
Flower at anchor, we should not do so well at Sea
I have been endeavouring to get a quantity of Yams
from Antigua & Anguilla, and have a prospect of
succeeding. What a glorious business it would have
been

been, had Mr. M. Kempenfelt, been directed under particular circumstances of falling in with the French Armament, and even under the exact circumstance he did, to have proceeded immediately to Barbadoes with the greatest part of his Squadron! he would probably have been with me as soon as the Tesephone; and had it so been, we should soon have routed De Grasse, who is now in full view with 30 two decked ships & six frigates - but it avails nothing to look back - Surely Sir George Rodney will soon be here! I have impatiently expected him since the 10th of last month, as I had every reason to expect he would leave England by the end of November - I sailed on the 29th of Nov^r. and arrived at Barbadoes the 7th of Jan^y. One day the enemy's force consists of 32 ships of two the whole at present in this country, and another only

only 29. so that I imagine two or three are
constantly watering at old road.

If the Armament from Brest joins, before Sir
George Rodney makes his appearance, what
is to be become of me! But I will do my best for
our Royal & most gracious Masters Service

Ever my dear General

Your most affectionate
& faithful

Wm. Amey

Duplicate

Barfleur, Basseterre Road S. Christophers
7th February 1782

Sir,

My last letter which I put on shore at Antigua on the 22^d of last Month, and will probably accompany this, will fully explain my situation and that of the Enemy to that date.

The design of the Count de Grasse was most undoubtedly against Barbadoes, could he have got to Windward, but failing of that owing to strong Easterly Winds, and a Lee Current he bent his course to this Island — the moment his views were made known to me, I quitted Castile Bay and got off English Harbour with all the haste in my power, where I could only hear of a formidable attack being made upon S. Christophers, without any certain information, either of the Enemy's Sea or Land force.

The Squadron having then but fourteen days bread, I anchored in S. Johns Road to get what Flour I could, as a succedaneum for Bread; and the Prudent having joined me, I sailed
on

on the 23^d in the Evening with twenty
two Sail of the Line, and was close off
the South end of Mevis at daylight next
Morning, when I directed the Squadron
to be formed in Order of battle, with a
design of attacking the Enemy at Anchor,
if I saw it practicable to any advantage,
but the Signal for the Line ahead was
no sooner thrown out, than Rear Admiral
Drake made that for speaking with me,
and brought too, I did the same, and
soon learnt he only repeated the Signal
of the Alfred in the Rear, and that that
Ship had run on board the Nymphe
and almost cut her asunder.

It was reported to me, each had
received so much damage, as to be unable
to keep the Sea, I immediately ordered
a Survey on both, and was happy to find
the Alfred could be put in a State for
present service in the course of the day
and following night, but the Nymphe
could not, I therefore shifted the Troops
she had on board to another Frigate
and ordered her to English harbour,
where she arrived safe.

Thus

This misfortune to the Alfred obliged me
to remove her from being the leading Ship
into the Center of my Line, and to place
the S^t. Albans in her room - That
Morning the lost out frigate ahead fell
in with, and took a very large King
Cutter of Sixteen Sea Pounds, but Seven
Months Old, and commanded by a
Knight of Malta, She is named L'Espion,
She sailed from Martinique about thirty
hours before, and was full of Shells and
other Ordnance Stores.

In the Afternoon the Count de
Grasse quitted the Road, and kept a
few Miles to Leeward of me, the whole
Night. At daylight we plainly discerned
thirty three Sail of the Enemy's Ships,
twenty nine of which of two decks
formed in a Line ahead, I made
every appearance of an attack which
drew the Count de Grasse a little from
the Shore, and as I thought I had
a fair prospect of gaining the Anchorage
he left, and well knowing it was
the

The only means I had of saving the Island if it was to be saved; I pushed for it, and succeeded by having my Rear and part of the Centre engaged

The Enemy gave a preference to Commodore Affleck, but he kept up so noble a fire, and was so supported by his Seconds Captain Cornwallis and Lord Robert Manners, that the damages sustained in those Ships were very trifling, and they very much preserved the other Ships in the Rear, the Prudent had the misfortune to have her Wheel shot to pieces the first broadside, which occasioned her loss to exceed that of any other Ship

Would the event of a battle have determined the fate of the Island, I would without hesitation have attacked the Enemy, from my knowledge how much was to be expected from an English Squadron commanded by Men, amongst whom is no other consideration, than who should be most forward in rendering Service to his King & Country Herein I placed the utmost confidence and fully trust I should not have been

Disappointed

disappointed,

I anchored His Majesty's Squadron in a close line ahead, but Commodore Affleck having acquainted me that the Bedford had droov from off the Bank I ordered her into the Van. Next Morning about Eight of Clock I was attacked from Van to Rear with the whole force of the Enemy (29 Sails) for nearly two hours, without having the least visible impression made upon my line. The French Ships then wore and stood off again, and in the Afternoon began a Second Attack upon my Center and Rear with no better success than before — since which the Count de Grasse has kept at a safe distance. Many of the French Ships must have suffered very considerably, and the Ville de Paris was upon the heel all the next day covering her Shot holes, and by information from the Shore the French Ships have sent to S^t. Eustatius upward of 1,000 Wounded Men.

O F

I think my situation perfectly
secure here against the Enemy's present
force, superior as it is, and I am happy
to find by a letter from Gov^r Shirley
that Primstone Hill, to which his
Excellency retired is in the most
perfect security.

I have not a thought of moving,
and think the Count de Grasse will
not venture to attack me again, unless
he should attempt something by fire
Vessels, which I am prepared against
as much as possible

If therefore Primstone Hill
can hold out which I have no doubt
of, the Marquis de Bouilli (who landed
with 8,000 Men upon the Island) as
well as the Count de Grasse will I think
be glad to retire.

When I sent an Officer to
Primstone Hill he was accompanied
by one from General Prescott who
embarked with the 28th Reg^t and
two Companies of the 13th from Antigua

at

at my request, knowing well (Pern Stone
Hill and every part of the Island)
who brought the following message from
that brave Old Soldier General Fraser
" That as he had taken the trouble to
" come with Troops to his assistance, he
" should doubtless be glad of the honor
" of seeing him, but that he was in no
" want of him or his Troops " Upon
my being made acquainted with this
spirited message from General Fraser
I proposed to General Prescott his
taking a Post on shore in the vicinity
of Papsseterre, and offered to land two
Battalions of Marines of 700 each rank
and file, with the 69th Reg^t. which with
the 28th Reg^t. and the two Companies
of the 15th would make a body of 2,400
Men, his answer was he did not
think it practicable to maintain a
Post but was sanguine in his wishes
to be put on shore with his Antigua
Troops and the 69th Reg^t. they
were accordingly landed on the 28th
immediately

immediately got into Cuthon, and drove
the Enemy with considerable loss, he
remained on shore all night, and
next morning the Marquis de Bouille
appeared at the head of upwards of
2,000 Men, but not caring to attack
General Proust on a hill he possessed
just to the Eastward of Fingate Bay,
(where he landed) led his Troops back
to his Encampment under Penn Stone
Hill, and as it then appeared to me
that no solid purpose could be answered
by the continuance of our Troops on
shore, I submitted it to the General's
consideration whether it would not be
adviseable to reembark, and he
readily concurring all were taken
off that Evening without the loss of a
Man, the General had about forty
killed and Wounded in his skirmish
with the Irish Congade

General Skene landed with
the 89th Reg^t and had his full share
in putting the Enemy to the rout

All communication being now cut off
with Primstone Hill, and it being
General Poves's Opinion no Post
could be taken and held on Nevis,
(which I submitted to the General's
consideration) I thought it expedient,
as did the General also, to send him
and his Antigua Troops back, as that
Island was entirely stripped and
defenceless, and they sailed in the
Conest and Gallunee on the 1st Inst.

On that day the *Tisiphone*
joined me, and I immediately dispatched
a Sloop to Jamaica, with the Duplicate
Captain Saumarez brought from
Rear Admiral Kempenfelt, as I
propose the *Tisiphone* shall return
with an Account of the State of Things
here, which I think of importance
their Lordships should know

W

It is impossible for me to think
of moving hence at present, with an
idea of going to Windward of the
Islands, with De Grapes Fleet now
consisting of thirty two deck Ships,
constantly in sight, not that there would
be any difficulty in doing it, but
Antigua would in that case become
an easy prey.

I am sorry to say the King's
Squadron has but a very few days
bread, and though we make a tolerable
shift with Flour at Antigua, we should
not be able to do so well at Sea.

I am endeavouring to procure
some Yams from Antigua and Angoula
and have a prospect of succeeding.

Surely Sir George Rodney
will be soon here, I have impatiently
and daily expected him since the
middle of last Month. Herewith
I send the Copy of a letter I left at

at Barbados for him, also Copies of
Letters between General Prescott and me
My List of Casualties and an Account
of the killed and Wounded

I have much pleasure in telling
You His Majesty's Ships under my
Command, are very immaterially
Injured in their Masts and Yards
perfectly healthy, and the people in
the highest Spirits