

Basseterre, at Sea. 22<sup>d</sup> February 1782.

If the Dispatch arrives safe you will be informed of my situation to the 8<sup>th</sup> Instant.

From the very strong assurances Governor Shirley gave me of Brimstone Hill being in the most perfect state of security, and from the very spirited and encouraging Message sent by General Frazer to General Prescott on the 24<sup>th</sup> of last month, I had not the least doubt of relieving the Island after I got the Enemy's anchorage in the Road of Basseterre.

And as the Governor had expressed a wish for an able Sea Officer and a few Seamen; I sent Captain Curgeon and Lieutenant Hare (late of the Solebay) who were eager Volunteers for the service, with thirty men in two Boats to endeavour to throw themselves into Brimstone Hill in the Night. The Oars were muffled and every precaution taken that not the least noise should be made to give an alarm, but upon putting the Stems of the Boats towards the Shore, Volley after Volley of Musquetry was fired at them and they were obliged to return. Two Nights after, the Man I first sent upon the Hill, and who Captain Curgeon took with him, thought he could make his way alone to the Garrison; he made the Trial in a small Canoe but was forced to return being fired at from every place he attempted to land.

At the same time Lieutenant Faylie of the Rufel landed at Red Flag Bay, on the North side of the Island, his Father is Surgeon of the Admiralty, had retired to the Hill, and whose Estate lay at the foot of it on that side; Lieutenant Faylie knowing every accessible path to the Hill, was very sanguine in his hopes of being able to reach the Garrison, but after waiting two Nights, found it impossible, and came back.

Upon the Signals being made from the Hill, on the 8<sup>th</sup>, that the Enemy's Batteries had been successful in damaging the Works and Buildings that the Garrison was reduced and short of Ordnance Stores, I was eager to make further Trials to get an Officer upon the Hill, and Capt<sup>m</sup> Curgeon again offering his service, as well as Captain Bourne of the Marines, I sent them.

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them away that Evening, in a very small Boat-towed by a Barge near to the place they intended to Land. They got onshore at midnight, and after being landed about ten minutes, Captain Curyewen came back and ordered the Boats aboard, but neither was successfull in reaching the Garrison, and both were made prisoners at different places.

About the hour Captain Curyewen left the Barge, Lieu<sup>t</sup>. Fayzie was again landed on the North side of the Island being desirous of making another Trial from his Fathers Estate. and as he is not yet returned and I have heard nothing of him, conclude he was taken prisoner also.

I was sanguine for getting an Officer into the Hill, just to say that I was confident the Count de Grasse was tired of his situation, and as the Marquis de Bouille was destroying every Fort and Magazine at Basseterre, and had blown their very foundations up, I was persuaded he despaired of success, and that if the Garrison could hold out ten days longer the Island must be saved.

I am however extremely concerned to say that on the 13<sup>th</sup> in the Evening Captain Robinson of the 16<sup>th</sup> Regiment came aboard the Barge, to enquire for General Prescott, being charged with a Letter for him from Governor Shirley and General Frazer, acquainting him of their having surrendered the Garrison that morning to the arms of the French King.

The information I got from Captain Robinson is as follows. That he was sent to Mons<sup>rs</sup>. J. Simon at seven in the Evening of the 12<sup>th</sup> to propose a cessation of arms - at the same hour another Officer was sent to the Marquis de Bouille on the same errand; and so eager was the Marquis to get possession of the Hill that he granted all that was asked, and the Terms were agreed to at his (Captain Robinson's) return to the Garrison at midnight.

I enquired if any article was stipulated for my being made acquainted with the state of the Garrison before the surrender took place, and to my very great astonishment was answered in the negative.

On the 14<sup>th</sup> the Enemy's Fleet anchored off Nevis, consisting of the Ville de Paris, six Ships of eighty Guns, twenty three of seventy four, and four of sixty four - one sixty four was at Sea Road and another at Sandy Point. The Triumphant and Brave joined the 6<sup>th</sup> from Europe.

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Under this situation of things I had no longer any Business in Basseterre Road, especially as the Enemy were preparing to get Cannon and mortars upon the Hill that would annoy the Ships in the Van, and I left it, that Night, unperceived I imagine as not a French Ship was to be seen in the Morning.

With such a great superiority against me, I had nothing left to do but to endeavour to join Sir George Rodney as expeditiously as I was able, and as it was of very great importance to the Kings service that I should carry his Majesty's Squadron to him in as perfect a State as I could, I judged it necessary in order that every Ship should be under sail as nearly as possible at the same moment, for the better preserving a compact Body; I gave Orders for the Squadron to set exactly at eleven o'clock, in which Rear Admiral Drake most readily concurred, thinking it highly expedient; as we had every reason to expect to be attacked, the Enemy's Ships being not more than five Miles from us and their Lights very distinctly seen.

Except Governor Shirleys Letter, and the Message General Prescotts Officer brought from General Frazer on the 24<sup>th</sup> of last month, I never heard any syllable from Bermistone Hill, or any one person in the Island, and what is still more wonderful to tell, the Garrison in all probability could not have been reduced, but for the eight Brass 24 pound Cannon, Two Brass 13 Inch Mortars, 1500 Shells, and base, twenty Four pound Cannon Balls: the Enemy found at the foot of the Hill, which Government had sent out, and which the Inhabitants of the Island would not give proper assistance to get up - for the Ship the Enemy's Shells were outboard of was sunk, and with great labour not more than four or five in a day could be fished up; and a L'Espion which had all the Shells could be got from Martinique was taken by one of my look out Frigates close under Nevis on the Morning of the 24<sup>th</sup> ult<sup>o</sup>.

This is all the information I am able to send, and I mean not to insinuate in the most distant manner, that the Garrison could have held out even a single day beyond what it did, as the works and Buildings were totally destroyed, and no further defence as I understand could possibly be made.

I anchored his Majesty's Squadron in S. Johns Road on the 19<sup>th</sup> after Sun set, to get some Flour and Yams in lieu of Bread. sailed again this Noon to seek Sir George Rodney at Barbadoes and get a supply of Water, and I hope to find the forway arrived to have all our wants furnished. The Fortunes and Pegasus which I left to watch the French Fleet, have this instant joined, and report that thirty six Sail of the Line quitted Basseterre Road yesterday Morning with upwards of fifty Sail of Brigs, Sloops, & Schooners and steered for Martinique.

Duplicate of a Letter by the  
Drake Brig Feb<sup>y</sup> 22 1782