

Burflour at Sea March 5th 1782

My dear General!

I cannot find words to express to you, the very great and heart-felt pleasure, I received from the very friendly and affectionate letter, you did me the honor to write me, by General Matthews, whom I have seen only at a distance; he is on board the Conqueror, which ship coming within hail of the Burflour just now, I had an opportunity of making a bow, & saying how I ye, and to get your kind letter. It is my dear friend a satisfaction truly singular, and inexpressible, that my conduct upon Sir George Rodney's return, has been exactly such as your friendship has led you to recommend. Our meeting was cordial & friendly, and he shall never have occasion to complain of my behaviour to him, and if my example can produce unanimity in the Squadron, it shall subsist in the fullest manner

and

and though I have great reason to fear from his
unsteadiness, and versatile turn of mind, acting
upon no fixed, and well digested plan, that he
will often fall short of that attention, it is not only
proper, but his interest, to carry towards me, I will
on no occasion be wanting in the most respectfull
and minute attention towards him - and I cannot
better prove what my sentiments really are; than by
giving you verbatim, what I wrote to a friend, two
days ago, upon a supposition some vessel might be
suddenly dispatched to England; "How my Dear Sir,
"Could you entertain a thought, that I should be
"dissatisfied, and apply to go home, upon the return
"of Sir George Rodney, what you suggest astonishes
"me much, it is a measure I could not have the
"shadow of pretence for, I trusted you had known me
"better. Being almost the youngest flag officer in His
"Majesty's Navy, how could I imagine, a fleet of
"that vast magnitude, which must be employed in
"these seas, would be placed under my direction

be

11 Be assur'd I shall descend with as much pleasure, to
11 serve as second, as I by accident rose, to be first in
11 command. I will most chearfully, and to the
11 utmost of my poor abilities, support Sir George in
11 every instance, as it is my duty to do, as I also would
11 any other admiral, to whom Government should see
11 fit, to commit the care & protection of His Majestys
11 Islands. If no disaster befalls the Drake Brig in
her passage to England, you will know before this
reaches your hands, that I sailed from S^t Johns road
Antigua on the 22^d - on the 25th at midnight I fell in
with the Anson, whose Captain informed me, Sir
George was off English harbour, where I joined him
next morning. It was I think rather unfortunate
my meeting with the Anson, as we were three days
in working round Descada, and I should otherwise
have been at Barbadoes on the 26th, and have had
the Squadron watered by this night, by which much
time would have been saved; and if Sir George
should

should make the least delay in completing the
water of the ships, and the french fleet should move
soon from Martinique, I fear we shall be thrown into
great confusion, nay into great distress, as no ship
has more than 14 days water on board; this is
a very serious matter, and requires to be attended
to. I fully explained the situation of His Majesty's
Squadron when I joined Sir George, and he then
told me part of the ships should go immediately
to Barbadoes & part to St. Lucia, to put themselves in
the best state possible for service - but he has now
altered his mind, which I am sorry for, as I see
manifest inconvenience must arise, if the enemy
move soon from Fort Royal Bay. If Count De Grasse
should wait being joined by a Spanish Squadron
which is expected, admitting it is not approved, we
shall have sufficient time to fill our water: I
write to you, my dear General, my inmost thoughts
but

but I do not do it, or even speak so, to any one else.
My mind has been constantly upon the stretch, in
endeavouring to look forward as much as possible,
it being much easier to prevent, than to cure evils,
and though His Majesty's Navy abounds in Officers
of far greater Abilities, than I possess, yet, I can with
much truth assure you, my dear Sir, there is not
one in it, that has more ardent Zeal for His
Majesty's Service, or more veneration, & Love, for
His royal person - To render Services to His
Majesty has been, and ever will be, my utmost
pride & ambition and if my conduct entitles me
to His most gracious approbation, I feel it as the
first, & greatest of all rewards.

I shall have infinite pleasure & satisfaction in
writing to you, by every opportunity that offers, but
I warn you, not to be surprized, if a dispatch vessel
should arrive, without a letter from me, from
what I have seen & experienced, it is possible so to
happen

happen, but I trust you will not attribute it to any negligence or inattention on my part, for I will omit no opportunity of writing, that I am told of.

I find the Partizans of Mr. G. are labouring to throw blame upon me, respecting the unhappy affair of the 5th of Sept. A letter in the morning Chronicle of the 13th of Nov. soon found its way to this country, and was read to most of the Captains on board the *Bur fleur* on my return from New York, which excited laughter only, in any one, except Cap^t. Ford, who felt angry, that it should be supposed, such a passage of absurdity and falshood, should come from the ship under his command, and I understand he put a letter in the Barbadoes newspaper, where the anonymous publication was reprinted; if I can get a copy of it, I will send it you. But I rejoice most exceedingly, that my friends in England, have treated the letter with silent contempt. My conscience

is

is perfectly clear, and I bid defiance to the utmost
malice can do, and though the times are I confess
full of calamity and danger, particularly to
military characters, I have sought to bear.

Admitting the Justizans of Rear Admiral Graves, could
fix delinquency upon me, it must be from the
representations of the Rear Admiral, and which
would prove him a delinquent in a very high
degree, not only for not making my failure of duty
known in his publick letter, but for calling on me
three several times after, for my opinion & advice
and more especially, when I was so open and
candid, as to tell him, where he had been mistaken,
in a conversation we had together, the evening
after the action. Thus far I am prepared, when
an opportunity offers for England. We are now to
windward of Martinique, and suppose shall anchor
in Gros Islet, if the enemy should be in Fort Royal
Bay

Bay, I hope in god they are, or I know not what
we shall do, so short of water, and by dividing
the Bread equally which the Squadron from England
has on board, it will not exceed six weeks, there
is not a Biscuit in all these Islands, and I am
told Jamaica is equally destitute. March 2^d St Lucia

After receiving a letter in the morning ^{yesterday} from Sir George
to say he could not think of going into Port, and was
determined to seek, and give battle to the enemy, he all
of a sudden in the afternoon, bore up for this Island
we are now busily employed in watering, Sir Georges
Division is at Gros Islet, Admiral Drakes, in Choque Bay
and mine came to the Line de Sae this morning.

Sir George wrote me just now, that the French Fleet is between
Guadaloupe & Dominique - which cannot be, and if it is not
at Fort Royal, it must be gone to leeward - but I have not
a doubt in my own mind, of their being at Fort Royal.

The frigates I sent to watch de Grapes motions, have both been
off Pigeon Island and are gone to Barbadoes acrible to their

orders

orders, which convinces me he is at Martinique
but we shall know for certain this night upon
the return of two ships Sir George sent to reconnoiter
early this morning

March 3. Cne De Sacl

Sir George has this morning acquainted me, that
the reconnoitering ships are returned, and report
31 sail of the Line in Port Royal Bay, and others
at St. Piers, some of the former in a deranged
state, with their Tops off - and as 31 only are in
Port Royal Bay, I begin to suspect all Vandrenot's
Squadron are not arrived - more ships are sent
to reconnoiter again, and if that should be
the case, I imagine Sir George will send some
of his best conditioned ships to windward of Martinique
The Barfleur will be compleat in her water tomorrow
evening, and join Sir George the next morning

Sir

Sir George has found the Invenible & Intrepid
two of my Squadron, in so shattered a state, as
to be totally unfit to cruise, and is therefore
about to send them to Jamaica to be hove
down - and I fear the Shrewsbury & Centaur
are not in a much better state - Their Pumps
are constantly going, and to carry ships into
action in that state, when a single shot under
water, will oblige them to quit the Line,
would be so encouraging to the enemy, that it
better to be without them.

I will now conclude, with every sentiment
of respect & esteem my dear General
your most faithful and
affectionate humble servant
J. M. Hooby