

finished May 20

Battle of Sea May 12th 1782

My dear General

The Captain of the Alarm, who joined me on the 9th in afternoon with the Commander in Chief's Dispatches to go by the Ceres, which proceeded for England immediately having told me, that the Packet, with Cap^t. Burnett on board chased with Sir George's Duplicates, was to leeward, and was directed to speak with me, I prepared a few lines to go by her, and will by that conveyance trouble you, with the Duplicate of the letter I had the honor to write you since Sir George left me.

I am grieved to relate to you, my friend Cap^t. Inglefield's very sad misfortune, after boarding the Cesar of 74 guns, in the most gallant & heroic manner, under my eye; a rascal of a Corporal of Marines, went below in the course of the evening, and in drawing off a cask of Rum, with a candle in his hand; it caught

caught fire, and the noble prize, was immediately in
a blaze not to be extinguished, and blew up, between
8 & 9 o'clock, by which melancholly accident, the
Centaur lost two Lieutenants, her Boatswain, a
midship & twenty four seamen, and a Lieut. and
seven marines - her loss in battle was eight killed &
fourteen wounded. There never was a more spirited
action, than that of Inglefields, it has covered him
with honor; Sir George Rodney spoke of it to me, in
the highest terms of approbation, and I dare say will
do justice to his very gallant behaviour in his
representation of it.

Oh my dear General, had Sir George done, what he
might and ought, we should all have been quiet
by our fire sides at home in the course of another
year; Now he can stand the reproaches of his
own mind, if he has any feelings at all, for doing
so little, when a great deal of honor & advantage
might so easily have been gathered for his Country
almost

almost a Bankrupt in both, I cannot reconcile! The French would never have rose again this war, America would have shaken off its connection with them; Spain would have seen her error and have withdrawn herself from the war, and England would have been the admiration and Envy of every Court in Europe - The great and very favorable opportunity, that has been left in raising the glory of Britain's arms, is melancholly in the extreme to think of, and there is no dwelling upon the subject, with any degree of temper.

I send you the translation of an intelligent Seaman's letter, taken in the Ceres, which I will venture to assure you, is a more just account than I think will be given of the action by the Count Despepe. The reason he supposes, His Majesty's Fleet was roughly handled is not a bad one, though it

is by no means true, for we had five or six & twenty
ships of the line, as felt to pursue in the evening, as
they were to commence the fight in the morning, in
comparison, with the very shattered state of the enemy
and I do not think three of the whole would have
resisted further than the discharge of their guns which
were loaded, either in the water or air, as they
might chance to be pointed - Indeed they had not
the means of resistance left - The Ville de Paris's
powder was ^{very} nearly exhausted, which her captain
told me, when he came on board, ^{& further said} he was sure it
was the case with every ship. I told this to Sir George
the next morning - and I have undoubted intelligence
that the four ships which put into Curacao, had
scarcely a pound of powder on board either. By the
Frenchman's letter, my division / which was the van
on the 9th. & the rear on the 12th / claimed DeGrasse's
greatest attention, which is true enough.

Sir George Rodney's force was 35 sail of the Line

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I find my conduct is done justice to, in a Jamaica
newspaper; what follows, is an extract, from an
account, some officer sent to the printer,

13 The sea never produced a scene more navally
11 beautifull, — or the service an exertion more
11 heroically animated, than that of Sir Samuel
11 Hood preparing to action; so impetuous, incessant,
11 and irresistable was his fire, that just as the
11 sun sett, the guns of the Ville De Paris, were
11 silenced by that gallant Rear admiral, and
11 Mons^r Delgrape struck the flag of France, which
11 he had nobly defended to the victorious
11 Marflour.

I now fear the whole business will be,
to come over again, for farther than the Glory of His
Majesty's arms, having appeared in full lustre and
the danger probably removed for the present from
Jamaica, I apprehend no great benefit can arise from
so perfectly complete, and unparalleled a victory

M. W.

May 20th 1782

Yesterday His Majesty's Ship *Licorne* joined me accompanied by a French Frigate from Cape Francois with 200 English Seamen; Admiral Vandreuil having accepted my proposal for an exchange of prisoners man for man; Captain Cadogan was at the Cape four days, and received and treated with the utmost politeness and attention. I herewith send you a very exact account of the combined forces on St. Domingo all the French disabled Ships, are now arrived, except the *Zele*, which is at Guadeloupe, in a most distressed condition, The four that took shelter at Curacoa, got into Cape Francois the 12th - The account Cap^t. Cadogan and his officers give of the battered state of the Enemy's Ships in Hull, Masts & yards, is not to be described, and they say, not one half of them can be fitt to go to sea on any service for some weeks - Captain Cadogan joined Commodore Wbleck, whom I had detached with six sail on the 9th / to windward of Cape Nicolas about six or seven Leagues, yesterday morning, not having been able to get farther, owing to calms, and light airs wetherly, and as he was informed by Cap^t. Cadogan that the Dutch Convoy, had been left in the Mona Channel on the 10th standing to the northward for Europe

Europe, the Commodore concluded he had no chance
of overtaking it, before his water was all expended
and thought it best to rejoin me, which he did
last night; and as the water in the Ships in general
is very short, some having not more than six Days
supposing all their ^{remaining} Cask to be full, and it often
happens otherwise, I am now taking the whole
to the Commander in chief at Port Royal, Jamaica
and hope to join him tomorrow.

Since writing the above, I have caused all the prisoners
brought from Cape Francois, to be closely examined,
and found two, which came from Curacoa, in the
Hercules and both flatly contradict, what the Captain
of the Pluton reported to Admiral Vandreuil of his
leaving the Dutch Convoy in the Mona channel, and
are clear and positive, that the only vessel, which sailed
with the four French ships, was a Dutch Snow, which the
Pluton towed the greater part of the way, and that
they left the Dutch men of war, & merchant ships at
Curacoa, where most of the latter had been waiting
15 or 16 months - that no ship had arrived from
Holland, since the rupture with England, and that
provisions

provisions, and all european commodities were exceeding scarce, and bore very advanced prices - The french ships could not fetch the mona passage by eight leagues, and were obliged to make a stretch to the eastward

The Spanish Ships at the Cape, have their sails bent, and are in all respects ready for sea, but Mons^r. De L'Equille, Admiral Vandrevil's nephew, says, it will not be an easy matter, to get them to sail, without the french: I understand there is not even the appearance of any cordiality, or scarce any intercourse between the french & spanish officers or seamen.

The report the released prisoners make, / who were all in the french fleet during the actions, & compelled to pump the ships / of the number of killed and wounded is incredible, scarce a ship lost less than 100 men, & many between 2. & 300 - The letters I have intercepted from Curacao, respecting the carnage on board the four french ship, which put into that port, exactly correspond with what the english seamen say - The Captain of the Hercules & 70 men were killed, upon which the second Captain quitted the fight early in the day - I have this rec^d dispatches from Sir George - a Paquet sails tomorrow to precede the convoy, I am now in sight of Port Royal but shall not gett in till the morning most affectionately yours
Off Port Royal May 20th 6 P.M. Saml. Arosely