

Phoenix, Salisbury N^o. 1791

Sir,

In consequence of the Signal which you made for me to examine strange Sails passing near the Fleet, I proceeded in pursuit of Two Merchant Ships - About Noon a French Frigate that was also standing to the Northward, made a signal of shorten'd Sails, and the Two Merchant Ships closed to her - a little after One P.M. we fired a Gun unshotted to Leeward to denote that our intentions were friendly, and to induce them to bring too - at this time the French Frigate had set all her Sails, except Royals, and the Merchant Vessels sailed well - His Majesty's Ships the *Pursuer* and *this Ship* not being able to gain upon each other, and very little on those we pursued - I soon after order'd another Gun unshotted, to be fired to Leeward, and then the French Frigate made a signal, and brought too, with the Two Merchant Ships ahead of her - upon coming up with her, he appear'd

To
The Hon^{ble} William Cornwallis, Commander in Chief
of His Majesty's Ships

to be clear for Action - Their people were at
their Guns, which they kept pointing at us -
he hail'd, and ask'd what I wanted - I inform'd
him that I had Orders to search the two
Vessels ahead of him, but as our Nations were
in perfect Friendship, we did not mean to use
any violence, and that I would send my Boat
on Board him to explain - in case the Vessels
should be under his Charge - he answer'd that
he did not understand me, and began to make
Sail - this Ship being between him & the two
Merchant Vessels - I however reflected upon
the consequence of harsh measures, and sent a
Boat with the First Lieutenant to explain,
if possible, to his satisfaction, that no National
insult was intended - Upon the Boat getting
alongside him, and the Officer delivering the
Message, he began to make Sail, and made a
Signal which was instantly obey'd by the two
Merchant Ships, they making Sail - I was
then ahead of him - I saw, that if they once
had the Start, we should not easily get up
with them - I therefore made Sail, the French
Man of War pointing her Guns at us - Our
Boat was now a great way astern - I hail'd
the Frigate and told him, that if he did not
stop the Ships from making Sail I should be
oblig'd

Obliged to fire at them - He told me in English,
"I do not understand you Sir" - One of our people
hail'd him in French, and endeavour'd to
persuade him to stop the Ships by Signal,
that no Accident might happen from our
firing at them, which we should be obliged
to do if they did not stop - I therefore began
to fire at One, with our Bow Chace, and the
Other, with our Starboard Guns - They soon
shorten'd Sail, but did not bring too - The
Frigate fired some Shot, but not at us - The
Perseverance at some distance from us board'd
One, and we dropp'd our Boat on board
the other - We tack'd close to her, to prevent
the Frigate from injuring our Boat - she
fired two Shot across us, and soon after having
closed with us, began to engage with much
vivacity, - upon receiving the second Discharge
from her Broadside, I began to return it -
our people having, with great presence of mind,
obey'd their instructions in not firing till
I order'd them - I tack'd close to her, she having
more way, attempted to rake us across the
Bow, which I prevented by keeping close to
her, and when her Guns were all discharged,
tack'd across her Stern, swept her Ensign from
her Mizzen Mast with our 5th Boom, and raked
her - her pendant came down, but she still

continues

continued to attempt to cross us on the other
Bow - We closed with him on the Starboard
side, and after a Broadside which brought his
Sails down, they call'd out, & made Signs that
they had surrender'd. x

The Rigging, Yard Tackles, and
Boats being much damaged, I could not board
her, and therefore made the signal that we
had not, as the *Perseverance* was at some
distance, & did not seem to understand the
signal - and being anxious, I stood towards her,
and gave the French Ship in Charge to
Captain Smith, with the accompanying Instructions,
which I hope you will approve of - She
proved to be *la Raisolie* of 36 Guns, &
250 Men, Commanded by *Mont. De Callmande*,
Lieut. De Vaisseau, who was wounded in the
Action - I left her at Anchor between
Mangalor & *Dula* repairing her Damages,
& hope by Captain Smith's Assistance, she
will be able to sail the 20th in the Morning -
but I am inform'd she has suffer'd much -
having given Captain Smith his Instructions,
our First Lieutenant came on board, having
as I said before, been left astern - he inform'd
me that the French Captain told him, that

he "would not allow the Two Ships, ^{which were} under
"his Convoy to be search'd - that he thought
"it a presumption on the part of the English
"to attempt to do it on the open Seas - but
"that if we had blockaded any Port, & they
"were going there, he would have allow'd
"us to search them, but that he would
"not then," and order'd his Men to their
Quarters - upon which, our First Lieutenant
(Parker) left the Ship - At this time he
made the Signal to his Convoy, which I
last alluded to.

You will excuse Sir, my being
so particular in the detail of this Affair, but
as it may be the subject of much National
importance, I think it my duty to give you the
fullest information, and have brought for that
purpose, the Second Captain of the French
Frigate, with his own Consent, the Captain
being Wounded, to corroborate what I have
asserted with respect to their motives for
engaging us.

Inclosed is my Journal, a State
of His Majesty's Ship, with a Return of Kill'd
and Wounded, and a Report of the Officer of
this Ship, who boarded the Two Merchant
Vessels

Respects.

I have much pleasure Sir, to add, that His Majesty's Ship is in perfect readiness to perform any Service you may please to order her upon - the little Accidents of the Service being repaired, as well as we could do it.

I have the Honor to be
Sir,

With the greatest Respects
Your most Obedient
Humble Servant,
Atkinson

P.S. - I beg to add Sir, that a Note accompanies this letter from the Captain of the French Frigate. Upon my sending my First Lieutenant on board to him after he had surrender'd - he desired him to tell me, that he was ready to do any thing I wish'd with respect to the movements of the French Frigate - I then desired him thro' his second Officer who was on board with me, to assure me that he would follow us to Sullibury, that this Affair might be explain'd - the Note does not appear to me to be perfectly satisfactory

and

and as his Ship was represented to be much
shatter'd, I was induc'd to desire Captain
Smith to assist him, and escort him to Tellisbury,
but told Captain Smith he was not to be
consider'd in the light of a Captured Vessel,
and to be permitted to wear his Colours -
of this I also acquainted the French Captain
with, and that the Perseverance would give
him every assistance.

As I have not mention'd the
Perseverance in the course of the Action, I
think it my duty, in justice to Captain Smith,
to inform you, that when it began, the
Perseverance was at some distance, near the
Ship her Boat was on Board, and we were
so situated that the Perseverance could not
fire conveniently, when she came towards us,
without running the risk of doing us injury.

W. H. M.

Mr. M. M. M. M. M.
of a General Agency
Having collected of them
21. Nov. 1791

From Black

The original account signed
by Mr. S. S. S. S. S.

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