Leigh House 23rd May 1804

Private

My Lord

Having been on a visit in Sussex for a few days past and my letter not being forwarded to me your Lordship will I hope forgive me for not acknowledging sooner the honor of your letter of the 16th Instant.

I have every reason to believe that my Friends at Portsmouth would readily sacrifice their own feelings to the satisfaction they would desire in pleasing your Lordship and therefore prove how sensible they are of the marks of kindness and attention you have shewn them throughout the business. Their situation is awkward and uncomfortable for they know not what to do. General Whitelocke is now just as indifferent about them as he was before or appeared to be anxious. The consequence is that the Volunteers of Portsmouth and Portsea are by no means in such a state of discipline and efficiency as they ought to be. In fact not much is to be said of the Companies under Major Carter who is by no means a good Officers and of the Companies in Portsmouth they are completely disorganised the four companies are in tolerable good order but their spirits, zeal and order are checked and suppressed and as for the Six Companies they are far from being in a State of Harmony one with another. From a Spirit of Envy and jealousy, passions that inhabit men or less the minds of all men, they became instruments of the Generals and the Corporation's personal objections to me the consequence of which, I am now by events well warranted in asserting are, the failure of all that was expected of them and recommended by them to your Lordship, to adopt in Portsmouth.

I will not conceal that I was hurt to see the Influence of General Whitelocke prevail because I foresaw the consequences and that however his Vanity might lead him to fancy himself popular the time would not be long ere he would find out his error, this I believe he has now done and that he is sensible that if he ever had a Friend in Portsmouth he has lost him.

He has contrived to divide the very few that were in the habit of acting together, he has courted those who hated him, and who seeing his weakness, made him the foot of their inveteracy to a family whose only crime was loyalty, and I believe at this moment all parties and all descriptions of people dislike him. I long before the Volunteer question arose anticipated the animosity of the Corporation, they no sooner felt their wright in the Government than they marked me and determined to attack me and my family in every point that they thought Vulnerable, this My Lord and only this, was the motive and source of a Conversation at a Visit that you honor'd me with in Gower Street two years ago and which was in the first instance occasioned by one you previously had had with Mr. Lefevre. I then thought that the sacrifice I had made, the immense expense we had put ourselves to, the example, Individuals like us had shown at a time of such public peril, and finally the host of Enemies that we had made, did entitle us fairly and honorably to protection at least if not to a mark of distinction from the Government of the Country. It would have been at that time gratifying and highly acceptable. It is however past and I am now anxious only to justify myself in your Lordship's opinion for having ever felt a desire of the kind and I hope you will pardon me for seizing this opportunity to explain myself upon a point which perhaps might have caused some little surprize in your mind at the time.

From a thorough conviction that his removal from Portsmouth would have good effect, I have flattered myself General Whitelocke would have been promoted 'ere this, at one time I heard it hinted he was to go to the Isle of Wight in the room of General Hewitt who was to go to Jamaica but another General is now named for that Government. He is living at the House of my Father within a mile of me for a few months but we seldom meet, indeed, I have only spoken to him once since your Lordship was at Portsmouth, His taking so much pains to deny having written to me a Letter to different members of the Corporation disgusted me so much. I would readily forgive him were I persuaded that his conduct proceeded from his great zeal for the service, but I knew to the Contrary.

His assertion too, which reached me only lately that my house of business owed many advantages to his friendship, and which he may have told Your Lordship are totally untrue. These advantages in truth we owe to the private friendship of Sir William Pitt, and which General Whitelocke alludes to. Your Lordship will be suprised to hear so far for giving to my house, He has endeavour’d to deprive it of. He did also I hear take great pains to publish to the world that if my family spent great sums in support of the Government we had gained large ones by its influence. I am sure your Lordship will forgive me for availing myself of every opportunity to contradict any such assertion, and that you will give me credit to my solemn declarations that through the means of Government or of any individual in it, we are not aware of owing the benefit of one single shilling but that the severest injury we ever experienced was through the interference of Government which was never before heard of or thought of. So far indeed is it from the truth that my family is indebted to Government for its prosperity we are vain enough to exult privately and in our own minds that the balance is much in our favour and that if we stop’t and left others to follow our example it would be more wise and prudent in us.

I am still however going on and in the instance of the Little Corps of Volunteers at Havant I have already involved myself in an expense of between 2 & £300, the subscription having fallen so short and the men having taken their drill money which they gave me reason to think in the first instance they would not do. I have a desire to make as much of them as a Country Corps composed of such a description of Men can be made of and I hope when your Lordship sees them which I do not despair of in the course of the Summer you will give me some little Credit. I have a great deal of trouble and no small degree of Mortification very often, for such Men are frequently Changing, and no sooner do I get a man perfect than he quits the Service. I labor too under a disadvantage which I have ventured to hope I shall get rid of through your Lordship’s friendly assistance and for which purpose I have in another Envelope address’s as an official Letter to your Lordship. It is to obtain through Lord Melville as first Lord of the Admiralty the discharge of a Man who will be of infinite use to me as a Sergeant Major, out of the Marines at Portsmouth; I have settled every thing with general Elliot and the other Officers of the Division who will readily give their assent to it when applied to by the Board as is usual but it is not in their Power to discharge the Man without an order from the Admiralty. This Man will be of infinitely more Service in drilling 200 Men than in doing nothing at Portsmouth where they have not Men enough to employ him and being exempt from Sea Duty, he is really a fit Man to be employed in Volunteer Corps. Your Lordship will oblige me by forwarding my letter and using your influence with Lord Melville if it is necessary. When Mr Dundas I was well known to his Lordship but he may have forgotten me. But should you have objections to transmitting my letter, make no ceremony with me My Lord for I am persuaded of your friendly and kind intentions towards me. I will write at once myself it is not a Private but Public favour I solicit and I should think he would not refuse it. In answer to your observation about Drummers Swords, I have none of Government. I brought out of my own pocket every individual thing except musquets, Spears, and 3 drums.

When I reflect on the length of this letter, and the freedom I have used in troubling your Lordship with so long a one and upon such a subject as a good deal of this letter consists of. I have great doubts and apprehensions at sending it, but trusting that the indulgence you have frequently honoured me with is not quite worn out, I will venture to intrude once more upon your Lordship with a promise that if it offends I will never repeat it.

With every sincere wish for your restoration to health and enjoyment of happiness.

I have the honor to be

My Lord, your Lordship’s

Most obliged and obedient servant

W. Garrett

Right Honorable Lord Bolton