Hackwood House

1 February 1804

Private

My dear Sir

I am very sincerley sorry to trouble you with a letter upon an uncomfortable subject, but I am bound in my duty to represent to you some delicate matters in the real state, in which I find them. I took an opportunity, when I had last the honor of seeing you to say a few words say a few words upon some proceedings at Portsmouth and I showed you a letter from General Whitelock which annouced the resignation of Three Captain and his recommendations of three persons to suceed them. You agreed with me on the propriety of seeking information about the cause of this retreat more especially as I had recieved some private intimations of circumstances which made me hesitate about acceptance of the resignations or putting forward the successions. I wrote in consequence a very civil letter to General Whitelocke expressive of my concern at the letter which he had found it necessary to write to me and requesting some account of the cause for so sudden a proceeding. I thought it right upon this occasion to mention the uncertainty in which I was placed with respect to many things, which were reported to have taken place in the Volunteer arrangements without any communication to me, and that I was therefore at a complete loss to judge about the grounds of some uneasiness which had been expressed to me. I mentioned my observations of seeing accidentally in a return the names of two Field Officers as Commanding two Battalions of Volunteer Infantry at Portsmouth of whose recommendations or appointments I had never heard. I reminded him of the original arrangement, which was made in consequence of great difficulties and displeasures amount the several parties at Portsmouth, when I prevailed upon them all to adopt a system, in order to prevent the prevelance of more obstacles in [?] - of equality of rank by agreement, that no Person immediately connected with the Place should have higher command than that of Captain of an independent company, and that I should recommend some Officer from the Line of the rank Field Officer to be, generally, at their head and to form them into discipline and fitness for service, this Officer to receive permanent pay. Some gentleman upon this occasion who during the late war had been Field Officers and who had with approbation been now encouraged to raise a Company agreed upon any propostion to accept Companies. And I recommended General Whitelocke's desire Colonel Duke to be at the head of the plan with general concurrance. He however was immediately appointed an Inspecting Field Officer, in consequence of a plan then adopted, and when I proposed to recommend another Officer, I was told, that it would not be necessary, as an Inspecting Field Officer would be specifially appointed for Portsmouth etc and which would answer every purpose. I was fully disposed from real opinion to acquiesce in this idea, and took it for granted that a proper person would be appointed, about which I did not otherwise interfere. Lieutenant Colonel Mannooch, whom I had not the honor to know, was appointed, and, I dare say is a very proper choice. But the newspapers some months ago annouced a Major Maxwell to command a battalion of volunteers at Portsmouth on permanent duty. You will remember that I troubled you with a line about it and recieved your answer that the appointment was unknown to you. I wrote to General Whitelocke and recieved his answer that it was a mistake, as no permament duty had even been thought of at Portsmouth. He however said not a word about the appointment itself; and I really supposed that also itself to have been a mistake, as not a hint of such a thing had been given to me. This however turn out to be a reality and in addition to it another Field Officer to command another Battalion of Volunteers without the knowledge of the Officers or men, without any intimation whatever of it to me - and I probably should not now have known it, if I had not desired a general return of the whole Volunteer Force of Portsmouth from Colonel Mannooch instead of the return of each Company. The resignations followed immediately thereupon, and General Whitelocke's letter, which I enclose for your fresh consideration annouced them in a way which suprised and alarmed me. To my enquiry about the cause and to my intimation of ignorance about several material things I received an answer, which I also beg leve to recommend to your notice as well as a copy of my reply. The matter so remains. But I am sorry to say, that I have recieved informatiom, which convinces me, that very extraordinary harshness has been used towards these Gentlemen, and a mode of treatment of the Volunteers perfectly incomfortable to the nature of their establishment. The Field Officers appointed seemed indeed to consider them as upon permanent duty and wished upon obedience to every unexampled order accordingly - had indeed it is evident, that the object has been to force out of the service every thing like a Gentleman and to intimidate the rest into absolute submission. They are to be Soldiers in the most exact point; and the hair not cut into proper form, or any little matter of that kind recieves a threat of resentment. But I will spare you all this nonsense. I only wish to know what I shall do. I shall at all events act with the most perfect temper and moderation; but you see how I am placed and in what way I am only referred to, when occasion requires indispensibly my interference. I do not comprehend how the other appointment can with any possible propriety have taken place without any notice to me or call upon my recommendation. I have no view of personal gratification for I have no wish to obtrude any friend of mine. I am glad that I have not; for I should probably be mortified, as I have never in any instance since I have held my present situation, been honored with the slightest mark of attention out of line of mere recommendations of course under the acts for purpose. And in the two instances I mention, they have all out of course and I think I may add, out of all common decorum or propriety been assumed by the Lieutenant Governor of Portsmouth. I care not about the thing or the persons - but I must not and I will not be exposed to the fitfull and absurd predicament of being nominally responsible for the conduct of measures, in which I am not allowed to have even common information.

Nothing, I delcare from my heart and soul, but an [?] duty would induce me to sacrifice health comfort and fortune in the exercise of the functions of my station, and in seeking to promote the success of measures directed by the Legislature and recommend by His Majesty’s Government under circumstances of peculiar exigency I can conscientiously assert, that I have laboured dis[?] to forward the view of every department of Government and I know not how I can have offended any. But after all my own case is not uppermost in my mind, I am very sollicitus to know how to proceed for the good of the service or the proper protection of those who are jealous of it. I have not accepted the resignations at Portsmouth, but I have desired the Gentlemen to remain perfectly quiet till I can hear from you and at all events to act with the utmost temper and respect.

I am shocked to trouble you with such a scrawl, but I have absolutely no time to compress my statement into shorter compress. I hope, I shall never again have occasion to run into such length.

I have the honor to be with sincere respect

And esteem Dear Sir

Your faithfull humble servant

Bolton

I thank you for your line about Lieutenant Colonel Milford and will seek to do the best I can to find a successor to him.