To the Earl of Egremont

Boston Oct 25 1763

My Lord

Your Lordships Commands dated July 9 having come to Boston whilst I was absent upon a Visitation of the Eastern parts of this Province, & an immediate acknowledgement of the receipt of them being required, The Lieut Governor acquainted your Lordship that this Letter was arrived. Nevertheless I think it my duty to acknowledge, as soon as possible, my own receipt of these papers & also of the duplicates thereof.

Your Lordship signifies the Kings pleasure that I use my utmost endeavours to prevent the introduction of foreign commodities contrary to the Acts of the 12 Char. 2 the 15th Char. 2 & the 8 & 9 Will. 3. I have the honor to inform your Lordship, that ever since I have been in this Government, I have exerted the best of my powers to maintain a due obedience to the above mentioned Laws; and I can with pleasure add, that I beleive they are no where better supported than they are in this province.

When first I came to this Government, about 3 years ago, Some of the Merchants of this Town, provoked with the liberties allowed at Ports allmost under their Eye, & really injured by them did endeavour to enforce the allowance of the same liberties within this port by divers violent means. But my Resolution & the Steadiness of the Judges of the superior Court defeated this Scheme; & they became content to wait till Measures should be taken for putting all the Ports in America upon the same footing. Before this Commotion & since The Merchants here in general have acted in such a manner as to intitle themselves to all proper favour.

I do not pretend that this Province is intirely free from the breach of these laws, but only that such breach, if discovered, is surely punished. There has been an Indulgence time out of mind allowed in a trifling but necessary article; I mean the permitting Lisbon Lemons & Wine in small quantities to pass as Ships stores. I have allways understood that this was well known in England & allowed, as being no object of trade, or, if it was, no ways injurious to that of Great Britain. As for Lemons, in this climate, they are not only necessary to the comfort of Life but to health also: And a Prohibition of them would be a great mortification to those who have been accustomed to the use of them. For my own part, I reckon them among the Necessaries of Life & beleive they contribute much to the good health I enjoy here.

In regard to Portugal Wines, there seems to be no material distinction (except as Casus omissions in the letter of Law) between Wines from the Portuguese Islands & wines from the Portuguese continent: nor would the least benefit accrue
to Great Britain from permitting the one ^only^ & prohibiting the other. Besides, there is sometimes a Want of these little Articles to help to make up a ballance in the Trade between this Country & Portugal; the latter affording no other return hither but Salt. And the Fish Trade of New England is of too great consequence to Old England to run any risk of checking it. Spanish Wines & Fruit, altho at present not in much demand here, are within the same rule of reasoning in regard to promoting the fish trade. But It were to be wished that these were permitted by a positive Law, rather than by an indulgence however reasonable and approved.

The Wine generally used in this Country heretofore has been Madeira: but of late that has grown so extravagantly dear, that few People can afford it. The Wines of the Western Isles are now in the general use of this Country. But some Gentleman prefer Portugal Wines. French Wines can never be an Article of Trade here, as what comes to America is ^in general^ bad & Very perishable; & when it is good, it comes as dear as Madeira, & is not near so much esteemed. And tho’ there is now here, under Prosecution, a small Vessel of 130 tuns laden with french Wines said to be bound for Bourdeaux to Eustatia yet this will not conclude for the frequent use of french Wines here. For tho’ this Vessel was intended to be unladen on this Coast (as I make no doubt that She was) She would be a singular instance for some years past, and her Cargo would supply the demand for french Wine in New England for 2 or 3 years.

I have according to your Lordship’s order imparted to your Lordship what alteration of the Laws before mentioned is wanting to the exigencies of this Country; at the same time bespeaking your Lordship’s favour that this intimation may not be understood to contain an admission that I myself have been knowingly concerned in or consenting to the aforesaid indulgence. I shall take the like liberty to communicate to your Lordship whatever else shall occur to me on this subject fit for your Lordships consideration.

I am with the greatest respect My Lord, Your Lordships most obedient & most humble Servant

Fra Bernard

The Right Honble The Earl of Egremont

ALS, RC


1. No. 224.