

BARBADOS

Francis (c. 1614–1666), Baron Willoughby, Royalist Governor of Barbados (1650–1651, 1663–1666)
to Elizabeth Cecil Willoughby (1607–1661), his wife

Barbados, August 1651

I did, not above a fortnight ago, write at large to you by the way of Holland, by my governess Cateline, the carpenter's wife, whom, upon her earnest importunity, I gave leave to go home. She performed her trust very carefully and honestly in keeping all things under her charge, but for anything else she was loathe to trouble herself. Honest Mary is all my stay now, and I hope will do as well as she can. I have entertained another coarse wench to be under her, allowing her help enough of negroes, which are the best servants in these countries, if well-tutored, and cost little—only a canvas petticoat once a year, and there is no more trouble with them.

Mrs. Chavye, this bearer, who has promised me to deliver this with her own hand, is one who challenged acquaintance of me upon your score, which caused me to give her pass for her sugar, custom free. She tells me she waited upon you when you lay in of little Dosey.¹ I do not remember her, nor would not have believed her but that she gave me such a token by naming the child. If I be deceived, if this letter come safe to you I shall not be much troubled at the cheat; for it is frequent here to have tricks put upon one of such kind.

My Lord Charles Paulet's daughter, I wrote to you of, proves no such thing, for she is run quite away and, I think, out of the island, for I cannot hear of her, which makes her appear a cheat. She knowing that I had wrote into England about her, made her not dare to stay a return of my letter. I did by Cateline write so large, giving you an account of myself, and the state of the island, by some papers acquainting you what we had done in order to our self-preservation against that storm which was threatened us from England, by their printed declaration calling us all rebels, so as I shall touch no more upon anything of that, only what we have further added since; which is, to make ourselves strong in men, as well as in words; and to that end have raised forces, both of horse and foot, which the country pays, and are constantly to be kept in a body to resist any forces that shall come against us.

It was occasioned by Mr. Arnold, who came at the time of the Assembly's meeting; he is a very honest man. By him I received two letters, and three from my children; one more which was super-scribed to Mr. Rich. We had a fine passage, being but five weeks upon the way. I could wish to my heart you had been with him; but I know not how I should be so happy, though your goodness to me in saying you will come, puts me in some comfort. For which kind resolution of yours, God in Heaven reward you.

He came in a very opportune time, for the terror of his news that so many ships were coming with men to reduce the island stirred up the spirits of the Assembly, caused them to desire me to put the island in a posture of war, occasioned the raising of horse and foot, so as we shall be very able to resist them and send them home again, showing them the island is not so easily to be won as they are made to imagine it.

And I hope they will reward those runaway bankrupt rogues, who durst stay no longer here for fear of a gaol—whereof learned Mr. Bayes is one—having, by their villainy, done what in them lies to ruin one of the best and sweetest islands in the English possession, or in any others, except the Spaniards, with whom we hear they have made a league, offensive and defensive. And if that be their planting the gospel, I hope God will never prosper it.

I thank God we are all in good health and good heart, wanting nothing but those things I so long ago wrote for, of which I have now so much want as I would give double what they were worth for to have them. I might have been as much beholding to my friends as to have done me that courtesy to have furnished those things. I

¹ Diana Willoughby (1631–1648), their daughter

writing that it was not to be upon my particular account, any merchant would have done it; if not out of England, yet out of Holland, from whence ships come daily in to us. I sent a list to you by two conveyances, which I hope failed not; but, however, your letters put me out of hopes of having any return of my desires in that particular.

I thank you for having a care of my credit in Mr. Read's business, in which you did me a very great kindness. I am very sorry it was forced to fall upon the particular. It was none of my meaning it should have done so, for, poor soul, to hear of the sadness of your condition, to be brought to so low a stipend, cuts my heart. But I hope God, Who has hitherto kept us up, will still preserve us, and though cruel men may rob, oppress, and steal away what I have, yet I shall find a way to live. And since they began so deeply with me as to take away all at one clap, and without any cause given on my part, I am resolved not to sit down a loser and be content to see you, my children, and self ruined.

There was wont reparation to be allowed to those that were injured by the contrary party. And being it is in my own power to help myself, shall I not do it, but sit still, like an ass, seeing the meat torn out of your and my children's mouths? No! I will not do it; and therefore, dear heart, let me entreat you to leave off your persuasions to submit to them, who, so unjustly, so wickedly, have ruined you and me and mine. If ever they get the island, it shall cost them more than it is worth before they have it. And be not frightened with their power and success. God is above all.

There is an enclosed note, directed "The Gentleman," which I am confident, if you will, you may make use of, praying you not to omit the opportunity. I shall send him as much in sugar when I hear from you that you have made use of this. Be not frightened nor perplexed for me; I am confident yet God will bring us together into these parts, according to my former petitions to Him, that we may end our days together in happiness. For I have had a return of my discovery of Guyana, which I wrote to you formerly of; and the gentleman which I sent has brought with him to me two of the Indian kings, having spoke with divers of them, who are all willing to receive our nation, and that we shall settle amongst them. For which end I am sending hence a hundred men to take possession, and doubt not but in a few years to have many thousands there.

It is commended by all that went for the sweetest place that ever was seen—delicate rivers, brave land, fine timber. They were out almost five months and, amongst forty persons, not one of them had so much as their head ache. They commend the air to be so pure, and the water so good, as they had never such stomachs in their lives, eating five times a day plenty of fish and fowl, partridges and pheasants innumerable. Brave savannas, where you may in coach or on horseback ride thirty or forty miles.

God bless me into life. And if England will be a friend, or that we make them so by tiring them out, either their seamen by the tedious voyages or the state by the great expense they must be at, which I am very confident we shall, being all so well resolved to stand by one another to the last man, then I shall make you a brave being there. For since all is gone at home, it is time to provide elsewhere for a being.

I am very much troubled for honest John Ward, that he should suffer so much for his honesty and kindness to me. Pray you send for him and commend my kind love to him; and tell him that if he will come to me, he shall never want as long as I have it.

Though God is at present pleased to afflict us, and that justly for my sins, yet so long as He gives us health, let us not despair, but do our best; for who knows what a day may bring forth? Do your best where you are, playing your game as well as you can, and I will do the like here; and when the fleet shall return, and the gentlemen see how they are abused, you may perchance find them more charitable; at least in a more calm humor to be spoke with.

One comfort we have, they can neither starve us with cold nor famish us for hunger; and why should they think so easily to put us to it then? If a qualm should come, I thank God I have some of your cordial water left still; but I thank my God, I never was more healthy nor better in my life. I want nothing but your sweet

company. That would make time short, and all things easy to me. When once this expected storm is over and this place settled so as no more trouble may disquiet it, then shall I with all violence pursue you with my humble suit and desire for your company. God keep you in health. Pull up a good heart, and yet all may be well.

I have no tokens to send my poor children for their kind letters. Mr. Arnold commends Will² much; and relates a great deal of discourse he had with him one day when you were from home. My best of blessings to them all. For Mrs. Betty,³ if there be such an inclination in the young lord you mention, let not the present want of portion discourage. I have known un-handsomer than she married as well for nothing; but I shall hope, however, in a few years, to be able to give a portion, though as yet it goes out apace. As for Frank,⁴ I hope you will be careful for her health in preventing what you fear. What I mentioned to you concerning my Lord Callender, be not so averse, out of an opinion of our too much good fellowship; for he is a noble lord and an honest man. I had a letter lately from him, and he is resolved to come and plant in these parts of the world.

This enclosed engagement I sent by another conveyance, and renew it again, because I would have it with you, to satisfy your fear of my being delivered up. God but preserve you, and I cannot do amiss. Farewell, my dearest joy.

The account Mr. Knowles gives me by his letter concerning the improvement of Will in his learning is a great comfort to me; but the consideration of the loss of it again by his leaving of him is as great a cross. He expresses to me that because you could not continue his allowance to him is the cause of his leaving him. If that be all, I should not doubt but, by God's blessing, I may be able to procure that, and shall spare it out of my own belly, if you can procure him to come to you again upon any reasonable terms; for I fear change of masters may do by him as it did by me. Prythee, dear heart, let me hear from you. If there be any hopes of getting him to you again, I will strain hard to procure means for the good of my boy.

When you have read this letter, pray you seal it, and convey it to my lord by my brother; to whom I forbear to write because I will not endanger him more than I have.

Henry Cary, *Memorials of the Great Civil War in England* (London: Henry Colburn, 1842), II:312–319.

² William Willoughby (1638–1661), their son

³ Elizabeth Willoughby (1635–1695), their daughter

⁴ Frances Willoughby (1633–1680), their daughter