

Letter Bk. III

[Sharpe to Pitt.]

Annapolis 27th Feby 1761.

Sir

As soon as I received Your Letter dated the 23^d of Augst last I communicated the Contents thereof to the Collectors of His Majestys Customs & to the several Naval Officers in this Province who in answer to the Letters which I sent to them respectively do assure me that no such iniquitous Trade with His Majestys Enemies as is mentioned in Your Letter hath to their knowledge been carried on from Maryland & that they do believe no such Trade hath been carried on without their Knowledge by any Persons living in their respective Districts; This being the Case they are unable they say to inform me by what Artifices & Evasions the Dealors in such iniquitous Inter-course find means to cover their criminal Proceedings & to elude the Law, nor do I think any one in this Province can inform me certainly how the Persons concerned in that Trade have managed so as that the Officers of the Customs in the Northern Colonies & in Rhode Island particularly where it is said this Trade hath been openly carried on should not have been at Liberty to seize the Vessels that returned loaded from the Enemys Ports which it is said were open to all who had obtained Protections or Lycences from the French Governors who refused them to none that applied for them. I understand however that since the Commanders of His Majesty's Ships of War in the West Indies have made Captures of many Vessels that were returning loaded from the Enemies Ports very few if any have gone directly thither, but that the Trade is now carried on in another Channel particularly by the Way of Monto Christi on the Island of Hispaniola to which place it is said the French who live on that Island bring their Sugars & other Commodities in order to be shipt on board such English & other Vessels as go thither to receive them & as carry thither from England, Ireland & N^o America Provisions & such other Necessaries as either the French or Spaniards stand in need of, & I presume tho I do not know it to be the Case that the British Vessels which trade to the abovementioned Spanish Port obtain Clearances there from the proper Officer for the Goods & Commodities they take on board as if the same were the Product of that part of the Island & regularly purchased from the Subjects of a Prince in Amity with His Majesty. This Sir is all I can at present write in answer to the Lett^r dated the 23^d of Aug^t last which I have had the honour to receive from you, but if any thing more relative to the Subject of it shall come to my knowledge (& I will endeavour as much as possible to obtain farther Information) I shall not fail to communicate to you my Discoveries; & I beg Leave