

Bienville to Pontchartrain

June 21, 1710

My Lord:

There has arrived at this port a vessel from Martinique which is returning immediately. It gives me an opportunity to render an account to your Lordship of all that has been happening in this colony since the month of September when I had the honor of writing to your Lordship. We have all been reduced to living on Indian corn. I had taken the precaution last autumn at the harvest to go myself to the neighboring Indian nations to trade for the largest quantity of corn [that] I was able [to obtain] at a low price, foreseeing clearly that we (p. 550) should not receive any assistance at all from France soon. We had some until the month of March after which, seeing myself obliged to buy some from the individuals of this place, who had very little since they had assisted the Spaniards with one hundred and eighty barrels this last autumn, I decided to send for the chiefs of several nations and I distributed soldiers to each of their villages for them to feed. I reserved only thirty soldiers to guard this fort. I have definite information that the English from Carolina with their Indian allies were going to undertake to destroy us this autumn. I am taking very good measures to parry their blows and to repulse them thoroughly with the aid of my Indians on whom I am counting very much. The governor of Pensacola offered me some time ago flour enough to last this garrison two months which I would not accept at all since I knew that it was at an exorbitant price. I took from him only six hundred-weight of cannon power which with the ten that I had received before make sixteen which we must return to them when some has come for us. I was unwilling to take it except on this condition since he wished to sell it too dear. It is necessary always to have in this country ten to twelve thousand pounds of powder in order to discharge the King from several small expenditures that we are obliged (p. 551) to incur. That is the thing that sells best.

I have had some deerskins distributed to the soldiers of this garrison for them to make shirts for themselves. For a year they have been quite destitute and deserving of compassion. There is not, thank God, a single sick man in this country.

This river has been overflowing the land since the month of January. The Indians have not yet been able to plant. As the harvest will be very late-it will not be gathered until November- and as I am no longer able to find corn to feed for two months the small garrison that I have, we, the officers of this garrison and I, have decided in order not to find ourselves in the extremity of entirely abandoning the fort in order to get a living, to send a boat of La Rochelle that we have hired to Vera Cruz to obtain provisions for three months, hoping that they will be at a low price since it is at the time of the harvest.

As I know that the Spanish gentlemen are very slow and take little trouble to assist us I am sending Mr. de Chateaugue, a captain of infantry who is a seaman and knows the language, to represent the urgent necessity that we are in to the viceroy of New Spain who will doubtless raise many objections to giving anything without [receiving] money [in return] as he did three years ago, repeating several times to my said (p. 552) Sieur de Chateauge that the King of Spain was already far ahead of the King of France; that nevertheless he would try to assist us and that the next time he must think of bringing money, a thing that we are no more in a position [to do] than heretofore.

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