

W. Wilberforce to Josiah Pratt

Kens[ingto]ⁿ Gore Jan^y 23^d 1812

My dear Sir

My having been extremely engrossed by other Business, has alone prevented my addressing you ere now on a Subject which was first brought under my Notice by the Report of one Af[ric]^a & y^e East Miss^y Soc^y at y^e Anniversary Meeting in June last— Let me refer you to the Report page 25 &c. You will there see M^r Marsden's Suggestion of a Vessel to be stately employed in sailing between New South Wales & the different Islands in y^e South Seas &c. The Idea, on Reflection seemed to me a good one & I confess it was a great Recommendation of it to me that [f] it was M^r Marsden's— for I have seen a good deal of that Gent[lema]ⁿ & of his proceedings & I have formed a high Conception, both of his Talents for Business, his Unaffected Piety & Work— On my return {to} y^e Neighbourhood of London therefore, the matter having been mentioned to me by some friends, more especially by M^r Mortlock, whose Liberality I dare say you well know, & who intimated a disposition to assist in carrying the plan into Execution, I consulted a few Gentlemen whom I deemed likely to be useful auxiliaries in such an Undertaking— I have not time to enter into particulars but it may suffice to say, that it appear'd on Inquiry & after Consideration, that solid Objections might [f] bild against forming any Association in this Country for executing y^e plan but that it would probably not be difficult to raise among the various divisions of y^e Religious World, such a Sum as when added to what could be obtained in N.S.

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Wales itself would suffice for carrying the Scheme into Effect; those who should subscribe in this Country, being exempt from all responsibility & the Management being left entirely to Mr. Marsden & such Coadjutors as He should see fit to associate with himself for such a purpose— My excellent friend Mr. Hardcastle approves of this Mode of proceeding— He offers his good offices with y^e great Missionary Society & hopes that it might be prevailed on provided y^e object would really be effected, to [f] contribute to the Extent of £500, if our Society would subscribe to y^e same Extent— I know not what is the State of our funds, but I am persuaded, we should be willing to strain a point for such an excellent purpose as this, where also the Expence is not of a recurring nature, but y^e contrib[utio]ⁿ is to be made once for all. Mr Hardcastle seems to think that if 2000£ could be rais^d in this Country. it might be sufficient in addition to y^e £1500 which Mr M most liberally indulges the Hope of collecting in N.S.W. itself— Let me beg you my dear Sir to lay this Subject before y^e Committee to which the Management of our affairs is intrusted & to request their most serious Consideration of y^e plan I have taken the liberty [f] of proposing— They will excuse my Brevity & y^e other defects which have arisen from my being circumscribed in point of time, & subjected to repeated Interruptions— I can truly assure you that I should have been far better pleas^d [sic] to pursue a plan which had been suggested by some other person than to suggest one my self. But having waited in vain in y^e Hope of y^e Matters being taken up by some other person I have at last been led to propose a measure myself— As I shall

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wish to confer again with Mr Hardcastle, Mr Mortlock &c I will thank you, if you will consult y^e Comm[itt]ee as soon as you can do it conveniently – I ought to have stated that Mr Mortlock is disposed to act in this [f] occasion with his usual liberality.

I am begging you if you see fit, to suggest to me any alterations & modifications of y^e plan before you lay it before y^e Comm^{ee}.

My dear Sir

With cordial Esteem & regard

Your faithful Ser^t

W. Wilberforce

P^s. Mr Hardcastle himself would be a Subscriber of £50.

The Rev^d Jos[ia]^h Pratt Secretary to y^e Society

For Missions to Africa & y^e East