

1788.
30 Oct.
Cattle wanted.

Attacks by
natives.

If the ships that bring out provisions were such as could receive on board black cattle at the Cape of Good Hope, I think we shall in future be able to preserve them; and a ship to remain here as a store-ship would be attended with many advantages. It is still a doubt whether the cattle we lost have been killed by the natives, or if they have strayed into the country.* I fear the former, and am sorry to say that the natives now attack any straggler they meet unarmed; and though the strictest orders have been given to keep the convicts within bounds, neither the fear of death or punishment prevents their going out in the night; and one has been killed since the Sirius sailed. The natives, who appear strictly honest amongst themselves, leave their figs, spears, &c., on the beach, or in their huts, when they go a-fishing; these articles have been taken from them by the convicts, and the people belonging to the transports buy them at the risk of being prosecuted as receivers of stolen goods, if discovered. The natives, as I have observed, revenge themselves on any they meet unarmed; it is not possible to punish them without punishing the innocent with the guilty, and our own people have been the aggressors.

The natives still refuse to come amongst us, and those who are supposed to have murdered several of the convicts have removed from Botany Bay, where they have always been more troublesome than in any other part. I now doubt whether it will be possible to get any of those people to remain with us, in order to get their language, without using force; they see no advantage that can arise from us that may make amends for the loss of that part of the harbour in which we occasionally employ the boats in fishing.

Conduct of
marines.

If my former letters have reached your Lordship the situation of this settlement is known, and as most of the officers have declined any kind of interference with the convicts, except when immediately employed by themselves, the little progress made in clearing land that requires so much labour will be accounted for. A letter sent from the Admiralty to the commanding officers of marines at Portsmouth and Plymouth is what the officers say they govern themselves by, and in which they say no extra duty is pointed out. What I asked of officers was so very little, and so far from being what would degrade either the officer or the gentleman in our situation, that I beg leave to report once more to your Lordship the request I made soon after we landed, and which was made in the following words:—"That officers would, when they saw the convicts diligent, say a few words of encouragement to them, and that when they saw them idle, or met them straggling in the woods, they would threaten them with punish-

* Note 51.