

Barfleur to windward of the French  
Islands March 14<sup>th</sup> 1781

My dear General

The Packet for England having passed me  
a few days ago in her way to Antigua &  
having occasion to send away a Dispatch  
to my Commander in chief, I imagine  
this will catch her at St. Eustatius.

Sir George must have been a good deal  
alarmed lately, and if he saw room for  
believing the report carried to him, he had  
much reason to be so, as his situation  
would have been full of danger.

On the afternoon of the 8<sup>th</sup> Instant, His Majesty's  
Ship Garland joined me, with a letter from

Sir



Sir George, informing me of the arrival of a  
French Fleet at Martinique on the 28<sup>th</sup> of  
last month, consisting of twenty sail of the  
Line six Frigates and one hundred & seven  
sail of merchant Vessels, and that one of the  
convoy went to Guadaloupe the next day  
where his intelligence then was, and which  
place he left the same evening, to tell the  
news. A very plausible story truly, but not  
one word of which, could I bring myself to  
give credit to; I however instantly stood  
away with the Squadron towards Port Royal  
Bay. I reasoned thus; had the Enemy taken  
a northern Track; made Antigua in an Evening  
and



and gone between Montserrat & Guadeloupe  
in the night to avoid being seen. the ships  
bound to the latter Island, would not have  
passed by it, to return back the next day,  
for the person who carried the account to  
Sir George, says, it was brought from Martinique  
to Guadeloupe, by one of the Convoy; This  
made it clear to me, the Fleet did not go  
that way, and that it went to the Southward  
round Point Salines (the South end of Martinique)  
was still more unlikely to me; for I sent  
away the Prince William on the 27<sup>th</sup> of last <sup>month</sup>  
to reconnoiter Fort Royal, and on the 28<sup>th</sup> at  
noon, (the very day the Fleet is reported to have  
arrived) Capt. Douglas was within four or  
five



five miles of the men of war in the Bay, & was positive no more than four ships of the line and three frigates were there; and as the Prince William came round Point Salines on her return to me, so large a Fleet must have been seen, had it taken that Track & on that day.

From these circumstances I was well satisfied in my own mind, no Enemy's Fleet was arrived at Martinique, and that the report was raised, by the tricking, & rascally vermin at S<sup>t</sup>. Christophers, to take Sir George Rodney from S<sup>t</sup>. Eustatius, or else, of the French to take me from the windward of the Islands: I therefore thought it very much my duty, to move with caution, and thinking it of no moment, see

if



(Even if the Enemy was arrived) whether I  
shewed myself before Fort Royal a few  
hours soon or later, and that it might  
prove of very serious consequence to the  
Kings Service, the Squadron being carried  
to Leeward, with a strong Lee Current,  
I judged it most advisable to bring Foo  
off Point Salines, having dispatched the  
<sup>Thetis</sup> brigate to reconnoiter Fort Royal the  
moment I received Sir Georges Letter,  
directing her Commander, so soon as he  
had informed himself of the exact state  
of the Enemy in the Bay, to return to me  
as fast as possible off Point Salines, making  
the



the private signal, as early as it could be  
seen, and when answered to make other  
signals I had given him, if the Fleet was  
arrived, which would carry me down—  
immediately, but if the Fleet was not arrived  
he was to continue carrying all the sail  
he could up to me. At 2 Pm next day

several sails were seen close in with S. Lucia  
from the Mast head of the Bar fleur, upon  
which I made the Cyclops' signal to go ahead,  
keeping a watchfull eye upon the Thetis,  
and carefully to repeat, such signals as she  
should make, and when this Frigate had got  
about 3 miles from me, she made the signal  
for



for a fleet, which I confess alarmed me,  
concluding St. Lucia was attacked, and  
that the Enemy had got there by enchantment  
I immediately formed the Squadron and  
bore down. At 4 the Thetis came in sight  
made the private signal, and no other  
after it was answered; but continued working  
to windward, which perfectly satisfied me  
no enemy's fleet was arrived, and that  
the sails seen by the Cyclops, were the ships  
from England, (brought out by the Santa Monica)  
coming out of St. Lucia, bound to Jamaica  
under convoy of the Licorne; I then hauled  
down the signal for the Line, and lay too for  
the Thetis. at 10 she joined me, when I  
received



received from Capt. Linzee, an exact similar  
report, of the Enemy's force at Martinique  
as was brought me by Captain Douglas.

This determined me to return back to my  
Cruizing Station off the North end of Dominique  
for the French have for some time past, made  
the Island of Desceade, and gone down between  
the Islands Mari Galante & Dominique; and  
that I might be sure the Enemy did not pass by  
to the Northward, while I was in the South, I  
sent Captain Linzee along to the Seaward of  
the Islands, and to join me here. I expect  
to see him every hour; and the moment he  
goes I shall send away my Duplicate to Sir  
George Rodney. I have the honor to be  
my dear General,

your most faithfull &  
obliged humble servant

J. W. H. H.