

My dear General

1500 pcur 1700 1720 1700 31 March 1700

Private

As I feared, foretold, and laboured to prevent, the French
Armament are safe arrived in Fort Royal Bay, by making
the Island of Descada, and running down between
Dominique & Gradaloupe. If I had been solliciting
the greatest boon for myself, I could not have been
more earnest in my entreaties with Sir George Rodney
so soon as I returned from the Cue de Sac on the 7th
to divide his force, station one half off Descada, and
the other off point Salines; but he would not hear of
it, said the French always made Point Salines, to
which I took the liberty of replying, that Guichen did
not do it, though he came with 18 sail, neither did
the Spanish Squadron afterwards, or the Convoy vice
Admiral Parker fell in with - Sir George was perfectly
silent to this - I added at the same time, that admitting
there was the greatest probability that the expected
French Convoy would make point Salines, and but a
base

care possibility of its making Descada, why not guard
against that possibility, when your force will allow
you to do it? for allow the enemy to come here
fourteen sail of the line strong, you can have two
squadrons of 18 sail of the line, which will be ship
for ship, and admit of four sail to play upon
the transports & storeships, which appears to me, of
great importance. The Feb⁹ Packet arrived here
the 7th which left Falmouth the 10th and two days
after took a Brig from Bourdeaux bound to Martinique
the prisoners of which said the armament was then
about to sail from Brest - and as a Dane was
arrived here which left Spithead on the 10th also
I took the liberty of suggesting to Sir George, whether
the french Convoy might not be daily expected,
his answer was, oh no, he was sure it would not sail
till march; I admitted the probability of it, but thought
it very possible to happen otherwise; and as the
greatest

greatest part of his fleet was ready for sea, I could not help expressing my wish to sail, and cruise off Descada - after receiving two or three orders, I at last put to sea with 11 sail, but to cruise in sight of Point Salines - on the 18th I spoke with La Nymphe brigate from Antigua, where a ship was arrived which sailed from Spithead under the convoy of the Princess Caroline on the 11th of last month, and parted company the same night in a snow storm and on the 14th was spoken with by the Arcturion brigate and received written information from Sir Richard Pearson her commander, that he had fallen with, just come out of Brest, 14 sail of the Line & Sea frigates having under convoy, 100 sail of transports & storeships I dispatched La Nymphe to Sir George Rodney, without detaining her a moment - on the 20th in the afternoon I saw the commander in chief's flag to seaward and at midnight I received the arrangement N^o. 1 for the fleet's cruising - and at the same time a private

private note from Sir George - to which I replied, that I rejoiced most exceedingly, he had been pleased to extend his ships to the northward, for that the Commander of the french Squadron, must be a mad man, to think of coming in sight of St. Lucia, knowing as he must the force of the English Squadron, which would naturally be upon the look out - but at 8 am on the 22nd not more than thirty hours after, he sent me the letter number 2, which I trouble you with to shew the unsteadiness of the man, and as a further proof of it he did not send Commodore Affleck & the two Sixty fours, to the northward, untill the 26th. nor do I believe that a single private was stationed off Descada for the first intelligence we had of the arrival of the french Armament at Fort Royal, on the 20th, was by an English officer who came from Martinique in a cartel, and got to Sir George on the 28th. We may from luck / of which we have not hitherto had a common share

share) yet do something, to retrieve our Country's
misfortunes; but I am afraid we cannot expect
from judgement, or by acting, by any rational &
well digested plan, which the present situation of
things here makes absolutely necessary — every
Scheme in my humble opinion, should have been
had recourse to, and every issue, should have
been encountered, to have intercepted the best
armament; having expected that, the greatest
difficulty would have been surmounted — but
turn ones eye now, which way one will; nothing
but difficulties, and those in the extreme, stare us
full in the face. On the 28th I received orders
to proceed to this place, with my division, & anchored
the next morning at sunrise — Sir George & his
Division came in yesterday, but Admiral Drake
still remains out — I wish he was in also, that the
whole might be ready to act together on a moment
for

for I cannot see the least service his Division
can now do at sea, further than watching the Enemy
at Fort Royal, which two or three frigates and
as fully equal to, and I think in the present moment
no unnecessary vigour should be run, for crippling
the Line of Battle Ships, as every one will most
willingly be wanted, and it may be of the utmost
consequence, there not being all together, and in the
best condition possible for service, since we have
now the means, by the arrival of our convoy of
putting them so - The force of the Enemy lately
arrived at Martinique, is three Ships of the Line
three frigates, & six thousand Troops; four sail
of the Line parted company with the above and
are gone to the Cape; & five with three ~~thousand~~^{thousand}
Troops to the East Indies - all sailed from Brest together
on

on the 10th of last month.

Thirteen sail of the Line of Spanish Ships of the Line, with nine thousand troops, are supposed to rendezvous at Inarico - and are there to be joined by the four French ships lately gone to the Cape, as well as by De Grasse, who has now thirty three sail of the Line ready for sea in Port Royal Bay, and the Marquis De Bouillie with the troops from Martinique, which seems to make it absolutely necessary for Sir George

Rodney, to keep his whole force together, in order to follow the French the moment they put to sea. Though I am writing I know not when an opportunity may offer of sending my letter, but there is no harm in being prepared

I do not recollect, that I have told you, of

my

my having on board the Barfleur two very
excellent Pipes of Madeira, for His Royal Highness
Prince Frederick -

I have the honor to be
my dear General, with much affection

Your most faithful and
Obedient humble servant

75

James Oglethorpe

In further support of what I suggested, with respect to dividing
the Fleet, for the better intercepting the Armament; I observed
there could be no objection arise from the Count de Grasse, for
should he venture to come out, in whatever force he may, &
go to the Northward of Martinique the Squadron off Leeward
could find no difficulty in making a junction with the
Southern one, and if he should go out to the Southward
of Martinique, the Squadron off Point Salines, could as
easily join the Northern one, so that nothing dangerous
was to be apprehended, from the Enemy at Port Royal
from a Division of the British Fleet -