

Barfleur 40 Leagues South from

S^t. Eustatius May 4th 1781

My dear General

I have had a distant action with a French Squadron of Twenty three sail of the Line under the Command of the Count De Grasse. My utmost endeavours were ineffectual for getting nearer, I therefore invited him to come to me, by putting His Majesty's Ships under their Topsails to receive him, and though I am conscious of no one omission and of having done every thing in my power for the support of the honor of the British flag, which I flatter myself will be most readily acknowledged by Rear Admiral Drake & every Captain & officer in the Squadron; yet my mind is not altogether at ease, fearing the Enemy may make an attack upon S^t. Lucia

I never once lost sight of getting to windward, but it was totally impossible, and notwithstanding the French

Admiral

Admiral, had so manifest a superiority, and the choice of distance, he has I thank God, nothing to boast.

I beg leave to trouble you with an exact similar detail of the Skirmish, as I have given it to Sir George Rodney, with my Line of Battle a List of the killed and wounded, and an account of the numbers, sick & short of Complement by death, in the King's Squadron under my Command; all which I most humbly request you will do me the honor to lay before His Majesty; and I hope and trust I shall appear in the royal judgement, to have been in no one instance deficient in my duty.

Never was a Squadron my dear General so unmeaningly stationed, as the one under my Command, and what Sir George Rodney's motive for it could be, I cannot conceive unless it was, to cover him at St. Eustatius and it is equally as difficult to be accounted for by Mr Drake, and all the Captains; for what

solid

solid purpose could the Blockade of Martinique
for a few weeks answer, unless a force was
expected to make an attack upon the Island?

As far as decency, and any degree of propriety
with an old friend & acquaintance would
permit me, I gave my reasons against it, as
you will see, by some extracts from my public
letters, I and in my private ones. I was still
more urgent, which I have herewith the
honor to send. Had I fortunately been to
windward of the Islands, I must have
brought the Enemy to close action, or they
must have given up their Transports
Trade &c.

I have the honor to be
with every sentiment of regard & esteem

My dear General

Your most faithful and
Obliged humble servant

JAMES HODGKINSON

This was intended to have accompanied my letter to
Sir George, but he would not suffer any letter to be
sent in the vessel he dispatched home.