

TO MANN, Monday 5 June 1780

Strawberry Hill, June 5th 1780.

NOT a syllable yet from General Clinton.¹ There has been a battle at sea in the West Indies,² which we might have gained, know we did not, but not why³—and all this is forgotten already in a fresher event. I have said for some time that the field is so extensive, and the occurrences so numerous, and so much pains are taken to involve them in falsehoods and mystery; and opinions are so divided, that all evidences will be dead before a single part can be cleared up—but I have not time, nor you patience for my reflections. I must hurry to the history of the day. The Jack of Leyden of the age, Lord George Gordon, gave notice to the House of Commons last week,⁴ that he would on Friday bring the petition of the Protestant Association; and he openly declared to his disciples⁵ that he would not carry it unless *a noble army of martyrs, not fewer than forty thousand,*

1. From Charleston (see *post* 14 June 1780).

2. An inconclusive three-hour naval battle on 17 April, northwest of Martinique, between 22 of Guichen's fleet of 'twenty-three sail of the line [and] one fifty-gun ship' and Rodney's twenty, both fleets suffering severe damage. The French fleet escaped, and 'took shelter under Guadaloupe' (Rodney to Stephens 26 April, *London Gazette Extraordinary* 25 May; Mann's copy, sent to him 26 May by Hillsborough, is in S.P. 105/287 ff. 109–10). See also Guichen's dispatch of 28 May (*post* 24 July 1780, n. 1); Donald Macintyre, *Admiral Rodney*, 1962, pp. 113–30.

3. The *Public Advertiser* 31 May spoke of the 'shameful garbling of Admiral Rodney's letter in the Extraordinary Gazette'; that, in his 'original letter to Mr Stephens,' Rodney stated 'his complaints against particular officers for disobedience of signals, and . . . his intention of bringing them before court martials in the West Indies' (ibid. 27 May). It further reported that on 26 May, 'Lord George Gordon produced Thursday night's Extraordinary Gazette, and read it to the House [of Commons] . . . [and] gave it as his opinion that Administration had not pub-

lished the whole of Sir George Rodney's dispatches to the Admiralty; yet . . . enough was published to throw a general reflection on the whole fleet, which required explanation' (ibid. 27 May); he moved 'that there be laid before this House a copy of the public letter' from Rodney of 26 April, but lost the motion (*Journals of the House of Commons* xxxvii. 883). In his private letter of the same date, Rodney wrote bluntly of 'circumstances highly derogatory to the discipline of the Navy . . . barefaced disobedience to orders and signals' (*Sandwich Papers* iii. 211), and again on 31 May, of the 'dastardly behaviour of a fleet which called themselves British' (ibid. iii. 215). For Rodney's comments on Hyde Parker's 'conduct during the action on the 17th of April . . . [his] palpable disobedience of signals and daring to carry the van and his squadron two leagues ahead of their station,' see ibid. iii. 216–17.

4. Tuesday, 30 May (*Public Adv.* 31 May; *London Chronicle* 30 May–1 June, cited in Ossory ii. 173, n. 18; Cobbett, *Parl. Hist.* xxi. 628–9, erroneously *sub* 26 May).

5. As president of the Protestant Association, at Coachmakers Hall, 29 May, at the 'last general meeting [of the Protes-