

The Project Gutenberg eBook of Memoirs and Correspondence of Admiral Lord de Saumarez, Vol. I

This ebook is for the use of anyone anywhere in the United States and most other parts of the world at no cost and with almost no restrictions whatsoever. You may copy it, give it away or re-use it under the terms of the Project Gutenberg License included with this ebook or online at www.gutenberg.org. If you are not located in the United States, you'll have to check the laws of the country where you are located before using this eBook.

Title: Memoirs and Correspondence of Admiral Lord de Saumarez, Vol. I

Author: Sir John Ross

Release date: July 11, 2008 [eBook #26031]
Most recently updated: January 3, 2021

Language: English

Credits: Produced by Steven Gibbs, H el ene de Mink and the Online Distributed Proofreading Team at <https://www.pgdp.net>

*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK MEMOIRS AND CORRESPONDENCE OF ADMIRAL LORD DE SAUMAREZ, VOL. I ***

Transcriber's note: Minors spelling inconsistencies, mainly hyphenated words, have been harmonised.

Obvious printer errors have been repaired.

The ERRATA given in this edition and the remaining corrections made are indicated by dotted lines under the corrections. Scroll the mouse over the word and the original text will appear.



[View larger image](#)

Frontispiece.
Portrait of Rear-admiral Sir James Saumarez,
taken after the battle of the 12th July 1801.

MEMOIRS
AND CORRESPONDENCE

OF
ADMIRAL
LORD DE SAUMAREZ.

FROM
ORIGINAL PAPERS IN POSSESSION OF THE FAMILY.

BY SIR JOHN ROSS, C.B. K.S.A. K.C.S. F.R.A.S.
CAPTAIN IN THE ROYAL NAVY.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:

RICHARD BENTLEY, NEW BURLINGTON STREET,

Publisher in Ordinary to her Majesty.

1838.

LONDON:
PRINTED BY SAMUEL, BENTLEY,
Dorset Street, Fleet Street.

OF THE FIRST VOLUME

CHAPTER I

Genealogy of the family of Saumarez.—Curious Record.—Branches of the late family.—Marriage of the late Lord de Saumarez.

CHAPTER II

Commencement of his Career.—His Education.—dash;Visit of the Duke of Gloucester to Guernsey.—Decides for the Navy.—Is put on the Solebay's books.—School at London.—Embarks in the Montreal.—Winchelsea, Pembroke, Levant.—Smyrna.—Returns home.—Passes for Lieutenant.—Embarks in the Bristol.—Proposal to leave the Navy.—Attack on Fort Sullivan.—Gallant Conduct.—Is made Lieutenant.—Bristol, Chatham, Lady Parker.—Commands the Spitfire.—Rhode Island.—Many Engagements.—War with France.—Appearance of the French Fleet under D'Estaing.—Spitfire burnt.—Appearance of Lord Howe.

CHAPTER III

Serves ashore.—Returns to England in the Leviathan.—Providential escape from shipwreck.—Visits Guernsey.—Joins the Victory.—journey to London.—Joins the Fortitude.—Battle Bank.—Anecdotes of Admiral Parker.—Lieut. Saumarez promoted to the rank of Master and Commander.—Appointed to the Tisiphone.—Sails for the West Indies with Admiral Kempenfelt.—Action with Comte de Guichen.—Captures a French ship of thirty-six guns.—Is despatched to Sir Samuel Hood.—Arrives at Barbadoes.—Escapes from two French men-of-war.—Passes through an intricate channel.—Joins Sir Samuel Hood.—Gallant conduct in cutting out a vessel.—Tisiphone ordered home.—Fortunate exchange with Captain Stanhope.—Takes command of the Russel.

[Pg iv]

CHAPTER IV

Situation of the Hostile Fleets.—Surrender of Brimstone Hill.—Junction of the Fleets.—Antigua.—St. Lucia.—Sailing of the French Fleet under Comte de Grasse.—Action of the 9th of April.—12th of April.—Gallant conduct of the Russel.—Captain Saumarez returns to Jamaica.—Comes to England with Convoy.—Is paid off at Chatham, and confirmed a Post-captain.

CHAPTER V

Captain Saumarez returns to Guernsey.—His exemplary Conduct.—Visits Cherbourg.—Is introduced to the French King.—Returns.—Changes at Guernsey.—Prince William Henry visits the Island twice.—His Reception.—Appearance of Hostilities in 1787.—Captain Saumarez is appointed to the Ambuscade, and pays her off.—His Letter on his Marriage.—Remarks thereon.—Armament of 1790.—Saumarez commissions and pays off the Reasonable.—War of 1793.—Appointed to command the Crescent.—First Cruise; takes a prize and saves Alderney.—Second Cruise; captures a cutter.—Third Cruise.—Return.—Crescent docked and refitted.

[Pg v]

CHAPTER VI

Crescent refitted.—Sails for the Channel Islands.—Falls in with the French frigate La Réunion.—Particular account of the action.—Letters from Captain Saumarez to his brother.—Brings his prize to Portsmouth.—Official letters.—Letters from various persons.—Ship refitting.—Captain Saumarez obtains leave of absence.—Is knighted for his gallant conduct.

CHAPTER VII

Sir James Saumarez is placed under the orders of Admiral M^cBride.—Is detached, and attacks an Enemy's squadron.—Narrow Escape from Shipwreck.—Off Havre.—Cherbourg.—Private letters

relating the particulars of several Cruises on the French coast.—Gallant Action with a French squadron of superior force off Guernsey.

CHAPTER VIII

Sir James commands a Squadron of Frigates, in the Channel.—Visit to Weymouth.—Joins the Channel Fleet.—Black Rocks.—Private Letters and Instructions.—Appointed to the Orion.—Crescent's Officers and Crew volunteer to follow him.—Appointed to the Marlborough (*pro tempore*).—Commands a detached Squadron.—Returns to the Orion, attached to the Channel Fleet.—Private Letters.—Lord Bridport's Action.—Orion, the headmost Ship, begins the battle.—Official Letter.—Two private Accounts.—Returns to Portsmouth.—Expedition to Isle Dieu.—Returns to Spithead.

CHAPTER IX

Orion taken into dock.—Is refitted, and joins the Channel Fleet.—Detached on a particular service.—Returns.—Proceeds to reinforce Sir John Jervis.—List of his fleet.—Battle with Spanish Fleet off Cape St. Vincent described in a private letter.—Conduct of Saumarez in the action.—Salvador del Mundo strikes the Orion, and is taken possession of by her Lieutenant.—Engages the Santissima Trinidad.—She strikes the Orion.—Remarks on that occasion.—Lagos Bay.—Lisbon.—Sir James sails on a cruise with Admiral Sir H. Nelson.—Returns.—Commands the advanced squadron.—Several private letters.—Commands the advanced squadron off Cadiz.—Mutiny in the fleet.—Anecdote and remarks thereon.

[Pg vi]

CHAPTER X

Sir Horatio Nelson resumes the command of the advanced squadron.—Bombardment of Cadiz.—Nelson sails for Teneriffe.—Saumarez resumes the command.—Escorts a convoy to Gibraltar.—Refits at Lisbon, and returns.—Conducts the negotiations for exchange of Prisoners.—Sir W. Parker relieves Sir James.—He arrives at Gibraltar.—Is attached to Nelson's squadron.—Proceeds off Toulon.—A storm.—Vanguard dismasted.—Great exertions of the Orion and Alexander in refitting the Vanguard at St. Pierre.—Sailing of the Toulon fleet.—Nelson reinforced by ten sail of the line.—Pursues the enemy unsuccessfully.—Proceedings of the fleet in a journal addressed by Sir James to his family.—French fleet discovered in Aboukir Bay.—Battle of the Nile.—Diagram of ditto.—Conduct of the Orion.—Saumarez wounded.—Writes to Nelson.—Goes on board the Vanguard.—Occurrences there.—Remarks on the name of the second in command being left out in Nelson's despatches.—On the mode of attack.—Various letters and orders.—Sir James's account of the battle, in a letter to Lady Saumarez.

[Pg vii]

CHAPTER XI

Fleet repair damages.—Sir James receives orders to take a detachment of six ships of the line, and five prizes, under his command.—Sails for Gibraltar.—Journal of his tedious voyage.—Arrives off Candia.—Decides to pass through a perilous passage, and escapes the dangers.—Falls in with the Marquis of Nisa, and summons the French garrison at Malta.—Puts into Port Auguste, in Sicily.—Sails from thence.—Tedious passage.—Letters from Earl St. Vincent and Nelson.—Arrives at Gibraltar.—Reception there from the Admiral, Governor, &c.—Sails thence.—Arrives at Lisbon.—Sails thence.—Arrives at Spithead.—Paid off at Plymouth.—Remarks on his treatment, and explanation of it.

CHAPTER XII

Sir James writes to Earl Spencer.—Is appointed to the Cæsar, of 84 guns.—Joins the Channel fleet.—The Brest fleet having escaped, proceeds to the Mediterranean.—English fleet at Bantry Bay.—Return of the French fleet.—Cæsar at Lisbon.—Sir James returns to Spithead.—Rejoins the Channel fleet.—Earl St. Vincent takes the command.—Appoints Sir James to command the advanced squadron.—Black Rocks.—Earl St. Vincent's letter of approbation.—Douvarnez Bay.—Various letters.—Complete success of the blockade.—Enemy's fleet laid up.—Sir James returns to Spithead.—Conclusion of 1800.

CHAPTER XIII

Sir James Saumarez is promoted to the rank of Rear-admiral.—Appointed to command the advanced squadron.—Proceedings at the Black Rocks.—Douvarnenez Bay.—Returns to England.—Appointed to command a squadron on a very particular service.—His secret orders, &c. and letter of approbation.—Ready for sea.—Is created a Baronet of the United Kingdom.

[Pg viii]

[CHAPTER XIV](#)

Sir James sails from England in command of a squadron of six sail of the line on a particular service.—Arrives off Cadiz.—Attacks a French squadron at Algeziras.—Captain Brenton's account of the battle.—Loss of the Hannibal.—Colonel Connolly's statements.—Logs of the Cæsar and ships of the squadron.—Sir James proceeds to Gibraltar.—Remarks.—Flag of truce sent to Algeziras.—Correspondence with Linois.—Squadron refit at Gibraltar.

[CHAPTER XV](#)

Observations on the Battle of Algeziras.—Copies of the Journals of the Spencer, Audacious, and Venerable.—Remarks on them.—Further particulars.—The Spanish account.—The French account.—Bulletin from the Moniteur.—Anecdote of an occurrence at St. Malo.—Sword presented to Linois.—Lines on the occasion.—His improvement of Naval tactics.—Epigram.—Anecdote of the intrepidity of one of the Cæsar's men.

[CHAPTER XVI](#)

Mole of Gibraltar.—Negotiation for the exchange of prisoners unsuccessful.—Captain Ferris and the officers of the Hannibal return on parole.—They sail for England in the Plymouth lugger, which carries home despatches and private letters.—Despatch sent to Lord Keith.—Admiral Saumarez shifts his flag to the Audacious.—Extraordinary exertions of the crew of the Cæsar.—Their admirable conduct.—Captain Brenton and the garrison.—Arrival of the Spanish squadron at Algeziras.—Increased exertions of the crews of the squadron.—Private letters.—Preparations to attack the enemy.

[Pg ix]

[CHAPTER XVII](#)

Occurrences at Gibraltar.—Determination of Sir James to attack the combined squadron.—Cæsar rehoists the Admiral's flag.—Sir J. Brenton's description of that interesting scene.—His account of the battle.—Destruction of two Spanish three-deckers.—Capture of the St. Antonio.—Action between the Venerable and Formidable.—Public letters.—Private letters.—French details of the battle.—Spanish ditto.—Orders of sailing.—Remarks.

LIST OF PLATES

[Frontispiece.](#)
[Surrender Réunion.](#)
[Off Guernsey.](#)
[Rocks Guernsey.](#)
[Chart Island](#)
[Diagram Algeziras](#)

ADVERTISEMENT.

In perusing the following Memoir, the reader must not be surprised if he finds that the accounts of the several battles in which the illustrious Saumarez was engaged, differ in some degree from those previously given to the public. Every circumstance connected with them has been carefully examined, and whatever statements are now advanced can be borne out by documentary

evidence. The career of Saumarez was a long and eventful one: he entered the Navy while the nation was at peace; he subsequently served during the American War of independence, and throughout the late continental war, in both of which he was in more engagements with the enemy than any other officer. He was the last of the heroes of the 12th of April 1782.

THE LIFE

OF

LORD DE SAUMAREZ.

[Pg 7]

CHAPTER I.

Genealogy of the family of Saumarez.—Curious Record.—Branches of the late family.—Marriage of the late Lord de Saumarez.

Admiral the Right Honourable James Lord de Saumarez, of Guernsey, was born, on the 11th March 1757, in the parish of St. Peter-Port, the principal town of that romantic island. The family, whose original name was *De Sausmarez*, is of Norman extraction, and of great antiquity in the island of Guernsey, where their lineage can be traced almost to the Norman conquest.

Their remote ancestor received from the Dukes of Normandy a fief of the district of Jerbourg, and was appointed hereditary captain (or chatelain) of the castle of that name, which lies within the limits of the fief, and is situated in the parish of St. Martin.

[Pg 8]

Among the records of the island, we find the following interesting particulars:—In the twenty-seventh year of the reign of Edward the First, at a court of chief pleas held at Guernsey, in the presence of the judges of assize, Matthew de Sausmarez made homage for his fief; which appears to have been acknowledged by an act of Edward the Second in the year 1313; and in the reign of Edward the Third, in the year 1331, an application was made by Matthew de Sausmarez for a confirmation of his rights and prerogatives, as formerly enjoyed by his ancestors.

On receipt of this petition, his Majesty sent an order to John de Roches, guardian of the Channel islands, to make a perquisition thereon; authorising him to give to it his royal assent if not found to be prejudicial to the rights of the Crown or the privileges of the inhabitants, who had, by consent of his Majesty's father, fortified the castle of Jerbourg as a place of retreat and protection, as also for the security of their effects in case of invasion by the enemy.

In pursuance of his Majesty's order, the guardian appointed twelve of the most respectable inhabitants of the island to be examined before the bailiff or chief magistrate, who declared upon oath that the predecessors of Matthew de Sausmarez held that appointment from the Crown, with sundry appurtenances and privileges, which, in consideration of their services as hereditary keepers of the castle, had always been, and ought to be, inseparable from the fief of Jerbourg; and they further deposed, that these were not in any respect detrimental to the prerogative of the Crown, or injurious to the rights of the inhabitants, who still retained the advantage and privilege of retreating into the castle, with their effects, in every emergency.

[Pg 9]

The following curious and interesting fact, as attached to this ancient fief, has been also recorded in a Guernsey periodical: "Whenever the lord had occasion to go to Jersey, his tenants were obliged to convey him thither, for which they received a gratuity of *three sous*, or a dinner; but they were not obliged to bring him back." And this exemption may be thus explained:—The lord, or captain of Jerbourg, in those days held a fief in Jersey, called by the same name, which no longer belongs to the De Saumarez family; but formerly, when it was possessed by the same individual, the same rights and privileges were attached, so that when the affairs of the lord called him to Jersey, he was conducted to that island by his Guernsey tenants, and brought back by those of Jersey.

It is indeed certain, that, during many years after the Norman conquest, several gentlemen possessed estates in both islands, more or less considerable in one than in the other. The fief of Jerbourg remained in the family of De Sausmarez till about the year 1555, when it became the property of Mr. John Andros, in right of Judith de Sausmarez: but it has since reverted to the descendants of the old family, and belonged to Thomas de Sausmarez, his Majesty's late attorney-

[Pg 10]

general in the island of Guernsey, who died lately at a very advanced age,—the father of twenty-eight children!

The genealogy of the family between the year 1481, and the birth of the grandfather of the late Lord de Saumarez on the 4th June 1635, will be found in the Addenda, as also that of the subsequent members of the family who are not mentioned here; but, in proceeding, we cannot pass over the names of Captains Philip and Thomas Saumarez, uncles of the late lord, who were two of the bravest and most meritorious officers of their time. The former, who was first lieutenant with Commodore Anson, afterwards commanded the Nottingham, sixty-four, captured the French seventy-four, Mars, and was killed in action 1747;^[1] and the latter, when in command of the Antelope, of fifty guns, captured the French sixty-four, Belliqueux, in the following extraordinary manner:

In the month of November 1758, Captain Saumarez was stationed in the Bristol Channel for the protection of the trade, and, the wind blowing strong from the westward, had anchored his ship, the Antelope, of fifty guns and three hundred and fifty men, in King Road; and there being little probability of the appearance of an enemy under such circumstances, he had repaired to Bristol to partake of the hospitality of his friends in that prosperous city. While sitting at dinner, an express came from Barnstaple to inform him that a large ship, supposed to be an enemy, had anchored under Lundy Island.

[Pg 11]

Captain Saumarez immediately repaired on board his ship, weighed anchor, and, notwithstanding the contrary wind and fresh gale, he beat down the channel, and in the morning saw her at anchor off Ilfracombe. On discovering the Antelope, the enemy weighed and stood towards her, and, on coming near, hoisted French colours and seemed prepared to engage. As soon as the Antelope came within gun-shot, she opened her fire, when the Frenchman immediately hauled down his colours without returning a shot. Captain Saumarez now sent his boat with the first lieutenant to know if she had surrendered; but finding that the boat did not return, he bore down under her stern, and asked if they had struck. The answer was in the affirmative, and she was immediately taken possession of. She proved to be the Belliqueux, of sixty-four guns and five hundred men.

When the captain came on board the Antelope, and found that he had surrendered to a ship so much inferior in force, both in men and weight of metal, his chagrin and mortification knew no bounds. He exclaimed that he had been deceived, and actually proposed to Captain Saumarez that he should allow him to return to his ship, and that he would fight him fairly; to which the English captain replied that he must keep possession now; that he had obtained it, but he had no objection to his going back to France and getting another ship of the same kind to try the fortune of war. He conducted his prize back to King Road, and returned to Bristol with his French guest to enjoy the hospitality and hearty welcome of his friends, after an absence of only eighteen hours!

[Pg 12]

Matthew de Saumarez, father of Lord de Saumarez, being brought up to the medical profession, arrived at considerable practice and high respectability. He was remarkable for his urbanity of manners and hospitality, particularly to strangers. He married, first, Susannah, daughter of Thomas Dumaresq, Esq. of Jersey, and by her had Susannah (an only child), who married Henry Brock, Esq. of Guernsey: his second wife was Carteret, daughter of James Le Marchant, Esq. of Guernsey, and by her he had a numerous family, who are brothers and sisters of the late lord.^[2]

The family of De Sausmarez, a branch of which changed the spelling of the name to Saumarez about the year 1700, was not only one of the most ancient and respectable, but the members of it successively held the highest situations, and were connected with the first families residing in the island of Guernsey, which has always been distinguished for its loyalty and patriotism: indeed, it has not only produced several of our bravest and greatest warriors, but its inhabitants have ever manifested themselves to be proof against every attempt to seduce them from their allegiance. The opinions which have been entertained unfavourable to this fact,—arising no doubt from the proximity of the island to the coast of France, and the general use of the French language, but, most of all, from its having at one time been infested by adventurers,—are totally without foundation.

[Pg 13]

Having been many years stationed at this island, we have witnessed the loyalty and intrepidity of the natives: and could give several instances where the Guernsey pilot was the *first* to board the enemy.

Lord de Saumarez was married at Guernsey, on the 27th October 1788, to Martha, only daughter and heiress of Thomas Le Marchant, Esq. by marriage with Miss Mary Dobrée, two of the most ancient and respectable families in the island. This marriage was the consequence of a long and mutual attachment: it need scarcely be added, that it completed the happiness of both. They became the parents of eight children, whose biography will be found in the Appendix.

Commencement of his Career.—His Education.—Visit of the Duke of Gloucester to Guernsey.—Saumarez decides for the Navy.—Is put on the Soleby's books.—School at London.—Embarks in the Montreal.—Winchelsea, Pembroke, Levant.—Smyrna.—Returns home.—Passes for Lieutenant.—Embarks in the Bristol.—Proposal to leave the Navy.—Attack on Fort Sullivan.—Gallant Conduct.—Is made Lieutenant.—Bristol, Chatham, Lady Parker.—Commands the Spitfire.—Rhode Island.—Many Engagements.—War with France.—Appearance of the French Fleet under D'Estaing.—Spitfire burnt.—Appearance of Lord Howe.

The illustrious admiral, of whose ancestors a biographical sketch has been briefly given in the preceding chapter, and in the Addenda to this work, and whose glorious career is the subject of this record, passed from the first rudiments of learning, under a dame, to the more manly tuition of Elizabeth College, in Guernsey, where his brother, fifteen months his senior, was receiving his education.

Although he always said that his brother was a much better scholar in both Latin and Greek than himself, his taste for poetry, and his discrimination in that refined branch of literature, must have appeared at a very early age, as, when he was only seven or eight years old, he surprised his mother by reciting to her several lines from the first pages of Milton's *Paradise Lost*, which he had learnt of his own accord,—a foretaste of the gratification which he derived through life in reading that noble poem. His mother was so delighted with this unexpected discovery of his taste, that she could not forbear making it known to her friends; especially to a literary gentleman of her acquaintance, who sent young Saumarez a present of the *Golden Verses of Pythagoras*, which he also committed to memory, and retained throughout his life.

[Pg 15]

But the great sensibility of his heart was most apparent in his attachment to all his relations: their pleasures and their pains were always *his*; and it is therefore not surprising that he was a favourite with them all. In those days, Guernsey was, as it were, a large family; and the society of the upper classes was linked in a small, but a select and happy, circle, interested in each other's welfare. The communication with England not being, as now, kept up by regular packets, the arrival of a stranger was an event of some importance, and mostly occurred through the visits of the king's ships going on foreign stations, which put into Guernsey for wines and other stores: on these occasions the captains and officers were constant guests at the hospitable mansion of our hero's father, and it was usually the province of young Saumarez to look out for and report their appearance.

[Pg 16]

In July 1767, this little community was surprised by an occurrence which to this day is related among the events of "olden times," as having made a great, and certainly a lasting impression. His royal highness the Duke of Gloucester, on his return from a tour in France, anchored in Guernsey roads. At two in the morning, the hostess of the only inn in the town was awakened by a call that the Duke of Gloucester had landed, and was coming there: not supposing this possible, she for a long time refused to rise; but, being at length convinced, she directed the party to the house of the lieutenant-governor, who was as incredulous as the good woman of the Ship Inn.

At last he appeared at the window in his dressing-gown and *bonnet de nuit*, and finding whom he was called upon to receive, he exclaimed, in the trepidation of the moment,—“My house is not fit for the duke; go to my friend, Doctor Saumarez.” There at last his royal highness found entrance, and a hearty welcome; but it may be conjectured that no little surprise and bustle spread through the house at the unexpected arrival at such an hour of the illustrious guest. The blue damask room was, however, soon prepared, with other apartments for the aides-de camp, Sir Henry Clinton and another.

[Pg 17]

Young Saumarez and his brother were sent off, as soon as the sun rose, to inform their uncle the attorney-general, who resided some distance from the town, that the royal visitor had arrived. On their return the streets were decorated with crowns, festoons, and garlands of flowers, which had risen as from the wand of a magician; the bells were ringing, the populace were in holiday suits, and the whole effect was so animated, that the more splendid scenes of after-life never erased it from the mind of Saumarez.

The duke, on rising, was surprised at the quick display of loyalty he beheld, and expressed himself much gratified at the proofs he received of respect and attachment which these faithful islanders evinced in his person towards the king and the royal family. His royal highness condescended to honour a ball in the evening; and often did young Saumarez hear his aunt (a sister of his mother, married to Major Brabazon of the 65th regiment,) relate her having opened the ball in a minuet with his royal highness.

Young Saumarez had long and constantly cherished a decided predilection for the navy. Accustomed as he had been from childhood to hear of the fame which his valiant uncles, Captains Philip and Thomas Saumarez, had acquired, his mind was early inspired with a desire to tread in their path, and to acquire for himself a name which might emulate theirs. His eldest brother was already in the navy; but his father having six sons, when he found that James had evinced such a desire for the sea, and having connexions in the service, probably considered that he could not place another more advantageously than in a profession which had already afforded an honourable and glorious career to two of his family. Accordingly he accepted the offer of Captain Lucius O'Bryen, of his majesty's ship *Soleby*, who entered his name on the books of that ship on the 20th September 1767 as volunteer, where it remained until the 3rd of June 1770, having been

[Pg 18]

there two years and nine months. During this time, however, he never joined the ship, but was for a part of it at a school in the vicinity of London, which had been recommended to his father by a naval friend, who appears to have been ill qualified to make the selection, if we may judge from the amusing account which Saumarez gave in after-life of his acquirements in that seminary. Fortunately, as he said, when he had been there ten months, his father being in London, sent for him, and to his great joy took him home, and with this portion of education he was launched into the world; as a few months after he went to Portsmouth to join the *Montreal*, Captain Alms, who had been a friend of his uncles, and who had visited his father at Guernsey.

[Pg 19]

On the 9th of August 1769, the ship sailed for the Mediterranean. Great pains were taken by the captain to improve the talents of young Saumarez, which soon became apparent: but the commodore being obliged to return home on account of ill health, he placed him in the *Winchelsea*; and we find that he went on board the *Pembroke*, bearing the broad pendant of Commodore Proby, and commanded by Captain Durell, who was a relative of the family, on the 14th August 1770, and joined the former ship on the 28th September following.

Nature happily had endowed young Saumarez with talents, and qualities of mind and heart, which in a great measure repaired the want of a regular and more enlarged education: a sound judgment and quick sensibility soon led him to perceive his deficiency in acquired knowledge; and he was inspired with a laudable ambition, to remedy it by every exertion the feeble means within his reach could accomplish. When, indeed, it is considered that only a few volumes of the *Spectator* and *Idler*, with some stray volumes of the Roman History, composed his little library, it may justly be inferred that it was no ordinary capacity or moderate application which could form a character such as was manifested by him.

[Pg 20]

Frigates, in those days, had neither chaplains nor schoolmasters; and the "young gentlemen," when off duty, were left to spend their time as they thought fit. The midshipmen of the present day can have but a faint idea of the hardships and privations of a naval aspirant's life at the period Saumarez entered the service. Biscuits with insects, and tainted meat, was the usual fare when at sea at their mess-table; and none would have thought of procuring such *luxuries* as are now indispensable *necessaries* to their successors in the service. While there is great cause to rejoice in the change which has taken place, it should not prevent the expression of just and well-founded regret that the amelioration has spread to the opposite extreme; the placing a son in the navy being now a heavy tax instead of a relief, which we know is felt severely by old naval officers on half-pay, who naturally wish to employ a son in the service to which they belong.

With grateful remembrance, Saumarez has often been heard to say, that, on his departure from home, his affectionate father put a purse containing fifteen guineas in his hand; observing that, as he knew he had a large family, he trusted that he would use it with economy, but that when he wanted more he might draw on his banker. So strictly, however, did he fulfil this recommendation, that his father said, the sight of his drafts gave him pleasure.

[Pg 21]

His first journal is of the *Winchelsea*, Captain Samuel Cranston Goodall, and commences on the 8th November 1770, at which time he was first rated a midshipman: he remained in that ship until the 14th February 1772. During these seventeen months he gained a valuable friend in Captain Goodall, whose regard he preserved to the end of his life. Saumarez had constant access to his cabin: he allowed him to write there, and make extracts from the best authors in his possession, which was of great service in improving his acquaintance with modern literature. This ship had been cruising in the Mediterranean, and visited most of the interesting ports there; and, in February 1772, the *Winchelsea* was ordered to England,—an account joyfully hailed by all on board, but by none more sincerely than by Mr. Saumarez, whose heart panted to see his dearest friends. What, then, must have been his feelings, on the arrival of the *Levant* to relieve the *Winchelsea*, when he was sent for by Captain Goodall, and apprised that Captain Thompson would receive him?—and as it was of importance that he should finish his time before going home, he strongly recommended his stay, especially as it was his father's wish. Although it was as if a sword had pierced his heart, he calmly submitted to the decision, and he saw the worthy Captain Goodall and his messmates depart without a murmur.

[Pg 22]

This self-denial was not wholly unrewarded. The *Levant* was a larger ship, affording much better accommodation to the midshipmen; and Mr. Saumarez, having been nearly three years at sea, became of some consequence with his messmates. The date of his joining the *Levant* was the 15th February 1772, having been discharged on the preceding day from the *Winchelsea*. He soon formed a close friendship with Mr. Samuel Thompson, the captain's son; which continued unshaken till the death of the latter in 1782.

The British merchants having petitioned for a ship of war to be stationed in the Mediterranean for the protection of the trade, the *Levant* was ordered on that service, and for fourteen months remained in that inactive position, which young Saumarez used to say he considered a blank in his existence. Having no books to relieve the spirits, no letters to cheer the heart, life wasted away without profit or satisfaction. There must, however, have been a few bright days; for he often mentioned with pleasure the hospitality of the English families settled in Smyrna, of which he occasionally partook when Captain Thompson allowed it. This was the more frequent on account of his thorough knowledge of the French language, which was the means of procuring him attentions rendered doubly acceptable by the dulness of that anchorage: such were the advantages he derived from his familiarity with that language, that he never failed to recommend the study of it to all his young *protégés* before going to sea.

[Pg 23]

On the 28th of May 1773, the *Levant* was at length released, and sailed for Gibraltar; from which

place she proceeded to Port Mahon, to be repaired. On the 28th of May 1774, she resumed her old station in Smyrna harbour, (in consequence of an insurrection, in which several Christians had been massacred, owing to the destruction of the Russian fleet in the Bay of Chisma, on the contiguous coast,) having been away precisely one year. She again left that station, on the 19th of September, for Gibraltar; and finally for England in March 1775, on the 29th of which month she arrived at Spithead. On the 14th of the following April, Mr. Saumarez was discharged from the Levant; and had at length the long-wished-for happiness of seeing again his native land, and the friends from whom he had been for more than five years separated.

The Levant, being paid off, was recommissioned by the Honourable Captain Murray, who used every persuasion to induce Mr. Saumarez to remain in the ship; but, after an absence of five years, he was too anxious to spend some time with his family, to accede to his proposal, and the moment he was at liberty he set off for Guernsey.

Taking into account the time his name had been on the books of the Solebay, he had now served more than the required six years of service: and as the regulations for age were at that time not strictly enforced, after a few weeks of rest he went to London to pass his examination for lieutenant; but owing to the commissioners being on their annual visits to the dock-yards, and their return being protracted, two months elapsed before the object was accomplished. This enabled him again to return to his friends, but he was not then permitted long to enjoy their society.

[Pg 24]

In the year 1775, on the breaking out of the war with the American colonies, Commodore Sir Peter Parker being appointed to the command of a squadron, with his broad pendant on board the Bristol, of fifty guns, Mr. Saumarez, then eighteen years of age, was ordered to join that ship, through the recommendation of Admiral Keppel, who, having been the friend and contemporary of his uncles, ever evinced an interest in his advancement. After an interview with Sir Peter in London, he embarked, on the 9th of October, at Sheerness, whence the Bristol proceeded to the Nore at the end of November. After passing a short time at Spithead and Plymouth, which they left on the 21st of December, the squadron sailed for Cork, the last rendezvous of the expedition destined for South Carolina. This consisted of six frigates, two bombs, and two hundred transports, containing seven regiments of infantry and two companies of artillery, under the command of that distinguished nobleman, the Earl Cornwallis, and the Honourable Brigadier-general Vaughan. These two chiefs, with their aides-de-camp, Lord Chewton and Captain Eustace, were embarked on board the Bristol: they sailed about the middle of January 1776.

[Pg 25]

On the passage out, which was remarkable for stormy weather, and for the consequent dispersion of the convoy, the activity and zeal of young Saumarez not only attracted the attention, but gained the esteem of the noble earl; who, by offering to make him his aide-de-camp and take him by the hand, had nearly persuaded him to leave the naval service, and enter the army, offering him a commission in the 33rd, his own regiment. We have heard him relate, that, after he had more than half consented, he went below and told his messmates, who immediately jeered him so much about "turning soldier," that he returned to the quarter-deck and gave a positive refusal to the earl, who could not help expressing his disappointment and chagrin on the occasion.

There can be no doubt that he would have highly distinguished himself in the army, or wherever he was placed; but, happily for the nation, and for the honour of the profession which he had first chosen, he was destined to display his bravery and splendid talents in a sphere where there happened to be a much greater range for them, than if he had followed the fortunes of the noble earl in the other honourable service. Many years after, when Saumarez's career had proved the wisdom of his decision, he met Lord Cornwallis at dinner at Lord Spencer's, then first lord of the admiralty; who, on hearing this anecdote, observed, "Lord Cornwallis would have deprived the naval service of one of its best officers."

[Pg 26]

The Bristol arrived off Cape Fear early in May, where they found General Clinton; and, having repaired their damages, reached Charlestown in the beginning of June. The troops were landed on the island, at a low, sandy spot, in the midst of a heavy surf, and the guns of the Bristol and the Experiment were put on board the Harcourt East-indiaman, to enable them to get over the bar.

One of the transports, called the Friendship, having been fitted as a ship of war to be taken into the service, was commissioned by Lieutenant Charles Hope, first of the Bristol, an excellent officer, and he selected Sir James Barclay and Mr. Saumarez to be his officers; but, after a few days, he prevailed on Captain Hope to allow him to return to the Bristol, which he did only two days previously to the attack on Fort Sullivan, which, after passing the bar, it became necessary to silence and take possession of. This fortress was considered the key of the harbour, and the fortifications of it were constructed with great skill: the works being formed of cabbage-tree, a kind of wood peculiarly calculated, by its porous and elastic quality, to resist the effects of shot; and, from its not being liable to splinter, the troops in the batteries were secured from what is deemed one of the principal means of destruction; while the Bristol's crew were fully exposed to the fatal effects of the enemy's fire. The guns being taken on board on the 28th of June 1776, at 8 A.M. the squadron began the attack by a furious and incessant cannonade, which continued with little intermission until nine o'clock at night. Never did British valour shine more conspicuously, nor did our ships in an engagement of the same nature experience so serious an encounter: the squadron could not approach within grape-shot of the enemy, and therefore could not clear the batteries; and the spring of the Bristol's cable being cut by the shot, she swung so as to get

[Pg 27]

dreadfully raked. Mr. Saumarez was employed in replacing this spring three times in the Mercury's boat, assisted by the captain of that transport.

The brave Captain Morris, after receiving a number of wounds, with a noble constancy disdained to quit his duty; until, his arm being shot off, he was carried below in a condition which did not afford any probability of recovery. At one time, the quarter-deck of the Bristol was cleared of every one except the commodore, who stood on the poop-ladder alone; a spectacle of intrepidity and firmness which has been seldom equalled, never exceeded. It is said, that Mr. Saumarez seeing him in this situation, requested him to come down; when he replied with a smile, "What! you want to get rid of me, do ye?" while he well knew that the reverse was the fact.

[Pg 28]

The loss sustained by the squadron in general, and by the Bristol in particular, in an action unexampled in point of duration, and in which it was finally repulsed, was very great: she had alone one hundred and eleven killed and wounded, including her gallant captain and several other officers.

During this severe conflict, Mr. Saumarez had a very narrow escape: at the moment he was pointing a gun on the lower-deck, of which he had the command, a shot from the fort entered the port-hole, struck the gun, and killed seven out of eight men who were stationed to work it. Some time afterwards, being called on deck to execute certain orders respecting the replacing the spring on the cable, he was standing close to Mr. Darley, a midshipman, for whom he had the greatest regard, when a shot took off the young man's head and covered Mr. Saumarez with his blood.

Captain Morris, after being carried below, lingered contrary to expectation, and hopes were formed that he would survive; when, unfortunately, his attendant being overcome with sleep, it is supposed the captain's bandages gave way, and, not having strength to awake him, he was found in the morning bathed in his blood. His dissolution becoming inevitable, one of the officers asked him if he had any direction to give with respect to his family; to which he nobly replied, "None! I leave them to the Providence of God, and the generosity of my country," and soon after expired. This engagement lasted thirteen hours: it was the first in which Mr. Saumarez had been present; and, after the very many in which he was subsequently engaged, he has been heard to declare it to have been one of the most severe he ever witnessed. Captain Scott, of the Experiment, lost his arm; and there were several death-vacancies for lieutenants.

[Pg 29]

Mr. Saumarez's conduct during the whole of this obstinate and bloody contest was deemed so especially meritorious, that the commodore expressed his highest approbation of it in the warmest and most flattering terms, and soon after the battle he promoted him to the rank of lieutenant. The following is a copy of his first acting commission:

"By Sir Peter Parker, Commander-in-chief of a squadron of his Majesty's ships to be employed on a particular service.

"Whereas I think it necessary for the good of his Majesty's service to have an Acting-lieutenant on board his Majesty's ship the Bristol, you are hereby required and directed to take upon you the office of Acting-lieutenant of his Majesty's ship BRISTOL strictly charging and commanding all the officers and company of the said ship to behave themselves jointly, and severally, in their respective employments, with all due respect and obedience unto you their said LIEUTENANT; and you are likewise to observe and execute the GENERAL PRINTED INSTRUCTIONS, and such orders and directions as you shall from time to time receive from your captain, or any other your superior officer, for his Majesty's service.

[Pg 30]

"For which this shall be your Order. Dated on board his Majesty's ship Bristol, in Five-fathom Hole, off Charlestown, the 11th day of July 1776.

P. PARKER.

"To Mr. James Saumarez, hereby appointed to act as Lieutenant on board his Majesty's ship Bristol, until further orders.

"By command of the Commodore.

JOHN READ."

In this ship Acting-lieutenant Saumarez remained until the 23rd September; serving often with the army on shore, and on all occasions taking a distinguished part. He was actively employed in the boats of the Bristol on every landing that took place, from the first disembarkation of the troops in Gravesend Bay, to the landing at Rochelle from Frog's-neck. Lord Howe then commanded in person on this expedition, and hoisted his flag in the Carysfort, the gallant Captain Fanshawe. His lordship appointed Mr. Saumarez his aide-de-camp, and selected him to convey General Clinton, commanding the troops, to the vicinity of Rochelle, when he had the satisfaction of receiving the thanks of his lordship for his zealous exertions. All the boats were then ordered to join their respective ships off New York; an order, it may be supposed, not unwelcome after an absence of several weeks, during which officers and men had been subject to all the privations consequent on such a service, sleeping in boats, and scarcely having any change of clothing.

[Pg 31]

Saumarez was afterwards on duty up the North River, and had the honour of conveying Lord Cornwallis and his staff on board his boat in the first landing in the Jerseys; and on several occasions he was actively useful to his lordship, who repeatedly acknowledged his services. Being

employed in the disembarkation of troops newly arrived, he discovered that his brother's regiment, the twenty-third Welsh (now Royal Welsh) Fusileers, was one of them; and soon after he had the happiness of meeting him, who, on his part, was not less agreeably surprised at the welcome and unexpected encounter.

Being at head-quarters when Fort Washington surrendered, the garrison, consisting of two thousand seven hundred men, having laid down their arms, Lieutenant Saumarez was the bearer of the tidings to the Bristol; but they appeared so incredible, that it was some time before Sir Peter Parker could be persuaded of their authenticity.

Rear-admiral Lord Shuldham, having on the 6th September, shifted his flag to the Bristol, Lieutenant Saumarez followed his commander, who then hoisted his broad pendant in the Chatham. He was therefore removed by Lord Viscount Howe, vice-admiral of the white, and commander-in-chief of all his Majesty's ships and vessels in North America, to the Chatham, as fifth lieutenant "for the time being." In this situation Lieutenant Saumarez so often and so particularly distinguished himself in the boats, and in command of the Lady Parker schooner, tender to the Unicorn, Captain Ford, that, on the 17th February 1778, he was appointed lieutenant commanding the Spitfire, a schooner-rigged galley, by special direction of the commander-in-chief, as will appear by the following order:

[Pg 32]

By Commodore Hotham, on board the Preston.

"The Viscount Howe having directed that you shall command the Spitfire galley, in the room of Lieutenant Scott; you are hereby directed to repair on board the said galley, and take the command of her accordingly, using the utmost despatch in preparing and fitting her for a passage to Rhode Island.

"Given on board the Preston, off
New York, 17th February 1778.
W. HOTHAM.

"To Lieut. Saumarez, hereby
appointed to command
H.M. galley, the Spitfire.

"By command. TITUS LEWIS."

Our young hero, who had been far less actively employed than he wished, had now obtained almost the height of his ambition,—in other words, a situation where he could have an opportunity of displaying his talents and intrepidity. He found his new vessel in the king's yard; and, having taken charge from her former commander, proceeded to fit out with surprising diligence. On the 23rd February he received twenty-three seamen from the Preston; and on the 27th a sergeant and eleven marines completed his complement of thirty-seven men, including himself and the carpenter; when he immediately weighed and made sail. It soon after blew a gale, but he succeeded in reaching the Brothers, where he anchored, and found H.M.S. Sphinx, and some traders: the next morning he weighed, and falling in with H.M.S. Falcon and convoy, they proceeded on their voyage. On the 4th of March strong gales obliged the convoy to put into Huntingdon Bay, where they were detained by stormy weather till the 13th of March. On the 15th the convoy reached Oyster-pond Bay, and on the 16th anchored off Fort Island, in company with the Eagle, Nonsuch, Apollo, Mermaid, Unicorn, Ariel, Maidstone, Grampus, and Stromboli; and here their active operations began. On the 28th of March an enemy's frigate was chased and run on shore in the Narraganset Passage, when Lieutenant Saumarez, together with the boats of the squadron, went to destroy her, she being protected by a battery on shore; the Spitfire was anchored about four hundred yards from this battery in twelve feet water, and, having got her long-bow gun to bear, engaged it while the boats boarded and set fire to the frigate: this occupied more than an hour, during which time the battery was silenced, but a brisk fire of musketry was kept up by the rebels; and the service being performed, the galley was towed out with little damage, five men being wounded: at nine she anchored in safety off Newton's Point. Soon after this a gale came on; the galley drove towards the rocks, and it was supposed she must be lost; but Lieutenant Saumarez cut his cable, and by a masterly act of seamanship saved his vessel, and gained the admiration of the whole squadron. During this period, Lieutenant Saumarez was under the orders of Commodore Griffith, of the Nonsuch, senior officer of his Majesty's ships and vessels at Rhode Island; and it will appear by the following secret order, that he was kept at the most important point in advance.

[Pg 33]

[Pg 34]

(Secret.)

"By Walter Griffith, Esq. Commander of a division of his Majesty's ships and vessels at Rhode Island.

"The employment of the galley under your command being necessary in the Seakonnet Channel, with the intention to intercept any armed vessels fitted by the rebels for putting to sea from the harbours or creeks communicating therewith; but more particularly to defeat any attempts they may propose for making a descent in force, or attacking the post occupied by the king's troops on the eastern shore of Rhode Island; you are therefore to proceed to the aforesaid channel, and put yourself under the command of the superior officer there, for those purposes accordingly: but you are, nevertheless, at liberty to move the galley (under the orders of the commanding officer there) from time to time, to prevent the enemy from being able to ascertain the position thereof, either for executing any meditated insult on the galley, or to pass you unobserved during the night; taking care, however, to keep as much as may be within such limits, as will fully enable you to effect the principal object of your appointment as aforesaid.

[Pg 35]

"It will become requisite for this end, to have your boats (or other better-appointed craft, with which you can in future be supplied), advanced at seasonable lines, both for the earlier discovery of any

ships or vessels attempting to pass your station in the night, and preventing any other advantages attempted by the enemy under cover thereof.

"The crews of the boats so directed should be prudently cautious in boarding vessels of inconsiderable appearance, that they may not be exposed to suffer by the treacherous practice of the enemy in different modes to blow up and destroy your men; but a suitable discretion will be no less requisite on your part, that, in warning them of these hazards, they are not induced to become remiss in their exertions in the essential services.

"If the enemy should attempt to pass your station with any ship of apparent force, great attention will be requisite that you may not be misled by such not improbable expeditions to draw you from your station, and thereby facilitate the means to succeed with less risk in a meditated descent on the eastern shore of the island; which is to be at all times the object of your chief care to resist and oppose, by endeavouring to destroy the boats of the enemy employed on that occasion, or otherwise to prevent the further use of them in the attempt.

"It will therefore be incumbent on you, in conjunction with other armed vessels stationed with you in Seakonnet Channel, to intercept the said armed vessels (if possible) before they have advanced below your first anchoring station, and to keep secret such directions as the senior officer at the said anchorage may propose to adopt for that intent.

[Pg 36]

"You are to continue on this service until further orders; and I am to recommend your attention, that a careful watch is kept in the galley at all times, conformable to the tenour of the printed instructions given in that respect; and that every other precaution is taken to guard against the attempts of the rebel for the annoyance of the galley, wherein it is to be observed of all such enterprises, that those which are the least suspected are ever the most likely to be attended with success.

"Given on board H.M.S. Nonsuch,
at Rhode Island, 21st May 1778.
S.W. GRIFFITH.

"To Lieut. Saumarez, &c.

It should be mentioned here, that Rhode Island was taken possession of by his Majesty's forces under General Clinton and Sir Peter Parker on the 9th December 1776; and some description of it is necessary to show the arduous as well as perilous nature of the service on which our young hero was now employed. This island takes its name from the province, and lies in Narraganset Bay: it is fifteen miles in length from north to south, and three miles and a half broad; the north end is only three miles from Bristol, to which there is a ferry. The Seakonnet Passage separates it from the main on the north-west side, and the islands of Conanicut and Prudence lie in the passage on the south-east side, the town of Newport being in the south-east part of the island.

[Pg 37]

The Seakonnet Passage was in consequence of the above order allotted to the Spitfire. Lieutenant Saumarez was now under the orders of Captain Græme, and proceeded to his station: it appears from his journal, now in our possession, that he was constantly on the alert, and almost daily skirmishing with the enemy. On the 24th he had to sustain the attack of three armed boats which came off from Point Judith, and had nearly decoyed them on board; but they found their mistake in time to escape after a good drubbing. On the same evening he joined a detachment of five hundred men, which, under cover of the Flora, had landed above Bristol and burnt one hundred and twenty-five batteaux-plats, an armed galley, and a privateer of fourteen guns, besides destroying the greatest part of the town. On the 30th April a firing was heard in the direction of the Taunton: the Spitfire immediately weighed, and ran over to the enemy's shore, where Lieutenant Saumarez opposed his vessel to a field-piece, which returned his fire without doing any injury for a considerable time; this was meant as a diversion to enable the 54th regiment to attack unobserved, which in the mean time landed up the Taunton, destroyed eight sawmills and several flat-boats, and came off by the assistance of the Spitfire with inconsiderable loss.

[Pg 38]

On the 1st of May the Spitfire weighed, and was beating against the wind to obtain her station, when, by the vessel missing stays, she got aground on Sandy Hook. On this, the enemy immediately brought down a gun, but without effect. An anchor was carried out; the vessel was hove off without damage, and reached Fogland Battery, off which she anchored, and the next day reached her former station.

It will be needless to notice every occasion wherein the Spitfire was engaged with the enemy, which, while Lieutenant Saumarez commanded her, was no less than forty-seven times! but we shall proceed to the period when his operations in that vessel were drawing to a close. The Americans, who had publicly declared their independence on the 4th July 1776, had concluded a treaty with the French on the 13th March 1778, which was considered by the British government as a declaration of war; and the French ambassador being directed to withdraw, the following orders were issued to the squadron at Rhode Island by Commodore John Brisbane, who had now taken the command:

"By Captain John Brisbane, Captain of H.M.S. Flora, and senior officer of his Majesty's ships and vessels at Newport, Rhode Island.

"In pursuance of an order from the Lord Viscount Howe, vice-admiral of the white, and commander-in-chief of his Majesty's ships and vessels employed on a particular service, you are hereby required and directed to MAKE WAR UPON, take, or destroy any part of the French squadron lately arrived on the coasts of this continent, as well as other ships of war of that nation appearing on the coasts of North America, to the utmost of your ability, until further orders, keeping this secret. Dated on board H.M.S. Flora, at Newport, Rhode Island, 26th July 1778.

[Pg 39]

(Signed) J. BRISBANE.

"To Lieutenant Saumarez, commanding
the Spitfire, galley."

This order was transmitted with an enclosure, designated "Copy of a paragraph of a letter received from Lord Viscount Howe, dated off Sandy Hook, 19th July 1778."

"As there is not a sufficient naval force for the defence of Rhode Island, and none can be sent while the French squadron, at anchor off Sandy Hook, continues so much superior to that under my command, it may not be unseasonable to remind you that you are at liberty to apply the force under your direction, by landing of guns and men for the service of the batteries; dismantling, and even destroying the ships, to strengthen the defences of the post in the most effectual manner, in case of an attack upon the post, more especially when no longer in prospect of rendering better assistance under the same circumstances, or preventing the capture of the ships.

"Every captain or commander is therefore directed to attend to the foregoing paragraph, and act from circumstances, in the best and most effectual manner possible for the defence of the post, and ship or vessel under his command, so as to answer the intention of his lordship. Dated on board H.M.S. Flora, Newport Harbour, 27th July 1778.

"To Lieutenant Saumarez, commanding
H.M. galley Spitfire."

The French, who had secretly been assisting the Americans, and had long been preparing for war, sent a powerful fleet from France, which arrived, and anchored off Sandy Hook, while Lord Howe was within the harbour with a very inferior force, but could not be attacked: they therefore bent their course to reduce Rhode Island. On the 29th of July they were discovered; and, on the 4th of August, two ships of the line and two frigates entered the passage, where the Kingfisher sloop, the Alarm and Spitfire, galleys, were stationed; and it being no longer possible to prevent them from falling into the hands of the enemy, their stores, guns, and crews were landed, and the vessels set on fire.

[Pg 40]

CHAPTER III.

[Pg 41]

1778 to 1782.

Serves ashore.—Returns to England in the Leviathan.—Providential escape from shipwreck.—Visits Guernsey.—Joins the Victory.—A journey to London.—Joins the Fortitude.—Battle off the Dogger Bank.—Anecdotes of Admiral Parker.—Mr. Saumarez promoted to the rank of Master and Commander.—Appointed to the Tisiphone.—Sails for the West Indies with Admiral Kempenfelt.—Action with Comte de Guichen.—Captures a French ship of thirty-six guns.—Is despatched to Sir Samuel Hood.—Arrives at Barbadoes.—Escapes from two French men-of-war.—Passes through an intricate channel.—Joins Sir Samuel Hood.—Gallant conduct in cutting out a vessel.—Tisiphone ordered home.—Fortunate exchange with Captain Stanhope.—Takes command of the Russell.

After the destruction of his little vessel, the Spitfire, Lieutenant Saumarez was attached to the division of sailors under Commodore Brisbane, to whom he became aide-de-camp. This division consisted of the crews of the frigates and other vessels which had been destroyed, on the following day in the southern passage, to prevent their falling into the hands of the enemy. The vessels destroyed, in addition to those mentioned in the last chapter, were, the Juno, Lark, Orpheus, and Flora of thirty-two guns, and the Cerberus of twenty-eight.

[Pg 42]

The artillery and stores had been in part landed, and mounted in various positions on the island; while the seamen and officers, amounting to above a thousand men, were actively employed there during the whole of the siege. Lieutenant Saumarez was stationed latterly in command of one of the advanced posts, and had several opportunities of distinguishing himself in repulsing the repeated assaults of the enemy, and in attacking them in return.

The plans of the French for the reduction of Rhode Island having failed, and their fleet having been dispersed in a storm, during which some were disabled, and others captured, and finally the appearance of Lord Howe with a reinforced but still inferior squadron, induced them to abandon the project, and, after refitting at Boston, to steer for the West Indies.

The officers and seamen, being now no longer wanted, were ordered a passage home in the Leviathan of fifty guns, on board which ship Lieutenant Saumarez embarked, in company with Captains Dalrymple, Smith, Hudson, Brisbane, Symons, and Græme, whose ships had also been destroyed. As she was approaching the English Channel, the Leviathan was overtaken by a violent storm, and most providentially saved from shipwreck by the clearing up of a thick fog just in time to avoid the danger, when they found the ship close to the Rocks of Scilly, near to the spot where Sir Cloudesley Shovel was lost. This circumstance has been attributed to a strong northerly current, but it was probably from the position of these dangerous islands being inaccurately laid down in the charts; it is indeed an extraordinary fact, that an error of no less than three leagues in their situation was first discovered by the Swedish surveyor, Nordenanker, about the commencement of last war. The Leviathan, nevertheless, arrived safely at Portsmouth

[Pg 43]

about the beginning of the year 1779, when Lieutenant Saumarez had again an opportunity of visiting his family and friends in Guernsey.

He had, however, resided there but a short time, when he was appointed first lieutenant of the *Edgar* of seventy-four guns, then fitting at Woolwich for the broad pendant of Commodore Elliot. After receiving his letter of appointment, he was obliged to wait some time for an opportunity to cross the channel; but at length availed himself of the *Ambuscade*, which touched at Guernsey. Having arrived at the Isle of Wight, Captain Phipps, her commander, ascertained that the squadron under Admiral Drake, to which he belonged, had sailed from Spithead; therefore without touching at Portsmouth to land Lieutenant Saumarez, he proceeded to join the Channel fleet, which he found twenty leagues to the westward of Scilly, having on the way retaken the *Helena* sloop of war; to command which Sir John Warren, then first lieutenant of the *Victory*, was appointed, and Mr. Saumarez was ordered in his stead to join the *Victory*, then bearing the flag of Sir Charles Hardy, at whose request he was continued in that ship, where he was third lieutenant in seniority, but supernumerary on the books. Besides the commander-in-chief of the Channel fleet, Rear-Admiral Kempenfelt, as first, and Captain Collings, as second captain, were both on board the *Victory* detached to cruise off Brest, commencing in June 1779, and returning occasionally to port until May 31st, 1780. After the death of Sir Charles Hardy, which took place on the 9th May 1780, Admiral Geary, and then Sir Francis Drake, succeeded to the command, with Captain Clayton as captain.

[Pg 44]

The *Victory* continued on the same service until the spring of 1781, when Admiral Hyde Parker hoisted his flag, and Mr. Saumarez now became first lieutenant. He had been so zealously attentive to his duty, that for several months he never went on shore, till at length he yielded to the persuasion of his messmates. On arriving at Point Beach, Portsmouth, he was accosted by a person in French, who demanded the way to the admiral's house, and at the same time informed him that he had just landed with the intelligence that Jersey had been attacked by the French. Mr. Saumarez immediately went with the messenger to the admiral, who despatched him as a courier to town, and he returned in a remarkably short time with orders respecting it. In short, his diligence and zeal were so manifest in every service on which he was employed, that he soon gained the esteem and friendship of Vice-admiral Hyde Parker, who, in June 1781, was appointed to the command in the North Seas, and shifted his flag into the *Fortitude*, Captain Robertson. The squadron in those seas, when under command of Commodore Keith Stewart, was of inconsiderable strength, but had now risen to a force of five ships of the line, besides one fifty, one forty-four, and three frigates. Notwithstanding the desire of Lord Sandwich, then first lord of the admiralty, to provide for his own friends, the admiral succeeded in carrying with him, from the *Victory*, Lieutenants Waghorne and Saumarez. On the 3rd of June they sailed from Spithead to Sheerness, and, after refitting and touching at Leith, sailed to bring home the Baltic convoy from *Elseneur*, about the beginning of July.

[Pg 45]

The squadron, which might have been made much stronger, consisted of the *Fortitude*, seventy-four, Captain Robertson; the *Princess Amelia*, eighty, Captain Macartney; the *Berwick*, seventy-four, Captain Fergusson; the *Bienfaisant*, sixty-four, Captain Braithwaite; the *Buffalo*, sixty, Captain Truscott; the *Preston*, fifty, Captain Græme; the *Dolphin*, forty-four, Captain Blair; the *Latona*, thirty-eight, Sir Hyde Parker (the admiral's son); the *Belle Poule*, thirty-six, Captain Patton; the *Cleopatra*, thirty-two, Captain Murray; and the *Surprise*, cutter, Lieutenant Rivett.

[Pg 46]

The Dutch by this time had declared war, and, being perfectly aware of the force of Admiral Parker's squadron, sailed with a large convoy for the Baltic, under command of Admiral Zoutman, whose squadron was one ship of the line superior; it became, therefore, necessary to take the *Dolphin*, of forty-four guns, into the line, although she had only eighteen-pounders on the lower deck.

But before entering into the details of the action which took place on the 5th of August 1781, it is proper to give some of the particulars of each squadron. That of Admiral Parker was totally unfit for the line of battle; the ships had been but a short time together, and had only two or three times practised the usual manœuvres of forming the line, &c. The *Fortitude* was a small seventy-four, but well manned. The *Princess Amelia* was an old eighty-gun ship, with reduced metal and masts. The *Berwick* was a good ship, and, in addition to her metal, had two sixty-eight-pounder carronades on the poop; but next to her was the *Dolphin*, forty-four, with only twenty twelve-pounders on the lower-deck, which could not be expected to make any impression on a sixty-four. The *Buffalo* was formerly the *Captain*, of seventy guns; but, in the commencement of hostilities, not being thought efficient as a ship of war, she was fitted up as a mast-ship and her name changed; but, probably for want of vessels, she was again equipped for war with sixty guns, but only with eighteen-pounders on the lower deck. The *Preston* was a good fifty-gun ship, with her proper metal, twenty-four-pounders on the lower, and twelve-pounders on the upper deck. The *Bienfaisant* had the metal on her lower deck reduced. The *Artois*, which afterwards joined the squadron, was the finest frigate then known; had twenty-eight, eighteen-pounders on her main deck, with, in addition to her complement of guns, heavy carronades on the quarter-deck and fore-castle; she was manned with three hundred men. The *Latona* was a fine thirty-eight gun frigate, with eighteen-pounders; the *Belle Poule* and *Tartar* were excellent of their class.

[Pg 47]

The Dutch squadron consisted of one seventy-four, one sixty-eight, one sixty-four, and five fifty-fours. In the action there were five frigates, the other five having gone off with the convoy; the list of both will be found in the Appendix to this volume, with that of the killed and wounded.

The Dutch squadron and convoy, which were bound to the Baltic, were discovered at four o'clock

in the morning about six leagues to leeward; and there being a fine commanding breeze and smooth water, everything was favourable, as well for detaching the convoy, which was immediately done by signal to the Tartar, as for making dispositions to attack the enemy. The admiral seeing that they had their own port (the Texel) directly to leeward, and being doubtful that they would run in there for shelter, or at least go nearer to the shore, made the signal to chase at thirty-five minutes past four, which obliged every ship to make sail instead of preparing for action with a superior enemy. At five, Admiral Zoutman hoisted Dutch colours, and his men-of-war drew out from the convoy, which took their station under the lee to await the event. At half-past five, the admiral made the Tartar's signal to stay by, and part company with the convoy, which then hauled their wind, made sail to the south-west, and was soon out of sight and danger.

[Pg 48]

At ten minutes past six, the signal for the line of battle abreast was made, which allowed the headmost ships to take in small sails; and immediately after another signal was given for the Dolphin and Preston to change stations; this was a serious mistake, as it led our squadron to believe that the admiral meant to engage the ship ahead of the Dutch admiral, and not that of the latter, which was actually his intention. This unfortunately placed the Dolphin in opposition to one of the largest of the enemy's vessels; and while it left the rear-ship (the Bienfaisant) for some time without an opponent, the van-ship Berwick and the Dolphin had to engage three of the enemy.

[Pg 49]

In the mean time, the Dutch were regularly drawn up in a line of battle ahead, on the larboard tack, the ships being about a cable's length apart, and keeping a point from the wind, with their sails well proportioned to each other. They appeared in excellent order, their hammocks stowed, and marines drawn up on the poop.

At fifty-six minutes past seven, the signal for close action was made, and, to the astonishment of our squadron, the enemy never fired a shot, although they might have done considerable damage to our ships had they opened their fire on them as they approached end on to them, on their weather beam. Not a gun was fired on either side until within half-musket shot, when the red flag was hoisted on both ships. Up to that moment all was silent, and it is scarcely possible to conceive a silence more solemn and impressive! At the same instant, they saw the signal go to the mast-head of Zoutman's ship. The dreadful silence was now broken by the tremendous roar of cannon when within pistol-shot, and the battle raged with the utmost fury for three hours and forty minutes.

At ten o'clock, the signal for close action which had been made, was repeated. The Berwick, having forced the van-ship of the enemy to edge off, fell to leeward of the line, and was consequently obliged to make sail, tack, and regain her station in support of the Dolphin, which had then two ships on her, and was also thrown to leeward. The admiral, having now slackened the Dutch admiral's fire, passed ahead of the Buffalo, on which the ships astern closed up to the Buffalo; and the Berwick took the station ahead of the admiral. At thirty-five minutes past eleven, the ships became unmanageable; and, the Dutch dropping to leeward, the action ceased.

[Pg 50]

By some it has been affirmed that Admiral Parker should have renewed the action: Lieutenant Saumarez says, it was certainly his intention to do so; but the state of his own ship, and the reports he received from others, rendered it quite impossible.^[3]

The Dutch convoy had about the middle of the conflict bore up for the Texel. The protection of them was no longer an object, and Admiral Zoutman, as soon as he could possibly get his ships collected and put before the wind, made the best of his way into the port; but during the night the Hollandia, Dutch seventy-four, was seen sunk in twenty-two fathoms water, and her pendant was hauled down by Captain Patton, of the Belle Poule, and brought to the admiral. As no ship was taken, both claimed the victory: but, the convoy being sent back into port and one ship sunk, should certainly decide it to Admiral Parker; and had the English admiral not inadvertently rendered his van too weak by the mistake in the signal which also extended his line beyond their rear, thereby rendering one ship for a time useless, he would have obtained a decisive victory.

[Pg 51]

While Admiral Zoutman must be admired for his cool intrepidity, it must be admitted that he was much to blame in forbearing to avail himself of the opportunity of attacking and disabling the approaching fleet, which he might have done with great effect. After the Fortitude had been put into a condition to make sail, Lieutenant Saumarez was sent to conduct the Preston, one of the disabled ships, into port; her commander, Captain Græme, having lost his arm in the action. When Admiral Parker arrived at the Nore, his Majesty paid the squadron a visit; but the veteran commander, indignant at the conduct of ministers, who, he conceived, ought to have reinforced his squadron instead of allowing some fine ships to lie idle in port, received the King with that rough *hauteur* peculiar to himself, observing, "I wish your Majesty better ships and younger officers. As for myself, I am now too old for the service."

[Pg 52]

On this occasion Lieut. Saumarez was presented to George III. The King inquired if he was related to the captains of the same name one of whom had circumnavigated the globe with Anson, and who had fallen gloriously in the service of their country: the admiral replied in the affirmative, saying, "Yes, please your Majesty; he is their nephew, and as brave and as good an officer as either of them."

In consequence of the bravery and skill he displayed in this action, Lieut. Saumarez was promoted to the rank of commander, although only second lieutenant; the first being wounded early in the action, the duty had fallen on our hero: and he was immediately appointed to the Tisiphone, a fire-ship constructed on a new plan, and armed with carronades, which was then

fitting at Sheerness; his commission as "master and commander," bearing date for that ship, the 23rd August 1781.

When lieutenant of the *Fortitude*, with Admiral Sir Hyde Parker,—who, from his acerbity of temper, was distinguished from others of the same name by the sobriquet of "Vinegar Parker,"—the old admiral betrayed his ill-humour by unwarrantably finding fault with him one morning when Mr. Saumarez commanded the watch; but soon after, probably to make amends for such hasty and unguarded conduct towards an officer for whom he had the greatest regard, he sent to invite him to dinner, an honour which the young lieutenant declined in terms sufficiently strong to indicate that his feelings had been hurt. On this, the admiral sent for him and exclaimed, "What! can't you put up with the fractious disposition of an old man?" The admiral, who could not bear to be, even for a day, at variance with Lieutenant Saumarez, would do anything to serve him; and, when he obtained the command on the *East India* station, offered to take him with him in the *Cato*, which sailed, and was supposed to have foundered off the Cape of Good Hope, as she was never afterwards heard of; and he happily escaped sharing the fate of that gallant chief and unfortunate crew.

[Pg 53]

The *Tisiphone* having been fitted out at Sheerness, and the complement of men having been filled up by supernumeraries from the *Conquestadore* at the Nore, Captain Saumarez, by order from Admiral Roddam, placed himself under the command of Captain Allen, of the *Sceptre*, on the 6th September 1781, from whom he received the following order:

You are hereby required and directed to put yourself under my command, and to follow all such orders and directions as you shall from time to time receive from me for his Majesty's service, and to hold yourself in constant readiness to sail at a moment's warning; and in case of separation by any unavoidable accident, you are to make the best of your way without loss of time to Torbay, and put yourself under the command of Admiral Darby.

[Pg 54]

(Mem.) In case of your parting company with his Majesty's ship *Sceptre*, and falling in with any ships or vessels belonging to France or French subjects, Spain or Spanish subjects, the States General of the United Provinces, or to his Majesty's rebellious subjects in the colonies of North America, that you can cope with, you are to use your best endeavours to take, seize, sink, burn, or destroy the same: giving me an account of your arrival at Torbay, and of anything you may have so taken or destroyed.

Signed. WM. ALLEN.

In pursuance of these orders Captain Saumarez sailed from the Nore, and, arriving at Torbay on the 17th, found that Admiral Darby had sailed in the *Britannia* on the 15th, after having left orders for the *Tisiphone* to cruise a week off the Lizard. Here he was directed to proceed for Plymouth, where he arrived on the 1st of October; and having received further orders to repair to Spithead without loss of time, he arrived there on the 13th October, to fit for Channel service. He now joined the fleet under Lord Howe, and, after a cruise off Brest, returned to Portsmouth on the 21st of November: his ship was found to sail extremely well.

Captain Saumarez was now ordered to place himself under the command of Admiral Kempenfelt, who, with a detachment of twelve sail of the line, was destined to intercept Count de Guichen, who had put to sea from Brest, after having returned from his last severe campaign. The count had been ordered to use every exertion to refit and prepare the French fleet for sea, notwithstanding the lateness of the season. The objects in view could be accomplished only by extreme diligence and the most profound secrecy, as it was absolutely necessary to reinforce Count de Grasse, with both ships and troops in the West Indies, as also M. Des Ornes and Admiral Suffrein in the East. It was evident that De Grasse, after his hard service on the coast of North America during the preceding campaign, must stand in need of a vast supply of naval and military stores; and the service he was about to undertake in the West Indies would increase the want of provisions, and almost every necessary of life and of warfare: neither was the demand for naval and military stores in the East Indies less urgent. Accordingly, a numerous convoy of transports, store-ships, and victuallers were prepared and equipped at the same time as the fleet, which was now extended to such a number of men-of-war as was considered sufficient for the protection of the convoys until fairly out of reach. This part of the service, as well as the charge of the whole expedition, was, as we have stated, confided to Count Guichen; and the command of the squadron and fleet destined to the West Indies, to M. de Vaudreuil. The *Tisiphone* was the look-out ship of the squadron, which sailed from Spithead at the end of November.

[Pg 55]

At day-break on the 12th December, Captain Saumarez, being the first to discover the enemy, made known his situation to the admiral; which was, that the men-of-war were too far ahead and too much to leeward of the convoy to afford any protection to it. The admiral, with that decision and professional skill by which he was so eminently distinguished, determined to profit by their situation, and boldly pushed between the convoy and the greater part of the enemy's line-of-battle ships, and succeeded in capturing twenty sail. In this affair Captain Saumarez had a noble opportunity of distinguishing himself, by attacking the ship of war, of thirty-six guns, which was bringing up the rear of the convoy, and capturing her after an action of twenty minutes.

[Pg 56]

Besides those captured, many others had struck; but, the weather at this time becoming thick and squally, the admiral discontinued the chase of those which had been cut off, and which made sail in every direction, that he might collect his squadron before dark, many of his ships being at a great distance astern with the prizes. At daylight next morning, the enemy's ships of war, twenty-one sail of the line, were seen formed to leeward; but their force was so much superior, that the admiral did not think it advisable to risk an action. The captured ships consisted of

[Pg 57]

twenty-one sail of transports, having on board eleven thousand troops, besides their crews of seven thousand seamen; the greatest part of which were taken by this squadron, and the Agamemnon, which picked up five or six more.

It was now evident that the force under Count Guichen, destined to assist Count de Grasse in the capture of the valuable island of Jamaica; was much greater than had been supposed by the English government; and, consequently, it became of the utmost importance to give the earliest information of the approach of such a formidable enemy to Sir Samuel Hood. Accordingly, Captain Saumarez, whose gallant conduct and zeal had been so manifest, was selected for this service. His men were returned to the Tisiphone from the captured ships; and he was detached with orders to push past the French fleet, and make the best of his way to Barbadoes, (see Appendix) where he arrived on the 28th of January; and finding the Pegasus, Captain John Stanhope, he delivered his despatches, and received the following orders from that officer:

You are hereby required and directed to proceed (without a moment's loss of time) to the island of Antigua, where, on your arrival off English Harbour, you are to send a boat in for intelligence respecting Sir Samuel Hood and the fleet under his command; which having received from the senior officer in that port, you will proceed in search of the commander-in-chief, and deliver him the despatches you are charged with from Rear-admiral Kempenfelt, as also those you will receive herewith.

[Pg 58]

Given on board his Majesty's ship Pegasus,
Carlisle Bay, this 28th Jan. 1782.

(Mem.) I recommend that particular attention may be paid to keep well to windward of the French islands.

Signed JOHN STANHOPE.

To Captain Saumarez, H.M. fire-ship
Tisiphone.

In pursuance of these orders, Captain Saumarez sailed from Barbadoes on the 28th of January. In the mean time, the Comte de Grasse, who had been beating to windward for some days with the intention of attacking Barbadoes, but without gaining ground, had abandoned his plan, and bore away for St. Kitts. On his arrival there, he landed eight thousand men, and took possession of greater part of the island: General Frazer, with a small party of six hundred men, was obliged to retire to Brimstone Hill Fort.

Sir Samuel Hood, notwithstanding the superiority of the enemy, (twenty-nine sail of the line,) resolved on a sudden and unusually bold manœuvre, namely, to sail and attack the enemy's fleet at anchor. It was for this purpose that he had put to sea with twenty-two sail of the line, and proceeded to Antigua, where he took in provisions, and embarked the twenty-eighth and two companies of the thirteenth regiment, under command of General Prescott.

[Pg 59]

Captain Saumarez, according to the orders he had received, proceeded for Antigua, and keeping "well to windward," as he had been directed to do, fell in with the Triumfante and Terrible, two French line-of-battle ships, of the squadron which had been attacked by Admiral Kempenfelt on the 12th December, and which had been detached by Comte de Guichen to Martinique. These ships immediately gave chase; but, night coming on, Captain Saumarez had recourse to stratagem in order to effect his escape, which would otherwise have been impossible in consequence of the Tisiphone having carried away her fore-top-mast in a squall, an accident which was fortunately not observed by his pursuers: he now made night-signals by hoisting lights and burning false fires; which having led the enemy to suppose he was communicating with an English squadron, they abandoned the pursuit after a chase of half-an-hour.

At the moment the fore-top-mast was carried away, Mr. Robb, one of the midshipmen, who was looking out at the fore-top-gallant-mast-head, fell on the fore-castle without receiving any injury. This young gentleman was an *élève* of Captain Saumarez, continued with him to the end of that war, and embarked with him on board the Crescent in 1793. After the capture of *La Réunion*, he was promoted to the rank of lieutenant.

[Pg 60]

The fore-top-mast of the Tisiphone was soon replaced; and next day, on reaching English Harbour, he learned that Sir Samuel Hood, with his squadron was at anchor in Basseterre Roads, St. Kitts, where he had three times repulsed the enemy of a much superior force, but which had now taken up such a position as rendered it impossible for him to communicate with the admiral; for, unless he would venture to push through the intricate channel between Nevis and St. Kitts, he would run the greatest risk of being captured. Undismayed, however, at the danger of navigating an unknown passage, he fearlessly proceeded where no ship had ever before ventured; and by sounding as he advanced, and by the dexterous management of his ship, he succeeded in carrying the Tisiphone to the anchorage at St. Kitts in safety; and delivered his despatches to Sir Samuel Hood, who informed him that the intelligence was of such importance, that it was necessary it should be immediately sent on to Sir Peter Parker at Jamaica. But when the admiral proposed to send the Tisiphone on with it, Captain Saumarez, desirous of remaining at the seat of warlike operations, represented to him that the Tisiphone was a fine fast-sailing ship on a new construction, that in the existing state of affairs she might be useful, and that he should be happy to contribute by his own personal exertions to the promotion of the public service; whereas any vessel could run down with the trade-wind to Jamaica. Sir Samuel, no less pleased with the proposal, and the manner in which it was made, than convinced of the advantage he would derive from having with him a fast-sailing vessel commanded by so zealous

[Pg 61]

an officer, whose tact and intrepidity had already been manifested, determined to keep the *Tisiphone* with his squadron, and send a less useful vessel with the intelligence to Jamaica. The admiral soon reaped the advantage of this decision. Captain Saumarez, during the time the fleet remained there and at Antigua, was the most active in harassing the enemy. He commanded several boat expeditions, and cut out a vessel in a most gallant style from Basseterre Roads and several other small vessels from the back of the island.

The time, however, had now arrived when it was absolutely necessary to send another despatch to England; and the admiral had no other small vessel remaining but the *Tisiphone*. On the 7th February 1782, the signal was made for an opportunity of sending letters to England, and subsequently for the captain of the *Tisiphone*: Captain Saumarez had been dining with his friend, Captain Charrington, on board the *Ajax*, and it was some time before he reached the *Barfleur*; when he found to his dismay and mortification that he was ordered home! In a short time the despatches were ready, and he had taken his leave. He described this interesting circumstance, on which it may be said his fortune was founded, in the following manner to us, and we cannot do better than give it in his own words.

[Pg 62]

"I was," says he, "in my own boat, with the despatches in my hand; and with a heavy heart had ordered the bow-man to shove off, when Captain Stanhope, of the *Russell*, came alongside, and seeing me called: 'Hollo! Saumarez, where are you going?'—'To *England*', said I, 'I am sorry to tell you!'—'Sorry,' replied Stanhope; 'I wish I was in your place; I want to go home on account of my health; and, if I had known, I would have exchanged with you.'—'Perhaps it is not too late,' said I.—'Hold on then,' said he, 'till I speak to the admiral, since I have your leave.'"

By this time the *Russell*'s boat was alongside the admiral's ship; and at the word "Hold on!" which was emphatically repeated by Saumarez, the bow-man hooked the quarter of the *Russell*'s barge, and he remained but a few minutes in breathless suspense; after which Captain Stanhope appeared at the gangway, and called, "Come up, Saumarez." He was on deck in an instant, and found that, on Captain Jackson being asked to submit the proposal to the admiral, he said, "Let Captain Saumarez do it himself, he is the fittest person."

[Pg 63]

When Sir Samuel Hood heard the application, he was silent, and after reflecting for a few minutes he said, "Captain Saumarez, you know not how much I wish to serve you; Captain Stanhope shall go home as he desires, and you shall have command of the *Russell*." Accordingly, before the close of that day, Captain Stanhope was on board the *Tisiphone* on his way to England; while her late commander was in possession of his post-rank, and captain of one of his Majesty's ships of the line of seventy-four guns; and all this effected in less than two hours!

We cannot forbear making honourable mention of a trait of attachment manifested on this occasion by the first lieutenant, a Scotch baronet of an ancient family, who had not been at sea for twenty-two years, when he was appointed to the *Tisiphone*. The conflict of this officer's feelings between joy for his captain's promotion and regret at losing so excellent a friend was far beyond description; but, as the moment of parting approached, he selected what he considered most valuable, and so earnestly did he press Captain Saumarez to accept some testimonial of his esteem, that, finding a refusal would deeply wound his feelings, he accepted a silver ladle marked with his initials, which has ever since been carefully preserved in memory of its former owner.

The same night Captain Saumarez took command of the *Russell*, he had cause to find that promotion and honours bring cares. A report was made to him that the ship was in a state of mutiny, and that a shot had been thrown at one of the officers. He soon found, indeed, that he had a most disorderly ship's company; but the firm, prompt, and judicious regulations which Captain Saumarez immediately established, brought the crew so effectually into order, that two months after, at the memorable battle of the 12th April 1782, no ship was in a higher state of discipline than the *Russell*.

[Pg 64]

CHAPTER IV.

[Pg 65]

1782.

Situation of the Hostile Fleets.—Surrender of Brimstone Hill.—Junction of the Fleets.—Antigua.—St. Lucia.—Sailing of the French Fleet under Comte de Grasse.—Action of the 9th April.—12th of April.—Gallant conduct of the *Russell*.—Captain Saumarez returns to Jamaica.—Comes to England with Convoy.—Is paid off at Chatham, and confirmed a Post-captain.

It has now become necessary to give a brief account of the situation of the hostile fleets at the seat of war in the West Indies. While the enemy's troops were prosecuting the siege of Brimstone Hill, the fleet under the Comte de Grasse had been reinforced, and either continued at sea, near to Basseterre, or anchored in the old road. On the 13th, a practicable breach being made in the works, the general and governor having given up all hopes of succour, and his brave garrison being reduced to five hundred men, they embraced the proposals of a capitulation made by the Marquis de Boullie, who on the same day proclaimed the surrender of Brimstone Hill to the

admiral by a flag of truce, which had been previously agreed upon. The British fleet, which had till this time continued at the anchorage in which it had so bravely resisted the attacks of the Comte de Grasse, who on the 14th anchored off Nevis with thirty-four sail of the line, was now in a perilous situation, especially as the enemy were erecting mortar batteries on the hill opposite to the shipping; and as it was no longer necessary for him to continue there, Sir Samuel Hood issued orders to slip or cut cables *without signal* at eleven o'clock at night, the sternmost and leeward-most ships first, and so on in succession, and proceed under easy sail until directed otherwise by signal. That this order might be punctually executed, the captains were ordered to set their watches by the admiral's timepiece. The movement was performed with the utmost order and regularity. Not one ship was molested or pursued by the French fleet, which was lying within five miles, and must have been astonished at this excellent manœuvre of the British admiral, wherein the Russell had a distinguished share. Soon afterwards, Nevis and Montserrat fell into the hands of the French.

[Pg 66]

On the 19th February, Sir Samuel Hood anchored in St. John's Road, Antigua; and on the same day, Sir George Rodney arrived at Barbadoes from England with several sail of the line. On the 25th, he joined Sir Samuel Hood off Antigua; and, three days after, three more sail of the line arrived from England. Thus fortunately united, the admiral proceeded to St. Lucia, to refit and complete with water. On the 14th of March he put to sea, with a view of intercepting a large French convoy which was expected to arrive from Europe; but, notwithstanding the vigilance of the frigates, the enemy, by keeping close to Guadaloupe and Dominique, effected their escape into Fort Royal Bay, on the 20th and 21st, unperceived by any of our ships. When this unlucky event was made known to Sir George Rodney, he returned to St. Lucia, to watch the motions of the enemy. In the mean time the Russell, which had been damaged by striking on a rock, was repaired at the Carenage.

[Pg 67]

The Comte de Grasse was equally active in the equipment of his fleet, in order to proceed to leeward and form a junction with the Spaniards, for the purpose of carrying into execution their grand object—the reduction of Jamaica, with an overwhelming force of sixty sail of the line and twenty thousand troops.

At daylight, on the 8th April, Captain Byron, of the *Andromache*, communicated to the admiral by signal the anxiously-expected intelligence that the enemy's fleet, with their large convoy, were coming out of Fort Royal Bay, and standing to the north-west. Sir George Rodney first made the signal for all boats, and persons who had been necessarily employed in watering, &c. to repair on board, and immediately after to weigh. Before noon the whole fleet were clear of Gros Islet Bay: Sir George stretched first over to Fort Royal, and then made the general signal to chase north-eastward.

[Pg 68]

The enemy's lights were distinctly visible during the night; and as their ships-of-war, though better sailers than the English, were delayed by the convoy of transports, there was little doubt of overtaking them. Accordingly, at daylight on the morning of the 9th, some of the advanced ships were close up with their convoy under Dominique, while their men-of-war seemed much scattered: fourteen of the latter were between Dominique and the Saints, with a breeze from east-north-east; but the rest were becalmed under the land about St. Rupert's Bay, and one ship was observed at some distance in the north-west.

About half-past seven, the van division, commanded by Sir Samuel Hood, got the breeze; while the centre and rear, in which was the Russell, continued to be becalmed. This of course caused a separation, but did not deter Sir Samuel Hood from advancing, although he had only eight ships to fourteen of the enemy. In the mean time, the French ship seen in the north-west, which had got the breeze, boldly stood on and weathered the *Alfred*, the van-ship of Sir Samuel Hood's division, which bore up to allow her to pass; and, no signal having been made to engage, not a shot was fired.

[Pg 69]

At nine o'clock the action began, and was maintained with determined bravery for upwards of an hour, the enemy's ships which had the breeze having borne down upon and engaged this division; the *Barfleur* and others had, at times, three to one opposed to them; and in this attack there can be but one opinion, that the Comte de Grasse displayed great professional ability. At length the leading ships of the centre got up with the enemy's rear, and were followed by the *Duke*, *Formidable*, and *Namur*; the *Arrogant* lost her main-top-mast, as well as the *Royal Oak*. The rear squadron, commanded by Admiral Drake, now came up, and the Comte de Grasse prudently hauled his wind; and as his ships sailed better than the English, he succeeded in gradually drawing off, and by half-past one his fleet were all out of the reach of shot.

Captain Bayne, of the *Alfred*, lost his life in this his sixth encounter with the enemy; and it is said that he bled to death after his leg was shot off, before he was carried to the cockpit.

In the action of this day the Russell had only a small share, as she belonged to the rear division of the fleet, and, being becalmed, could not get up until the enemy had hauled off. The *Royal Oak*, *Montagu*, and *Alfred* were the ships which suffered most, but not so much as to prevent their being repaired at sea; while two of the enemy's ships were so materially disabled as to oblige them to bear up for Guadaloupe. The necessary repairs of these ships were not completed before the 11th, during which time the enemy, by carrying a great press of sail, had gained so far to windward as to weather the Saints, and were nearly hull down; and, as it was supposed that the Comte de Grasse meant to abandon to their fate two of his ships of the line that had been so much damaged in the late action as not to be able to keep company, all hope of being able to come up with them seemed now to vanish.

[Pg 70]

In the mean time the line had been inverted, which brought Rear-admiral Drake's division in the van, and that of Rear-admiral Hood, which had been engaged, in the rear. The signal having been made for a general chase, the two ships above mentioned would have been cut off, had not De Grasse been induced to bear down to their relief. This brought the enemy so far to leeward, that the hope of forcing them to engage was revived.

As soon as the commander-in-chief saw that the enemy's fleet was sufficiently to leeward, he recalled the chasing ships, formed a close line of battle, and carried sail to windward all night; during which the French line-of-battle ship *Le Zélé*, whether from injuries received in action, or in running foul of another ship, lost her bowsprit and fore-mast, and at daylight on the morning of the 12th was seen in tow of a frigate, both carrying all the sail they could, and steering for Basseterre. Sir Samuel Hood being in the rear, and consequently nearest these ships, was directed to detach some of his division in chase of them; and the Comte de Grasse, seeing that they must be inevitably taken, bore up with his whole fleet for their protection. It was now impossible to avoid an action.

[Pg 71]

The ships which had been recalled from chase resumed their stations, and a close line ahead was formed on the starboard tack, the enemy being on the larboard. Having hauled their wind after they had perceived the chasing ships recalled, they thus endeavoured to avoid an action; but the English fleet could now fetch near the body of the French. At half-past seven, therefore, the engagement began by Admiral Drake's division, led by the *Marlborough* and *Arrogant*, fetching the fifth ship from the van, and bearing up in succession. The Honourable Hugh Lindsay, who was a midshipman in the *Arrogant*, informed us that in that part, and in the whole of the action, the enemy fired so high, that the three *trucks* of the *Princessa's* mast-heads were shot away, and the consequence was that very few men were killed or wounded. The *Duke* lost her main-top-mast, as she approached the centre of the enemy's fleet.

At half-past nine the action became general: Admiral Drake's division, in which was the *Russell*, had now passed the rear of the enemy on the opposite tack; and Captain Thompson, of the *America*, seeing that he could fetch to windward of the enemy's line, wore without waiting for the anxiously-expected signal, as did also the *Russell*; and we have reason to know that Captain Saumarez rejoiced at this circumstance. Captain Thompson, being an experienced officer and second in command, gave a sufficient authority to any other officer to follow his motions, and they now stood to the southward. The *America*, however, did not continue long on that tack, and the *Russell* was consequently separated from her and the whole division; as the signals to tack, and soon after to wear, were not made and put in execution for an hour afterwards by Sir Francis Drake, who was then considerably to the northward.

[Pg 72]

In the mean time the *Russell* continued, and got up with the rear ship of the enemy's centre division about eleven o'clock, with which she exchanged broadsides. At noon, the wind, which was very light, changed to the south, throwing both fleets into confusion; but this gave Sir George Rodney, and three of the centre division, an opportunity of passing through an opening it occasioned in the enemy's line, and doubling on its rear division: all their attempts to form again were in vain; the enemy's van could never come into action. After this, the remainder of the day was spent in desultory actions of single ships, without regard to the motions of each other; the signals to chase and for close action being visible only at intervals.

[Pg 73]

It is here unnecessary to give a particular account of the events which took place on this memorable day, or to allude to those circumstances which have been so fruitful in controversy; more especially as Rodney's public letter, and other official records, will be found in the Appendix to this volume. We shall, therefore, confine our observations to the positions and conduct of the *Russell*, commanded by Captain Saumarez.

The *Russell* was the only ship belonging to the van (Admiral Drake's) division, which had wore and continued her course soon after she had passed the rear of the enemy. By standing to the southward again, Captain Saumarez brought his ship into action, but to *windward* of the enemy; and, at the time the wind shifted to the southward, Sir George Rodney, in passing through the enemy's fleet, was surprised to find an English ship to *windward* of the French. Having ascertained it was the *Russell*, he declared emphatically that the captain had distinguished himself more than any officer in the fleet.^[4] By this favourable position, which he had thus gallantly obtained, after receiving the more distant fire of several of the enemy's ships, about three o'clock he was able to come up with and closely engage a French seventy-four, and after exchanging broadsides with three others, pushed up to the *Ville de Paris*, and after raking her, having maintained a position on the lee quarter, poured in a most destructive fire, until the *Barfleur*, Sir Samuel Hood's flag-ship, came up.

[Pg 74]

Sir Gilbert Blane, in his account of this period of the battle, says: "It was late in the day when the *Ville de Paris* struck her colours: the ships immediately engaged with her at that moment were the *Barfleur*, the flag-ship of Sir Samuel Hood, and the *Russell*, commanded by Captain Saumarez. The *Formidable* (in which was Sir Gilbert) was right astern, and, having come within shot, was yawing in order to give the enemy a raking broadside, when Sir Charles Douglas and I standing together on the quarter-deck, the position of our ship opened a view of the enemy's stern between the foresail and the jib-boom, through which we saw the French flag hauled down." This fact has not been generally stated.

But the anecdote which we are now about to relate, must remove every doubt on the subject. In the autumn of 1808, when the Baltic fleet, under command of Vice-admiral Sir James Saumarez,

returned from the Gulf of Finland, in company with the Swedish fleet, to the harbour of Carlsrona, the Swedish commander-in-chief, Admiral Palmquist, Rear-admiral Nauckhoff, Commodore Blessing, Captain Tornquist, and others, came on board the flag-ship, Victory, to pay their respects to the admiral: they were of course asked to take some refreshment in the cabin: on which, as on all other occasions where an interpreter was wanted, we were of the party. The conversation naturally turned to the actions wherein they each had served in early life, when it appeared that the whole of the four officers mentioned had been brought up in the French service, and had actually been in the battle of the 12th of April 1782. When we acquainted them that Sir James Saumarez commanded a ship in that action, they eagerly inquired the name; and being informed it was the Russell, Captain Tornquist, who was in the Northumberland, rising from his chair and seizing Sir James's hand, exclaimed, "Mon Dieu! Monsieur l'Amiral, nous avons brulé le poudre ensemble; allons boire un coup."

[Pg 75]

It is impossible to do justice to the scene which followed. The old Swedish officer's joy at this discovery knew no bounds; they completely "fought the battle o'er again;" and we found it distinctly proved that it was the Russell, commanded by Captain Saumarez, which gallantly engaged several of the enemy's ships for two hours, and at six, P.M. pushed on to the Ville de Paris. Baron Rosenstien, who was on board that ship, and Baron Palmquist, who was on board La Couronne stationed next to her, declared that the Comte de Grasse, who was then attempting to escape to leeward, would have succeeded had it not been for the Russell. During our sojourn among the Swedes in that and another winter, we often heard the history of that memorable battle repeated; and they never ceased to maintain the circumstance we have stated, of which we made a memorandum at the time.^[5]

[Pg 76]

We took leave on that occasion to say to Sir James, that we believed the credit had been given to another ship; to which he replied, "Yes, it was; but what Admiral Palmquist and Captain Tornquist has told you, is true: it was the Russell that engaged the Ville de Paris until the Barfleur came up." But such was the extreme sensibility of Saumarez, that he could not persuade himself to correct the error, from an idea that such an interference might argue a desire to sound his own praise; and, but for the circumstance we have now related, the truth might never have come to light.

In answer to a letter from Captain Thomas White, which he sent to Lord de Saumarez with a copy of his publication, called "Naval Researches," written in 1836, to defend the gallant Rodney from certain attacks and allegations which had been published, *not* to give a "full and perfect account of the battle, but," says Captain White, "more particularly that part where your lordship so ably commanded the Russell, which portion of our fleet the tongue of calumny has never ventured to assail," Lord de Saumarez wrote the following letter:

[Pg 77]

Guernsey, 13th June 1836.

MY DEAR SIR,

I BEG to acknowledge the receipt of your letter, accompanying your interesting publication, which you have done me the favour to send for my acceptance, and which has been forwarded to me by Lord Amelius Beauclerc.

I regret that you have (inadvertently, I am persuaded) fallen into the same error as some of your predecessors, in detailing the account of Lord Rodney's victory of the 12th of April, by ascribing to the Canada what is alone due to the Russell, which ship I commanded.

I shall for your information briefly state the circumstance to which I allude. After passing the sternmost of the enemy's ships, the America, the ship astern of the Russell, wore to stand after them: I was glad to have the example of an old experienced officer, and wore also; but Captain Thompson, finding there was no signal, shortly after wore again, to join Sir Samuel Drake's division. I stood on, till passing a division of four of the enemy's ships, I exchanged broadsides with them, and finally came up with the Ville de Paris, wore under her stern and engaged her on the quarter for some time, when the Barfleur came up, and the Comte de Grasse hauled down his colours.

[Pg 78]

Even at this distant period, I have a perfect recollection of the transactions of that day. I shall only add, that I am convinced that no officer who was on board the Canada in the victory of the 12th of April, will assert that she was engaged with the Ville de Paris at the time stated. The present Admiral Giffard was, I believe, one of the lieutenants, to whom I wish to refer you.

I am, &c.

DE SAUMAREZ.

Captain White, as well as other officers, is of opinion that Admiral Drake's division should have tacked sooner; and, as circumstances happened, it would doubtless have been better if he had done so; but probably the admiral, in continuing to stand on the same tack, had calculated that the wind would continue in the same direction, or alter to the northward; in either case he would have weathered the whole of the enemy's fleet, besides giving time to his division to repair damages. The wind veering to the southward immediately after his division had wore, had unfortunately the effect of throwing them to leeward; whereas the Russell, which wore as above stated, was by the same change of wind far to windward of his division and nearer the enemy.

No sooner had the Ville de Paris struck her colours, which "went down with the setting sun," than the Russell made sail in chase of one of the French ships which had deserted her chief, as also did Sir Samuel Hood; but their noble efforts were arrested by the night signal to bring to, which put an end to the battle in that quarter: and although Commodore Affleck in the Bedford, and three others, who did not see the signal, continued the chase, they were unable to come up with

[Pg 79]

the enemy, who escaped to leeward in small divisions and single ships, leaving the *Ville de Paris*, the *Glorieux*, the *Hector*, and *Cæsar*, in possession of the English.

On the morning of the 13th no enemy was in sight, and the ships which had been in chase returned to the fleet. Admiral Rodney, with his prizes and the fleet, remained three days under Guadaloupe to repair damages, which afforded the flying enemy an opportunity to escape; but, on the 19th, the *Caton* and *Jason*, of sixty-four guns each, with the *Astrée* and *Ceres*, frigates, were added to the list of prizes by the exertions of Sir Samuel Hood, Captains Goodall, and Linzee. On the 23rd of April, Sir Samuel Hood rejoined the fleet off Tiberoon; whereupon Sir George Rodney proceeded to Jamaica with those ships most disabled, among which was the *Russell* and the prizes, leaving Sir Samuel Hood with a strong squadron to watch the enemy, should they venture out and attempt to prosecute their attack on Jamaica.

Nothing could be more flattering than the reception that Sir George Rodney met with at Jamaica from the inhabitants, whose anxiety was so suddenly supplanted by unbounded joy; and who not only found themselves freed from the danger of invasion, but beheld the principal commander of that overwhelming force which had caused them so much alarm a prisoner within their harbour, and six of his principal ships having the English colours triumphantly waving over the fleur-de-lis of France.

[Pg 80]

It is worthy of remark that, down to this period, the *Ville de Paris* was the only *first-rate* man-of-war that had ever been taken and carried into port by any commander of any nation! The *Ville de Paris*, in the capture of which Captain Saumarez had a distinguished share, was the largest ship in the French navy: she had been a present from the city of Paris to Louis XV. and no expense had been spared to render the gift worthy of the city and of the monarch. Her length was 185 feet 7½ inches, her breadth 53 feet 8½, depth 22 feet 2, and 2347 tons' measurement; and the expense of building her and sending her to sea is said to have been 156,000*l*. On board her at the time of capture were found thirty-six chests of money intended for the pay and subsistence of the men who were to be employed in the expedition against Jamaica; and she had on board, at the commencement of the action on the 9th, 1,300 men: in the other captured ships, the whole train of artillery, the battering cannon and carriages meant for the expedition, were found.

[Pg 81]

The loss of men in the British fleet in both actions was very small, amounting to only two hundred and thirty-seven killed, and seven hundred and seventy-six wounded; while the loss of the French was computed to be three thousand slain, and double that number wounded. In the *Ville de Paris* alone three hundred were killed.

In the engagement on the 9th of April, the French fleet consisted of thirty-four sail of the line, and the British of thirty-six; but in that engagement, two of the enemy's ships having been disabled, their numerical force was reduced in the battle of the 12th to thirty-two sail of the line: on the other hand, the French ships were much larger than the British; and it was calculated by Sir Charles Douglas, that the broadside of the French fleet exceeded that of the British in weight by 4396 pounds, and their numerical superiority in men was much greater.

On the 13th of April, the *Comte de Grasse* was removed to the flag-ship; and, some days after, when Captain Saumarez went on board the *Formidable* after the action, and several times after their arrival at Jamaica, the *Comte de Grasse* acknowledged that the *Ville de Paris* suffered very severely from the well-directed fire of the *Russell*.

Among the instances of heroic submission and perseverance under the severest suffering, may be recorded the conduct of the captain of the main-top of the *Russell*, who having received a shot that carried off one of his arms, instead of requesting the assistance of his companions to take him below, insisted that they should continue at their stations, and let himself down by one of the backstays. After suffering amputation, he persisted in going again on deck, where he remained encouraging the men till the action terminated.

[Pg 82]

On the arrival of the fleet at Jamaica, the *Russell* was found to be in so disabled a state, that Sir George Rodney intended to send her home with the *Ville de Paris* and the other prizes, and arrangements were made for that purpose accordingly. His old friend, Sir Peter Parker, who had held the command at Jamaica, sailed in the *Sandwich*, on board which ship was the *Comte de Grasse*, for England, with a convoy of merchant-ships. After having been at sea three days, the *Ajax*, one of the ships under his command, sprang a leak, returned to Bluefields Bay, and the *Russell* was ordered to follow the fleet in her stead. The exertions which Captain Saumarez used to refit his ship obtained the commander-in-chief's highest approbation. In two days he was ready, and immediately joined the *Sandwich* and *Intrepid*, which now sailed with the trade under convoy, and preceded the prizes, which were not yet ready to undertake the voyage to England; and it was owing to this interposition of Providence, that the *Russell* escaped the melancholy fate which afterwards befel the unfortunate fleet, in which the ill-fated *Ville de Paris* was lost with all her crew. The *Russell* had on board three hundred French prisoners and twenty-two officers, and arrived at the Downs on the 29th July 1782. She was ordered to be paid off at Chatham, to which port she proceeded. On her arrival there, an order came from the Admiralty to draft her crew into a ship which was under order to sail for the East Indies. This excited a general murmur, and at length the men refused to obey. On Captain Saumarez being informed of it, he went on board and remonstrated, when they unanimously declared that, although they had but just returned from a long voyage, they would follow him all the world over. Before he left the ship, however, he prevailed on them to resume their duty; and these orders were subsequently altered. After returning her stores, the *Russell* was paid off on the 24th of September. Captain Saumarez' acting commission as a post-captain, dated on the 8th of February 1782, was confirmed by Earl

[Pg 83]

CHAPTER V.

[Pg 84]

1784 to 1793.

Captain Saumarez returns to Guernsey.—His exemplary Conduct.—Visits Cherbourg.—Is introduced to the French King.—Returns.—Changes at Guernsey.—Prince William Henry visits the Island twice.—His Reception.—Appearance of Hostilities in 1787.—Captain Saumarez is appointed to the Ambuscade, and pays her off.—His Letter on his Marriage.—Remarks thereon.—Armament of 1790.—Saumarez commissions and pays off the *Raisable*.—War of 1793.—Appointed to command the *Crescent*.—First Cruise; takes a prize and saves Alderney.—Second Cruise; captures a cutter.—Third Cruise.—Return.—*Crescent* docked and refitted.

Captain Saumarez having paid off the *Russell*, and distributed his crew into different ships according to the final orders he had received from the Admiralty, repaired to London, and after paying his respects to Earl Howe, proceeded to Guernsey to receive the congratulations of his numerous friends; but these were far from altering "the natural bent of his disposition to do good." Instead of becoming elevated by prosperity, his sincere and unaffected piety induced him to take a leading part in the establishment of charitable institutions, and in his own person to give "a striking and useful example of moral and religious life." But his noble mind was never diverted from the service and the good of his country; he was constantly attentive to every circumstance that concerned the duties of his profession, and an event occurred about this time that peculiarly interested him.

[Pg 85]

Although this was a period of profound peace, the ambition of France was constantly awake. It had long been the object of the French government to form a naval port in the British Channel, for the evident, if not avowed, purpose of annoying our trade in time of war, and disputing with us the dominion of the British seas. No labour however arduous, and no expense however great, could check this favourite design. The port of Cherbourg, which had long been fixed upon as being immediately adjacent to our great arsenal at Portsmouth, became the point of attraction. The unfortunate Louis XVI. had determined to stimulate this grand undertaking by his presence, when the first *cone* was submerged.

The assemblage of the French court opposite our own coast naturally attracted a number of our countrymen, among whom was Captain Saumarez, who was induced to cross the Channel probably by a secret wish to examine the nautical projects of our rivals, to counteract which, might at some future period become his duty. This was eventually the case in 1793, when he captured the French frigate *Réunion* off that very harbour, from which she had sailed only a few hours before the action.

[Pg 86]

Captain Saumarez was present at the above imposing ceremony, and had the honour of being introduced to the French king, by whom he was treated with the greatest attention. It is worthy of remark, that this was the only time during his long life that he ever set his foot in France, and he returned directly to Guernsey much gratified by his excursion.

Between the period of Captain Saumarez' departure from Guernsey in 1776, and his return in 1782, the island of Guernsey had undergone great and important changes. The war with America had brought an influx of strangers; wealth and its attendant luxuries had superseded the simple mode of living of its inhabitants; society had extended; and when the peace took place, at the close of 1782, no spot of its size could display a greater appearance of prosperity, civilization, and beauty.

Between the years 1785 and 1787, the island was twice honoured with a visit from Prince William Henry, our late most gracious sovereign; and, however great the change had been in men and manners since it had beheld a prince of the blood on its shores, the loyalty of the islanders had sustained no diminution, and the arrival of the prince, then a lieutenant of the *Hebe*, Captain Thornborough, excited the most unbounded joy. Every one's heart glowed at seeing the son of a monarch whom they were accustomed to regard with veneration and love; and as people who lived in the habitual belief that to "fear God and honour the King" is a "united precept," every mark of respect and attachment was exhibited on both occasions. When his Royal Highness came the second time, as captain of the *Pegasus*, the homage, which had been paid to him at the first visit, as son of their sovereign, was mingled with respect to himself. Some there are who yet remember, and still delight to relate, the account of the elegant *dejeuné* with which the illustrious prince entertained a party on board the *Pegasus*; after which his Royal Highness honoured Captain Saumarez and his brothers with his company at dinner, and attended a ball in the evening at the assembly-rooms.

[Pg 87]

In 1787, when Captain Saumarez had nearly attained his thirtieth year, peace seemed to be completely established. At an early age he had attained, by his own merit, the highest rank to which an officer could be advanced: he had fully established a character equally exalted for

courage and professional talent; and having been, wherever Fortune had placed him, always in the best society, his manners as a gentleman were no less elegant than his person, which was tall and graceful, while his handsome features denoted a heart susceptible of the dictates both of humanity and love. It is not then to be wondered at, when he returned to his native island, that he still cherished an attachment which he had long formed; especially when he found her on whom he had fixed his affections, possessed of every quality which could ensure mutual happiness; neither can it appear surprising that on her part the regard should be equally warm and sincere.

[Pg 88]

The appearance of hostilities in the same year, however, occasioned a suspension of his matrimonial arrangements, as he was then appointed by Lord Howe to the command of the *Ambuscade* frigate, which he had scarcely fitted before she was ordered to be paid off, the hostile differences having been adjusted. He now returned to Guernsey, and, on the 8th October 1788, was united to Miss Martha Le Marchant, only daughter and heir of Thomas Le Marchant, Esq. by his marriage with Miss Mary Dobrée, to the entire satisfaction of the families and relations on both sides.

The following extract of a private letter to his brother Richard, written a few days after his marriage, will give the reader a just idea of the feelings which occupied his mind on this happy occasion:

"It is needless," he says, "to attempt giving you any idea of my joy on this occasion. The abundant blessings which Providence is pleased to pour down on me, who am ever unworthy the least of its favours, makes my heart glow with boundless gratitude and love, which I hope ever to testify by a life strictly devoted to His service. To have the power of making her happy who has ever been the joy and delight of my soul, far surpasses all that I had ever formed of felicity in this world. I must also acknowledge the affectionate kindness of her relations, who have for ever attached me to them by the confidence they have placed in me."

[Pg 89]

These self-congratulations were, indeed, fully confirmed in after life; for few husbands have ever been blessed with such a devoted wife, or children with such an affectionate mother. During their younger days, and when their gallant father was at sea, Mrs. Saumarez lived retired, giving up her whole time to their instruction; and we can most fully testify that gratitude for her maternal anxiety, both for their spiritual and temporal welfare, has been indelibly impressed on all their hearts.

After passing some time at Guernsey, Captain Saumarez removed to the neighbourhood of Exeter, where he resided two years. In 1790, appearances of hostility took place. The Spanish armament was not to be lightly regarded. Captain Saumarez was appointed to command the *Raisable* of 64 guns; but he never went to sea in this ship, the differences between the two nations having been amicably settled. It seemed to show, however, that, in the event of war, he was one of those who were to be actively employed.

[Pg 90]

Captain Saumarez remained on shore until the war occasioned by the French revolution broke out in 1793, when he was appointed to command the *Crescent* of 36 guns. His commission was dated on the 24th January, and he hoisted his pendant in her at Portsmouth on the 28th of the same month, receiving, at the same time, orders to place himself under the command of Commodore Sir Hyde Parker. No sooner was it known at Guernsey, and in Devonshire, that the *Crescent* was commissioned by Captain Saumarez, than a number equal to half the complement of seamen volunteered for the *Crescent*; and, on the 1st of February, the *Tisiphone* sloop was sent to bring the men from Guernsey, while the rest, from Exeter, were sent by the way of Plymouth to join the ship. It could not but be highly gratifying to his feelings when he found that so many of his countrymen had chosen to devote themselves to his service; and he was soon able to report his ship ready for sea.

On the 10th of February 1793, in common with other officers, he received the following intelligence that war had been declared against France.

By Sir Hyde Parker, Knt. &c.

Accounts having been received that war was declared at Paris, by the National Convention of France, against Great Britain and Holland; you are, in pursuance of the King's pleasure, signified to the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty by the Right Honourable Henry Dundas, one of his Majesty's principal secretaries of state, hereby required and directed to seize or destroy all ships and vessels belonging to France that you may happen to fall in with.

[Pg 91]

Given under my hand, on board the *Victory*,
this 10th day of February 1793.
H. PARKER.

To Captain Saumarez, R.N.

The *Crescent* having been reported ready for sea on the 1st of March, Captain Saumarez received orders to proceed to Guernsey with his ship, accompanied by the *Liberty* brig, and three transports under convoy, to reinforce the garrisons of the Channel islands. He had also sealed orders, which were to be put in execution when the troops were landed at Guernsey and Jersey. The following account of this cruise was sent to his brother, on the ship's return to Guernsey Road.

H.M.S. *Crescent*, Guernsey, 18th March 1793.

MY DEAR RICHARD

As the detail of our proceedings on our first cruise cannot but be acceptable to you, I take up my pen to communicate them. We anchored in this road on Sunday morning, the day after we had sailed from Spithead. The independent companies and invalids for this island were immediately disembarked. The wind being too much to the southward for the transports to proceed to Jersey, they remained till Thursday following, when I sent them under convoy of the Liberty brig.

On Thursday morning, intelligence was brought to me that a French brig was seen to the northward of the island, standing for the Casketts. I immediately got under way, and directed the Drake to do the same. We pushed through the Race of Alderney during the night, and at day-break found ourselves close to the brig, off Cherbourg. She is about 100 tons, from Vannes, loaded with salt, for Havre. Seeing another brig and a galliot to the N.W. from us, I ordered the Drake and Cockatrice to chase, and I have hopes they are also prizes.

[Pg 92]

About three o'clock, it blowing very hard, I was much surprised at an express joining me from Alderney, with a letter from the governor, addressed to the commander of H.M. ships off Alderney, mentioning that he had positive information that the enemy meant to attack the island this or the following night; and as there was no ship of force at Cherbourg but an old 64, with frigate's masts, he was certain that the appearance of a man-of-war off Cherbourg would preserve Alderney, and baffle the expedition. Chance having thrown me off Cherbourg, within sight the whole day, I was happy the purport of this letter was so fully answered. Expecting further intelligence, I waited till a cutter hailed us that he was going express to Plymouth. No other vessel appearing, I made sail for this island, and anchored in the road this morning. I have scarcely a doubt that what caused your brother^[6] to be alarmed was the appearance of this ship, the Drake and Cockatrice, with another small vessel in the Race of Alderney; and I am sorry it was not in my power to acquaint him with it, as the vessel he sent me returned immediately.

Captain Saumarez, on his return to Guernsey, wrote to Governor Le Mesurier, and, in reply to his letter, informed him that the appearance of the Crescent and squadron off Cherbourg had the desired effect of baffling the meditated attack on Alderney; nevertheless, the Crescent was detained on that station until the 25th, in consequence of other reports of the enemy's intentions to attack either Jersey or Alderney, and his squadron therefore was reinforced. In the mean time he succeeded in filling up the complement of his crew at Guernsey, and at length returned to Spithead, when some alteration took place in the armament of his ship: having there completed his stores and provisions, Captain Saumarez' next employment was to take a convoy of transports with troops to Cork, and bring from thence two regiments to Guernsey. This service occupied his ship until the 4th of May, when she arrived off the Lizard, and, having sent part of his convoy into Falmouth, he anchored at Guernsey on the following day.

[Pg 93]

He left Guernsey on the 15th of May, having six transports with French prisoners on board, and arrived at Spithead on the 17th.

On the 22nd Captain Saumarez received orders from the Admiralty to take the Hind, Captain Cochrane, under his command, and proceed with the Crescent and that ship to cruise between lat. 51° and 47° N. and long. 10° to 16° W. for the protection of the trade, and continue on that service for three weeks. The account of this cruise, in which two prizes were taken, is given in the following letter to his brother.

[Pg 94]

Crescent, Spithead, 26th June 1793.

MY DEAR RICHARD,

I have the pleasure to acquaint you with our return from a cruise which has been rather unsuccessful, having only taken (besides the brig I informed you of) a cutter called "Le Club de Cherbourg," of ten guns. She sailed from Brest on the 20th instant, and was found on the coast of Ireland, where she had done much mischief on her former cruise, having taken four vessels within a few days. I find by the prisoners that the French have only eighteen sail from Brest in readiness for sea. They rendezvous in Quiberon Bay as soon as they are equipped. I hope Lord Howe will soon give a good account of all of them. I anchored at Guernsey for a few hours, where I left the cutter for my brother's disposal.

As we have been parted from the Hind since the 8th instant, I hope to find she may have met with success. We are under agreement to share till the expiration of our cruise. As I write before we anchor, you cannot expect I should give you an account of my further destination; but, from what they informed me in the island, we are to go with Lord Howe, which hurried me from there. All the family were in perfect health at six o'clock on Tuesday evening, when I left them. We must now console ourselves with the hope that we shall soon terminate the business. I think this year will nearly do it. We anxiously sought for an opportunity similar to the Nymphé. We traversed the bay (Biscay) in every direction, without the appearance of a French ship; and on Monday we were all day in sight of Ushant, but could never meet with any but neutral vessels. Our next cruise may probably prove more fortunate. With my affectionate love to my sister and the children, I am, my dear Richard,

[Pg 95]

Yours truly,

JAMES SAUMAREZ.

It will be seen by the date of this letter, that the Crescent had arrived at Spithead on the 26th, which is the date of his official letter to the Admiralty, giving an account of the capture of Le Club, which, being the same as already given, need not be repeated.

The Crescent, being replenished with water and provisions, was directed on the 4th July to take on board a quantity of specie for Plymouth, to which he sailed on the 5th, and, having delivered it there, took a convoy from thence to the Downs, where he arrived on the 18th July, and, according

to further orders, returned with the trade under convoy from thence to Spithead on the 20th.

The following order, which Captain Saumarez received from the Lords of the Admiralty, will show the nature of the service on which he was now employed.

By the Commissioners for executing the office of Lord High Admiral of Great Britain and Ireland, &c.

CAPTAIN SAUMAREZ,

You are to take his Majesty's ships named on the margin (Concorde and Thames) under your command, (their captains being directed to follow your orders,) and putting to sea with them and the Crescent, the moment the wind and weather will permit, proceed and cruise between the latitudes of 49° and 50° 30' north, and from sixty to one hundred leagues to the westward of the Scilly Islands, for the protection of the trade of his Majesty's subjects, and the annoyance of the enemy, taking all possible care of the above-mentioned frigates; and diligently looking out for, and using your best endeavours to fall in with, the homeward-bound convoys from Jamaica and the Leeward Islands, which are daily expected, and which are to be the principal objects of your attention.

[Pg 96]

In case of falling in with either of the said convoys, you are to see, or cause to be seen, such of the merchant ships or vessels as may be bound to Ireland, or into the Bristol Channel, as far as may be necessary for their security, and those bound into the English Channel, as far as the Start; and, having so done, return with the frigates under your command to the above-mentioned station, to look out for the other convoy; and, having met with it, to see, or cause to be seen, such of the merchant vessels as may be bound to Ireland, and into the Bristol Channel, as before directed, and to see those bound up the English Channel off their respective ports, as high as Spithead, where you are to remain until further orders, sending to our secretary an account of your arrival and proceedings.

You are to continue on the above-mentioned service until the 20th of next month, unless you shall have fallen in with both the said convoys sooner; when you are to make the best of your way to Spithead, and remain there as above directed.

Given under our hands, this 18th day of July 1793.

CHATHAM, J. SMYTH, CH^S. S. PYBUS.

To James Saumarez, Esq. &c.

By command of their lordships. P. STEPHENS.

[Pg 97]

Captain Saumarez received at the same time information of the number of ships expected from the different islands in both the convoys, took the Concorde and Thames under his command, and sailed from Spithead on the 26th of July 1793.

Next to the command of a fleet, that of a squadron of frigates was at this period of the war considered the most important, and it could not but be highly gratifying to Captain Saumarez to find himself selected again for such a desirable command; but Fortune did not favour his little detachment. The convoys, which they had been sent to look out for and protect, had arrived safely at the respective ports before the squadron reached their destination, and they continued to cruise in vain within the prescribed limits of their station, till at length they were assailed by a tremendous gale from the south-east on the 17th of August, in which the Concorde parted company, the Thames lost her bowsprit and bore up for England, while the Crescent sprung her main-yard, and by a sudden shift of wind to the northward carried away her main-top-mast, and, her orders for returning into port having expired, she arrived at Spithead after an unsuccessful cruise.

The Crescent had not been in dock since the year 1785, and required much refitting: Captain Saumarez, therefore, on reporting his arrival to the Secretary of the Admiralty, sent also a statement of the ship's defects; in consequence of which, an order was sent for her to be docked at Portsmouth, and refitted for Channel service, while one hundred of her crew were lent to the Vanguard. As this process required a considerable time, Captain Saumarez sent for his family; and, having taken apartments at Ryde, had a few weeks of enjoyment in their society, and of relaxation from the arduous duties of his profession. The Crescent was received into dock on the 25th August, and was again fit for sea on the 10th October, when he received orders to hold himself ready to proceed at a moment's notice.

[Pg 98]

CHAPTER VI.

[Pg 99]

1793.

Crescent refitted.—Sails for the Channel Islands.—Falls in with the French frigate La Réunion.—Particular account of the action.—Letters from Captain Saumarez to his brother.—Brings his prize to Portsmouth.—Official letters.—Letters from various persons.—Ship refitting.—Captain Saumarez obtains leave of absence.—Is knighted for his gallant conduct.

The Crescent being now ready for sea, but with thirteen men short of her complement, Captain Saumarez applied to have the number filled up, as her masts and yards were of the same dimensions as those of a frigate of thirty-eight guns; he also requested such increase as the Lords of the Admiralty thought proper: but these applications were unsuccessful, and on the 10th of October he received orders from Sir Peter Parker, the port-admiral, to "hold himself in constant readiness to put to sea at a moment's warning;" and it was not long before the following order was received from the Admiralty.

[Pg 100]

By the Commissioners for executing the office of
Lord High Admiral, &c.

You are hereby required and directed to proceed in the ship under your command, without a moment's loss of time, to the islands of Guernsey and Jersey; and so soon as you shall have delivered the packets you will herewith receive, addressed to the commanding officers of his Majesty's troops serving in these islands, you are to repair with the said ship off St. Maloes, and use your best endeavours to obtain such information of the enemy's forces there, as circumstances will admit.

Having so done, you are to return with the said ship with all possible despatch, for further orders, transmitting to our secretary, for our information, by post-office express, an account of your arrival and proceedings.

Given under our hands, this 18th October 1793,
A. GARDNER. J. SMYTH.
P. AFFLECK.

To Captain Saumarez, R.N.

For several days previously to the 19th, it had been reported that a French frigate usually quitted the port of Cherbourg at night, and returned next morning with what prizes she had picked up: this, together with the information that an armament was preparing for the invasion of Jersey, caused Captain Saumarez to make extraordinary exertions to get to sea; and, although the wind was light, he fortunately succeeded in getting round St. Helens before night. Early on the morning, on the 20th, he was close to the light-house off Cape Barfleur.

[Pg 101]

ACTION BETWEEN THE CRESCENT AND REUNION.

This gallant action, which we are now about to describe, having been misrepresented in every account yet published, we have, in order to make the circumstances attending it more easily understood, illustrated the positions by a diagram, showing the masterly manœuvre performed by the Crescent, and the relative situation of the ships at the commencement and the end of the conflict. The engraving shows the state and situation of the two ships at the time the Réunion surrendered.

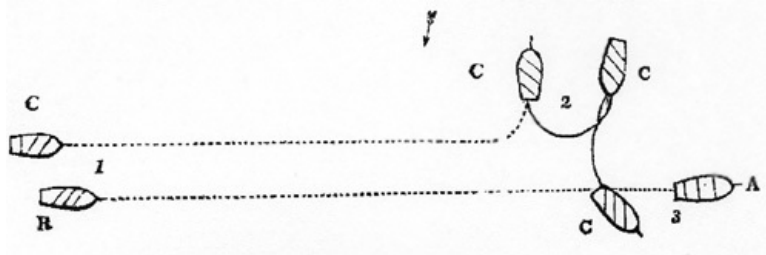
During the night, the wind had been so far to the westward as to enable the Crescent to fetch Cape Barfleur, while the Réunion, which left Cherbourg in the evening, stood to the northward, in hopes of meeting with merchant-ships coming up Channel. The two frigates, therefore, must have crossed each other at no great distance; but the wind having changed towards the south about daylight, and the French frigate being unable to fetch back to Cherbourg, broke off with her head to the eastward, while the Crescent, by coming up on the opposite tack, was enabled to weather and get in shore of the enemy.

Shortly after day-break Captain Saumarez saw two sail standing on the starboard tack towards the Crescent, and it appears that they had approached her within two miles before they discovered themselves to be under the lee of an English frigate: they then tacked and made all sail, either for the purpose of trying to escape, or to approach nearer to Cherbourg, that they might have the assistance of their consort then in the harbour with her sails hoisted up. It was soon evident that the Crescent, now "clean out of dock," had the advantage in sailing; and, by half-past ten, Captain Saumarez, by edging down, took his position on the enemy's larboard quarter within pistol-shot, when the action began.

[Pg 102]

Captain John Tancock, who was then a midshipman stationed on the main-deck, says that the men had directions to fire at the rudder of their opponent, which was very soon disabled, while the main-topsail-yard and fore-yard were both shot away. The enemy fired so high that scarcely any shot struck the hull of the Crescent; but, consequently, her fore-topsail-yard, and soon afterwards her fore-top-mast, fell over the starboard gangway. Hitherto the ship had been kept in her first position by backing and filling the mizen-topsail, but now she came to, and eventually *came round*: but Captain Saumarez, whose presence of mind never forsook him, brailled up the mizen, and, by keeping all the square-sails aback, gave the ship a *stern-board*; at the same time, by keeping the *helm up*, she wore round on her heel, obtaining a position under the stern and on the starboard quarter, while the enemy was lying with his yards square and totally unmanageable. This manœuvre is shown in the diagram, to which an explanation is added.

[Pg 103]



C. The Crescent. R. The Réunion. 1. Commencement of the action. 2. The Crescent's track in wearing on her heel. 3. The position when the Réunion struck.

In passing under the enemy's stern, it was observed that his colours had been shot away, and, supposing he had struck, the firing ceased; but, on coming round on the starboard quarter, the enemy again opened his fire. The Crescent, having now got her larboard guns to bear, returned his broadside with such effect, that at twenty minutes past noon the officers of the Réunion waved their hats and flags to indicate that they had surrendered. The engraving represents the situation of the two ships at this moment; and Captain Sir Thomas Mansel, who was then a midshipman, declares it to be correct.



[View larger image](#)

Action with the Crescent and Réunion taken at the time the latter surrendered.

The combat now ceased, and the prize was taken possession of by Lieutenant (now Admiral) Sir George Parker, who received the usual order to carry her into port. The French captain being sent on board the Crescent, they began to remove the prisoners and repair damages. When the action began, a ship had been seen under the land to the eastward, about four leagues distant; this was supposed to be an enemy: but it turned out to be the Circe, Captain Yorke, who joined four hours after the action, and took part of the prisoners. In the mean time the cutter made off towards Cherbourg, out of which harbour the wind and adverse tide prevented the other frigate, said to be La Semillante, from getting to assist the Réunion.

[Pg 104]

The following very concise official letter to the Secretary of the Admiralty from Captain Saumarez, supplies the rest of the detail.

Crescent, off Cherbourg, 20th October 1793.

SIR,

I have the honour to acquaint you, for the information of my Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty, that this morning, being off Cape Barfleur in his Majesty's ship Crescent, under my command, I fell in with a French frigate, which, after a close action of two hours and ten minutes, struck to his Majesty's colours: she proved to be the Réunion, mounting thirty-six guns, and manned with three hundred and twenty men.

I am singularly happy in being able to inform their lordships that she has been obtained without the loss of a single man, or even any wounded, although her own loss has been very considerable indeed, having, as the prisoners informed me, one hundred and twenty killed and wounded.

[Pg 105]

I must beg leave to render the most ample justice to the officers and ship's company of the Crescent, for their cool and steady behaviour during the action; and I take this opportunity to recommend to their lordships' notice the three lieutenants, Messrs. Parker, Otter, and Rye: their conduct has afforded me the utmost satisfaction.

I have the honour to be,
 With the greatest respect, sir,
 Your most obedient and very humble
 servant,

To Philip Stephens, Esq. Admiralty.

P.S.—The Réunion was accompanied by a cutter, which did not attempt to come into action, but made for Cherbourg.

Captain Saumarez was now on his passage to Portsmouth, where he had left his wife and infant children only two days before, in pursuit of an implacable enemy known to be not many leagues distant! It was the first battle he had fought since he became a husband and a father; and his feelings, as he returned triumphantly to the bosom of his family, can be easier imagined than described.

The anxiety and excitement inseparable from the day of battle had subsided, the prisoners had been removed, the captive Frenchmen with whom he had been sympathizing had retired, and he was at length left alone to meditate on that remarkable dispensation of Divine favour which had been so fully and especially manifested towards him: he had gloriously wrested from an enemy, fighting under the proud banner of liberty, a ship equal to his own in weight of metal and superior by seventy men in numbers, after a furious contest of above two hours, without a man being hurt by his opponent, who lost one hundred and twenty men killed and wounded: a fact unparalleled in the page of history. With the generality of mankind, such circumstances were well calculated to raise feelings of proud exultation; but these were never cherished in the breast of Saumarez. Having done all in his power to soothe the affliction of his vanquished enemy, his first impulse was to offer up his thanksgivings and acknowledgments to the great GIVER of all victory, and to implore that his mind might not be too highly elevated by his glorious success. After despatching his unpresuming letter to the Admiralty, which has been already given, he wrote to his brother, in London, the following letter:

[Pg 106]

Crescent, 21st Oct. 1793.

MY DEAR RICHARD,

You will rejoice with me at the success that has attended our short cruise. On Saturday evening we sailed from Spithead; and the next morning, being about three leagues from Cape Barfleur, we saw two sail standing towards us from under Cherbourg, which I soon discovered to be a French frigate and a cutter. We were on the larboard tack with the wind off shore; I was happy in being able to keep between them and the land. When about two miles from us, the frigate tacked with all her sail set, and the cutter made sail to windward: we edged down to her, and at a cable's distance, at half-past ten, began the action, which continued with scarcely any intermission two hours and ten minutes.

[Pg 107]

Both ships were soon cut up in their sails and rigging, our fore-topsail yard being shot away, and soon after the fore-top-mast; the ship came to, and wearing on the other tack, gave us an opportunity to fire our guns, which were so well served that the French ship soon became unmanageable, and enabled us to rake her fore and aft; in which situation she struck her colours. I must observe that they had been before shot away, and, imagining she had struck, I gave orders to cease firing; she, however, soon relieved us of our suspense by giving us her broadside: we were so well prepared, and kept up so good a fire, that in a short time after they waved their colours and made signs from the gunwale with their hats that they had struck.

I immediately sent Mr. Parker to take possession of the ship, and send the first and second captains on board the Crescent. They informed me that the ship they had surrendered was La Réunion, mounting thirty-six guns and three hundred and twenty-one men. When we came into action, another frigate was in sight to the eastward, which we took to be her consort; we therefore lost no time to exchange prisoners, and repair our damages, in the best manner we could: she, however, proved to be the Circe, and joined us four hours after the action ceased.

The circumstance that has made me most happy from this engagement is, that we have not had a single person hurt by the enemy, and but one man injured, who had his leg fractured by the recoil of a gun. There being little wind the sea was perfectly calm; and I had the satisfaction to observe that most of our shot were perfectly well directed. The enemy's frigate is indeed most sadly a wreck, thirty-four men killed and eighty-four wounded, many of them mortally; one officer only has suffered, being badly wounded. She was commanded by Citizen Denain, capitaine de vaisseau, to whose obstinacy they ascribe the sacrifice of many lives.

[Pg 108]

It is unnecessary for me to observe, my dear Richard, the great happiness I derive from the consciousness that this event will afford you and all our friends particular satisfaction. My dear Martha, too,—I scarcely know how I shall disclose the circumstance to her; it embarrasses me as much as if it were a mournful subject. One observation is incumbent on me to make, namely, that Captain Yorke used every possible exertion to join us sooner, and that he has most readily afforded us every assistance we required,

I now remain, your ever affectionate brother,

JAS. SAUMAREZ.

Captain Saumarez had now realized his ardent desire for an opportunity of distinguishing himself, such as was afforded to his gallant brother-officer of the Nymph; and it is a singular coincidence that each should have written to his brother on the day of action, under similar circumstances of triumph and excitement. These interesting documents seem to have decided the superiority of the British over the French navy, at the commencement of the French revolution, and in reference to that of Saumarez, we cannot but dwell with admiration on the humility and acuteness of feeling with which it is replete!

[Pg 109]

The Circe, which had joined four hours after the action, was despatched to Guernsey to execute

the service on which Captain Saumarez had been ordered; but the Crescent and her prize, in proceeding to Spithead, were detained by light winds and calms. On the 22nd, she arrived off the Isle of Wight, when Lieutenant Otter was sent to Portsmouth in the boat with the following official letter:

Crescent, off the Isle of Wight, 22d Oct. 1793.

SIR,

I BEG you will be pleased to inform my Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty, that, being unable to gain Spithead from the prevailing calms, I have thought it expedient to despatch Lieutenant Otter with the intelligence I have the honour to convey to their lordships.

Having been prevented by the action with La Réunion from complying with their lordships' orders, I directed the Hon. Captain Yorke, who joined me in his Majesty's ship Circe, to proceed with the pacquets I was charged with for the commanding officers of his Majesty's troops at Guernsey and Jersey, and from thence to proceed to St. Maloes, and return to Spithead, agreeable to their lordships' orders.

I beg to observe, that Captain Yorke gave me every possible assistance, and has taken one hundred and sixty prisoners from the Réunion, which I directed him to land in the island of Guernsey.

I have the honour to be, sir,
Your most humble servant,

JAS. SAUMAREZ.

To Philip Stephens, Esq.

[Pg 110]

The Crescent arrived at Spithead on the following day, and with her prize was ordered into harbour; the former to have her damages repaired, and the latter to be surveyed and purchased for his Majesty's service.

Before we submit the interesting official and private letters which Captain Saumarez received on his arrival, and which may be considered as the best proof of the sensation which this gallant action created, it becomes our duty to state the comparative force of the two frigates.

							Weight of	
<i>Crescent.</i>	No.	Size.	No.	Size.	No.	Size.	Total.	metal
Broadside guns	13	18pr.	4	18pr. car.	1	9pr.	36	315lbs.
<i>Réunion.</i>								
Broadside guns	13	14pr.	3	40pr. car.	4	7pr.	40	330lbs.
Difference of guns, and of weight of shot in favour of la Réunion							—	—
							4	15lbs.
<i>Crescent.</i>			Men	257	Tons	888		
<i>Réunion.</i>			Men	320	Tons	951		
Difference in favour of La Réunion				—	—	—		
				63	63			

N.B. The weight has been reduced to English pounds.

The Crescent lost her fore-top-mast; her sails and rigging were much damaged, but very few shot struck her hull; and the only man hurt was at the first broadside, when his leg was fractured by the recoil of a gun.

La Réunion, on the contrary, had many shot in her hull, and her stern was very much shattered. After she was in dock, we saw where a shot had entered the starboard quarter, and made its way out of the larboard bow. It was said to have killed and wounded twenty-one men! The head of her rudder and wheel were shot away, and the fore-yard and main-topsail-yard came down early in the action: she was, in short, a complete wreck, as represented in the plate. The hopes that the ship seen to the eastward under the land was a friend, induced the French captain to delay surrendering after defence could no longer be effectual.

[Pg 111]

The head-money was only paid for three hundred men; but there was no doubt that three hundred and twenty-one were on board at the commencement of the action, as many of the slain were thrown overboard, and the French officers, for obvious reasons, wished to make their force less than it was. According to Captains Tancock and Mansell, forty men were killed, and eighty wounded. The cutter which was in company, believed to be L'Espérance, mounting fourteen guns, made off for Cherbourg with sweeps and sails as soon as the firing commenced. La Réunion's consort, believed to be the Semillante, made an attempt to get out of Cherbourg, but was prevented by the tide, when she sent a boat full of men, it was supposed, to reinforce the former, but which returned when it was observed that her fate was decided. The French shore, only five miles distant, was crowded with spectators.

[Pg 112]

There is no action between two single ships on record, where consummate skill in naval tactics has been so brilliantly and successfully displayed as in that which we have just described. The patriotic reader must not imagine that, because the Crescent had "none" either killed or

wounded, the captain and officers of La Réunion did not do their utmost, and far less that they were deficient in courage. The severe loss they sustained, and the obstinacy with which their ship was defended, has fully proved their bravery. Had the Crescent at once boarded the Réunion, which was in her power, and carried her sword in hand, as in the case of the *Nymphe* and *Cléopâtre*, it would have been perhaps better calculated to excite feelings of admiration in the general reader, who is not acquainted with naval affairs; but this mode of attack is one which, we must acquaint them, might readily be made by any officer moderately skilled in naval tactics. It is where the commander of a ship, by his presence of mind and skilful manœuvring, succeeds in the defeat and capture of an enemy, that the superiority is manifest; and it is to him who has thus proved that he possesses the *tact* to accomplish his object, and yet spare the valuable lives of his men, that the meed of praise is most justly due.

[Pg 113]

Crescent, Spithead, 23rd October 1793.

SIR,

I beg you will be pleased to inform my Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty of my arrival at Spithead in H.M. ship *Crescent*, under my command, and the prize *La Réunion*, and from thence into Portsmouth Harbour, conformable with orders from Sir Peter Parker.

I have the honour to be,
Your obedient humble servant,

JAMES SAUMAREZ.

To Philip Stephens, Esq.

Admiralty, October 24th, 1793.

SIR,

I learnt yesterday with great satisfaction the account of your action with the French frigate *La Réunion*, and beg to congratulate you very sincerely on your success on this occasion. The greatest praise seems due to the bravery and good conduct of the officers and men of the *Crescent*. I shall be extremely happy, as soon as it is convenient to you, to have the pleasure of seeing you in town, and of presenting you to his Majesty on an occasion so highly honourable to you.

I am, sir,
Your very faithful humble servant,

CHATHAM
(First Lord of the Admiralty.)

To Captain Saumarez.

Admiralty, 24th October 1793.

DEAR SIR,

I was this morning so happy as to receive your letter, conveying the agreeable account of your having captured the French frigate *La Réunion*, and which I lost no time in communicating to Lord Chatham, who will himself express to you his very high sense of your distinguished conduct, as well as his great satisfaction at the account you have given of the exemplary and gallant behaviour of your officers and men. I beg, my dear sir, to congratulate you most sincerely on an event which adds such lustre to your professional character, at the same time that it entitles you to every reward from your country, and

[Pg 114]

I remain, with great regard,
Your very faithful
and obedient humble servant,

J. HUNT
(Private Secretary.)

To Captain Saumarez, &c.

St. James's-square, 24th October 1793.

SIR,

Lord Chatham was so obliging as to acquaint me yesterday with your success, and at the same time with his fullest approbation of your conduct, which you may be assured gave me great pleasure. I have this day the favour of your letter, and thank you for your kind attention in informing me of what you might be confident would give me particular satisfaction.

I am, with great regard, sir,
Your obedient humble servant,

AMHERST.

To Captain James Saumarez.

DEAR SIR,

Accept my warmest congratulations on your late very extraordinary and glorious success, which I consider as a signal favour and blessing upon you from the God of armies, whom I invoke, and shall ever, on your behalf, that the path of happiness and glory, temporal and eternal, may be successfully trodden by you, and that you may long live an example of the blessings that Heaven has for a Cornelius. Continue me in your friendly remembrance, which I shall ever consider as an honour.

[Pg 115]

I am, dear sir,
Your most affectionate
and most obedient humble servant,

R. B. NICHOLLS.

To Captain Saumarez, &c.

Portsmouth, 30th October 1793.

DEAR SIR,

I am infinitely obliged to you for your kindness and attention to George Parker. I have not as yet heard from Lord Chatham, but suppose I shall in a day or two. This morning I reckon you will kiss hands, and return home "Sir James." Such an honour obtained on such an occasion is worthy the solicitation of a duke. If anything material occurs, be so good to favour me with a line. Lady Parker unites in every good wish for your rib and yourself, with

Yours, most sincerely,

P. PARKER.

To Captain Saumarez.

Captain Saumarez, after a happy visit to his family at Ryde, repaired to London, on leave of absence; and, on being presented to his Majesty, received the well-merited honour of knighthood, and his first lieutenant (now Admiral Sir) George Parker, was promoted to the rank of master and commander. Sir James, having applied for an extension of his leave, enjoyed the society of his friends in London until the 14th of November, when he and Lady Saumarez returned to their family at Ryde. The following letter to his brother, descriptive of other marks of respect which had been paid to him, will be read with interest:

[Pg 116]

Ryde, Isle of Wight, 16th Nov. 1793.

MY DEAR BROTHER,

It was not before yesterday that we were enabled to return to our little treasure in this island, owing to official business and the badness of the weather. We found all in perfect good health except our little girl, who has been for some time very unwell, and has suffered exceedingly; she is at present rather better, and we hope her disorder is past its height. Mr. Le Marchant has fixed for next Monday to leave the island. I shall endeavour to accompany them to Southampton, and, after that, trust to opportunities hereafter offering to enable me to see them at Bath.

I do not expect the Crescent will be ready to leave the harbour before the middle of next week; what our destination will then be must remain uncertain. Sir John Jarvis has this morning made the signal for sailing, and it is expected will put to sea on Monday or Tuesday next. I mean to return to Portsmouth to-day or to-morrow, that I may have an opportunity of seeing General Dundas before his departure.

Our last letters from the island (Guernsey) are of the 6th; no particular news. You will be concerned to hear of the fate of the unlucky Thames; when the particulars are received, I am persuaded it will be found that the ship has not been given away. The report is, that, after a severe action with a six-and-thirty, she was next day attacked by the Carmagnolle, to which ship she struck. Sir E. Pellew is cruising with the Circe off St. Maloes; the French have no ships at present at Cherbourg.

[Pg 117]

Yesterday I received a very polite letter from Mr. Marsham, inclosing the resolution of the 14th instant from the committee for encouraging the capture of French privateers, voting me a piece of plate, value one hundred guineas, which I consider a very high compliment paid to my earnest endeavours. But I am not quite so well pleased with a letter from Mr. Cooke, who has the distribution of the fees which he says are due from those who receive the honour of knighthood, and which amount to 103*l.* 6*s.* 8*d.* In reply to this, I have referred him to whoever paid the above fees for Sir E. Pellew, on whom that honour was conferred on a similar occasion. I fear it may not be taken well; at the same time, I think it hard to pay so much for an honour which my services have been thought to deserve.

Captain Parker came down to Portsmouth last Thursday, without having obtained an interview with Lord Chatham. I am, however, persuaded he will soon get a ship. The other arrangements are not yet made. Mr. Warren has gone to London, to endeavour to get over the difficulty of not having served his rated time; if he does, he is to be third lieutenant.

You must now permit me to return you and my dear sister our most sincere thanks for the kind hospitality we experienced under your roof; we not only ate of your board and drank of your cup, but you gave us your very bed to repose on: when shall we have it in our power to requite such goodness? At any rate, receive this tribute of our warmest gratitude.

I hope your dear children, whom we almost considered as ours, are very well: bestow on them a thousand kisses from us. With our most sincere love, I remain, my dear brother,

[Pg 118]

On the 22nd of November, the Crescent came out of harbour, and was reported ready for sea; and Sir James Saumarez was now ready to proceed, and to add fresh laurels to those he had so gloriously gained in the service of his king and country.

CHAPTER VII.

[Pg 119]

1793, 1794.

Sir James Saumarez is placed under the orders of Admiral M^cBride.—Is detached, and attacks an Enemy's squadron.—Narrow Escape from Shipwreck.—Off Havre.—Cherbourg.—Private Letters relating the particulars of several Cruises on the French coast.—Gallant Action with a French squadron of superior force off Guernsey.

Sir James was now placed under the orders of Admiral M^cBride, who gave him the command of a squadron, consisting of the Crescent and Druid, frigates, Liberty brig, and Lion cutter. The first service he had to perform was to carry a small convoy of transports with troops, &c. to Guernsey and Jersey, and furthermore to obtain pilots for the admiral's squadron.

We shall not attempt to describe the enthusiastic reception which Sir James and his gallant crew received from their loyal and patriotic countrymen in these islands; but his stay was short. Despatching the Liberty to reconnoitre St. Maloes, he proceeded to Jersey, and, having reconnoitred Granville, returned to Guernsey Roads on the 28th of November, when he detached the Lion with pilots to the admiral; and, pursuant to orders, sailed to the adjacent coast of France to assist the royalists.

[Pg 120]

The following is his account of an attempt to attack a French squadron in the bay of Brehat.

Crescent, off Guernsey, 7th Dec. 1793.

SIR,

I have the honour to acquaint you, that pursuant to your orders I sailed from Guernsey Roads the night of the 5th instant, in his Majesty's ship Crescent, under my command, together with the Druid frigate and Liberty brig. The wind being to the southward, we were unable to fetch to windward off Cape Frehel in the morning; and observing several sail at anchor off the isles of Brehat, particularly two large ships and a brig, in a bay to the northward, which there appeared a great probability of attacking with success, I stood in for them; but the tide of ebb setting us to the westward, prevented our fetching into the bay, and enabled the enemy's ships to get under way with the first of the flood, and save themselves between the rocks. We were however in time to fire several shot at the largest, which, as well as the others, appeared armed *en flute* and deeply laden.

Finding it impossible to follow them without endangering his Majesty's ships, I stood out of the bay through a passage which both the pilots I had on board assured me was perfectly safe.

We soon found ourselves deceived, perceiving several rocks which we with difficulty cleared. Unfortunately the Druid, (which I hailed to acquaint her of the danger,) in wearing, tailed on a sunken rock; and, although she floated in a few minutes, she has I fear received so much damage as to require her to be taken into dock.

I have directed Captain Ellison, whose activity and exertions cannot be too highly praised, to proceed to Plymouth, and the Liberty to accompany him into the Sound, and rejoin you without loss of time.

[Pg 121]

I am, with every respect, sir,
Your obedient and most humble servant,

JAS. SAUMAREZ.

Rear-admiral John M^cBride.

On Sir James's arrival at Guernsey, he addressed the following letter to his brother in London, which continues the narrative of his proceedings on that dangerous coast.

MY DEAR RICHARD,

I take the first opportunity to send you an account of an enterprise which, had it been attended with success, would have proved fortunate indeed. Not having time to send you the particulars, I have enclosed a copy of my letter to the admiral, which you will show to M. Le Mesurier. I have only to add, that the object in view justified the attempt; but, as the world too often forms its judgment from events, I fear we shall not acquire much credit for the attempt.

At midnight, we providentially escaped getting wrecked on the Rocks Douvre, in steering after the Druid. We were warned of our perilous situation by the noise of the breakers, and had only time to avoid them. In short, my dear friend, when I consider our disappointment, and the very wonderful escapes we have had, it is almost too much for me, and I can only be thankful things are not worse.

Accounts have lately arrived from the army of the royalists, that they are in possession of Rennes, and we have reason to expect soon to hear of their having a seaport wherein we can land the reinforcement. Four French frigates have been in sight of the island these two days; the more mortifying as we cannot detach after them without leaving the troops embarked unprotected. An expedition of this consequence should have at least the support of two ships of the line.

[Pg 122]

Be careful that nothing that I write to you transpires. I have lately seen paragraphs which have given me concern, particularly one mentioning my being ordered off St. Maloes. Be assured they may occasion much mischief and distrust, if it can be imagined that they originate from any of my friends. My brother has shown me the P.S. of your letter to him: I think it best the plate should be confined to a dinner-set, as I am unwilling to separate the whole of a present so handsomely bestowed; therefore, if not too late, I wish you to direct accordingly. Lady S. writes to me that our dear little girl is better; I wish to hear that she is sufficiently well to be inoculated. I shall be happy to have it over.

You are a long time without writing to me. Although I know you are most hurried at this time, you must forgive me if I desire you will devote a few spare minutes to me; my sister, I am sure, will consent to it. Assure her of my sincere love; and believe me truly,

My dear Richard,
Yours affectionately,

JAMES SAUMAREZ.

P.S.—We are close ship-keepers, being all on board by six o'clock; a very proper regulation. I do not expect to sail before the fleet proceeds to the French coast, when I hope our accounts will prove more favourable.

We have here two other remarkable instances, where on sudden and unexpected danger appearing, the presence of mind and professional skill of Saumarez saved his ship and squadron from destruction; and although the bold attempt he made to attack the enemy was unsuccessful, he does not less deserve the merit of making it, for we cannot command the wind and tide.

[Pg 123]

The Crescent continued to cruise with Admiral M^cBride's squadron during the winter, making several attempts to assist the royalists on various places on the coast of France, and annoying the enemy's coasting trade.

The following letters from Sir James to his brother in London, give a particular account, in his own words, of the arduous services on which he was employed during that time.

Crescent, Cowes Roads, 25th January 1794.

MY DEAR RICHARD,

You will not expect so soon to hear from me, but I must just give you a journal of our short cruise. The day after we sailed from here, we chased three armed brigs off Havre, which were very near captured by the Flora and this ship. The day following, Sir John Warren having detached me and La Nymphé to look into Cherbourg, on the very spot where La Réunion fell into our hands, we were on the point of taking a French frigate, apparently of twenty-eight or thirty-two guns. The wind at first flattered us with the hope of cutting her off from the land, when it shifted and enabled her to get into Cherbourg: they were decidedly frightened, and kept firing guns as signals to their ships in the bay, which never attempted to come out to their assistance, although we were alone, as La Nymphé was scarcely discernible from this ship. The next day La Nymphé sprung her fore-mast, which obliged her to return to Spithead.

[Pg 124]

I appeared close to Cherbourg all day yesterday, in the hope of drawing their ships out, which I plainly discerned to consist of six frigates, four of which were large. In the evening it coming on to blow hard, and no appearance of our ships, I stood off shore, and at noon this day, it blowing a severe storm, I anchored in this road. Admiral M^cBride having consented to my going to Bath for twenty-four hours, I am setting off with all speed: not having time to add more, I remain, with my kindest love,

My dear Richard,
Yours ever affectionately,

Sunday Morning. JAS. SAUMAREZ.

P.S.—I really intended to write to the Lord Mayor, but have not a moment's time; I shall therefore leave you to acquaint him with our return here.

We may stop here to mention, that in the debate in the House of Commons on the address to the King's speech at the opening of parliament, the gallant conduct of Sir James Saumarez was mentioned in terms of admiration, and his late action quoted as a remarkable instance of the superiority of our naval commanders in professional talent and skill; the account of this had been transmitted to him from London by his brother Richard.

Cowes, 2nd February 1794.

MY DEAR RICHARD,

I left my dearest concerns yesterday morning, and arrived here this afternoon, after a six hours' storm, from Southampton. Both your kind letters afford me infinite satisfaction. When I wrote to you on Sunday, I had not the admiral's consent to remain till I heard from him, and only expected to remain twenty-four hours in Bath; but depended, nevertheless, on hearing from you there. You must therefore desire my sister to plead in your behalf, when she writes to Lady S.

[Pg 125]

I am much flattered at my name having been found worthy of notice in the House of Commons, and I thank you for the praise you bestow on me for the business of our last cruise. Though we failed in

taking the frigate, it was certainly a matter of exultation and triumph to me, in a single ship, thus to brave the enemy off their port.

I find Sir John Warren has sent in an armed brig, which we were prevented from sharing, at the time we were in pursuit of the frigate: we decoyed her to within a small distance from us by showing French colours, and I am persuaded we should have taken her, if we had chased her instead of the frigate; and they ought in justice to allow us to share in the profits of this prize.

I would advise you to wait till Donaldson's plates come out for your paintings. Let me caution you against purchasing any of the prints, as I have engaged fifteen sets for my friends, in order to have proof engravings.

Tom^[7] writes to me they are under serious apprehensions for the island. I own to you I think there is some cause, unless we keep a strong squadron for their defence; at the same time, I do not believe they have so strong a force as mentioned, or that they are making preparation for invading this country. Let me know what has become of Mr. Warren, and whether Captain Parker has sailed.

[Pg 126]

I must now wish you and my sister, and all under your roof, a good night. And

I remain truly,

Yours affectionately,

Monday morning. JAS. SAUMAREZ.

P.S.—Our admiral has not yet made his appearance, a vessel is gone to Portsmouth for him. The packet returns so speedily that it is next to impossible to answer letters the same day.

Crescent, Spithead, 24th February 1794.

MY DEAR RICHARD,

You will be pleased to hear of our being safe in port in the midst of the prevailing storms, but not without our having previously felt their rigour. Last Thursday morning we carried away our main-top-mast; and, in going to Torbay soon after, we sprung our fore-yard, which made the admiral determine to send us to Spithead to refit, and afterwards join him with all possible despatch. We are just anchored; but it blows so very hard, there is no possibility of sending a boat on shore.

I left the squadron anchored in Torbay yesterday evening, where they are well sheltered from the present very high wind. Let me hear from you, if possible, by the next post. Not expecting to be ordered here, I wrote to Lady S. yesterday morning, desiring her to direct to me there; and would have written to you to the same purpose, but that I expected to have sent my letters from here by this evening's post, which would have reached you equally soon.

I think this weather will, for the present at least, let us sleep in tranquillity, and make our enemies set aside their projected invasion. Let them attempt it when they will, I shall view it as a desirable event for this country. But I am not of that opinion with regard to our islands.

[Pg 127]

God bless you, and preserve them all! Let us deserve well, and there is nothing that we may not confidently expect from his providence. And, with my sincere love,

I am ever affectionately yours,

JAS. SAUMAREZ.

P.S. Sunday morning.—I availed myself of a favourable time this morning to come on shore, and have just received a letter stating that the Liberty had been chased by two frigates off the Casketts.

The following letter gives an account of his visit to the island of Jersey, &c.

Bouley Bay, Jersey, 30th March 1794.

MY DEAR RICHARD,

I have at length had an opportunity of visiting this island, the admiral having detached this ship and the Druid to look into Canelle Bay and Granville. It falling calm on Thursday evening, we anchored in St. Owen's Bay; and, next morning, Captain Ellison and myself went on shore to wait on Lord Balcarras. We called on Mr. Dumaresq on our way to St. Hilliers, who most obligingly assisted us with horses, and accompanied us to town after having engaged us to dinner. I had just time to call on our friends John Durell and Mr. Wm. Dumaresq, who were very kind in their offers of service. We then returned to St. Peter's, and I shall ever be thankful for one of the most pleasant days I have passed since I commanded the Crescent. Lord Balcarras and his aides-de-camp were the only strangers; Major and Mrs. Le Couteur were of the party; and they were all to have favoured me with their company on board the following day, had not untoward circumstances prevented that pleasure. In the evening we had so thick a fog that it was impossible to join the ships; and at day-break we had the mortification to find, that, the wind having come to the southward, they had found it necessary to leave the bay. They however soon made their appearance, and with some difficulty I got on board.

[Pg 128]

The weather not permitting our going on the French coast, I anchored in this bay, and detached a lugger with the third lieutenant, which will execute the service better than we could in the ships. They are here greatly relieved from their fears by knowing our squadron is so near them; and the ladies that at first emigrated are now returning. Write to me by the packet to Guernsey.

When we can ascertain the force at Canelle, I hope we shall find ourselves of sufficient strength to pay them a visit. If the emissaries are to be credited, they are disembarking their troops, and marching against the royalists in La Vendée.

I hope my sister continues well, as when I left you. And, with kindest love,

I remain, yours ever affectionately,

JAS. SAUMAREZ.

Sunday evening.—P.S. Mr. French, third lieutenant, is this moment returned. He reports that eleven sail of frigates are in Canelle Bay only;—not the least appearance of ships of the line.

After remaining some time on this dangerous station, the Crescent and squadron returned to Plymouth, when Sir James Saumarez was employed on the expedition under Earl Moira, which need not be detailed here. On the 11th May he received orders to take a squadron under his command, to cruise off the Lizard. The following letter is relative to this cruise:

[Pg 129]

Crescent, at sea, 14th May, 1794.

SIR,

Pursuant to your directions, I dispatch the Mary cutter to Plymouth for any orders you may be pleased to send me, and I avail myself of this opportunity to acquaint you with the proceedings of the squadron from the time of our departure.

[Pg 130]

We made sail to the southward on Sunday night, and saw nothing except two neutral vessels. One of them was informed by Sir Richard Strachan, that on the 6th instant he fell in with a squadron of French frigates in lat. 47° 50' N., long. 6° 15' W.

Yesterday morning, about eighteen leagues to the southward of the Lizard, the weather having proved hazy, on clearing up we saw a ship and a brig, which we soon distinguished to be enemy's cruisers. I made the signal for general chase, and endeavoured to cut them off from the French coast. We pursued them till within four miles of Ushant, when they escaped through the passage De Four. I then made the best of my way to regain the station; and we are now anxiously looking for the frigates we sailed in pursuit of, with the hopes of better success.

I beg to assure you of my most earnest endeavours to merit the confidence you are pleased to repose in me; being, with great truth,

My dear Admiral,
Your most faithful
and obedient servant,

JAS. SAUMAREZ.

To Admiral M^cBride, Plymouth.

It was in the interval between December 1793 and June 1794, that Sir James Saumarez and Sir Edward Pellew, and Sir John Warren, being each in command of squadrons of frigates, agreed to share prize-money until the latter should return to port, which did not take place until June. It is notorious in the navy that this led to a dispute, and consequently a coolness, between these gallant officers, but the misunderstanding was subsequently made up, and need not be farther alluded to.

On the 1st June Captain Saumarez returned to Plymouth from the coast of France adjacent to the Channel islands, and on the 6th received the following order from Admiral M^cBride.

You are hereby required and directed to take under your command his Majesty's ships, luggers, and cutters, named on the margin,^[8] and proceed first with them to Guernsey and Jersey, and then endeavour to ascertain the force the enemy may have in Canelle Bay and St. Maloes, and then return to Cawsand Bay, leaving the Prestwood cutter with Captain Ball, of his Majesty's ship Fury.

[Pg 131]

Given under my hand, on board
H.M.S. Echo, 6th June 1794.

JNO. M^cBRIDE.

Sir James sailed on the 7th from Plymouth: the following is a copy of his official letter, giving an account of his action with the French squadron:

Crescent, Guernsey, 8th June 1794.

SIR,

I have the honour to acquaint you that this morning, at dawn of day, being with his Majesty's ship Crescent, under my command, and the Druid and Eurydice frigates, about twelve leagues to the northward of Guernsey, on the larboard tack, with a fresh breeze to the N.E., we fell in with five sail of ships and a cutter to windward. From their not bearing down, and other circumstances, I did not take them for enemy's ships; and I directed Lieut. Baker, of the Valiant, armed lugger, to make sail to windward, for the purpose of reconnoitring them. At six o'clock they hoisted national colours, and fired on the lugger. I then shortened sail to form the line; but the Eurydice sailing so indifferently, and having so superior a force to contend with,—three of the enemy's ships being large frigates, with another which I took for the Thames, and one apparently of twenty-four guns,—I directed Captain Cole to make all the sail he could and stand in shore, Guernsey at the time being in sight.

[9]



[View larger image](#)

Commencement of the action between the Crescent and her squadron, with the French squadron of superior force off Guernsey.

I remained with this ship and the Druid under easy sail to windward. The two headmost ships of the enemy kept up a brisk fire as they came up; which was returned, but at too great a distance to do any considerable damage. At eight, the Eurydice being so far in shore as to run no risk of their coming up with her, and the whole French line coming up within gun-shot, I made sail with the Druid for the Hanoways.

[Pg 132]

Observing the headmost of the enemy gaining very fast on the two ships, I hauled in for the shore with the view of drawing off her attention; which answered my purpose, as she immediately hauled up after me, and maintained a brisk fire for some time, but without effect. She then bore away, but the Druid and Eurydice were too far ahead; and soon after they hauled their wind to the northward.

I feel every satisfaction in acquainting you that, from the spirit and bravery of my officers and men on this occasion, I am persuaded it would have had every effect, had we had a more equal force to contend with. I met with a noble support in Captain Ellison; and I have only to regret that Captain Cole was not in a ship of sufficient force to allow of my deriving advantage from his tact and intrepidity.

I am, with every respect, sir,
Your most obedient and most humble servant,

JAS. SAUMAREZ.

Rear-Admiral John M^cBride.

RELATIVE FORCE OF THE ENGLISH AND FRENCH SQUADRONS.

English.

	Guns.	Weight of shot.
Crescent	36	630
Druid	36	630
Eurydice	20	240
	—	—
Total	92	1500

The cutters and luggers went off to Plymouth when the action began.

[Pg 133]

French.

	Guns.	Weight of shot.
Le Scævola (razée)	54	1656
Le Brutus (ditto)	54	1656
La Danae	36	800
La Félicité	36	800
La Terreur.	12	144
	—	—
Total	192	5056

Thus it appears that the French were 100 guns, and 3556 pounds in weight of metal, superior to the English squadron.

This exploit, which has been justly considered by every officer of the navy a masterpiece of

professional skill, as well as of presence of mind and intrepidity, should be more particularly related than in the above very modest public letter. The superiority of the enemy being much too great to be opposed with any chance of success, it became the imperative duty of Saumarez to effect, if possible, the escape of his ships, to which the enemy immediately gave chase. Observing that his own ship and the *Druid* had the advantage in sailing, and that the *Eurydice*, which was not only in bad condition but a bad sailer, would fall into their hands, he shortened sail, and having ordered the *Eurydice* by signal to push for Guernsey, he contrived, by occasionally showing a disposition to engage, to amuse the enemy, and lead him off until the *Eurydice* was safe. He now tacked, and, in order to save the *Druid*, closed with the enemy, passing along their line; and the capture of the *Crescent* seemed at one time inevitable. The *Druid* meanwhile made her escape, with the *Eurydice*, into Guernsey Roads.

[Pg 134]

But Sir James Saumarez had for his own preservation a scheme which, in the first instance, required great courage; in the second, a perfect knowledge of a most dangerous and intricate channel; and, in the last, a consummate skill in the management of his ship. He was himself well acquainted with the coast, and possessed an experienced pilot, John Breton, a native, whose house was on that extremity of the island. As soon therefore as the other two ships were secure, he bore up as if to run his ship on the rocks, to avoid capture. Ordering his pilot to steer the *Crescent* through a narrow passage between the rocks, which had never before been attempted by a ship of her size, and defying the enemy to follow him, he reached the anchorage in safety,^[10] to the no small surprise and mortification of the French, who, after firing some time over the rocks at the ship, were obliged, by the shot of the *Crescent* and that of the batteries, to give up the contest.

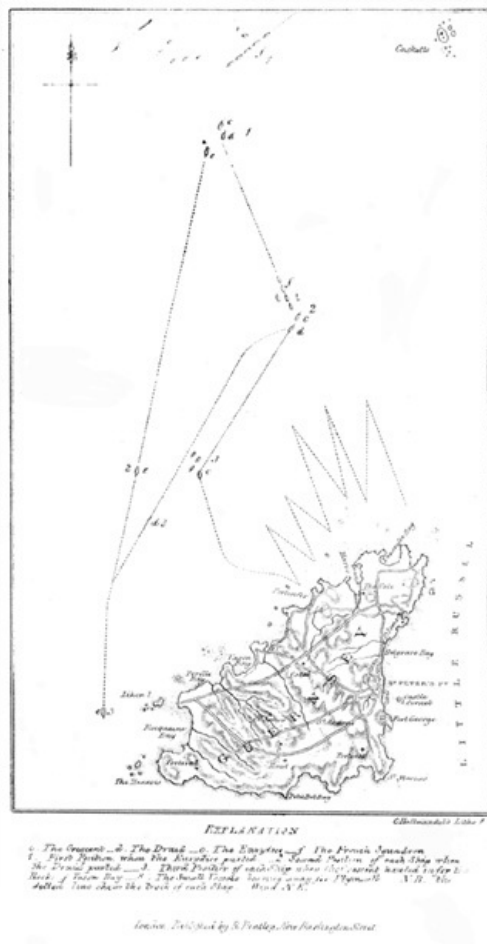


[View larger image](#)

Close of the action when the *Crescent* retreated among the rocks at Guernsey.

It is worthy of remark that, after passing through the narrow channel, the ship had to sail so near to the shore of C atel parish, that he could distinctly see his own house,—a position truly singular, for behind he beheld a French prison, and before him his own fireside! While passing through the narrowest part of the channel, Sir James asked the pilot if he was sure he could see the marks for running through? when he replied, "I am quite sure, for there is *your* house, and there is my own!"

[Pg 135]



[View larger image](#)

Chart of the island of Guernsey, showing the positions of the English and French squadrons.

The gratification which Sir James must have felt in having, by his admirable skill and daring, so completely succeeded in saving the whole of the ships, could not but be highly augmented by the circumstance of his countrymen, and even his family and friends, being eye-witnesses of his gallant and judicious conduct. Lieutenant-governor Small, who, with a multitude of the inhabitants, beheld the whole of these masterly evolutions, immediately published the following flattering testimonial in his general orders, which was afterwards transmitted to Sir James by the brigade-major in a polite letter.

Parole, Saumarez; countersign, Crescent.

The lieutenant-governor cannot, without doing injustice to his own feelings, help taking notice thus publicly of the gallant and distinguished conduct of Sir James Saumarez, with the officers and men of his Majesty's ships Crescent, Druid, and Eurydice, under his command, in the very unequal conflict of yesterday, where their consummate professional skill and masterly manœuvres demonstrated with brilliant effect the superiority of British seamanship and bravery, by repelling and frustrating the views of at least treble their force and weight of metal.

[Pg 136]

This cheering instance of spirit and perseverance in a detachment of our royal navy, could not fail of presenting an animating and pleasing example to his Majesty's land forces, both of the line and island troops, who were anxious spectators, and beheld with admiration the active conduct of their brave countrymen.

To the loyal inhabitants of Guernsey it afforded cause of real exultation to witness the manly and excellent conduct of an officer of whom this flourishing island has to boast he is a native.

The governor of Guernsey, as a further mark of admiration at the gallant conduct of Sir James Saumarez, wrote the following letter to the Secretary of the Admiralty:

Government-house, Guernsey, 9th June 1794.

SIR,

I do myself the honour of transmitting herewith a copy of what I deemed proper to insert this day in the public orders issued to his Majesty's forces stationed on the island of Guernsey, under my command. May I request that this tribute of well-earned approbation from a brother officer may be communicated to the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty. Should it appear irregular that an extra-official communication of this nature comes from a department not immediately under their lordships' cognizance, the impropriety on my part I trust will be indulgently forgiven, as it arises from an irresistible impulse of wishing to do justice to merit and exertions far indeed above my praise. As an officer honoured with a public and confidential situation, and having from shore been an eye-witness of the gallant intrepidity of Sir James Saumarez, and sailors of his Majesty's ships

[Pg 137]

Crescent, Druid, and Eurydice, under his command, I consider it my duty to express, although still inadequately, my opinion of the conduct of men whose modesty (the infallible concomitant of merit) may, in reporting to you, come short of what thousands of loyal and anxious spectators from this island beheld with joy and satisfaction, in the display of superior address and British bravery alluded to.

I have the honour to subscribe myself,
With esteem and high regard, sir,
Your most obedient and most humble
servant,

JOHN SMALL.

To Philip Stephens, Esq. &c. &c. &c.

N.B. The enclosure has been already given.

The following general memorandum was issued to the squadron, dated

Crescent, Guernsey Roads, 9th June 1794.

General Memorandum.

Sir James Saumarez desires to return his best thanks to Captain Ellison, and the officers and men of H.M.S. Druid, for their spirited conduct and bravery on the 8th instant, in having, jointly with the Crescent, repelled ships of the enemy treble our force. It is to be regretted that the bad sailing of the Eurydice prevented their deriving the advantage they otherwise would have received from Captain Cole and his brave ship's company.

Crescent, Guernsey Roads, 9th June 1794.

General Memorandum.

Sir James Saumarez requests Captain Cole will signify to the officers and ship's company of his Majesty's ship Eurydice, under his command, how truly mortified he felt himself at being deprived of their support and assistance on the 8th instant, in consequence of the bad sailing of their ship. Had the enemy's force on that day permitted their being brought to action on more equal terms, he is too fully persuaded of the gallantry and bravery of British seamen not to be convinced of its having been attended with the most signal success.

[Pg 138]

Early in the action, the small vessels, being separated by the enemy, bore up for Plymouth. The Valiant arrived first with bad news; and then Mr. Hall, of the Cockchafer, went to Admiral M^cBride, and informed him that the whole of Sir James Saumarez' squadron was taken. The admiral, who was then suffering under a fit of the gout, demanded if he saw them strike; to which Mr. Hall replied that he did not, but they could not escape. This so enraged the admiral, who would not believe Sir James's squadron had been taken, that he threatened to throw his crutch at him, and sent him out of his presence in a very summary manner, charging him to return to Guernsey with the following letter:

Tuesday, 10th June.

MY DEAR SIR,

If I can gather anything right from Hall, of the little lugger that ran away from you, this will find you at Guernsey, and I hope in good health, with your associates; to whom remember me. The conduct of the small craft you are the best judge of, and I shall suspend my conjectures till I see or hear from you on that subject. As you must naturally have received damage, you will, I think, do well to return hither, by which time I suppose La Margareta will arrive. Yesterday evening Sir Roger Curtis landed from the Phaeton. He left Lord Howe on the 4th. I know not the particulars, but there has been a general action; and I think Monsieur Jean Bon L'Andre and his Guillotine have had a thorough drubbing. We have lost very few officers of rank. Lord Howe is perfectly well, of which I give you joy.

[Pg 139]

Yours, my dear sir, most affectionately,

JOHN M^cBRIDE.

Meanwhile the commodore, in consequence of the enemy's motions, wrote the following letter to the Admiralty:

Crescent, Guernsey Road, 11th June 1794.

SIR,

I have despatched the Active cutter to Spithead, to acquaint you, for the information of their lordships, that the French squadron which engaged his Majesty's ships under my command on Sunday last, put into Cancell Bay the day following. I have reason to believe they are part of the squadron that chased this ship, in company with the Nympe and Concorde, on the 2nd instant, off the Seven Islands; and that the ships of the line that were then in company proceeded to Brest.

His Majesty's ship Severn joined me this morning from Plymouth; and I propose to proceed to the Sound to-morrow, in compliance with orders from Rear-admiral M^cBride.

JAMES SAUMAREZ.

Philip Stephens, Esq. Secretary, &c. &c. &c.

The squadron returned to Plymouth Sound on the 14th of June, when Sir James sent the following

Saturday, 14th June 1794.

MY DEAR RICHARD,

We sailed from the island at four yesterday morning, unluckily too soon for the arrival of the packet; by which I lost all the pretty things you, with other friends, said to me on the business of last Sunday. We remain also uninformed of Lord Howe's victory, except that we know a general action has taken place favourable to us. This evening will, I hope, clear up all our doubts.

The French squadron put into Cancele Bay the day after our rencontre, and I have reason to think were rather sore from our well-directed fire. That their fire did not take more effect on the Crescent, must be ascribed to a superior Providence; as, I will own to you, I never saw shot fall thicker about any ship than at the time we hauled up for Vason Bay.

My old pilot, Jean Breton, has infinite merit, and I must have him recommended to that very laudable society for the encouragement of the protection of the commerce of the country. He has a large family, to whom any pecuniary recompense will be of service; but as two other pilots exerted themselves, one on board the Druid, and the other in this ship, I hope they will also be considered. Mention this to my worthy friend the Lord Mayor, who will probably have the goodness to undertake the business.

I am proceeding to Plymouth for further orders, and you may rest assured of hearing from me when any thing is fixed. The Valiant lugger has this instant joined me from Plymouth, and has brought me the extraordinary Gazette; I most truly rejoice at the good news it contains, though I am savage enough to wish a few more had been sunk or taken.

This business absorbs all lesser considerations, and I must be satisfied if I can only be considered the *horse-radish* to garnish the roast beef.

[Pg 141]

Adieu, my worthy Richard: lose no time, as the Admiral writes to me we shall sail again early next week. I hope to arrive in the Sound this evening.

Yours affectionately,

JAS. SAUMAREZ.

Sir James was, however, disappointed in receiving an answer from his brother, being ordered to sail in command of a squadron. The following letter concludes the account of the late meritorious affair:

Plymouth, Crescent, June 1794.

MY DEAR RICHARD,

I have been much disappointed, not to receive a single line from you since we sailed from this place, although I am convinced you must have written by way of Guernsey. To-morrow I sail with a squadron of six frigates under my command, viz. Crescent, Nymphé, Blonde, Druid, Concorde, and Severn: my only fear is, that we shall not be so fortunate as to fall in with the enemy. Admiral M^cBride has shown me his reply from the Admiralty to his letter, inclosing my account of our late business off Guernsey. It is highly flattering to myself, and expressive of their approbation of my conduct in the strongest terms. I doubt my letter being published, as it is only in instances where success has been the consequence.

What a noble business that of Lord Howe! And how well he has fulfilled the expectations which those who knew him had formed of his character! Several of my friends are here who were in that action, and speak in the highest strain of panegyric of the whole of his conduct.

[Pg 142]

I wait for my wife being again on her legs to compose on the late victory. Why have you not a turn for poetry and music, so as to indite a song on this subject, in lieu of the famous Ninety-two., that has had the run of a whole century?

Adieu, my worthy friend! I am truly and faithfully yours,

JAS. SAUMAREZ.

CHAPTER VIII.

[Pg 143]

1794, 1795.

Sir James commands a Squadron of Frigates, in the Channel.—Visit to Weymouth.—Joins the Channel Fleet.—Black Rocks.—Private Letters and Instructions.—Appointed to the Orion.—Crescent's Officers and Crew volunteer to follow him.—Appointed to the Marlborough (*pro tempore*).—Commands a detached Squadron.—Returns to the Orion, attached to the Channel Fleet.—Private Letters.—Lord Bridport's Action.—Orion, the headmost Ship, begins the battle.—Official Letter.—Two private Accounts.—Returns to Portsmouth—Expedition to Isle Dieu.—Returns to Spithead.

Captain Saumarez, whose conduct in his late encounter with the enemy's squadron had called forth the admiration of his country, and the high approbation of the Admiralty, was continued in

command of the squadron destined to protect the Channel islands. Admiral M^cBride emphatically said, "their defence could not be in better hands." Sir James left Plymouth on the 16th of June 1794, and arrived at Guernsey on the following day. The enemy's large ships escaped to Brest before any force could be brought to intercept them. The station of Saumarez was from Cape Barfleur to the Seven Islands; and, on the English coast, between the Isle of Wight and the Start, having four frigates under his command. The following letter to his brother gives an amusing account of a false alarm, occasioned by the squadron while his Majesty George the Third was at Weymouth:

[Pg 144]

Crescent, 18th September 1794.

MY DEAR RICHARD,

I was made happy yesterday by the sight of your handwriting, of which I had for a considerable time been deprived. You will have learnt from the Lord Mayor of our short cruise off Cherbourg. On our return, Sunday evening, we caused an alarm I had little expected: the *Trusty*, having fallen in with the four frigates, made the private signal, which, not being distinctly seen, remained unanswered. In consequence of which she proceeded to Weymouth Road, making signals of an enemy. The troops were ordered under arms, the batteries manned, and the royal carriages got in readiness. At our approach to the road after dark, a shot was fired from the *Trusty*. This ship was secured with springs on her cables, and was ready to pour her broadside, when I fortunately made the night-signal, to denote we were friends. I immediately went on shore, and found the royal family at the rooms, not without apprehension of the enemy's landing.

The King desired to see me, and very heartily laughed at the circumstance. I remained near an hour in conference with their Majesties in the tea-room; a very distinguished honour, I assure you, as even the lords in waiting are scarcely ever admitted during meals: I was highly flattered at the very gracious and flattering reception I met with. The next day they were on the water, and the King expressed himself much satisfied with the manœuvres of the squadron under my directions. Lady S. and Mrs. Le Marchant, of Bath, were on board the *Crescent*, and I was happy in the company of Mr. G—. All dined on board, and seemed well satisfied with the day.

[Pg 145]

I expect Admiral M^cBride the beginning of next week; at which time we shall either go to Plymouth or Portsmouth, to complete our provisions. The weather is so bad that we must not expect the packet from Guernsey, and it prevents the one from Weymouth putting to sea. Love to my sister and children.

Yours most affectionately,

Jas. Saumarez.

The *Crescent* continued on Channel service until the 10th of October, when she returned to Cawsand Bay; and, after a short cruise in the entrance of the Channel, she came to Plymouth to be refitted on the 4th of November. On the 8th she was taken into dock, not having been coppered since 1784. Sir James had now an opportunity of enjoying repose for two months, (his ship being in course of repair,) till the 15th of January 1795, when he was immediately attached to the grand fleet under Earl Howe.

The following instructions will show the nature of the arduous service on which Saumarez was destined to be employed for a considerable time:

Instructions for the conduct of ships appointed to obtain intelligence of the state of the enemy's naval force at Brest.

Two frigates, supported by one or more ships of the line, will be most generally appointed for obtaining intelligence of the enemy's naval force, from time to time, when the wind has been favourable to their fleet, or detachment thereof, to put to sea. The frigates so appointed are meant to stretch from Ushant inward to the Black Rocks, together or in succession, as requisite for their mutual support, and better means of communicating with the covering ships; and off St. Matthew's Point, or so as to discover whether the enemy's fleet are still in Brest water, and, if easily practicable, the number and situation of the enemy's ships of war there, and in the adjacent anchoring bays without the Goulet. The covering ships of the line, it is supposed, will generally answer the purpose of their appointment by keeping off, or a little within, the Black Rocks, whilst the frigates are advanced to the more eastern situation before mentioned. The several captains so employed are, nevertheless, to be governed on this service by the state of the weather and movements of the enemy, as they see best in their discretion, or may be directed by the commanding officer, for being able to get to sea with facility when necessary for the purpose of this appointment; and, having made the intended discovery, they are to return for reporting observations to me with all convenient despatch. They are to observe, that the capture of single ships of the line or frigates, or any action with the enemy not absolutely requisite for the security of their ships, is not an object of equal moment to compensate for any delay in conveying the earliest information to me, by signal or personal intercourse, of the state or motions of the enemy as aforesaid. The ordering of the fleet in their absence on this service will be calculated for arriving off Ushant as early as possible the next morning, on these occasions if the detached ships should not have joined the fleet the preceding day, in view to take advantage of every opportunity to intercept the ships of the enemy attempting to put to sea from Brest. And as it may be requisite often to renew this appointment, the intention will be expressed by signal No. 181, together with the particular signals (one or more) of the ships of the line and frigates then meant to be so employed; and the signal No. 124 will be subsequently made when the ships are to part company from the fleet for such purpose.

[Pg 146]

[Pg 147]

Given on board the *Queen Charlotte*,
Torbay, 5th February 1795.

HOWE.

To Sir James Saumarez,
Captain H.M.S. Crescent.

On this occasion Sir James Saumarez wrote the following letter to his brother, which shows the high opinion entertained of his services off the Black Rocks by his lordship:

Spithead, 15th January 1795.

I had the pleasure of yours yesterday morning, and have only time to acquaint you that part of the fleet are now dropping down to St. Helen's, and to-morrow we hope to put to sea. The wind is far to the southward, but I hope we shall be able to get down Channel before it comes to the westward. There can be little doubt but the enemy's fleet are still at sea. If we have the good fortune to meet them, the business will be glorious for the country.

Our line consists of thirty-five, ten of which are three-deckers. The French have only thirty-two, and four only of three-deckers. My situation in the fleet (repeating frigate) is certainly more desirable than a less conspicuous one; at the same time, I would rather command a seventy-four. Lord Howe is remarkably gracious, and has overwhelmed me with compliments in his opinion of my merits. I have the more to accomplish in order to show myself deserving of it. Be assured of my zealous endeavours. Adieu! Give my sincere love to my sister and dear children.

[Pg 148]

I am ever affectionately yours,

JAS. SAUMAREZ

Sir James always preferred the command of a ship of the line to a frigate, notwithstanding the chances of prize-money are in favour of the latter. He accordingly made the following application to the First Lord of the Admiralty; and it will be seen, by the subsequent correspondence, that his wishes were complied with.

MY LORD,

I beg leave to acquaint your lordship, that some time since I made application to be appointed to a line-of-battle ship, and the Earl of Chatham was pleased to signify his intention of meeting my wishes the earliest opportunity. I shall esteem myself greatly obliged to your lordship to appoint me to one, and at the same time to permit me to take my officers and ship's company.

I have the honour to be, &c. &c.

JAMES SAUMAREZ.

Right Honourable Earl Spencer.

SIR,

I take the earliest opportunity of acknowledging your letter to be appointed to a line-of-battle ship. I am not at present apprised of there being an immediate opportunity to comply with your request; but it will give me great pleasure to have an early one afforded me of promoting an officer of so much acknowledged merit.

[Pg 149]

I am, sir, with great respect,
Your obedient humble servant,

SPENCER.

To Captain Saumarez, H.M.S. Crescent.
Admiralty, December 24th, 1794.

Crescent, Spithead, 1st March 1795.

MY LORD,

I beg to avail myself of the return of the fleet into port, to remind your lordship of the application I had the honour to make to be appointed to a line-of-battle ship; and as the Orion is likely soon to become vacant, I shall be greatly obliged to your lordship to have the goodness to give me the command of her, and at the same time to permit me to take my officers and ship's company.

I have the honour to be, my lord,
Your lordship's most obedient and most humble
servant,

JAMES SAUMAREZ.

Right Honourable Earl Spencer.

Crescent, off Spithead, 4th March 1795.

MY LORD,

I beg to express my sincere acknowledgments to your lordship for having been pleased to appoint me to the command of the Orion. I shall be further obliged to your lordship to permit the commissioned and warrant officers of the Crescent to be removed to her, with the ship's company. I have the honour to be, &c. &c.

JAMES SAUMAREZ.

Earl Spencer, &c. &c.

Sir James remained with the Channel fleet until the 13th of March, when, at his own request, he

[Pg 150]

was removed into his Majesty's ship Orion. The whole crew of the Crescent volunteered to follow him, and his application for them was in part complied with; as also for Lieutenants Otter and Rye, and some of the warrant and petty officers, who were consequently turned over to that ship, which was fitting at Portsmouth. As it would be a considerable time before she could be refitted so as to be ready for sea, Captain Saumarez was, at the special application of the admiral, Lord Hugh Seymour, appointed (pro tempore) to the Marlborough of seventy-four guns, and attached to a detachment of the grand fleet under the Honourable W. Waldegrave, (afterwards Lord Radstock,) cruising between Ushant and Cape Finisterre. His appointment was dated 19th March 1795. On the 8th of April he became senior officer of the detached squadron off the Western Isles, under the orders of Lord Bridport. He returned on the 8th of June to take command of his own ship, the Orion, which had been fitted out by Captain Donnelly, and was now ready to receive orders for sea. He was now again placed under the orders of his lordship, the commander-in-chief of the Channel fleet, and sailed on the 12th of June, two days after his arrival. On the 22nd, the squadron fell in with the enemy off L'Orient at daylight, at which time the Orion was one of the sternmost ships when the signal was made to chase. Her captain soon gave a manifest proof of his zeal and abilities on this occasion. She was, before morning of the 23rd, the headmost ship of the fleet; and, before six o'clock, was the first which actually began the action with one of the enemy's largest ships.

[Pg 151]

The following is a copy of Lord Bridport's official despatch:

Royal George, at sea, 24th June 1795.

SIR,

It is with sincere satisfaction I acquaint you, for the information of the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty, that his Majesty's squadron under my command attacked the enemy's fleet, consisting of twelve ships of the line, attended with eleven frigates and some smaller cruisers, on the 23rd instant, close in with the port of L'Orient. The ships which struck are the Alexander, Le Formidable, and Le Tigre, which were with difficulty retained. If the enemy had not been protected and sheltered by the land, I have every reason to believe that a much greater number, if not all the line-of-battle ships, would have been taken or destroyed.

In detailing the particulars of this service, I am to state that at the dawn of day, on the 22nd instant, the Nymph and Astrea, being the look-out frigates ahead, made the signal for the enemy's fleet. I soon perceived there was no intention to meet me in battle; consequently, I made the signal for four of the best-sailing ships, the Sanspareil, Orion, Russell, and Colossus, and, soon afterwards, the whole fleet, to chase; which continued all day and the whole night with very little wind.

Early in the morning of the 23rd, the headmost ships, the Orion, Irresistible, Queen Charlotte, Russell, Colossus, and Sanspareil, were pretty well up with the enemy; and a little before six o'clock the action began, and continued till near nine. When the ships struck, the British squadron was near to some batteries, and in the face of a strong naval port, which will manifest to the public the zeal, intrepidity, and skill of the admirals, captains, and all the other officers and seamen, and soldiers, employed upon this service; and they are fully entitled to my warmest acknowledgments.

[Pg 152]

I beg also to be allowed to mark my approbation in a particular manner of Captain Domett's conduct, serving under my flag, for his manly spirit, and for the assistance I received from his active and attentive mind. I feel great satisfaction in doing justice to the meritorious conduct of all the officers of every class, as well as to the bravery of the seamen and soldiers in the Royal George, upon this event and on former occasions.

I judged it necessary, upon the information I received of the force of the enemy, to put the Robust, Thunderer, and Standard into my line of battle; but their distance from my squadron, and there being little wind, prevented them from joining me till after the action was over.

I shall proceed upon my station as soon as I have ordered a distribution of the prisoners, and made other necessary arrangements for the squadron. It is my intention to keep at sea, in order to fulfil every part of my instructions.

I am, &c.

BRIDPORT.

To Evan Nepean, Esq.

The enemy made their escape into L'Orient. By some accounts the commander-in-chief has been blamed for not continuing the action; but this does not seem to have been the opinion of Sir James Saumarez, who wrote the following letter to his brother on the day after the action. It is said that the fleet were not supplied with pilots for that part of the coast.

[Pg 153]

Orion, at sea, 24th June 1795.

MY DEAR RICHARD,

I have the satisfaction to acquaint you that, last Monday, we fell in with the French fleet, about eighteen leagues from the Isle de Groix. The signal for a general chase was made at six o'clock; but, having little wind, we were still at a considerable distance from them in the evening. Our headmost ships denoted by signal that they consisted of fourteen sail of the line and eleven frigates. The admiral made the signal to engage the enemy on coming up with them. It was with great delight I found the Orion sail extremely well, and in the morning we were one of the headmost ships of the squadron. I should observe, that Sir John Warren's convoy were in sight at the time we first saw the enemy; and a vessel was detached to order the Robust and Thunderer to join us, which made our number nineteen sail of the line.

The French fleet at daylight was about five miles from us, crowding all sail, and steering for their coast, which appeared in sight. At five o'clock, this ship, being ahead of the Queen Charlotte, began

the action, and kept up a constant fire as we came up; which was warmly returned by the enemy's sternmost ships, one of which was the Montagne. Finding I could go to windward of one of their ships, I hauled up between her and their fleet, and gave her our larboard guns directly for her stern. She was afterwards attacked by other ships, to which she struck, and proved to be the Alexander.

[Pg 154]

The Irresistible, Russell, Colossus, and Sanspareil were the headmost of our fleet after the Orion and Queen Charlotte, and engaged the enemy as they came up. A French seventy-four, that had taken fire on the poop, struck to the frigates. She is called the Formidable, and is not materially damaged from the fire. When the Queen, London, and finally the Royal George, came into action, they kept up a most amazing fire; but by this time the enemy were within three miles of their coast, and they all escaped except the Tigre, which struck to the Royal George.

For further details I must refer you to the public accounts. Our loss in this ship has been inconsiderable when I assure you we were engaged with very little intermission the whole time of the action, which lasted four hours. We have four killed, two since dead, and eighteen wounded. The ship has suffered more in proportion in the hull, masts, and sails. We regret not to have had a few leagues' more space, as none could then have escaped. Port Louis, near L'Orient, has afforded them this timely shelter, but not till they had a severe drubbing.

You will show the contents of this letter to Mr. Le Mesurier, as I have scarcely one moment to spare.

Adieu! Remember me most kindly to my sister; and believe me truly, my dear Richard,

Yours affectionately,

JAS. SAUMAREZ.

You will oblige Lady S. by inclosing this, after perusal, to her.

This detachment of the Channel fleet, which was destined to protect the ill-fated expedition to Quiberon Bay, under Sir J. B. Warren, continued for some time on the coast; but the Orion, being one of the ships which had suffered most, was ordered to Portsmouth. On his arrival, Sir James wrote the following letter to his brother Richard.

[Pg 155]

Orion, off St. Helens, 12th July 1795.

MY DEAR BROTHER,

I take the earliest opportunity to acquaint you, that I parted from the fleet last Thursday, with the Charon, hospital ship, which I saw safe into Portland this morning: Captain Grindall, (the only captain wounded,) who took his passage on board her, was much recovered. On the day I left the fleet, Admiral Cornwallis, with the ships under his command, joined Lord Bridport; and I imagine the Queen Charlotte, with the ships that suffered most in the action, will go home. As the Orion requires a new fore-mast and bowsprit, besides considerable repair, I take it for granted she will be ordered into harbour.

A few days after the action we were alarmed by the appearance of an epidemic fever on board; but, by sending the men infected on board the hospital ship, and using timely precaution, I am happy to say it has entirely subsided, but it gave me a great degree of concern: added to this, we have had the small-pox on board; but it has been of so favourable a kind, that the men who have had it are all doing well, two excepted, who died on board the hospital ship. Several are now under inoculation, and I hope will recover.

We have lost eight men in consequence of the action: all the wounded, except two, are nearly well; their wounds, I am happy to find, were slight.

[Pg 156]

It will have surprised you to find me differ in my statement of the action from the Admiral, when I mention having begun the action. The fact was, the Irresistible fired two, or, I believe, three bow-guns, but I never could consider that entitling her to being the first in action; *but of this hereafter*.

Now is a good opportunity for you and my sister to come and spend a few days at Portsmouth, if you can spare time to undertake the journey. Come down immediately, and take a sail in the ship into Portsmouth Harbour. I was in great hope to be in time to see Lady S. this evening, but I fear it is impossible; it is near eight o'clock, and we are no nearer than St. Helen's Road, with little wind. I have heard from none of my friends during the cruise, so that I know not what became of you after your peregrination to St. Helens.

The prizes left the fleet ten days ago, and must be expected the first westerly winds. You will be glad to hear that Mr. Otter is promoted.

Yours affectionately,

JAS. SAUMAREZ.

P.S. Portsmouth, 15th July 1795. I have only time to acquaint you with my being just landed. Let me hear from you. Adieu!

We here give a diagram of this action at the time it began. When the Irresistible fired her bow-guns, she was in *chase*, astern and not up alongside of the enemy; but the Orion reserved all her fire until actually alongside; she was certainly the first that could bring all her broadside to bear on one of the enemy's ships, and therefore justly claims the honour of having commenced the battle. But Sir James took no steps to correct the statement, and was, as usual, content with being included in the mass of those who distinguished themselves on that occasion.

[Pg 157]

Position of the hostile fleets on the morning of the 23rd June 1795, when the headmost ships brought the rear of the enemy to action.



No.1. Orion, Capt. Sir J. Saumarez. 2. Queen Charlotte, Capt. Sir A. S. Douglas. 3. Irresistible, Capt. Grindall. 4. Russell, Capt. T. Luscom. 5. Colossus, Capt. Moncton. 6. Sanspareil, Admiral Lord H. Seymour, Capt. Brown. 7. London, Capt. Griffith. 8. Queen, Rear-admiral Gardner, Capt. Bedford. 9. Prince George, Capt. Edge. 10. Royal George, Admiral Lord Bridport, Captain Domett.

[Pg 158]

The Orion was taken into Portsmouth harbour, and, as six weeks were required to repair her damages, Sir James had another month's relaxation from actual service. It was the 18th July before she was reported ready for sea. On the 21st he wrote the following letter to his brother, describing the service on which he was now to be employed:

Ryde, 21st August 1795.

MY DEAR RICHARD,

Expecting to sail from day to day, I delayed writing till I could acquaint you with the precise time of our departure. This morning the wind proved easterly, but it has again veered to the westward, and become as uncertain as ever, so that I yet hope to hear from you. I understand that about four thousand troops, *British*, and fifteen hundred emigrants, sail under our escort. They are commanded by General Doyle, and it is supposed are destined to take possession of Noirmoutier, to keep up communication with Charrette's army. Monsieur, who you know is embarked on board the Jason, accompanies them. It is to be hoped that this last effort of ours to secure a footing on their own territory to these unfortunate people, will prove successful; I say this last, for, from what I learn, Lord Moira resigns with the whole of his staff, and the rest of his army are to be, under command of Sir R. Abercromby, destined for the West Indies.

We are likely to have enough on our hands should war be continued, as it is impossible but we must have the Spanish to contend with. Several ships sailed this morning to reinforce our squadron in the North Seas, which shows the Dutch are beginning to stir themselves.

[Pg 159]

I write from Ryde, where Lady S. has been since yesterday, being near Spithead, where I must be every day. As the wind is at present, there is every reason to expect that we shall be here some days longer; therefore write to me. Adieu! God bless you all!

I am truly and affectionately yours,

JAS. SAUMAREZ.

The expedition, alluded to in the above letter, was placed under command of Rear-admiral Henry Harvey, and consisted of the Prince of Wales (flag-ship), Queen Charlotte, Prince, Orion, Russell, Arethusa, and Jason, with a convoy of one hundred and twenty-six vessels. These were detained at Spithead till the end of September; and on the 13th of October they reached Isle Dieu, where they were destined to co-operate with the former expedition. When off Hedic, Admiral Harvey sent the Orion to join Commodore Sir John Borlase Warren, with that part of the convoy intended to act with the royalists, while he proceeded with the rest to the West Indies.

The troops were landed. The Orion was employed blockading the coast near Rochfort and L'Orient; the nature of which memorable service will be best understood from the following letters from Sir James to his brother.

Orion, at sea, 26th October.

MY DEAR RICHARD,

I have just learnt from the Admiral, that he intends to despatch the Porcupine for England, which gives me an opportunity of writing a line merely to acquaint you of our being in existence, but most

[Pg 160]

deucedly tired of our cruise: nothing worthy our notice has occurred since my last letter. Sir John Warren left Quiberon Bay last Wednesday for Noirmoutier, whence it is supposed the emigrants will join Charrette's army. We pay frequent visits to our friends in Port Louis. They continue nearly in the same state as when we left them after the 23rd of June; and, from the intelligence we have obtained, they are not in any forwardness for sea, being without stores or men.

We experienced hitherto remarkable fine weather, which I hope will continue; but nothing can equal our unvaried scene, fixed to this confounded spot, without the least prospect of anything falling in our way. We have not even the advantage of hearing from England; for, sparingly, two ships only have joined us from Plymouth since we are on this station. In short, my dear friend, I am heartily tired of so inactive a situation, and shall very sincerely rejoice to be relieved from it. You are much more likely to receive accounts of the expedition than we are, having but little intercourse with the army, and that little is solely confined to the Admiral, who deals out the news very *cautiously*. Could we but hear from our friends, it would yield us some comfort; but that we are also denied: it is, however, some satisfaction we can let them know we are alive. God bless you! and believe me, with my kindest love to my dear sister and children,

Yours most affectionately,

JAS. SAUMAREZ.

Orion, Houat, 26th November 1795.

MY DEAR RICHARD,

We sailed from Isle Dieu this day, subsequent to my letter by the Thunderer; and various have been the decisions respecting withdrawing the troops from that island. On Monday, Sir John Warren sailed with the Robust, Theseus, and four frigates, with the intention of making the embarkation; but it came on to blow so strong that they were obliged to put back. I was dispensed with from that service, by having been appointed to carry on the communication with the royalists, for the purpose of conveying to them the immense supply of stores and ammunition intended for them, besides about thirty thousand pounds in specie. The 24th was the day fixed for their being landed, and General George was to muster all his force to receive them, at a place called Bitiers, at the entrance of the Villaine; but the weather proved so boisterous on that and the following day, that there existed no possibility of any communication.

[Pg 161]

Sir John Warren, to my great satisfaction, joined me this morning with the frigates; the embarkation from Isle Dieu having at last been given up. To-morrow we hope to hear that our friends occupy the post agreed on; and we shall throw them as speedily as possible, by means of the chasse-marées and boats of the squadron, the various articles in our possession which they so much want.

The last letters I have received were dated the 19th: they mention P— being under arrest; but there was a difference of opinion respecting him, which was submitted to Monsieur. As his Royal Highness is gone home, it will be some time before his fate is decided. Being informed that the Standard was ordered for England, I would not lose the opportunity, and in some way I hope to inform you with the successful result of our enterprise: once ended, I hope we shall bend our steps homeward.

Our friend Dan, with Phil. Dumaresq, are perfectly well. Remember me with kindest love to my sister, and believe me ever affectionately yours,

JAS. SAUMAREZ.

The details of the failure of this expedition need not be dwelt upon; it was finally determined on the 13th of December to withdraw the troops, and Sir James Saumarez consequently received the following order:

[Pg 162]

By Henry Harvey, Esq. Rear-admiral of the Red, &c.
To Sir James Saumarez, Captain of H.M.S. Orion.

You are hereby required and directed to take under your convoy all the transports, store-ships, victuallers, and other vessels lying in this bay, and put to sea in company with his Majesty's squadron under my command. You will have under your direction his Majesty's ship Porcupine, whose captain is directed to follow your orders. You are to use your utmost endeavours to keep company with me; but, in case of separation, make the best of your way to Spithead, leaving off Plymouth such of the victuallers as may have sailed from that port.

Given under my hand, on board the
Prince of Wales, 17th December
1795, Houat Roads.

H. HARVEY.

Admiral Harvey parted from the convoy off Brest, and Sir James arrived at Spithead, after having looked into Brest, on the 30th December, and reported his arrival to the Secretary of the Admiralty; to which he received the following answer:

31st December 1795.

SIR,

I have received, and communicated to my Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty, your letter of yesterday's date, informing them of your arrival at Spithead in the ship you command, with part of the transports under your convoy, from Quiberon Bay; and I have their lordships' command to acquaint you that they are pleased with your proceedings.

[Pg 163]

I am, sir, your obedient humble
servant,

To Captain Sir James Saumarez,
H.M.S. Orion, Spithead.

CHAPTER IX.

[Pg 164]

1796, 1797.

Orion taken into dock.—Is refitted, and joins the Channel fleet.—Detached on a particular service.—Returns.—Proceeds to reinforce Sir John Jervis.—List of his fleet.—Battle with Spanish fleet off Cape St. Vincent described in a private letter.—Conduct of Saumarez in the action.—Salvador del Mundo strikes to the Orion, and is taken possession of by her lieutenant.—Engages the Santissima Trinidad.—She strikes to the Orion.—Remarks on that occasion.—Lagos Bay.—Lisbon.—Sir James sails on a cruise with Admiral Sir H. Nelson.—Returns.—Commands the advanced squadron.—Several private letters.—Commands the advanced squadron off Cadiz.—Mutiny in the fleet.—Anecdote and remarks thereon.

The Orion was ordered into harbour; and on examination it was found she had been so much strained during the last cruise, particularly in the November storm, subsequently known by the name of "Admiral Christian's gale," besides having sprung her lower masts, that it became absolutely necessary for her to be taken into dock. During the next four months Sir James obtained, leave of absence; and it was not until the 7th of May 1796, that, having rejoined his ship, he was called into active service, the Orion being placed in Rear-admiral Lord Hugh Seymour's division of the grand fleet which was fitted for foreign service.

[Pg 165]

After a short cruise off Brest, the Orion proceeded to reinforce the fleet under Sir John Jervis, off Cape St. Vincent. This squadron consisted of the Sanspareil (flag-ship), Orion, Triumph, Juste, Hector, and Theseus, of the line; Phaeton and Latona, frigates; and Incendiary, fire-ship. On arriving off their station, Captain Saumarez was detached to Fayall by Lord Hugh's order, dated the 13th June, to obtain stock, wine, &c. for the use of the squadron; and was directed to meet his lordship at ten leagues to the westward of that island; after which the squadron returned to Cape St. Vincent, and from thence, in the month of September, they joined the Channel fleet, under Lord Gardner.

On the 11th of December the Orion returned to Spithead, in order to refit and replenish in water and provisions, after a six months' unsuccessful cruise. This occupied but a short time; and on the 17th of the same month Sir James proceeded in the Orion, with a squadron under the orders of Admiral W. Parker, to reinforce Sir John Jervis, off Cape St. Vincent. This squadron consisted of the Prince George, 98; Namur, 90; Irresistible, Orion, and Colossus, of 74 guns; and Thalia frigate. The junction with Sir John was effected on the 6th of February. Thus reinforced, the Admiral had under his command—

[Pg 166]

Guns.		
100	Victory,	Admiral Sir John Jervis. Captain Robert Calder. Captain George Grey.
	Britannia,	Vice-admiral Charles Thompson. Captain Foley.
98	Barfleur,	Vice-admiral Hon. W. Waldegrave. Captain J.R. Dacres.
	Prince George,	Rear-admiral W. Parker. Captain John Irwin.
	Blenheim,	Captain Thos. L. Frederick.
90	Namur,	Captain James H. Whitshed.
74	Captain,	Commodore Horatio Nelson. Captain R.W. Miller.
	Goliath,	Captain Charles Knowles.
	Excellent,	Captain Cuthbert Collingwood.
	Orion,	Captain Sir James Saumarez.
	Colossus,	Captain Geo. Murray.
	Egmont,	Captain John Sutton.
	Culloden,	Captain Thomas Troubridge.
	Irresistible,	Captain Geo. Martin.
64	Diadem,	Captain Geo. H. Towry.
38	Minerve,	Captain Geo. Cockburn.
32	Lively,	Captain Lord Garlies.

	Niger,	Captain Ed. Jas. Foote.
	Southampton,	Captain Jas. Macnamara.
Slps	Bonne Citoyenne,	Captain Chas. Lindsay.
	Raven,	Captain W. Prowse.
Cut.	Fox,	Lieutenant John Gibson.

Sir John Jervis was well aware that the Spanish fleet might be nearly double his force, but he kept working up towards the position where he expected to meet them. On the 13th, in the morning, the *Minerve*, Captain Cockburn, bearing the broad pendant of Commodore Nelson, (which was afterwards shifted to the Captain, 74) having on board Sir Gilbert Elliot, late viceroy of Corsica and others, came into the fleet with intelligence that on the 11th, soon after quitting Gibraltar, she had been chased by two Spanish line-of-battle ships; and that afterwards, when in the mouth of the Straits, she got sight of the Spanish fleet. Before sunset the signals were made for the British fleet to prepare for battle, and to keep in close order all the night, during which the signal-guns of the Spaniards were distinctly heard. At half-past two, A.M. the Portuguese frigate *Carlotta* spoke the *Victory*; and her captain (Campbell) gave information that the Spanish grand fleet, commanded by Don Josef de Cordova, was only five leagues to windward; that they had sailed from Carthage on the 1st of the month, and consisted of twenty-eight sail of the line, viz.

[Pg 167]

	Guns.
130	Santissima Trinidad. (four-decker).
112	Concepcion. Conde de Regla. Mexicano. Principe de Asturias. Salvador del Mundo. San Josef.
80	Neptuno. San Nicolas.
74	Atalante. Bahama. Conquistador. Firme. Glorioso. Oriente. Pelayo. San Antonio. San Domingo. San Firmin. San F'sco de Paula. San Genaro. San Ildefonso. San Juan Nepomuceno. San Pablo. San Ysidro. Soberano. Terrible.

There were also twelve frigates, some gun-boats, and seventy transports with troops, which were disembarked at Algeiras.

[Pg 168]

It is not positively known what the destination of this powerful fleet was; some accounts say Cadiz, others Brest. It is, however, certain that their admiral did not expect to meet more than ten or twelve sail of the line with Sir John Jervis, and that he anticipated an easy capture, and a triumphant entry into port with his prizes. His dismay may therefore be easily imagined at seeing the English fleet of fifteen sail of the line close to him, in excellent order of battle, while his own fleet was in such a scattered situation as to render it impossible to prevent his intrepid enemy from cutting off a group which had separated from the main body of his fleet, and which in vain attempted to rejoin by crowding all sail.

As it is not our intention to enter into the particulars of this memorable battle, excepting as regards the *Orion*, an extract from the admiral's despatch will be sufficient to show the bold and decisive step which he took on that occasion, and by which he succeeded in obtaining a most glorious victory over double his force.

Victory, Lagos Bay, 16th February 1797.

SIR,

The hope of falling in with the Spanish fleet, expressed in my letter to you of the 13th instant, was confirmed last night by distinctly hearing the report of their signal-guns, and by intelligence received from Captain Foote, of his Majesty's ship Niger, who had, with equal judgment and perseverance, kept company with them for several days, on my prescribed rendezvous, (which, from the strong S.E. wind, I had never been able to reach,) and that they were not more than the distance of three or four leagues from us.

[Pg 169]

I anxiously waited the dawn of day; when, being on the starboard tack, Cape St. Vincent bearing E.N.E. eight leagues, I had the satisfaction of seeing a number of ships extended from S.W. to S., the wind then W. by S. At forty-nine minutes past ten, the weather being extremely hazy, La Bonne Citoyenne made the signal that the ships seen were of the line, twenty-five in number.

His Majesty's squadron under my command, consisting of fifteen ships of the line, happily formed in the most compact order of sailing in two lines. By carrying a press of sail, I was fortunate in getting in with the enemy's fleet at half-past eleven, before it had time to collect and form a regular order of battle. Such a moment was not to be lost; and, confident in the skill, valour, and discipline of the officers and men I had the happiness to command, and judging that the honour of his Majesty's arms, and the circumstances of the war in these seas, required a considerable degree of enterprise, I felt myself justified in departing from the regular system; and, passing through their fleet in a line formed with the utmost celerity, tacked, and thereby separated one-third from the main body. After a partial cannonade, which prevented their rejunction till the evening, and by the very great exertions of the ships which had the good fortune to arrive up with the enemy on the larboard tack, the ships named in the margin^[11] were captured, and the action ceased about five o'clock.

That the Orion was one of those ships which distinguished themselves will best appear from the private letter of her brave commander to his brother, written only the day after the action; a circumstance which cannot but give such a communication a value far superior to a more elaborate composition. The log also of his ship, written at the time by the master, to which we have had access, completely accords with the facts so clearly stated in the letter.

[Pg 170]

Orion, Lagos Bay, 15th February 1797.

MY DEAR RICHARD,

You will be happy to receive an account from me of the important victory obtained by our squadron over the Spanish fleet, consisting of nearly double our force. The Admiral having received previous information of their sailing from Carthagena, and of their cruising off the entrance of the Straits, gave us timely notice of the intelligence by the signal to prepare for battle.

Early on Tuesday morning, the weather being hazy, with light winds, the frigates on the look-out made the signal for discovering the enemy, and soon after we discerned several ships to leeward, and the body of the fleet to windward. We were then on the starboard tack, standing to the southward. The signal was made to different ships to chase; and, shortly after, for the fleet to form in line of battle as most convenient. The enemy at this time were bearing down to join their ships to leeward; but we came upon them so fast, that, before they could effect the junction, the headmost ships, which were the Culloden, Prince George, Orion, Blenheim, and Colossus, with the Victory and the rest coming up, it was effectually prevented. They then hauled their wind on the larboard tack, and our Admiral made the signal for the fleet to tack. Our sternmost ships then became the headmost.

[Pg 171]

Commodore Nelson, who had joined from Elba the day before, shifted his pendant to the Captain, the leading ship, and distinguished himself most eminently. The Culloden, Blenheim, Prince George, and Orion, were the next that came up, and were warmly engaged for nearly three hours with the body of the enemy's fleet, who had not had the time, or address, to form into any order. But it is only doing them justice to say, they defended themselves very bravely.

We were, for above an hour, opposed to a three-decker, the Salvador del Mundo, which finally struck to this ship; we lowered the boat from the stern, and gave orders to Mr. Luce, the first lieutenant, to take possession of her; still making sail for the other ships, and following Admiral Parker in the Prince George. The Excellent, which had passed us to windward, had made a line-of-battle ship, the San Domingo, strike some time before this.

Several ships of the enemy were extremely shattered in their masts and sails; but, keeping up a warm fire on their ships, the Captain laid one of them, the San Nicolas, an eighty-four, on board, and hauled down her colours. A three-decker, the San Josef, wishing, I believe, to rescue the ship, got on board of her, and gave Commodore Nelson an opportunity of also hauling down her colours. His bravery on this occasion is above all praise.

The Namur and other ships had by this time joined the van, and engaged as they came up. I stood for a three-decker, which, after engaging some time, struck her colours: she first had showed a white flag, which, though I concluded to indicate a truce, was not satisfactory to myself, and we continued firing till they hoisted an English flag over the Spanish, on which we ceased firing.

[Pg 172]

The enemy's ships, many of which had not been in action, at this time came up and were forming to windward. The Admiral made the signal to wear and come to the wind on the starboard tack; wishing, I believe, to keep his squadron collected near the prizes, as well as the Captain, that was much disabled, besides the Colossus, which ship very unfortunately lost her fore-yard very early in the action. This ill-timed, but doubtless necessary manœuvre, lost us the additional triumph of having the Purissima Concepcion, to grace the ships already in our possession, and I experienced the regret of again seeing her resume the Spanish colours.

I have here related to you facts as they really occurred, and I believe all my officers will vouch for the authenticity of this account. I am happy to acquaint you that we have providentially lost no man in the action; eight only wounded, all doing well; amongst which number is Mr. Mansell, from a contusion in his right shoulder by splinter. Our main and mizen top-masts are alone disabled, and the hull has not suffered materially. All the officers, and every man individually, behaved as nobly as

I have ever witnessed; and you know it is not the first action in which I have seen courage excited.

This is copied from the letter I write to my brother. My amanuensis is a gentleman who acted as my aide-de-camp, and I beg you will acquaint his good father that he acquitted himself highly to my satisfaction, and showed himself deserving the stock from which he sprung. I truly hope in due time to have the opportunity of advancing a young man of his merit.

In case I have not time to write to my brother, as the above has been copied only from the scraps of the letter I intended writing, send him this letter, stating my great hurry and the pressure of service at this crisis.

[Pg 173]

Adieu! nothing can equal my impatience to hear from you, and to receive good accounts of my sister.

I am truly, most affectionately yours,

JAS. SAUMAREZ.

Lagos Bay, 17th February 1797.

The principal cause of my present haste is my anxiety attending the care of the San Josef, which we have in tow, and which has delayed us more than I can express, these twenty-four hours.

N.B. I since have found it was the Santissima Trinidad, and not the Concepcion, that struck, but afterwards got off. And the St. Ysidro, 74 guns, and not the Santa Domingo, that is captured. The Santissima Trinidad is reported to be off here by one of our frigates.

The enemy, however, passed Lagos Bay, leaving the prizes unmolested. As the further details, and Spanish account of this action, will be found in the Appendix, we shall proceed by giving the copies of the following letters.

Victory, Lagos Bay, 16th February 1797.

SIR,

No language I am possessed of can convey the high sense I entertain of the exemplary conduct of the flag-officers, captains, officers, seamen, marines, and soldiers embarked on board every ship of the squadron I have the honour to command, present at the vigorous and successful attack made upon the fleet of Spain on the 14th instant. The signal advantage obtained by his Majesty's arms on that day is entirely owing to their determined valour and discipline; and I request you will accept yourself, and give my thanks and approbation to those composing the crew of the ship under your command.

[Pg 174]

I am, sir,

Your most humble servant,

J. JERVIS.

To Captain Sir James Saumarez, Orion.

In consequence of this glorious victory, obtained, under Providence, by the valour and discipline of the crews of his Majesty's ships on the 14th February 1797, the commander-in-chief was pleased to grant a free pardon to James Maloney, seaman, then under sentence of death for repeated desertion from H.M.S. Speedy, which was communicated in the most impressive manner to the fleet.

We cannot but remark that, in the various accounts of this action, justice has been but barely done to the commander of the Orion, who is only mentioned as one of the six captains who prevented the junction of the enemy's separated squadron. If any act of heroism displayed on that occasion was designed to be particularly recorded in the public despatches, surely the fact that the Orion was the last ship that engaged and took possession of the Salvador del Mundo, and then made the Santissima Trinidad strike her colours and hoist the English flag over the Spanish, deserves a place. For these achievements we have the undoubted testimonies, not only of the gallant commander and the officers of the ship, viz. Sir John Savage, Captains Tancock and Mansell, but also that of one of the officers of the Spanish ship who was on board at the time, and who added, that "we did not surrender until all further defence was hopeless." The Orion could not send a boat to her, because she had already taken possession of the Salvador, on board which ship she had sent her first lieutenant and as many men as she could spare, and also because she had no boat that could swim: but this, it appeared, raised some doubts on the subject; and on a subsequent occasion, when the captains met on board the Victory, Commodore Nelson said, "It was true, Saumarez, that the Santissima struck to you; the Spanish officers have acknowledged it." Sir James, supposing from the manner in which this was spoken that Nelson had doubted the truth of his report, answered rather sharply, "Who ever doubted it, sir? I hope there is no need for such evidence to establish the truth of the report of a British officer."

[Pg 175]

Lieutenant Luce's description of the state he found the Salvador in was appalling in the extreme.—There were more than fifty lying on the decks with wounds requiring amputation. In many instances the Spanish surgeon, after having separated the limb, omitted to tie up the arteries; consequently, on removing the tourniquet, the victim in a few minutes bled to death: and the English sailors, who at length stopped his merciless hand, were with difficulty prevented from throwing him overboard with those he had butchered.

[Pg 176]

Lieutenant Luce was one of the officers promoted, in consequence of this battle, to the rank of master and commander.

The fleet now returned to Lisbon, where the conquerors were received with every demonstration of joy and gratitude. The English factory presented a congratulatory address; and at this place the thanks of both houses of parliament were communicated to them; and a third time to Sir James, as one of the most distinguished captains. At the same time he received from Earl Spencer and Lord Hugh Seymour the following handsome letters of congratulation:

DEAR SIR,

I congratulate you most sincerely on your having been present at the most brilliant action which our naval history records, and on having had so distinguished a share in it.

I am, dear sir, with great truth,
Your very obedient, humble servant,
Admiralty, 8th March 1797. SPENCER.

Sir James Saumarez.

MY DEAR SIR JAMES,

I congratulate you most heartily on your having had another opportunity of displaying your merit, and on the share which you bore in the most brilliant action that ever was achieved. [Pg 177]

I hope that I need not assure you how much I have shared with your friends the satisfaction your conduct has given them; the reward for which, I hope, you will long enjoy in the approbation of the whole world, which is now bestowed upon you.

I am, my dear Sir James,
Most truly and faithfully yours,
H. SEYMOUR.

Admiralty, March 10th, 1797.

Early in March the Orion was again ready for active service; and the following letter gives an account of the departure of Sir James Saumarez with Commodore Nelson on a cruize.

Orion, off the Tagus, 6th March 1797.

MY DEAR RICHARD,

I had the pleasure of your letter by packet, and I have to tell you we are now actually under sail, with Commodore Nelson, in the Irresistible, the Leander, and some frigates, going to intercept several Spanish ships expected from Vera Cruz with rich cargoes. Be not surprised if, with our *desperate* commodore, you hear of our taking the whole Spanish fleet, should we fall in with them. Our cruise is expected to last only three weeks.

I hope on our return to receive letters from my friends, in reply to those I sent by the Lively. I shall thank you, when you see our friends in Walbrook, if you will mention to them that all my brother officers are extremely incensed at the opinion given by Sir William Scott on the case of the Kingston; and we hope he will have found reason to alter it. It is the circumstance, and not the value of the salvage, that has displeased us so much.

We are just going over the Bar, so I must conclude with my sincere and best wishes for health and every happiness to attend you, my dear sister and family. [Pg 178]

I am ever, my dear Richard,
Affectionately yours,
JAS. SAUMAREZ.

This short cruize was, however, an unsuccessful one; and the commodore had not yet an opportunity of displaying his valour. They returned to Lisbon, and found that their commander-in-chief had become Earl St. Vincent, and that Nelson had received the grand cross of the Bath; while Saumarez was among those on whom was bestowed a gold medal for their gallant conduct on Valentine's Day.

A reinforcement had now arrived from England; and the whole fleet, consisting of twenty-one sail of the line, resumed the blockade of Cadiz, where they arrived on the 2nd of April, and found there the whole Spanish fleet of twenty-six sail of the line. Sir Horatio Nelson, who at first commanded the advanced squadron, was ordered up to Elba; and Sir James, in the Orion, succeeded in his room; during which time the two Spanish frigates Nimfa and Elena were captured by the Irresistible, Captain Martin, who chased them by signal from the Orion. Sir James on this occasion sent a flag of truce, and entered into correspondence with the Spanish admiral Mazarredo; which, we need only add, completely succeeded, and met with the high approbation of the commander-in-chief, as will appear from the following extracts of letters from Earl St. Vincent to Saumarez. [Pg 179]

Ville de Paris, 11th May 1797.

You approve yourself so able in the diplomatique, that you need no assistance from me: in truth, a better despatch could not have been penn'd than yours of yesterday to Don Joseph De Mazarredo.

13th May.

I very much admire your last letter to Mazarredo, as I have done all the former.

27th May.

I like your letter so much better than mine, of which I enclose a copy, that I desire you will send it on immediately.

Ville de Paris, 30th May 1797.

It is impossible for any man to have acquitted himself with greater ability than you have done during the time you commanded the blockade; for which I return you my best thanks. Your last letter to Mazarredo is a masterpiece; and you will perceive, by the enclosed copy of my letter to him, in answer to his comment on our suspicion about the seamen from Trinidad, that I profited by your hint relative to the prisoners landed at Lagos. Your lash on the destruction of the Spanish ships he bears with Spanish stoicism: *nous verrons*.

The following communication from Sir James Saumarez to the commander-in-chief will elucidate the foregoing extracts:

[Pg 180]

(Secret.)

Orion, 27th May, 1797.

Seeing the cutter on her way to the advanced squadron this morning, I waited to send the flag of truce till she joined. I had prepared the enclosed for Don Mazarredo, but was happy to find you had been pleased to take up the business. I therefore confined my letter solely to the certificates for the seven men taken in the two Spanish barks.—In a former letter, you were pleased to advert to a proposed descent when the troops joined from Gibraltar. I hope you will excuse the zeal that urges me to observe, that if possession was taken of Fort St. Mary, it would in a great degree leave us masters of the entrance of Cadiz, and enable us to drive all the outward ships up the harbour, and possibly destroy some of them. I am extremely obliged to you for permitting the *Flora* to remain with the advanced squadron, where she is of the greatest service.

I am with great respect, &c.

JAMES SAUMAREZ.

The high opinion entertained by Nelson of the great talent and zeal of Saumarez, is evidenced in the following short, but characteristic epistle:

Theseus, June 9th 1797.

My DEAR SIR JAMES,

Send, I beg, whatever you think fit towards San Lucar: all you do is right, and can hardly want my sanction. I hope your boats will be rewarded for their trouble; they take all the prizes for our squadron.

HORATIO NELSON.

To Sir James Saumarez.

The following letter to his brother in London gives an interesting account of the proceedings of Sir James Saumarez.

[Pg 181]

Orion, off Cadiz, 26th May, 1797.

MY DEAR RICHARD,

I had the happiness to receive your kind letter of the 2nd yesterday, with several of nearly the same date, from Bath, and from our friends in the island. Having been near two months without hearing from you, and knowing you had been ill, you will readily suppose I was anxious for your letter. You will have heard from me by various opportunities since we sailed from the Tagus; my last acquainting you that I was entrusted with the command of the advanced squadron for effecting the blockade of Cadiz. We find, from different accounts, that the inhabitants feel great distress from the interruption of their trade, and begin to be in great want of provisions and other articles. We have detained a few neutrals laden with Spanish property, and two or three Spanish vessels; but as the whole fleet partake of them, they will not be very productive.

Sir Horatio, now Rear-admiral Nelson, joined the fleet yesterday, having left the troops he brought from Elba at Gibraltar. I know not whether he is to resume the command of the advanced squadron. All the fleet are anchored about five miles from us, and we lie between them and the entrance of Cadiz.

All private accounts from England agree with you in the prospect of peace; and they are corroborated by those we occasionally receive from Cadiz. It is certain that the Spaniards are extremely tired with the war; and they are apprehensive of insurrection amongst themselves. Mazarredo, who commands their fleet, went off for Madrid a fortnight ago, and, it is said, to represent the state of the fleet, and its insufficiency to cope with ours.

We understand Lord H. Seymour is off Cape St. Vincent, and that Admiral Frederick is on his way with five sail of the line. It looks as if ministers meant to back the negotiation with all their force.

[Pg 182]

The Admiralty order respecting the increase of wages, &c. has been read to the different ships' companies; and I am happy to observe that in my ship no part of their conduct has hitherto shown the least appearance of discontent. It is much to be lamented that the disturbance which prevailed in the Channel fleet was not timely prevented, as the same spirit of disaffection may hereafter show itself when it may not be so easily suppressed.

We begin to want the luxuries, yet abound in the essentials of life,—having plenty of beef, mutton, fowls, &c. Seriously, I have not had above twelve men in the sicklist since I left Lisbon, and most of them slight complaints.

I want to hear that my sister has *dreamt* of another action,—or, what is still better, of galleons! It must be soon, or the approaching peace will oblige us to restore what we may capture. I am happy to hear from my brother Thomas that things go on prosperously at Guernsey, and that he does not fear the French, though the two regiments are taken from him.

Adieu, my dear Richard!
Affectionately yours,

JAS. SAUMAREZ.

No part of the career of Sir James Saumarez is more deserving of admiration than his conduct on the unfortunate disaffection which took place in His Majesty's fleet; a calamity gently alluded to in the above letter. This circumstance, which must ever redound to his honour, was entirely owing to the high state of discipline of the crew in his own ship, and to their unalterable attachment to their commander, under whom the greatest part had served since the commencement of the war. It was from a perfect knowledge of that loyalty of spirit in which he justly confided, that he consented to receive from the Prince George one of the worst of the mutineers in that ship, who was to have been tried for his life. The seasonable admonition which this man received from Sir James, and the attention paid to his situation and feelings, had the desired effect of working a complete change in his conduct, and from being one of the most hardened of the mutineers, he soon became one of the most loyal, as he was one of the bravest of English sailors. It was only three days after he came on board that the signal was made for a boat from each ship to attend the execution of three of the mutineers on board the Prince George; which Earl St. Vincent, by a well-timed decision, had ordered to take place very soon after the sentence, and while the in-shore squadron were actually engaged with the enemy. He directed, moreover, that this duty should be performed entirely by their own ship's crew.

[Pg 183]

Sir James availed himself of this trying occasion to work out the man's full conversion. Instead of sending him, as it is customary to send culprits, in the boats to witness the execution of his shipmates, he ordered him into his cabin, and having represented in the mildest and most feeling terms the heinousness of the crime which he was known to have committed, he assured him that it was his intention to spare him the anguish he must endure of beholding his late companions suffering the last penalty of the law for the very crime of which he had been guilty.

[Pg 184]

This well-timed exhortation had the desired effect. The penitent man fell on his knees, and with tears in his eyes acknowledged the heinousness of his offence, and expressed the strongest protestations of future loyalty, and of gratitude as well as attachment to his humane commander. What followed was most creditable to both. The man not only kept his word, but highly distinguished himself: at the battle of the Nile he was captain of a gun, and, after the action, was very instrumental, from his exertions and ability as carpenter's mate, in saving the People Souverain, which struck to the Orion. Being one of those who took possession of the former ship, he was slung over the side, and successfully employed in stopping the shot-holes under water as the vessel rolled in the opposite direction;—a dangerous service, which requires much intrepidity and address.

It is, indeed, by no means surprising that the spirit of mutiny never appeared in the Orion, or in any ship Sir James commanded. The proper degree of discipline which was always maintained—the attention that was invariably paid to the wants and the comforts of the crew,—the excellent regulations of his ship, which were subversive of every kind of vice and immorality,—his own unaffected piety, and, lastly, the example he himself set before his officers and men,—established in his ship a feeling of respect for, and warm attachment to, the captain which could not be shaken by any artifice of the wicked; for every officer and man looked up habitually to their commander as their *best* friend and adviser. There may, indeed, have been some ships, wherein the crews were made up from the metropolitan and other prisons, that no treatment would have brought under proper discipline; but we may confidently assert, that had all the ships in His Majesty's fleets been commanded by such officers as Saumarez, the disgraceful spirit of insubordination would never have been so seriously and generally diffused. The Orion's crew treated all attempts to seduce them with just indignation!

[Pg 185]

Earl St. Vincent being well aware of the confidence that could be placed in the Orion at this critical time, kept her, for the safety of his fleet, constantly at the post of honour in the advance; and it was during this period of active and arduous service that a circumstance occurred which does honour to all concerned, while it particularly displays the humane character of Captain Saumarez, who was not one of those that desired or permitted his officers and men to risk their lives on any dangerous or desperate enterprise without a mature and compassionate consideration of the consequences.

[Pg 186]

Near the fortifications of Cadiz, as if to guard the entrance of the harbour, about twenty gun-vessels had been placed, which it appeared to Earl St. Vincent might be cut out by the boats of the advanced squadron; and accordingly an order was sent by the commander-in-chief to Captain Saumarez, directing him to proceed in *person* with the boats of each ship to make the attempt. It was sufficiently evident to Captain Saumarez, who, from the position of the Orion, had a better view of the gun-vessels, that they were moored there on purpose to provoke an attack for which the enemy were well prepared; but, having received the order to command in *person*, he could not make known his opinions without appearing averse to risk his own life on an enterprise which the commander-in-chief thought advisable. Having thus in his own mind no doubt that the affair would be both desperate and bloody, he selected those officers and men who were unmarried for the service, a list of whom he sent to the first lieutenant, with the necessary orders to prepare

the boats.

This list being exhibited in the ward-room, Captain (now Lieutenant-general Sir John) Savage, of the Marines, had the mortification to see that his name was omitted, while those of the two subalterns of that distinguished corps were inserted. This gallant officer, who had been a sharer with his heroic chief in several actions, felt hurt that he was not chosen on this glorious occasion; and, having ventured respectfully to express his feelings, was sent for to the cabin, when he was addressed by his commander in the following terms:

[Pg 187]

"Captain Savage, do not imagine that your name is left out in the list because I have not a high opinion of your zeal and intrepidity. I well know that you would be foremost in the assault; but I am also well aware that this is a desperate enterprise: many will fall; and if *you* should be one, who is to support your wife and family? The case is different with me: I am ordered, and my duty is to obey. Perhaps if Lord St. Vincent knew what I do, he would not send us; but it does not become me *now* to make any observation. However, aware as I am of the consequences, I cannot conscientiously order you to accompany me, under the conviction that your valuable life would thereby be sacrificed."

The entreaties of Captain Savage were in vain. He beheld with mixed feelings of disappointment, gratitude, and admiration, his humane and heroic commander leave his ship at the head of the perilous enterprise with that smile on his manly countenance which denoted a full determination to face every danger. The boats had not proceeded far before a storm arose directly off the land, against which no boats could make way, and it was with some difficulty they regained the ships. It was afterwards fully ascertained from various sources that these gun-vessels had been moored in that position with rivetted chains, having no person on board them, in order to tempt an attack; and that the plan was, to let the boats take possession, and then open a destructive fire from the batteries, which were kept several nights lined with troops for the purpose. Had not a merciful interposition of Providence prevented the advance of the boats, there can be no doubt that many, if not all the lives of the assailants, would have been sacrificed!

[Pg 188]

We shall leave the feelings of Earl St. Vincent, when the truth came out, as well as those of Captain Savage and all concerned, to the imagination of the reader.

CHAPTER X.

[Pg 189]

1797—1798.

Sir Horatio Nelson resumes the command of the advanced squadron.—Bombardment of Cadiz.—Nelson sails for Teneriffe.—Saumarez resumes the command.—Escorts a convoy to Gibraltar.—Refits at Lisbon, and returns.—Conducts the negotiation for exchange of prisoners.—Sir W. Parker relieves Sir James.—He arrives at Gibraltar.—Is attached to Nelson's squadron.—Proceeds off Toulon.—A storm.—Vanguard dismasted.—Great exertions of the Orion and Alexander in refitting the Vanguard at St. Pierre.—Sailing of the Toulon fleet.—Nelson reinforced by ten sail of the line.—Pursues the enemy unsuccessfully.—Proceedings of the fleet in a journal addressed by Sir James to his family.—French fleet discovered in Aboukir Bay.—Battle of the Nile.—Diagram of ditto.—Conduct of the Orion.—Saumarez wounded.—Writes to Nelson.—Goes on board the Vanguard.—Occurrences there.—Remarks on the name of the second in command being left out in Nelson's despatches.—On the mode of attack.—Various letters and orders.—Sir James's account of the battle, in a letter to Lady Saumarez.

REAR-ADMIRAL Sir Horatio Nelson having resumed the command of the advanced squadron, Earl St. Vincent determined to bombard the city of Cadiz, for the double purpose of inducing the Spanish admiral Mazarredo, who had now twenty-eight sail of the line, to put to sea: the Earl wished moreover to employ the minds of the seamen, which had become unsettled by the baneful example of those in England. Accordingly the Thunder bomb, covered by the boats of the squadron, made the first attempt; but her mortar was discovered to have been injured in retreating: she was assailed by the Spaniards, when after a desperate struggle she was rescued, and the Spanish commanding-officer, Don Miguel Tyrason, was eventually made prisoner by Nelson, who also captured a number of men and two mortar-boats.

[Pg 190]

On the 5th July, another bombardment took place by the Thunder, Terror, and Strombolo, which being judiciously placed, their fire produced a considerable effect on both the town and shipping, and obliged the Spanish admirals to remove their fleet out of shell-range. This attack, like the first, ended in an encounter between the gun-boats. The third attempt, which was to have taken place on the 8th, was rendered abortive by a strong gale blowing off the shore.

On the 15th, Nelson having been detached with a squadron of three sail of the line, a fifty, and three frigates, on the unfortunate expedition to Teneriffe, the command of the advanced squadron again devolved on Sir James Saumarez. Nothing could surpass the zeal and intrepidity with which he performed this arduous duty. On the 18th August he escorted a convoy to Gibraltar, and having refreshed his crew and refitted his ship, he resumed his duty off Cadiz, sometimes at anchor off the harbour, and under sail when obliged by the weather. On the 15th November he was relieved, in order to refit at Lisbon, and entered the Tagus on the 25th, returning about the same day in the next month to the blockade of Cadiz, which was almost

[Pg 191]

entirely intrusted to him. Such indeed were his vigilance and activity, that nothing escaped during that period. He displayed, moreover, great tact and address in several communications with the Spanish admiral on the subject of the exchange of prisoners, to the entire satisfaction of Earl St. Vincent, the commander-in-chief, who had always reposed the most implicit confidence in his judgment.

On the 7th of February 1798, the Spanish fleet were seen coming out of Cadiz, and, in hopes of decoying them into the open sea, the English fleet retired to Cape St. Vincent; but it was soon found that on the 14th the enemy had returned into port, being unwilling again to try the fortune of war with such an opponent. The advanced squadron was at that time commanded by Sir William Parker, who remained there.

Sir James Saumarez continued with the fleet until the 28th April, when he was sent to refit at Gibraltar.

On the 8th May 1798, the Orion sailed from Gibraltar in company with the Vanguard, Rear-admiral Sir Horatio Nelson,—the Alexander, Captain Ball,—Emerald and Terpsichore frigates, and Bonne Citoyenne sloop,—with orders from Earl St. Vincent to watch the enemy's fleet at Toulon. When they were fairly through the Straits of Gibraltar, the following order was given:

[Pg 192]

Most secret rendezvous.

In the direct track between Cape Saint Sebastian's and Toulon, in lat. 42° 20' N. from twenty to thirty leagues from the Cape; and, not hearing where I may be, in ten days return to Gibraltar.

Given on board His Majesty's ship Vanguard,
at sea, 14th May 1798.

HORATIO NELSON.

To Sir J. Saumarez, Captain of H.M.S. Orion.

By command of the Rear-admiral, J. CAMPBELL.

On the 17th, off Cape Sicie, the Orion being sent in chase, captured the Pierre, French corvette, which sailed the evening before from Toulon, and obtained the following information from the prisoners, which was immediately sent to the Rear-admiral: viz. "That the enemy's fleet, consisting of twelve sail of the line, besides six Venetian ships, were in readiness to sail, with a great number of transports, having on board both cavalry and infantry, on a secret expedition. The French general Buonaparte arrived at Toulon ten days ago to command the expedition, and was to embark in the Sans-culotte, (afterwards L'Orient,) which ship was said to have three thousand men on board, including her complement; almost all the line-of-battle ships had troops on board. Three frigates,—La Juno, La Diane, and La Justice,—were seen by the corvette this morning, and sailed from Toulon five days ago."

[Pg 193]

On the 19th a strong gale blew from the N.W. which being fair for the enemy, they sailed from Toulon, and, calling off Genoa, stood across to Cape Corse. This powerful expedition was found to consist of thirteen sail of the line, six frigates, and transports amounting to nearly four hundred sail, having on board, including the crews, forty-eight thousand men. It appears that, although not many leagues distant from Nelson's squadron, the fleet did not experience a gale which blew with uncommon violence on the 21st, and in which, after losing her three top-masts, the Vanguard lost her fore-mast and sprung her bowsprit; while the Orion and Alexander lost each a main-top-sail, and it was with difficulty they reached the Bay of St. Pietro in Sardinia on the following day. Here the squadron had a narrow escape; for, besides crossing the track of the enemy on the night of the 20th, they, by being at anchor in this bay, were not discovered by a detachment which the enemy sent in quest of them, and to which, in their disabled state, they must have been an easy capture. By the assistance of the Orion and Alexander the damages of the Vanguard were repaired in four days!

[Pg 194]

It has been justly said by Nelson, that "the exertions of Sir James Saumarez in the Orion have been wonderful: if the Vanguard had been in England, months would have been taken to send her to sea; here my operations will not be delayed four days, and I shall rejoin the rest of my fleet on the rendezvous." [12] Accordingly, on the 27th, while the Orion was taking possession of a Spanish brig, the Vanguard and Alexander joined her off the port; but the frigates which had parted never afterwards joined.

The following journal, written in the shape of a letter by Sir James to his family, detailing the proceedings of the squadron, and the events previous to the memorable 1st of August, will be read with much interest.

"Orion, St. Peter's Port,
"Island of Sardinia, 24th May 1798.

"If the letter I sent you the 18th instant arrives safely, it will apprise you of our being in the neighbourhood of Toulon, with every prospect of a propitious cruise. The squadron experienced blowing weather till the Sunday following, when it became more moderate; and in the afternoon a valuable vessel was captured, from Smyrna, laden with cotton. This little success appeared the forerunner of our future good fortune; and we began to make exulting reflections on the advantages of our situation. A few hours, however, convinced us of the futility of all our views, and the instability of human projects: at ten o'clock the wind began to increase with such rapidity as scarcely to give us time to take in our sails, and prepare to encounter the gale: at midnight we were reduced to a close-reefed main-topsail; a tremendous sea, and vivid flashes of lightning,

[Pg 195]

convinced us that the storm was not at its height: at three o'clock our main-top-sail was shattered to ribands, and blew overboard.

"The dawn of day presented to us a sad spectacle: the Vanguard without a fore-mast, and her main and mizen-top-mast gone; the rest of the squadron much dispersed, and the prize captured the evening before not in sight.

"Providentially the Vanguard was enabled to *wear* on the other *tack*, as the sea was setting her fast towards Corsica, from which island we were not many leagues distant. The gale continued with unabated violence until the afternoon, when it became rather more moderate, but still there was a very great sea. This ship, with the Alexander and Emerald, kept company with the Admiral, and the latter parted in the night.

"The next morning the gale had considerably abated, and we were enabled to set some sail. The Admiral hailed me that he intended to proceed for Orestan Bay, in the island of Sardinia, and directed me to make the land, which we discovered at noon: but the wind would not enable the Vanguard, in her disabled state, to reach it before night; and Sir H. Nelson altered his intention for this bay, which we reached yesterday morning, though not without having passed a most anxious night: the Alexander having the Vanguard in tow, within three miles of a most dangerous coast, where there existed no possibility of anchoring, and with which we were totally unacquainted. This is a very safe harbour, sheltered from any wind, very happily for us; as the weather has continued very unsettled since we are here. St. Pietro is a very small town; and the island, as well as this part of Sardinia, appears very uncultivated.

[Pg 196]

"The governor sent an officer to the Admiral this morning, who very civilly informed us that by a late alliance with France he was not permitted to admit us in the port; at the same time observing that, as he could not prevent it, we might do as we pleased, but that he could not give us *pratique*.

"We are going on in the equipment of the Vanguard with all expedition; and we hope the three ships will be ready to sail by next Sunday, Sir H. Nelson is happily very well, and has not lost his usual spirits.

"Friday, 25th.—Whilst I was on shore this morning to have some conversation with the governor, a sail was discovered off the island, and my signal made to prepare to proceed after her, supposing she was an enemy. We are however disappointed, it being a neutral vessel from Cagliari, the principal port in Sardinia; and I am now returning to the anchorage. I have great hopes my having been on shore this morning will be attended with a good effect; the governor having promised to supply us with oxen, sheep, and as much poultry as can be procured by to-morrow.

[Pg 197]

"Sunday, 27th May.—This morning my signal was made to chase a vessel, which I came up with and captured: she proved a Spanish brig from Cagliari, laden with wheat. It was in contemplation to set fire to her; we, however, finally determined to send the people on shore, and, if they bring off the value of the corn, we shall restore her to them. The Vanguard, being repaired of her damages, got under way this morning with the Alexander. I was happy to find my negotiation with the governor succeeded; and we have been supplied with the articles I mentioned, on moderate terms, both for the ships' companies and officers, which is a seasonable relief, as Gibraltar supplied us with nothing whatever excepting fowls.

"I am not free from great anxiety lest the account of the gale we encountered may reach England before that of our safety shall arrive, and give you some uneasiness; but the experience you have had how nugatory all such fears are, will, I hope, make you banish them for ever.

[Pg 198]

"Monday, 29th.—The Spaniard not having come off as was expected, the Admiral determined on sending the prize to Gibraltar. I hazarded a line by her for Mr. Le Mesurier; but we form no great expectation of her safety, from the great number of the enemy's gun-boats. A vessel we spoke yesterday, from Marseilles, informs us that the French fleet put to sea, the 20th, from Toulon, with all their transports, &c.: as it was that evening the gale of wind came on, we have no doubt but they must have suffered severely. By this vessel we have also several papers from Paris, the latest dated the 16th instant: they contain extracts from the English papers, which to us are very interesting, viz. the capture of the Hercule, the defeat at Marcou, Sir Sidney Smith's escape, and other important news, which, on the whole, are favourable to the welfare of the country, particularly as regards the unanimity which appears to prevail in England.

"I dined, together with Captain Ball, on board the Vanguard: we all form great expectations of our future success, which, I trust, will be realized. Certain it is that no ships could be ordered on a more promising service.

"Sunday, 3rd June—Nothing particular has occurred these last days. Yesterday a vessel was spoken with, which mentioned having seen eleven sail of the line, a few days ago, supposed to be English. We are at a loss what conjectures to put on this intelligence. We are at present off Toulon: unfortunately, none of our frigates have joined us, and we are apprehensive they have returned to Gibraltar.

[Pg 199]

"Tuesday.—La Mutine brig joined us this morning, with the very interesting intelligence of the arrival off Cadiz of the reinforcement under Sir R. Curtis; and that Captain Troubridge, with eleven sail, was on his way to join us: we look for him with the utmost impatience, trusting in the Divine Providence to be in time to baffle the designs of the enemy, who, we understand, are

certainly gone to Naples with their numerous army. I shall now go on with this journal with great glee, inasmuch as our proceedings are becoming of such very great import.

"Thursday, 7th.—Nothing can equal our anxiety to fall in with the reinforcement. Our squadron has been, these two days, detached in all directions, without falling in with them; and there is strong reason to fear they think us returned to Gibraltar. This morning the Alexander and myself chased two vessels, one of which we have just taken possession of; she proves a Spanish vessel from Genoa, not very valuable: the other the Alexander is still in chase of.

"Friday, 8th.—As this is in some degree to be a faithful account of our transactions, I must not conceal from you the deep distress I have been under at finding myself this morning parted from the Vanguard, and the Alexander almost out of sight; knowing how important and very material it was, for the good of the service we were upon, that the squadron should not be separated. It was not till this afternoon I was relieved from the most acute anxiety I have ever suffered, by the Leander joining me, with the very satisfactory account that Sir H. Nelson, while we were in chase, fell in with the expected ships under Captain Troubridge, and which occasioned our separation. I am now under full sail to join them; and have not the least doubt of being in time to add my endeavours to promote the tranquillity of Christendom by the destruction of the enemy's fleet, which, I firmly believe, cannot now escape us.

[Pg 200]

"Our prize requiring more men than I can at this time conveniently spare to navigate her, I have consented to her being ransomed for ten thousand dollars, although, I dare say, worth more than five times that sum. She had thirty-six ex-Jesuits (Spanish priests), who, after having been banished from Spain, had resided thirty-one years in Italy, '*et à présent prévoyans le bannissement menacé des ex-Jesuites Espagnols des nouvelles républiques Italiennes, retournoient chez eux.*' Thus these poor wretches are driven about according to the prejudices of the times. She had also on board Swiss recruits for the Spanish army, eight of whom have entered volunteers in Captain Savage's corps, which I consider an acquisition: but no captured vessel ever gave so much uneasiness as she has caused me; and I have often wished we had never seen her, even had she been worth a million of money.

[Pg 201]

"Sunday, 10th June.—I had the great satisfaction yesterday to join Sir H. Nelson with the reinforcement; and this morning the Alexander joined us, after having captured the prize she chased, which I understand to be a valuable ship, also from Genoa.

"We are now fourteen sail of the line, with La Mutine brig only; our present anxiety is to gain information of the enemy's fleet, and to find them where we can attack them. I hope to give you soon good intelligence of them, and speedily be the bearer of the good news in person, as Sir H. Nelson has orders to send the Orion home, when he can spare her. What a blessing if our present endeavours should be crowned with success, and I have the good fortune to proceed to England immediately after; which at present is really intended, having seen the order from the commander-in-chief.

"Tuesday, June 12th: off Elba.—We have reached this distance without having been enabled to obtain any information of the enemy, who we have reason to think are not far from our squadron: the winds have been very favourable to us, as at this time of the year calms are very prevailing. Although a long period has elapsed since I was on this station, I derive great advantage, as well as satisfaction, from my recollection of the different places we have passed. We are at present between Corsica and Leghorn, about fifteen leagues from the latter: if we do not hear anything of the French fleet before we get to Naples, we shall rendezvous at that place; and, we hope, in time to save that country from the hands of our rapacious enemy.

[Pg 202]

"Thursday, 14th.—The Admiral has this morning made the signal of his having gained intelligence of the enemy, and that they were off Syracuse in the island of Sicily. This information has been communicated by a Moor that the Leander has spoken with. We are now in full sail, with a fresh breeze of wind; and to-morrow we hope to get sight of Naples, in order to obtain more certain accounts of them. The officers and crews in the several ships are all in the highest spirits; and I never remember going into action with more certain hopes of success.

"Friday, 15th.—I dined with Sir Horatio to-day, and find his intelligence only extends to the enemy's fleet having been seen off Sicily. As he has sent Captain Troubridge in La Mutine to Naples, we may expect to-morrow more certain accounts of them; but we have reason to suppose them gone for Alexandria, the distance from which to the Red Sea is only three days' journey. They may soon be transported thence by water to the East Indies, with the assistance of their ally and our inveterate enemy, Tippoo Saib; and with their numerous army they expect to drive us out of our possessions in India. This profound scheme, which is thought very feasible, we hope to frustrate by coming up with them before they reach the place of their destination; and, as we know them to have great numbers of troops embarked in their men-of-war, they will become an easier prey to us.

[Pg 203]

"Saturday, 16th.—Calms and baffling winds since yesterday have prevented our getting within sight of Naples, although all the time within a few miles of that beautiful place; which you must suppose has been mortifying to an extreme. We are looking out for the Mutine. As soon as she joins us we expect to proceed in search of the enemy. Our route lies through a passage often celebrated by the ancients, "the famous Scylla and Charybdis." We shall have sight of Mount Ætna and other volcanoes, particularly Mount Strombolo, and other small islands formed by subterranean eruptions. We are at present in sight of Vesuvius, at the foot of which Naples is situated; but we are at too great a distance to observe its fiery eruptions.

[Pg 204]

"Sunday, June 17th. The wind has favoured us this morning, and given us a good sight of the Bay of Naples; but at too great a distance to see much of the city. The country around it, as well as several of the islands that form the bay, are beautifully interspersed with towns and villages; the whole presenting a most delightful scene. At 6 P.M. La Mutine joined us; and, from what I can understand from Sir H. Nelson, brings him some information of the enemy's fleet. He has just hailed me to say they were seen eight days ago, but I could not distinguish at what place. We are again making all possible sail after them.

"I regret much not having been able to send a letter I had written to you, and carried on board the Admiral this morning; *mais tu sais bien qu'il ne se met guère en peine d'écrire lui-même*, and he is so full of mystery at this time that he seems unwilling any letter should be sent but those he writes to Government. It shall go some other opportunity.

"Tuesday, 19th.—This morning has presented to us a delightful view of Mount Strombolo, from the top of which we plainly discern constant columns of smoke; and, although at the distance of at least six leagues from it, I can assure you, without assuming the privilege of travellers in general, that I am very sensible of the sulphureous vapour produced by the volcano: at the same time, it may be necessary to observe, that the wind blows directly towards the ship. Strombolo is a remarkably high island, of a regular conical form, and may be seen at the distance of twenty leagues. It is about ten miles in circumference, and, I understand, is inhabited by a few fishermen. Unluckily, the weather is too hazy to admit our seeing much of the beautiful coast of Calabria, which is at no great distance from us.

[Pg 205]

"Wednesday, 20th.—We have now a pleasant breeze, which will soon waft us through the Straits of Messina, so famous for being the terror of the ancients. An old pilot is just come on board, who reminds me more of the poet's description of old Charon than of a modern human being. I hope he is not come to ferry us across the Styx. The whole of his crew have the same grotesque appearance. We can now discern the famous Ætna disgorging columns of smoke. Some distance below its summit it appears covered with snow, whilst we are here melting with heat. It has indeed a most stately appearance; and the whole country of Sicily answers everything that has been reported of it for its fertility, as well as for the varied beauty of its scene: but I must recommend you to read Brydone's travels through Sicily and Malta, a writer who, I recollect, gives a lively description of these different places.

[Pg 206]

"We have this day been regaled with a most enchanting prospect in passing through the Faro of Messina. It is not more than three miles distant, and on each side lies the most picturesque and lovely country that can be described. The ship was within a mile of the beautiful city of Messina, where I distinctly observed some of the ruins occasioned by the earthquake in the year 1783.

"From what I have been able to learn from old Charon (who has just left us in perfect safety), the French fleet are still off Malta; and it appears their formidable armament is directed against that island. As it is a place of great strength, and as we are within two days' sail of it, with a favourable wind, I hope we shall be in time for its relief, and add still more important exploits to many that have formerly been achieved in fighting for its defence.

"Thursday, 21st.—The wind has proved rather contrary for the squadron since yesterday. We are still in sight of Mount Ætna, and only a few leagues from the nearest part of Sicily: the ancient city of Syracuse is discernible from the ship. To-morrow I think will bring us in view of the enemy's fleet, which will be a far more desirable sight.

"June 22nd.—I am just returned from on board the Admiral, where I had the mortification to learn that a vessel, which sailed yesterday from Malta, gives the very unpleasing account that the island had surrendered to the French, and that their fleet left it six days ago. This intelligence has more than ever left us in perplexity as to their further destination. On the supposition that Alexandria, as we first conjectured, was what they had in view, we are crowding sail for that place; but the contrast to what we experienced yesterday is great indeed, having made sure of attacking them this morning. At present it is very doubtful whether we shall fall in with them at all, as we are proceeding upon the merest conjecture only, and not on any positive information. Some days must now elapse before we can be relieved from our cruel suspense; and if, at the end of our journey, we find we are upon a wrong scent, our embarrassment will be great indeed. Fortunately, I only act here *en second*; but did the chief responsibility rest with me, I fear it would be more than my too irritable nerves would bear. They have already been put to the trial in two or three instances this voyage.

[Pg 207]

"I should observe that we saw three French frigates this morning, but they were not considered of sufficient importance to run the risk of separating the squadron in chasing them. The island of Malta will prove a great acquisition to the French; as well for its excellent harbour as for the immense wealth it contains: they will also get a few ships of war and a considerable quantity of naval stores. *D'ailleurs*, the suppression of a useless order that encouraged idleness will be no real detriment to the cause of Christianity.

[Pg 208]

"Sunday, June 24th.—The last two days we have not gone less than a hundred leagues; and, as the wind continues favourable, we hope to arrive at Alexandria before the French, should their destination be for that place, which continues very doubtful. At the same time, if it should prove that our possessions in India is the object of their armament, our having followed them so immediately appears the only means of saving that country from falling into their hands. I therefore hope that credit will be given us for our intentions at least. We have hitherto been certainly unfortunate, which has chiefly arisen from the reinforcement not joining sooner; the

French armament sailed from Toulon five days before Captain Troubridge left Lord St. Vincent: another circumstance has been the separation of all our frigates, which deprived us of the means of obtaining information. The day we were off Naples the French fleet left Malta, and it was not until we arrived off that island, six days after, that we heard of its being taken, and that the French fleet had left it; and then without the least intimation which way they were going.

"Sir H. Nelson consulted with some of the senior captains, who agreed with his opinion, that, in the uncertainty where the enemy were gone, the preservation of our possessions should be the first consideration. It may be worth remarking that our squadron was sent, on the application of the King of Naples, for the protection of his dominions. On our arrival there, and requiring the co-operation of his ships, the reply was, that, as the French had not declared war against him, he could not commence hostilities; that if the Emperor declared war, he would also join against France. Should his territories be attacked, he has to thank himself for the event.

[Pg 209]

"We must hope that in England affairs prosper better than in this country; they are certainly *en fort mauvais train* in this part of the world.

"Tuesday, 26th.—We are now within one day's sail of Alexandria, so that we hope soon to know whether the French fleet are in this direction; but having seen no appearance of any of their numerous convoy, we begin to fear they are gone some other way. I was this morning on board the Admiral; he has detached La Mutine for information. I hope she will not find the plague there, to which that country is very subject.

"Friday, 29th.—The weather did not permit us to get near Alexandria before yesterday. La Mutine's boat went on shore; and I find this morning from the Admiral that they took us for the French fleet, having had some intimation of their coming this way. We have now to use all despatch in getting back towards Naples; it is probable we shall learn something of them on our passage. The squadron has captured a French ship this afternoon, which we suppose to be from Alexandria. I have passed the day on board the Vanguard, having breakfasted and staid to dinner with the Admiral.

[Pg 210]

"Sunday, 1st July.—The wind continues to the westward, and I am sorry to find it is almost as prevailing as the trade-winds. The vessel captured the day before yesterday was set on fire, after taking out what could be useful for firewood.

"Sunday, 29th July: off Candia.—A small vessel, captured yesterday by the Culloden, gave some information of the enemy's fleet. The Admiral having made the signal that he had gained intelligence of them, we are proceeding with a brisk gale for Alexandria. If at the end of our voyage we find the enemy in a situation where we can attack them, we shall think ourselves amply repaid for our various disappointments. The Alexander also spoke a vessel which gave information; but, having had no communication with the Admiral, we have not been able to learn the different accounts: we are however satisfied with the purport of the signal he made yesterday.

"Monday.—I find from Captain Ball that the enemy were seen steering towards Alexandria *thirty* days ago, and we are once more making the best of our way for that place. I also understand that two of our frigates were seen a few days since at Candia; it seems decreed we shall never meet with them. I am rather surprised the Admiral did not endeavour to fall in with them, as they probably have certain information where the enemy's fleet are, from vessels they may have spoken with, and they otherwise would be a great acquisition to our squadron."

[Pg 211]

It may now be stated, that in the mean time the French expedition had landed the troops and taken possession, not only of Alexandria, but Cairo; and that their fleet, consisting of thirteen sail of the line, four frigates, two brigs, and several bombs and armed vessels, had taken up a position in the Bay of Aboukir, in which, according to the opinion of their admiral, they could "defy the British navy."

As a particular list of both fleets will be given in a subsequent place, I need now only mention that the force of the British fleet was fourteen ships of seventy-four guns, one of fifty, and the Mutine brig. The fleet was manned with 7,000 men; but as the Culloden, which was not in the action, must not be included, the actual force may be estimated 6,300 men and 872 guns, while the enemy's force, actually opposed, may be reckoned 8,000 men, and 1,208 guns throwing a broadside of one-half more weight than the British.

On the junction of the squadron, the following orders were given by the Admiral:

[Pg 212]

GENERAL ORDER.

Vanguard, at sea, 8th June 1798.

As it is very probable the enemy may not be formed in regular order on the approach of the squadron under my command, I may in that case deem it most expedient to attack them by separate divisions; in which case, the commanders of divisions are strictly enjoined to keep their ships in the closest order possible, and on no account whatever to risk the separation of one of their ships. The captains of the ships will see the necessity of strictly attending to close order: and, should they compel any of the enemy's ships to strike their colours, they are at liberty to judge and act accordingly, whether or not it may be most advisable to cut away their masts and bowsprits; with this special observance, namely, that the destruction of the enemy's armament is the sole object. The ships of the enemy are, therefore, to be taken possession of by an officer and one boat's crew only, in order that the British ships may be enabled to continue the attack, and preserve their

stations.

The commanders of divisions are to observe that no consideration is to induce them to separate in pursuing the enemy, unless by signal from me, so as to be unable to form a speedy junction with me; and the ships are to be kept in that order that the whole squadron may act as a single ship. When I make the signal No. 16, the commanders of divisions are to lead their separate squadrons, and they are to accompany the signal they may think proper to make with the appropriate triangular flag, viz. Sir James Saumarez will hoist the triangular flag, white with a red stripe, significant of the van squadron under the commander in the second post; Captain Troubridge will hoist the triangular blue flag, significant of the rear squadron under the commander in the third post; and whenever I mean to address the centre squadron only, I shall accompany the signal with the triangular red flag, significant of the centre squadron under the commander-in-chief.

[Pg 213]

2d. Div.

1st. Div. red.	white with red stripe.	3d. Div. blue.
Vanguard.	Orion.	Culloden.
Minotaur.	Goliath.	Theseus.
Leander.	Majestic.	Alexander.
Audacious.	Bellerophon.	Swiftsure.
Defence.		
Zealous.		

GEN. MEM.

Vanguard, at sea, 8th June 1798.

As the wind may probably blow along shore when it is deemed necessary to anchor and engage the enemy at their anchorage, it is recommended to each line-of-battle ship of the squadron to prepare to anchor with the sheet-cable in abaft and springs, &c.—Vide Signal 54, and Instructions thereon, page 56, &c. Article 37 of the Instructions.

HORATIO NELSON.

To the respective Captains, &c.

Mem. P.S.—To be inserted in pencil in the Signal-Book, at No. 182. Being to windward of the enemy, to denote that I mean to attack the enemy's line from the rear towards the van, as far as thirteen ships, or whatever number of the British ships of the line may be present, that each ship may know his opponent in the enemy's line.

No. 183. I mean to press hard with the whole force on the enemy's rear.

The proceedings of Sir Horatio Nelson's squadron are now brought down to the moment when their united, ardent, and anxious wishes were to be realized. The disappointments they had met with during their hitherto fruitless pursuit,—the state of anxiety, of alternate hope and despair, in which they had been kept, had raised their feelings of emulation to a pitch far beyond description; this was soon to be manifested by the endeavours of each to close with the enemy.

[Pg 214]

Never could there have been selected a set of officers better calculated for such a service; Nelson was fortunate in commanding them, and they in being commanded by him. It is true, indeed, that his particular favourite, Captain Troubridge, was intended for his second-in-command, instead of Sir James Saumarez; and the latter would no doubt have been sent home, according to the orders he had received: but, with the chance of such an engagement as that which they anticipated, the well-trying captain of the Orion and his highly disciplined crew could not be spared; and, although Nelson carefully concealed his feelings towards Saumarez, they were but too manifest by the chary manner in which he expressed himself on this and on former occasions.

In consequence of the before-mentioned information, the fleet bore up for Alexandria; and on the morning of the 1st of August the towers of that celebrated city, and Pompey's Pillar made their appearance. Soon after was discerned a forest of masts in the harbour, which they had previously seen empty; and, lastly, the French flag waving over its walls. A general disappointment was caused for a short time by a signal from the look-out ships that the enemy's men-of-war did not form a part of the vessels at anchor there; but this was soon dispelled by a signal from the Zealous that the enemy's fleet occupied the Bay of Aboukir in a line of battle, thirteen ships, four frigates, and two brigs, in sight on the larboard bow. At half-past two P.M. the British fleet hauled up, and steered directly for them with a fine N.N.W. breeze, carrying top-gallant sails.^[13]

[Pg 215]

When the Admiral made the signal to prepare for battle, at half-past three, the signal to haul the wind on the starboard tack, and for the Culloden to cast off her prize, the Swiftsure and Alexander, which had been recalled from looking out off Alexandria, were carrying all sail to join. At five, the Admiral made the signal that it was his intention to attack the van and centre of the enemy as they lay at anchor, which was repeated by the Orion. At forty-five minutes past five, he made the signal to form the line as most convenient. The fleet then formed in the following order:—Goliath, Zealous, Vanguard, Minotaur, Theseus, Bellerophon, Defence, Orion, Audacious, Majestic, and Leander. The Culloden was then astern the Swiftsure, and the Alexander to leeward, tacking to clear the reef. The Admiral hove to, to pick up a boat, and also the four next ships astern of the Vanguard, which gave the Orion an opportunity, by standing on and passing

[Pg 216]

them, to get up with the Zealous at about half-past six.

In ten minutes afterwards the signal for close action was made, and repeated by most of the fleet; at the same time, the Goliath, having passed round the enemy's headmost ship, anchored on the quarter of the second; while the Zealous took her position on the bow of the former ship; both anchoring by the stern. The batteries on the island of Bequir or Aboukir, and the headmost ships, opened their fire as the leading ship approached; and they in return opened theirs on rounding the advanced ship of the enemy's line.

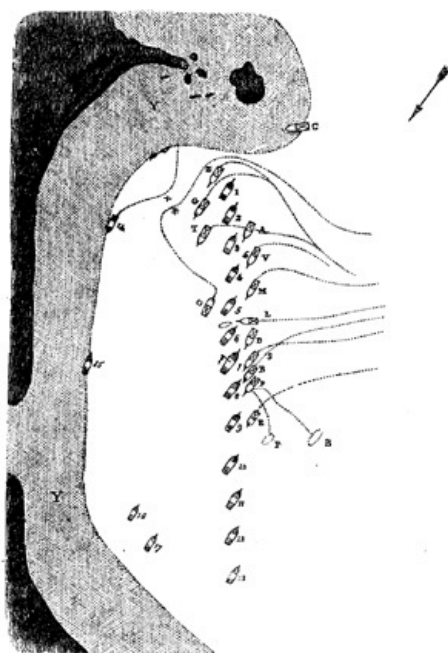
The Orion, after giving that ship her broadside, passed round the Zealous and Goliath; and, as she was passing the third ship of the enemy, the French frigate Sérieuse approached, began to fire on her, and wounded two men. In reply to an observation of one of the officers, who proposed to return her fire immediately, Sir James said, "Let her alone, she will get courage and come nearer. Shorten sail." As the Orion lost way by shortening sail, the frigate came up; and, when judged to be sufficiently advanced, orders were given to yaw the Orion, and stand by the starboard guns, which were double-shotted. The moment having arrived when every gun was brought to bear, the fatal order to fire was given; when, by this single but well-directed broadside, the unfortunate Sérieuse was not only totally dismasted, but shortly afterwards sunk, and was discovered next morning with only her quarter above water.

[Pg 217]

On discharging this fatal broadside the helm was put hard a-starboard; but it was found that the ship would not fetch sufficiently to windward, and near to the Goliath, if she anchored by the stern. She stood on, and, having given the fourth ship her starboard broadside, let go her bower anchor, and brought up on the quarter of Le Peuple Souverain, which was the fifth ship, and on the bow of Le Franklin, the sixth ship of the enemy's line. The third and fourth ships were occupied by the Theseus and Audacious on the inside, by passing through; while they were attacked on the outside by the Minotaur, Vanguard, and Defence.

[Pg 218]

By the log of the Orion it was forty-five minutes past six o'clock when that ship let go her anchor, and, in "tending," poured her starboard broadside into the Franklin and L'Orient. The fire was then directed on Le Peuple Souverain, until she cut and dropped out of the line, totally dismasted and silenced.



[View larger image](#)

EXPLANATION.

[Pg 219]

BRITISH.	FRENCH.
A—Audacious.	1—Guerrier.
B—Bellerophon.	2—Conquérant.
C—Culloden (aground).	3—Spartiate.
D—Defence.	4—Aquilon.
E—Majestic.	5—Peuple Souverain.
F—Alexander.	6—Franklin.
G—Goliath.	7—L'Orient.
L—Leander.	8—Tonnant.

M—Minotaur.	9—Heureux.
O—Orion.	10—Mercure.
S—Swiftsure.	11—Guillaume Tell.
T—Theseus.	12—Généreux.
V—Vanguard.	13—Timoléon.
Z—Zealous.	14—Sérieuse.
†*—Sérieuse, dismasted by the Orion, and sunk at 14.	15—Artemise. 16—Justice.
I—Island of Aboukir.	17—Diane.
Y—Shallow water.	

At seven o'clock the headmost ships were dismasted; a fire-raft was observed dropping down from them on the Orion. Her stern-boat having been shot through, and the others being on the booms, it was impossible to have recourse to the usual method of towing it clear: booms were then prepared to keep it off. As it approached, however, the current carried it about twenty-five yards clear of the ship. About half-past eight, just as the *Peuple Souverain*, which had been the Orion's opponent, had dropped to leeward, a suspicious ship was seen approaching the Orion in the vacant space which the vanquished one had occupied. Many on board were convinced of her being a fire-ship of the enemy, and Sir James was urged to allow the guns to be turned upon her. Happily he himself had stronger doubts of her being such than those who pressed the reverse. He ordered a vigilant watch to be kept on her movements; and when the darkness dispersed, she was discovered to be the *Leander*. Distinguishing lights were hoisted, and the Orion continued to engage *Le Franklin* from fifty minutes past six o'clock to a quarter before ten. The action was general, and kept up on both sides with perseverance and vigour, when the enemy's fire began to slacken, and the three-decker was discovered to be on fire. At ten the firing ceased; the ship opposed to the Orion having surrendered, as also all the van of the enemy.

[Pg 220]

Preparations were now made to secure the ships from the effects of the expected explosion.—The ports were lowered down, the magazine secured, the sails handed, and water placed in various parts to extinguish whatever flames might be communicated. The unfortunate ship was now in a blaze; at half-past eleven she blew up, and the tremendous concussion was felt at the very keelsons of all the ships near her. The combatants on both sides seemed equally to feel the solemnity of this destructive scene. A pause of at least ten minutes ensued, each engaged in contemplating a sight so grand and terrible. The Orion was not far off; but, being happily placed to windward, the few fiery fragments that fell in her were soon extinguished. Her vicinity to the *L'Orient* was the happy means of saving the lives of fourteen of her crew, who, in trying to escape the flames, sought refuge in another element, and swam to the Orion, where they met a reception worthy the humanity of the conquerors. The generous, warm-hearted sailors stripped off their jackets to cover these unfortunate men, and treated them with kindness, proving that humanity is compatible with bravery.

[Pg 221]

About the middle of the action Sir James received a wound from a splinter, or rather the sheave from the heel of the spare top-mast on the booms, which, after killing Mr. Baird, the clerk, and wounding Mr. Miells, a midshipman, mortally, struck him on the thigh and side, when he fell into the arms of Captain Savage, who conducted him under the half-deck, where he soon recovered from the shock it gave him: but although he acknowledged it was painful, and might in the end be serious, he could not be persuaded to leave the deck even to have the wound examined; and the part was so much swelled and inflamed on the next day, that he was not able to leave the ship.

After the pause occasioned by the dreadful explosion, the action continued in the rear by the ships dropping down which were not too much disabled; and Sir James had given orders to slip and run down to the rear, when the master declared that the fore-mast and mizen-mast were so badly wounded, that the moment the ship came broadside to the wind, they would go over the side, particularly the fore-mast, which was cut more than half through in three places. It was therefore determined to secure the disabled masts and repair other damages, while the action was renewed by those that were not so much disabled.

[Pg 222]

As soon as the battle ceased in the van, by the capture of the enemy's ships, Sir James, who was the senior captain of the fleet, ordered Lieutenant Barker on board the *Admiral* for the purpose of inquiring after his safety, and of receiving his further instructions. He shortly returned with the melancholy detail that Sir Horatio was severely wounded in the head. At this period, several of the ships of the squadron were still warmly engaged with the centre and part of the rear of the enemy's fleet. Sir James therefore sent a boat to such ships as appeared to be in condition, with directions to slip their cables and assist their gallant companions. These orders were immediately put in execution by that distinguished officer Captain Miller, of the *Theseus*, and by the other ships that were in a state to renew the action. It has been already stated that the masts of the Orion were too much damaged to admit of that ship getting under way. In the course of the day the whole of the enemy's fleet had surrendered, excepting two ships of the line and two frigates, which escaped from the rear.

[Pg 223]

Sir James being unable, from the effects of his wound, to wait on the *Admiral* and offer his congratulations personally, sent him the following letter:

MY DEAR ADMIRAL,

I regret exceedingly being prevented from congratulating you in person on the most complete and glorious victory ever yet obtained,—the just recompense of the zeal and great anxiety so long experienced by you before it pleased Providence to give you sight of those miscreants who have now received the just punishment of their past crimes. You have been made the happy instrument of inflicting on them their just chastisement; and may you, my dear Admiral, long live to enjoy, in the approbation of the whole world, the greatest of earthly blessings!

I am ever your most faithful and obedient servant,

JAMES SAUMAREZ.

To Sir Horatio Nelson, &c. &c. &c.

From the character which has already been portrayed of Sir James, the reader will not be surprised to find that the Orion was the first to hoist the pendant at the mizen-peak, and thereby to show an example to the fleet worthy of imitation, in returning thanks to the great Disposer of events and Giver of all victory for that which they had just obtained over their enemies. A discourse on this occasion was delivered by the clergyman of the Orion, which must have made a great and lasting impression on the hearers; but the circumstance, which is much easier to be imagined than described, of a ship's company on their knees at prayers, and offering up a most solemn thanksgiving for the Divine mercy and favour which had been so fully manifested towards them, must have excited feelings in the minds of the prisoners,—the demoralised citizens of the French republic,—which had never before been known to them; and we understand that they did not fail to express their astonishment and admiration at a scene of that kind under such circumstances.

[Pg 224]

At ten o'clock, when the action had entirely ceased, and the Admiral had received the congratulations of most of the captains of the fleet, the following general memorandums were issued:

Vanguard, 2nd of August 1798, off the mouth of the Nile.

The Admiral most heartily congratulates the captains, officers, seamen, and marines of the squadron he has the honour to command, on the events of the late action; and he desires they will accept his sincere and cordial thanks for their very gallant behaviour in the glorious battle. It must strike forcibly every British seaman how superior their conduct is when in discipline and good order, to the notorious behaviour of lawless Frenchmen.

The squadron may be assured that the Admiral will not fail, in his despatches, to represent their truly meritorious conduct in the strongest terms to the commander-in-chief.

HORATIO NELSON.

To the respective Captains of the ships of the squadron.

[Pg 225]

Almighty God having blessed his Majesty's arms with victory, the Admiral intends returning thanksgiving for the same at two o'clock this day; and he recommends every ship doing the same as soon as convenient.

HORATIO NELSON.

To the respective Captains, &c. &c.

Captain Ball, in pursuance of orders from the Rear-admiral, directed the negotiation for landing the prisoners on parole. Such as were not Frenchmen were permitted to enter into the English service, for the purpose of conducting the prizes home.

We must refer our readers to the different accounts of this splendid action, which have been published by James, Brenton, Wilyams, &c. for the particulars which do not concern the Orion. But we cannot forbear to mention the gallant conduct of Vice-admiral De Brueys, who, according to James and others, "had received two wounds, one in the face, the other in the hand; towards eight P.M. as he was descending to the quarter-deck, a shot cut him almost in two. This brave officer then desired not to be carried below, but to be left to die on deck; exclaiming in a firm tone, 'Un amiral Français doit mourir sur son banc de quart.' He survived only a quarter of an hour." Commodore Casa-Bianca fell mortally wounded soon after the admiral had breathed his last. Captain Du-Petit-Thouars, of the Tonnant, had first both his arms, and then one of his legs shot away; and his dying commands were "Never to surrender!"

[Pg 226]

Neither must we leave unrecorded the heroic death of young Miells, the midshipman, who we mentioned had been mortally wounded by the same splinter which struck his gallant commander. His shoulder having been nearly carried off, and his life being despaired of, the surgeons were unwilling to put him to needless pain by amputation; but after some hours, finding he still lived, it was determined to give him a chance of recovery by removing the shattered limb. The operation was ably performed by Mr. Nepecker, the surgeon of the Orion, assisted by the surgeon of the Vanguard. The sufferer never uttered a moan, but as soon as it was over, quietly said—"Have I not borne it well?" The tidings were instantly conveyed to his captain, whose feelings may be better imagined than described, and who could only fervently exclaim "thank God!" But his joy soon received a check. Many minutes had not elapsed before he learnt that this amiable and promising youth had been seized with a fit of coughing and expired!

The captains of the *Mercure* and *Heureux*, who participated but slightly in the action, were both wounded; Captain Trullet, of the *Guerrier*, the ship most shattered, was unhurt, and Gantheaume escaped in a boat from the *L'Orient*.

[Pg 227]

By great care Sir James kept off the fever which threatened to be the consequence of his wound.

On the morning of the 3rd, Sir James, finding himself sufficiently recovered from the effects of his wounds to leave the ship, went on board the *Vanguard* to congratulate the Admiral in person on the glorious result of the battle. He found several of his brother officers on the quarter deck, discussing the merits of the action. Some regret having been expressed at the escape of the two sternmost ships of the French line, Sir James said to the Admiral, "It was unfortunate we did not ——" and was proceeding to say, "all anchor on the same side." But, before he could finish the sentence, Nelson hastily interrupted him, exclaiming, "Thank God there was no order!" thus turning the conversation, he entered his cabin, and sent for Captain Ball.

While Sir James was receiving the congratulations of his brother captains on being the second in command, no doubt being entertained among them that the Admiral would make most honourable mention of his name as such,—*an honour which he so highly deserved*, and which is usual in similar cases,—Captain Ball came on deck, and interrupted the conversation by observing, "Nelson says there is to be no second in command; *we are all to be alike in his despatches!*"^[14]

[Pg 228]

We need scarcely say that this was eventually the case; but we may relate the circumstances which induced Saumarez, without the least intention to offend, to make the observation at which offence was taken. It was the custom of Nelson, when in communication or in company with the captains under his command, to converse with them on the various modes of attacking the enemy under different circumstances; and, on one of these occasions, Sir James Saumarez, who had seen the evil consequences of *doubling* on the enemy, especially in a night action, had differed with the Admiral in that plan of attack, saying that "it never required two English ships to *capture* one French, and that the damage which they must necessarily do to each other might render them both unable to fight an enemy's ship that had not been engaged; and as in this case two ships could be spared to the three-decker, every one might have his own opponent."

[Pg 229]

It would perhaps be deemed invidious to mention the individual cases of English ships which fired on each other in this action; but that this did actually happen, and that many of our brave men fell by our own shot is a fact too notorious to be disputed. Moreover, had the four sternmost ships of the enemy's line done their duty as they ought, by slipping their cables soon after the action commenced, and making sail to windward, they would have made an easy capture of the *Culloden* as she lay aground; and afterwards, by doubling on the *Vanguard*, they would probably have given a different turn to the affair. The enemy's ships being moored 160 yards apart, left space enough for the British ships to pass between them, and rake the ship on each side, as the *Theseus* did; whereas, by anchoring outside, our squadron had equally to suffer the raking fire of the enemy as they approached, without being able to retaliate in the same way, thereby losing the important effect of two double-shotted broadsides, besides the advantage of being anchored in shore, to prevent the possibility of the enemy *doubling* on a disabled ship, or of their running on shore and destroying those that were vanquished.

It has been insisted on that Nelson, in omitting to mention the name of his second in command, only followed the example of Earl St. Vincent; and this may have been the case; but it cannot justify his evident reluctance to acknowledge the position in which Sir James really stood. Every officer in the service must know that, if Nelson had lost his life, the command would have devolved on Sir James Saumarez: yet, in his public letter, he not only avoids mentioning him, but he endeavours to represent the captain of the *Vanguard* as his successor in that responsible situation. His great friendship for Sir Thomas Troubridge was, no doubt, the motive that occasioned the substitution, and led to this injustice, which he carried so far as to remonstrate, in his private letters to Earl St. Vincent and Earl Spencer, against any honours being conferred on Sir James Saumarez which were not equally bestowed on Sir Thomas Troubridge. ^[15]When Nelson's great popularity, at this period, is considered, it may appear less extraordinary that this request should have had weight. Yet it cannot but surprise an impartial reader, in after-ages, that no honours or distinctions, except on the commander-in-chief, should have followed a victory, which Mr. Pitt in the House of Commons pronounced to be the greatest on record.

[Pg 230]

On the 3rd of August, when Sir James returned from the *Vanguard*, the captains were assembled on board the *Orion*. He proposed the following resolution, which was agreed to unanimously:

[Pg 231]

The captains of the squadron under the orders of Rear-admiral Sir Horatio Nelson, K.B. desirous of testifying the high sense they entertain of his prompt decision and intrepid conduct in the attack of the French fleet in Bequir Road, off the Nile, August 1st, 1798, request his acceptance of a sword; and, as a further proof of their esteem and regard, hope that he will permit his portrait to be taken, and hung up in the room belonging to the Egyptian club now established, in commemoration of that glorious day.

To which Sir Horatio returned the following answer:

GENTLEMEN,

I feel most sensibly the very distinguished honour you have conferred upon me by your address this day. My prompt decision was the natural consequence of having such captains under my command; and I thank God I can say that in the battle the conduct of every officer was equal.

I accept as a particular mark of your esteem the sword you have done me the honour to offer; and I will direct my picture to be painted the first opportunity for the purpose you mention.

I have the honour to be, gentlemen,
with the highest respect,
Your most obliged,

HORATIO NELSON.

We shall conclude this chapter with the extract of a letter written to Lady Saumarez by Sir James, which we have no doubt will be perused with much interest: [Pg 232]

Thursday, 2nd August 1798.

Happy am I in being enabled, through the mercy of Divine Providence, to acquaint you with our having obtained the most glorious and complete victory ever yet recorded in the annals of the world.

Yesterday afternoon we discovered the enemy's fleet at anchor a short distance from Alexandria. Although our squadron was not collected,—the Alexander and Swiftsure being at a considerable distance from having been detached to reconnoitre the port, and the Culloden a great way off from having had a prize in tow,—Sir Horatio deemed it of such importance to make an immediate attack on the enemy, that he made sail for them without waiting for those ships.

At sunset the action began upon the van and centre of the enemy's line, and in rather more than two hours six of their ships were completely dismasted, and the L'Orient, of 120 guns, blown up. The action was continued all night with the enemy's rear by the Alexander and Majestic; and this evening the whole, except three, have fallen into our hands, and a frigate, which they dastardly set fire to, and escaped on shore.

The loss sustained has been considerable in some of the ships. I have to regret the loss of poor Miells, and of Mr. Baird, my clerk, and of several good men. I received a contusion in the side, which, though at first painful, is doing as well as possible, and does not even prevent my going on with the usual duty of the ship. Poor Captain Westcott is killed, and several other officers.

The enemy have now obtained the just chastisement of their past crimes, and Sir Horatio Nelson has the happiness of being the fortunate instrument of inflicting their just punishment; in which happiness all his squadron partakes. Fourteen of the Frenchmen, who had the good fortune to swim on board the Orion from the L'Orient after she was on fire, report that their army were all landed three weeks since, and are at present in possession of Grand Cairo; and that they have frequent severe skirmishes with the Turks. [Pg 233]

Our worthy friend Mr. Le Cras will lament with me the loss of Mr. Miells. A better young man I think never existed. He lived until this evening, and was the whole time perfectly resigned to his fate, saying, "he died in a good cause." Mr. Richardson is also badly wounded, and my servant John Lewis, who you recollect waited on us at Portsmouth; but I hope they will both recover.

I should observe that the Culloden, not having been able to get to us before night, unfortunately ran aground; by which accident we were deprived of the assistance of so fine a ship, and of the exertions of Captain Troubridge.

CHAPTER XI.

1798.

Fleet repair damages.—Sir James receives orders to take a detachment of six ships of the line, and five prizes, under his command.—Sails for Gibraltar.—Journal of his tedious voyage.—Arrives off Candia.—Decides to pass through a perilous passage, and escapes the dangers.—Falls in with the Marquis of Nisa, and summons the French garrison at Malta.—Puts into Port Auguste, in Sicily.—Sails from thence.—Tedious passage.—Letters from Earl St. Vincent and Nelson.—Arrives at Gibraltar.—Reception there from the Admiral, Governor, &c.—Sails thence.—Arrives at Lisbon.—Sails thence.—Arrives at Spithead.—Paid off at Plymouth.—Remarks on his treatment, and explanation of it. [Pg 234]

The fleet was employed in repairing the damages it had received, and in fitting the prizes that were deemed worthy of being sent to England. This occupied the whole week after the battle. On the 5th, the Leander, having on board Captain Berry with the Rear-admiral's despatches, sailed for England; and, on the 12th, the Emerald, Alcmena, and Bonne Citoyenne arrived. On the same day Sir James received the following order: [Pg 235]

(1st Order.)

By Sir Horatio Nelson, K.B. &c. &c. &c.

You are hereby required and directed to take the ships named on the margin [16] under your command, their captains having orders for that purpose; and to proceed with them with all possible despatch down the Mediterranean. On your arrival near Europa Point, you will send a boat on shore to the Commissioners' office to receive any orders that may be lodged there for your further proceedings. In case you find no orders at Gibraltar, and learn that the commander-in-chief is off Cadiz, or at Lisbon, you will join him at either place with all possible expedition.

(2nd Order.)

By Sir Horatio Nelson, K.B. &c. &c. &c.

You are hereby required and directed to take charge of the prize ships; putting a sufficient number of men on board each to navigate the said prize, with six weeks' provisions. You are never to separate from her without orders in writing from the officer under whose command you are for the time being; and you are hereby required and directed to put yourself and the prize under the command of Captain Sir James Saumarez; and follow all such orders and instructions as you may receive from him from time to time for his Majesty's service.

[Pg 236]

Given on board H.M.S. Vanguard,
Mouth of the Nile, 12th August 1798.

Thus were Sir James's wishes and anticipations, mentioned in his journal of the 10th June, completely realized. After a distinguished share in effecting the destruction of the enemy's fleet, he is returning home triumphant with the hard-earned fruits of his labours; which were, however, not yet at an end, as will be seen by the following journal of his tedious and hazardous voyage:

"Orion, at sea, 18th August 1798.

"After having so well completed the journal I sent by Captain Berry, you will not doubt the great pleasure I must feel in beginning the present, particularly when situation and many other circumstances combine to render it so interesting. But I have more to relate than you are aware of; and in which I have been most particularly favoured, as you will see, when it comes in its proper place to be mentioned.

First, I sailed from Bequir Road last Tuesday morning, with seven sail of the line and six of our prizes; leaving the Admiral with the Culloden, Alexander, Zealous, Goliath, and Swiftsure, and the three remaining French ships, which it was intended to destroy after taking out their stores and landing the prisoners. The Alcmena, Emerald, and Bonne Citoyenne had at last joined us. As, however, they had not been with the fleet, but had remained all the time in search of us, we were disappointed of our letters, and *they* at finding themselves 'the day after the fair.'

[Pg 237]

In falling light winds, we came again to an anchor, Tuesday noon, about five miles from the squadron; which gave the ships an opportunity to get completed for sea, and afforded a night's repose to the men. At eleven I was waked from a sound sleep with the account that a brig which joined the Admiral in the afternoon was from Tunis, and had on board a hundred men belonging to L'Aigle, which had been lost some time before on her way to join the squadron; and it was added, 'there is a large packet of letters for the different ships.' I soon had them sorted, and out of about twenty for myself I selected four from you, which were read with an avidity you will better conceive than I can describe; before I had finished a page of one I flew to another, and so for near an hour, till at last I found their date, and endeavoured to read them regularly; but it was not till daylight that I could bring myself to a sufficient degree of composure. Never were letters more welcome—never did any yield greater joy and comfort; they have since formed my chief happiness, and will continue so to do until the end of our voyage. Had we unfortunately sailed one day sooner, I should have lost these precious letters: judge then how fortunate I think myself, particularly so at their having been preserved from the wreck of the poor L'Aigle; as I find that several packages, &c. for this squadron, with the good things you sent me, shared the fate of the poor ship; Captain Hay having written to me from Gibraltar that they were put on board her.

[Pg 238]

Sir Horatio Nelson wrote to me that he had not heard from his family; but, as Captain Nisbet came in the brig, he will give him accounts from Lady Nelson.

I now come to the sequel of our voyage, having accounted for my being so *unseasonably* disturbed from a sound sleep."

Sir James now received the following letters.

August 15th, 1798.

MY DEAR SIR JAMES,

I am not very anxious to receive any persons of the description you mention; they will all eat our meat, and drink. As they choose to serve the French, there let them remain. I have not a line from home, all lost in L'Aigle. You will get off in good time, I dare say. I am sure you will not lose a moment off Cape Bronte; the shoal extends six miles. If you favour me with a line, direct it for Naples, where I am going to join the Portuguese squadron. Zealous, Swiftsure, and the two frigates, I have kept here as long as possible. Nisbet thanks you for your inquiries. I send you a copy of my letter intended to be sent to Mr. Nepean; keep it quiet till you get off. Wishing you health, and good passage,

Believe me ever,
Your obliged,

HORATIO NELSON.

To Sir James Saumarez.

I hope Lady S. and all the little ones are well.

(Copy.)

[Pg 239]

SIR,

Six of the prizes sailed yesterday with Sir James Saumarez; three others, viz. Guerrier, Heureux, and Mercure are in the act of repairing. In this state I received last evening Earl St. Vincent's most secret orders, and most secret and confidential letters. Thus situated, it became an important part of my duty to do justice between my King and country, and the brave officers and men who captured those ships at the Battle of the Nile. It would have taken one month at least to fit those ships for a passage to Gibraltar, and not at a great expense to government, but with the loss to the service of at least two sail of the line. I therefore feel confident that the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty will, under the present circumstances, direct that a fair value shall be paid for those ships. I have farther thought it my duty to tell the squadron the necessity I am under, for the benefit of the King's service, to order their property to be destroyed; but that I had no doubt but that government would make a liberal allowance. I have therefore directed such stores as could, without taking too much time, be saved from them, and ordered the hulls to be burned.

I have the honour to be, &c.

HORATIO NELSON.

To Evan Nepean, Esq.

The journal of Sir James is thus resumed: "We again weighed anchor, Wednesday noon; and although with a contrary wind, and ships in a crippled state, we had the good fortune to clear the land in the night without accident, and next day lost sight of our ships in the Nile. Since that period we have not made any great progress; but we have no reason to complain, and I trust a favourable wind will in due time waft us down the Mediterranean.

"*A présent, un petit mot sur ma santé.* In the first place, too great exertion for two or three days after being under sail, certainly retarded my perfect recovery, and, added to the excessive heat of the weather, threw me into a sort of languor that required the three last days' rest and composure to shake off. I am now, thank God! as well as ever; and when I consider that every day shortens my distance from you, my happiness is daily increasing. I have much more to say, *mais en voilà assez pour le présent;* and as there is abundance of time before this can be despatched, *il faut le remettre pour un autre jour: ainsi adieu!*

[Pg 240]

"Sunday, August 19th.—I was indeed surprised to find Lyme the place fixed for your residence; and, on reflection, approve of it highly, as I believe it is a very healthy place; but more particularly as I hope to send you a line in going up Channel, and possibly take you to Spithead. Judge, therefore, the *selfish* motives by which I am actuated, and scold me if you can.

"I was happy our dear boy had reached home before the close of your last letter, and am charmed with your account of him. Having understood that there is a good school in Dorsetshire,—I think at Sherborne,—I shall not be surprised if you have placed him there for the summer, and shall not think it a bad plan to have him nearer to you. I am glad to find my letters from Gibraltar reached you, and hope that one or two stragglers will also have come to hand before those from the Nile arrive. These last will induce you to believe our cruise less unpleasant than you seemed to apprehend,—more particularly when you find it the means of bringing the Orion to England.

[Pg 241]

"Your *P.S.* of the 11th of June is considerably later than any accounts received in the squadron; indeed, I find very few letters have been received by any of the captains. The Lion, I understand, is on her way to join the squadron; but I have reason to believe she has nothing for me, as she sailed before L'Aigle.

"The accounts from Ireland are truly distressing; but I hope tranquillity has long since been restored in that distracted country. We have heard of the dreadful business off Cadiz; but as news from the fleet must reach home before we can be acquainted with them, I shall not enlarge on the subject. Captain Grey, I find, is gone to England, which will have been an agreeable surprise to his amiable lady.

"Now for some account of the Orion and her crew:—In the first place, Mr. Barker is on board Le Peuple Souverain, happier than a prince. Mr. Wells becomes first, in his room; and, as I found it necessary to send away Mr. — at Syracuse, I should remain with only three lieutenants, but that, in virtue of my present command, I appointed, the day I left Admiral Nelson, our kinsman Dumaresq to that station, who acquits himself with great zeal and assiduity. He will receive pay for the time; but cannot be confirmed, from not having served the six required years.

[Pg 242]

"All the officers are in rapture at the share the ship had in the action, except her captain, who is never satisfied. The ship's company all healthy, and the wounded daily recovering. Sheep and poultry in abundance; but the fear of a long passage down the Mediterranean obliges us to be frugal, wishing, if possible, to avoid putting into any place before we reach the fleet off Cadiz,—a thing scarcely possible, and rendered still more improbable from our little progress the last five days: however,—*patience!*

"I have only two French officers on board; one was second captain of the Tonnant; they are both in the ward-room, and I occasionally invite them to my table. Of the six prizes four are fine ships, particularly the Franklin and Spartiate: the Souverain and Conquérant are both very old ships; Le Tonnant and L'Aquilon were built within these few years only. Both the former are quite new. But it is not what we have taken, but what we have destroyed. We have left France only two sail of the line in the Mediterranean, except a few bad Venetian ships and some frigates. A squadron of five sail leaves us masters of these seas, equal to protect our commerce, and with a few frigates

destroy that of the enemy: these are the real fruits of our victory; and as to anything personal to ourselves, the approbation of our country, and possibly an additional medal, will be ample recompence to us. At present my chief solicitude is to find things go on well in England; and I think, when the account of our action arrives, it will set the minds of people at ease for some time at least.

[Pg 243]

"I shall have a great deal to say to you, in which you will acknowledge with me that the Almighty has been kind and bountiful indeed, beyond my merits or pretensions. You will infer from my late journal what I particularly allude to, wherein I mention the Orion having been intended to return to the fleet on the junction of the reinforcement; which was merely to favour Captain Troubridge, with whom I clashed from seniority. Very, very fortunately for me, the enemy's force would not permit Sir H. Nelson to part with me; and the sequel has shown the partiality of the Earl's proceeding: but of this '*ci-après*;' only, for the present, judge what must have been my feelings had I been thus deprived of my share in this action!

"My situation at this moment is exactly what I could wish,—the command of a respectable squadron escorting the trophies of our victory; and I am induced to hope that I shall proceed with them to England without considerable delay. We have just gained sight of Cyprus, nearly the track we followed six weeks ago; so invariably do the westerly winds prevail at this season; but I hope we shall not be subject to the tedious calms we experienced under Candia. Hitherto we have always had a good breeze, which has prevented any intercourse between the ships of the squadron, one day only excepted.

[Pg 244]

"I have not told you that we all voted a sword to the Admiral before we parted from the squadron; the captains having agreed to subscribe fifty pounds each to defray the expense, and to have his picture, which is to be put up in the room intended to hold the *Egyptian Club*, when we all meet in England. The overplus, which will come to about thirty pounds each, is to be applied for the relief of the widows and orphans of those who have nobly fallen in the action. All this shows unanimity at least, and I believe greater never existed in any squadron.

"Wednesday, 22nd.—This morning the wind has set in very favourably for us; but it is to the southward, and produces such a close, sultry, and damp air, that it is scarcely bearable; and, with all this, we have to encounter so strong a western swell, that the prizes and crippled ships, for want of more sail, can scarcely contend against it. What if we should have the good fortune to fall in with the four French ships! They are certainly on their way to Toulon; and, from the want of water and provisions, must have put into some of the ports in these seas. I *dreamt* so much of them last night that I really form great hopes of our falling in with them. This leads me to mention that all the captains agreed to share together in whatever may be captured till the 1st of October.

[Pg 245]

"It is now exactly three weeks since the Battle of the Nile; it appears almost an age; but when once we get in the fair track down the Mediterranean, every day will, I hope, shorten our distance. We have seen but one strange sail since we left Bequir, and that at too great a distance to speak with. I think it probable Sir Horatio may be on his way to Naples, as he proposed to sail soon to join the Portuguese squadron, taking with him the Culloden, Alexander, and Goliath. The Zealous, with Swiftsure, and the frigates, were to be left to block up Alexandria, and distress the enemy. What barbarous people we must be, after having done them so much mischief, still to add to their disasters!

"August 24th.—I have been right in my conjectures this morning, having fallen in with Sir Horatio, who obligingly sent the Bonne Citoyenne with letters, &c. for the ships with me, brought by the Seahorse, which joined him at Bequir. He has only the Culloden and Alexander with him, having left the rest of the ships for the good purposes before mentioned. This meeting has afforded me an opportunity of sending you a few hurried lines, which I have requested the Admiral to forward from Naples. I have no doubt that the letter will reach you some time before any other I can have an opportunity of sending you.

[Pg 246]

"I think the few last lines will not be the less acceptable for having been anticipated. I can assure you their purport is highly acceptable, as I now have the Earl's own assertion for the Orion being ordered to England upon his own terms, 'when I join him with the prizes.' Alas! they get on very slowly; but I am endowed with unparalleled patience, having scarcely uttered a murmur on their tardiness, so perfectly satisfied am I with the prospect before me.

"I understand the Seahorse has taken La Sensible, and the Lion a Spanish frigate: *à propos*, we have received intimation that a Spanish squadron is on its way to Leghorn, to convey his holiness Pope Pius the Sixth to some part of Spain; and, in case of our falling in with them, we are to treat him with all the ceremony and respect due to the sovereign pontiff.

"Sunday, 26th.—I went yesterday on board the Admiral, for half-an-hour; and was happy at finding him in perfect health. He will ever retain the mark on his forehead which he has so honourably acquired; mine is not quite in so *distinguished a place*, but I also expect to have a scar on my left side, or rather on the hip-bone, which was slightly grazed; but it is now perfectly healed, and I reflect with great gratitude on the very narrow escape I had: my only fear is, that it will give you great uneasiness when the account reaches you. I did not intend to have my name inserted in the return of wounded, but the Admiral desired it should; so that he must share the blame if it should have alarmed you.

[Pg 247]

"I cannot tell you all the fine projects I form for some months at least after my arrival in England.

This last business has so shattered the poor Orion, that she will not, without considerable repair, be in a state for more service; and if I can be so fortunate as to obtain Le Franklin with my officers and men, she will be getting forward during the winter months, and I shall have the enjoyment of your society all that time: and I think, if it pleases God to bless our arms in England with success, the enemy will be brought to sue for a peace before the spring of next year. Their great inducement for carrying on the war was their hopes of success from this expedition, which is considered as entirely frustrated, as their army will be too much reduced to attempt to go to India without being reinforced from France; and they never will be able to prevail on more troops to embark for Egypt, even if they had the means of conveyance for them.

"The winds prove all this time very variable, *et nous avançons fort lentement*.

"The Admiral is still in sight, though we are not in company together. Had I not been certain of going to England, I should regret losing the opportunity of seeing Naples, particularly on this occasion; but everything is absorbed in that first consideration. The newspapers are at all times acceptable, and I was happy when you found opportunities to send them from Ryde; but as many of the squadron receive them, and they are always circulated to the different ships, I would not trouble you to send them. *D'ailleurs, pour le présent, j'espère que ce serait inutile*.

[Pg 248]

"Monday.—We get on very slowly indeed, not having yet got sight of Candia; we must however have *patience*. Three days' fair wind will bring us the distance of Sicily. I have invited Captains Miller, Louis, and Gould to dine with me to-day. To the former I said that your ladyship had the pleasure of having made acquaintance with Mrs. Miller. Miller is an excellent man. Another day I shall have the other captains, Derby, Peyton, and Cuthbert, late first lieutenant of the Majestic.

"Whilst I am writing, a fine breeze has sprung up, which will get us as far as Rhodes at least. We have entirely lost sight of the Admiral; and I think, from the wind having favoured us, that we shall have considerably the start of his little squadron.

"Tuesday.—Nothing so uncertain and variable as the winds in this country. We are still off the island of Rhodes, which appears fertile and well cultivated. We have also sight of Candia at the distance of above thirty leagues. Our present route is different from any of the former, as we go to the northward of Candia, amidst the innumerable islands that form the archipelago. It is thought by many a dangerous navigation with our disabled ships, but I always consider *que le bon Dieu nous guide*.

[Pg 249]

"The Admiral has again joined us, but too far off for any personal communication. This evening we have effected a great object in doubling Rhodes, and we are now proceeding with a fine breeze. I hope in three days to congratulate you on our being in the fair track down the Mediterranean.

"Friday, 31st.—Events multiply and increase upon us, but not so favourably as they promised when I last took up my pen. After contending for three days against the baffling winds we had so often experienced, and by our perseverance gained a considerable distance, the wind increased so much against us yesterday morning, that I was compelled, from the disabled state of several of the ships, to abandon my intention of going to the northward of Candia; and, not without great risk, we ran through a passage imperfectly explored, and never known to ships of war till we found it practicable: at the same time, I almost shudder at the danger we escaped; nothing but a case of extreme necessity could have justified the attempt, and Providence was our guide;^[17] at the same time warning us of the danger we ran, having actually seen the breakers, and escaped them by a trifling distance; and this was performed late at night, all the ships following and guided by our lights.

[Pg 250]

"We are at present close to Candia, and the Admiral in sight; rather in advance of us, owing to the circumstance I have related. I now fear our voyage will prove very tedious, and that the want of provisions and other circumstances will compel us to put into some port; this may occasion great delay, which the approach of the equinox makes me very desirous to avoid. I really believe no ships in so bad a condition as those with me ever attempted so intricate a navigation.

[Pg 251]

"September 1st.—You are certainly unapprised of the Orion being on her way to England. Here have we been occupied for three weeks in effecting what might be accomplished in two days. Your wishes, I think, would prove more availing were you acquainted with the real state of things. This extraordinary delay makes me more fractious than can be imagined, and I begin to lose the character for patience which I had given myself by so tiresome a situation; besides which, I have Le Peuple Souverain to drag after me, that causes me more trouble than even the Spanish *saints* did after the 14th of February.

"Sunday.—I had almost determined not to resume my pen till we were entirely clear of this same island of Candia; but we have made such great progress since yesterday, and the prospect continues so favourable, that I cannot refuse myself the satisfaction of congratulating you thereon.

"I received last evening a letter from the Admiral, brought me by La Bonne Citoyenne.^[18] He is desirous of having the Minotaur and Audacious detached to Naples after accompanying us as far on our way as Minorca. A vessel was yesterday spoken with that saw one of the French line-of-battle ships, with the loss of her main-mast, and towed by a frigate towards Corfu, only eight days since; so that, had the winds favoured us, we should have been at no great distance from them. I dined to-day in the ward-room; but I am sorry to say we had no church this morning; this

[Pg 252]

[Pg 253]

[Pg 254]

[Pg 255]

[Pg 256]

is so very necessary a duty, that I am always grieved when it is omitted."

"Thursday, 6th September.—The last four days we have got on remarkably well; and, what is still better, the wind seems now set in very favourably. Late last night the Thalia joined me, after cruising in all directions to fall in with Sir Horatio. I was not disappointed at receiving no letters by her: but this morning, having been joined by the Flora cutter, that left England the 26th July, and the fleet off Cadiz so late as the 12th August, I own it gave me concern to receive no tidings from you; but, on recollection that all the letters for this ship have been kept back, from our being expected down the Mediterranean, my disappointment ceases.

"I have seen nothing of Admiral Nelson since I last wrote; and, as our route now lies in a different direction, I do not expect to meet with him again. The information obtained by the above vessels is of a very satisfactory nature; and I trust things will soon, very soon, draw to a favourable crisis.

"The Thalia brought me from Bequir several intercepted letters from France, taken in a corvette going to Alexandria. I have read several of them, and find that their chief reliance was placed in the expedition to Egypt; which having failed so completely, must disconcert all their future projects. One bad piece of news I have learnt,—'that a Spanish vessel we took off St. Pierre, laden with wheat, has been recaptured by a French privateer.'

[Pg 257]

"I have been occupied for some days past in putting my cabin in good repair, which I hope to have fit for your ladyship's reception, so that, on my arrival in the Channel, I may have only to despatch the first vessel I fall in with to Lyme, with an invitation for you to partake of it, accompanied by one or more of the children, and any servants you may please to require to attend upon you. This has for some time past engaged my attention, and I trust nothing will intervene to thwart my expectations. Alas! they have been but too much disappointed already by the adverse winds, which still continue to weary our patience.

"I dined to-day on board the Minotaur, the weather having proved nearly calm; it is the first time since we left Bequir that I have consented to leave the ship. I hope to fall in with the Colossus and some victuallers, which I find, by the Flora, were on their way to our squadron, supposing us to have been off Malta, blockading the French fleet. Strange that at so late a period Earl St. Vincent had not obtained information of their having sailed from that island!

"Sunday.—The wind always continues contrary; but we get on, notwithstanding, by slow degrees. I made up for last Sunday, and had Divine service performed, and dined in the ward-room. We obtained a small supply of stock from the Thalia when she joined us; I should have told you that I despatched her and the cutter towards Naples, to meet Sir Horatio.

[Pg 258]

"Tuesday evening.—The wind has at last favoured us for a few hours, and to-morrow I hope to be in sight of Syracuse. A vessel was yesterday spoken with, that had an ambassador on board from Constantinople, going to the different states in Barbary, to direct them to arm against the French. An English frigate had arrived at the Sublime Porte with the news of the defeat of their fleet at Alexandria; but I am at a loss to conjecture what the frigate was. The French officers "*sont indignés de cette insulte offerte à la grande nation.*"

"Thursday.—We at last gained sight of Mount Ætna yesterday evening; but the winds still prove very contrary, and I fear we shall be obliged, much against my inclination, to put into either Syracuse or Messina: we are at present off the former place. By a boat that has joined one of the ships, I find they only heard of the battle four days ago. They are disposed to give us a hearty welcome, but I hope we shall have no occasion for their well-meant intentions.

"Friday.—We last night fell in with the Marquis de Niza's squadron, on their return from the mouth of the Nile. The Marquis hailed me that he was *very sorry* he had not arrived a few days sooner. We were much better without him."

[Pg 259]

Sir James sent, by the Thalia, the following letters to Sir Horatio:

Orion, Port of Augusta, 16th September 1798.

MY DEAR ADMIRAL,

I fear you will be disappointed at finding that we are no further on our voyage than this place. We were three days in sight of Sicily, endeavouring to beat round Cape Pesaro; and, Friday afternoon, the wind set in so strong to the westward, that I was obliged to endeavour to get into Syracuse, but I found the wind directly out of the harbour, and stood again to the southward. It blew a gale all night; and in the morning, seeing no possibility of getting into Syracuse, I bore up for this place, where the squadron anchored yesterday afternoon. We are completing the water with all expedition, but I am disappointed that there is no wine to be had but at a very high price. We are supplied with bullocks and other articles the same as at Syracuse; and, as at that place, the people are exorbitant in their demands. Every possible attention has been shown by the governor. I paid him a visit of ceremony this morning with the other captains of the squadron. He appears a man of the first respectability.

I thought it proper to mention to him that I had seen Mr. Acton's letter, which stated that his Majesty's ships were to be received in the ports of this island; and I should do him great injustice, did I not observe to you, sir, his earnest endeavours that we should be supplied with everything we require on the most reasonable terms.

A vessel, which left Malta six days ago, reports that the inhabitants have revolted against the French, who are driven to the greatest stress by the want of provisions. They seem very anxious for the appearance of an English squadron off that island.

[Pg 260]

I hope to have the squadron completed in water by Wednesday next, and to put to sea the same evening. The Spartiate has caused us considerable uneasiness, having unfortunately got aground by bordering too near the light-house. She was however got off without sustaining any damage. All your friends, with me, desire their best compliments.

I am, my dear Admiral,
Your ever faithful and obedient servant,

JAMES SAUMAREZ.

To Sir Horatio Nelson.

Orion, Augusta, 20th September 1798.

MY DEAR ADMIRAL,

I feel great satisfaction in acquainting you that the squadron and all the prizes are completed with water, and will be ready to proceed to sea at daylight to-morrow morning. The westerly winds have prevailed ever since our arrival, and I fear still continue in the channel of Malta; but it is of such importance to get from this place before easterly winds set in, that not a moment has been lost in getting the ships forward, which must be evident to you when you consider our great demands for water, and that we have only four boats in the squadron to supply the ships. We have been abundantly supplied with fresh provisions, and each ship takes twelve or fourteen bullocks to sea; but wine was not to be had at any reasonable rate. We have found difficulty in obtaining cash for the articles purchased on account of Government in a place where there scarcely exists any trade, and where the inhabitants are extremely poor. The governor has offered us every possible assistance; and I must entreat you will represent to Mr. Acton the zeal and earnest endeavours he has shown to forward the King's service. I have the honour to be, &c.

[Pg 261]

JAS. SAUMAREZ.

To Sir Horatio Nelson.

"Saturday, 22nd September.—A whole week has elapsed since I closed the account of our voyage; having the following day been under the necessity, from the state of the weather, to put into Augusta, a port a few leagues from Syracuse. We sailed thence yesterday, after completing the squadron with water. We found abundance of provisions, and each ship has sailed with a dozen or fourteen oxen, besides sheep, fowls, &c. Augusta is a more modern town than Syracuse, having been rebuilt after an earthquake thirty years ago. It has no trade, and the inhabitants are extremely poor; the ships were visited by them daily, but we went to very few parties on shore. A few leagues from Augusta there is a considerable town called Catania. I regretted much it was not in my power to visit it, as there we might have had many things that would have been very acceptable in England.

"In passing Syracuse yesterday, several of the principal inhabitants came on board; and I was happy in sending a letter to you, enclosed to Admiral Nelson at Naples. I hope to be with you as soon as it arrives, having still every expectation of being in England in the month of October. My mind is much more at ease since we have obtained the last supplies, as a small quantity of salt provisions, which we can have from the fleet, will enable the ships to proceed for England without stopping at Gibraltar, or any other place; and if the Orion is not of the number, great will be my disappointment.

[Pg 262]

"Thursday, 27th of September.—I have been very much engaged on public business of great importance the last three days, which, I am sorry to say, has not turned out quite equal to my wishes. On Monday I fell in with the Marquis de Niza's squadron, which had been ordered off Malta by Admiral Nelson. On Tuesday a deputation of the principal inhabitants came on board the Orion, to solicit a supply of arms and ammunition; at the same time informing me that the French garrison were in the greatest distress, and that, if the town was summoned, they had good grounds to believe they would be induced to surrender. I waited on the Marquis de Niza, who readily concurred in sending a flag of truce with proposals to the French garrison. After three hours' deliberation they returned a very concise answer,^[19] which although not satisfactory at this time, leaves little doubt that they will be compelled to surrender very shortly. Before I came away, I supplied the inhabitants, from the prizes, with twelve hundred muskets, and a great quantity of ammunition, of which they were in great want. I only regretted it was not in my power to stay a few days off the island. The Guillaume Tell and two frigates are in the harbour, and must fall with the garrison. A report prevailed that Le Généreux was lost; these ships form the remaining force that escaped us from the mouth of the Nile.

[Pg 263]

"We are now pursuing our voyage with slow steps; but, as the light winds lead us in the fair track, we must not complain. I was glad to learn from the Marquis de Niza that the Colossus was seen going to Naples, with four victuallers and a store-ship. A frigate is now in sight, joining me, by which I hope to receive good accounts.

"Friday morning.—The frigate proved to be the Terpsichore, from the Admiral, whom she left ten days ago going to Naples. The Terpsichore was going off Malta for intelligence, and to look out for the Colossus, with the victuallers. As I could satisfy the Admiral on both those points, I despatched her immediately for Naples. We have now a fine Siroc wind, attended with all its usual close dampness; but, as it wafts us down the Mediterranean, we readily put up with its disagreeable attendants, without the risk of hanging ourselves. I intend to part with the Minotaur and Audacious to-day, agreeably to my orders. Fortunately, I exchanged their men from the prizes two days ago, as it would have been attended with danger to do it in the present weather. We have taken our final leave of Sicily this morning.

[Pg 264]

"Sunday, 30th Sept. The weather has proved very unfavourable the last three days. Le Souverain has sustained some disasters, and causes me great uneasiness. I hope, in another week, to get the distance of Gibraltar, where we may all be better refitted. I cannot be too thankful for the supplies we obtained at Augusta; the squadron would otherwise have been much distressed for want of water and provisions. We are in sight of Sardinia, with every appearance of a favourable breeze. To-morrow we enter the ever propitious month. I still hope my expectations will be fulfilled; although I own that probability is against their accomplishment.

"Thursday, 4th October.—This month began most auspiciously with a fine breeze of wind, which continued all the following day; but yesterday morning we experienced a tremendous gale to the northward, with a very heavy sea, which still continues: the wind has again shifted favourably, and I hope this time will carry us through the Straits; but we have had so many disappointments that we must not trust to appearances.

"Saturday, 6th.—The winds prove again contrary for us. We have the Souverain in tow, and in so bad a condition that I almost fear it will not be possible to get her as far as Gibraltar. There has been a great deal of blowing weather, with heavy seas, since we left Malta, and the prizes have suffered considerably from it. I have had an addition to my stock since I left Augusta, having three fine little lambs; and I understand more are expected: it is fortunate I was well provided, as this increase would have proved ruinous to my table.

[Pg 265]

"Monday, 8th October.—We have had variable winds these last two days, which have brought the squadron a considerable distance. We are at present off Algiers, a very unfriendly coast, which I hope soon to lose sight of with our present breeze. The anchorage off Cadiz having broken up about this time last year, I depend on finding Lord St. Vincent at anchor at Gibraltar, or there to find orders to join him at Lisbon, and from thence to proceed to England.

"Tuesday, 9th.—I congratulate you on our darling's birth-day; and join my prayers to yours that Heaven may bestow on him its choicest blessings.

"We have a continuance of fine wind, which, I trust, will carry us to Gibraltar in two days. I have been treated with the perusal of several French papers, which I intercepted on board a Danish vessel from Marseilles, bound to Algiers. They are dated so late as the 27th Fructidor, which answers to the 13th September; and I am happy to see, by the English news they contain, that things were going on favourably. I hope soon to have it under your hand more particularly: in the mean time it is very satisfactory to receive these news, which are near three months of later date from England than we before possessed; your dear letter of the 10th June being the latest I have seen.

[Pg 266]

"Wednesday, 10th.—I fell in with L'Espoir this morning. She left Gibraltar ten days ago. She has surprised me with the account that the Leander had not at that time reached Earl St. Vincent; and that the news of our victory was only received two days before by the Mutine, which had arrived from Naples. This account has created amongst us great uneasiness for the fate of the Leander. I have despatched L'Espoir with a letter to Earl St. Vincent, apprising him of the approach of the prizes, with the ships under my command; and I hope to receive his lordship's orders for our proceedings when we appear off Gibraltar.

"Saturday, 13th.—The wind has again set against us the last two days, and continues to exercise our patience. What adds to my uneasiness is, the small quantity of provisions in the squadron. We have been at short allowance these six weeks; and should it unfortunately continue to the westward a few days longer, we shall be very badly off. I now very reluctantly give up all hope of being in England during this month.

[Pg 267]

"Sunday, 14th.—The wind has again sprung up to the eastward, and I hope will this time carry us to Gibraltar.

"Monday, 15th.—The wind still continues favourable, and to-morrow I hope to anchor in Gibraltar Bay; and, as an opportunity may offer to send you this tedious journal, I hold it in readiness accordingly. It will give you some faint idea of the trial our patience has been put to; and although our progress has not been attended with the same anxiety as I described in my former journal, when we were in pursuit of the enemy, still I have not been exempt from great uneasiness on various accounts, particularly from the crippled state of most of the ships, in a navigation some part of which is very hazardous, and where contrary winds so invariably prevail. I now hope in a short time to be released from so heavy a charge, and that I shall be permitted to proceed, as I have been given to expect, *immediately for England*.

"Tuesday, 16th.—We have gained sight of Gibraltar this morning; but westerly winds and the current prevent our approach to it. I hope, however, to have communication with the Rock to-morrow.

"Thursday, 18th.—I received late last evening a very flattering letter from Earl St. Vincent, in answer to mine of the 10th, which, he says, diffused universal joy to the garrison, and the little squadron with him: and his lordship has rejoiced my heart by informing me that so soon as the wounded and sick are landed from the squadron, and the wants of the ships are supplied, I shall proceed to Lisbon with them. He adds that, in his judgment, our action stands foremost in the page of naval history, having, beyond all dispute, achieved more than was ever done before, &c.

[Pg 268]

"We are still struggling against adverse winds, not without hope of gaining the anchorage to-morrow. I most sincerely wish it, on every account; and, although my next rendezvous is not what

I exactly expected, it always brings me nearer England.

"Great is our uneasiness for the fate of the Leander. In the letter above alluded to, Lord St. Vincent thinks it probable she may have been dismasted, and have put into one of the islands of the Archipelago. I own my fears for her are great." The following is Lord St. Vincent's letter, with Sir James's answer.

Gibraltar, 16th October 1798.

SIR,

Your letter of the 10th instant, received yesterday, has diffused universal joy through the garrison and little squadron now here. I highly applaud and admire the measures taken by you and Rear-admiral the Marquis de Niza to induce the French to surrender their stronghold in Malta; and the supply of arms and ammunition you furnished the islanders with was very judicious. Two very respectable Moorish merchants, natives of the eastern coast of Barbary, who arrived at Gibraltar from Genoa yesterday, report that advices had been received at the latter place before they left it, that the Maltese had succeeded, and put the French garrison to the sword. I have been so long accustomed to the fallacy of *pratique* reports, that I do not give entire credit to this.

[Pg 269]

Of the Leander we know nothing; and I am rather inclined to believe that the story Sir Horatio Nelson learned from a Candia boat, is true; and that she has either been dismasted in the action, or so crippled as to be obliged to take refuge in one of the islands of the Archipelago. I never despair, and I have great confidence that she will yet turn up.

The account you give from Captain Retallick, of the near approach to Naples of the Colossus and her precious charge,—for the Alliance is full of naval stores, with all the top-masts and top-sail yards we had, and the four victuallers loaded with new provisions of every species except bread,—is a communication of the utmost consequence.

It is my anxious wish that the six prize ships of war should be safe moored in the Tagus as soon as possible; and my intention that the Orion, Defence, and Theseus shall accompany them: the Bellerophon and Majestic to enter Gibraltar Mole in order to be remasted, for all the lower masts are there; and their men, after assisting in the navigation of the prizes to Lisbon, may return hither in the Santa Dorothea.

I am fitting out an expedition of great importance,—I believe, *entre nous*, against Monte Video, or Lima,—which swallows up all the transports and frigates I have, or I would send you some salt provisions and wine. Should the Levanters fail you, by working close to the Barbary shore you will soon reach Tetuan Bay, and find no difficulty in working round Europa with a flood-tide.

[Pg 270]

I request you will convey to your brave companions in arms, that, in my judgment, they stand foremost in the page of naval history; having, beyond all dispute, achieved more than was ever done before, and, under the critical circumstances of the times, have certainly rendered the greatest benefit to the human race at large, and to their King and country in particular, that ever was performed.

I have the honour to be, with great esteem and regard,

Sir,

Your most obedient, humble servant,

ST. VINCENT.

To Sir James Saumarez.

P.S. Doctor Harness has prepared the naval hospital for the reception of the wounded and sick of your squadron in the best manner our means will admit; the wards have been whitewashed, and every exertion made to purify them. The moment the invalids are landed, and the wants of the ships that go to Lisbon supplied, you shall proceed thither with them. ST. VINCENT.

Orion, off Gibraltar, 18th Oct. 1798.

MY LORD,

I received late last evening the honour of your letter by L'Espoir, and shall not fail to communicate to the squadron the very handsome terms in which your lordship is pleased to express yourself of the action of the Nile. I am particularly happy the measures taken off Malta meet with your lordship's approbation; but I fear the account from Genoa is premature respecting the French garrison, as there has scarcely been time since we left the island, the 26th Sept. for the news to reach Genoa, and arrive at Gibraltar, if such an event had taken place.

Fearing that, with the ship I have in tow, it will not be possible to reach Rozia Bay till a late hour, I send an officer on shore with the despatches for your lordship, and the letters for the garrison.

[Pg 271]

I have the honour to be, my lord,

Your lordship's most obedient and most humble servant,

JAMES SAUMAREZ.

To the Right Hon. Earl St. Vincent.

The squadron arrived at Gibraltar on the evening of the 18th, amidst the universal and unbounded acclamations of the assembled population.

"Sunday, 21st Oct.—Last Thursday, my dear love, we all anchored in safety in this bay, and met with a reception we want words to express from the governor, admiral, officers, soldiers, seamen, and inhabitants. We can never do justice to the warmth of their applause, and the praises they all

bestowed on our squadron.

"A ball was given last night by the governor, in honour of our victory; and we have a round of dinner invitations from the heads of the garrison. I am, however, happy to tell you that to-morrow I expect to put to sea for Lisbon, with the *Theseus* and prizes, which I am to leave in safety in the Tagus, and then proceed to England. I am to give a passage to the Duc d'Havré and his suite: he is a nobleman of distinction, who has resided some time in Spain, but has been expelled from that country with other *emigrés*. I had an opportunity of sending you, by a cutter for Lagos, a short letter, with the above pleasing accounts, which I am persuaded will yield no less happiness to you than it has to me."

[Pg 272]

We have already mentioned the honours, the titles, the decorations, and the favours conferred on the victorious Nelson, as also the praises he had himself bestowed on some of the captains of the fleet; but we cannot refrain from reverting to the extraordinary circumstance that the second in command in that battle, which both Earl St. Vincent and Mr. Pitt declared "stands foremost in the page of naval history," and which (as before stated), was most highly extolled, had not that mark of distinction conferred upon him, which is usually granted on such occasions. In common, indeed, with the other captains, he received a gold medal; being only the second given to him, although he commanded a ship of the line in four great general actions, and served in two others.

[20] We mention this, because Sir James was not aware of the extent of this neglect until many years after, when, meeting with Clarke and Mac Arthur's *Life of Nelson*, he discovered that Nelson's letters had influenced the Admiralty to regard him as having held no higher station in the action than any other captain in the squadron, and represented Sir Thomas Troubridge, who unfortunately had no part in the battle, as equally entitled to reward as himself: therefore he felt this deviation from the common usage less severely at the time than he would otherwise have done.

[Pg 273]

We admit that it would be difficult to point out a situation of extraordinary hardship more peculiarly calculated, than that of Troubridge, to excite the feelings of sympathy expressed so strongly by Nelson.

But what would have been the situation,—what would have been the feelings of Sir James Saumarez, had he been sent away to make room for Sir Thomas Troubridge? We leave the reader to judge. Suffice it to say, that as soon as the Admiral had ascertained the real force of the enemy, he found the *Orion* could not be spared, by which fortunate circumstance Sir James was saved a mortification which would have weighed on his heart the remainder of his days.

Every admiral, captain, and officer, with whom we have conversed on the subject, has been decidedly of opinion that the name of Saumarez ought to have been honourably mentioned; and that, as second in command, some mark of distinction should have been conferred upon him. We dwell on this subject particularly, because we know, that when a brave and meritorious officer does not obtain the reward due to his merit, it is extremely injurious to the service, as it damps that ardour after fame, and weakens that emulation, which lead to valour and enterprise. May every succeeding Nelson regard, and be able to look up to, that motto which was conferred on the hero of the Nile,—*Palmam qui meruit, ferat!*

[Pg 274]

On Sir James's arrival at Gibraltar he received the following letters from Sir Horatio Nelson, approving of his proceedings:—

Vanguard, Naples, 29th Sept. 1798.

SIR,

I have received your letter of the 17th from Augusta, as well as your despatch of the 27th, by Captain Gage.

I very much approve of your putting into Augusta to get water, and very highly so of your officer-like behaviour and conduct relative to Malta, as also of your supplying the Maltese with arms and ammunition.

I am, sir,

Your most obedient servant,

HORATIO NELSON.

To Sir James Saumarez.

September 29th, 1798.

MY DEAR SIR JAMES,

Captain Gage is just arrived with your letters and papers relative to Malta. I can say with truth there is no action of your life, as far as relates to me, but what must be entirely to my approbation: your summons to Malta is highly proper; and you have done as I wished in sending the arms, &c. The wind here is strong at S.E. I hope you have it, and that it will carry you through the Straits. This is a sad place for refitting, the swell sets in so heavy; never again do we come to Naples: besides the rest, we are killed with kindness. Wishing you, my dear Sir James, every felicity in this world, believe me ever,

Your obliged and affectionate,

HORATIO NELSON.

At Gibraltar Sir James also received a letter from his gallant friend and brother-in-arms, Captain Ball, which gives so vivid a description of some of the events of this most eventful period of the war, that we are persuaded the reader will thank us for inserting it.

[Pg 275]

Alexander, at sea, 11th Oct. 1798.

MY DEAR SIR JAMES,

I have the satisfaction of sending you, by the Colossus, a case containing six fan-mounts, two boxes of perfumery, four large and two small of Naples soap, amounting to eighteen Spanish dollars and a half. I hope to collect from Sicily some ornamental figures for a table, which I will forward to you, by the first safe conveyance, with some Neapolitan shawls. I shall not draw upon your agent, as I expect, when I return to Naples, to receive nearly forty pounds as your share of the cotton and articles taken out of the Spanish polacre we captured. Pray let me know to whom I shall remit the balance. I sincerely hope that you had a good passage down, and have not suffered from the fatigue and anxiety you must have experienced. I make no doubt but you will have the pleasure of convoying the ships to England, where you will be amply recompensed by a joyful meeting with Lady Saumarez and your family. When you get your second medal, beware of the ladies, if they hear such a story of you as of our friend Collingwood. I shall feel very much flattered whenever you will favour me with a line; and you may be assured that I shall never lose an occasion of testifying to you my great esteem, and how very much I value your friendship. I enclose herewith a translation of Admiral Blanquet's account of the battle of the Nile, with his plans, which he is to present to the French Minister of the Marine. One of my officers copied them unknown to him, but his aide-de-camp allowed everybody to read them.

[Pg 276]

It would be difficult to describe to you the very flattering reception we met with at Naples. Our gallant Admiral was hailed as the saviour of Italy. He daily receives from all parts congratulatory addresses and verses, celebrating his fame. The King visited him before he anchored, and he gave him and all the captains a very elegant dinner on board one of his ships of the line. We dined on the poop; the party very select, consisting of the hereditary Prince and one of his brothers, the Minister of Marine, three of the Lords in waiting, Sir William and Lady Hamilton, and the captain of the Neapolitan ship. After dinner, the King gave as a toast, "Sir Horatio Nelson and the brave English nation," with a salute from his lower deck guns. Sir William Hamilton gave a fête that cost more than a thousand pounds. It was much admired for its taste and magnificence. There was nothing to be seen or heard of but "Viva Nelson!" The English nation never stood so high in the estimation of the Italians as at this present moment: and I believe the French were never so universally execrated and despised as they now are. The Emperor and King of Naples will make an effort to drive them out of Italy. General Mack was daily expected at Naples to arrange the plans.

We have to regret the capture of the Leander by the Génèreux. She is carried into Corfu. Of course all our letters by her are destroyed, and our friends will suffer much anxiety until the arrival of Capel, who could not get there before the 20th of last month. The grand Seigneur declared war against the French the 1st of last month. He did not receive the Admiral's official account of the action until the 6th ult. He has ordered a costly diamond to be presented to him for the important victory.

[Pg 277]

Buonaparte's career is nearly finished. He will soon be surrounded by sixty thousand men. One of his colonels, whom Foley took very lately, says that the whole army will soon perish. He sent to Alexandria for all the troops in garrison to join him without loss of time, which they refused doing. The seamen marched to retrieve their character, but I do not think many will return to tell of their exploits. A Turkish fleet is gone for Alexandria. Our Envoy at Constantinople, Sir Sidney Smith's brother, has gained great credit by his ability and judicious conduct. I had great satisfaction in reading some of his correspondence. We expect very soon to be in possession of Malta, Corfu, Zante, and Cerigo. I shall then hope to go to England, Sir H. Nelson having given me reason to expect the pleasure of carrying home Sir William and Lady Hamilton.

I am now in company with the Colossus, going off Malta, which we are in sight of. Captain Murray talks of staying to ascertain the state of the island. He is then to proceed to join Lord St. Vincent. He has this moment made the signal for Gibraltar; I must therefore refer you to him for the state of Malta. The French must surrender in a few days. Their ships mean to slip out and trust to their sailing. Believe me,

With true esteem and regard,
My dear Sir James, very sincerely yours,

ALEX. M. BALL.

Sir James Saumarez, &c. &c.

To return to Sir James's journal:

"19th October.—Your valued letters of the 21st July and 29th August I received the morning of my arrival, and they gave me real comfort after so long a privation. I now trust that, in a few weeks, we shall be re-united, no more to part! It is my firm intention to remain, for some time at least, entirely abstracted from active service. If I can do so, and retain the command of the ship, well and good; if not, I shall apply to be superseded.

[Pg 278]

"An expedition under Sir John Duckworth is now sailing from this bay; various are the conjectures on its destination. I need not tell you, after what I have noticed respecting the Earl, that we are on a very good footing. Indeed, the solicitous attention he shows to me almost overwhelms me, as I wish to keep clear of laying myself under obligation, except as far as concerns the promotion of my officers.

"24th October, Orion, off Cadiz.—Yesterday I got clear of Gibraltar Bay with the Theseus and five of the prizes, it having been decided, the morning before we sailed, to leave the Souverain for a

hulk at Gibraltar, which I had strongly recommended before.

"I was fortunate in the arrival of the Transfer brig, in ten days from Naples, a few hours previous to our sailing. She brought the sad news of the capture of the Leander, with the despatches; but having long before given her over for lost, and being apprehensive for the safety of all on board, the account rather gave me satisfaction, especially as she is said to have well supported the fame of the Nile squadron, though the details of the action are not known.

[Pg 279]

"Earl St. Vincent afforded me the perusal of several interesting letters that came by the Transfer from Naples, particularly from the envoy and our gallant Admiral: he was on the point of sailing for Malta, which, there is scarcely a doubt, is by this time, entirely in possession of the inhabitants.

"We are going on with a fine breeze for Lisbon, which I hope to reach before Saturday. This morning I gained sight of our squadron off Cadiz; and, although within a few miles of one of the ships, (the Hector,) they had not the curiosity to join us, and I was unwilling to be delayed by going to them, although I should have been happy to have had communication with some of the ships. I hope my stay at Lisbon will be but short; as, after I embark the Duc d'Havré, and have seen the prizes taken care of, I proceed immediately for Portsmouth. Judge then of my feelings. My only regret is, being unable to impart them to you!

"Thursday.—Early this morning I fell in with the Barfleur and Northumberland. Although not without great difficulty, I persevered in my endeavours to join them; but, to my great concern, I found no letters for me on board either ship. Captain Dacres tells me he wrote to Ryde, thinking you were there, but in vain. Lady Parker, however, assured him that she had a letter from you very lately.

[Pg 280]

"I was glad to hear Captain Capel had reached England with the accounts of our action, the news of which were received at Portsmouth the day before the Barfleur sailed.

"Fortune has, as usual, proved propitious this month. What think you of two vessels, with valuable cargoes from Genoa, which promise to give, at the most moderate computation, at least £10,000 between Captain Miller and myself!^[21] The Theseus joined me with one yesterday noon, and we brought the other to, some time after; both under Greek colours, but unquestionably laden with the property of Genoese merchants. More are on their way, which we expect to fall in with. But indeed, my dearest love, we require not riches to add to our happiness. Let us but have peace and tranquillity, and we have enough for every earthly enjoyment whilst it pleases Heaven to bless us with good health. Alas, poor Lady W.! how sensibly I feel for the misfortune that has deprived her excellent husband of all prospect of ever again enjoying comfort in this life. She was, indeed, all you have said of her.

"To-morrow I depend on arriving at Lisbon, with the hope of being detained a few days only, and where I rely on being cheered with letters from you. *A propos*: Miss R. is there, and will not be sorry to hear the Leander is at last heard of, although in possession of the enemy. She is going to England with General and Mrs. Trigge.

[Pg 281]

"27th October.—I had hoped before the arrival of this *blessed* day to acquaint you with our being safe in the Tagus; but the light winds prevented our getting round Cape St. Vincent before yesterday evening, and it now blows so strong from the westward that there is no possibility of getting over the bar. To-morrow, I trust, we shall be more fortunate; or, what would prove still better, that it will blow so strong as to compel me to bear up for the Channel, which I certainly would do in case of a south-west gale.

"Sunday, two o'clock.—I now congratulate you on our safe arrival in the Tagus, in the midst of very boisterous weather; but, thanks to Divine Providence! without an accident to any of the ships; I have but once more to weigh anchor, and then I trust in its mercy to bring me to the haven where I would be, and to find all my precious treasures in complete possession of health and happiness.

"A packet arrived this morning with Commissioner Coffin. The only letter I have been so fortunate as to receive is one from Mr. Le M. dated the day Captain Capel arrived. What would I not give for one of as late date from you! Another is soon expected, this packet having had nearly three weeks' passage."

[Pg 282]

The extract of the following letter from Sir James to the commander-in-chief continues this narrative:

Orion, Tagus, 1st November, 1798.

MY LORD,

I have the honour to acquaint your lordship of the safe arrival in the Tagus of this ship and the Theseus, with five of the prize-ships lately taken in his Majesty's service.

His grace the Duc d'Havré embarks on board this ship on Monday next; and the Marquis de Mortemart having solicited a passage to England, I have consented to receive him on condition of his being considered in the suite of the duke. Captain Tyler also takes his passage in the Orion. I should have been happy to have made the like offer to General Trigge, but it was not possible to accommodate him and the ladies of his family without considerable inconvenience to the Duc d'Havré. His grace is a nobleman of the first distinction and consideration, and he expresses himself very sensible of your lordship's attention in providing for him so good a conveyance.

I beg to offer my most sincere and fervent wishes for health and every happiness to attend your lordship; and, with my unfeigned thanks for all your lordship's favour,

I remain, &c.

Sir James, having now fulfilled the anxious charge entrusted to him, and, with great professional skill and unremitting vigilance, brought the prizes in safety to Lisbon, is at length setting sail for England: and who will not share the feelings of the husband and the father, on approaching his home after so long an absence! The following extracts from his letters will convey some impression of what those feelings were.

[Pg 283]

Lisbon, Nov. 3rd, 1798.

I am now rejoicing in the hope of being in England nearly as soon as this letter can reach you. I propose to sail from this place the beginning of next week, and I trust my arrival will shortly follow. Let me find a letter from you at Portsmouth. I depend on your being ready to set off as soon as you hear the *Orion* is there. The post will arrive sufficiently early to allow of your leaving Bath the same day. I may possibly be able to meet you on the road, as I shall have had time to despatch Monsieur le Duc d'Havré (who is a very polite Frenchman) and to make arrangements against our return. I think it right to mention that unless the wind admits the ships getting over the Bar of Lisbon, I may be detained. But I hope for a quick passage.

"Sunday, November 25th, Spithead.—I wrote to you, this morning, from St. Helens. The happy moment is at length arrived when I can despatch a letter from Spithead. Yours of yesterday is in my hand. To-morrow you will be setting off; but I fear the service will prevent our meeting till the day after.

"I have despatched Dumaresq to Newport for our dear boy; and I depend on seeing him to-night. *Le Duc est empressé de le voir.* I hope to get the party on shore, *de bonne heure*, to-morrow: but we are still in quarantine whilst I am making these arrangements.

[Pg 284]

"Tuesday morning.—Great is my disappointment at being kept thus long in quarantine: it is a cruel *contre temps*, and the more so from its being unforeseen. What adds to my disappointment is, that I am at a loss to know if our *pratique* has been received by this day's post, the weather having prevented all communication with the shore. It will rejoice you to learn that our beloved boy has been with me since ten, yesterday morning, and that I find him all you have described. I expect to hear every moment of your arrival at the Fountain. Mr. Maxwell writes there is no doubt of our being released to-morrow.

"One o'clock.—If our *pratique* is not received by this post, request Sir Peter to set the telegraph at work, now that the weather has cleared up. 8 P.M. Your letter has this instant reached me. The tidings of your arrival have relieved my mind from great inquietude. The messenger has orders to wait your commands until after the post hour to-morrow; and if we are not then admitted to the privileges of *Christian charity* after our *Egyptian bondage*, we must *endeavour* to submit to our fate. James is by my side, and glows with thankfulness at being so soon likely to embrace his beloved mamma. He has indeed been a real comfort to me under this sad contrariety of events. I have placed Monsieur Le Duc, and the rest of the party, at cards, to send these lines in time *pour ton réveil demain. Encore adieu, ma très chère!* Write every hour of the day, and send your letters to Mr. Maxwell.

[Pg 285]

"Wednesday morning.—Grieved as I am to be a prisoner still another day, there is consolation in the *certainty* of our being released to-morrow. Ardently as I aspire for the moment of our meeting, I must delay going on shore until after the performance of divine service in this ship:^[22] and I know this arrangement will have your full concurrence. Your note is just received: how well have you anticipated my thoughts, and met my wishes even before they were expressed. Please God, to-morrow we shall be compensated for a separation of two long years; and on a day in which none can have greater mercies to commemorate than ourselves.

"Wednesday evening.—I have just ascertained that the Duke and the Marquis do not proceed to town before Friday; therefore expect to receive them at dinner, and desire Mrs. Fielding to prepare for eighteen or twenty guests."

Sir James remained at Portsmouth, until the 15th December, when he sailed for Plymouth, at which place he arrived on the 22nd: and on the 6th of January 1799 the *Orion* was paid off, when Sir James went to Bath, where he was once more free and happy in the bosom of his family.

[Pg 286]

CHAPTER XII.

[Pg 287]

1800.

Sir James writes to Earl Spencer.—Is appointed to the *Cæsar*, of 84 guns.—Joins the Channel fleet.—The Brest fleet having escaped, proceeds to the Mediterranean.—English fleet at Bantry Bay.—Return of the French fleet.—*Cæsar* at Lisbon.—Sir James returns to Spithead.—Rejoins the Channel fleet.—Earl St. Vincent takes the command.—Appoints Sir James to command the advanced

squadron.—Black Rocks.—Earl St. Vincent's letter of approbation.—Douvernenez Bay.—Various letters.—Complete success of the blockade—Enemy's fleet laid up Sir James returns to Spithead.—Conclusion of 1800.

Sir James had cherished the hope that he was to be permitted to enjoy the blessings of domestic life, at least for a few months; but even in the most perfect state of happiness which can be well imagined, he always held his duty to his King and country, (next to the duty he owed to his Creator,) to be paramount to every other consideration; and, feeling himself bound, after a short period of relaxation, to offer his services, he wrote the following letter:

Bath, 15th January 1799.

MY LORD,

As you were pleased to intimate your intention of being at Bath when I last had the honour of seeing you, I delayed writing until this time. I am extremely happy to find that Lady Spencer's improved state of health has rendered the journey unnecessary.

[Pg 288]

Two days after my arrival I received a letter from Admiral Young, proposing to me (in the absence of your lordship) a large seventy-four, which I declined accepting, as you had done me the honour to offer me the Cæsar, on a certain expected event taking place. I hope you will forgive me for entreating that as many of the Orion's ship's company may be reserved for me as the service will admit. Having experienced their uniform good conduct for so many years, I am most solicitous to have them with me in another ship.

I have the honour to be,
With the highest respect,
Your lordship's most obedient and humble
servant,

JAMES SAUMAREZ.

To the Right Honourable Earl Spencer, &c. &c. &c.

To the above, Sir James received the following answer:

Admiralty, 18th January 1799.

DEAR SIR,

Lady Spencer's journey to Bath is only deferred, I fear; as it will probably be necessary for her to go there soon.

The proposal made to you by Admiral Young was only intended as a temporary measure, in case you had no objection to be employed in the interval before you could have a permanent appointment. Whenever the period shall come at which I can propose such an appointment to you, I shall avail myself of it with pleasure. With respect to reserving your ship's company, that practice is attended with so much inconvenience to the public service, that it has of late been necessarily discontinued. Although there is no one in whose favour I should be more disposed to relax than to you, I fear it will be impossible for me to do so in this particular. I am, dear sir,

[Pg 289]

Your very obedient and humble servant,

SPENCER.

To Sir James Saumarez, &c. &c. &c.

The 14th of February, being the anniversary of the glorious victory obtained over the Spanish fleet, was selected for a promotion of flag-officers; and on this occasion his Majesty was pleased to confer on Sir James Saumarez one of the colonelcies of Marines as a reward for his many and meritorious services. Earl Spencer availed himself of the opportunity to appoint him to the Cæsar, of 84 guns, one of the finest, but hitherto most unfortunate, ships in the British navy. Sir James hoisted his pendant on the 26th of February, and had the satisfaction to have several of his officers and crew removed from the Orion to the Cæsar, in Hamoaze, where her fitting out went on with considerable rapidity. On the 19th of March she proceeded to Cawsand Bay, where, on the 30th, she rode out a heavy gale of wind from the S.E.

On the following day, in company with the Magnificent and Impetueux, she sailed for the Channel fleet, commanded by Admiral Berkeley, which she joined off Brest the 3rd April. On the 16th, Lord Bridport arrived from Portsmouth with five sail more, increasing the fleet to fifteen sail of the line. Another heavy gale was experienced on the 20th, but no damage was sustained.

On the 25th, looking into Brest Harbour, they were surprised to see the French fleet, consisting of twenty-five sail, partly in Camaret Bay, and under way in Brest Water. The fleet stood off Ushant; the wind came to the S.E. with hazy weather, and on the same night they escaped.

[Pg 290]

Sir James writes:—

"April 27th.—Yesterday at noon, it blowing very strong from the northward, with foggy weather, the signal was made that the enemy was under sail. A general chase soon followed; but, I am sorry to say, they eluded our pursuit under cover of the thick weather, keeping close to their shore, by the passage du Raz. The cruise has now taken quite a different turn to what I expected; and it gives me great spirits to find we are likely to render to our country some service.

"1st of May.—My fervent vows were very early offered, my best love, for Heaven's choicest blessings to attend you, with many, many returns of your natal day. The fatted calf was intended to have been killed for the fête; but the bustle caused by the French fleet occasioned its being

neglected. Your health, however, will be drunk in a bumper of my best wine. I have a letter from the Duc d'Havr , dated Edinburgh, where he was on a visit to Monsieur.^[23] He was going to embark for the continent. *Mille compliments de sa part pour miladi, &c. &c.*

"May 5th.—We have had, the last three days, a strong S.E. gale, which has brought us off Ireland. I hope to-morrow we shall fall in with ships from Plymouth, and that I shall have the satisfaction of receiving letters from you,—the greatest I can possibly enjoy at this time, except that of beating the French fleet.

[Pg 291]

"May 8th.—Off Cape Clear.—Captain Durham hailed me: he says the French fleet were seen a week ago, steering to the southward. These are trying times for those who feel as we do the importance of events, which involve and may decide the fate of nations.

"May 17th.—Sir Alan Gardner has joined us this morning with a reinforcement. We are still without any certain intelligence of the enemy; a few days must determine. I only wish we could soon, very soon meet them, to put a stop to our perplexity and impatience.

"Friday evening, 24th May.—We are just anchored in Bantry Bay. I fear my conjectures of the enemy being gone to Portugal, or the Mediterranean, and not being destined for this country, are too surely founded.

"I have this instant received your letter of the 4th, by which, though, as yet, very hastily perused, I learn you are at Teignmouth. I am sorry to see that you have already taken alarm at the reports which are circulated respecting us: follow the example of Lady Howe, who neither reads newspapers, nor listens to rumours. I know not who are most to blame, those who invent them, or you who believe them.

[Pg 292]

"26th.—We continue without any certain accounts respecting the destination of the French armament. Admiral Collingwood arrived this morning, and hoists his flag in the Triumph. He will take a strong detachment with him for the Mediterranean. It is not yet known what ships are to go: but I have been on board Lord Bridport; and I do not hear the C sar is to be one of them; which, I suppose, will *please* you: *in other respects*, there is no doubt that the Mediterranean station is far preferable to the Channel service. Your wish that we should carry away a mast was nearly gratified, the Achille and the C sar having been on board each other in coming into this bay; the principal damage was, however, sustained by the former; notwithstanding which, she will not be obliged to return into port; therefore, form no such wishes, but show yourself a true patriot, and let the good of the country be the principal wish of your heart. The escape of the French fleet, was, I dare say, consonant to these feminine feelings, and see what a dilemma it has thrown us into.

"31st May.—Off Cape Clear.—I see Lord Bridport very frequently, who always inquires most kindly after you. His lordship, it may be believed, is not very well satisfied with the present state of affairs. We must hope that future good will result from apparent evil; but it must ever be regretted that the French fleet escaped from Brest, without being brought to action. I think it probable Sir Alan Gardner will have the command of a strong detachment, and proceed off Cape Finisterre; but what ships are to be attached to him will not be known until the separation takes place. Should the French fleet be gone up the Mediterranean, they will proceed on that station; in which case I hope the C sar will be one of Sir Alan's squadron. I am well provided for a long cruise. When I shall hear from you, Heaven alone knows! but I am endued with patience, after all our trials. The * loge* of Mr. Morgan, on our dear boy, is a great satisfaction to me, and no less so at knowing him to be where his morals will be attended to, equally with the other branches of his education.

[Pg 293]

"June 9th.—My last will have led you to expect my being detached with Sir A. Gardner. We separated from Lord Bridport, Saturday, with sixteen sail of the line; and we are already the distance of Lisbon, with a fine breeze, steering for the Mediterranean. I almost fear we shall be too late, notwithstanding the expedition we are using. I fell in with a Dane, from whom I learned the French fleet had passed the Straits, and Lord St. Vincent after them.

"Sunday 10th.—In going down with the information to the Admiral, we had the misfortune to carry away our fore-top-mast. I was not a little surprised to find Sir Alan with only the Magnificent and Russell, Sir Charles Cotton having been detached to the Mediterranean; thus I fear we shall be deprived sharing in the victory we hoped to obtain over the enemy's fleet. Our small squadron is returning towards Lisbon, instead of gaining the medals we made sure of.

[Pg 294]

"14th.—Off Lisbon. We are anxiously waiting here for intelligence. The Admiral surprised me with the information that the object of our coming to Lisbon was to take away our prizes. He has ordered me in to accelerate their joining him."

Sir Alexander Ball, in a letter to Sir James, dated off Malta, 27th April 1799, writes: "Be assured that your appointment to the Marines and the command of the C sar, which are given to you as a mark of the high estimation in which you are regarded by the Admiralty and the public, has given me more joy than I should have received from the appointment of any other person on the list, because I have had the satisfaction of witnessing your bravery, zeal, and ardour in the service. I am much pleased with your plan of the sword."

The Commander-in-chief, supposing the destination of the French expedition to be Ireland, proceeded at once to Bantry Bay, where the fleet remained until the end of May; while the enemy passed the Straits of Gibraltar unmolested, having been on that occasion favoured by a gale of wind, which prevented the fleet under Lord Keith (though certainly very inferior) from bringing them to action. The French and Spanish fleets returned to Brest, unobserved, on the 21st of June.

[Pg 295]

In the mean time a part of Lord Bridport's fleet, in which was the *Cæsar*, proceeded under command of Sir Alan Gardner to the Tagus, which it left on the 18th; and, cruising back, returned to Cawsand Bay on the 13th July. As the enemy showed no disposition to put to sea again, the *Cæsar*, and the rest of the fleet, remained quietly at Cawsand Bay, and subsequently at Torbay till the 2nd September, when they again sailed. In the course of the three ensuing months it put back three times; and finally, on the 8th of December 1799, when the Admiralty, being desirous of ascertaining whether Torbay was a safe anchorage for the fleet during the winter months, ordered the *Cæsar* to continue on that station for the trial, and at the same time placed the *London*, of 98 guns, under the orders of Sir James. The tempestuous weather which prevailed during the rest of the month, and throughout January, afforded several occasions to determine the point. The *London*, during a heavy gale, parted her cables, and was with great difficulty preserved from going on shore, which left no doubt that it was an insecure and unfit post to shelter a fleet.

[Pg 296]

On the 17th March 1800, Lord Bridport took command of the fleet, which was soon after increased to twenty-five sail of the line; but nothing remarkable occurred till the 18th of May, when a dreadful gale occasioned much damage to many of the ships. The wind was at first S.W. and blew with great violence, when it suddenly checked to the N.W., before the S.W. sea had time to subside: most of the fleet wore. The *Lady Jane*, *Trompeuse*, and *Railleur* foundered: the *Montague* lost all her masts, and several others met with damage. It appears by the log of the *Cæsar* that she continued for some time on the same tack, which may account for her having sustained little injury, although it mentions that she shipped several heavy seas. So tremendous was the rolling of the ship, that her lower yard-arms were at one time under water, while the carpenters stood by with their axes, to cut the masts away, if she had not righted. She did not bear up for Torbay with the rest of the fleet, but followed two days after, and, having replenished her water and provisions, resumed her station, from whence Sir James wrote a letter to Lady Saumarez, of which the following is an extract:

[Pg 297]

"*Cæsar*, 26th June, 1800.

"Of the enemy in this neighbourhood we know nothing, except of their inactivity. I hope they do not mean to leave so fine a fleet, as we have here, useless all the summer. Fear not my complying with your injunctions. I shall more than ever strive against *ennui*,—my greatest enemy, I believe, whilst in this inactive state. I read when I can, but anxiety to hear from you, and to have accounts of our darling children, has its share in withdrawing my attention and fixing it on more interesting subjects. Of one thing, however, be assured, that with respect to the ship and all thereto belonging, I am as well situated as possible. I enjoy the satisfaction of having a very quiet and well-disposed ship's company, who are kept orderly, and, I flatter myself, well regulated, without exercising severity or rigour. The officers continue as I wish them. Captain Maxwell, who joined some time ago, is an active, diligent officer in his corps; and Mr. Packwood, as well as Mr. Holliday, our new chaplain, are very good men in their respective stations.

"Although I find amusement in books, believe me your letters form my sole delight, and tend more to lighten the time than all the volumes in Hoxland's library."

Sir James, after another cruise, returned on the 24th of July, to prepare for a service of more responsibility and importance.

[Pg 298]

The French had now a large fleet at Brest, which appeared to be in a state of great forwardness; and, as they had before eluded the vigilance of the blockading ships, it was necessary to place a strong squadron near the Black Rocks to watch their motions, and to give the command of this advanced detachment to an officer of skill, experience, and intrepidity. Earl St. Vincent, who was now commander-in-chief of the Channel fleet, knowing how highly Sir James Saumarez was qualified for such an important trust, gave him the following order to take command of the in-shore squadron:

You are hereby required and directed to proceed without a moment's loss of time, in his Majesty's ship under your command, off the Black Rocks, where you may expect to find his Majesty's ships named in the margin, [24] which you are to take under your command; their respective captains being instructed to obey your orders: and having received from Captain Knight, of his Majesty's ship *Montague*, authenticated copies of all orders and papers in his possession relative to the command of the advanced squadron, carry the same into execution until you receive further orders.

You will also receive from Captain Knight a sealed secret instruction, addressed to the officer commanding the advanced squadron off the Black Rocks for the time being, which is on no account to be opened, but under the circumstances thereon directed.

ST. VINCENT.

To Sir James Saumarez, &c.

[Pg 299]

Copy of Instructions to the Senior Officer of the advanced squadron off the Black Rocks.

You are hereby required and directed to take under your command the advanced squadron, composed of his Majesty's ships named on the other side hereof, (whose captains are instructed to

obey your orders,) stationed off the Black Rocks and in the Bay of Brest, for the purpose of watching the combined fleets in that port; adopting such measures as you shall judge necessary for gaining every possible information of their force, condition, and movements.

In the execution of this most important service, the line-of-battle ships (composing the advanced squadron) are to be anchored during an easterly wind in the Iroise Passage, as well to support the look-out frigates, as to intercept a squadron of the enemy which is held in constant readiness to slip out the very first opportunity that shall offer; and during a westerly wind, you are not to fail in making Brest every day, if possible, but at all events to take such precautions as will enable you to resume your former position in the Iroise, on the first appearance of easterly wind.

You are to communicate to me from time to time every intelligence you may obtain respecting the enemy; and in case he should come out in great force, while the squadron under my command is in this rendezvous, you are to give me immediate notice thereof, and also the officers commanding the detachments off the Passage Du Raz, Isle Grois, and in Quiberon Bay; but, in the event of my being compelled by tempestuous weather to take shelter in Torbay, and of the enemy seizing that opportunity of putting to sea, you are to give me information thereof by every means in your power: taking under your command the detachments off the Passage Du Raz, Isle Grois, and in Quiberon Bay, together with the ships named in the margin,^[25] which are directed to keep as near the Black Rocks as possible, under the orders of Captain Sutton, for the support of your ships; and to hang upon and use your utmost endeavours to harass the enemy's rear until the approach of this squadron, which, you may be assured, will be in pursuit.

[Pg 300]

Given on board the Royal George,
off Ushant, 7th August 1800.
ST. VINCENT.

To Sir John Borlase Warren,
Bart. K.B. Rear-admiral of
the Blue, &c. &c. &c.

By command of the Admiral. BEN. TUCKER.

An exact copy. Given the 8th August 1800
JOHN BORLASE WARREN.

Sir James now proceeded, in the *Cæsar*, to assume the important command off the Black Rocks, which had deservedly obtained the name of New Siberia, as being the least desirable of stations for a ship-of-war. It is, indeed, scarcely possible to describe any situation more miserable; for, besides being at the very entrance of a port containing twenty-five sail of the line ready for sea, which might slip out and attack the squadron of six, the ships are two-thirds surrounded with rocks and dangers, which afford no shelter; while they are open to the S.W. winds. They have often great difficulty in working out, sometimes against the tide as well as against the wind; and, in reconnoitring, they are exposed to the fire of the enemy on each side of Brest Water.

[Pg 301]

The following extracts of private letters written by Sir James to Lady Saumarez, will be found interesting, as they convey the best idea of his situation.

Cæsar, off the Black Rocks, Sunday evening, 2d Sept. 1800.

On dit, but I do not believe it, that the French fleet is to be ordered out by the First Consul, at all risks. We may therefore expect to make *minced meat* of them with our seventeen three-deckers. We remain in sight of the enemy unmolested by them. To-day I had the colours hoisted, to show them Sunday was not expunged from *our* calendar; and divine service was performed on board.

Our boats have occasionally landed on some small islands near this. Captain Buller purchased two nice little cows, one of which he has spared me: it is so tame, the children could play with it. It supplies me with milk, and cost me only three guineas.

The Guernsey traders continue with the squadron; but, on account of the spirits they sell to the ships, I wish them further off. I have been obliged to be harsh with them, from this circumstance; and I expect they will give a very bad report of their countryman when they return to the island.

Cæsar, off the Black Rocks, Sept. 12th 1800.

Sir Henry Harvey has joined the fleet, which makes up the complement of flags; and it remains to be proved if the Earl has influence to effect what he so strenuously aims at respecting the promotion. I form very sanguine hopes that peace will shortly extend its blessed influence over these countries; and that I shall have the satisfaction to enjoy, without interruption, the sweets of domestic comfort. I certainly shall avail myself of the earliest respite the service will enable me to pass in the island; and I think I may have that opportunity this winter; for if the war should be continued, there is no doubt that a promotion would give me, at least, six weeks interval from duty; at any rate, I see no reason for the future affording you anxiety, as whether there, or in England, I depend on our passing a considerable portion of the winter together. I hope Master Saumarez knows his alpha, beta, &c. by heart. When convenient to the young gentleman, I shall be glad that he will take the trouble to transcribe it for me to Omega, as I have no Greek grammar by me. I can readily believe the difficulty that attends fixing the little ladies to the French grammar, whose particularly quick and lively temper is not much suited to so tedious a process. I think, notwithstanding, it is the best method, especially as the same grammatical rules are adapted to any language, which they will find useful hereafter. Dancing, no doubt, has more attractions. I trust they have quite got rid of their colds: their papa has also had a very severe one, and kept his cabin for two days; but he is now perfectly recovered.

[Pg 302]

September 18th. I admire N., with his comments on Colchester. When you next write, recommend him to try the Black Rocks in a thick fog, and no chance of letters from England: he will find even Norman Cross preferable. I, however, believe I have done with that anchorage for some time, as the wind is set in to the westward; and I shall now cruise to prevent vessels going into Brest.

I am happy to say I am perfectly well. I trust my nerves will prove equal to the task; as I have before often told you, they generally strengthen with difficulties.

[Pg 303]

I mean to make this cruise long enough to entitle me to a relief, therefore do not expect me in port as long as I can keep the sea.

Sir James immediately gave such orders and regulations as would best guard against, or overcome, the difficulties inseparable from such a service; and, with the prospect of a long winter before him, he sent these regulations, and a list of the rendezvous appointed by him, to the commander-in-chief, whose letter to Sir James, in answer, is expressive of the high opinion he entertained of him.

Ville de Paris, off Ushant, 15th Sept. 1800.

SIR,

Nothing can be more appropriate than the different rendezvous you have sent me a copy of; your change of position must fluctuate according to the sudden changes of the weather, which are to be looked for soon. I repose such unbounded confidence in your zeal and judgment that *I sleep as soundly as if I had the key of Brest in my possession.*

Sir Richard Strachan and Captain Buller, in the Captain and Edgar, will relieve two of the ships which last joined you as soon as they return to this rendezvous, and the Canada will relieve the third. As I have applied for Captain Foley's leave of absence on very important private business, I wish the Elephant to be the first sent to me. I am, sir,

Your most obedient humble servant,

ST. VINCENT.

Sir James Saumarez.

It was supposed that the Brest fleet would take advantage of the equinoctial gales, which were now approaching, and slip out as before, when the in-shore squadron was blown off, or compelled to bear up for Torbay; but Sir James had determined on frustrating their attempt. On the 23rd a heavy gale came on, which, in former instances, would have obliged the in-shore squadron to abandon the post; but, instead of bearing up for Torbay when no longer able to maintain his position, Sir James steered for Douvarnenez Bay, where he anchored with the whole squadron, just out of range of the enemy's mortar batteries, which soon tried their shells, but without effect.

[Pg 304]

Here his squadron struck top-masts and lower yards, and rode out all the equinoctial gales, actually in the enemy's harbour, within a few miles of their whole fleet of four times his force, and in perfect safety! The gale had been very severe; and although Earl St. Vincent, who was obliged to run with his fleet for Torbay, had no fears for the safety of the in-shore squadron, relying as he did on the experience and skill of Sir James, yet the Admiralty were in a considerable state of alarm until the following account of his proceedings was received:

TO THE RIGHT HON. EARL SPENCER.

Cæsar, Douvarnenez Bay, 26th Sept. 1800.

MY LORD,

On the supposition that the fleet may have been driven from their station by the late tempestuous weather, and as some anxiety may be excited for the safety of this squadron, I take the opportunity by the Marlborough to inform your lordship of my having anchored in this bay last Tuesday evening, with the ships under my command, where we have ridden the gale out in perfect safety, together with the Montague and Naiad, which ships anchored here on Wednesday.

[Pg 305]

This is a most spacious bay, and may be considered safe anchorage in any weather: it lies about four leagues to the southward of Brest; from which port it is only separated about five miles by land, over a mountainous and hilly country. As the same winds that enable the enemy's fleet to put to sea, also lead out of this bay, we can always be in time for them; and this appears the most favourable position to prevent their coasting convoys coming from the southern ports. The enemy has endeavoured to annoy the squadron with shells, but at too great a distance to reach any of the ships, and the whole fleet may lie in perfect safety from any of the batteries.

I purpose to remain here until the weather becomes more moderate, to enable me to resume the station off the Black Rocks. In the mean time, ships will occasionally be detached to watch the motions of the enemy in Brest Water. I have the honour to be, &c.

JAS. SAUMAREZ.

In answer to this, Sir James received the following letter from Earl Spencer, then First Lord of the Admiralty.

Admiralty, 30th Sept. 1800.

DEAR SIR,

I am much obliged to you for your letter of the 26th, dated from Douvarnenez Bay, and was much pleased to find that you had got hold of that anchorage, as I felt very uneasy at your absence during the late gales. I should rather doubt whether that bay could be capacious enough for a large fleet to anchor in without danger from the batteries; but I have always hoped that some of our small squadron might avail themselves of that resource on such an occasion as that which has presented itself to you; and I have no doubt that the doing so will much assist the occupation of our fleet off Brest.

[Pg 306]

Believe me, dear sir,

Your very faithful humble servant,

SPENCER.

To Sir James Saumarez.

Sir James, at the same time, wrote to Earl St. Vincent by the Marlborough, giving his lordship an account of his proceedings, which could not but be highly satisfactory.

Cæsar, Douvarnenez Bay, 26th September 1800.

MY LORD,

The weather not having admitted the stores and provisions to be taken out of the Marlborough whilst under sail, I bore up for this anchorage with the squadron; and early Wednesday morning the boats were all employed in conveying the water and provisions to the squadron: but it having continued to blow excessively hard from that time, it was not until this morning we have been enabled to accomplish this service.

The Montague and Naiad anchored in the bay Wednesday morning, and are now under sail. It has blown a very severe gale of wind at north-west the last two days, and we have saved considerable wear and tear to all the ships by having taken this anchorage in good time.

[Pg 307]

I propose to remain here during the continuation of westerly winds, or until the weather enables me to resume the station off the Black Rocks; detaching ships occasionally to watch the enemy's motions.

I have the honour to be
Your lordship's most obedient and most humble
servant,

JAMES SAUMAREZ.

The Right Honourable the Earl of St. Vincent, &c. &c. &c.

The following is an extract of a letter which Sir James wrote to Lady Saumarez, and sent by the same opportunity. It will be found to give an accurate description of the important anchorage of which he was the first who was so daring as to take advantage in stormy weather, with the squadron under his command.

Cæsar, Douvarnenez Bay, Sept. 24th, 1800.

We anchored at eleven last night, and this morning found ourselves in one of the finest bays I have ever seen. It is far more spacious than Torbay, and much more enclosed; consequently more secure against all winds. It is the same distance from Brest by sea as Dartmouth is from Torbay; and by land the same as from Brixham, not being more than five miles across, over a hilly country; substituting the Bec de Chèvre for the Berry Head, and it exactly forms the counter part to Torbay. It abounds with the finest fish, of which we shall profit.

As it is not possible for the ships to sail from Brest but with an easterly wind, which blows directly out of this bay, we can always be beforehand with them.

25th.—It has continued to blow hard since we entered this bay, and it has now risen to a severe storm. I wish you knew how well sheltered we are in this famous anchorage. Captain Pierrepont has been with me since yesterday: he has been near fourteen weeks at sea, and, as you may suppose, very tired. I am better satisfied with my situation than since I have been in the Channel fleet, and find it far preferable to being attached to it.

[Pg 308]

Monday, 29th Sept.

I trust my letter by the Marlborough has reached you this morning, which will have set your mind at ease as to our safety after the gales we encountered last week. I wrote to you yesterday, but too hastily to express, as I wished, the happiness I derived from having just received your letters of the 15th and 19th. They had been too long and too anxiously looked for not to receive the most cordial and heartfelt welcome. I am in hourly expectation of seeing the fleet, the letters from the Earl acquainting me with his intention of putting to sea the moment the weather moderated. The Superb, with Centaur and Warrior, hove in sight this afternoon,—the only ships I have seen since last Tuesday, when I went into Douvarnenez Bay; and I have the satisfaction to reflect that, notwithstanding the tempestuous weather, this squadron has been enabled to keep its station, although all the other detachments have been driven from theirs. Now that your letter gives me reason to believe you entertain serious thoughts of going to Guernsey, like your father I lose my courage at the prospect of it. I sincerely wish I had never suggested the idea, which I was induced to do from the hope of the war being over, and that you would pass the winter more comfortably than in England during the dreary months. I am now become a very coward on the subject, and leave it to you to determine as you think best; at the same time assuring you that I shall endeavour to be reconciled to whatever plan is adopted which is most likely to conduce to your comfort. Your account of our dear girls gives me the most heartfelt satisfaction, and of the increasing strength of the sweet dove in particular, whom I truly long to behold,—a happiness I still hope to enjoy ere many weeks are elapsed. I shall expect a letter from the dear boy by the next opportunity from Plymouth.

[Pg 309]

The next letter to the Earl of St. Vincent gives an account of the further proceedings of his squadron, and the situation of the enemy's fleet in Brest, which proves how successful his endeavours had been in preventing its meditated escape.

Cæsar, off the Black Rocks, 28th September 1800.

MY LORD,

Soon after I despatched my letter by the Marlborough, dated from Douvarnenez Bay, the wind

having shifted to the northward, I got under sail with the squadron; but in the evening it came to the south-west, with thick weather: I returned to the anchorage, as did Captain Knight, with the Montague and Naiad.

It continued to blow very strong till yesterday noon, when the wind suddenly shifted to N. and N. by E. I immediately got under sail, and stood out of the bay; the Pompée leaving a bower-anchor, her cable having parted in endeavouring to weigh it. From the report of several signal-guns fired in Brest soon after the sudden change of wind, I have no doubt of the preparatory movements of the enemy to put to sea, had the wind continued favourable for them; and I carried a press of sail during the night, in order to be off St. Matthew's Point early this morning to watch their motions.

[Pg 310]

I had a full view of the enemy's fleet, and counted twenty-two sail with their top-gallant-masts struck, but apparently ready for sea. Having made the signal to the Megæra to reconnoitre, I beg to refer your lordship to Captain Hill for a more particular report of their state and numbers.

I have the honour to be, my lord,
Your lordship's obedient and most humble
servant,

JAMES SAUMAREZ.

The Right Honourable the Earl of St. Vincent, &c. &c. &c.

His Majesty's ship Montague, with the Naiad, and Suwarrow schooner, went through the bay yesterday evening.

Ville de Paris, Torbay, 4th October, 1800.

SIR,

I have to acknowledge the receipt of your several letters of the 25th, 26th, 28th ultimo, and 1st instant, detailing your proceedings with his Majesty's ships under your orders; the whole of which I very much approve, particularly the taking under your command Captains Sutton and King, with the ships and vessels attached to them: and you will herewith receive orders to their respective captains and commanders to put themselves under your command, and obey your orders for their future proceedings in the important duty of watching the combined fleets.

I am, sir, your most obedient servant,

ST. VINCENT.

Sir James Saumarez.

By this bold and unexpected step, (which the French have since characterised as a piece of *impudence*.) Sir James completely frustrated the meditated escape of the combined fleets, which were now thirty-two in number, seven of which were three-deckers. He had, moreover, the honour of being the first to defy the enemy in his own anchorage, proving at the same time that it would not be so easy as formerly to elude the vigilance of the advanced squadron.

[Pg 311]

The weather having moderated after the second return to Douvarnenez Bay, the squadron resumed the anchorage near the Black Rocks, daily reconnoitring the enemy, destroying several small vessels which attempted to get in, and keeping under sail when the wind was westerly. In continuation to Lady Saumarez he writes:

Oct. 4th 1800.

The anxiety inseparable from this cruise is very considerably alleviated from knowing the fleet is in port, which must prove of the greatest benefit both to officers and men, and to the service in general. I find the rumours of peace are vanished, and that war is determined upon. I trust events will be favourable to this country. There is no doubt the French are much distressed for provisions in the neighbourhood of Brest, and that discontent prevails among their troops, who are ill-paid, ill-fed, and badly clothed. It is horrid to see the leading men of all nations so infatuated for war, at a time peace is so much to be desired for the sake of humanity.

Cæsar, Bay of Brest, 18th Oct.

The delightful weather we have enjoyed this last week has enabled me to remain at anchor off the Black Rocks. They have lost their gloom from the serene atmosphere, but more particularly from having had such frequent tidings from you, as scarce a day has passed (I believe not one) without being joined by something from the fleet. Yesterday, the Earl sent me a message that he expected my flag to be hoisted in a very few days; and Troubridge writes to me the promotion was to extend to Sir Edward Pellew; and,—what think you!—that Lord St. Vincent has actually written for Captain Brenton to be appointed my flag-captain. His lordship, in his letter, tells me that Capt. Thornbrough is to remain in the Mars, and will relieve me here, if the measure he has proposed is acceded to: so you may perceive I have some grounds on which to form my hopes; but I do not wish *you* to dwell too much upon it.

[Pg 312]

21st.—I am now *solus*. Captain Brenton, who I mentioned had been staying with me, is gone to the Ville de Paris. I know no one I should prefer as captain under my flag. He is a steady, sensible, good officer, and of great experience, having served several years with admirals as a lieutenant. Captain Cook dined with me to-day on a *Black Rock* dinner, viz. a fine piece of salmon and a nice little *cochon-de-lait*, with *entremêts*, removes, &c. The salmon was sent me with a basket of vegetables from Plymouth, I suspect from Captain Markham; the roaster was a present from Captain Hood, who, being under sail, could not dine with me. I mention these trifles because I know they please you. The boats occasionally go to the small islands and procure bullocks, &c.; and, as fast as the stock is purchased, they contrive to replenish it from the mainland,—a proof they are well satisfied with the price we pay for it, which is fixed by themselves.

26th Oct.—After near a fortnight passed at what the Earl now calls the Elysian Lake (instead of Siberia), a westerly wind compelled me to get under sail yesterday afternoon; and it was fortunate that I did so, as it has blown a gale since that time. By the Megæra, which has joined me this evening, I find the fleet is to go to Torbay; and, from what Sir Thomas Troubridge writes, I conjecture the Earl intends to go on shore part of the winter.... While we remained at an anchor the boats of the squadron were occasionally detached in pursuit of the enemy's vessels. Last Monday they chased one close under the batteries at the entrance of Brest, which has afforded me an opportunity of making favourable mention of Mr. Lamborn and Mr. Wood, who were employed on that service. The Earl has desired me to send the latter to him to be promoted. The Canada, which was ordered to cover the boats, took possession of three Spaniards belonging to the Principe de Asturias, Don Gravina's flag-ship, who were fishing in a small boat. They are to be returned without being exchanged, agreeably to what I suggested, and I shall send in a flag of truce the first favourable weather. We were so comfortably anchored the last fortnight, and so agreeably employed, that it has nearly spoilt me for the remainder of the cruise. Of the promotion nothing further is said, and I have not heard when I am to be released. If I am kept out much longer, and have the duty of an admiral without my flag, I fear I shall grow *sulky* and impatient. It is not improbable Captain Sutton may relieve me in the charge of this squadron, as I doubt Sir Edward Pellew being yet ready. I fear the second return of the fleet will have again set your heart palpitating, and caused you another disappointment at the Cæsar not being with it.

[Pg 313]

October 30th.—Yesterday I received a very civil reply to the letter I wrote to Don Gravina, who wishes that I may live many thousand years. The French received the officer from the Canada who was entrusted with the flag of truce with great politeness. I sent Maingy from this ship as interpreter. They remained at Camaret till the following morning. You will not be displeased to hear that the Cæsar must go into port *from necessity*, having sprung her main-yard; but, if possible, I shall delay it three or four weeks longer, notwithstanding my *threat* of losing patience. I shall depend on finding you at Dartmouth.

[Pg 314]

Cæsar, Nov. 1st.

I remain without any of your letters since the 20th, which I feel a grievous circumstance, particularly at this time, when I am left in doubt whether you are still at Dartmouth, or gone to Bath. This morning I experienced a severe disappointment. The Nile cutter, whose tardy approach for four hours was anxiously waited for, at last joined without any letters, having left Plymouth with sealed orders. We have such blessed weather at present that it is almost impious to be discontented; yet I cannot enjoy it while I remain so long without hearing from you. I accuse the Earl of indifference to the comfort of those whom it is incumbent on him to attend to. Since he has left this station there has been scarcely a day that the wind has not been favourable for vessels to join us. A fortnight or three weeks more and I hope my turn will come, when, if things do not meet my expectations, I shall be tempted to take leave of the good ship, and look out for a snug cottage to pass some time in the enjoyment of your society. I am serious, *je t'assure*. I understand Sir Hyde Parker is to command in the absence of the chief. *Cela ne me plait pas aucunement*; for, after having been employed upon this important and arduous service with acknowledged credit, I shall certainly very ill brook being hurried out of port in the usual manner to serve with him: I therefore *go on shore* unless my views are complied with. I hope to-morrow to have letters from you to acknowledge the receipt of. At present I am much out of humour, and with too much cause to be easily reconciled on any other terms but of hearing from you.

[Pg 315]

2nd.—Another disappointment this morning, having been joined by a lugger which we hoped had letters, but which proves to be from another quarter. I look for the Nimrod: if she joins us to-morrow I shall be satisfied. It has blown strong all day, with very thick weather. I hope for better success, but I still continue out of temper.

3rd.—The Superb, which has been in sight since daylight, is at last joining. Imagine my impatience after a whole fortnight since the date of your last letter. Captain Sutton, who is now with me, has not brought a single letter. I send this by the Courageux, and have only time to say that the Edgar is hourly expected, and possibly we may be more fortunate. A ship is in sight: I hope it is her.

On the 9th of November the fleet experienced one of the severest gales ever known, which did immense damage to the shipping; but, except the loss of some storm-sails, the Cæsar sustained no injury; while several of the others lost masts and yards, obliging them to return to port. But Sir James kept his station; indeed, during the whole fifteen weeks he had the command, not a vessel either sailed from, or entered, the harbour of Brest.

At last, seeing their escape impossible, they began to dismantle the ships; and Sir James received the following letter from Earl St. Vincent:

[Pg 316]

MY DEAR SIR,

The Impetueux took in her guns this day, and Sir Edward Pellew will receive his orders to-morrow morning; and, if the wind favours his getting out of Hamoaze, he will be with you in the course of the week. You will receive by him orders to proceed to Spithead; but I shall be very glad to see you here *en route*, and I will inform Lady Saumarez by to-morrow's post of your probable approach.

Lord Spencer has been fully impressed by me of the long and arduous service you have undergone, and seems well disposed to give you the respite so justly due to the cheerfulness with which you have conducted the most important employment of this war. I am not in the secret when the promotion is to take effect. Private letters from town and the newspapers are full of it, and I am morally certain it will be out soon; for one of the ninety-gun ships, commanded by an officer very near the head of the list of captains, is nominated for Sir Erasmus Gower's flag, which appears conclusive.

Sir Hyde Parker has asked leave of absence; and, as the size of the fleet of observation is much reduced, I conceive it will be granted.

Yours, most truly,
Torr Abbey, 2nd December, 1800.

To Sir James Saumarez.

The following extract, which alludes to the preceding, was written by Sir James to Lady Saumarez on the

29th Dec.—The Earl informs me of his intention to write to you. I perceive he is resolved to become a favourite of yours by his attention. The order for the Cæsar to anchor in Torbay for twenty-four hours, on her way to Portsmouth, will not lessen his favour with you. After this, I suppose I cannot do less than invite you to take a passage in the ship with your two dear little companions; but it must be on condition that the weather is propitious to my views.

[Pg 317]

The station off the Black Rocks had hitherto been considered tenable only by frigates during the winter; on which service three or four were annually employed; but which, like the Channel fleet, occasionally took refuge in Torbay. It had been, however, resolved upon by Earl St. Vincent to form an advanced squadron of six sail of the line; and Sir James, as we have before stated, was the officer selected to proceed on this arduous and important undertaking. None but professional men who have been in that anxious and perilous service can have any idea of its difficulties. In such a situation the commanding-officer must consider himself constantly in the scene of action, surrounded by dangers of every description, exposed to the violence of storms, and sailing amidst a multitude of rocks and variable currents, in the longest and darkest nights, and often on a lee-shore on the enemy's coast, while the whole of their fleet is near, and ready to take advantage of any disaster, or change of wind or circumstance that might arise in their favour.

[Pg 318]

It has already been shown that Sir James performed this duty to the entire satisfaction of the noble Earl, and to the country. No storm ever obliged him to leave his station, which has justly been denominated *the post of honour*.

We cannot conclude this chapter with more satisfaction than by subjoining the following interesting correspondence between Sir James and Earl Spencer, which no longer need be characterised as "secret."

Secret and confidential.

Cæsar, off Ushant, 20th June 1800.

MY LORD,

At this time, when a proper example should be set to the seamen of his Majesty's fleet, and a due sense of religion and the practice of it kept up in the royal navy, permit me to suggest to your lordship the propriety of a strong recommendation from the Board of Admiralty to the commanders-in-chief on the different stations (more particularly the Channel fleet) that they will cause the public worship of Almighty God to be duly and regularly performed on board the ships under their command, and that nothing but the most pressing exigency shall prevent Divine service from being publicly read every Sunday on board the respective ships.

It is from the too flagrant neglect of this most essential part of our duty that I have been impelled to write *in confidence* to your lordship on the subject, with the hope that proper means will be adopted to rectify it.

We have signals to denote that the ship's companies will have time for dinner or breakfast; why should there not be one to signify that they will have time for the performance of Divine service? Were such a signal to be made from the ship of the commander-in-chief on Sunday morning, it would be generally followed by all the fleet, as they would then know the Admiral's intention to give time for that purpose.

[Pg 319]

I trust that your lordship will do justice to the motives that have induced me to write on the present subject, which I have long had in contemplation, and which I have now decided upon from the apprehensions that seem to be entertained of disturbances among the seamen of this fleet, as I know nothing that will contribute more to keep them in the right line of their duty than a proper attention to religious principles, the example to which should be set them by their officers.

I have the honour to be, with the greatest regard,
Your lordship's most faithful
and obedient humble servant,

JAS. SAUMAREZ.

The Right Hon. Earl Spencer, &c. &c. &c.

DEAR SIR,

I have to acknowledge your letter of the 20th instant, and am much obliged to you for the hint contained in it. You must be aware how delicate a matter it is for me to interfere in a detail of this description. I shall not, however, fail to make such use of the suggestion as may appear to me to come within the bounds of propriety, and may very probably produce the desired effect.

I trust that the present alarm, which has been excited by several circumstances of a suspicious nature, may prove groundless; and I feel very strongly that nothing can more probably contribute to make it so than every precaution being taken in time to prevent an evil, which experience has already proved to us, if suffered once to begin, is so very difficult to remedy.

[Pg 320]

I am, dear sir,

Your very obedient humble servant,

SPENCER.

The Cæsar arrived at Torbay on the 14th December, and on the 21st reached Spithead, where she remained during the rest of the year 1800.

CHAPTER XIII.

[Pg 321]

1801.

Sir James Saumarez is promoted to the rank of Rear-admiral.—Appointed to command the advanced squadron.—Proceedings at the Black Rocks.—Douvarnez Bay.—Returns to England.—Appointed to command a squadron on a very particular service.—His secret orders, &c. and letter of approbation.—Ready for sea.—Is created a Baronet of the United Kingdom.

On the 1st of January 1801, a promotion of flag-officers took place, in order, it was said, to include the name of Sir James Saumarez; and this flattering compliment was immediately followed by a further honour, in his being ordered forthwith to hoist his flag on board his old ship, the Cæsar; while Lieutenant Henryson, who was senior in that ship, was promoted to the rank of commander. Sir James being ordered to fit for the same service in which he had lately been so successfully employed, Captain Jahleel Brenton, who had been recommended by Earl St. Vincent, and who had been a volunteer during the last cruise, was appointed to the Cæsar as his captain.

[Pg 322]

On the 6th of January the ship came out of harbour, and having received her guns, and her stores and provisions for six months, the flag of Rear-admiral Sir James Saumarez was hoisted on the 24th; and on the 25th of February he sailed to resume the command of the in-shore squadron off Brest, but joined the Channel fleet at Torbay on the way thither. On the 7th March he arrived off the Black Rocks, where he relieved Admiral Thornbrough, and soon afterwards reconnoitred the harbour of Brest. On the 20th, the severe equinoctial gale forced the squadron into Douvarnez Bay, where the ships anchored in eighteen fathoms, just out of reach of the enemy's shot. Here they remained, as much at their ease in the enemy's harbour as they would have been at Spithead, and were never molested. On the 25th March, after two attempts to work out of the bay, the squadron resumed their station at the Black Rocks.

The following is extracted from a letter from one of the officers of the Cæsar, dated 26th March:

Our advanced squadron of the Channel fleet, commanded by Sir James Saumarez, never quitted the French coast during the late stormy weather. We anchored during the late violent gales in Douvarnez Bay, which is, in my opinion, one of the finest in the universe. It is sheltered from every wind but those from W. 1/2 N. to W. 1/2 S.; and even that opening is protected by a reef of rocks. Although the height of the gale was in the worst direction it could have been, yet, having no very considerable sea, we rode it out remarkably well. We lay, much to the disappointment of the enemy, just out of gun-shot of the forts. They favoured us, however, with some shells. We found, upon our re-appearance off Brest, that six Spaniards had equiped themselves, in addition to six Frenchmen, probably with a design to attack us.

[Pg 323]

The Government having been relieved from their anxiety for the safety of the in-shore squadron by a despatch from Sir James, Earl St. Vincent, who was now First Lord of the Admiralty, wrote to him the following letter of approbation:

Admiralty, 1st April 1801.

MY DEAR ADMIRAL,

The manner in which you have conducted the advanced squadron calls upon me to repeat my admiration of it. Your taking the anchorage in Douvarnez Bay during the late equinoctial gales has been of the utmost importance, and prevented the crippling of one or more of your squadron. I heartily hope you continue in good health, for which and every other blessing you have the fervent wishes of

Your very sincere and obedient servant,

ST. VINCENT.

To R. A. Sir James Saumarez.

During the whole of this month, Sir James kept his squadron generally within three or four miles of the entrance of Brest, from which it was never further than as many leagues. In this situation, and by frequently reconnoitring in his own ship, he was enabled to watch the preparations of the enemy, and to frustrate their designs to attack his squadron with a superior force; while he so completely blockaded their port that, as when he formerly commanded, no square-rigged vessel ever entered it, thereby preventing the necessary supplies of stores and provisions from reaching the depôt of their navy. Nor did a single vessel escape the unwearied vigilance and perseverance of the advanced squadron during the whole time it was under his command.

[Pg 324]

Early in May, letters reached him from Guernsey, intimating the great apprehension his

countrymen were under of invasion by the enemy; when he wrote to Sir Thomas Troubridge, then one of the Lords of the Admiralty, who sent the following answer:

Admiralty, 17th May 1801.

MY DEAR SIR JAMES,

Many thanks for your kind letter of the 6th instant. I am sorry our *French friends* do not come out, that you may teach them *English*. The Gazette [26] will show you that our soldiers are getting into the habits of fighting.

We heard of the miscreants' intentions on the islands; and I have sent over several gun-brigs, gun-barges, frigates, sloops, &c. and a few additional troops. There are 5,000 regulars at Jersey, and some more going soon, so that I think they have little chance of success if they make the attempt; but it appears to me that the different powers cannot look on without interfering, and stopping the progress of the villains. In short, I hope to see them soon weighed down in a congress.

[Pg 325]

Lord St. Vincent's cough is better, and the warm weather will re-establish him. I beg you to give my best compliments to Brenton. Believe me

Yours most faithfully,

THOMAS TROUBRIDGE.

To Sir James Saumarez.

Thus released from the painful anxiety for the safety of the Channel islands, where so many of his dearest connexions resided, he wrote the following letter to his brother, Sir Thomas Saumarez, who was at that time in command of the local force in Guernsey:

Cæsar, off Ushant, 30th May 1801.

I have received your kind letter of the 17th, and am happy to hear that a considerable force has been sent for the protection of Guernsey and the other islands. They cannot be too well taken care of, when we consider the infinite mischief they would do to Great Britain, should they fall into the enemy's hands.

I am in daily expectation of being relieved by Admiral Thornbrough, after a fourteen weeks' cruise, which is rather a longer period than the Earl intended when I sailed from Spithead. Brenton is everything that can be desired. I have found in him a most excellent officer and a most agreeable companion.

It appears by his journal, that on the following day he received the welcome orders which put an end to his long and harassing cruise; also a private letter of importance from Earl Spencer: and, being relieved by Admiral Thornbrough on the 1st of June, he arrived on the 2nd at Cawsand Bay. Having reported the return of the Cæsar, he received in answer the following letters from Earl St. Vincent and Mr. Nepean:

[Pg 326]

Admiralty, 4th June 1801.

MY DEAR SIR,

I am glad the Cæsar is in Cawsand Bay, because you will be the sooner informed of his Majesty's most gracious intentions towards you, in which I have greater pleasure than I can express, as you are to be placed at the head of a detached squadron destined for a very important service, at no great distance from home. I hope the Cæsar will not be long in fitting up.

Yours most truly,

ST. VINCENT.

To Rear-admiral Sir James Saumarez.

Admiralty Office, 4th June 1801.

SIR,

I have received, and communicated to my Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty, your letter to me of the 2nd instant, acquainting me, for their lordships' information, of your arrival in H.M.S. Cæsar, in Cawsand Bay, in pursuance of orders from Admiral Cornwallis, a copy of which you have enclosed: and I have their lordships' commands to signify their directions to you to use every exertion in completing the stores and provisions of the said ship, as also of the Spencer; and, having so done, remain with the said ships in Cawsand Bay, in constant readiness to proceed on service, when you shall receive their lordships' orders for that purpose.

I am, sir, your obedient servant,

EVAN NEPEAN.

To Rear-admiral Sir James Saumarez.

The following is the reply to Earl St. Vincent's letter of the 4th June, dated

[Pg 327]

Cæsar, Cawsand Bay, 6th June.

MY LORD,

Previously to receiving the honour of your lordship's letter, I had been informed by Earl Spencer of his Majesty's gracious intentions; and I beg to express my sincere acknowledgments for the part your lordship has taken in obtaining for me this mark of the royal favour.

I am much flattered by the communication your lordship has the goodness to make of having nominated me for the command of a squadron to be employed on a very particular service; and I beg your lordship will be assured of my most zealous exertions for the promotion of every part of it. I have the honour to be, &c.

JAS. SAUMAREZ.

On the 7th of June, Sir James received the following communication from the Lords of the Admiralty, which could not fail to afford him the highest gratification.

Most secret.

By the Commissioners for executing the office of Lord High Admiral of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, &c.

Whereas we have received information that a squadron consisting of five Spanish ships of the line, which lately sailed from Ferrol, have arrived at Cadiz; and that great exertions are now making at the last-mentioned place for the equipment of a further naval force, for the purpose (it is alleged) of an attack upon Portugal; we send you herewith copies of the several letters containing the information mentioned: and do hereby direct you, on the arrival of the Hannibal, Audacious, and Thames, at Plymouth, to take them under your command, (their captains being directed to follow your orders,) as also the Spencer, and either the Juste, Pompée, or Courageux, now in Cawsand Bay, whichever may first be ready, and proceed with them and the Cæsar, with as little delay as possible, off Cadiz, where you may expect to be joined by the Venerable and Superb, which ships you are also to take under your command; and use your best endeavours to prevent the enemy's ships at that port from putting to sea, or to take or destroy them should they sail from thence.

[Pg 328]

In the event of the enemy's squadron getting out of Cadiz undiscovered, either before or after your arrival off that place, you are to follow it, according to any well-grounded intelligence you may be able to obtain of it; but you are not to proceed in quest of it to any distant station, unless you should receive such information as shall leave no doubt of the certainty of the enemy's destination. If you should not be able to obtain any information of the enemy's squadron so as to enable you to follow it, you are in that case to repair with the ships under your command off the Straits, and send into Tangier and Gibraltar, and, finding that it has proceeded up the Mediterranean, to follow it; but, not gaining any intelligence of it, you are to resume your station off Cadiz, and remain there until you shall receive some information whereby your proceedings may be regulated.

And whereas it has been represented to us that three Portuguese ships of the line are now fitting out in the Tagus for the purpose of joining you and serving under your orders, you are, on the arrival of the said ships, to take them under your command, and employ them in such manner as you may judge most advisable in carrying these, or any other orders you may receive from us or from Admiral Lord Keith, (under whose command you are to consider yourself,) into execution. And whereas we have directed Admiral Sir Thomas Pasley to order one of the hired brigs, and either a cutter or lugger, to follow your orders; you are to take the commanders of these vessels under your command, and, on your repairing to your station, you are to send one of them into the Tagus for the purpose of apprising his Majesty's minister there of your situation, and for obtaining from him such intelligence as he may have to give you.

[Pg 329]

Whilst you remain on this service, you are to send occasionally to Lisbon for intelligence, and to keep a good look-out for any French squadron which may attempt either to join the Spanish ships at Cadiz, or to pass through the Straits; and to use your best endeavours to intercept, and to take or destroy it, if the force you may have with you should be sufficient to enable you to do so; taking care to avoid it in time, if the enemy's force should be so superior to that under your command as to render it improper for you to attack it; in which case it is left to your discretion to act as circumstances shall require: using, however, every possible exertion to join the commander-in-chief of his Majesty's ships in the Mediterranean, or to fall in with the same detachment of his Majesty's ships; and, so soon as you shall have collected such a force as may be sufficient to enable you to attack the enemy's squadron, you are to proceed in quest of it, and, upon falling in with it, to bring it to action.

In case you should get sight of a French squadron, or should obtain certain information that such squadron has passed the Straits, you are no longer to attend to the Spanish ships in Cadiz, but to consider the capture or destruction of the French squadron as the principal object to which your exertions are to be directed; and, in the event of your following any squadron into the Mediterranean, you are to send an account thereof to our secretary, as well as to Admiral Lord Keith, with as little delay as possible; and you are also to transmit to him and the said admiral, by every proper opportunity that may offer, accounts of your proceedings, and of every information you may be able to obtain of the movements and intentions of the enemy.

[Pg 330]

Given under our hands, 6th day of June 1801.

ST. VINCENT.
ST. VINCENT.
J. MARKHAM.

To Sir James Saumarez, Bart.
Rear-admiral of the Blue,
Plymouth.

By command of their Lordships,

EVAN NEPEAN.

The following is the copy of information transmitted to Sir James with the above letter:

No. 1.

Dated Lisbon, 15th May 1801.

MY LORD,

It appears, from the report of an American captain arrived here from Bilboa, that a French corps had passed within a few miles of that place, on their way to Vittoria, on the 21st and 22nd ultimo. It consisted in the whole of 7,000 infantry and 2,000 cavalry, well armed and mounted; and had reached their place of encampment, supposed to be Burgos, according to the accounts which had arrived at Bilboa, on the 30th day, when the vessel sailed. It appeared evident that no other troops had passed the frontier at that time, though it was uniformly reported that a body of no less than 22,000 men were collected at Bayonne.

The Spanish army on the south side of the Tagus, between Badajos and Alcantara, amounts to 21,000 men; of which 10,000 are encamped at Badajos, 8,000 at Albuquerque, and the remainder between Vincenti and Alcantara. The Prince of Peace was daily expected at head-quarters. His aides-de-camp were already arrived, and a train of 700 mules had been collected for the conveyance of his baggage. The French detachment was destined to join the army of Castile, which I already mentioned to your lordship has returned from its movements towards the northern provinces, and taken a position to the southward of Ciudad Rodrigo. Its numbers and distribution are not so accurately known, but it is stated to be equal to the army of Estremadura, with the addition of the French auxiliaries.

[Pg 331]

I have the honour to be, &c.

J.H. FRERE.

No. 2.

MY LORD,

By intelligence which arrived from Cadiz, in date of the second of this month, it appears that there were in that port five Spanish ships of the line, which had pushed out from Ferrol, conformably to the report which I mentioned to your lordship in my last despatch. There was at the same time (in Cadiz) an additional force of eight or ten sail preparing for sea; four of them of the line, and the remainder frigates. This equipment was however retarded by the want of naval stores, particularly sailcloth and cables, which was occasioned by the late fire which has taken place in the arsenal, as well as by the total want of money, which was such that many of the officers were actually reduced to subsist on charity.

The informant, whose authority may be depended on, adds that a squadron from Brest was expected to join them. It was supposed that the whole armament would be directed against Portugal; and this supposition was not weakened by a report which was given out industriously that the object of the intended expedition was to make a landing on the coast of Barbary, in order to force the Emperor of Morocco to shut his ports against the English. The ships from Ferrol have the French and Spanish colours united in the same flag. It was understood that the ships now arming in Cadiz were to be commanded by French officers. They were victualled only for a very short voyage.

[Pg 332]

Respecting the danger to which this capital would be exposed by a *coup-de-main*, which might be attempted in spite of the batteries at the entrance of the river, as well as the possibility of effecting a landing a few miles off Cascaes, your lordship has at hand the means of information so much superior to any which I could presume to offer, or collect from professional persons here, that I shall only presume to solicit your lordship's attention to the consideration of this subject, and to the necessity which may arise out of it, for employing a naval force upon this station. Don Rodrigo has informed me that the three Portuguese ships of the line, which I mentioned to your lordship as preparing for service, will be ready within three weeks to form a junction with any force which his Majesty might be pleased to detach, for the defence of Portugal; and that two more would be prepared to follow them within a short time after.

It appears by a letter from Viana, that the master of an English vessel, who had been captured on the 10th ultimo by Le Telegraph privateer, and carried into Corunna on the 23rd, had found there two large French frigates, which had arrived immediately before him in eight days from Cherbourg, laden with some ammunition, and destined (as they reported) for Cadiz. The master of Le Telegraph had avoided putting into any of his own ports from the apprehension of being detained, as it was reported that other privateers had been stopped, and stripped of their men, on account of a secret expedition which was fitting out in the French ports.

[Pg 333]

I have the honour to be, &c.

J.H. FRERE.

The Right Honourable Lord Hawkesbury, &c. &c. &c.

No. 3.

Intelligence arrived from General O'Hara, at Gibraltar.

Arrived by land the crew of the Fortune privateer, consisting of twelve men. They report that last Saturday, between three and four P.M. they saw two three-deckers and three seventy-fours arrive at Cadiz from Ferrol; that the Santissima Trinidad, another Spanish three-decker, is completed and ready in that harbour; and that they are fitting out five other line-of-battle ships at Cadiz, which have their lower-masts in; that, in order to man the said ships, they are detaining all the crews of the French privateers; that those eleven ships are to be commanded by French officers; and they say the five ships in the Caraccas will soon be ready,—that they observed a number of seamen rigging them.—Gibraltar, 29th April 1801.

List of the armament fitting out at Cadiz.

	Guns.		Guns.
Santissima Trinidad	140	San Justo	74
Atlante	80	San Januario	80

Ferrivel	80	Intrepido	80
San Antonio	80	Firme	80
Suberano	80		

The above ships are commanded by French officers, and probably, therefore, are those which are alluded to as having been ceded to France.

	Guns.		Guns.
A. Real de St. Carlos	120	Bergantina St. Andre	24
St. Hermenegildo	120	Balandra Aglina	14
St. Fernando	120	St. Nicalao	14
St. Agustino	80	4 gun-boats ^[27]	2}
St. Izidoro	80	20 built by the inhabitants	}
Argonauta	80	of Cadiz	1}
Fragata Sabina	44	18 gun-boats	1}
Fragata Perula	40	4 burlates	

[Pg 334]

Cæsar, Cawsand Bay, 9th June 1801.

SIR,

I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of their lordships' secret orders, dated 6th instant; and, in compliance therewith, I have directed Captain Stirling, of his Majesty's ship *Pompée*, to put himself under my command.

Be pleased to inform their lordships that Admiral Sir Thomas Pasley has acquainted me that there is no hired armed brig at this port except the *Louisa*, and has placed the *Joseph*, hired cutter, only under my orders.

I am, sir,

Your most obedient servant,

JAMES SAUMAREZ.

To Evan Nepean, Esq. &c. &c. &c.

We need scarcely add that every possible exertion was made on the part of the admiral, the captains, officers, and crews of the respective ships, to get the squadron ready for sea; and in eight days the equipment was completed.

Before we record a circumstance which, in rewarding the merits of the new commander-in-chief, afforded great and universal satisfaction to the royal navy, we take occasion to introduce a correspondence, which, in order to avoid interruption of the narrative, has been omitted, and which will now be found more interesting.

[Pg 335]

Royal George, between Ushant and the Black Rocks, 26th July 1800.

MY DEAR LORD,

I need not describe to your lordship the merit of Sir James Saumarez, which cannot be surpassed. In a conversation I accidentally had with him last evening, I learned that his ambition had been much disappointed in not being created a baronet; and he thought I was wanting, in not pointing to this object in the letter I had the honour to write your lordship by him, after the battle of the Nile, where he was second in command; and he also conceives that your lordship led him to hope this mark of approbation of his services would have been conferred upon him. May I therefore trespass upon your indulgence, to request you will bring it about, if possible, as nothing can gratify me more, than that officers, who have signalised themselves under my auspices, should be amply rewarded.

Yours, most faithfully,

ST. VINCENT.

To the Right Hon. Earl Spencer.

A copy of the preceding having been sent by Earl St. Vincent to Sir James, produced the following answer:—

MY LORD,

Permit me to express my sincere acknowledgments for the very handsome letter you have done me the favour to write on a certain subject to Lord Spencer. Whether it meets with the expected success, or otherwise, I shall ever feel grateful for your obliging intentions towards me: at the same time, I am persuaded your lordship must coincide with my feelings, when I observe that the boon now pointed out was no more than the services I had the good fortune to be employed upon, gave me reason to expect long before this.

[Pg 336]

That health, and every possible success may ever attend your lordship, is the fervent wish of

My dear lord,
Your much obliged,
and faithful humble servant,

JAS. SAUMAREZ.

Cæsar, 29th July 1800.

On the 13th of June, his Majesty, having taken into consideration the meritorious services of Sir James Saumarez, was pleased to create him a Baronet of the United Kingdom; and, as an additional mark of the royal favour, permission was granted under the King's sign manual to wear the supporters to the arms of his family (which had been registered in the Heralds' office since the reign of Charles the Second); a privilege to which no commoner is entitled without a dispensation from the Crown. Of these honours Sir James was informed by Earl St. Vincent, at that time First Lord of the Admiralty, at the moment the Cæsar and squadron were about to proceed on one of the most interesting, and, as it turned out, one of the most glorious expeditions that ever left the shores of Great Britain.

CHAPTER XIV.

[Pg 337]

1801.

Sir James sails from England in command of a squadron of six sail of the line on a particular service.—Arrives off Cadiz.—Attacks a French squadron at Algeziras.—Captain Brenton's account of the battle.—Loss of the Hannibal.—Colonel Connolly's statements.—Logs of the Cæsar and ships of the squadron.—Sir James proceeds to Gibraltar.—Remarks.—Flag of truce sent to Algeziras.—Correspondence with Linois.—Squadron refit at Gibraltar.

On the 16th June the signal was made to unmoor; and soon after, for the squadron to weigh. The wind being fair, the ships quickly cleared the English Channel, and crossed the Bay of Biscay. Cape Finisterre was reached on the 22nd; on the 26th the squadron hove to off the Tagus, and sent letters on shore at Lisbon. The detachment was now joined by the Phaeton, Captain Morris, and proceeded off Cadiz, where it arrived on the 28th June: to announce this, the following letter was written to Admiral Lord Keith, who had then the chief command on the Mediterranean station:

[Pg 338]

Cæsar, off Cadiz, 26th June 1801.

MY LORD,

I have the honour to inform your lordship of my arrival off Cadiz with the ships named on the margin ^[28]under my orders; having sailed from Cawsand Bay on the 16th instant. On the 26th I was joined, off Lisbon, by the Phaeton, Captain Morris, from whom I received the enclosed state of the enemy's ships at Cadiz.^[29] The Venerable and Superb have both joined the squadron; and I have taken these ships under my orders, agreeably to my instructions from my Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty.

I shall take the earliest opportunity of transmitting to your lordship a copy of those instructions; but having at present no other vessel than the Plymouth, hired lugger, I cannot part with her further than to Gibraltar.

I have the honour to be,
Your lordship's most obedient humble
servant,

JAS. SAUMAREZ.

Right Honourable Lord Keith, K.B. &c.

The squadron continued to cruise off Cadiz, and frequently to reconnoitre the harbour; while the Superb was stationed off Lagos as a look-out ship to westward, and the Thames in the Straits of Gibraltar to the eastward.

Nothing of importance occurred until the 5th, when intelligence was received as to the situation of a French squadron. Sir James accordingly despatched the Plymouth lugger with the following letters to the Secretary of the Admiralty, and to Mr. Frere, the English ambassador at Lisbon:

[Pg 339]

Cæsar, off Cadiz, 5th July 1801.

SIR,

In my letter of the 29th ultimo, I acquainted you, for the information of my Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty, of my arrival before Cadiz with the squadron under my orders, and of my having been joined by the Venerable and Superb.

You will please to inform their lordships, that, early this morning, a despatch-boat joined me from Gibraltar, with intelligence that three French line-of-battle ships and a frigate were seen, on the 1st instant, endeavouring to pass the Straits from the eastward; and the Plymouth lugger has since

joined me, whose commander informs me that they anchored yesterday off Algeziras. As from the different accounts I form great hopes of being able to attack them with success, I am proceeding to the eastward, and I hope to reach the bay early to-morrow morning. The ships in Cadiz are getting in forwardness to put to sea. Eight appeared this morning with top-gallant yards across and sails bent, and four others with their top-masts rigged. I have directed the commander of the Plymouth, hired lugger, after having landed this letter at Faro, to cruise off Cape St. Mary's to apprise any of his Majesty's ships of my rendezvous, giving them such further information as he may be possessed of.

I am, sir, your most obedient servant,

JAMES SAUMAREZ.

Evan Nepean, Esq. &c. &c. &c. Admiralty.

Cæsar, off Cadiz, 5th July 1801.

SIR,

I have the honour to acquaint you with my having this instant received information, by an express from Gibraltar, that three sail of French line-of-battle ships and a frigate had anchored yesterday in Algeziras Bay, after being three days in endeavouring to pass the Straits from the eastward. They are supposed to be destined for Cadiz. I am proceeding off Gibraltar, in hopes it may be practicable to attack them, or prevent the junction of their other ships, from whom they are said to be separated. I request you will please to forward the letters I take the liberty to enclose herewith. I have the honour to be, sir,

[Pg 340]

Your most obedient humble servant,

JAMES SAUMAREZ.

Governor O'Hara writes that he is without intelligence from Egypt since the repulse of the French, the 21st March.

His Excellency J.H. Frere, Esq. &c. &c. &c. Lisbon.

It now becomes our duty to give a particular account of the defensive means of the French Admiral. The road of Algeziras, six miles distant from Gibraltar, is open to the eastward. It is shallow, with sunken rocks in several parts. The town is nearly in the centre, at the bottom of the Bay; about a third of a mile from which there is a tower standing on a point, and off this point is Isla Verda, whereon is a battery of seven long 24-pounders. About a mile to the southward of this battery is Fort Santa Garcia. The English ships had to pass these fortifications before they could reach the French line. The northward of the town was no less protected, having at the distance of about two-thirds of a mile the fort of San Jago, mounting five long 18-pounders, besides the tower Almirante. By referring to the diagrams, it will be manifest that the road is admirably protected by these fortifications, while those at a greater distance to the northward would be of some service in throwing shells, and in preventing the ships from working up to the attack. There were also fourteen large gun-boats, whose positions, as shown, were such as to form a serious opposition to an approaching enemy in light and variable winds.

[Pg 341]

Before we proceed to a description of the attack on the enemy's well-protected squadron, we must intreat the reader to pause, while we call his attention to the circumstance of the British ships, led by the gallant Hood, slowly and silently approaching the batteries of an enemy, strongly reinforced, perfectly prepared to receive them, and knowing well that they could not suffer any injury from the ships, while every shot from their cannon must tell. Silence, undoubtedly derives importance from the circumstances under which it is observed, and we cannot well refer to an instance where silence could have had a more solemn and impressive character than that which must have been observed on this occasion, until broken by the roar of the enemy's destructive engines.

Captain (now Admiral Sir Jahleel) Brenton, who was flag-captain of the Cæsar, has kindly transmitted the following particular and authentic account of all that took place on that eventful day, which afforded the enemy a short-lived triumph. We shall make no apology for giving it in his own words:

[Pg 342]

On Sunday, the 5th July 1801, a despatch-boat was seen in the S.E., and at two P.M. came alongside the Cæsar, with intelligence of a French squadron having anchored in Algeziras Bay, consisting of three sail of the line and a frigate.^[30] The Admiral immediately decided on attacking them; and ordered the Thames frigate to proceed off St. Lucar to recall the Superb, and make sail with the Pompée, Hannibal, Spencer, Audacious, and Venerable, for the entrance of the Straits of Gibraltar; making the signal to prepare for action, and for anchoring by the stern.

The day was beautiful, with a light air from the westward. At eleven o'clock the ship's company was, as usual, assembled for the purpose of Divine service. The appearance of this congregation, under the peculiar circumstances in which they were placed,—proceeding, as they all knew they were, to engage in battle with the enemy, with the probability that many had but a few remaining hours to live,—was solemn and deeply impressive. The crew were all dressed in white, as is customary in warm climates; and being arranged according to their respective divisions on the quarter-deck, with the band and the marines on the poop, and the Admiral and the officers under the poop awning, an effect was produced highly animating, solemn, and appropriate; while the meek, devotional countenance of the well-tryed Admiral indicated that he derived his confidence and support from its only true source.

Our chaplain, the Rev. Mr. Holliday, gave an excellent discourse, appropriate to the occasion; and it

[Pg 343]

cannot be doubted but the impressions it made on that eventful day were deep and affecting, however temporary.

I had of course much communication with the Admiral during the course of this day and the ensuing night. He was, as usual, calm, cheerful, and collected; foreseeing, and endeavouring to provide for, whatever might be required during the struggle which we were anticipating. He was quite aware of the difficulties we had to encounter, and fully determined to overcome them if possible.^[31]

At daylight we were off Tariffa, with light airs from the westward, which at seven freshened to a strong breeze, and enabled the Venerable to open the Bay of Algeziras, in which the French squadron were discovered at anchor. On the Venerable making the signal that she could weather the enemy, the Admiral made another to take stations for mutual support. The Pompée, Venerable, and Audacious were soon at an anchor, and at thirty-five minutes after eight began the action with the enemy. The Cæsar at nine o'clock opened her fire, and at fifteen minutes past nine came to an anchor ahead of the Venerable. The Spencer and Hannibal passed under our lee, nearly becalmed, and anchored without the Cæsar, firing, as the smoke subsided, through the openings between our ships at the enemy.

[Pg 344]

About ten o'clock the fire of the French ships appeared to slacken so much that I ventured to suggest to the Admiral that a flag of truce might be sent in, with a notice to the Spaniards that if the British squadron were permitted to take away the French ships without any further molestation from the batteries, the town would be respected, and no further injury done to it.

The Admiral expressed his readiness to do this; but considered the advantage we had gained, as yet, not sufficiently decisive to justify such a measure. And his judgment was but too correct. The decrease of the fire from the French ships arose from their being occupied in warping close in-shore; and, shortly after this period, the Pompée having broken her sheer, lost her commanding position relative to the French Admiral, whom she had been raking with great effect, and now became raked in her turn. At twenty minutes after ten, the boats of the squadron were sent to her assistance, and, having cut her cables, she was towed out of her exposed situation.

At thirty-five minutes after ten, the Admiral, observing how much the enemy had increased their distance from us by warping in-shore, ordered our cables to be cut, and sail to be made upon the ships, in the hope of being able to close with them. He also sent me on board the Spencer, with orders to Captain Darby to weigh, and work up to the enemy. The Hannibal, having already received these orders, was in the act of obeying them, and soon after opened her fire upon the French Admiral; but in the gallant endeavour to get between the Formidable and the shore, and not being aware of the French Admiral's change of position by warping in, Captain Ferris unfortunately ran his ship aground, abreast of the battery of St. Jago, and under the raking fire of the Formidable. In this helpless state he continued to engage the enemy until, to use the French Admiral's words, his decks were *jonché de morts*. He had seventy-three killed and sixty-four wounded,—a very unusual proportion, as, in general, the wounded trebles the number of the killed; but this may be accounted for by the Hannibal being so near that the enemy's shot passed through her sides without making any splinters, to which the greater number of wounds are attributable.

[Pg 345]

From the time the Cæsar cut her cable, she and the Audacious were constantly engaged with the Indomptable, Meuron, and island batteries, and occasionally with the Dessaix, as they could bring their guns to bear; but the perpetual flaws of wind rendered this very difficult, and exposed them frequently to a severe and raking fire from the enemy. The Admiral made the signal for the marines to be prepared to land on the island; but, as the boats were all employed in assisting the Pompée and Hannibal, this was rendered impracticable. At length, finding every effort fruitless to close with the enemy, the Admiral was under the necessity of withdrawing his ships from this unequal contest with winds and batteries; but it was not until all hope had vanished of saving the Hannibal that he left her in possession of the enemy.

[Pg 346]

The accompanying diagram shows first, the position of the hostile squadrons at the moment the Spencer, and Venerable, and Cæsar, had anchored; secondly, their position when the action ceased, and when the Hannibal was in possession of the enemy.



[View larger image](#)

Diagram of Algeziras and Gibraltar Bay.

The action of Algeziras was certainly obstinately fought, and gallantly contested on both sides. It is true that the French had little to do but to attend to their guns, being either at an anchor in their strong position, or warping towards the shore. In this operation the Spaniards had the hardest duty, being employed in their boats in carrying out hawsers, and even in heaving them in. Success seemed certain to the British squadron till the *Pompée* broke her sheer; after that, it was one continued but unavailing struggle to recover the ground we had lost by this misfortune: and we retreated to Gibraltar when all hope was at an end, the Admiral justly considering the importance of repairing the damages already sustained, and of preserving the lives of his gallant crew, which would be uselessly sacrificed by a continuance of a hopeless contest.

Never did I contemplate more real greatness of mind than was displayed on this occasion by our heroic chief. The calmness and cheerfulness with which he met and sustained the sad reverses of this most trying day, were objects worthy of remark and admiration. Whilst going into the Bay of Algeziras, he desired me to look over my signal-book, and to mark such signals as might be likely to be called for. He had already done the same, and when, during the heat of the action, any of the flags were destroyed, or the halliards shot away, I was astonished at the readiness with which he ordered one signal to be substituted for another, according as the signification might answer the purpose, without any reference to the book.

[Pg 347]

On reaching our anchorage off the Mole of Gibraltar, after giving the necessary orders for the disposal and refitting of his squadron, he returned to his cabin with a deep sense of the responsibility he had incurred; but supported by the unqualified conviction that every exertion had been made to obtain success, and that the disappointment resulted from circumstances over which he had no control.

The action terminated, as appears by the log, at thirty-five minutes after one; and the squadron proceeded to Gibraltar. As soon as the ship was secured, the Admiral sent me on shore to the governor, to relate to him the events of the two preceding days. I found him sitting in his balcony, which commanded a view of the Bay and Algeziras, evidently deeply affected by the unlooked-for termination of an attack upon the French squadron, and anxiously reflecting on the probable results.

On my return on board, the Admiral had retired to his cot; and I had no means of communicating with him until next morning. I could then, however, perceive that under all the severity of disappointment he experienced from our failure, and the loss of the *Hannibal*, he felt that no honour had been lost; that every effort had been made to obtain success; and that he derived comfort from the sanguine hopes he entertained that an opportunity might present itself in which he should be able to retrieve the loss.

He ordered me to take a flag of truce and wait upon the French Admiral, and propose an exchange of prisoners; which M. Linois refused, alleging that it was not in his power to establish a cartel for the purpose until he obtained the sanction of the Minister of the Marine at Paris, to whom he had sent off an express as soon as the firing had ceased on the preceding day; but he consented to send over the officers on parole. The object of the French Admiral was very obvious. He concluded we wanted the men to replace those that had been killed and wounded; but he thought, justly, that sending over officers on parole would be a harmless act of courtesy, from which we could reap no immediate benefit. It will be seen that, subsequently to the second action, (only six days after the first,) when his despatches from Algeziras had scarcely reached Paris, he did not wait for an answer from the Minister of the Marine: but circumstances had altered. We had taken a line-of-battle ship, and burned two first-rates; and he now wished to get as many of the crew back as possible.

[Pg 348]

We shall now transcribe the Rear-admiral's official account of the battle: this affords additional particulars, and proves that every step had been taken to insure success; which, but from circumstances that often blight the fairest prospects, would have had a very different result. We shall venture to add, that, had the gallant Admiral hesitated to make the attempt, he would have rendered himself obnoxious to animadversions, not only from all the squadron under his command, but from every one on the Rock of Gibraltar who witnessed the enemy's squadron of inferior force setting, as it were, that of Sir James at defiance; while it would have afforded the French and Spaniards a just, or, at least a plausible subject of exultation. But Sir James, with that decision of character and coolness, when in the presence of an enemy, for which he was always remarkable, did not hesitate one moment on the attack, which was made with consummate skill, and maintained with a perseverance never surpassed.

[Pg 349]

Cæsar, Gibraltar, 6th July 1801.

SIR,

I have to request you will be pleased to inform my Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty that, conformable to my letter of yesterday's date, I stood through the Straits, with his Majesty's squadron under my orders, with the intention of attacking three French line-of-battle ships and a frigate that I was informed were at anchor off Algeziras. On opening Cabrita Point, I found the ships lay at a considerable distance from the enemy's batteries; and having a leading wind up to them, every reasonable hope of success in the attack was afforded.

I had previously directed Captain Hood in the *Venerable*, from his experience and knowledge of the anchorage, to lead the squadron, which he executed with his accustomed gallantry; and, although it was not intended he should anchor, he found himself under the necessity of so doing, from the wind failing,—a circumstance so much to be apprehended in this country, and to which I have to attribute the want of success in this well-intended enterprise. Captain Stirling anchored, conformably to the enclosed order of attack, opposite to the inner ship of the enemy, and brought the *Pompée* to action in the most spirited and gallant manner; an example which was followed by the commanders of every ship in the squadron.

[Pg 350]

Captains Darby and Ferris, owing to light winds, were prevented for a considerable time from coming into action. At length, the *Hannibal* getting a breeze, Captain Ferris had the most favourable prospect of being alongside one of the enemy's ships, when the *Hannibal* unfortunately took the

ground; and I am extremely concerned to acquaint their lordships that, after having made every possible effort with this ship and the Audacious to rescue her from the enemy, I was under the necessity to make sail, being at the time only three cables' length from one of the enemy's batteries.

My thanks are particularly due to all the captains and men under my orders; and, although their endeavours have not been crowned with success, I trust the thousands of spectators from his Majesty's garrison, and also the surrounding coast, will do justice to their valour and intrepidity, which were not to be checked by the fire from the numerous batteries (however formidable) that surrounded Algeziras.

I feel it incumbent upon me to state to their lordships the great merits of Captain Brenton of the Cæsar, whose cool judgment and intrepid conduct, I will venture to pronounce, were never surpassed. I also beg leave to recommend to their lordships' notice my flag-lieutenant, Mr. Philip Dumaresq, who has served with me from the commencement of this war, and is a most deserving officer. Mr. Lamborn and the other lieutenants are also entitled to great praise; as well as Captain Maxwell of the Marines, and the other officers of his corps serving on board the Cæsar.

The enemy's ships consisted of two of eighty-four guns and one of seventy-four, with a large frigate: two of the former are aground, and the whole are rendered totally unserviceable.

[Pg 351]

His Majesty's ships have suffered considerably in their masts and rigging; but I hope will soon be refitted, and in readiness to proceed on service.

Inclosed is the return of the killed and wounded from the different ships of the squadron. Amongst other valuable men I have most sincerely to lament the loss of Mr. William Grave, master of the Cæsar. I cannot close this letter without rendering the most ample justice to the great bravery of Captain Ferris: the loss in his ship must have been very considerable both in officers and men; but I have the satisfaction to be informed that his Majesty has not lost so valuable an officer.

The Honourable Captain Dundas, of his Majesty's sloop the Calpe, made his vessel as useful as possible, and kept up a spirited fire on one of the enemy's batteries. I have also to express my approbation of Lieutenant Janvrin, commander of the gun-boats; who, having joined me with intelligence, served as volunteer on board the Cæsar.

I am,
Your most obedient servant,

JAS. SAUMAREZ.

To Evan Nepean, Esq. &c. &c. &c.

On the return of the squadron to the Mole of Gibraltar, the following public order was issued by the Admiral.

Cæsar, in Rosia Bay, 6th July 1801.

Rear-admiral Sir James Saumarez desires to express in the strongest terms the high sense he entertains of the gallantry and valiant conduct of all the captains, officers, and men belonging to the squadron under his orders, in the attack made this day on the enemy's ships and batteries; and, although the result has not proved so successful as his expectations had framed, he trusts that the glory they have acquired on this occasion will ever be acknowledged by their country.

[Pg 352]

JAS. SAUMAREZ.

To the respective Captains.

The following addition to Sir James's despatch gives the account of the capture of the Hannibal, from Captain Ferris, then a prisoner at Algeziras.

Cæsar, Gibraltar, 9th July 1801.

SIR,

I herewith enclose a letter from Captain Ferris of his Majesty's late ship Hannibal, which I request you will please to lay before their lordships; and I have only to express my deep regret that his well-meant endeavours to bring his ship to close action should have occasioned so severe a loss. I have the honour to be, sir,

Your most obedient servant,

JAS. SAUMAREZ.

Evan Nepean, Esq. Admiralty.

Algeziras Bay, 7th July 1801.

SIR,

I have little more to tell you of the fate of his Majesty's ship Hannibal than yourself must have observed; only, that from the number of batteries, and ships' gun-boats, &c. we had to encounter, our guns soon got knocked up; and I found it was impossible to do anything, either for the preservation of the ship, or for the good of the service. Our boats, sails, rigging, and springs being all shot away, and having so many killed and wounded, as will appear by the annexed list, I thought it prudent to strike, and thereby preserve the lives of the brave men that remained.

[Pg 353]

Had I been successful in the view before me previously to the ship taking the ground, my praises of the conduct of my officers and ship's company could not have exceeded their merits; but I have, notwithstanding, the satisfaction to say, that every order was obeyed and carried into execution with that promptitude and alacrity becoming British officers and seamen.

I am, sir,
Your most obedient humble servant,

To Rear-admiral Sir James Saumarez.

It has now become necessary that we should notice a controversy which has taken place between the authors of the different naval histories on the subject of the Battle of Algeziras; and we have been led to make minute inquiries, first, into the cause of the discrepancies of the different accounts; and, secondly, into the truth, which we have been the better able to do from our personal knowledge and recent communication with some of the officers of the Hannibal and Cæsar, on whose veracity we can depend. We are happy to add that the result of our inquiries has been satisfactory, and, we trust, will completely clear up and reconcile the facts, while it will leave no reflection of a dubious character on the conduct of the heroic commander of the squadron.

It appears that no difference of opinion arose on this subject until the court-martial of Captain Ferris, which took place on the 1st September 1801, at Portsmouth, Rear-admiral Holloway president; when, as usual on trials for the loss of a ship, Captain Ferris read his narrative, which he begins thus:

[Pg 354]

"In giving a detail of the circumstances which led to the loss of his Majesty's late ship Hannibal, I am sorry that, owing to my clerk being killed, whose remarks were lost,^[32] I cannot be so particular as to the exact times of signals being made as I otherwise should have been; but I shall state them to you to the best of my recollection."

After this admission, is it not surprising that the controversy should be mainly founded on the time at which the Hannibal struck her colours? Captain Ferris says, "about two o'clock;" while by the log of the Cæsar the action had entirely ceased at thirty-five minutes past one. It may be asked, why did not the court, which must have seen the discrepancy between his narrative and the public and other documents before it, inquire into the truth by requiring the evidence of the officers and crew, none of whom were examined as to the time the ship struck: but the duty of the court being confined to the trial of Captain Ferris, his officers and crew, and it being (whether supported or not) evident and notorious that they had defended their ship to the last extremity, they had (unluckily for Sir James) nothing to do but to pronounce an honourable acquittal.

[Pg 355]

The next contradiction which appears, relates to the boats which were sent to the assistance of the Hannibal. Captain Ferris says, "The Admiral, having previously made my signal of recall, sent a boat from the Cæsar, and another from the Venerable, to my assistance; but, finding they could afford me none, I sent the Venerable's boat back, and the crew of the Cæsar in one of my own cutters, their pinnace having been sunk by a shot alongside."

I am bound to say that this assertion is not borne out either by the testimony of those who were in the boats of the Cæsar and the Venerable, or by the officers of the Hannibal; because, as will be seen hereafter, these boats never reached the Hannibal, when aground, until after she had struck her colours.

Captain Ferris next relates that "About twelve o'clock our ships were all out of gun-shot of the enemy, and we had the fire of the whole French squadron, batteries, and gun-boats, to contend with alone; against which we continued to keep up as brisk a fire as could be expected, even by men in the most sanguine anticipation of victory, until near two o'clock."

Now this is quite impossible, as, by the log of every ship, the squadron was engaging much later: by the Cæsar, until 1h.35m.; by the Audacious, until 1h.20m.; by the Venerable, until 1h.30m. &c.; before which, the ensign of the Hannibal was seen, from every ship, *Union down*.

[Pg 356]

It has been unwarrantably alleged by some that the Hannibal hauled the ensign down, and then hoisted it reversed, as a signal of distress, and afterwards, when she struck, hauled it down; and that the French hoisted it union down to decoy the Calpe,. But, for the refutation of these absurdities, we must refer the reader to the testimony of Colonel Connolly, who was then acting captain of the marines, an officer of the highest character, whose veracity cannot be questioned; and who, moreover, from being the only officer on the poop when the colours were struck, had a better opportunity of knowing the facts than any other. The following are the questions which we put to Colonel Connolly, with his answers, given verbatim:

Did the enemy take possession of the Hannibal before the colours were hoisted union down?

The colours were hauled down by Captain Ferris's orders, and remained so; but, being so near the Formidable, the captain of her was on board of us in two minutes after we had struck, and the colours were hoisted *union downwards* by the Frenchmen.^[33]

Were the colours hoisted union down by the enemy; or, at any time, by Captain Ferris's orders?

[Pg 357]

By the enemy.

Did the boats come *before* or *after* the colours were hoisted union downwards, to render her assistance?

The boats from our ships did not get near us till after we were in possession of the enemy; and I called to an old shipmate of mine in the Venerable's barge, and told him so, as he came under the starboard quarter; but he persisted in coming on board, and was taken.

What boats were taken; and what boats escaped?

A good many were taken. The Venerable's barge and her first lieutenant; and another lieutenant, in the Cæsar's boat, of some ship lying at Gibraltar; beside the mids. I am not aware indeed that any escaped.

What French officer took possession of the Hannibal?

I am not quite certain whether it was the captain of the Formidable or the Dessaix; they were both very close to us: however, he was a very little fellow.

To what prison were you taken?

The ship's company were divided into two prisons, which appeared to have been stables. There was no water in one of them, and the distress of our poor fellows, on that account, was truly shocking: often, when they would give money to the people outside to bring them some to drink, they would walk off with it, and never bring the water.

On this occasion Colonel Connolly recognised a French officer who had been a short time previously a prisoner on board the Warrior, to whom he had been particularly civil, supplying him with linen, &c.; and who left the ship with protestations of his desire to make every return in his power, if the "fortune of war" should give him an opportunity: but when he claimed the performance of his promise, his reply was, "Monsieur de Connolly, I very sorry for your misfortune; but I wish you good morning!" and left him with a sarcastic sneer.

[Pg 358]

It is evident, from this testimony, that the colours were only struck once, and hoisted once union down, and only hoisted union down by the Frenchmen; and that the boats of the Cæsar and Venerable were only once on board the Hannibal after she was aground; namely, when their crews were taken prisoners. But both these boats were actually sent to her assistance at a previous period, when the Hannibal was directed by the Admiral to endeavour to obtain a position to rake the Formidable; and it was then that they were sent back. Captain Brenton first received the report of the Hannibal having her colours union downwards between twelve and one, while the Cæsar was engaging the island battery, and the Dessaix and the Muiron.

The Cæsar's boat was sent with others to the assistance of the Hannibal, according to the log, at seventeen minutes past one, and must have reached her certainly before the action ceased, and found her in the hands of the enemy, as described by Colonel Connolly.

[Pg 359]

It is absurd to suppose that, while actually engaging the enemy, Captain Ferris would haul down his colours, to hoist them as a signal of distress, when he had other ensigns to hoist, and when there was a signal in the book, "In distress, and in want of immediate assistance:" this is a circumstance which, I will venture to assert, never occurred in any naval action.

Captain Brenton, being decidedly of the same opinion, adds, "I can only say, when it was reported to me, *while in action*, that the Hannibal's colours were reversed, I considered her to be in possession of the enemy: that the Admiral took the same view of the subject, I have not the least doubt; and I think nothing would have induced him to abandon the Hannibal while she was engaged. I will further add, that I never remember the slightest doubt being expressed of the Hannibal having struck before the action terminated, until I read the narrative of Captain Ferris, at his court-martial, some time afterwards."

The moment these champions of "liberté, égalité, et la mort," entered the Hannibal, plunder was the order of the day; and, in their furious haste to get at the officers' trunks, they cruelly trod over the wounded in the cockpit and cable-tiers. Colonel Connolly relates that in a few minutes one of them had taken his new cocked-hat, and appeared on deck with it. He himself had given up seeking his desk, which contained a considerable sum of money besides valuable papers, because he could not get at it without creeping over the wounded; but the French, not so particular, soon found it.

[Pg 360]

We shall now give the extracts of the various logs to which we have had access. These have never yet been published, and we trust they will set the matter at rest. It is some satisfaction indeed, that all authors agree in declaring that nothing more could have been done, and that the honour of the British flag was to the last gloriously maintained on the 6th of July 1801.

Extract of the Cæsar's log in the Battle of Algeziras, 5th July:

Winds S.W. and variable. At 12h.30m. P.M. up mainsail and in royals; at 2h. made the signal for the squadron to prepare for battle, and, anchoring, bent the sheet cable through the larboard gun-room port to the sheet anchor; at 4h. set steering-sails,—fresh breezes and fair; at 8h. moderate breezes,—Cape Moulinau E.N.E. seven or eight miles; at 12h. (midnight), light airs inclinable to calm,—squadron in company, Venerable S.S.E. one mile. At 12h.30m. (6th), in steering-sails, and at 12h.40m. lowered down the yawl; at 3h.45m. a breeze sprung up,—made the signal for attention; at 4h.5m. beat to quarters,—Cabrita Point, S.E. by E. three or four leagues,—made the Pompée's signal to close; at 5h. set top-gallant steering-sails, and at 6h. the fore-top-mast steering-sail; at 7h. 45m. made the Venerable's signal to haul the wind,—took in the starboard steering-sails; at 8h. in steering-sails; at 8h.5m. in top-gallant sails,—made the signal for being at liberty to engage the enemy in passing; at 8h. do. to take stations for mutual support; at 8h.25m. set top-gallant sails,—the enemy's ships opened their fire,—saw the Venerable break round off,—Cæsar fired at a Spanish battery in passing; at 8h.35m. the action commenced with the Pompée, Venerable, and Audacious; at 8h. 45m. made the signal for the ships astern to make more sail; at 9h. light breezes, and variable,—opened our fire, and the engagement became general; at 9h.15m. passed the Venerable, and came to with the sheet-anchor in nine fathoms,—the sheet-cable became *taut*,—let go the best bower to steady the ship,—Spencer and Hannibal passed under our lee,—hailed them to get the boats ahead, and tow into action,—light airs; at 9h. 35m. the Spencer opened her fire; at 9h.40m. the Hannibal, do.—our spanker-boom shot away; at 10h.20m. sent boats to the Pompée and

[Pg 361]

Hannibal; at 10h.26m. made the Hannibal's signal to tack,—saw the Pompée had broke her sheer, apparently by a flaw of wind, and was raked by the French Admiral; at 10h.30m. made the Pompée's signal to cut or slip; at 10h.35m., a breeze springing up from the N.W., cut our cable, wore, and made sail, engaging the enemy's ships while passing them; at 10h.50m. the Hannibal opened her fire on the French Admiral; at 10h.52m. made the signal for the squadron to come to,—the wind on the starboard tack; at 11h.5m. made the signal for the boats to tow the Pompée,—Cæsar engaging the southernmost ships,—Audacious, ditto,—Cæsar opened her fire on the island battery,—Audacious and Cæsar becalmed near the island reef,—boats employed towing the ship's head round; afternoon,—light winds and variable weather,—engaging the enemy; at 12h.33m. made the signal for the Hannibal being aground,—employed engaging the southernmost ship; at 1h. 17m. Audacious wore,—made the signal for armed-boats to proceed as denoted; at 1h.35m. the action ceased,—found the main-mast shot through in five places, (and other damage which need not be mentioned,) nine men killed, twenty-five wounded, and seven missing; at 5h. came-to at Gibraltar, with the small bower employed warping alongside of the sheer hulk.

[Pg 362]

The Venerable's log, which we have examined at the depôt at Deptford, and which is signed by Captain Hood, fully corroborates the above, with the addition,—“At 12h.40m. sent the first lieutenant in the pinnace to assist the Hannibal;” and this officer (Lieutenant Collis) in his own journal mentions the same fact. When he arrived at the Hannibal, she was in possession of the enemy; and he was taken prisoner, with his boat's crew, by persisting to go on board after he was warned by Lieutenant (now Colonel) Connolly, of the Marines. He says it was in consequence of the ensign being reversed that the boats were sent; and, before any of the boats reached her, she was in possession of the French, who hoisted the colours union downwards themselves, and that they never were hoisted in that manner at any other time.

These facts are also corroborated by the logs and journals of the Audacious and Spencer, which will be given in the next chapter. Every ship, indeed, mentions the impossibility of affording any assistance to the Hannibal, and that the signal was not made to leave off action until her situation was utterly hopeless.

[Pg 363]

The nature of the well-protected road of Algeziras being fully manifest in the diagram facing the 346th page, it is unnecessary to point out the difficulties the squadron had to contend with from the five strong batteries, which were served with much effect by the French artillerymen. The numerous gun-boats stationed at Algeziras for the annoyance of our commerce, were from their constant practice in that kind of warfare, of themselves a most formidable enemy; besides, the assistance they afforded in warping their ships in-shore, and placing them in such a position as to enable the different batteries to support them. But the failure of the attack must be mainly attributed to the unsteadiness and faintness of the wind, which enabled none of the squadron to obtain the position it wished; that is, in-shore of the enemy: while, by falling calm at a moment the most disadvantageous, it left the ships exposed to the enemy's fire without the possibility of returning it.

The loss sustained by each ship was severe. The Cæsar had her master, Mr. William Grave, six seamen, and two marines, killed; her boatswain, G.W. Forster, seventeen seamen, one boy, and six marines, wounded; besides the capture of Lieutenant Janvarin, a volunteer, Mr. Richard Best, and seven seamen, who were taken by boarding the Hannibal when in possession of the enemy. Her masts, particularly the main-mast, and yards, were very much injured; her boats were all cut to pieces, besides that taken at the Hannibal; and there were many shots in her hull. The Pompée had Mr. P. Roxborough, master, Mr. Stewart, midshipman, ten seamen, and three marines killed; Lieutenants Cheesman, Stapleton, and Innes, Messrs. Currie, Hillier, and Hibbert, fifty-three seamen, and ten marines, wounded. She was so completely damaged in masts, rigging, and sails, that all hope of refitting her as promptly as the rest was at an end. The Spencer had Mr. Spencer, a midshipman, and five seamen, killed; Mr. Chatterton, midshipman, twenty-three seamen, and three marines wounded. She was damaged chiefly in her rigging and sails, which were soon repaired. The Venerable had Mr. W. Gibbons, midshipman, and eight seamen, killed; Messrs. Austin and Collins, midshipmen, twenty seamen, and four marines, wounded; and eight missing. The Hannibal had seventy-five killed, among whom were Mr. D. Lindsay, clerk, and Lieut. James Williams, R.M.; and seventy wounded and missing. The Audacious had eight killed; Lieut. Day, of the Marines, thirty-one seamen and marines, wounded. The total loss of the squadron being one hundred and twenty-three killed, two hundred and forty-two wounded, and twenty-two missing.

[Pg 364]

[Pg 365]

The loss of the French and Spaniards, by their own accounts, was considerable; the former having three hundred and six killed,—among whom were Captains Moncouso, of the Dessaix, seventy-four, and Lalonde, of the Indomptable, eighty-four,—and near five hundred wounded; five gun-boats were sunk, and others damaged; and the forts, in which eleven men were killed, received considerable injury. The ships suffered a good deal in hull, masts, and rigging; but not so much as was anticipated.

The French, as might be expected, from their usual disregard to truth, made this out one of the most brilliant exploits ever performed. Their account stated that three French ships had completely beaten six English, which took refuge in Gibraltar after leaving the Hannibal in their possession, &c.; saying nothing of the heavy batteries and gun-boats they had to contend with. But the Spaniards, in the Madrid Gazette extraordinary, represented the "action as very obstinate and bloody on both sides; and likewise on the part of the batteries, which decided the fate of the day:" and in another place, "the fire of our batteries was so hot and well supported that the enemy suffered most from them; and particularly it is to the St. Jago we owe the capture of the English ship, for her bold manœuvre of attempting to pass between the French Rear-admiral's ship, the Formidable, and the shore, made her take the ground; and, notwithstanding the utmost

[Pg 366]

exertions to get her afloat, it was found impossible to move her. Then the fire from the battery very soon dismasted her, and compelled her to strike.^[34]

The diagram, besides pointing out the situations of the five strong batteries, which so completely protect the harbour, and which did the greatest execution, shows the first position of the ships about the time they all anchored, and before the enemy's ships had warped near the shore. The second, represented by the outlines, shows the situation of the hostile squadrons at the time the Hannibal struck, when the Pompée had nearly reached the Mole, the distance of which from Algeziras is little more than four miles, and the Spencer was considerably advanced in that direction.

We cannot conclude our account of this action without a few remarks on the circumstances we have related. There cannot be a doubt that, had the enemy remained in the position he held at the commencement of the action, every ship would have been taken. Praise is certainly due to Admiral Linois for his able manœuvre of warping his ships aground, being the only chance he had of escaping; while it was acknowledging that, as long as his ships were continued afloat, he had no confidence in protection from the batteries, strong as they were, against the valour and perseverance of British seamen.

[Pg 367]

Although the attack was not crowned with the success it merited, in a national point of view the result was as complete as if the whole squadron had been destroyed, as the enemy were thereby prevented from proceeding further in the execution of the ulterior object of their expedition; and the chance of this alone was sufficient to justify Sir James in this bold and daring attempt, which, it will be seen, ultimately led to one of the most glorious achievements which adorn the annals of the empire.^[35]

CHAPTER XV.

[Pg 368]

1801.

Observations on the Battle of Algeziras.—Copies of the Journals of the Spencer, Audacious, and Venerable.—Remarks on them.—Further particulars.—The Spanish account.—The French account.—Bulletin from the Moniteur.—Anecdote of an occurrence at St. Malo.—Sword presented to Linois.—Lines on the occasion.—His improvement of Naval tactics.—Epigram.—Anecdote of the intrepidity of one of the Cæsar's men.

It has been mentioned in the preceding chapter that, owing chiefly to the minutes of Captain Ferris's court-martial, and to the discrepancies in different statements, a controversy has arisen on the subject. In order to avoid the possibility of our becoming a party thereto, correct copies of the logs, which are now at the Record Office in the Admiralty, are subjoined, after having been compared with those at Somerset House.

Copy of the Log of his Majesty's ship Spencer, 6th July 1801.

Moderate and cloudy,—spoke his Majesty's ship Cæsar, which informed us of having intelligence of three sail of French line-of-battle ships and a frigate being in Algeziras Bay,—answered the signal to prepare for battle at anchor,—employed clearing ship for battle at anchor; at 6h. Apes hill S. E.; at half-past 6 beat the general to quarters,—ship clear for action; A.M. light airs and variable; at 4h. sprung up a breeze from the westward; at 7h.58m. saw three French sail-of-the-line and one frigate, lying under the protection of the Spanish batteries of Algeziras, and a strong fortified island to the southward, and a number of forts and redoubts to the westward of them.

[Pg 369]

At 8h.17m. the batteries commenced firing on the Venerable, Pompée, and Audacious,—Venerable commenced firing; at 9h.11m. we commenced firing; at 9h.35m. found the sheet-cable cut through by the enemy's shot; at 9h. 48m. anchored between the Cæsar and the Hannibal, Audacious astern, the Pompée on our larboard bow, having a battery and the French Admiral's ship to oppose us on our larboard beam, a battery and gun-boats ahead; at 10h.33m. dismasted and disabled a gun-boat that was rowing to the assistance of the others; at 10h. 39m. cut the cable per Admiral's order whilst wearing,—the gun-boats attempted to approach us from under the land, but the brisk fire that was kept up made them retreat in great disorder; at 11h.3m. answered the signal to come to the wind on the larboard tack (No. 98); at 11h.7m. commenced firing at the outer ships of the enemy, which was kept up at intervals.

At 11h.37m. observed the Hannibal under the batteries at the north end of the town, with her main-top-mast shot away and aground, but keeping up a brisk fire on the enemy's ships and batteries; P.M. Hannibal still on shore, but keeping up a brisk fire at the enemy's ships and batteries; at 1h.16m. observed the Hannibal to slacken her fire, shortly after the ensign hauled down and hoisted union downwards; at 1h.35m. observed the enemy's boats boarding the Hannibal; at 1h.44m. ceased firing,—found the ship had suffered considerably in her hull, having several shots on both sides between wind and water. Our loss in the action was six killed, twenty-seven badly wounded, two of whom died of their wounds. The fore-mast, bowsprit, main-top-mast, main-top-gallant yard, and main-top-sail yard badly wounded; the boats and booms shot through in several places; the cutter and yawl that were towing astern were sunk by the enemy. At 6h.30m. anchored per signal, and moored ship in Rosia Bay, Gibraltar.

[Pg 370]

The following is a correct copy of the Audacious's log, at Somerset House.

This log, like the former, begins in the evening of the 5th July 1801.

Wind S.W. P.M. moderate and hazy; half-past 2 tacked,—Cape Trafalgar S. E. three or four leagues,—got springs on the anchors; at 8h. standing up the Gut of Gibraltar,—Admiral S. by W. three-quarters of a mile; at 12h. taken aback, came to the wind on the land-tack; at 6h. Gibraltar Rock N. by E. four or five leagues,—shortened sail to let the Pompée go ahead to her station; at half-past 7, saw the enemy's ships at anchor in Algeziras Roads, consisting of three line-of-battle ships, a frigate, gun-boats, &c.; three-quarters past 7, the batteries commenced firing on our ships as they passed; twenty minutes past 8, the enemy's ships began to fire on our ships; at half-past 8, the action became hot on both sides,—the Venerable, Pompée, and Audacious as yet only in action; at half-past 9, the Cæsar, Spencer, and Hannibal joined the action against the ships and batteries; at 11h. cut the cables, and tried to tow the ship's head round to the eastward, to bring the ship's broadside to bear on her opponent, but without effect; by this time the sails and rigging being much cut up, and the ship unmanageable, got the kedge anchor with a five-inch hawser out on the starboard bow, and succeeded in bringing the broadside to bear; at noon, light airs inclining to calm,—Cæsar, Spencer, under way, still in action.

[Pg 371]

P.M. dark weather; at forty-five minutes past 12, the Venerable and Pompée hauled to the wind on the starboard tack; at 1h. cut the sheet-cable, and slipped the end of the kedge hawser, and spring on the sheet-anchor,—got the boats ahead to tow,—found the ship drifting under the island fort, which did us considerable injury,—the rocks close under the lee-bow,—cut away the best bower-anchor to check her head, and bring her broadside to bear, it being calm; at twenty minutes past 1, a light breeze sprung up off-shore,—cut away the best bower-cable, and made sail on the starboard tack,—observed the Hannibal on shore, and the enemy take possession of her; at 4h. anchored in Rosia Bay, Gibraltar.

The next is the journal of Captain Hood of the Venerable.

6th July 1801.

Monday, 6th July, wind variable off Algeziras,—Gibraltar Bay, light breezes, and variable,—the captain went on board the Cæsar,—all sail set,—squadron in company,—the captain returned,—got the sheet-cable through the stern-port, and bent it to the anchor,—got springs on the sheet and bower-anchors; at 2h. Captain Hood went on board the Admiral; at 3h. returned,—received a midshipman and seven men per the Plymouth lugger, and from the Boladore, Spanish lugger; at 4h. Cape Trafalgar, N.E. seven or eight miles,—all sail set,—made and shortened sail occasionally for the squadron, and tacked occasionally,—A.M. do. weather; at 4h. made more sail; at 7h. discovered the enemy, consisting of three two-decked ships and a frigate, with an Admiral's flag flying, at anchor under the town and batteries of Algeziras, protected by many gun-boats, &c.—all sail set, standing in for the enemy, followed by the Pompée, Audacious, Cæsar, Spencer, and Hannibal; at 7h.50m. the batteries opened their fire on us,—Pompée and Audacious one mile and a half distant from us astern.

[Pg 372]

At 8h. it fell calm; at 8h.20m. the Pompée and Audacious, bringing up the breeze, passed us to windward, when the enemy's ships opened their fire on us; at 8h.14m. a light air sprung up,—passed the Audacious to leeward, at which time the Pompée and Audacious opened their fire; at 8h. 20m. the breeze dying away, came to with the sheet-anchor, as did the Pompée and Audacious,—hove in the spring; and at 8h.30m. opened our fire on the French Admiral's ship: at 10h. the Cæsar anchored on our bow, and sent a spring on board of us; at the same time the action became general, and the Hannibal got on shore, after attempting to cut off the French Admiral's ship.

At 10h.20m. the Pompée drifted between us and the French Admiral's,—hove in our spring, and brought our guns to bear on the other enemy's ship on our bow, and the other's stern: at 12h. the Pompée drifted between our fire and the enemy's,—slipt the sheet-cable, and eight-inch hawser, the spring, with the intention of getting alongside the enemy's southernmost ship,—light air springing up at the time from the N.E.; in awaiting this opportunity, the mizen-top-mast, fore-braces,—hove halyards, with various other standing and running rigging, shot away, and main-mast badly wounded: at 11h.15m. breeze dying away prevented our intention,—opened our fire on the southernmost ship; at 12h. calm and hazy,—Cæsar, Hannibal, Audacious, Spencer, and us still firing on the enemy's ships, batteries, and gun-boats,—boats of the squadron towing off the Pompée to Gibraltar; P.M. calm,—still firing on the enemy's ships, which were warping farther in-shore.

[Pg 373]

At 12h.40m. sent Lieutenant Collis in the pinnace to assist the Hannibal; at 1h.40m. finding it impossible to near the enemy's ships with safety, it being calm, and a strong current setting in-shore, their batteries firing red-hot shot and throwing shells, ceased the action as per signal, as did the other ships, and steered for Gibraltar,—observed the Hannibal ceased firing, and hoist the colours reversed, having her fore and mainmasts shot away, and being in ten foot water, rendered all assistance useless.

24 Nov. 1801.^[36]

S. HOOD.

Thus the logs and journals of the captains and officers of the Spencer, Audacious, Venerable, and Cæsar, all agree that the Hannibal struck her colours between 1h.20m. and 1h.40m. The Pompée, being by this time near the Mole at Gibraltar, could not see nor take minutes of that circumstance. The Spencer, according to her position at that time, was in the best situation for seeing the Hannibal, and accordingly her log is the most particular. The Cæsar's log need not be given, as it would be merely a repetition of Captain Brenton's narrative. All these agree with Colonel Connolly's testimony, and their evidence is quite conclusive as to the following facts; namely, that the Hannibal struck her colours before the main-mast fell; that these colours were hoisted union down by the enemy, who had possession of the ship before the boats came alongside from the Venerable and Cæsar, and that to save her was quite impossible.

[Pg 374]

The following further particulars relative to the action are given in the extract of a letter from an officer of the Cæsar, dated at Gibraltar:

There is one point that needs explanation; namely, when the Cæsar cut her cable at half-past ten o'clock, it was from a fine breeze springing up, and the hope of closing with the enemy. Orders were given for that purpose to the Audacious and Venerable; the Cæsar wore round them, and brought her broadside to bear on the Indomptable's bow, lying there (about three cables distant from her) a considerable time, with the fore-top-sail to the mast (aback). The Audacious, bringing up a breeze from the north-west, passed between us and the enemy, who, in this part of the day, suffered materially, his fore-top-mast going about five minutes before twelve o'clock. Shortly afterwards, the Audacious and Cæsar were becalmed upon the broadside of the Indomptable, without being able to bring one of their guns to bear,—the Cæsar not more than three cables' length from the island battery, and the Audacious still nearer,—both ships drifting on the reef.

It was at this time that Sir James Saumarez formed the resolution of attacking the island with marines. Boats were signalled for the purpose; but, being all employed with the Pompée, or sunk by the enemy's fire, it was found impracticable. A breeze again sprung up, and Sir James directed his ship to be laid alongside of the Indomptable, in the firm resolution of carrying her. The sails were trimmed for that purpose as well as the crippled state of the masts would allow, but a calm ensued. The Venerable had never received the breeze from the time of her cutting, and still lay unmanageable. The Spencer had drifted considerably in repairing her rigging.

[Pg 375]

The following is a translation of the Spanish official account of the battle of Algeziras, 6th July 1801:

The division of three French line-of-battle ships and one frigate, under the command of Rear-admiral Citizen Linois, that sailed from the road of Toulon on the 25th last June, destined for Cadiz, came in sight of this station and bay on the 1st of July; and, the Levant wind having failed on entering the Straits, they cruised between the coast of Africa and that of Europe, in which they captured the English brig of war the Speedy, of sixteen guns, that was a Mahon packet, and was conducting to Gibraltar a prize, the merchant brig the Union, loaded with oil and provisions.

The continuation of the westerly winds obliged the said division to come into this port on the 5th instant, at seven in the evening. From that moment, recollecting the desperate attacks of the English at Alexandria and Copenhagen, we could not but expect that their squadron, which had been seen off Cadiz on the 3rd instant, under the command of Rear-admiral Saumarez, would come and attack this division. So it happened.

As soon as the English received intelligence where the French had anchored, they steered directly for the Straits; and, on the 6th instant, at half-past six in the morning, six English ships doubled the Point of Carnero, and, coming round the island of Algeziras, advanced in a line within half cannon-shot of the French ships. The batteries of St. Garcia and the island opened their fire upon the English; and afterwards the frigate and republican ships.

[Pg 376]

As soon as the English line came opposite the French ships at anchor, they opened upon them an animated, bold, and unremitting fire. The English Admiral having placed himself against the French, and the British ship Hannibal being under sail, cannonaded furiously the French Admiral, who, with superior spirit and success, resisted them; insomuch that, having carried away the Admiral's mizen-mast, and sails of the main and fore-mast, with no small damage of his hull, the commander of the English ship Hannibal, despising the fire from the battery of St. Jago, pushed on to his succour; and, intending to place the French Admiral between two fires, by running between him and the shore, had the imprudence, being unacquainted with his position, to place himself within a quarter of a gun-shot of the battery, and ran aground. He relieved his Admiral, who, after this, went out of the action; but he lost his own ship and crew, as the fire from the battery and French Admiral dismantled him, and killed three parts of his ship's company.

Until this ship's surrender, which was about the time of the retreat of the English Admiral, the fire was constant upon the two French ships and frigate, as well as upon the seven Spanish gun-boats, the batteries of the island, St. Garcia, St. Jago, La Almiranta, and Almirante, which, as opportunity offered, returned their fire.

The battle lasted from half-past eight o'clock in the morning, when the fort of St. Garcia opened its fire, till two in the afternoon, when the last shot was fired from the French ship Indomptable. The persevering, active, and tremendous fire of the enemy, and that of the two nations (French and Spanish), were only distinguishable by the prudence, skill, and greatness of soul with which the allied chiefs directed theirs, and the audacity, temerity, and confusion which were shown in that of the English. The idea of this kind of fighting, which we form from the account of the battles of Alexandria and Copenhagen, does not, in proportion to the numbers engaged, bear any comparison with that of Algeziras, either in point of bloodiness or obstinacy.

[Pg 377]

The English, after having left the glory and the field of battle to the two nations, covered with shame, and taught by dear-bought experience, have only given an unequivocal proof of their inveterate hatred to France and Spain; since, not being able to obtain any advantage over the French and Spanish forces, they directed their fire against an inoffensive town, which received no small injury in the buildings. This is the only glory which the arms of Great Britain have to boast of.

The Pompée was towed out of the action by eight boats, who came to her succour from the garrison of Gibraltar. She was kept afloat by casks, or otherwise could not have been brought in.

The ships of the French Republic which sustained this attack were the Formidable, 84, Citizen Linois; Dessaix, 74, Moncoussu, killed; L'Indomptable, 84, Lalonde, killed; the frigate Muiron, 36, Martinencq; five Spanish gun-boats damaged, and two sunk. In the French ships, three hundred and six killed; one hundred and eighty-four wounded. We suppose in the English squadron above five hundred are killed, and from two hundred and seventy to two hundred and eighty wounded.

[Pg 378]

The general commandant of the camp at St. Roque, in a despatch of the 6th instant, transmitted by a courier extraordinary, communicates an account of an action which has been fought between six sail of the line, and other vessels of war, belonging to the English, and the French squadron of three ships of the line, and one frigate, lying at anchor in the harbour of Algeziras; and of the glorious result which has taken place for his Majesty's arms, and those of the Republic, his ally.

About eight in the morning of that day, (viz. the 6th,) there were seen, coming out of Gibraltar, one ship of eighty-four guns, five of seventy-four, a lugger of sixteen, another of ten, and a polacre of ten, two armed launches, and fourteen boats. This force, under the command of a Rear-admiral, stood into Algeziras, for the purpose of attacking the French squadron then anchored in that port, which, as has been already stated, consisted of three sail of the line, and one frigate. The commanders of this squadron, being aware of the enemy's intention, made their dispositions for defence, placing themselves, as well as they were able, under the cover of our batteries, and waiting in this position for his approach.

The action commenced at nine; it was very obstinate and bloody on both sides, and likewise on the part of our batteries, which decided the fate of the day. The action was continued till two in the afternoon, at which hour the English drew off with the loss of one ship of the line; taking in tow another, which was dismasted and damaged in the hull; and having sustained very great loss and damage in the rest of their vessels. Their loss in men must have been considerable, as it is certain that a great number were killed and wounded on board all the ships. The French also have been equal sufferers, the killed and wounded in their squadron being estimated at eight hundred: that of our troops has been less; out of the whole, only the royal regiment of Ronda has lost eleven men.

[Pg 379]

The fire of our batteries was so hot and well supported, that the enemy suffered most from them; and particularly it is to that of St. Jago we owe the capture of the English ship, for her bold manœuvre of attempting to pass between the French Rear-admiral's ship, the Formidable, and the shore, made her take the ground; and, notwithstanding the utmost exertion to put her afloat, it being found impossible to move her, the fire from the battery very soon dismasted her, and compelled her to strike. The French vessels, and our batteries, have likewise received a good deal of damage; but they are already in a course of repair; and the most active dispositions are making in order to cause the enemy to repent, should he have any intention of renewing the action with troops so animated and well-conducted as ours and the French have proved themselves in the engagement of the 6th.

The French account of this action, as we have already noticed, was still more exaggerated than the Spanish; and, unfortunately for the friends and relatives of the Admiral, officers, and men of the squadron, it made its way to England some time previously to the *true* accounts,—causing much uneasiness. The *Moniteur* announced that

On the 5th July, at eight o'clock in the morning, the cannonade commenced against six English ships, which lost no time in coming within musket-shot of the French vessels. The action then became very warm. These two squadrons seemed equally animated with a determination to conquer. If the French squadron had any advantage in point of situation, the English had double their force, and several of their vessels had ninety guns each: already had the English ship, Hannibal, of seventy-four guns, contrived to place herself between the French squadron and the shore. It was now eleven o'clock A.M., and this proved the decisive moment. For two hours the Formidable, the French Admiral's ship, successfully opposed three English ships.

[Pg 380]

One of the British squadron, which was singly engaged with a French vessel, struck her colours at three-quarters past eleven. Immediately after, the Hannibal, exposed to the fire of three French ships, which fired from two decks, also struck her colours: about half-past twelve, the English squadron cut their cables, and sailed away. The Hannibal was boarded by the Formidable. Of six hundred men, who composed her crew, three hundred were killed. The first ship that struck her colours was retaken by a great number of gun-boats, and other vessels, sent out from Gibraltar. This action covers the French arms with glory, and shows what they are capable of accomplishing. Rear-admiral Linois *proceeded to Cadiz with the Hannibal, in order to repair her damage.*^[37] We wait with impatience the returns of the loss sustained by each ship.

These accounts appear to have reached Paris on the 11th July. On the 19th, the following bulletin reached St. Malo.

Three French ships of the line and a frigate, under the command of Rear-admiral Linois, were attacked on the 6th instant by six English sail of the line and a frigate. The English were completely beaten, and took refuge in Gibraltar, leaving in possession of the French the Hannibal, of seventy-four guns: another ship of the line had struck, but was towed off by a great number of gun-vessels, which sailed from Gibraltar to her relief.

[Pg 381]

About this time, the Jason frigate, having been wrecked near St. Malo, the captain and crew were made prisoners. The author was sent in with a flag of truce by Commodore Cunningham, of the Clyde, to negotiate for the exchange of prisoners; when the French officer, with an air of triumph and exultation, handed him a copy of that bulletin: but, as soon as the negotiation was ended, the author had the pleasure of handing to him, in return, the Gazette account of the victory of the 13th, which Sir James Saumarez had gained over Linois, and which the Commodore had received, fortunately, on that day. The Frenchman's chagrin may be easily imagined, when he threw down the Gazette, with the exclamation '*Ce n'est pas vrai!*'

On the statement of Linois' victory, as it was called, reaching Paris, a handsome sword was sent to him; which, however, did not reach him until after his subsequent defeat. On this occasion the following Epigram was written.

In the days of the Bourbons, a man was *rewarded*
For *standing* the brunt of the day:

But, now, this old maxim in France is *discarded*,—
Men are honoured for *running away*!

In the French accounts nothing was mentioned of their running their ships aground to escape from the English, which is, indeed, the only thing Citizen Linois deserved any credit for doing. At the same time, it could not fail to convince both the French and Spanish troops, of the want of confidence he must have had in his crews, and of their evident inferiority: it was certainly a new mode of fighting, which called forth the following lines on this improvement in naval tactics.

[Pg 382]

To mar our skill, fam'd Linois, thou hast found
A certain way,—by fighting ships on *ground*;
Fix deep in sand thy centre, van, and rear,
Nor e'er St. Vincent, Duncan, Nelson, fear.
While, o'er the main, Britannia's thunder rolls,
She leaves to thee the trident of the *shoals*!

In concluding this chapter, we shall relate the following anecdote of British heroism, derived from Captain Brenton's Naval History.

When, in the hottest part of the action at Algeziras, the *Cæsar broke her sheer*,—that is, her situation was altered by a puff or flaw of wind so as to change the direction of her head, and turn her round, that her guns could not be brought to bear on her opponent,—the captain ordered the boat to be lowered down from the stern, to convey a warp to the *Audacious*; but the boat was found to be knocked to pieces by the enemy's shot. Before other means could be resorted to, Michael Collins, a young sailor belonging to the *Cæsar's* mizen-top, seized the end of a lead-line, and exclaiming, "You shall soon have a warp," darted into the sea from the taffrail, and swam with the line to the *Audacious*, where it was received, and by that means a hawser was run out which answered the intended purpose.

CHAPTER XVI.

[Pg 383]

1801.

Mole of Gibraltar.—Negociation for the exchange of prisoners unsuccessful.—Captain Ferris and the officers of the *Hannibal* return on parole.—They sail for England in the Plymouth lugger, which carries home despatches and private letters.—Despatch sent to Lord Keith.—Admiral Saumarez shifts his flag to the *Audacious*.—Extraordinary exertions of the crew of the *Cæsar*.—Their admirable conduct.—Captain Brenton and the garrison.—Arrival of the Spanish squadron at Algeziras.—Increased exertions of the crews of the squadron.—Private letters.—Preparations to attack the enemy.

The squadron being now in the Mole at Gibraltar, the wounded having been removed to the hospital, and the necessary orders given for refitting with all possible speed, the Admiral lost no time in turning his attention to the situation of the captain, officers, and crew of the unfortunate *Hannibal*, which had so nobly maintained the honour of the British flag.

Sir Jahleel Brenton says, "He ordered me to take a flag of truce, and wait upon the French admiral (Linois), proposing an exchange of prisoners, which the latter refused, alleging that it was not in his power to establish a cartel for the purpose, until he obtained the sanction of the Minister of the Marine at Paris, to whom he had sent off an express, as soon as the firing had ceased, on the preceding day; but he consented to send over on parole Captain Ferris and the officers of the *Hannibal*. The object of the French Admiral was very obvious; he concluded we wanted to replace the men who were killed, and wounded; but he justly thought, that sending officers on parole would be an act of harmless courtesy, from which we could reap no immediate benefit. It will be seen that, after the second action, when his dispatches from Algeziras could scarcely have reached Paris, (only six days having elapsed,) he did not wait for an answer from the Minister of Marine. But circumstances had altered; we had taken a line-of-battle ship, and burned two first-rates; and he then wished to get back as many of the crews as possible."

[Pg 384]

The following correspondence, which took place between Sir James Saumarez and the French Admiral Linois, shows the deep interest Sir James took in the distressing situation of the crew of the *Hannibal*, of which an account was brought to him by Captain Brenton, together with the assurance that Captain Ferris and his officers would be liberated on parole.

[Pg 385]

Cæsar, off Rosia Bay, 8th July 1801.

SIR,

Solicitous as I am for the welfare of the men unfortunately wounded on board his Majesty's ship *Hannibal*, and desirous to have them conveyed as speedily as possible to this garrison, I propose to send a boat early to-morrow morning with a flag of truce, and I trust no objection can be made to their coming by her.

Being informed that Captain Ferris and his officers have permission to come on their parole, a boat will also be sent for them. I have the honour to be, sir,

Your most obedient and most humble servant,

JAS. SAUMAREZ.

To Rear-admiral Linois,
commanding the French squadron at Algeziras.

The boat having returned from Algeziras with Captain Ferris and his officers, but not with the crew of the Hannibal, Sir James despatched another boat, with the following letter to Admiral Linois:

Cæsar, off Rosia Bay, 9th July 1801.

SIR,

Having received different reports, particularly from Captain Ferris, that the men who had the misfortune of being wounded on board his Majesty's ship Hannibal are left in the most afflicting condition, and are unprovided with every kind of refreshment, I am impelled, from motives of humanity, to renew my application to you that they may be permitted to come to this place by the boat now sent for them; and that you will also permit those wounded men who are confined in the prison, and who, I understand, are without any surgical attendance whatever, to accompany them. I have the honour to be, sir,

With all possible regard, your obedient servant,

JAMES SAUMAREZ.

To Rear-admiral Linois,
commanding the French squadron at Algeziras.

This application was, however, not attended with success; and the sufferings of the unfortunate wounded at Algeziras were extreme, until circumstances changed, in consequence of the second action. [Pg 386]

We shall now continue the authentic and interesting communication which Sir Jahleel Brenton has so kindly made to us:

"The morning of the 7th July was passed in getting the Cæsar secured in the Mole, and in landing the wounded men that still remained on board; also in stripping the ship, and in ascertaining the amount of injury she had sustained. The main-mast was so much injured that it became necessary to take it out and get in a new one; the fore-mast was also very badly wounded, but capable of being fished and rendered serviceable. Every effort was made to complete our repairs, and get again ready for sea. On the following day, Captain Ferris and his officers, who were sent on parole, arrived. They were accompanied by Lord Cochrane and the officers of the Speedy, sloop of war, which had been taken on the 3rd by Linois' squadron, off Malaga."

The Admiral now prepared duplicates of his despatches for the Admiralty, which Lieutenant Janvarin, of the Calpe,, who was taken in the Cæsar's boat, assisting the Hannibal, had been previously charged to carry to Faro. These were confided to Lieutenant Hills, of the Hannibal, who, with Captain Ferris, were embarked on board the Plymouth lugger for England. Sir Jableel Brenton says: "On taking leave of the Admiral, the scene was deeply interesting, and even affecting. Sir James, after giving Captain Ferris the highest credit for his gallant daring, to which the loss of the Hannibal was attributed, and lamenting that their united endeavours had not been crowned with the success they merited, added, adverting to his despatches, 'Tell them, sir, that I feel convinced I shall soon have an opportunity of attacking the enemy again, and that they may depend on my availing myself of it.'" [Pg 387]

On the 9th, in the afternoon, the Superb and Thames, which had continued to watch the enemy off Cadiz, were seen coming through the Straits under a crowd of canvass, with the signal for an enemy flying; and they had scarcely rounded Cabrita Point before the Spanish squadron, consisting of six sail of the line, were seen in pursuit of them, and soon after anchored in Algeziras with the French squadron.

Sir James now added the following to his despatches to Lord Keith:

Cæsar, Gibraltar, 9th July 1801.

MY LORD,

I have the honour to inform your lordship that the Superb and Thames are now standing into the bay, with the signal for the enemy's being in sight; and I understand from Governor O'Hara that he has information from Cadiz that all the Spanish and French ships in that port were ordered to Algeziras Bay to take the French ships to Carthagea. [Pg 388]

I hope to have all the squadron ready before this day week; and, as they cannot possibly put to sea under a fortnight at the earliest, I hope something may join me from your lordship before they can put to sea: but, on the event of their sailing before such junction, I shall follow them up with all the ships with me, and proceed off Minorca, which will be my rendezvous till I have the honour of hearing from your lordship.

I am sorry to mention that the Hannibal is got off; but Captain Ferris, who has just come over on his parole, describes her in the worst condition, as well as the three French ships, and does not think they can be repaired under a fortnight or three weeks at the earliest; as does Lord Cochrane, who is likewise come over on his parole.

I have the honour to be

Your lordship's most obedient and most humble servant,

To Right Hon. Lord Keith, K.B. &c. &c. &c.

The public despatches being closed, Sir James wrote the following letters, which were sent by the same conveyance; and, as they contain his own private feelings on the occasion, they will be read with interest:

Cæsar, Rosia Bay, 6th July 1801.

MY DEAR RICHARD,

After the warm expectations my friends have always formed for my success in the public service, they will be distressed on being informed of my having failed in an enterprise with the squadron on three French line-of-battle ships at anchor off Algeziras. I was informed by different expresses from this garrison of their having attempted to pass the Straits for Cadiz, and having anchored at some distance from the batteries. I made sail yesterday with the intention to attack them, if found practicable. We got round the point of the bay at about seven this morning, and at half-past eight the action began, and during the first hour, promised the most favourable hopes of success; when, by a most unfortunate circumstance, the Hannibal got aground, and at once destroyed all my expectations, though the action was continued for nearly four hours after.

[Pg 389]

Every possible effort was made to rescue her from the enemy's fire; and after repeated attempts, and a very great risk of this ship and the Audacious getting on shore under the enemy's batteries, I was under the necessity of abandoning the Hannibal to her fate. Although we have not succeeded in bringing off the enemy's ships, they are, we believe, very seriously damaged. Two of them are aground, and it is not expected they will be got off.

Wednesday, 9th July 1801.

Having found a conveyance by way of Tangier, I sent you a duplicate of this. The Superb and Thames have just made their appearance, with the signal for the enemy being out of port. I think it is a good thing to have drawn them this way, as I trust the first Levanter will bring us ships from the Mediterranean. Captain Ferris goes by this opportunity, and has promised to forward this immediately to you. He will be heard of at the Admiralty, or at the Adelphi Hotel. Great praise is due for the brave defence of his ship.

10th July 1801.

It is incalculable how much I have on my hands, night and day; but, thank God! my health is good, though my anxiety is great. A fresh Levanter having sprung up, the lugger sails immediately. Phil. Dumaresq is very well, as are all the others. Poor Graves is the only person we have lost of the class of officers. I also wrote to you, by way of Lisbon, only an hour since, and just before the easterly wind set in. I trust none of my friends will suffer anxiety on my account. This will be addressed to you, my dear Richard, and you will forward it to my brother. He will be happy in being able to satisfy those who have friends on board that they have all escaped unhurt. H. Brock, with the young men from the island, are all well. I am, &c.

[Pg 390]

JAS. SAUMAREZ.

To Richard Saumarez, Esq.

Extracts of letters written on the 7th July 1801, to Lady Saumarez:

I have formed a thousand apprehensions lest an account of the events of yesterday should reach England through France before the arrival of my despatches (which were sent off by way of Faro), and fill your mind with cruel anxiety on my account; and this fear is much increased lest those despatches should not even arrive, as I was obliged to send them by a doubtful opportunity, through Tetuan and Tangier, the wind not admitting any vessel to pass the Straits.

Trusting, however, to their safety, I will not repeat their contents; but will only observe that, when I sat down to write to you, it was the first interval of rest from one of the most bustling scenes I ever witnessed, and from experiencing one of the severest disappointments I have ever known; having, for a considerable period during the action, flattered myself with the strongest confidence that the most complete success would have attended the enterprise.

[Pg 391]

I resign myself to the decree of DIVINE PROVIDENCE, whose will the winds obey; and I have great cause to be thankful for not having been forsaken in the hour of danger, but for having my courage strengthened as the peril increased. Feeling, as I do, all the responsibility on an event of this importance to the country, I should be miserable had I to reproach myself for having undertaken the enterprise on light grounds, or with having failed in the planning or in the execution; but, on the contrary, it is admitted by every one to have been most judicious. It is therefore only in the result that I have been unfortunate, and that arising from unforeseen and inevitable causes. I have been too much employed to reflect on the light in which the business may be viewed in England; but, conscious of having done my duty, and to the utmost of my exertions, I shall be indifferent as to the rest. I only trust that all my friends, but you more particularly, will be superior to any reflexions that may be made, should there be any unfavourable to me; though I hope for better things, and that with the liberal, at least, that which has been well intended, and carried on with conduct and bravery, will be held in some estimation.

Admiral Linois, from the specimen he had had of the determined perseverance of the British commander-in-chief, had no wish to try another contest; nor was it possible for him to escape the risk of one, either by lying under the protection of the Spanish batteries, or by proceeding to Cadiz. He lost no time, therefore, in sending an express to the Spanish Admiral Mazzaredo, and the French Rear-admiral Dumanoir, who, with Commodore Le Ray and other officers and men, had previously arrived in two frigates at Cadiz for the purpose of equipping the Spanish fleet, imploring the assistance of a squadron to convoy them to Cadiz, before the English ships under Sir James Saumarez could be refitted; adding in his despatch, "I have just received advice that

[Pg 392]

the enemy intends burning us at our anchorage. It is in your power to save for the Republic three fine ships of the line and a frigate by merely ordering the Spanish squadron to come and seek us."

This demand, through the influence of Admiral Dumanoir, was immediately acceded to by Mazzaredo, who ordered Vice-admiral Moreno to proceed with five sail of the line, three frigates, and a lugger, accompanied by the San Antonio, manned partly with French and Spaniards, in which Admiral Dumanoir hoisted his flag. The movements of these ships were observed by Captain Keats in the Superb, who, in consequence of information he had received from an American, returned with the Thames and Pasley off Cadiz.

At daylight, on the 9th, this squadron put to sea, except the San Antonio, which, being unable to fetch out, came to an anchor in the road. The rest made sail up the Straits, preceded by the Superb, Thames, and Pasley; and, the wind being fair, the former reached Algeziras about four P.M., while the latter, as already stated, anchored in Gibraltar Bay, to unite their efforts in refitting the shattered ships. On the next morning, the San Antonio, with Admiral Dumanoir's flag, arrived at Algeziras.

[Pg 393]

As the object of this overwhelming force could be no other than to conduct in safety the three French ships, and their prize the Hannibal, to Cadiz or Carthagena, the exertions of the British officers and men were redoubled in getting the damaged ships ready to meet the enemy. They accomplished what has been justly acknowledged, one of the most extraordinary undertakings ever known.

The Pompée was in too bad a state to leave any hopes that she could be got ready in time; her men, therefore, were distributed to assist in repairing the other ships: and all idea of refitting the Cæsar was on the point of being abandoned!

The following account given by Captain Brenton will be read with much interest: "Sir James now expressed the greatest anxiety to have as many of his little squadron as possible ready for action, that he might avail himself at any moment of the motions of the enemy to make an attack upon some part of them; and despairing, from the state of the Cæsar, that she could possibly be got in readiness before the departure of the ships from Algeziras, he expressed a wish that the deficiencies in the other ships might be made up from the crew of the Cæsar; but on my entreaty for permission to keep them while a possibility remained of getting her in a state to receive his flag again, he consented, hoisting it for the time on board the Audacious.

[Pg 394]

"On communicating to the people what had passed, there was a universal cry, 'All hands all night and all day until the ship is ready!' so earnest were they to carry the flag of their beloved Admiral again into battle, and so sanguine in the expectation of victory, notwithstanding the disparity of force,—nearly *two to one*! This I could not consent to, as they would have been worn out and incapable of further exertion; but I directed that all hands should be employed during the day, and that they should work *watch and watch* during the night. They immediately commenced their various duties, with all the energy and zeal that could be expected from men under such powerful causes of excitement. The new main-mast was got in forthwith, and extraordinary efforts made to refit the rigging.

"On Saturday, the 11th, the enemy showed symptoms of moving; and the Admiral, fearing they might get out in the night, again suggested that the people from the Cæsar should be distributed, and every idea of getting her ready abandoned; but I entreated, and obtained permission to keep them during that night, under the promise that they should be held in readiness at a minute's warning to proceed to the ship pointed out to receive them.

[Pg 395]

"The enemy having anchored again, the Admiral went to dine with the governor; and, on his return on board, was greatly delighted at beholding the ship apparently ready for sea, although much yet remained to be done."

We must here pay a just tribute to the professional abilities and conduct of Captain (now Sir Jahleel) Brenton. He was, in the first place, well aware of the magnitude of the labour which the men had to perform, and saw the danger of allowing his brave crew to be worn out with fatigue in attempting that to which the human frame is unequal. He therefore decided that, instead of working on until the labour was finished, according to the seamen's laudable wishes, they should have such a portion of rest as would enable them to resume their labour with renewed energy. In the second place, he knew that without system, the exertions of the men would be in vain; but the admirable directions he gave employed every man in what he was best able to perform without impeding his neighbour, whilst every part of the labour advanced simultaneously. There has, indeed, never yet been on record an instance of a ship performing such a task so well and in so short a time.

Although the services going on required many men to be on shore for gunpowder and other stores, to replace what had been expended, there was not a single complaint of any one absenting himself from his duty, or of being intoxicated; though the inducement must have been great, from the number of wine-houses on the Rock: but such was the desire of these brave fellows to be avenged for the loss of the Hannibal, that they would not allow any temptation to induce them to swerve from the duty they had to perform.

[Pg 396]

The extraordinary anxiety of mind, and the multiplicity of duty he had to perform, did not divert the attention of Sir James from the situation of the unfortunate crew of the Hannibal, especially the wounded, who were suffering as well from want of proper surgical care as from the treatment

they had received. He once more made a strong, but fruitless attempt for their exchange, by addressing the following letter to Admiral Linois:

Cæsar, off Rosia Bay, 10th July 1801.

SIR,

I am impelled by motives of humanity again to renew my application in behalf of the men unfortunately wounded on board his Britannic Majesty's ship Hannibal, and to request they may be permitted to come to this garrison without delay. A proposition so conformable to the laws of civilised nations I trust cannot be rejected; but, should you further refuse to comply with it, you must take upon yourself the impression all the world must have of so cruel a proceeding as to deny those unhappy people the benefit of their own hospital, where they would receive surgical assistance, and not be subjected to the severe treatment they have so long experienced in their present situation.

[Pg 397]

I am, sir,
Your most obedient humble servant,

JAMES SAUMAREZ.

Rear-admiral Linois, &c. &c. &c.

No answer having been given to this application, the correspondence ended, to be resumed under more favourable circumstances.

Sir James now added to the duplicates of his despatches (which had been sent in charge of Lieutenant Janvarin, by way of Tangier,) the following letter to his brother:

Cæsar, Gibraltar, 10th July 1801.

You will, I hope, receive the letters I have written to you on the subject of the enterprise of our squadron against three ships of the line and a frigate, at anchor in Algeziras Bay, last Monday; for a more particular account of which I must refer you to my public letter. But as my friends, with their usual anxiety on my account, will naturally wish further information from me, I must assure them in justice to myself and for their satisfaction, that everything was done that depended on myself, both in the planning and executing the business; but I cannot be accountable for the accidents that prevented its success. Even within an hour from our first engaging, and before any of our ships had sustained much injury, the *Pompée*, which was remarkably well placed against the inner ship, which proved to be the French Admiral, had at one time nearly silenced her, and must have done so in less than ten minutes, had not an unfortunate flaw of wind *broke her sheer*; and from that moment she was unable to bring one of her guns to bear on the enemy's ship.

[Pg 398]

A short time after, the Hannibal got a fine breeze of wind, and was lying up in the handsomest manner for the French ship; but unfortunately, wishing to go between her and the shore, got aground. Surely in either of these instances I was not concerned.

I had, before this, cut our cables, to profit by a favourable breeze to close the other two ships; but before we got near them it failed us, as well as the *Audacious*, and with the current we drove close to the island battery, where we remained a considerable time before either of the ships could clear a shoal close to it. At length a fine breeze sprung up, which gave the most favourable hope of carrying us close to the enemy's ships, and, by silencing them, to extricate the unfortunate Hannibal.

But here, again, it most unhappily failed us; and although we had, at different times, opened a heavy fire upon them, we were still not sufficiently near to silence them effectually; and, the wind all the time leading us farther off, I was constrained to abandon all hopes of success, and proceeded with the squadron to this anchorage.

The *Superb* yesterday joined us, with the *Thames*. Captain Keats, having seen the enemy coming out of Cadiz, appeared with the signal of their being in sight, and they soon after came round *Cabrita Point*. Two are three-deckers, and three are seventy-fours, with three frigates. If it draws this force to the Mediterranean, some good may come from it. A squadron is hourly expected from Lord Keith, and probably some ships may soon join us from England. We shall have all the ships in readiness; and the junction of a few ships, would make us again superior to the enemy's force. I must not forget to mention that Captain Brenton has shown himself a brave and most able officer.

[Pg 399]

It is with difficulty I have found a leisure moment to write this. All I request of my friends is, to feel assured that the failure of this enterprise has in no instance proceeded from myself; and every one is ready to acknowledge that I did, in every respect, all that depended on me. This, you will perceive, is written in the midst of much bustle and a most active scene.

The despatches contained accounts of the arrival of the Spanish squadron, and of Sir James's determination to attack them if they attempted to put to sea, even with the force under his command. He also sent despatches to Lisbon to delay any convoys which might be sailing; and to Lord Keith, in the Mediterranean, to inform his lordship of all the circumstances we have related. The Plymouth lugger had already sailed, the wind being fair, with Captain Ferris, who, as well as Lieutenant Hills, were bearers of the interesting details.

The intense interest which these circumstances created on the Rock of Gibraltar is far beyond description; nor do we know whether the kind and sympathising reception which the suffering heroes met with on their return from Algeziras was more worthy of praise than the unparalleled exertions made to renew the conflict. On the one hand, had the squadron arrived after the most complete and glorious victory, they could not have been received in a manner more gratifying to their feelings; while, on the other hand, it was evident that every man was worthy of such generous and such noble conduct.

[Pg 400]

The attention of the governor, the garrison, and the inhabitants, although themselves in a state of

privation, was unremitting. We shall leave them for the present preparing to take farewell of each other on the evening before the Admiral's departure, to meet what must have appeared to every spectator an overwhelming foe!

CHAPTER XVII.

[Pg 401]

1801.

Occurrences at Gibraltar.—Determination of Sir James to attack the combined squadron.—Cæsar rehoists the Admiral's flag.—Sir J. Brenton's description of that interesting scene.—His account of the battle.—Destruction of two Spanish three-deckers.—Capture of the St. Antonio.—Action between the Venerable and Formidable.—Public letters.—Private letters.—French details of the battle.—Spanish ditto.—Orders of sailing.—Remarks.

General O'Hara the gallant governor, and the brave garrison of Gibraltar, had beheld from the Rock, which is only four miles from Algeziras, the long-contested, severe, but unfortunate conflict of the 6th of July. They had witnessed the bravery of their countrymen. Their intense anxiety for the success of the Admiral's daring attack had been changed into sympathy for the loss his squadron had sustained; and, fully convinced that not only no honour had been sacrificed, but that the character of the nation had been gloriously maintained, the unsuccessful were received at the Rock, as if they had returned from a victory. The garrison beheld with admiration the wonderful efforts which were made to meet a still more formidable foe. Every day marked the progress of the Herculean labours in preparation for that event; the exertions, zeal, and intrepidity of Sir James's officers and crews increased in proportion to the multiplied force of the enemy, which, to men of any other cast, would have appeared overwhelming!

[Pg 402]

After one of the severest engagements on record, the British squadron, in the short space of five days, had repaired its damages, and sought the enemy, whose force had been nearly tripled by the junction of six ships and three frigates from Cadiz. With such men, and in such a cause, victory seemed certain, notwithstanding the great disparity of force between the belligerents, and the exertions of the enemy proved, that he expected a tremendous struggle. Every circumstance contributed to render the approaching contest more eventful. Their late unsuccessful attack only served to animate the officers and crews with a noble enthusiasm, and a desire to put their valour to another but a fairer trial; and they well knew that their Admiral would lead them to the combat with that consummate skill, and deliberate courage which had so justly rendered his name illustrious.

At length the moment arrived. The enemy, whose force almost tripled that of the English, were seen under sail; the wind was fair, and the weather fine. The Cæsar, having rehoisted the Admiral's flag, made the signal to prepare for battle!

[Pg 403]

For a description of the intensely interesting and animating scene which followed, we gladly avail ourselves of a communication kindly made to us by Sir Jahleel Brenton, the gallant captain of the Cæsar on that memorable occasion.

"12th July 1801.—At daylight the enemy were seen making every preparation for sailing; and in the course of the forenoon were getting under way, and working out of the bay with a fresh wind from the eastward. As they required to make several tacks for this purpose, it was past one o'clock before the headmost ships could clear Cabrita Point, when they brought to, to wait for the others to join them.

"At half-past two the Cæsar hauled out of the Mole, her band playing "Cheer up my lads, 'tis to glory we steer!" which was answered by the military band on the Mole-head with "Britons, strike home!" At the same moment the Admiral's flag was rehoisted on board the Cæsar; and sail being made upon her, she weighed amidst the deafening cheers and acclamations of the garrison, and the whole assembled population, carrying with her the sincerest and most ardent wishes for victory.

"She took her station off Europa Point, with the signals for her little squadron to close round her, and to prepare for battle.^[38] We then returned the salute which had been fired by the garrison on entering the bay on the 6th; and which, in consequence of being immediately engaged with the enemy, we could not do at the time. It was delightful during this and the preceding days to witness the calm, but decided manner of the admiral. He had evidently calculated the awful responsibility under which he was placed; and this, at the same time, was self-imposed; for it was by no means incumbent on him as a duty, with only five sail of the line, viz. the Cæsar, Superb, Spencer, Venerable, and Audacious, to attack an enemy with six fresh ships, of which number two mounted one hundred and twelve guns each, one of ninety, and three of seventy-four, in addition to the three French ships we had already engaged, and their prize, the Hannibal. But our chief had counted the cost, and made up his mind to the enterprise. His intention was to throw his whole force upon whatever part of the enemy's line he might be able to reach; depending upon the talents of his captains, and the discipline of his ships, to make up for the

[Pg 404]

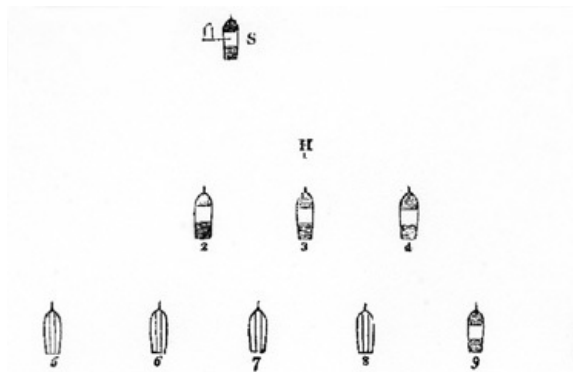
[Pg 405]

disparity of force, especially in a night action.

"The squadron was soon assembled off Europa, and we beheld that of the enemy forming their line off Cabrita, about five miles to leeward, waiting for the Hannibal, which was the last ship to leave Algeziras. Sir James now made the interrogatory signal to know if all the ships were ready for battle, which was most properly answered in the negative, as all had much to do. The time which the combined squadron took to get into the order of battle and sailing was invaluable to all of us, by enabling us to complete the arrangements so necessary upon so momentous an occasion. At length, every ship having announced her readiness for action, the Admiral made the signal for them to be prepared to follow his motions. He had already communicated with his captains his plan of attack, and no other signal was made, or was necessary.

[Pg 406]

"At eight o'clock the Hannibal, unable to work out of the Bay, was observed to anchor again at Algeziras, and the enemy bore up through the Straits; the Cæsar's helm was instantly put up, a blue light being burned at the same time for the squadron to follow. At 8h.40m. the Superb was gaining fast upon us, and the Admiral ordered me to hail Captain Keats, directing him to engage the ship nearest to the Spanish shore. The enemy was retreating in two lines abreast, thus:



the three French ships in the van, the Spanish squadron in the rear. Had the Hannibal succeeded in getting out of the bay, she was to have taken the station ahead of the French ships, at the place marked with a cross H, in order to put her in the greatest security, and to preserve their trophy.

[Pg 407]

"At five minutes past eleven the Superb opened her fire; and, very shortly after, the two sternmost ships of the enemy were seen to be in flames. We were rapidly approaching them, and orders had been sent down to the officers at their quarters to fire as soon as the guns would bear.

"I was at this time standing on the poop ladder, near the Admiral, when he seized me by the shoulder, and, pointing to the flames bursting out, exclaimed, 'My God, sir, look there! the day is ours!' A more magnificent scene never presented itself, as may be easily imagined, than two ships of such immense magnitude as the Spanish first-rates, on board of each other in flames, with a fresh gale, the sea running high, and their sails in the utmost confusion. The flames, ascending the rigging with the rapidity of lightning, soon communicated to the canvass, which instantly became one sheet of fire. A very general feeling of regret and sympathy seemed to be quickly experienced around us when we beheld the Spanish colours brilliantly illuminated by the dreadful conflagration, instead of the French. The unfortunate Spaniards, having become at once the tools and the victims of France, were objects of our sincere commiseration.

[Pg 408]

"The Superb was now seen a little way on the starboard bow, engaged with one of the enemy's ships, while several others were in sight at a distance ahead. We kept on our course, and after having fired a broadside into the Superb's opponent, (which, however, was already nearly silenced), continued the chase, followed by the Venerable; but, when nearly the length of Trafalgar, our wounded masts complained so much, that we were under the necessity of close-reefing the main-top-sail, and taking in the fore-top-sail. The Admiral was also anxious to get his squadron round him, that he might, with his collected force, reach Cadiz before the morning, and cut the enemy off from the only port in which they could find security.

"The easterly wind, which, although blowing with great violence in the Straits, is seldom felt close in shore on either the Spanish or African coasts, entirely failed us as we hauled round Cape Trafalgar, and left our ship rolling heavily in the swell, to the great danger of our masts. At half-past twelve o'clock one of the Spanish three-deckers blew up, with a tremendous explosion, and soon after the other. They had previously separated, after their masts had fallen, and the rigging was consumed; and they were seen for some time burning at a distance from each other, before their fatal termination.

[Pg 409]

"As the Admiral and myself were looking over the chart together, in order to shape our course for Cadiz, we heard an alarming cry of 'Fire!' and, running out upon deck, were enveloped in a thick sulphureous smoke, which seemed to pervade every part of the ship. Soon, however, we found it clear away, and ascertained the cause to be, that we had run into the column of smoke and vapour arising from the explosion of the Spanish ship, which, being too dense to rise, lay along the surface of the water. We gradually emerged from this, and were relieved from our apprehensions of sharing the fate of our unhappy enemies.

"At the dawn of day we saw the Venerable close to a French line-of-battle ship, and drawing up with her by the aid of a light air off the Spanish shore. At five o'clock the Venerable opened her fire upon the enemy. The breeze dying away, the two ships were enveloped in a cloud of smoke. The Cæsar, at the distance of about a mile and a half, was perfectly becalmed. The boats were sent ahead, in hopes of being able to tow her within gun-shot of the enemy. In the course of a short time, a light breeze having dispersed the dense cloud of smoke which the fire of the two ships had occasioned, we discovered the Venerable with her main-mast gone, and her opponent availing herself of the air from the eastward to draw away, and pursue her course for Cadiz, firing her stern-chasers at the Venerable. The remainder of the enemy's squadron, consisting of five sail of the line and one frigate, in which both the French and Spanish admirals were embarked, were discerned in the N.W., at a considerable distance, coming down with a westerly wind.

[Pg 410]

"The Superb having secured the prize, was approaching us from the S.E., and the Spencer and Audacious were also to the southward. Such was the relative situation of the squadrons, when, at eight minutes past eight, the Venerable made the signal of having struck on a shoal. The Admiral, very apprehensive of her falling into the hands of the enemy, sent me with discretional orders to Captain Hood, that, should he not be able to get her off the shoal, he might put his men into the Thames, and burn the Venerable, making the signal at the same time for the Thames to close with the Venerable as soon as possible. I had scarcely left the Cæsar when I saw the Venerable's fore-mast go over the side; and before I reached her the mizen-mast followed. I found her, on going on board, a perfect wreck, striking on the shoal, and the shot from the stern-chase guns of the Formidable, her opponent, going over her. The gallant Hood was seated on a gun on the quarter-deck, cheerfully waiting for the assistance which he knew the Admiral would send to him as soon as the wind would enable him, and ready to take advantage of any circumstance that might occur.

[Pg 411]

"Having delivered my message from the Admiral, he said, 'Tell Sir James I hope it is not yet so bad with the old Venerable; I hope to get her off soon. Let the Thames stay by me, in readiness to receive our people. These rascals shall not have her.' I returned to my ship; the breeze sprung up; and the Thames closing with the Venerable, enabled her to heave off the shoal, and the enemy availed himself of the wind to get into Cadiz. The Venerable was soon under jury-masts and in tow of the Spencer, steering for Gibraltar, followed by the rest of the squadron; where we all anchored, with our prize, the San Antonio, of seventy-four guns, at 6 P.M. on the 14th.

"The scene before us, on anchoring, was of the most animating description. Every point of the Rock overhanging the shore was crowded with people, and the acclamations of the troops and inhabitants which rent the air resounded throughout the bay! Here, indeed, was a triumph for our hero, who, only a week before, had been towed in from Algeziras with his crippled and defeated squadron, with the loss of a ship of the line; but now entering victorious with the same squadron, reinforced, it is true, by the Superb, but diminished by the loss of the Hannibal, while the disabled state of the Pompée had prevented her leaving Gibraltar; after having engaged and defeated an enemy of more than double his force, and having burnt two of their first-rates, and taken from them a ship of the line.

[Pg 412]

"From the nature of the attack and retreat, there was not much hard fighting on this occasion, and consequently little opportunity for any display of that valour and skill which is so constantly manifested in severe actions. The Superb and Venerable had the greatest, and almost the only share. But the conduct of the Admiral, I will venture to say, when all the circumstances are taken into consideration, must be deemed fully equal to anything that has adorned the pages of England's naval history. Instead of the recklessness of despair, to which some might have attributed an attack with crippled ships against a force every way so greatly superior, he manifested a calm and resolute determination. His intentions were expressed with so much clearness that, as I have already observed, signals were rendered unnecessary. He waited with much patience and firmness for the enemy to bear up, which would place them in a situation the least favourable for resisting a simultaneous attack upon any portion of their squadron.

"When the governor, the garrison, and the inhabitants of Gibraltar, who had passed the night with painful anxiety beheld the approach of the victorious squadron, their joy and exultation knew no bounds. Even the wounded at the hospitals, when they heard of the glorious success which had attended their brethren in arms, raising their stumps, joined in the general burst of acclamation. On the arrival of the Cæsar, the royal standard was hoisted, twenty-one guns were fired at the King's Bastion, and the whole of this noble fortress was brilliantly illuminated in honour of the victory."

[Pg 413]

After the termination of this contest,—a contest which may be said to have lasted seven days, in which two battles had been fought under peculiar disadvantages, and which ended in adding another brilliant ray to the naval glory of Britain,—Sir James, with that humility which had ever formed a distinguished feature in his character, returned thanks to the great Giver of all victory for crowning his exertions with success.

The following general memorandum was given out to the squadron, on their return to Gibraltar:

Cæsar, Rosia Bay, 15th July 1801.

Rear-admiral Sir James Saumarez has the happiness to offer his most heartfelt congratulations to the captains, officers, and men of the ships he had the honour to command, on the signal success with which it has pleased Almighty God to crown their zealous exertions in the service of their

country. To the discipline and valour of British seamen is to be ascribed their great superiority over the enemy, who, although more than triple the force of the English squadron in number of guns and weight of metal, have been so signally defeated.

[Pg 414]

The Rear-admiral has not failed to transmit in his late despatches a report of the unparalleled exertions of all the officers and men in refitting his Majesty's ships after the battle of Algeziras, where their conduct and bravery were equally conspicuous, and which has led to the late glorious success.

JAS. SAUMAREZ.

To the respective Captains, &c.

Lieutenant Dumaresq, of the Cæsar, was now despatched in the Louisa brig to England, with the following official accounts of the action from the Rear-admiral, and from Captains Keats and Hood:

Cæsar, off Cape Trafalgar, 13th July 1801.

SIR,

I request you will please to inform my Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty that it has pleased the Almighty to crown the exertions of this squadron with the most signal success over the enemies of their country.

The three French line-of-battle ships disabled in the action of the 6th instant off Algeziras, were, on the 8th, reinforced by a squadron of five Spanish line-of-battle ships, under the command of Don Juan Joaquin de Moreno, and a French ship of seventy-four guns, wearing a broad pendant; besides three frigates, and an incredible number of gun-boats and other vessels; and got under sail yesterday morning, together with his Majesty's late ship Hannibal, which they had succeeded in getting off the shoal on which she struck.

I almost despaired of having a sufficient force in readiness to oppose to such numbers; but, through the great exertions of Captain Brenton, and the officers and men belonging to the Cæsar, the ship was in readiness to warp out of the Mole yesterday morning, and got under way immediately after, with all the squadron except the Pompée, which ship had not had time to get her masts in.

[Pg 415]

Confiding in the zeal and intrepidity of the officers and men I had the happiness to serve with, I determined, if possible, to obstruct the passage of this powerful force to Cadiz. Late in the evening I observed the enemy's ships to have cleared Cabrita Point; and, at eight, I bore up with the squadron to stand after them. His Majesty's ship Superb being stationed ahead of the Cæsar, I directed Captain Keats to make sail and attack the sternmost ships of the enemy's rear, using his endeavours to keep in-shore of them.

At eleven, the Superb opened her fire close to the enemy's ships; and, on the Cæsar's coming up and preparing to engage a three-decker that had hauled her wind, she was perceived to have taken fire; and the flames having communicated to a ship to leeward of her, both were soon in a blaze, and presented a most awful sight. As no possibility existed of affording the least assistance in so distressing a situation, the Cæsar passed, to close with the ship engaged by the Superb; but, by the cool and determined fire kept up on her, which must ever reflect the highest credit on the discipline of that ship, she was completely silenced, and soon after hauled down her colours.

The Venerable and Spencer having at this time come up, I bore up after the enemy, who were carrying a press of sail, standing out of the Straits; and lost sight of them. During the night it blew excessively hard till daylight, and, in the morning, the only ships in company were the Venerable and Thames, ahead of the Cæsar, and one of the French ships at some distance from them, standing towards the shoals of Conil, besides the Spencer astern, coming up.

[Pg 416]

All the ships immediately made sail with a fresh breeze, but, as we approached, the wind suddenly failing, the Venerable was alone able to bring her to action; which Captain Hood did in the most gallant manner, and had nearly silenced the French ship, when his main-mast (which had been before wounded) was unfortunately shot away, and, it coming nearly calm, the enemy's ship was enabled to get off without any possibility of following her. The highest praise is due to Captain Hood, the officers, and men of the Venerable, for their spirit and gallantry in this action, which entitled them to better success. The French ship was an eighty-four, with additional guns on the gunwale. This action was so near the shore that the Venerable struck on one of the shoals; but was soon after got off, and taken in tow by the Thames, though with the loss of all her masts.

The enemy's ships are now in sight to the westward, standing in for Cadiz; the Superb and Audacious, with the captured ship, are in sight, with the Carlotta, Portuguese frigate, commanded by Captain Crawford Duncan, who very handsomely came out with the squadron, and has been of the greatest assistance to Captain Keats in staying by the enemy's ship captured by the Superb.

I am proceeding with the squadron for Rosia Bay, and shall proceed, the moment all the ships are refitted, to resume my station before Cadiz; and shall immediately detach the Thames to cruise off Cape St. Mary's.

No praises that I can bestow are adequate to the merits of the officers and ships' companies of all the squadron, particularly for their unremitting exertions in refitting the ships at Gibraltar; to which, in a great degree, is to be ascribed the success of the squadron against the enemy.

[Pg 417]

Although the Spencer and Audacious had not the good fortune to partake of this action, I have no doubt of their exertion, had they come up in time to close with the enemy's ships.

My thanks are also due to Captain Holles of the Thames, and to the Honourable Captain Dundas of the Calpe, whose assistance was particularly useful to Captain Keats in securing the enemy's ship, and enabling the Superb to stand after the squadron in case of being enabled to renew the action with the enemy.

I have the honour to be, sir,

Your most obedient humble servant,

JAS. SAUMAREZ.

To Evan Nepean, Esq. &c. &c. &c. Admiralty.

Cæsar, off Cape Trafalgar, 14th July 1801.

SIR,

I herewith enclose, for their lordships' further information, the statement I have received from Captain Keats, to whom the greatest praise is due for his gallant conduct in the service alluded to. Captain Hood's merits are held in too high estimation to receive additional lustre from any praise I can bestow; but I only do justice to my feelings, when I observe that in no instance have I known superior bravery to that displayed by him on this occasion.

I have the honour to be, sir,
Your most obedient servant,

JAS. SAUMAREZ.

To Evan Nepean, Esq. Admiralty.

Superb, off Cape Trafalgar, 13th July 1801.

SIR,

Pursuant to your directions to state the particulars of the Superb's services last night, I have the honour to inform you that, in consequence of your directions to make sail up to, and engage, the sternmost of the enemy's ships, at half-past eleven I found myself abreast of a Spanish three-deck ship, (the Real Carlos, as appears by the report of some survivors,) which, having been brought with two other ships, in nearly line abreast, I opened my fire upon them at not more than three cables' lengths. This evidently produced a good effect, as well in this ship as the others abreast of her, which soon began firing at each other, and, at times, on the Superb. In about a quarter of an hour, I perceived the ship I was engaging, and which had lost her fore-top-mast, to be on fire; upon which we ceased to molest her; and I proceeded on to the ship next at hand, which proved to be the San Antonio, of seventy-four guns and seven hundred and thirty men, commanded by Chef-de-division Le Ray, under French colours, wearing a broad pendant, and manned, nearly equally, with seven hundred and thirty French and Spanish seamen, and which, after some action, (the chef being wounded,) struck her colours.

[Pg 418]

I learn, from the very few survivors of the ships that caught fire and blew up, who, in an open boat, reached the Superb at the time she was taking possession of the San Antonio, that, in the confusion of the action, the Hermenegildo, (a first-rate ship,) mistaking the Real Carlos for an enemy, ran on board of her, and shared her melancholy fate. Services of this nature cannot well be expected to be performed without some loss; but though we have to lament that Lieutenant Edward Waller, and fourteen seamen and marines, have been mostly severely wounded, still there is reason to rejoice that that is the extent of our loss. I received able and active assistance from Mr. Samuel Jackson, the first lieutenant; and it is my duty to represent to you that the officers of all descriptions, seamen and marines, conducted themselves with the greatest steadiness and gallantry.

[Pg 419]

I have the honour to be, sir,
Your most obedient humble servant,

R.G. KEATS.

To Sir James Saumarez, Bart. &c. &c. &c.

List of the Spanish and French squadrons which sailed from Algeziras on the 12th July 1801, under command of Don Juan Joaquin de Moreno, Lieutenant-general (or Vice-admiral), and the French Vice-admiral Linois:

SPANISH.

Ships' names.	Guns.	Captains.	Where built.	Year.
Real Carlos*	112	Don J. Esquerria	Havanna	1793
Hermenegildo*	112	Don J. Emparran	Do.	1789
San Fernando	96	Don J. Malina	Do.	1765
Argonauta	80	Don J. Harrera	Ferrol	1798
San Augustin	74	Don R. Jopete	Guarnizo	1768
Sabrina	40			
	514	* Burnt.		

FRENCH.

Ships' names. Guns. Captains.

Brought over	514	
Formidable	84	Amable-Gilles-Troude.
Indomptable	84	— Callende.
Dessaix	74	Jean A. Chirly-Pallièrè.
San Antonio	74	Julien Le Ray (Commodore), taken.
Libre	40	
Indienne	40	
Muron	40	
Vautour	12	
Total	962	& Hannibal, 74 not in the action, 1036.

The Spanish and French admirals were on board the Sabrina frigate.

[Pg 420]

List of the British squadron, commanded by Rear-admiral Sir James Saumarez, which defeated the above combined squadron, 12th July 1801, in the Straits of Gibraltar:

Ships names.	Guns.		Captains.
Cæsar.	84	Captain	Jahleel Brenton.
Spencer	74	"	Henry D'Esterre Darby.
Venerable	74	"	Samuel Hood.
Superb	74	"	Rich. Goodwin Keats.
Audacious	74	"	Shuldham Peard.
Thames	36	"	A.P. Holles.
Total	416		
In favour of the }	—		
enemy. }	546		

The Rear-admiral had his flag on board the Cæsar, 84.

The guns of the enemy's ships being much heavier, increased their weight of metal to triple that of the squadron.

The Superb had Lieutenant Waller, and fourteen seamen and marines, wounded. The Venerable had Mr. J. Williams (her master), fifteen seamen, and two marines, killed; Lieutenant Thomas Church, Mr. Snell (boatswain), Messrs. Massey and Pardoe (midshipmen), seventy-three seamen, and ten marines, wounded.

In the French and Spanish accounts of this action, which will be given hereafter, it will be seen that the loss of the enemy has *not* been accurately enumerated; but, out of two thousand men that were in the Real Carlos and Hermenegildo, only three hundred were saved. Commodore Le Ray, of the San Antonio, was wounded; but his loss in men, which must have been severe, has not been ascertained.

[Pg 421]

We shall here give some interesting extracts from private letters from Sir James, written at the close of the battle:

Cæsar, 13th July 1801, 8 A.M.

I shall leave you to judge of the difference of my feelings to those when I sat down to write the letter of this day week.^[39] To an all-merciful PROVIDENCE is to be ascribed the wonderful and most awful event of last night, which will ever be remembered with terror by the nations it concerned, and by me with infinite gratitude for so peculiar a token of Divine mercy vouchsafed towards me.

Two days after the action of last Monday, a strong squadron was sent to Algeziras from Cadiz, to protect the disabled French ships, and to convoy them to the latter port, with the Hannibal, which ship they had succeeded in getting off the shoal whereon she had unfortunately grounded. It may be supposed that no exertion was wanting on my part to get the squadron in a state for service; and, beyond all expectation, owing to the great activity and zeal of every officer and man in the squadron, we were in a state to put to sea yesterday, on the enemy's getting under sail from the Bay of Algeziras; the Pompée excepted, which had not sufficient time to get in new masts.

Late in the evening I observed that the enemy's ships, consisting of ten sail of the line and four frigates, had succeeded in clearing the bay; and at eight o'clock I made sail after them. Captain Keats, who, in the Superb, had been much mortified at not having shared in the former affair, being near the Cæsar, I directed him to endeavour to bring the rear ships of the enemy to action; myself following with the Venerable, and the other two ships, some distance astern.

[Pg 422]

It was near midnight when the Superb succeeded in engaging the enemy; and, as we came up, a three-deck ship hauling up for us after having fired at the Superb, by some accident, in the moment we were going to give her our broadside, took fire, which communicating to a ship which we

perceived close to her, both were almost instantly in a blaze. So awful a scene I never yet have witnessed. We then closed with the Superb, which had nearly silenced her opponent, when she struck.

Think what a change then took place in the inequality of force with which we began the action! I left the Superb to take care of the prize, and proceeded after the other ships; the Audacious and Spencer having now joined. It came on to blow excessively hard till daylight, when I found the Venerable and Thames a small distance ahead, and one of the French ships standing for the shore. We immediately crowded all sail, and made sure of taking her, when the wind failed us, and the Venerable only was able to engage her; but, being at the time close to the shore, she very unfortunately got aground, and we were obliged to leave her, after sustaining very great damage.

We are now about seven leagues from Cadiz, and I see the remainder of the enemy's squadron going into port. I am as yet ignorant of the ship's name that struck her colours last night. She is, however, one of those that came from Cadiz with the Spanish squadron, but under French colours, and had a broad pendant. We are proceeding to Gibraltar.

The following extract is from a letter to Richard Saumarez, Esq.:

[Pg 423]

Cæsar, off Cadiz, 13th July 1801.

I intend to send Phil. D. with my despatches. You must refer to him for the particulars of the wonderful events since yesterday.

After detailing these events exactly as in the above, he adds, respecting the Venerable:

It was as severe an action as I have known, and must reflect the highest credit on Captain Hood; but having his main-mast shot away, and it falling nearly calm, he was obliged to leave the enemy. We were at this time close to the shoals off the coast, on which the Venerable got aground; but she was afterwards got off, and was taken in tow by the Thames. I fear she has sustained great loss in men. What a surprising change, my dear Richard, to the events of last Monday! To the Divine mercy I entirely ascribe this signal success, who never forsakes those who place their confidence in him! I mean to send the Louisa, which joined me yesterday from Minorca, with Phil. Dumaresq, and doubt not but he will be a welcome messenger. We see the remainder of the enemy's squadron. They are standing for Cadiz, &c.

Sir James subsequently wrote to his eldest brother, residing in Guernsey; and, as his letter will be found to contain additional matter of much interest, we herewith insert it.

Cæsar, Gibraltar, 16th July 1801.

MY DEAR BROTHER,

I hope that the several letters I have had the pleasure of writing to you at different opportunities, will arrive safely; and that you and all my friends will not be kept in suspense on events which, thanks to the Divine Providence! have terminated so successfully to the squadron. Although I always trusted some favourable turn would take place, I never could have formed any hopes equal to what has actually occurred. The possession of one or two of the disabled ships, besides the recovery of the Hannibal, was the utmost that could have been expected; but our present success far exceeds that. The destruction of two first-rates, and the capture of a seventy-four, completely cripples the force in Cadiz, and places the squadron with me superior to all the force the enemy can collect; and this, without any loss whatever to this ship, and trifling to the Superb. The men, wounded on board the latter, suffered from the explosion of cartridges in their own ship.

[Pg 424]

The misfortune to the Venerable was more serious; but this was subsequently to the attack on the enemy's force, and was mainly attributable to the untoward circumstance of the wind failing this ship when we were very close to her.

It is inconceivable the *éclat* with which we have been received by this garrison, and the distinguished honours paid to the squadron; indeed their marked attention, after the attack of Algeiras, does them great credit; as, after the failure of that business, we exposed Gibraltar to all the inconvenience of a blockaded port; and yet the whole garrison received us as if we had obtained a victory. You must suppose my distress must have been great during the interval: convoys long expected were liable to fall into the enemy's hands, whilst the increasing force at Cadiz would soon have put it out of my power to cope with them.

The St. Antoine has scarcely suffered: my intention is to take her into the service; and in two weeks, I expect, she will be partly manned, and fit for sea. Yesterday, almost all the Hannibal's men were sent in, which will make up our deficiencies, and partly man that ship, when in a fortnight she shall proceed on a particular service.

[Pg 425]

These are trifling advantages compared to those that result from both actions. The three ships were to have proceeded direct to the Bay of Casquays, at the entrance of the Tagus, where the troops with them were to have taken possession of the batteries, which would have given them complete possession of the trade to and from Lisbon. I have despatched the Spencer and Audacious, and shall join them with this ship, the Pompée, and Superb, the first easterly wind, and cruise before Cadiz with this force, far superior to any the enemy can put to sea. I shall soon be joined by ships from England.

We have, as yet, no accounts since we sailed. You will have the pleasure of mentioning to the relations of the young men I have, that they have all behaved most nobly, and are perfectly well: it is a particular circumstance that, out of six ships, three masters should have been killed, and not one lieutenant hurt out of the whole number.

I hope the benevolence of the public will be extended to the sufferers in these actions: some are piteous objects; indeed, no less than three brave men with the loss of both arms.

I send this by a vessel belonging to Jersey.

John Saumarez, Esq. Guernsey.

P.S.—I am under great concern at the uneasiness you must all suffer at our unsuccessful attack off Algeziras; but this will, I hope, soon remove it. Messrs. Le Mesurier, jointly with Mr. Tucker, Lord St. Vincent's secretary, are appointed agents.

The following letter to Lady Saumarez is dated 17th July, on board the *Cæsar*, at Gibraltar; and gives a detailed account of his proceedings after his arrival there. [Pg 426]

Since our arrival here on Tuesday afternoon, every distinguished attention which can be thought of has been paid to the squadron. The day following, the royal standard was hoisted; at noon the garrison saluted; and, in the evening, the most splendid illuminations took place in every habitable part of this famous Rock. Yesterday the governor gave a dinner, and he intends to invite the ladies to a ball on this occasion. We have, also, invitations from the different corps for every day we are likely to remain here: but what has afforded me more satisfaction, is the manner we were received after the attack of Algeziras, which, from the arrival of the Spanish squadron, subjected the garrison to every inconvenience of a port blockaded. The *St. Antoine* I have ordered to be purchased into the service; and I propose to appoint officers to her. She is a very good ship, and has suffered so little that I expect to have her fit for service in less than a fortnight. The *Spencer* and *Audacious* I detached off Cape St. Mary's, and I shall join them with the *Pompée* and *Superb* the first easterly wind, and resume my station before Cadiz, where they cannot have more than four ships ready for sea; and, I may venture to pronounce, the Spanish ships will not come out, except the French take possession of the batteries and compel them. We have almost daily accounts from thence, describing the disagreements between the French and Spaniards as most serious. They also describe the two French ships as being in a very shattered condition, and there being no materials in store to repair them. [Pg 427]

I think my first accounts will reach you by way of Lisbon; but I hope Dumaresq, with the subsequent ones, will make his appearance very soon after. I am very impatient to hear from England. I require small vessels very much, as I have not been able to convey the accounts of our success to Lord Keith.

When am I to hear from you? and when shall I be assured you have not suffered from the relation of these events? The governor and others talk to me of honours being conferred; but, unless Parliament furnish the means to support them with dignity, I might as well be without them. The only ladies I have yet seen are, Lady Ann Niel and Mrs. Edwards, whose husbands have regiments here; they are very amiable people: besides, Mr. Fyers, whose daughter was married the evening of the illumination,—an ominous day you will think. Captain Brenton will draw you some excellent views of both actions, without partiality. I am most highly indebted to him, in getting this ship so soon refitted, and, indeed, throughout the whole of our important service. A large shot passed through the cabin, which filled it with splinters, and demolished the tables and chairs, besides the glass. Fortunately, my papers and wardrobe escaped. We are now quite refitted; as well, I may say, as we were a fortnight ago.

I am in want of nothing whatever, but letters from you. Let me have favourable accounts of yourself and of our precious children, and I shall be satisfied. I hope to send a box of Malaga raisins for the young tribe. James will be overjoyed to hear of his father's victory.

The following is the account of the above action, from the French commander-in-chief, dated at Cadiz, 16th July 1801. [Pg 428]

CITIZEN MINISTER.—General Moreno has returned into harbour. General Linois will give you an account of the sailing and passage of the squadron. I shall only mention to you the chagrin which I have experienced at not seeing the French ship, *St. Antonio*, and the two three-deckers, the *Real Carlos* and the *Hermenegildo*: a marine, saved with forty-five men from the *Real Carlos*, has informed us that about midnight the squadron having been attacked by the English, the *Real Carlos* and the *Hermenegildo* took each other for enemies. A very smart engagement ensued, the two vessels being nearly foul of each other. A fire broke out on board the *Real Carlos*, which soon blew up, and set fire to the *Hermenegildo*, which shared the same fate. The *St. Antonio*, in consequence of her station, was near the latter vessel, and this station gave me the greatest uneasiness; yet I have been assured that there were only two explosions. I have reason to conclude that, to get at a distance from the conflagration, Captain Lenny proceeded towards the coast of Africa, where the calms and currents carried him away from the squadron, which, at the break of day, was six leagues west of Cadiz. The day before yesterday the British ships were descried from the coast, and a French ship in the Strait; but the latter did not appear to be captured. This may give us some hope, if the signals are correct. Nothing remains to me but uncertainty, with a great deal of fear; I do not know what opinion to entertain.

After having spoken of our losses, it gives me great pleasure to state to you the new glory with which *Le Formidable*, commanded by Captain Troude, has been covered. During the night cannonade, in the middle of the Strait, this ship received the fire of her friends and enemies; but with intrepid coolness the captain would not return the fire, lest he should increase the disorder, and, keeping close to the Spanish coast, he retired from the combatants. He was followed by a division of the British fleet of three ships, and a frigate: and, at break of day, being in sight of Cadiz, and five leagues distant from the squadron, he was attacked by three ships, with which he was engaged half-an-hour, and obliged two of them to retire: the third endeavoured to attack *Le Formidable* on the quarter, while the frigate cannonaded her in stern. But, notwithstanding the bad state of his masts, Captain Troude approached within musket-shot of the British ship, the *Pompée*, which, having lost her mast, after an engagement of an hour and a half, made haste to get away, being taken in tow by a frigate. Some time after, both of her masts came down, and the vessel had the appearance of having yielded; but, as the two other ships and the frigate were at a short distance, Captain Troude would not take possession of her: he expected to be attacked again. The enemy, disconcerted both in their fire and their bravery, suffered him quietly to pursue his course. [Pg 429]

This engagement took place in sight of Cadiz; and the glorious result of a combat so unequal, by covering our arms with glory, has filled the hearts of the Spaniards with the utmost degree of enthusiasm. Le Formidable was scarcely repaired after the battle of Algeziras, on the 6th,—top-gallant-mast served as top-masts; but, in this damaged state, the brave Troude, instead of flying from the enemy, who might have captured him without firing a shot, offered them battle, as by this manœuvre, as prudent as bold, he first extricated himself from two ships, which he greatly damaged, and at last totally dismasted the *Pompée*,^[40] which fought him bravely for an hour and a half.

The combined squadron was at that time becalmed, at the distance of five or six leagues. I expected to see it, on the breeze springing up, come to take possession of this vessel, and give chase to capture the four British ships which were in sight; but I was far from having any idea of the misfortune which befel the two three-deckers, which no doubt occasioned the separation of the *St. Antonio*: and in the evening the squadron came to anchor.

[Pg 430]

Rear-admiral Linois was exceedingly sorry that he was not on board the *Formidable*; but he did not think proper to resist the earnest solicitations of General Moreno, who induced him to go on board his frigate that they might better concert their operations. My respectful salutations,

DUMANOIR LE PELLEY.

Report of Captain Troude, provisional commander of *Le Formidable*, to Rear-admiral Linois:

Cadiz, 15th July 1801.

CITIZEN GENERAL,

I have the honour of communicating to you an account of the operations of *Le Formidable*, with the provisional command of which you entrusted me. Proud of the honourable charge of defending your flag, I endeavoured to execute your orders with the most scrupulous exactness. I immediately repaired on board to assume the chief command, and I put to sea as soon as you made the signal.

You observed, as well as myself, the movements of the enemy's squadron, which had retired to Gibraltar after the memorable battle of the 6th at Algeziras. Seeing the enemy set sail at the same time as the combined squadrons, and keeping to windward of us at the distance of about a league, I endeavoured to follow exactly your manœuvres, and made all the sail possible to follow you; but the ship I had the honour to command, being absolutely disabled, having only jury-masts and the lower sails, I could not make that way which I wished. During the darkness of the night a strong breeze broke the small top-gallant-mast that served me as a fore-top-mast, and everything contributed to prevent me from following the combined squadron.

[Pg 431]

About midnight I sustained the fire of five English ships that had come up with me: they fired red-hot bullets. I escaped as fast as possible from the brisk cannonade which they maintained, hanging up the same lights as I observed them to have. I had only three men killed, and two wounded. As I was very near the combined squadron, I resolved not to engage, that I might avoid those fatal mistakes which too often take place in a night engagement. I was afraid lest I might fire into some of our own vessels, or that they might fire into mine; from which, fatal accidents must have resulted to the combined squadron. At one in the morning, not being able to observe or distinguish any more signals, I made for Cadiz, keeping close in with the Spanish coast, on a course N. or N.E., and by that means got at a distance from the squadron, which were steering large in a westerly direction.

At break of day I found myself attacked by four of the enemy's squadron,—three ships and a frigate,—which had pursued the same course. Though totally disabled, and the crew fatigued, having had no rest for three days, we returned their fire with courage: the frigate attacked us first, but a few shots well directed from our stern-guns made her abandon her object. The ship which followed, approached us, and kept up a brisk fire. We manœuvred to get into a better position; I ran close to her until we were yard-arm and yard-arm, and maintained a terrible and well-supported fire: after being engaged an hour and a half, she was completely dismasted, making water in every part. The frigate which had attacked me astern, came immediately to her assistance; the other two vessels finding it necessary to sheer off after receiving some broadsides, not without damage, joined the frigate, and hoisted out all their boats to save the crew of the other vessel, and to take her in tow. They resigned to me the field of battle, and retired.

[Pg 432]

I expected, however, another combat. We were determined to make the most vigorous defence; but, as the enemy retired, and as I found myself in such a situation as to be unable to pursue them, I resolved to proceed to Cadiz, where I arrived at two in the afternoon.

I shall not attempt to give you any account of particular instances of bravery. The two staffs, the crew, and the troops who were passengers, vied with each other,—covering themselves with glory; for, besides the noble combat of the 6th, this proves that the valour which animated the brave men I have the honour to command, was carried to a degree which it is difficult to describe. Government will, no doubt, take the earliest opportunity of rewarding so much courage, and so great a devotion to restore the glory of the French navy. It would be just, also, to indemnify them for the losses they have sustained; their effects having been cut to pieces and absolutely destroyed.

I have now, Citizen General, to communicate to you a very fatal relation.—In the battle of this night, two of the ships which fired upon me, took fire and blew up. I supposed them to be English, presuming that the fire had been occasioned by the furnaces they had on board for heating their shot; but, on entering the harbour of Cadiz, I was assured they were Spanish. The darkness had led them into a mistake, which I had justly dreaded. They fired on each other, and on my vessel, at the moment when I formed the prudent resolution of avoiding a combat in which I could not distinguish the enemy. The names of these two vessels are the *San Carlos* and the *Hermenegildo*.

[Pg 433]

In the combat so severe as that of this morning, and against so unequal a force, I am happy in having to regret only twenty men killed, or severely wounded.

Accept, Citizen General, assurances of my zeal and most respectful devotion.

TROUDE.

CITIZEN MINISTER,

On the 9th of July a Spanish division, consisting of six sail of the line and three frigates, arrived at Algeiras from Cadiz, under command of his Excellency Lieutenant-general Moreno, in order to raise the blockade of four sail of the line and one frigate, which were under my orders, and to favour their escape to Cadiz. That officer accordingly gave me every assistance in his power in order to put my ships in a condition to put to sea, and to tow them out, in order to enable them to set sail. Our labour was continued day and night. General Moreno made his squadron anchor in a line N.E. and S.W. On the 12th, there was a tolerable fresh east wind, and it was determined to set sail at one o'clock in the afternoon, on account of the tide. The signal being given at that hour, the fleet set sail, the Spanish squadron being to windward of ours. The frigate L'Indienne towed the Hannibal, which we were sorry to perceive made very little way.

The calm which we experienced under Gibraltar necessarily deranged the regularity of our order; while the enemy, having a brisk gale at east, sailed from Gibraltar with five sail of the line, a frigate, a brig, and a Portuguese frigate, and formed the order of battle. As soon as the English Admiral had passed Europa Point, he made a signal, and immediately we saw to windward six sail, of which two had three masts. I was then with M. de Moreno on board the Sabina frigate. At sunset, the two last ships of our line doubled the Cape Carnero. Three only remained, with the Hannibal, which was under jury-masts, and which consequently could not carry much sail.

[Pg 434]

Night was coming on, and it was necessary to return to our anchorage, which afforded the enemy an opportunity of attacking us before we took a position. At all events every delay was dangerous, for the reinforcements which the enemy expected might arrive every moment. The breeze from the east becoming stronger, we were assured of the wind during the night. We determined to send the Hannibal back to Algeiras, and to pass the Strait with the combined squadron. We then manœuvred so as to facilitate the rallying of two of our vessels, which had fallen into the rear in consequence of the calm. The three French vessels, which sailed better than could have been expected, were in the van; and in that order it was proposed to pass the Strait.

At eight, the enemy showed a disposition to attack us. At nine we heard the reports of three cannon, and at the same time we saw fires at a considerable distance behind us. We presumed it might be some of the enemy's vessels making signals of their arrival. We congratulated ourselves upon seeing our squadrons so well collected together, and sailing so well, which made us confident that the plan of the enemy would not succeed.

At half-past eleven the wind was considerably increased. The night was very dark, and we heard a smart cannonade in the E.N.E.; and, soon after, we saw a conflagration, which made us apprehend that some of our vessels, in firing their stern guns, had taken fire, in consequence of the force of the wind. We thought also that they might be fire-ships of the enemy. We put about for a moment; but the vessel on fire approaching us, we continued our way, having constantly a light at our main-top-mast head, as a signal for rallying.

[Pg 435]

It could no longer be doubted that the enemy had passed the Strait, and had got into our wake. The cannonade became pretty general, but the wind was too strong to continue the action. We received several shots on board the frigate, which killed one man and wounded five. Several balls passed through our sails. We took down the signal we had at our mast-head, for fear the enemy would fall upon us. It was afterwards hoisted, in order to collect our ships. We made sail, directing our course to the W.N.W., not choosing to go more before the wind, lest the wind, which was very strong, would carry away our masts. We passed the night in the greatest disquietude, not knowing whether the vessels which were in sight were not enemies. At length the day dissipated part of our fears, and we found ourselves in the midst of our fleet, with the exception of the two ships of three decks, viz. the Hermenegildo and Real Carlos, and the Formidable and the St. Antoine. The wind having fallen calm, it became impossible to go in search of the vessels which had separated. We were then six leagues west of Cadiz.

At half-past four the Dessaix made a signal that she had sprung a leak, and that the water gained upon her thirty inches an hour. She demanded assistance, which was granted. At five o'clock we heard an action in the east, and perceived a smoke. The wind being then from the S.E., we made the signal for the line of battle to be formed as quickly as possible, without regard to places, in order to assist the vessel that was engaged. At half-past six the action ceased, and a most perfect calm succeeded. At eleven, the wind rising again, we perceived four vessels at a considerable distance from one another. We flattered ourselves at first that they were our ships, but we soon found by their manœuvres that they were enemies. We also distinguished the Formidable close under the land, making the best of her way to Cadiz. We stood for the port, from which a felucca brought me a letter from the captain of the Formidable, which had been anchored in the Road of Cadiz, stating that in the morning he had engaged two ships of the line and a frigate, and that one of the ships of the line had been completely dismantled, and had been towed away by a frigate. We then anchored in Cadiz.

[Pg 436]

I must acknowledge the consummate experience and talents of General Moreno, as well as the zeal and care which he displayed for the success of his mission. If separations have taken place, they must be attributed to the darkness of the night, and the necessity which there was of getting away from the vessels that were on fire. That officer, on hearing at Cadiz of the destruction of two ships of his squadron, Hermenegildo and Real-Carlos, was justly struck with grief on the occasion. He had, by his wise instructions, provided against almost every possible case. I have since been informed that the two Spanish vessels which were destroyed, cannonaded and run foul of one another, each supposing the other to be an enemy. We are uncertain about the fate of the St. Antoine. The violence of the wind made it extremely dangerous to fire to windward.

Rear-admiral LINOIS.

Dated in Cadiz Harbour, 15th July 1801,
on board the Formidable.

[Pg 437]

Admiral Moreno's orders to his fleet on the 11th July 1801:

Orders of sailing to be observed by the ships in my charge on their passage through the Straits of Gibraltar.

The three ships under the command of Rear-admiral Linois will form the vanguard, with the line abreast; the six ships under my charge will form astern of these, likewise formed in a line abreast, endeavouring, as much as possible, to keep opposite to the intervals of the French ships, so as not to impede their fire, according to the following disposition:

Hannibal.
Indomptable. Formidable. Dessaix.
Augustin. Argonauta. R. Carlos. Hermenegildo. St. Antonio. St. Fernando.

In case the enemy should attempt to follow and attack the combined squadron in the rear, besides the continual fire which we ought to make from the stern chasers, chiefly with a view to destroy the enemy's rigging, the squadron will form the line ahead, either with their heads to the Spanish coast, or to that of Africa, as will be determined by signal from the Admiral; and, in order that this might be more simple, in that case, he will only show the signal for the course, at the entire lowering of which the movements must be made. As their situation, from their local position, cannot be of long duration, consequently either by hailing (if near enough) or by signal to preserve the course, the squadron will proceed again to form the line abreast as formerly. It is of the utmost importance that the fire from none of the ships should interfere, or be embarrassed with that of others in this squadron, nor leave the three French ships in the rear.

[Pg 438]

As soon as the French ships get under sail, all those in my charge will do the same, following the track of each other, always observing to keep at a short distance from the French, till we weather the Point of Carnero, in order that if the enemy should get under sail, and find themselves in a situation to offer battle to our squadron before it is formed in the Straits with the line abreast as above directed, we may engage them with advantage; consequently, the least inattention or delay may produce the most unfortunate consequences.

I think the captains of the ships I have the honour to command are fully persuaded of this truth, and therefore I depend upon its efficacy; and I flatter myself that they are convinced everything will be performed on my part which can be inspired by my wish to add to the glory of his Majesty's arms, that of our corps in particular, and the nation in general.

Line of battle in natural order.

2nd Squadron. 1st Squadron. 3rd Squadron.
St. Ferdinand, Formidable, Argonauta,
St. Antonio, R. Carlos, Dessaix,
Hermenegildo. Indomptable. St. Augustin.

Fr. frigate Sabina, Vautour.

A red pendant, under any other signal, signifies it is directed to the French ships only.

To those conversant in naval affairs, it must appear manifest that the disposition made by Admirals Moreno and Linois was one of the worst that could be devised. It was scarcely possible that nine ships, which had never sailed in company with each other, could maintain, for any length of time, a line abreast before the wind so exactly as to be able to form in a line ahead when required, especially in a dark night with a strong breeze; and it must be evident that any ship which advanced at all ahead of the others could never get into the line of battle when the signal was made to form it on either tack. Moreno seems to have been fully aware of the probability of the ships firing into each other, yet he made arrangements of all others the least likely to prevent it. Had he formed into two lines ahead, with the disabled ships in advance, he would have obviated the risk of firing into each other, while the one division, by shortening sail, might have given timely assistance to the other which had been attacked.

[Pg 439]

Nothing can equal the scene of horror which the sudden conflagration produced in these two ships. The collision in which the fore-top-mast of the Hermenegildo fell on board of the Real Carlos, added to the general dismay; and the agonising screams of the unhappy crews, deserted by their countrymen and allies in that dreadful hour, could not fail to pierce the hearts of the brave conquerors; but to render them any assistance while the hostile flag was flying was impossible. The duty of the Admiral was to "sink, burn, and destroy." Seven sail of the enemy's line were still flying from half their force, and he was obliged to leave the burning ships to their fate, and pursue his enemy until his destruction was complete.

[Pg 440]

The capture of the Hannibal, in which the Spaniards had so distinguished a share, induced a number of the young men of family to embark in the two Spanish three-deckers, in order to convey their trophy to Cadiz, never supposing that the half-demolished British squadron would dare to approach so formidable and so superior a force. This fatal event, while it plunged into distress the whole city of Cadiz, could not fail to create a sensation strongly unfavourable to their new republican allies as the originators of their misery.

LONDON:
 PRINTED BY SAMUEL BENTLEY,
 Dorset Street, Fleet Street.

FOOTNOTES:

- [1] See Addenda.
- [2] See Addenda.
- [3] When the action had ceased, Sir Hyde Parker, captain of the *Latona* and son of the admiral, bore down on the *Fortitude*, and affectionately inquired for his brave parent, of whose gallantry he had been an anxious eye-witness. The admiral, with equal warmth, assured his son of his personal safety, and spoke of his mortification at being unable, from the state of his own ship, and from the reports he had received of the other ships, to pursue the advantage he had gained, in the manner he most ardently desired.
- [4] Ralfe's *Naval Biography*, Vol. ii. p. 378.
- [5] See Appendix for this memorandum, and for extracts from the Russell, Canada, and Barfleur's logs; also Captain White's reply, and extracts of letters from Sir Lawrence Halsted and Admiral Gifford, who were in the Canada, and Captain Knight's letter.
- [6] Governor Le Mesurier was brother to Mrs. Richard Saumarez.
- [7] Sir James's brother.
- [8] *Druid*, *Valiant*, *Dolphin*, *Cockchafer*, *Active*, and *Prestwood*.
- [9] See Engraving.
- [10] See Engraving and Diagram.
- [11] *The San Josef*, *Salvador del Mundo*, *San Nicolas*, and *San Ysidro*.
- [12] See Clarke and M'Arthur's *Life of Lord Nelson*.
- [13] In allusion to this memorable event, Sir James writes—"When on the morning of the 1st of August the reconnoitring ship made the signal that the enemy was not there, despondency nearly took possession of my mind, and I do not recollect ever to have felt so utterly hopeless, or out of spirits, as when we sat down to dinner; judge then what a change took place when, as the cloth was being removed, the officer of the watch hastily came in, saying—"Sir, a signal is just now made that the enemy is in Aboukir Bay, and moored in a line of battle." All sprang from their seats, and only staying to drink a *bumper* to our success, we were in a moment on deck." On his appearance there his brave men, animated by one spirit, gave three hearty cheers, in token of their joy at having at length found their long-looked-for enemy, without the possibility of his again eluding their pursuit.
- [14] We may here state that, on the preceding day, Captain Ball had paid a visit to Sir James; and as they were discussing the various points of the battle, he stated to Sir James, that "having been the second in command, he would, unquestionably, receive some mark of distinction on the occasion." Saumarez, in the enthusiasm of the moment, exclaimed, "We all did our duty,—there was no second in command!" meaning, of course, that he did not consider he had done more than other captains; and, not supposing that this observation would come to the ears of the Admiral. But, he afterwards thought, Nelson had availed himself of this conversation, to deprive him of the advantage to which his seniority entitled him, although he fully exonerated Captain Ball of having the slightest intention of communicating to the Admiral anything he could have supposed would be detrimental to his interest.
- [15] See Clarke and M'Arthur's *Life of Nelson*, vol. ii. p. 119.
- [16] The captains of his Majesty's ships to take charge of the prizes as under:

Orion	to take charge of	Le <i>Souverain Peuple</i> .
Bellerophon	do. }	
Majestic	do. }	Le <i>Spartiate</i> .
Minotaur	do.	<i>Aquilon</i> .
Defence	do.	<i>Franklin</i> .
Audacious	do.	<i>Conquérant</i> .
Theseus	do.	<i>Tonnant</i> .

To the captains of above-mentioned ships. H. N.

- [17] Sir James displayed a remarkable instance of presence of mind and unhesitating decision in this

unexpected case of extreme danger. Captain John Tancock, who was then lieutenant of the watch, and who, having served under Sir James during the whole of the war, enjoyed his perfect confidence, anticipated the captain's wishes in volunteering on this occasion to go up to the mast-head and look out for rocks, and thus considerably relieved his anxiety. The prizes were quite unable to beat to windward, and, in order to be extricated from the peril which the shift of wind had occasioned, their signal was made "to keep in the Orion's wake." Sir James having determined to push on, as the most probable means of saving his inefficient squadron, the "helm was put up," and orders given to steer through a passage between islands, which was marked "*doubtful*" in the charts, and in which shallow water was soon discovered by Mr. Tancock, who gave timely notice to the helmsman on their approach to each danger. The rest of the ships kept close in the track of the Orion, and in this manner the whole of the squadron and prizes passed between the islands and breakers without accident; and there can be no doubt that their safety was owing to the skilful and decisive conduct of Sir James. It is but justice to add, that, in approving of Mr. Tancock's very meritorious conduct, he emphatically assured him that "he should never forget that he had so fully anticipated his wishes."

[18]

Vanguard, September 1st, 1798.

MY DEAR SIR,

From what I have heard, and made up in my own mind, I feel it is absolutely necessary that I should order the Minotaur and Audacious to quit your squadron when you are in the fair way between Sardinia and Minorca, and join me at Naples; and also with as much salt provisions as can be got out of the ships victualled for *six* months, reserving only one month's at whole allowance. My squadron are at two-thirds of salt provisions, making the allowance up with flour; therefore you will direct the same in yours. I have put down the number of casks of beef, pork, and pease, which can be easily spared if the commander-in-chief's orders for victualling have been obeyed. Audacious is, I fancy, short of salt provisions, not knowing of coming so long a voyage. If you can manage to let those ships have any part of their officers and men, it will be very useful for the King's service; but of this you must be the best judge. Retalick will tell you all the news from Rhodes, and I was rejoiced to see you are this side of Candia.

Ever yours most truly,

HORATIO NELSON.

To Sir James Saumarez, &c.

Your squadron evidently sails better than Culloden. The Bellerophon sails so well that Darby can take very good care of Conquerant; and Aquilon seems also to sail remarkably well. Remember me kindly to all my good friends with you.

Orion, at sea, 1st September.

MY DEAR ADMIRAL,

Captain Retalick has just joined me with your order respecting the Minotaur and Audacious, both which ships are to be detached for Naples so soon as we are in the fair way between Sardinia and Minorca, with as much salt provisions as can be spared from the ships victualled for six months; which shall be duly complied with. I shall also take from the prizes as many of the officers and men as can be replaced from the ships left with me, which I shall endeavour to be as near the full number as can be thought prudent. Wishing to use as little delay as possible, not to detain the Bonne Citoyenne,

I am very truly, &c.

JAMES SAUMAREZ.

To Sir Horatio Nelson, K.B.

Orion, at sea, 1st September.

MY DEAR ADMIRAL,

After contending for three days against the adverse winds which are almost invariably encountered here, and getting sufficiently to the northward to have weathered the small islands that lie more immediately between the Archipelago and Candia, the wind set in so strong to the westward Thursday morning, that I was compelled to desist from that passage, and bear up between Sargeanto and Guxo, a narrow and intricate channel; but which we happily cleared without any accident, the loss of a few spars excepted, which are now replaced; and we are proceeding as fast as the wind will admit to our destination. The ships are all doing as well as possible; the fever on board the Defence fast abating, and the wounded in Bellerophon, Majestic, and Minotaur daily recovering. Seeing the Citoyenne on her way to us, I seize the opportunity to give you the information.

I am, my dear sir, &c.

JAMES SAUMAREZ.

To Sir H. Nelson, K.B.

Orion, at sea, 5th Sept. 1798.

MY DEAR ADMIRAL,

Since the receipt of your letter of the 1st instant, containing an order for the Minotaur and Audacious to join you at Naples, I have been employed in making the necessary arrangements for the distribution of prisoners from the ships that remain with me. I fear the quantity that can

be spared, after reducing ourselves to four weeks at whole allowance, will fall very short of what you mention. The order for the ships to be put to two-thirds' allowance was given the day after I received your letter. With regard to the men belonging to the Minotaur and Audacious on board the prizes, I hope to have it in my power to meet more fully your expectations, as I see no reason why these men should not be almost entirely replaced from the ships with me, the Bellerophon and Majestic having only fifty men each on board; the Spartiate certainly can spare the same number for Le Conquérant; and I hope to man the Aquilon from the other three ships, except the party of marines, which I shall direct to be left on board of them. We have had favourable winds the last three days, and I hope to-morrow to get sight of Mount Ætna. The enclosed report of a vessel boarded by the Theseus makes me regret the wind did not prove favourable a few days sooner, to have come up with the strayed sheep.

10 o'clock P.M.

Captain Renhouse, in the Thalia, has this instant joined me on his return from Bequir. I have taken his letters for the fleet, &c.: and as the Flora cutter is in sight, closing with the squadron, I have detained him till the morning, that he may take from her any despatches she may have for you. I am happy to learn from him that the Lion had joined the squadron off Alexandria. He also informs me that the Marquis de Niza was on his return from Aboukir, highly mortified at having lost the opportunity of distinguishing himself in the action. I am truly, my dear Admiral,

Your faithful and most obedient servant,

JAMES SAUMAREZ.

To Rear-admiral Sir Horatio Nelson, K.B.

Orion, 6th September 1798.
A.M. 7 o'clock.

MY DEAR ADMIRAL,

The Flora did not join me till this instant, owing to the commander's timidity. I was waiting for him the whole night. I thought it my duty to open one of Earl St. Vincent's public despatches, in case they might contain anything that might render necessary any alteration in my present proceedings. I find from them that Colossus is to the southward of Sardinia, with the Alliance and four victuallers: we shall of course keep a look-out for them. This information will enable me to keep rather a greater supply of provisions than I had made arrangements for, having scarcely reserved four weeks to each ship of the squadron. I have charged Captain Newhouse with the Flora's despatches, with orders to proceed in search of you immediately, and also indicated to him the track I mean to pursue, in case you should have occasion to send me further orders, in consequence of your letters from Earl St. Vincent.

I hope you will do me the favour to believe that I have acted to the best of my judgment for the good of his Majesty's service, and that you will approve my having opened one of Lord St. Vincent's public despatches; which it will be satisfactory to me to know from you.

With sincere and best wishes for your
health
and every happiness, &c.

JAMES SAUMAREZ.

To Sir H. Nelson, K.B. &c.

- [19] See Appendix. (Vol II)
- [20] The actions of Sullivan's Island, and the Dogger Bank.
- [21] This was never realised.
- [22] November 29th, the day appointed for a general thanksgiving for the great naval victories.
- [23] Afterwards Louis XVIII.
- [24] Magnificent, Defiance, Marlborough, and Edgar.
- [25] Superb and Captain.
- [26] Battle of Alexandria.
- [27] 24-pounders each.
- [28] Cæsar, Pompée, Spencer, Hannibal, Audacious, Thames, Phaeton, and Plymouth, hired lugger.
- [29] See list already given. [28](#)
- [30] Le Formidable, 84. Dessaix, 84. Indomptable, 74: and Meuron, 38.
- [31] The following memorandum was communicated to the squadron before bearing up for Gibraltar Bay:

Memorandum

Cæsar, 5th July 1801.

If the Rear-admiral finds the enemy's ships in a situation to be attacked, the following is the order in which it is to be executed:

The Venerable to lead into the bay, and pass the enemy's ships without anchoring;

The Pompée to anchor abreast of the inner ship of the enemy's line;

The Audacious, }

" Cæsar, } to anchor abreast of the enemy's ships
 " Spencer, } and batteries;
 " Hannibal, }
 { to keep under sail, and annoy the enemy's
 " Superb, { batteries and gun-boats during the attack
 " Thames, { assisted by the Plymouth lugger.

The boats of the different ships to be lowered down and armed, in readiness to act where required.

Given on board the Cæsar, off Tariffa,
 5th July 1801.
 JAMES SAUMAREZ.

To the respective Captains.

- [32] The captain's clerk is stationed in action to take minutes of the events as they occur.
- [33] When the French happen to take one of our men-of-war, they do not, as we would do, hoist their own colours over their opponents', but hoist the English ensign union downwards. It so seldom happened that an English man-of-war was taken by the French, that this circumstance was known to very few in the navy, and consequently, the ensign reversed was known only as the signal of distress used by merchant-ships.
- [34] James, vol. iii. p. 120.
- [35] The discrepancies between the diagram and *some* of the statements given in the logs, are easily accounted for by the changes which took place in the positions of the ships during the action.
- [36] The journal of Lieutenant Collis of the Venerable, the officer who was sent to assist the Hannibal, and was taken prisoner when on board, but who was sent to Gibraltar on parole, need not be given, as it is an exact copy of the captain's log.
- [37] This was a gratuitous falsehood.
- [38] While off Europa point, and probably at the distance of more than half a mile, a boat with two men was observed pulling towards us, and, on coming alongside, the men proved to be two of our own people, who had been wounded in the action of Algeziras, and sent to the hospital at Gibraltar. On seeing the ship under sail, with the evident intention of attacking the enemy, these gallant fellows asked permission of the surgeon to rejoin their ship, and being refused, on account of their apparent unfitness, they made their escape from the hospital, and taking possession of the first boat they could find, pulled off to the ship.
- Two other seamen belonging to the Pompée, who had not been selected as part of the reinforcement to the crews of the other ships, secreted themselves on board the Cæsar, and the day after the action presented themselves on the quarter-deck, with a request that intercession might be made for them with their captain, telling their story in the following quaint manner:—"Sir, we belongs to the Le Pompée, and finding our ship could not get out, we stowed ourselves away in this ship, and, in the action, quartered ourselves to the "10th gun, and opposite— on the lower deck," referring, at the same time, to the officer in command of this division of guns, for the truth of their statement.
- [39] See page [388](#)
- [40] M. Dumanoir le Pelley is in error here. The Pompée was not in this action. It has been seen that she was lying disabled at Gibraltar.

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK MEMOIRS AND CORRESPONDENCE OF
 ADMIRAL LORD DE SAUMAREZ, VOL. I ***

Updated editions will replace the previous one—the old editions will be renamed.

Creating the works from print editions not protected by U.S. copyright law means that no one owns a United States copyright in these works, so the Foundation (and you!) can copy and distribute it in the United States without permission and without paying copyright royalties. Special rules, set forth in the General Terms of Use part of this license, apply to copying and distributing Project Gutenberg™ electronic works to protect the PROJECT GUTENBERG™ concept and trademark. Project Gutenberg is a registered trademark, and may not be used if you charge for an eBook, except by following the terms of the trademark license, including paying royalties for use of the Project Gutenberg trademark. If you do not charge anything for copies of this eBook, complying with the trademark license is very easy. You may use this eBook for nearly any purpose such as creation of derivative works, reports, performances and research. Project Gutenberg eBooks may be modified and printed and given away—you may do practically ANYTHING in the United States with eBooks not protected by U.S. copyright law. Redistribution is subject to the trademark license, especially commercial redistribution.

START: FULL LICENSE
THE FULL PROJECT GUTENBERG LICENSE
PLEASE READ THIS BEFORE YOU DISTRIBUTE OR USE THIS WORK

To protect the Project Gutenberg™ mission of promoting the free distribution of electronic works, by using or distributing this work (or any other work associated in any way with the phrase “Project Gutenberg”), you agree to comply with all the terms of the Full Project Gutenberg™ License available with this file or online at www.gutenberg.org/license.

Section 1. General Terms of Use and Redistributing Project Gutenberg™ electronic works

1.A. By reading or using any part of this Project Gutenberg™ electronic work, you indicate that you have read, understand, agree to and accept all the terms of this license and intellectual property (trademark/copyright) agreement. If you do not agree to abide by all the terms of this agreement, you must cease using and return or destroy all copies of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works in your possession. If you paid a fee for obtaining a copy of or access to a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work and you do not agree to be bound by the terms of this agreement, you may obtain a refund from the person or entity to whom you paid the fee as set forth in paragraph 1.E.8.

1.B. “Project Gutenberg” is a registered trademark. It may only be used on or associated in any way with an electronic work by people who agree to be bound by the terms of this agreement. There are a few things that you can do with most Project Gutenberg™ electronic works even without complying with the full terms of this agreement. See paragraph 1.C below. There are a lot of things you can do with Project Gutenberg™ electronic works if you follow the terms of this agreement and help preserve free future access to Project Gutenberg™ electronic works. See paragraph 1.E below.

1.C. The Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation (“the Foundation” or PGLAF), owns a compilation copyright in the collection of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works. Nearly all the individual works in the collection are in the public domain in the United States. If an individual work is unprotected by copyright law in the United States and you are located in the United States, we do not claim a right to prevent you from copying, distributing, performing, displaying or creating derivative works based on the work as long as all references to Project Gutenberg are removed. Of course, we hope that you will support the Project Gutenberg™ mission of promoting free access to electronic works by freely sharing Project Gutenberg™ works in compliance with the terms of this agreement for keeping the Project Gutenberg™ name associated with the work. You can easily comply with the terms of this agreement by keeping this work in the same format with its attached full Project Gutenberg™ License when you share it without charge with others.

1.D. The copyright laws of the place where you are located also govern what you can do with this work. Copyright laws in most countries are in a constant state of change. If you are outside the United States, check the laws of your country in addition to the terms of this agreement before downloading, copying, displaying, performing, distributing or creating derivative works based on this work or any other Project Gutenberg™ work. The Foundation makes no representations concerning the copyright status of any work in any country other than the United States.

1.E. Unless you have removed all references to Project Gutenberg:

1.E.1. The following sentence, with active links to, or other immediate access to, the full Project Gutenberg™ License must appear prominently whenever any copy of a Project Gutenberg™ work (any work on which the phrase “Project Gutenberg” appears, or with which the phrase “Project Gutenberg” is associated) is accessed, displayed, performed, viewed, copied or distributed:

This eBook is for the use of anyone anywhere in the United States and most other parts of the world at no cost and with almost no restrictions whatsoever. You may copy it, give it away or re-use it under the terms of the Project Gutenberg License included with this eBook or online at www.gutenberg.org. If you are not located in the United States, you will have to check the laws of the country where you are located before using this eBook.

1.E.2. If an individual Project Gutenberg™ electronic work is derived from texts not protected by U.S. copyright law (does not contain a notice indicating that it is posted with permission of the copyright holder), the work can be copied and distributed to anyone in the United States without paying any fees or charges. If you are redistributing or providing access to a work with the phrase “Project Gutenberg” associated with or appearing on the work, you must comply either with the requirements of paragraphs 1.E.1 through 1.E.7 or obtain permission for the use of the work and the Project Gutenberg™ trademark as set forth in paragraphs 1.E.8 or 1.E.9.

1.E.3. If an individual Project Gutenberg™ electronic work is posted with the permission of the copyright holder, your use and distribution must comply with both paragraphs 1.E.1

through 1.E.7 and any additional terms imposed by the copyright holder. Additional terms will be linked to the Project Gutenberg™ License for all works posted with the permission of the copyright holder found at the beginning of this work.

1.E.4. Do not unlink or detach or remove the full Project Gutenberg™ License terms from this work, or any files containing a part of this work or any other work associated with Project Gutenberg™.

1.E.5. Do not copy, display, perform, distribute or redistribute this electronic work, or any part of this electronic work, without prominently displaying the sentence set forth in paragraph 1.E.1 with active links or immediate access to the full terms of the Project Gutenberg™ License.

1.E.6. You may convert to and distribute this work in any binary, compressed, marked up, nonproprietary or proprietary form, including any word processing or hypertext form. However, if you provide access to or distribute copies of a Project Gutenberg™ work in a format other than “Plain Vanilla ASCII” or other format used in the official version posted on the official Project Gutenberg™ website (www.gutenberg.org), you must, at no additional cost, fee or expense to the user, provide a copy, a means of exporting a copy, or a means of obtaining a copy upon request, of the work in its original “Plain Vanilla ASCII” or other form. Any alternate format must include the full Project Gutenberg™ License as specified in paragraph 1.E.1.

1.E.7. Do not charge a fee for access to, viewing, displaying, performing, copying or distributing any Project Gutenberg™ works unless you comply with paragraph 1.E.8 or 1.E.9.

1.E.8. You may charge a reasonable fee for copies of or providing access to or distributing Project Gutenberg™ electronic works provided that:

- You pay a royalty fee of 20% of the gross profits you derive from the use of Project Gutenberg™ works calculated using the method you already use to calculate your applicable taxes. The fee is owed to the owner of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark, but he has agreed to donate royalties under this paragraph to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation. Royalty payments must be paid within 60 days following each date on which you prepare (or are legally required to prepare) your periodic tax returns. Royalty payments should be clearly marked as such and sent to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation at the address specified in Section 4, “Information about donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation.”
- You provide a full refund of any money paid by a user who notifies you in writing (or by e-mail) within 30 days of receipt that s/he does not agree to the terms of the full Project Gutenberg™ License. You must require such a user to return or destroy all copies of the works possessed in a physical medium and discontinue all use of and all access to other copies of Project Gutenberg™ works.
- You provide, in accordance with paragraph 1.F.3, a full refund of any money paid for a work or a replacement copy, if a defect in the electronic work is discovered and reported to you within 90 days of receipt of the work.
- You comply with all other terms of this agreement for free distribution of Project Gutenberg™ works.

1.E.9. If you wish to charge a fee or distribute a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work or group of works on different terms than are set forth in this agreement, you must obtain permission in writing from the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, the manager of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark. Contact the Foundation as set forth in Section 3 below.

1.F.

1.F.1. Project Gutenberg volunteers and employees expend considerable effort to identify, do copyright research on, transcribe and proofread works not protected by U.S. copyright law in creating the Project Gutenberg™ collection. Despite these efforts, Project Gutenberg™ electronic works, and the medium on which they may be stored, may contain “Defects,” such as, but not limited to, incomplete, inaccurate or corrupt data, transcription errors, a copyright or other intellectual property infringement, a defective or damaged disk or other medium, a computer virus, or computer codes that damage or cannot be read by your equipment.

1.F.2. LIMITED WARRANTY, DISCLAIMER OF DAMAGES - Except for the “Right of Replacement or Refund” described in paragraph 1.F.3, the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, the owner of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark, and any other party distributing a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work under this agreement, disclaim all liability to you for damages, costs and expenses, including legal fees. YOU AGREE THAT YOU HAVE NO REMEDIES FOR NEGLIGENCE, STRICT LIABILITY, BREACH OF WARRANTY OR BREACH OF CONTRACT EXCEPT THOSE PROVIDED IN PARAGRAPH 1.F.3. YOU AGREE THAT THE FOUNDATION, THE TRADEMARK OWNER, AND ANY DISTRIBUTOR UNDER

THIS AGREEMENT WILL NOT BE LIABLE TO YOU FOR ACTUAL, DIRECT, INDIRECT, CONSEQUENTIAL, PUNITIVE OR INCIDENTAL DAMAGES EVEN IF YOU GIVE NOTICE OF THE POSSIBILITY OF SUCH DAMAGE.

1.F.3. LIMITED RIGHT OF REPLACEMENT OR REFUND - If you discover a defect in this electronic work within 90 days of receiving it, you can receive a refund of the money (if any) you paid for it by sending a written explanation to the person you received the work from. If you received the work on a physical medium, you must return the medium with your written explanation. The person or entity that provided you with the defective work may elect to provide a replacement copy in lieu of a refund. If you received the work electronically, the person or entity providing it to you may choose to give you a second opportunity to receive the work electronically in lieu of a refund. If the second copy is also defective, you may demand a refund in writing without further opportunities to fix the problem.

1.F.4. Except for the limited right of replacement or refund set forth in paragraph 1.F.3, this work is provided to you 'AS-IS', WITH NO OTHER WARRANTIES OF ANY KIND, EXPRESS OR IMPLIED, INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO WARRANTIES OF MERCHANTABILITY OR FITNESS FOR ANY PURPOSE.

1.F.5. Some states do not allow disclaimers of certain implied warranties or the exclusion or limitation of certain types of damages. If any disclaimer or limitation set forth in this agreement violates the law of the state applicable to this agreement, the agreement shall be interpreted to make the maximum disclaimer or limitation permitted by the applicable state law. The invalidity or unenforceability of any provision of this agreement shall not void the remaining provisions.

1.F.6. INDEMNITY - You agree to indemnify and hold the Foundation, the trademark owner, any agent or employee of the Foundation, anyone providing copies of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works in accordance with this agreement, and any volunteers associated with the production, promotion and distribution of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works, harmless from all liability, costs and expenses, including legal fees, that arise directly or indirectly from any of the following which you do or cause to occur: (a) distribution of this or any Project Gutenberg™ work, (b) alteration, modification, or additions or deletions to any Project Gutenberg™ work, and (c) any Defect you cause.

Section 2. Information about the Mission of Project Gutenberg™

Project Gutenberg™ is synonymous with the free distribution of electronic works in formats readable by the widest variety of computers including obsolete, old, middle-aged and new computers. It exists because of the efforts of hundreds of volunteers and donations from people in all walks of life.

Volunteers and financial support to provide volunteers with the assistance they need are critical to reaching Project Gutenberg™'s goals and ensuring that the Project Gutenberg™ collection will remain freely available for generations to come. In 2001, the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation was created to provide a secure and permanent future for Project Gutenberg™ and future generations. To learn more about the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation and how your efforts and donations can help, see Sections 3 and 4 and the Foundation information page at www.gutenberg.org.

Section 3. Information about the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation

The Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation is a non-profit 501(c)(3) educational corporation organized under the laws of the state of Mississippi and granted tax exempt status by the Internal Revenue Service. The Foundation's EIN or federal tax identification number is 64-6221541. Contributions to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation are tax deductible to the full extent permitted by U.S. federal laws and your state's laws.

The Foundation's business office is located at 809 North 1500 West, Salt Lake City, UT 84116, (801) 596-1887. Email contact links and up to date contact information can be found at the Foundation's website and official page at www.gutenberg.org/contact

Section 4. Information about Donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation

Project Gutenberg™ depends upon and cannot survive without widespread public support and donations to carry out its mission of increasing the number of public domain and licensed works that can be freely distributed in machine-readable form accessible by the widest array of equipment including outdated equipment. Many small donations (\$1 to \$5,000) are particularly important to maintaining tax exempt status with the IRS.

The Foundation is committed to complying with the laws regulating charities and charitable donations in all 50 states of the United States. Compliance requirements are not uniform and it takes a considerable effort, much paperwork and many fees to meet and keep up with these

requirements. We do not solicit donations in locations where we have not received written confirmation of compliance. To SEND DONATIONS or determine the status of compliance for any particular state visit www.gutenberg.org/donate.

While we cannot and do not solicit contributions from states where we have not met the solicitation requirements, we know of no prohibition against accepting unsolicited donations from donors in such states who approach us with offers to donate.

International donations are gratefully accepted, but we cannot make any statements concerning tax treatment of donations received from outside the United States. U.S. laws alone swamp our small staff.

Please check the Project Gutenberg web pages for current donation methods and addresses. Donations are accepted in a number of other ways including checks, online payments and credit card donations. To donate, please visit: www.gutenberg.org/donate

Section 5. General Information About Project Gutenberg™ electronic works

Professor Michael S. Hart was the originator of the Project Gutenberg™ concept of a library of electronic works that could be freely shared with anyone. For forty years, he produced and distributed Project Gutenberg™ eBooks with only a loose network of volunteer support.

Project Gutenberg™ eBooks are often created from several printed editions, all of which are confirmed as not protected by copyright in the U.S. unless a copyright notice is included. Thus, we do not necessarily keep eBooks in compliance with any particular paper edition.

Most people start at our website which has the main PG search facility: www.gutenberg.org.

This website includes information about Project Gutenberg™, including how to make donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, how to help produce our new eBooks, and how to subscribe to our email newsletter to hear about new eBooks.