

Admiralty-Office, May 9, 1812.

Copy of a Letter from Vice-Admiral Sir Edward Pellew, Bart. Commander in Chief of His Majesty's Ships and Vessels in the Mediterranean, to John Wilson Croker, Esq. dated on board the Caledonia, at Port Mahon, the 29th March 1812.

SIR,

HAVING by my last report of the state of the enemy's ships, apprised their Lordships that the Rivoli of seventy-four guns, recently launched at Venice, was in readiness to put to sea; I have now great satisfaction in announcing her capture by His Majesty's ship Victorious, after a severe contest of five hours, on the 21st ultimo, and I have the honour to enclose a letter from Captain Talbot, detailing the particulars of this very gallant affair.

The great disparity of force sufficiently bespeaks the merits of the captors; the Rivoli having eight hundred and sixty-two men at the commencement of the action, while the crew of the victorious was reduced to five hundred and six, of whom sixty were in the sick list.

The loss has been very severe on both sides, upwards of four hundred having been killed and wounded on the part of the enemy, and forty-two men killed, and ninety-nine wounded, on the part of the Victorious.

Their Lordships will observe that the Weazle had a share in this brilliant action, engaging a French brig of war until she blew up alongside; the conduct of Captain Andrew and his men has been extremely creditable.

I congratulate their Lordships on this achievement, and from the zeal and vigilance which I have the satisfaction to perceive throughout the fleet under my command, I trust it may be the prelude to other important successes.

I have the honour to be, &c.

(Signed) EDWARD PELLEW.

John W. Croker, Esq. Secretary to the Admiralty.

His Majesty's Ship Victorious, Port Saint

SIR, George, Lissa, March 3, 1812.

ON the 16th ultimo I arrived off the Port of Venice; the weather was very foggy at that time and continued so till the 21st, which prevented me reconnoitring the port.

At half-past two o'clock P.M. on that day, a brig was seen E. N. E.; at three o'clock a large ship with two more brigs and two settees in the same direction; all sail was made in chase; at four o'clock I made the Weazle's signal to prepare for action; at this time I was convinced that the ship seen was one of the enemy's line of battle ships, proceeding from Venice to the Port of Pola, in Istria.

The enemy were sailing in a line of battle; with the two gun-boats and one brig a-head, the other two brigs in a line a-stern.

At half-past two o'clock A.M. I perceived that one of the enemy's brigs dropped a-stern; and that the line of battle ship had shortened sail to allow her to close again.

I hailed the Weazle, and ordered Captain Andrew to endeavour to pass the Victorious, and if possible

to bring the brigs a-stern of the Commodore to action, in hopes it would induce him to shorten sail, which had the desired effect.

At a quarter past four o'clock, His Majesty's brig Weazle commenced the action with the two brigs. At half-past four we commenced action at the distance of half pistol-shot, with the line of battle ship, neither ship having fired a single shot until that time.

At five we perceived a brig to blow up; at daylight I perceived the Weazle in chase of the brigs, the gun-boats not in sight. I recalled her as she did not appear to close with the chase. We were at this time in seven fathoms water off the Point of Crao, and I was fearful we might want assistance from her, in case either of the ships had got on shore on the bank.

Captain Andrew on being recalled, placed his brig very judiciously on the bow of the line of battle ship, within pistol-shot, and in that situation he gave her three broadsides.

The enemy for nearly the last two hours had been rendered perfectly unmanageable, and had kept up a very slow fire, and that chiefly from two guns on the quarter-deck, her mizen-mast fell over her side about a quarter before nine o'clock. At nine they hailed us and said they had struck; I sent on board Mr. Peake, the First Lieutenant, to take possession of her.

I found the squadron we had engaged consisted of two gun-boats, the Mameluke brig of ten guns, and Jena and Mercure of eighteen guns each, with the Rivoli, of seventy-four guns, bearing the broad pendant of Commodore Barré, the Commander in Chief of the enemy's forces in the Adriatic.

From the length of the action, and the smoothness of the water; the loss of men and the damages on both sides, I am sorry to say, have been very great indeed, neither ship having been above half musket-shot distance from each other during the whole of the action, which only ceased at intervals, when the ships were hid from each other by the fog and smoke, and were not even able to see the flashes of each other's guns.

I feel great satisfaction in saying that the conduct of Commodore Barré, during the whole of the action, convinced me I had to deal with a most gallant and brave man, and, in the manœuvring his ship, a most experienced and skilful officer. He did not surrender his ship till nearly two hours after she was rendered unmanageable, and had four hundred killed or wounded; his captain and most of his officers either killed or wounded.

By the returns you will perceive, Sir, that our loss too has been very severe.

I have to regret, as well as the service, the loss of two very fine young men, Lieutenants Thomas H. Griffiths and Robert S. Ashbridge, of the Royal Marines, who were mortally wounded early in the action, with many other brave and good men, both seamen and marines.

The conduct of the officers has been throughout highly meritorious, both during the action, and also in securing the masts of the ship, in the very bad weather we met before we gained the port of Lissa.

Having received a contusion from a splinter early in the action, for some days afterwards I have been