

Brief of the Progress of the Enemy's Operations, together with the Destruction of the Frigates, and other Particulars since the Dates of his earlier Reports, as stated in the Copies of his several Letters herewith inclosed. By an Officer from the Major General Sir Robert Pigot I was at the same Time advised, that he had been obliged to evacuate Conanicut, as well as all his Out-ports on the Northern Parts of Rhode Island, and to confine his Defence to the Lines constructed on the Heights adjacent to the Town of Newport. Under these Circumstances I judged it was impracticable to afford the General any essential Relief.

The Wind changing to the North-East next Morning, the French Admiral stood out of the Port with the Twelve Two-decked Ships of his Squadron, named in the List transmitted with your Letter dated the 3d of May.

Deeming the Superiority of the Enemy's Force too great to come to Action with them, if it could be avoided, whilst they possessed the Weather-gage, I steered with the Squadron formed in Order of Battle to the Southward, in the Hope of having the Wind in from the Sea, as, by the Appearance of the Weather, was to be expected later in the Day: And, retaining the Fire-ships only, I sent Directions for the Bombs and Gallies to make Sail with the Sphynx for New York.

The Enemy being equally attentive to the same Object, no material Use could be made in an Alteration of the Wind, for a short Time, to the Southward of the East. I therefore continued the same Course the rest of the Day, under a Proportion of Sail for the Phoenix, Experiment and Pearl, having the three Fire-Ships in Tow, to keep Company with Facility: The French Ships advancing, though unequally, with all their Sail abroad.

The relative Position of the two Squadrons (about North and South from each other) remained the same on the Morning of the 11th; but by the Increase of Distance between them at Break of Day, it appeared that the Enemy had kept nearer the Wind during the Night, as their headmost Ships were then Hull-down.

The Wind continuing to the East North East, and having no further Expectation of being able to gain the Advantage of the Enemy with respect to it, as before proposed, I altered the Direction of the Ships by successive Changes of the Course in the same View; or, failing still in that Attempt, to await the Approach of the Enemy, with the Squadron formed in Line of Battle ahead from the Wind to Starboard; and about Four in the Evening I made the Signal for the Ships to close to the Centre, when they shortened Sail accordingly. I had moved some Time before from the Eagle into the Apollo, to be better situated for directing the subsequent Operations of the Squadron.

The Bearing of the Enemy's Van (then under their Top-sails, between Two and Three Miles distant) was altered since the Morning from the East-North-East to South-South-East; and the French Admiral had formed his Line to engage the British Squadron to Leeward. He soon after bore away to the Southward, apparently from the State of the Weather; which, by the Wind freshening much with frequent Rain since the Morning, was now rendered very unfavourable for coming to Action with any suitable Effect.

The Wind increasing greatly that Night, and continuing violent with a considerable Sea until the Evening of the 13th, I was separated from the rest of the Squadron in the Apollo, (where I had been compelled by the Weather to remain) with the Centurion, Ardent, Richmond, Vigilant, Roebuck, and Phoenix; and, as I afterwards found, many of the other Ships had been also much dispersed.

The Apollo's Main-Mast being dangerously sprung in the Partners, which made it necessary to cut away the Top-Mast to save the Lower-Mast, and having lost her Fore-Mast in the Night of the Twelfth,

I embarked in the Phoenix, when the Weather became more moderate later in the Day, to collect the dispersed Ships, and sent the Roebuck (which had lost the Head of her Mizzen-Mast) to attend the Apollo to Sandy Hook.

Having afterwards proceeded in the Centurion to the Southward, upon hearing several Guns on that Bearing in the Morning of the 15th, I discovered Ten Sail of the French Squadron, some at Anchor in the Sea, about Twenty-five Leagues Eastward, from Cape May; leaving the Centurion thereupon, in a suitable Station, to direct any of the dispersed Ships, or those which might arrive of Vice-Admiral Byron's Squadron, after me, I repaired directly in the Phoenix for the appointed Rendezvous, and joined the rest of the Squadron, this Evening, off of Sandy Hook.

The chief Damage sustained in the Squadron by the Effects of the late Gale of Wind, besides what I have before related, was confined to the Cornwall and Raifonable; the Main-Mast of the former, and Bow-sprit of the last being sprung; but the Cornwall's Mast will soon be rendered serviceable. And the Thunder Bomb is still missing.

My Observations on the Ships of the French Squadron were confined solely to the Discovery of their Position. The Particulars of their Situation I have to add, were communicated by the different Commanders of His Majesty's Ships, which had been crossed earlier upon them.

The Languedoc and Tonant had lost all their Masts, the Main-Mast of the latter excepted. The Languedoc was met in that Condition in the Evening of the 13th, and attacked by the Renown with such Advantage, that the most happy Consequences might have been expected from Captain Dawson's resolute Efforts the next Morning, if the Execution of his Purpose had not been prevented by the Arrival of Six Sail of the French Squadron, which then joined the disabled Ship.

A similar Attempt, with the like Prospect of Success, was made the same Night by Commodore Hotham in the Preston, on the Tonant; and the Continuance of the Action, the next Morning, necessarily declined for the same Reason.

Neither of the Two Fifty-Gun Ships received any material Damage in those spirited Undertakings, besides the Loss of the Preston's Fore Yard, which is rendered very unserviceable.

On the 16th, the Isis was chased and engaged by a French Seventy-four-Gun Ship, bearing a Flag at the Mizzen Top-Mast Head, and therefore supposed to be the Zélé. The Lords Commissioners will see in the Copy of the inclosed Report from Captain Raynor, the Event of that very unequal Contest. But it is requisite that I should supply the Deficiency of his Recital, by observing to their Lordships, that the Superiority acquired over the Enemy in the Action, appears to be not less an Effect of Captain Raynor's very skilful Management of his Ship, than of his distinguished Resolution, and the Bravery of his Men and Officers.

My chief Attention will be directed to a speedy Dispatch of the needful Repairs and Supplies in the Ships capable of being made soonest ready for Service. The Experiment has been ordered off of Rhode Island to procure Advices of the State of the Garrison at Newport; for the reducing of which the Rebels have been unavoidably left at Liberty to land any Force they may have drawn down to the adjacent Coasts, upon Rhode Island.

I am with great Consideration, &c.

H O W E.

P. S. Since my Return to this Port, I have received Letters from Captain Hawker, to acquaint me with the Loss of the Mermaid, which was forced on Shore near Senepuxa by the French Squadron, when the Enemy arrived first off of the Delaware towards the Beginning of last Month.