

The Romney could only fire in Two Openings, and this under a Precision which was cautiously observed; neither could she veer away Cable to open a larger Space, as the Jason lay right a Stern of her. Seeing the Romney was like to have little Share in the Action, after the Fourth Ship had passed her, I ordered the Barge to be manned, to go on Board the Hero. General Meadows and Captain Saltern insisted they should accompany me, with a Degree of Generosity and good Humour which I could not resist. It is pleasant to be near the General at all Times, but on the Day of Battle that Satisfaction is felt in a peculiar Degree. We were received by Captain Hawker with as cheerful and affable Civility as if we had come to Dinner, while the Hero kept up a constant, awful, heavy Discharge of Artillery.

The Action bordered upon a Surprize, and the Nature of the Service in which we were engaged rendered it liable to much Confusion; yet upon the Whole, until the Enemy were beat off, I saw nothing on our Part but steady, cool, determined Valour.

Captain Alms, of the Monmouth, kept up a well-directed Fire.

Captain Pasley had worked hard from the Beginning of the Business, and had got a Spring on his Cable, by which Effort every Shot told from the Jupiter.

The French Commodore now found his Situation too hot, and he cut his Cable in Three Quarters of an Hour, and went away through the Ships, as his Second a-stern had done before him; the other a-head was now left behind, an Object to be fired at by all the Ships in our Fleet, who could get Guns to bear upon him. In this Situation he remained for Fifteen Minutes, hardly firing a Gun during the whole Time: Such a Spectacle of Distress I never before beheld.

I am satisfied myself he struck his Colours, and that they were not merely shot away, as some alledge; and this I believe, because different Ships thought he struck at the same Time; but it was impossible to get all the Ships to cease firing at once; and One Gun being aftwards discharged from the Enemy's Ship, the Firing began again even from such of our Ships as had left off.

Whether his Cable was shot away, or he cut the Cable, I cannot say, but off the Ship went round upon the Heel, her Stern falling close to the Broad-side of the Isis; her Masts were tottering; her Yards were hanging different Ways; her Sails were flying about in Rags, and full of Holes. First fell the Mizzen-mast, next went the Main-mast, and lastly the Fore-mast and outer End of the Bow-sprit tumbled in the Water.

I instantly returned to the Romney, and made the Signal for all Captains, and after hearing the Condition of every Ship, I directed the Men of War to cut and slip as fast as they could get to Sea, to follow up the Victory, with Orders to make any India Ships who lay in their Way to cut their Cables also, that they might not be impeded.

I ordered the Merchant Ships to lie fast and repair their Damages, until we joined them again.

As soon as the Jason was out of the Way, the Romney was call by a Spring on the Cable, and she went out to Sea under the Acclamations of the whole Fleet.

The Jupiter instantly followed, and we run between our scattered Ships and the Enemy. Perceiving neither the Isis nor Diana making any Signs to follow, though both of them lay in clear Births for so doing, their several Signals were made. The

Diana answered, and soon after followed; but although Gun after Gun was fired to enforce the Signal to call out the Isis, she still remained without any Signs of Obedience to my Signal then Abroad. At last the Hero came under our Stern, with a Message from Captain Sutton, saying that his Masts and Yards, and Sails and Rigging, were so wounded, that he could not come out without repairing them, but that he would follow as fast as he could.

My Answer was, all this is no Excuse for disobeying my positive Orders; besides, I think his Damages immaterial to a Man of any Resources.

Captain Sutton's Signal was therefore again enforced by another Gun; he then hoisted his Answering Flag, and came out, after Three Hours Delay.

All the Ships being now come out, the Signal was made to form the Line a-head on the Larboard Tack. The French Ships had before this collected and taken the disabled Ship in Tow, and they had raised a Stump forward, and fixed a Sail upon it, with which they had wore the Hulk, and put before the Wind in a Line of Battle a-breast, and sent off their Convoy under all the Sail they could get.

When the Isis joined us she run under our Stern, and repeated an Account of her Distress and her Damages, particularly the Want of a Mizzen-top-sail-yard, which I told the Captain was nothing at all.

The Signal was now made to bear up in a Line of Battle a-breast. At that Instant the Isis lost her Fore-top-mast above the Top-sail-yard, which Yard was not injured by the Fall, nor was the Sail hurt, or any other Damage sustained, to prevent the Ship from working, the Fore-top-sail being clove reefed and set.

I immediately shortened Sail to give Time to the Isis to clear the Wreck, which was done in Half an Hour or Forty Minutes.

This increased our Distance from the Enemy. As soon as I saw the Isis could make Sail, I bore up and set the Fore-sail, and made the Signal for the Line a-breast. When we came near the Enemy, I found the Isis and Monmouth had dropt astern between Two and Three Miles, though both of them sail much better than the Romney: Their Signals were therefore made to call them to their Stations; the Monmouth immediately answered, and made Sail accordingly, but the Isis still kept behind.

By these various Obstructions and Delays, added to a strong Lee Current, the Enemy had drawn us far to Leeward of St. Jago. The Sun was set; the Sea had increased; I could not propose a decisive Action in the Night. If I followed until Day-light, my Prospects were great and tempting; but I must then determine to leave my Convoy in Distress, and separate from the Troops, without any fixed Determination concerning them or their Destination; and I must also have relinquished the Object of the present Expedition; because, after getting so far to Leeward that we could not fetch the Islands of Bravo or Fogo, it is a well-known Fact that no Ship can beat up against the N. E. Winds and the S. W. Currents which always prevail here, much less after such an Action as must be expected.

On the other Hand, if the principal Force of the Enemy should arrive before us at the Place of our Destination, it might prove equally fatal to the Object of the Expedition.

The Dilemma was great indeed, and I felt the cruel Situation with an Anguish which I never before experienced; but after maturely weighing the Subject in all its Consequences with those Persons