

Admiralty-Office, February 3, 1795.

A Letter from Rear-Admiral Bligh, late Captain of His Majesty's Ship the Alexander, to Mr. Stephens, (a Copy of which is as follows) was received at this Office the 30th of last Month.

*On Board the Marat, at Brest,
November 23, 1794.*

S I R,

THE Arrival of the Canada must long since have informed their Lordships of my Misfortune, in losing His Majesty's Ship Alexander, late under my Command, having been taken by a Squadron of French Ships of War, consisting of Five of Seventy-four Guns, Three large Frigates, and an armed Brig, commanded by Rear-Admiral Neilly; farther Particulars and Details I herewith transmit you, for their Lordships Information. We discovered this Squadron on our Weather Bow, about Half past Two o'Clock, or near Three, in the Morning on the 6th Instant, being then in Latitude 48 Deg. 25 Min. North, 7 Deg. 53 Min. West, the Wind then at West, and we steering North-East; on which I immediately hauled our Wind, with the Larboard Tacks on Board, and without Signal, the Canada being close to us. We passed the strange Ships a little before Four o'Clock, the nearest of whom at about Half a Mile distant, but could not discover what they were. Shortly after we bore more up, let the Reefs out of the Top-Sails, and set Steering-Sails. About Five o'Clock, perceiving, by my Night-Glass, the strange Ships to stand after us, we crowded all the Sail we could possibly set, as did the Canada, and hauled more to the Eastward. About Day-break the Canada passed us, and steering more to the Northward than we did, brought her on our Larboard Bow. Two Ships of the Line and Two Frigates pursued her; and Three of the Line and One Frigate chased the Alexander. About Half past Seven o'Clock the French Ships hoisted English Colours. About a Quarter past Eight o'Clock we hoisted our Colours, upon which the French Ships hauled down the English, and hoisted their's; and drawing up within Gun-Shot, we began firing our Stern Chaces at them, and received their Bow Chaces. About Nine o'Clock, or shortly after, observing the Ships in Pursuit of the Canada, drawing up with her, and firing at each other their Bow and Stern Chaces, I made the Canada's Signal to form a-head for our mutual Support, being determined to defend the Ships to the last Extremity; which Signal she instantly answered, and endeavoured to put it in Execution by steering towards us; but the Ships in Chace of her, seeing her Intentions, hauled more to Starboard to cut her off, and which obliged her to steer the Course she had done before. We continued firing our Stern Chaces at the Ships pursuing us till near Eleven o'Clock, when Three Ships of the Line came up, and brought us to close Action, which we sustained for upwards of Two Hours, when the Ship was become a complete Wreck, the Main-Yard, Spunker-Boom, and Three Top-Gallant-Yards shot away, all the lower Masts shot through in many Places, and expected every Minute to go over the Side; all the other Masts and Yards were also wounded, more or less, nearly the Whole of the Standing and Running Rigging cut to Pieces, the Sails torn into Ribbands, and her Hull much shattered, and making a great Deal of Water, and with Difficulty she floated into Brest. At this Time the Ships that had chased the Canada had quitted her, and were coming fast up to us, the Shot of one of them at the Time passing over us. Thus situated, and cut off from all Resources, I judged it advis-

able to consult my Officers, and accordingly assembled them all on the Quarter-Deck; when, upon surveying and examining the State of the Ship, (engaged as I have already described) they deemed any farther Resistance would be ineffectual, as every possible Exertion had already been used in vain to save her, and therefore they were unanimously of Opinion, that to resign her would be the Means of saving the Lives of a Number of brave Men. Then, and not till then, (painful to relate) I ordered the Colours to be struck; a Measure which, on a full Investigation, I hope and trust their Lordships will not disapprove. Hitherto I have not been able to collect an exact List of the Killed and Wounded, as many of the former were thrown overboard during the Action, and, when taken Possession of, the People were divided, and sent on Board different Ships, but I do not believe they exceed Forty, or thereabout. No Officer above the Rank of Boatswain's Mate was killed. Lieutenant Fitzgerald, of the Marines, Mess. Burns, Boatswain, and M'Curdy, Pilot, were wounded, but in a fair Way of doing well.

The cool, steady, and gallant Behaviour of all my Officers and Ship's Company, Marines as well as Seamen, throughout the whole of the Action, merits the highest Applause; and I should feel myself deficient in my Duty, as well as in what I owe to these brave Men, were I to omit requesting you will be pleased to recommend them in the strongest Manner to their Lordships Favour and Protection; particularly Lieutenants Godench, Epworth, Carter, West and Daracott; Major Tench, Lieutenants Fitzgerald and Brown of the Marines; Mr. Robinson the Master, together with the Warrant and Petty Officers, whose Bravery and good Conduct I shall ever hold in the highest Estimation. I have hitherto been treated with great Kindness and Humanity, and have not a Doubt but that I shall meet with the same Treatment during my Captivity.

I am, with great Respect,

S I R,

Your most obedient and

Most humble Servant,

R. R. B L I G H

Philip Stephens, Esq;

Secretary of the Admiralty.

Downing-Street, February 3, 1795.

The Queen has been pleased to appoint Mr. Bartolomeo Paperce to be Plaister Figure-Maker to Her Majesty.

Commissions in the Cambridgeshire Militia, signed by the Lord Lieutenant.

Edward Nightingale, Esq; to be Lieutenant-Colonel, vice Hale Wortham, Esq; resigned. Dated December 15, 1795.

Charles Yorke, Esq; to be Major, vice Edward Nightingale. Dated as above.

Edward Huddleston, Esq; to be Captain, vice Charles Yorke. Dated as above.

Samuel Holworthy, Esq; to be Captain, vice Sir John Alston, Bart. resigned. Dated January 5, 1795.

William Hatton, Esq; to be Lieutenant, vice T. F. Addison, resigned. Dated December 26, 1794.

G. A. Swinton, Gent. to be Lieutenant, vice Edward Huddleston. Dated January 1, 1795.

Commission in the Eastern Regiment of Essex Militia, signed by the Lord Lieutenant.

William Hicks, Gent. to be Ensign. Dated January 31, 1795.