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Admiralty-Office, May 30, 1812.

Copy of a Letter from Admiral Lord Keith, Commander in Chief of His Majesty's Ships and Vessels in the Channel Soundings, to John Wilson Croker, Esq; dated on board the Conquestador, in Cawsand-Bay, the 27th instant.

SIR,

IN my letter of the 16th instant I acquainted you, for the information of the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty, with the disposition which I had made for intercepting a French squadron, reported to be on its way from the West Indies to some port in the bay; and I have now the satisfaction to acquaint you that that arrangement has been attended with complete success, as their Lordships will observe by the enclosed copy of a letter which I have received from Rear-Admiral Sir Harry Neale, transmitting one from Captain Henry Hotham of His Majesty's ship Northumberland.

When the gallantry of the action with such a force, under numerous galling batteries, and the intricacy of the navigation amidst dangerous rocks, in the very entrance of the enemy's harbour, are taken into consideration, the performance of so important a service, while it reflects the highest honour upon the courage, skill, and extraordinary management of all concerned, adds fresh lustre to the naval annals of the country.

The selection of Captain Hotham for the station off L'Orient does great credit to the judgment of Rear-Admiral Sir Harry Neale, for no officer but one who possessed great local knowledge, could, under such difficult circumstances, have ventured to undertake the service that Captain Hotham has so bravely and so effectually performed.

I have the honour to be, &c.

(Signed)

KEITH.

J. W. Croker, Esq;

*Boyne, off Ushant,
May 25, 1812.*

MY LORD,

AGREEABLY to your Lordship's directions to send a ship of the line off L'Orient, to intercept two of the enemy's frigates and a brig that were supposed to be on their return to some port in the bay, I selected Captain Hotham, of His Majesty's

ship Northumberland, for that service, as an officer whose local knowledge of the coast, ability, and zeal, well qualified him for the service he has so ably and gallantly performed.

I herewith enclose for your Lordship's information, Captain Hotham's letter to me, detailing the particulars of his having destroyed the enemy's two frigates and brig on the 22d instant, when literally in the mouth of the port of L'Orient, under a heavy fire from the numerous batteries upon that part of the coast, and during a warm contest with the frigates and brig, which were of the largest class.

In transmitting these particulars to your Lordship, I cannot resist adding my testimony to the ability and zeal with which Captain Hotham has, upon all occasions, distinguished himself in the discharge of his professional duties; but in the present instance, from the force of the enemy's ships, supported by the batteries upon the shore, and the judgment displayed in the able conducting of the ship, they are eminently conspicuous, and will, no doubt, meet the applause and consideration he has so highly merited. I must refer your Lordship to Captain Hotham's letter, as the strongest testimony I can offer of the good conduct and gallantry of all the officers, seamen, and marines upon this occasion, and of the assistance he received from Lieutenant Weeks of the Growler gun-brig, after the enemy's frigates and brig had grounded.

I have the honour to be, &c.

(Signed) H. NEALE, Rear-Admiral.

*The Right Honourable Admiral Lord
Keith, K. B. &c. &c. &c.*

*Northumberland, off the Penmarks,
Wind S. S. W. Light Breezes, and
fine Weather, May 24, 1812.*

SIR,

I HAVE the honour to inform you the object of the orders I received from you on the 19th instant, to proceed off L'Orient for the purpose of intercepting two French frigates and a brig lately seen at sea, has been accomplished, by their total destruction, at the entrance of that port, by His Majesty's ship under my command, (the Growler gun-brig being in company), under the circumstances I beg leave to relate to you.