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ADMIRALTY-OFFICE—MAY 22.

Copy of a Letter from the Right Honourable Lord Keith, K. B. Admiral of the Blue, &c. to William Marsden, Esq. dated at Ramsgate, the 20th Instant SIR,

I herewith transmit, for the information of their Lordships, a letter which I have this day received from Commodore Sir Sidney Smith, acquainting me that the enemy's flotilla at Flushing had been pushed out from that port on the 16th instant to form a junction with that at Ostend, and that the greatest part of them had succeeded in reaching the latter place, notwithstanding the vigorous measures that were used by the Commodore and his Squadron to resist their progress; a circumstance which is to be imputed only to the numerous disadvantages to which his Majesty's ships were subjected in consequence of the shallowness of the water, and the effect of enemy's field artillery and their batteries on the shore; for the Commodore appears to have used every practicable exertion to defeat the design, and to have been very gallantly seconded by all the officers serving under his orders.

I also enclose a list of the killed and wounded on this occasion; and have the honour to be, &c.

KEITH.

Antelope, at anchor, off Ostend, May 17, 1804.

My Lord,

Information from all quarters, and the evident state of readiness in which the enemy's armaments were in Helvoet, Flushing, and Ostend, indicating the probability of a general movement from those parts, I reinforced Captain Manby, off Helvoet, with one ship, and directed Captain Hancock, of the cruiser, stationed in shore, to combine his operations and the Rattler's with the Squadron of gun-boats stationed off Ostend.

The Antelope, Penelope, and Amiable, occupied a central position in sight both of Flushing and Ostend, in anxious expectation of the enemy's appearance. Yesterday at half past five a. m. I received information from Captain Hancock, then off Ostend, that the enemy's flotilla was hauling out of that pier, and had already twenty-one one-masted vessels, and one schooner, outside in the roads; and at half past seven the same morning, I had the satisfaction to see the Flushing flotilla of fifty-nine sail, viz. two ship-rigged praams, nineteen schooners, and thirty-eight schuyts, steering along-shore from that port towards Ostend, under circumstances which allowed me to hope I should be able to bring them to action. The signal was made to the Cruiser and Rattler for an enemy, in the E. S. E. to call their attention from Ostend; the Squadron weighed the moment the flood made, and allowed the heavier ships following them over the banks; the signals to chase and to engage were obeyed with alacrity, spirit, and judgment, by the active and experienced officers your Lordship has done me the honour to place under my orders. Captains Hancock and Mason attacked this formidable line with the greatest gallantry and address, attaching themselves particularly to the two praams, both of them of greater force than themselves, independent of the cross-fire from the schooners and schuyts; I lent the Amiable by signal, to support them. The Penelope, (having an able pilot, Mr Thornton), on signal being made to engage, Captain Broughton worked up to the centre of the enemy's line, as near as the shoal water would allow, while the Antelope went round the Stroom-Sand to cut the van off from Ostend; unfortunately our gun-boats

were not in sight, having, as I have understood, since devoted their attention to preventing the Ostend division from moving westward.

The enemy attempted to get back to Flushing; but, being harassed by the Cruiser and the Rattler, and the wind coming more easterly against them, they were obliged to run the gauntlet to the westward, keeping close to the beach, under the protection of the batteries.

Having found a passage for the Antelope within the Stroom-Sand, she was enabled to bring her broadside to bear on the headmost schooners before they got the length of Ostend. The leader struck immediately, and her crew deserted her. She was however recovered by the followers; the artillery from the town and camp, and the rowing gun-boats from the Pier, kept up a constant and well-directed fire for their support; our shot, however, which went over the schooners, going on shore among the horse artillery, interrupted it in a degree; still however it was from the shore we received the greatest annoyance; for the schooners and schuyts crowding along could not bring their prow guns to bear without altering their course towards us, which they could not venture; and their side guns, though numerous and well served, were very light. In this manner the Penelope and Antelope engaged every part of their long line from four till eight, while the Amiable, Cruiser, and Rattler, continued to press their rear. Since two o'clock the sternmost Praam struck her colours and ran on shore; but the artillery men from the army got on board, and she renewed her fire on the Amiable with the precision of a land battery, from which that ship

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