

cattle, 15 ports of a side on the main deck; when she failed from France, had 28 eighteen pounders mounted on it, now 26; two were landed from her at Martinique.

When the action commenced between La Ville de Milan and his Majesty's ship Cleopatra, she was commanded by Monf. Reynaud, Capitaine de Vaisseau, had on board 360 men as her complement, besides a number of officers and soldiers of the French army, going passengers to Europe.

The officers of La Ville de Milan agree in saying that, having dispatches on board for France, with orders not to speak any thing during their passage, every thing was done in their power to avoid being brought to action by the Cleopatra.

Monf. Reynaud was killed by the last shot fired from the Cleopatra. He was esteemed an experienced and active officer, and had served in the late King of France's service as an auxiliary officer. He failed in La Ville de Milan, from L'Orient, the 1st of last August, as Commodore of six of their largest frigates, with troops embarked on board them, to be landed on the island of Martinique. After having performed this service, he was ordered, as the French officers express it, to make a sweep through the islands.

Monf. Guillet, Capitaine de Fregate, and Second Captain of La Ville de Milan, commanded when she struck to us, and Monf. Carron, her Second Lieutenant, had the command of the Cleopatra.

It is not possible for officers to speak in stronger terms than the French officers do in praise of Sir Robert Lawrie's perseverance in so long a chase, except it is in the praise they bestow on him, his officers, seamen, and marines, for their gallant conduct during so long and severe an action.

It is a very painful part of my duty to be obliged to inform you, Sir, that your eldest son, who was doing duty as an acting Lieutenant, is included among the number badly wounded on board the Cleopatra: as soon as the weather admitted of his being removed, I had him brought on board this ship, and have great pleasure in telling you that he is much recovered; and from the experience, great care and attention of Mr Clifford, surgeon of the Leander, I have every reason to believe you will, in a short space of time, have the satisfaction of finding him once more gallantly exerting himself for the honour, and in the defence of his king and country. Sir Robert Lawrie speaks in the highest terms of his conduct, and, indeed, of that of all the officers, seamen and marines of his Majesty's ship Cleopatra.

Sir Robert has, at my request, been so kind as to take charge of the Cleopatra till she arrives in Port. I have given Mr Nairne, First Lieutenant of his Majesty's ship Leander, charge of La Ville de Milan; the length of time he has had the honour to serve under your flag would make it superfluous in me to attempt to point out to you, Sir, his meritorious services and abilities as an officer; the only comment I can make on his conduct on this occasion, is, that nothing can exceed the exertions he has made in putting La Ville de Milan in a sea-worthy state.

The alacrity of the officers, seamen, and marines of his Majesty's ship under my command during the chase, and their steadiness on going down to attack the two frigates, who had closed, in appearance with determination to make a formidable resistance, convinced me, Sir, that had they waited to make the resistance they seemed disposed to do, the Leander would not have sullied her good name. I have, &c.

JOHN TALBOT, Post Captain.  
To Vice-Admiral Sir Andrew Mitchell, K. B. &c.

His Majesty's ship Leander, Murray's Anchorage, Bermuda, March 7. 1805.

SIR,  
I have the honour to send you inclosed a letter I this day received from Sir Robert Lawrie, Bart. From the statement made therein, you will find, Sir, that the credit of the British flag has seldom been more honourably and gallantly supported than on the present occasion; and the French officers, whom I have prisoners on board this ship, cannot themselves avoid to acknowledge, that had not the Cleopatra unfortunately forged a-head of La Ville de Milan the latter part of the action, La Ville de Milan must have surrendered to the Cleopatra.

I have the honour to be, &c.

J. TALBOT.

Vice-Admiral Sir Andrew Mitchell, K. B.

His Majesty's ship Cleopatra at Sea  
Feb. 25. 1805.

SIR,  
I have to request that you will be pleased to acquaint the Commander in Chief, that on Saturday the 16th instant, in lat. 28. deg. N. long. 67. deg. W. at ten A. M. saw a ship in the S. E. standing to the E. N. E. the wind at N. W. made sail towards her; at eleven perceived the chase to be a large frigate, with fifteen ports of a side on the main-deck; cleared ship for action, and hoisted American colours to induce him to bring to for us; but, instead of which, he made more sail; the weather squally; made and shortened sail occasionally; carried away several studding-sail yards, and the foretop-mast studding sail boom, shifted over the starboard one, and set the reefed lower studding-sail; a good deal of swell; the chase apparently steering so as to keep the studding-sails drawing full; and that at day-light on the 17th, was about four miles a-head; fresh breezes and swell as before. At half past ten he took in his studding sails, and hauled more up; when we got within about three quarters of a mile took in ours also. At half past eleven he hauled his main-sail up, and kept more to the wind; upon our steering so close with him upon his quarter, he again set it and stay-sails, trying to gain the wind of us (upon which point of sailing he had the advantage;) we made all sail, the chase having some time before hoisted French colours, and we ours.

On his seeming to draw a-head from us, at the distance of about half gun-shot, fired our bow-chasers, which he returned occasionally from his stern.

His guns appearing so well directed, and of heavy metal, and to prevent being raked by them, I was obliged to steer so as to keep on his quarter, though prolonging the chase. Latitude at noon, 29 deg. 24 min. N. long. 64 deg. 20 min. W. At half past two P. M. having got within about a cable's length from the enemy, he luffed close to the wind, and gave us two broadsides, which, when at less than half a cable's distance, we returned, and a warm action commenced, both ships trimming sails, steering sometimes close to the wind, and at others about three point-free, during which we had considerably the advantage. About five, having shot away his main-top-sail-yard, we forged a-head, although the mizen-top-sail was squared, and both jib, stay, and haulyards gone, finding neither fore nor main clue-garnets left to haul the courses up, our running rigging cut to pieces, so as to render it impossible either to shorten or back a sail, and both main and spring stays were shot away, the main-mast only supported by the storm stay-lash-stay, I was induced to cross his bow, and, by hauling up, to have raked him, in preference to exposing our stern to the fire of 25 pieces of cannon from his broadside; but in the act of which an unfortunate shot struck the wheel, the broken spokes were jammed against the deck, so as to render it immovable, as well as the rudder,

which, at the same time, was choaked in the end by splinters, pistols, &c. placed near it.— Our opponent, availing himself of our ungovernable situation, with the wind upon his quarter, gave us the stern, running his head and bowsprit over our quarter-deck, just abaft the main rigging, and under the cover of a very heavy fire from muskets and musketoons, attempted to board us; but was drove back; we exchanged a few musketry with them; but their great advantage in height and superiority of numbers, as well as by their musketoons from their tops, cleared our decks, and in at our ports. The only two guns we could bring to bear, being fired from within board, did them little injury, the shot passing through their lower deck. Most of our sails laying a shiver, or partly a-back, and bore down by so heavy a ship, (having been intended for a 74) going almost before the wind, and much sea running, appearing to cut us asunder at every send, I saw no prospect of saving this ship, or the lives of the numerous wounded that then were below, on the suggestion of the First Lieutenant we attempted to hoist the fore-top-mast stay-sail; and I directed the sprit-sail top-sail to be set also; but, in the execution of which orders, every man was knocked down by their musketry and other small shot, as they made their appearance. At a quarter-past five they succeeded in boarding, and I was compelled to surrender to the French frigate La Ville de Milan, of 46 guns, French eighteen-pounders on the main-deck, and eights on the quarter-deck and fore-castle; 350 men, besides several officers and passengers; commanded by Monsieur Reynaud, Capitaine de Vaisseau, and Monsieur Gillet, Capitaine de Fregate; the former was killed and the latter badly wounded in the action, and immediately afterwards the Cleopatra became a perfect wreck; not a spar standing but the mizen-mast, the bowsprit and other masts gone by the board, and I fully expected she would have foundered before both ships could get clear of each other.

I trust it will be found that every exertion was made to bring a ship of so superior a force into action, and in maintaining of it. La Ville de Milan is nearly double our size and force, being a new ship of about 1200 tons burthen, and having almost twice our number of men on board, as we only mustered at quarters 199, being ten short of complement, and that from the strength of the ship's company in able seamen, and there were several in the sick list.

From Lieutenant Balfour I received every assistance, as from a good and zealous officer, as also from Lieutenants Kinsman and Crooke, and Lieutenant Bowen of the Bermuda; who kept up a well directed fire from the main deck, and Mr Mitchell, Midshipman and acting Lieutenant, from the quarter-deck, at which Lieutenant Appleton of the marines assisted, having no men to spare for small arms, but was wounded early.

The steady and cool conduct of Mr Bett (the Master) confirmed what I had always expected from him: to go further in particularizing individuals would be too tedious; but I think it my duty to mention Mr McCarthy's (the Boatwain) conduct, who is badly wounded, was highly spirited and active; and more gallantry and bravery could not have been displayed than by both officers and men of so young a ship's company, many being under twenty years of age, and only three marines, who had joined that corps more than two weeks before they were embarked.

I have no hesitation in saying, that had not the above unlucky accident occurred, she must have struck to us, as the next morning her fore-mast and bowsprit were the only masts standing, much cut in the hull, and I counted eleven shot in the wreck of her main-mast: that our well-considered could not do that justice too from its