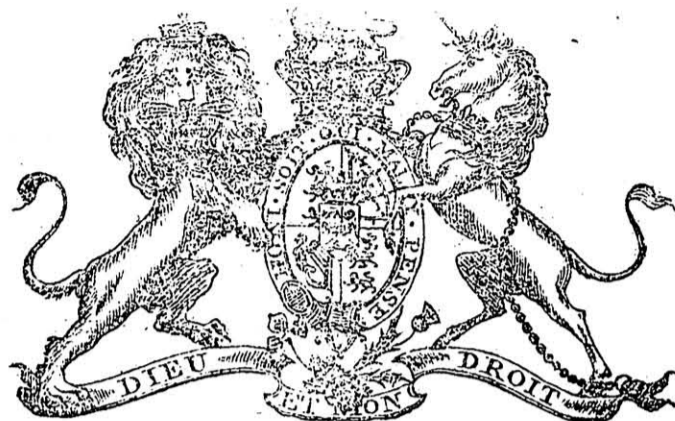


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FROM FRIDAY, APRIL 21, to TUESDAY, APRIL 25, 1809.

ADMIRALTY-OFFICE, APRIL 21, 1809.

Sir Harry Neale, Bart. first captain to Admiral Lord Gambier, commander in chief of his Majesty's ships and vessels employed in the Channel Soundings, &c. arrived here this morning with a dispatch from his Lordship to the Honourable William Wellesley Pole, of which the following is a copy.

*Caledonia, at Anchor, in Basque Roads,
April 14, 1809.*

SIR,

The Almighty's favour to his Majesty and the nation has been strongly marked in the success he has been pleased to give to the operations of his Majesty's fleet under my command; and I have the satisfaction to acquaint you, for the information of the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty, that the four ships of the enemy named in the margin* have been destroyed at their anchorage, and several others, from getting on shore, if not rendered altogether unserviceable, are at least disabled for a considerable time.

The arrangement of the fire-vessels placed under the direction of Captain the Right Honourable Lord Cochrane were made as fully as the state of the weather would admit, according to his Lordship's plan, on the evening of the 11th instant; and at eight o'clock on the same night they proceeded to the attack under a favourable strong wind from the northward, and flood tide, (preceded by some vessels filled with powder and shells, as proposed by his Lordship, with a view to explosion), and led on in the most undaunted and determined manner by Captain Wooldridge, in the Mediator fire-ship, the others following in succession, but owing to the darkness of the night several mistook their course and failed.

* Ville de Varsovie, of 80 guns; Tonnerre, of 74 guns; Aquillon, of 74 guns; and Calcutta, of 56 guns.

On their approach to the enemy's ships, it was discovered that a boom was placed in front of their line for a defence. This however the weight of the Mediator soon broke, and the usual intrepidity and bravery of British seamen overcame all difficulties. Advancing under a heavy fire from the forts in the Isle of Aix, as well as from the enemy's ships, most of which cut or slipt their cables, and from the confined anchorage, got on shore, and thus avoided taking fire.

At daylight the following morning, Lord Cochrane communicated to me by the telegraph, that seven of the enemy's ships were on shore, and might be destroyed. I immediately made the signal for the fleet to unmoor and weigh, intending to proceed with it to effect their destruction. The wind however being fresh from the northward, and the flood tide running, rendered it too hazardous to run into Aix roads, (from its shallow water), I therefore anchored again at the distance of about three miles from the forts on the island.

As the tide suited, the enemy evinced great activity in endeavouring to warp their ships (which had grounded) into deep water, and succeeded in getting all but five of the line towards the entrance of the Charente before it became practicable to attack them.

I gave orders to Captain Bligh, of the Valiant, to proceed with that ship, the Revenge, frigates, bombs, and small vessels, named in the margin,* to anchor near the Boyart Shoal, in readiness for the attack. At twenty minutes past two P. M. Lord Cochrane advanced in the Imperieuse with his accustomed gallantry and spirit, and opened a well directed fire upon the Calcutta, which struck her colours to the Imperieuse; the

* Indefatigable, Aigle, Emerald, Pallas, Beagle, Ætna bomb, Insolent gun-brig, Conflict, Encounter, Fervent, and Growler.

ships and vessels above mentioned soon after joined in the attack upon the Ville de Varsovie and Aquillon, and obliged them, before five o'clock, after sustaining a heavy cannonade, to strike their colours, when they were taken possession of by the boats of the advanced squadron. As soon as the prisoners were removed, they were set on fire, as was also the Tonnerre a short time after by the enemy.

I afterwards detached Rear-Admiral the Honourable Robert Stopford in the Cæsar with the Theseus, three additional fire-ships, (which were hastily prepared in the course of the day), and all the boats of the fleet, with Mr. Congreve's rockets, to conduct the further operations of the night against any of the ships which lay exposed to an attack. On the morning of the 13th, the Rear-Admiral reported to me, that as the Cæsar and other line of battle ships had grounded, and were in a dangerous situation, he thought it advisable to order them all out, particularly as the remaining part of the service could be performed by frigates and small vessels only; and I was happy to find that they were extricated from their perilous situation.

Captain Bligh has since informed me, that it was found impracticable to destroy the three-decked ship, and the others which were lying near the entrance of the Charente, as the former, being the outer one, was protected by three lines of boats placed in advance from her.

This ship, and all the others, except four of the line and a frigate, have now moved up the river Charente. If any further attempt to destroy them is practicable, I shall not fail to use every means in my power to accomplish it.

I have great satisfaction in stating to their Lordships how much I feel obliged to the zealous co-operation of Rear-Admiral Stopford, under whose arrangement the boats of the fleet were placed; and I must also express to their

Price Sixpence.

