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ADMIRALTY-OFFICE, SEPT. 22. 1798.-

Copy of a letter from the Right Hon. Admiral Earl of St Vincent, K. B. to Evan Nepean, Esq. dated Ville de Paris, before Cadiz, Aug. 20.

I inclose the representation of a very gallant and obstinate action, fought by his Majesty's sloop L'Espoir, of fourteen six pounders, against a Ligurian pirate of very superior force, which reflects such lustre upon his Majesty's arms, that too much cannot be said in praise of it.

The loss of Mr Soulsby, the master, is greatly to be lamented, as he was a very promising young man.

His Majesty's sloop L'Espoir, Gibraltar, Aug. 10. 1798.

MY LORD,

I have the honour to acquaint your Lordship, that having under my charge part of the Oran convoy, on the 7th inst. at about five P.M. I discovered a large ship seemingly steering to cut off the convoy; or for Malaga, Cape Windmill bearing N.E. by N. four or five leagues; If she proved an enemy I saw the preservation of the convoy depended upon my opposing her; I therefore hauled out from them, and made all sail to meet her.

A little before seven P. M. perceiving her to be a man of war, and hove-to to receive me, I hoisted our colours, that we might know each other, being then within musket-shot; she did not think proper to display hers; but when we came upon her weather-quarter, hailed, which I answered. He then ordered me, in a very imperious manner, and in good English, to "go to leeward of him, and strike, or he would sink me," firing one shot into us, and instantly after his whole broadside, which we returned, and continued a very heavy fire of great guns and small arms on both sides, till about three quarters past ten P. M. when we had the satisfaction to hear him call out for quarter, "begging us not to fire any more; he was a Genoese."

I told him again we were a British man of war, and ordered him to lower all his sails, and come on board of me; but he paid no further attention, and kept shooting

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up; to gain a situation to rake us: We brought our broadside to bear, and, thinking his force too great to be trifled with, gave it to him with its full effect, and he returned it; but, on our shooting a-head, and tacking to give him the other, he again cried out, "begging us not to fire again; that he was badly wounded, but would obey my orders immediately;" and, on lowering his sails, all firing ceased at about eleven P.M. The vessel is called the Liguria, Don Franc de Orfo commander, a Dutch frigate sold to the Genoese, and mounting twelve 18-pounders, four 12-pounders, ten 6-pounders, twelve long wall-pieces, and four swivels, with 120 men on board; of all nations.

It would give me infinite pleasure if I could close this, without having to inform your Lordship, that in the first hour of the action I lost my master, Mr Soulsby; a loss I felt more severely, for he was brave with the greatest coolness, and knew his duty well. I had six men wounded, two badly; the Liguria had seven killed and fourteen wounded, among them the boatswain was killed, and the First Captain very dangerously wounded.

No panegyric of mine can do justice to either warrant officers or men; for the great disparity between the vessels shews that, had it not been for their spirited exertions, we must have fallen a sacrifice to these pirates, or whatever else they may be.

The service is much indebted to the spirited conduct of Captain Brown, of the 28th regiment, who happened to be on board, by his animation inspiring all around; and by his attention to the guns; nor would I do justice if I did not beg leave, in the strongest terms, to recommend to your Lordship's notice Mr Hemphill, the purser, who with my leave came up from below, where he was stationed; and by his assiduity in attending the guns, saved me much, as after the loss of the Master, my attention was more particularly required in manœuvring the helm and sails. I have the honour to be, &c.

LOFTUS OTWAY BLAND.

Admiral Earl St Vincent, K. B. &c.

(B.)