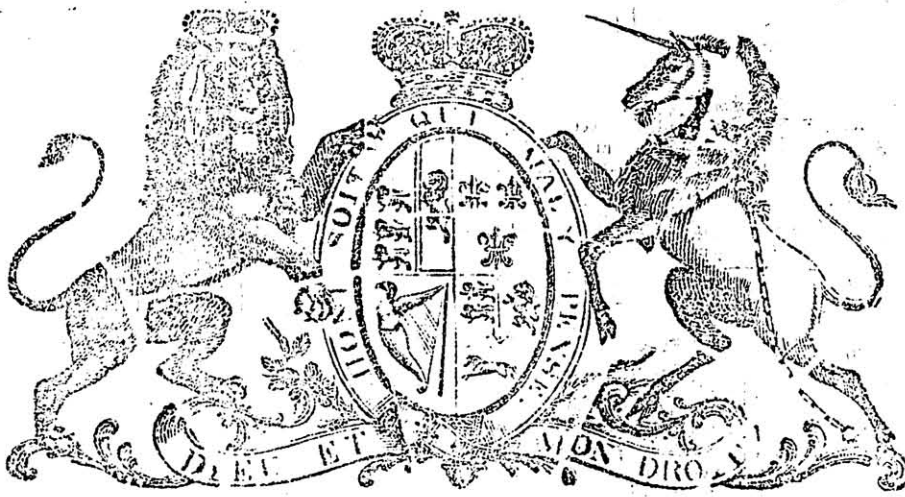


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FROM TUESDAY, JULY 20. TO FRIDAY, JULY 23. 1802.

FROM THE LONDON GAZETTE

ADMIRALTY OFFICE—July 20.

Copy of a Letter from Captain Sir HOME POPHAM, to the Admiralty, dated at Calcutta, the 13th of November, 1801.

I HAVE much pleasure in transmitting you a copy of Captain Collier's letter of the 10th instant, for the information of my Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty, giving a very full account of his sinking the French national ship *La Fleche* of 22 guns, and 170 men. The result of Captain Collier's unremitting vigilance under every trying circumstance, and his determined conduct in waiving the *Victor* in the harbour, is likely to be of very material service to the commerce of India, as *La Fleche* was unquestionably intended to cruise in the Bay of Bengal.

I have the honour to be, &c.

HOME POPHAM.

His Majesty's sloop *Victor*, Mahé Roads, September 19, 1801.

The state of the crew of his Majesty's sloop *Victor*, under my command, after leaving the Red Sea, and being put into the island Diego Garcia; and finding a large supply of turtle and good provisions, I left that harbour on the 27th of August, and proceeded on the execution of the particular service pointed out in your orders of the 10th instant; and on the 2d inst. in sight of these islands, his Majesty's sloop fell in with a French national corvette, and after a few ineffectual manoeuvres on her part, from the superior sailing of *Victor*, when going large, I had the pleasure of bringing her to a close action at three o'clock P.M. The disguised state of the enemy did not long deceive the enemy, the broadside proved sufficient, the corvette was disabled, her wind and endeavouring to escape,

[Price Sixpence.]

which, in about twenty minutes, I was sorry to observe, by having almost solely directed her fire at our masts and sails she had a fair prospect of effecting, for on her tacking under our lee, I endeavoured to wear, with the hope of boarding on her bow, when I had the mortification to find both lower and topsail braces shot away on the starboard side, as well as preventer ones and bow lines, and before others could be rove the corvette was half a mile to windward. Night fall approaching added to the chagrin I felt on observing the corvette sail better than the *Victor* on a wind. The chase continued all night, frequently within gun-shot, and at sunrise the following day, from the wind having favoured the enemy, she was four or five miles to windward; in the night of the 4th lost sight of the chase, when, probably by tacking, she escaped.

In this affair I had one man wounded with two musket balls, and Mr Middleton, master's mate, slightly; the damage sustained in the hull trifling, the foremast shot through, and I have to regret our sails and rigging much cut.

Judging from the course the corvette was steering, when first seen, she must be bound to these islands, I pushed for them, and towards sunset of the 5th, she was again seen running in for this anchorage. I kept under easy sail till dark, when the *Victor* was anchored. At daylight I had the satisfaction of seeing the corvette moored with springs in the basin, or inner harbour, with a red flag at the fore (which, as I since learn, was in defiance); being unacquainted with the channel, and having no pilot, Mr Crawford, the master, (though ill of a fever) and Mr Middleton, being volunteers, were sent to sound, which service they completely performed; nor did the latter gentleman desist, till repeatedly fired at by a boat from the corvette.

The extreme narrowness of the channel, added

to the wind not being very favourable, compelled me to use waips and the stay-fails only, which exposed the ship to a raking fire for some minutes, till, shoaling our water, I was obliged to bring up. Having two springs on the cable our broadside was soon brought to bear; and at three quarters past eleven A.M. a well-directed fire was opened, which was kept up incessantly from both vessels till twenty minutes past two, when I plainly perceived the enemy was going down; in a few minutes her cable was cut, she cast round, and her bow grounded on a coral reef.

Mr McLean, the First Lieutenant, with a party of officers and men, were sent to board.— Though scarce had they put off, ere we discovered the enemy to be on fire—Lieutenant Smith and other officers were then sent with proper assistance, but just as they had succeeded in extinguishing the fire, she fell on her larboard bilge into deeper water, and sunk.

She proves to have been the French national corvette *La Fleche*, mounting 20 long French eight pounders, answering to English nines, with two stern chasers, though it appears all her guns were not mounted in the first action; was larger than the *Victor* in dimensions, perfectly new, a remarkable fast sailer, and not four months from France, commanded by Captain Bonamy, Lieutenant de Vaisseau, with four Lieutenants, and a compliment of 145 men, some of whom had been left sick at Bourbon.

From a number of dead and dying men reported to be found on her forecattle, as well as two alongside, I am induced to believe the carnage was great, though only four are acknowledged by the French Captain.

She had 20 men to assist at her guns, forming a part of the crew of the French frigate *La Chiffonne*, captured here a few days since by his Majesty's ship *La Sybille*, Captain Adam.

