

On Friday the 22d instant, at a quarter after ten A. M. the N. W. point of the Isle Groa, bearing from the Northumberland north by compass, ten miles distant, and the wind very light from W. by N. they were discovered in the N. W. crowding all possible sail before it for L'Orient. My first endeavour was to cut them off to windward of the island, and a signal was made to the Growler (seven miles off in the S. W.) to chase, but finding I could not effect it, the Northumberland was pushed by every exertion round the S. E. end of Groa, and, by hauling to the wind as close as I could to leeward of it, I had the satisfaction of fetching to windward of the harbour's mouth, before the enemy's ships reached it. Their commander seeing himself thus cut off, made a signal to his consorts and hauled to the wind on the larboard tack to windward of Point Talcet, and they appeared to speak each other. I continued beating to windward between Groa and the Continent to close with them, exposed to the batteries on both sides, when I stood within their reach, which was unavoidable. The wind had by this time freshened considerably, and was about W. N. W. : at forty-nine minutes after two P. M. the enemy (in force as above described) bore up in close line ahead, and under every sail that could be set, favoured by the fresh wind, made a bold and determined attempt to run between me and the shore, under cover of the numerous batteries with which it is lined in that part. I placed the Northumberland to meet them as close as I could to the Pointe de Pierre Laye, with her head to the shore, and the main-topsail shivering, and made dispositions for laying one of them alongside; but they hauled so very close round the point, following the direction of the coast to the eastward of it, that, in my ignorance of the depth of water so near the shore, I did not think it practicable, consistent with the safety of His Majesty's ship (drawing near twenty-five feet) to prosecute that plan. I therefore bore up and steered parallel to them at the distance of about two cables' length, and opened the broadside on them, which was returned by a very animated and well directed fire of round, grape, and other descriptions of shot, supported by three batteries, for the space of twenty-one minutes, and was very destructive to our sails and rigging. My object during that time was to prevent their hauling outside the dry rock named Le Graul, but in steering sufficiently close to it to leave them no room to pass between me and it, and at the same time to avoid running on it myself, the most difficulty and anxiety was produced by the cloud of smoke which drifted ahead of the ship and totally obscured it. However, by the care and attention of Mr. Hugh Stewart, the Master, the ship was carried within the distance of her own length on the south west side, in quarter less seven fathoms, and the enemy were in consequence obliged, as their only alternative, to attempt passing within it, where there was not water enough, and they all grounded, under every sail, on the rocks between it and the shore.

The sails and rigging of the Northumberland were so much damaged, that I was obliged to leave the enemy to the effects of the falling tide, it being only one quarter ebb, while I repaired the rigging and shifted the foretop-sail, which was rendered

entirely useless; working to windward during that time under what sail I could set, to prevent falling to leeward; in which interval, at five o'clock, the Growler joined, and fired on the enemy occasionally. At twenty-eight minutes after five, I anchored the Northumberland in six and an half fathoms water, Point de Pierre Laye bearing N. W. half N., the citadel of Port Louis E. three quarters N., and the rock named Le Graul N. half E., two cables length distant, with her broadside bearing on the enemy's two frigates and brig, at point blank range, all of them having fallen over on their sides next the shore as the tide left them, and exposed their copper to us, and the main-masts of one frigate and the brig were gone; and from thirty-four minutes after five till forty-nine minutes past six (which was near the time of low water), a deliberate and careful fire was kept up on them, at which time, believing I had fully effected the object of my endeavours, the crews having quitted their vessels, all their bottoms being pierced by very many of our shot, so low down as to ensure their filling on the rising tide, and the leading frigate being completely in flames, communicated to the hull from a fire which broke out in her foretop, I got under sail. Three batteries fired at the ship during the whole time she was at anchor, and although the position was so far well chosen that she was out of the range of two of them, the other (to which the enemy's vessels were nearest) reached her, and did as much execution in the hull as all the fire she had been exposed to before.

I directed the Commander of the Growler to stand in and fire, to prevent the enemy from returning to their vessels after I had ceased.

At five minutes before eight, the frigate on fire blew up with an awful explosion, leaving no remains of her visible. At the close of day I anchored for the night, out of reach of the batteries on both sides, Point Talcet bearing N. N. W. half W., S. E. point of Groa S. S. W. half W., the enemy's vessels N. by E. At ten, the other frigate appeared to be on fire also (some smoke having been seen on board her from the time the firing ceased), and at half past eleven, the flames burst forth from her ports and every part with unextinguishable fury, which unlooked-for event leaving me nothing more to attempt in the morning, the brig being quite on her beam ends, and very much damaged by our shot in every part of her bottom, even very near her keel, I weighed anchor at midnight, with a very light air from the northward, with the Growler in company, profiting by the brightness of the moon to get to sea; but it was so near calm that I made very little progress, and therefore saw the frigate burning from head to stern all night, and explode at thirty-five minutes after two in the morning of yesterday, leaving a portion of her after-part still burning till it was entirely consumed; and in the course of the day, I had the satisfaction to see, from off the N. W. point of Groa, a third fire and explosion in the same spot, which could have been no other than the brig.

During the time of firing on the enemy's vessels, a scaman, who states himself to be a native of Portugal, captured in the ship *Harmony*, of Lisbon, by the frigates, on the 22d February, swam from one of them to the Northumberland, by whom