

LONDON.

THE LATE NAVAL ENGAGEMENT.

After stating the particulars of the late Action between the British fleet, under Admiral Calder, and the French and Spanish combined fleet, [which have appeared in this Gazette] *Bell's Messenger*, of the 4th August, remarks:

We must here be somewhat technical, in order to explain to our readers the general method of sea engagements. Truths are sometimes necessary, and we hope to escape ridicule in stating a self-evident thing, that all ships must be, as to each other, windward or leeward, and in their tacks, either starboard or larboard. A fleet to windward has invariably borne down in a slanting line on another to leeward, each ship in a line abreast of the other, till they brought up within a proper distance for a close and general engagement to avoid a general engagement has full leisure to disable a windward fleet during its approach to battle; and when the latter has assumed a situation for close encounter, the former might bear away at intervals, whilst enveloped with smoke; or, by making more sail, might shoot a head, and pour its whole fire into the opposite van, as it passed and wore in succession to form a new line to leeward on the opposite tack.

The mystery of the French tactics was formerly no more than this; they never made an attack, but always courted a leeward situation; they have thus invariably disabled the British fleets in coming down to action, and, upon seeing it disabled, have made sail and demolished the van in passing, keeping clear of close engagement, and never lying ship abreast: on the other hand the British, from an irresistible desire of attack, have as constantly courted the windward position; have had their ships constantly disabled and separated and have never been able to close with the enemy, or make a capture.

Such was the system by which the French succeeded in the naval engagement with Admiral Byng in the Mediterranean, 1756, to the re-encounter with Admiral Greaves off the Chesapeake, 1781. In Admiral Byron's engagement off Genoa, our fleet bore down to windward whilst the enemy, bearing away, prevented an attack, upon their rear, or a close engagement in the van. Our headmost ships were either disabled in making the attack, as they received the whole fire of the enemy's line, as each ship of the latter passed and wore in succession, in order to form to leeward upon the opposite tack. The French adhered so closely to this system, that, to avoid all change of close or general engagement, they forbore even to intercept our disabled ships which had necessarily fallen to leeward.

Such was the superiority of the enemy's tactics, that till the year 1782, above thirty years passed without any conspicuous naval victory; ship indeed engaging with ship, the British always succeeded; but the advantage was never extended to general engagement. Rodney set the first example of an attack to leeward and cutting off the line; since then, in all general battles, we have uniformly triumphed.

Rodney opened a new era, and with the exception of the battle of the Nile, where the French fleet was at anchor, the same manœuvre of attacking to leeward, and cutting the line, have uniformly succeeded.—In Lord Howe's victory, the signal was given (the first we believe that was ever given, for Rodney's was rather accident than design) for the British fleet to leeward to tack successively and cut the line; the two fleets were instantly intermixed, the battle was that of ship to ship, and the event was evidence of the skill of the attack.—Indeed so sensible were the French of the cause of our victory, that the Convention passed a decree of death against that Captain who should ever suffer the line to be cut.

Lord St. Vincent, indeed, disregarded the regular system from having greater advantages in varying his plan of attack; but Lord Duncan, in the victory off Camperdown, cut the Dutch line immediately in the centre.

Such being the approved system of tactics and the invariable success of adopting them, it is asked did Sir Robert Calder conform to them; had he or had he not the opportunity of applying them, or did he reject them from choice.

At noon, on the 22d July, our gallant Admiral discovered the combined fleet to windward; he immediately concerted his plan of attack, indeed, but one plan presented itself.—Having made signals for the closest order, he bore down upon the enemy, and upon closing with them, made the signal for attacking the center.—When he had reached their rear, he tacked his ships in succession, evidently meaning to intercept them, and bring on a close engagement of ship to ship. It was impossible to devise a plan of attack more promising; we venture to pronounce Lord Nelson would have done the same;—Lord St. Vincent did the same.—When that illustrious man perceived the Spanish fleet to windward, consisting of 27 sail of the line, he instantly cut off a division of it, though he could not bring on a general engagement, as the enemy, in great trepidation, chose rather to fly, than succour any part of their squadron. "When I had reached their rear," says Sir Robert, "I tacked the squadron in succession; this brought me close up under their lee, and when our headmost ships had reached their centre, the enemy were tacking in succession; this obliged me again to make the same manœuvre, by which I brought on an action of four hours, when I found it necessary to bring too the squadron, to secure the two captured ships."

Sir Robert then proceeds to observe, which is a perfect vindication of his not being able to do more, that the enemy had every advantage of wind and weather; the fog was so great that he could scarcely perceive the ship ahead or astern of him: this rendered it impossible to take advantage of the enemy by proper signals; "had the weather, he continues, been more favorable, I am led to believe the victory would have been more complete."

In many of the accounts we have received, it is positively stated, that the British ships twice, or thrice by mistake, fired into each other, and that five of the enemy were at once upon the Windsor. It is thus evident that not above two or three ships succeeded in passing the line of the enemy; the rest were prevented by not perceiving the signals,

and not knowing what impression the leading ships were making.

This is evident, from the circumstance of some ships having suffered greatly, and some triflingly; the fact is, the line can scarcely be said to have been cut at all; the fleets indeed, passed each other upon opposite tacks; but, from the circumstances of the weather, and the signals not being noticed, the British fleet were never able to form a new line to leeward, or, in returning on the contrary tack, to rake the enemy as each ship passed. Every advantage, therefore, of cutting the line in a leeward attack was lost to Sir Robert Calder, because his ships could not act under his superintendence, or, with that unanimity of attack which alone can lead to decisive victory, and which must ever depend on a quick perception, and obedience of signals in each ship.

In respect to the Admiral's terminating the engagement, in order to cover the two prizes, Lieut. Nicholson's account is most satisfactory.—He says, "the two ships which had struck were dropping fast to leeward, and the enemy, by a successful manœuvre, might easily have recovered possession of them, if our squadron had not brought too in order to cover them."

AUGUST 7.

The Hamburg Mail due on Wednesday last, and a Mail from Gottenburgh, arrived yesterday. The latter that is said respecting the military preparations of Austria and Russia is sufficient to indicate the approach of war. All the officers and soldiers of the Russian armies who are absent on furlough, have received strict orders to join their respective corps without delay, and Austria is actively employed in recruiting her forces. But by far the most important article of intelligence brought by the Mail, is a letter from Hamburg, which appears to confirm a report we formerly noticed, of the sale of Swedish Pomerania to Russia. The bargain, it is said, was concluded, during his Swedish Majesty's residence at Schonen, in the presence of the Russian and English Ambassadors, and the price to be given for the territory is 26,500,000 Rix dollars banco. It is impossible to reflect on this arrangement, without perceiving that it is likely to give birth to events of the greatest political importance. The Mails also bring some information respecting the movements of the French troops, which are of such a nature as to impress us with the belief that Bonaparte is at last determined to attempt the execution of his long menaced plan of invasion. The troops on the Lower Rhine have marched to the Western Coast, and all the Generals who had been for some time at Paris have returned to their posts. Bonaparte was expected at Boulogne by the end of last month; and by a Prussian vessel arrived at Yarmouth from the Texel, which she left on Friday night, we learn that a strict embargo has been ordered in all the ports. Every necessary precaution which the occasion could require has been adopted by Government. Orders have been issued to maintain, with the greatest vigilance, the blockade of the enemy's ports; in consequence of which a number of Americans and other neutral vessels have been stopped by our cruisers on the Dutch coast, and sent into Yarmouth. Our North Sea Squadron has been reinforced by several ships of the line.

AUGUST 8.

We received yesterday the Paris Journals to the 28th ult, and Dutch Gazettes to the 2d inst. the contents of which are of very little importance. Emperor Bonaparte was still at Paris on the 27th; but his departure for Boulogne was daily expected to take place. The *Moniteur*, with an air of mysterious reserve, says, in a short paragraph respecting the combined fleets, "that it will be a long time before the English will hear of them, and that the news will very much surprise us." Upon this display of profound pretence in the *Moniteur*, we are happy to congratulate the Official Editors of that most sapient Gazette. Nearly a fortnight before the appearance of this article, it is well known, we were in possession of the fact of the Combined Fleets having taken flight from the West-Indies, frightened at the very name of Lord Nelson, without having effected any important object; and several days previous to the tribes of the Corsican having treated at all of this subject, the defeat of the Combined Fleets was effected by a very inferior English force. What further is to happen to surprise us, a few days will probably determine; and we do not yet despair of some more of the enemy's ships finding their way to an English port.

A letter from the Hague, of the 28th ult. says:—"It has been suddenly determined to fit out an expedition at Helvoetsluys. The two ships of the line there, the *Chatham*, of 84 guns, and the *Pieter Paulus*, of 64, are accordingly to be got ready for sea as speedily as possible, for which purpose 600 ship carpenters are ordered to go from Amsterdam and Rotterdam to Helvoetsluys, where they will work night and day. Transports are also to be fitted out at the same time in the other ports of the Maese, to take on board the troops which will be embarked for this expedition, and which are estimated to amount to about 6000 men. The expedition will take out provisions for six months, from which circumstance it is supposed to be destined for the East-Indies. The French Commissary of the Marine, M. Gobier, is arrived here on account of these preparations. The naval preparations in the Texel likewise still continue; and it is believed that the squadron there will act in conjunction with the Flotilla from Boulogne. The greater part of the troops, however, that were intended for the Expedition from the Texel, will now go to Helvoetsluys.—Even on the approaching prayer day the workmen at Helvoetsluys will work from eight in the morning till six in the evening, to expedite the fitting out of the ships."

"The number of English ships of war cruising at the entrance of the Texel, and before Helvoetsluys, has lately been considerably increased. The Pensionary has returned from the journey he made to the Camp at Zeyfl. Two Batavian frigates and two French brigs have been got in readiness to sail at Helvoetsluys. Expresses pass almost daily between Amsterdam and Helvoetsluys. Many military equipages and artillery horses from Hanover, have passed through Brussels, on their way to Lille."

An expedition of considerable magnitude for foreign service is, we understand, ordered to be prepared in the port

of Helvoetsluys. It is to consist of a ship of 80 guns, one of 64, several frigates, some vessels armed in flute, and ten large transports. The number of troops to be embarked is estimated at 6000, and the expedition is to be victualled for six months. It is probably destined for the East-Indies; Twelve or fourteen of the Vienna bakers, who had baked light or bad bread, have been committed to prison, and some of them have been put in irons.

AUGUST 9.

The new invented life-boat, with which experiments have been making at Weymouth for some time past, is thus described:—She is buoyed up by eight cafes, four on each side, water tight, and independent of each other. When men are saved from a wreck and landed, the boat may return, and some tons of goods may be put in the cafes, if the sea will admit of its being taken out of the wrecked vessel. In a storm the boat is dismantled, and rowed by fourteen men, who are all fastened to their seats. As the sea breaks into the boat, it immediately runs out at her stern ports. It is impossible to sink her. She has fourteen life lines, the end of which float with cork, by which men that are washed off the wreck may hold, before they can be taken into the boat. She brings before the wind, or nearly so, upwards of one hundred men at a time from the wreck.

An order, we understand, was sent to all the out-ports some days ago, instructing our cruisers to detain all American vessels which have on board property not the produce of the United States. This order has been already acted upon, and several ships have been stopped. The American Consul, it is reported, has applied to government for an explanation. It has been ascertained, that the American ships have, for a length of time, been in the practice of going to the Isle of France, and the French ports in the West-Indies, to bring away produce, which they finally carried into French or Dutch ports. Their usual custom was to touch at an American port, in order to give the cargoes the appearance of being American property; but it is very well known that such cargoes were never landed.

AUGUST 14.

No intelligence has yet been received from Lord Nelson since he arrived off Cape St. Vincent on the 28th ult. nor has any information arrived of the course steered by the combined fleet after the 26th.

No intelligence has been received from the Squadron off Ferrol, of a later date than that which we have already communicated. Dispatches, however, are, we understand, hourly expected at the Admiralty from Lord Nelson.

Orders are said to have been issued to our cruisers in the West-Indies to capture all vessels from French ports, and that several Americans from Guadeloupe, Martinique, &c. had, in consequence, been sent into Tortola.

The late communications from Russia are such as to leave no doubt with our Government of the early efficient co-operation of Russia in the war. Immediately after the recall of M. Novosilzoff, and the departure of Prince Dolgoroucky for Vienna, another Special Messenger, General Tolstoy, was dispatched to the Austrian Court, to regulate with his Imperial Majesty to march of a Russian Army through his hereditary dominions.

Parliament, it is said, is to assemble in October.

We have received Paris Journals to the 30th ult. they present very little intelligence. Abuse of Russia seems now to be a part of the order of the day in the French Official Paper. We are concerned to find that the yellow fever has broken out at Corfu—at least so the *Moniteur* asserts.

Bonaparte, it appears, in the midst of his higher concerns, has not been unmindful of the unfortunate exiles from St. Domingo. A decree has been issued by him, declaring that every subject, formerly residing in that colony, who may have been exiled from his home and property by the brigands, shall be allowed from the national treasury 300 livres, per year, every married man 500, and for each child 100.—That this provision should have been made without an eye to the ultimate recovery of the property sacrificed by the brigands is incredible; and surely Bonaparte will not apply for remuneration to the blacks.

KING'S BENCH.

JAMES WILSON v. THOMAS BARBER.

Both the plaintiff and defendant are *Barbers* the one by profession, and the other by name: the occupation of the latter is that of a Sheriff's Officer.

Mr. Garrow, for the former, said, that this action was for a violent assault, which would demand the serious attention of his Lordship and the Jury. Notwithstanding the humble duties performed by the defendant, according to exterior appearance he was a gentleman of the *haut ton*, kept his hunter, and his mistresses in different situations, as the pleasures of the Court, or of the country, should gratify the whim of the hour. The plaintiff had the honor of decorating the head of the defendant, whom he was compelled to arrest, in order to obtain the just remuneration for the embellishment he conferred. The Sheriff's Officer, to whom the writ was entrusted, was very polite to this member of the fraternity, who, in consequence, was not subjected to the pains of confinement: that dog should eat dog, would be worse than canine brutality. Notwithstanding the civility the defendant experienced in this particular, his indignation was excited, and he said to a lad in his service in language more suited to his situation, than to his pretensions, "Kit, I am going to lick Wilson, and if you come, you will see a bit of fun." Having then provided himself with a baton, and his staff of office, he repaired to the house of the plaintiff. The latter was engaged, but he was called down, and the moment he appeared, he was accused of picking the pocket of the defendant of 4l. and while the accusation was vibrating in his ear, a blow drove him against the wall. It was in vain that the plaintiff expostulated; the defendant spit in his face, and repeated his indignities to the man of the comb. A person of the name of Sheffield entering at the time, expressed his surprise at the patience of the plaintiff, and entreated him to send for a Constable. A new object of resentment was now applied; the defendant produced his staff, and collaring Mr. Sheffield, convinced him that the Constable was much nearer than he expected.