

The SAINT JOHN GAZETTE.

VOL. 22.

SAINT JOHN, (New-Brunswick) MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 21, 1807.

No. 1112.

Printed and Published by JACOB S. MOTT, at the Sign of the Bible and Crown, No. 16, Prince William-Street—Where Subscriptions, Advertisements, &c. will be thankfully received.—Printing in general executed with dispatch.

IMPERIAL PARLIAMENT. HOUSE OF COMMONS, FRIDAY, JULY 10. NAVAL ABUSES.

LORD COCHRANE rose to make the motion, of which he had given notice. He said he had been induced to require several papers relative to the naval service, to be laid before the House, in order to shew how much many parts of that service were carried on, to the material injury of the country, and its bell interests. There were in the House many Members who were not conversant in nautical affairs, and who might not understand why such papers should be thought necessary to be produced. He hoped therefore he should be indulged with a few observations, explanatory of his reasons for making the motion, which he was about to submit to the consideration of the House. He did not desire any retrospect whatever, but wished to recommend it earnestly to His Majesty's Ministers, to take measures for preventing such things from occurring in future. He should first move, he said, "That there be laid before this House, copies of all letters and representations, made from the schooner *Felix*, to Capt. Keats, while commanding the squadron off Rochefort in 1805, respecting the state of that vessel, and the state of the seamen on board." He then requested the attention of the House to two letters he held in his hand, written by officers.—The first mentioned, that their flock was all out, and that they were praying for god-sends, which he interpreted, clean shirts and fresh provisions. The other, which is dated in November, eight weeks before she went down, stated, that the *Felix* failed worse and worse, and the writer feared they should never be able to bring her back to a British port. The other vessel that he alluded to was the *Atalante*, which came along-side of his Lordship's ship, and the Capt. told him, that he had applied for a survey to the Commander in Chief, but had been refused. His Officers had, indeed, thought it was unnecessary, though they did not know, that when the wind blew fresh, she made 20 inches of water an hour; and she was, in all respects, unfit for sea. On his arrival at Plymouth, his Lordship informed the Surveyor of the Yard there, that by the first news from Rochefort, they would hear that the *Atalante* was either gone down, or wrecked. In a very short time after she was wrecked, though he believed there were no men lost, or at least, very few. But he believed there were more men lost on the Rochefort station last winter, than would be sufficient to the talk of cutting out the squadron at that port. The next motion he should make, would be for "An Account of the number of ships and men kept off the port of Rochefort, specifying the time they had been out." The reason of his making this motion was, to shew the unnecessary cruelty that was used in the service. The *Plantagenet* had been eight months off Brest, except 12 days that she was wind-bound in the port of Plymouth, and there was during all that time an order that no officer or man should set his foot on land, which was a matter of very great cruelty; and in regard to the sick, there were many men on board who were in a fit state to be sent to the hospital, but were not allowed to be sent, by which many lives were lost, to the injury of the service. His third motion he said, was for "An Account of the fresh provisions sent to the squadron off Rochefort, from March 1, 1805, to March 1, 1807." His Lordship said, that Capt. Cooke, in his voyage round the world, had stated with exultation, that he had been 117 days at sea, and the scurvy had not affected his men. His Lordship said his ship had been only eight months at sea, and within four hours' sail of the coast, and yet they were most grievously afflicted with the scurvy. How did this arise? The answer was obvious; the old practice was, that when vessels, on the different stations, had expended their fresh provisions, they returned into port to re-victual. That practice prevailed also at present, but it was not so under a late Commander in Chief. Under him 5 days was considered sufficient to victual-out a ship, and not an officer or man was allowed to go on shore; and if the ship happened to be paid at the time, the men went to sea with their bank notes in their pockets, and he had seen them pull them out on the decks, and blow them overboard. He considered this order, that no officer or man should set his foot on shore, as most cruel, while, at the same time, the Commander in Chief was allowed to be on shore, nay, even to live in London; and he should not be surprised to see, in a short time, the place of future Commanders in Chief filled by a fool, or by some child. His next motion would be for "Copies of all such orders as had been issued, and acted on, from 1805 till 1807, in not sending such sick men to the hospital, as were incurable on board."—He considered those papers as necessary, to shew the cruelty with which the men were treated in this respect. He could say a great deal on this subject, but it was not necessary at present. He would only state that the men were prevented from going into the hospital, unless a survey was made on them by the surgeon of the Commander in Chief's ship; and in blowing weather, it was impossible this surgeon could go on board each ship for that purpose; in consequence of which the men's health was utterly destroyed, and in many instances amputation rendered necessary, whereas, if they had been sent to the hospital in time, the limbs might have been saved. However, it seemed economy in every thing was the order of the day, and for that purpose the medicines became very much limited. These things might seem trifling to many

who heard him; but when it was considered that the lives of so large a body of men ultimately depended on the care they met with from medical aid, it was of the utmost importance to the country. Many valuable remedies, which were indispensably necessary, were prevented from being used, from this grand system of saving. He had seen a ship going out of port with 70 men ill, who were not allowed to go into the hospital, and could not be cured at sea.—He saw one man who was diseased, and another ruptured, who were ducked, through fleet and snow, in going from the ship, and yet not allowed to go into the hospital. He acquitted all those Hon. Members who had for some time left the service, of any blame on this account, but thought it his duty to bring forward those facts. In the military hospitals, the men who had weak stomachs from long indisposition were allowed some little luxuries, which their stomachs could digest; but in the naval hospitals, where the men's stomachs had been debilitated with lemon juice, no such allowance was thought of; and even a dying Lieutenant, who wanted a little egg wine, was refused, and told, that eggs were unknown in the hospital. This system of economy had been carried so far, that lint for dressing forces and wounds was not allowed; and in his ship, if they had got into action, there was not half enough to have dressed the men's wounds, without the officers and men tearing up their own linen for that purpose. This lint had been cut off by a person unworthily employed by the late Administration as Commander in Chief. He did not know whether it was regular to mention his name in that House. [A cry from several parts of the House, name! name!] His Lordship said, he had no hesitation in naming Lord St. Vincent; and, in so cutting it off, he had sported with the lives of the men; and the country had thereby sustained a very heavy loss in the deaths of many brave fellows. Most of the ships, he said, were ill-manned from the cruelty of the service, and of course the men were liable to greater hardships; and, in proportion to the smallness of the number, were the more to be commended for the patience and forbearance with which they had borne those privations. He concluded by moving his first resolution.

SIR SAMUEL HOOD said, that as to the first topic of the Noble Lord respecting the loss of the *Atalante* and *Felix*, he must declare, that if any blame attached, it was not to the Noble Earl (St. Vincent) but to himself, or Commodore Keats. He believed, however, that it would be found, that no blame attached to any of them. The fact was, that the *Atalante* was lost in fine weather, not upon a lee shore. There was no pretence for saying that it was any thing in the condition of the ship which occasioned the loss. The case of the *Felix* was this: it had been sent as a flag of truce to Andro Bay for prisoners. It was not admitted to the port, but had been three days at anchor in the Roads, when a gale of wind came on, and drove her on a lee shore. This accident did not proceed from any defect in the vessel; if she had been new, it might have as well happened. As to the next charge, he must say, that he had himself commanded seven or eight ships of the line off the harbour of Rochefort, and he had never any thing to complain of with respect to supplies or necessities of any kind; neither did he hear of any complaints on board his fleet.

LORD COCHRANE observed, in explanation, that the bare circumstance of ships being kept at sea for eight months in the Channel, appeared to him a hardship on the inferior officers and sailors, and a cause of complaint.

ADMIRAL HARVEY said, that his Hon. Friend (Sir S. Hood) had explained these matters in so clear and officer-like manner, that he should have occasion to trouble the House but with a few observations. It was known that persons in inferior situations were sufficiently ready to make complaints, and he thought it must produce evil consequences to have officers of rank set them the example.

ADMIRAL MARKHAM declared, that he had never risen with greater regret than on the present occasion. He considered the present motion as one that stabbed at the very vitals of the navy, and its discipline. He expected to see the observations of his Lordship printed in every newspaper, and handed about the fleet. If he wished any particular enquiry into any thing which appeared to him a grievance, why did he not complain to the Admiralty? When did a Board of Admiralty ever refuse to examine complaints of grievances and abuses? What would be the situation of a Commander in Chief, if every officer who served under him could bring him to the bar of that House? He felt confident that, upon investigation, there would not appear to be any foundation for the charges which had been brought forward by the Noble Lord. Those who were on the spot, and had the best means of judging, had disproved the Noble Lord's statement. As to the keeping ships out too long, he could not avoid deploring the necessity of keeping them out so long, as to prevent the crews from enjoying their reasonable recreations on shore; but, if it was objected to on the ground of their health, he could not admit the charge by any means, as their health was always better at sea than in port. They went out of the port sickly, and returned in health. As to limejuice, he considered it a most valuable discovery. It was first given as a cure for the scurvy, and afterwards it was found out that it was a good preventive. The value of it in this respect was known to most Officers, both of the Army and Navy, who were

then in the House. As to the supply of the ships with fresh beef, more had been done in the Administration of Lord St. Vincent than under any former Administration.

The CHANCELLOR of the EXCHEQUER thought that after what had been now said, the House must see that there was no ground for agreeing to the motion of the Noble Lord. There was no question but that the House, at all times, felt deeply for the situation of the brave defenders of the country, and would be always ready, as far as lay in their power, to provide for their comforts. The person, however, who brought forward this complaint before the House, ought first to have stated that he had applied in the regular manner for redress, by a complaint to the Board of Admiralty. It appeared to him most evident, that all matters of regulation and discipline in the Navy should be first referred to the Board of Admiralty; and as this had not been done, he should vote against the inquiry that was proposed.

MR. WINDHAM conceived that it was hardly necessary for him to trouble the House at any length, after having heard the opinions of the gallant officers speaking with all the weight of their professional authority, and of their experience, upon this very subject. He perfectly agreed in what the Right Hon. Gentleman (the Chancellor of the Exchequer) had said, in laying down the general doctrine, and in marking the application of it. He thought, however, that he had not gone far enough, when he relied entirely on the ground of no previous application to the Admiralty. It might be possible that great abuses might exist, and it might be one of the greatest of the grievances, that no officer could venture to make a complaint, without risking all his professional hopes and prospects. This, however, did not appear to be the situation of the Noble Lord; and he did not seem influenced by any terror of that nature.—With respect to the *Atalante* and *Felix*, the House had only the Noble Lord's assertion for their being in a bad condition. The Noble Lord said, that he had predicted that they would be either foundered or wrecked, and so it happened. The Noble Lord was undoubtedly successful in his prediction; but from the circumstances which had been stated, it did not appear that he had any grounds for this prediction. The details of the different regulations of the Navy were certainly not matter for the House of Commons to judge of, but as the Commander in Chief being allowed to remain on shore, he would say, that every principle of humanity and gratitude would incline the country to husband the health of so valuable an individual, who had rendered them such important services.

MR. R. WARD said, that there was not a vestige of complaint against the Officers who commanded the *Atalante* and *Felix* nor against the general system of the illustrious Nobleman who was then at the head of the Admiralty.—The motion appeared to him to be a most unnecessary interference with the general discipline of the Navy.

SIR C. POLE declared, that no Naval Administration, since the reign of King William the Third, had ever done so much good to the service as the last Administration.

MR. SHERIDAN expressed great regret at hearing the Noble Lord again bring forward accusations, which he had supposed that he had completely refuted on the *Hullings*, where they were originally made.

LORD COCHRANE disclaimed any motives whatever on this occasion, except a regard to the good of the service. One of the Gentlemen who had spoken in reply to him belonged to the Admiralty in the late Administration.—As wrong motives had been imputed to him (Cochrane) he might advert to that circumstance, and also that the services of that Hon. Gentleman were better known on shore than afloat.—[A cry of "Order, Order," from several Members and of "Go on, Go on," from Adm. Markham.]

The SPEAKER observed, that when the Noble Lord said that improper motives were ascribed to him, it was a reproach to him (the Speaker) but he was satisfied in the judgment of the House whether he deserved it.

LORD COCHRANE proceeded to state that young officers had been appointed to the command of squadrons instead of Admirals, and that (if we heard correctly) the Noble Earl (St. Vincent) had given these appointments to his parliamentary friends, instead of old and distinguished officers.

[Mr. Ward here called to Order, and the Speaker said, that the last sentence exceeded all bounds of Order.]

His Lordship then proceeded to say, that an Hon. Gentleman behind him had remarked, that the loss of the *Atalante* sloop was as naturally accounted for as the loss of a ship which he (Cochrane) had commanded. His Lordship said, that he had applied for a Court Martial on that occasion, and would have got it, had it not been that the blame would have rested with the person who had sent him to sea in the situation in which the ship then was. His Lordship described the ship as having been in a most deplorable condition, the cannonades all loose, and not a cartridge ready, and had they met a single privateer with six guns, they must have been taken.—[The Speaker informed the Noble Lord, that he must confine himself to replying, and not introduce new facts.]—He was just going to apply this to what had been said by the Right Hon. Gentleman below (Mr. Sheridan.) With respect to the statement of the Hon. Gentleman behind, he had found, it seems, that the health of the seamen was increased by being at sea; but it