

THURSDAY, JANUARY 11, 1798

HAGUE, October 13.

The sitting of this day, the committee of marine communicated a letter addressed to them by vice-admiral de Winter, written yesterday, on board the British admiral Duncan, and received at 10 o'clock this morning by express. Of this affecting letter, the following is a summary—it caused the liveliest sensations of grief among the members of the assembly.

It is with the deepest regret that I address to you the present dispatch. Yesterday morning at 11 o'clock we discovered the English. We ranged in order of battle. I made the signal for forming the line as compact as possible, which, however, was very imperfectly obeyed.

At 12 o'clock the enemy attacked the extremity of our line. They soon afterwards undertook to force it. The action became general, and I found myself engaged with three of their ships. The Hercules took fire, and driving towards mine, I was under the necessity of changing my position, to avoid her, which obliged me to approach a fourth of my enemy's vessels, that of the admiral. I very soon lost all my rigging, and it became impracticable to continue my signals. Meanwhile the enemy took possession of the Wasenaar, Harlem, Brisson, Delft and Jupiter.

The smoke prevented me from distinctly observing the state of our affairs. The action was one of the briefest I have witnessed. After losing a considerable part of my crew, I endeavoured by a vigorous push, to force the five English ships which surrounded me, and to gain the coast, or join the remains of my fleet. At two o'clock all three of my masts went by the board.—After this I continued fighting half an hour when my flag was carried away, and the crew, reduced to half its number, ceased to fire. At 3 I was boarded by an English frigate, and conducted on board admiral Duncan. The Equality was not far from me—I observed her to cease firing, having lost all her rigging. Why she, as well as the Prissar, Delft and Harlem struck, I cannot determine. The Hercules was obliged to cut away her masts—she was on fire, but it was soon put out—she, however, drove into the British fleet, and was taken.

I am perfectly satisfied with my officers and crew, they fought with infinite bravery, as did also the enemy. The loss of men on both sides has been very great.

The British fleet which had put into Yarmouth, set sail again immediately on receiving news that we were at sea. It was joined by several vessels from Portsmouth and the Downs. Their force consisted of sixteen ships of the line, principally 74's.

This is the saddest day of my life—all our best manoeuvres, and all our courage were fruitless. The enemy esteem us as a prey, and our vigorous resistance. No action could have been more desperate and bloody.

I shall do myself the honour of transmitting you a more accurate detail by the next opportunity. I now only avail myself of the permission granted by admiral Duncan, to sign this letter.

I cannot give you any precise information respecting the other ships, I am told vice-admiral Reinter is slightly wounded, and a prisoner on board vice-admiral Onslow.

I cannot say how many English ships are damaged, but count only six in the way. I hope to be permitted to repair to Holland for my justification.

I am, Your obedient servant, DE WINTER.

The marine committee have this afternoon received official information that 23 of our ships have entered the Texel, and Helvoetsluis.

LONDON, October 17.

The price demanded by the Executive Directory for the liberation of Sir Sidney Smith, has been erroneously stated; it was not four hundred but thousand men that they have required. It is so untrue that Sir Sidney is on his parole, he is still in close confinement.

Our government, it is said, has decided to purchase the exchange of Sir Sidney Smith at the price put upon his liberty by the Directory of France. It would certainly be establishing a very bad precedent to accede to the unreasonable proposition of returning an officer of equal rank to the good men for any officer, whatever may be his merits.

A letter from Dublin, dated September 11, contains the following information.—After the firing of the 21st, the plenipotentiaries separated, observing that they were not to meet again. A total silence prevailed relative to whatever passed at the late conferences.—It is supposed that the parties would not have been so discreet, provided they had been enabled to communicate good and satisfactory intelligence. What renders us still more easy, is the sudden departure of general Meerfeldt, sent to the congress by the emperor. Such are our advices from Udina.

Those from Strasbourg are far more satisfactory. We shall insert them to the end, that our readers may compare them with the foregoing extracts. Our article is dated from Strasbourg, September 27, and is as follows.—An agent of the landgrave of Darmstadt, who resides at Colk, has just received a packet from the landgrave, in which he states to him, that the minister at Vienna had just transmitted to him an extraordinary courier, with the agreeable intelligence, that the emperor had just ratified the definitive articles of peace signed at Udina, and brought to him express by general Meerfeldt. This important intelligence has been proclaimed throughout the whole extent of the right bank of the Rhine, and has just been communicated by adjutant-general Polissart to the generals residing in this city.

YARMOUTH, October 10.

Six ships of the line that sailed lately with admiral lord Bridport from Torbay, are to convey the commercial fleets to a certain latitude of safety; after which they are ordered to proceed immediately to join admiral earl St. Vincent, on the Portugal station, whose fleet will then be of the same strength as before the lately arrived ships were detached home.

Every bay and inlet from the sea on the coast of Essex, Norfolk, Suffolk, &c. are now completely guarded by gun boats, and signal towers, with proper officers in them night and day, are erected all along the north and east coast, to give the earliest advice of any hostile approach. When the weather is clear by day, flags are hoisted in various situations and colours; in case of fog signal guns are substituted. By night, reflecting lights are made use of, so that the whole coast may be alarmed for the space of 30 or 40 leagues in the course of half an hour.

On Wednesday a board was held at the admiralty for the admission of stamens and marines into Greenwich Hospital. A greater number of wounded men were never known to attend. Three hundred and sixty applications were made most of which were admitted.

EDINBURGH, October 7.

The following letter was this morning received by the right honourable the lord provost.

N. Shields, October 6, 1797.

My Lord,

For the information of the commander of any of his majesty's ships with you, and the merchants of your place, we think it our duty to acquaint you, that we just now received information, by a vessel arriving this morning, that the last evening passed a large French frigate off the Texel, who had in her company five or six merchant ships which she had captured; and we are sorry to add one of our armed ships, which we suppose to be the Gally, captain Wolfe, as she was cruising off here, and a heavy cannonade was distinctly heard at Suberland, from 6 to 10 o'clock yesterday morning; so that we have too much reason to fear the account true. The frigate is described as a very large one, said to mount 36 guns at least.

As there is every reason to suppose her stay will be short on this, and that Bergen is most likely to be her rendezvous for the present we trust, if there are any of his majesty's ships in the Firth, there may be a great probability of intercepting them; it is but too likely they will use the Gally as a decoy to our merchant ships, of which they should be particularly on their guard; she is a fair bark, black sails; and her bowsprit flying very fast, with royal top, top gallant masts, and pole mizzen top masts, and is a frigate tiered ship, with bulwarks. We remain, in great haste, Your Obedient servant, WM. CLARK, and SON.

DUBLIN, October 7.

For the two last days the citizens of Dublin have been surprised by a very extraordinary report, which upon inquiry we believe to be fully supported by fact. The substance of the report we now give.

That a general in the French service, named Clarke, the brother-in-law and co-adjutor of Buonaparte, and by which an Irishman, had been forty hours in the last week in this city, had held conferences with the leaders of the United Irishmen, and having obtained his information and given directions, had embarked in a fishing smack from Killybegs on Sunday morning last.

That he could have no other purpose than the arrangement of a French invasion, we have no doubt, and when our readers have learned that there is a strong opinion to believe that he had been for some time in the north of Ireland, they will naturally join in our opinion.

Our readers will recollect, that this general Clarke was announced in the French papers to have been an Italian army forty times since on his way to Vienna, to

negotiate with the emperor; there has been no negotiation at Vienna, the treaty is under discussion at Udina; so that this journey has been obviously fabricated to conceal his real destination.

HALIFAX, November 22.

Loss of the British frigate La Tribune.

As a melancholy contrast to the intelligence from Europe, we are impelled, with the utmost distress, to state the dreadful fate of his majesty's ship Tribune, of 44 guns, commanded by captain Barker. This ship, coming into the harbour on Thursday last, struck on the shoals off Thrumcap. The tide being somewhat ebb'd, every exertion to relieve her proved ineffectual, and she remained there until near eleven the same night, previous to which time it blew a violent heavy gale, nearly E. S. E. The guns, except one for signals, and every other weighty article, being thrown overboard, the ship thus relieved, floated a little before high water when the gale blew strongest, her rudder having been knocked off—the ship leaking excessively, and every thing in the greatest confusion, all attempts to gain the harbour were found impracticable—at this dreadful moment, lieutenants Campbell and North, of the frigates, who had been on board to offer their assistance, quitted the ship, intending to stand under her lee and wait the event; but the sea ran too high to admit of it. The ship drifted directly before the wind until within a small distance of the craggy shore just below Herring-Cove, where she foundered—and terrible to relate (except eleven seamen and marines, and one petty-officer) every soul on board have perished!

The number of men belonging to the ship is stated to have been upwards of 240—exclusive of which, about 16 non-commissioned officers and privates of the R. N. S. reg.—Mr. Rackum of the navy yard—and (we mention with peculiar regret) lieutenant James, of the N. S. regiment, an amiable and deserving young officer, who had gone on board from motives of humanity, met the same fate.

La Tribune came out with the Quebec convoy—she is said to have been a most beautiful frigate, and was lately captured by the Unicorn, captain Williams, June 7, 1796.

BOSTON, December 15.

LA FAYETTE.

We are happy to announce the safe arrival of America's noble friend at Hamburg, in October last, where he was escorted by the captains of American vessels lying there—and who, two days after, gave him an elegant entertainment. As he was so full for Philadelphia, in the John, two days after captain Hall, who arrived here yesterday, we may daily expect to hear of his landing in the United States. No event will give greater joy to the patriot at Mount Vernon than to behold his adopted son in this land of freedom.

NEW YORK, December 25.

From the New York Gazette.

LATEST FROM FRANCE.

The various and contradictory reports at the coffee-house, on Saturday evening, are condensed into the following, which are direct from captain Peterfon.

Captain Peterfon, of the brig Eliza, of Philadelphia, arrived here on Saturday, from Bourdeaux, which place he left on the 26th of October, and the month of the year the first of November.

On the 29th of October, he went on shore at a small town, called Royan, on the north side of the river, for the purpose of laying in board for the voyage; at this place he saw several French vessels who had that day arrived from the West-Indies, and were then embarking in a small vessel for Bourdeaux. One of the sailors, who belonged to Royan, and whose wife lived there, informed captain Peterfon, that the state of affairs was very disagreeable.

On the 31st of October, he was informed by a French vessel, that the French Directory had issued a proclamation offering their frigates to such merchants as thought proper to accept of them; they allowed government one third of the price.

This statement, we think, may be depended on; for these reasons, captain Peterfon speaks the French language, appears to be an intelligent man, and was known to be the bearer of NEWS from the West-Indies. This is evinced from the circumstance of his departing his vessel several hours after he was ready for the arrival of the mail from Paris, which he did an expedition of receiving intelligence from thence. Mr. Fenwick, our consul at Bourdeaux, told captain Peterfon that he did not think it worth his while to wait longer.—The captain then requested the consul to favour him with what news he was in possession of, to which he replied, that he knew no more.

It is to be observed, that this general Clarke was announced in the French papers to have been an Italian army forty times since on his way to Vienna, to close from him.