

Charles Hardy, on the 21st instant, who has been drove to the westward by the strong easterly winds, and, at present, the British fleet is not to be heard of. Lieutenant Cobb, of his majesty's cutter, the True Briton, arrived here yesterday with dispatches from Sir Hyde Parker, captain of his majesty's ship the Phoenix, stationed at Guernsey, to admiral Sir Thomas Pyc. Lieutenant Cobb says, that Sir Hyde Parker, with the ships under his command, were gone to make an attempt upon Cherbourg.

Extract of a letter from Folkestone, Aug. 27.

"On Tuesday last was discovered cruising off Dunghill Neck, and Hythe Bay, very near the shore, two large French cutter privateers of 25 guns each, with upwards of 130 seamen and 40 soldiers on board each of them; about four o'clock in the afternoon they came within a small distance of our town, giving chase to a sloop from Ireland, bound to London, with butter, beef, &c. valued at 3000l. which they must inevitably have taken, had not lieutenant Turner, of the impress service at this place, sent his boat with part of his gang to the assistance of the sloop, and got her safe under the protection of Sangate castle; when the impress boat got on board the sloop, she was not more than one mile from the privateers, and had only three hands before on board to work her. Alarm guns from Sangate castle and Folkestone battery were fired, and expresses immediately sent to Dover, and the Downs; but as the frigates were sailed before from the Downs, and the embargo locked up all our privateers, nothing could be got sufficient to go after them; at the same time there were in Dover harbour not less than ten sail of very fine privateers of 18 and 20 guns each, and the sailors which belong to them almost mad at being hindered going to take the French privateers, which to every spectator appeared very easy to have been done, as they could have easily cut them off from the French land.

"On the 13th instant in the morning, the same two French privateers, were discovered again on our coast, with two others, a ship and a sloop sail vessel, in chase of an English cutter, which at last they drove, with seven colliers, on shore, near Rye, and carried off with them two vessels, which they took that day.

"There is a great murmuring all along our coast, occasioned by our privateers being locked up, and hindered from doing that service they otherwise would, by keeping the Channel clear of French vessels, and protecting our merchant ships; if government does not relieve our privateers, the Channel will soon be filled with French; all our coast at this time is in great fear and dread, expecting the French privateers will do some mischief on shore."

A letter received by the last Lisbon packet, at a principal house in Dublin, gives intelligence, that the same privateer of that port has taken and carried into Messina, in Sicily, a French homeward bound Turkey ship, computed to be worth between 30,000l. and 40,000l. sterling.

Advice is received from Falmouth, by an express this morning that a large fleet of men of war passed by there last Friday, which was supposed to be our grand fleet under the command of Sir Charles Hardy, and that they were steering towards Plymouth.

Yesterday noon an express arrived at the admiralty, from Falmouth, which was landed there from a cutter, the purport of which is said to be, that the combined fleets were seen on the 26th, in the morning, between Ushant and the Lizard.

They write from Madrid, that fresh orders have been issued for recruiting the army from every district with the utmost dispatch. It is added the Spaniards are fitting out a squadron of men of war and transports in their several sea ports, which are to rendezvous at Cadiz the 1st of September, where they are to take on board a large body of troops, and sail immediately on some secret expedition.

Extract of a letter from Bristol, Aug. 25.

"The Thetis frigate arrived in our road about one o'clock this afternoon; she came with an express from Lisbon, which was sent off immediately for London. By her we learn, that the Hussar and Panther frigates had fallen in with a fleet of Spanish ships, consisting of 20 sail, bound to Cadiz, under the convoy of a xebec; that they made a prize of the xebec, and 12 sail of the merchantmen, and drove the other eight on shore, and destroyed them. She also brings an account, that the Spaniards have absolutely invested Gibraltar both by sea and land; their troops are said to amount to 30,000, and their force by sea also is very formidable; yet the garrison is so well fortified and stored with provisions that they will be able to stand a very long siege, if not totally defeat the attempts of the enemy."

Extract of a letter from Hague, Aug. 24.

"We have accounts from Lisbon, that that court is determined to observe the strict neutrality in the differences between Spain, France, and England; for which end, as soon as the queen heard Spain had declared war against England, her majesty immediately published an ordinance, permitting the vessels of all nations, without distinction, freely to enter any ports of her dominions, either to trade or repair any damages they may have received by storms or otherwise. How the king of Spain will take this conduct time will show.

"The states at their last meeting only deliberated upon the old story of granting convoys, which was opposed point-blank by the province of Zealand, whilst those of Gelderland, Utrecht, Friesland, Overijssel, and Groningen, declared in their answers to the circular letter from the states of Holland, that they were not against giving their consent to the convoy, provided an augmentation was made in the land forces of the republic, which is at present much talked of. As to the giving an answer to Sir Joseph Yorke's memorial that is again put off to next week."

Gibraltar is blocked up only by two ships of the line from Carthage, three frigates, some xebecs, and armed vessels; so contemptible are we become in the Mediterranean!

Every manoeuvre of the admiralty more and more proves, that it was a settled design that Sir Charles Hardy should not meet the combined fleets of France and Spain.—When this national cowardice is known to our enemies, what must Englishmen expect, but to be treated like all cowards—first kicked—and then despised.

The last accounts from Sir Charles Hardy, mention his being very ill. The truth of it is, that the uneasiness of his mind in being made the dupe of a few designing men, has combined with a feverish fit of the gout, as to render the life of this honest, well meaning seaman, hazardous.

A letter received this morning from Dover says, that since last Friday morning no less than six dispatches have been sent from thence, to go by the way of Flushing to Paris; and that yesterday morning, a Frenchman of distinction landed there from Calais. He came over in a new built yacht, and set out immediately for London. The yacht returned, and not one of the men came on shore.

Sept. 2. Last night an express arrived at the admiralty with an account of the safe arrival of Sir Charles Hardy, and all his fleet, at Plymouth; so that the combined fleets now ride triumphantly masters of the sea, and the whole commerce of this country is left at their mercy.

All the private letters from the West-Indies, agree in the constant depredations committed by the French frigates and cruisers on their trade, even in sight of the English fleet, which is obliged to watch d'Estaing, and cannot spare frigates or other vessels to protect them. The islands are in daily alarm, and a grand attack on Jamaica by the French and Spaniards, is esteemed an unavoidable event. So much for our superiority in the West-Indies!

A strong convoy is to sail from l'Orient this month, for the use of France, on board of which are to be embarked the regiments of Austrais, de la Sarre, and a battalion of marines.

The committee of secrecy sat at the India-House on Saturday last (a very unusual circumstance) to consider of sending dispatches to apprise the twelve homeward bound East-Indiamen, expected this month under convoy of the Warwick of 50 guns, of the danger they are in, from the certain intelligence received, that the Spaniards detached four ships of the line, and three frigates, from the Cadiz squadron, in June last, to cruise off the Western Isles, to intercept them. The cargoes of these twelve Indiamen are worth at least three millions sterling.—So much for lord Sandwich's superiority at sea, and his protection of our commerce! yet is he a great favourite, and powerful patron at the India-House.

A very valuable convoy sailed from Brest on the 16th of last month for the combined fleets, and which may serve to shew that they do not intend soon returning into port, consisting of one thousand ton of water, a vast quantity of beef, mutton, poultry, &c. &c. Three frigates and a transport arrived there likewise on that day, from the grand fleet, with the sick on board, which amounted in the whole to no more than four hundred, which, considering the numerous manning of the French ships, proves that they must in general be uncommonly healthy.

Don Antonio d'Arce, who was so consistently and circumstantially asserted to have been degraded, for refusing to obey count d'Orville's, is actually in his command with the combined fleets; his flag is on board the St. Vincent, of 80 guns, and commands the fourth division, which forms the White Squadron.

The capitulation of St. Vincent is in the utmost importance to the unfortunate islanders, who have property in that island. Let any partial man compare the paltry, pettifoggish detail of taking a few small craft in the court of zette of Tuesday, with the innumerable wrecks and concealments of the most important events both to the public, and to private persons, and say whether this is not a government of private inhumanity and public iniquity, a base and contemptible system of expedients and patchwork, which deserves not the support, but the contempt, the indignation, the resentment of a betrayed and injured country?

Nineteen first and second rates, will be ready for sea from the different dock yards of France by the first of January next. This fact, let lord Sandwich look to it.

Administration has set on foot a subscription in several parts of the kingdom, for the moral and intellectual propagation of the gospel in America. There is something extremely laughable in this ministerial manoeuvre. It would have us suppose, that our shameful defeats in America, have been so many glorious victories; and that we are still in possession of a country, which folly, treachery, and corruption, have lost for ever to the kingdom. The truth is, America is no longer ours, and the subscriptions raised under the pretence of their being appropriated to the purpose of propagating the gospel, are to be expended amongst those *reverend worthies* in America, that have espoused England in her unjust claim on that country. The trap is artfully laid; but few, it is hoped, will be caught in it. Beat and disgraced abroad, and unable to defend ourselves at home, we talk of propagating the gospel, in a country from whence we are driven with loss and with shame! but according to lord North's maxim on a late parliamentary discussion of the naval expenditures, "money raised by government for one purpose, may be applied to any other whatsoever." And thus the *missionary clergy* in America, are to be enriched out of the pockets of those whom they have endeavoured to enslave. This is likewise another instance of the wisdom and confidence of the present administration. With the sword in one hand, and the gospel in the other, a whole nation is to be destroyed and saved at the same time!

We hear that his royal highness the duke of Cumberland solicited for a command in the present fleet, but was refused—under the old compliment, that it was too much to risk the *princes* of the blood at one time.

PLYMOUTH, Aug. 21. The French and Spanish fleets appeared off Plymouth on Tuesday morning. From the top of Mount Edgemoor they were clearly perceived, and the excessive prospect from this height drew innumerable crowds from the town towards it. The signal of an enemy being in sight was hoisted on Martello Tower. Expresses were sent off to the neighbouring towns, to solicit the troops; sailors were planted at the great guns on the works; and the proper persons went to cartridge making, for, through the neglect of some department, there was found to be no more than two rounds of cartridges made up in the garrison. While these things were doing, the inhabitants of the town were busied, agreeable to the proclamation, in removing every thing that could be of any value to the enemy. The proclamation mentions only cattle, stores, and provisions, but they very prudently removed every removeable article of their possession.

About two o'clock the same day, a firing was seen in the offing, and from Mount Edgemoor it was clearly perceived, that two French frigates had engaged an English ship, which, from every circumstance, was determined to be the Admiral of 64 guns.

On Wednesday the easterly wind was so strong that the French fleet were blown down the Channel out of sight; on Thursday morning they were again seen; on Friday they were out of sight again.

On this day numbers of troops arrived from different places, and they have encamped along the coast on lord Edgemoor's ground. The French prisoners, to the amount of twelve hundred, are to be sent from hence to-morrow to the city of Exeter, the gentlemen of that place having come to the resolution to associate themselves as a guard over them. The gentlemen of Bristol have done the same, and both these towns have sent their militia hither. We have now 7000 troops in Plymouth, and many gentlemen volunteers from London, and all quarters of the country hourly throng in. I have only to add, that to-day being lazy, we have seen nothing of the French fleet, but we have intelligence by express, that Sir Charles Hardy and the fleet have beat against the wind round the Lizard, and is now off Falmouth.

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