

JOHN ROSS

MEMOIRS AND
CORRESPONDENCE OF
ADMIRAL LORD DE
SAUMAREZ, VOL. I

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Sir John Ross

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of Admiral Lord

de Saumarez, Vol. I

ADVERTISEMENT

In perusing the following Memoir, the reader must not be surprised if he finds that the accounts of the several battles in which the illustrious Saumarez was engaged, differ in some degree from those previously given to the public. Every circumstance connected with them has been carefully examined, and whatever statements are now advanced can be borne out by documentary evidence. The career of Saumarez was a long and eventful one: he entered the Navy while the nation was at peace; he subsequently served during the American War of independence, and throughout the late continental war, in both of which he was in more engagements with the enemy than any other officer. He was the last of the heroes of the 12th of April 1782.

THE LIFE OF LORD DE SAUMAREZ

CHAPTER I

Genealogy of the family of Saumarez.—Curious Record.—Branches of the late family.—Marriage of the late Lord de Saumarez.

Admiral the Right Honourable James Lord de Saumarez, of Guernsey, was born, on the 11th March 1757, in the parish of St. Peter-Port, the principal town of that romantic island. The family, whose original name was *De Sausmarez*, is of Norman extraction, and of great antiquity in the island of Guernsey, where their lineage can be traced almost to the Norman conquest.

Their remote ancestor received from the Dukes of Normandy a fief of the district of Jerbourg, and was appointed hereditary captain (or chatelain) of the castle of that name, which lies within the limits of the fief, and is situated in the parish of St. Martin.

Among the records of the island, we find the following interesting particulars:—In the twenty-seventh year of the reign of Edward the First, at a court of chief pleas held at Guernsey, in the presence of the judges of assize, Matthew de Sausmarez made homage for his fief; which appears to have

been acknowledged by an act of Edward the Second in the year 1313: and in the reign of Edward the Third, in the year 1331, an application was made by Matthew de Sausmarez for a confirmation of his rights and prerogatives, as formerly enjoyed by his ancestors.

On receipt of this petition, his Majesty sent an order to John de Roches, guardian of the Channel islands, to make a perquisition thereon; authorising him to give to it his royal assent if not found to be prejudicial to the rights of the Crown or the privileges of the inhabitants, who had, by consent of his Majesty's father, fortified the castle of Jerbourg as a place of retreat and protection, as also for the security of their effects in case of invasion by the enemy.

In pursuance of his Majesty's order, the guardian appointed twelve of the most respectable inhabitants of the island to be examined before the bailiff or chief magistrate, who declared upon oath that the predecessors of Matthew de Sausmarez held that appointment from the Crown, with sundry appurtenances and privileges, which, in consideration of their services as hereditary keepers of the castle, had always been, and ought to be, inseparable from the fief of Jerbourg; and they further deposed, that these were not in any respect detrimental to the prerogative of the Crown, or injurious to the rights of the inhabitants, who still retained the advantage and privilege of retreating into the castle, with their effects, in every emergency.

The following curious and interesting fact, as attached to this ancient fief, has been also recorded in a Guernsey periodical:

"Whenever the lord had occasion to go to Jersey, his tenants were obliged to convey him thither, for which they received a gratuity of *three sous*, or a dinner; but they were not obliged to bring him back." And this exemption may be thus explained:—The lord, or captain of Jerbourg, in those days held a fief in Jersey, called by the same name, which no longer belongs to the De Saumarez family; but formerly, when it was possessed by the same individual, the same rights and privileges were attached, so that when the affairs of the lord called him to Jersey, he was conducted to that island by his Guernsey tenants, and brought back by those of Jersey.

It is indeed certain, that, during many years after the Norman conquest, several gentlemen possessed estates in both islands, more or less considerable in one than in the other. The fief of Jerbourg remained in the family of De Saumarez till about the year 1555, when it became the property of Mr. John Andros, in right of Judith de Saumarez: but it has since reverted to the descendants of the old family, and belonged to Thomas de Saumarez, his Majesty's late attorney-general in the island of Guernsey, who died lately at a very advanced age,—the father of twenty-eight children!

The genealogy of the family between the year 1481, and the birth of the grandfather of the late Lord de Saumarez on the 4th June 1635, will be found in the Addenda, as also that of the subsequent members of the family who are not mentioned here; but, in proceeding, we cannot pass over the names of Captains

Philip and Thomas Saumarez, uncles of the late lord, who were two of the bravest and most meritorious officers of their time. The former, who was first lieutenant with Commodore Anson, afterwards commanded the Nottingham, sixty-four, captured the French seventy-four, Mars, and was killed in action 1747;¹ and the latter, when in command of the Antelope, of fifty guns, captured the French sixty-four, Belliqueux, in the following extraordinary manner:

In the month of November 1758, Captain Saumarez was stationed in the Bristol Channel for the protection of the trade, and, the wind blowing strong from the westward, had anchored his ship, the Antelope, of fifty guns and three hundred and fifty men, in King Road; and there being little probability of the appearance of an enemy under such circumstances, he had repaired to Bristol to partake of the hospitality of his friends in that prosperous city. While sitting at dinner, an express came from Barnstaple to inform him that a large ship, supposed to be an enemy, had anchored under Lundy Island.

Captain Saumarez immediately repaired on board his ship, weighed anchor, and, notwithstanding the contrary wind and fresh gale, he beat down the channel, and in the morning saw her at anchor off Ilfracombe. On discovering the Antelope, the enemy weighed and stood towards her, and, on coming near, hoisted French colours and seemed prepared to engage. As soon as the Antelope came within gun-shot, she opened her fire, when

¹ See Addenda.

the Frenchman immediately hauled down his colours without returning a shot. Captain Saumarez now sent his boat with the first lieutenant to know if she had surrendered; but finding that the boat did not return, he bore down under her stern, and asked if they had struck. The answer was in the affirmative, and she was immediately taken possession of. She proved to be the *Belliqueux*, of sixty-four guns and five hundred men.

When the captain came on board the *Antelope*, and found that he had surrendered to a ship so much inferior in force, both in men and weight of metal, his chagrin and mortification knew no bounds. He exclaimed that he had been deceived, and actually proposed to Captain Saumarez that he should allow him to return to his ship, and that he would fight him fairly; to which the English captain replied that he must keep possession now; that he had obtained it, but he had no objection to his going back to France and getting another ship of the same kind to try the fortune of war. He conducted his prize back to King Road, and returned to Bristol with his French guest to enjoy the hospitality and hearty welcome of his friends, after an absence of only eighteen hours!

Matthew de Saumarez, father of Lord de Saumarez, being brought up to the medical profession, arrived at considerable practice and high respectability. He was remarkable for his urbanity of manners and hospitality, particularly to strangers. He married, first, Susannah, daughter of Thomas Dumaesq, Esq. of Jersey, and by her had Susannah (an only child), who married

Henry Brock, Esq. of Guernsey: his second wife was Carteret, daughter of James Le Marchant, Esq. of Guernsey, and by her he had a numerous family, who are brothers and sisters of the late lord.²

The family of De Sausmarez, a branch of which changed the spelling of the name to Saumarez about the year 1700, was not only one of the most ancient and respectable, but the members of it successively held the highest situations, and were connected with the first families residing in the island of Guernsey, which has always been distinguished for its loyalty and patriotism: indeed, it has not only produced several of our bravest and greatest warriors, but its inhabitants have ever manifested themselves to be proof against every attempt to seduce them from their allegiance. The opinions which have been entertained unfavourable to this fact,—arising no doubt from the proximity of the island to the coast of France, and the general use of the French language, but, most of all, from its having at one time been infested by adventurers,—are totally without foundation.

Having been many years stationed at this island, we have witnessed the loyalty and intrepidity of the natives: and could give several instances where the Guernsey pilot was the *first* to board the enemy.

Lord de Saumarez was married at Guernsey, on the 27th October 1788, to Martha, only daughter and heiress of Thomas Le Marchant, Esq. by marriage with Miss Mary Dobrée, two

² See Addenda.

of the most ancient and respectable families in the island. This marriage was the consequence of a long and mutual attachment: it need scarcely be added, that it completed the happiness of both. They became the parents of eight children, whose biography will be found in the Appendix.

CHAPTER II

1767 to 1778

Commencement of his Career.—His Education.—Visit of the Duke of Gloucester to Guernsey.—Saumarez decides for the Navy.—Is put on the Soleby's books.—School at London.—Embarks in the Montreal.—Winchelsea, Pembroke, Levant.—Smyrna.—Returns home.—Passes for Lieutenant.—Embarks in the Bristol.—Proposal to leave the Navy.—Attack on Fort Sullivan.—Gallant Conduct.—Is made Lieutenant.—Bristol, Chatham, Lady Parker.—Commands the Spitfire.—Rhode Island.—Many Engagements.—War with France.—Appearance of the French Fleet under D'Estaing.—Spitfire burnt.—Appearance of Lord Howe.

The illustrious admiral, of whose ancestors a biographical sketch has been briefly given in the preceding chapter, and in the Addenda to this work, and whose glorious career is the subject of this record, passed from the first rudiments of learning, under a dame, to the more manly tuition of Elizabeth College, in Guernsey, where his brother, fifteen months his senior, was receiving his education.

Although he always said that his brother was a much better

scholar in both Latin and Greek than himself, his taste for poetry, and his discrimination in that refined branch of literature, must have appeared at a very early age, as, when he was only seven or eight years old, he surprised his mother by reciting to her several lines from the first pages of Milton's *Paradise Lost*, which he had learnt of his own accord,—a foretaste of the gratification which he derived through life in reading that noble poem. His mother was so delighted with this unexpected discovery of his taste, that she could not forbear making it known to her friends; especially to a literary gentleman of her acquaintance, who sent young Saumarez a present of the *Golden Verses of Pythagoras*, which he also committed to memory, and retained throughout his life.

But the great sensibility of his heart was most apparent in his attachment to all his relations: their pleasures and their pains were always *his*; and it is therefore not surprising that he was a favourite with them all. In those days, Guernsey was, as it were, a large family; and the society of the upper classes was linked in a small, but a select and happy, circle, interested in each other's welfare. The communication with England not being, as now, kept up by regular packets, the arrival of a stranger was an event of some importance, and mostly occurred through the visits of the king's ships going on foreign stations, which put into Guernsey for wines and other stores: on these occasions the captains and officers were constant guests at the hospitable mansion of our hero's father, and it was usually the province of young Saumarez

to look out for and report their appearance.

In July 1767, this little community was surprised by an occurrence which to this day is related among the events of "olden times," as having made a great, and certainly a lasting impression. His royal highness the Duke of Gloucester, on his return from a tour in France, anchored in Guernsey roads. At two in the morning, the hostess of the only inn in the town was awakened by a call that the Duke of Gloucester had landed, and was coming there: not supposing this possible, she for a long time refused to rise; but, being at length convinced, she directed the party to the house of the lieutenant-governor, who was as incredulous as the good woman of the Ship Inn.

At last he appeared at the window in his dressing-gown and *bonnet de nuit*, and finding whom he was called upon to receive, he exclaimed, in the trepidation of the moment,—"My house is not fit for the duke; go to my friend, Doctor Saumarez." There at last his royal highness found entrance, and a hearty welcome; but it may be conjectured that no little surprise and bustle spread through the house at the unexpected arrival at such an hour of the illustrious guest. The blue damask room was, however, soon prepared, with other apartments for the aides-de camp, Sir Henry Clinton and another.

Young Saumarez and his brother were sent off, as soon as the sun rose, to inform their uncle the attorney-general, who resided some distance from the town, that the royal visitor had arrived. On their return the streets were decorated with crowns,

festoons, and garlands of flowers, which had risen as from the wand of a magician; the bells were ringing, the populace were in holiday suits, and the whole effect was so animated, that the more splendid scenes of after-life never erased it from the mind of Saumarez.

The duke, on rising, was surprised at the quick display of loyalty he beheld, and expressed himself much gratified at the proofs he received of respect and attachment which these faithful islanders evinced in his person towards the king and the royal family. His royal highness condescended to honour a ball in the evening; and often did young Saumarez hear his aunt (a sister of his mother, married to Major Brabazon of the 65th regiment,) relate her having opened the ball in a minuet with his royal highness.

Young Saumarez had long and constantly cherished a decided predilection for the navy. Accustomed as he had been from childhood to hear of the fame which his valiant uncles, Captains Philip and Thomas Saumarez, had acquired, his mind was early inspired with a desire to tread in their path, and to acquire for himself a name which might emulate theirs. His eldest brother was already in the navy; but his father having six sons, when he found that James had evinced such a desire for the sea, and having connexions in the service, probably considered that he could not place another more advantageously than in a profession which had already afforded an honourable and glorious career to two of his family. Accordingly he accepted the offer of Captain

Lucius O'Bryen, of his majesty's ship *Soleby*, who entered his name on the books of that ship on the 20th September 1767 as volunteer, where it remained until the 3rd of June 1770, having been there two years and nine months. During this time, however, he never joined the ship, but was for a part of it at a school in the vicinity of London, which had been recommended to his father by a naval friend, who appears to have been ill qualified to make the selection, if we may judge from the amusing account which Saumarez gave in after-life of his acquirements in that seminary. Fortunately, as he said, when he had been there ten months, his father being in London, sent for him, and to his great joy took him home, and with this portion of education he was launched into the world; as a few months after he went to Portsmouth to join the *Montreal*, Captain Alms, who had been a friend of his uncles, and who had visited his father at Guernsey.

On the 9th of August 1769, the ship sailed for the Mediterranean. Great pains were taken by the captain to improve the talents of young Saumarez, which soon became apparent: but the commodore being obliged to return home on account of ill health, he placed him in the *Winchelsea*; and we find that he went on board the *Pembroke*, bearing the broad pendant of Commodore Proby, and commanded by Captain Durell, who was a relative of the family, on the 14th August 1770, and joined the former ship on the 28th September following.

Nature happily had endowed young Saumarez with talents, and qualities of mind and heart, which in a great measure

repaired the want of a regular and more enlarged education: a sound judgment and quick sensibility soon led him to perceive his deficiency in acquired knowledge; and he was inspired with a laudable ambition, to remedy it by every exertion the feeble means within his reach could accomplish. When, indeed, it is considered that only a few volumes of the Spectator and Idler, with some stray volumes of the Roman History, composed his little library, it may justly be inferred that it was no ordinary capacity or moderate application which could form a character such as was manifested by him.

Frigates, in those days, had neither chaplains nor schoolmasters; and the "young gentlemen," when off duty, were left to spend their time as they thought fit. The midshipmen of the present day can have but a faint idea of the hardships and privations of a naval aspirant's life at the period Saumarez entered the service. Biscuits with insects, and tainted meat, was the usual fare when at sea at their mess-table; and none would have thought of procuring such *luxuries* as are now indispensable *necessaries* to their successors in the service. While there is great cause to rejoice in the change which has taken place, it should not prevent the expression of just and well-founded regret that the amelioration has spread to the opposite extreme; the placing a son in the navy being now a heavy tax instead of a relief, which we know is felt severely by old naval officers on half-pay, who naturally wish to employ a son in the service to which they belong.

With grateful remembrance, Saumarez has often been heard to say, that, on his departure from home, his affectionate father put a purse containing fifteen guineas in his hand; observing that, as he knew he had a large family, he trusted that he would use it with economy, but that when he wanted more he might draw on his banker. So strictly, however, did he fulfil this recommendation, that his father said, the sight of his drafts gave him pleasure.

His first journal is of the *Winchelsea*, Captain Samuel Cranston Goodall, and commences on the 8th November 1770, at which time he was first rated a midshipman: he remained in that ship until the 14th February 1772. During these seventeen months he gained a valuable friend in Captain Goodall, whose regard he preserved to the end of his life. Saumarez had constant access to his cabin: he allowed him to write there, and make extracts from the best authors in his possession, which was of great service in improving his acquaintance with modern literature. This ship had been cruising in the Mediterranean, and visited most of the interesting ports there; and, in February 1772, the *Winchelsea* was ordered to England,—an account joyfully hailed by all on board, but by none more sincerely than by Mr. Saumarez, whose heart panted to see his dearest friends. What, then, must have been his feelings, on the arrival of the *Levant* to relieve the *Winchelsea*, when he was sent for by Captain Goodall, and apprised that Captain Thompson would receive him?—and as it was of importance that he should finish his time before going

home, he strongly recommended his stay, especially as it was his father's wish. Although it was as if a sword had pierced his heart, he calmly submitted to the decision, and he saw the worthy Captain Goodall and his messmates depart without a murmur.

This self-denial was not wholly unrewarded. The *Levant* was a larger ship, affording much better accommodation to the midshipmen; and Mr. Saumarez, having been nearly three years at sea, became of some consequence with his messmates. The date of his joining the *Levant* was the 15th February 1772, having been discharged on the preceding day from the *Winchelsea*. He soon formed a close friendship with Mr. Samuel Thompson, the captain's son; which continued unshaken till the death of the latter in 1782.

The British merchants having petitioned for a ship of war to be stationed in the Mediterranean for the protection of the trade, the *Levant* was ordered on that service, and for fourteen months remained in that inactive position, which young Saumarez used to say he considered a blank in his existence. Having no books to relieve the spirits, no letters to cheer the heart, life wasted away without profit or satisfaction. There must, however, have been a few bright days; for he often mentioned with pleasure the hospitality of the English families settled in Smyrna, of which he occasionally partook when Captain Thompson allowed it. This was the more frequent on account of his thorough knowledge of the French language, which was the means of procuring him attentions rendered doubly acceptable by the dulness of

that anchorage: such were the advantages he derived from his familiarity with that language, that he never failed to recommend the study of it to all his young *protégés* before going to sea.

On the 28th of May 1773, the *Levant* was at length released, and sailed for Gibraltar; from which place she proceeded to Port Mahon, to be repaired. On the 28th of May 1774, she resumed her old station in Smyrna harbour, (in consequence of an insurrection, in which several Christians had been massacred, owing to the destruction of the Russian fleet in the Bay of Chisma, on the contiguous coast,) having been away precisely one year. She again left that station, on the 19th of September, for Gibraltar; and finally for England in March 1775, on the 29th of which month she arrived at Spithead. On the 14th of the following April, Mr. Saumarez was discharged from the *Levant*; and had at length the long-wished-for happiness of seeing again his native land, and the friends from whom he had been for more than five years separated.

The *Levant*, being paid off, was recommissioned by the Honourable Captain Murray, who used every persuasion to induce Mr. Saumarez to remain in the ship; but, after an absence of five years, he was too anxious to spend some time with his family, to accede to his proposal, and the moment he was at liberty he set off for Guernsey.

Taking into account the time his name had been on the books of the *Solebay*, he had now served more than the required six years of service: and as the regulations for age were at that

time not strictly enforced, after a few weeks of rest he went to London to pass his examination for lieutenant; but owing to the commissioners being on their annual visits to the dock-yards, and their return being protracted, two months elapsed before the object was accomplished. This enabled him again to return to his friends, but he was not then permitted long to enjoy their society.

In the year 1775, on the breaking out of the war with the American colonies, Commodore Sir Peter Parker being appointed to the command of a squadron, with his broad pendant on board the Bristol, of fifty guns, Mr. Saumarez, then eighteen years of age, was ordered to join that ship, through the recommendation of Admiral Keppel, who, having been the friend and contemporary of his uncles, ever evinced an interest in his advancement. After an interview with Sir Peter in London, he embarked, on the 9th of October, at Sheerness, whence the Bristol proceeded to the Nore at the end of November. After passing a short time at Spithead and Plymouth, which they left on the 21st of December, the squadron sailed for Cork, the last rendezvous of the expedition destined for South Carolina. This consisted of six frigates, two bombs, and two hundred transports, containing seven regiments of infantry and two companies of artillery, under the command of that distinguished nobleman, the Earl Cornwallis, and the Honourable Brigadier-general Vaughan. These two chiefs, with their aides-de-camp, Lord Chewton and Captain Eustace, were embarked on board the Bristol: they sailed about the middle of January 1776.

On the passage out, which was remarkable for stormy weather, and for the consequent dispersion of the convoy, the activity and zeal of young Saumarez not only attracted the attention, but gained the esteem of the noble earl; who, by offering to make him his aide-de-camp and take him by the hand, had nearly persuaded him to leave the naval service, and enter the army, offering him a commission in the 33rd, his own regiment. We have heard him relate, that, after he had more than half consented, he went below and told his messmates, who immediately jeered him so much about "turning soldier," that he returned to the quarter-deck and gave a positive refusal to the earl, who could not help expressing his disappointment and chagrin on the occasion.

There can be no doubt that he would have highly distinguished himself in the army, or wherever he was placed; but, happily for the nation, and for the honour of the profession which he had first chosen, he was destined to display his bravery and splendid talents in a sphere where there happened to be a much greater range for them, than if he had followed the fortunes of the noble earl in the other honourable service. Many years after, when Saumarez's career had proved the wisdom of his decision, he met Lord Cornwallis at dinner at Lord Spencer's, then first lord of the admiralty; who, on hearing this anecdote, observed, "Lord Cornwallis would have deprived the naval service of one of its best officers."

The Bristol arrived off Cape Fear early in May, where they found General Clinton; and, having repaired their damages,

reached Charlestown in the beginning of June. The troops were landed on the island, at a low, sandy spot, in the midst of a heavy surf, and the guns of the Bristol and the Experiment were put on board the Harcourt East-indiaman, to enable them to get over the bar.

One of the transports, called the Friendship, having been fitted as a ship of war to be taken into the service, was commissioned by Lieutenant Charles Hope, first of the Bristol, an excellent officer, and he selected Sir James Barclay and Mr. Saumarez to be his officers; but, after a few days, he prevailed on Captain Hope to allow him to return to the Bristol, which he did only two days previously to the attack on Fort Sullivan, which, after passing the bar, it became necessary to silence and take possession of. This fortress was considered the key of the harbour, and the fortifications of it were constructed with great skill: the works being formed of cabbage-tree, a kind of wood peculiarly calculated, by its porous and elastic quality, to resist the effects of shot; and, from its not being liable to splinter, the troops in the batteries were secured from what is deemed one of the principal means of destruction; while the Bristol's crew were fully exposed to the fatal effects of the enemy's fire. The guns being taken on board on the 28th of June 1776, at 8 A.M. the squadron began the attack by a furious and incessant cannonade, which continued with little intermission until nine o'clock at night. Never did British valour shine more conspicuously, nor did our ships in an engagement of the same nature experience

so serious an encounter: the squadron could not approach within grape-shot of the enemy, and therefore could not clear the batteries; and the spring of the Bristol's cable being cut by the shot, she swung so as to get dreadfully raked. Mr. Saumarez was employed in replacing this spring three times in the Mercury's boat, assisted by the captain of that transport.

The brave Captain Morris, after receiving a number of wounds, with a noble constancy disdained to quit his duty; until, his arm being shot off, he was carried below in a condition which did not afford any probability of recovery. At one time, the quarter-deck of the Bristol was cleared of every one except the commodore, who stood on the poop-ladder alone; a spectacle of intrepidity and firmness which has been seldom equalled, never exceeded. It is said, that Mr. Saumarez seeing him in this situation, requested him to come down; when he replied with a smile, "What! you want to get rid of me, do ye?" while he well knew that the reverse was the fact.

The loss sustained by the squadron in general, and by the Bristol in particular, in an action unexampled in point of duration, and in which it was finally repulsed, was very great: she had alone one hundred and eleven killed and wounded, including her gallant captain and several other officers.

During this severe conflict, Mr. Saumarez had a very narrow escape: at the moment he was pointing a gun on the lower-deck, of which he had the command, a shot from the fort entered the port-hole, struck the gun, and killed seven out of eight men who

were stationed to work it. Some time afterwards, being called on deck to execute certain orders respecting the replacing the spring on the cable, he was standing close to Mr. Darley, a midshipman, for whom he had the greatest regard, when a shot took off the young man's head and covered Mr. Saumarez with his blood.

Captain Morris, after being carried below, lingered contrary to expectation, and hopes were formed that he would survive; when, unfortunately, his attendant being overcome with sleep, it is supposed the captain's bandages gave way, and, not having strength to awake him, he was found in the morning bathed in his blood. His dissolution becoming inevitable, one of the officers asked him if he had any direction to give with respect to his family; to which he nobly replied, "None! I leave them to the Providence of God, and the generosity of my country," and soon after expired. This engagement lasted thirteen hours: it was the first in which Mr. Saumarez had been present; and, after the very many in which he was subsequently engaged, he has been heard to declare it to have been one of the most severe he ever witnessed. Captain Scott, of the *Experiment*, lost his arm; and there were several death-vacancies for lieutenants.

Mr. Saumarez's conduct during the whole of this obstinate and bloody contest was deemed so especially meritorious, that the commodore expressed his highest approbation of it in the warmest and most flattering terms, and soon after the battle he promoted him to the rank of lieutenant. The following is a copy of his first acting commission:

"By Sir Peter Parker, Commander-in-chief of a squadron of his Majesty's ships to be employed on a particular service.

"Whereas I think it necessary for the good of his Majesty's service to have an Acting-lieutenant on board his Majesty's ship the Bristol, you are hereby required and directed to take upon you the office of Acting-lieutenant of his Majesty's ship Bristol strictly charging and commanding all the officers and company of the said ship to behave themselves jointly, and severally, in their respective employments, with all due respect and obedience unto you their said Lieutenant; and you are likewise to observe and execute the General Printed Instructions, and such orders and directions as you shall from time to time receive from your captain, or any other your superior officer, for his Majesty's service.

"For which this shall be your Order. Dated on board his Majesty's ship Bristol, in Five-fathom Hole, off Charlestown, the 11th day of July 1776.

P. Parker.

"To Mr. James Saumarez, hereby appointed to act as Lieutenant on board his Majesty's ship Bristol, until further orders.

"By command of the Commodore.

John Read."

In this ship Acting-lieutenant Saumarez remained until the

23rd September; serving often with the army on shore, and on all occasions taking a distinguished part. He was actively employed in the boats of the Bristol on every landing that took place, from the first disembarkation of the troops in Gravesend Bay, to the landing at Rochelle from Frog's-neck. Lord Howe then commanded in person on this expedition, and hoisted his flag in the Carysfort, the gallant Captain Fanshawe. His lordship appointed Mr. Saumarez his aide-de-camp, and selected him to convey General Clinton, commanding the troops, to the vicinity of Rochelle, when he had the satisfaction of receiving the thanks of his lordship for his zealous exertions. All the boats were then ordered to join their respective ships off New York; an order, it may be supposed, not unwelcome after an absence of several weeks, during which officers and men had been subject to all the privations consequent on such a service, sleeping in boats, and scarcely having any change of clothing.

Saumarez was afterwards on duty up the North River, and had the honour of conveying Lord Cornwallis and his staff on board his boat in the first landing in the Jerseys; and on several occasions he was actively useful to his lordship, who repeatedly acknowledged his services. Being employed in the disembarkation of troops newly arrived, he discovered that his brother's regiment, the twenty-third Welsh (now Royal Welsh) Fusileers, was one of them; and soon after he had the happiness of meeting him, who, on his part, was not less agreeably surprised at the welcome and unexpected encounter.

Being at head-quarters when Fort Washington surrendered, the garrison, consisting of two thousand seven hundred men, having laid down their arms, Lieutenant Saumarez was the bearer of the tidings to the Bristol; but they appeared so incredible, that it was some time before Sir Peter Parker could be persuaded of their authenticity.

Rear-admiral Lord Shuldham, having on the 6th September, shifted his flag to the Bristol, Lieutenant Saumarez followed his commander, who then hoisted his broad pendant in the Chatham. He was therefore removed by Lord Viscount Howe, vice-admiral of the white, and commander-in-chief of all his Majesty's ships and vessels in North America, to the Chatham, as fifth lieutenant "for the time being." In this situation Lieutenant Saumarez so often and so particularly distinguished himself in the boats, and in command of the Lady Parker schooner, tender to the Unicorn, Captain Ford, that, on the 17th February 1778, he was appointed lieutenant commanding the Spitfire, a schooner-rigged galley, by special direction of the commander-in-chief, as will appear by the following order:

By Commodore Hotham, on board the Preston.

"The Viscount Howe having directed that you shall command the Spitfire galley, in the room of Lieutenant Scott; you are hereby directed to repair on board the said galley, and take the command of her accordingly, using the utmost despatch in preparing and fitting her for a passage

to Rhode Island.

"Given on board the Preston, off

New York, 17th February 1778.

W. Hotham.

"To Lieut. Saumarez, hereby
appointed to command
H.M. galley, the Spitfire.

"By command. Titus Lewis."

Our young hero, who had been far less actively employed than he wished, had now obtained almost the height of his ambition,—in other words, a situation where he could have an opportunity of displaying his talents and intrepidity. He found his new vessel in the king's yard; and, having taken charge from her former commander, proceeded to fit out with surprising diligence. On the 23rd February he received twenty-three seamen from the Preston; and on the 27th a sergeant and eleven marines completed his complement of thirty-seven men, including himself and the carpenter; when he immediately weighed and made sail. It soon after blew a gale, but he succeeded in reaching the Brothers, where he anchored, and found H.M.S. Sphinx, and some traders: the next morning he weighed, and falling in with H.M.S. Falcon and convoy, they proceeded on their voyage. On the 4th of March strong gales obliged the convoy to put into Huntingdon Bay, where they

were detained by stormy weather till the 13th of March. On the 15th the convoy reached Oyster-pond Bay, and on the 16th anchored off Fort Island, in company with the Eagle, Nonsuch, Apollo, Mermaid, Unicorn, Ariel, Maidstone, Grampus, and Stromboli; and here their active operations began. On the 28th of March an enemy's frigate was chased and run on shore in the Narraganset Passage, when Lieutenant Saumarez, together with the boats of the squadron, went to destroy her, she being protected by a battery on shore; the Spitfire was anchored about four hundred yards from this battery in twelve feet water, and, having got her long-bow gun to bear, engaged it while the boats boarded and set fire to the frigate: this occupied more than an hour, during which time the battery was silenced, but a brisk fire of musketry was kept up by the rebels; and the service being performed, the galley was towed out with little damage, five men being wounded: at nine she anchored in safety off Newton's Point. Soon after this a gale came on; the galley drove towards the rocks, and it was supposed she must be lost; but Lieutenant Saumarez cut his cable, and by a masterly act of seamanship saved his vessel, and gained the admiration of the whole squadron. During this period, Lieutenant Saumarez was under the orders of Commodore Griffith, of the Nonsuch, senior officer of his Majesty's ships and vessels at Rhode Island; and it will appear by the following secret order, that he was kept at the most important point in advance.

(Secret.)

"By Walter Griffith, Esq. Commander of a division of his Majesty's ships and vessels at Rhode Island.

"The employment of the galley under your command being necessary in the Seakonnet Channel, with the intention to intercept any armed vessels fitted by the rebels for putting to sea from the harbours or creeks communicating therewith; but more particularly to defeat any attempts they may propose for making a descent in force, or attacking the post occupied by the king's troops on the eastern shore of Rhode Island; you are therefore to proceed to the aforesaid channel, and put yourself under the command of the superior officer there, for those purposes accordingly: but you are, nevertheless, at liberty to move the galley (under the orders of the commanding officer there) from time to time, to prevent the enemy from being able to ascertain the position thereof, either for executing any meditated insult on the galley, or to pass you unobserved during the night; taking care, however, to keep as much as may be within such limits, as will fully enable you to effect the principal object of your appointment as aforesaid.

"It will become requisite for this end, to have your boats (or other better-appointed craft, with which you can in future be supplied), advanced at seasonable lines, both for the earlier discovery of any ships or vessels attempting to pass your station in the night, and preventing any other advantages attempted by the enemy under cover thereof.

"The crews of the boats so directed should be prudently cautious in boarding vessels of inconsiderable appearance, that they may not be exposed to suffer by the treacherous

practice of the enemy in different modes to blow up and destroy your men; but a suitable discretion will be no less requisite on your part, that, in warning them of these hazards, they are not induced to become remiss in their exertions in the essential services.

"If the enemy should attempt to pass your station with any ship of apparent force, great attention will be requisite that you may not be misled by such not improbable expeditions to draw you from your station, and thereby facilitate the means to succeed with less risk in a meditated descent on the eastern shore of the island; which is to be at all times the object of your chief care to resist and oppose, by endeavouring to destroy the boats of the enemy employed on that occasion, or otherwise to prevent the further use of them in the attempt.

"It will therefore be incumbent on you, in conjunction with other armed vessels stationed with you in Seakonnet Channel, to intercept the said armed vessels (if possible) before they have advanced below your first anchoring station, and to keep secret such directions as the senior officer at the said anchorage may propose to adopt for that intent.

"You are to continue on this service until further orders; and I am to recommend your attention, that a careful watch is kept in the galley at all times, conformable to the tenour of the printed instructions given in that respect; and that every other precaution is taken to guard against the attempts of the rebel for the annoyance of the galley, wherein it is to be observed of all such enterprises, that those which are the

least suspected are ever the most likely to be attended with success.

*"Given on board H.M.S. Nonsuch,
at Rhode Island, 21st May 1778.
S. W. Griffith.*

"To Lieut. Saumarez, &c.

It should be mentioned here, that Rhode Island was taken possession of by his Majesty's forces under General Clinton and Sir Peter Parker on the 9th December 1776; and some description of it is necessary to show the arduous as well as perilous nature of the service on which our young hero was now employed. This island takes its name from the province, and lies in Narraganset Bay: it is fifteen miles in length from north to south, and three miles and a half broad; the north end is only three miles from Bristol, to which there is a ferry. The Seakonnet Passage separates it from the main on the north-west side, and the islands of Conanicut and Prudence lie in the passage on the south-east side, the town of Newport being in the south-east part of the island.

The Seakonnet Passage was in consequence of the above order allotted to the Spitfire. Lieutenant Saumarez was now under the orders of Captain Græme, and proceeded to his station: it appears from his journal, now in our possession, that he was constantly on the alert, and almost daily skirmishing with the enemy. On the 24th he had to sustain the attack of three armed boats which came off from Point Judith, and had nearly

decoyed them on board; but they found their mistake in time to escape after a good drubbing. On the same evening he joined a detachment of five hundred men, which, under cover of the *Flora*, had landed above Bristol and burnt one hundred and twenty-five batteaux-plats, an armed galley, and a privateer of fourteen guns, besides destroying the greatest part of the town. On the 30th April a firing was heard in the direction of the Taunton: the *Spitfire* immediately weighed, and ran over to the enemy's shore, where Lieutenant Saumarez opposed his vessel to a field-piece, which returned his fire without doing any injury for a considerable time; this was meant as a diversion to enable the 54th regiment to attack unobserved, which in the mean time landed up the Taunton, destroyed eight sawmills and several flat-boats, and came off by the assistance of the *Spitfire* with inconsiderable loss.

On the 1st of May the *Spitfire* weighed, and was beating against the wind to obtain her station, when, by the vessel missing stays, she got aground on Sandy Hook. On this, the enemy immediately brought down a gun, but without effect. An anchor was carried out; the vessel was hove off without damage, and reached Fogland Battery, off which she anchored, and the next day reached her former station.

It will be needless to notice every occasion wherein the *Spitfire* was engaged with the enemy, which, while Lieutenant Saumarez commanded her, was no less than forty-seven times! but we shall proceed to the period when his operations in that

vessel were drawing to a close. The Americans, who had publicly declared their independence on the 4th July 1776, had concluded a treaty with the French on the 13th March 1778, which was considered by the British government as a declaration of war; and the French ambassador being directed to withdraw, the following orders were issued to the squadron at Rhode Island by Commodore John Brisbane, who had now taken the command:

"By Captain John Brisbane, Captain of H.M.S. Flora, and senior officer of his Majesty's ships and vessels at Newport, Rhode Island.

"In pursuance of an order from the Lord Viscount Howe, vice-admiral of the white, and commander-in-chief of his Majesty's ships and vessels employed on a particular service, you are hereby required and directed to MAKE WAR UPON, take, or destroy any part of the French squadron lately arrived on the coasts of this continent, as well as other ships of war of that nation appearing on the coasts of North America, to the utmost of your ability, until further orders, keeping this secret. Dated on board H.M.S. Flora, at Newport, Rhode Island, 26th July 1778.

(Signed) J. Brisbane.

"To Lieutenant Saumarez, commanding the Spitfire, galley."

This order was transmitted with an enclosure, designated "Copy of a paragraph of a letter received from Lord Viscount Howe, dated off Sandy Hook, 19th July 1778."

"As there is not a sufficient naval force for the defence of Rhode Island, and none can be sent while the French squadron, at anchor off Sandy Hook, continues so much superior to that under my command, it may not be unseasonable to remind you that you are at liberty to apply the force under your direction, by landing of guns and men for the service of the batteries; dismantling, and even destroying the ships, to strengthen the defences of the post in the most effectual manner, in case of an attack upon the post, more especially when no longer in prospect of rendering better assistance under the same circumstances, or preventing the capture of the ships.

"Every captain or commander is therefore directed to attend to the foregoing paragraph, and act from circumstances, in the best and most effectual manner possible for the defence of the post, and ship or vessel under his command, so as to answer the intention of his lordship. Dated on board H.M.S. Flora, Newport Harbour, 27th July 1778.

"To Lieutenant Saumarez, commanding
H.M. galley Spitfire."

The French, who had secretly been assisting the Americans, and had long been preparing for war, sent a powerful fleet from France, which arrived, and anchored off Sandy Hook, while Lord Howe was within the harbour with a very inferior force, but could not be attacked: they therefore bent their course to reduce Rhode Island. On the 29th of July they were discovered; and, on the 4th of August, two ships of the line and two frigates entered

the passage, where the Kingfisher sloop, the Alarm and Spitfire, galleys, were stationed; and it being no longer possible to prevent them from falling into the hands of the enemy, their stores, guns, and crews were landed, and the vessels set on fire.

CHAPTER III

1778 to 1782

Serves ashore.—Returns to England in the *Leviathan*.—Providential escape from shipwreck.—Visits Guernsey.—Joins the *Victory*.—A journey to London.—Joins the *Fortitude*.—Battle off the Dogger Bank.—Anecdotes of Admiral Parker.—Mr. Saumarez promoted to the rank of Master and Commander.—Appointed to the *Tisiphone*.—Sails for the West Indies with Admiral *Kempenfelt*.—Action with *Comte de Guichen*.—Captures a French ship of thirty-six guns.—Is despatched to Sir Samuel Hood.—Arrives at Barbadoes.—Escapes from two French men-of-war.—Passes through an intricate channel.—Joins Sir Samuel Hood.—Gallant conduct in cutting out a vessel.—*Tisiphone* ordered home.—Fortunate exchange with Captain Stanhope.—Takes command of the *Russell*.

After the destruction of his little vessel, the *Spitfire*, Lieutenant Saumarez was attached to the division of sailors under Commodore Brisbane, to whom he became aide-de-camp. This division consisted of the crews of the frigates and other vessels which had been destroyed, on the following day in the southern passage, to prevent their falling into the hands of the enemy.

The vessels destroyed, in addition to those mentioned in the last chapter, were, the Juno, Lark, Orpheus, and Flora of thirty-two guns, and the Cerberus of twenty-eight.

The artillery and stores had been in part landed, and mounted in various positions on the island; while the seamen and officers, amounting to above a thousand men, were actively employed there during the whole of the siege. Lieutenant Saumarez was stationed latterly in command of one of the advanced posts, and had several opportunities of distinguishing himself in repulsing the repeated assaults of the enemy, and in attacking them in return.

The plans of the French for the reduction of Rhode Island having failed, and their fleet having been dispersed in a storm, during which some were disabled, and others captured, and finally the appearance of Lord Howe with a reinforced but still inferior squadron, induced them to abandon the project, and, after refitting at Boston, to steer for the West Indies.

The officers and seamen, being now no longer wanted, were ordered a passage home in the Leviathan of fifty guns, on board which ship Lieutenant Saumarez embarked, in company with Captains Dalrymple, Smith, Hudson, Brisbane, Symons, and Græme, whose ships had also been destroyed. As she was approaching the English Channel, the Leviathan was overtaken by a violent storm, and most providentially saved from shipwreck by the clearing up of a thick fog just in time to avoid the danger, when they found the ship close to the Rocks of Scilly, near to the

spot where Sir Cloudesley Shovel was lost. This circumstance has been attributed to a strong northerly current, but it was probably from the position of these dangerous islands being inaccurately laid down in the charts; it is indeed an extraordinary fact, that an error of no less than three leagues in their situation was first discovered by the Swedish surveyor, Nordenanker, about the commencement of last war. The Leviathan, nevertheless, arrived safely at Portsmouth about the beginning of the year 1779, when Lieutenant Saumarez had again an opportunity of visiting his family and friends in Guernsey.

He had, however, resided there but a short time, when he was appointed first lieutenant of the Edgar of seventy-four guns, then fitting at Woolwich for the broad pendant of Commodore Elliot. After receiving his letter of appointment, he was obliged to wait some time for an opportunity to cross the channel; but at length availed himself of the Ambuscade, which touched at Guernsey. Having arrived at the Isle of Wight, Captain Phipps, her commander, ascertained that the squadron under Admiral Drake, to which he belonged, had sailed from Spithead; therefore without touching at Portsmouth to land Lieutenant Saumarez, he proceeded to join the Channel fleet, which he found twenty leagues to the westward of Scilly, having on the way retaken the Helena sloop of war; to command which Sir John Warren, then first lieutenant of the Victory, was appointed, and Mr. Saumarez was ordered in his stead to join the Victory, then bearing the flag of Sir Charles Hardy, at whose request he was

continued in that ship, where he was third lieutenant in seniority, but supernumerary on the books. Besides the commander-in-chief of the Channel fleet, Rear-Admiral Kempenfelt, as first, and Captain Collings, as second captain, were both on board the Victory detached to cruise off Brest, commencing in June 1779, and returning occasionally to port until May 31st, 1780. After the death of Sir Charles Hardy, which took place on the 9th May 1780, Admiral Geary, and then Sir Francis Drake, succeeded to the command, with Captain Clayton as captain.

The Victory continued on the same service until the spring of 1781, when Admiral Hyde Parker hoisted his flag, and Mr. Saumarez now became first lieutenant. He had been so zealously attentive to his duty, that for several months he never went on shore, till at length he yielded to the persuasion of his messmates. On arriving at Point Beach, Portsmouth, he was accosted by a person in French, who demanded the way to the admiral's house, and at the same time informed him that he had just landed with the intelligence that Jersey had been attacked by the French. Mr. Saumarez immediately went with the messenger to the admiral, who despatched him as a courier to town, and he returned in a remarkably short time with orders respecting it. In short, his diligence and zeal were so manifest in every service on which he was employed, that he soon gained the esteem and friendship of Vice-admiral Hyde Parker, who, in June 1781, was appointed to the command in the North Seas, and shifted his flag into the Fortitude, Captain Robertson. The squadron in those seas,

when under command of Commodore Keith Stewart, was of inconsiderable strength, but had now risen to a force of five ships of the line, besides one fifty, one forty-four, and three frigates. Notwithstanding the desire of Lord Sandwich, then first lord of the admiralty, to provide for his own friends, the admiral succeeded in carrying with him, from the Victory, Lieutenants Waghorne and Saumarez. On the 3rd of June they sailed from Spithead to Sheerness, and, after refitting and touching at Leith, sailed to bring home the Baltic convoy from Elsinour, about the beginning of July.

The squadron, which might have been made much stronger, consisted of the Fortitude, seventy-four, Captain Robertson; the Princess Amelia, eighty, Captain Macartney; the Berwick, seventy-four, Captain Fergusson; the Bienfaisant, sixty-four, Captain Braithwaite; the Buffalo, sixty, Captain Truscott; the Preston, fifty, Captain Græme; the Dolphin, forty-four, Captain Blair; the Latona, thirty-eight, Sir Hyde Parker (the admiral's son); the Belle Poule, thirty-six, Captain Patton; the Cleopatra, thirty-two, Captain Murray; and the Surprise, cutter, Lieutenant Rivett.

The Dutch by this time had declared war, and, being perfectly aware of the force of Admiral Parker's squadron, sailed with a large convoy for the Baltic, under command of Admiral Zoutman, whose squadron was one ship of the line superior; it became, therefore, necessary to take the Dolphin, of forty-four guns, into the line, although she had only eighteen-pounders on

the lower deck.

But before entering into the details of the action which took place on the 5th of August 1781, it is proper to give some of the particulars of each squadron. That of Admiral Parker was totally unfit for the line of battle; the ships had been but a short time together, and had only two or three times practised the usual manœuvres of forming the line, &c. The *Fortitude* was a small seventy-four, but well manned. The *Princess Amelia* was an old eighty-gun ship, with reduced metal and masts. The *Berwick* was a good ship, and, in addition to her metal, had two sixty-eight-pounder carronades on the poop; but next to her was the *Dolphin*, forty-four, with only twenty twelve-pounders on the lower-deck, which could not be expected to make any impression on a sixty-four. The *Buffalo* was formerly the *Captain*, of seventy guns; but, in the commencement of hostilities, not being thought efficient as a ship of war, she was fitted up as a mast-ship and her name changed; but, probably for want of vessels, she was again equipped for war with sixty guns, but only with eighteen-pounders on the lower deck. The *Preston* was a good fifty-gun ship, with her proper metal, twenty-four-pounders on the lower, and twelve-pounders on the upper deck. The *Bienfaisant* had the metal on her lower deck reduced. The *Artois*, which afterwards joined the squadron, was the finest frigate then known; had twenty-eight, eighteen-pounders on her main deck, with, in addition to her complement of guns, heavy carronades on the quarter-deck and fore-castle; she was manned

with three hundred men. The *Latona* was a fine thirty-eight gun frigate, with eighteen-pounders; the *Belle Poule* and *Tartar* were excellent of their class.

The Dutch squadron consisted of one seventy-four, one sixty-eight, one sixty-four, and five fifty-fours. In the action there were five frigates, the other five having gone off with the convoy; the list of both will be found in the Appendix to this volume, with that of the killed and wounded.

The Dutch squadron and convoy, which were bound to the Baltic, were discovered at four o'clock in the morning about six leagues to leeward; and there being a fine commanding breeze and smooth water, everything was favourable, as well for detaching the convoy, which was immediately done by signal to the *Tartar*, as for making dispositions to attack the enemy. The admiral seeing that they had their own port (the *Texel*) directly to leeward, and being doubtful that they would run in there for shelter, or at least go nearer to the shore, made the signal to chase at thirty-five minutes past four, which obliged every ship to make sail instead of preparing for action with a superior enemy. At five, Admiral Zoutman hoisted Dutch colours, and his men-of-war drew out from the convoy, which took their station under the lee to await the event. At half-past five, the admiral made the *Tartar's* signal to stay by, and part company with the convoy, which then hauled their wind, made sail to the south-west, and was soon out of sight and danger.

At ten minutes past six, the signal for the line of battle

abreast was made, which allowed the headmost ships to take in small sails; and immediately after another signal was given for the Dolphin and Preston to change stations; this was a serious mistake, as it led our squadron to believe that the admiral meant to engage the ship ahead of the Dutch admiral, and not that of the latter, which was actually his intention. This unfortunately placed the Dolphin in opposition to one of the largest of the enemy's vessels; and while it left the rear-ship (the Bienfaisant) for some time without an opponent, the van-ship Berwick and the Dolphin had to engage three of the enemy.

In the mean time, the Dutch were regularly drawn up in a line of battle ahead, on the larboard tack, the ships being about a cable's length apart, and keeping a point from the wind, with their sails well proportioned to each other. They appeared in excellent order, their hammocks stowed, and marines drawn up on the poop.

At fifty-six minutes past seven, the signal for close action was made, and, to the astonishment of our squadron, the enemy never fired a shot, although they might have done considerable damage to our ships had they opened their fire on them as they approached end on to them, on their weather beam. Not a gun was fired on either side until within half-musket shot, when the red flag was hoisted on both ships. Up to that moment all was silent, and it is scarcely possible to conceive a silence more solemn and impressive! At the same instant, they saw the signal go to the mast-head of Zoutman's ship. The dreadful silence

was now broken by the tremendous roar of cannon when within pistol-shot, and the battle raged with the utmost fury for three hours and forty minutes.

At ten o'clock, the signal for close action which had been made, was repeated. The Berwick, having forced the van-ship of the enemy to edge off, fell to leeward of the line, and was consequently obliged to make sail, tack, and regain her station in support of the Dolphin, which had then two ships on her, and was also thrown to leeward. The admiral, having now slackened the Dutch admiral's fire, passed ahead of the Buffalo, on which the ships astern closed up to the Buffalo; and the Berwick took the station ahead of the admiral. At thirty-five minutes past eleven, the ships became unmanageable; and, the Dutch dropping to leeward, the action ceased.

By some it has been affirmed that Admiral Parker should have renewed the action: Lieutenant Saumarez says, it was certainly his intention to do so; but the state of his own ship, and the reports he received from others, rendered it quite impossible.³

The Dutch convoy had about the middle of the conflict bore up for the Texel. The protection of them was no longer an object,

³ When the action had ceased, Sir Hyde Parker, captain of the Latona and son of the admiral, bore down on the Fortitude, and affectionately inquired for his brave parent, of whose gallantry he had been an anxious eye-witness. The admiral, with equal warmth, assured his son of his personal safety, and spoke of his mortification at being unable, from the state of his own ship, and from the reports he had received of the other ships, to pursue the advantage he had gained, in the manner he most ardently desired.

and Admiral Zoutman, as soon as he could possibly get his ships collected and put before the wind, made the best of his way into the port; but during the night the *Hollandia*, Dutch seventy-four, was seen sunk in twenty-two fathoms water, and her pendant was hauled down by Captain Patton, of the *Belle Poule*, and brought to the admiral. As no ship was taken, both claimed the victory: but, the convoy being sent back into port and one ship sunk, should certainly decide it to Admiral Parker; and had the English admiral not inadvertently rendered his van too weak by the mistake in the signal which also extended his line beyond their rear, thereby rendering one ship for a time useless, he would have obtained a decisive victory.

While Admiral Zoutman must be admired for his cool intrepidity, it must be admitted that he was much to blame in forbearing to avail himself of the opportunity of attacking and disabling the approaching fleet, which he might have done with great effect. After the *Fortitude* had been put into a condition to make sail, Lieutenant Saumarez was sent to conduct the *Preston*, one of the disabled ships, into port; her commander, Captain Græme, having lost his arm in the action. When Admiral Parker arrived at the Nore, his Majesty paid the squadron a visit; but the veteran commander, indignant at the conduct of ministers, who, he conceived, ought to have reinforced his squadron instead of allowing some fine ships to lie idle in port, received the King with that rough *hauteur* peculiar to himself, observing, "I wish your Majesty better ships and younger officers. As for myself, I

am now too old for the service."

On this occasion Lieut. Saumarez was presented to George III. The King inquired if he was related to the captains of the same name one of whom had circumnavigated the globe with Anson, and who had fallen gloriously in the service of their country: the admiral replied in the affirmative, saying, "Yes, please your Majesty; he is their nephew, and as brave and as good an officer as either of them."

In consequence of the bravery and skill he displayed in this action, Lieut. Saumarez was promoted to the rank of commander, although only second lieutenant; the first being wounded early in the action, the duty had fallen on our hero: and he was immediately appointed to the *Tisiphone*, a fire-ship constructed on a new plan, and armed with carronades, which was then fitting at Sheerness; his commission as "master and commander," bearing date for that ship, the 23rd August 1781.

When lieutenant of the *Fortitude*, with Admiral Sir Hyde Parker,—who, from his acerbity of temper, was distinguished from others of the same name by the sobriquet of "Vinegar Parker,"—the old admiral betrayed his ill-humour by unwarrantably finding fault with him one morning when Mr. Saumarez commanded the watch; but soon after, probably to make amends for such hasty and unguarded conduct towards an officer for whom he had the greatest regard, he sent to invite him to dinner, an honour which the young lieutenant declined in terms sufficiently strong to indicate that his feelings had been

hurt. On this, the admiral sent for him and exclaimed, "What! can't you put up with the fractious disposition of an old man?" The admiral, who could not bear to be, even for a day, at variance with Lieutenant Saumarez, would do anything to serve him; and, when he obtained the command on the East India station, offered to take him with him in the Cato, which sailed, and was supposed to have foundered off the Cape of Good Hope, as she was never afterwards heard of; and he happily escaped sharing the fate of that gallant chief and unfortunate crew.

The Tisiphone having been fitted out at Sheerness, and the complement of men having been filled up by supernumeraries from the Conquestadore at the Nore, Captain Saumarez, by order from Admiral Roddam, placed himself under the command of Captain Allen, of the Sceptre, on the 6th September 1781, from whom he received the following order:

You are hereby required and directed to put yourself under my command, and to follow all such orders and directions as you shall from time to time receive from me for his Majesty's service, and to hold yourself in constant readiness to sail at a moment's warning; and in case of separation by any unavoidable accident, you are to make the best of your way without loss of time to Torbay, and put yourself under the command of Admiral Darby.

(Mem.) In case of your parting company with his Majesty's ship Sceptre, and falling in with any ships or vessels belonging to France or French subjects, Spain or Spanish subjects, the States General of the United

Provinces, or to his Majesty's rebellious subjects in the colonies of North America, that you can cope with, you are to use your best endeavours to take, seize, sink, burn, or destroy the same: giving me an account of your arrival at Torbay, and of anything you may have so taken or destroyed.

Signed. Wm. Allen.

In pursuance of these orders Captain Saumarez sailed from the Nore, and, arriving at Torbay on the 17th, found that Admiral Darby had sailed in the *Britannia* on the 15th, after having left orders for the *Tisiphone* to cruise a week off the Lizard. Here he was directed to proceed for Plymouth, where he arrived on the 1st of October; and having received further orders to repair to Spithead without loss of time, he arrived there on the 13th October, to fit for Channel service. He now joined the fleet under Lord Howe, and, after a cruise off Brest, returned to Portsmouth on the 21st of November: his ship was found to sail extremely well.

Captain Saumarez was now ordered to place himself under the command of Admiral Kempenfelt, who, with a detachment of twelve sail of the line, was destined to intercept Count de Guichen, who had put to sea from Brest, after having returned from his last severe campaign. The count had been ordered to use every exertion to refit and prepare the French fleet for sea, notwithstanding the lateness of the season. The objects in view could be accomplished only by extreme diligence and the most

profound secrecy, as it was absolutely necessary to reinforce Count de Grasse, with both ships and troops in the West Indies, as also M. Des Ornes and Admiral Suffrein in the East. It was evident that De Grasse, after his hard service on the coast of North America during the preceding campaign, must stand in need of a vast supply of naval and military stores; and the service he was about to undertake in the West Indies would increase the want of provisions, and almost every necessary of life and of warfare: neither was the demand for naval and military stores in the East Indies less urgent. Accordingly, a numerous convoy of transports, store-ships, and victuallers were prepared and equipped at the same time as the fleet, which was now extended to such a number of men-of-war as was considered sufficient for the protection of the convoys until fairly out of reach. This part of the service, as well as the charge of the whole expedition, was, as we have stated, confided to Count Guichen; and the command of the squadron and fleet destined to the West Indies, to M. de Vaudreuil. The Tisiphone was the look-out ship of the squadron, which sailed from Spithead at the end of November.

At day-break on the 12th December, Captain Saumarez, being the first to discover the enemy, made known his situation to the admiral; which was, that the men-of-war were too far ahead and too much to leeward of the convoy to afford any protection to it. The admiral, with that decision and professional skill by which he was so eminently distinguished, determined to profit by their situation, and boldly pushed between the convoy and the

greater part of the enemy's line-of-battle ships, and succeeded in capturing twenty sail. In this affair Captain Saumarez had a noble opportunity of distinguishing himself, by attacking the ship of war, of thirty-six guns, which was bringing up the rear of the convoy, and capturing her after an action of twenty minutes.

Besides those captured, many others had struck; but, the weather at this time becoming thick and squally, the admiral discontinued the chase of those which had been cut off, and which made sail in every direction, that he might collect his squadron before dark, many of his ships being at a great distance astern with the prizes. At daylight next morning, the enemy's ships of war, twenty-one sail of the line, were seen formed to leeward; but their force was so much superior, that the admiral did not think it advisable to risk an action. The captured ships consisted of twenty-one sail of transports, having on board eleven thousand troops, besides their crews of seven thousand seamen; the greatest part of which were taken by this squadron, and the *Agamemnon*, which picked up five or six more.

It was now evident that the force under Count Guichen, destined to assist Count de Grasse in the capture of the valuable island of Jamaica; was much greater than had been supposed by the English government; and, consequently, it became of the utmost importance to give the earliest information of the approach of such a formidable enemy to Sir Samuel Hood. Accordingly, Captain Saumarez, whose gallant conduct and zeal had been so manifest, was selected for this service. His men were

returned to the Tisiphone from the captured ships; and he was detached with orders to push past the French fleet, and make the best of his way to Barbadoes, (see Appendix) where he arrived on the 28th of January; and finding the Pegasus, Captain John Stanhope, he delivered his despatches, and received the following orders from that officer:

You are hereby required and directed to proceed (without a moment's loss of time) to the island of Antigua, where, on your arrival off English Harbour, you are to send a boat in for intelligence respecting Sir Samuel Hood and the fleet under his command; which having received from the senior officer in that port, you will proceed in search of the commander-in-chief, and deliver him the despatches you are charged with from Rear-admiral Kempenfelt, as also those you will receive herewith.

Given on board his Majesty's ship Pegasus,
Carlisle Bay, this 28th Jan. 1782.

(Mem.) I recommend that particular attention may be paid to keep well to windward of the French islands.

Signed John Stanhope.

To Captain Saumarez, H.M. fire-ship
Tisiphone.

In pursuance of these orders, Captain Saumarez sailed from Barbadoes on the 28th of January. In the mean time, the Comte de Grasse, who had been beating to windward for some days with the intention of attacking Barbadoes, but without gaining ground,

had abandoned his plan, and bore away for St. Kitts. On his arrival there, he landed eight thousand men, and took possession of greater part of the island: General Frazer, with a small party of six hundred men, was obliged to retire to Brimstone Hill Fort.

Sir Samuel Hood, notwithstanding the superiority of the enemy, (twenty-nine sail of the line,) resolved on a sudden and unusually bold manœuvre, namely, to sail and attack the enemy's fleet at anchor. It was for this purpose that he had put to sea with twenty-two sail of the line, and proceeded to Antigua, where he took in provisions, and embarked the twenty-eighth and two companies of the thirteenth regiment, under command of General Prescott.

Captain Saumarez, according to the orders he had received, proceeded for Antigua, and keeping "well to windward," as he had been directed to do, fell in with the *Triumphante* and *Terrible*, two French line-of-battle ships, of the squadron which had been attacked by Admiral Kempenfelt on the 12th December, and which had been detached by Comte de Guichen to Martinique. These ships immediately gave chase; but, night coming on, Captain Saumarez had recourse to stratagem in order to effect his escape, which would otherwise have been impossible in consequence of the *Tisiphone* having carried away her fore-top-mast in a squall, an accident which was fortunately not observed by his pursuers: he now made night-signals by hoisting lights and burning false fires; which having led the enemy to suppose he was communicating with an English squadron, they

abandoned the pursuit after a chase of half-an-hour.

At the moment the fore-top-mast was carried away, Mr. Robb, one of the midshipmen, who was looking out at the fore-top-gallant-mast-head, fell on the forecastle without receiving any injury. This young gentleman was an *élève* of Captain Saumarez, continued with him to the end of that war, and embarked with him on board the *Crescent* in 1793. After the capture of *La Réunion*, he was promoted to the rank of lieutenant.

The fore-top-mast of the *Tisiphone* was soon replaced; and next day, on reaching English Harbour, he learned that Sir Samuel Hood, with his squadron was at anchor in Basseterre Roads, St. Kitts, where he had three times repulsed the enemy of a much superior force, but which had now taken up such a position as rendered it impossible for him to communicate with the admiral; for, unless he would venture to push through the intricate channel between Nevis and St. Kitts, he would run the greatest risk of being captured. Undismayed, however, at the danger of navigating an unknown passage, he fearlessly proceeded where no ship had ever before ventured; and by sounding as he advanced, and by the dexterous management of his ship, he succeeded in carrying the *Tisiphone* to the anchorage at St. Kitts in safety; and delivered his despatches to Sir Samuel Hood, who informed him that the intelligence was of such importance, that it was necessary it should be immediately sent on to Sir Peter Parker at Jamaica. But when the admiral proposed to send the *Tisiphone* on with it, Captain Saumarez, desirous

of remaining at the seat of warlike operations, represented to him that the *Tisiphone* was a fine fast-sailing ship on a new construction, that in the existing state of affairs she might be useful, and that he should be happy to contribute by his own personal exertions to the promotion of the public service, whereas any vessel could run down with the trade-wind to Jamaica. Sir Samuel, no less pleased with the proposal, and the manner in which it was made, than convinced of the advantage he would derive from having with him a fast-sailing vessel commanded by so zealous an officer, whose tact and intrepidity had already been manifested, determined to keep the *Tisiphone* with his squadron, and send a less useful vessel with the intelligence to Jamaica. The admiral soon reaped the advantage of this decision. Captain Saumarez, during the time the fleet remained there and at Antigua, was the most active in harassing the enemy. He commanded several boat expeditions, and cut out a vessel in a most gallant style from Basseterre Roads and several other small vessels from the back of the island.

The time, however, had now arrived when it was absolutely necessary to send another despatch to England; and the admiral had no other small vessel remaining but the *Tisiphone*. On the 7th February 1782, the signal was made for an opportunity of sending letters to England, and subsequently for the captain of the *Tisiphone*: Captain Saumarez had been dining with his friend, Captain Charrington, on board the *Ajax*, and it was some time before he reached the *Barfleur*; when he found to his dismay

and mortification that he was ordered home! In a short time the despatches were ready, and he had taken his leave. He described this interesting circumstance, on which it may be said his fortune was founded, in the following manner to us, and we cannot do better than give it in his own words.

"I was," says he, "in my own boat, with the despatches in my hand; and with a heavy heart had ordered the bow-man to shove off, when Captain Stanhope, of the *Russell*, came alongside, and seeing me called: 'Hollo! Saumarez, where are you going?'—'To *England*', said I, 'I am sorry to tell you!'—'Sorry,' replied Stanhope; 'I wish I was in your place; I want to go home on account of my health; and, if I had known, I would have exchanged with you.'—'Perhaps it is not too late,' said I.—'Hold on then,' said he, 'till I speak to the admiral, since I have your leave.'"

By this time the *Russell's* boat was alongside the admiral's ship; and at the word "Hold on!" which was emphatically repeated by Saumarez, the bow-man hooked the quarter of the *Russell's* barge, and he remained but a few minutes in breathless suspense; after which Captain Stanhope appeared at the gangway, and called, "Come up, Saumarez." He was on deck in an instant, and found that, on Captain Jackson being asked to submit the proposal to the admiral, he said, "Let Captain Saumarez do it himself, he is the fittest person."

When Sir Samuel Hood heard the application, he was silent, and after reflecting for a few minutes he said, "Captain

Saumarez, you know not how much I wish to serve you; Captain Stanhope shall go home as he desires, and you shall have command of the Russell." Accordingly, before the close of that day, Captain Stanhope was on board the Tisiphone on his way to England; while her late commander was in possession of his post-rank, and captain of one of his Majesty's ships of the line of seventy-four guns; and all this effected in less than two hours!

We cannot forbear making honourable mention of a trait of attachment manifested on this occasion by the first lieutenant, a Scotch baronet of an ancient family, who had not been at sea for twenty-two years, when he was appointed to the Tisiphone. The conflict of this officer's feelings between joy for his captain's promotion and regret at losing so excellent a friend was far beyond description; but, as the moment of parting approached, he selected what he considered most valuable, and so earnestly did he press Captain Saumarez to accept some testimonial of his esteem, that, finding a refusal would deeply wound his feelings, he accepted a silver ladle marked with his initials, which has ever since been carefully preserved in memory of its former owner.

The same night Captain Saumarez took command of the Russell, he had cause to find that promotion and honours bring cares. A report was made to him that the ship was in a state of mutiny, and that a shot had been thrown at one of the officers. He soon found, indeed, that he had a most disorderly ship's company; but the firm, prompt, and judicious regulations which Captain Saumarez immediately established, brought the crew so

effectually into order, that two months after, at the memorable battle of the 12th April 1782, no ship was in a higher state of discipline than the Russell.

CHAPTER IV

1782

Situation of the Hostile Fleets.—Surrender of Brimstone Hill.—Junction of the Fleets.—Antigua.—St. Lucia.—Sailing of the French Fleet under Comte de Grasse.—Action of the 9th April.—12th of April.—Gallant conduct of the Russell.—Captain Saumarez returns to Jamaica.—Comes to England with Convoy.—Is paid off at Chatham, and confirmed a Post-captain.

It has now become necessary to give a brief account of the situation of the hostile fleets at the seat of war in the West Indies. While the enemy's troops were prosecuting the siege of Brimstone Hill, the fleet under the Comte de Grasse had been reinforced, and either continued at sea, near to Basseterre, or anchored in the old road. On the 13th, a practicable breach being made in the works, the general and governor having given up all hopes of succour, and his brave garrison being reduced to five hundred men, they embraced the proposals of a capitulation made by the Marquis de Boullie, who on the same day proclaimed the surrender of Brimstone Hill to the admiral by a flag of truce, which had been previously agreed upon. The British fleet, which had till this time continued at the anchorage

in which it had so bravely resisted the attacks of the Comte de Grasse, who on the 14th anchored off Nevis with thirty-four sail of the line, was now in a perilous situation, especially as the enemy were erecting mortar batteries on the hill opposite to the shipping; and as it was no longer necessary for him to continue there, Sir Samuel Hood issued orders to slip or cut cables *without signal* at eleven o'clock at night, the sternmost and leeward-most ships first, and so on in succession, and proceed under easy sail until directed otherwise by signal. That this order might be punctually executed, the captains were ordered to set their watches by the admiral's timepiece. The movement was performed with the utmost order and regularity. Not one ship was molested or pursued by the French fleet, which was lying within five miles, and must have been astonished at this excellent manœuvre of the British admiral, wherein the Russell had a distinguished share. Soon afterwards, Nevis and Montserrat fell into the hands of the French.

On the 19th February, Sir Samuel Hood anchored in St. John's Road, Antigua; and on the same day, Sir George Rodney arrived at Barbadoes from England with several sail of the line. On the 25th, he joined Sir Samuel Hood off Antigua; and, three days after, three more sail of the line arrived from England. Thus fortunately united, the admiral proceeded to St. Lucia, to refit and complete with water. On the 14th of March he put to sea, with a view of intercepting a large French convoy which was expected to arrive from Europe; but, notwithstanding

the vigilance of the frigates, the enemy, by keeping close to Guadaloupe and Dominique, effected their escape into Fort Royal Bay, on the 20th and 21st, unperceived by any of our ships. When this unlucky event was made known to Sir George Rodney, he returned to St. Lucia, to watch the motions of the enemy. In the mean time the Russell, which had been damaged by striking on a rock, was repaired at the Carenage.

The Comte de Grasse was equally active in the equipment of his fleet, in order to proceed to leeward and form a junction with the Spaniards, for the purpose of carrying into execution their grand object—the reduction of Jamaica, with an overwhelming force of sixty sail of the line and twenty thousand troops.

At daylight, on the 8th April, Captain Byron, of the *Andromache*, communicated to the admiral by signal the anxiously-expected intelligence that the enemy's fleet, with their large convoy, were coming out of Fort Royal Bay, and standing to the north-west. Sir George Rodney first made the signal for all boats, and persons who had been necessarily employed in watering, &c. to repair on board, and immediately after to weigh. Before noon the whole fleet were clear of Gros Islet Bay: Sir George stretched first over to Fort Royal, and then made the general signal to chase north-eastward.

The enemy's lights were distinctly visible during the night; and as their ships-of-war, though better sailers than the English, were delayed by the convoy of transports, there was little doubt of overtaking them. Accordingly, at daylight on the morning of

the 9th, some of the advanced ships were close up with their convoy under Dominique, while their men-of-war seemed much scattered: fourteen of the latter were between Dominique and the Saints, with a breeze from east-north-east; but the rest were becalmed under the land about St. Rupert's Bay, and one ship was observed at some distance in the north-west.

About half-past seven, the van division, commanded by Sir Samuel Hood, got the breeze; while the centre and rear, in which was the Russell, continued to be becalmed. This of course caused a separation, but did not deter Sir Samuel Hood from advancing, although he had only eight ships to fourteen of the enemy. In the mean time, the French ship seen in the north-west, which had got the breeze, boldly stood on and weathered the Alfred, the van-ship of Sir Samuel Hood's division, which bore up to allow her to pass; and, no signal having been made to engage, not a shot was fired.

At nine o'clock the action began, and was maintained with determined bravery for upwards of an hour, the enemy's ships which had the breeze having borne down upon and engaged this division; the Barfleur and others had, at times, three to one opposed to them; and in this attack there can be but one opinion, that the Comte de Grasse displayed great professional ability. At length the leading ships of the centre got up with the enemy's rear, and were followed by the Duke, Formidable, and Namur; the Arrogant lost her main-top-mast, as well as the Royal Oak. The rear squadron, commanded by Admiral Drake, now came

up, and the Comte de Grasse prudently hauled his wind; and as his ships sailed better than the English, he succeeded in gradually drawing off, and by half-past one his fleet were all out of the reach of shot.

Captain Bayne, of the *Alfred*, lost his life in this his sixth encounter with the enemy; and it is said that he bled to death after his leg was shot off, before he was carried to the cockpit.

In the action of this day the *Russell* had only a small share, as she belonged to the rear division of the fleet, and, being becalmed, could not get up until the enemy had hauled off. The *Royal Oak*, *Montagu*, and *Alfred* were the ships which suffered most, but not so much as to prevent their being repaired at sea; while two of the enemy's ships were so materially disabled as to oblige them to bear up for *Guadaloupe*. The necessary repairs of these ships were not completed before the 11th, during which time the enemy, by carrying a great press of sail, had gained so far to windward as to weather the *Saints*, and were nearly hull down; and, as it was supposed that the Comte de Grasse meant to abandon to their fate two of his ships of the line that had been so much damaged in the late action as not to be able to keep company, all hope of being able to come up with them seemed now to vanish.

In the mean time the line had been inverted, which brought Rear-admiral Drake's division in the van, and that of Rear-admiral Hood, which had been engaged, in the rear. The signal having been made for a general chase, the two ships above

mentioned would have been cut off, had not De Grasse been induced to bear down to their relief. This brought the enemy so far to leeward, that the hope of forcing them to engage was revived.

As soon as the commander-in-chief saw that the enemy's fleet was sufficiently to leeward, he recalled the chasing ships, formed a close line of battle, and carried sail to windward all night; during which the French line-of-battle ship *Le Zélé*, whether from injuries received in action, or in running foul of another ship, lost her bowsprit and fore-mast, and at daylight on the morning of the 12th was seen in tow of a frigate, both carrying all the sail they could, and steering for Basseterre. Sir Samuel Hood being in the rear, and consequently nearest these ships, was directed to detach some of his division in chase of them; and the Comte de Grasse, seeing that they must be inevitably taken, bore up with his whole fleet for their protection. It was now impossible to avoid an action.

The ships which had been recalled from chase resumed their stations, and a close line ahead was formed on the starboard tack, the enemy being on the larboard. Having hauled their wind after they had perceived the chasing ships recalled, they thus endeavoured to avoid an action; but the English fleet could now fetch near the body of the French. At half-past seven, therefore, the engagement began by Admiral Drake's division, led by the *Marlborough* and *Arrogant*, fetching the fifth ship from the van, and bearing up in succession. The Honourable Hugh Lindsay,

who was a midshipman in the *Arrogant*, informed us that in that part, and in the whole of the action, the enemy fired so high, that the three *trucks* of the *Princessa's* mast-heads were shot away, and the consequence was that very few men were killed or wounded. The Duke lost her main-top-mast, as she approached the centre of the enemy's fleet.

At half-past nine the action became general: Admiral Drake's division, in which was the *Russell*, had now passed the rear of the enemy on the opposite tack; and Captain Thompson, of the *America*, seeing that he could fetch to windward of the enemy's line, wore without waiting for the anxiously-expected signal, as did also the *Russell*; and we have reason to know that Captain Saumarez rejoiced at this circumstance. Captain Thompson, being an experienced officer and second in command, gave a sufficient authority to any other officer to follow his motions, and they now stood to the southward. The *America*, however, did not continue long on that tack, and the *Russell* was consequently separated from her and the whole division; as the signals to tack, and soon after to wear, were not made and put in execution for an hour afterwards by Sir Francis Drake, who was then considerably to the northward.

In the mean time the *Russell* continued, and got up with the rear ship of the enemy's centre division about eleven o'clock, with which she exchanged broadsides. At noon, the wind, which was very light, changed to the south, throwing both fleets into confusion; but this gave Sir George Rodney, and three of the

centre division, an opportunity of passing through an opening it occasioned in the enemy's line, and doubling on its rear division: all their attempts to form again were in vain; the enemy's van could never come into action. After this, the remainder of the day was spent in desultory actions of single ships, without regard to the motions of each other; the signals to chase and for close action being visible only at intervals.

It is here unnecessary to give a particular account of the events which took place on this memorable day, or to allude to those circumstances which have been so fruitful in controversy; more especially as Rodney's public letter, and other official records, will be found in the Appendix to this volume. We shall, therefore, confine our observations to the positions and conduct of the *Russell*, commanded by Captain Saumarez.

The *Russell* was the only ship belonging to the van (Admiral Drake's) division, which had wore and continued her course soon after she had passed the rear of the enemy. By standing to the southward again, Captain Saumarez brought his ship into action, but to *windward* of the enemy; and, at the time the wind shifted to the southward, Sir George Rodney, in passing through the enemy's fleet, was surprised to find an English ship to *windward* of the French. Having ascertained it was the *Russell*, he declared emphatically that the captain had distinguished himself more than any officer in the fleet.⁴ By this favourable position, which he had thus gallantly obtained, after receiving the more distant

⁴ Ralfe's Naval Biography, Vol. ii. p. 378.

fire of several of the enemy's ships, about three o'clock he was able to come up with and closely engage a French seventy-four, and after exchanging broadsides with three others, pushed up to the *Ville de Paris*, and after raking her, having maintained a position on the lee quarter, poured in a most destructive fire, until the *Barfleur*, Sir Samuel Hood's flag-ship, came up.

Sir Gilbert Blane, in his account of this period of the battle, says: "It was late in the day when the *Ville de Paris* struck her colours: the ships immediately engaged with her at that moment were the *Barfleur*, the flag-ship of Sir Samuel Hood, and the *Russell*, commanded by Captain Saumarez. The *Formidable* (in which was Sir Gilbert) was right astern, and, having come within shot, was yawing in order to give the enemy a raking broadside, when Sir Charles Douglas and I standing together on the quarter-deck, the position of our ship opened a view of the enemy's stern between the foresail and the jib-boom, through which we saw the French flag hauled down." This fact has not been generally stated.

But the anecdote which we are now about to relate, must remove every doubt on the subject. In the autumn of 1808, when the Baltic fleet, under command of Vice-admiral Sir James Saumarez, returned from the Gulf of Finland, in company with the Swedish fleet, to the harbour of Carlsrona, the Swedish commander-in-chief, Admiral Palmquist, Rear-admiral Nauckhoff, Commodore Blessing, Captain Tornquist, and others, came on board the flag-ship, *Victory*, to pay their

respects to the admiral: they were of course asked to take some refreshment in the cabin: on which, as on all other occasions where an interpreter was wanted, we were of the party. The conversation naturally turned to the actions wherein they each had served in early life, when it appeared that the whole of the four officers mentioned had been brought up in the French service, and had actually been in the battle of the 12th of April 1782. When we acquainted them that Sir James Saumarez commanded a ship in that action, they eagerly inquired the name; and being informed it was the Russell, Captain Tornquist, who was in the Northumberland, rising from his chair and seizing Sir James's hand, exclaimed, "Mon Dieu! Monsieur l'Amiral, nous avons brulé le poudre ensemble; allons boire un coup."

It is impossible to do justice to the scene which followed. The old Swedish officer's joy at this discovery knew no bounds; they completely "fought the battle o'er again;" and we found it distinctly proved that it was the Russell, commanded by Captain Saumarez, which gallantly engaged several of the enemy's ships for two hours, and at six, P.M. pushed on to the Ville de Paris. Baron Rosenstien, who was on board that ship, and Baron Palmquist, who was on board La Couronne stationed next to her, declared that the Compte de Grasse, who was then attempting to escape to leeward, would have succeeded had it not been for the Russell. During our sojourn among the Swedes in that and another winter, we often heard the history of that memorable battle repeated; and they never ceased to maintain the

circumstance we have stated, of which we made a memorandum at the time.⁵

We took leave on that occasion to say to Sir James, that we believed the credit had been given to another ship; to which he replied, "Yes, it was; but what Admiral Palmquist and Captain Tornquist has told you, is true: it *was* the Russell that engaged the Ville de Paris until the Barfleur came up." But such was the extreme sensibility of Saumarez, that he could not persuade himself to correct the error, from an idea that such an interference might argue a desire to sound his own praise; and, but for the circumstance we have now related, the truth might never have come to light.

In answer to a letter from Captain Thomas White, which he sent to Lord de Saumarez with a copy of his publication, called "Naval Researches," written in 1836, to defend the gallant Rodney from certain attacks and allegations which had been published, *not* to give a "full and perfect account of the battle, but," says Captain White, "more particularly that part where your lordship so ably commanded the Russell, which portion of our fleet the tongue of calumny has never ventured to assail," Lord de Saumarez wrote the following letter:

Guernsey, 13th June 1836.

My dear Sir,

⁵ See Appendix for this memorandum, and for extracts from the Russell, Canada, and Barfleur's logs; also Captain White's reply, and extracts of letters from Sir Lawrence Halsted and Admiral Gifford, who were in the Canada, and Captain Knight's letter.

I beg to acknowledge the receipt of your letter, accompanying your interesting publication, which you have done me the favour to send for my acceptance, and which has been forwarded to me by Lord Amelius Beauclerc.

I regret that you have (inadvertently, I am persuaded) fallen into the same error as some of your predecessors, in detailing the account of Lord Rodney's victory of the 12th of April, by ascribing to the Canada what is alone due to the Russell, which ship I commanded.

I shall for your information briefly state the circumstance to which I allude. After passing the sternmost of the enemy's ships, the America, the ship astern of the Russell, wore to stand after them: I was glad to have the example of an old experienced officer, and wore also; but Captain Thompson, finding there was no signal, shortly after wore again, to join Sir Samuel Drake's division. I stood on, till passing a division of four of the enemy's ships, I exchanged broadsides with them, and finally came up with the Ville de Paris, wore under her stern and engaged her on the quarter for some time, when the Barfleur came up, and the Comte de Grasse hauled down his colours.

Even at this distant period, I have a perfect recollection of the transactions of that day. I shall only add, that I am convinced that no officer who was on board the Canada in the victory of the 12th of April, will assert that she was engaged with the Ville de Paris at the time stated. The present Admiral Giffard was, I believe, one of the

lieutenants, to whom I wish to refer you.

I am, &c.

De Saumarez.

Captain White, as well as other officers, is of opinion that Admiral Drake's division should have tacked sooner; and, as circumstances happened, it would doubtless have been better if he had done so; but probably the admiral, in continuing to stand on the same tack, had calculated that the wind would continue in the same direction, or alter to the northward; in either case he would have weathered the whole of the enemy's fleet, besides giving time to his division to repair damages. The wind veering to the southward immediately after his division had wore, had unfortunately the effect of throwing them to leeward; whereas the Russell, which wore as above stated, was by the same change of wind far to windward of his division and nearer the enemy.

No sooner had the Ville de Paris struck her colours, which "went down with the setting sun," than the Russell made sail in chase of one of the French ships which had deserted her chief, as also did Sir Samuel Hood; but their noble efforts were arrested by the night signal to bring to, which put an end to the battle in that quarter: and although Commodore Affleck in the Bedford, and three others, who did not see the signal, continued the chase, they were unable to come up with the enemy, who escaped to leeward in small divisions and single ships, leaving the Ville de Paris, the Glorieux, the Hector, and Cæsar, in possession of the English.

On the morning of the 13th no enemy was in sight, and the ships which had been in chase returned to the fleet. Admiral Rodney, with his prizes and the fleet, remained three days under Guadaloupe to repair damages, which afforded the flying enemy an opportunity to escape; but, on the 19th, the Caton and Jason, of sixty-four guns each, with the Astrée and Ceres, frigates, were added to the list of prizes by the exertions of Sir Samuel Hood, Captains Goodall, and Linzee. On the 23rd of April, Sir Samuel Hood rejoined the fleet off Tiberoon; whereupon Sir George Rodney proceeded to Jamaica with those ships most disabled, among which was the Russell and the prizes, leaving Sir Samuel Hood with a strong squadron to watch the enemy, should they venture out and attempt to prosecute their attack on Jamaica.

Nothing could be more flattering than the reception that Sir George Rodney met with at Jamaica from the inhabitants, whose anxiety was so suddenly supplanted by unbounded joy; and who not only found themselves freed from the danger of invasion, but beheld the principal commander of that overwhelming force which had caused them so much alarm a prisoner within their harbour, and six of his principal ships having the English colours triumphantly waving over the fleur-de-lis of France.

It is worthy of remark that, down to this period, the Ville de Paris was the only *first-rate* man-of-war that had ever been taken and carried into port by any commander of any nation! The Ville de Paris, in the capture of which Captain Saumarez had a distinguished share, was the largest ship in the French navy: she

had been a present from the city of Paris to Louis XV. and no expense had been spared to render the gift worthy of the city and of the monarch. Her length was 185 feet 7½ inches, her breadth 53 feet 8½, depth 22 feet 2, and 2347 tons' measurement; and the expense of building her and sending her to sea is said to have been 156,000*l*. On board her at the time of capture were found thirty-six chests of money intended for the pay and subsistence of the men who were to be employed in the expedition against Jamaica; and she had on board, at the commencement of the action on the 9th, 1,300 men: in the other captured ships, the whole train of artillery, the battering cannon and carriages meant for the expedition, were found.

The loss of men in the British fleet in both actions was very small, amounting to only two hundred and thirty-seven killed, and seven hundred and seventy-six wounded; while the loss of the French was computed to be three thousand slain, and double that number wounded. In the *Ville de Paris* alone three hundred were killed.

In the engagement on the 9th of April, the French fleet consisted of thirty-four sail of the line, and the British of thirty-six; but in that engagement, two of the enemy's ships having been disabled, their numerical force was reduced in the battle of the 12th to thirty-two sail of the line: on the other hand, the French ships were much larger than the British; and it was calculated by Sir Charles Douglas, that the broadside of the French fleet exceeded that of the British in weight by 4396 pounds, and their

numerical superiority in men was much greater.

On the 13th of April, the Comte de Grasse was removed to the flag-ship; and, some days after, when Captain Saumarez went on board the Formidable after the action, and several times after their arrival at Jamaica, the Comte de Grasse acknowledged that the Ville de Paris suffered very severely from the well-directed fire of the Russell.

Among the instances of heroic submission and perseverance under the severest suffering, may be recorded the conduct of the captain of the main-top of the Russell, who having received a shot that carried off one of his arms, instead of requesting the assistance of his companions to take him below, insisted that they should continue at their stations, and let himself down by one of the backstays. After suffering amputation, he persisted in going again on deck, where he remained encouraging the men till the action terminated.

On the arrival of the fleet at Jamaica, the Russell was found to be in so disabled a state, that Sir George Rodney intended to send her home with the Ville de Paris and the other prizes, and arrangements were made for that purpose accordingly. His old friend, Sir Peter Parker, who had held the command at Jamaica, sailed in the Sandwich, on board which ship was the Comte de Grasse, for England, with a convoy of merchant-ships. After having been at sea three days, the Ajax, one of the ships under his command, sprang a leak, returned to Bluefields Bay, and the Russell was ordered to follow the fleet in her stead. The

exertions which Captain Saumarez used to refit his ship obtained the commander-in-chief's highest approbation. In two days he was ready, and immediately joined the Sandwich and Intrepid, which now sailed with the trade under convoy, and preceded the prizes, which were not yet ready to undertake the voyage to England; and it was owing to this interposition of Providence, that the Russell escaped the melancholy fate which afterwards befel the unfortunate fleet, in which the ill-fated Ville de Paris was lost with all her crew. The Russell had on board three hundred French prisoners and twenty-two officers, and arrived at the Downs on the 29th July 1782. She was ordered to be paid off at Chatham, to which port she proceeded. On her arrival there, an order came from the Admiralty to draft her crew into a ship which was under order to sail for the East Indies. This excited a general murmur, and at length the men refused to obey. On Captain Saumarez being informed of it, he went on board and remonstrated, when they unanimously declared that, although they had but just returned from a long voyage, they would follow him all the world over. Before he left the ship, however, he prevailed on them to resume their duty; and these orders were subsequently altered. After returning her stores, the Russell was paid off on the 24th of September. Captain Saumarez' acting commission as a post-captain, dated on the 8th of February 1782, was confirmed by Earl Howe; and no officer in his Majesty's service more richly deserved his promotion.

CHAPTER V

1784 to 1793

Captain Saumarez returns to Guernsey.—His exemplary Conduct.—Visits Cherbourg.—Is introduced to the French King.—Returns.—Changes at Guernsey.—Prince William Henry visits the Island twice.—His Reception.—Appearance of Hostilities in 1787.—Captain Saumarez is appointed to the Ambuscade, and pays her off.—His Letter on his Marriage.—Remarks thereon.—Armament of 1790.—Saumarez commissions and pays off the *Raisable*.—War of 1793.—Appointed to command the *Crescent*.—First Cruise; takes a prize and saves Alderney.—Second Cruise; captures a cutter.—Third Cruise.—Return.—*Crescent* docked and refitted.

Captain Saumarez having paid off the *Russell*, and distributed his crew into different ships according to the final orders he had received from the Admiralty, repaired to London, and after paying his respects to Earl Howe, proceeded to Guernsey to receive the congratulations of his numerous friends; but these were far from altering "the natural bent of his disposition to do good." Instead of becoming elevated by prosperity, his sincere and unaffected piety induced him to take a leading part in the

establishment of charitable institutions, and in his own person to give "a striking and useful example of moral and religious life." But his noble mind was never diverted from the service and the good of his country; he was constantly attentive to every circumstance that concerned the duties of his profession, and an event occurred about this time that peculiarly interested him.

Although this was a period of profound peace, the ambition of France was constantly awake. It had long been the object of the French government to form a naval port in the British Channel, for the evident, if not avowed, purpose of annoying our trade in time of war, and disputing with us the dominion of the British seas. No labour however arduous, and no expense however great, could check this favourite design. The port of Cherbourg, which had long been fixed upon as being immediately adjacent to our great arsenal at Portsmouth, became the point of attraction. The unfortunate Louis XVI. had determined to stimulate this grand undertaking by his presence, when the first *cone* was submerged.

The assemblage of the French court opposite our own coast naturally attracted a number of our countrymen, among whom was Captain Saumarez, who was induced to cross the Channel probably by a secret wish to examine the nautical projects of our rivals, to counteract which, might at some future period become his duty. This was eventually the case in 1793, when he captured the French frigate *Réunion* off that very harbour, from which she had sailed only a few hours before the action.

Captain Saumarez was present at the above imposing

ceremony, and had the honour of being introduced to the French king, by whom he was treated with the greatest attention. It is worthy of remark, that this was the only time during his long life that he ever set his foot in France, and he returned directly to Guernsey much gratified by his excursion.

Between the period of Captain Saumarez' departure from Guernsey in 1776, and his return in 1782, the island of Guernsey had undergone great and important changes. The war with America had brought an influx of strangers; wealth and its attendant luxuries had superseded the simple mode of living of its inhabitants; society had extended; and when the peace took place, at the close of 1782, no spot of its size could display a greater appearance of prosperity, civilization, and beauty.

Between the years 1785 and 1787, the island was twice honoured with a visit from Prince William Henry, our late most gracious sovereign; and, however great the change had been in men and manners since it had beheld a prince of the blood on its shores, the loyalty of the islanders had sustained no diminution, and the arrival of the prince, then a lieutenant of the Hebe, Captain Thornborough, excited the most unbounded joy. Every one's heart glowed at seeing the son of a monarch whom they were accustomed to regard with veneration and love; and as people who lived in the habitual belief that to "fear God and honour the King" is a "united precept," every mark of respect and attachment was exhibited on both occasions. When his Royal Highness came the second time, as captain of the Pegasus, the

homage, which had been paid to him at the first visit, as son of their sovereign, was mingled with respect to himself. Some there are who yet remember, and still delight to relate, the account of the elegant *dejeuné* with which the illustrious prince entertained a party on board the Pegasus; after which his Royal Highness honoured Captain Saumarez and his brothers with his company at dinner, and attended a ball in the evening at the assembly-rooms.

In 1787, when Captain Saumarez had nearly attained his thirtieth year, peace seemed to be completely established. At an early age he had attained, by his own merit, the highest rank to which an officer could be advanced: he had fully established a character equally exalted for courage and professional talent; and having been, wherever Fortune had placed him, always in the best society, his manners as a gentleman were no less elegant than his person, which was tall and graceful, while his handsome features denoted a heart susceptible of the dictates both of humanity and love. It is not then to be wondered at, when he returned to his native island, that he still cherished an attachment which he had long formed; especially when he found her on whom he had fixed his affections, possessed of every quality which could ensure mutual happiness; neither can it appear surprising that on her part the regard should be equally warm and sincere.

The appearance of hostilities in the same year, however, occasioned a suspension of his matrimonial arrangements, as he was then appointed by Lord Howe to the command of the

Ambuscade frigate, which he had scarcely fitted before she was ordered to be paid off, the hostile differences having been adjusted. He now returned to Guernsey, and, on the 8th October 1788, was united to Miss Martha Le Marchant, only daughter and heir of Thomas Le Marchant, Esq. by his marriage with Miss Mary Dobrée, to the entire satisfaction of the families and relations on both sides.

The following extract of a private letter to his brother Richard, written a few days after his marriage, will give the reader a just idea of the feelings which occupied his mind on this happy occasion:

"It is needless," he says, "to attempt giving you any idea of my joy on this occasion. The abundant blessings which Providence is pleased to pour down on me, who am ever unworthy the least of its favours, makes my heart glow with boundless gratitude and love, which I hope ever to testify by a life strictly devoted to His service. To have the power of making her happy who has ever been the joy and delight of my soul, far surpasses all that I had ever formed of felicity in this world. I must also acknowledge the affectionate kindness of her relations, who have for ever attached me to them by the confidence they have placed in me."

These self-congratulations were, indeed, fully confirmed in after life; for few husbands have ever been blessed with such a devoted wife, or children with such an affectionate mother. During their younger days, and when their gallant father was at sea, Mrs. Saumarez lived retired, giving up her whole time

to their instruction; and we can most fully testify that gratitude for her maternal anxiety, both for their spiritual and temporal welfare, has been indelibly impressed on all their hearts.

After passing some time at Guernsey, Captain Saumarez removed to the neighbourhood of Exeter, where he resided two years. In 1790, appearances of hostility took place. The Spanish armament was not to be lightly regarded. Captain Saumarez was appointed to command the *Raisable* of 64 guns; but he never went to sea in this ship, the differences between the two nations having been amicably settled. It seemed to show, however, that, in the event of war, he was one of those who were to be actively employed.

Captain Saumarez remained on shore until the war occasioned by the French revolution broke out in 1793, when he was appointed to command the *Crescent* of 36 guns. His commission was dated on the 24th January, and he hoisted his pendant in her at Portsmouth on the 28th of the same month, receiving, at the same time, orders to place himself under the command of Commodore Sir Hyde Parker. No sooner was it known at Guernsey, and in Devonshire, that the *Crescent* was commissioned by Captain Saumarez, than a number equal to half the complement of seamen volunteered for the *Crescent*; and, on the 1st of February, the *Tisiphone* sloop was sent to bring the men from Guernsey, while the rest, from Exeter, were sent by the way of Plymouth to join the ship. It could not but be highly gratifying to his feelings when he found that so many of

his countrymen had chosen to devote themselves to his service; and he was soon able to report his ship ready for sea.

On the 10th of February 1793, in common with other officers, he received the following intelligence that war had been declared against France.

By Sir Hyde Parker, Knt. &c.

Accounts having been received that war was declared at Paris, by the National Convention of France, against Great Britain and Holland; you are, in pursuance of the King's pleasure, signified to the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty by the Right Honourable Henry Dundas, one of his Majesty's principal secretaries of state, hereby required and directed to seize or destroy all ships and vessels belonging to France that you may happen to fall in with.

*Given under my hand, on board the Victory,
this 10th day of February 1793.*

H. Parker.

To Captain Saumarez, R.N.

The Crescent having been reported ready for sea on the 1st of March, Captain Saumarez received orders to proceed to Guernsey with his ship, accompanied by the Liberty brig, and three transports under convoy, to reinforce the garrisons of the Channel islands. He had also sealed orders, which were to be put in execution when the troops were landed at Guernsey and Jersey. The following account of this cruise was sent to his brother, on the ship's return to Guernsey Road.

H.M.S. Crescent, Guernsey, 18th March 1793.

My dear Richard

As the detail of our proceedings on our first cruise cannot but be acceptable to you, I take up my pen to communicate them. We anchored in this road on Sunday morning, the day after we had sailed from Spithead. The independent companies and invalids for this island were immediately disembarked. The wind being too much to the southward for the transports to proceed to Jersey, they remained till Thursday following, when I sent them under convoy of the Liberty brig.

On Thursday morning, intelligence was brought to me that a French brig was seen to the northward of the island, standing for the Casketts. I immediately got under way, and directed the Drake to do the same. We pushed through the Race of Alderney during the night, and at day-break found ourselves close to the brig, off Cherbourg. She is about 100 tons, from Vannes, loaded with salt, for Havre. Seeing another brig and a galliot to the N.W. from us, I ordered the Drake and Cockatrice to chase, and I have hopes they are also prizes.

About three o'clock, it blowing very hard, I was much surprised at an express joining me from Alderney, with a letter from the governor, addressed to the commander of H.M. ships off Alderney, mentioning that he had positive information that the enemy meant to attack the island this or the following night; and as there was no ship of force at Cherbourg but an old 64, with frigate's masts, he was

certain that the appearance of a man-of-war off Cherbourg would preserve Alderney, and baffle the expedition. Chance having thrown me off Cherbourg, within sight the whole day, I was happy the purport of this letter was so fully answered. Expecting further intelligence, I waited till a cutter hailed us that he was going express to Plymouth. No other vessel appearing, I made sail for this island, and anchored in the road this morning. I have scarcely a doubt that what caused your brother⁶ to be alarmed was the appearance of this ship, the Drake and Cockatrice, with another small vessel in the Race of Alderney; and I am sorry it was not in my power to acquaint him with it, as the vessel he sent me returned immediately.

Captain Saumarez, on his return to Guernsey, wrote to Governor Le Mesurier, and, in reply to his letter, informed him that the appearance of the Crescent and squadron off Cherbourg had the desired effect of baffling the meditated attack on Alderney; nevertheless, the Crescent was detained on that station until the 25th, in consequence of other reports of the enemy's intentions to attack either Jersey or Alderney, and his squadron therefore was reinforced. In the mean time he succeeded in filling up the complement of his crew at Guernsey, and at length returned to Spithead, when some alteration took place in the armament of his ship: having there completed his stores and provisions, Captain Saumarez' next employment was to take a convoy of transports with troops to Cork, and bring from thence

⁶ Governor Le Mesurier was brother to Mrs. Richard Saumarez.

two regiments to Guernsey. This service occupied his ship until the 4th of May, when she arrived off the Lizard, and, having sent part of his convoy into Falmouth, he anchored at Guernsey on the following day.

He left Guernsey on the 15th of May, having six transports with French prisoners on board, and arrived at Spithead on the 17th.

On the 22nd Captain Saumarez received orders from the Admiralty to take the Hind, Captain Cochrane, under his command, and proceed with the Crescent and that ship to cruise between lat. 51° and 47° N. and long. 10° to 16° W. for the protection of the trade, and continue on that service for three weeks. The account of this cruise, in which two prizes were taken, is given in the following letter to his brother.

Crescent, Spithead, 26th June 1793.

My Dear Richard,

I have the pleasure to acquaint you with our return from a cruise which has been rather unsuccessful, having only taken (besides the brig I informed you of) a cutter called "Le Club de Cherbourg," of ten guns. She sailed from Brest on the 20th instant, and was found on the coast of Ireland, where she had done much mischief on her former cruise, having taken four vessels within a few days. I find by the prisoners that the French have only eighteen sail from Brest in readiness for sea. They rendezvous in Quiberon Bay as soon as they are equipped. I hope Lord Howe will soon give

a good account of all of them. I anchored at Guernsey for a few hours, where I left the cutter for my brother's disposal.

As we have been parted from the Hind since the 8th instant, I hope to find she may have met with success. We are under agreement to share till the expiration of our cruise. As I write before we anchor, you cannot expect I should give you an account of my further destination; but, from what they informed me in the island, we are to go with Lord Howe, which hurried me from there. All the family were in perfect health at six o'clock on Tuesday evening, when I left them. We must now console ourselves with the hope that we shall soon terminate the business. I think this year will nearly do it. We anxiously sought for an opportunity similar to the Nymphe. We traversed the bay (Biscay) in every direction, without the appearance of a French ship; and on Monday we were all day in sight of Ushant, but could never meet with any but neutral vessels. Our next cruise may probably prove more fortunate. With my affectionate love to my sister and the children, I am, my dear Richard,

Yours truly,

James Saumarez.

It will be seen by the date of this letter, that the Crescent had arrived at Spithead on the 26th, which is the date of his official letter to the Admiralty, giving an account of the capture of Le Club, which, being the same as already given, need not be repeated.

The Crescent, being replenished with water and provisions,

was directed on the 4th July to take on board a quantity of specie for Plymouth, to which he sailed on the 5th, and, having delivered it there, took a convoy from thence to the Downs, where he arrived on the 18th July, and, according to further orders, returned with the trade under convoy from thence to Spithead on the 20th.

The following order, which Captain Saumarez received from the Lords of the Admiralty, will show the nature of the service on which he was now employed.

By the Commissioners for executing the office of Lord High Admiral of Great Britain and Ireland, &c.

Captain Saumarez,

You are to take his Majesty's ships named on the margin (Concorde and Thames) under your command, (their captains being directed to follow your orders,) and putting to sea with them and the Crescent, the moment the wind and weather will permit, proceed and cruise between the latitudes of 49° and $50^{\circ} 30'$ north, and from sixty to one hundred leagues to the westward of the Scilly Islands, for the protection of the trade of his Majesty's subjects, and the annoyance of the enemy, taking all possible care of the above-mentioned frigates; and diligently looking out for, and using your best endeavours to fall in with, the homeward-bound convoys from Jamaica and the Leeward Islands, which are daily expected, and which are to be the principal objects of your attention.

In case of falling in with either of the said convoys, you are to see, or cause to be seen, such of the merchant ships

or vessels as may be bound to Ireland, or into the Bristol Channel, as far as may be necessary for their security, and those bound into the English Channel, as far as the Start; and, having so done, return with the frigates under your command to the above-mentioned station, to look out for the other convoy; and, having met with it, to see, or cause to be seen, such of the merchant vessels as may be bound to Ireland, and into the Bristol Channel, as before directed, and to see those bound up the English Channel off their respective ports, as high as Spithead, where you are to remain until further orders, sending to our secretary an account of your arrival and proceedings.

You are to continue on the above-mentioned service until the 20th of next month, unless you shall have fallen in with both the said convoys sooner; when you are to make the best of your way to Spithead, and remain there as above directed.

Given under our hands, this 18th day of July 1793.

Chatham, J. Smyth, Ch^s. S. Pybus.

To James Saumarez, Esq. &c.

By command of their lordships. P. Stephens.

Captain Saumarez received at the same time information of the number of ships expected from the different islands in both the convoys, took the Concorde and Thames under his command, and sailed from Spithead on the 26th of July 1793.

Next to the command of a fleet, that of a squadron of frigates was at this period of the war considered the most important,

and it could not but be highly gratifying to Captain Saumarez to find himself selected again for such a desirable command; but Fortune did not favour his little detachment. The convoys, which they had been sent to look out for and protect, had arrived safely at the respective ports before the squadron reached their destination, and they continued to cruise in vain within the prescribed limits of their station, till at length they were assailed by a tremendous gale from the south-east on the 17th of August, in which the Concorde parted company, the Thames lost her bowsprit and bore up for England, while the Crescent sprung her main-yard, and by a sudden shift of wind to the northward carried away her main-top-mast, and, her orders for returning into port having expired, she arrived at Spithead after an unsuccessful cruise.

The Crescent had not been in dock since the year 1785, and required much refitting: Captain Saumarez, therefore, on reporting his arrival to the Secretary of the Admiralty, sent also a statement of the ship's defects; in consequence of which, an order was sent for her to be docked at Portsmouth, and refitted for Channel service, while one hundred of her crew were lent to the Vanguard. As this process required a considerable time, Captain Saumarez sent for his family; and, having taken apartments at Ryde, had a few weeks of enjoyment in their society, and of relaxation from the arduous duties of his profession. The Crescent was received into dock on the 25th August, and was again fit for sea on the 10th October, when he received orders to

hold himself ready to proceed at a moment's notice.

CHAPTER VI

1793

Crescent refitted.—Sails for the Channel Islands.—Falls in with the French frigate *La Réunion*.—Particular account of the action.—Letters from Captain Saumarez to his brother.—Brings his prize to Portsmouth.—Official letters.—Letters from various persons.—Ship refitting.—Captain Saumarez obtains leave of absence.—Is knighted for his gallant conduct.

The *Crescent* being now ready for sea, but with thirteen men short of her complement, Captain Saumarez applied to have the number filled up, as her masts and yards were of the same dimensions as those of a frigate of thirty-eight guns; he also requested such increase as the Lords of the Admiralty thought proper: but these applications were unsuccessful, and on the 10th of October he received orders from Sir Peter Parker, the port-admiral, to "hold himself in constant readiness to put to sea at a moment's warning;" and it was not long before the following order was received from the Admiralty.

By the Commissioners for executing the office of Lord High Admiral,&c

You are hereby required and directed to proceed in the ship under your command, without a moment's loss of time, to the islands of Guernsey and Jersey; and so soon as you shall have delivered the packets you will herewith receive, addressed to the commanding officers of his Majesty's troops serving in these islands, you are to repair with the said ship off St. Maloes, and use your best endeavours to obtain such information of the enemy's forces there, as circumstances will admit.

Having so done, you are to return with the said ship with all possible despatch, for further orders, transmitting to our secretary, for our information, by post-office express, an account of your arrival and proceedings.

Given under our hands, this 18th October 1793,

A. Gardner. J. Smyth.

P. Affleck.

To Captain Saumarez, R.N.

For several days previously to the 19th, it had been reported that a French frigate usually quitted the port of Cherbourg at night, and returned next morning with what prizes she had picked up: this, together with the information that an armament was preparing for the invasion of Jersey, caused Captain Saumarez

to make extraordinary exertions to get to sea; and, although the wind was light, he fortunately succeeded in getting round St. Helens before night. Early on the morning, on the 20th, he was close to the light-house off Cape Barfleur.

ACTION BETWEEN THE CRESCENT AND REUNION

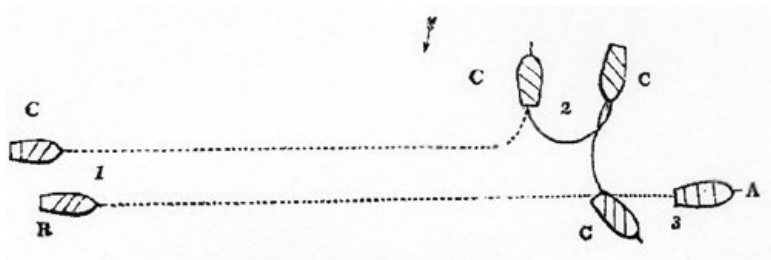
This gallant action, which we are now about to describe, having been misrepresented in every account yet published, we have, in order to make the circumstances attending it more easily understood, illustrated the positions by a diagram, showing the masterly manœuvre performed by the Crescent, and the relative situation of the ships at the commencement and the end of the conflict. The engraving shows the state and situation of the two ships at the time the Réunion surrendered.

During the night, the wind had been so far to the westward as to enable the Crescent to fetch Cape Barfleur, while the Réunion, which left Cherbourg in the evening, stood to the northward, in hopes of meeting with merchant-ships coming up Channel. The two frigates, therefore, must have crossed each other at no great distance; but the wind having changed towards the south about daylight, and the French frigate being unable to fetch back to Cherbourg, broke off with her head to the eastward, while the Crescent, by coming up on the opposite tack, was enabled to weather and get in shore of the enemy.

Shortly after day-break Captain Saumarez saw two sail standing on the starboard tack towards the Crescent, and it appears that they had approached her within two miles before they discovered themselves to be under the lee of an English frigate: they then tacked and made all sail, either for the purpose of trying to escape, or to approach nearer to Cherbourg, that they might have the assistance of their consort then in the harbour with her sails hoisted up. It was soon evident that the Crescent, now "clean out of dock," had the advantage in sailing; and, by half-past ten, Captain Saumarez, by edging down, took his position on the enemy's larboard quarter within pistol-shot, when the action began.

Captain John Tancock, who was then a midshipman stationed on the main-deck, says that the men had directions to fire at the rudder of their opponent, which was very soon disabled, while the main-topsail-yard and fore-yard were both shot away. The enemy fired so high that scarcely any shot struck the hull of the Crescent; but, consequently, her fore-topsail-yard, and soon afterwards her fore-top-mast, fell over the starboard gangway. Hitherto the ship had been kept in her first position by backing and filling the mizen-topsail, but now she came to, and eventually *came round*: but Captain Saumarez, whose presence of mind never forsook him, brailed up the mizen, and, by keeping all the square-sails aback, gave the ship a *stern-board*; at the same time, by keeping the *helm up*, she wore round on her heel, obtaining a position under the stern and on the starboard quarter, while the

enemy was lying with his yards square and totally unmanageable. This manœuvre is shown in the diagram, to which an explanation is added.



C. The Crescent. R. The Réunion. 1. Commencement of the action. 2. The Crescent's track in wearing on her heel. 3. The position when the Réunion struck.

In passing under the enemy's stern, it was observed that his colours had been shot away, and, supposing he had struck, the firing ceased; but, on coming round on the starboard quarter, the enemy again opened his fire. The Crescent, having now got her larboard guns to bear, returned his broadside with such effect, that at twenty minutes past noon the officers of the Réunion waved their hats and flags to indicate that they had surrendered. The engraving represents the situation of the two ships at this moment; and Captain Sir Thomas Mansel, who was then a midshipman, declares it to be correct.



Action with the Crescent and Réunion taken at the time the latter surrendered.

The combat now ceased, and the prize was taken possession of by Lieutenant (now Admiral) Sir George Parker, who received the usual order to carry her into port. The French captain being sent on board the Crescent, they began to remove the prisoners and repair damages. When the action began, a ship had been seen under the land to the eastward, about four leagues distant; this was supposed to be an enemy: but it turned out to be the Circe, Captain Yorke, who joined four hours after the action, and took part of the prisoners. In the mean time the cutter made off towards Cherbourg, out of which harbour the wind and adverse tide prevented the other frigate, said to be La Semillante, from getting to assist the Réunion.

The following very concise official letter to the Secretary of the Admiralty from Captain Saumarez, supplies the rest of the detail.

Crescent, off Cherbourg, 20th October 1793.

Sir,

I have the honour to acquaint you, for the information of my Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty, that this morning, being off Cape Barfleur in his Majesty's ship *Crescent*, under my command, I fell in with a French frigate, which, after a close action of two hours and ten minutes, struck to his Majesty's colours: she proved to be the *Réunion*, mounting thirty-six guns, and manned with three hundred and twenty men.

I am singularly happy in being able to inform their lordships that she has been obtained without the loss of a single man, or even any wounded, although her own loss has been very considerable indeed, having, as the prisoners informed me, one hundred and twenty killed and wounded.

I must beg leave to render the most ample justice to the officers and ship's company of the *Crescent*, for their cool and steady behaviour during the action; and I take this opportunity to recommend to their lordships' notice the three lieutenants, Messrs. Parker, Otter, and Rye: their

conduct has afforded me the utmost satisfaction.

I have the honour to be,

With the greatest respect, sir,

Your most obedient and very humble servant,

James Saumarez.

To Philip Stephens, Esq. Admiralty.

P.S.—The Réunion was accompanied by a cutter, which did not attempt to come into action, but made for Cherbourg.

Captain Saumarez was now on his passage to Portsmouth, where he had left his wife and infant children only two days before, in pursuit of an implacable enemy known to be not many leagues distant! It was the first battle he had fought since he became a husband and a father; and his feelings, as he returned triumphantly to the bosom of his family, can be easier imagined than described.

The anxiety and excitement inseparable from the day of battle had subsided, the prisoners had been removed, the captive Frenchmen with whom he had been sympathizing had retired, and he was at length left alone to meditate on that remarkable dispensation of Divine favour which had been so fully and especially manifested towards him: he had gloriously wrested from an enemy, fighting under the proud banner of liberty, a ship equal to his own in weight of metal and superior by seventy men in numbers, after a furious contest of above two hours, without a man being hurt by his opponent, who lost one hundred and

twenty men killed and wounded: a fact unparalleled in the page of history. With the generality of mankind, such circumstances were well calculated to raise feelings of proud exultation; but these were never cherished in the breast of Saumarez. Having done all in his power to soothe the affliction of his vanquished enemy, his first impulse was to offer up his thanksgivings and acknowledgments to the great Giver of all victory, and to implore that his mind might not be too highly elevated by his glorious success. After despatching his unpresuming letter to the Admiralty, which has been already given, he wrote to his brother, in London, the following letter:

Crescent, 21st Oct. 1793.

My dear Richard,

You will rejoice with me at the success that has attended our short cruise. On Saturday evening we sailed from Spithead; and the next morning, being about three leagues from Cape Barfleur, we saw two sail standing towards us from under Cherbourg, which I soon discovered to be a French frigate and a cutter. We were on the larboard tack with the wind off shore; I was happy in being able to keep between them and the land. When about two miles from us, the frigate tacked with all her sail set, and the cutter made sail to windward: we edged down to her, and at a cable's distance, at half-past ten, began the action, which continued with scarcely any intermission two hours and ten minutes.

Both ships were soon cut up in their sails and rigging, our fore-topsail yard being shot away, and soon after the fore-

top-mast; the ship came to, and wearing on the other tack, gave us an opportunity to fire our guns, which were so well served that the French ship soon became unmanageable, and enabled us to rake her fore and aft; in which situation she struck her colours. I must observe that they had been before shot away, and, imagining she had struck, I gave orders to cease firing; she, however, soon relieved us of our suspense by giving us her broadside: we were so well prepared, and kept up so good a fire, that in a short time after they waved their colours and made signs from the gunwale with their hats that they had struck.

I immediately sent Mr. Parker to take possession of the ship, and send the first and second captains on board the Crescent. They informed me that the ship they had surrendered was La Réunion, mounting thirty-six guns and three hundred and twenty-one men. When we came into action, another frigate was in sight to the eastward, which we took to be her consort; we therefore lost no time to exchange prisoners, and repair our damages, in the best manner we could: she, however, proved to be the Circe, and joined us four hours after the action ceased.

The circumstance that has made me most happy from this engagement is, that we have not had a single person hurt by the enemy, and but one man injured, who had his leg fractured by the recoil of a gun. There being little wind the sea was perfectly calm; and I had the satisfaction to observe that most of our shot were perfectly well directed. The enemy's frigate is indeed most sadly a wreck, thirty-four men killed and eighty-four wounded,

many of them mortally; one officer only has suffered, being badly wounded. She was commanded by Citizen Denain, capitaine de vaisseau, to whose obstinacy they ascribe the sacrifice of many lives.

It is unnecessary for me to observe, my dear Richard, the great happiness I derive from the consciousness that this event will afford you and all our friends particular satisfaction. My dear Martha, too,—I scarcely know how I shall disclose the circumstance to her; it embarrasses me as much as if it were a mournful subject. One observation is incumbent on me to make, namely, that Captain Yorke used every possible exertion to join us sooner, and that he has most readily afforded us every assistance we required,

I now remain, your ever affectionate brother,

Jas. Saumarez.

Captain Saumarez had now realized his ardent desire for an opportunity of distinguishing himself, such as was afforded to his gallant brother-officer of the *Nymphe*; and it is a singular coincidence that each should have written to his brother on the day of action, under similar circumstances of triumph and excitement. These interesting documents seem to have decided the superiority of the British over the French navy, at the commencement of the French revolution, and in reference to that of Saumarez, we cannot but dwell with admiration on the humility and acuteness of feeling with which it is replete!

The *Circe*, which had joined four hours after the action, was despatched to Guernsey to execute the service on which Captain

Saumarez had been ordered; but the Crescent and her prize, in proceeding to Spithead, were detained by light winds and calms. On the 22nd, she arrived off the Isle of Wight, when Lieutenant Otter was sent to Portsmouth in the boat with the following official letter:

Crescent, off the Isle of Wight, 22d Oct. 1793.

Sir,

I beg you will be pleased to inform my Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty, that, being unable to gain Spithead from the prevailing calms, I have thought it expedient to despatch Lieutenant Otter with the intelligence I have the honour to convey to their lordships.

Having been prevented by the action with La Réunion from complying with their lordships' orders, I directed the Hon. Captain Yorke, who joined me in his Majesty's ship *Circe*, to proceed with the pacquets I was charged with for the commanding officers of his Majesty's troops at Guernsey and Jersey, and from thence to proceed to St. Maloes, and return to Spithead, agreeable to their lordships' orders.

I beg to observe, that Captain Yorke gave me every possible assistance, and has taken one hundred and sixty prisoners from the Réunion, which I directed him to land in the island of Guernsey.

I have the honour to be, sir,

Your most humble servant,

Jas. Saumarez.

To Philip Stephens, Esq.

The Crescent arrived at Spithead on the following day, and with her prize was ordered into harbour; the former to have her damages repaired, and the latter to be surveyed and purchased for his Majesty's service.

Before we submit the interesting official and private letters which Captain Saumarez received on his arrival, and which may be considered as the best proof of the sensation which this gallant action created, it becomes our duty to state the comparative force of the two frigates.

[illegible]

<i>Crescent.</i>		Men	257		Tons	888
<i>Réunion.</i>		Men	320		Tons	951
Difference in favour			—			—
of La Réunion			63			63
N.B. The weight has been reduced to English pounds.						

The *Crescent* lost her fore-top-mast; her sails and rigging were much damaged, but very few shot struck her hull; and the only man hurt was at the first broadside, when his leg was fractured by the recoil of a gun.

La Réunion, on the contrary, had many shot in her hull, and her stern was very much shattered. After she was in dock, we saw where a shot had entered the starboard quarter, and made its way out of the larboard bow. It was said to have killed and wounded twenty-one men! The head of her rudder and wheel were shot away, and the fore-yard and main-topsail-yard came down early in the action: she was, in short, a complete wreck, as represented in the plate. The hopes that the ship seen to the eastward under the land was a friend, induced the French captain to delay surrendering after defence could no longer be effectual.

The head-money was only paid for three hundred men; but there was no doubt that three hundred and twenty-one were on board at the commencement of the action, as many of the slain were thrown overboard, and the French officers, for obvious reasons, wished to make their force less than it was. According to

Captains Tancock and Mansell, forty men were killed, and eighty wounded. The cutter which was in company, believed to be *L'Espérance*, mounting fourteen guns, made off for Cherbourg with sweeps and sails as soon as the firing commenced. *La Réunion's* consort, believed to be the *Semillante*, made an attempt to get out of Cherbourg, but was prevented by the tide, when she sent a boat full of men, it was supposed, to reinforce the former, but which returned when it was observed that her fate was decided. The French shore, only five miles distant, was crowded with spectators.

There is no action between two single ships on record, where consummate skill in naval tactics has been so brilliantly and successfully displayed as in that which we have just described. The patriotic reader must not imagine that, because the *Crescent* had "none" either killed or wounded, the captain and officers of *La Réunion* did not do their utmost, and far less that they were deficient in courage. The severe loss they sustained, and the obstinacy with which their ship was defended, has fully proved their bravery. Had the *Crescent* at once boarded the *Réunion*, which was in her power, and carried her sword in hand, as in the case of the *Nymphe* and *Cléopâtre*, it would have been perhaps better calculated to excite feelings of admiration in the general reader, who is not acquainted with naval affairs; but this mode of attack is one which, we must acquaint them, might readily be made by any officer moderately skilled in naval tactics. It is where the commander of a ship, by his presence of mind and

skilful manœuvring, succeeds in the defeat and capture of an enemy, that the superiority is manifest; and it is to him who has thus proved that he possesses the *tact* to accomplish his object, and yet spare the valuable lives of his men, that the meed of praise is most justly due.

Crescent, Spithead, 23rd October 1793.

Sir,

I beg you will be pleased to inform my Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty of my arrival at Spithead in H.M. ship *Crescent*, under my command, and the prize *La Réunion*, and from thence into Portsmouth Harbour, conformable with orders from Sir Peter Parker.

I have the honour to be,

Your obedient humble servant,

James Saumarez.

To Philip Stephens, Esq.

Admiralty, October 24th, 1793.

Sir,

I learnt yesterday with great satisfaction the account of your action with the French frigate *La Réunion*, and beg to congratulate you very sincerely on your success on this occasion. The greatest praise seems due to the bravery and good conduct of the officers and men of the *Crescent*. I shall be extremely happy, as soon as it is convenient to you, to

have the pleasure of seeing you in town, and of presenting you to his Majesty on an occasion so highly honourable to you.

I am, sir,

Your very faithful humble servant,

Chatham

(First Lord of the Admiralty.)

To Captain Saumarez.

Admiralty, 24th October 1793.

Dear Sir,

I was this morning so happy as to receive your letter, conveying the agreeable account of your having captured the French frigate La Réunion, and which I lost no time in communicating to Lord Chatham, who will himself express to you his very high sense of your distinguished conduct, as well as his great satisfaction at the account you have given of the exemplary and gallant behaviour of your officers and men. I beg, my dear sir, to congratulate you most sincerely on an event which adds such lustre to your professional character, at the same time that it entitles you to every

reward from your country, and
I remain, with great regard,
Your very faithful
and obedient humble servant,
J. Hunt
(Private Secretary.)

To Captain Saumarez, &c.

St. James's-square, 24th October 1793.

Sir,

Lord Chatham was so obliging as to acquaint me yesterday with your success, and at the same time with his fullest approbation of your conduct, which you may be assured gave me great pleasure. I have this day the favour of your letter, and thank you for your kind attention in informing me of what you might be confident would give me particular satisfaction.

I am, with great regard, sir,
Your obedient humble servant,
Amherst.

To Captain James Saumarez.

FROM THE REV. R. B. NICHOLLS

28th October 1793, Middleham, Yorkshire.

Dear Sir,

Accept my warmest congratulations on your late very extraordinary and glorious success, which I consider as a signal favour and blessing upon you from the God of armies, whom I invoke, and shall ever, on your behalf, that the path of happiness and glory, temporal and eternal, may be successfully trodden by you, and that you may long live an example of the blessings that Heaven has for a Cornelius. Continue me in your friendly remembrance, which I shall ever consider as an honour.

I am, dear sir,

Your most affectionate

and most obedient humble servant,

R. B. Nicholls.

To Captain Saumarez, &c.

Portsmouth, 30th October 1793.

Dear Sir,

I am infinitely obliged to you for your kindness and attention to George Parker. I have not as yet heard from Lord Chatham, but suppose I shall in a day or two. This

morning I reckon you will kiss hands, and return home "Sir James." Such an honour obtained on such an occasion is worthy the solicitation of a duke. If anything material occurs, be so good to favour me with a line. Lady Parker unites in every good wish for your rib and yourself, with

Yours, most sincerely,

P. Parker.

To Captain Saumarez.

Captain Saumarez, after a happy visit to his family at Ryde, repaired to London, on leave of absence; and, on being presented to his Majesty, received the well-merited honour of knighthood, and his first lieutenant (now Admiral Sir) George Parker, was promoted to the rank of master and commander. Sir James, having applied for an extension of his leave, enjoyed the society of his friends in London until the 14th of November, when he and Lady Saumarez returned to their family at Ryde. The following letter to his brother, descriptive of other marks of respect which had been paid to him, will be read with interest:

Ryde, Isle of Wight, 16th Nov. 1793.

My dear Brother,

It was not before yesterday that we were enabled to return to our little treasure in this island, owing to official business and the badness of the weather. We found all in perfect good health except our little girl, who has been for some time very unwell, and has suffered exceedingly; she is at present rather better, and we hope her disorder

is past its height. Mr. Le Marchant has fixed for next Monday to leave the island. I shall endeavour to accompany them to Southampton, and, after that, trust to opportunities hereafter offering to enable me to see them at Bath.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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