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Whitelaw Reid

from Campdown

(The Author)

Oct 5. 1906.

ADMIRAL DUNCAN







John Hoppner, R.A. pinx. 1783

Walker & Beutall, ph.

*Admiral Duncan*

# ADMIRAL DUNCAN

BY THE  
EARL OF CAMPERDOWN

*WITH THREE PORTRAITS  
AND A PLAN OF THE ACTION OFF CAMPERDOWN*

LONGMANS, GREEN, AND CO.

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T. R.  
C 195 A

## INTRODUCTION

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JUST ONE HUNDRED YEARS have passed since the sea fight off Camperdown on October 11, 1797, which decided the fate of the Dutch Navy; and a Centenary seems a not inopportune moment to place on record some incidents in the life and naval career of Admiral Duncan which have hitherto remained unpublished.

He had the honour to be one of the great Sea Commanders whom the perils of Great Britain in the eighteenth century called into existence. Boscawen, Hawke, Keppel, Howe, Rodney, Hood, St. Vincent, Nelson, Collingwood, were of the number. Of all these famous sailors there are written memorials, which will keep their memory green as long as there is a British Empire, and which tell how, in the eighteenth century, superior seamanship and daring time after time warded off and finally brought to naught combinations of Great Britain's enemies which seemed irresistible.

In Admiral Duncan's case a connected record of his life and service—a service which, as he reminded his ship's company when attempting to mutiny, extended over more than fifty years—

is unfortunately wanting. It is almost too late to attempt the task now. If a biographer is to achieve any measure of success, he cannot begin his work too soon. Personal reminiscences quickly fade away. Letters and papers are constantly being lost or destroyed. Personal anecdotes alter in course of narration, until they can hardly be recognised. As each year passes it becomes more and more difficult to represent a man just as he was, neither adding anything to him nor detracting anything from him—to bring him back such as those saw him who lived and served with him.

It must be admitted, too, that Admiral Duncan himself did not do much to assist anyone who might be desirous of perpetuating his memory. Comparatively little of his handwriting remains. During his earlier service the facilities for writing at sea cannot have been great, nor does he appear to have been at any time much given to placing his thoughts and ideas on paper; he was a man of action, not of words. Nevertheless, in preserving official letters and orders as a Captain and as an Admiral, he was regular and methodical in the extreme, and endorsed and kept every document of the kind which he received.

Lord Spencer's private letters to him during his command of the North Sea Fleet, including the dark days of the Mutiny at the Nore, are all preserved, and will be referred to. The Admiral's private letters to Lord Spencer were, unfortunately, destroyed by accident at Althorp.

His despatches to the Admiralty during his command in the North Sea, of which some are in his own hand, as well as two or three autograph letters written to the Admiralty at important moments, are preserved in the Public Records Office. Amongst his Papers are his plans for the improved administration of the Navy, a subject in which he was much interested, and which he urged strongly upon his relative Mr. Henry Dundas, afterwards Viscount Melville; the drafts of some letters to the Admiralty and to Lord Spencer; and the rough drafts of several addresses which he delivered to the ship's company of the 'Venerable,' during the mutiny.

Nor has much information about him been handed down by his wife and family. Lady Duncan lived until 1832, but, so far as is known, she left no writings behind her and no letters from her husband, although she adored his memory. His eldest surviving son, Robert, who succeeded to the title, was only twelve years old at the time of the action; and his father hauled down his flag and came ashore in the year 1800, just four years before he died. Moreover, it was not in accordance with the Admiral's temperament or habits to talk much about himself or what he had seen or done.

Notwithstanding, however, the absence of information from family sources, some information of interest is obtained from Admiral Duncan's Papers and in other ways. The secret despatches from the Admiralty and Lord Spencer's private letters



to him, which are here published for the first time, tell the history of the mutiny at Yarmouth and at the Nore from a fresh point of view.

Almost every naval history contains notices of him which are worth collecting and collating. The standard works about the British Navy such as the 'Naval Chronicle,' 'The Annual Register,' James' 'Naval History,' Charnock's 'Naval Biography,' Beatson's 'Memoirs,' Ralfe's 'Naval Biography,' Schomberg's 'Naval Chronology,' Brenton's 'Naval History,' Admiral Sir Charles Ekin's 'Naval Battles,' have been consulted; and also the Biographies of Viscount Keppel by the Hon. and Rev. Thomas Keppel, and of Earl St. Vincent by Jedidiah Tucker. From all these, as well as from other works, amongst which must be mentioned the 'Arniston Memoirs' (which are the history of the Dundas family) and the 'Memoirs of R. and J. A. Haldane, by Alexander Haldane, Esq., Barrister at Law,' quotations and extracts have been taken which are acknowledged as far as possible where they occur.

Some of the naval officers, too, who served under Admiral Duncan have left their impressions and have narrated anecdotes of him in writing, amongst whom may be mentioned Captain Hotham of the 'Adamant' (to whose Journal access has been obtained through the kindness of Vice-Admiral Sir Charles Hotham), and Lieutenant Richardson of the 'Circe' Frigate, afterwards Admiral Sir Charles Richardson.

Moreover, it is hardly possible for anyone who

at the present time is describing a British admiral belonging to the last years of the eighteenth century not to have read the three great works of Captain A. T. Mahan, U.S.N., showing the influence of sea power upon history; and it is quite impossible that a reader of those works should not both consciously and unconsciously imbibe and assimilate the suggestive ideas and the philosophy of naval history which are contained therein. It will be seen that Captain Mahan's doctrines, viz. that sailors are made by constantly cruising at sea, and that a maritime nation protects herself best by blockading her enemies' ports, receive abundant illustration and confirmation from Admiral Duncan's service in the North Sea.

In an account of Admiral Duncan's life some events must be described which are already matters of history, but as an excuse for the repetition it may be pleaded that it is hardly possible to describe too often a crisis of such superlative and exceeding interest.

In the eighteenth century France was a powerful and intriguing rival to Great Britain in almost every part of the world, and became more hostile, more powerful, and more intriguing, under the influence of the Revolution and of the genius of Napoleon. Spain was more than once drawn into the struggle. Holland, towards the close of the century, was led captive by the French Republic, and joined the coalition against Great Britain. Worst of all, it was then that Great Britain threw away her American colonies by a course of

stupendous and culpable folly of which the consequences still remain, and will be felt as long as there are two divisions of the Anglo-Saxon race.

After such mistakes as Great Britain had committed in America, and such misfortunes as her allies had experienced on the continent of Europe, any other nation would have given way to despair. Even such a man as William Pitt could, at times, see no bottom to the abyss and no salvation but peace. What saved Great Britain and the cause of freedom was her doggedness, and, above all, her command of the sea. No one felt this so bitterly as Napoleon:—" Make what efforts we will, we shall not, for many years, regain command of the sea. To make a descent upon England, without being masters of the sea, is the boldest and most difficult operation ever attempted." (Napoleon to the Directory, February 23, 1798.)

Never, too, did Great Britain remain for one moment passive on the sea in the face of any hostile combination. If at war with France, British frigates were at once cruising in front of Toulon, Rochefort, and Brest, while the ships of the line were rocking near the rendezvous at sea. Other squadrons were at the same time destroying French commerce and capturing French colonies. If Spain was added to the combination, Cadiz, Carthagena, Ferrol were blockaded; Spanish treasure was seized, and Spanish trade with South America ruined.



When the Batavian Republic declared against Great Britain, she lost the Cape of Good Hope, her possessions in India, Ceylon, and her West Indian colonies, together with much of her commercial prosperity. At the same time the North Sea Fleet came into existence, and a blockade of the coast of Holland was established which only terminated with the surrender of the Dutch Navy.

The crisis, however, became more and more acute in the last years of the century. At any moment the French might have the command of the Channel, or the Dutch might be in the Thames. If the command of the sea were lost, even for a few days, the result to Great Britain might be beyond repair. Her fortunes were embarked on board each and every fleet that she possessed. It is because of the unparalleled excitement and tension of the nation during this crisis that the great Seamen, who by a policy of bold offence so well defended their country, will never be forgotten.

An attempt, however imperfect and defective, to revive a few incidents in the life of one of them will, it is hoped, meet with toleration and indulgence, notwithstanding the lapse of years.

*October 11, 1897.*



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# ADMIRAL DUNCAN

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## CHAPTER I

MIDSHIPMAN 1746—LIEUTENANT 1755—  
COMMANDER 1759

ADAM DUNCAN was born in Dundee on July 1, 1731. He was the third son of Alexander Duncan of Lundie and of Helen Haldane, daughter of John Haldane of Gleneagles, in Perthshire. The Duncan family originally belonged to Dundee, and acquired Seaside in the Carse of Gowrie, and afterwards they resided at Lundie House in the county of Forfar, while they also possessed the upper flat of a house at the end of the Seagait in Dundee, the lower part of which was the town house of the Stewarts of Grandtully, where the Pretender lodged when he visited Dundee on January 6, 1716.

Thomson's  
History of  
Dundee

The Duncans of Lundie were staunch Presbyterians ; opposed to King James VII., and, unlike most of the neighbouring County Families, strong supporters of the Protestant Succession and of the House of Hanover. They had for some time taken an active part in the Municipal Government of Dundee, where they resided during the winter

Municipal  
History of  
Dundee

months. From 1682 to 1685 an Alexander Duncan of Lundie was Provost of Dundee. He was one of the Bailies when, on May 13, 1689, John Graham of Claverhouse, who claimed to be Constable of Dundee, attacked the town with the intention of seizing the Municipal Charters, but found himself obliged to retire; and on that occasion Duncan, as one of the magistrates by whose authority Claverhouse was resisted, sent an express to inform the Committee of the Estates of Parliament of the attack, and to ask for assistance. He died in 1696.

Municipal  
History of  
Dundee

In the year 1716, after the flight of the Pretender and the dissolution of the Jacobite Town Council of Dundee, Alexander Duncan of Lundie, son of the Alexander aforesaid and grandfather of Admiral Duncan, was one of the Commissioners appointed by King George I. to conduct a new election of Common Councillors; was chosen Preses by his fellow Commissioners, and was himself among those elected as Common Councillors. On September 26, 1717, he was chosen Provost, and held this office at the time of his death in January 1719.

From 1744 to 1746 his son, also named Alexander Duncan, the Admiral's father, was Provost, and saw the town occupied by the adherents of Charles Edward from July 7, 1745, to January 14, 1746.

His eldest son, John, died early, in China, in the service of the East India Company. The second son, Alexander, obtained a commission in the 55th Regiment, which was raised in the neighbourhood



of Stirling at the time of the rebellion in 1745. It is believed that he owed his commission to the influence of the Duke of Cumberland, to whose forces his father, as Provost of Dundee, had rendered valuable assistance when on the march to the North, both by furnishing supplies and by procuring intelligence. Alexander was present on January 17, 1746, at Falkirk, when General Hawley's forces were defeated by the Highlanders; but although his regiment broke, he with some other officers remained, and came off unharmed. He afterwards served on the Continent and in Canada. He was an excellent regimental officer, devoted both to the officers and men, but seems to have had no opportunity of distinguishing himself in the field, although he was well known in Canada, and was the 'Major Duncan' of Fenimore Cooper's novel, 'The Pathfinder.' An interesting memoir of him at the time of the French war in Canada, when he was Major of the regiment, is to be found in a book well known in America, 'Memoirs of an American Lady,' by Mrs. Grant of Laggan, whose father was an officer in the regiment, at that time stationed at Albany, and later, at Fort Oswego, on Lake Ontario. "Major Duncan  
"was an experienced officer, possessed of con-  
"siderable military science, learned, humane and  
"judicious, yet obstinate, and somewhat of a  
"humorist withal. Wherever he went a respectable  
"library went with him. He took great pains with  
"the officers and with the men of the regiment, and  
"when stationed up country strongly inculcated the

“necessity of not being idle, and taught them to  
“occupy their time with industries. He taught them  
“gardening and farming. They all lived in a rough  
“kind of luxury, and were enabled to save much of  
“their pay. He set the young officers to read books  
“which suited their different inclinations. They  
“loved him, but at the same time they stood in  
“some awe of him. . . . He was so just, so im-  
“partial, so free from fickleness and favouritism, so  
“attentive to their health, their amusements, and  
“their economy, that every individual felt him to  
“be necessary to his comfort, and looked up to him  
“as his guide, philosopher, and friend.

“The Indian war which broke out after the  
“peace of 1763 occasioned the detention of six  
“companies of the regiment at Ontario until 1765,  
“when Colonel Duncan, who now commanded,  
“returned with the regiment to Ireland, and soon  
“afterwards retired from the service.

“He was frequently visited by his old officers  
“at his Forfarshire home, who still regarded him  
“with warm attachment.”

Colonel Duncan, who married a Miss Smythe of Methven, resided at Lundie House after leaving the army. He died in 1796, leaving no children, and was succeeded by his brother, the Admiral, then in command of the North Sea Squadron.

1746

Adam Duncan first went to sea in 1746, in the ‘Tryal,’ a sloop-of-war commanded by his cousin, Captain Robert Haldane. Why he went to sea is not known. One story is that, like many other young men, he was fired with the desire to

emulate Commodore Anson, who had returned in June 1744 from his journey round the world with rich prizes taken from Spain; but it is more probable that, his brother having entered the Army, he resolved to try the Navy as a profession, and took the opportunity which offered of serving under a relation. 1746

The 'Tryal' sailed from Sheerness on April 10, 1746, and convoyed transports to Leith Roads, where Adam Duncan joined, and thence she went north to Inverness.

On April 16 the rising in favour of Charles Edward was finally crushed at Culloden. The 'Tryal' then cruised off the Western Islands and off Ireland until September 1747, when she went to Greenock, and reached Plymouth in November. 1747

On November 22, Captain Haldane obtained the command of the 'Shoreham' frigate, and took on board with him his cousin, who at once commenced his experience of active service. In January 1748 the 'Shoreham' started on a cruise in the Channel, and when off Cape Clear on January 17 captured a ship from Brest. On February 24 she chased a French privateer, and forced her to take shelter under the batteries at Belleisle. The 'Shoreham' at once sent in her boats to cut out the privateer; and they succeeded in boarding her, but finding it impossible to get her from under the fire of the batteries, took out some of the crew as prisoners and scuttled the vessel. On the next day the 'Shoreham' fell in with and re-took a North Carolina ship which had been taken by a French privateer. On February 28 1748



1748 she chased another ship, which hoisted French colours, and was captured after a short action. The prize, which proved to be 'La Valeur,' a French privateer of sixteen guns and thirty-three men, was taken into Plymouth. On April 5 the 'Shoreham' fell in with Sir Edward Hawke's squadron off Belleisle, and cruised in company till the squadron returned to Plymouth. On June 22, in Plymouth Sound, the 'Shoreham,' owing to the breaking of a hawser in a gale of wind, drifted ashore and struck on the German rock, but, after her guns and stores had been removed, was successfully towed off by the boats of the fleet. An inquiry followed, and on September 13 Captain Haldane gave up his command, and the ship was paid off at the Nore.

1749 At this period Adam Duncan became known—how and by what means is not recorded—to Captain the Honourable Augustus Keppel, and was taken by him as a midshipman on board the 'Centurion' in January 1749. "He may truly be said to have received his professional education in Keppel's school, having served under him in the several ranks of Midshipman; third, second, and first Lieutenant; Flag and Post Captain; indeed, with the exception of a short time with Captain Barrington, he had no other Commander during the "Seven Years' War."

Keppel's  
Life, vol. i.  
p. 144

Captain Keppel had just been appointed to the chief command of H.M. ships in the Mediterranean with the rank of Commodore, and was directed to proceed in the 'Centurion' on a diplomatic mission to Algiers and the Barbary States,

with which he was instructed to make treaties for the purpose of checking the piratical expeditions from Moorish ports, and also to obtain the release on the best terms possible of all His Majesty's subjects who had been captured and were held to ransom. Long delays and difficulties occurred, and the treaty with the Dey of Algiers was not concluded until June 1751; the treaties with Tripoli and Tunis were signed a few months later. Algiers, Tetuan, Gibraltar, Port Mahon, were the ports chiefly visited during the two years of weary negotiations, at the conclusion of which Keppel returned to England, and was soon afterwards directed to pay off the 'Centurion.'

Although after the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle (October 7, 1748) France and Great Britain were at peace in Europe, a different state of things prevailed on the opposite shores of the Atlantic. Disputes had arisen and continued with regard to the boundaries of Canada and of British territory in parts of North America. Some fighting had taken place between the colonial forces of the two nations, and reinforcements of troops were arriving from both countries in North America, though no formal declaration of war was made.

In the latter part of 1754 Captain Keppel was appointed Commodore of the North American station, and the 'Centurion' put to sea on December 23 with the 'Norwich,' Captain the Hon. Samuel Barrington, in company. The day previous to sailing, Mr. Napier, third Lieutenant of the 'Norwich,' being too unwell to proceed on the

- 1754 voyage, the Commodore gave Adam Duncan an order as acting-Lieutenant on board the 'Norwich.'
- 1755 On January 10, 1755, Duncan's appointment as Lieutenant was confirmed by the Admiralty, and he was transferred back into the 'Centurion.'

Keppel's  
Life, vol. i.  
chap. vi.

"After a tedious and tempestuous voyage, in which the 'Centurion's' foremast and the 'Norwich's' fore and main masts were sprung, Keppel arrived with both ships off the coast of Virginia, and anchored in Hampton Roads on February 19," where the transports conveying the ill-fated General Braddock and 1,500 troops joined him in the middle of March. After the landing of the army, General Braddock and the Commodore held a meeting with the Governors of Virginia, New England, New York, Pennsylvania, and Maryland, to consider the state of the colony and to frame a plan of operations for the summer campaign. It is not necessary to state at length the decisions which were arrived at; but it will be remembered that General Braddock's force, while on the march to attack Fort Du Quesne on the Upper Ohio, and not far from Lake Erie, was surprised and routed on July 9, when about seven miles from the Fort, and the General himself was mortally wounded.

The French were at this time busily engaged in equipping at Brest a powerful fleet destined for America, and Admiral Boscawen being despatched from home with eleven sail of the line to take command on the North American station at the end of July, the Commodore shifted his broad pendant



on board the frigate 'Seahorse,' commanded by Captain Palliser, in compliance with orders from the Admiralty, and arrived in England on August 22. He at once commissioned the 'Swiftsure,' of 70 guns, and on January 10, 1756, removed to the 'Torbay,' of 74 guns, in which ship Duncan rejoined him on July 10, 1756, as second Lieutenant, immediately after the commencement of the Seven Years' War. The 'Torbay' was attached to the Brest fleet under Sir Edward Hawke, by whom Captain Keppel was directed in September to cruise off Cape Finisterre, with the 'Rochester' and 'Harwich' under his command. Having parted company with these vessels in November, the 'Torbay,' captured several prizes off Finisterre, and after a chase and a night engagement took the 'Chariot Royale,' a frigate of 36 guns, bound to Louisbourg. She then returned to Portsmouth, and Captain Keppel was called upon to sit on the court-martial assembled there to try Admiral Byng.

In June 1757 the 'Torbay' sailed with the Channel Fleet under Admiral Boscawen; and on June 30 was ordered on a detached cruise with the 'Medway' of 60 guns. Two days afterwards 'Le Commissaire,' a French ship laden with stores and provisions for Louisbourg, was captured.

In September the 'Torbay' was attached to Admiral Knowles' division of Sir Edward Hawke's fleet of eighteen sail of the line, sent on an expedition against Rochefort, and after chasing the 'Hardie,' 74 guns, off the Isle of Oleron into the Garonne, she took an active part in the successful

1755

1756

Keppel's  
Life, chap.  
vii.

1757

Keppel's  
Life, chap.  
viii.



1757  
Keppel's  
Life, chap.  
viii.

attack on the Isle of Aix. After much procrastination and several councils of war, the generals and the Admiral decided not to attack Rochefort, and abandoned Aix, and the consequent failure of the expedition excited great indignation in England, more especially against Sir John Mordaunt, the General who commanded the land forces.

Keppel's  
Life

When leaving Basque Roads to return to Portsmouth, Sir Edward Hawke detached Captain Keppel with a squadron of six ships to cruise off the west coast of France. Parting company on October 2, Keppel took several prizes and recaptured the 'Levant,' a letter of marque which had been taken by the French off the banks of Newfoundland, and in November returned to England with his squadron and a convoy of East Indiamen.

At the end of November the 'Torbay' put to sea again, and captured the French privateer 'Rustan,' of 36 guns, from Bordeaux, after a gallant resistance.

1758

Early in 1758 the 'Torbay' cruised again under Sir Edward Hawke with five other ships of the line. On April 4 the squadron arrived in the Basque Roads, and drove into the Charente five French ships of the line with a large fleet of transports destined for America; after which the boats landed and destroyed the battery and fortifications which had been reconstructed on the Isle of Aix. After this Captain Keppel with a small squadron cruised in the Bay of Biscay, and captured part of a convoy from Bordeaux

Keppel's  
Life

destined for Quebec. On the next day the 'Torbay' chased the 'Formidable,' 84 guns, bound for Louisbourg, but after continuing the pursuit for four days was obliged to desist, having sprung her bowsprit and two of her lower masts, owing to the heavy press of sail which she was carrying. After returning to Plymouth and getting new masts on July 16, she joined Lord Anson's fleet starting to blockade Brest.

1758

On August 4 Keppel proceeded on detached service with the 'Medway' and 'Coventry' frigates to the Penmarks, and drove ashore a French frigate and the greater part of a convoy of about fifty-three masted vessels.

On August 27 the 'Torbay' rejoined Lord Anson, and shortly after anchored at Spithead, where the forepart of the ship was blown up by an explosion in the powder-magazine.

Mr. Pitt had formed the project of reducing the French settlements on the west coast of Africa, and late in 1758 he determined to send an expedition to take Goree, a small island lying about a mile southward of Cape Verd, and appointed Captain Keppel to the command. Hoisting his broad pendant as Commodore, Keppel proceeded to sea in the 'Torbay' on October 26 with five sail of the line, three frigates, and some smaller vessels, together with seven hundred soldiers on board seven transports. The squadron was driven back from the coast of Ireland by very heavy gales, in which the 'Fougeux' ran foul of the 'Nassau,' and the 'Torbay' struck upon a rock. Putting to sea again

Keppel's  
Life, vol. i.  
chap. viii.

1758 on November 11, the expedition experienced very tempestuous weather, in which the 'Lichfield,' 50 guns, was lost on the west coast of Africa; they reached Teneriffe on December 13, and started again on the 20th. "The four following days the Commodore exercised his ships in lines of battle  
 Lindsay's Taking of Goree "and in the use of great guns and small arms."

Lindsay's  
Taking of  
Goree

Keppel's  
Life, chap.  
viii.

On the evening of December 28 the squadron arrived off Goree, and on the morning of the 29th a furious bombardment commenced, in which the 'Torbay' took a very prominent part. At length the French colours were lowered and the Marines of the 'Torbay' took possession of Fort St. Michael. Duncan, now first Lieutenant of the 'Torbay,' was wounded by a musket-ball in the leg. And it is somewhat remarkable, considering the large number of ship and fleet actions—more than fifty, as he himself said—in which he took part, this was the only wound which he ever received.

1759 Leaving a garrison in the island, the Commodore landed the remainder of the troops at Senegal under Lieutenant-Colonel Worge, the new Governor of Fort Louis; and thence returned to England, arriving at Portsmouth on March 1, 1759.

On May 18 the 'Torbay' sailed again with the Channel Fleet under Sir Edward Hawke, and cruised all the summer, sometimes on detached service off Ushant and in the Bay of Biscay.

On September 21, 1759, Duncan was promoted to the rank of Commander, and left the 'Torbay'; and from October 13 to April 1760 he had command of the 'Royal Exchange,' a hired vessel



employed in petty convoy service. “The ‘Royal Exchange’ had a miscellaneous ship’s company, “consisting to a large extent of boys and foreigners, “many of whom (he reported) could not speak English, and all of whom were impressed with the “idea that, as they had been engaged by the “merchants from whom the ship was hired, they “were not subject to naval discipline.”

1759  
Drant's  
Dictionary  
of Naval  
Biography  
‘Duncan,’  
in Diction-  
ary of Na-  
tional Bio-  
graphy

It is not surprising under these circumstances that difficulties arose with the owners of the ‘Royal Exchange,’ and that her services were dispensed with.

Duncan left the ‘Torbay’ at a very unlucky moment. There can be little doubt that he wished promotion and convoying at a far distance when, two months later, he heard how his old ship had comported herself off Ushant under Sir Edward Hawke’s command; how she was among the foremost to overtake the enemy; how she ‘silenced’ the ‘Formidable,’ of 80 guns and a thousand men; how the ‘Soleil Royal,’ bearing Admiral Conflans’ flag, after pouring in her broadside, bore up; how the ‘Thésée’ sank with her colours flying “after a determined fight with the ‘Torbay’ yard- “arm to yardarm,” which was only ended by the sea pouring in through her lower deck ports owing to the violence of the gale; and how the ‘Torbay’ herself was only saved by superior seamanship. “We received,” says her log-book, “so much water “in at the lee ports that we were obliged to fling “the ship up in the wind, when she went round.”

Campbell's  
British  
Admirals

The ‘Torbay’ for Duncan was now a thing of

1759 the past, but she was the school in which he had received his lessons in seamanship and in venture. Every mast and every spar had been at one time or other sprung or shaken out of her in spreading canvas for chase ; her sails and rigging had been cut up by French guns again and again. He had gone in-shore in her boats on daring service time after time ; he had felt an Irish rock in her when on her way to Goree ; and on the same passage a flash of lightning had shivered her main topmast, damaged her main mast, and killed one of her men.

Keppel's  
Life

She received and she had well earned a very severe battering in the action off Ushant ; and soon after his arrival in England Keppel was ordered to take with him his officers and crew and remove into the 'Valiant,' a new ship of 74 guns, and considered of greater force, as well from her construction as from her heavier weight of metal.

Keppel's  
Life chap.  
viii.

Commander Duncan's good fortune was still, however, in the ascendant. Although he was never to sail in the 'Torbay' again, it was not to be long before he would get back again to her company and her Captain.

Colburn's  
New  
Monthly  
Magazine,  
1836,  
xlvii.  
466

At this time Duncan is said to have been the biggest and finest man in the Navy. "He was of " size and strength almost gigantic. He is described " as six feet four in height and of corresponding " breadth. When a young Lieutenant walking " through the streets of Chatham, his grand figure " and handsome face attracted crowds of admirers, " and to the last he is spoken of as singularly " handsome."

According to Ralfe's 'Naval Biography,' "In  
"person he was of a manly and athletic form, erect  
"and graceful, with a countenance that indicated  
"great intelligence and benevolence, and was con-  
"sidered one of the handsomest men of the age. It  
"is reported that on his appointment to a lieu-  
"tenancy, and passing through Chatham, the in-  
"habitants were so struck with his figure and  
"appearance that they came out of their houses,  
"and followed him as far as the eye could reach,  
"as though they beheld some strange or unusual  
"prodigy."

## CHAPTER II

CAPTAIN 1761-1787

1761      Soon after the accession of King George III. to the throne it was decided by Mr. Pitt to carry out a design against Belleisle which had for some time been in contemplation. The naval part of the expedition was entrusted to Captain Keppel, who hoisted his broad pendant on board the 'Valiant,' with Duncan, now a Captain, as his flag-Captain. The squadron sailed from Spithead on March 29, 1761—eleven ships of the line, eleven frigates, and some smaller vessels ; while one hundred transports conveyed about seven thousand soldiers under General Hodgson. Owing to contrary winds Belleisle was only reached on April 7. On the 8th a landing was attempted, but the boats were repulsed with the heavy loss of about five hundred soldiers and sailors killed and wounded. The 'Valiant' had one midshipman and eleven men killed, the first Lieutenant, two Midshipmen, and twenty-six men wounded, and another Midshipman and fourteen men taken prisoners. On April 22, however, a landing was effected, and General Hodgson proceeded to lay siege to the fortifications ; but it was not until June 7 that the French garrison, which had made a most gallant defence under the

Keppel's  
Life, chap.  
ix.

Log of  
'Valiant'





Sir Joshua Reynolds pinx 1761.

Walker & Boutall, ph. sc.

*Captain Duncan.*  
*of H. M. S. Valiant.*



brave Chevalier de St.-Croix, capitulated, marching out through the breach in the fortifications of Palais with all the honours of war; after which the soldiers, according to the stipulations of the treaty of surrender, were transported in the British ships to the opposite French coast. During the siege the Commodore's squadron, which had been strongly reinforced, had prevented any assistance being given from the mainland to the besieged, and after the surrender blockaded Brest and the other ports on the west coast of France. 1761

On January 12, 1762, the 'Valiant,' which was now very leaky, after experiencing very severe weather, put into Torbay with five feet of water in the hold, and almost in a sinking condition. 1762

In May 1761 the Governments of France and England entered into negotiations for peace, which were prolonged for several months, but ceased to have any chance of a successful issue from the moment that King Charles III. of Spain was won over to the cause of France and acceded to the treaty, signed on August 15, known as the Family Compact, whereby the two branches of the House of Bourbon entered into a league against Great Britain.

As soon as Mr. Pitt became aware of what was in contemplation, he urged the Cabinet at once to declare war upon Spain, and to seize the galleons coming from the West Indies; but he retired from office on October 5, finding himself unable to persuade his colleagues to adopt this course.

In a few weeks events proved that his judgment

1762 had been correct. All information and explanation as to the Family Compact was refused. On January 4, 1762, war was formally declared against Spain, and it was decided immediately to attack the Havannah, as the centre of Spanish colonial trade.

Lord Albemarle was appointed to command the land forces, and Admiral Sir George Pocock was in command of the fleet, with Captain Keppel in the 'Valiant' as Commodore second in command. The army amounted to 11,000 men, while the fleet numbered twenty-six sail of the line, besides frigates and transports. The expedition started on March 6, arrived on April 26 at Martinico, which had recently been captured by a force under General Monckton and Admiral Rodney, and reached the Havannah on June 6.

To Captain Duncan was entrusted the disembarkation of the troops, which was successfully effected on the next day. A long and toilsome siege ensued, with constant fighting, in which both besiegers and besieged displayed great valour and endurance, and in which the sailors of the fleet took an active part, both at sea and on shore. They erected and manned a battery called "the 'Valiant's' battery," which fired "in the ratio of three to two oftener than any other work;" the ships also stood in from time to time and cannonaded the Moro Castle from the sea. Notwithstanding all these efforts the progress made was but slow, and both sea and land forces suffered terribly from scarcity of water and the unhealthy climate, and were



decimated by disease. The log-book of the 'Valiant' shows that hardly a day passed without one or more deaths on board; the Commodore's health was undermined, and his Captain's constitution received a severe shock, which made him unable afterwards to return to the West Indies.

1762  
Keppel's  
Life

At last, on July 30, a small breach was effected in the fortifications of the Moro Castle, barely sufficient to allow one man to pass at a time, which the besiegers mounted, and carried the castle by assault; it is related that Captain Duncan led a storming party from the 'Valiant' and climbed through the breach at their head, armed only with a heavy stick.

Even after the capture of the citadel, Don Juan de Prado, who was now Governor in place of the heroic Don Luis de Velasco, who had been killed, continued to hold out until August 14, when the Havannah was surrendered, and on the 17th Captain Duncan was ordered to take possession of nine Spanish ships of the line in the harbour. Two more ships of the line which were on the stocks were a considerable obstacle to the negotiations, until he solved the difficulty by himself landing at night with his boat's crew and setting them on fire, a proceeding about which a discreet silence was preserved.

Campbell's  
Naval  
History,  
vol. vii.

The 'Valiant' had again become leaky, and "her condition became more and more unpleasant "in the hot climate," but on October 12 Keppel put to sea with seven sail of the line, and very

Keppel's  
Life, chap  
x.

1762 shortly afterwards captured three French frigates  
and a convoy of merchant vessels, with which he  
1763 reached Port Royal on November 3.

A cessation of hostilities was now ordered, and by the terms of the Treaty of Paris, signed on February 14, 1763, the Havannah, "the capture of which had cost Great Britain 10,000 men," was restored to Spain. The British troops soon afterwards returned to England. The Commodore was promoted to flag rank, and being relieved of his command by Sir William Barnaby, set sail  
1764 for England early in 1764, but was compelled to return to Port Royal by the dangerous condition of the 'Valiant.' In May she again started on her voyage, and arriving in England on June 26, was soon afterwards paid off.

Up to this time Duncan had no reason to complain of his fortune in the navy. After only sixteen years' service he found himself a Captain at thirty years of age.

The Seven Years' War had been a time of employment and activity for naval officers, and if it had continued Duncan's services would have been required, and the road up the list of Captains might have been short and easy. But the fifteen years which followed the Treaty of Paris were years of peace in Europe, and of weary waiting and discouragement for the naval service. Captain Duncan applied at the Admiralty again and again for employment, but without success, and he was destined to remain on shore until, in 1778, France declared her intention to support

the cause of the North American colonies against the Mother Country. Another misfortune, too, befell him: his eventful service under Admiral Keppel came to a final close when the 'Valiant' was paid off in 1764. The Admiral went on shore, and being a member of Parliament, became in the next year a Junior Lord of the Admiralty in Lord Rockingham's Administration, and subsequently occupied himself with his political duties. Although only forty years old, he had become infirm owing to severe attacks of gout and ill-health arising from past hardships at sea. Fourteen years passed before his flag was hoisted again, and for the last time, in command of the Channel Fleet, and the indecisive action of July 27, 1778, off Ushant was the closing incident in his naval career.

Captain Duncan's health had suffered so much from the climate of the Havannah and from exposure and fatigue that he found it necessary to spend a great part of the next three years at Bath and Cheltenham; he subsequently lived much at home, visiting London occasionally to ask for employment. After his father's death in 1771 he stayed much with his mother, and when a few years later his sister, Mrs. Haldane, lost her husband, he assisted in the education of her children. In 1774 he went to Italy to visit Lady Mary Duncan, his aunt by marriage, and in the year 1777 he married Henrietta, a daughter of Robert Dundas, President of the Court of Session, and niece to Henry Dundas, afterwards Lord Mel-

1764

1764-  
1778Memoirs of  
R. and T.  
Haldane



1764-  
1778

ville, and the friend of William Pitt. It would appear that about the time of Captain Duncan's marriage there was some discussion as to his future, and that Henry Dundas strongly urged his niece not to encourage her husband to leave his profession, of which he reminded her in a letter on the announcement of the result of the battle off Camperdown.

Captain and Mrs. Duncan resided at Nellfield, near Edinburgh, after their marriage, until he was recalled to active service.

By the terms of the Treaty of Paris (February 16, 1763) the British Empire had been greatly extended and strengthened. In India Great Britain had obtained a firm foothold; Canada had become a British possession; and the North American colonies had been successfully defended against French aggression. French ambition and Spanish jealousy seemed to be effectually checked. At this moment, however, a fatal colonial policy was devised by the Ministers of George III., and obstinately supported by the King himself, which created internal discord for ten years in the nation, caused the open revolt of the American colonies, and resuscitated the armed hostility of France and of Spain. As soon as it became apparent, in 1778, that the American colonies were able to make some effectual resistance to the Mother Country, France seized the opportunity to make treaties of commerce and alliance with them, and thus to acquire the chance of recovering some of the ground which she had lost on that side of the Atlantic. In June of the next year Spain joined the league, and once more

Great Britain was compelled to place reliance on her sea power.

1764-  
1778

On May 16, 1778, Duncan was ordered to take command of the 'Suffolk,' 74 guns, fitting out at Chatham; and on August 25 he sailed to the Downs, whence on September 5 he convoyed some merchantmen to Plymouth. On September 12 the 'Suffolk' left Plymouth and, joining the Channel Fleet under Admiral Keppel near the Lizard, cruised until October 28, when the fleet anchored at Spithead.

1778  
Log of the  
'Suffolk'

On December 4 Duncan was appointed to the 'Monarch,' 74 guns, also belonging to the Channel Fleet.

Strangely enough, almost his first duty was to sit upon the court-martial appointed by the Admiralty to try Admiral Keppel at Portsmouth, on charges put forward by Sir Hugh Palliser, for "neglecting to do all in his power to destroy the "French fleet" in the indecisive action which had taken place off Ushant on the preceding July 27. It is reasonable to suppose that it would have required very strong evidence to induce Captain Duncan, after his experience of Admiral Keppel, to believe that that officer had not done his best to bring on an action or to destroy the enemy. During the sitting of the court-martial Captain Duncan asked a few very pertinent questions of many of the witnesses, but evinced no signs of partiality.

1779

Court-mar-  
tial on  
Admiral  
Keppel

When the finding of the court-martial was announced on February 11, 1779, "that the charge "was malicious and ill-founded, and that the Admiral

1779 “ had behaved himself as became a judicious, brave  
 “ and experienced officer,” there was great rejoicing  
 Keppel's  
 Lite in Portsmouth. A procession left the court-house,  
 headed by the Duke of Cumberland, Sir Robert  
 Harland, and Admiral Keppel, in which, besides  
 the Admiral's friends, walked sixty naval captains,  
 lieutenants, and masters.

It next fell to Captain Duncan to sit upon the  
 court-martial which was appointed in April 1779  
 to inquire into the conduct of Sir Hugh Palliser.

It is stated in the ‘Dictionary of National  
 Biography’ that the Board of Admiralty was  
 desirous “ that Captain Duncan should not be  
 “ present, and on the day before the sitting of the  
 “ court-martial ordered the ‘Monarch’ to go to St.  
 “ Helen's. Her crew, however, refused to go until  
 “ they had been paid their advance, and as this could  
 “ not be done in time, the ‘Monarch’ was still in  
 “ Portsmouth Harbour when the signal for the  
 “ court-martial was made; so that Duncan, sorely  
 “ against the wishes of the Admiralty, sat on this  
 “ court-martial also.” The court-martial, it will be  
 remembered, acquitted Sir Hugh Palliser of the  
 charges, but observed that he ought to have  
 informed Admiral Keppel of the disabled condition  
 of the ‘Formidable,’ which made him unable to  
 obey the signals.

During the summer of 1779 the ‘Monarch’  
 was attached to the Channel Fleet, now under the  
 command of Sir Charles Hardy owing to the  
 resignation of Admiral Keppel.

Spain had declared war in the month of June,



and on July 9 it was announced by Royal Proclamation that an invasion by a combined French and Spanish force was to be apprehended. 1779

The French fleet sailing from Brest under Count D'Orvilliers was permitted without opposition to unite with the Spanish fleet under Don Luis de Cordova, and on August 16 sixty-six sail of the line were off Plymouth. The Channel Fleet had missed them, and was to the south-west of Scilly.

In the Channel Fleet were men who were burning to engage the enemy. Captain Jervis in the 'Foudroyant' wrote to his sister :

" August 24, twenty leagues south-west of Scilly.

"A long easterly wind has prevented our getting into the Channel, to measure with the combined fleets. What a humiliating state is our country reduced to ! Not that I have the smallest doubt of clearing the coast of these proud invaders. The first westerly wind will carry us into the combined fleets. . . . I and all around me have the fullest confidence of success and of acquiring immortal reputation."

On August 29 a strong easterly wind forced the combined fleets down the Channel, and on September 1 they found themselves in presence of the British Fleet a few miles from the Eddystone.

Sir Charles Hardy had only thirty-eight ships, and deciding that it would be imprudent to risk an engagement, he retreated up the Channel, and

1779 on September 3 anchored at Spithead, much to the disgust of some of his officers. Captain Jervis, who in the 'Foudroyant' was second astern of Sir Charles Hardy in the 'Victory,' wrote: "I am in the most humbled state of mind I ever experienced, from the retreat we have made before the combined fleets all yesterday and all this morning."

R. and J. A.  
Haldane's  
Memoirs

Captain Duncan told his nephew of his own impotent indignation and shame, and how he could "only stand looking over the stern gallery of the 'Monarch.'"

This was probably the only occasion on which either of those officers retreated before an enemy. The fundamental article of their nautical creed was that an enemy when once encountered must not be permitted to part company without an action. From this line of conduct neither of them willingly ever deviated one hair's-breadth. It is safe to assert that if either had on that day been in a position to give orders to the Channel Fleet a larger Cape St. Vincent or a larger Camperdown would have been fought off Scilly, though not possibly with a different result. If, however, the 'Foudroyant' and the 'Monarch' had been sunk, it is certain from their record that French and Spanish ships would have gone down as well, and that even if the combined fleets had come off victorious, their condition would have been such as to give England no cause for apprehension on the score of invasion.

As events happened, the combined fleets

held for some weeks undisputed command of the Channel, but, happily for Great Britain, neglected to make any use of their advantage. The Spaniards wished to effect a landing; the French wished before landing to defeat the British fleet. The crews became sickly; the ships were defective, and the season for equinoctial gales was at hand. The Spanish commander declared to Count D'Orvilliers that he must relinquish the present enterprise and return to the ports of his own country; and the French admiral had no other course open to him but to acquiesce and to retire to Brest.

1779

Mahon's  
History,  
vol. vi.

Lord North afterwards declared in the House of Commons that "had Sir Charles Hardy known then, as he did afterwards, the internal state of the combined fleet he would have wished and earnestly sought an engagement, notwithstanding his inferiority of force." It is fortunate for Great Britain that other Admirals were less prudent and more adventurous in the face of a superior force. It is uncomfortable to reflect what might and, indeed, would have happened if the command of the Channel had been given to Napoleon even for a few days.

History,  
vol. vi.  
chap. lviii.

Towards the close of 1779 the 'Monarch' was ordered to sail with Sir George Rodney's fleet to the relief of the fortress of Gibraltar. Off Cape Finisterre sixteen vessels were taken, laden with provisions for the Spanish force besieging Gibraltar.

On January 16, 1780, a Spanish squadron of eleven line-of-battle ships, commanded by Don Juan

1780



1780 de Langara, was sighted. Admiral Rodney had under his command twenty-one ships of the line. The wind was rising and night came on, but there was a brilliant moon. A general chase and attack was at once ordered, in which the 'Monarch' did her full share of the fighting. It has been stated in more than one account of the action that, although she was not copper sheathed, she was the first ship to engage the enemy.

Campbell's  
Lives:  
'Duncan,'  
vol. viii.  
Dictionary  
of National  
Biography

The 'Monarch's' log shows that this is a mistake, though the ship was driven under a heavy press of sail. "At  $\frac{1}{2}$  past 3 the headmost ships began to engage; at 4 one of the enemy's ships blew up in action, the headmost ships engaged and we in chase; at 5, still in chase; at  $\frac{1}{2}$  past 7, coming up with the enemy. At 9 the enemy began to fire their stern chasers at us;  $\frac{1}{2}$  past 9, got up alongside of 3 of the enemy's ships and came to a close engagement with them, which continued till 11.30, when one of them struck, and we brought to under the mizen, the rest of our sails being shot and cut to pieces (the other two ships were pursued by some of ours and engaged to leeward), likewise great part of running rigging, stays and shrouds shot away, foretopmast wounded with a large shot, maintopsail yard shot in two, likewise head of foretopgallant mast ditto, shrouds and back stays shot, and many shot in the ship's hull."

Log of  
'Monarch'  
in Public  
Record  
Office

The ship which struck to the 'Monarch' was the 'San Augustin,' 70 guns. The sea was too heavy to launch a boat to take possession, and she finally escaped into Cadiz. Of the other two, the

Naval  
Chronicle



'Monarca' surrendered to the 'Sandwich' after one broadside, and the 'San Julian' escaped. The 'Monarch' lost her foretopmast, and had three men killed and twenty-six wounded. 1780

"Langara's own ship was taken, and three ships of the line besides, while the 'San Domingo' was blown up, and three others sunk or driven on shore. Of the whole Spanish fleet only four sail escaped into Cadiz Bay." Mahon's History, chap. lxii.

The wind had freshened into a heavy gale, and the fleet experienced great difficulty in working off a lee shore. The ships, however, were out of shoal water before the next night fell, and in a few days Gibraltar was relieved. Hannay's Life of Rodney

After this Sir George Rodney proceeded with four ships to the West Indies, while the 'Monarch' returned with Admiral Digby and the bulk of the fleet to the Channel.

It must have been at this time that Duncan became acquainted with young Prince William Henry, who on June 15, 1779, entered as a midshipman on board the 'Royal George,' the flagship of Admiral Digby, and so was present at Lord Rodney's relief of Gibraltar, returning thence to the Channel.

Duncan's wife and family were then residing at Gosport, and Mrs. Duncan was very kind and hospitable to the young officers, who constantly visited her house. Prince William Henry often called there, and he was always most friendly to his hosts in after-life. He was present as Duke of Clarence when Lord Duncan took his seat in the

1780 House of Lords, and moved that the Lord Chancellor's speech and Lord Duncan's reply be inserted in the Journals of the House ; and he always retained a regard for Lady Duncan, and after her husband's death made a point of calling upon her when he was in Edinburgh.

1781  
Haldane's  
Memoir

In the spring of 1781 the 'Monarch' was ordered to the West Indies ; but Captain Duncan's health having suffered severely from the climate in Keppel's expedition to the Havannah, he was persuaded by his medical adviser to decline tropical service. It was unfortunate for him that he could not go to the West Indies : the 'Monarch,' under Captain Reynolds, took part in Rodney's action against Comte de Grasse on April 11, 1782.

1782

In March 1782 Lord North resigned and Lord Rockingham's Administration succeeded, in which Admiral Keppel was the First Lord of the Admiralty. Captain Duncan was immediately appointed to the 'Blenheim,' 90 guns. In September 1782 the 'Blenheim' joined Lord Howe's fleet and sailed to take part in the relief of Gibraltar, which was still besieged. The 'Blenheim' led the larboard division of the centre or Commander-in-Chief's squadron at the relief of Gibraltar, and in the partial encounter with the allied French and Spanish fleets off Cape Spartel on October 21, when coming out of Gibraltar, she found her way into action and lost two men killed and three men wounded.

Charnock's  
Naval  
History

Arriving at Portsmouth on November 15, Captain Duncan soon afterwards quitted the

‘Blenheim’ on her being ordered to the West Indies, receiving from Lord Howe a very complimentary letter : 1782

“ Bath : December 22, 1782.

“ Sir,—Exclusive of the constitutional infirmity which renders it necessary for you to decline the foreign service on which the ‘Blenheim’ is ordered, I must so far congratulate myself on your surrender of the ship, as it may afford me a prospect of your desirable assistance if I should be called upon again for the Western Station, in consequence of a continuance of the war.

“ The concurrent sentiments you do me the favour to express in your obliging declarations relative to our late appointment are infinitely grateful to, Sir, your ever faithful and most obedient servant,

“ HOWE.”

On January 15, 1783, Captain Duncan was appointed to the ‘Foudroyant,’ in succession to Sir John Jervis, and when she was put out of commission in consequence of the peace (January 20, 1783) he received on April 1 the command of the ‘Edgar,’ guardship at Portsmouth, and served in her the regular term of three years, during which time he occupied himself in instructing the young officers who were placed under his charge. A few months after he left the ‘Edgar’ he was promoted to be a flag officer. 1783

In reviewing Duncan’s service as a Captain it will be seen that, from causes which were



1783 beyond his control, he passed more than half his time on half-pay. It was a great misfortune to an active and enterprising officer thus to waste fifteen of the best years of his life, from the age of thirty-two to forty-seven. That he felt it severely and was much discouraged is shown by his repeated applications to the Admiralty for employment.

It has been stated more than once that this failure to obtain employment was on account of his adherence to Keppel and on account of his own political opinions.

It is, unfortunately, too true that in the eighteenth century the favours of the Admiralty depended much on the political opinions and connections of naval officers, and that naval officers found it worth their while to obtain seats in Parliament, and to take an active part in the political conflicts of the day. About 1780, Keppel, Rodney, Howe, Sir Hugh Palliser, and even Sir John Jervis, sat in the House of Commons. Keppel, a Whig, complained bitterly of the conduct towards him of Lord Sandwich's Board of Admiralty, and, indeed, after the court-martial declined to serve under that Government. Rodney, a bitter Tory, complained, and apparently with some reason, of the Admiralty of Lord Rockingham's Administration, who removed him from command almost at the moment of his great victory in the West Indies. Sir Hugh Palliser was a Lord of the Admiralty, and supported his own case against Admiral Keppel in Parliament.

Sir John Jervis entered Parliament in 1783, and attached himself to Lord Shelburne and the Whig interest, and voted steadily against William Pitt's Government and with those who declared the war of 1793 "unnecessary—impolitic—lamentable." 1783

It is also true that Duncan was a faithful supporter and friend of Admiral Keppel, as he had every reason to be. As a Lieutenant and Captain he had made his way in the Service under his command. He knew him to be a gallant officer, and was no doubt rejoiced at his acquittal of the charges preferred by Sir Hugh Palliser, which were generally regarded as in some measure a political indictment; and he probably took little care to conceal his satisfaction at the result.

There is, however, nothing to show that Lord Sandwich took any action opposed to Captain Duncan's interests. After Keppel's court-martial Duncan continued to command the 'Monarch'; and if his health had permitted, he would have taken her to the West Indies. Soon after he ceased to command her, Keppel became First Lord of the Admiralty; and he was appointed to the 'Blenheim,' a ship of 90 guns.

So far as his own political opinions were concerned, he did nothing to attract attention or to excite hostility. Belonging to a Whig family, and being himself a strict Presbyterian, he inclined to Whig principles; but he made his profession his business, and never at any time in his life took any active part in politics.

His failure to obtain employment at a time when employment was all-important to him was



1783 more probably due to causes which are obvious enough and easily explained. It was his ill-luck to be born at the wrong time for advancement as a Captain. As a Lieutenant he came in for the Seven Years' War, and took every advantage of his opportunities, but he became a Captain just before the peace of 1763, and had only had time for the expeditions to Belleisle and the Havannah. Another cruise or two in the 'Valiant' might have produced for him very important results. The number of vessels in commission, and consequently of Captains employed, was largely reduced after the peace, and, except on the North American station, such service as was to be found was of little interest.

Duncan had to endure another period of inactivity from the time of his becoming a Flag Officer in 1787 until his appointment in 1795 to the command of the North Sea fleet.

But these years were likewise years of peace; and a junior Rear-Admiral could hardly expect a command under such circumstances. Nor does it seem that he would have fared better if he had been born ten or fifteen years sooner or later. If he had been a Captain early in the Seven Years' War, he would have had nothing to do as an Admiral. If he had entered the Service at the end of the Seven Years' War, he would have had no opportunity of making himself a name as a Lieutenant.

Looking at his career as a whole, it may be said that in his earlier service he had some cause for receiving condolence and some reason for receiving congratulation; while, as an Admiral, he had the opportunity to strike a heavy blow for his country.

## CHAPTER III

REAR-ADMIRAL 1787—VICE-ADMIRAL 1793—APPOINTED  
TO COMMAND OF NORTH SEA FLEET, 1795—THE  
BLOCKADE OF THE TEXEL

ON September 24, 1787, Lord Howe, at this time  
First Lord of the Admiralty, wrote to Captain  
Duncan :

1787

“ Sir,—The King having been pleased to direct that a Promotion of Flag Officers should be made on the present occasion for arming the fleet ; by which promotion you will be advanced to the rank of Rear-Admiral ; I have great pleasure in communicating this testimony of His Majesty’s approbation of your services.

“ Being with much esteem, Sir, your most obedient humble servant,

“ HOWE.”

After Captain Duncan was promoted to Flag rank, nearly eight years elapsed before he hoisted his flag. During these years he lived chiefly in Scotland, and passed much of his time in Edinburgh, with his wife’s relations. His brother-in-law, Mr. Robert Dundas, was Lord Advocate in Mr. Pitt’s Government, and in 1790 was elected M.P. for Edinburgh, in succession to Mr. Henry

1787 Dundas, Treasurer of the Navy, and afterwards Lord Melville, who was returned for Midlothian.

Arniston  
Memoirs,  
p. 226

In sympathy with the political upheaval in Europe, two movements commenced at this time in Scotland which were opposed by the Government: the agitation for Burgh Reform and the agitation for Parliamentary Reform. The Association of the Friends of the People, which had recently been formed in England to promote these objects, had established branches in Scotland. Public opinion being much excited, popular rioting became not unfrequent, and a disturbance took place in Edinburgh on June 4, 1792, the King's birthday. The Dundas family was especially obnoxious to the popular party as comprising two members of Mr. Pitt's Government, the Lord Advocate, and Mr. Henry Dundas, who had now become Home Secretary; and on Tuesday, June 5, a crowd having assembled in George Square, proceeded to break the windows of the houses of the widowed Mrs. Dundas of Arniston and of the Lord Advocate, and became so violent that they were ultimately fired upon by the military.

1792

Admiral Duncan, who was residing with his mother-in-law, went out among the crowd, and had the little finger of one hand broken by a blow from a stick, which obliged him during the rest of his life to wear a double ring, which is still preserved, to connect that finger with the next.

1793 On February 3, 1793, Duncan rose to the rank of Vice-Admiral.



The French Revolution was now in active progress. The King had been beheaded; and the Directory had assumed the reins of government. At the end of 1794 Holland was invaded, and on May 16, 1795, an alliance was concluded between the French and Batavian Republics, by the terms of which, among other conditions, it was agreed that Holland should aid France with twelve ships of the line and eighteen frigates, as well as with half the Dutch troops under arms. This alliance having been foreseen, the British Government had on January 19 placed an embargo on all Dutch ships, and in February appointed Vice-Admiral Duncan to “the command of the ships employed “in the North Sea and on the coasts of England “and Scotland from Harwich to the islands of “Orkney and Shetlands.”

Lord Spencer had succeeded Lord Chatham in December 1794 as First Lord of the Admiralty. It is said on the authority of Lady Jane Hamilton, Admiral Duncan’s eldest daughter, that “in going “over the list of Admirals with Mr. Henry Dundas “Lord Spencer said ‘What can be the reason that ““Keppel’s Duncan” has never been brought forward?’ Upon this Mr. Dundas said that he “thought he would like employment and added “that he had married his niece. The same night “he was appointed Commander-in-Chief in the “North Sea.”

The duty with which the Admiral was specially charged was to prevent military expeditions being despatched from the Texel. The Texel was to

1793

1795

1795

February

Keppel's  
Life, vol. i.  
p. 145

1795 be blockaded and the Dutch fleet, if possible, destroyed.

The plan upon which the Admiral proceeded, and which he never changed until his task was performed, was as follows: His squadron was constantly cruising off the Texel. Almost every day one or more small vessels looked into the Texel and reported on the number and condition of the Dutch ships. When the squadron was obliged to return to the Downs or to Yarmouth for revictualing or refitting, the frigates and small craft hovered along the coast, ready to report any change. The 'Active' and 'Rose' cutters, the 'Black Joke,' 'Spider,' 'Espiegle' and 'Speculator' luggers, the 'Circe' frigate, were all honourably distinguished and prominent in this service.

The ships of the North Sea fleet, even tried by the standard of that day, might well have driven an Admiral to despair. In the commencement they numbered only four sail of the line. When their number increased their quality remained worse than indifferent: converted Indiamen, captured prizes, anything that was to be found, had to do duty in the North Sea. The better ships were all wanted for the more distant commands, such as the Mediterranean.

Even such ships as were attached to the North Sea squadron were constantly being taken away. If Admiral Duncan had had a fleet of ships which remained continuously under his orders, it is very probable that the mutiny at the Nore would never have occurred. His influence over those under



his command is admitted to have been and was proved to be almost unbounded.

1795

Admiral Sir Charles Middleton, a naval member of the Board of Admiralty, who seems to have exercised considerable influence in regard to the movement of ships, and who wrote frequently and very confidentially to Admiral Duncan, often lamented the inability of the Board to supply the ships which were required for the North Sea; on August 27 he wrote: "My own wish is to have your force very strong, but I plainly perceive from the many irons we have in the fire that I shall be overruled. The same cause obliges us to employ your frigates on many extra services, and which I have charged the secretary to acquaint you with as often as it happens; but, necessary as this information is for your guidance, I am afraid it is often forgot. I have also desired a list to be made out to lay at his elbow, that he may know what ships belong to your squadron."

Again on September 1: "Your ships are distributed in all quarters, and I am fearful that we are not regular enough in acquainting you with all the services they are ordered on."

On September 14: "Notwithstanding every Admiral can judge of the extent of his own station, it is impossible he can judge of the difficulties we are under to provide for the variety of services in hand and daily increasing."

On October 12: "We cannot spare the 'Isis' at present. We have been unfortunate on the

1795 “ coast of Portugal and to the westward, by the  
“ activity of six French frigates, and if we had  
“ not some in port ready to detach immediately  
“ after them we should have been open to clamour.  
“ In short, we must in our situation look to all  
“ quarters of the compass, which will account to you  
“ for our not following out your suggestions, which  
“ though perfectly right as regards your own  
“ station frequently militate with other services.”

It appears from Lord Spencer's letters that Admiral Duncan occasionally pointed out the shortcomings of his ships, which Lord Spencer did not attempt to deny, and, indeed, not unfrequently admitted. From the beginning to the end, however, the Admiral made the best, in practice, of the tools which he possessed, and made them do the work which was given to him to do.

In one respect he had reason to be well satisfied. During his command in the North Sea there was at the head of the Board of Admiralty a First Lord who was well worthy of his position. By his appointments, by his management of the Fleets, and by his management of the commanding officers, Lord Spencer inspired confidence in the ranks of the Navy, and thus contributed largely—much more largely than has been recognised—towards the remarkable successes at sea which occurred during his Administration.

Of this his intercourse with Admiral Duncan furnishes a good illustration. Almost on the day that Duncan hoisted his flag on the ‘Venerable,’ a private correspondence with Lord Spencer

commenced which continued without intermission until the Admiral's retirement. Lord Spencer understood well the character of the officer with whom he was dealing. He wrote his own views openly and frankly. He felt confident, and frequently, as will be seen, expressed his confidence, that the Dutch would be attacked on the earliest possible opportunity, and also that they would be defeated, though he did not pretend to say that the North Sea fleet was what he would have liked it to be. 1795

Throughout the mutiny at the Nore he gave to the Admiral a full and generous support, as will be mentioned hereafter.

It is abundantly clear that, if the Admiral's letters to Lord Spencer were in existence, they would show that he felt, professionally, deep respect and, personally, entertained the highest regard for the First Lord of the Admiralty. It is impossible to read Lord Spencer's published letters to Sir John Jervis and other naval officers without perceiving that their sentiments towards him were exactly the same. He understood them, their characters and peculiarities. He was large-minded enough to throw aside the pernicious doctrine which had long prevailed—that a naval officer's political opinions were a measure of his fitness for employment—and which had become so deeply rooted in the naval mind that officers were unwilling to accept command under an unfriendly Government because they feared—and not always without reason—that the Government would not support them loyally.



1795

Stanhope's  
Life of  
Pitt,  
vol. iii.

When the North Sea fleet returned to an English port, it lay sometimes in the Downs, and latterly repaired to Yarmouth. It was in 1795 that Admiral Duncan became acquainted with Mr. Pitt, no doubt through Mr. Henry Dundas, and when the fleet was in the Downs he used sometimes to visit at Walmer Castle.

Memoirs  
of R. and J.  
Haldane

When Admiral Hotham was recalled from the Mediterranean in the summer of 1795, that command was offered to Admiral Duncan, but was declined, he thinking that the Dutch would before long come out of the Texel. Being asked his opinion by Mr. Pitt, Mr. Henry Dundas, and Lord Spencer, as to the fittest officer for the Mediterranean command, he told them that "beyond all doubt, it was Sir John Jervis." Sir John had also been recommended by Lord Hugh Seymour, a member of the Board of Admiralty, and perhaps by others; but he had been an active opponent of Mr. Pitt's Government and measures in the House of Commons. It is greatly to Lord Spencer's honour that he ultimately decided to overlook this objection and appointed an officer who brought the Mediterranean Fleet to the highest state of efficiency, and by this, quite as much as by his victory off Cape St. Vincent, exercised an important influence on the fate of the war. Sir John appears to have been very sensible of the honourable conduct of the Board of Admiralty towards him, and when in 1801 Lord Duncan wrote to congratulate him on his appointment as First Lord of the Admiralty in Mr. Addington's Government, he said in his reply:

Tucker's  
Memoirs  
of Lord St.  
Vincent,  
ch. vi.

“To Mr. Dundas’s partiality I attribute, and ever shall, my naval career.” 1795

Duncan had always entertained great admiration for Sir John as an officer as well as a friend, and when he gave up command of the ‘Monarch’ in the spring of 1781, induced him to take his nephew, Robert Haldane, as a Lieutenant on board the ‘Foudroyant.’ Memoirs of  
R. and J. A.  
Haldane

Admiral Duncan was directed to hoist his flag on board the ‘Prince George,’ 90 guns, fitting out at Chatham. February

The ‘Prince George’ having been deemed unsuitable for the North Sea station owing to her deep draught of water, he was ordered on March 11 to remove to the ‘Venerable,’ 74 guns; and on March 31 he hoisted his flag with Captain William Hope as Flag Captain. March

On June 17, 1795, the Admiralty informed Admiral Duncan, who on June 1 had risen to be Admiral of the Blue, that the Empress Catherine of Russia having agreed to furnish twelve sail of the line and six frigates to be employed as occasion might require against the common enemy, he was to take them under his orders. June

On July 29 Vice-Admiral Hanickoff announced his arrival with Rear-Admirals Mackaroff and Tate, and the Russian squadron, consisting of twelve ships of the line and six frigates, having a complement of 8,000 officers and men, and placed himself under the British Admiral’s orders. July

On August 8 the Admiralty directed the Admiral to get ready for sea, as the Dutch fleet was reported August



1795  
August

to have come out from the Texel, and to take with him any portion of the Russian squadron which he thought proper.

On August 10 Lord Spencer wrote privately :

“ Admiralty.

“ Dear Sir,—Having been extremely occupied by business the whole morning, I have but a few minutes left to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of yesterday, in answer to which I can only assure you that I should have been very happy if the other pressing calls of the service at this moment had not rendered it impossible to appropriate on so sudden an emergency a larger force to your operations. I hope, however, that your squadron, augmented as I suppose there is every reason to expect it will be by the ‘ Lion ’ and ‘ Glatton,’ whose cruising time is expired, and perhaps the ‘ Repulse ’ (if she can be manned), together with as many of our good friends the Russians as you think fit to take with you, will be amply sufficient to give a very good account of these Frenchified Dutchmen, if they should venture to show their faces at sea. Their ships will undoubtedly be but very ill-manned, at least we have every reason to believe from all the accounts we have received that it is impossible for them to find a sufficient number of seamen to man them as they could wish, and one of the principal objects of their going out will be to secure the return of the valuable fleet from the East, which, as well as riches, is to bring them men.

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August

“ I cannot but approve highly of your attention and politeness to the Russian Admiral, to whom every possible civility should undoubtedly be paid, and who will, I hope, go on in perfect cordiality and good humour with you. We have sent directions to the proper officers to furnish him with the necessary articles of stores and provisions without delay, but I trust that if the Service should require your putting to sea, our friends are not quite so unprovided as to be unable to accompany you, or to occasion any delay which might be attended with very unpleasant consequences both to our numerous convoys in the district you command, and to the general interest by missing the opportunity of falling in with so rich an object as the East India fleet.

“ In short, my dear Sir, I have no doubt of your doing very well even with the force proposed, if you take a sufficient number of the Russian squadron, and you may depend on every exertion being used here to strengthen you as much as can be done consistently with the demands to the westward, which at this moment are not less pressing.

“ I have the honour to be,  
with great truth and regard,  
your very obedient humble servant,

“ SPENCER.

“ Admiral Duncan.”

(*Private.*)

“ Admiralty : August 11, 1795.

“ Dear Sir,—Notwithstanding the various reports we have received of the readiness of the

1795  
August

Dutch fleet for sea, I cannot yet help suspecting that, though their ships appear to be ready from without, they may still be so deficient in point of men as to make it improbable that they will be able to put to sea in a very short time, and to leave the greatest chance of our intercepting their homeward bound Indiamen who are expected North about. It is, however, in the present circumstances absolutely necessary to take all the precautions which would suggest themselves to us, were we perfectly certain that they were about to put to sea; and in this view I take the liberty of writing these few lines to you to submit to your opinion whether it would be most advisable as you are situated in respect of force to put to sea and cruise immediately for the purpose of locking up their fleet in the Texel &c., or to remain where you are till you receive intelligence of their being sailed, and then immediately to make sail after them. The comparative advantages and disadvantages of these two plans will readily enough suggest themselves to you, and I should be glad to receive your opinion on the subject in a private letter, as it will greatly tend to influence the determination which may be formed by His Majesty's servants in framing any instruction they may in future judge it expedient to send you. The question, I am aware, is rather a nice one, and much may be said on both sides of it; but as you must have been led by your situation to consider it with greater attention than any one else, it is very desirable to know your sentiment



—more particularly as you will be called upon to carry into execution whichever plan or mode of operations obtains the preference. I hope that the ‘Asia,’ ‘Nassau,’ ‘Calcutta’ and ‘Jupiter’ will have joined you before this reaches you, and the ‘Repulse’ may, I have no doubt, be soon added to them; but as I said in my former letter, I am under no apprehension of the event if the Dutch do but give you the meeting, and you may be assured that no one feels more sincerely anxious than I do that you may have an opportunity of performing a brilliant service to your country.

“ I am, &c.,  
“ SPENCER.”

On August 14 the Admiral was directed to send Vice-Admiral Pringle with the ‘Asia,’ ‘Repulse,’ ‘Calcutta’ and ‘Jupiter’ to cruise between the Orkneys and Norway, and to keep a look-out for the Dutch East India ships supposed to be coming “North about”; to desire Captain Trollope with the ‘Nassau,’ ‘Glatton,’ and ‘Lion’ to cruise between the Naze of Norway and the Texel; also to send seven Russian ships to cruise for three weeks off the Texel.

On August 15 Lord Spencer wrote:

“ Admiralty: August 15, 1795.

“ I have to acknowledge the receipt of your three letters, two of the 13th and one of yesterday, and have little to say in answer to them, except that the arguments used in the two

1795  
August

1795  
August

former on the subject of the employment of the force under your command appeared so forcible and judicious, both to the Cabinet and the Board of Admiralty, that, as you will see by the orders sent you yesterday, the substance of your propositions has been adopted. I shall be glad to have a line from you by the return of post, or rather by the coach of to-morrow, to let me know on what day it is likely that the Russian squadron will sail, as I should be very glad if possible to have a sight of them before they are separated. I am sorry to find, by a letter received from Count Woronzow, that there has been a misunderstanding between Admiral Peyton and Vice-Admiral Hanickoff respecting a salute. We must endeavour to do what we can to rectify it, but as Admiral Peyton has abided literally by the naval instructions I do not immediately see what can be done."

On August 17, Acting-Lieutenant Oswald, who had been sent to the Texel in the 'Spider' lugger to reconnoitre the Dutch fleet, reported to the Admiralty: "On my way to the Texel, August 15, " 7 A.M., the weather being hazy, Camperdown " S.E. nine or ten miles, I discovered a fleet in " the north-east quarter, the wind then about " south-west. I immediately bore down for the " fleet, and on its clearing away a little I dis- " covered them to be ships of war, standing on a " wind to the westward under easy sail. I hoisted " the private signal and ran down within three " miles of the van ship, and counted five sail of " the line, six frigates, and four cutter-brigs from



“ eighteen to twenty guns, and one cutter with a  
“ galliott gun vessel,” &c.

1795  
August

On August 18 Captain Trollope, of the  
‘ Glatton,’ having with him the ‘ Lion’ and  
‘ Nassau,’ fell in with the squadron, “ Goree,  
“ bearing S.S.E. about 7 leagues,” and continued  
to watch them.

On August 19 Lord Spencer wrote :

“ Admiralty : August 19, 1795.

“ I have only time before the messenger goes  
to acknowledge the receipt of your private letter  
of yesterday, and to refer you to the orders you  
will receive, which, as you will see, are calculated  
to strengthen you as much as the service will  
admit of. It is most essential to give the Dutch  
a hard blow as soon as possible, and I cannot  
help thinking that a few English ships, led as  
they will be, I am convinced, by you, will be as  
equal to this service as can be wished. As the  
wind is fair and our orders are very pressing to  
the Portsmouth ships, I am in hopes you may  
see them by to-morrow evening, and even though  
the ‘ Repulse’ should not join you, I should by  
all means advise your sailing. You will probably  
hear something more of the Dutch before that  
time, which may regulate the course you may  
take when you do sail. The Russian fleet,  
increased to whatever number of their own ships  
you and Admiral Hanickoff may judge right, will  
still be very well placed cruising off the Texel.  
Dr. Blair, of the Sick and Hurt Office, is gone

1795  
August

down to Deal, and will be there to-morrow morning to look after the sick, which I am of opinion will be much better disposed in a hospital ship at Sheerness than crowded on shore at Deal. The least fit ship of the Russian squadron might serve to carry them, if Admiral Hanickoff approves of it. As it is, the danger to be apprehended both to themselves and to our own people from their remaining in their own present situation is too great not to call for some immediate measure being taken to remedy it."

On August 21 Admiral Duncan sailed from the Downs, taking with him the Russian squadron, but was not successful in falling in with the enemy. How they escaped is not told. The 'Glatton,' 'Lion,' and 'Nassau' were in company with the Admiral off the Dutch coast on August 26. On the day before two French privateer brigs, 'La Suffisante' and 'La Victorieuse,' were taken, and Mr. Oswald, acting-Lieutenant in command of the 'Spider,' who was reported as having been instrumental in their capture, was promoted to be Lieutenant and retained in command of the 'Spider.'

Lord Spencer wrote :

"Admiralty : August 27, 1795.

"Though it is impossible not to regret that you could not catch Mynheer at sea, yet the exertions you have used endeavouring to do so, and the alacrity and expedition with which you went out

after him, do you and your officers great credit, and will I have no doubt be so considered by the country. I am much obliged to you for your two letters of the 23rd and 24th, and am very glad to hear that the Russians have done so well. I am a little surprised that their ships, so long out of dock and uncoppered, should sail better than ours, but I suppose it may have been owing to their carrying more sail in the night or some such circumstance.

1795  
August

“In order to satisfy Vice-Admiral Hanickoff that it was the difference of rank and not any disrespect to the Imperial Flag that occasioned the difference in the salute, I have imagined the expedient of ordering the Russian squadron when they return to anchor at the Nore, when, if he salutes, Admiral Buckner may return an equal number of guns without transgressing our rules. As there is time enough for determining on this, I should wish to know what you think of it.

“Your plan for sending Admiral Pringle Northward seems very proper, and I very sincerely hope he, or some of your other squadrons, may fall in with the homeward bound Dutchmen. I am very glad to hear by the ‘Mars’ that you have taken two French brigs. We flatter ourselves, though their description is not mentioned in Admiral Peyton’s letter, that they are two of the armed brigs that have lately been annoying us in those seas.”



Admiralty: August 28, 1795.

1795  
August

“ I have only time to say a few words to express my satisfaction and congratulate you on the capture of the two French brigs, which will prove a very great service to our trade in the North Sea. I hope Captain Trollope will pick up the Dutch brigs that are cruising there. Your account of the Russian fleet is very pleasant, and we have left it to your discretion how long you shall continue with them. We have already authorised you to give them positive orders to treat all neutrals as we do, and after the act of hostility with which the Dutch began, all naval stores bound to Holland even in neutrals become contraband of war.

“ You will see that we have heard of a fleet which has all the appearance of being the expected Dutch homeward bound Indian fleet, and I am much mistaken if they do not attempt making the coast of Norway. However, I hope the measures you have so properly taken on that point will intercept them.

“ Mr. James Oswald having only an acting order could only be made a Lieutenant, but to testify our approbation of his conduct we have given him the command of the ‘ Spider ’ lugger in which he may again have an opportunity of distinguishing himself.”

September

On September 4 the Admiral returned in the ‘ Venerable ’ to the Downs. During the remainder of the year the British cruisers were



constantly off the Texel, and the Admiral himself proceeded there in November. The Admiralty were very anxious that the squadron should arrive off the Texel as soon as possible, but at this time there was a great scarcity of British ships available for the North Sea. Lord Spencer wrote :

1795

September

“ Admiralty : November 10, 1795.

“ I am always very glad to hear your unreserved sentiments on any subject that concerns your command and operation, and consequently am much obliged to you for your letter of the 7th instant, which I only received yesterday. November

“ You are as well apprised as we are here, of the necessity of having a force ready to cope with the Dutch fleet if they should venture out, and you know all the dispositions which have been made respecting the squadron under your command too well for it to be necessary for me to enter into the detail of it with you. It appears to us here that the Dutch are very likely to put to sea at present, as they know we have several valuable convoys coming over from the Eastward in all this month, and they have the additional inducement of the protection of their homeward bound Indiamen now lying in the ports of Norway. It is also extremely desirable for the sake of appearances that the Russian fleet, who have now been a considerable time inactive, should be put in motion, and though the late boisterous weather is undoubtedly a very satisfactory reason why they could not be kept complete in stores and in readiness for sea, not a moment's time

1795  
November

must be lost in preparing them, that you may be able to join Admiral Pringle if possible, as soon as he gets off the Texel.

“ I am afraid this easterly wind, which seems disposed to blow hard, will continue to impede your operations in the Downs; however, I have not a doubt from what I have already experienced of your zeal and activity in the service, that every possible exertion will be used to enable you to carry the late orders into execution as soon as the nature of things will admit of your doing so. Captain Bissett will join you immediately, as the Board have been informed in a letter received from him this morning.”

“ Admiralty: November 12, 1795.

“ You will see from the letters of the Board to-day that we deem it so essential to have a squadron at least for a short time off the Texel that we have determined to give up Admiral Tate’s cruise off the Naze in order to enable you to make a show of more force in the former quarter. It is to be hoped that the weather will not be so very boisterous as it has lately been, and a short cruise will, I flatter myself, not be attended with any of the bad consequences you apprehend, while, on the other hand, I am sure very bad ones indeed will arise not only from the appearance of the Dutch fleet at sea without our going to sea likewise (and I cannot still help thinking that their late movements are an indication that they intend to come out), but even from the total

inactivity of the whole Russian fleet for the rest of the winter, who will then be very justly said to have been kept here for no other purpose than to eat up our victuals and waste our stores. 1795  
November

“ I don't understand how the ' Venerable ' can want so much caulking, as there is a standing order to employ caulkers occasionally on board all ships when at anchor, and she has had a great deal of leisure time of that sort lately ; and as to her payment, it will hardly make a difficulty for so short a cruise, and the ship's company may be paid as soon as she returns. I would not be so pressing upon you if I did not feel that the public service absolutely required every possible exertion to be made at this moment.”

The Admiral, whose fleet had experienced heavy gales, appears not to have viewed with much satisfaction the prospect of cruising off the Texel in winter with a squadron composed almost entirely of Russian ships. The draft of part of his reply is written in his own hand on the back of Lord Spencer's letter of November 12 :

“ My Lord,—I am honoured with your Lordship's letter of yesterday. The Admiralty order shall certainly be complied with about the cruise of Admiral Tate, but I have not received it to-day. In my last letter I gave my opinion about the Russian fleet going to sea ; and whatever the consequence may be, it must be borne. By the account I send, Admiral Parry and your



1795  
November

Lordship will see the devastation made on those ships we depend on off the Texel: the 'Coromandel' dismasted, and I have no doubt the 'Nassau' who relieved her is not in very good order. I never could see any reason for the Russian fleet being detained for the winter, but to be ready early in the spring, and it always was my opinion they were unfit for winter cruising. Indeed, they are themselves perfectly satisfied of it. Now as to myself I will say what I once did before: I am the first British Admiral that ever was ordered on service with foreigners only, and I must beg further to say I shall look upon it as an indignity to me if some British ships are not directed to attend me. As to what are to come with Admiral Pringle, very little dependence can be had on them. I find the 'Repulse' on the 9th had not joined, so that, with all we can muster, were they joined . . . ." (Draft ends with the end of the sheet of paper.)

On November 14 Lord Spencer answered:

"Admiralty.

"In consequence of the accident which Admiral Pringle reports to have befallen the 'Repulse' of having carried away her main yard, which cannot well be replaced at Leith, and in consideration of other circumstances, we have sent a messenger down to him to order him to the Nore, with all the ships that are now with him in Leith Roads. I hope that by the time of his arrival you will be ready to join him, and you may then go to sea



and take a short cruise without being exposed to the objections which you state in your letter. The defects of the 'Venerable' do not seem to be very material at present, and cannot afford any ground of objection to a cruise not intended to be of long continuance. Notwithstanding the convoy from Elsineur which has already sailed, we have information of a large number more that are still waiting to come away from thence, and the news of our ships being disabled in the North Sea may make the Dutch feel a little bolder." 1795  
November

Again on November 24 :

"Admiralty.

"I cannot still help thinking that the Dutch fleet may be out, and if they are I have no doubt of your giving a very good account of them, especially as I trust they may have been in the late gale. I am a little anxious to hear that Admiral Pringle's squadron have escaped without much damage. You will in the course of a very few days, even should you not fall in with him, have a very respectable force with you, and, according to the intelligence you send me by the 'Espiegle,' we shall use every exertion to make you equal, and if possible, superior to the enemy. God bless you, my dear Admiral. Every sincere wish for your success."

A few days later the Admiral sailed for his station. On December 15 Lord Spencer wrote : December

"I send a line to thank you for your letter and for the punctuality and zeal with which you

1795  
December

have, as usual, executed the service committed to your discretion. I fear the south-west winds have detained the Elsineur convoy longer than you were aware of, and the strength of the gales added to the weakness of our allied ships has, I doubt, reduced Her Imperial Majesty's squadron to a very unpleasant state, but I hope they will all get safe in. You will see that there is still an idea of a Dutch squadron sailing for the East Indies, and the accounts brought of the appearance of the ships in the Texel by Captain Colville seem a little to confirm the account. If you have anything to suggest on this subject or in general on the subject of your operations for the winter, I shall be very glad to hear from you upon it."

On November 25 the Dutch East India fleet, having succeeded in eluding the British cruisers, had reached the neutral port of Drontheim safely.

October

It had been decided that the Russian squadron was to winter in England, of which Admiral Hanickoff apprised Admiral Duncan on October 6 :

Russian Embassy, London.

" Sir,—On my arrival at London I was informed by His Excellency the Russian Minister Count Woronzow that it was His Majesty's wish signified through my Lord Granville that the squadron under my command should remain to winter here, and that His Excellency in the name of Her Imperial Majesty has given to my Lord

Granville his promise to the same purpose. I was likewise informed by Count Woronzow that, agreeable to the treaty between the Court of London and that of St. Petersburg, the officers and the seamen now serving in the Russian squadron will be maintained at the expense of His Britannic Majesty. That being the case, I think it my duty to mention to Your Excellency that I wish to give as little trouble as I can with regard to the victualling of our ships &c., and to avoid making preparations for such articles which are not made use of in His Majesty's Navy, and likewise to avoid procuring on purpose stores, which may be attended with some difficulties, as I am perfectly agreeable that our ships should be supplied with the same articles of provisions &c. as are used in the British Navy.

1795  
October

“ I beg leave however to make my observation upon two articles, namely, bread and corn brandy (whiskey or good gin instead of corn brandy). The Russian people in general eat more bread than the people of any other country; therefore I must have recourse to Your Excellency to intercede at the Admiralty that my people should have the same allowance of bread given them here as they are allowed in Russia. Charka or a glass of brandy or gin is the moving spring of a Russian sailor; it is allowed them daily by the regulations of Peter the Great, who knew so well the disposition of his people and who is adored by them all; and to deprive a Russian sailor of



1795  
October

what is allowed him by Peter the Great, whom they always call their Father, would be taking off at once so much of their courage and diminishing their resolution to face the enemy, which thank God they show so much goodwill and readiness to do for the good of their friends and allies, so that I hope Your Excellency will likewise have the goodness to assist me in obtaining that this article might be allowed them in the same manner as it is usually done in the Russian service. If grits of any kind could be easily procured, I should wish to have them allowed to my crews. It would add greatly to their comfort, as they generally make their hot meat of them. I shall have a few more articles to trouble Your Excellency upon with regard to my officers, which I must defer till I have the honour of seeing you. If Your Excellency should soon be coming to London I shall wait here, otherwise I shall do myself the pleasure to wait upon you at Deal.

“ Your Excellency was always pleased to show me so much attention and friendship that upon every occasion I have recourse to you without the smallest reserve, knowing that whatever I do by your advice and assistance cannot but cement the friendship of the two allied countries and promote their mutual welfare.

“ I have the honor to be &c.,

“ (*Sgd.*) P. HANICKOFF.”

In the month of October it seems to have been



proposed by some unknown person of influence to give to Admiral Duncan the seat at the Board of Admiralty vacated by Admiral Sir Charles Middleton. In all probability this person was Mr. Henry Dundas, for Lord Spencer's answer, to whomsoever it was addressed, is in the Admiral's collection of Lord Spencer's letters, and had no doubt been forwarded by the recipient to him for his information.

1795  
October

“Admiralty : October 13, 1795.

“Dear Sir,—The services of Admiral Duncan are so valuable in the situation in which he now acts that he could not possibly be spared from it without detriment to the service; and it will be absolutely necessary that whoever shall replace Sir C. M. at this Board should have it in his power to give constant attendance here, which could not be the case with an Admiral whose flag is flying.

“Yours very faithfully,

“SPENCER.”

The propriety of Lord Spencer's decision was beyond question. The Admiral commanding in the North Sea had abundant occupation on his own station and in his own fleet, and could have no time to bestow upon the general administration of the Navy.

## CHAPTER IV

## THE BLOCKADE OF THE TEXEL, 1796-7

1796 IN the early part of the year 1796 matters in the North Sea remained very much in the same state. There were occasional reports of the Dutch fleet having put to sea, and the British squadron was constantly on the alert off the Texel, Lord Spencer urging the Admiral to continue his exertions. At the end of February a small Dutch squadron under Admiral Braak slipped out and, eluding the British cruisers, went North about and escaped, part it was believed being destined for the West Indies, and part for the East Indies. Admiral Duncan himself put to sea on March 14 and relieved Vice-Admiral Pringle off the Texel, who then left the station for another command, and was succeeded by Vice-Admiral Macbride. The Admiral's cruise continued until May 18, when he was relieved and returned to Yarmouth, which now had been constituted the headquarters of the North Sea Fleet. Lord Spencer wrote :

“ Admiralty : April 6, 1796.

“ I have received your two letters of the 18th and 24th ultimo and have only to regret that your cruise has not hitherto proved more productive. I begin very much to suspect that the Dutch have

slipped round and are either bound to some foreign destination or mean to make one of the French ports in the Atlantic, which I am afraid they may be able to effect if the present easterly wind does not prevent them, before we can get any squadron to replace Admiral Harvey's, who are returned without having seen or heard anything of an enemy."

"Admiralty: April 15, 1796.

"I agree with you in the conclusion that the Dutch fleet which was met by Admiral Pringle on February 24 is certainly gone North about, and there is good reason to believe that some of them at least are destined to the Cape and East Indies. There is, however, another squadron of six or seven line-of-battle ships and some frigates remaining in the Texel, which, if manned (and accounts say that every effort is making to man them), will probably sail from thence the moment they hear of your return. As to Von Dirking I don't know what to make of him, but am not without hopes that before this reaches you he may have fallen in with one or other of the squadrons which you have so judiciously stationed to intercept him.

"Admiral Pringle's services having been required in another quarter of the world, we have taken him from you, and intend that Vice-Admiral Macbride should hoist his flag under your command in the North Sea, who I hope, from his knowledge of that sea and his well-known activity, will prove a useful second to you. His being a Vice-Admiral will also prevent any difficulties arising in point

1796 of rank between him and the two junior Russian flags.

“ I am very sorry for the loss of the ‘ Spider ’ lugger, as she was a very good one. Lieutenant Oswald deserves encouragement, and I think of recommending him to Pringle, who is already apprised of his merits.”

During the earlier months of the year Captain Von Dirking, a Dutch Captain above alluded to, who had under his command a Dutch frigate and three armed brigs, and who was, politically, a partisan of the House of Orange, was engaged in negotiations with the British Consul at Christiansand, where his ships were lying, to surrender them to the British together with several East Indiamen which were under his charge. The plan finally arranged was that when Von Dirking’s ships sailed they should be met by a superior British force, when Von Dirking felt certain that he could induce them to surrender without resistance. Owing to various circumstances their sailing was postponed until May 7, when they were met at sea by the ‘ Phœnix,’ Captain Halsted, and two other ships. The frigate ‘ Argo,’ 36 guns, was captured by the ‘ Phœnix ’ after a smart action, and the brigs were chased on shore. The ‘ Phœnix ’ had one man killed and three wounded : the ‘ Argo ’ had six men killed and twenty-eight wounded. Captain Von Dirking found that Dutch seamen, even though disaffected towards their own Government, were not inclined to surrender to an enemy



without fighting. On May 18 Lord Spencer wrote to Admiral Duncan :

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“ I am very glad your squadron stayed out long enough to catch Von Dirking, which service appears to have been performed in a very masterly manner, and I sincerely congratulate you on the success of it.”

A few days before her action with the ‘Argo’ the ‘Phœnix,’ acting according to orders received from Admiral Duncan, seized in a neutral Norwegian port the French privateer, ‘Petit Diable,’ and also a large Dutch cutter called the ‘Vlugheid,’ together with some British prizes which they had taken. These privateers had given much trouble, and the Admiral had ordered that they were to be taken wherever found.

Lord Spencer wrote on May 6 :

“ As to the ‘Petit Diable’ and ‘Vlugheid,’ all I can say is that I am very glad they are brought in, though this of course I can only say privately between you and me, for though nothing can be more unjustifiable than their method of cruising, yet I fear that the regular laws of war will not perfectly justify their capture in the manner and form in which it was effected. We shall have a great noise about it from Denmark, but in the meantime our trade will be quieter, and in less danger.”

Lord Spencer’s anticipations were soon verified, and a rather angry correspondence with the

1796 Danish Government ensued, which lasted for some time.

So far as the Dutch coast was concerned hardly a day was allowed to pass during all these months without one or more small vessels reporting upon the number and condition of the ships lying in the Texel.

The general plan of the blockade, as practised, is clearly told in the following letter from Vice-Admiral Macbride, off the Texel, to Admiral Duncan :

“ August 23, 1796.

“ Sir,—Admiral Tate has joined us, which I am very glad of, as it has enabled the ‘ Albion ’ to complete her water and provisions. She had only thirty tons remaining.

“ These people (the Dutch) have had a fair wind for these eight days past, and we are certainly inferior to them. If they would not come out then, they will hardly do so now. Admiral Tate’s party makes us look very big. I have begun to wean them, as I term it, by keeping closer in—the cutters as near the Texel as they can safely get, the frigates next them, then two line of battle ships to cover them, and the rest of us without and still farther off so as to be seen from their lookout. This keeps them in suspense as to the amount of our force. To-day we make a grand display. When it is thought right for us to come in, my idea would be for the ‘ Albion ’ and one of the line of battle ships and the ‘ Phœnix ’ and a few cutters to take the Texel lookout, to send another line of battle

ship to join Fairfax, with what he has with him ; that will keep everything sufficiently in check at Helvoet. As the ships are arranged, very few hours can elapse without our receiving news of their moving if they do move at all."

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In the month of September Mr. Pitt's Government decided upon an attempt to take possession of the Helder shore and the Texel Island, and to destroy the Dutch fleet with fireships. According to secret information which had been received, the people of Holland, and especially of the maritime provinces, were very much discontented with their Republican Government. Trade had fallen off and employment had diminished ; taxation pressed heavily on the people, and the price of all articles of consumption had risen greatly. The policy of the country was superintended by France, and seemed to be shaped for the benefit of French interests alone. The army and navy were employed as the French Government chose to direct, while at the same time the presence of large bodies of French troops in garrison was not congenial to the Dutch people. The seamen of the fleet were in a state of insubordination verging on mutiny, being badly fed, badly clothed, and irregularly paid. For a considerable time it had been found impossible to maintain the crews at their proper strength. Moreover, the sailors of the Dutch navy had always been favourably inclined towards the House of Orange, and it was well known that not only the seamen, but the pilots and sailors employed on the



1796 inland waters, hated the Republican Government. The French garrisons, too, had recently been either withdrawn or largely diminished throughout Holland. All these circumstances taken together pointed to the possibility of striking a severe and effective blow on the side of Holland which might alter the whole complexion of affairs in Europe, and might make peace more desirable in the eyes of France, now elated by the victorious campaign of Napoleon in Italy.

Lord Spencer, acting on behalf of the Cabinet, had been in communication with Admiral Duncan with reference to the proposed expedition, which it would appear the latter did not regard with favour. It may be gathered from Lord Spencer's letters that the Admiral feared that the heavy gales, which were of frequent occurrence in the late autumn, might blow the squadron off the coast, and leave the land forces unsupported to meet the attack which almost certainly would be made on them. In the operation of landing the forces and seizing the position he probably saw little difficulty, for three years later his fleet landed Sir Ralph Abercrombie and his troops on the Helder shore in face of the enemy.

However, his objections, whatever they may have been, were overruled, and he was directed to proceed.

Lord Spencer wrote :

“ Admiralty : September 30, 1796.

“ I send you this by Captain Drury, to whom we have given an acting order for the standard. He



will explain to you at large all that has passed here relative to the proposed plan which, upon a mature consideration of all the circumstances both political and military, Government have determined shall be carried into execution if possible. I shall therefore enter into no further particulars about it, knowing full well from what I know of you that all the exertion and ability which can be required will be applied to ensure its success. I say nothing in answer to your letter which I received yesterday, as the development of this plan in a great measure answers everything you have there stated.

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“ Captain Drury, whose zeal and spirit upon this occasion do him infinite credit, has thrown out a hint which I therefore think it right to mention to you, that, as he has planned this undertaking, he may be employed to execute it, and in order to that object it may probably be most proper to move him into the ‘ Redoubt ’ when she joins you, or at least before the execution of the project, as she will be the properest vessel to go in with, drawing so little water. I write in haste as Drury wishes to set off as soon as possible.”

“ Admiralty: October 3, 1796.

“ Dear Sir,—When any enterprise promising considerable advantage is undertaken, more especially in the military line, it is quite impossible that some risk should not be the necessary attendant upon it, and in general, the greater the advantage the greater the risk. In the case now before us there will unquestionably be some risk,

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but I think it is hardly fair to suppose that because we are not quite sure of fine weather there must be blowing weather, nor because we cannot bring the successful event of the attempt to a mathematical demonstration that we should despair so much as not even to take the chance of trying it. We are by no means desirous for you to risk the fleet by going too near the shore in stormy weather, or by exposing yourself more than is absolutely necessary to those dangers which you apprehend and which there is undoubtedly reason to apprehend in some degree. All we wish is this, that, considering the very favourable circumstances of the moment for such an attempt, you should take all the means necessary to carry it into execution if, when you come to the station, you find the weather, and the several other appearances on which success may depend, favourable to the undertaking. The proposed advantage from success is very great indeed, almost incalculable, and I cannot help thinking that, if executed (as I am sure it will be) with decision and spirit, the success of it is almost certain. It may chance to be attended with some difficulties, particularly in respect to getting off again, but, as I said before, something must be risked at a moment like the present. The execution will rest with you and those under your orders. The blame of having undertaken a project attended with too much hazard (if it shall hereafter so appear) must lie at our doors, who shall have ordered it. The weather seems now to be set in fine, and it frequently continues so during the greatest part of

October. If that should be the case, I shall feel extremely sanguine, and, should we in such a case have determined not to look at this plan for fear of bad weather, we shall for ever have to reproach ourselves with having missed one of the fairest opportunities that ever was offered to distress the enemy in a manner which will produce the best possible consequences to the interests of this country. One great point in this subject is the profoundest secrecy, without which, I am afraid, no such plan can succeed. Therefore, if by any accident it has been already at all mentioned, the idea should be totally destroyed if possible, either by treating it as quite chimerical or by any other way that may occur. One sure means would be for you to express great dissatisfaction at the 'Robust' and 'Ramillies' being ordered round to Portsmouth, just as you are on the point of sailing, and at the 'Ardent' being added to them, which ship you have confidently expected to have with you.

"I should be glad to have another line from you by return of post, and to know when you think you will be ready to put to sea.

"Yours &c.,

"SPENCER."

(*Private.*)

"Admiralty: October 5, 1796.

"Dear Sir,—I have not time to-day (being the first day of the session of Parliament) to do more than acknowledge the receipt of your letter of yesterday, and at the same time to say that I am very well satisfied of the justice of your remarks on



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the subject to which it relates, and can only repeat that, unless the circumstances appear to be favourable, it cannot be either my wish or that of anyone else to engage in a great difficulty without a prospect of at least proportional benefit to the Public. I have seen Captain Drury this morning and have talked it over with him again, and you will of course, before you sail, have full instructions and communications from us on every part of this business. We mean to appropriate the 'York' in addition to the 'Robust' and 'Ramillies' for carrying the troops, and as they are under twelve hundred I should hope these three ships may do.

“ Yours &c.,

“ SPENCER.”

Unfortunately, the seaman's instincts proved the more correct, and it soon began to blow hard from the westward.

“ Admiralty: October 8, 1796.

“ Dear Sir,—It blows so fresh now that I am very glad you are still in Yarmouth Roads. When the weather gets moderate we continue to think it extremely desirable that at least a chance should be taken of this very important blow, but by no means wish the fleet to be in danger for that object. If the ships in the Texel Roads should be in the situation in which they have from so many quarters been represented to be, and the weather should prove favourable, I cannot still help seeing a great probability of a successful attack being made on them by fire-ships, which, if it can be done by



surprise, must inevitably (though it should not succeed in burning them) produce so much confusion as to be attended with consequences the most favourable to us. A great point therefore to be wished is, now that the weather is such as to make it most advisable for you to remain at Yarmouth, that you should send out some intelligent officer to look in there and report what is the actual position of the Dutch fleet. In the meanwhile all the preparations towards the undertaking may go on, and when you sail, the three ships with the troops, the fire-ships from the Western squadron which is ordered to the Downs, and the 'Redoubt' floating battery, which will probably in a day or two arrive at Yarmouth, may join you at your rendezvous. Mr. Bell, a very clever and intelligent artillery officer, will be sent out to you to assist in fitting the Dutch boats as fire-ships, and the pretence for your taking them out with you when you sail may be to see them over to their own shore. It will be most prudent, I think, to take possession of any others you may meet with at sea, at least till it is determined whether anything can be done or no.

“ The regiments will, I understand, be ready to be embarked by next Monday, but while there is an appearance of blowing weather from the westward I suppose it will be better they should not be taken on board. In the meantime, if we could procure accurate and late intelligence of the Texel fleet it might serve to guide our final determination. This is all of course for yourself alone.

“ I am, yours &c.,

“ SPENCER.”

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*(Private.)*

"Wimbledon Park: October 16, 1796.

"Dear Sir,—In answer to your letters of the 10th and 13th inst., I have but little more to say than what I have before repeated in the several letters I have written to you since you were in the Yarmouth Roads, and must therefore only again desire you to consider fully the very great importance of the object in view to the whole future course of the war, not only considered in a naval light, but very possibly even as bearing on the operations upon the Continent; and as to the doubts you express respecting the effect of any such enterprise on the pending negotiations, I must confess I differ extremely from your opinion on that subject, for nothing can be more true than that till we are at peace we must be at war; and the more active and vigorous our war is, so much the more advantageous will be our peace. I cannot help thinking that it would be a great and powerful argument in the mouth of any negotiator of ours to have it to say that the navy of Holland was annihilated and the entrance to the port of Amsterdam completely in our possession. And if this attack upon the Helder should be successful, of which, if circumstances admit of its being attempted I have very little doubt, and it should appear possible to maintain possession of it for a certain time, which, from the knowledge we have of the want of troops in that quarter, I cannot help thinking may appear very practicable; in such a case I think there could be no doubt of the propriety of your going in with the fleet, and taking

possession of that anchorage. The immediate consequence of this would be either that the Dutch fleet would attempt to come out to attack you—in which case I am very confident indeed of the event, especially with those batteries in our possession—or they would slip and run up further into the Zuyder Zee, which would leave even the higher anchorage in your hands; or, if they ventured to remain at anchor under the Texel Island, they would then be very open to an attack by fire-ships, which could not fail of destroying the whole or the greater part of them. In the state of insubordination and mutiny in which the greatest part of that fleet is known to be, such a vigorous and bold attempt as this must inevitably throw them into the utmost confusion, and it is not impossible to suppose that some of them might immediately surrender themselves; and the effect which all this would produce at Amsterdam and all over the interior of Holland, already very much indisposed to its new governors, is really incalculable. All this you will see must entirely depend on the event of the attack on the Helder batteries, which if they are carried by a *coup de main* must immediately be made as secure as possible towards the land by throwing up entrenchments, which may be done with great ease and in a very short time in a manner effectual enough to prevent an enemy from retaking them without making a regular attack in considerable force, which by taking up time would give you an opportunity of re-embarking the troops and getting off.



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“ After all the arguments which you have urged against the practicability at this season of even the first and least difficult part of this undertaking, I am almost afraid that you will think me quite wild for having stated all this to you with any idea of its being carried into effect. I feel, however, so strongly impressed with the importance of the object, and so fully persuaded that the very circumstance of its being a hazardous and bold enterprise will in a great measure ensure its success against an enemy, whom we know to be very much disinclined to engage us, that I could not rest satisfied without having thrown the idea upon paper for your serious consideration ; that in case the favourable moment should happen (which I grant is from the season rather less probable than it might have been some months ago) you might at least see the extent of the public benefit, the chance of obtaining which must be taken in counterbalance to even a considerable risk in the execution.

“ I hope this will only reach you at sea, as I conclude the fine settled appearance of the weather yesterday and to-day will tempt you to go out.

“ I shall add no more at present but to say that with respect to the merit you may be entitled to claim for success in this attempt if it should be made, I know so well that you will do all that ought to be done, that I feel perfectly satisfied on that head, and should the event be prosperous you will have the merit of having performed one of the most brilliant services that ever fell to the lot of a British Admiral.

“ I am, &c.,

“ SPENCER.



“ P.S.—In case of possessing yourself of the anchorage in question you would of course declare the port of Amsterdam in a state of blockade and stop everything either coming in or going out.

“ I mean this letter as quite confidential to yourself alone, more particularly in the event of its being judged impracticable to carry the first attack into execution. If that attack succeeds, I am persuaded you will see that the other ideas follow almost of course.”

(*Private.*)

“ October 19, 1796.

“ Dear Admiral,—I don't know how the wind is with you to-day, but here it is very favourable and fine weather. Colonel Doyle went down last night to go on board the ‘ Ramillies ’ ; and those ships with the troops on board will certainly sail from to-day from the Nore. As it appears by the account from the ‘ Leander ’ that the ‘ Trusty ’ has been blown off her station, we have determined to substitute the ‘ Leander ’ in her room, on the service for which the ‘ Trusty ’ was intended, which has now become very pressing. You will therefore be so good as, in compliance with our order of this day's date, to send Captain Thomson to Spithead as soon as you can, and Captain Osborn will remain under your orders. God bless you, dear Admiral ; I hope you are at sea to-day, but if not I trust you will not lose a moment longer.

“ Yours &c.,

“ SPENCER.”

On October 13 Mr. Evan Nepean, the Secre-

1796 tary of the Admiralty, had forwarded to the Admiral the official orders, together with a private covering letter from himself.

“Admiralty: October 13, 1796.

“My dear Sir,—I send you the official orders respecting your intended enterprise, which if successful would be sure to be an important stroke. The plan referred to in Mr. Etches' letter is in the possession of Captain Drury, who will of course deliver it to you. I shall indeed desire him so to do when he calls here to-morrow.

“I expect the troops will be embarked and the ships be paid in the course of Saturday, and that, if the wind should be favourable, they may sail on that day.

“The ‘Incendiary’ is at the Nore, and the ‘Megæra’ in the Downs, both of which fire-ships will be ordered to join you immediately, but, to enable them with certainty so to do, it will be necessary you should send me your rendezvous (if you have not already done it) by the messenger who I hope will reach you to-morrow afternoon.

“Lord Malmesbury sets off for Paris to-morrow to negotiate. I confess from the temper of the times that I am not very sanguine in my expectations of their listening to any reasonable condition, but we shall soon be able to discover what they wish to be at. The intention of invasion is talked of with confidence, but I think they will hardly attempt it at this moment, nor indeed at any time until they are a little more powerful at sea.

“ We are all well here excepting poor Sir Philip Stephens, who is very melancholy at the loss of his nephew and heir (Brigadier-General Howe), who has lately died at Jamaica.

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“ Yours very sincerely,

“ EVAN NEPEAN.”

“ (Secret.) ”

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

“ The Right Honourable Henry Dundas, one of His Majesty’s Principal Secretaries of State, having acquainted us by his letter of this day’s date of His Majesty’s design that the 10th and 87th Regiments of Infantry, with a detachment of the Royal Regiment of Artillery under the command of Colonel Doyle, shall be put on board the ships of your squadron, intending that an attempt shall be made for destroying the Dutch squadron now lying in the Texel, and signified at the same time His Majesty’s pleasure that instructions should be given to you to take such measures by means of the ships of your squadron as may under the existing circumstances be best adapted to that end; and having in pursuance thereof directed that the said two regiments shall be received on board the ships named in the margin, forming a part of the force serving under your command ;

‘Ramillies,’  
‘Robust,’  
‘York,’  
‘Eurus’

“ We send you herewith for your information a copy of the instructions which have been given to Colonel Doyle for his direction and guidance, together with sundry papers of intelligence relative to the strength and situation of the Dutch



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squadron above mentioned, and of the state of the force and defences by which that anchorage is protected, and do hereby require and direct you, after being joined by the said ships and troops from the Nore, if from any intelligence you may collect you should find that the situation of things has not so changed as to preclude a reasonable expectation of success, to arrange the necessary measures with Colonel Doyle, and avail yourself of the first favourable opportunity of co-operating with him and the troops under his command to obtain possession of the Helder and the Texel Island, and employ the force under your command in such a manner as may on a consideration of all the existing circumstances be most advisable for taking, burning, or otherwise destroying the said Dutch squadron or any other ships or vessels belonging to the enemy which may be within your reach, taking care, however, not to expose the ships or troops without such prospect shall appear, nor without making the necessary arrangements for securing the retreat of the troops if, after their landing, they should find such a difficulty in carrying their design into execution as cannot be resisted.

“And whereas by our orders to you of the 8th instant you have been directed to take with you the Dutch fishing boats detained at Yarmouth in consequence of our orders signified to you by our secretary in his letter to you of the 22nd of last month; you are hereby further required and directed, in case you should judge it advisable so to



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do, to convert the said Dutch fishing boats into fire-vessels, and dispose of them as such, if circumstances should be favourable for applying them to advantage, or in the event of their being unfit, or of its being found inconvenient to apply them to that service, to employ them in the disembarkation of the troops and stores; observing, however, that if they cannot be applied to some useful purpose of the nature we have pointed out, or some other equally necessary for promoting the success of your operations, they are in such case to be ordered to return to Yarmouth for our further directions.

“ You are to acquaint our secretary for our information by every opportunity of your proceedings in the execution of the important service now committed to your care; and if from circumstances which may arise it should be found imprudent to make an attempt upon the Texel, you are in such case to order the ships with the troops and stores attached to them to proceed to Spithead, remaining with the rest of the ships and vessels under your command upon your station until you shall receive our further instructions for your guidance. Given under our hands October 12, 1796.

“ SPENCER.

“ H. SEYMOUR.

“ W. YOUNG.

“ To Adam Duncan Esq., Admiral of the Blue, Commander-in-Chief of His Majesty's ships and vessels employed in the North Sea. By command of their Lordships.—EVAN NEPEAN.”

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*The Instructions to Colonel Doyle, above  
referred to*

*(Most secret)*

“Parliament Street: October 10, 1796.

“Sir,—The intelligence of which I herewith enclose extracts for your information, and the communications I have had with some naval officers of experience, relative to the situation of the Dutch fleet in the Texel and of the batteries and defences which guard the entrance of that port, have induced me to submit to His Majesty a proposal that an attempt should be made to obtain possession of the said batteries, and thereby to enable the naval forces which are intended to co-operate in the expedition to make an attack on those of the enemy, with a view of taking, burning, or otherwise destroying the same, together with any other vessels belonging to the enemy which might be within their reach.

“The troops which have been selected by His Majesty for the execution of this service are the 10th and 87th Regiments of Infantry, now at Chatham, which will be embarked on board such ships of war, belonging to the fleet under the command of Admiral Duncan, as may be directed to receive them at the Nore, together with a detachment of the Royal Regiment of Artillery which have been ordered for this purpose, and I am to signify to you His Majesty’s pleasure that you are, without loss of time, to proceed to Chatham, and, taking the said troops under your command, to superintend and expedite their embarkation on board

the ships above mentioned, which will be directed, as soon as the whole shall be on board, to proceed without loss of time to join the remainder of the fleet destined for the expedition.

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“ You will of course take your passage with the persons of your suite on board such ship as the Admiral may appoint for this purpose.

“ As soon as you shall have joined the Admiral you will communicate with him and such officers as he may have more particularly charged to direct any operations necessary to be undertaken on this occasion, and you will, in concert with him and them, endeavour to make every arrangement, both of preparation and co-operation, which in your joint opinions may be conducive to the success of the enterprize. On these points it is impossible for me to furnish you with any specific instructions ; and I can only state generally to you that the great object of the expedition is to enable His Majesty’s ships, without too great a risk, to get within reach of the enemy’s fleet, so as to attack them in their present anchorage. In case, therefore, the situation of the latter should not be so changed as to preclude every reasonable hope of success, and provided the state of affairs in other aspects should hold out an expectation which in the opinion of yourself and the Admiral would justify the attempt, you will in concert with him make such dispositions as may appear best adapted to enable you to obtain possession, either by surprise or by a vigorous attack, of the batteries on the Helder and the Texel Island, and for this



1796 purpose you will endeavour with the utmost diligence to land such a proportion of the troops as may appear to you requisite at each point; and should you be so fortunate as to succeed I have strong hopes that you would be enabled to maintain possession of the same, not only as long as may be necessary for the fleet to proceed without danger of interruption or molestation in its operations against the shipping of the enemy, but also until you can have transmitted intelligence of your proceedings to this country, and have received from me further instructions, either for withdrawing the troops or for taking any other steps which the situation of affairs may suggest; but in this respect you must be guided by circumstances, and act according to your own judgment and discretion, taking care, however, to avoid risking the loss of any considerable number of men for an advantage very secondary in its importance to the great object of the expedition.

“ The practicability of retaining these posts is indeed mentioned with so much confidence in the extracts of intelligence which accompany this dispatch, that I own it has much weakened, in my view of the operation, an objection which might otherwise have been found of such weight as to prevent its receiving a fair trial. This objection arises from the extreme difficulty of re-embarking the troops when the surf is violent, which, I understand, is frequently the case on these shores. Should your troops be landed and not succeed in driving the enemy from their batteries, this diffi-



culty, it is true, may expose a part of them to be taken; but as you will not attempt a landing without a reasonable chance of success, it is expedient for so great an object to run this risk; whilst, on the other hand, should you overcome the resistance of the enemy your position, I flatter myself, would be sufficiently respectable to enable you to wait for a favourable opportunity of returning on board.

“The probability of success in this enterprise, you must be sensible, will very much depend on the utmost secrecy being observed until the moment of execution, which His Majesty confides to you and to the commanding naval officer with a perfect reliance that whatever can be expected from zeal and a cordial co-operation on your parts, and from valour and discipline in the soldiers and seamen, will be carried into effect in this important service.

“You will take every opportunity which may occur of acquainting me with your proceedings for His Majesty’s information, and in case you should find it absolutely necessary to relinquish the enterprise you will return with His Majesty’s forces under your command to Spithead, and there wait for instructions from me for their further disposal.

“I am, Sir,

*(signed)* “HENRY DUNDAS.”

The Admiral as soon as he received his orders prepared to carry them out in no half-hearted or hesitating fashion. He put to sea, and on October

1796 21 he was off the Texel. He then issued the following instructions to each captain in the fleet :

*“ On board the ‘ Venerable,’ at sea—By Adam Duncan Esq., Admiral of the Blue and Commander-in-Chief in the North Sea, &c., &c., &c.*

“ Whereas it is my intention, if favoured by the weather, to attack the Dutch fleet in the Texel Road, you are hereby required and directed to observe and execute the following instructions, viz. :

“ The ships of the squadron are to have their sheet and stream cables bent to anchors from the stern ports, springs on their cables, and use every precaution that may occur for the better ensuring success in the enterprise by placing their ships properly. They are to hoist out their launches and other boats, which are to be kept in readiness for any service, and any spars &c. that may be detrimental to clearing the ships for action may be thrown overboard, and the cutters will have orders to take them up.

“ On the signal being made to prepare for battle, the ships are to use every exertion in getting them ready accordingly, and, when so, hoist a flag, half blue, half yellow, at the main-top-gallant-mast-head, when the ‘ Albion,’ who is to lead, will hoist a red flag at the fore-top-gallant-masthead, bear away anchor and engage the headmost ship of the enemy ; the other ships are to follow and do so in succession as they arrive up with them agreeably

to the order of battle on the other side hereof, and the nearer ships engage the more probability there is of success.

“As fire-ships will be made use of, the moment one is fired, the ship engaged with the one intended to be destroyed is to cut and take the situation which may appear best for the more effectually defeating the enemy.

“Should the enemy attempt to get off, great care must be taken to prevent His Majesty’s ships from running on shore in the pursuit.

“As in such an attack much must depend on the skill and bravery of the Captains and Commanders, the Admiral, having full confidence in their zeal, leaves them to act as circumstances may occur.

“It is the Admiral’s intention not to make any more signals than are absolutely necessary.

“Frigates to be at all times ready to go to the assistance of any ship in distress without waiting for signal.”

The instructions are so simple that it was impossible not to understand them. The attack was to take place in shallow water and was full of risk. To succeed it must be pushed home at close quarters. Very much would depend on circumstances. The Admiral had, no doubt, considered the plan of attack carefully with his captains, and he left full discretion with them as to details. It was his invariable practice to consult with his officers, and after that to throw responsibility upon them.



1796

It may be observed that quite half of the ships had joined the squadron for the first time.

Unfortunately, the wind blew constantly on shore, and from the westward. It was found impossible to attempt a landing. The squadron remained off the Texel, beating about, from October 21 to November 4.

AN ABSTRACT FROM THE LOG BOOK OF HIS MAJESTY'S SHIP  
THE 'VENERABLE.'

Date 1796	Latitude		Longitude		Bearing and Distance at Noon
	D.	M.	D.	M.	
Oct. 21	52	35 N.	2	36 E.	Texel N. 71 E. 31 Leagues
" 22					Camperdown SEBE. distance 6 leagues
" 23	53	00 N.	3	36 E.	Camperdown S. 50 E. 13 leagues
" 24	53	13 N.	3	59 E.	Texel S. 77 E. 10 leagues
" 25	53	10 N.	2	12 E.	Camperdown S. 79 30 E. 39 leagues
" 26	52	32 N.	3	38 E.	Camperdown N. 70 E. 14 leagues
" 27	52	39 N.	3	42 E.	Texel N. 57 30 E. 19 leagues
" 28	53	07 N.	3	57 E.	Camperdown S. 57 30 E. 11 leagues
" 29	53	31 N.	3	51 E.	Camperdown S. 44 00 E. 16 leagues
" 30	53	04 N.	4	02 E.	Camperdown S. 45 00 E. 9 leagues
" 31	53	39 N.	4	32 E.	Texel S. 22 00 E. 10 leagues
Nov. 1	52	55 N.	3	15 E.	Texel N. 78 00 E. 19 leagues
" 2	53	32 N.	3	45 E.	Texel S. 64 00 E. 15 leagues
" 3	54	05 N.	3	29 E.	Texel S. 48 00 E. 24 leagues
" 4	53	45	4	05	Texel S. 26 00 E. 13 leagues

The Admiral was unwilling to relinquish a task when once undertaken, and suggested some other mode of attack, which appears not to have been approved of, and he was directed to bring in his squadron. This he was very reluctant to do, and, in spite of the continuance of storms and heavy weather, he remained off the Dutch coast until November 27, when he brought back the greater



part of the fleet to Yarmouth, leaving Captain Knight of the 'Montagu' with a small squadron to keep up the watch over the Texel. 1796

Although he was in no way responsible for the expedition, nor for the bad weather, which indeed he had predicted, he was evidently much chagrined at having failed to carry out his orders, and tendered his resignation, which Lord Spencer declined to accept.

Lord Spencer wrote :

“Admiralty : November 2, 1796.

“Dear Sir,—I have already so fully explained to you in former letters my views in so much pressing upon you the object of the late intended expedition against the Texel, that it is only now necessary for me to repeat that I was far from not feeling the weight and force of your objection, but wished that at least one chance of being able to effect it might be taken by putting it in our power to make the attempt, if upon the spot the circumstances should appear to favour it. That the circumstances were unfavourable, and so unfavourable as to make it perfectly right and proper to relinquish when it was relinquished, I am fully convinced, and having perceived the turn the weather had taken within the last week, I confess the receipt of your letter was rather a relief to my mind, as I felt a little uneasy upon the result in case the attempt should have been made with the weather so unsettled. I rejoice therefore that no loss was incurred unnecessarily, and so far from having lost any con-

1796      fidence in you in consequence from what has passed, my opinion of your judgment ought in fact to be increased, as it has turned out to be (what was most likely) much more correct than mine. I desire therefore that you will not think of such a measure as you talk of in your letter to me, which letter I shall show to no one but Mr. Dundas, to whom I this morning showed it, and who entirely agrees with me in thinking that the command entrusted to you cannot possibly be placed in better hands.

“As it appears extremely uncertain whether Macbride will be able to return to his station, we shall authorise some other Vice-Admiral to hoist his flag under you during his absence; I say a Vice-Admiral, because the return of Rear-Admiral Makaroff, who is senior to all our Rear-Admirals, would occasionally produce inconvenience if we had not a Vice-Admiral for second in command. I have not yet quite fixed upon the person, but I think Admiral Linzee will be as proper a man as any there is to be had, and the ‘Montagu’ will be the best ship for his flag.

“Unless the wind should come to the eastward away while you are off the Texel, I think it will be as well for you to come in and not keep your fleet beating about to no purpose with the wind on shore. You will of course leave something to watch the motions of the enemy, and we continue to think Yarmouth the best place for you to return to.

“I am, &c.

“SPENCER.”

On October 14 Admiral Hanickoff had written from Copenhagen Roads to say that he had received orders to send back to England "such ships as he thought capable of keeping the seas," under Rear-Admiral Makaroff, and that accordingly he had directed the Rear-Admiral to sail with the 'Peter,' 'Philip,' and 'Europe,' and five frigates. These vessels had arrived at the end of the month, and had placed themselves under Admiral Duncan's command.

1796

On November 19 Vice-Admiral Richard Onslow took the place of Vice-Admiral Macbride, whose health had given way, as second in command, and hoisted his flag on board the 'Nassau.'

The year 1797 opened much in the same manner as the preceding year so far as regarded the North Sea. Rumours were current of expeditions from Dunkirk and from the Texel. "We hear a good deal of equipments and expeditions from Dunkirk and we have experienced that the enemy do not mean to confine themselves to mere threats," wrote Lord Spencer on January 27. It was reported that between twelve and fourteen thousand men were in Dunkirk, and that more troops were coming.

1797

On March 3:—"The Dutch fleet of eight sail of the line sailed on Wednesday, March 1 from the Texel, and four of the line the same day from Helvoet; if you can get to your ships at Yarmouth, even though those at Hull should not join, you will be able to give them a good blow, and if you should I know you will not miss it.



1797

“ Sir John Jervis with fifteen of the line has just beat twenty-seven Spaniards and taken four of their best ships ; I hope soon to be able to congratulate you upon as brilliant a day.”

On the same day an official order was given to put to sea as soon as a force could be collected amounting to eight two-decked ships. On March 4 the Admiral informed the Admiralty from the Nore that he was getting under way with the ‘ Venerable,’ ‘ Albion,’ ‘ Montagu ’ and ‘ Repulse,’ leaving orders for others to follow as soon as they could, including the Russian ships under Rear-Admiral Makaroff. He called at Yarmouth and proceeded to his rendezvous off the Texel. On March 21 Lord Spencer had heard from him on his station :

(*Private*)

“ Admiralty : March 21, 1797.

“ I have to acknowledge your two letters of the 13th and 14th instant, and am glad to hear from you that you got out so well and are on your station. It is in vain to wish, as I suppose the Dutch will not put to sea for some time. It can, however, do no harm your showing yourself in such force ; and if it be true that the ‘ Scipio ’ and ‘ Venus ’ are coming from the northward home, you may, perhaps, be able to pick them up. As there are some movements at Dunkirk, we have thought it right that for a short time the ‘ Adamant ’ should lie in the Downs, and we have detained the ‘ Agamemnon ’ in Yarmouth Roads for the same reason. The number of ships



observed by the 'Espion,' as mentioned in your letter to the Board, does not appear to agree with what we might have expected, as I think they should by our accounts have had three or four more in all, unless, indeed, some mistakes have before been made by taking frigates for two-deckers; we shall, however, be more satisfied of these points when you have been able to look in yourself." 1797

As Lord Spencer feared, the Dutch fleet did not sail from the Texel, nor did the expedition start from Dunkirk. The wind became westerly, and orders were sent to Admiral Duncan to return to Yarmouth. He, however, remained off the Texel for some time longer.

(*Private*)

"Admiralty: April 10, 1797.

"I have to acknowledge the receipt of your letters of the 20th, 24th and 3rd ult., the latter brought by the 'Tisiphone,' which met with a smart action on her way home, but unfortunately without success, as you will probably have heard from Captain Wallis. I am obliged to you for all the information they contain; and I hope you will have been able to keep your station in this easterly wind, as our secret informer on the Continent mentions this very day as the day fixed for the Dutch fleet to sail, and the wind, if they choose it, is as fair as possible for them to come out; their destination is said to be an attack on Jersey and Guernsey, but I cannot say I give much credit to it. I noted what you say in one of your letters

1797 about the Duc d'Angoulême, and though I feel as much as possible for the unfortunate situation of these illustrious exiles, I cannot help thinking that under our present circumstances we have better employment for our frigates than to carry about their coaches and horses.

“We continue to receive representations of the damage done by privateers on the coast of Norway between the Scaw and the Naze, and though I know we cannot expect entirely to prevent it, I mention it because I think occasionally you will find it very good ground to send a cruiser or two upon.”

Except the indecisive action between H.M. ‘Tisiphone’ and the ‘Naiade,’ privateer, nothing occurred worthy of special notice, and on April 23 the ships of the line returned to Yarmouth Roads.

## CHAPTER V

## THE MUTINY—MAY AND JUNE 1797

THE year 1797 is notorious in British naval history for the outbreak of the mutiny among the seamen of the fleets. A general and deep-rooted discontent pervaded the whole Navy in connection with almost every subject of interest to the seamen—amount of pay, time of pay, clothing, food, leave, prize-money, discipline. This discontent was transformed into open mutiny, first at Spithead, then at Yarmouth, then at the Nore, afterwards in the Mediterranean fleet; and long after measures of relief had been applied, and open mutiny had ceased, there occurred from time to time all over the world isolated cases of resistance to authority.

1797

The mutiny at Spithead ended on May 13, a day or two after the mutiny at the Nore began. The mutiny at the Nore is a name which still strikes awe into those who contemplate past history. “No crisis so alarming or nearly so  
 “alarming has ever been known in England since  
 “the Revolution of 1688. . . . In the course of  
 “May the Three per Cents. fell to the extreme

Stanhope's  
 Life of  
 Pitt, vol. iii.

1797 "depression of 48." Not only were the mutinous ships in possession of the Thames, but the whole coast was laid open to the Dutch and the French.

Few people probably have paused to consider that the strength of this mutiny was found not so much at the Nore as at Yarmouth. It was the North Sea fleet which ultimately furnished to the Nore mutineers their largest contingent, and at the same time gave to the Dutch a splendid opportunity. It was on Admiral Duncan that the whole brunt of this mutiny fell. He was called upon to provide against his own squadron as well as to keep the enemy within the Texel. The two months of May and June 1797 were beyond question the most trying time in his whole service. Being so close to the mutineers at home, and also so close to the enemy, the causes of his anxiety were two-fold. How he dealt with the crisis the despatches and Lord Spencer's private letters will tell. It appears from these latter that the Admiral was in almost incessant correspondence with the First Lord. If the Admiral's letters were in existence, they would add much interesting information as to the development of that rising.

In order rightly to estimate Admiral Duncan's position at the outbreak of the mutiny, and the course of action which he adopted, it is essential to bear one or two special circumstances in mind.

In the first place, he never had during his command in the North Sea ships or crews which



he could call his own. More than once, when called suddenly to the Texel on some rumour of an expedition, he had to collect ships as best he could. Often, too, it happened that ships were removed from his command, to supply the exigencies of the Service elsewhere. Hence it was that he had not the same opportunity as the Admirals on other stations of bringing his personal influence to bear upon the officers and upon the crews. It is possible that if this had been otherwise, if the North Sea squadron had been (like the Mediterranean squadron) an administrative unit under one control, the mutiny at the Nore might never have occurred, and it is more than possible that it would have been immediately suppressed.

In the next place, it is essential to remember that the proximity of Yarmouth to the Nore gave to the mutineers there chances of success such as they did not have and could not have abroad. Immediate contact with the headquarters of the conspiracy gave to them boldness and organisation and facilitated escape in case of necessity. They calculated that the closing of the Thames must strike terror into the Metropolis and bring home to the public mind the expediency of conciliating them at any cost. The defenceless condition of the whole east coast would minister to the same result in a different way.

The mutiny at Yarmouth began on board the 'Venerable' on April 30. It probably was by design that the first attempt was made on the

1797 Flagship. The mutiny at Spithead broke out on board the 'Queen Charlotte'; that at the Nore on board the 'Sandwich'; and at those two ports all the Admirals' flags were without exception hauled down. If at Yarmouth the conspirators could hoist the red flag on the 'Venerable,' they would obtain immediate and full control of the North Sea squadron.

Admiral Duncan himself broke the bad news to the Board of Admiralty:

“‘Venerable,’ Yarmouth Roads: May 1, 1797.

“Sir,—I have to desire you will acquaint the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty that yesterday afternoon I was very unexpectedly surprised to hear three cheers given on board the 'Venerable' by some of the company on board the forecastle and in the foreshrouds without orders. I immediately assembled the officers and ordered the Marines under arms. Being thus prepared I went on the forecastle and demanded to know the cause of such improper conduct, to which they made no reply; but five of them appearing more forward than the rest I ordered aft on the poop, and directed the others to disperse, which they did. Soon after I ordered all hands to be sent aft on the quarterdeck and the five men to be brought from the poop. I then interrogated them on their conduct. They had nothing to say for themselves but that as their friends at Spithead had done so they thought no harm and that they wished to know when their

increased pay and provisions was to commence. Having satisfied them on this head, I pointed out the enormity of the crime of mutiny and pardoned the offenders. Good order was again established, and I have the satisfaction to say they have behaved very properly ever since.

1797

“The ‘Nassau’ followed the example of the ‘Venerable,’ but on Vice-Admiral Onslow demanding the cause, was told that seeing the ‘Venerable’ cheer they thought no harm in doing so and had no grievances. The rest of the squadron was perfectly quiet.

“I beg you will make known to their Lordships that Major Trollope, the subalterns, and private Marines were under arms as quick as thought, and behaved with great firmness and resolution, and I took the opportunity before the ship’s company of thanking them for their good conduct.

“I am, Sir,

“Your most obedient humble servant,

“ADAM DUNCAN.

“Evan Nepean, Esq.

“P.S. Vice-Admiral Onslow informed me that the officers and Marines on board the ‘Nassau’ conducted themselves with great propriety and spirit on this occasion.”

The Admiral in his report was concise, as usual: he did not tell all that occurred. The ‘Venerable’ was not reduced to obedience so easily as he represented. If the mutineers supposed that his flag could be hauled down with



1797 impunity, they soon discovered their mistake. His Admiral's flag was to him the sign of his authority, as he said to his ship's company a few days later—"In all my service I have maintained " my authority ; which I will not easily part with." He was angered as well as grieved by the mutiny of his own men. He was prevented with difficulty by the Chaplain from plunging his sword into one of them. Violence fortunately proved to be unnecessary. He ordered his ship's company about, and got them under control ; he then lectured them on the enormity of the crime of mutiny and dismissed them. The mutineers had found their master, and though the ship's company clamoured for their pay when ordered to put to sea at the end of May, they dared not disobey. On board the 'Venerable' no man ventured again to question the Admiral's will.

The Board of Admiralty "very highly approved " of his proceedings." Lord Spencer wrote on May 2 :

"Admiralty.

"Being much engaged to-day I have only just time enough to acknowledge your letter, and to express the satisfaction I felt at hearing that the beginning of a mutinous disposition on board your fleet was so successfully and properly met, in the manner in which such dispositions ought always to be met. A little well-placed presence of mind on these occasions is everything, and I have no doubt that your people will not only obey you better, but like you the better for it."



Lady Spencer, who was always a good friend, wrote on the next day : 1797

“ Admiralty : May 3, 1797.

“ My dear Admiral,—You must allow me to thank you for your kind letter and obliging attention to my request, and I am the more eager to do this because, in the same page on which I return you my acknowledgements for these favours, I have an opportunity of expressing to you my delight at your dexterity and spirit upon certain cheerings on board the ‘ Venerable.’ The success attending such well-judged and vigorous conduct makes me lament that we have not more Adam Duncans. However, since we can’t cut him up into several pieces (tho’ there is certainly enough of him to make many reasonable-sized men), we must be contented with having one of that name who will keep the North Sea fleet in good order. God bless you, my dear Admiral.

“ Believe me sincerely yours,

“ LAVINIA SPENCER.”

Though the mutiny was suppressed on board the ‘ Venerable,’ and for the moment on the ‘ Nassau,’ the spirit of insubordination was becoming rife in the squadron. On May 6 the Admiral heard from Captain Parr that there was a mutiny on the ‘ Standard’ :

“ ‘ Standard,’ Yarmouth Roads : May 6, 1797.

“ Sir,—I have the unhappiness to inform you that the ship’s company of the ‘ Standard,’ under my command, had yesterday morning at four

1797 o'clock barricaded themselves in the bays, and pointed four guns aft. On my going down the accompanying letter was delivered to me. On my talking to them they returned to their duty, and are now quiet."

"Honoured Sir,—We are sorry to have recourse to this method of disclosing our minds to you, but nessesety demands it to clear ourselves from the infamous imputation of mutney being thrown upon us meaning no sutch thing but the comon caus of the British Navy we being allready the jest and redicule of this whole fleet likewise our boats cannot go on shore but the men are exposed to the scoffts and jests of others and accounted as men that cannot stand up for their own rights threatned that whenever the blessings of peace shall be restord to revenge themselves upon us wherever they meat us for our cowerdliness as they term it theirfore we hope Hond. Sir under these curcumstances we have stated to you we hope you will not consider us as a rebellious or mutines set of people but as men who without failing in the least in their respect thay owe you and the other officers would wish to do their duty as such Honoured Sir if any cruelty be used against us and any of our lives be taken you cannot think will tamely suffer it no we wil have the life of the person if we suffer for it afterwards theirfore we intend not to die cowerdly but as men that will to the utmost verge of life not only defend their countreys cause but also defend themselves

against any other internal enemies that may oppose.” 1797

The Admiral had been deeply grieved by the mutiny of his own ship; he was proud of his men, and during his whole service they were his one thought and constant care. In almost every account of him allusion is made to his affection for his men and his attention to their interests. He was well aware that they had good reason to complain, and he sympathised with them, and supported their claims at the Admiralty. But at this moment he had to deal with mutiny, a crime for which so stern a disciplinarian could admit no excuse; and he proceeded at once personally to take it in hand. Throughout his service it was his custom to take into his confidence his officers, and also his ship's company. When he addressed his ship's company he expected them to reply, which it was their habit to do. At this time he decided not to ignore the mutinous spirit which was known to pervade the whole fleet, but to seek it fearlessly wherever it was to be found. Throughout the critical month of May, in Yarmouth Roads, he went on board every ship which was suspected, hoisted his flag, mustered the ship's company, and addressed them, inquiring whether they had any grievances, and also whether anyone dared to dispute his authority or that of their officers. “He visited in this way every ship in the squadron.” He was interfered with only once or twice, and it was soon considered more prudent to remain quiet



1797 when he was on board. Very few sailors were inclined to enter into an open contest with a British Admiral, and especially with an Admiral who was known to be in earnest, and who was a giant besides.

The condition of his own ship concerned him greatly. It was not sufficient to quiet the mutiny there. It was necessary for him to re-establish his influence, which could only be effected by bringing the ship's company to see that they had done wrong.

Having waited about a week, he mustered the crew and addressed them. The draft of this address is preserved. Like most of his writings, it is written upon the back of envelopes addressed to him by the Admiralty, and other small pieces of paper.

It must have been delivered about May 7.

“My Lads,—Fearing some part I intend to say to you might escape me, I have written it down.

“You have had a week coolly to reflect on what happened on Sunday last, and, I doubt not, will agree with me in thinking your conduct was highly improper. I know many of you think so.

“The redress most graciously given by His Majesty, who you all know is the best of kings, to the requests of the fleet at Spithead, was read to you, and you seemed pleased with it.

“The bad example from this ship brought others into the same situation, and ended, as in this ship, without its being known what was wanted or in-



tended. I will venture to say you was misled by a few designing men, and those not the best characters, some of whom I know and saw active. I would advise them to guard their conduct well, as I shall keep a strict eye on them; nor can they expect to be longer petty officers in this ship. Others I also know who shrank from the business and behaved as they ought. They shall always have a claim to my favour. I hear it rumoured, though I give no credit to it, that the ship's company will refuse to go to sea. As a matter of that kind should not be doubtful, I ask you, and I shall ask every ship in the fleet, is that your determination?

1797

“Surrounded as Britain is with enemies, still we have nothing to fear if the fleet strictly adheres to their former character, which never shone with more brightness than during this war. I hope and trust you and others will ever support that character, which in due time will bring the blessings of peace now so particularly desirable. The regard we owe our country and our families, I think, should animate us to exert ourselves in a particular manner and not flinch at the appearance of danger. You see me, now grown grey with fifty-one years' service. In every ship I had the honour to command I have endeavoured to do justice both to the public and the men I commanded, and have often been flattered with particular marks of their regard; and I still hope, in spite of all that has happened, this ship's company have not lost their confidence in me. Both my officers and me are always ready

1797 to redress any supposed grievances when asked in a proper manner.

“In all my service I have maintained my authority, which I will not easily part with. I shall take this opportunity of mentioning a thing that has too often offended my ears in this ship: I mean the profane oaths, and I will say blasphemy, that too much prevails, and, I really believe, often without meaning. But if there is a God—and everything round us shows it—we ought to pay Him more respect. In the day of trouble the most abandoned are generally the first to cry for assistance and relief from that God whose name they are daily taking in vain. With what confidence they expect it they know best. I am always happy to see you cheerful and at play, but the noise and tumult that seems at that time to prevail amongst you looks more like a lawless set of men than a well-disposed ship’s company.

“I hope you will attend to this, and if what I have said makes any impression I shall expect to see it by much alertness in doing your duty and in obedience to your officers. God bless you all, and may He always have us under His gracious protection and make us better men. Go to your worthy pastor and hear what he has to say.”

That these simple, strong words produced a deep effect is shown by the reply of the ship’s company, which made it plain that one ship at all events was to be depended upon, if only the squadron should be removed from external influences.

“Most worthy and honoured sir,—Not having the gift of speech of accosting you in a proper manner we the ship’s company of H.M. ship ‘Venerable’ having taken into consideration the weighty affair which was so indiscreetly committed on the 30th ult. and for which we are sincerely ashamed of we therefore think it our duty to return you our most sincere and hearty thanks for so graciously forgiving us the rash step which we took on that fatal day and so we humbly implore your honour’s pardon with hearts full of gratitude and tears in our eyes for the offence we have given to the worthyest of commanders who as proved a father to us and as such we shall always honour you—we are fully convinced of our error which the shame and disgrace of this unguided affair as brought on us through some misguided circumstance or other while in the state of intoxication which his the ruin of thousands—we have therefore taken a full resolution to abolish all such indiscreet and diabolical thoughts out of our minds and that our future conduct shall be in every respect worthy of your honour’s attention and obtain the same good opinion of us as before that fatal day we brought this disgrace on ourselves which stings us to the quick as we never had the least cause of complaint since we have had the secret satisfaction of being commanded by so worthy a commander, but sorry are we in our hearts that we should have caused you the least uneasiness and to repair it and fully convince you of our readiness every man as taken a firm resolu-



1797 tion and his determin'd to obey your orders either by night or day. Should it be your honour's orders to go to sea and should it be our fortune to fall in with the enemy we flatter ourselves that their his not one man on board of the 'Venerable' but what would loose the last drop of blood in his body before they should obtain any victory over us, theirfore honoured Sir we once more implore your gracious pardon and that you will be plased to think this misconduct to be undertaken without thought or consideration. As far as we can learn no one knows what unforeseen deamon possest our minds to act as we did theirfore we pray and put our trust in the Almighty God that our future conduct may be acceptable to you and suficent to convince you of our fully repenting of our past misconduct and we pray to our heavenly father and almighty protector that his gracious mercy will extend over us and keep us from all such diabolical practices and that we may imprint in our hearts the duty we owe to God and obey his holy commandments and that it may be instilled in our minds the dangerous snare we have so lately escaped from which we are too concious his unbecoming the character of a Christian in whose belief we are taught—theirfore we have every reason to return you our sincear and hearty thanks once more for the trouble you give your self this forenoon to bring in our memory the indiscreet behaviour of our conduct on the 30th ult. which we are too concious was not becoming the character of British seamen theirfore, honoured Sir;



we once more flatter our selves that we shall obtain your former confidence in us. We cannot conclude this without begging the pardon of our worthy captain, lieutenants and other of our superior officers, which we hope will be the reconciliation of all our past misconduct which his the prayer of us that peace and tranquility will remain with the ship's company of the 'Venerable'—which we flatter our selves we shall obtain.

1797

“Which honoured Sir we shall be in duty bound ever to pray for your health and prosperity, we are, Sir, with the greatest Respect your Obligd. humble Servants &c. &c.”

On May 4 the Admiral had forwarded to the Admiralty a report from Captain Parr, stating that “the crew of the ‘Standard’ represent that they “are much in want of necessaries and request to “be paid as soon as the exigencies of the service “will permit.” It is to be observed that they had been paid up to March 1, 1797.

The Admiralty replied on May 8 that as soon as the service would admit, the ‘Standard’ and other ships which he had mentioned would be ordered to the Nore to be paid.

Lord Spencer wrote privately on the same day :

(*Private.*)

“Admiralty : May 8, 1797.

“I am glad to hear you are still so quiet at Yarmouth; I hope you will continue so, though I cannot help fearing there may be some means taken to mislead your men while you remain so

1797 near there. The mutiny has again broken out on board Lord Bridport's fleet at St. Helen's, and some unpleasant circumstances have taken place in consequence of it on board the ships which remained at Spithead. I hope the vote of Parliament which sanctions the increase of pay &c., and which is now passing in the Committee of Supply of the House of Commons, will satisfy them that it neither was nor could be our intention to deceive them.

“It would be impracticable (without very great inconvenience to the service) to make any such alteration as you propose respecting payments. Your best way will be to send such ships as are really in want of necessaries to the Nore for the purpose, taking proper precautions to have their pay books ready so as not to detain them longer there than necessary.

“I have not time to-day to add more than this.”

On May 10 the Admiral acknowledged receipt of copies of the Act of Parliament and the Order in Council relating to increased pay and provisions :  
“The crews under my command are perfectly  
“satisfied and quiet, and I have no doubt of their  
“remaining so. I shall enforce obedience and good  
“order.”

On the next day he wrote that the copies of the Act of Parliament and of the Order in Council had been distributed in the squadron.

The Admiral was too sanguine. On May 13

there was a serious rising on board the 'Adamant.' The Admiral proceeded on board, hoisted his flag, and mustered the ship's company. "My Lads," he said, "I am not in the smallest degree apprehensive of any violent measures you may have in contemplation; and though I assure you I would much rather acquire your love than incur your fear, I will with my own hand put to death the first man who shall display the slightest signs of rebellious conduct." He then demanded to know if there was any individual who presumed to dispute his authority or that of the officers. A man came forward and said insolently, 'I do.' The Admiral immediately seized him by the collar and thrust him over the side of the ship, where he held him suspended by one arm, and said 'My Lads, look at this fellow, he who dares to deprive me of the command of the fleet.' "

1797

Ralfe's  
Naval  
Biography

A fortnight later, when all other ships deserted, the 'Adamant' followed the 'Venerable' to the Texel.

"Dear Sir," wrote Lord Spencer on May 15, "I am too much occupied to-day to do more than barely acknowledge your letter of yesterday and express the sincere satisfaction I felt at reading the very dexterous manner in which you contrived to get rid of the rising disturbance on board the 'Adamant.' "

On May 18 the Admiralty wrote that order was re-established at Portsmouth.



1797

" Admiralty Office : May 18, 1797.

" Sir,—I have the commands of my Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty to acquaint you that the disturbances which of late have prevailed in the Channel fleet have now happily subsided, and that order and discipline being re-established, Lord Bridport with the squadron under his command sailed from St. Helens yesterday morning and has proceeded down Channel; and I have at the same time their Lordships' commands to express to you the highest approbation of your prudent and judicious proceedings and of the attention shown by the several officers in the fleet under your command during the late interesting period.

" I am, &amp;c.

" EVAN NEPEAN."

At Yarmouth, however, the trouble continued.

" ' Venerable,' Yarmouth Roads : May 17, 1797.

" Sir,—Be pleased to acquaint the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty that the crew of His Majesty's sloop ' Albatross ' were very riotous and disorderly last evening, but by the determined and officer-like conduct of Captain Scott, who presented a pistol at the first man that appeared, and of Lieutenant Lambert, who cut down another with his hanger, the business was soon settled, and she sailed this morning to put in execution my order of the 15th instant, to proceed to Hull and take the ' Trade ' from thence to the Elbe.

" I am, &amp;c.

" ADAM DUNCAN.

" To Evan Nepean, Esq."



Before the date of this last letter the mutiny at the Nore had become alarming. On May 12 the 'Sandwich' had mutinied; on May 20 Vice-Admiral Buckner went on board and read the Royal Proclamation of pardon to the mutineers at Spithead. "On going on board no respect was shown to me. . . . Finding my efforts to restore order of no avail, I went on shore. On May 23 my flag was struck."

1797

Vice-Admiral Buckner's Evidence at Parker's trial

It was also reported that the Dutch fleet was preparing to put to sea. To make the position worse, notice was given that the Russian squadron under Rear-Admiral Makaroff would shortly leave for home.

The 'Annual Register' for May 18, 1797, records a strange state of things at Sheerness. "The delegates go regularly every day to Sheerness, where they hold their conferences. They then parade the streets and ramparts of the garrison with a degree of triumphant insolence, and hold up the bloody flag of defiance as a mark of scorn to the military. At the head of these men marches the person who is considered the admiral of their fleet. No officer has any command or authority whatever."

Vice-Admiral Buckner on May 20 reported to the Admiralty the result of a meeting with the delegates :

"Sheerness : May 20, 1797.

"Sir,—I beg you to acquaint my Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty that after conferring with the delegates from the different ships at this

1797

port, I sent a message to them on Thursday that I should go on board the 'Sandwich' as yesterday, to notify His Majesty's pardon upon the terms expressed in their lordships' direction, contained in your letter dated 17th instant. They returned me for answer that they would wait upon me on shore to attend me off. They did not, however, get on shore till about 2 o'clock, and then a committee of the delegates waited on me with a paper containing an account of additional grievances, all of which I discussed with them, and endeavoured by every means in my power to shake their resolution of stipulating for them. I had considerable hopes that I had succeeded in doing this, and received their earnest request to go off to the ships at the Nore this morning, when they expressed that they had no doubt the whole would be satisfactorily settled. At nine this morning I went on board the 'Sandwich,' accompanied by a procession of boats with the delegates, and on my requesting they would attend me on the quarterdeck, one of them was deputed to acquaint me that they still had something to settle, which they would lay before me in half an hour. Having waited a considerable time, they in a body brought me the enclosed paper, and declared with one voice *that they would not resign the charge they now had in their own hands till the conditions therein stipulated for were complied with, and satisfied by the personal attendance of a Board of their Lordships here, which they insist they have a right to expect, there having been a precedent for it at Spithead, disclaiming at*

the same time every idea of disrespect or want of confidence towards me, and observing that although fewer in number they are a firm body, determined to persevere in this point. 1797

“ On the article of advance money to impressed men put on board ships going to sea, I gave them an assurance that I would notice it to their lordships, and that I did not give it my disapprobation.

“ For further particulars I take the liberty of referring you to Mr. Stow, my secretary, who will deliver this letter.

“ I am, &c.

“ CHARLES BUCKNER.”

*Article 1*

“ That every indulgence granted to the fleet  
“ at Portsmouth to be granted to H.M. subjects at  
“ the Nore and places adjacent, under command  
“ of Vice-Admiral Buckner.

2

“ That every man, on a ship's coming into  
“ harbour, shall have liberty (a certain number) to  
“ go and see their friends and families, a con-  
“ venient time to be allowed each man.

3

“ That all ships before they go to sea shall be  
“ paid all arrears of wages down to six months  
“ according to the old rules.

## 4

1797 “ That no officer that has been turned out of  
 “ any of His Majesty’s ships shall be employed in  
 “ the same ship again without consent of the ship’s  
 “ company.

## 5

“ That when any of His Majesty’s ships shall  
 “ be paid, that may have been some time in com-  
 “ mission, if there is pressed men on board that  
 “ may not be in the regular course of payment,  
 “ that they shall receive two months’ advance to  
 “ furnish them with necessaries.

## 6

“ That an indemnification be given to any man  
 “ who had run and may not be in His Majesty’s  
 “ service, and that they shall not be liable to be  
 “ taken up as deserters.

“ The committee of the delegates of the whole  
 “ fleet in counsel on board H.M.S. ‘ Sandwich’ are  
 “ unanimously agreed that they will not deliver up  
 “ their charge until the appearance of some of the  
 “ Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty to ratify  
 “ the same.

“ By order of the committee of delegates of all  
 “ the ships at the Nore.

“ ‘ Sandwich,’ May 20, 1797.”

On May 21 the Admiralty replied :

“ Admiralty Office : May 21, 1797.

“ Sir,—I received late last night by Mr. Stow,  
 and immediately communicated to my Lords



Commissioners of the Admiralty, your letter to me of yesterday's date, stating the proceedings which had taken place during your interview with the seamen deputed by the crews of His Majesty's ships at the Nore and at Sheerness, and enclosing a paper which had been delivered to you on board the 'Sandwich,' containing certain conditions which they expected to be complied with and ratified before they would consent to resign the charge which they had in their hands. After the very liberal attention of His Majesty in increasing the wages and provisions of the seamen and marines in His Majesty's service, for which they have in general expressed themselves not only satisfied but highly grateful, their lordships are extremely surprised to find the seamen and marines of His Majesty's ships at the Nore and Sheerness to be still in a state of disobedience, and bringing forward further requests; I have it therefore in command from their lordships to signify their direction to you to inform them that since all that could reasonably be expected by the seamen and marines has been already granted them, their lordships cannot accede to any such further requests.

“ With respect to the first article of those which you have transmitted as forming the conditions above alluded to, it is the direction of their lordships that you inform the seamen and marines (as has already been explicitly declared) that all the additional allowances of wages and provisions and every other regulation announced at Portsmouth

1797 have been established by His Majesty's Order in Council and by Act of Parliament, and extend to all seamen and marines in His Majesty's service.

“That with respect to the second article of the said conditions, the nature of the service in time of war does not admit of the men having leave to go to their families except under very particular circumstances, of which the captains or their superior officers alone can judge.

“That in regard to the third and fifth articles, the ship's companies shall be paid in the manner pointed out in the several Acts of Parliament at present in force for the encouragement of seamen and marines employed in His Majesty's service, as they always are unless some very urgent necessity prevents it; but as it has ever been the practice of the service to show attention to those who, with the true spirit of British seamen, voluntarily stand forward in the defence of their country, their lordships are desirous of giving every possible encouragement to volunteers, and it is not their intention to direct that advance should be paid to impressed men.

“That with respect to the fourth article, all arrangements concerning the officers to be employed in the ships of the squadron must be settled by you, or the commanding officer for the time being, conformable to the instructions of their lordships according to the circumstances of each particular case.

“That with respect to the sixth article, if it should be His Majesty's pleasure to pardon all who

may have deserted from the service in the Navy, it must be the effect of His Majesty's royal clemency alone, and not of any requisition.

“ That although their lordships thought proper to go to Portsmouth for the purpose of obtaining more perfect information of the grievances which the seamen and marines in general might have to represent, and of adopting most expeditiously such measures as might be necessary, and granting such further indulgences as might render their situation more comfortable and enable them better to provide for the support of their families, no similar reason exists for their taking such a step on the present occasion. That the representations made at Portsmouth have been fully considered, and the regulations made in consequence have already been extended to the whole fleet and established by the highest authority. It is therefore to you and to the officers under whom they are serving that the ships' companies are to look up. It is to them their petitions are always to be presented. It is through them they are to expect their lordships' determination. After stating these circumstances, you will also inform them that, notwithstanding all they have done, His Majesty's most gracious pardon, and their lordships' order to all officers to bury in oblivion all that has passed, are now offered them, which should they refuse they will have to answer for all the melancholy consequences which must attend their persisting in their present state of disobedience and mutiny.

“ But when the seamen and marines at the



1797

Nore and at Sheerness reflect that the rest of the fleet have returned to their duty and have proceeded to sea in search of the enemies of their country, their lordships have no doubt that they will no longer show themselves ungrateful for all that has been so liberally granted to them, but will strive who shall be first to show his loyalty to his king and his love for his country, by returning to that state of obedience and discipline by which British seamen have long been the admiration of the world; but without which they cannot expect any longer to enjoy the confidence and good opinion of their country.

“ I am, &c.,

“ EVAN NEPEAN.”

On May 22 the ships dropped down from Sheerness to the Nore.

It was under these circumstances that Mr. Nepean, the Secretary of the Admiralty, wrote a private and confidential letter to Admiral Duncan of a very momentous character.

*(Private and confidential.)*

“ Admiralty: May 22.

“ My dear Sir,—The ships at the Nore are in the most complete state of mutiny, and it seems to be very difficult to bring them to any reason without submitting to conditions which would be highly disgraceful. You know the state of your fleet, I believe, as well as anyone can do, and what use could be made of it. Do you think that you could depend upon any of the ships if you were to



bring them up to the Nore, if it should be necessary to employ them in bringing the two or three ships of the line over there to reason ?

1797

“You may give me your private thoughts on this head, but the less they are communicated to other people the better.

“Yours ever most sincerely,

“EVAN NEPEAN.”

The Admiral replied :

“‘Venerable’ : May 23, 1797.

“My dear Sir,—Your two letters of the 21st and 22nd was yesterday secured. The last requires some delicacy to answer. The fleet here continues to behave well, and I am sure will refuse no common service. At the same time, to call them who have kept in order to chastise those at the Nore, in my opinion would subject them to a disagreeable jealousy from all other parts of the fleet who engaged in this unhappy business ; but for all this I don’t shrink from the business if it cannot otherwise be got the better of ; and this day having occasion to speak to my ship’s company, a thing I have lately practised much, from what happened last night I touched gently on what I might expect from them in support of my flag and self in the execution of my duty. They to a man said they were ready and willing at all times to obey my commands. Captain Bowater last night came to say his ship’s company would not weigh anchor. I sent him back to hoist in his boats and I would settle it in the morning. After

Letter in  
Public  
Record  
Office

1797 telling my ship's company the 'Trent's' grievances, which was only that they had not got proper weights and measures, I asked my people what they thought they deserved. Their general answer was that they should be made to go to sea ; and if I would let them chastise them, they would. However on sending Admiral Onslow on board to see what they wanted, he found all quiet and they answered directly. I fear there is something wrong in the head there. The 'Trent' was near me and I determined to have enforced my orders. Much harmony is in this fleet, which I think has kept us right. I hear that people from the ships at Sheerness go ashore in numbers and play the devil. Why are there not troops to lay hold of them and secure all the boats that come from them ? As to the 'Sandwich,' you should get her cast adrift in the night and let her go on the sands, that the scoundrels may drown ; for until some example is made this will not stop.

"God bless you and send us better times, not that I despair. This chastisement is sent us for a warning to mend our ways.

"I always am most truly and faithfully yours

"ADAM DUNCAN.

"To Evan Nepean, Esq.

"P.S. I have met with so many interruptions I fear you will not be able to make out my letter."

It was just about this critical moment that the ship's company of the 'Venerable' presented

to the Admiral, probably in reply to some speech from him about his flag and what he might require of them, a declaration of loyalty and affectionate regard which must have moved him deeply. No date is on the address, but the postscript evidently refers to a possible attack on the ships at the Nore.

1797

“Honoured Sir,

“With the feelings of men we humbly presume to state to you our general approbation of your Honour’s conduct in the late interesting although tumultuous proceedings, our pardon for which we have undoubtedly received through your goodness ; but at the same time are very sorry to think that you should doubt our fidelity in any respect, being so firmly attached to your person and that of our officers and country in general. We have nothing at present to complain of, and if we had we doubt not but your Honour would give us any redress that lay in your power. Fully persuaded in this respect it is with the utmost regret that we observe the proceedings of our brother seamen in different ships and squadrons, but rest yourself assured that we will not, as long as life will permit, in any respect see either you or the flag insulted. You will undoubtedly allow us the feelings of men, and as such it grieves us one and all to see the anxiety of mind which in our opinion you undoubtedly labour under, therefore we hope you may rely on our words and be assured while life remains in our bodies that we will endeavour always to comply



1797 with your wish and obey your command; and if necessity require you may depend on it we will give you a sufficient proof thereof.

“Remaining as usual your Honour’s most obedient and loving subjects at command,

“Venerable’s.

“P.S. It is with the utmost regret we hear of the proceedings of different ships in the squadron, but sincerely hope their present agrievances will be redressed as soon as possible, as it would appear unnatural for us to unsheath the sword against our brethren, notwithstanding we would wish to show ourselves like men in behalf of our Commander, should necessity require.

“For the ship’s company in general.	}	“ARCHIBALD MOODY, × his mark.
		“JAMES ORCHARD.
		“WILLIAM KILGOUR, × his mark.
		“WILLIAM MAGEE.
		“EDWARD GARTHWAIT.
		“ANDREW OLIPHANT, × his mark.
		“JOHN WOODALL, × his mark.
		“JOHN ROSE.”

It would really appear that if the Admiral had so ordered the ‘Venerable’ would have attacked any ship or ships in the squadron.

The Dutch fleet was, if possible, even a more pressing danger than the mutiny. It was reported that the Dutch were ready to put to sea.

On May 21 the Admiralty sent a warning to Admiral Duncan, and enclosed a copy of intelligence received from the Foreign Office.



*(Secret.)*

"Downing Street : Sunday, May 21, 1797.

1797

"Information relative to the state of the Dutch Navy in the Texell. Received May 20, 1797.

"There are now lying in the Texell ready for sea—18 ships of the line; 22 frigates, sloops and brigs, from 44 to 10 guns; 42 large transports fitting out for the reception of troops.

"There is little doubt of a descent upon this country being in contemplation."

This intelligence having been confirmed on May 24, the Board ordered Admiral Duncan to sail to the Texel.

"Whereas by intelligence which has been transmitted to us from the Captain of H. M. ship 'Minerva,' it appears that the enemy's fleet in the Texel is in every respect ready for sea, we send you herewith copy of the said intelligence for your information, and do hereby require and direct you, if the wind should continue easterly, to lose no time in proceeding with the squadron under your command off the Texel; using your best endeavours to take or destroy any of the enemy's ships should they attempt to put to sea, agreeably to the orders you have already received for that purpose. Given under our hands, May 24, 1797.

" ARDEN.

" GAMBIER.

" W. YOUNG.

"To Adam Duncan, Esq., Admiral of the Blue, &c., Yarmouth Roads. By command of their Lordships.—EVAN NEPEAN."

1797

On May 25 the Admiral was warned by the Admiralty that some delegates were coming from the Nore to tamper with his ships. He captured most of them.

“*May 27, 11 P.M., off Yarmouth.*—The ‘Rose’  
 “cutter has this moment joined me. Her Lieu-  
 “tenant informs me that last evening he fell in  
 “with the cutter, having the delegates on board,  
 “and seized all but three, who had got ashore, but  
 “was in hopes of getting them. The ‘Hope’  
 “lugger was left in charge of them, and I have  
 “despatched the ‘Rose’ to her with directions to  
 “convey them to the Downs, and acquaint their  
 “lordships with the particulars.”

The sooner he could sail the better was the chance of re-establishing order in the squadron. He determined to put to sea at once.

“‘Venerable’ in Yarmouth Roads: May 26, 1797.

“Sir,—I have received both your secret letters of yesterday’s date, and in consequence have ordered the ‘Vestal’ off the Buoy of the Gunfleet, and the ‘Hope’ lugger and ‘Rose’ cutter to cruise between Lowestoffe and Orford Ness, to prevent all communications from the Nore with the ships in this Road. And you will please acquaint the Lords Commissioners that although the wind may be westerly in the morning, I shall put to sea with the whole of the squadron, except the ‘Nassau,’ and I believe the ‘Standard,’ whose companies appear determined not to weigh their anchors until they are paid the wages due to them. I have,

therefore, ordered Vice-Admiral Onslow to hoist his flag on board the 'Adamant' for the present.

1797

"To Evan Nepean, Esq."

On May 26 Lord Spencer decided to send Captain Bligh to consult with Admiral Duncan about the Nore.

(*Private.*)

"Admiralty : May 26, 1797, 7.30 P.M.

"We send you Captain Bligh on a very delicate business, on which the Government is extremely anxious to have your opinion. The welfare, and almost the existence, of the country may depend upon what is the event of this very important crisis, but till we know what we can look to from your squadron it will be very difficult for us to know how to act."

On the next day the Board wrote, ordering the Admiral to prepare to attack the Nore.

(*Secret.*)

"Admiralty Office : May 27, 1797.

"Sir,—Captain Bligh, who will have had the honour of delivering to you my letter of yesterday's date, will have explained to you the melancholy state of the ships at the Nore, and the views which their lordships then had in respect to the assistance of the squadron under your orders for the purpose of bringing the crews of the ships above-mentioned to a sense of their duty.

"Since Captain Bligh left town, no symptom of contrition has shown itself on board the ships at the Nore, but, on the contrary, measures have



1797 actually been taken for exciting the crews of the ships in Longreach to join in the mutiny, and have so far succeeded as to prevail on the crew of the 'Lancaster' to follow their example and oblige Captain Wells to quit her and get on shore.

“The measures which have hitherto been tried to bring these deluded people to a sense of their duty having proved ineffectual, it has been judged expedient that a Board of Admiralty should forthwith proceed to Sheerness, and if the measures which their lordships mean to take to endeavour to bring the crews of the different ships to a due sense of their error, and to induce them to accept His Majesty's most gracious pardon, should not lead to the restoration of order, it is their lordships' intention, pursuant to the commands of His Majesty, signified to them on that head, to send orders to you to act against them with any part of your force on which you may think you can rely which may be competent thereto. With a view to this important object, it will be for you to show to the crews of the ships under your command that this mutiny at the Nore rests on grounds different from the complaints or applications which were originally preferred by the seamen at Spithead, and to take such steps as according to your discretion you may think most advantageous in order to be enabled to fulfil such eventual orders as you may expect to receive in the case above mentioned, either by detaching on separate cruises any of your ships on which you may think less dependence is to be placed, or by communicating to those from



whom you may expect support the actual state of things, and the Service expected from them. 1797

“ Having stated to you the ideas which have been formed in respect to the Squadron under your command, I have it only farther in charge from their Lordships to signify their direction to you, although they see great objection to your directing your course towards the Nore, to place that part of your squadron which may eventually be called upon to act, in such a situation that their Lordships’ commands may reach you without any material delay, and to leave a fast sailing vessel at Yarmouth to follow you therewith to such Rendezvous as you may fix upon for that purpose.

“ I enclose to you a copy of a letter from Admiral Buckner, which, with the Paper therein referred to, and a copy of my letter in answer thereto, will explain to you the nature of the demands made by the seamen at the Nore and their Lordships’ opinion upon the different points, to which they positively mean to adhere. I also enclose a printed copy of His Majesty’s Royal Sign Manual authorising their Lordships to promise his most gracious pardon to them notwithstanding what has passed, on condition of their immediate return to their duty; to which I have now only to add that I have the honor to be, Sir,

Admiral  
Buckner  
to Ad-  
miralty,  
May 20,  
1797  
Admiralty  
to Admiral  
Buckner,  
May 21,  
1797

“ Your most obedient humble servant,

“ EVAN NEPEAN.

“ Admiral Duncan.”

The Admiral knew that there was no time to

1797 lose, and had anticipated his orders. On May 27 he wrote off Yarmouth : “ I put to sea this morning “ with the ‘ Venerable,’ ‘ Adamant,’ ‘ Agamemnon,’ “ ‘ Belliqueux,’ ‘ Lion,’ ‘ Glatton,’ ‘ Standard,’ ‘ Leopard,’ ‘ Monmouth,’ ‘ Ardent,’ ‘ Isis,’ and ‘ Repulse.’ “ The wind is westerly, and whilst it continues I “ shall keep near the English coast.”

On May 28 :—“ I am off Yarmouth, anxiously “ waiting to be joined by the ‘ Russel ’ and ‘ Ganges.’ ”

The ships were still inclined to mutiny. On May 26 Captain Parr reported to the Admiral :

“ ‘ Standard,’ Great Yarmouth : May 26, 1797.

“ Sir,—A boat at  $\frac{1}{2}$  past eight came along side belonging to the ‘ Lion,’ with several Seamen in her, and wished to speak with the Captain of the Fore Castle. She was of course ordered away, but spoke to the people as they passed under the bows.

“ When our hands were turned up to hoist the boats in, they refused doing it, unless I would promise them a boat to go to the ‘ Lion ’ to-morrow, which I found myself reduced to the necessity of doing. What may have stimulated the people to this or what steps are agreed on by the different ships of the Fleet I know not, but I apprehend more is in agitation than is known or suspected by any of us. The uneasiness it occasions me is far beyond any that could be produced by the greatest private calamity.

“ The consequence may not be so great as I suspect, but I fear the Lions came as delegates ; at least this is advanced by our people.

“ I did not think I should be right in quitting the ship myself, but thought it absolutely necessary this should be immediately made known to you.

“ I have the honor to remain, Sir,

“ Your most obedient and very humble servant,

“ THOMAS PARR.”

What followed is graphically narrated by Mr. Brenton, a Lieutenant on board the ‘ Agamemnon,’ commanded by Captain Fancourt :

“ On 28th May the Fleet sailed for the Texel, and “ were becalmed outside of the sands off Yarmouth when the ships anchored, except the “ ‘ Standard ’ and ‘ Belliqueux,’ of 64 guns each, “ which returned into Yarmouth Roads to ‘ redress “ their grievances ’; such was the language of “ the Mutineers.

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“ On the morning of 29th May, when the signal “ was made for the Fleet to weigh, it was reluctantly “ complied with, and such ships as did weigh “ returned into Yarmouth Roads. The seamen of “ the ‘ Agamemnon ’ cut her cable, though they did “ not refuse to make sail on the ship when ordered “ to do so, and during the morning the rest of the “ ships got under sail and stood to the Eastward. “ Before twelve o’clock, however, all of them had “ deserted the Admiral, except the ‘ Adamant,’ of “ 50 guns, bearing the flag of Vice-Admiral “ Onslow ; the ‘ Glatton,’ commanded by Captain “ Trollope ; and the ‘ Agamemnon,’ commanded by “ Captain Fancourt. At one o’clock the two latter “ ships also mutinied, and leaving the ‘ Venerable ’



1797 “ and ‘Adamant’ to proceed off the Texel, re-  
“ turned into Yarmouth Roads. On the following  
“ morning the ‘Agamemnon’ in Yarmouth Roads  
“ joined three other ships, each having a red flag  
“ flying at her fore-top-gallant-mast-head. The  
“ ‘Agamemnon’ hoisted one also, which was called  
“ by the Delegates the Flag of Defiance. During  
“ the whole of this time the Officers kept charge of  
“ their watches, the seamen obeying them in any  
“ order for the safety of the ship but no farther.  
“ A meeting of the delegates was immediately  
“ called, at which it was decided that the ‘Aga-  
“ memnon’ and ‘Ardent,’ of 64 guns, and the  
“ ‘Leopard’ and ‘Isis,’ of 50 guns, should go to  
“ the Nore, to augment the number of ships at  
“ that anchorage in a state little short of open  
“ rebellion, but not with any view of assisting or  
“ being assisted by the enemies of their country ;  
“ and it is certain that had these put to sea, we  
“ should immediately have gone in pursuit of them  
“ with the same zeal and loyalty as at the beginning  
“ of the war.

“ As soon as the determination was made known  
“ of taking the ships to the Nore, the Officers of  
“ the ‘Agamemnon’ declined doing duty, and  
“ returned to their cabins or the Ward room, where  
“ they remained unmolested, and were even treated  
“ with respect. . . .

“ The four ships anchored at the Nore on the 6th  
“ June, late in the evening, under the entire com-  
“ mand of the Quarter-master and Delegates, the  
“ pilots taking charge as usual.”



On May 29 the Admiral wrote to the Admiralty : 1797

“ Off Yarmouth, 8 P.M.

“ On my putting to sea yesterday the ‘ Nassau ’ and ‘ Montagu ’ did not weigh their anchors, and are now in Yarmouth Roads. I anchored the squadron last night about 6 leagues off land, in hopes of being joined by the two ships from Spithead. This evening an Officer came on board from the ‘ Belliqueux,’ and informed me that her crew were in a state of mutiny, wanting to send a boat on board the ‘ Lion ’ (who, I fear, is not in a much better state), in consequence of which I made the signal to weigh. The ‘ Belliqueux ’ made the signal of inability. Their Lordships will observe from the above statement how little I can depend on the squadron. However, I shall continue off Yarmouth and wait their Lordships’ further orders, and in the meantime their Lordships may be assured I shall use my utmost endeavours to persuade the crews of the several ships to act as their Lordships may see occasion to direct.”

Captain Bligh, on returning to the Admiralty, had nothing good to report.

(*Secret.*)

“ 30th May, 1797.

*Memorandum by Captain Bligh for the Board  
of Admiralty.*

“ Arrived at Yarmouth, Saturday, 28th May.

“ Admiral sailed at 5 A.M. with 12 sail.

“ The ‘ Standard ’ and ‘ Lion ’ refused to obey the Admiral’s orders, but afterwards complied and

1797 sailed. 'Nassau' refused to obey the sailing order on account of the pay due to the people. The Ship's Company observed on being questioned whether they would resist mutiny in other ships, that every Captain should keep his own ship quiet.

" 'Montagu' claims pay although but a month due. The Ship's Company went to their quarters and shotted their guns when the 'Venerable' got under weigh.

" The Ships in the Road will only permit their own boats to come alongside, and no strangers. The Captain of Marines of the 'Standard' turned on shore, and a lieutenant of the 'Repulse' put into the Admiral's ship by command of the people.

" The 'Glatton's' company have a remarkably loyal and good character.

" The Delegates arrived from the Nore, but Admiral Duncan was informed of eighteen coming round in the 'Cygnet' Cutter, and he had given orders to prevent their communicating with any of the ships (dated 26th May).

" It appeared to me very doubtful and hazardous what would be the conduct of the favourable party of seamen if employed against the other.

" The 'Standard' and 'Lion' wanted to send delegates to the other ships, but they were refused admittance.

" When I received Admiral Duncan's letters for their Lordships, I thought it advisable to return without a moment's loss of time. 'Montagu' and 'Nassau' only in the Road."

On May 29 the Admiral wrote:—" Off Yar-

“ mouth. In course of last night the ‘Lion’ and  
 “ ‘Standard’ parted company, and I find, are gone  
 “ into Yarmouth Roads, and early this morning I  
 “ saw the ‘Montagu’ a long way to windward of  
 “ us, standing to the westward. I therefore con-  
 “ clude she is going to the Nore.” 1797

On May 30 he was directed to proceed to the Texel.

“ Admiralty Office: 30 May, 1797.

“ Sir,—I have received and laid before my  
 Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty your two  
 letters of yesterday’s date, acquainting me for  
 their Lordships’ information of the Proceedings  
 of the Squadron under your command, and of the  
 dissatisfaction expressed by the crews of the ships  
 named in the margin, who could not be prevailed  
 to accompany you on your intended cruize.

‘Montagu,’  
 ‘Nassau,’  
 ‘Lion,’  
 ‘Standard,’  
 ‘Belli-  
 queux’

“ From the intelligence which has been trans-  
 mitted to you by Captain Douglas, of the ‘Garland,’  
 referred to in one of your letters above-mentioned,  
 and accounts which have been received from other  
 Quarters (copies of which are enclosed), there  
 appears to be the strongest reason to believe that  
 the Dutch Fleet will attempt to put to sea, accom-  
 panied by some transports with troops on board;  
 and as the wind seems inclined to come round to  
 the Eastward, an opportunity will be afforded to  
 them for carrying that design into execution.  
 Under these circumstances it is highly important  
 that every practicable means should be exerted,  
 without holding out anything that can in the least  
 degree be construed to lead to an expectation of



1797 farther concessions, to induce the crews of the ships now at Yarmouth to put to sea ; and in case of your succeeding in your endeavours with the whole, or even a considerable part, of the Force now there, you will proceed with it off the Texel without waiting for the junction of the ships expected to arrive from Spithead, leaving orders for them to follow you to such rendezvous as you may appoint, assuring the crew of the 'Nassau,' as also the crews of the other ships in the course of payment, that they will be brought to the Nore to be paid the wages due to them the moment the public service will admit of it, and which has indeed been delayed only by the unfortunate state of the ships now there, and a desire of preventing men who had hitherto conducted themselves so well from being exposed to the risk of being compelled to follow the example of their deluded brethren at that place.

“ By accounts which have been received from Portsmouth this morning, it appears that the 'Russel' will be likely to sail in the course of this day from Spithead, and that the 'Ganges' will follow her, if the wind and weather should permit, in the course of to-morrow. This Force will be increased by three other ships of the Line, but the precise time of their being in readiness to proceed on this Service cannot now be ascertained. Perhaps, however, you may calculate upon seeing them in the course of two or three days, if the wind should be favourable for their joining you.

“ By a message which has been received from



the Nore ships this afternoon, their Lordships are informed that a ship of the Line is now coming up, supposed to be the 'Montagu,' and apparently in a complete state of Mutiny. The ships now there, at least those of the line, are as refractory as ever; and notwithstanding the endeavours made by the Board, who proceeded to Sheerness for the purpose of bringing them to a sense of their duty, there is no immediate prospect of their submission, and it is feared that measures of coercion must necessarily be resorted to before it can be effected. This being the case, no expectation ought to be formed by you of the assistance of the 'Montagu' or either of the other ships which would, under different circumstances, have been ready to have joined you from the Nore upon the present emergency.

"I have the honor to be, Sir,

"Your most obedient humble servant,

"EVAN NEPEAN.

"Admiral Duncan."

The 'Venerable' had joined in the general demand that the wages due to the ships should be paid before they left Yarmouth, but when the order to weigh anchor was given, she complied, and led the squadron out to sea. The Admiralty wrote to Captain O'Bryen of the 'Nassau':

"Admiralty Office: 30 May, 1797.

"Sir,—Having read to my Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty your letter of the 28th instant, addressed to Earl Spencer, giving an

1797 account of the various unpleasant proceedings which had taken place on board the ships in Yarmouth Roads, and stating particularly the conduct of the crew of the ship you command, by which it appears that the only obstacle to their proceeding to sea has been the non-payment of their wages; I have their Lordships' commands to acquaint you that they very much approve of what you have done, and to signify their direction to you to explain to the crew of the 'Nassau' that orders had already been given by their Lordships a fortnight ago for that ship to be brought to the Nore for the purpose of paying the wages due to her crew, but the Mutiny having broken out before she could be spared from Yarmouth their Lordships had judged it advisable to countermand their orders to her rather than expose them after having conducted themselves so well to the risk of being compelled to follow the example of the crews of the rest of the ships at the Nore, and that it is their intention to bring her thither as soon as order shall have been restored.

“ I am, Sir,

“ Your very humble servant,

“ EVAN NEPEAN.

“ Captain O'Bryen, 'Nassau,' Yarmouth.”

The public mind, deeply agitated by the revolt of the ships at the Nore, was still further disturbed by the news arriving from Yarmouth. The 'Times' newspaper contains the following reports:

“ Yarmouth : May 29.

1797

“ Admiral Duncan’s fleet is now returning into  
“ these Roads, having been the whole time in  
“ sight of the town. The ‘ Standard ’ and ‘ Lion ’  
“ are come in and have hoisted the flag of defiance.  
“ The ‘ Nassau ’ lying in our Road has done the  
“ same ; it also seems some other ships of the fleet  
“ have the same flag flying.

“ The ‘ Belliqueux ’ is come in and with the  
“ ‘ Comet ’ sloop have, in addition to those  
“ mentioned before, hoisted the flag of defiance.  
“ It seems the men treat the officers in general  
“ well and perform their duty regularly.”

“ June 1.

“ We learn from good authority that the Dutch  
“ fleet is ready to sail from the Texel ; there are  
“ from twenty-six to thirty pendants flying there  
“ and a great number of French troops of whom  
“ 4,000 are said to be actually embarked. This  
“ is the latest authentic advice on the subject.”

“ Sheerness : Wednesday, May 31.

(*By express.*)

“ Yesterday afternoon between the hours two  
“ and seven o’clock a part of the ships under the  
“ command of Admiral Duncan arrived at the  
“ Nore from Yarmouth Roads. . . . Immediately  
“ on their coming within hail of the other ships  
“ they expressed their approbation of their proceed-  
“ ings by loud cheers and by display of the red  
“ flag. It is supposed that the remainder of the  
“ fleet with the Admiral himself will be brought



1797 “to the Nore either this evening or to-morrow  
“morning.”

Neale's  
Mutiny at  
the Nore

The ‘Agamemnon,’ the ‘Ardent,’ the ‘Leopard,’ and ‘Isis,’ after returning to Yarmouth Roads, proceeded to the Nore, where they arrived on June 6. The arrival of Admiral Duncan's ships raised the mutinous fleet at the Nore to twenty-four sail.

In the meantime the Admiral was at sea and had anticipated the order to make for the Texel :

“ ‘Venerable’ at Sea, 30th May 9 A.M.

“ Yarmouth N.N.W. 17 miles.

“ Since my letter of yesterday His Majesty's Ships ‘Belliqueux,’ ‘Monmouth,’ and ‘Repulse’ have left the Squadron and gone into Yarmouth Roads. As the wind is northerly I shall stand over towards the Texel with the ships named in the Margin ” (‘Venerable,’ ‘Adamant,’ ‘Agamemnon,’ ‘Glatton,’ ‘Leopard,’ ‘Ardent,’ ‘Isis,’ ‘Garland,’ ‘Stork’) “therefore any orders their Lordships may have occasion to send me will find me on my rendezvous or in shore of it.”

“ ‘Venerable’ at Sea, June 1, 1797.

“ Texel, E.S.E. 17 leagues.

“ Wind W.S.W.

“ Since my letter of 30th ult. all the squadron left me except the ‘Adamant,’ ‘Garland,’ and ‘Stork’ Sloop, and I was joined by the ‘Trent’ yesterday. Nothing can be more orderly than the crews of the ships with me. I looked into the Texel last evening, and saw in the Road 14 sail of the line and 8 frigates with a number



of other vessels amounting in the whole to 95. I shall continue to cruize on my rendezvous until I receive further orders.” 1797

When the Admiral found himself off the Texel with only one ship of fifty guns besides his own, he quickly made up his mind what to do. “ Vice-Admiral Onslow came on board the ‘ Venerable ’ and suggested Leith Roads as a retreat of security against either an attack from the Texel or, what was infinitely more to be dreaded, the return of a detachment of the rebel fleet from the Nore. Admiral Duncan instantly declined entering into any measure of this kind, and laughingly said they would suppose he wanted to see his wife and family and would charge him with being home-sick.” His plan was of a different kind. The great duty with which he was charged was to keep the Texel closed; and, with ships or without ships, that he intended to do. He sent for Captain Hotham of the ‘ Adamant ’ and ordered him to fight her until she sank, as he intended to do with the ‘ Venerable.’ He then mustered the ‘ Venerable’s ’ ship’s company and told them plainly what lay before them, in an address of which only the substance is preserved; that the ‘ Venerable ’ was to block the Texel, and that “ the soundings were such that his flag would continue to fly above the shoal water after the ship and company had disappeared ”; and that if she should survive this performance of her duty in Dutch waters, she was then to sail to the Nore and to reduce “ those misguided men ” to

Captain  
Hotham’s  
Biographical  
Sketches

Ralfe’s  
Naval  
Biography

1797 obedience. The ship's company replied, as was their custom: they said that they understood him and would obey his commands.

Campbell's  
British  
Admirals

“ On 1st June the Admiral anchored the  
“ ‘Venerable’ at the outer buoy of the Texel,  
“ having the ‘Adamant’ in company; the  
“ Channel being so narrow as not to admit of  
“ more than one ship passing at a time. The  
“ crews were at their quarters three days and  
“ three nights . . . . Then the wind came  
“ round to the westward.”

When the wind shifted out of the east the greatest temptation to the Dutch fleet to come out of the Texel was removed, and to that extent the peril to the ‘Venerable’ and the ‘Adamant’ became less.

Although the Admiral's position was critical, there was to be found in the situation both consolation and encouragement. Of the four ships which had remained faithful to his flag, three had recently experienced his personal indignation. If, however, he had had a severe altercation on board the ‘Venerable’; if he had very nearly fired into the ‘Trent’; if he had, in person and not without violence, put down a rising on the ‘Adamant,’ the seamen owed him no grudge, and probably, as Lord Spencer said, respected him the more. After what had passed it was no slight compliment to the ‘Adamant’ that when on May 26 the ‘Nassau’ passed beyond control, the Admiral directed Vice-Admiral Onslow to transfer his flag to the ‘Adamant.’

The fourth ship, the 'Circe' frigate, had been also rebellious, but greatly to the credit of Captain Halket and her officers, who afterwards received the thanks of the Admiralty, she did not desert, and never actually refused to do her duty. It would appear from the statement of Lieutenant Richardson that the 'Circe' mutinied while cruising off the Texel, under the Admiral's orders.

" Captain Halkett gave positive orders to  
 " shoot the first man who attempted to alter the  
 " course of the ship. For six days and nights he  
 " and Lieutenant Richardson sat back to back on  
 " the deck, with a loaded carbine in hand and  
 " cocked pistols in their belts, issuing orders to  
 " the officers and the few men who remained  
 " dutiful. The mutineers had possession of the  
 " lower parts of the ships and watched every  
 " opportunity to gain entire power. After a week  
 " of awful suspense some ships were seen in  
 " detached portions coming to join the Admiral.  
 " Lieutenant Richardson, guessing at once that  
 " all was over at the Nore, sprang forward and  
 " with a cocked pistol at the head of the ring-  
 " leader (who was blustering on deck) dragged him  
 " below. The others gave way before the Captain  
 " and those who had been passive through intimi-  
 " dation, and ere assistance arrived everything  
 " was going on in the 'Circe' as if nothing had  
 " occurred to ruffle the general harmony. No  
 " serious punishment was inflicted as the mal-  
 " contents had abstained from violence; and the

1797

A Tar of  
 the last  
 War, by  
 the Rev.  
 C. E. Arm-  
 strong



1797 “certainty of an approaching engagement required  
“the goodwill and hearty assistance of the  
“seamen.”

All the other ships having deserted, it only remained to show how much one British ship of 74 guns, supported by a 50-gun ship and two frigates, could do against a whole fleet.

On June 3 Admiral Duncan again mustered the ship's company of the 'Venerable,' lying at the entrance to the Texel, from whom he was requiring a great effort, and addressed them in a speech which expressed in language rising almost to eloquence his own feeling of degradation as a British Admiral, his trust in them, and his belief in the future. He was no orator, but words become eloquent when they come direct from the heart. The general draft of this address is written on a single sheet of paper; he added separately, on the back of an envelope addressed to him by the Admiralty, one pregnant sentence: “To be deserted by my  
“fleet in the face of the enemy I may say is a  
“disgrace never before, I believe, known by a  
“British Admiral, nor could I have supposed it  
“possible.”

He said :

“My lads, I once more call you together with  
“a sorrowful heart, from what I have lately seen—  
“the disaffection of the fleet: I call it disaffection,  
“for the crews have no grievances. To be deserted  
“by my fleet in the face of an enemy is a disgrace  
“which, I believe, never before happened to a  
“British admiral, nor could I have supposed it



“ possible. My greatest comfort, under God, is,  
“ that I have been supported by the officers,  
“ seamen, and marines of this ship; for which,  
“ with a heart overflowing with gratitude, I  
“ request you to accept my sincere thanks. I  
“ flatter myself much good may result from your  
“ example, by bringing those deluded people to a  
“ sense of the duty which they owe, not only to  
“ their king and country, but to themselves. The  
“ British navy has ever been the support of that  
“ liberty which has been handed down to us by our  
“ ancestors, and which I trust we shall maintain  
“ to the latest posterity; but that can only be  
“ done by unanimity and obedience. This ship’s  
“ company, and others which have distinguished  
“ themselves by their loyalty and good order,  
“ deserve to be, and doubtless will be, the favour-  
“ ites of a grateful country. They will also have,  
“ from their inward feelings, a comfort which must  
“ be lasting, and not like the fleeting and false confi-  
“ dence of those who have swerved from their duty.  
“ It has often been my pride, with you, to look into  
“ the Texel, and see a foe which dreaded coming  
“ out to meet us. My pride is now humbled  
“ indeed. My feelings are not easily to be ex-  
“ pressed. Our cup has overflowed and made us  
“ wanton. The all-wise Providence has given us  
“ this check as a warning, and I hope we shall  
“ improve by it. On him then let us trust, where  
“ our only security can be found. I find there are  
“ many good men amongst us; I have had full  
“ confidence in all in this ship, and once more beg

1797 “ to express my approbation of your conduct.  
 “ May God, who has thus far conducted you,  
 “ continue to do so ; and may the British navy,  
 “ the glory and support of our country, be restored  
 “ to its wonted splendour, and be not only the  
 “ bulwark of Britain, but the terror of the world.  
 “ But this can only be effected by a strict adher-  
 “ ence to our duty and obedience ; and let us pray  
 “ that Almighty God may keep us in the right way  
 “ of thinking. God bless you all ! ”

Ralfe's  
 Naval  
 Biography

“ This address is said to have been delivered  
 “ with such impressiveness, and to have had such  
 “ an effect upon the crew, that on retiring there  
 “ was not a dry eye amongst them. With the  
 “ two ships above named the Admiral proceeded  
 “ off the Texel to watch the enemy's movements  
 “ and by his signals and manœuvres lulled the  
 “ enemy into the belief that he was attended by  
 “ several others in the offing. His situation was  
 “ now become critical and embarrassing ; the  
 “ enemy's squadron was daily expected out, and he  
 “ had no fleet to oppose them. In this extremity,  
 “ the determined spirit of Admiral Duncan was par-  
 “ ticularly displayed ; the two ships were moored  
 “ with springs on their cables at the outer buoy of  
 “ the Texel ; and he not only resolved to keep  
 “ up appearances, but to engage the enemy should  
 “ he venture out. He knew the critical state of  
 “ public affairs, that it required the most bold and  
 “ decisive measures ; and whatever the result  
 “ might have been, he determined to abide its  
 “ issue.”

The signals and manœuvres of the Admiral's two ships were recalled to him afterwards by Lieutenant Brodie, who had been present in the 'Rose' cutter, in a letter written on February 26, 1798. "You passed the Texel in sight of the Dutch Fleet with a Red Flag, Rear Admiral at the Mizzen, this was your First Squadron of two sail of the line: next day you appeared off the Texel with two private ships, the 'Venerable' and 'Adamant' with pendants only. This was two English Squadrons by the Dutch account. A few days after we were joined by the 'Russel' and 'Sanspareil,' when the wind came Easterly. Then the third Squadron of British ships came under their proper Admiral with Blue at the Main, and anchored in the mouth of the Texel, with four sail of the line, to block up sixteen or eighteen sail of the line, Frigates, etc., in all thirty-seven sail. It was then, my Lord, you confirmed your former manœuvres by throwing out pendants to your ships or imaginary ships in the offing, for the Dutch believed all your Fleet to be there. The next day, my Lord, all was confirmed by an American Brig which I was sent to board, coming out of the Texel.—The Master informed me that the Dutchmen positively asserted that the four ships were only come in there for a decoy, and that there was a large Fleet in the offing, as they saw the English Admiral making signals to them the evening he came to an anchor."

1797



“ ‘ Venerable ’ at Sea off the Texel.

“ 4 or 5 leagues.

“ 4th June, 10 A.M.

1797

“ Since my letter of 1st instant I have been constantly off the Texel and the Dutch Fleet has not made any apparent preparations for putting to sea. I have ordered the ‘ Trent,’ ‘ Stork,’ and ‘ Black Joke ’ Lugger to watch their motions, and intend standing over to the coast of England off Yarmouth Roads with the ‘ Venerable ’ and ‘ Adamant,’ in order to meet any reinforcements which may be coming to join me, and to receive their Lordships’ orders more expeditiously.”

“ ‘ Venerable ’ at Sea, 5th June, 1797.

“ Texel S.S.E., 5 leagues.

“ His Majesty’s ships ‘ Sanspareil ’ and ‘ Russell ’ joined me yesterday afternoon, and should the wind come from the Eastwards and the enemy put to sea, their Lordships may be assured every exertion shall be used with the force I have, to annoy them. I am in hourly expectation of being joined by some more ships from Portsmouth which I understand are ordered, and shall therefore make my rendezvous from 5 to 7 leagues W.N.W. by compass from the Texel for the present.”

“ ‘ Venerable ’ at Sea, 6th June, 1797.

“ Texel Island E.S.E. 6 miles.

“ On the wind coming to the N.E. yesterday afternoon I anchored with the ‘ Venerable,’ ‘ Adamant,’ ‘ Sanspareil,’ ‘ Russell,’ ‘ Trent,’ at the



back of the South Hack Sand. The Dutch Fleet in the Texel remains in the same state as mentioned in my letter of 1st instant."

1797

"' Venerable ' at Sea, 10th June, 1797.

" Texel S.E. 10 miles.

" Sir Roger Curtis with H.M. Ships, ' Prince,' ' Formidable,' ' Cæsar,' ' Bedford,' ' Ganges,' ' Glatton,' joined me yesterday; and last evening wind N.E. by E. I stood in shore and observed the enemy's fleet in the Texel in the same state as when last seen. I transmit some intelligence which I received from Lt. Brodie of the ' Rose ' Cutter relative to the enemy's force in the Texel, also an account of them taken by Captain Boorder of the ' Espiègle ' and the Master of the ' Venerable.' "

(Enclosure.)

" ' Rose ' Cutter, 6 June, at Sea.

" Captain of American brig ' Eliza ' of Philadelphia informed me that it was reported at the Texel that Admiral Winter had arrived there from Paris yesterday; that his orders were sealed and not to be opened for a week; that there were in the Texel all manned and ready for sea 5 ships of 74 guns, 12 and 13, of 64 and 50 guns, besides frigates and smaller vessels of war; that there are 8 India ships at the Texel as transports and 40 sail or Merchants ships were taken up this week as transports, and that about 3 weeks ago 80,000 French troops came into Holland and are quartered at and near the Hague; that this expedition is an

1797 entire secret in Holland, and that the merchants say that if it does no other good it will keep the British in motion, and that they say the English have more men of war in the Offing; and the Captain of this brig thinks they will not come to sea while we remain here. He also says the Dutch Fleet was ordered to sail the last Easterly winds, but the sailors would not go till they had got their pay which he says they have now got, and high pay and bounty is given to those who enter; which he says will be the only cause of their being well manned.

(Sgd.) "J. M. BRODIE,  
"Lieut."

(*Enclosure in Admiral's Letter, 10th June.*)

"State of Dutch Fleet in Texel, 4 June /97.

"16 large ships,

"10 frigates and sloops

"3 brigs and 1 cutter

"3 flags and 1 broad pendant.

"'l'Espiegle,' 4 June /97.

"JAMES BOORDER."

"Men of War lying in Texel, 5 June 1797.

"In the Mars Deep.

"16 sail of two-decked ships,

"8 frigates

"3 Brigs.

"In the New Deep. 2 Line of Battle ships viz.

one with her main top sail unbent and the other with her top masts struck and no sails bent. 1797

“ ‘Venerable,’ 5 June,  
“ G. PATTERSON, *Master.*”

“ Agrees with what I saw myself.

“ A. DUNCAN.”

The Admiral wrote on June 4 that he would stand over towards England, but for all that he never quitted the Texel and the enemy. When he said that he would be found “on his rendezvous or “in shore of it,” he meant in shore at the entrance of the Texel, where he could make the best use of his two ships if the Dutch fleet came out. He ordered the ‘Adamant’ and ‘Circe’ to stand off, and kept making signals to them as if his fleet was in the Offing. In a few days Sir Roger Curtis arrived and the most acute stage of the crisis was past. The Dutch had neglected to seize their opportunity; they thought that there were more British ships in the Offing, as there ought to have been. If their information had been better, an action unique in character would have been fought at the entrance of the Texel; two ships of the British Navy would have been destroyed, and two fresh Admirals would have been required for the North Sea Command. As events happened, a British Admiral, finding himself in extreme difficulties, decided to ignore them, and by dauntless behaviour deceived the enemy, saved his ships and the situation, and protected his country.

1797

All this time the First Lord of the Admiralty did everything in his power, by sympathy and praise, to encourage and stimulate Admiral Duncan.

*(Private.)*

“ Admiralty : 1st June, 1797.

“ 6 P.M.

“ I feel much for the very unpleasant situation in which you are placed but I still hope by the same firmness and good sense which has hitherto distinguished your conduct you will be enabled to keep the ‘ Venerable ’ and the other ship with you right. We have sent down Sir Thomas Pasley to Yarmouth to use his best endeavours to persuade the misguided crews of the ships there to rejoin you and return to their duty and we are hurrying round all the ships we can get to move from Portsmouth. The ‘ Sanspareil ’ and ‘ Russell ’ are already passed through the Downs and the ‘ Bedford,’ ‘ Cæsar ’ and ‘ Ganges ’ will soon follow them. To them we shall probably be able in a day or two to add one or two more and you will then be in a respectable state again and have it in your power to show these rascals that you can do without them.”

*(Private.)*

“ Admiralty : 5th June, 1797.

“ Nothing can be more creditable than the spirit and decision of your proceedings in the very disagreeable situation in which the defection of your squadron has placed you. I hope you will before now have been joined by the ‘ Sanspareil ’ and ‘ Russell,’ and Sir Roger Curtis with five more is on his way in addition to them. Captain



Trollope in the 'Glatton' has also subdued the disturbances on board that ship and reports her to be in a state of obedience. Therefore I hope she also will join you, and then even without the four ships at Yarmouth who, I am sorry to say, seem too much disposed to catch the contagion, you will have it in your power to put a pretty good countenance on the business if the Texel Fleet should move.

1797

"The people at the Nore continue very bad, but I am in hopes that the steady and vigorous measures which we are pursuing to show them that we are not disposed to be got the better of, will soon bring them to their senses.

"Yours etc.

"SPENCER.

"P.S. I have to acknowledge the receipt of your letters as follows, 17th, 26th, 27th, 28th, 30th, and 30th May and 1st June."

(*Private.*)

"Admiralty: 11th June, 1797.

"I have to acknowledge your two letters of 5th and 8th instant and am happy to hear you made so good a countenance with your 4 ships as to keep the whole Dutch Fleet in awe. By this time I conclude you have such a force as will most effectually prevent their coming out, though I wish they would that you might make an example of them.

"Our business at the Nore is not yet quite settled, though it begins to wear the appearance of breaking up. The 'Repulse,' 'Ardent' and

1797 'Leopard' have quitted the rest and surrendered, not without some conflict on board the latter, and with a good deal of hostility from the other ships. The 'Repulse' got aground between the Great and Little Nore, and the 'Monmouth's' people were desperate enough to keep up a heavy fire on her for a considerable time in that situation. A Lieutenant had his leg shot off, but there were no other men wounded though the ship was damaged.

"We shall stand very firm to our point, and I have no doubt of their giving way soon, but perhaps not without some blood-shed. Some examples must be made for the good of the service, and I trust that in the end it may be got over without producing such bad consequences as were at first to be apprehended. I fear from some hints I have received (the particulars of which, when I get them, I will not fail to communicate to you) that you have now got with you one or two ships which contain a good deal of mischief. If our enemy was only a little more active it would be more likely to keep us right than anything else I believe, but the business of locking up a fleet at anchor, especially when all that comes in or goes is neutral, is very flat work.

"I admire the sentiments of your last letter and am very glad to find them among us at this time of day; I sincerely wish they were more prevalent."

The Admiral wrote, still cruising off the Texel :

“ ‘ Venerable ’ at Sea,

“ June 13th, 1797, Texel

“ E. by N. 4 leagues.

“ Rear Admiral Makaroff with his squadron  
joined me yesterday according to your Lordship’s  
orders, to serve for the present under my command,  
and offered to co-operate with me until the 25th  
of this month. I have given him directions  
accordingly, and am to request their Lordships  
will be pleased to send me instructions whether I  
am to detain him longer than the time above  
mentioned. Whilst the enemy continue in such  
numbers I trust their lordships will see the necessity  
of my having numbers to repel them in the event  
of their coming out.” 1797

In the meantime the Board of Admiralty had displayed great vigour and spirit.

On May 29 Lord Spencer with two other members of the Board met the Delegates at Sheerness, and offered a free pardon on certain conditions. Their terms being refused, the Board entered into no further negotiations and determined to make no further concessions. It was unfortunately at this critical time that Admiral Duncan’s ships had arrived at the Nore.

On June 14 Lord Spencer announced the final break-up of the Mutiny at the Nore :

(*Private.*)

“ Admiralty : 14 June, 1797.

“ I take this opportunity of acknowledging the receipt of your letter of the 12th in order to have the pleasure at the same time of announcing the



1797 approaching termination of the Mutiny at the Nore in as desirable a manner as could under all the circumstances be wished. In the course of the last 48 hours most of the ships have one after another dropped off and submitted themselves at discretion, and last night at length the 'Sandwich' herself unmoored, got under weigh and ran into the Harbour with Parker and his associates on board, who have all been taken into custody and are now safely lodged in different prisons. We shall lose no time in taking the necessary steps for bringing him and the other delegates etc. to justice, and I hope some examples will be made in every ship concerned, by which means alone we can flatter ourselves to restore anything like order or discipline again. I wish the Dutch would give you an opportunity of beating them without the assistance of these scoundrels, but I fear there are no hopes of their moving. In a few days we shall I hope be able to send you out some ships and frigates, but there must be some purging and purifying first.

“ At the Trinity House dinner on Monday last your health was drunk with universal applause. Your firmness on this occasion has indeed most deservedly ensured you the approbation of the country.

“ I have also to acknowledge your letter of the 10th. I hope the news I send to-day from the Nore will tend to put a stop to all further grumblings everywhere else. We hear from Admiral Pole that great indignation has been excited in Lord



Bridport's Fleet by the accounts they have received of the lengths to which the Fleet at the Nore have gone."

1797

On June 17 the Admiral joyfully acknowledged the receipt of the good news :

" 'Venerable' at Sea, June 17th,  
" Texel in sight with wind at the North.

" Yesterday I had the pleasure to receive your letter of the 14th acquainting me that the Mutiny and Rebellion which have for some time past prevailed amongst the crews of H.M. Ships at the Nore have at length been suppressed, and that Richard Parker with others of the ring-leaders were under confinement in the garrison at Sheerness. I immediately communicated the same to the ships of the squadron. The Ship's Company of the 'Venerable' expressed great satisfaction on the occasion."

On August 24 the Admiralty returned the thanks of the Board to the crews of the 'Venerable' and 'Adamant' :

" I have their Lordships' commands to acquaint  
" you that three of the Mutineers belonging to the  
" ' Saturn,' who were the most active in bringing  
" that ship into Port, were executed on Monday last  
" at Plymouth pursuant to the sentence of a Court  
" Martial; and to signify to you that in communi-  
" cating this circumstance to the crews of the several  
" ships under your command you are to inform the  
" Officers and Crews of His Majesty's Ships

1797 “ ‘ Venerable ’ and ‘ Adamant ’ that their Lordships  
 “ have seen with the greatest satisfaction their  
 “ good conduct during the late outrageous mutiny,  
 “ and that it reflects the highest honour on them  
 “ that, while so many ships seduced by the acts of  
 “ some wicked men, deserted their Admiral and  
 “ returned into Port, leaving their country exposed  
 “ to the risk of being invaded by her enemies, the  
 “ ‘ Venerable ’ and ‘ Adamant,’ steady and deter-  
 “ mined in the discharge of their duty, and resisting  
 “ all attempts of others to induce them to follow  
 “ their bad examples, went, with cheerful obedience  
 “ to their Officers’ orders, to block up the enemy’s  
 “ ships.”

In looking back upon the Mutiny at the Nore, it must be admitted that there is much to be said on the side of the seamen. They had undoubtedly good reason to complain of their treatment in several particulars. Many of them had been pressed and were serving in the fleet against their will : their pay was small and frequently in arrear : the whole system of provisioning the ships was most unsatisfactory : leave depended entirely on the will of the individual officer in command, and some officers were unreasonable and harsh, and even guilty of oppression and tyranny.

Many of their petitions were entirely free from objection. What, for instance, can be said against either the terms or the spirit of the following petition of the crew of the ‘ Nassau ’ ?

“ ‘Nassau,’ Yarmouth Roads : 18 May, 1797.

1797

“ Sir,—Enclosed is an address from the company of His Majesty’s Ship ‘Nassau’ which you will be pleased to lay before my Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty, I having acquainted Admiral Duncan with it who desired me to forward the same. I have much satisfaction in saying they are a very orderly and obedient ship’s company.

“ I am, etc.

“ RICHARD ONSLOW.

“ To Evan Nepean.”

“ *Address of ‘Nassau’s’ to V. A. Richard Onslow,*  
18 May, 1797.

“ On board H.M.S. ‘Nassau’ off Yarmouth.”

“ The humble address of the aforesaid ship’s  
“ company humbly sheweth that from a due sense  
“ of your accustomed clemency and goodness, and  
“ being fully assured that your main object has  
“ always been as much as possible to remove every  
“ inconvenience attending not only your own ship’s  
“ company but all those under your command,  
“ therefore actuated by the hope of obtaining re-  
“ dress from your Honour’s hands and through  
“ your influence, we the aforesaid Ship’s company  
“ do thus humbly beg leave to submit to your  
“ perusal a statement of the present grievances we  
“ labour under. Having had nineteen months’  
“ wages due to the ship and being in general in  
“ want of almost every article of wearing apparel  
“ that may conduce to render our lives comfortable



1797 “ in this situation of life, we flatter ourselves to  
“ think your Honour will be kind enough to take  
“ the same into consideration and remedy that  
“ inconvenience by obtaining leave from the Board  
“ of Admiralty for a Commissioner to come to this  
“ Port if it be not convenient to have the ship  
“ ordered to a King’s Port when she might be  
“ paid. Your Honour’s compliance with the above  
“ requisition shall for ever be acknowledged with  
“ thanks and we as in duty bound shall always be  
“ found conformable to our duty.”

Numerous instances might be quoted to show that the ships were paid very irregularly. On September 22, 1797, the Admiralty wrote to say “ that the ‘ Nautilus ’ had sixteen months’ pay due, “ and was to be relieved as soon as possible.” On August 8, 1797, the captain of the ‘ Seagull ’ “ represented that she had not been paid since “ June 1796.”

If even the most mutinous of the proclamations are read, it will be found that the seamen usually declared themselves at all times ready to fight against the enemies of the country. They had the strongest aversion to being regarded as mutineers. They presented a strange mixture of discipline and disobedience. While in some respects they had taken the command out of the hands of the officers, in other respects they laid down that the orders of the officers were to be strictly obeyed. Subjoined are literal copies of the mutineers’ reports of their



proceedings in Yarmouth Roads, after deserting the Admiral : 1797

“ At a Meeting of the Committee from the  
“ different ships belonging to Admiral Duncan’s  
“ Fleet returned to Yarmouth Roads, on board His  
“ Majesty’s Ship the ‘ Isis,’ Robert Watson, Esq.  
“ Commander, on the 31st day of May, 1797.

“ Resolved that as the ships so returned have  
“ every wish for the general good so they would  
“ wish to act with that œconomy which men in our  
“ critical situation should do, that every obedience  
“ must be paid to the Officers in command when  
“ the ships duty is required, so that they may be  
“ convinced and the country at large of these our  
“ unanimous exertions for the safety of the ships  
“ under their command.

“ Resolved, that the Delegates of the Ships  
“ returned have had a meeting this day on which  
“ it was determined that a certain number of men  
“ should be appointed from each ship, not exceed-  
“ ing four, that the said men should apply to their  
“ respective Captains that they should order a  
“ Cutter to be appointed to carry the said Delegates  
“ round to the Nore, to the intent they may  
“ enquire into the reason or cause, why the said  
“ ships deserted the Fleet, that if the said ships,  
“ when the grievances subsisting among them are  
“ redressed ; are ready and willing to return and  
“ join the Admiral, and convince him and our  
“ countrymen, that when they are pleased to call  
“ us forth in defence of our country against the

1797 “ common Enemy, they will ever find us behave  
 “ as becomes the character of British Seamen.

“ Resolved that it may be represented to the  
 “ Captain and Officers, that the Delegates so  
 “ appointed, are not to be understood as ring-  
 “ leaders of a Mutinous Assembly, but as men  
 “ appointed by the majority of each ship’s company,  
 “ in order to prevent confusion and obtain as  
 “ speedy a regularity of affairs as possible.

“ Resolved that no liquor shall be admitted  
 “ into the ship, for the use of the ship’s company  
 “ and that no person do presume to drink more  
 “ than the allowance allowed him by the  
 “ ship.

*“ Articles to be strictly observed and sworn to by  
 the Ship’s Company.*

1. “ As the Delegates are chosen by the ship’s  
 “ company, we are to support them and firmly  
 “ maintain whatever they shall think proper or  
 “ see necessary to be done on this occasion.

2. “ If any person is caught in liquor, or  
 “ buying or selling the same from each other,  
 “ shall be severely punished till everything is  
 “ settled by the Delegates.

3. “ Every person is strictly to attend to his  
 “ duty in there several stations and obey every  
 “ lawful command of any Officer, on pain of being  
 “ severely punished.

4. “ No person whatever, officers excepted,  
 “ shall be allowed to go out of the ship on any  
 “ pretence whatever, nor any women to go out but

“ as many to come in as chuses. N.B. Boats 1797  
 “ crews excepted when on duty.

5. “ There shall be no quarrelling or fighting  
 “ amongst ourselves on any pretence whatever,  
 “ on pain of being severely punished.

6. “ Any person found guilty of breaking  
 “ any of these articles, shall be punished with  
 “ the almost rigour by the ship’s company.

“ ‘ Agamemnon,’ the 30th of May, 1797.”

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“ At a Meeting of a Committee from the dif-  
 “ ferent ships belonging to Admiral Duncan’s  
 “ Fleet returned into Yarmouth Roads on  
 “ board H.M.S. ‘ Agamemnon,’ May 31st, 1797.

“ Resolved that the ships returned have every  
 “ wish for the general good so that they should  
 “ wish to behave with respect which men in our  
 “ critical situation should do, every obedience  
 “ shall be paid to the Officers in command when  
 “ the duty of the ships is requested so that they  
 “ may be convinced and our country at large of  
 “ these unanimous exertions for the safety of ships  
 “ under their command.

“ Resolved that the Delegates of the ships  
 “ returned had a meeting this day on which they  
 “ agreed that a certain number of men should be  
 “ appointed for each ship not exceeding four, they  
 “ the said men should apply to their respective  
 “ Captains to send a Cutter to the Nore with them  
 “ for the purpose of enquiring the reason why the  
 “ said ships deserted the fleet, that when the said  
 “ ships’ grievances are redressed we are ready



1797 “ and willing to join the Admiral and convince  
 “ him and our country when we are called forth  
 “ in defence of a common enemy they will find  
 “ us behave with that character which British  
 “ seamen are renoun’d for. May it be represented  
 “ to the Captains and Officers that the Delegates  
 “ so appointed are not ringleaders of a Mutinous  
 “ Assembly but as men appointed by the majority  
 “ of each ship’s company in order to prevent  
 “ confusion and obtain a speedy regulation of  
 “ affairs as soon as possible.”

The following document is addressed to “ Mr.  
 “ Thomas Barnes, Chief Botswain’s Mate, on  
 “ board H.M. Ship ‘ Adamant,’ Yarmouth Roads.” :

“ The Outlines of y<sup>e</sup> Articles of H. M. Ships  
 “ ‘ Belliqueux,’ ‘ Montague,’ ‘ Standard,’ ‘ Mun-  
 “ mouth,’ and ‘ Adamant.’

1. “ That no disafection be shown to any  
 “ officer what somever.

2. “ That if any officer of officers should behave  
 “ (him) themselves in a cruel or oppressive manner  
 “ unbecoming the character of a British Officer by  
 “ calling a magority of Delegates shall be acted  
 “ according as their Judgement best directs.

3. “ That no assembly what somever shall  
 “ conveen in the Gally after nine at night where  
 “ there might be any reason of suspecting that a  
 “ mutinous or disorderly mind reigned in us more  
 “ than our ship-mates at Spithead to maintain



“ which we here pledge ourselves (unanimous) by  
“ oath one and all. 1797

4. “ That no aclamations or noises or any  
“ expressions such as Grog be used and that good  
“ order and strict dissipline be carried on untill  
“ this business is over.

5. “ That one ship is strictly to look into each  
“ others Gravances, and if possible to remidy on  
“ them directly.

6. “ That directly the above measures is put in  
“ execution above every thing sobriety is to be  
“ observed and that proper people are to be  
“ appointed to prevent the same from coming on  
“ board.

7. “ That no person is to be admitted on to or  
“ from any ship in the fleet without liberty being  
“ asked and obtained from the Delegates. And  
“ that they are to flay to their respective duties  
“ directly the Botswain pipes.

8. “ That as many women may come on board  
“ as please, none to go on shore unless in a bad stat  
“ of health and no hopes of recovery.

9. “ That a rope shall be rove at each yard arm  
“ to hang the first man who shall seem to object,  
“ this after being put in execution and being fully  
“ resolved should the fleet agree never to start an  
“ anchor untill all and every of our grivances be  
“ redressed.”

The above articles were addressed to the Chief  
Boatswain's Mate of the 'Adamant,' and, pre-  
sumably, were passed on to the Admiral, amongst

1797 whose papers they are preserved. The mutineers apparently assumed that the 'Adamant' would return with the other ships to Yarmouth Roads.

Although Admiral Duncan allowed no expression of sympathy to escape him in the presence of the seamen, he had for long been making representations of various kinds on their behalf. On April 8, 1795, in the earliest days of his command in the North Sea, he wrote to the Admiralty: "As  
" the service on which His Majesty's ships under  
" my command will be employed, will probably not  
" admit of their being often in port, their companies  
" will of course be seldom supplied with fresh  
" provisions. I therefore think it would much  
" tend to the preservation of their health could  
" they be sometimes furnished with fresh fish, for  
" which purpose I beg leave to suggest to their  
" Lordships the propriety or ordering such ships as  
" they may judge proper to be supplied with a  
" trawl and a proportion of lines and hooks."

A little later he was making arrangements at the Admiralty about tobacco.

On June 8, 1795, he wrote asking for wine for the sick, and for a regular allowance of lemon juice and sugar for the ships' companies.

There are among his papers more than one scheme for improving the organisation of the ships, usually written on small pieces of paper. One of these is written on the spare leaves of "the Log of  
" H.M. 'Niger' from July 1 to July 14, 1797." It begins by limiting the number of lashes that may be given by court-martial. "Grog should be

1797

“ served in all ships with the same number of  
“ waters. No stopping of grog but for drunkenness  
“ or by the Surgeon’s desire, those stopped by desire  
“ of the surgeon to be paid in money. Young  
“ persons under 15 to have half allowance of  
“ liquor. Porter, in my opinion, would be better  
“ than small beer and cheaper to Government.  
“ Provisions of all kinds to be served as agreeably  
“ as possible. The rating of the ship’s company to  
“ be much attended to. Midshipmen and young  
“ gentlemen to be put on such a footing as not to  
“ interfere with the ship’s company. If women  
“ are allowed to be carried to sea the numbers  
“ should be fixed and an allowance of provisions  
“ for them. No particular men for sweepers, hold-  
“ men, or otherwise, but all to take their turn at  
“ dirty work of certain discriptions; that is to say  
“ landsmen, and ordinary seamen. More Petty  
“ Officers should be made. The times and  
“ numbers allowed to be on leave to be regulated  
“ as near in every ship as possible. A severe  
“ penalty for selling liquor. Profane swearing to  
“ be discouraged as much as possible and punished  
“ agreeable to the old custom of the Navy. Divine  
“ service to be more attended to. Tobacco and  
“ soap to be served. To be regular payments  
“ wherever their ship is, and particularly abroad.  
“ A more equal distribution of prize money. Boys  
“ to have but half prize money. Public Agents  
“ for prizes to be established. As agents now are,  
“ it is one of the greatest grievances seamen have.  
“ Could the Chaplain also be schoolmaster it would



1797 “ be a good thing. As to pressing, if possible  
 “ should be put an end to, only in emergency. A  
 “ Naval Militia to be abolished. A good body of  
 “ Marines always to be kept up, and a large  
 “ proportion in every ship ; also Marine Gunners.  
 “ Pursers should be employed not only to attend to  
 “ Provisions but all the stores of the ship, under  
 “ the inspection of the Captain,” etc., etc.

All such matters as the above he was earnestly pressing on the attention of the Government at the time the Mutiny broke out. Mr. Henry Dundas wrote on May 15, 1797 : “ My dear Sir,  
 “ This return in the Mutiny of the Fleet has kept  
 “ us so constantly in hurry and agitation that I  
 “ have never been able to acknowledge the receipt  
 “ of your letter. I need not enter into a detailed  
 “ discussion of the particulars you suggest for the  
 “ further satisfaction of the Navy. I concur in  
 “ opinion with you on all the particulars and would  
 “ long since have taken some steps relative to the  
 “ more speedy and just distribution of prize money,  
 “ but I have always understood that it was very  
 “ adverse to the wishes of the Officers of the Navy  
 “ to give up their Prize Agents ; and without that  
 “ being done, it is impossible to make any bene-  
 “ ficial regulation.”

A man who could see the Seamen's side of the question so clearly had a great advantage when dealing with the Mutiny. Much as Admiral Duncan resented the conduct of the sailors, he could not but feel that they were not altogether to blame. Perhaps this was the reason that he never



lost his temper in dealing with the mutinous ships. Looking, as he did, on the Seamen as his children, he could not feel harshly towards them; and he would not even admit to himself or to the Admiralty that he could not keep order, when he must have known in his heart that mutiny was inevitable.

1797

His conduct, applauded as it was by the Government and the country, has not altogether escaped criticism. It has been said that “the Admiral who, remarkable for uniting in his own person the most undaunted courage with the most benevolent heart, forgave the mutineers on the ‘Venerable,’ would have done better to inflict speedy and exemplary punishment.”

Brenton's  
Naval His-  
tory, vol. i.

What were the circumstances of the moment? Every ship at Portsmouth, at the Nore, and at Yarmouth was steeped in discontent and mutinous feeling, arising in great part, as the Admiral well knew, from neglect of the comforts and want of sympathy with the interests of the seamen.

He went boldly into the very middle of the mutiny, and his presence had a very important effect. It was well known to the men that if he reasoned with them and behaved calmly, it was not because he was afraid of them. If any insult or opposition had been offered to his flag, it is probable that, as he said on board the ‘Adamant,’ he would have himself put to death the first mutineer. That he might have been able to do, because he was personally popular and was a British Admiral. But if at that time he had ordered any mutineers to be hanged,

1797 it is doubtful whether any ship's company would have obeyed. More probably a general rising of the fleet against the officers would have ensued, with consequences even more serious than what actually occurred. Though he was unable to extinguish the mutiny, he controlled it to a certain extent wherever he went, and, most important of all, he never relaxed the blockade of the Texel.

Mr. Pitt said afterwards that the best service which Admiral Duncan ever performed for the country was in respect of the Mutiny at the Nore. A moment's reflection will show that Mr. Pitt was quite right. If, in the outset, the Admiral had surrendered his influence and allowed his flag to be hauled down, there would have been no semblance of British authority in the North Sea. Again, when his squadron deserted on the way to the Texel, the temptation was great to make one of two enormous mistakes. He might either have returned to England to seek reinforcements; or, in the anger and shame of the moment, he might have applied himself to the task of seeking out his ships at the Nore and forcing them to return to their duty. To attempt to blockade the Dutch fleet with one seventy-four-gun and one fifty-gun ship seemed at first sight to be the act of a madman. His instinct, however, directed him, and directed him rightly, to play the bold game. To acknowledge his impotence and to retreat was to bring upon the shores of Great Britain certain dangers of uncertain magnitude. Moreover, the

bold game was the game which he preferred and the game which he knew best how to play. He trusted to the Admiralty to do their part—to collect and send assistance from home; but he made their part easier by letting them know that under any circumstances the 'Venerable' and 'Adamant' would control the Texel as long as they were able to float.

Too much praise also cannot be bestowed on the Admiralty for their behaviour throughout the Mutiny. Admitting that at the outset they were insufficiently informed of the pressing necessity for meeting the seamen's demands, they at once put aside all feelings of false pride and conceded to the ships at Spithead what they believed to be right. In regard to the Nore, although in the first instance the Board refused to grant an interview to the Delegates at Sheerness, they wisely altered their decision. When, however, their concessions and offers of pardon were rejected, Lord Spencer rightly gave up all notion of further compromise, and threw himself upon the spirit and good sense of the country. Immediately public spirit revived and the Mutiny began to fade away.

It will always remain a wonder, but it is nevertheless a fact, that the Mutiny at the Nore and the obliteration for the moment of the North Sea Fleet left unaffected Great Britain's control of the Channel and of the North Sea.



## CHAPTER VI

THE BATTLE OFF CAMPERDOWN, OCTOBER 11, 1797

1797  
June

ADMIRAL DUNCAN'S cruise off the Texel was destined to continue for no less than nineteen weeks ; and indeed his recent experience of the Home Ports was not such as to make him desirous of returning. For the discipline of the ships it was important to keep them at sea ; and apart from all questions connected with the British Squadron, the information from Dutch sources continued to indicate the probability of an early expedition. Captain Boorder, of the 'Espiègle' sloop, reported that " 11,000 French troops are embarked in ships now " lying in the Texel, and 25,000 more are em- " barked in different vessels in the Pampus (an " anchorage close by) ready to drop down and join " them. The idea in general is that the Fleet are " so very averse to putting to sea that they will " not do it unless forced by the French Army, and " have threatened that if they are, they will not " fight."

On June 13, Rear Admiral Makaroff, with the Russian ships 'Peter,' 'Philip,' 'Europe,' 'Archipelago' and 'Despatch' brigs, joined.

On June 17 the Admiral was informed that " the Mutiny at the Nore having now been happily







A Representation of the English and Dutch Fleets five minutes before the Action commenced, on the 11th Oct. 1797.  
 The English Fleet, under the command of Admiral Duncan, captured nine Ships of  
 the Line, two Frigates, and took three Admirals.

ENGLISH	GUNS	ENGLISH	GUNS	DUTCH	GUNS
A Venerable . . . . .	74	P Montagu . . . . .	74	9 Haarlem . . . . .	68
B Ardent . . . . .	64	FRIGATES		10 Alkmaar . . . . .	56
C Triumph . . . . .	74	Q Beaulieu . . . . .	40	11 Delft . . . . .	56
D Isis . . . . .	50	R Circe . . . . .	28	12 Gelykheid . . . . .	68
E Bedford . . . . .	74	S Martin (sloop) . . . . .	16	13 Mars . . . . .	44
F Lancaster . . . . .	64	Four Cutters and a Lugger.		14 Admiral Devries . . . . .	68
G Belliqueux . . . . .	64	DUTCH	GUNS	15 Brutus . . . . .	74
H Monarch . . . . .	74	1 Vryheid . . . . .	74	16 Hercules . . . . .	64
I Powerful . . . . .	74	2 States General . . . . .	74	FRIGATES	
J Russel . . . . .	74	3 Wassenaer . . . . .	64	17 Munnikkendam . . . . .	44
K Monmouth . . . . .	64	4 Cerberus . . . . .	68	18 Ambuscade . . . . .	32
L Veteran . . . . .	64	5 Beschermer . . . . .	56	Three more Frigates, names unknown, and five Brigs.	
M Agincourt . . . . .	64	6 Leyden . . . . .	68	Those marked T taken.	
N Adamant . . . . .	50	7 Batavier . . . . .	56		
O Director . . . . .	64	8 Jupiter . . . . .	74		





“suppressed, measures will be taken for increasing  
“the force under your orders.”

1797  
June

The threatened expedition did not take place, but the rumours continued of invasion from the Texel, and also from the French Channel Ports.

*(Private.)*

“Admiralty: 26 June, 1797.”

“I have to acknowledge the receipt of yours of the 17th and 21st, and I am glad to have it in my power to acquaint you that the proceedings on the subject of the late Mutiny seem to be taking the turn we could wish them to do. All Parker’s trial is not yet over but the evidence on his prosecution (which is closed) has been so strong that I do not think it possible for him to make any thing of his defence, which is to take place to-day. Two of the ringleaders on board the ‘Poupée’ will be hanged in two or three days; there were 4 condemned, but the Court thought fit to recommend two of them to mercy on the ground of their having been misled.

“I wish I could flatter myself that there was a chance of the Dutch coming out to meet you; we have lately had a good deal of intelligence from the Hague, Rotterdam etc. of the preparations for embarking troops for an expedition to take place about this time, but your appearance will be an effectual check upon them.

“I have not time for more at present but that I am dear Sir with great regard

“Yours etc.

“SPENCER.

1797  
June

“ P.S. Just as I finished the above I got your letter of the 23rd and am much obliged to you for the intelligence it contains ; it looks a little like their meaning to do something, but I am inclined to believe that Brodie’s account with respect to their manning and equipment is well-founded.”

*(Private.)*

“ Admiralty : 14 July, 1797.

July

“ I write chiefly for the purpose of acknowledging the receipt of your letters of the 25th and 30th ult. and the 7th instant, not having any thing very particular to say in answer to them. I agree with you in regretting that so many ships trading under false pretences should slip through your fingers, and I know only one way of putting a stop to it, which would be to declare Amsterdam in a state of blockade, a measure which if earlier taken might probably have been very proper and advisable, but I doubt whether I should recommend it under all the circumstances existing at this moment. I also agree with you in doubting whether the French are likely to attack Hamburgh by sea when they may so easily accomplish it (if they please) by land ; holding out this is their object is now probably a feint, when their real intention (if they come out) is to make an attempt upon some part of Great Britain or Ireland. I have very little doubt but that they have something in contemplation of importance, and some circumstances which have come to my knowledge lately (though they are of a nature which I cannot now distinctly

point out) confirm me in that opinion. Our accounts however do not lead me to think that their armament will be very formidable, and if it be true, as it is now stated, that the French Troops are not to make part of it, we have reason to think that a great part of those who will be to compose it are not very well affected to their present system."

1797  
July

On June 23 the Russian ships, being ordered home, parted company, Rear Admiral Makaroff writing to Admiral Duncan: "Your Excellency's letter of thanks binds me to you feelingly with gratitude I cannot express. Your thanks for my poor services done in the service of His Britannic Majesty will remain indelibly stamped on my mind."

It is interesting to read what was occurring inside the Texel at the end of June, as described by the Irish patriot Wolfe Tone in his Journal. At this time he himself had gone to the Hague, and immediately afterwards General Hoche arrived. General Hoche informed Wolfe Tone: "The Governor General Daendels and Admiral de Winter by the most indefatigable pains have got together at the Texel sixteen sail of the line and eight or ten frigates all ready for sea and in the best condition. The object they have in view is the invasion of Ireland."

Soon afterwards a dispute arose as to whether the French General or the Dutch Admiral was to have the command of this expedition, and finally General Hoche waived his pretensions to the command and



1797 returned to Paris. He was in delicate health, and died at Wetzlar on September 18 following.

The troops embarked early in July, but the wind proved unfavourable; Wolfe Tone records in his Journal:

*July 19.*—"Wind foul still."

*July 26.*—"I am to-day eighteen days on board, "and we have not had eighteen minutes of fair "wind."

Wolfe  
Tone's  
Journal

Towards the middle of August, Admiral De Winter pointed out to Tone that "Duncan's fleet "had increased to seventeen sail of the line and "that the Dutch troops, so long pent-up on ship- "board, had consumed nearly all the provisions. "It would be necessary to relinquish the expedi- "tion to Ireland."

July

To return to the blockading Squadron. On July 10 the 'Nancy' cutter had been sent into the Texel under a flag of truce with a letter to Admiral De Winter about some fishing vessels which had been captured, and her master, Mr. Terence O'Neill, reported on returning that "the men of war in the "Texel appeared to be in very good order and to "be well manned, and that all their sails were bent "and perfectly ready for sea except the three "Frigates." His report is interesting as showing the courtesy of the Dutch Admiral and the unpopularity of the war among the Dutch Officers.

" 'Nancy' off the Texel: July 13, 1797.

"Sir,—I most respectfully beg leave to inform you that agreeable to the orders I received from



Captain Dacres, I proceeded on the tenth instant into the Harbour of the Texel the wind dying away when within two or three miles of the Dutch fleet I proceeded with the necessary Flags in the Boat leaving proper instructions with the Master of the Cutter. Being met by a Boat from the Flag ship I proceeded in her on board, and delivered the English letter to his Excellency Admiral De Winter. He received me with the greatest attention but he not perfectly understanding certain parts of the English letter I delivered the French one, Captain Dacres having previously explained to me that their contents were the same. Admiral De Winter informed me that it would be necessary to forward the letter to the Court and it might be two or more days before I received an answer. I was then sent on board the Cutter in the Admiral's barge, a Dutch Officer attending, who brought us up about half a mile from the shore and a mile ahead of the Admiral. The Officer having noticed the smallness of the cutter asked me how long I had commanded her. I replied about three hours, and he having stayed below three hours I was obliged to apologize for having nothing to ask him to. At ten o'clock the same night I could not be but much surprised at the return of the same officer with a couple of hampers with Admiral De Winter's compliments and he had sent me some refreshments and at the same time to request me on my honour that neither the boat nor people might be suffered to go on shore nor any boats from the shore to come alongside to which I very readily assented. At

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2 A.M. a Brig anchored close alongside of us and at 10 A.M. the Captain came on board and informed me that he was sent by the Admiral to know if I wanted anything and to offer me accommodation in the Brig during my stay in the Texel. These offers with the necessary compliments I declined supposing my stay would be very short. I however drank tea with him that evening and I dined with him and a large party of Officers the next day. The Officers expressed their hopes of a speedy peace and by their conversation appeared very averse to the war. They however speak very highly of their Force and they have great confidence in it. I do myself the honor of enclosing for your inspection the number of ships and their classes as clearly as I could make out and also the force of the Batteries within my observation and I beg to remark that as far as I could observe there were not the smallest symptoms of transports fitting out or collecting for troops of which there is said to be a great number on shore. On the 12th at 6 P.M. I received the answer to the letter I had the honour to deliver from you with permission to depart. I immediately got under weigh but the wind dying away I was obliged to bring up abreast of Kickdown Hill for the night. At 3.30 A.M. we again got under weigh with a light air from the East and proceeded with all expedition to join the fleet. I have taken the liberty to trouble you with a minute detail of my proceedings conceiving it to be necessary on this occasion to acquaint you with every circumstance. Should my conduct on the service you

have been pleased to employ me upon merit your approbation, it will ever be remembered as an honor by him who is with the greatest respect your obedient and very humble servant,

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“TERENCE O’NEILL.

“Admiral Duncan, etc., etc., etc.

“List of the Ships lying in the Harbour of the Texel. July 11th 1797.

5 seventy-fours  
8 sixtys  
6 fiftys  
4 fortys  
8 Frigates  
2 ship sloops  
4 brigs.

*Flags.*  
One Admiral  
One Vice-Admiral  
Two Rear-Admirals.”

Admiral De Winter’s answer was as courteous as his treatment of Mr. O’Neill :—

“On board the Republican Ship ‘Liberty’—  
in Texel Roads—11 July, 1797—3rd year  
of Batavian Liberty.

“Sir,—According to the promise I made you I take the first opportunity to send back to you your Officer and your vessel with the Flag of Truce. I did not think it proper to detain her till an answer could be received from the French Government, on account of the length of time it will take; but the Batavian Government has requested them to give the most severe orders against molesting any of the English Fishing vessels.

“It is with satisfaction that I announce to you that my Government has issued these orders; and



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that it is their Instructions that Fishing Vessels are not to be molested either by their men of war or Privateers. I shall take care as I have always done, that their orders be faithfully observed, and I have no doubt but that you Sir, on your part will continue to do what is in your power to prevent the detaining of Fishing vessels of every description, as well as Pilot Boats. You know better than any person that vessels of the kind can be nowadays dangerous; and to act against them, would not only have the effect of ruining the poor proprietors who are but little disposed to the war, but also hurt a great number of Foreign Merchants who send their vessels on our Coasts and into our Harbours.

“Persuaded as I am that you are animated with the sentiments of Justice and Humanity, which you have expressed in your former letter, I hope you will endeavour to cause to be released the Fishing and Pilot vessel ‘The Sloop,’ Master Henry Janson Kolder, taken on the 13 March by the Excise Yacht the ‘Royal George’ and carried into Leith, where they have detained the vessel (a copy of the condemnation of which I now send you) although they have set the people at liberty. Since writing the above I have received your letter by Captain Ruysen, and I hasten to finish this not to detain your cutter longer. Assuring you of my respect and esteem—

“Health and respect

“DE WINTER.”



The Admiral wrote on July 18 to the Admiralty :

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July

“ ‘ Venerable ’ at Sea, Texel east 15 miles.  
“ Intelligence received yesterday that the Dutch  
“ fleet were unmoored, intending to put to sea with  
“ thirty thousand troops embarked in Transports  
“ and in their ships of war and that a French  
“ general had arrived that day and was saluted on  
“ going on board the fleet. We distinctly heard  
“ them salute. Their Lordships being in posses-  
“ sion of their number and force, must know how  
“ inadequate the force I have is to theirs, and  
“ although I have no doubt of giving a very good  
“ account of them in the event of an action, yet  
“ from their great superiority of numbers their  
“ Frigates and Transports may proceed on their  
“ intended expedition without my being able to  
“ prevent it.”

The westerly winds which so much annoyed Wolfe Tone were now blowing. The blockading squadron was much incommoded, but remained on its station as well as circumstances would permit. The ships were revictualled from transports at sea ; and very difficult it was, and at times impossible, to bring provisions, and more especially water, on board.

Some of the ships which had gone to the Nore were now joining the squadron or were on their way. On July 25 Vice-Admiral Onslow shifted his flag from the ‘ Adamant ’ to the ‘ Monarch,’ and on July 29 the ‘ Ardent,’ ‘ Director,’ ‘ Belliqueux,’ and ‘ Isis ’ arrived. The Admiralty at this stage of the proceedings proposed to withdraw Sir Roger

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July

Curtis and his squadron, in order to reinforce the Mediterranean Fleet.

Lord Spencer in the same letter conveyed to the Admiral from the King an offer of an Irish peerage for his services during the late Mutiny.

(*Private.*)

“ Admiralty: 27 July, 1797.

“ Dear Sir,—I have to acknowledge the receipt of your letters of the 13th and 17th instant, and regret that the enemy though apparently prepared for sea have not yet made up their minds to try what they can do, and give you an opportunity of shewing what I know you will do with them whenever it happens.

“ I assure you it is not owing to any want of approbation of your Proceedings that nothing of that kind has appeared in any of the official letters from the Board of late, as we are all of us fully impressed with the activity, spirit, and skill, with which you have conducted your command through these very difficult times; but in the course of a dry official correspondence it is not usually the custom to introduce much of compliment and we trusted that you could not entertain a doubt on the subject of our sentiments.

“ This approbation is not confined to the Board of Admiralty alone, and in order to convince you that it is not, I am happy to be authorized by His Majesty to signify his intention of bestowing some publick mark of his favour on you at this time; what it shall be in some measure will depend on your own wishes on the subject, and if I might

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July

venture to offer an opinion to you, I should recommend your choice of an Irish Peerage ; in case you should agree with me I must trouble you to let me know by what Title you would wish to be distinguished. If you should feel any objection to this, perhaps you might better like the Order of the Bath, to which, if you are desirous of an honour which may remain in your family, I have reason to suppose that His Majesty would be pleased to add a Baronetage. I shall be glad of your answer as soon as convenient, and on this subject have only to add that it gives me great pleasure to be the channel of conveying to you the sense I know His Majesty entertains of your Merit and Services.

“The letters and orders you will receive from the Board will make it necessary for you to part with some of the large ships now with you ; we should willingly have left them, if the pressing exigencies of the service westward, and the necessity we are under of re-inforcing Lord St. Vincent did not oblige us to the measure ; however, when the ‘Warrior’ has joined you, your Squadron even with the diminution of the ‘Prince,’ ‘Formidable,’ ‘Sans Pareil,’ and ‘Bedford,’ will be a very strong one, and undoubtedly quite equal to beat any Force that can be opposed to you ; we are in the mean time using all possible exertions to add more large Frigates to those you have already, and in a very few days I hope some will be able to join you. I have wondered a little as you have now the adequate number of two-decked ships, that you have not applied to have a first Captain, which



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July

when fifteen sail of the line compose a squadron you are by the late Regulations entitled to, I should think you might very easily find some upon the List of the young Rear Admirals, who in this capacity would be of great use to you, but of this you are the best judge and I only throw it out as a hint which I trust you will consider quite as it is meant, and merely as private communication from one friend to another.

“We have sent you out wine, fresh meat, and water, and will continue to supply you with these necessary refreshments on every opportunity, as it would be wrong to quit your station at present, while so excellent an effect is produced not only here but all over Europe by your remaining there. If you should think it of any advantage to declare the Texel in a state of blockade, and that your Force, when the Frigates get out to you, is adequate to watching the Vlie Passage as well as that near which you are anchored, there does not appear the least reason why you should not do so, and if you did you would then have a right to prevent any vessels whatever (whether neutral or otherwise) from going in or coming out. Lord St. Vincent has found great advantage from this at Cadiz, and I do not see why it should not answer quite as well with you.

“It has been suggested that sinking a few of the large Dutch Fly Boats (as they call them) in the principal passage would effectually prevent large ships from coming out. You are now so well acquainted with the Texel, that any idea of



this sort must be entirely left to your judgment and discretion, but any blow of this kind against them or any other fair way of distressing them, would (especially at this juncture) have most excellent effects in every point of view.

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July

“Believe me Dear Sir with great truth Your very faithful humble servant,

“ SPENCER.

“ Admiral Duncan.”

On August 7 the Admiral declared a blockade of the Texel, and directed that all neutral vessels should be prevented from entering or leaving.

August

On August 7 the Admiral wrote: “The wind has blown strong from the northward and westward for these five days past, which has put the Fleet to the Northward and Eastward. It is more moderate at present, and I am endeavouring to regain my rendezvous.”

An incident had just occurred on board the ‘Venerable’ which is worth narrating. On July 13 the inhabitants of Yarmouth had collected a local subscription, amounting to fifty-four pounds (the list of subscribers and their letter to the Admiral are among his papers) for the crews of the ‘Venerable’ and ‘Adamant,’ and had informed the Admiral that they proposed to spend it in porter and vegetables. “The subscribers request the favour of you to point out to them the best mode to apply it and that you would have the goodness to order a Cutter to receive the articles on board. Should porter and vege-

1797  
July

“ tables be acceptable, I am desired to inform you  
“ we have both of very good quality here.”

The ‘ Venerable’s ’ company, on receiving their portion, requested the Admiral to return their thanks, in the following terms :

“ ‘ Venerable ’ at Sea : July 23, 1797.

“ Sir,—We the seamen and marines of His Majesty’s Ship the ‘ Venerable ’ beg you will be pleased to communicate to the Gentlemen Merchants and Traders of the Town of Yarmouth our most grateful thanks for their liberal present of porter which has (under your own direction) afforded us a seasonable refreshment for ten days.

“ We feel the more happy on this occasion as it is a testimony that our conduct has met the approbation of our countrymen whose liberty and property we conceive ourselves bound to protect and whose confidence it is our utmost pride to deserve.

“ We cannot omit this opportunity to express our gratitude and affection to you our Commander in Chief for your paternal care attention and salutary advice in every stage of that unhappy event which has stained the character of the British Tar, but which we hope and trust may be redeemed by future bravery and a steady perseverance in their country’s cause.

“ We sincerely wish the enemy may give us an opportunity of manifesting our loyalty to our King, our steady attachment to the Constitution and our personal regard for the best of Commanders.

“ We have the honour to be, with all due respect, Sir,

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July

“ Your faithful servants at command,

“ At the request on behalf of the whole Ship's Company.

- “ THOMAS KNIGHT, Captain of the Forcastle.
- “ JAMES ORCHARD, do.
- “ CHRISTOPHER WATSON, Captain of the Hold.
- “ JAMES CUBITT, Forecastleman.
- “ FRANCIS WILSON, do.
- “ ISRAEL LEWIS, Quartermaster.
- “ JOHN DONALDSON, do.
- “ THOMAS EDWARDS, Boatswain's mate.
- “ JOHN BEATON, Sergeant of Marines.
- “ ANDREW GLASS, Quartermaster.”

Some of the ships suffered severely in the gale of August 7, and were unable to keep at sea. August

On August 8, Captain Henry Wray, of the ‘ Seagull ’ sloop, reported : “ We have not a rope or a sail to be depended upon. The hull is likewise much out of repair. The ‘ Seagull ’ refitted in June 1796, and has not been paid since.”

“ The ‘ King George ’ armed cutter, has just joined me, and Lieutenant Rains officially represented to me that his vessel is unfit for sea ; but there being no other cruizers but ourselves on the coast, I think it improper he should leave his station until relieved. The enemy's privaters are very numerous.”

“ ‘ Hope ’ Lugger reported by Lieutenant Reddy to be unfit for sea.”

Five transports arrived with oxen, sheep, vegetables, and water.



1797  
August  
Admiral  
Duncan's  
Despat-  
ches to the  
Admiralty

August 22.—“The wind has blown strong for  
“some days from the westward. It is impossible  
“to clear the transports at present.”

On August 24 three Dutch frigates and four  
Brigs moved into Texel Roads, but slipped back  
again on the approach of the British ships.

August 28.—“The transports with water only  
“cleared to-day, owing to the south west winds  
“with a swell.”

August 29.—“‘Monmouth’ and ‘Agincourt’  
“joined on the 26th instant.”

August 31.—“A gale of wind came suddenly  
“on. Several ships parted their cables.”

September  
September 4.—“It blew hard from the South  
“West, suddenly changing to the North West.”

September 11.—“‘Venerable’ at sea.

“On Friday last a strong gale came on at  
“W.N.W., and for sixteen hours it blew a mere  
“hurricane, during which period the ‘Agincourt’  
“and ‘Warrior’ made the signal of distress. Yester-  
“day there was an interval of good weather when I  
“was informed the latter had sprung all her lower  
“masts. I therefore ordered her to the Nore.  
“The former being so far to leeward I did not get  
“a report from her but I understand she shipped a  
“quantity of water and was obliged to wear, to  
“clear her. The ‘Inflexible’ is very leaky and  
“her main and mizen mast sprung. The ‘Naiad’s’  
“foremast and bowsprit badly so. The ‘Circe’  
“carried away most of her main shrouds, and the  
“‘Venerable’ two of hers, which are replaced with  
“others. I have had no return from the other



“ships and therefore cannot say what state they  
 “are in. The wind has shifted to the S.E. with  
 “every appearance of a gale. Indeed it is blow-  
 “ing so hard at present that I am under the  
 “necessity of putting this letter into a keg, in order  
 “to convey it on board the Lugger. Their Lord-  
 “ships will please order a main yard for the  
 “‘Inflexible’ and some top-masts and topsail  
 “yards for the different rates to Yarmouth, as I  
 “apprehend many of the ships will want them.”

1797  
 September

September 14.—“Very constant and stormy  
 “since 11th from West to W.S.W. Yesterday the  
 “‘Naiad’ made signal of inability. I ordered her  
 “to proceed to the nearest Port.

“The ‘Astrea’ is in want of sails, rigging and  
 “provisions. I ordered her to Port. At present  
 “it is moderate, but so very hazy that I can only  
 “count seventeen sail in company and cannot say  
 “what ships have parted in the late gales, which  
 “have been very constant and stormy, from West  
 “to S.W. since the 11th instant.

“‘Veteran’s’ bowsprit is sprung.

“All the cutters but one are missing.”

September 22.—“The ‘Agamemnon’ is sent  
 “into port.

“The ‘Circe’ has sprung her mainmast and  
 “bowsprit, but Captain Halkett informed me he  
 “could fish them so as to keep the sea. She  
 “parted company in chase on the 16th. ‘Lion’  
 “has just reported her bowsprit badly sprung.”

September 24.—“‘Inflexible’ ordered into Port.  
 “The ‘Glatton’ ordered to Portsmouth.”

1797  
September

This list of casualties was serious, yet the squadron kept at sea off the Texel or near the rendezvous.

On September 26 the Admiralty directed Admiral Duncan to return with the squadron to Yarmouth Roads, to refit and fill up with stores and provisions, and to proceed to sea again as expeditiously as possible.

In the meantime, intelligence had reached the British Squadron that for the present the Dutch expedition was postponed. On September 23 Captain Bradby, of the 'Ariadne,' spoke the 'Independence,' of New York, which had left the Texel on the day before. "The Master says the  
"troops are all disembarked from the vessels in the  
"Texel and that he lodged with several of the  
"Officers who declared that it is not intended the  
"Dutch Fleet should go to sea, but that  
"preparations were frequently made for the purpose  
"of alarming, and that the greater part of the sea-  
"men were also landed."

October

On October 1 the squadron arrived off Yarmouth, and the Admiral wrote: "The wind is southward  
"and westward. I have left the 'Circe,' the  
" 'Vestal,' and two cutters to watch the Texel.  
"The wind continuing westward I came on and  
"anchored at the back of Yarmouth sands. Every  
"exertion shall be used in getting the ships ready  
"for sea again; and should the wind come from  
"the eastward before I reach Yarmouth, I shall  
"return to my station off the Texel."

According to the *Times*, "Admiral Duncan on

“arriving in Yarmouth Roads on October 2 in the  
 “evening, was visited on board the ‘Venerable’ by  
 “the Vice Admiral and Captains, when he signified  
 “in his plain and affable way: ‘I shall not,  
 “Gentlemen, put foot out of the ship. Your  
 “supplies of water and provisions shall be sent to  
 “you in the morning, and I hope to be able to sail  
 “again in 20 hours, when an early meeting  
 “with the enemy will give us cause to rejoice.  
 “To complete, therefore, my wishes, the caulkers  
 “shall go over my ship’s bows in the morning and  
 “do their best to keep her afloat.’ ”

1797  
 The  
 Times,  
 October 16,  
 1797

On October 3 Duncan informed the Admiralty from “‘Venerable’ in Yarmouth Roads”: “I  
 “have ordered Captain Trollope of the ‘Russell’ to  
 “take the ‘Adamant’ and ‘Beaulieu’ and proceed  
 “off the Texel.”

On October 4 the Admiralty wrote: “Cause  
 “the bowsprit of the ‘Nassau’ to be supplied to the  
 “‘Veteran,’ sending the defective bowsprit of the  
 “‘Veteran’ on board the ‘Nassau’ to enable her to  
 “proceed to the Nore, to which place she is ordered  
 “for a new bowsprit and to make good her other  
 “defects.”

On October 6.—“In case the wind should con-  
 “tinue easterly you are to proceed as soon as  
 “possible off the Texel with such of the ships as  
 “are in a fit condition, and to continue on your  
 “station until the wind shall have shifted to the  
 “westward, when you are to return into Port.”

In the first days of October the Naval Committee  
 at the Hague decided upon a complete change of



1797  
October

policy with regard to the Dutch Fleet. The troops having been landed from the ships in the Texel, all idea of an invasion of British territory by a combined Military and Naval expedition had been abandoned. It was now decided that the Fleet should put to sea and engage the British Squadron, if there was reasonable prospect of success.

Vice Admiral De Winter told Admiral Duncan afterwards that this course was adopted against his expressed opinion. He could not but be well aware of the existence of grave disaffection among the sailors, and also that some of the ships were defective; and perhaps he deemed it better policy to keep a considerable British Squadron employed in watching the Texel than to risk everything in a battle with a force which, as he believed, was superior to his own. However, on October 5 he received orders to put to sea "as soon as the wind should be favourable," and "when at sea to act according to Articles 9, 10, and 11 of the Instructions given to him on 10 July, 1797," which are as follows :—

De Jonge's  
History of  
the Dutch  
Navy,  
page 305  
(Second  
Edition)

#### *Article 9*

"In case the Vice Admiral be returned with  
" the National Fleet in the North Sea, he shall try  
" and cause as much damage to the enemy as pos-  
" sible, and if he be informed that the enemy's  
" forces are such as to enable him to engage in a  
" battle with hope of success, he shall at once take  
" the position he judges useful and necessary;  
" he then shall attack, conquer, or destroy the



“ fleet of the enemy wherever he finds it also the  
 “ armed and unarmed ships and boats and shall  
 “ try and cause as much hindrance and harm as  
 “ he possibly can to the trade and navigation of  
 “ the enemy.”

1797  
 October

## I O

“ He must always manage his operations in as  
 “ far as they are not exactly prescribed to him by  
 “ these Instructions, according to the strength of  
 “ the enemy’s forces ; that is to say, as far as he  
 “ can know them by the reports he has obtained,  
 “ in order that in the case of the enemy’s forces  
 “ being far superior to his own, he may carefully  
 “ avoid a battle, but in doing so he is to bear in  
 “ mind how frequently the Dutch Admirals have  
 “ maintained the honour of the Dutch Flag, even  
 “ when the enemy’s forces were sometimes superior  
 “ to theirs.”

## I I

“ In case of an approaching engagement he  
 “ must, as far as circumstances permit, try and  
 “ draw the enemy as near to the harbours of the  
 “ Republic as will be found possible in conformity  
 “ with the rules of prudence and strategy.”

At daybreak on Saturday, October 7, the Dutch Fleet left the Texel. The British Cruisers observed them as soon as they began to make sail to come out. The ‘ Speculator ’ lugger was the first to give the alarm.

“ Memo. Saturday, 7th Oct., 1797.

Light  
 breezes  
 from the  
 E.S.E.,  
 and clear  
 weather.

“ At 6 o’clock in the morning observed the  
 “ Dutch Fleet making sail in the Texel to come

1797  
October

Wind  
E.S.E.,  
light wind.  
(*At. Dun-  
can's own  
note*)

Variable to  
E.N.E.

Sunday,  
wind  
W.S.W.  
a great  
gale. (*At.  
Duncan's  
own note*)

October 7.  
All night  
light wind,  
W.S.W.  
(*At. Dun-  
can's own  
note*)

Light air  
N.E., and  
inclinable  
to calm

At 9,  
W.S.W.  
light airs

At mid-  
night  
moderate  
breezes,  
W. by S.

“ out; at half past six Captain Halkett of His  
“ Majesty's Ship 'Circe,' made the signal for the  
“ enemy, at 7 sent his Boat on board with an order  
“ and a letter to Admiral Duncan, to proceed to  
“ Yarmouth with all possible dispatch. I then  
“ counted 16 sail of ships and eight small sail;  
“ after I made sail the 'Circe' made different  
“ signals and fired guns to deceive the Enemy,  
“ which I answered by firing guns and hoisting  
“ different Flags; at 8 the two headmost of the  
“ Enemy's ships fired one gun each; they then  
“ being to the westward and southward of Kick-  
“ down coming out of the Texel; the 'Circe' and  
“ 'Active,' Armed Cutter, still watching their  
“ motions; at  $\frac{1}{2}$  past 9 lost sight of the  
“ Enemy; at 11 saw four sail, which proved to be  
“ His Majesty's Ships 'Russell,' 'Adamant,'  
“ 'Beaulieu,' and 'Vestal'; at noon saw the  
“ 'Circe' with all sail set, running to W.N.W.; at  
“ 3 in the afternoon, went on board the 'Russell'  
“ and acquainted Captain Trollope of the above.  
“ Received a letter from Captain Trollope to  
“ Admiral Duncan. At 4 came on board and  
“ made sail; the 'Circe' and 'Active' had then  
“ hauled their wind to the N.N.W. and answered  
“ signals from the 'Russell.' Nothing more re-  
“ markable since.

“ 'Speculator' Lugger,  
(*Sgd.*) “ HENRY HALL.”

Captain Halkett at once despatched the

'Speculator' to Yarmouth with the following letter :

1797  
October 7

"His Majesty's Ship 'Circe,' Kickdown E.  
by N., 6 miles,  $\frac{1}{2}$  past 6 a.m. Saturday,  
7 Oct. 1797.

"Sir,—Since day break the Fleet in the Texel have been getting under sail, nine are now under weigh, and five more sails loosed; I dispatch this by the 'Speculator.' I shall as soon as I discover their motions, send the 'Active,' and mean to stand a little way to the N.W. to make Signals as if I saw your Fleet, but I imagine they have already heard you are in Port. There are in all 19 sail with Poops in the Mars Deep, no Troops on board.

"I am, Sir, in haste,

"P. HALKETT.

"Adam Duncan, Esq."

Captain Trollope sent a line on board the 'Speculator' as she passed the 'Russell':

"'Russel' at Sea. 7 Oct., 1797.

"Sir,—I have but a moment's time to acquaint you I have learnt by the 'Speculator' Lugger, the Dutch Fleet are now out and that the 'Circe,' who is hull down from us bearing N.E., is in sight of them. It is at present almost calm and very uncertain which way the wind may come, but whether they go North or South you may depend on seeing the 'Russel' and 'Adamant' in sight of them whenever you meet them. The 'Vestal' and 'Beaulieu' are in company.

"I am in haste

"Your most obedient very humble servant,

(Sgd.) "HENRY TROLLOPE.

"Adam Duncan, Esq."



1797  
October 8

“ ‘Circe’ at Sea. Yarmouth 58 miles, Texel  
54 miles. Sunday Morning, 8 October.

“ Dear Sir,—I despatched the ‘Speculator’ to inform you the enemy were getting under weigh yesterday morning. In the evening I fell in with Trollope, kept sight of the Fleet all night. They stood, with the wind easterly, due west, 10 leagues off shore; and then closehauled to the northward and westward; winds from S.W. to west. They tacked an hour since and have shortened sail. Fifteen sail of the line, six frigates, five brigs. Hope to God you will soon be out.

“ I am, Sir, your humble servant,

“ P. HALKETT.

“ To Admiral Duncan.”

October 9

On October 9 Captain Trollope ordered H.M.S. ‘Vestal’ to proceed to England and endeavour to find the Admiral. The ‘Vestal’ put into Lowestoffe, and Captain White sent his Despatches to the Admiralty, having failed to meet the Squadron. He narrates what had happened since the Dutch Fleet was sighted by the ships under Captain Trollope:—

“ On board His Majesty’s Ship ‘Vestal,’  
off Lowestoffe: 10th October, 1797.

October 10

“ Sir,—I am to request you will be pleased to acquaint their Lordships of my arrival, in compliance with Orders from Captain Trollope, a copy of which I have enclosed.

“ As Captain Trollope’s time would not permit him to be very particular in stating the circumstances of the Squadron since we first fell in with the Dutch Fleet on the 7th inst., he has desired me to acquaint



their Lordships therewith by letter, that they may form a judgment of the Enemy's intentions.

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October 10

“ We first got sight of the Dutch Fleet about 11 o'clock at night on the 7th inst., the 'Circe' having previously sent a boat to us to acquaint us with their position, and I wore round to join the 'Russel' which was steering for them. A light air springing up from the W.S.W. at day light, we were near enough to distinguish 16 sail of two-decked ships from 64 to 50 guns, 5 frigates and 5 brigs standing to the N.W., but about 8 o'clock they tacked and stood to the southward without making any attempts to chase us, some of them carrying sail apparently to get better collected. At about 10, Captain Trollope made our signal to look out to the S.W. and the 'Circe's' soon afterwards to the N.W., all the Squadron being on the same tack with, and to windward of, the Enemy. At  $\frac{1}{2}$  past 3, we returned to the Squadron by signal, the land about Wykop Zee then in sight, bearing S.E. by E. about 7 leagues, the wind varying, but in the S.W. quarter. During the night, the Enemy stood off under a very easy sail, as did our Squadron 'til towards the morning, when the wind having drawn round to the W.N.W., and the Enemy little more than two miles upon the 'Russell's' Lee Bow, we all made sail to keep clear of them, the 'Adamant' being so close from the change of wind that they might have cut her off had they made the attempt.

“ At day light on the 9th the Enemy were all standing to the S.W. and during the day kept

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their wind upon the starboard Tack, the wind gradually changing to N.N.W. I left them about 6 in the evening standing to the westward with top gallant sails set, and the 'Russel,' 'Adamant' and 'Beaulieu' standing down for them, the 'Circe' having been previously sent to look out, and had not rejoined the Squadron. I am fully convinced that Captain Trollope will keep sight of them whilst they continue at Sea. It is not possible for me to form any idea what are the designs of the Enemy, but their whole proceedings indicated an intention of making the British Coast, evidently wishing not to go to the northward, as they did not avail themselves of the wind which was favorable for that purpose.

"From the first of our getting sight of them, they appeared much confused, and during the whole time they managed their ships very badly.

"I am to request you will inform their Lordships I shall get under weigh again immediately in compliance with Captain Trollope's orders and endeavour to fall in with Admiral Duncan to acquaint him of the above particulars.

"I have further to add I did not lose sight of the Dutch Fleet till after 10 o'clock, having then run 14 miles since I left the Squadron; therefore imagine they must have kept their course to the westward under a press of sail.

"I herewith enclose a copy of the Log, wherein their Lordships will perceive my having spoken H.M. Ship 'Ethalion,' but not meeting with success in my enquiries after Admiral Duncan, I intend

putting into Lowestoffe to forward the Despatches and to procure every possible intelligence concerning the Admiral, intending to proceed to sea immediately to join him. I have given Captain Countess of the 'Ethalion' a copy of my letter, in case of accidents.

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"I have the honour to remain etc.

"CHAS. WHITE.

"Evan Nepean, Esq."

It is curious to note how audaciously close to the Dutch Fleet the British frigates and cutters, and also the ships under Captain Trollope, approached, and that they continued in near proximity as long as they chose, apparently without being chased.

On Monday, October 9, the Admiral wrote to the Admiralty :

October 9

"'Venerable,' Yarmouth Roads: 11 A.M., Wind North.

"A Lugger this morning appeared at the back of the Sands with a signal flying that the Dutch are either out or preparing for it. The Squadron under my command are unmoored and I shall put to sea immediately."

The 'Nassau,' 'Warrior' and 'Standard' were at the Nore, refitting, the 'Glatton' was at Portsmouth, and the 'Agamemnon' and 'Inflexible' were also in Port for repairs. At Yarmouth immediately all was hurry; even the provisioning was abandoned; and with eleven ships of the line the Admiral put to sea, leaving the rest to follow.



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“A number of Officers and men were left on shore.”

“10 Oct. (9 Oct. ?). ‘Venerable’  
off Yarmouth : 1 P.M.

“I left Yarmouth Roads at 11 this forenoon. I shall proceed to the Texel with all possible expedition. A cutter has just come in sight which I take to be the ‘Active.’

October 10

“11 (10 ?) October. ‘Venerable’  
at Sea. Texel East 11 miles.

“At 2 this afternoon I was close in to the Texel. It is clear that the ships which lately left it are not returned. I shall therefore keep in such situation as to prevent them and wait their Lordships’ further instructions; unless I receive certain information of them, which of course I shall pursue. Several vessels from the Northward have been spoke with by the Squadron this day but not the least information gained of the Enemy.”

The Admiral had not long to wait for certain information. Early in the next morning, Wednesday, October 11, Captain Halkett of the ‘Circe,’ signalled to the ‘Venerable’ that the enemy was approaching :

October 11

Captain  
Halkett’s  
evidence at  
the court-  
martial on  
Captain  
William-  
son  
of H.M.S.  
Agincourt  
(The  
Times,  
December  
5, 1797)

“At daybreak in the Morning (of 11th October)  
“I was about two miles to windward of the fleet,  
“the wind about N.E. The ‘Russel’ made my sig-  
“nal to look out N.E. On the Pilot and an officer  
“going aloft they called down that they saw the  
“enemy’s Mizen top-sails. I immediately made the  
“signal for a fleet but while in the act of hoisting  
“it the ‘Russel’ and ‘Adamant’ made the same



“ signal. The Pilot soon after said he saw an  
“ Admiral’s flag. I then made the signal to the fleet  
“ that the enemy was in sight and the signal to  
“ speak the Admiral. After twenty minutes the  
“ British fleet bore down and soon answered the  
“ signal. When the fleet was near enough to dis-  
“ tinguish signals more clearly, I made the signal  
“ of the force of the enemy, which was sixteen sail of  
“ the line. I still carried a press of sail, and about  
“ nine o’clock the ‘ Venerable ’ hailed me. I told  
“ Admiral Duncan the force of the enemy and re-  
“ ceived his orders. At that time we could not see  
“ the enemy from the deck. The morning was dark  
“ but we could distinguish colours, and the weather  
“ was such as just permitted us to carry top-gallant  
“ sails ; it was squally. The enemy were then on  
“ our lee quarter about six miles distant and bearing  
“ S.S.W. ; the wind N.N.W. There were a great  
“ number of signals. Before I spoke the ‘ Vener-  
“ able ’ one was made to prepare for battle, this was  
“ before nine. Soon after the signal was made to  
“ form the line S.E. and N.W. and occasionally pen-  
“ dants thrown out for particular ships to alter their  
“ course and make more sail. Thirty-eight minutes  
“ after ten a signal was made for a general chase ;  
“ and at forty-two minutes after ten this signal was  
“ enforced by two guns. At 11 o’clock we saw the  
“ land, and at 11-11 the signal was made to shorten  
“ sail and take in two reefs. At this time the Dutch  
“ Fleet was formed in a line on the larboard tack  
“ under top-sails ; but ours bore down a considerable  
“ time before the action. The signal was made to

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“close a little after eleven; at half past eleven the  
“signal to form the line was thrown; ten minutes  
“after only three or four pendants were out  
“when the Admiral hauled it down. The signal  
“was made to keep in his wake. At twelve the  
“signal was made to break through the enemy’s line.  
“Before the fleet got into action the signal was made  
“for several ships to alter from Port to Starboard.  
“At fifty-four minutes after twelve the ‘Monarch’  
“broke the Enemy’s line; and soon after several  
“other ships in the rear began to engage.”

The necessarily most exact and instructive account of what immediately followed is to be found in the logbook of the ‘Venerable,’ where appears a record of all the Signals made by the Admiral during the whole day.

Hrs. mins.	Signals by whom made	To whom addressed	Number and Signification
9 0	‘Venerable’	General	10. Prepare for battle
9 15	do.	‘Circe’	47. Come within hail
9 20	do.	‘Russel’	101. Close with the Admiral
9 22	do.	General	48. Line on starboard bearing
9 16	do.	General	17. Alter the course to port, and steer S.S.E.
9 38	ditto	General	48. With compass signals to form the line on starboard, bearing N.E. and S.W.
9 50	do.	General	67. Make more sail
9 58	do.	‘Isis’ and ‘Lancaster’	67. To make more sail
10 0	do.	‘Russel’	16. To steer more to starboard
10 4	‘Venerable’	‘Isis’	67. To make more sail
10 5	do.	General	16. With compass signals, the fleet to steer S.
10 15	do.	General	7. With two guns, general chase.
10 24	do.	General	35. To engage the enemy as arriving up with them
10 33	‘Venerable’	‘Beaulieu’	67. To make more sail
10 38	ditto	‘Belliqueux’	67. To make more sail

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Hrs. mins.	Signals by whom made	To whom addressed	Number and Signification
11 45	'Venerable'	'Monarch' and 'Montague'	69. To shorten sail, but hauled down before answered
10	'Venerable'	Van	71. Van to shorten sail
11 2	do.	General	66. Take in one reef of the topsails
11 8	'Venerable'	General	48. Starboard line of bearing
11 11	do.	do.	81. With preparative, come to the wind on the starboard tack
11 17	do.	General	95. To take stations in the line as ships' pendants are thrown out, after 95, was answered, countermanded
11 29	do.	Particular	87. Ships to windward to come down
11 30	do.	General	36. Each ship to engage her opponent in the enemy's line
11 35	do.	General	14. Bear up and sail large
11 40	do.	Van	41. The van to attack the enemy's rear
11 53	'Venerable'	General	34. To pass through the enemy's line, and engage them to leeward
P.M.			
12 5	do.	General	5. With red pendant over, for close action
12 30	The	action	commenced
3 -	The	firing	ceased
3 20	'Venerable'	General	101. Close round the Admiral
4 10	do.	General	10. Prepare for battle

At 3 P.M. the Admiral felt sufficiently confident of the result of the action to despatch the 'Rose' Cutter with the subjoined letter to the Admiralty:

" 'Venerable,' off the Coast of Holland, the 12th of October, by Log (11th) Three P.M., Camperdown E.S.E., Eight Miles, Wind N. by E.

" Sir,—I have the pleasure to acquaint you, for the Information of the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty, that at Nine o'clock this morning I got sight of the Dutch Fleet; at half-past twelve I passed through their Line, and the Action



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October 11

commenced, which has been very severe. The Admiral's Ship is dismasted, and has struck, as have several others, and one is on fire.

"I shall send Captain Fairfax with particulars the moment I can spare him.

"I am, Sir, your most obedient humble Servant,  
"ADAM DUNCAN."

October 16

On October 16 Captain Fairfax of the 'Venerable' arrived at the Admiralty with the detailed account of the battle :

October 13

"'Venerable,' at sea : 13th October 1797,  
off the Coast of Holland.

"Sir,—Be pleased to acquaint the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty, that, judging it of Consequence their Lordships should have as early Information as possible of the Defeat of the Dutch Fleet under the command of Admiral De Winter, I dispatched the 'Rose' Cutter at Three P.M. on the 12th (11th) Instant, with a short Letter to you, immediately after the Action was ended. I have now farther to acquaint you, for their Lordships' Information, that in the Night of the 10th Instant, after I had sent away my Letter to you, of that Date, I placed my Squadron in such Situation as to prevent the Enemy from returning to the Texel without my falling in with them. At Nine o'clock in the Morning of the 11th I got Sight of Captain Trollope's Squadron, with Signals flying for an Enemy to Leeward ; I immediately bore up, and made the Signal for a general Chace, and soon got Sight of them, forming in a Line on the Larboard



Tack to receive us, the wind at N.W. As we approached near I made the Signal for the Squadron to shorten sail, in order to connect them; soon after I saw the land between Camperdown and Egmont, about Nine Miles to Leeward of the Enemy, and finding there was no Time to be lost in making the Attack, I made the Signal to bear up, break the Enemy's Line, and engage them to Leeward, each Ship her Opponent, by which I got between them and the Land, whither they were fast approaching. My Signals were obeyed with great Promptitude, and Vice-Admiral Onslow, in the 'Monarch,' bore down on the Enemy's Rear in the most gallant Manner, his Division following his Example; and the Action commenced about Forty Minutes past Twelve o'Clock. The 'Venerable' soon got through the Enemy's Line, and I began a close Action, with my Division on their Van, which lasted near Two Hours and a Half, when I observed all the Masts of the Dutch Admiral's Ship to go by the Board; she was, however, defended for some Time in a most gallant Manner; but being overpressed by Numbers, her Colours were struck, and Admiral De Winter was soon brought on Board the 'Venerable.' On looking around me I observed the Ship bearing the Vice-Admiral's Flag was also dismasted, and had surrendered to Vice-Admiral Onslow; and that many others had likewise struck. Finding we were in Nine Fathoms Water, and not farther than Five Miles from the Land, my Attention was so much taken up in getting the Heads of the disabled Ships off Shore, that I was not able to distinguish the

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Number of Ships captured ; and the Wind having been constantly on the Land since, we have unavoidably been much dispersed, so that I have not been able to gain an exact Account of them, but we have taken Possession of Eight or Nine ; more of them had struck, but taking Advantage of the Night, and being so near their own Coast, they succeeded in getting off, and some of them were seen going into the Texel the next Morning.

“ It is with the greatest Pleasure and Satisfaction I make known to their Lordships the very gallant Behaviour of Vice-Admiral Onslow, the Captains, Officers, Seamen and Marines of the Squadron, who all appeared actuated with the truly British Spirit, at least those that I had an Opportunity of seeing.

“ One of the Enemy’s Ships caught Fire in the Action, and drove very near the ‘ Venerable ’ ; but I have the Pleasure to say it was extinguished, and she is one of the Ships in our Possession. The Squadron has suffered much in their Masts, Yards, and Rigging, and many of them have lost a Number of Men ; however, in no Proportion to that of the Enemy. The Carnage on Board the Two Ships that bore the Admirals Flags has been beyond all Description ; they have had no less than Two Hundred and Fifty Men killed and wounded on Board of each Ship ; and here I have to lament the Loss of Captain Burgess, of His Majesty’s Ship the ‘ Ardent,’ who brought that Ship into Action in the most gallant and masterly Manner, but was unfortunately killed soon after. However, the Ship continued the Action close, until quite disabled.

The Public have lost a good and gallant Officer in Captain Burgess, and I, with others, a sincere Friend.

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“ Captain Trollope’s Exertions and active good Conduct in keeping Sight of the Enemy’s Fleet until I came up, have been truly meritorious, and, I trust, will meet a just Reward.

“ I send this by Captain Fairfax, by whose able Advice I profited much during the Action, and who will give their Lordships any further Particulars they may wish to know.

“ As most of the ships of the Squadron are much disabled, and several of the Prizes dismasted, I shall make the best of my Way with them to the Nore.

“ I herewith transmit you a List of Killed and Wounded on Board such of the Squadron as I have been able to collect; a List of the Enemy’s Fleet opposed to my Squadron, and my Line of Battle on the Day of Action.

“ I am, Sir, Your most obedient humble Servant,  
“ ADAM DUNCAN.”

“ *A List of Killed and Wounded on Board the Ships of Admiral Duncan’s Squadron in an Action with the Dutch on the 11th of October, 1797.*

“ ‘ Venerable.’—13 Seamen, 2 Marines, killed; 6 Officers, 52 Seamen, 4 Marines, wounded.—Total 77.

“ ‘ Monarch.’—2 Officers, 34 Seamen, killed; 9 Officers, 79 Seamen, 12 Marines, wounded.—Total 136.



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“ ‘Bedford.’—2 Midshipmen, 26 Seamen, 2 Marines, killed; 1 Lieutenant, 37 Seamen, 3 Marines, wounded.—Total 71.

“ ‘Powerful.’—8 Seamen, 2 Marines, killed; 4 Officers, 74 Seamen and Marines, wounded.—Total 88.

“ ‘Isis.’—1 Seaman, 1 Marine, killed; 3 Officers, 18 Seamen, wounded.—Total 23.

“ ‘Ardent.’—2 Officers, 33 Seamen, 6 Marines, killed; 8 Officers, 85 Seamen, 11 Marines, 3 Boys, wounded.—Total 148.

“ ‘Agincourt.’—None killed or wounded.

“ ‘Belliqueux.’—2 Officers, 20 Seamen, 3 Marines, killed; 3 Officers, 63 Seamen, 12 Marines, wounded.—Total 103.

“ ‘Lancaster.’—3 Seamen killed; 2 Officers, 13 Seamen, 3 Marines, wounded.—Total 21.

“ ‘Triumph.’—15 Seamen, 3 Marines, a Boy, killed; 5 Officers, 50 Seamen and Marines, wounded.—Total 84.

*“ Officers Killed.*

“ ‘Monarch.’—Mr. J. P. Tindall and Mr. Moyle Finlay, Midshipmen.

“ ‘Ardent.’—Captain Burgess, Mr. Michael Dunn, Master.

“ ‘Belliqueux.’—Lieutenant Robert Webster, Mr. James Milne, Master’s Mate.

*“ Officers Wounded.*

“ ‘Venerable.’—Lieutenants Clay and Douglas, Lieutenant Chambers of the Marines, Mr. Stewart, Midshipman, Mr. Brown, Pilot.



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“ ‘ Monarch.’—Lieutenant Retalick, Lieutenant Smith of the Marines, Mr. George Massie, Mr. Benjamin Clement, Mr. Daniel Sherwin, Mr. Charles Slade, Midshipmen, Mr. John Chimley, Master’s Mate.

“ ‘ Bedford.’—Lieutenant Keenor.

“ ‘ Powerful.’—Lieutenant Jennings, Mr. Mel. Jones, Boatswain, Mr. Daniel Rogers, Midshipman, Lieutenant Walker of the Marines.

“ ‘ Isis.’—Lieutenant Charles Rea of the Marines, Mr. Simon Fraser and Mr. John Walker, Midshipmen.

“ ‘ Ardent.’—Lieutenant James Rose, Lieutenant John Sibriel, Captain Cuthbert of Marines, Mr. John Tracy, Master’s Mate, Mr. John Airey, Master’s Mate, Mr. Thomas Leopard, Midshipman, Mr. John Taylor, Captain’s Clerk, slightly, Mr. George Killiar, Midshipman, slightly.

“ ‘ Belliqueux.’—Lieutenant Robert England, slightly, Captain James Cassel of Marines, slightly Mr. James Scott, Midshipman.

“ ‘ Lancaster.’—Lieutenant Morgan, Lieutenant Sandys of the Marines.

“ ‘ Triumph.’—Captain Essington, slightly in the Arm; Mr. Chapman, First Lieutenant, slightly in the Head; Mr. Trollope, Third Lieutenant, slightly in the Foot; Mr. Read, Master, slightly bruised; Mr. Jones, Midshipman, slightly in the Face.

“ ADAM DUNCAN.”

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*“ List and Disposition of the Dutch Fleet on the  
11th of October, 1797.*

*“ Van.*

“ VICE-ADMIRAL REYNTJES, Commander.

“ ‘ Cerberus,’ Captain Jacobson, 68 Guns, 450 Men.

“ ‘ Delft,’ Captain Verdoorn, 56 Guns, 375 Men.—Taken.

“ ‘ Jupiter,’ Vice-Admiral Reyntjes and Rear-Admiral Meuses, 74 Guns, 550 Men.—Taken.

“ ‘ Alkmaar,’ Captain Kraft, 56 Guns, 350 Men.—Taken.

“ ‘ Haarlem,’ Captain Wiggerts, 68 Guns, 450 Men.—Taken.

“ ‘ Munnikkendam,’ Captain Lancaster, 44 Guns, 270 Men.—Taken.

“ ‘ Helden,’ Captain Dumisnilde L’Eestrielle, 32 Guns, 230 Men.

“ ‘ Daphne’ Brig, Lieutenant Fredericks, 18 Guns, 98 Men.

*“ Center.*

“ ADMIRAL DE WINTER, Commander-in-Chief.

“ ‘ Wassenaer,’ Captain Holland, 64 Guns, 450 Men.—Taken.

“ ‘ Batavier,’ Captain Souters, 56 Guns, 350 Men.

“ ‘ Vryheid,’ (the ‘ Liberty’) Admiral De Winter, Captain Van Rossem, 74 Guns, 550 Men.—Taken.

“ ‘ States General,’ Rear-Admiral Story, 74 Guns, 550 Men.

“ ‘Leyden,’ Captain Musquetier, 68 Guns, 450 Men. 1797  
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“ ‘Mars,’ Captain Kolff, 44 Guns, 400 Men.

“ ‘Waaksaamheid,’ Captain Lieutenant Nicrop, 24 Guns, 150 Men.

“ ‘Minerva,’ Captain Eilbracht, 24 Guns, 150 Men.

“ ‘Galatea’ Brig, Lieutenant Rivery, 18 Guns, 98 Men.

“ ‘Atalanta’ Brig, Lieutenant Plets, 18 Guns, 98 Men.

“ *Rear.*

“ REAR-ADMIRAL BLOYS, Commander.

“ ‘Admiral Devries,’ Captain Zegers, 68 Guns, 450 Men.—Taken.

“ ‘Hercules,’ Captain Van Rysoort, 64 Guns, 450 Men.—Taken.

“ ‘Brutus,’ Rear-Admiral Bloys, 74 Guns, 550 Men.

“ ‘Beschermer,’ Captain Hinxtt, 56 Guns, 350 Men.

“ ‘Gelykheid, (the ‘Equality’) Captain Ruyse, 68 Guns, 450 Men.—Taken.

“ ‘Ambuscade,’ Captain-Lieutenant Huys, 32 Guns, 270 Men.—Taken.

“ ‘Ajax’ Brig, Lieutenant Arkenbout, 18 Guns, 98 Men.

“ ‘Haasje,’ (‘Aviso’) Lieutenant Hartenfeld, 6 Guns, 35 Men.

“ ADAM DUNCAN.

“ N.B. Another Line of Battle Ship, reported to be taken, Name unknown.”

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“ *Disposition of the Squadron, in the Order of Battle, on the 11th of October, 1797.*

“ *Larboard or Lee Division.*

“ RICHARD ONSLOW, ESQ., Vice-Admiral of the Red, Commander.

“ 1. ‘Russel,’ Henry Trollope, Captain, 74 Guns, 590 Men.

“ 2. ‘Director,’ William Bligh, Captain, 64 Guns, 491 Men.

“ 3. ‘Montagu,’ John Knight, Captain, 74 Guns, 590 Men.

“ 4. ‘Veteran,’ George Gregory, Captain, 64 Guns, 491 Men.

“ 5. ‘Monarch,’ Vice-Admiral Onslow, Edward O’Bryen, Captain, 74 Guns, 599 Men.

“ 6. ‘Powerful,’ William O’Bryen Drury, Captain, 74 Guns, 590 Men.

“ 7. ‘Monmouth,’ James Walker, Captain, 64 Guns, 491 Men.

“ 8. ‘Agincourt,’ John Williamson, Captain, 64 Guns, 491 Men.

“ *Repeaters.*

“ ‘Beaulieu’ Frigate.—Cutters ‘Rose,’ ‘King George,’ ‘Active,’ ‘Diligent’—‘Speculator’ Lugger.

“ *Starboard, or Weather Division.*

“ ADAM DUNCAN, ESQ., Admiral of the Blue, and  
Commander in Chief, &c., &c., &c.

“ 9. ‘Triumph,’ William Henry Essington, Captain, 74 Guns, 640 Men.



“ 10. ‘ Venerable,’ Admiral Duncan, William George Fairfax, Captain, 74 Guns, 593 Men. 1797  
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“ 11. ‘ Ardent,’ Richard R. Burgess, Captain, 64 Guns, 491 Men.

“ 12. ‘ Bedford,’ Sir Thomas Byard, Captain, 74 Guns, 590 Men.

“ 13. ‘ Lancaster,’ John Wells, Captain, 64 Guns, 491 Men.

“ 14. ‘ Adamant,’ William Hotham, Captain, 50 Guns, 343 Men.

“ 16. ‘ Isis,’ William Mitchell, Captain, 50 Guns, 343 Men.

*“ Repeaters.*

“ ‘ Circe ’ Frigate.—‘ Martin ’ Sloop.

“ ADAM DUNCAN.”

“ ‘ Venerable,’ off Orfordness : October 15, 1797. October 15

“ Sir,—In Addition to my Letter of the 13th instant, containing the Particulars of the Action of the 11th, and which I have not been able to send away until this Day, I have to acquaint you, for the Information of the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty, that, from the Wind continuing to blow on the Dutch Coast, the Ships have had great Difficulty in keeping off the Shore, and that we have unavoidably been separated. On Friday last the wind blew strong from the W.S.W. to W.N.W. and continued so to do until Saturday Morning; it then shifted to the North, when I made the Signal to wear, stood to the Westward, and fortunately anchored here last Evening, the ‘ Venerable ’ being so leaky that, with all her Pumps going,

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we could but just keep her free. This Morning I observed the Ships named in the Margin<sup>1</sup> at Anchor near us. Three near the Kentish Knock, and Three in Hosley Bay. The wind is at N.W. and much against the disabled Ships: I have therefore sent the 'Lancaster' and 'Beaulieu' out to render them Assistance.

"Sir Thomas Williams, in the 'Endymion,' who joined me the Day after the Action, I also sent in Shore, to keep by and assist the disabled Ships; and I am informed that, in the Course of the Night, he fell in with a Dutch Ship of the Line off the Texel, and had engaged her, but I have not heard the Particulars.

"I am, Sir, your most obedient humble Servant,

"ADAM DUNCAN.

"Evan Nepean, Esq."

The Admiral also forwarded a letter to Mrs. Duncan's half-brother, Mr. Robert Dundas, M.P., the Lord Advocate for Scotland:

Arniston  
Memoirs,  
page 250

"'Venerable,' getting up to Sheerness, Sunday, October 15, 1797.

"My dear Advocate,—As I am sure no friend will rejoice more at any good fortune that attends me than you will, I write you these two lines to say I hope the action I have had with the Dutch, who fought with their usual gallantry, is not exceeded by any this war. We have suffered much. The returns I have had, and have not had half, exceed 191 killed, and 565 wounded; from only two Dutch ships, 250 killed, and 300 wounded. We were obliged, from being so near the land, to

<sup>1</sup> 'Monarch,' 'Powerful,' 'Lancaster,' 'Beaulieu.'

be rather rash in our attack, by which we suffered more. Had we been ten leagues at sea none would have escaped. Many, I am sure, had surrendered, that got off in the night, being so near shore. We were much galled by their frigates, where we could not act. In short, I feel perfectly satisfied. All was done that could be done. None have any fault to find. I have now in my possession three admirals Dutch, an admiral De Winter, Vice-ad. Reuter, Reer-adm. Meame. The admiral is on board with me, and a most agreeable man he is. He speaks English well, and seems much pleased with his treatment. I have assured him, and with justice, nothing could exceed his gallantry. He says nothing hurts him, but that he is the first Dutch admiral ever surrendered. So much more credit to me. He tells the troops that were embarked in the summer were 25,000 Dutch, destined for Ireland, but after August that expedition was given up. The government in Holland, much against his opinion, insisted on his going to sea, to show they had done so, and was just going to return, when I saw him. I am sure I have every reason to be thankful to God Almighty for His kindness to me on this occasion, and all others. I believe the pilot and myself were the only two unhurt on the quarter-deck, and De Winter, who is as tall and big as I am, was the only one on his quarter-deck left alive. After all my fatigue, I am in perfect health, and my usual spirit. Believe me, most faithfully yours,

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“ADAM DUNCAN.”



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In order to appreciate the mode of attack adopted by the British Admiral it is necessary to recall the movements of the Dutch Fleet immediately before the engagement.

As the British Fleet approached, Admiral De Winter drew back towards the Dutch Coast, with the object of making an attack more difficult and dangerous for the British, and also in compliance with the written instructions of the Naval Committee, before alluded to. As the Dutch Fleet changed its position Admiral Duncan promptly altered his plan of attack; the changes which he made are clearly shown by the successive signals of the 'Venerable' and by her log, and also by the evidence of Lieutenant Renton, her Signal Lieutenant, given subsequently at the Court-Martial on Captain Williamson of the 'Agincourt' for not obeying signals and for keeping out of the engagement.

At 9.20 A.M. the Admiral ordered the Fleet to form line preparatory for battle. At 10.15 he had observed that the Dutch were falling back towards land, and he ordered a general chase by signal No. 7, which he enforced "after it had been flying for "some time" by two guns. "At 11 A.M. made the "signal for the Van to shorten sail to let the stern- "most ships come up and connect our line as well "as time would permit."

Lieut.  
Renton's  
evidence  
(Times  
of Dec. 5,  
1797)

Log of  
'Venera-  
ble.'

"By the inequality of the sailing of several of "our ships the Squadron was unavoidably going "down towards the enemy in no regular order of



“battle. Brought to for a short time on the star-board tack, in order to form them.”

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“Q. How long did the Fleet lay to before you made No. 14, to sail larger?”

Lieut.  
Renton's  
evidence

“A. But a short time; the Admiral was impatient to get down, as the Dutch were drawing in shore.

“Q. Did you make No. 34, and for what?”

“A. We did; to pass the enemy's line and engage them to leeward, and vice versâ.

“Q. Did you make No. 5, with a red pendant, and for what? Was it flying?”

“A. We did, as the signal for close action; and it was repeated by the ‘Monarch’ and ‘Powerful,’ and kept up on board the ‘Venerable’ near an hour and a half, till it was shot away.”

Admiral Duncan was resolved to break through the enemy's line and get in between them and the shore; and in this he succeeded, Vice-Admiral Onslow breaking through the rear, and the ‘Venerable’ soon after breaking through the van, of the Dutch line; each being followed by other ships.

The Article on ‘Admiral Lord Duncan’ in ‘The Dictionary of National Biography’ contains a good and correct account of the British attack: “The wind was blowing straight on shore, and though the Dutch, forming their line to the North, preserved a bold front, it was clear that if the attack was not made promptly they would speedily get into shoal water, where no attack would be possible. Duncan at once realised the

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'Duncan  
(Lord)'  
(Dictionary  
of National  
Biography)

"necessity of cutting off their retreat by getting  
"between them and the land. At first he was  
"anxious to bring up his fleet in a compact body,  
"for at best his numbers were not more than equal  
"to those of the Dutch; but seeing the absolute  
"necessity of immediate action, without waiting  
"for the ships astern to come up, without waiting  
"to form line of battle, and with the fleet in very  
"irregular order of sailing, in two groups, led re-  
"spectively by himself in the 'Venerable' and Vice-  
"Admiral Onslow in the 'Monarch,' he made the  
"signal to pass through the enemy's line and  
"engage to leeward."

With regard to the action itself, while unfavourable remarks have been made by some critics upon the loose formation of the British Fleet and upon the absence of tactical manœuvring before the battle, there are some points on which all authorities are agreed.

This action was, by general consent, one of the most severe actions fought by the British Navy.

Schom-  
berg's  
Naval  
Chrono-  
logy

"A more bloody conflict than this is not recorded  
"in the Naval History of Great Britain since the  
"famous Dutch wars." "Both sides fought with  
"great fury. No action can have been more  
"bloody," wrote De Winter to the Naval Commit-  
tee. "At half past twelve began one of the most  
"obstinate engagements, perhaps, that ever took  
"place on the ocean," wrote Story.

Admiral Duncan, as has been seen, wrote on October 15 to his brother-in-law, the Lord Advocate, to the same effect.

Too high praise cannot be given to some of the Captains, both Dutch and British. "I have assured Admiral De Winter, and with justice, nothing could exceed his gallantry," wrote Admiral Duncan. The brave Captain van Rossem of the 'Vryheid,' whose thigh was shot off, and who died of his wounds, fought his ship long after resistance was hopeless. The 'Jupiter,' 74 guns and 550 men, the Flagship of Vice-Admiral Reintjies and Rear-Admiral Meurer, which eventually struck to the 'Monarch,' greatly distinguished herself; as did the 'Hercules,' the 'Monnikendam' Frigate, and several more of the Dutch ships.

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Admiral  
Duncan to  
the Lord  
Advocate,  
Oct. 15,  
1797

Of the British ships, 'The Monarch,' 74, Captain Edward O'Bryen, bearing Vice-Admiral Onslow's Flag, began the fight with admirable spirit, passing through the rear ships of the Dutch line in silence, and opening fire as soon as they were divided.

"Q. What were the Dutch ships which the 'Monarch' first engaged?"

"A. We opened our fire on the 'Jupiter' and 'Haerlem,' both sides at once."

Lt. Retalick's  
evidence  
(Times,  
Dec. 6,  
1797)

The 'Monarch' was gallantly supported by the 'Powerful,' Captain Drury, who also broke the line at the same point.

The 'Venerable,' supported by the 'Triumph' and the 'Ardent,' broke the line of the Dutch Van at the head of another Division. "We intended to engage the 'Vryheid,' but were prevented by the 'States General' of 76 guns shooting close up to the Dutch Commander in Chief. We there-

'Venerable's' Log



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“ fore put our helm aport, run under his stern,  
“ engaged him close, and soon forced him to run  
“ out of the line. We then fell alongside the  
“ ‘ Vryheid,’ who was for some time well supported  
“ and kept up a heavy fire upon us.”

Lt. Ren-  
ton's  
evidence at  
the Court-  
Martial

“ Q. Was not the ‘ Venerable ’ hard pressed by  
“ the enemy’s van? Relate her situation.

“ A. From the time we beat the ‘ States  
“ General ’ out of the line until Admiral De  
“ Winter’s ship was dismasted, the ‘ Venerable ’  
“ had seldom less than two and sometimes three  
“ line of battle ships upon her, besides a Dutch  
“ Frigate and a brig who fired as opportunity  
“ offered.”

The ‘ Ardent,’ 64, which, much to the grief of Admiral Duncan, lost her Captain, Richard Burges, as well as more than a third of her whole ship’s company, proved herself in the fight second to none, even without her Captain. Lieutenant Philips, on whom the command devolved, and who was specially promoted for his gallant conduct, stated in his evidence at the above Court Martial:

Lieut.  
Philips’  
Evidence  
(Times,  
Dec. 6)

“ We engaged the ‘ Vryheid,’ the Dutch  
“ Admiral’s ship. Captain Burges was killed  
“ about ten minutes after the action began. I  
“ then was the Senior Officer.

“ Q. Had the ‘ Ardent ’ more than one ship of  
“ the enemy upon her at one time?

“ A. She had two in the beginning of the  
“ action, and about 2 P.M. she had four line of battle  
“ ships and a Frigate.”

An Officer of the ‘ Ardent ’ wrote: “ Our loss



“ is very great, having 140 killed and wounded on  
 “ board of us. Among the former was our truly  
 “ good and brave Captain Burges, and our Master  
 “ Dunn. Amongst the wounded are two Lieuten-  
 “ ants of the Ship, Rose, and Sidrell; the former  
 “ is much wounded in the shoulder, the latter  
 “ rather slightly in the leg. Captain Cuthbert of  
 “ the Marines received a flesh wound in the thigh  
 “ from a splinter.

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 Times,  
 October 21,  
 1797

“ I am much afraid that a great part of our  
 “ wounded will die, as they are in general dreadfully  
 “ mangled. One of the men’s wives assisted in  
 “ firing the gun where her husband was quartered,  
 “ though frequently requested to go down below,  
 “ but she would not be prevailed upon to do so,  
 “ until a shot carried away one of her legs and  
 “ wounded the other.

“ As to the damage done to the ship, a descrip-  
 “ tion of it would fill sheets of paper. All our  
 “ masts were so badly wounded that we could not  
 “ set a sail on any of them, and we were towed  
 “ into this Port by the ‘Bedford.’ It is indeed a  
 “ wonder from the number of shot holes in her  
 “ sides that we had not many more men killed.

“ The first two broadsides of the Dutch were  
 “ terrible; but after that, on an average, the  
 “ British fired three guns to their one. Thirteen  
 “ of the Dutch ships struck, but no boats could be  
 “ put off to take possession of them, by which many  
 “ escaped.

“ The action began by the ‘Monarch,’ which  
 “ broke through their line without firing; as did

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“also the ‘Powerful.’ About 40 minutes after,  
“Admiral Duncan also broke the line.”

Admiral  
Sir C.  
Ekins’  
Naval  
Battles:  
‘Lord  
Duncan’s  
action.’

The ‘Belliqueux,’ 64, had been amongst the most mutinous of Admiral Duncan’s ships, but she took this occasion to redeem her character. Captain Inglis, a Scotsman belonging to East Lothian, who had a rather hasty temper, “had neglected to “make himself a complete master of the Signal ‘book, and on the morning of the battle found “himself more puzzled than enlightened by it. At “last throwing it upon the Deck, he exclaimed in “broad Scotch, ‘D—— &c., &c., Up wi’ the hel-lem “and gang into the middle o’t.’ ”

Letter of  
an Officer  
of the  
‘Belli-  
queux.’  
(Times,  
October 18,  
1797)

“Into the middle o’t ga’ed” the ‘Belliqueux.’ “By 12.30,” wrote one of her Officers, “the action “was general with both Fleets; by one every ship “had broken the enemy’s line and had got between “them and the land. . . . We had now sufficient “exercise. By half past two a large two-decker “struck to our ship. . . . At 3.10 wore ship and “bore down on Admiral Bloys commanding the “rear Division, which immediately struck, hailed “us and desired us to send a boat on board and take “possession. We were so much disabled that we “could not get a boat out; but she dropped astern “of us. . . .”

Another point on which all parties were agreed, was as to the decision and resolution displayed by Admiral Duncan. The Officers of the Squadron, whose lives and whose professional pride were at stake, were delighted with the manner in which he bore down, straight and without a moment’s hesita-

tion, into action. They believed—and as eye-witnesses they are entitled to belief—that it was the Admiral who caused the fight and the Victory.

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“ Too much credit cannot be given to the  
“ British Admiral for his promptitude and  
“ decision on seeing the Dutch Fleet, as he  
“ took immediately the most effectual means of  
“ capturing and destroying it. . . . He perceived  
“ that if he waited to form the line (the enemy  
“ drawing fast in with the land) there would be no  
“ action. He therefore made the signal, to make  
“ all sail, break the line and engage the enemy to  
“ leeward, and for close action ; which last signal  
“ flew until it was shot away. This signal could  
“ not be mistaken, and coupled with the gallant  
“ Chief’s example, superseded all former ones ; and  
“ every ship had then nothing to call her attention  
“ from using every exertion to close speedily with  
“ the enemy.”

‘An Officer  
who was  
present at  
Camper-  
down—’  
Admiral C.  
Ekins’  
Naval  
Battles

Captain Hotham of the ‘Adamant,’ who was in the battle, wrote in his memoirs : “ In the action  
“ of 11th October, Admiral Duncan’s decision was  
“ evident from the moment the enemy was seen.  
“ There was no time for tactique or manoeuvre : the  
“ day was advanced, the wind on shore, the water  
“ shoal ; and hence the charge against him of  
“ going down in some confusion on the enemy’s  
“ Fleet. Had he done anything else but what  
“ he did, the day would not have been so decided.”

Captain  
Hotham’s  
Reminis-  
cences

“ Never were the promptitude, decision, skill  
“ and courage of an Admiral more gloriously dis-  
“ played than on this occasion ; and the example

Ralfe’s  
Naval  
Biography,  
vol. i.  
page 328



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“ which he set was, in general, most ably followed  
“ by the Captains under him.”

In nearly all the Naval Biographies the same opinion is expressed.

All authorities, too, are agreed that the victory was complete and conclusive.

Admiral  
Sir C.  
Ekins'  
Naval  
Battles

“ Eleven ships of war were captured by ten  
“ ships of the British Squadron ; as not more than  
“ that number were seriously engaged. What is  
“ remarkable in this action is that more was ac-  
“ complished, in proportion to the means, than in  
“ any naval engagement of modern times.”

Times,  
October 18,  
1797

“ Admiral Duncan could not do more with so  
“ large a fleet and so near the enemy's shore, and  
“ wind in if they had been some leagues at sea,  
“ very few would have got into the Texel again,”  
wrote an Officer of the 'Belliqueux' after the  
battle.

Wolfe Tone, in spite of his disgust, wrote the same thing in his Journal :

“ There never was a more complete victory  
“ than that gained by the English. The fleets  
“ were equal in number but they had the advantage  
“ in number of guns and weight of metal. De  
“ Winter fought like a lion and defended himself to  
“ the last extremity : but was at length forced to  
“ strike, as were nine of his fleet out of sixteen of  
“ which it consisted. With him were taken the  
“ Admirals Reyntjis who is since dead and Meurer.  
“ Bloys lost his right arm, and Story is the only  
“ one who came off clear. The two last were not  
“ taken. I cannot conceive why the Dutch



“ Government sent out their fleet at that season,  
 “ without motive or object as far as I can learn.  
 “ My opinion is that it is direct treason, and so  
 “ think Barras, Pleville le Pelley and even Meyor  
 “ the Dutch Ambassador whom I have seen once  
 “ or twice.

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 Wolfe  
 Tone's  
 Life,  
 page 452

“ It was well I was not on board the ‘ Vryheid.’  
 “ If I had it would have been a paltry bit of  
 “ business. . . . I fancy I am not to be caught at  
 “ sea by the English, for this is the second escape  
 “ I have had, and by land I mock myself of them.”  
 (Alas for prophets! and for poor Wolfe Tone,  
 whose spirit and courage it is impossible not to  
 admire.)

“ Admiral Duncan trusted that the brave  
 “ example which he set would achieve his object,  
 “ which it did completely,” observed Lord St.  
 Vincent.

Tucker's  
 Memoirs of  
 Earl St.  
 Vincent,  
 vol. ii.  
 page 282

After the battle, it is well known that, although  
 there continued to be a fairly large Dutch Fleet in  
 the Texel, there never again was serious cause for  
 apprehending an invasion from the side of Holland.  
 The detestation of the Dutch sailors for their  
 Republican Government was, no doubt, one cause  
 of their surrender of the Fleet in the Texel without  
 fighting on August 31, 1799; but the experience of  
 October 11, 1797, was a severe lesson which had not  
 been forgotten.

Some Naval authorities whose opinion is entitled  
 to respect, and notably Lord St. Vincent, an old  
 friend of Admiral Duncan's, are inclined to depre-  
 ciate the professional skill and ability of the

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Admiral as displayed in the commencement of the action.

Tucker's  
Memoirs of  
Earl St.  
Vincent,  
vol. ii.  
page 282

“ Lord Duncan’s action was fought pell mell  
“ (without plan or system): he was a gallant  
“ Officer (but had no idea of tactics, and being  
“ soon puzzled by them): and attacked without  
“ attention to form or order, trusting that the brave  
“ example he set would achieve his object, which it  
“ did completely.”

When Lord St. Vincent wrote this he was perhaps a little biassed by the fact that he was engaged at the moment in disproving John Clerk of Eldin’s theories about breaking the line; which “ though ingenious and worthy the study of all “ young and inexperienced Officers,” he described as “ frippery and gimcrack.” He apparently intended to imply that Admiral Duncan’s breaking the line on this occasion was more or less the result of chance, and at all events was not prompted by the work of John Clerk of Eldin on *Naval Tactics*; just as, in the same ‘*Observations*,’ he wrote to the same effect about Lord Rodney’s battle with De Grasse in 1782, and about Lord Howe’s action on June 1, 1794.

Tucker's  
Life of  
Earl St.  
Vincent,  
vol. ii.  
page 282.  
'Observa-  
tions on  
Clerk's  
Naval  
Tactics'

So far as John Clerk of Eldin, that celebrated apple of Naval discord, is concerned, Lord St. Vincent might have been surprised to learn that Admiral Duncan possessed a copy of Clerk’s ‘*Naval Tactics*,’ and, judging from the external and internal appearance of the book, which is still with his Papers, studied it carefully.

The important question, however, is whether

an action could have been won, or even brought about, in any other way than that which Duncan adopted. It has been already shown by the Signals of the 'Venerable' on October 11, and by the Admiral's own statements in his letters and despatches, that he at first intended to form line of battle, but changed his plan because he found that "there was no time to lose." It has been shown also that the Dutch ships were rapidly nearing the land.

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If the Admiral had formed line and had begun to manœuvre, either the Dutch might have, on further consideration, taken shelter in the Texel, or, if they found themselves getting the worst of the action, they could have retreated at their pleasure.

It must be admitted that to bear down and break their line in shallow water close to the coast of Holland, and on a lee shore, was a risky proceeding, which required strong nerves; but it was the only course which offered great possibilities. There is considerable evidence to prove that it was this mode of attack which produced the victory.

Admiral De Winter himself said to Admiral Duncan: "Your not waiting to form line ruined me: if I had got nearer to the shore and you had attacked, I should probably have drawn both Fleets on it, and it would have been a victory to me, being on my own coast."

Naval  
Battles, by  
Admiral C.  
Ekins

Admiral Story in his letter to the Hague on October 14 wrote: "The English Fleet which



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“ bore down upon us with the wind abaft, formed in  
 “ a line towards the south ; then ranged en échiquier  
 “ (chequerwise) it came right upon us. . . . The  
 “ greater part of the English Fleet broke through  
 “ our line.”

The ‘Leyden Gazette’ of October 20, commenting upon the above letter, observed: “It is certain  
 “ that the Dutch sailors evinced neither a want of  
 “ ardour, of courage, or of fortitude ; and that if  
 “ the misfortune of the day be attributable to any-  
 “ thing else than the great superiority of the enemy  
 “ both in number and force, and to his having the  
 “ wind in his favour, it is on the one hand to be  
 “ imputed to the order of battle adopted by Admiral  
 “ Duncan, and on the other to the Dutch line not  
 “ being sufficiently close. The English order of  
 “ battle was, according to various reports, such  
 “ that the enemy appeared to come down in a  
 “ confused manner on our ships. Vice-Admiral  
 “ Story informs us, on the contrary, that the  
 “ English were really formed in line of battle ; and  
 “ that it was the order en échiquier, the most  
 “ proper for breaking the Dutch line, that the  
 “ British Commander employed.”

Admiral De Winter himself, in his Report said :  
 “ The Dutch Squadron immediately formed line of  
 “ battle. The English did not attack them in  
 “ that order, but broke our line by passing through  
 “ each of the spaces that separated our ships.”

The effect of the manœuvre was augmented and intensified by the manner in which the attack was delivered. Neither of the British Admirals



slackened or hesitated: both the 'Monarch' and the 'Venerable' bore right down, each through the opposing part of the Dutch line, followed by their supporting ships; and then, wearing, caused the confusion both in the rear and in the van of the Dutch line which has been described.

The risk which the British Admiral ran was indeed very great. The British ships "were in nine fathoms of water and only five miles from the shore." "The Battle was so nigh land that thousands of people were on the shore to view it."

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Admiral  
Duncan's  
Despatch,  
October 13,  
1797.  
Times  
Article,  
October 14,  
1797

It was not unreasonable to expect, as Admiral De Winter did, that the British Admirals would run their Fleet on shore: but unluckily for him, they did not. They carried their boldness up to the very verge of rashness in order to cut off the Dutch from retreat, and when the victory was won, worked their ships out of danger, through the superior seamanship of the Captains, in spite of a rising gale.

What would not Napoleon have given for an Admiral or two of this kind? "All naval expeditions undertaken since I have been at the head of the Government have failed because the Admirals see double and have learned—in what school I do not know—that war can be made without running risks."

Corre-  
spondence  
de  
Napoléon,  
September  
12, 1804.  
Mahan's  
Influence  
of Sea  
Power on  
the French  
Revolu-  
tion, vol.  
ii. page  
130

"If further proof of the efficacy of such a mode of attack be wanting, it is to be found in the honorable testimony of the great Nelson who, though not acquainted with Lord Duncan, wrote to him

Admiral  
Sir C.  
Ekins'  
Naval  
Battles,  
pages  
234-5

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“ after the battle of the Nile, to tell him how he  
“ ‘ had profited by his example.’ ”

It may be observed too—in support of the contention that in a Naval engagement successful and decisive results are most likely to be produced by attacking a line of ships in column—that the attack at Trafalgar was almost identical with that at Camperdown, and that the order of attack was altered at the last moment in the same way and for precisely the same reasons.

Those who wish to be able to appreciate the attack at Trafalgar must read Captain Mahan’s unrivalled ‘ Life of Nelson,’ vol. ii. pages 368, &c., where every particular relating to Trafalgar is given, together with an excellent Plan of the Action.

For the convenience and guidance of the general reader, a few extracts from Captain Mahan’s pages are subjoined, which bring out the features of the attack to which reference has been made, but which cannot and ought not to satisfy a reader who takes an intelligent interest in Naval History.

“ At twenty minutes before seven ” (October 21, 1805) “ Nelson made in quick succession the signals  
“ ‘ to form the order of sailing ’—which by his  
“ previous instructions was to be the order of battle  
“ —and ‘ to prepare for battle.’ Ten minutes later  
“ followed the command ‘ to bear up,’ the ‘ Victory ’  
“ setting the example by at once altering her  
“ course for the enemy. Collingwood did the same,  
“ and the ships of the two Divisions fell into the  
“ wake of their leaders as best they could, for the  
“ light wind afforded neither the means nor the

Captain  
Mahan’s  
Life of  
Nelson,  
vol. ii.  
pages 370,  
&c.

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“ time for refinements in manœuvring. Fourteen  
 “ ships followed the ‘Royal Sovereign,’ while the  
 “ remaining twelve gathered in Nelson’s division  
 “ behind the ‘Victory.’ The two columns steered  
 “ east, about a mile apart, that of Nelson being to  
 “ the Northward. . . . .  
 . . . . .  
 “ Thus. . . Nelson at the moment of engaging  
 “ changed the details of his plan and substituted  
 “ an attack in two columns simultaneously made,  
 “ for the charge of Collingwood’s Division, in line  
 “ and in superior numbers upon the enemy’s flank :  
 “ to be followed, more or less quickly, according to  
 “ indications, by such movement of his own  
 “ Division as might seem advisable. . . . .  
 “ . . . Villeneuve, wishing to keep Cadiz, then  
 “ twenty miles to the northward and eastward,  
 “ under his lee, ordered the Combined Fleets  
 “ to wear together. . . . Owing to the scanty wind  
 “ this manœuvre was not completed until near ten  
 “ o’clock. Nelson, however, noted its beginning at  
 “ seven, and with grave concern ; for not only would  
 “ it put the Allies nearer their port, but it would  
 “ cause vessels crippled in the action to find to  
 “ leeward of them, in the gale which he foresaw  
 “ the dangerous shoals off Trafalgar instead of the  
 “ open refuge of the Straits. . . .”

“ About ten o’clock,” says Blackwood, “ Lord  
 “ Nelson’s anxiety to close with the enemy became  
 “ very apparent. . . . .  
 “ Owing to the lightness of the breeze the  
 “ Allies carried a good deal of sail, a departure from



1805  
October 21

“ the usual battle practice. This was necessary in  
 “ order to enable them to keep their places at all,  
 “ but it also had the effect of bringing them  
 “ continually, though very gradually, nearer to  
 “ Cadiz. Seeing this, Nelson signalled to Colling-  
 “ wood, ‘ I intend to pass through the van of the  
 “ enemy’s line, to prevent him from getting into  
 “ Cadiz,’ and the course of the ‘ Victory ’ for this  
 “ purpose, was changed a little to the Northward. .

. . . . .  
 “ At noon the French ship the ‘ Fougoux,’ fired  
 “ at the ‘ Royal Sovereign ’ the first gun of the  
 “ Battle. . . . For ten minutes the latter advanced  
 “ in silence, the one centre of the hostile firing  
 “ drawing near to the two ships between which she  
 “ intended to pass. . . . The ‘ Victory ’ was about  
 “ two miles from the ‘ Royal Sovereign,’ when at  
 “ ten minutes past twelve, the latter broke through  
 “ the Allied order, and she had about a mile and a  
 “ half to go before she herself could reach it. . . .  
 “ At one o’clock the bows of the ‘ Victory ’ crossed  
 “ the wake of the ‘ Bucentaure.’ . . .”

At the close of the action both Fleets presented a pitiable spectacle. Mr. Richardson, First Lieutenant of the ‘ Circe,’ to whom Admiral De Winter surrendered on board the ‘ Vryheid,’ gave the following description of the scene :

“ The appearance of the British ships was very  
 “ unlike what it was when opposed to the French  
 “ or Spaniards. No masts were shot away, nor  
 “ was the rigging in its usual tattered state : for



“ the Dutchmen had directed their shot at the  
 “ hulls of the British, and this so near that no aim  
 “ could well miss. Many were pierced by balls in  
 “ all directions, and a few had received dangerous  
 “ injuries between wind and water, which kept the  
 “ pumps in constant employment. With hulls so  
 “ shattered the loss of men was very severe,  
 “ making two hundred and twenty-eight killed and  
 “ eight hundred and twelve wounded. The cap-  
 “ tured ships were nearly all dismasted ; the Dutch  
 “ Vice and two Rear Admirals were wounded, and  
 “ their returns were five hundred and fifty killed  
 “ and six hundred and twenty wounded.”

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Amongst Admiral Duncan's Papers are preserved the original lists of the names of the killed and wounded on board of each ship, and of the defects of each ship herself, as reported by the Gunner and the Carpenter, and certified by the Captain. The 'Venerable,' 'Monarch,' 'Powerful,' and several more were in a sad condition. As an instance of what had happened to the ships which had been in the thick of the engagement, the Carpenter's and Gunner's lists of defects on board the 'Ardent' are interesting.

“ 'Ardent,' Yarmouth Roads : October 18, 1797.

“ Sir,—Not having an opportunity of so fully  
 informing you of the state of His Majesty's Ship  
 the 'Ardent,' and the conduct and behaviour of the  
 Company and Officers when I made known to you  
 the death of Captain Burges, I avail myself of this  
 opportunity, and am only doing justice when I

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inform you, that I received very great assistance from Lieutenants Morris, Rose and Sibriel, and altho' the two latter were wounded, and Lieutenant Rose severely, they did not quit the deck till the Action was over. To the other officers in general and the Ship's Company I cannot give too much praise for their steady conduct and behaviour during the whole of the Action.

"I anchored here on the 15th in the evening, towed in by His Majesty's Ship 'Bedford,' and am using every exertion in my power to get the 'Ardent' in a state to proceed from hence. Enclosed I send you the defects of the Ship, and a more accurate account of the killed and wounded.

"And have the honour to be,

with the greatest respect,

"your most obedient humble Servant,

"J. PHILIPS, 1st. Lt.

"Adam Duncan, Esq., Admiral of the Blue, &c., &c., &c."

"Gunner's Defects of His Majesty's Ship 'Ardent,' Lieutenant John Philips Commander :

" Two Guns, Lower Gun Deck	} All disabled.
Five Guns, Main Deck	
Three Guns, Quarter Deck	
One Gun Fore Castle	
One Gun Poop	

" J. PHILIPS, 1st. Lieut.

" RICHARD JEW, Gunner."

" Carpenter's Defects of His Majesty's Ship 'Ardent,' Lieut. John Philips, Commander :

“ The Flying Jibb Boom, Jibb boom and Sprintsail Yard shot away,

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“ Bowsprit wounded in different places,

“ Foretopgallant Mast and Yard shot away,

“ Fore Yard and Foretopsail Yard shot away,

“ Foremast shot in different places,

“ Maintopgallant Mast and Yard shot away,

“ Main Mast and Maintopmast shot in sundry places,

“ Mizentopgallant Mast, Topmast, Topgallant Yard and topsail Yard with the top and part of the Mizen mast shot away,

“ The Cross Jack Yard shot away,

“ The Driver boom and Gaff shot away,

“ Spare Yards and Masts all shot in different places,

“ The Quarter-Deck, Poop and Forecastle very much damaged,

“ The Wheel and Tiller shot in sundry places,

“ The Cat heads and Anchor Stocks shot to pieces,

“ One of the Anchors shot away,

“ The upper Gun Deck very much damaged by the Enemy's shot,

“ The lower Gun Deck very much damaged by the shot.

“ A great number of the wood riders shot to pieces,

“ The Capsten shot in sundry places,

“ Several of the Iron Stantions shot away,

“ A great number of shot between wind and water.



1797  
October 18

“ The Fore, Main and Mizzen chains shot in different places,

“ The ship makes from five to six feet of water in 24 hours.

“ J. PHILIPS, 1st. Lt.”

The ‘ Venerable’s ’ “ Mainmast, Foremast, Mizzen Mast and Bowsprit were much wounded and, besides other injuries innumerable, she had 45 shot between wind and water,” and “ made so much water that the chain and two hand-pumps hardly kept her above water. After the action she made 29 inches of water in 20 minutes,” &c., &c., &c. When she reached the Nore, which she did with great difficulty, she was ordered to be dismantled for a thorough repair; and Admiral Duncan shifted his Flag into the ‘ Kent,’ a new ship of 74 guns, then just launched.

In Chatham Dockyard, up to within a few years ago, stories were still current about the crippled state of the ships which arrived at the Nore.

Alison's  
History of  
Europe,  
vol. iii.  
page 244

“ The Dutch prizes were either dismasted or so riddled with shot as to be altogether unseviceable;” it may be observed that not one of them was ever employed under the British Flag.

Times  
Nov. 20,  
1797

Admiral De Winter, in a second report to the Committee of Marine at the Hague, attributed his defeat in great part to the early retreat of six Batavian ships from the action; and also to the fact that the British Squadron had been for nineteen weeks together at sea.

There is indeed reason to believe that some of



the Dutch ships left the action early ; but some of the English ships also did not take much share in the fighting, as was proved at the court-martial in regard to the ' Agincourt ' and is known in regard to some of the others. With regard to the composition of the British Squadron, some of the ships had only joined Admiral Duncan after the mutiny ; the ' Standard ' was absent repairing, and the Squadron generally " was formed of very indifferent " and inadequate ships, many of them having been " intended for Indiamen ; it was otherwise ill- " conditioned and deficient. . . . Had that Fleet " been composed of the same material as Lord " St. Vincent's, every Dutch ship would have been " taken."

1797  
October 11

Admiral  
Sir C.  
Ekins'  
Naval  
Battles

Although Admiral De Winter was defeated, he had no reason to feel ashamed. " The battle was " fought with all the desperation that in every " age has marked the meetings of the British and " the Dutch."

Mahan's  
Influence  
of Sea  
Power on  
the French  
Revolu-  
tion,  
vol. i.  
page 378

An officer of the ' Belliqueux ' summed up the result with reasonable fairness when he wrote : " The Dutch fought remarkably well, but we fought " better."

## CHAPTER VII

HOW THE NEWS OF THE VICTORY WAS RECEIVED IN  
GREAT BRITAIN1797  
October 11

THE Victory off Camperdown was won at a moment when the spirit of the Nation was flagging, and it imparted fresh strength to Mr. Pitt and his Government.

On the Continent of Europe, the French Republic had for some time triumphed everywhere over the Allied Powers. Napoleon's splendid campaign of 1796 in Italy; the failure of Lord Malmesbury's negotiations in Paris at the end of the same year; the misfortunes of Austria in 1797, which had obliged her to consent to the Preliminary Articles of Peace at Leoben, resulting in the Treaty of Campo Formio (October 17, 1797)—all these untoward occurrences were discouraging in the extreme, and made the war and the enormous pecuniary sacrifices which it entailed more and more unpopular in Great Britain.

Even on the sea the supremacy of Great Britain had been somewhat shaken. Spain had now joined her Naval forces to France, and the numerical superiority of the two Navies was such that the British Fleet had been compelled to retire from the Mediterranean. The Channel Fleet also had



Joseph N. P. pinx. 1798

Walker & Frost all photo

*Admiral Duncan.*





failed to prevent or even to detect the despatch from Brest of a large French expedition to Ireland, which miscarried only because the 'Fraternité' frigate with Admiral Morard and General Hoche, the two Commanders of the Forces, on board, was separated in stormy weather from her consorts, and because of the timidity of Admiral Bouvet, the second in command.

1797  
October 11

The one redeeming feature had been the memorable victory gained on February 15, 1797, off Cape St. Vincent, by Sir John Jervis, who, with fifteen sail of the line, routed and drove into Cadiz Langara's Fleet of twenty-seven sail, of which he captured four. Since that success, however, mutiny had occurred in the Home Ports; the Thames had been closed by British ships of war; and although the seamen as a body had disclaimed any traitorous intentions, some of their leaders had proposed to take over the ships to the enemy. It is not surprising if, under these circumstances, the confidence of the Nation in the Navy had somewhat abated; though if the Navy, or any part of it, were to fail in battle, what might not be the result? Throughout the anxious summer of 1797 invasion had been threatened from Holland, and had approached so nigh to realisation that French troops had been for some weeks embarked on board the Dutch ships which were to convey them. It seemed as if the days of De Ruyter and of Tromp were not unlikely to return.

As soon therefore as it was known in London that the Dutch Fleet was beyond all doubt at sea,

1797  
Times,  
October 12

and that the North Sea Fleet had started from Yarmouth in pursuit, the excitement became intense.

Times,  
October 14

About 4 o'clock on the morning of October 13 Lieutenant Brodie of the 'Rose' Cutter arrived at the Admiralty with the news of the victory; and at 7 A.M. Lord Spencer waited on the King at Kew to communicate the joyful intelligence, and also announced it by letter to the Lord Mayor of London. The public enthusiasm and rapture knew no bounds.

Times,  
October 14

"At noon the Queen and Princesses drove from Kew to Windsor where the bells of the Church rang the Royal Family into the town. At the same hour the Tower guns were fired, and the bells of the different Churches about London rang merrily during the day, and at night the principal streets were illuminated."

October 13

The news reached Mr. Pitt at Walmer in a very strange manner, which is narrated by Mr. John Fordyce to Mr. John Clerk of Eldin in a letter written with reference to the manœuvre of breaking the line in a naval action, as recommended by Mr. Clerk in his work on 'Naval Tactics.'

"Putney Hall: 11th June, 1809.

"My good old friend,—I happened on another and very remarkable occasion to hear the declaration of Lord Rodney that he in his great Action had followed the plans and principles recommended in your Naval Tactics, very strongly confirmed by another unquestionable testimony.



I happened to be down at Walmer Castle with Mr. Pitt at the time of Lord Duncan's great battle on the coast of Holland. Mr. and Mrs. Dundas were living with him at the same time. We were sitting drinking a glass of wine, I remember, when a man whose name I do not at present recollect, a smuggler, came rather abruptly into the room and told us he had just come on shore from his vessel, returning from the coast of Holland where he had witnessed the great victory gained by Admiral Duncan. He described the Action and having mentioned breaking through the line, Mr. Dundas took notice of that new instance of the success of your system, and then mentioned Rodney's often having told him that he had taken that mode of attack from you." 1797  
October 13

A Memorandum respecting Mr. Clerk and his work on Naval Tactics, certified by Lord Melville in a letter to W. Adam, Esq., dated "5 June, 1810, "Saville Row," to be "accurate in every particular "so far as my name is concerned," contains the following :

" Lord Melville (Mr. Henry Dundas) often dis-  
 " cussed the subject with Lord Duncan, who had  
 " studied Clerk's system with great care and was  
 " deeply impressed with it. He stated that Lord  
 " Duncan always said he would act upon the  
 " principles laid down in Mr. Clerk's book and also  
 " that the scene described and the different facts  
 " stated by Mr. Fordyce in his letter when the  
 " news of Lord Duncan's Victory was brought to  
 " Mr. Pitt at Walmer Castle, are correct."

Papers  
 now at  
 Camper-  
 down

1797  
October 16  
Times,  
October 17

On the night of October 16, further particulars of the Battle having been received, “the illuminations were general throughout London and the mobs of course, extremely troublesome.”

(It is hardly possible to read this last sentence without comparing and contrasting the manners and behaviour of the vast London crowds of a century later on the occasion of the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria.)

A public subscription was at once started at Lloyd’s Coffee-house for the relief of the families of the killed and wounded seamen, which was supported not only by individuals, but by public bodies and the theatres, and amounted in a short time to 52,609*l.*

Times,  
October 21

The rejoicings became general in all parts of the kingdom as the news spread. “The libations to the health of the gallant Admiral, his officers and crews would, on a moderate calculation, bring to the revenue 5,000*l.* additional revenue on wine only. Even the mail coach horses at Bath and Bristol discovered the emblems of victory by being profusely decorated with laurels.”

October 19

On October 19 the Court of Common Council resolved to present an address of congratulation to the King, and the Freedom of the City of London, together with a sword of honour, to Admiral Duncan, and also to Admiral Onslow, for their services; as also the thanks of the Corporation to the Captains, Officers and Seamen of the North Sea Fleet, and to subscribe 500*l.* to the Widows’ and Orphans’ Fund collecting at Lloyd’s.

Times,  
October 20

“ The whole town of Edinburgh was illuminated,  
 “ seeming to consider the victory as a national  
 “ honour to Scotland. In each of the lower  
 “ windows of Admiral Duncan’s house was the  
 “ representation of a ship with her streamers  
 “ flying.”

1797

Times,  
October 24

The Corporation of the City of Dublin unani-  
 mously voted a congratulatory address to the King,  
 and resolved to present the Freedom of the City  
 to Admirals Duncan and Onslow in decorated oak  
 boxes, for their gallant conduct.

Times,  
October 27

“ In Sunderland the news arrived on Sunday  
 “ at 11, when the good folks were at worship. A  
 “ loyal citizen elated with the joyful intelligence  
 “ in passing St. John’s Church, opened the north  
 “ door and shouted at the top of his voice :  
 “ ‘ Admiral Duncan has defeated the Dutch Fleet  
 “ at Camperdown.’ The congregation were at  
 “ prayers at the time, when Mr. Haswell the  
 “ organist struck up the air of ‘ Rule Britannia ’  
 “ and the congregation responded to the enthu-  
 “ siasm of the organist by rising while the spirit-  
 “ stirring air was performed. Prayer was then  
 “ quietly resumed.”

Copied  
from the  
Newcastle  
Chronicle,  
August 4,  
1838

At the Hague also great anxiety had prevailed  
 after the sailing of the Dutch Fleet, and the public  
 temperature rose to fever height when on October  
 11 the booming of the guns was heard in the  
 city :

“ According to information received by several  
 “ fishing boats and observations made from the  
 “ spires of our maritime villages, the Batavian Fleet



1797  
October  
Hague  
Courant,  
October 12

“ was yesterday engaged with an English Fleet supposed to be that commanded by Admiral Duncan though the English Papers state that it has returned to Yarmouth. The action began at ten in the morning and lasted without interruption till four in the afternoon. We are ignorant of the force of the English and of the issue of the combat. The cannonade was so vigorous that it was heard distinctly here. Three ships have been seen dismasted, but their colours could not be perceived. The Marine Committee have not yet received any official intelligence. During the whole of the day several vessels have been observed on the coast but there has been no firing heard. Impatience is general.”

October 13  
Hague  
Courant,  
October 13

On October 13: “The letter from Vice-Admiral De Winter addressed to the Marine Committee, was communicated to the Convention during the sitting. . . . The reading of it produced a very melancholy sensation among the members of the Assembly.”

The ‘Venerable’ anchored in “the Swin, Beacon of the Gunfleet N.E. by E., distance 3 or 4 miles” on Thursday, October 18, having accomplished the journey from the Texel in six days! “Ever since my letter of the 15th,” wrote the Admiral to the Board of Admiralty, “the wind has blown fresh from the westward and has retarded my progress to the Nore.”

He struck his flag on the next day, and landed at Margate, proceeding thence to visit Mr. Pitt at Walmer Castle.

Mr. Pitt wrote to his mother about this visit : 1797

“ Walmer Castle : October 22, 1797.

“ My dear Mother,—Lord Duncan joined us very opportunely on Friday at Dover Castle, where we had gone the day before to be present at a feu de joie in honour of his victory. Our Admirals (Hood and Duncan) leave us to-morrow, but we shall probably stay here till the end of the week and shall probably visit the Fleet on our way back to-morrow sen’night when the King intends to go on board. Such a ceremony will be no bad prelude for the opening of the Session.

“ Ever my dear Mother, etc.,  
“ W. PITT.”

Stanhope's  
Life of  
Pitt, vol.  
iii. p. 73

October 22

The King lost no time in bestowing Honours and otherwise expressing his satisfaction.

The ‘ London Gazette ’ of October 17 announced that the King had been pleased to grant the dignity of a Viscount of the Kingdom of Great Britain to Adam Duncan, Esq., Admiral of the Blue Squadron of His Majesty’s Fleet, by the name, style and title of Viscount Duncan, of ‘ Camperdown ’ ; and also that the King had been pleased to grant the dignity of a Baronet of the Kingdom of Great Britain to Richard Onslow, Esq., Vice-Admiral of the Red Squadron of His Majesty’s Fleet.

“ On Monday October 30, the King left Windsor  
“ at half past six in the morning to visit the Fleet  
“ at the Nore. He came the usual road to town

1797  
Times,  
October 31

“ and passed through Storey’s Gate in St. James’  
“ Park over Westminster Bridge to Greenwich.  
“ His Majesty arrived at Lord Hood’s apart-  
“ ments in the Hospital as the clock was striking  
“ nine; the King remarking to Lord Hood that  
“ he was very punctual in keeping his appoint-  
“ ment, nine having been the hour fixed. The  
October 30 “ Princess of Wales had arrived a few minutes  
“ before, in order to give His Majesty the meeting,  
“ which appeared to be cordial on both sides. . . .

“ After breakfast the King was conducted on  
“ board the ‘Royal Charlotte’ Yacht, in a six-  
“ oared Barge of which Captain Trollope was  
“ coxswain. . . .

“ The ‘Royal Charlotte’ was commanded by  
“ Captain Trollope and steered by Admiral Duncan’s  
“ Pilot (John Porteous); the ‘Princess Augusta’  
“ which was fitted up for the accommodation of the  
“ Lords of the Admiralty, was commanded by  
“ Captain Riou, and the ‘Mary’ Yacht by Lieu-  
“ tenant Philips of the ‘Ardent.’

Times,  
Novem-  
ber 2

“ Violent and adverse winds blew from the time  
“ the King embarked, and it was found impossible  
“ to reach the Nore, where most splendid prepara-  
“ tions had been made for the reception of His  
“ Majesty. His Majesty was never able to proceed  
“ farther than the Lower Hope, a little below Graves-  
“ end; and on Wednesday morning November 1,  
“ the Royal Yacht came up to Greenwich, where  
“ the King landed and returned to London.”

The King was graciously pleased to pardon 180  
of the mutineers confined at Chatham, whose



petition was presented by Admiral Duncan in person.

1797  
Novem-  
ber 1

Before the King disembarked at Greenwich he conferred on Captain Trollope the honour of a Knight Banneret as a special mark of his approbation, and Lord Spencer thanked him for the steadiness and skill with which he had kept company with a superior force, and told him that Admiral Duncan both in his private and public letters had given the most handsome testimony to the way in which he had behaved.

Lieutenant Philips of the 'Ardent' was specially promoted to be Captain; and the first Lieutenants of all the ships were promoted.

The King ordered a number of Gold Medals to be struck in commemoration of the victory, and desired that the Officers receiving them should be presented, wearing the medals, the first time they appeared at St. James's.

Parliament was opened by the King on November 2, who in his speech made a reference to the victory of the North Sea Fleet. In the House of Lords, Earl Spencer moved the thanks of the House to Admiral Lord Duncan and the Officers serving under him. Similar votes were moved by Mr. Dundas in the House of Commons, "thanking Admiral Lord Viscount Duncan, Vice-Admiral Sir Richard Onslow, the Captains and Officers, and highly approving of the services of the Seamen and Marines," all of which were carried unanimously.

Novem-  
ber 2

Mr. Dundas then alluded to the death of

1797  
Novem-  
ber 2

Captain Burges, and said that “ he had the authority  
“ of the gallant Admiral under whose command he  
“ fell, to assure the House that both from public  
“ and private motives Lord Duncan considered  
“ his untimely death as one of the greatest losses  
“ the country had sustained ” ; and he concluded  
by moving that “ An humble Address be presented  
“ to His Majesty that he would be graciously  
“ pleased to give directions for a monument in  
“ the Cathedral of St. Paul to the memory of  
“ Captain Burges of the ‘ Ardent,’ this House  
“ promising to make good the expenses of the  
“ same.”

This motion was agreed to ; and on November 4  
His Majesty was graciously pleased to send a  
favourable reply to the Address, and to issue orders  
accordingly.

Novem-  
ber 8

On Wednesday, November 8, Lord Duncan was  
introduced into the House of Lords by Lord Hood  
and another Peer.

The Lord Chancellor (Lord Loughborough)  
addressed him in the following terms :

“ Lord Viscount Duncan, I am commanded by  
“ the Lords to give your Lordship the thanks of  
“ this House for your able and gallant conduct in  
“ the brilliant and decisive victory obtained over  
“ the Dutch Fleet on the 11th day of October last,  
“ as well as for the zeal, courage and perseverance  
“ which you have uniformly manifested during the  
“ arduous period in which you have commanded  
“ His Majesty’s Fleet in the North Sea.

“ At the same time that this vote passed

“ unanimously, their Lordships were pleased to  
 “ order that all the Peers should be summoned to  
 “ attend on the occasion: a distinction unprece-  
 “ dented, but called for by the general admiration  
 “ your conduct has inspired, and strongly expres-  
 “ sive of that peculiar satisfaction which the Peers  
 “ must feel upon your Lordship’s promotion to a  
 “ distinguished seat in this House.

1797  
 Novem-  
 ber 8  
 Lords’  
 Journals

“ Splendid in all its circumstances as the  
 “ victory obtained by His Majesty’s Fleet under  
 “ your command has been, important as it must  
 “ prove, in its consequences, to the security of all  
 “ His Majesty’s dominions, and, under the Divine  
 “ blessing, to the favourable issue of the arduous  
 “ contest in which they are engaged; the magni-  
 “ tude and lustre of these considerations have not  
 “ so occupied the observation of the Lords as to  
 “ make them unmindful of the constant vigilance  
 “ with which your Lordship had, in the whole  
 “ course of your command for three successive  
 “ seasons, watched and frustrated every design of  
 “ the enemy; nor the manly fortitude with which  
 “ you had sustained the temporary defection of the  
 “ greater part of your force; nor, above all, that  
 “ undaunted resolution with which, at so momen-  
 “ tous a crisis, you proceeded to check and control  
 “ the presumptuous hopes of the enemy. These  
 “ are merits in which fortune can claim no share;  
 “ they spring from that energy of mind and that  
 “ ardent love of your country, which has directed  
 “ your own conduct and animated the Officers and  
 “ men under your command, whose exertions are



1797  
November 8

“entitled to every testimony of public gratitude  
“and applause.”

Lord Duncan replied: “My Lords—Not accus-  
“tomed to speak in public, though my feelings are  
“great, my words must be few.

“Deeply impressed as I am with the high  
“honor this Right Honourable House has been  
“pleased to confer upon me, I shall only say that  
“I acknowledge it with the most profound respect  
“and am deeply gratified by it.

“To you, my Lord, my best thanks are due for  
“the very flattering and polite manner in which  
“you have been pleased to convey to me the Reso-  
“lutions of this House.”

On the motion of His Royal Highness the  
Duke of Clarence, the Address of the Lord  
Chancellor to Admiral Lord Viscount Duncan,  
together with his Lordship’s reply, was ordered to  
be entered upon the Journals of the House.

Decem-  
ber 19

On Tuesday, December 19, the King proceeded  
in solemn procession to St. Paul’s Cathedral to  
return thanks for the great naval victories obtained  
during the war over the enemies of the country.

Bell’s  
Weekly  
Messenger,  
Decem-  
ber 10

The day was fine, and there was an enormous  
concourse of people. “Houses in the line of the  
“procession were let at the rate of from twenty to  
“fifty guineas for the day; and five guineas was  
“the established price for single places in the  
“West Gallery of St. Paul’s, and two guineas for  
“single places over the West Portico, from which  
“there was a complete view of the ceremony.”

The Seamen and Marines with their Officers

assembled in Palace Yard, Westminster, and soon after 8 A.M. the procession began with a Division of Marines followed by about 200 Seamen, and then by an Artillery Waggon drawn by four horses, with the French Flags taken during the war; by a second Artillery waggon with the Spanish Flags taken off Cape St. Vincent; and by a third Artillery waggon with the Dutch Flags.

1797  
Times,  
Decem-  
ber 20

Lord Duncan followed the third waggon in his carriage; Lord Howe was represented by Vice-Admiral Caldwell; and Lord St. Vincent by Vice-Admiral Sir Charles Thompson.

The procession passed along Charing Cross and the Strand, which streets were lined by the Foot Guards and the Horse Guards.

From Temple Bar to St. Paul's the streets were lined by the East India Volunteers, the City Militia, and the Artillery Company. The Light Horse Volunteers patrolled up and down Ludgate Hill and Fleet Street to preserve order.

On arriving at the Cathedral the Lieutenants took the Flags from the waggons, and carried them in procession, "under the loudest shouts of applause and grand martial music to the middle of the Dome, where they were placed in a circle." The Captains passed up the middle aisle and took their seats in the galleries on each side of the choir.

Times,  
Decem-  
ber 20

About 9 o'clock the procession from the House of Commons passed through Temple Bar, consisting of about 130 carriages. Mr. Pitt's carriage was nearly the last, and he was received

Times,  
Decem-  
ber 20

1797  
Decem-  
ber 19

with very general applause. The Speaker's state carriage closed the procession of the Commons.

Next came the Masters in Chancery and the Judges; and then the Peers in their robes, in about 50 carriages. The Lord Chancellor closed this part of the procession in his state carriage.

After an interval of about half an hour the King's procession arrived, having driven from Stable Yard down Pall Mall and the Strand, and reached Temple Bar at about 11 o'clock, where the King was received by the Lord Mayor and a Deputation from the City. His Lordship delivered to the King the City Sword, which was returned to him; and the Royal procession then moved on as follows: the Duke of Gloucester, the Duke of Clarence and Prince Ernest, the Duke of York, in coaches and six. The Duke of York was received with great acclamation.

The Suite and Officers of the Court followed, and then, preceded by a party of Horse Guards, came their Majesties in a State coach drawn by eight cream-coloured horses.

The City Deputation were next; after whom the Lord Mayor rode on horseback, carrying the City Sword, dressed in a scarlet velvet robe trimmed with ermine, and accompanied by the City Officers on each side.

The procession was closed by two coaches and six, containing the Princesses and their suite.

Their Majesties arrived at the Cathedral about half-past eleven o'clock.

The Princesses with the Dukes of York and



Clarence, Prince Ernest and the Duke of Gloucester and their respective suites, on alighting formed a line within the Church, regularly from the right of the great West Door, with the Lord Mayor, the Sheriffs, and the Admirals on the opposite side.

1797  
Decem-  
ber 19

The King was received by the Bishop of Lincoln as Dean of St. Paul's and the Bishop of London, who walked on each side of His Majesty, preceded by the Heralds at Arms and the Prebendaries of the Cathedral.

Her Majesty followed with her Suite, and the Princes and Princesses according to their rank, in procession.

On the arrival of their Majesties within the circle formed by the Colours, the Colours were lowered, and the Royal Family respectively made their obediences to the company assembled in different parts of the Church, "which were returned with the loudest acclamations and congratulations ever perhaps heard on any occasion."

The Royal procession into the Choir was closed by the Colours, which were carried to the altar and then presented by Lord Howe, Lord Duncan, and some other Admirals to the Dean, who deposited them on the Communion Table. Earl Spencer had the honour to carry the Sword of State, as First Lord of the Admiralty, before their Majesties, and was conducted to the Prebendal Stall on the right hand of the Throne; Lord Chatham, as President of the Council, occupied that on the left.

St. James's  
Chronicle,  
December  
19 to 21

The Throne, which was brought from the Chapel

1797 Royal, St. James's, was erected almost under the Organ; and when the Royal Family entered the choir, a curtain was drawn which enclosed it entirely from the Dome.

Times,  
Decem-  
ber 20

The Princesses sat on one side of their Majesties, and the Princes and Duke of Gloucester on the other, with the Speaker of the House of Commons, the Lord Chancellor, and the Foreign Ministers next to them.

The Body of the Choir was occupied by the Members of the House of Peers, in nearly the same form as in the House of Peers, the Judges being seated on woolsacks; the Peeresses were in the seats on each side, and the Members of the House of Commons, and the Lord Mayor and Court of Aldermen and their Ladies, in the Galleries.

Decem-  
ber 19

The covering of the seats within the Choir was crimson, to correspond with the velvet of the Throne. The other erections in the Cathedral were covered with green baize.

St. James's  
Chronicle

“ The Queen and Princesses were all dressed alike in Royal purple satin robes, after the latest fashion, only just meeting in front, and falling straight downwards, with a rich gold lace trimming and gold belts round the waist. The Royal Family wore bandeaus, with feathers; the Queen’s was particularly noticed for its elegance, for though made of gold it moved with the elasticity of a feather.”

The Communion Service was performed by the Bishop of London, and the Sermon was preached by the Bishop of Lincoln, as Dean of St. Paul’s. It lasted thirty-seven minutes.

The Anthem was the same as was sung when Queen Anne went to St. Paul's.

1797  
Decem-  
ber 19

At half-past two o'clock, a signal being given from St. Paul's that the Service was over, the Park guns were fired. The procession of the Royal Family's carriages was reversed on their return, their Majesties going first.

It was not until long after dark that the company could get away from St. Paul's.

It was a matter of general surprise that the Prince of Wales did not take part in the procession.

When Admiral Duncan dined with the Lord Mayor on the evening of Lord Mayor's day, "His chariot was drawn by the mob down Fleet Street and all the way to the Guildhall. The Ladies greeted him from the houses with huzzas and waving of their handkerchiefs."

Times,  
Novem-  
ber 10

The cities of London, Edinburgh and Dublin presented their Freedom to the Admiral, as did also Glasgow, Liverpool, Bristol, Dundee, Hull, Berwick, Dover, Yarmouth, Worcester, Bath, and Portsmouth. Many Counties, including his native County of Forfar, and other Public Bodies presented addresses of congratulation and subscribed liberally to the Fund for the Families of the killed and wounded.

The directors of the East India Company entertained him on November 6 at a complimentary Dinner at the London Tavern, when between 90 and 100 guests sat down, amongst whom were the Lord Chancellor, the Duke of Buccleuch,

Times,  
Novem-  
ber 7



1797  
 Novem-  
 ber 6

Earl Spencer, Lord Hood, Mr. Pitt, Mr. Dundas, Mr. Canning, Mr. Huskisson, Sir Francis Baring, Sir Stephen Lushington, and Admirals Nelson and Onslow.

John Bull,  
 October 17,  
 1842

After the Dinner a ballad was sung, written by the Earl of Mornington (afterwards Marquess of Wellesley), in commemoration of the victory, of which the history is rather interesting. “ Mr. “ (afterwards Sir Walter) Scott having been applied “ to, wrote some verses for the occasion which were “ shown in manuscript by Lord Aberdeen to Mr. “ Pitt, at whose house at Wimbledon Lords “ Mornington and Morpeth with some other friends “ were then staying. The merits of the manu- “ script poem were discussed, and owing to some “ remarks it was agreed that several of the Party “ present should write ballads on the battle of “ Camperdown.

“ Lord Mornington’s gave such general satisfac- “ tion to the company that they were preferred to “ the verses of the afterwards great Northern Poet, “ and were adapted to music.”

On November 8, at a Court of the East India Directors, &c., &c.

“ 8th November, 1797.

“ The Chairman acquainted the Court that “ Admiral Lord Duncan had made it his particular “ Request that they would indulge him so far as to “ confer an Appointment in the Company’s Civil “ Service on Mr. Samuel Fairfax now in their “ Military Service in Bengal the Son of Captain “ Fairfax of the ‘ Venerable ’ which Ship bore His

“ Lordship’s Flag in the late engagement with the  
 “ Dutch Fleet.

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 Novem-  
 ber 8

“ And the Court being very desirous of evinc-  
 “ ing the high sense they entertain of the brilliant  
 “ merits and services of Admiral Lord Duncan,  
 “ from which the Political and Commercial In-  
 “ terests of the Country derive the most important  
 “ benefits, it was moved, and, on the Question,  
 “ RESOLVED BY THE BALLOT UNANIMOUSLY that  
 “ Mr. Samuel Fairfax be appointed a Writer for  
 “ Bengal and to rank as youngest of last Season.”

The friends of the Admiral were not less kind to him than the public, and congratulations poured in from every side.

The Captain of the ‘ Standard ’ wrote from Yarmouth on October 26 :

“ I beg leave to offer my sincere and most  
 “ hearty congratulations on your glorious and  
 “ important victory over the Dutch Fleet. I shall  
 “ ever have to lament that the ‘ Standard ’ had  
 “ not joined you.”

Lord Spencer wrote at once, on receiving the news of the victory :

“ Admiralty : 16th October, 1797.

“ Dear Admiral,—You have done gloriously  
 indeed, and I really have not words to express  
 what I feel on this occasion ; so great a victory  
 at so critical a time, gained entirely by the  
 unexampled activity of your exertions, comes  
 accompanied with so many circumstances which  
 enhance its value to me as an Englishman, as a

October 16

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October 16

Minister, and as a warm friend of yours, that it is quite impossible for me to shape my congratulations to you in a manner satisfactory to myself; I will therefore trust to your usual kindness that you will do me credit for thinking as I ought upon it.

“ It is with sincere satisfaction however that I fulfil my duty by announcing to you that I have just received a note from the King in which he signifies his intention of immediately creating you a Viscount of Great Britain, and as His Majesty has expressly desired that it may be announced in the Gazette to-morrow, Mr. Dundas and I have put our heads together, and have determined that your title shall be Viscount Duncan of Camperdown. By this, your own name (much too good an one to lay aside) will be continued to posterity with a title annexed to it marking the glorious occasion by which your honour has been so well earned.

“ Vice-Admiral Onslow, of whom I am happy to see your very handsome Testimony, will in the same Gazette be announced as a Baronet, and his Majesty has signified his intention of conferring the honour of Knighthood on Captain Fairfax at the Levee on Wednesday when I shall present him.

“ When I have the pleasure of seeing you (or at least when you get into Port) we will communicate more particularly about the Promotions in the professional line on board your Fleet. Mr. Dundas is going down to Walmer again and will



probably see you if you should reach the Nore to-morrow; if not, as he wishes to see you at Walmer, we shall send you down leave of absence which you may avail yourself of when you think fit. It is but fair you should see him first, otherwise there are very few persons in whose favour I should willingly delay the heartfelt pleasure I shall experience in shaking you by the hand.

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“I have not time for more before Post therefore must conclude with assuring you how sincerely

“I am your very faithful  
and obedient humble servant,  
“SPENCER.”

Lady Spencer wrote also in a state of great delight and enthusiasm :

“Admiralty : Monday, 16th Oct., 1797.

“What shall I say to you my dear and victorious Admiral? Where shall I find words to convey to you the slightest idea of the enthusiasm created by your glorious, splendid and memorable achievements? Not in the English Language; and no other is worthy of being used upon so truly British an exploit. As an English woman, as an Irish woman, as Lord Spencer's wife, I can not express to you my grateful feelings. But amongst the number of delightful sensations which crowd upon me since Friday last, surprise is not included. The man who has struggled thro' all the difficulties of everlasting N. Sea Cruizes, of hardships of every kind, of storms, of

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October 16

cold, of perpetual disappointments, without a murmur, without a regret, and lastly who most unprecedently braved an enemy's fleet of sixteen or twenty sail of the line, with only two Men of War in a state of mutiny to oppose them: *That Man*, acquiring the honour and glory you have done on the 11 of October did not surprize me. But greatly have you been rewarded for your past sufferings. Never will a fairer fame descend to posterity than yours, and the gratitude of a great nation must give you feelings which will thaw away all that remains of your Northern mists and miseries. God, who allowed you to reap so glorious an harvest of honor and glory, who rewarded your well borne toils by such extraordinary success, keep you safe and well to enjoy for many years the fame He enabled you to acquire on this most distinguished occasion.

“ Ever yours with gratitude and esteem,

“ LAVINIA SPENCER.”

Mr. Henry Dundas sent his congratulations to his niece :

“ London : 16th October, 1797.

“ Do you remember, my dear Mrs. Duncan, when you first conceived your attachment to the Admiral, then Captain Duncan, and applied to me to speak to your Father, that before doing so I made it a special condition that you would never, directly nor indirectly, use any influence to induce him to give over his profession? Do you now repent that I made that condition, and that you

made that promise? God bless you, my dear, your husband has gained immortal glory, and done more signal service to his country than ever any man had it in his power to do. In place of being an Irish Peeress, don't be surprised to hear in a few days that you are a Viscountess in the British House of Lords. My love to all the family. Mr. Pitt and I are going down to Walmer this evening but if we hear that the Admiral is got to the Nore, it is our intention to visit him to-morrow morning on board the 'Venerable.'

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"I remain, my dear Mrs. Duncan,  
"Yours very sincerely,  
"HENRY DUNDAS."

Lady Mary Duncan, daughter of the seventh Earl of Thanet, the widow of Sir William Duncan, M.D., Court Physician to George II. and younger brother of the Admiral's father, wrote a spirited and characteristic letter to Mr. Dundas. Ladies have always excelled in the character of advocates.

October 18

"Hampton Court Green :  
"Oct. 18th, 1797.

"Sir,—Tho' I have not the honour of being personally known to you, I can't resist giving you joy of the signal victory. Report says my nephew is only made a Viscount. Myself is nothing. But the whole nation thinks the least you can do is to give him an English earldom. From the multiplicity of your business, you may have slipt what I am going to lay before your eyes. Please to recollect what a chicken-hearted way all the

Arniston  
Memoirs,  
p. 251



1797  
October 18

nation was in, low spirited by the war, murmuring at taxes (tho' necessary), grumbling and dissatisfied in every county.

“ Now comes my hero, the first that attempted to quash the rebellious seamen, locks up the Texel for nineteen weeks; when he could no longer remain. They came out. He flies after the Dutch; completely beats them, though they resisted like brave men. I know the little etiquette of not raising gentlemen but by degrees; a very proper distinction for those thirteen gentle lords you made last week. But what has that to do with a conqueror? What a different situation all your Ministers are in at the opening of the Parliament. The nation joyful. Not a black democrat dare open his mouth. Even our cowardly allies will be ashamed to have deserted us. All success, under God, owing to my nephew. Lord St. Vincent is a brave man; he merited it; was made an earl. I leave to you the comparison. All my ancestors only rose by their brave actions, both by land and sea. Makes me think it is the only great way of rising. Am sure, were this properly represented to our good King, who esteems a brave religious man like himself, would be of my opinion. Therefore, I hope to hear soon of his being made Earl of Lundie, Viscount Texel, and Baron Duncan.

“ The first and last titles he owes to his ancient family; the Viscount, for his successor to remember the great man who locked up the Dutch and bravely defeated them. Don't doubt you are

proud, as I am, of being related to Admiral Duncan. I have the honour to be, your most ob. humble servant, MARY DUNCAN.”

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The popularity of the Admiral himself with the people was immense. At every theatre there were representations of the fight off Camperdown, and all his engagements and movements were chronicled in the newspapers from day to day.

An amusing adventure happened to him, immediately after his arrival in London, which was narrated by Mr. William Dundas, the Admiral's brother-in-law, M.P. for Edinburgh, and afterwards Lord Clerk Register, to the late Colonel Philip Dundas, who gives it thus :

“ On the Admiral's first arrival in London after his victory, he came to my Uncle's lodgings in Lincoln's Inn Fields and said ‘ Now William, take me somewhere to dine.’ They went together to the Piazza Coffee House in Covent Garden and I remember my Uncle describing his dress as somewhat singular. Tho' not in uniform he had a very nautical look and wore a small cocked hat with a bit of lace. Before their dinner was over, the room became very crowded. It was a very large room, and the people dined in separate parties at small tables. A waiter late in the evening brought a note to William Dundas from one of the tables, asking him if his friend was not Admiral Duncan. On getting the answer the man who made the enquiry and who was unknown to my Uncle got up on the

Colonel  
Philip  
Dundas to  
Adam  
second  
Earl of  
Camper-  
down,  
March 15,  
1860

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“ table, insisted on all present filling their glasses,  
 “ and proposed the Admiral’s health, telling them  
 “ that he was in the room. The uproar was  
 “ tremendous; the Admiral got upon his legs and  
 “ in a stentorian voice said, ‘Gentlemen I thank  
 “ you.’ Not another word. They all cheered  
 “ louder than ever, and Sheridan who was having  
 “ some quieter orgies of his own in a private room  
 “ upstairs, sent to ascertain what the tumult was  
 “ about. They began vociferating in their turn,  
 “ and my Uncle and the Admiral got to a Hackney  
 “ Coach at the door to escape. The people outside  
 “ heard who they were, took the horses out of the  
 “ coach and drew it round Covent Garden, and it  
 “ was with difficulty that they were allowed to go  
 “ home. I forget whether they were taken home,  
 “ or if they made their escape at last.”

It would be easy to add more letters and stories of the same kind, but details enough have been given to prove the excited state of public feeling immediately after the crushing disaster to the Dutch Fleet.

This excitement may appear to-day a little extravagant, but it is difficult now to realise and feel, as that generation did, the magnitude and imminence of the public dangers of that moment. A foreign invasion was at their doors, and just then it seemed most likely to arrive from the side of Holland. If Admiral Duncan had been defeated, it would have been attempted from that quarter and within a few weeks or even days.



After the 11th of October it was certain, as far as anything human could be certain, that an invader would not in future attempt to make his descent from the Texel; and the Admiralty was able to concentrate its attention upon the Channel and the Atlantic. The whole Nation experienced a deep sense of relief and a consciousness of reviving power, which found expression in the wild rejoicings which followed the victory.

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It required a strong head and sound common-sense to be proof against ovations which proceeded from all classes in the Nation; and a man whose life had been passed upon the sea might have been pardoned if he had given way to some extent to feelings of pride or exultation. It was, however, a matter of general remark that Admiral Duncan showed no disposition to do anything of the kind, while he accepted, naturally and simply, the public approbation and gratitude, of which it was impossible not to be deeply sensible. The 'Times' repeated of him the quotation, "This Duncan hath borne his faculties so meekly"; and it is probable that he was not tempted to do otherwise, as many others in his position at that moment might have been. He felt sincerely what he wrote to the Speaker in reply to the vote of thanks of the House of Commons: "If in fulfilling the duties of my station I have been fortunate in rendering service to my country, I am most truly gratified."

The deepest feeling in his heart, as he often said, was profound thankfulness to Heaven.

At the Thanksgiving Service in St. Paul's, where

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his towering figure was conspicuous, it was noticed that he was wholly absorbed in the Service, and was apparently unconscious of anything beyond.

When the Admiral reached his own home in Forfarshire he was greeted enthusiastically. On November 13, 1797, the Commissioners of Supply of the County of Forfar had held a meeting, at which 200 guineas were voted for a piece of Plate, and it was resolved to have the Admiral's Portrait painted by Hoppner and placed in the County Hall. The Town of Dundee presented him with the Freedom of the Town and a piece of Plate, and hung a Portrait of him in the Town House.

Times,  
January 17,  
1798

When he arrived in Dundee early in January, 1798, he was received on the Parade by the 21st Regiment, commanded by Captain Meyrick, and the 1st Regiment of Dundee Volunteers, commanded by Lieutenant-Colonel Mylne, under arms and with saluting honours. The Magistrates formed a procession and walked with him up the High Street to the Town House, where they entertained him at Dinner, and "he set off for his seat " at Lundee (sic) in the evening."

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February  
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The Admiral soon afterwards went to Edinburgh, where a demonstration was organised in his honour.

" Edinburgh : Feb. 17, 1798.

Times,  
February  
1798

" Yesterday being appointed by the Lord Provost and Magistrates for giving a grand entertainment to Admiral Lord Duncan, the brigade of Royal Edinburgh Volunteers, accompanied by the Royal Edinburgh Light Dragoons, and the Royal

Edinburgh and Midlothian Artillery, assembled in the Meadow Walk and Lauriston-road at 2 o'clock in the afternoon. 1798  
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“ When the front of the column came opposite Lord Duncan’s house, the different regiments marched past to slow time in open order, the Officers saluting his Lordship, who stood at his door with his hat in his hand to return the compliment, attended by the Lord Provost, his Grace the Duke of Buccleuch and a number of other Noblemen and Gentlemen.

“ About a quarter of an hour after the Volunteers left George’s Square, a second Procession commenced, in which were several Noblemen and Gentlemen’s carriages. A large carriage with three masts, on the centre one the Noble Admiral’s Blue Flag; Lord Viscount Duncan in his carriage accompanied by John Inglis, Esq. of Redhall, Captain of the ‘ Belliqueux ’ who was wounded on the 11th of October.

“ On the North Bridge the people and sailors took the horses out of his Lordship’s carriage, and drew it along all through the New Town to Fortune’s Tavern, where the entertainment was provided. When he alighted from his carriage, he was saluted by the Volunteers with presented arms; and at the door of the Tavern, he was received by the Magistrates in their robes, attended by the City Sword, &c.

“ The invitations to the entertainment were very numerous, comprising a great number of the Nobility and principal Gentlemen of this City and



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its neighbourhood, Naval and Military Officers,  
&c.

“Immediately after dinner, the Lord Provost presented the Noble Admiral with a complimentary letter from the Magistrates and Council. The evening was spent with a degree of convivial and social enjoyment worthy of the occasion.”

## CHAPTER VIII

## DUTCH ACCOUNTS OF THE BATTLE—ADMIRAL DE WINTER

A NARRATIVE professing to tell the events of 1797  
 October 11, 1797, which should omit the Dutch  
 Accounts of the Battle and all mention of the  
 brave Vice-Admiral De Winter, would have the  
 demerit not only of being partial and one-sided, but  
 of leaving out much that is of interest.

Lieutenant Richardson of the 'Circe,' who in  
 her jolly-boat boarded the 'Vryheid' after her  
 colours were struck, "found the Admiral on his  
 "knees on the Quarterdeck, holding a square  
 "sheet of lead which a carpenter was nailing over  
 "a shot hole in the bottom of a small punt about  
 "twelve feet in length, which was to have been  
 "launched for his escape."

A Tar of  
 the Late  
 War, by  
 Rev. C.  
 Armstrong

"He surrendered, remarking, 'This my  
 "destiny was not foreseen,' and taking leave of a  
 "young Officer (I believe his nephew) who was  
 "desperately wounded, accompanied me to the  
 "gangway, the Officers and Crew making way for  
 "him, and many kneeling to take leave of their  
 "beloved Commander."

When De Winter came on board the  
 'Venerable,' he tendered his sword to Admiral  
 Duncan, who refused it, saying, "I would much

1797 “rather take a brave man’s hand than his  
“sword.”

On the next day De Winter despatched a letter to the Naval Committee at the Hague by a messenger whom Admiral Duncan sent ashore to convey intelligence to the Dutch Admiral’s wife that he was alive and unharmed, a report having spread that he was killed :

“ October 12th.

October 12

“ With the deepest impresse of grief I inform you, that yesterday morning, October 11, we discovered the English fleet; I immediately formed into a line of battle on the starboard tack, and did everything in my power to keep the ships as close together as possible; but my orders for this purpose could not be completely obeyed, on account of the unsteadiness of the wind, the high sea, and the bad sailing of some of the vessels. At eleven o’clock the enemy attacked the rear of the line, which they broke through with great resolution. This I saw with some pleasure, because I always entertained hopes that the rest of the fleet would close up, and therefore I made the signal to the headmost ships to slacken sail; this, however, was of no avail; we came into action successively in an irregular manner: my ship was engaged at one time with two, and afterwards with three: the ‘Hercules,’ which was the second in the line from me, took fire, and drove towards me, by which means I was obliged to shift my station, and approach a fourth English ship, being that of the Admiral. All my running



rigging was now torn to pieces ; and while I was endeavouring to make a signal for some of the ships to come to my assistance, the flag line was shot from my hand. In the meanwhile the 'Wassenaar,' by the captain being wounded early, and the loss of a great many people, was obliged to strike ; as did also the 'Haarlem,' the 'De Vries,' the 'Delft,' and the 'Jupiter,' whose main-mast went by the board ; this I was in some measure prevented from seeing, by the thickness of the smoke, and the closeness with which I was engaged. Every thing being at length shot away, and having lost a considerable number of men, I nevertheless endeavoured to force my way through the five English ships, with a view of making for port, or of giving an opportunity to some of the fleet not yet disabled, to afford me assistance ; but my attempt was not successful. At two o'clock all my three masts went overboard, but I still continued to defend the wreck for half an hour ; when, having no further hope, seeing the rest of the ships at a distance, and finding that my flag was shot away, I ordered the people, one half of whom I had already lost, to stop firing ; and at three o'clock an English frigate approached me, the captain of which came on board and carried me to Admiral Duncan. The 'Gelykheid' lay to the windward of me ; I saw also that she made no longer any resistance, and had ceased firing ; her running rigging was all in pieces ; but why she struck I know as little as I do of the 'Admiral De Vries,'

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October 12

the 'Delft,' and the 'Haarlem.' The 'Hercules' lost her mizen mast, and took fire, which brought her, as well as me, into the midst of the English fleet, and she has also been captured. With the behaviour of my Officers and crew I am perfectly satisfied: I recommend them to you, as men who defended themselves to the last, and continued faithful to their Admiral. Both sides fought with fury, and many men have fallen: the English also have sustained great loss. They had returned to Yarmouth with nine sail of the line, in order to refit. On Saturday evening they received intelligence that we were at sea; on Monday they again sailed, having re-victualled in twenty-four hours, and having received eight other ships from Portsmouth and the Downs, in the room of the eight which were under repair. They had altogether sixteen sail of the line; among which there was only one fifty, the greater part of the rest being seventy-four guns. Behold then the most unfortunate day of my life: every exertion that depended on manœuvre, or personal courage, was made by myself, and many others on board, but in vain. Our enemies respect us on account of the obstinacy of our defence. No action can have been so bloody, for it was fatal to us. I shall have the honour of sending you a more accurate and minute account, as soon as I find an opportunity. I at present take advantage of a permission from the English admiral, to give you this short notice, and to call your care and attention to a number of prisoners, whose bravery and courage

deserved a better fate, and particularly to the crew of the 'Vryheid.' I recommend to you the poor widows and orphans, and the wife and children of my worthy captain Van Rossum, whose thigh was shot off at half past two: he is still alive, but there are little hopes of his recovery. Two cadets, one of whom is my nephew, have each lost the left leg; the rest of my Officers are well. Cranenburg, the Lieutenant of Marines, only is dead. Of the state of the other ships I can give no account, nor do I know what loss they have sustained: the English do not know themselves. I am informed however, that Vice Admiral Reintjies has been wounded also, and that he is on board Admiral Onslow. Meurer is well; but Captain Holland, of the 'Wassenaar,' was mortally wounded in the beginning of the action, and lost a great many men.

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"I trust and hope that I shall be permitted to return to Holland, in order to justify myself further.

"I am, your unfortunate admiral,

"DE WINTER."

On October 14 Rear-Admiral Story, who, after his ship, the 'States General,' was "beaten out of the line" by the 'Venerable,' had escaped into the Texel with some other ships, wrote his account of the battle for the Naval Committee:

October 14  
Lieutenant  
Renton's  
evidence at  
Court Mar-  
tial on Cap-  
tain Wil-  
liamson



“ On board the ‘ States General ’ :

“ Oct. 14, 1797.

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October 14

“ After having happily gained the Offing with the squadron of the Republic on the 7th of October, we continued to cruize along the coast, by making tacks towards the Bree Veertrin. We fell in with no vessels until the 11th, when, at eight in the morning, we were informed by the men upon the outlook at the top-gallant-mast-head, that the English fleet, amounting to thirty sail, was then to the windward of us. The signal for preparing to engage was immediately made, and afterwards that for forming a line of battle in three divisions on the larboard tack. The wind was then N.N.E., and the village of Egmont bore East North East, distant two leagues and a half. The English fleet, which bore down upon us with the wind abaft, formed in a line towards the south; then, ranged *en échiquier* (chequerwise) it came right upon us. At half past twelve began one of the most obstinate engagements, perhaps, that ever took place on the ocean. At the commencement of the action the greater part of the English fleet broke through our line: two of their largest vessels then engaged one of ours. Their line consisted of twenty ships, six of which carried 84 guns; the others were 64's and 74's. The ships engaged on both sides throughout the whole line. Thus we were attacked both to windward and leeward.

“ All vessels, as far as I could observe, fought with equal courage. The behaviour of the officers and crews is above all praise. I engaged Admiral

Duncan's ship, and another of 84 guns. The 'States General' was between these two vessels, each of which was not more than the length of the ship from us. The same thing took place throughout all the line. Every part of my rigging was soon shot away; but we got a-stern of them in such a manner that the English Admiral was obliged to wear and to drop a-stern. All his rigging appeared ready to give way, and most of it came down some time after. The ship of 84 guns with which I still remained engaged, was immediately seconded by a 74, in the room of Admiral Duncan's ship. We maintained a most obstinate action with these two ships, and continued fighting until three o'clock. While we were constantly repeating broadside after broadside, a fire broke out in our stern, and between decks, but it was soon extinguished.

"All the ships were now so much disabled, that they could no longer be managed, and drove about in the greatest confusion. It was no longer possible to fire a single gun. The standing rigging of each mast was carried away; the masts, top-masts, and yards were all wounded; the running rigging was entirely shot away; and the sails all torn to pieces. I had twenty killed and forty severely wounded. Every brace was shot away; as were also the wheel, tiller ropes, &c. In a word, everything was carried away; we had shot in every part of the hull; and in this wretched state we floated about at the mercy of the waves.

"New braces were got up as soon as possible,

1797  
October 14

1797  
October 14

and at four o'clock we stood towards the English fleet: but my Officers then made a report to me that the ship was filling fast with water, and I was under the necessity of shortening sail. The evening set in with thick rain, which prevented us from seeing any of our ships but a few which had formed the rear of the line. I then collected all the vessels belonging to my division that I could discover. At midnight I found I had got together eleven sail. I endeavoured with them to collect the remainder of the squadron, and stood again towards the English fleet.

“At day break we saw them to windward of us at a short distance a-stern. There was then none of our ships of the line a-head of us, but we observed two ships making for the Texel. Upon coming near them we found they were English. They made sail, and we were not in a condition to chase them. I then continued to steer towards the Texel; and I observed the hulls of three vessels floating near the spot where the battle was fought. On the 12th, in the evening, I got safely into the Texel with the ships I had collected.

“Health and Fraternity,

“S. STORY.”

Another account of the Battle, collected from Dutch sources, is to be found in Van Lennep's History:—

Account of  
Battle of  
Camper-  
down. Van  
Lennep's

“The Admiral De Winter who was to convoy  
“the intended expedition with his fleet and indeed  
“all the Naval Officers were of opinion that con-



“ sidering the great force which the English again  
“ had in the North sea, it would be very dangerous  
“ to set sail but nevertheless the Committee of  
“ Marine, pressed on the one side by the constant  
“ complaints which were brought against the  
“ inactivity of the naval force and on the other  
“ dazzled by the recollection of former glory and  
“ fancying that it was only necessary to be in  
“ command of a Dutch ship to become a Tromp or  
“ a De Ruyter, sent to De Winter an express order  
“ to put to sea with the first favourable wind.

Transla-  
tion by late  
Sir John  
Shaw  
Lefevre

“ De Winter obeyed (6th Oct.) but the event  
“ justified his solicitude. After having cruized  
“ four days in the North Sea they saw off of  
“ Camperdown the British Fleet coming down on  
“ ours (11 Oct.). Both fleets consisted of the like  
“ number of ships of the line namely 16. The Dutch  
“ had three, the English only two frigates but the  
“ enemy’s ships were generally bigger and provided  
“ with heavier metal and larger crews, and (what  
“ it is of more importance to remark) the English  
“ fleet was composed of practised seamen and  
“ Officers of many years’ service whilst they were  
“ commanded by one of their most experienced  
“ Admirals, Duncan.

“ The Dutch seamen on the other hand had for  
“ the most part never been to sea, most of the  
“ Captains had never commanded a vessel. Even  
“ De Winter himself, who as you may possibly  
“ recollect had left the sea service whilst a Lieu-  
“ tenant, and at the very time he was Vice Admiral  
“ was also General of the Land forces, had never

“ had the command of a ship. And now he was to  
“ command a Fleet which had scarcely ever left  
“ the harbour and men and Officers who were  
“ unpractised in their duties. It would have been  
“ a miracle if the contest had been crowned with  
“ success.

“ The Dutch Fleet waited for the enemy in  
“ tolerably good order, who came down upon it  
“ before the wind. The large ships were arranged  
“ in a line in which De Winter’s ship had the fourth  
“ place, the ship of Rear Admiral Story the fifth,  
“ and that of Vice Admiral Reyntjes who com-  
“ manded the rear, the thirteenth. Behind the  
“ ships lay the frigates and the smaller vessels to  
“ support them. Duncan wishing to prevent the  
“ retreat of our Fleet which was only just four  
“ hours from the coast and to throw it into con-  
“ fusion by a bold manœuvre, gave orders to break  
“ the line. This command was carried into effect  
“ with uncommon bravery by Vice-Admiral Onslow.  
“ Attacking the rear of the Dutch he pushed in  
“ through the space which in consequence of the  
“ bad sailing qualities of the ship ‘ Haarlem ’ was  
“ left open between that and the ship of Van  
“ Reyntjes the ‘ Jupiter.’

“ Duncan on his part tried to do the same to  
“ our Van and to the Centre division. It failed as  
“ regards the Van, for our ships were there quite  
“ close to each other but Admiral Duncan himself  
“ made a way between Vice Admiral Story’s ship  
“ the ‘ States General ’ and that lying next to him  
“ the ‘ Wassenaer.’

“ The line was thus broken through in two  
 “ places and the battle from that moment was  
 “ decided against us.

“ Yet although the battle began with this un-  
 “ favourable chance, our Officers for the most part  
 “ maintained gallantly the ancient renown of their  
 “ country and endeavoured to supply by bravery  
 “ what they wanted in experience.

“ Onslow who had come through between the  
 “ ‘ Haarlem ’ and the ‘ Jupiter ’ fell upon the frigate  
 “ which lay behind, the ‘ Medemblik,’<sup>1</sup> commanded  
 “ by Captain-Lieut. Lancaster, who did not hesi-  
 “ tate to engage in this unequal battle and did him  
 “ some damage but not without being severely  
 “ treated by the stronger enemy. Relieved from  
 “ this difficulty he brought his frigate under the  
 “ lee of the ships ‘ Alkmaar ’ and ‘ Delft ’ which  
 “ were fighting at the extreme left wing and he  
 “ supported these two ships in their defence till  
 “ two others of the enemy’s ships came upon him  
 “ from behind. The ‘ Medemblik ’ could not stand  
 “ against this superior force, especially after the  
 “ ‘ Alkmaar,’ falling off owing to the loss of her  
 “ steerage wheel, had run against her and caused  
 “ her great damage. Lancaster nevertheless con-  
 “ tinued the fight for a considerable time, but  
 “ when his first Officer was killed, his second  
 “ Officer wounded and 50 seamen dead and he  
 “ himself with some sixty others injured, the masts  
 “ on the point of falling and the ship full of water,  
 “ he gave the matter up and struck his flag.

<sup>1</sup> In the British account called ‘ Monnikendam.’—ED.



“ The ‘ Alkmaar ’ and the ‘ Delft ’ which were  
“ the last ships of our line had in the meantime  
“ continued a fierce fight against five of the  
“ enemy’s ships. Neither of them gave up until  
“ they were shot through and through, their guns  
“ useless, and the half of their crew dead or *hors de*  
“ *combat*. The ships ‘ Haarlem ’ and ‘ Jupiter ’ which  
“ lay next before them had already struck earlier.

“ The ‘ Cerberus ’ having fallen out of the line,  
“ for which its commander excused himself on the  
“ ground that he had received an order to join the  
“ centre division of the fleet, caused the ‘ Jupiter ’  
“ to have two antagonists to deal with. Vice-  
“ Admiral Reyntjes who was on board this vessel  
“ was wounded, and this circumstance perhaps,  
“ especially after the ‘ Haarlem ’ had already struck,  
“ contributed to determine him to surrender. In  
“ the meantime whilst the Commanders at the Van  
“ acquitted themselves bravely but fruitlessly, the  
“ Flagship of Admiral Duncan attacked the Dutch  
“ ship ‘ States General,’ of which Story had the  
“ command and compelled it to keep off and to leave  
“ the line of battle. He then sailed under the Lee  
“ of the Dutch flagship which had beat off another  
“ English vessel. The battle between the two  
“ Flagships was obstinate and Admiral Duncan’s  
“ ship was itself so ill treated that he twice  
“ signalled for help.

“ The ship ‘ Wassenaar ’ which Captain  
“ Holland commanded, owing to the shameful  
“ flight of the Dutch ship next to him was obliged  
“ to contend with two of the enemy’s ships and

“ after a fierce combat was entirely shattered and  
 “ obliged to strike, and consequently one of the  
 “ enemy’s ships which had fought with him was  
 “ now able to come to Admiral Duncan’s assist-  
 “ ance.

“ At the Van of the Dutch fleet Captain Zegers  
 “ who commanded the ‘ Vryheid ’<sup>1</sup> had made head  
 “ against two and latterly against five enemies and  
 “ had defended his ship to the uttermost, for he  
 “ did not strike before he had 130 men *hors de*  
 “ *combat*.

“ With no less undaunted courage the Captain-  
 “ Lieut. Ruysch who commanded the ‘ Gelykheid ’  
 “ the first ship in the Dutch line, defended himself  
 “ during an hour and a half against the increasing  
 “ strength of the English and only decided to  
 “ strike his flag when he had 60 killed and 70  
 “ wounded. The ‘ Beschermer ’ the 2nd ship of  
 “ the Van had at the commencement of the action  
 “ defended herself gallantly, but after her com-  
 “ mander Captain Hinxt had been mortally  
 “ wounded, fell out of the line. The ‘ Hercules ’  
 “ which lay by it had not only acquitted herself  
 “ just as bravely but had so handled an enemy’s  
 “ ship that she was on the point of striking, when  
 “ unluckily her bulwarks caught fire and her com-  
 “ mander Captain Van Rysoort had his arm shot  
 “ off. The Lieut. Musquetier who now took the  
 “ command, found himself accordingly obliged to  
 “ quit the line of battle in order that the fire  
 “ which had communicated itself to the sails

<sup>1</sup> ‘ De Vries ’ ?—Ed.

“ should not extend itself to the ships next to her.  
“ For a long time the burning vessel was driven  
“ hither and thither making both friend and foe  
“ give way before her and not a little increasing  
“ the confusion, especially amongst our ships.  
“ After having tried with uncommon calmness  
“ every means of putting out the fire and when  
“ that was accomplished to defend his ship,  
“ Musquetier found himself obliged to give up as a  
“ prize to the enemy his vessel which had now  
“ become defenceless, inasmuch as they had been  
“ obliged to throw the powder overboard.

“ The Dutch ships ‘ Brutus,’ ‘ Leyden ’ and  
“ ‘ Mars,’ which were in the centre division of the  
“ fleet, in the commencement took very little part  
“ in the action and were only cannonaded from a  
“ distance by four or five British ships and were  
“ then kept from being of any essential service.  
“ First after the Dutch ship ‘ Batavier ’ had retired  
“ and the ‘ Wassenaer ’ was obliged to hold off, a  
“ more serious fight took place. Captain Lieut.  
“ Kolff, who commanded the ‘ Mars ’ fought with  
“ no unfavourable result. The ‘ Leyden ’ after a  
“ brave resistance was obliged to fall out of the  
“ line to repair her damage. The ‘ Brutus ’ also of  
“ which the Rear Admiral Bloys had the command  
“ after having acquitted herself gallantly was  
“ obliged to hold off, the Commander having his  
“ arm shot off.

“ De Winter altho’ thus deprived of the help  
“ he so sorely wanted and seeing nothing but  
“ enemies on all sides, fought to the uttermost and



“ gave himself up to the enemy after more than  
“ half of his crew were killed.

“ Thus ended this naval engagement, the last  
“ which up to the present time has been fought by  
“ the Dutch, and the first in which England might  
“ boast of seeing a Dutch Admiral of the Fleet  
“ and two Flag Officers brought in as prisoners.

“ But not on the prisoners but on those who  
“ had so recklessly perilled our country's Fleet  
“ rested the disgrace of this defeat.

“ Admiral Duncan himself felt this and the  
“ reception which De Winter met with on board  
“ his ship was in the highest degree courteous,  
“ whilst later our seamen in England were treated  
“ in the most humane manner.

“ The closing in of the evening, the stormy  
“ weather, and the vicinity of the coast prevented  
“ the English from pursuing the Dutch ships  
“ which were on their lee. These therefore had  
“ the opportunity under the command of Rear  
“ Admiral Story to direct their course to the Texel  
“ which they managed to reach.

“ But the ‘ Brutus ’ which had wandered away  
“ from the rest did not get there but into Helvoet,  
“ after having had to encounter an English frigate  
“ which nevertheless he obliged to haul off.

“ The British Fleet reached Yarmouth some  
“ days later, after having contended with bad  
“ weather, whereby two of their prizes the ‘ Delft ’  
“ and ‘ Medemblik ’ became a prey to the waves.  
“ The first of these ships foundered with her  
“ first Lt. Heilberg, 134 of her crew who had

“ fought so bravely, and five Englishmen. The  
“ ‘ Medemblik ’ ran ashore at Westchapel <sup>1</sup> where  
“ it was broken up by the sea but the crew were  
“ saved.”

From the moment that he stepped on board the ‘ Venerable,’ Admiral De Winter won for himself universal admiration and respect by an unvarying and remarkable display of fortitude and self-control. In Admiral Duncan’s opinion, as has been stated, he had done everything a man could do to secure victory and to avert surrender. From the time that the two Admirals had assumed their respective commands their antagonism had been marked by mutual courtesy on every occasion when communications had passed between them, and in the altered circumstances their relations became still more friendly, and in a short time ripened into intimacy. Both were brave men of large mind and experience, and both knew how much of the result of war belongs to fortune and to circumstances over which a Commander can exercise little control.

De Winter’s composure and self-restraint were all the more remarkable because he felt his position very keenly indeed. Not only had the Dutch Navy sustained a disastrous reverse, but he was, as he truly said, the first Dutch Admiral brought on board a British ship. That the ‘ Vryheid’s ’ colours were ever struck he denied, when he heard that statement read from a copy of Admiral Duncan’s Official Despatch of October 13, and

<sup>1</sup> West Kapelle ? — Ed.

affirmed that the flag lines were shot out of his own hand. It was not his fault that he was a prisoner, for when he surrendered there was hardly an Officer unwounded on the 'Vryheid,' and further resistance was impossible.

He always resented deeply what he considered the defection of Rear-Admiral Story and of four or five of his ships, and in his second and detailed Report to the Naval Committee he represented that this was a principal cause of the defeat. It is said that on one occasion he expressed this opinion at dinner, and appealed for support to Admiral Duncan, who was present, and whose reply was characteristic of his nationality: "My dear Admiral, I am exceedingly happy to drink your health in this good company."

Besides the personal chagrin which must be experienced by every defeated Commander of high spirit, however little his own conduct may have contributed to the misfortune, De Winter, who had from his earliest days been an ardent Republican, well understood that the Republican cause in Holland had received a severe shock.

Born in 1761, he entered the Navy at twelve years old, and rising to be a Captain-Lieutenant, actively espoused the Republican cause in 1786, so that when in the next year the Stadtholder was restored by a Russian Army supported by a British Fleet, De Winter found it necessary to seek an asylum in France.

Having entered the French Army, he served with distinction in Flanders in the campaigns of



1792 and 1793 under Dumourier and Pichegru, and commanded a Corps under the latter in 1794; after which, along with General Daendels, he rendered invaluable service in the conquest of Holland and in the establishment of the Batavian Republic. He was then entrusted with the supreme command of the Dutch Naval Forces, with the rank of Vice-Admiral. Although his only Naval experience had been gained in his early days as a Lieutenant, he at once showed capacity as a Naval Commander, and, but for the imperious and unwise interference of the Naval Committee, would have allowed the British Fleet to continue its weary occupation of cruising to and fro off the Texel, in the hope that tempestuous weather or some other circumstance might at some time give him an advantage.

When Admiral De Winter arrived in London he experienced a most flattering reception. During his stay he was entertained privately by Mr. Pitt, Mr. Dundas, Lord Spencer, and many other persons distinguished in the political world and in general society. A banquet was given in his honour by the East India Company, and he was loudly cheered when he visited the Bank of England with Mr. Vandyke, a Dutch merchant, and on other occasions when he was recognised by the public. He conducted himself invariably with great prudence and circumspection, avoiding delicate topics in conversation, and often declaring that he ardently desired peace and an alliance between his country and Great Britain.

Among many proofs of the good feeling and

good taste which were exhibited on all sides, it is worthy of note that the newspapers contain no mention of Admiral Duncan and Admiral De Winter being seen together on any public occasion.

It may be mentioned that De Winter sat to Mr. Daniel Orme for his miniature, which he presented to Lord Duncan with the following inscription in his handwriting: "Admiral De Winter Commander of the Dutch Fleet—defeated by Admiral Duncan 11th October 1797—Painted from life in London by Daniel Orme for the purpose of presenting to Admiral Duncan—born 1761—6 ft. 1 inch high—painted Nov. 1797."

On November 10 Vice-Admiral Reintjes died of his wounds, and the British Government determined to send his body to Holland with every mark of respect. Admiral De Winter had also received alarming accounts of his wife's health, who had been struck down by paralysis; and it was decided, it is said on Admiral Duncan's application, to release him and Rear-Admiral Meurer on parole, together with some other Dutch Officers.

On November 20, Captain Carew received orders to convey them in the Sloop 'Swan' to the Nore, and on the 22nd De Winter was received on board the Sloop 'Ranger' at the Nore, and sailed, taking with him the esteem and respect of all who had known him. The 'Ranger' arrived in the Texel on November 30 with the two Admirals, the Dutch Officers, and the late Admiral Reintjes' coffin.

Captain Campbell brought back to Admiral Duncan a letter from Admiral De Winter written at Sheerness :

“ Scheernes : le 22 Nov., 1797.

“ My Lord,—Sensible à tous vos bontés vous me permettrez que je vous en temoigne encore ma vive reconnaissance, a jamais je m’en souviendrai, mon respect et amitié pour vous ne cessera qu’avec ma vie.

“ Je suis arrivé ce matin à bord du ‘ Ranger,’ les autres Officiers, le fiscal et mon Secrétaire n’y étoit point arrivé encore, j’espere qu’ils nous joindront aujourd’hui, parceque le vent étant si favorable j’en voudrois profiter pour mettre à la voile demain matin.

“ Mon cher My Lord, l’amitié avec le quel vous avez bien voulu m’honorer me fait esperer que vous me pardonnerez l’importunité de vous demander de nouveaux une grace nomemant que vous voudrez vous interesser pour procurer le rétour en Hollande sur leur parole les cinq officiers qui ont servi sous mes ordres sur le ‘ Vryheid,’ et le capitaine Ruysch, que vous connoissez. Je prends la liberté de vous joindre ici leur noms . . . Capt.-Lt. Siccama à Yarmouth, Lieut<sup>nts</sup>. Dibbets La febre et Glym à Wye en Kent, et le Lieut<sup>nt</sup>. Sadet à Hamblédon, ces officiers me sont tres cher, leur conduite a été sans reproches, et vous leur rendrez ainsi qu’a moi, une douce satisfaction, en leur redonnant à leur familles.

“ Recevez mon cher My Lord mon eternel respect et amitié, souvenez vous dans vos heures



de loisir un homme que vous avez obligé pour la vie et qui ne cessera que d'être avec l'estime La plus haute et l'attachement le plus sincere.

“ My Lord !

“ Votre très humble et très obeissant

“ Serviteur,

“ DE WINTER.”

De Winter made a public entry into Amsterdam on December 7, and delivered a speech, a translation of part of which was given in the ‘Times’ of January 8, 1798 :

“ Citizen Counsellors and Fellow Burghers,—  
 “ It is with the most grateful acknowledgements I  
 “ receive your congratulations, and I rejoice in the  
 “ consolatory reflection that I find myself once  
 “ more in my native country, and again in the  
 “ midst of my worthy fellow citizens. The fortune  
 “ of war formerly forced me for a while to live  
 “ abroad and since, having been for the first time  
 “ vanquished by the enemy, I have experienced a  
 “ second state of exile. However mortifying that  
 “ may have been to a man sincerely attached to  
 “ his country, I can assure you that the satisfac-  
 “ tory treatment I experienced from the enemy,  
 “ the English, has been such, and the humane and  
 “ faithful support and assistance they have one  
 “ and all evinced towards my worthy fellow  
 “ countrymen and fellow sufferers whose blood  
 “ flowed in torrents in their country’s cause, has  
 “ been so great that they have considerably softened  
 “ and alleviated the horrors of our situation.

Also in  
 Universal  
 Magazine,  
 January,  
 1798

“ Worthy Burgesses, I am bound in honour not to  
 “ conceal from you that the noble bearing and  
 “ liberality of the English nation since the bloody  
 “ contest most justly entitles them to your  
 “ admiration.”

A Military inquiry subsequently held on  
 Admiral De Winter's conduct on October 11  
 entirely exonerated him from blame : “ Le Conseil  
 “ de guerre chargé d'examiner sa conduite dans la  
 “ journée du 11 Octobre déclara qu'il avait glorieu-  
 “ sement soutenu l'honneur du pavillon de la  
 “ République Batave.”

Biographic  
 Univer-  
 selle, De  
 Winter

He wrote again to Admiral Duncan from  
 Amsterdam. This letter, as all other extracts, is  
 given with literal accuracy :

“ Austerdam : Le 16 Décembre, 1797.

“ My lord,—C'est à vous My Lord que je dois  
 la permission que le gouvernement Anglois à bien  
 voulu me donner, pour retourner chez-moi, et pour  
 secourir une femme chérie mais malheureuse qui  
 auroient succombé aux chagrins de mon absence et  
 aux terreurs journaliers qu'on lui fit souffrir par  
 mille nouvelles Impostures.

“ Recevez donc encore mes sinceres remercie-  
 ments et ceux de mon Epouse qui vous chérit  
 quoiqu'elle n'a l'honneur de vous connoitre que  
 par votre conduite genereuse et loyale envers son  
 mari. Oui cher mÿ-lord vous avez rendu à moi,  
 ainsi qu'a elle un bien grand service ; mon Epouse  
 déjà attaquée par une Paralésie qui lui à oté

l'usage du coté gauche de tout son corps, auroient succombé infailliblement à sa tristesse si votre amitié ne m'avoit rendu à elle sitôt. C'est par ma présence que ses forces commencent à reprendre et que l'espoir commence à renaitre qu'elle recouvreras sa Santé primitive, par l'effect de l'elextricité, la Medicine, mais sur tout par la tranquillité de son esprit que je lui ai rendu. Ainsi cher Amiral c'est vous qui lui à rendu la vie ; comment vous payer ma gratitude, où trouverai je des mots pour vous communiquer les sentiments de mon cœur. Combien heureux ne suis je d'avoir rencontré dans L'Amiral Duncan un sincere ami ! Cependant ces mêmes idées me font songer aux autres officiers et Capitaines prisonniers ; permettez que je rappelle à votre souvenir les Capitaines Rüysch Lancaster Krafft et les officiers qui ont servi sous mes ordres à bord du vaisseaux ' la liberté,' je vous prie de leur accorder votre appuÿ, pour leur faire avoir la permission de retourner chez eux sur parole. Je crainderois de vous etre importun, si je vous demandois pour les autres Capitaines, quoique je vous aurois une obligation eternelle si vous leur procuriez aussi cette grace, quand ils demanderont cette permission individuellement, et non à la fois. Ce sont ces Capitaines qui par leur presence, et leur temoignage verbal, justiferons ma conduite et la leur dans la journée du 11 Octobre, vous renderez par cet acte de generosité Le bonheur et la gaÿté à leur familles, et vous en sauverez par là de leur Ruine certaines, et votre nom leur sera cher à jamais.



“ Soyez persuadez My Lord que les Anglois que le sort des armes pourroit faire nos prisonniers, seront traité de memes et qu’il trouverons dans l’ami de l’amiral Duncan leur protexteur.

“ Je connois trop votre caractere, loyal genereux et brave pour que la desertion de quelques chirurgiens-majors qui ont violé leur parole pourroient influencer sur ma demande. Il ne faut pas qu’un honnet homme soit puni, pour des gens qui ne connoissent pas ce que c’est que l’honneur et meme qui n’en ont point d’idée. Cependant j’ai porté mes plaintes à mon gouvernement, j’ai demandé qu’on les arrette et qu’on les renvoij en Angletterre, j’espere qu’on m’accorderas mon requete et qu’on vous convaincras, qu’on regarde ici avec mépris sur ces hommes qui abusent de la confiance qu’on avait en eux, du moins My Lord vous et le gouvernement Anglais peuvent etre assuréz que tous ceux qui désertent de la maniere et qui violeront ainsi leur Parole d’honneur seront traité ici comme vos prisonniers et qu’ils ne seront employés, sans une exchange à rang Egal, ou bien après la Paix.

“ Vous vouderez bien assurer My Lady Duncan de l’estime de mon Epouse ainsi que de la mienne, nous prions dieu qu’elle soit preservee pour des Epreuves aussi fortes, comme celles que nous venons de subir.

“ Soyez cher amiral dans tous ce qui vous regarde à jamais heureux, et que bientôt une paix honorables pour nos deux Patries, vous assure une vie tranquille et sans chagrins. Songez alors

dans vos heures de loisir que vous avez fait d'un amiral ennemi, un des vos meilleurs amis.

“ Je serai flatté de recevoir de vos nouvelles si tot que les circonstances des affaires politiques vous permettront de m'écrire sans reserve et rien ne me feras autant de plaisir que d'apprendre que je possede toujours une place dans votre estime et amitié.

“ J'ai l'honneur d'être

“ My Lord,

“ Votre très humble et très obeissant

“ Serviteur et ami

“ DE WINTER.”

He wrote again in the following year, expressing his desire for a peace.

“ Amsterdam : Le 8 Mars, 1798.

“ My Lord,—Quoique les circonstances et la geurre m'empchent de correspondre beaucoup, je me sens toujours pressant de vous donner de mes nouvelles quand l'occasion s'en presente si ce n'etoit que pour me rappeler à votre souvenir, et vous assurer de mon amitié et de mon estime. J'ai été bien en peine quand j'ai vu dans les gazettes que vous vous trouviez indisposé, j'espere de tout mon cœur que vous etes retabli parfaitement et que cela n'aura eu aucune suite. Vivez encore long-tems cher Amiral pour la consolation de vos amis et de votre famille, agréez mes respect pour My Lady Duncan, et croyez moi que je souhaite ardemment qu'une paix honorable et solide pour nos deux nations me donne bientôt la satisfaction que

je pourrois vous embrasser, et vous dire de bouche que je ne cesserai jamais d'être avec un sincère attachement.

“ My Lord et cher ami !

“ Votre très humble et très obeissant

“ Serviteur,

“ DE WINTER.

“ P.S. bien mes respect à Capitaine Fairfax.”

On April 20, 1799, De Winter wrote to tell Admiral Duncan of his wife's death :

“ Amsterdam : Le 20 Avril, 1799.

“ Mon cher Amiral,—Dans la supposition que ces peu de lignes ne troubleront point trop vos importantes occupations j'ai cru de mon devoir de vous donner connaissance de la perte que je viens de faire de mon aimable et trop sensible Epouse, elle mourut le 29 Janvier dernier aux suites de sa maladie et paralysie, dont elle fut attaquée le moment qu'on lui annonçoit ma mort supposée dans le terrible combat de 11 Octobre 1797. Tous mes soins n'ont pu la sauver et à la fin elle à du succomber à tous les souffrances Physiques dont elle fut accablée, elle payoit sa tribut à la nature dans la pleine confiance en celui, qui dispose à volonte sur ses creatures, et qui plane sur tout l'univers, l'œuvre de ses mains en celui que jamais ne refusa la consolation de la conscience à sa creature vertueuse, changeant l'esperance sur une vie et gloire eternelle en certitude et realité, c'est dans ce raisonnement mon cher Amiral que je trouve ma consolation.



L'homme doit mourir une fois et payer le tribut de la nature, heureux celui qui meurt sans regrets et sans honte, avec une conscience tranquille, et la confiance dans l'être supreme. Je prie le bon Dieu et souhaite que le terme de votre vie, soit encore bien Eloigné, jouissez en attendant d'une parfaite santé et parfait contentement, Dieu vous preserve longtems pour des pertes aussi douloureuses que je viens de faire, souvenez vous de tems en tems d'un malheureux ami qui vous porte beaucoup et beaucoup d'estime qui veut mérité le votre et votre amitié, qui vous prie de faire souvenir vos amis à lui, et qui n'aura jamais plus de plaisir que de pouvoir vous rendre quelques services, se nomant avec la consideration la plus parfaite.

“ Cher Amiral

“ Votre très humble tres obeissant

“ Serviteur,

“ DE WINTER.”

These letters are given, not because it can be claimed that they contain much that is of public interest, but because they show De Winter's generous, simple nature, which could rise superior to the cares and troubles of life, and which deeply appreciated and clung to the friendships formed in England.

The Batavian Government in November, 1799, sent over M. Van Dedem van de Gelder as Commissary to treat for the exchange of the Dutch prisoners. One of the articles of the arrangement concluded by the Duke of York and General Brune

at the Helder provided that the Dutch prisoners should be sent back to Holland, and provided expressly for the liberation from their parole of Admiral De Winter and the other Officers taken at Camperdown.

De Winter wrote to introduce M. Van Dedem van de Gelder to Lord Duncan :

“ Amsterdam : Le 28 Novembre, 1799.

“ Mon cher My Lord,—Mon Gouvernement ayant nommé le C<sup>r</sup> Van Dedem son Commissaire pour traiter l'échange des prisonniers de geurre que l'angletterre nous à fait je profite de cette occassion pour me rappeler à votre souvenir et vous assurer de mon estime. Permettez qu'en meme tems je vous presente Le C<sup>r</sup> Van Dedem comme un de mes amis, que je sollicite de vouloir l'honorer de votre attention, de le protèger dans la marche de sa mission et d'employer vos bontes pour que les vues de nos gouvernements soyent remplies le plutot possible en rendant les prisonniers à leurs familles deplorées. Je prends la liberté de rappeler à votre attention quelques Midshipmans Batave fait Prisonnier le 11 Octobre 1797 et encore retenu en Angletterre, ainsi que quelques Pilotes detenu dans les prisons. Je souhaite bien ardemment qu'une paix honorable et durable pour les deux Nations Anglaise et Batave, mette une terme au fléau de la geurre et me permetteras de cultiver de plus près l'amitié dont vous m'avez bien voulu honorer et etant fondee sur l'estime reciproque aucune circonstance

de la geurre ni rapport politique ne sçaura le troubler, après avoir remplis la tache que nos patries exigent de nous comme soldats et marins. Recevez mon cher My Lord les assurances sinceres de ma plus haute considerations avec laquelle j'ai l'honneur d'etre, mon cher My Lord !

“Votre très humble et très obeissant Serviteur,  
“DE WINTER.”

The closing sentence of De Winter's letter—the last communication which, so far as is known, Lord Duncan received from him—breathes a generosity so open and manly, a statesmanship so wise, and a Christianity so pure, that it deserves to be repeated : “I desire most ardently that an  
“honorable and lasting peace between the English  
“and Dutch Nations shall put an end to the scourge  
“of war and shall allow me to cultivate more  
“closely the friendship with which you have  
“honoured me—which is founded on mutual esteem  
“—and which neither the circumstances of war nor  
“the state of Political relations can disturb.”

These are words which all the wise and patriotic men in both nations might then and still may ponder over with advantage.

Why was there or should there be war between Holland and Great Britain ? Apart from commerce they had no opposing interests. Sprung from the same stock, the habits and feelings of both nations bore much resemblance, and neither aspired to make conquest of the country of the other. In such a war the smaller Nation must in the long



run prove the weaker ; while, on the other hand, the Continental interests of Great Britain suggested to her the position of Protector rather than of Oppressor of Holland.

Their rivalry had been mostly commercial, but in 1795 Holland found herself involved in war chiefly because no silver streak of sea intervened to isolate her from the political infection and aspirations of a turbulent neighbour. Little did the Batavian Republicans foresee the fate which they were preparing for their country and themselves. What would De Winter have said in 1795 if he had been told that he would live to inspect the coasts of Holland as part of France, himself an officer of a French Emperor ?

The sea struggles between Great Britain and Holland were invariably obstinate and generally indecisive ; more than once in the times of Cromwell and of Charles II. a sea fight had lasted for several days. And if Blake and Monk and Albemarle and Prince Rupert had had their triumphs, Tromp had sailed in the Channel with a broom at his masthead, and De Ruyter within a short time after a defeat had taken Sheerness, insulted Chatham, Portsmouth and Plymouth, and had threatened London itself.

In more recent times, Admiral Zoutman and Sir Hyde Parker had fought a desperate battle (August 5. 1781) near the Doggerbank, in which neither obtained the mastery ; and if Camperdown proved a victory for Great Britain, the losses of the victors were equal to those of the vanquished.

On many occasions the Dutch seamen had shown themselves, beyond all comparison, the best and the most hardy sailors of the Continent of Europe.

When wars between Great Britain and Holland had thus served no purpose except to furnish splendid proof of the tenacity and endurance of their common race, might not every Patriot and Statesman of both Nations pray, with De Winter, for an honourable and lasting peace and friendship, in which both Nations might, in every quarter of the world, work out their destiny in harmony, mutual forbearance, and goodwill?

## CHAPTER IX

BLOCKADE OF THE TEXEL, 1798-9—ADMIRAL OF THE WHITE, FEBRUARY 14, 1799—EXPEDITION TO THE HELDER, AUGUST, 1799—SURRENDER OF THE DUTCH FLEET IN THE TEXEL, AUGUST 30, 1799

1798 IN the first six months of the year 1798 nothing of special interest occurred in the North Sea. In the early part of the year Lord Duncan was unwell and Sir Richard Onslow had charge of the Squadron off the Texel. Lord Duncan relieved him in the beginning of August, having hoisted his Flag in the 'Kent,' with Captain William Hope once more as Flag Captain, in place of Sir William Fairfax, who had received an independent command in Scotland.

On August 20 it was reported that there were lying in the Texel fourteen two-decked Ships, fourteen Frigates, one Brig, and eighteen Transports.

On August 27 Lord Duncan heard from the Admiralty that three French Frigates—'La Concorde,' 'La Medée,' 'La Françoise'—had sailed from Rochefort, and had landed a body of troops at Killala Bay, in the North-west of Ireland, and he was directed to watch the Texel and the other Ports of Holland very closely, "so as to pre-



“vent any small squadron of Frigates from sailing  
“to the coast of Ireland.” 1798

The Admiral had just experienced a strong westerly gale, and “on the 25th at noon the “‘Kent’s’ main topmast went away from its being “a very bad stick,” and other ships suffered damage, more especially the Russian ships, Admiral Makaroff being compelled to make for the Nore with two of his vessels, in order to get new masts and to effect other repairs.

“The wind continued strong until the 27th; “it then came to the northward, and on the 28th to N.E.” The ‘Kent’ was again on her station on the 29th, and, on looking into the Texel, found that there was no change in the number or condition of the Dutch Fleet.

The French troops who had landed in Killala Bay were only twelve hundred in number, and were commanded by General Humbert. “You will “have heard that the French have made a landing “in Ireland but not of serious consequence,” wrote Mr. Harvey, Sir Richard Onslow’s Secretary, on September 1 from Yarmouth to Lord Duncan’s Secretary, Mr. Noble. It will be remembered that on September 8 these troops surrendered to General Lake, and that an auxiliary Squadron commanded by Commodore Bompart, and consisting of the ‘Hoche’ line of battle ship and eight Frigates, with 3,000 soldiers on board, started from Brest on September 15, and reached the Northwest coast of Ireland, but was defeated off Loch Swilly, the ‘Hoche’ and six of the Frigates being

1798 captured. Wolfe Tone, who was on board, was taken prisoner, and committed suicide while waiting for trial.

Mr. Harvey's letter went on to make reference to the battle of the Nile, which had been fought on August 1, but of which the news had not yet been received: "We are yet in a state of suspense  
"relative to the operations of the Squadron under  
"Admiral Nelson but are anxiously expecting to  
"hear something very decisive. The French ac-  
"count of the Action appears this day in the  
"Paper; by it poor Nelson is dead but the victory  
"very complete."

Lord Duncan, in pursuance of directions from the Admiralty, returned on September 18 to Yarmouth, to repair defects in the ships and to replenish stores as quickly as possible. He issued orders on arriving in Port that information of all defects and demands for stores in each ship was forthwith to be sent on board the 'Kent.' Each Captain was "always to keep his ship ready for sea  
"at a moment's warning, with buoys ready in case  
"of cutting or slipping. On the appearance of an  
"easterly wind, everybody is to repair on board  
"their respective ships." Great vigilance was necessary in order to prevent any assistance to the French in Ireland being sent from the Ports of Holland, and Sir Richard Onslow on September 22 resumed observation off the Texel.

On October 1 Captain Capel arrived in the 'Kite' Sloop at Yarmouth, bringing Sir Horatio Nelson's Despatches about the Battle of the Nile

to the Admiralty. Lord Duncan wrote to congratulate Sir Richard Onslow, who replied on October 8 from "The 'Monarch,' off the Texel : "

1798

" Many thanks for your two letters. I congratulate your Lordship upon Sir Horatio Nelson's Victory off the Nile; nothing was ever more completely done. Two Naval Victories within the year merits a promotion which, I hope, will soon follow."

Lord Duncan also wrote to congratulate Sir Horatio Nelson; but no copy of his letter has been preserved.

Lady Spencer guessed that he would highly applaud Sir Horatio's splendid deed, and she wrote to him on October 7: " I thank God that your health is so comfortably re-established. Lord Spencer assures me that you are forty years younger than you were a very few months ago. May you long preserve this renovating faculty and long continue to be one of your country's best bulwarks !

" You are my great Hero, and what say you to my little Hero? but I already know what you *do* say to my dear Nelson's brilliant action; and it is beyond expression animating to hear the applause of a great and splendid deed given by one whose own illustrious life exhibits an equally glorious one. Such praise, so given, is the brightest reward valour can receive in this world."

Lady Spencer wrote on the same day to Lord St. Vincent, on the Mediterranean Station :

" I am sure it must be needless to attempt



1798 “ expressing to your Lordship my delight at the  
 “ recollection of the last eighteen months. Lord  
 “ Spencer’s naval administration has witnessed  
 “ during that period three victories, which, since  
 “ naval records have been kept in this or any other  
 “ country, are not to be equalled. Your magnifi-  
 “ cent achievement saved this Country; Lord  
 “ Duncan’s saved Ireland; and I must hope Lord  
 “ Nelson’s saves India.”

On October 9 a Russian reinforcement of five ships under Rear-Admiral Kartzoff arrived at the Nore; unhappily, the ‘Prince Gustav,’ 74, had been lost on the voyage.

On October 24, Captain King, of the ‘Sirius,’ when reconnoitring off the Texel, chased and captured two Dutch Frigates. “ The ‘Waaksamheid,’  
 “ mounting 26 guns, was warped out of the Texel  
 “ at night on the 23rd and was captured by the  
 “ ‘Sirius’ about noon of the 24th, after firing one  
 “ gun; she had on board upwards of two hundred  
 “ men, one hundred and twenty of whom were  
 “ Dutch Artillery and French soldiers, with a  
 “ quantity of arms and ammunition, and was going  
 “ North about for Ireland.”

The ‘Sirius’ then stood after the other ship, and captured her about 5 P.M., after a running fight of about half an hour. She proved to be ‘La Furie,’ 36 guns, and had on board a party of French troops and a quantity of ordnance stores, also destined for Ireland.

The Dutch after this made no further attempts in 1798 to send relief to Ireland, and on November 9

Sir Richard Onslow was ordered to bring his Squadron back to Yarmouth. Having fallen into ill health, he soon after his return applied for sick-leave, and ultimately gave up his command; and on December 10 he was succeeded by Vice-Admiral Archibald Dickson. 1798

Lord Duncan had had occasion also to apply for sick-leave, and on December 16 he struck his Flag and proceeded to his home in Scotland for change of air.

He became Admiral of the White on February 14, 1799. 1799

The Dutch Fleet did not make any attempt in the spring of that year to issue from the Texel or to molest British trade. Vice-Admiral Dickson, in the 'Monarch,' superintended the blockade of the Dutch coast during the early part of the year; and not only was it difficult to elude the vigilance of the British cruisers, but political disaffection and discontent had made progress, and had produced further demoralisation in the Dutch Navy. The partisans of the House of Orange continued their correspondence with the Stadtholder in England; and in consequence of the intelligence received, Mr. Pitt's Government endeavoured to effect an arrangement with the Emperor Paul for a combined attack upon some part of Holland, as a diversion in favour of the armies operating on the Rhine and in the Alps. On June 22 an agreement was concluded between Great Britain and Russia, by which Great Britain was to provide a force of 13,000 and Russia a force of 17,000 troops for this purpose.

1799

The British Cabinet was encouraged by the agents of the Prince of Orange, and, as it proved, not without reason, to hope that the Dutch Fleet might be detached from its allegiance to the Republican Government without armed resistance. Lord Spencer on June 25 communicated the design to Lord Duncan, and requested him at the same time to proceed to the Texel:

*“ Secret.*

*“ Admiralty: 25th June, 1799.*

“ My Dear Lord,—I write a few lines to prepare you for instructions which you will probably receive by to-morrow’s post on a subject of considerable importance and secrecy. The tenor of them will relate to a communication which has lately taken place between a confidential Agent of the Prince of Orange and M. Van Braam the second in command of the Texel Fleet; the latter has been long known to be in the Orange Interest, and he now proposes to bring over the Fleet under his orders (that is to say all of them which are in a condition to sail) to join the British Fleet off the Texel and to come into an English Port on condition that they shall be received and treated as Allies. The particulars of this communication with the instructions grounded on it will be by to-morrow’s post transmitted to your Lordship, and as in an affair of such delicacy and secrecy it is most advisable that it should pass through as few hands as possible, it will be desirable that you should put to sea and relieve Admiral Dickson as soon as is convenient for the purpose, in case the proposed signal should



be made of acting upon it; and we are taught to expect from the present circumstances of that country that the Fleet will very shortly be ready to come out and join you.

1799

“ Believe me, etc.

“ SPENCER.

“ Viscount Duncan &c., &c., &c.”

Accordingly, on July 1 the ‘ Kent ’ was off the Texel, and Lord Duncan on the next day wrote to the Secretary of the Admiralty: “ Be pleased to inform their Lordships that I arrived off the Texel yesterday morning when I was joined by Vice Admiral Dickson with the ‘ Monarch,’ ‘ Belliqueux,’ ‘ Agamemnon,’ ‘ Ardent,’ ‘ Veteran,’ ‘ Director,’ ‘ Prince Frederick ’ and ‘ Glatton,’ and one Russian line of battleship. The weather, having been very hazy ever since, has afforded me no opportunity to view the enemy’s Force, but the Vice Admiral informs me that no alteration has taken place since the last Reports. The ‘ Isis ’ is now close in shore and the ‘ Romney ’ gone into Yarmouth with a large suspicious ship but I shall send instructions to both these ships to proceed to Spithead agreeably to their Lordships’ instructions.”

On July 11 the ‘ Kent ’ worked in shore to get a better view of the enemy’s force, and the Admiral wrote to Lord Spencer, who replied on July 15:

“ Admiralty: 15th July, 1799.

“ I have to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 11th and I do not yet despair of the

1799

business to which it relates coming to a favourable conclusion.

“ I am glad to hear you have had such fine weather which I hope may continue, and that you may find a Summer Cruize off the Texel agree as well with you as you did before.

“ You will perceive that on the illness of Captain Macdonell I have taken the opportunity which offered for Captain Campbell and Lt. Little, who will obtain their respective Rank when any final determination is come to respecting the ‘ Ganges ’ and ‘ Ranger.’ ”

On July 19 Lord Duncan reported on the strength of the enemy :

“ 19th July, 1799, ‘ Kent ’ off the Texel.

“ Be pleased to acquaint their Lordships that  
 “ on the evening of the 17th I had a very good  
 “ view of the Enemy’s force in the Texel. I found  
 “ in the Mars Diep only 12 ships all the others  
 “ seemed to be laid up in the Nieu Diep. On the  
 “ 18th in the morning the ‘ Director ’ joined company,  
 “ and as Captain Bligh had been in the habit of  
 “ seeing them often previously to his going into  
 “ Yarmouth, I ordered him to reconnoitre, and I  
 “ here enclose his report, for the accuracy of which  
 “ I am ready to vouch and which agrees with my  
 “ own observations.”

Lord Duncan returned to Yarmouth about July 20, and issued orders to get ready again for sea at a moment’s notice. On the 23rd he wrote to Captain Wood, of the ‘ Hound,’ con-

gratulating him on destroying the French privateer 'l'Hirondelle' of 5 guns and 26 men, and also another Lugger privateer mounting 16 guns. Captain Clements, of the 'Cruizer,' also took and sent into Leith Roads 'Le Courageux' privateer of 14 guns and 60 men. 1799

Lord Duncan returned to the Texel on July 24. By an Admiralty letter dated on that day he was informed that in consequence of the combined French and Spanish Fleets having left the Mediterranean and returned to the Atlantic, he was to send as many ships as he could spare to reinforce the Channel Squadron. The 'Monarch,' 'Monmouth,' 'Director,' 'Belliqueux,' 'Agamemnon' and 'Prince Frederick' were accordingly despatched to Spithead.

It may perhaps be of interest to recall the circumstances under which this sudden emergency had occurred. On April 26 the French Admiral Bruix had slipped out of Brest with twenty-five sail of the line and ten smaller vessels, eluding the Channel Fleet under Lord Bridport; after which he made for Cadiz, off which Port he appeared on May 4, intending to effect a junction with the Spanish Fleet. There, however, he found Lord Keith with a Squadron of fifteen ships ready to oppose him; and as a gale was blowing directly on shore, and as he had not much confidence in the seamanship of his Captains, he decided not to attack even with a position to windward and with numbers so much in his favour, and therefore kept away to the South-east and passed through the Straits of Gibraltar,

Capt.  
Mahan's  
Influence  
of Sea  
Power on  
the French  
Revolution  
and  
Empire,  
vol. i.  
chap. x.



1799 running before the gale, past Cartagena, on to Toulon, which latter port he reached on May 20. Sailing again on May 26 with twenty-two ships, he directed his course east until he anchored in Vado Bay on June 4, after which a portion of his Squadron threw supplies into Genoa on the 6th. From thence, for some unknown and unaccountable reason, he turned short back and retraced his steps, getting information at Toulon as he passed, and anchored at Cartagena on June 22. Here he found the Spanish Fleet, which had sailed from Cadiz, Lord Keith having been withdrawn from his station by Lord St. Vincent to assist in the pursuit of the French Fleet in the Mediterranean.

On June 29 Bruix sailed again, having now sixteen Spanish ships in company, and passed through the Straits on July 7, reaching Cadiz on the 11th, whence the Combined Fleets started once more on the 21st, numbering forty sail, and arrived in Brest Harbour on August 13. Only twenty-four hours later Lord Keith appeared off Brest with thirty-one ships, having searched vainly for the French in the Mediterranean until July 6, when he heard at Port Mahon that they were at Cartagena, since which date he had been prosecuting an energetic but fruitless stern chase.

Admiral Bruix' cruise, barren of practical results as it had proved, might, and indeed ought to, have had a very different ending ; but at all events it had greatly alarmed the British Admiralty and created much excitement among the scattered British Naval Forces belonging to the Mediter-

ranean command. “The Brest Squadron had such  
“a game to play at Malta and Sicily,” wrote Lord  
St. Vincent, the Commander-in-Chief on the  
Mediterranean Station, to Lord Spencer, “that  
“I trembled for the fate of our ships employed  
“there and for the latter Island. Your Lordship  
“made a better judgment by fixing their operations  
“to the coast of Genoa.”

1799

Although it would appear from Lord St. Vincent's statement that Lord Spencer had guessed correctly the actual movements of the Combined Fleets, the First Lord did not place much reliance in his own prognostications. Writing on July 25 to explain the situation and his views more fully to Lord Duncan, he said :

“*Private.*”

“Admiralty : 25th July, 1799.”

“My dear Lord,—You will have learnt by Nepean's letter of our situation here with respect to the French and Spanish Fleets, whose motions have of late been so irregular and unaccountable that they baffle all conjecture. The probability is strong that they passed the Streights on the 8 July, but it is not quite sure, and if it should prove otherwise I fancy we shall soon hear of an Action, as our Fleet could not be far behind them. In this state of uncertainty, it is however necessary to be prepared in case of their coming into these seas again in Force, which though perhaps not very likely is possible, and at the same time we are desirous of keeping a good look out on our Dutch friends that we may not be disappointed

1799 in our intention in that Quarter, on the success of which so much depends.

“I have received your two letters of the 19th and 21st, and I rather think with you that whatever disposition there may be in the quarter to which you allude, the means are not quite so much at hand as we were led to suppose.

“Captain Winthrop’s activity does him very great credit and he would not have been recalled from where he was working so well, if we did not want his assistance shortly in another point of equal importance.

“Believe me etc.,

“SPENCER.

“Viscount Duncan &c., &c., &c.”

The Russian ships at the Nore under Admiral Makaroff, and at Yarmouth with Admiral Tate, six sail of the line, two Frigates and a Brig, were directed to reinforce the North Sea Fleet, and they joined on August 1.

It would seem that Lord Duncan had no great confidence in the immediate or peaceful surrender of the Dutch Fleet, and Lord Spencer appears to have shared his opinion :

“*Private.*

“Admiralty : 3rd August, 1799.

“My dear Lord,—I have to acknowledge your two letters of the 22nd and 25th July, and am much obliged to you for them ; I believe your conjecture about the Dutch Admiral is not far from the truth, and I think the best way of securing his Fleet from mischief will be to keep them as tightly blocked



1799

as possible, for the present at least (as you will have fully learned from the Board) it will be absolutely necessary.

“ I have not time now to add more than that I hope you find cruizing agrees well with your health and

“ am my dear Lord,

“ Yours very faithfully,

“ SPENCER.

“ Viscount Duncan, &c., &c., &c.”

It was at this moment that the plan of an Expedition to Holland was put in execution. The British Government placed a Land Force amounting in all to about 13,000 men under Sir Ralph Abercrombie, and entrusted the duty of transporting and landing the troops to Vice-Admiral Andrew Mitchell, who was directed to hoist his Flag on board the ‘ Isis,’ 50 guns, and to embark the troops at Ramsgate, Margate, and Broadstairs. Lord Duncan was duly informed by the Admiralty of the approaching departure of the Expedition, and was desired to make a feint upon some other part of the Dutch Coast :

“ *Secret.*

“ Admiralty : 6 August, 1799.

“ My Lord,—I have the honour of enclosing to your Lordship by command of my Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty a copy of their Lordships’ Orders to Vice-Admiral Mitchell for employing the force under his command in co-operating with the Troops under Lieutenant-General Sir Ralph Abercrombie in a descent on the coast of Holland.

1799      “ The first Division of the troops appointed for this expedition consisting of about 12,000 men will embark at Margate and other places in that neighbourhood to-morrow and on Thursday next, and will if the wind continues fair, proceed immediately to the points of destination, so that a tolerably good judgment may be formed by your Lordship of the probable time of their reaching the coast, and as it is of the first importance that measures should be taken for drawing off the attention of the enemy from that part of the coast on which the attack is actually to be made, it is their Lordships’ command that you should make such demonstrations of an intention to land on some other part by means of the force under your Lordship’s command, as may be best adapted to that purpose.

“ I am etc.,

“ EVAN NEPEAN.”

Lord Duncan was also requested by Mr. Henry Dundas to send certain information to Sir Ralph Abercrombie :

“ *Secret and Confidential.*      “ Walmer Castle : 9th August, 1799.

“ My dear Lord,—From every information lately received in this country respecting the dispositions of the inhabitants of the United Provinces, it is of the utmost importance that the Armament under Sir Ralph Abercrombie should proceed without delay to the coast of Holland, and I have no reason to doubt that it will be ready to sail on

Sunday next, unless prevented by circumstances of wind and weather.

1799

“ After the most mature consideration we can give to the subject, it has been resolved that the first landing shall be made on the Island of Gorée, and there appears every reason to hope that this operation will be attended with success. After securing Gorée, our next wish is that the Island of Voorn with the Fortresses upon it should be reduced, which is the leading object of our present plan and the principal inducement for first taking possession of Gorée. From the difficulty of the navigation this attempt however may be found altogether impracticable, or liable to a much greater risk and danger than it would be proper to incur. In either of these suppositions he must be instructed to proceed to some other quarter. The most important in our view of the subject is the Helder and the Texel Island, which would afford him a safe position and communication with the Fleet until he could be reinforced, and, among other striking advantages, by giving him the command of the Zuyder Zee enable him to threaten Amsterdam and the adjacent ports. The importance of this plan as connected with the objects which more immediately occupy your attention I need not detail to your Lordship.

“ With a view therefore to this attempt, considered as the next object of the Expedition in the event of a disappointment at Voorn, or, in the event of success, to be prepared for this attempt with some future division of our Forces, Sir Ralph



1799 is anxious to obtain the most accurate information he can upon the subject, and for this purpose Captain Finlay the bearer of this letter is dispatched to you with such queries as have occurred to the General and myself, and is ordered to return with your Lordship's answers to Sir Ralph Abercrombie at Gorée, where I trust he will find him, unless a more rapid success has placed him upon the Island of Voorn. I earnestly request of your Lordship to give every aid and information in your power in the most confidential manner to Captain Finlay for the guidance of Sir Ralph Abercrombie, and to furnish Sir Ralph with any suggestions which may occur to you for the execution of this important service. Having stated to your Lordship the probable time of the departure of the Expedition, I recommend to your Lordship as far as it may be in your power, to make such demonstrations upon the coast of Holland as may be judged by you best calculated to distract the attention of the Enemy, and to deceive them as to the first and immediate attack on the Islands of Gorée and Voorn.

“I remain my dear Lord,

“Yours very faithfully,

“HENRY DUNDAS.

“P.S.—The Russian Marines if wanted for the proposed attack on the Texel, or for a demonstration on any other point may be allotted to either service, as your Lordship will perceive by the Extract I enclose of a private letter from Lord Grenville.”

The Admiral about this time began to suffer from another serious attack of illness, as appears from Lord Spencer's kind and sympathetic letter of August 15 :—

“ Admiralty : 15 August, 1799.

“ My dear Lord,—I am very sorry that you give so indifferent an account of your health, but as I do not wish by any means that you should injure it by cruizing when there appears so little for you to expect of active service, I have desired that you may be authorized to send in the ‘ Ganges ’ to take up Admiral Dickson for the purpose of relieving you.

“ The weather has been uncommonly bad for the season, and it now blows quite a hurricane from the S.W., so that I don't know where this will find you.

“ Admiral Mitchell and his Flotilla sailed the day before yesterday, but the wind will probably have deranged his operations for a time at least. I hope no material mischief will happen from it.

“ Believe me etc.

“ SPENCER.

“ Viscount Duncan, &c., &c.”

Although it was very improbable, judging from the intelligence which had been received about the Seamen of the Dutch Fleet, and also in view of the condition and number of the Dutch ships, that any fighting would take place on the open sea, the Admiral was unwilling to leave his post at such a moment, and remained there, in order to lend to the Expedition every assistance in his power.

1799

On August 13 Admiral Mitchell's ships put to sea with the troops on board, and on the 20th he arrived off the Texel. It would appear that on the passage Sir Ralph Abercrombie, who was on board the 'Isis,' had, after considering his instructions, together with the information received from Lord Duncan, resolved that the best course was to attack both Helder Point and the Texel Island, and had so agreed with Admiral Mitchell.

*"To Vice-Admiral Andrew Mitchell.*

*"'Isis' at Sea : 14 August, 1799.*

"Sir,—After having maturely weighed the objects recommended in my secret instructions of the 10th inst., and after considering the information received from Lord Duncan, I have been induced to form a decided opinion that in the present existing circumstances it would tend more for the honour and advantage of His Majesty's Arms and the real interest of Great Britain to attack in the first instance the Helder and the Texel island and by that means to open a communication with Holland and at the same time either to destroy or to render totally unserviceable the Dutch Fleet.

"On these grounds I have no doubt of your hearty concurrence in this plan and that you will take immediate means to carry it into execution.

"I am etc.,

"R. ABERCROMBIE."

Lord Duncan's Despatch to the Admiralty of August 24 narrates in detail the events which followed.



“ ‘Kent,’ Texel S.E. by E.  
distant 7 leagues : 24 August, 1799.

“ Sir,—Be pleased to acquaint the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty that by the letters I received on the 14th instant I had reason to believe that Vice Admiral Mitchell with the Expedition would come my way. The wind being then at S. by E. I stood in for Egmont and anchored about three leagues from the shore with the Squadron. Early on the morning of the 15th I was joined by the ‘Circe,’ whose Captain informed me that Vice-Admiral Mitchell was at no great distance. At 8 A.M. I stood out to meet him. We soon got sight of his Fleet, but before we could join it blew a storm at S.W. which continued more or less violent till Tuesday the 20th. On the afternoon of that day General Sir R. Abercrombie and Vice-Admiral Mitchell came on board to me. I gave the Vice-Admiral orders to put himself under my command, and at the same time directions to continue conducting the men-of-war and transports as formerly, not intending to interfere with his arrangements unless I judged it absolutely necessary. We soon adjusted matters for the attack of the Helder Point as well as the ships in the Texel, with great unanimity, and I furnished the Vice-Admiral with such ships as was thought necessary for his securing the Texel, amongst which were His Imperial Majesty’s Ships ‘Ratvizan’ and ‘Mistislaw,’ and Vice Admiral Tate was directed to follow with a Reserve of four more line of battle ships in case it should be judged

1799

1799 necessary. We at the same time agreed that the General should summon the land forces, and I the Fleet, to give up, offering the most flattering terms. On Wednesday the weather was fine and all stood towards the shore with the most flattering appearances. A flag of truce was sent in, Captain Winthrop having charge of my letter and Colonel Maitland that on the part of the General. About 6 P.M. I anchored off the Helder and before midnight every vessel was in safety off that anchorage. Thursday morning the wind came back to the South West and the weather looked lowering; by noon it began to blow and the Fleet got under sail to get off the land. Thursday and Friday it blew strong from the S.W. which prevented our approaching the shore. The Flag of truce returned yesterday with an answer from Admiral Story the original of which I enclose for their Lordships' information. From the conversation Captain Winthrop had with Admiral Story and some of the Dutch Captains, there seems no doubt if the Helder Point could be taken the Fleet would soon surrender. It is now Saturday noon, the wind at N.W. with a good appearance of weather.

“I shall stop to remark that in all the service I ever was on, I never saw more unanimity, zeal and anxiety in all ranks for the public service, and in particular for the success of the expedition. The Russian Vice-Admirals Makaroff and Tate most cordially agreed to the active part pointed out for them as have likewise all their Officers and men

and have in every instance shown themselves faithful allies to the General Cause.

1799

“ I am etc.

“ DUNCAN.

“ To E. Nepean.”

On Wednesday, August 21, Lord Duncan sent in a flag of truce, with a letter from himself as arranged, summoning Commodore Van Braam to surrender, and with another from Sir R. Abercrombie, conveying a similar summons to Colonel Gelquin, who was in command of the Dutch troops on Helder Point :

“ ‘ Kent ’ : 20 August, 1799.

“ Sir,—As there are now above 20,000 British troops landed on the Helder and many more will follow, you have a good opportunity to show your zeal for your lawful Sovereign the Prince of Orange by declaring with as many of the Dutch Fleet as will follow your example, for him. All those that now make that declaration will be treated as friends and allies and may hoist the Dutch Flag at the main-top-mast head. After your making that declaration to Sir Ralph Abercrombie the General who commands the British Army on shore and to Andrew Mitchell Esquire Vice-Admiral of the Blue commanding under me the Naval Department of the expedition, any of the ships that wish it may come out and join me, and shall with the most sincere friendship be treated as Allies and received into the bosom of the British Fleet, there



1799 to remain until they have directions from the Prince of Orange how to proceed.

“ I am etc.

“ DUNCAN.

“ To Commodore Van Braam etc.”

It was not the Commodore but Admiral Story who replied to Lord Duncan's summons, and in honourable and dignified terms :

*Translation.* “ The ‘ Washington,’ Texel Roads : 22 August, 1799.

“ Admiral,—If I acceded to the proposal you make to me, as an Officer I should be unworthy of the esteem of Lord Duncan and would lose the good opinion of every honest man. I know the duties I owe to the Flag under which I have the honour to serve and to my country.

“ Even if your force were to increase to double their number my sentiments will remain the same, therefore expect from me, my Lord, a defence worthy of my honour and my nation. Meanwhile I send instantly your summons to my Government. Should you choose to wait their decision, I will inform you of it.

“ I am with esteem,

“ J. STORY.”

Colonel Gelquin replied to the General at the same time :

“ On board the ‘ Washington ’ in  
Texel Roads : 22 August, 1799.

“ General,—I received your letter, upon which I have the honour to answer that my life is attached to my country and, General, I expect you with

tranquillity with the troops I have the honour to command.

“ This is my answer.

“ With esteem etc.,

“ The Colonel GELQUIN.”

Lord Duncan was premature in stating that 20,000 British troops were landed on the Helder Point. On the evening of the 21st it appeared that in a few hours such would be the case, but “ on Thursday the 22nd, it began to blow hard from the South West and the Fleet was obliged to put off from land.”

On August 23 Admiral Mitchell made a report to the Admiralty :

“ ‘ Isis ’ at Sea off Texel Island, 23 August, 1799.

“ I joined Lord Duncan’s Squadron on the 20th and his Lordship has, in the most handsome manner, left the whole management and direction of the expedition to me, purposing not to interfere unless circumstances should render it necessary, and has reinforced me with the ships named in the margin (‘ Ardent,’ ‘ America,’ ‘ Veteran,’ ‘ Mistisloff,’ ‘ Ratvisan,’ ‘ Latona,’ ‘ Lutine,’ ‘ Coburg ’ Cutter, ‘ Juno ’). . .

“ On the evening of the 20th at the earnest request of Lord Duncan, I sent Captain Winthrop of the ‘ Circe ’ accompanied with Colonel Maitland from the General, into the Texel with a Flag of Truce to the Dutch Commodore with Lord Duncan’s propositions and a letter of my own.”

He further proceeded to say that the weather

1799 was very rough indeed; that the victualling ships had not arrived, and that owing to want of provisions and other causes his ships containing the troops would not be able to remain off the Texel longer than Tuesday the 27th. “The General and  
 “ myself have determined, from the returns of the  
 “ Transports, that we cannot without the greatest  
 “ risque keep the Convoy on this ground after  
 “ Tuesday the 27th, especially as the Victuallers  
 “ have not arrived.”

The position of the Expedition had thus become critical, but fortunately the weather moderated on Monday the 26th, and on the 29th Admiral Mitchell was able to report to Lord Duncan that a landing had been effected on the 27th and that the Helder Point and Texel Island were in the possession of the British :

“ ‘ Isis ’ at Anchor off Texel: 29 August, 1799.

“ Fortunately the gale abated on the 26th. . . .

“ At 3 A.M. on 27th the troops were all in the boats, and signal being made to row towards the shore, the line of gunboats, sloops and Bombs opened a warm and well directed fire to scour the beach, and a landing was effected with little loss. We secured the possession of the whole neck of land between Kykdown and the road leading to Alkmaar.

“ Late that night the Helder Point was evacuated and taken possession of by our troops quietly in the morning, as were the men-of-war named in the enclosed list—(‘ Broederschap,’ 54, Guardship—‘ Verwagting,’ 64—‘ Heldin,’ 32,—‘ Venus,’ 24—‘ Dalk,’ 24—‘ Minerva,’ 24—‘ Hector,’ 44) and about



thirteen Indiamen and transports. . . . I must now, my Lord, acknowledge in the warmest manner the high degree of obligation I am under to your Lordship for the liberal manner in which you continued to entrust to my direction the service I have had the honor to execute under your immediate eyes.” 1799

Lord Duncan's Despatch of August 28 gave to the Admiralty a lucid and concise account of what had happened :

“ ‘ Kent ’ at anchor off the Texel : August 28, 1799.

“ Sir,—Be pleased to acquaint the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty that I shall go on from my letter of 25th inst. and say it blew so fresh on Sunday that we could not approach the land, but the weather becoming more moderate on Monday the whole of the Fleet with the Transports were at anchor close in shore that day. I shall not enter into detail of landing the Troops of what happened on Tuesday as their Lordships will have that stated by Vice Admiral Mitchell; suffice it to say, the Troops rowed toward the shore at day-break and landed, though immediately opposed by numbers, and from that time till half past four P.M. were continually in action. However the gallantry of the British troops surmounted all difficulties and drove the enemy wherever they met them.

“ The ‘ Ratvizan,’ Russian ship, got ashore on the South Haik in coming to the anchorage, where she remained for some time in great danger, but by timely assistance of her Captain and Officers in

1799 getting out some of the guns and otherwise lightening her, she was got off and last night reported to be again fit for service.

“ At 5 P.M. the ‘Belliqueux’ with her Convoy from the Downes anchored. This day it blows strong from the westward with a great surf, so that I fear little can be done, but I am sure the Vice Admiral will avail himself on every opportunity to carry on the service, as I never witnessed more attention and perseverance in spite of most unfavourable weather, to get the troops landed, and nothing shall be wanting on my part towards furnishing him with every aid in my power, in order to bring the business to a happy termination.

“ I am &c.,

“ DUNCAN.

“ To E. Nepean.

“ P.S.—8 P.M. The weather is still bad but a lugger is just returned with an answer to a letter I wrote Vice Admiral Mitchell this morning, by which I find the Helder Point was last night evacuated and the guns in it spiked up. The Lieutenant of the Lugger likewise reports that the General and Vice Admiral had not sent off their Despatches, and as I think it of the greatest consequence that the Publick should have the earliest notice, I detach a cutter with this interesting intelligence, although it was my original intention only to have sent one away after the General and Vice Admiral had forwarded their Despatches, and as I have not time to alter my other letter to you of this date, I beg to refer their Lordships to

Lieutenant Clay of H.M.S. 'Kent,' an intelligent and deserving Officer, for further particulars."

1799

On August 30 Admiral Mitchell, as his Fleet was entering the Texel, sent a peremptory note to Admiral Story, calling upon him to surrender :

" ' Isis ' under sail, in line of battle : August 30, 1799.

" Sir,—I desire you will instantly hoist the Flag of His Serene Highness the Prince of Orange. If you do, you will be immediately considered as friends of the King of Great Britain, my most gracious Sovereign ; otherwise take the consequences. Painful it will be to me for the loss of blood it may occasion, but the guilt will be on your own head."

As the Dutch seamen refused to fight or offer any resistance, Admiral Story in despair surrendered the Fleet, answering as follows :

" On board the ' Washington ' anchored under the Vlieter : 30 August, 1799.

' Admiral,—Neither your superiority nor your threat that the spilling of human blood should be laid to my account, could prevent my shewing you to the last moment what I could do for my Sovereign, whom I acknowledge to be no other than the Batavian people and its Representatives, when your Prince's and the Orange Flags have obtained their end. The traitors whom I commanded refused to fight ; and nothing remains to me and my brave Officers but vain rage and the dreadful reflection of our present situation : I therefore deliver over to you the Fleet which I



1799 commanded. From this moment it is your obligation to provide for the safety of my Officers and the few brave men who are on board the Batavian ships, as I declare myself and my Officers prisoners of war and claim to be considered as such.

“ I am with respect,

“ S. STORY.”

Admiral Mitchell despatched the news at once to the Admiralty :

“ ‘ Isis ’ at anchor, at the Red Buoy  
near the Vlieter : August 30, 1799.

“ Sir,—I have the greatest satisfaction to acquaint you for the information of the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty that the whole of the Dutch Fleet near the Vlieter surrendered without firing a gun, agreeable to a summons I sent this morning.

“ *List of Dutch ships surrendered.*

	Commanders			
‘ Washington ’	R. A. Story	}	.	.
	Captain Capelle			
‘ Gelderland ’	Capt. Waldeck	.	.	68
‘ Admiral de Ruyter ’	Capt. Huijs	.	.	68
‘ Utrecht ’	Capt. Kolf	.	.	68
‘ Cerberus ’	„ De Jong	.	.	68
‘ Leyden ’	„ Van Braam	.	.	68
‘ Beschermmer ’	„ Eilbracht	.	.	54
‘ Batavier ’	„ Van Senden	.	.	54
‘ Amphitrite ’	„ Schutter	.	.	44
‘ Mars ’	„ De Bock	.	.	44
‘ Ambuscade ’	„ Rivery	.	.	32
‘ Galatea ’	„ Droop	.	.	16”

In the last few days Lord Duncan’s illness had increased, and had become so serious that as soon as he saw Admiral Mitchell’s ships entering the

Texel he made sail for home, and on September 1 he announced his arrival to the Admiralty :

1799

“ ‘ Kent ’ off Aldborough : Sunday, 1st Sep. 1799.

“ Sir,— . . . . .  
 . . . Finding the ‘ Kent ’ with several of the Russian seventy-four gun ships to draw too much water to be able to get into the Harbour (of the Texel) I have returned with them to this anchorage; but previous to my getting under weigh at 8 o’clock on Friday morning I had the pleasure to see Vice Admiral Mitchell with all the men-of-war, transports and armed vessels in a fair way of entering the Texel with a favourable wind and have not the least doubt but the whole of the Dutch Fleet were in our possession by noon on that day.

“ These Despatches will be delivered by Captain Hope and Oughton, etc.

“ I am etc.,

“ DUNCAN.

“ To E. Nepean.”

“ ‘ Kent,’ Yarmouth Roads : 5 P.M. 2nd September, 1799.

“ Sir,—Be pleased to acquaint the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty that I am just arrived at this anchorage, and being at present much indisposed, have directed Vice-Admiral Dickson to carry on the duty of the post until I am recovered.

“ As it blew fresh on my leaving the Texel and no immediate opportunity offering to communicate with Vice-Admiral Mitchell, I have this day directed him not to consider himself any longer under my orders, and desired him to send all the two-decked ships to Yarmouth Roads, when the

1799 expedition on which he was now employed rendered their services no longer necessary.

“ I am etc.,

“ DUNCAN.

“ E. Nepean.”

He was prostrated with illness for some days, and came very near to death. If anything could give him pleasure under such conditions, Lord Spencer's letter of September 3 surely must have done so :

“ *Private.*

“ Admiralty : 2 September, 1799.

“ My dear Lord,—I have to acknowledge your letters of the 24th, 28th, and 31st of August, and I congratulate you most sincerely on the brilliant success of the landing of our Troops on the Helder, which will I trust end in the possession of the Dutch Fleet and thereby crown your services in the North Sea in the completest manner possible. Your anxiety must indeed have been great during the Action, and I am truly happy to hear that your son was safe after it.

“ Nothing can have been more truly handsome, noble and like yourself, than your conduct to Admiral Mitchell, of which I am sure he will ever have a grateful sense, and for which we give you the fullest credit. I have not time for more than to assure you that I am, my dear Lord, yours ever faithfully,

“ SPENCER.

“ Viscount Duncan, &c., &c., &c.

“ I was much pleased with the exertions of the Officers who were employed in the Attack at



Schievening Bay ; I have given a Post Commission to Captain Mackenzie, have removed Captain Boorder into the 'Pylades,' and appointed Lt. Slade of the 'Latona' to the 'Espègle.' ”

1799

“ Admiralty : 3 September, 1799.

“ My dear Lord,—I congratulate you most sincerely on the successful termination of our attack upon the Texel. Much is certainly due to the exertions of Admiral Mitchell and his Officers and men, but I shall never forget the handsome and judicious manner with which your Lordship acted on the occasion. I trust that a little rest will soon restore you to perfect health, and I shall be very happy when I have it in my power to rejoice with you in person on the completion of all your anxious and meritorious labours by the annihilation of the Force which you have so long been watching.

“ I am in great haste and can only add that I am most sincerely your very faithful humble servant.

“ SPENCER.

“ Admiral Viscount Duncan, &c., &c., &c.”

“ Walmer Castle : 6th September, 1799.

“ My dear Lord,—I received your two letters. The first of them was the only account which for several days reached me of the transactions at the Helder. I sincerely join with you and every lover of his country in congratulations on the glorious transactions which have taken place in that quarter. Never was there a more hazardous enterprise, and never was there one in which the execution was

1799 more compleat. It must lead to the most important consequences. Full justice is done to your liberality in leaving everything to Mitchell. He seems to have done his duty incomparably well. Since Alexander has escaped unhurt, it was fortunate for him that he had a share in so glorious a day. I don't wonder your nerves were put to the trial. I hope you are now perfectly well. My love to all at home; Lady Jane desires to return her best thanks for your kind attention to her respecting her brother.

“ I remain, My dear Lord, Yours very sincerely,  
“ HENRY DUNDAS.

“ The Duke of York is here and I am very busy in dispatching him. The Frigate has not got round from Portsmouth that is to carry him, but she is hourly expected. The wind is however at present very adverse.”

The attacks from which Lord Duncan suffered had within the last year or two become more severe and more frequent, and his health was evidently beginning to fail; but the natural vigour of his constitution soon asserted itself on this occasion, and in a week he was able, as appears from Lord Spencer's letters, to write to Lord Spencer that he was already recovering:

“ Admiralty: 12 Sep., 1799.

“ My dear Lord,—I received your letter yesterday and am very happy to hear that you are better; I hope a little quiet and land air will effectually restore your health.

“No body could be better calculated than Captain Brodie for the service you mention but as yet I fear it might be a little premature, as we are not yet in possession of those passages, all the islands to the Eastward of the Texel being still in the hands of the Enemy, and, till the Provinces of Groningen and Friesland have declared themselves, likely to remain so.

“I wish I could hear of the arrival of the Dutch ships and our large ships from thence, and I cannot imagine what detains them, as Admiral Mitchell had very pressing orders to send them over as soon as possible.

“Believe me, etc.,

“SPENCER.

“Viscount Duncan, &c.”

“Admiralty : 14 September, 1799.

“My dear Lord,—I wrote to you in my last my reasons for thinking that sending any one to make a survey of the Vlie Passage would for the present be premature; I think there may possibly be another objection to surveying the Ems, as it may give a jealousy to the neutral Powers who are concerned in its Banks.

“I am very glad to hear that you are better and likely to be able to come on shore as to-day; it is also a good sign that you feel stout enough to think of going to sea again; on which subject however I cannot help thinking that you will judge it most advisable not to put your idea into execution under the present circumstances. The ‘Latona,’ you will perceive, is ordered to receive



1799 Admiral Dickson's flag for the present till the 'Monarch' can get back to him, and we have ordered the 'Ganges' away to the Westward as there is a good deal to do in that quarter yet, and while our land Force is so fully occupied in Holland, we have nothing but our naval Force to depend upon for the defence of Ireland and the Western Coast of England.

"I hope we shall soon hear of our Army having pushed forward, as it will not do for an invading Army to stand long on the Defensive.

"Believe me, etc.

"SPENCER.

"Viscount Duncan, etc."

The improvement in Lord Duncan's health continued, and on September 16 he wrote from the 'Kent,' Yarmouth Roads: "Inform their Lordships that finding myself recovered from my late indisposition I shall carry on the public service on this Station as usual."

The Naval part of the Helder Expedition was now complete, and had been attended with success almost beyond the most sanguine expectations. There was no longer a Dutch Navy worthy of the name, and the mission entrusted to Admiral Duncan in 1795 had been amply fulfilled.

So far as the Admiral and the Navy are concerned it is not necessary, and indeed it is not within the scope of a Biography of Admiral Duncan, to go further, but if the reference to the Helder Expedition were to terminate with the surrender of the Dutch Fleet, it might with some

show of reason be said that the unfavourable side of the picture was purposely hidden from view.

1799

At first it appeared as if the Military part was to be equally successful with the Naval part of the operations. When the British troops disembarked their loss was only 500 men, whereas the Dutch, under General Daendels, owned to a loss of 1,500; and on the following night the Helder Point was evacuated by the Dutch Forces and occupied by the British.

By September 10, however, General Brune found himself in command of twenty-four thousand men, including seven thousand French troops under General Vandamme.

From the 12th to the 15th of September seventeen thousand Russian soldiers disembarked, and at this time the Duke of York came over in the 'Amethyst' Frigate and assumed the chief command. On September 19 the Russians were defeated near Alkmaar, and General Hermann was made prisoner. On October 2 the Allies resumed the offensive, but were unable to obtain any advantage, and by October 8 the Duke of York had fallen back to Zuupp, and his Army was suffering from sickness and was without provisions.

On October 17 there was a suspension of hostilities; and ultimately the Allies were permitted to evacuate Holland without molestation, on undertaking to leave the works on the Helder Point intact, to exchange prisoners, and to liberate Admiral De Winter from Parole.

1799

All these conditions were performed, and the British troops were conveyed home by the ships of the Navy about November 17, the Russians being landed at Guernsey and Jersey.

The disastrous termination of this large Expedition made it evident that Admiral Duncan had given sound and prudent advice when, in 1796, before the Dutch Navy was paralysed, he warned the Government to the utmost of his power against even attempting to land a few hundred men in the vicinity of the Texel.



## CHAPTER X

RETIREMENT OF THE ADMIRAL, APRIL 28, 1800—  
 EARL SPENCER LEAVES THE ADMIRALTY, JANUARY  
 1801—DEATH OF THE ADMIRAL, AUGUST 4,  
 1804—LOSS OF H.M.S. 'VENERABLE,' NOVEMBER 24,  
 1804

ALTHOUGH Lord Duncan resumed duty in the 'Kent' in Yarmouth Roads in the latter part of September, he had seen the Texel for the last time, and was never again to serve at sea. His attacks of illness had lately been alarming; and much as he struggled against ill health, and indomitable as was his resolution, age was gradually creeping over him, and he must have been conscious that he was failing.

1799

He had held out longer than most of the well-known Admirals and Naval Officers of that time. It was not only the rough life at sea which tried and wore out their constitutions: it was the unhealthy conditions under which they served; the insanitary state of the ships; the crowding on board; the want of fresh provisions; and, above all, the scarcity and bad quality of the water.

Boscawen died when he was fifty. Keppel, before he was forty, was prostrated by gout and illness contracted in the Service, and never having

Mahan's  
Influence  
of Sea  
Power  
on the  
French  
Revolution  
and  
Empire,  
vol. i.  
p. 101

recovered from the shock which his constitution experienced at the Havannah, died at sixty-one. Howe, indeed, lived to the age of seventy-four, but he had been for many years very careful of himself, and, on principle, “steadily resisted the policy of continuous “cruizing before the Ports whence the enemy must “sail, alleging that the injury received in heavy “weather, while the French lay at anchor inside, “would keep the British Fleet constantly inferior”; and thereby he avoided the tossings and fatigues which St. Vincent, Duncan, Cornwallis and others belonging to their school underwent. Lord St. Vincent was the exception to prove the rule, as he lived no less than eighty-nine years, from 1734 to 1823. But even he found himself unable as early as 1798 to endure the constant cruising, and in October of that year he was compelled, sorely against his will, to live ashore at Gibraltar, and on June 2, 1799, broke down altogether, and was obliged, at a moment when he was in eager pursuit of Admiral Bruix' Fleet, to turn over his command to Admiral Keith.

Mahan's  
Influence  
of Sea  
Power on  
the French  
Revolution,  
vol. i.  
p. 285  
*Ibid.* p. 312

In April 1800 he took command of the Channel Fleet, but in October he wrote to his Doctor, “I “am confident another cruize would finish me,” and came ashore early in 1801, to become First Lord of the Admiralty in Mr. Addington's Administration, which office he held until the resignation of the Government in 1804.

Memoirs of  
Earl St.  
Vincent,  
by J.  
Tucker,  
vol. ii.  
p. 111

*Ibid.* p. 262

When in 1806 he resumed the command of the Channel Fleet, it was on the understanding that when winter set in he should reside on shore near

the port of refit; and he resigned active service altogether in 1807.

1807

Other causes besides health prompted Lord Duncan to seek retirement. As long before as the month of August 1796 he had succeeded to the family estate by his brother's death, and found himself in comfortable circumstances so far as pecuniary affairs were concerned. At that time, however, it did not occur to him to relinquish his post: his home was on the sea, and his thoughts were fixed on his duty to his country and on the Dutch Ships in the Texel.

On August 13, 1796, when starting for sea, he wrote thoughtfully and not without a touch of sadness, to his brother-in-law, the Lord Advocate, about his family:

“‘Venerable’: August the 13, 1796.

“My dear Advocate,—Many thanks for your very kind letter of the 7th and the attention you have been so kind as to pay to Alexander. You are too affectionate a Parent for me to say how much I am interested in his welfare and must beg you to mention what is best for him to do, which shall be strictly adhered to. This is only the beginning of what will fall to you when I take my departure to another world and I feel happy to think I shall leave him and all my family in so friendly hands. I expect to go to sea immediately, and do think till you make a peace there will be no rest for me. I can not bring myself to believe it will be right to think of retirement till the war is over, however comfortably I may think myself



1796 circumstanced. May God bless you and all your concerns is the sincere wish of, my dear Advocate, your most affectionate and thankful humble servant, in haste,

“ ADAM DUNCAN.”

Much, however, had happened since then, and the shades of evening were beginning to fall. He had finished the work which had been given him to do ; he could not well hope to see the conclusion of any new Naval undertaking ; he had a family now grown up which demanded his care ; he had a home to which, since he first left it, more than fifty years before, he had been almost a stranger, and presumably he had in some degree that desire for rest and peace which comes sooner or later to every spirit, however active or ambitious.

In March 1800 he resolved to haul down his Flag and to retire : a step never taken without reluctance in any department of life, and inexpressibly painful to a British Naval Officer.

He wrote to Lord Spencer on March 25, as appears from Lord Spencer's reply. He seems to have said that there was no longer work for an Admiral in the North Sea ; but beyond that there is a tradition in the family that he wrote or said that an old man ought to hoist his Flag only at his own fireside. Lord Spencer replied on March 27 :

“ *Private.*

“ Admiralty : 27th March, 1800.

“ My dear Lord,—I perfectly coincide with you in the sentiments you express in your letter of the 25th

instant on the continuance of an Officer of your rank and situation in the Service in the command of a Fleet which from circumstances is likely to have so little to do; and as the retiring from it will at the same time prove convenient to your own private affairs, I do not see any objection to your striking your Flag, and having permission to look after your concerns in Scotland.

“ You are already so fully apprised of, and as I trust so ready to do justice to the sentiments of regard and attachment with which the official connection between us has for the last five years inspired me, that I shall not think it necessary to detain you at present with any further detail or repetition of them; suffice it to say, that no one can feel more truly sensible than I do, of the advantage which both in a publick and private view I have derived from the formation of the connection.

“ As I perceived you have ordered the ‘ Kent ’ to the Nore for pay and some refitting, it is probable that we may take some early opportunity of directing you to strike your Flag (on the ground of there not being at present further occasion for your services in these Seas) unless you wish that such Order should be grounded on any official Representation of your own.

“ I have the honour etc.,

“ SPENCER.

“ Viscount Duncan, &c., &c.”

A few days later Lord Spencer wrote again :

1800

“Admiralty: 31st March, 1800.

“My dear Lord,—I think it will be better upon the whole that you should write a publick Letter to the effect you mention, in consequence of which you will be allowed to strike your Flag and come on shore. I am well aware of Captain Hope’s merits, and unless it should be to make room for a Flag I would not willingly remove him, though his standing is hardly equal yet to a ship of the ‘Kent’s’ class.

“I shall be very happy to shake you by the hand in Town and remain my dear Lord,

“Your very faithful humble servant,

“SPENCER.

“Viscount Duncan, etc., etc., etc.”

It was characteristic of the Admiral that his last act was to recommend his Flag Captain, who had been also his first Flag Captain, to the favour of the Admiralty.

On April 28, 1800, he wrote to the Admiralty from his house in London :

“Sir,—I have received their Lordships’ order  
“of the 26th to strike my Flag and come on shore  
“and shall transmit directions by this Post for the  
“same being complied with.”

From the time he hauled down his Flag Lord Duncan lived chiefly in Scotland, and mostly at his own home in Forfarshire, where his private concerns required his attention. He was surrounded by mementoes of his sea days. The figure-head of the ‘Vryheid’—the Red Lion of Holland rampant, supporting a shield with the



initials of Amsterdam and two crossed anchors, full of shot holes and with half his head shot away-- had been towed from the Nore to Dundee by the 'Active' Cutter, and hauled out to Lundie House, against the gable end of which it still stands. The colours of the 'Vryheid,' the swords of the three Dutch Admirals, his own blue Flag, were treasures which he kept and which still remain. The bell of the 'Vryheid' was hung on Lundie Kirk, whence until recently it summoned the Parish to Divine Service. Lady Mary Duncan commissioned Mr. Copley to paint a picture, which she presented to her nephew, representing the reception of Admiral De Winter on board the 'Venerable' after the battle. The portraits in this picture were all taken from life, and Lord Lyndhurst, who himself wrote the description annexed to the key, said in after days that he should always remember the men-- seven of whom are in the foreground--coming to sit in his father's studio, and especially John Cresey, the Boatswain, who wore a large pigtail and insisted on being painted in such a position as to display it.

And here it may be permitted to make a short mention of some of the Officers and men of the 'Venerable' in the picture; for no account of the Admiral can be complete which separates him from his Ship's company.

Captain Fairfax had been Captain of the 'Repulse,' and became Flag Captain of the 'Venerable' in the autumn of 1795, when Captain William Hope was detached in general charge

1800 of the arrangements of the Russian Squadron, which then for the first time joined the North Sea Fleet. After the action Captain Fairfax was created a Baronet; a special pension of 300*l.* a year was conferred upon Lady Fairfax; and at the Admiral's request, as has been mentioned, the East India Company appointed Mr. Samuel Fairfax, the Captain's son, a writer in the Bengal Civil Service. Sir William Fairfax left the 'Venerable,' having received the command of the Gunboats on the Scottish Station. John Cleland, the First Lieutenant, was appointed to the 'Venerable' at the Admiral's request when he hoisted his Flag on March 31, 1795; as were William Renton and John Little. Mr. Cleland was specially promoted to Captain's rank; and Mr. Renton, the Second Lieutenant, was promoted also, being treated as if he had been a First Lieutenant in the action. Mr. Little was promoted in July 1799 at the Admiral's request. For some unknown reason neither of the last two appears in the picture.

Lieutenant Oswald, who stands by the mast under the colours, had distinguished himself in command of the 'Spider' Lugger; and when he ran her ashore while in chase, the Admiral appears to have regarded it merely as a misfortune, and Lord Spencer generously wrote on April 15, 1796: "Lieutenant Oswald deserves encouragement;" and on April 20: "I now find that it will be necessary pro formâ that Lieutenant Oswald should undergo the ceremony of a Court Martial for the loss of his Lugger, but I think for the present of

“ putting him into another very fine Lugger we  
“ have had offered to us till a better opportunity  
“ shall occur of providing for him.” The Admiral,  
however, found an opportunity to take him into the  
‘ Venerable,’ and after the action continued to  
watch over his interests. “ Your friend Oswald  
“ shall shortly have an appointment,” wrote Lord  
Spencer on April 19, 1798. Mr. Oswald became a  
Captain before the Admiral died.

Major Trollope, who commanded the Marines  
on board the ‘ Venerable,’ was highly esteemed by  
the Admiral, and specially mentioned to the  
Admiralty for his conduct at the time of the  
Mutiny.

Mr. James Paterson, the Master, stood high in  
favour, and his failure on one occasion to obtain  
an appointment for which he had been recom-  
mended was, as will be related, the occasion of a  
protest from the Admiral to the Board.

Mr. Burnet, the Admiral’s Secretary, received  
from Lord Spencer a lucrative appointment.

James Porteous, the Pilot, went to the ‘ Royal  
Charlotte ’ after leaving the ‘ Kent,’ and a long  
letter from him to the Admiral, written on March 4,  
1804, is preserved, at the end of which he begs  
to be remembered to Lady Duncan and the  
family.

John Cresey, the Boatswain, was selected by  
the Admiral from the ‘ Seahorse ’ on May 8, 1795,  
and in the picture is represented as engaged with  
three other men in working a gun. It is related  
of him that when Admiral De Winter, who was



1800 six feet one, came on board, Cresey muttered to himself as he passed, "Hold up your head, Red Breeches; it took a bigger man than yourself to bring you on board;" and that Admiral De Winter, who overheard him and understood English perfectly, turned and made him a bow, to his no small confusion.

The names of the other three men, and also of a fair-haired young sailor carrying the Dutch colours, are not definitely known; but it is almost certain that one of the men at the gun is Archibald Moody, and the others are probably the men mentioned in Lord Duncan's letter to the Admiralty of May 25, 1798:

" London.

" Sir,—I beg leave to enclose you a list of four *very good* men who were on board H.M.S. 'Venerable' in the action of 11 October last, and have to request you will solicit their Lordships to give them Promotion.

" PATRICK BARRY	}	for Boatswains.
WILLIAM LIDDLE		
ARCHIBALD MOODY	}	for Gunners."
GEORGE WEIR		

In reply Lord Duncan was informed that their names were noted on the list of candidates for warrants; and on June 6, 1799, he had the satisfaction of sending to the Admiralty Archibald Moody's certificate of having passed on appointment as Gunner.

There is a letter from Moody to him written on

November 23, 1800, from the Bomb Vessel 'Terror' at the Nore: "understanding that there are several new Frigates nearly ready for launching that will want Gunners, I will thankfully acknowledge the favour of your interest to obtain such or any promotion your Lordship may be pleased to suppose me deserving of, as I was of No. 6 [presumably means 'one of six'] whose conduct met the sanction and approbation of yourself and Officers at a crisis when a Mutiny was approaching on board H.M.S. 'Venerable' under command of your Lordship;" of which fact it was hardly necessary to remind the Admiral.

1800

Another sailor standing on the rigging is described by Lord Lyndhurst as "John Crawford of Sunderland, Durham, who nailed the colours to the mast." In the action "the maintopgallant mast of the 'Venerable' was shot away six or seven feet above the topmast cap." Crawford told William Bell of Sunderland, a friend of his, that "he was fighting the after gun on the starboard side when he was called away to rehoist the Flag. When he went aloft with the colours he stood on the cap and with the butt of his pistol nailed the upper end of the Flag as far up as he could reach and then nailed the lower end of the Flag down close to the cap."

A shot struck the mast close to his face, and a splinter of the wood passed through his cheek into his mouth. Nevertheless, when he jumped down on deck among his shipmates, who were cheering him, he exclaimed, "Never mind, that's nought."

Life of  
John  
Crawford,  
by Captain  
John Todd  
of Sunder-  
land

1800

On the occasion of the procession to St. Paul's he was ordered to hold aloft the Admiral's Flag in an open carriage; but, unfortunately for him, he was not to be found when the day arrived. The crowd showered money into the carriage all along the route; and as an old Sunderland keelman friend of his remarked: "Jack at that time might hev  
"meyd a gintleman ev hissel if he haddent been a  
"feul."

He received a pension of 30*l.* a year, and the Town of Sunderland gave him a large silver medal, about four inches in diameter, which is now in the Sunderland Museum.

A gallant townsman is not easily forgotten in Durham or Northumberland; and in 1888, ninety years after Camperdown, a large sum was collected locally to erect a monument to his memory in the Public Park. The Admiralty sent three hundred Blue Jackets to attend the ceremony of unveiling the statue, and his Admiral's Blue Flag left its Scottish home, for the first and only time, to drape the headstone which now marks Jack Crawford's grave.

It was hardly to be expected that retirement and country life would for long satisfy a mind which was still active and vigorous, and which had always been devoted to things of the sea.

1801

Only a year later, when Russia with Sweden and Denmark formed the Northern Confederacy to resist the right of search by belligerents for contraband of war in neutral vessels which should be under convoy, the Admiral appears to have offered



his services to the Admiralty. Lord Spencer replied : 1801

“ Admiralty : 5th January, 1801.

“ Many thanks for your kind letter of the 1st and the wishes it contains. The offer you make in it on the new aspect of affairs in the North, is like yourself and does you credit : I however agree with you in thinking that however equal the mind and spirit might be to such an undertaking, the body would scarce be able to keep pace with them, and in that case you could neither derive satisfaction to yourself nor as much benefit as you would wish for the public, by stepping forward on this occasion.”

Within a few days of this time Mr. Pitt's Government resigned office in consequence of the King's refusal to sanction a policy of Catholic Emancipation, and the hour had come for Lord Spencer to leave the Admiralty. Lord Duncan wrote to him on this occasion, it is certain with great regret and gratitude. It is only possible to guess at what he wrote from the reply :

“ Admiralty : Feb. 27th, 1801.

“ I am very much obliged to you for your letter “ and the kind sentiments it contains to me and “ Lady Spencer. . . . My best respects and wishes “ will ever attend you and yours ; ” and so ended a correspondence which had dealt with anxious times and had continued for more than six years.

It is not possible to allow Lord Spencer to pass

1801 off the scene without a word of tribute to his administration. When he became First Lord of the Admiralty he found the Navy sunk in disorder and neglect, and among the Officers a want of confidence in the Administration at home. He succeeded in selecting capable Admirals for every command, with all of whom he by incessant labour maintained intimate and constant relations. He was full of energy and ideas. If he did not always appreciate and realise so fully as they did through their experience the defects of the ships under their command, both in number and quality, he did the best that he could in the way of apportioning and manipulating the forces which were at his disposal, while he never ceased to urge the necessity of an energetic and vigorous policy, and to express his conviction that the British Fleets would prove victorious. All the Admirals felt confidence in him, as their memoirs and letters show, and at the time of his resignation the Navy was animated by a splendid spirit, and contained a large number of Officers whose names afterwards became household words. He performed a great service to his country, which ought always to be kept in remembrance. To use Lady Spencer's eloquent words, "England, Ireland and India were "all saved by victories won during his term of "office," and in no inconsiderable degree through his means. Taking his administration and policy as a whole, he did as much as any man—perhaps more than any one man—to ruin the fortunes of Napoleon upon the ocean.

Lord St. Vincent succeeded Lord Spencer as the First Lord of the Admiralty in Mr. Addington's Administration, and Lord Duncan wrote to his old friend on his appointment, who replied :

1801

“ Admiralty : 28th February, 1801.

“ My dear Lord,—I feel very sensibly the obliging interest your Lordship takes in a late event. I come here to great disadvantage, the successor of an able and virtuous man with a princely fortune. Nevertheless I feel I can be of use to my country and I have one advantage over most men, viz., that no person existing has any claim upon me except those which arise from meritorious services. I am free from prejudices and have no job whatever to serve. To Mr. Dundas' partiality I attribute and ever shall, all my career. Assure Lady Duncan that I am not insensible of her approbation. Lady St. Vincent went from Tor Abbey to Bath but will be highly gratified by Lady Duncan and your kind remembrances of her. With fervent wishes of health and every other blessing to you both,

“ Believe me, etc.

“ ST. VINCENT.”

As Lord Vincent has been mentioned, it may be permitted to digress so far as to insert, in illustration of his character, a letter written by him soon after to Lady Duncan, who had thought as a good Scotswoman that, having a ‘ Colony ’ of her own, she might apply to an old friend to assist a nephew. It will be seen that Lord St. Vincent



1801 showed himself to be a 'kinless loon,' as, much to his honour, petitioners of either sex always found him to be :

" Admiralty : 15th March, 1801.

" My dear Madam,—(For I cannot help addressing your Ladyship with the familiarity of an old acquaintance) be assured nothing will give me more real satisfaction than to advance any relation of Lord Duncan's ; and I thank you most kindly for pointing out Mr. Tait to me. At present, I am under an engagement not to promote to either list of captains, and this measure will be continued until most of the meritorious officers of those Ranks, who have been so long out of employment, are provided for.

" I heartily hope your Ladyship, Lord Duncan and the Colony enjoy health and every other blessing, for the continuance of which, no man living wishes more favourably than your Ladyship's

" very faithful and obedient Servant,

" ST. VINCENT."

Lord Duncan had entered his fourth and youngest son, Henry, on April 1, 1800, as a Midshipman in the 'Maidstone,' Captain Donnelly, and followed his career with great interest. Lord Spencer very kindly wrote on March 20, 1800 :  
 " I own I am glad to hear that we are to keep on the  
 " name of Duncan in the service. I think you could  
 " not have placed your son in a better school than  
 " under Captain Donnelly who I am sure will feel  
 " highly gratified by this mark of your approbation."

Captain Donnelly was transferred from the 'Maidstone' into the 'Narcissus' frigate, and took Henry Duncan with him, who, in 1803, became her First Lieutenant. Lord Nelson, to whom he had the honour of being presented when the 'Narcissus' was in the Mediterranean, wrote about him to his father :

“ ‘ Victory ’ off Toulon : Oct. 13th, 1803.

“ My dear Lord,—Before I was honor'd by your Lordship's letter of July 11th which I only received on October 6th I had desired to be introduced to your son whose character stands very high with Capt. Donnelly. Your Lordship will believe that I shall have the very greatest pleasure in giving Mr. Duncan a good sloop, for which purpose I have only to hope that the French Fleet will put to sea, and with the Officers I have the honour to command I think we may fairly presume on some promotion, and among the first shall be your son. I am truly sensible of your Lordship's expressions of regard which I shall always endeavour to merit, for I am with the very highest respect and esteem your Lordship's most faithful and obedient servant,

“ NELSON AND BRONTE.”

The last years of Lord Duncan's life were spent quietly in Scotland, but a few months before his own departure a heavy sorrow befell him : his eldest surviving son, Alexander, to whom he was much attached, died at Malta in November 1803. His

1803 eldest son, William, had died on January 23, 1789, at the age of nine years.

1804 In July 1804, having once more proceeded to London to offer his services, he had a short and sharp attack of illness. Mr. Wright, who had been his surgeon in the 'Venerable,' and who now held an appointment at Haslar Hospital, wrote to him the last letter which he preserved; "the 26th  
 " July"—I was much alarmed by the first account  
 " of your illness till I was relieved next day by the  
 " assurance of your recovery. I much fear London  
 " is now too warm for you although you are so near  
 " the river. Your complaint is very unpleasant,  
 " yet I apprehend not the least danger from it. It  
 " arises merely from spasms of the diaphragm, and  
 " therefore you have only to attend to your diges-  
 " tion. . . . I conjure you to take care of your  
 " health. I have only to repeat what I have often  
 " told you that you have been blessed with an iron  
 " constitution, which (unless from accident and  
 " mismanagement) yields to the all-devouring hand  
 " of time only."

On his way home Lord Duncan was taken ill suddenly, and died at Cornhill, near Coldstream, on August 4.

*Mr. J. Anderson to Chief Baron Dundas.*

"Corn-Hill: August 4th, 1804.

"I am very sorry for the melancholy occasion which is the immediate motive of my writing to you at present. This morning early I was woke by an express from Lord Duncan's butler announcing the



melancholy intelligence of his master having died suddenly this morning at one o'clock in the Inn at this place. I lost no time in coming here, and it will I am sure afford you consolation to know that he died in the most tranquil manner and with suffering as little pain as possible. He had arrived here about six in the evening, and after eating a moderate dinner and taking his pint of wine as usual he went to bed about ten in good spirits after expressing to his servant the satisfaction he felt at the prospect of dining with his family to-day. He slept for more than an hour and then, awakening with a sense of pain in his stomach, he rang for his servant, who having given him a few drops of laudanum left him for a little but was soon after alarmed by another ringing of the bell. On his return he declared to his servant he was gone, and that he only regretted dying without seeing his family. The servant sent immediately an express for the surgeon at Coldstream but before he could arrive His Lordship had expired and both the servant and the land-lady assure me that it was in the easiest manner possible."

It happened by a strange and pathetic coincidence that within a few weeks after the close of Lord Duncan's life the ship whose name is intimately associated with his ended for ever her tossings on the sea. It was the tragic fate of the 'Venerable' to be totally lost in a gale upon an English shore.

On November 24 the Channel Fleet was

1804 lying in Torbay, when in the evening a strong north-easterly wind began to blow, and Vice-Admiral Cornwallis made the signal to put to sea and to proceed towards Brest.

Morning  
Herald, 28  
November,  
1804

“Owing to the darkness of the night there was some confusion, and when endeavouring to weather one of the ships near her, the ‘Venerable’ missed stays and went ashore on some rocks near Berry Head, where she beat violently and soon went to pieces. Captain Hunter, the Officers, and the Crew with the exception of thirteen men, were saved by the boats of the ‘Goliath’ and ‘Frisk’ Cutter.

“In the morning there was nothing of the ‘Venerable’ to be seen except her bows sticking up out of the water. When she went ashore the winds were very baffling, which was the principal occasion of her missing stays.”

Morning  
Herald, 3  
December,  
1804

“By the 29 November she had entirely gone to pieces and the shore for two or three miles was covered with her wreck.”

## CHAPTER XI

## CONCLUSION

THE foregoing account of Admiral Duncan does not profess to be more than an outline of his life and career in the Navy, and it will have been perceived that much is wanting to complete the picture.

A few details which are known have been omitted by design. In describing the career of a Naval Officer it is not unusual to give all the details of his service, including all the expeditions and proceedings in which he took part. In this instance such descriptions have been abbreviated as far as possible, or omitted; to give at length all the cruises, chases, and captures by the ships in which Duncan served would be wearisome.

On the other hand, there are in the narrative of his personal history several gaps and omissions, the material for filling up which cannot be found. The account of his service as a Midshipman and as a Lieutenant is, of necessity, brief, because the individuality of a young Officer is merged in the history of his ship, except on very rare and exceptional occasions. In this respect Duncan only shares the common lot, but the result, in his case, is to leave unanswered some interesting questions



regarding him. For instance, it is not even ascertained how he became acquainted with Captain Keppel, with whom he was afterwards closely associated, and to whom he was mainly indebted for his advancement, deserved though that may have been by his own exertions and character.

This connection furnishes in itself an illustration of the anomalies which at that period were common in the Navy. When Duncan became a Midshipman on board the 'Centurion' in 1749, Keppel, his Captain, was only six years older than himself, and had commanded the 'Sapphire,' a Frigate of 40 guns, in 1745, when he was twenty.

But whatever their relative positions, and whatever may have been the origin of their acquaintance, their intimacy was only terminated by Keppel's death, and in the very last speech that he made in Parliament he spoke of Captain Duncan as a familiar friend.

There is little doubt that Duncan created for himself a name during the six years he was a Lieutenant. He is only heard of on two occasions: first, when in Sir Edward Hawke's Fleet, on its way to Rochefort in 1757, he was sent from the 'Torbay' on board Vice-Admiral Knowles' flagship off Oléron, to point out that the French ship 'Hardie' had run within reach of the 'Torbay,' if permitted to chase; and secondly, at Goree in 1758, when, being First Lieutenant, he was sent in to summon the garrison to surrender, and, on his return to the 'Torbay,' was wounded as he was leaving the boat. One thing is certain, that he at

some time acquired a reputation for coolness and courage; and there is a tradition that he was always first to volunteer for the boats or to lead the boarders. He bore the same character among the seamen of the Fleet to his latest day. After Camperdown a sailor wrote home to his father:

“Dear Father,—I am come off safe and sound after having had a breeze with the Dutch. The Battle lasted two hours when we killed one half and took the other half; so there is an end of all Dutchmen. As to the particulars I can't tell you them just now, but when I get leave to go ashore and can come by a Newspaper you shall have them all. For my part I minded nothing but my gun, except when we gave shouts of Victory as the Enemy's ships struck to us.

A copy of  
this letter  
among  
Lord  
Duncan's  
Papers

“They say as how they are going to make a Lord of our Admiral. They can't make too much of him. He is heart of oak; he is a seaman every inch of him, and as to a bit of a broadside it only makes the old cock young again.”

Cool and fearless as Duncan was, nothing is related of him which makes it probable, or even likely, that he was inclined to rashness, or to seek danger for its own sake. From what is known of his temperament it is probable that he did not think much about danger in the execution of his duty, or about anything except the task in which he was engaged. And this indifference to risk left his judgment calm and clear, as was proved in

every ship he commanded, and especially at Camperdown.

Ralfe, vol.  
i., 'Admiral  
Duncan'

“ As an Admiral he was bold and daring but  
“ neither rash nor precipitate ; he saw in a moment  
“ every possible advantage, seized it instantly,  
“ pursued it to the extremity but never attempted  
“ impossibilities. He met obstructions with tem-  
“ per and submitted to hardships with fortitude ;  
“ and his intrepidity was accompanied with a  
“ calmness which peculiarly fitted him for those  
“ seasons of danger which he experienced.”

It is hardly possible to conceive an ordeal which could more thoroughly test the decision, the judgment, and the courage of an Admiral than that which he went through on October 11, 1797, apparently without difficulty or effort. The wind was blowing direct on shore ; the water was shoal ; the enemy was close to his own coast ; if any misfortune should befall the British Fleet in battle, every ship must of necessity be captured, while it was not unlikely that, even in the midst of success, the Fleet might be lost by running ashore, as De Winter believed it would be. Duncan, however, showed no disposition to hesitate ; “ his decision “ was evident,” as Captain Hotham perceived on board the ‘Adamant,’ “ from the moment the “ enemy was seen,” his only anxiety being lest the Dutch should escape into the Texel.

When also it is remembered that Admiral Duncan was above sixty-six years old, it will be admitted that his behaviour at Camperdown was not an ordinary display. On this point an inter-



esting piece of evidence was given by the Reverend William Harvey in 1863, before a Select Committee of the House of Commons, which was considering the question of the promotion and retirement of Naval Officers: "I recollect one morning when " I was with Sir Charles Napier, not long before " his death in the summer of 1860 . . . he men- " tioned many cases of Officers in the Actions of " the late war, Lord Nelson and others, who had " gained brilliant actions as very young men, and " who, he said, he felt certain, would not have " gained those actions if they had not been young " men ; and he said that the only case that struck " him at the time of men really between 60 and " 70 fighting an action which a young man would " not have done better, was that of Lord Duncan " at Camperdown."

Select  
Committee  
on Navy  
Promotion  
and Retirement,  
1863.  
Minutes of  
Evidence

So far, however, from furnishing an argument against retirement, Admiral Duncan's behaviour in his sixty-seventh year only excites a regret that he had not risen to command a Fleet twenty years before.

In Captain Hotham's Reminiscences a striking account of Admiral Duncan occurs: "I first " remember this Officer Captain of the 'Edgar,' " a Guardship in Portsmouth Harbour, in 1785, " and twelve years afterwards I was ordered in the " 'Adamant,' fifty guns, to put myself under his " command in the North Sea. The very active " and eventful Summer of this year 1797, brought " us a good deal together and gave me an opportu- " nity of seeing much of his character.

“ In domestic life I believe he was very  
“ amiable ; and though he did not bear the  
“ reputation of possessing much professional skill  
“ as an Admiral of a Fleet, his zeal was pure and  
“ his conduct spirited.

“ During the most dangerous Mutiny that  
“ ever threatened the existence of the Navy and  
“ the Empire his conduct was beyond praise, and  
“ when the whole Fleet left him one by one,  
“ excepting the ‘ Adamant,’ he bore this humiliat-  
“ ing reverse of professional fortune with dignified  
“ composure, and anchored in spite of it off the  
“ Texel with the two ships, in sight of the Dutch  
“ Admiral De Winter with a Fleet of fifteen sail of  
“ the line, some Frigates and Transports. . . .  
“ He ordered the ‘ Circe ’ in the Offing and every  
“ now and then made signals to her and the  
“ ‘ Adamant,’ which for a few days deceived the  
“ enemy till a reinforcement under Sir Roger  
“ Curtis from Spithead joined him. His personal  
“ intrepidity had saved the ‘ Venerable ’ before  
“ that in Yarmouth Roads. . . . Lord Duncan  
“ was a remarkably fine man in his person, and  
“ though impetuous in his temper, exceedingly  
“ good-natured. He kept very little state either  
“ in his establishment or his person and lived in a  
“ very frugal manner. He was however always  
“ cheerful and kind at his Table.”

It is rather a matter for regret that Captain Hotham did not enter into particulars or produce some facts or evidence in support of his statement that Duncan did not bear the reputation of

possessing much professional skill as an Admiral of a Fleet. If such an opinion existed, it is material to know on what it was founded, as otherwise it is not possible to inquire whether the reputation was deserved.

That Duncan was all through his life a good seaman can be shown abundantly. Admiral Keppel was not likely to have asked for his promotion and at once to have taken him as Flag Captain to Belleisle and the Havannah, if he had not been a good seaman and able to manage ships.

The 'Valiant' under his command distinguished herself both at sea and in action throughout the Commission.

The 'Monarch' was a notoriously indifferent sailer, and uncoppered when Duncan commanded her; and yet he was able in sailing to hold his own with ships far superior to her, in Rodney's action with Langara off Cape St. Vincent in 1780, and on other occasions. As an instance of her smartness, his nephew, Mr. Haldane, has narrated how on one occasion, when pursuing some French men-of-war, "the 'Monarch,' outsailing the rest of "the Squadron, got into the midst of a Convoy, "and her discipline was such that boats were let "down on each side without swamping, filled "with armed crews to take possession of the "prizes, whilst the 'Monarch' never slackened "her speed, but with studding sails set, bore down "on the flying ships of war."

R. & J.  
Haldane's  
Memoirs,  
page 28  
Ralfe,  
vol. i.,  
'Admiral  
Duncan'

Memoirs of  
R. & J.  
Haldane,  
page 37

In the 'Blenheim' Duncan was ordered by



Lord Howe, no doubt for good reason, to lead the Centre Division of his Fleet in 1782 at the relief of Gibraltar. When in 1799 Sir John Jervis resigned the command of the 'Foudroyant,' the finest ship of the day, to hoist his broad pendant as Commodore on the 'Salisbury,' 50 guns, Duncan was appointed to the 'Foudroyant.'

All this would surely go to prove that Captain Duncan knew how to handle and manage a ship either when alone or in company?

Sir Charles  
Ekins'  
Naval  
Battles:  
'Camper-  
down'

As Admiral, Duncan had little opportunity of handling Fleets, for he only held one command, and the North Sea Squadron always contained some of the most indifferent ships in the Navy. The 'Venerable' herself never at any time ceased to leak, and was constantly in want of docking for repairs.

To manœuvre at all with such ships was not an easy task; their sailing qualities varied so much that, in approaching the enemy off Camperdown, the Admiral was obliged to heave to in order to get them into something like a line. When also it is remembered that the Russian ships generally formed a considerable part of the Squadron, he would indeed have been a wonderful Admiral who could have obtained a reputation for professional skill and smart manœuvring, with such vessels to command.

It is not improbable that the irregular form of attack at Camperdown, which proved thoroughly effectual, may have created or encouraged an idea that Admiral Duncan was not skilful in handling a

Fleet. If on that occasion he had employed the orthodox tactics of the day, he would have manœuvred in front of the Enemy's line, until either he was worsted or it suited them to withdraw; for which latter their position, close to their own coast and to the Texel, afforded singular facilities. He would have added one more to the long list of indecisive actions, after some firing and possibly the capture of a ship or two. The manœuvring would have been admirable, and the result more than unsatisfactory.

It is not too much to assert that the most skilful manœuvre is that which is best suited to the circumstances and effects the most complete victory. There was at Camperdown no time to spend in manœuvres and no sea on which to perform Naval evolutions. To declare him incapable of handling a Fleet because he elected an instant close engagement where there was no sea room would hardly raise the reputation of the critic.

If Admiral Duncan had been entrusted with the command of the Channel or Mediterranean Fleet, he would have had an opportunity of displaying or acquiring powers of Fleet-manœuvring. Eminent skill in Naval tactics, as in other occupations, is only obtained by practice.

All that can be affirmed with certainty of Duncan as an Admiral of a Fleet is that he kept a number of indifferent ships cruising together for several years without material loss, and that when after Camperdown the Fleet found itself in shoal

water close to an enemy's coast, with an adverse wind which became a gale, and embarrassed with Prizes, it worked off a lee shore under his guidance without disaster.

Ralfe, vol. i., 'Admiral Duncan'

With regard to Admiral Duncan's disposition and behaviour, all authorities are agreed that he was good-humoured and kind, and had a great distaste for violent measures, while at the same time he enforced strict and regular discipline.

Dr. Campbell's Lives of British Admirals

Dr. Campbell says of him: "As an Officer bearing command, no person ever more endeared himself to those whom he was appointed to conduct; for while benevolence and good humour had acquired for him the universal love of all who knew him, a regularity of government and discipline, unalloyed by severity and un- mixed with the smallest portion of that species of conduct which too often appears in very humane and well disposed men, perpetually reminding those over whom they are put in authority, of the great inferiority of their station, had rendered him revered as well as adored."

Naval Chronicle, vol. iv.

Captain Brenton, who considered that he ought to have adopted more stringent measures in dealing with the mutiny, did not impute this to weakness; he wrote that the Admiral was "remarkable for the most undaunted courage with the most benevolent heart."

Brenton's Naval History, vol. i. page 282

All the other Naval Histories mention him in similar terms.

In 'The Times' description of him on October 19, 1797, it is said: "His manners are



“ simple, easy and obliging, equally free from  
 “ affectation and roughness, the natural expression  
 “ of unfeigned goodness of heart.”

Many stories are narrated of his good humour and good temper. “ When a Captain, and at that  
 “ time reckoned the handsomest Officer in the  
 “ Navy, his assistance was required by the Civil  
 “ Power to quell some insurrection at Portsmouth.  
 “ The brave Commander at the head of his crew  
 “ with his sword in his hand, convinced the mob  
 “ that he had spirit and firmness to enforce obedi-  
 “ ence if they were determined to resist. His  
 “ frankness and generosity spared that alternative ;  
 “ he joked them into good humour, and they  
 “ separated in peace.”

Times,  
 October 19,  
 1797

As the ‘ Venerable ’ was going into action at Camperdown, an Officer asked him what number of ships they were going to engage. He replied :  
 “ Really, Sir, I cannot ascertain, but when we  
 “ have taken them we will count them.” One of  
 the Midshipmen began ducking his head under fire,  
 on which the Admiral said : “ Very well, my boy,  
 “ that is very well ; but don’t do that again. You  
 “ might put your head in the way of the shot.”

In a letter  
 of Lady  
 Mary  
 Duncan’s,  
 October 29,  
 1797

His management of the Russian Squadron may be cited amongst other proofs of his geniality and his power of adapting himself to different persons and circumstances. From June 1795 a Russian Force was under his orders during the whole of his command, except when the ships returned to Russian Ports, which they sometimes did for the winter.

Of the Russian ships themselves it is not possible to say much that is favourable. They were constantly in dock or in want of repairs, and were a source of much anxiety to the Admiral and to the Board of Admiralty, as well as to their own Officers, whenever heavy weather was experienced. The Russian Squadron was not present at Camperdown, and the only record of its active service is that two Russian ships, the 'Ratvizan' and 'Mistisloff,' sailed with Vice-Admiral Mitchell into the Texel on August 30, 1799, when the Dutch Fleet surrendered; the 'Ratvizan,' however, unluckily ran on shore.

To act in concert with a foreign Squadron or Squadrons has always been a task of difficulty, and has required the constant exercise of tact, patience and good temper; and this case proved to be no exception to the general rule.

It happened more than once that the Russian Admiral received orders from home with which he was bound to comply at a moment very inconvenient for his British allies. To give an instance. Rear-Admiral Makaroff sailed away with his ships on June 23, 1797, from the Texel to Russia, although Admiral Duncan was only beginning to collect a Fleet after his recent severe experience of the mutiny, and had not yet sufficient ships to maintain the blockade with safety.

Occasionally, too, some professional difficulty arose, such as the never-ending question of Relative Rank, or whether the Russian Flag Ship was to fire the evening gun when in Port; matters on which

Admiral Hanickoff very sensibly pointed out in private that he could not afford to give way, for fear of unfavourable criticisms at home. Notwithstanding, however, a few such occurrences, the general relations between Admiral Duncan and the Officers of the Russian Fleet were always harmonious and friendly; he wrote and spoke very highly of them personally, and of their zeal, and throughout his correspondence with the Admirals nothing but good wishes and honest endeavours to co-operate for the general good are to be found.

Each Russian Admiral who left the Station sent to Admiral Duncan most flattering testimony of his regard and esteem; and after Camperdown Admiral Tate wrote to him from Russia, congratulating him warmly on the victory.

Admiral Duncan's tact and good management obtained recognition both at the British Admiralty and at St. Petersburg. More than once Lord Spencer congratulated him on his success in this respect, and on July 19, 1797, the Emperor Paul addressed to him an autograph letter, in which he was created a Knight of the Imperial Order of St. Alexander Newsky, "for the honourable and distinguished manner with which you have discharged the command over the Squadron of my ships intended to act in conjunction with you against the enemies of your country, and the zeal you have so strongly evinced for the benefit of my Officers and Seamen. I flatter myself that this act of Justice done to you will be considered as a most convincing proof of my high regard."



That every instinct of Admiral Duncan's mind was generous is proved by his actions at all times. After Camperdown he displayed the most simple kindness as well as delicacy of feeling towards Admiral De Winter.

Again, when Vice-Admiral Mitchell arrived off the Texel in August 1799 with the troops for the Helder Expedition on board, and placed himself under his orders, he, as Commander-in-Chief, directed what was to be done by the Fleet, and then handed over to Admiral Mitchell all the ships of his Squadron which could enter the Texel, informing him that he should entrust the operations in the Texel to him, and should not interfere without absolute necessity. In this he only acted on his usual plan of taking the Officers commanding under him into his confidence beforehand about any operations to be executed, and then throwing upon them full power and responsibility.

Again, when serving under Lord Howe at the relief of Gibraltar in 1782, although the 'Blenheim' leading the Centre Division of the Fleet brought the enemy to action and was probably recalled not without difficulty, he loyally supported his chief afterwards when attacked, and maintained that Lord Howe was quite right in not forcing on an engagement with the superior Spanish Fleet. Lord Hervey on April 10, 1783, commented severely on Lord Howe's conduct in a letter addressed to him, and on August 31, 1783, was obliged to make a humble apology; on which Lord Howe wrote to Captain Duncan, as having been a

leading Officer in his Fleet, and requested him to publish the apology as widely as he could.

“ Grafton Street : 5th Sep. 1783.

“ Sir,—Having received a very rough comment from Lord Hervey upon the operations of the Channel Fleet last Summer, which he did not scruple to communicate when he wrote it, to several persons whose names he does not now recollect, it has become a matter of necessity with me to take such steps for making the acknowledgment he has subscribed, as generally known to the chief Officers of that Fleet as the offence which gave occasion for the requisition.

“ Under these circumstances I take the liberty to trouble you with the particulars more at large in the copies of the two papers<sup>1</sup> enclosed and to solicit your assistance for rendering the latter of equal notoriety with the former, where such interposition of your testimony under this authority is requisite. You will therein confer a lasting obligation on Sir your most faithful and obedient Servant,

“ HOWE.

“ Captain Duncan.”

Captain Duncan wrote a reply, of which Lord Howe sent the following grateful acknowledgment :

“ Weymouth : 16th Sep. 1783.

“ Sir,—The letter upon which you express your sentiments in such obliging terms in your

<sup>1</sup> Lord Hervey's letter of April 10, and his apology of August 31, 1783.—ED.

favour of the 12th, was intended to have been sent from Town by Saturday's post on the 6th, when one to the same effect was to go to Vice Admiral Milbank at Plymouth. But as I went into the country on the Friday I don't yet know from what cause it was so long delayed in its passage to you.

“As I can never esteem a man who could show such a letter as that of the 10th of last April from Lord Hervey, before he could know whether the reflections in it would be submitted to by him to whom they were addressed, however pertinent they might by himself be deemed, the good opinion of such commentators would not have engaged my thoughts for a moment. But finding from your previous knowledge of the circumstance, that the effect of this illiberal communication has not been confined to the foreign quarter where it was first made, I feel an interest in your kind attention to my late request that adds much to the very grateful regard with which I am your most obliged and obedient servant,

“HOWE.”

Any success of a brother Officer always afforded to Admiral Duncan intense gratification. His congratulations to his former chief, Lord Howe, after the action of June 1, 1794, evoked the following response :

“Portsmouth: 4th July 1794.

“Dear Sir,—I am much obliged to you for the favour of your friendly congratulations on our late



good fortune. It is undoubtedly very grateful to be deemed worthy of applause. But it is equally certain that the commendations of those who condemn without knowledge of the subject on which they presume to be judges or approve with as little cause, does not make the impression their benevolent prejudices intend. If our success had excited a disposition in the description of people whose personal service would be useful in the Fleet, much benefit would have resulted from our success. But I fear little advantage will be derived to the State from the addition of the serviceable ships brought into port, for a long time. Wishing you all the comforts of a peaceful<sup>1</sup> retreat I remain dear Sir your most obedient Servant,

“ HOWE.”

The victories of his old friend Sir John Jervis off Cape St. Vincent, and of Sir Horatio Nelson at the Nile, gave him the most unalloyed satisfaction. The victory of the Nile he celebrated by a dinner at the ‘ Duke’s Head ’ at Yarmouth, with the Officers of his Fleet, on October 11, 1798, the first anniversary of his own Action. The proprietor of the Telegraph Coach, ‘ Star ’ Tavern, Yarmouth, wrote offering to drive the Admiral and his friends down from London :

“ 2nd October, 1798.

“ My Lord,—I hope you will pardon the liberty taken of thus troubling you, but hearing this morn-

<sup>1</sup> Admiral Duncan was on half-pay.—ED.

ing of your Lordship's intention to celebrate the glorious 11th October I beg leave to offer the service of my coach free of expense from London to this place on Tuesday the 9th and Wednesday the 10th inst. ; by well loading of which on both days by your Lordship's friends and provisions (which no other business shall interfere with) would be the highest gratification I ever received for any two journeys' loading over this road. The honour of a line to-morrow morning, if he (*sic*) will accept my small services as above, will confer a high compliment done your Lordship's obedient humble servant,

“ JOHN ROBERTS.”

The Admiral wrote to express his thanks, but said that his friends were all upon the spot.

A graphic account of this dinner is given in 'Colburn's Magazine' in March 1836, by a merchant who was present, and who also had in the preceding year seen and described the departure of the British Fleet from Yarmouth Roads on the arrival of the tidings that the Dutch were at sea, as also its return after the battle, “ the rigging in disorder, the masts sticks, the decks bare.”

“ Twelve months after this happened the Battle  
 “ of the Nile, and it was celebrated by Admiral  
 “ Duncan and the Officers of the English and  
 “ Russian Fleets which then lay in Yarmouth  
 “ Roads, on the 11th October the anniversary of  
 “ Lord Duncan's engagement. The Town of  
 “ Yarmouth was illuminated and the Party dined

“ together at one of the Hotels. Chance led me  
“ there and the Mayor took me with him to the  
“ Dinner ; when it happened that there being no  
“ other person in plain clothes in the room I was  
“ placed on the left hand of the Admiral. He was  
“ without exception the finest man in his person I  
“ ever beheld. Imagine a man upwards of six feet  
“ two inches in height (I think he was six feet  
“ four) with limbs of proportionate frame and  
“ strength. His features were nobly beautiful, his  
“ forehead high and fair, and his hair as white as  
“ snow. His movements were all stately and  
“ unaffected, and his manner easy though  
“ dignified. . . . The cloth drawn, the Admiral  
“ gave ‘The King,’ with heartiness. . . . One  
“ delightful trait of the gallant old man was that  
“ he took the earliest occasion to turn towards his  
“ own home and his affections. ‘Gentlemen,’ said  
“ he, ‘I’ll give you the best woman in the world :  
“ ‘I’ll give you my own wife, Lady Duncan.’ He  
“ then gave Lady Anne Hope (the wife of the  
“ Captain of the Fleet, his Vice President) ‘who,’  
“ he said, ‘was as good a woman as Lady Duncan,’  
“ not forgetting to repeat, however, that ‘she was  
“ the best woman in the world.’ . . . I used the  
“ opportunity his affability afforded me, to enquire  
“ some particulars of his own state of feeling  
“ before and after the Action. He said he went  
“ upon deck about six o’clock, having had as sound  
“ a night’s rest as ever he enjoyed in the whole  
“ course of his life. The morning was brilliant,  
“ with a brisk gale ; and he added that he never



“ remembered to have been exalted by so exhilarating a sensation as the sight of the two Fleets afforded him. He said however that the cares of his duties were too onerous to allow him to think of himself; his whole mind was absorbed in observing and in meeting the occasion by orders; all other feelings were lost in the necessity of action.

“ The night after the Battle he never closed his eyes—his thoughts were still tossing in the turmoil through which he had passed; but his most constant reflection was a profound thankfulness to God for the event of the engagement.

“ All this was said in so perfectly natural a tone, and with a manner so simple that its truth was impressed at once, together with veneration for a man who could regard thus humbly an event in which much of human life had been sacrificed, so much of personal honour and so much of national glory and advantage attained. . . .

“ When the moment arrived for the departure of Lord Duncan he rose slowly from his seat, drew himself up to his full height, and in a few simple words announced that he must take his leave. A dead silence ensued. He turned to the Russian Admiral, and folding his vast arms round him, expressed his farewell in this solemn embrace. It was then that the voices of his companions in arms broke forth, and he was saluted with three such cheers, so hearty, so regular, so true, that they vibrated through

“ every fibre of my frame. The venerable man  
“ bent his head upon his breast for a moment, and  
“ seemed deeply impressed: he then bowed low  
“ and majestically, tucked his triangular gold-laced  
“ hat under his huge arm and walked gravely down  
“ the room to the door amid a silence so intense  
“ that his measured tread sounded like minute-  
“ drops. He stopped; he turned; he again reared  
“ himself to his noble height, took his hat from  
“ under his arm, waved it over his head, gave three  
“ loud, articulate, and distinct hurrahs in return for  
“ the former salutation, placed his hat upon his  
“ brow and closed the door. It was the last time  
“ I ever beheld him, but the vision still remains  
“ with me.”

A prominent feature both in his private and professional life was his earnest and unaffected piety, which appears in his whole life and conversation. At home he is said to have been rather strict in requiring attendance at Church, family prayers, and other religious observances, to all of which he himself paid most earnest and devout attention. On board ship his conduct was the same, and his deep religious feeling found its way into his addresses to those under his command (as has been seen in his speeches to the seamen at the time of the mutiny), and imparted weight to all that he said and did. When the ‘Venerable’ was bearing down at Camperdown, “ he called all his officers  
“ upon deck, and in their presence prostrated him-  
“ self in prayer before the God of Hosts, committing  
“ himself and them, with the cause that they main-

Naval  
Biography,  
Ralfe, vol.  
i. page 333

“ tained, to his Sovereign protection, his family to  
 “ His care, his soul and body to His Providence, and,  
 “ after the action, he, in presence of the Dutch  
 “ Admiral, ordered the crew on deck, and again upon  
 “ his bended knees solemnly, with fervour and  
 “ humility, offered up praise to the God of Battles  
 “ for the success.”

In society Admiral Duncan was happy and cheerful. It has been already stated that when his Fleet lay in the Downs he used sometimes to visit Mr. Pitt at Walmer Castle. Lord Wellesley, then Lord Mornington, met him there, and wrote afterwards in 1836, that he was “ a constant and  
 “ favourite guest, and a lively and jovial com-  
 “ panion, seeming quite delighted with Mr. Pitt’s  
 “ company.”

Stanhope's  
 Life of Pitt,  
 vol. iii.  
 page 74

An anecdote is told of the Admiral at Walmer which illustrates his supreme confidence and belief in British ships and seamen. On the 16th and 17th of June, 1795, Admiral Cornwallis with five ships of the line and two frigates executed his famous retreat up the Channel, during which he kept off thirteen French ships of the line and fourteen frigates, which in the end sheered off and left him unmolested. News of his isolation and probable capture had reached Walmer, and Mr. Pitt was very despondent. “ Admiral Duncan was present  
 “ and scouted the idea of the capture of five British  
 “ ships of war. ‘What,’ said Mr. Pitt, ‘do you  
 “ think that against such odds, they have a  
 “ chance?’ ‘A chance! Sir: Frenchmen do not  
 “ yet know how to take a British ship.’ ”

Memoirs  
 of R. & J.  
 Haldane



Coming to dine a day or two afterwards, when the news of Cornwallis's safety had been received but had not arrived at Walmer, the Admiral on shaking hands with Mr. Pitt, said: "Give you joy, Sir!" "Joy, Admiral, what joy? nothing is yet known of the fate of Cornwallis." "On hearing the news, he said that the Admiral had taken a load off his mind and that he never sat down to dinner with a lighter heart."

Throughout Admiral Duncan's papers not a line of writing appears reflecting upon or disparaging, or even criticising, others. He was also very reluctant to find fault with subordinates, though he could be very severe when he thought that they had failed in their duty. It is said that after Camperdown he wished to try by Court-martial more than one of the Captains who had kept aloof from the heat of the engagement, and that he was only dissuaded by Lord Spencer, who thought that, considering the completeness of the success, it was better not to have a public trial. The Officers of the 'Agincourt' having, however, insisted on the prosecution of Captain Williamson and Captain Hopper, the Captain of Marines on board that ship, having preferred a charge of neglect of duty and cowardice as Prosecutor, it is said that Captain Williamson appealed to the Admiral to give evidence in his favour, and received as a reply: "For myself I do not care, but how can I bring my ship's company to life again?"

Although modest and unpretending as regarded himself, he was very mindful of the dignity of a

British Admiral, and considered that in professional questions the Board of Admiralty ought not, without grave reason, to disregard the recommendations of a Commander-in-Chief. When, after the surrender of the Dutch Fleet in the Texel, Lieutenant Clay of the 'Kent,' whom he had sent home with Despatches, was not promoted, and Mr. Paterson, the Master of the 'Venerable,' had been passed over for an appointment for which he had recommended him, his zeal on behalf of his Officers, together with what he considered a slight to the Commander-in-Chief in the North Seas, prompted him to address the following letter to the Board of Admiralty :

"Yarmouth Roads : September 22, 1799.

"I beg you will be pleased to inform the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty that I can no longer refrain from representing how much I feel hurt at the indignity put upon me by Vice Admiral Mitchell's Lieutenant being promoted and Lieutenant Clay, first of the 'Kent,' the bearer of the first advice to the Government which diffused such general joy all over the Kingdom of the success of our Army in Holland and consequent surrender of the Dutch Fleet without bloodshed communicated by him at least forty-eight hours before the General's and Vice Admiral's Despatches were received. I therefore hope that their Lordships on reconsidering the case will remove the occasion of this representation, in the full persuasion they will not think it ill grounded, and that the circumstance of this officer still remaining a Lieutenant has

been rather the effect of oversight than of intention, for in justice to Mr. Clay's pretensions to preferment I must add he was so severely wounded in the Action of 11th October 1797 that a pension was then ordered by his Majesty in Council and since withheld in consequence of undergoing a second survey by their Lordships' order.

“ I am your obedient servant,  
“ DUNCAN.

“ Evan Nepean, Esq., &c., &c.”

This letter the Admiral backed up by a private communication to Mr. Nepean, the Secretary of the Admiralty, which, however, was treated as ‘ officious,’ and is now in the Public Records Office with the words ‘ His Followers ’ endorsed.

“ Yarmouth Roads : 2 October, 1799.

“ My dear Sir,—I am much obliged to you for your kind wishes about my health. I have been seriously ill indeed and still weak, nor has the way I have been treated by the Admiralty contributed to hasten my recovery. After all the *flattery* given me for the way I behaved to Admiral Mitchell, not to make my Lieutenant Clay who was the first who brought the news of success at the Helder, a Captain, and for which intelligence Mr. Dundas expressed himself in strong terms of approbation ; next, when I wrote a public letter on the subject to the Admiralty they have ever since remained in the most contemptuous silence. Had they given a good reason I must



have been contented, but I well know they cannot. Now again Mr. Paterson who was my Master on the 11th October, was appointed Master Attendant here; another is put into a permanent situation at Sheerness and no notice taken of him, though by his activity and diligence has taken up a number of anchors and cables which must have cost Government a great sum of money besides removing a number of wrecks from the Roads which might have much incommoded both men-of-war and merchant ships.

“ I am etc.,

“ DUNCAN.

“ E. Nepean.”

Although the Admiral's interest in the advancement of his Officers was in itself laudable, the tone of his official letter can hardly be justified, and was not in accordance with his own ideas of discipline. Moreover, he seems to have pressed Mr. Clay's claims for promotion rather unduly, inasmuch as the 'Kent' was unable, owing to her draught of water, to take part in the operations on which Admiral Story's surrender of the Dutch Fleet followed.

Lord Spencer showed a becoming dignity, and also his knowledge of Lord Duncan's character, by addressing to him, a short time after, a very friendly, while open and forcible, remonstrance :

“ Admiralty: November 30, 1799.

“ My dear Lord,—After the very friendly and

confidential footing on which I have had the satisfaction of acting with your Lordship ever since you were called to the Chief Command of the North Sea Fleet, you may easily suppose that it has not been without very considerable regret that I have observed a discontinuance on your part of that confidence which appears to me to have taken place so entirely without any plausible ground for it that I confess I have for some time past been led to expect that whatever mistaken cause has given rise to it might have ceased to operate and that I might have had the pleasure of hearing from you again as usual, feeling as I do perfectly unconscious of having given you any cause for dissatisfaction. I very readily now resolve to break the silence by expostulating with you in the most friendly manner possible on the subject and by assuring you that it is impossible (whatever you may have been led to suppose) that any other sentiment than that of regard and respect can be harboured by me towards you, but I cannot help saying that considering the habit of confidential intercourse in which we had been, I could not but be extremely surprised as well as concerned to see such a letter from you as you thought fit to write to the Board on the subject of Lieutenant Clay, which from anyone except from yourself I could have looked upon in no other light than an intentional slap in the face to the first Lord of the Admiralty, conveyed officially through the Board, to which I should think myself entirely undeserving of holding my situation here if I had yielded

by promoting any officer on such a ground. The proper and regular mode of conveying your wishes for the Promotion of any Officer is through me in a private communication, and I think that from your private experience that to that mode I am as ready to pay attention as I believe that any one situated as I am ever was, and therefore I could not but feel surprised that the means of an official letter should in this instance be resorted to and that we should at once be charged with inflicting an indignity upon a person to whom I have with the greatest pleasure shown every wish to pay every respect and attention in my power. I have thought it right to express myself thus freely to you, my dear Lord, because I wish very sincerely to maintain the same confidence and friendship with you which I have ever done ; it will rest with you to enable me to do so and I know you well enough to be fully sure that you will have as much pleasure in returning to our former friendship as I shall myself. We have ordered Admiral Mitchell to strike his flag as there does not appear to be any further occasion for his services at present and it will soon be necessary to make some other arrangements for the North Sea Service, the circumstances of which are now so different from what they were before the late Expedition.

“ I am etc.,

“ Viscount Duncan.”

“ SPENCER.

The Admiral's reply of course does not exist, but it is clear from Lord Spencer's letter of Decem-



ber 3 that he had recognised that he had made a mistake and had hastened to repair it :

“ Admiralty : December 3, 1799.

“ My dear Lord,—I have only time before post to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 2nd, which has removed a considerable deal of uneasiness from my mind in a very full and satisfactory manner. I also take the opportunity of informing you that having a vacancy in the ‘ Zebra ’ Bomb Vessel by the promotion of Captain Sparkes, I have availed myself of it for the purpose of appointing Mr. Clay to the rank of Commander in that Vessel.

“ I am etc.,

“ Viscount Duncan, etc.’

“ SPENCER.

The distinctive feature in Admiral Duncan’s character as an Officer was his intense regard for the Officers and men under his command. His pride and interest in the ‘ Venerable,’ and in all on board her, have been already alluded to ; this was extended to all the Officers and men of the Fleet. Judging from his papers, he seems to have taken especial interest in the Commanders of the smaller ships, whose audacity and activity at the mouth of, and sometimes even inside, the Texel were to him invaluable. Captain Halkett of the ‘ Circe ’ frigate, Captain Halsted of the ‘ Phœnix,’ Mr. Hamilton of the ‘ Active ’ cutter, Captain Boorder of the ‘ Espiègle,’ Lieutenant Brodie of the ‘ Rose ’ cutter, Mr. Hall of the ‘ Speculator ’ lugger, and several

others, are constantly mentioned in his correspondence. Most of them obtained promotion or advancement of other kinds by his means. Mr. Hamilton was in 1800 appointed Superintendent of the Packet Service at Dover; Captain Boorder was moved by Lord Spencer into the 'Pylades'; Lieutenant Brodie was promoted on being sent home with the news of the victory, and Lord Spencer found him a ship at Lord Duncan's request. On April 19, 1798, Lord Spencer wrote: "When I get anything proper for Brodie I will employ him under you."

All his Officers respected and believed profoundly in the Admiral. Mr. Hamilton talked of him to the end of his days, and was never tired of spinning endless yarns to the late Lord Camperdown about his grandfather and the North Sea Fleet. He looked upon himself as Admiral Duncan's right hand, and, by whatever means, the 'Active' appears in every picture existing of the action.

"Hope to God you will soon be out!" wrote Captain Halkett to the Admiral on October 8, 1797, when he had discovered the Dutch Fleet putting to sea, not doubting what would happen as soon as his chief could be brought upon the scene.

Lieutenant Brodie, who, in his little vessel the 'Rose,' hovered on the outskirts of the action on October 11, wrote in February 1798 to the Admiral a vivid account of his experience: "In order I might be near to assist or carry any message from ship to ship while in Action, I was nearer the ships engaged than any ship or vessel which

“ was not in the fight. . . . From the time you  
“ went into action till I saw you after, I prayed  
“ more than once that God would preserve your  
“ gray hairs and grant you Victory, and those of  
“ my little Ship’s Company who heard me prayed  
“ as well, and indeed my Chief Mate and Boat-  
“ swain lamented that we was too insignificant to  
“ assist you. . . . I now come to the painful part ;  
“ this was when the ‘Hercules’ took fire ; I thought  
“ it was the ‘ Venerable.’ . . . What a thought it  
“ was, while it lasted. I bore right down on you  
“ then, my Lord, I thought I might pick you up,  
“ for we all thought you was blown up, for that  
“ ship appeared to us to blow up through the  
“ masts . . . I was however certain it was not  
“ the ‘ Venerable’ before any of my Officers and  
“ Crew would believe it. . . . After this tre-  
“ mendous seeing was over, for it was a glorious  
“ though tremendous sight, the enemy’s Admiral  
“ totally dismasted and his second ahead in flames,  
“ I ran down to look for my Admiral and would  
“ have been with you some minutes sooner, had  
“ not the ‘ Bedford’ waved me to her to know what  
“ ship it was on fire, when I assured him it was a  
“ Dutch Ship.

“ I then came under your stern and had almost  
“ passed it, with a very sore heart, not seeing you  
“ there, when all at once you appeared and ordered  
“ me on board. If ever I was happier than when  
“ I saw you safe, I hope for no happiness in this  
“ world or the next, and I believe your Lordship  
“ saw it, for you was quite cool and collected, and



“ when I took hold of your left arm, I really could  
“ not speak. . . . ”

Throughout the Admiral's whole service the seamen of the Fleet, and especially his own ship's company, were always uppermost in his thoughts. He devoted endless labour and time to plans for improving the condition of the seamen and of the Navy. At one moment he was having a difference with the Victualling Office about fresh meat for his crews, which he prosecuted in his vigorous way :

“ 10th June, 1799.

“ Sir,—Finding the little chance there was of the ships off the Texel being regularly relieved to get refreshments and considering of what consequence it was to send as much fresh beef as possible to them at no public expense, I directed sixteen oxen and a small proportion of vegetables to be shipped in the ‘ Agamemnon ’ for the use of the Squadron of which I acquainted you for their Lordships' information, but finding by a letter I received yesterday from the Victualling Board that their Lordships disapprove of such supplies I shall for the future cause them to be discontinued. At the same time I cannot help being of opinion that exclusive of that great consideration the health of the crews, fresh beef is cheaper to Government than salt meat, and by the mode I have adopted by sending the cattle by King's ships the enormous expense incurred for freight in Victuallers would have been avoided.

“ I am etc.

“ E. Nepean.”

“ DUNCAN.

At another moment he was writing short minutes for his own guidance or for transmission to the Admiralty with regard to the domestic economy of the Fleet. "As few of criminals from gaols as possible" is a recommendation that ought not to have been necessary. It is a disgrace to the Nation that in those days the King's ships were manned in any and every way.

Sometimes even Greenwich Hospital pensioners were called upon to serve on board the Fleet: "By Robert Roddam Esq. Rear Admiral of the 'White' and Commander-in-Chief of H.M. Ships and vessels in the River Medway and at the Buoy of the Nore.

"You are hereby required and directed to receive all such Greenwich hospital pensioners as shall from time to time be sent on board H.M. Ship under your command in order to assist in fitting out H.M. said ship, bearing them on a supernumerary list until further order.

"Dated on board H.M. Ship the 'Conquestador' at the Nore 10th June 1778. R. Roddam.

"To Captain Duncan or the Commanding Officer of H.M.S 'Suffolk.'"

Sometimes the seamen were impressed at sea and taken out of merchant or fishing vessels:

"From Lt. Rickard, Kirkwall, to E. Nepean. 11th July 1797—

"You will be pleased to inform their Lordships that if any more men are wanted from this

“ country for the Navy, there are nearly 300 good  
 “ men, and most of them Seamen, in the ships  
 “ now at Greenland and Davis Strait, who can be  
 “ easily impressed if a vessel was sent for that  
 “ purpose which generally arrives here about the  
 “ middle of this month and continues until the  
 “ 10th of August. The Heritors of Orkney will  
 “ not deem it a hardship or inconvenience on them  
 “ if such steps were put into execution, as they are  
 “ rather a nuisance than a service to the country.”

Sometimes recourse was had to the general press gang ; and, much as he disliked it, Duncan in his time had been obliged to take part in that service.

“ By the Commissioners for executing  
 the Office of Lord High Admiral of  
 Great Britain and Ireland, etc.

“ Whereas we intend that a General Press  
 “ shall be made on Wednesday night next the 27th  
 “ inst. upon the River Thames, towards supplying  
 “ the want of Men in the King’s Fleet, and have  
 “ fixed upon you to conduct and carry the same into  
 “ execution ; and whereas we have directed the  
 “ Regulating Captains in London to advise, settle  
 “ and adjust with you, the best methods of making  
 “ the said Press ; to station their Tenders as shall  
 “ be judged best for the reception of the Prest  
 “ Men ; and to have their Lieutenants and Gangs  
 “ ready at the hour which shall be agreed upon ;  
 “ You are therefore, hereby required and directed  
 “ to advise with the said Regulating Captains, and  
 “ to adjust matters with them accordingly ; and to



“ take care to prepare everything in such manner  
“ as may be most likely to be attended with success ;  
“ and then you are to impress or cause to be  
“ impressed, as many seamen, seafaring men and  
“ persons whose occupations and callings are to  
“ work in vessels and boats upon Rivers as you  
“ shall be able, *without regard to any Protections*  
“ *save such as have been granted in consequence of*  
“ *Acts of Parliament* ; excepting, however, the  
“ following persons, viz. :—

“ First Mates, Boatswains and Carpenters of  
“ such ships and Vessels as are of 50 tons and  
“ upwards ; all persons belonging to Transports or  
“ other ships or vessels, in the actual service of  
“ the Offices of the Navy, Ordnance, Victualling,  
“ Customs, and Post Master General ; all persons  
“ belonging to any Storeships, Victuallers, or other  
“ ships or vessels employed under the direction  
“ of the Lords Commissioners of His Majesty’s  
“ Treasury ; and all persons belonging to merchant  
“ ships and vessels loaded, and cleared out by the  
“ proper Officers of the Customs.

“ The more effectually to enable you to do  
“ which, we send you herewith a letter from our  
“ Secretary addressed to the respective Captains  
“ and Commanders of any of His Majesty’s Ships  
“ or Tenders in the River Thames to whom you  
“ shall think fit to show it, requiring them to  
“ furnish you with any assistance you may  
“ want ; and also two other letters addressed  
“ to the respective Officers of His Majesty’s  
“ Yards at Deptford and Woolwich to furnish,

“ upon your requisition, any vessels, boats,  
“ stores or necessaries from those Yards, which  
“ you may have occasion for; that you may  
“ make such use of them as circumstances may  
“ require.

“ And whereas we have sent Orders to Rear  
“ Admiral Roddam, Commander-in-Chief of His  
“ Majesty’s Ships and Vessels at Sheerness and  
“ the Buoy of the Nore, to cause a similar press to  
“ be made there and in the adjacent parts at the  
“ same time; and to direct the Parties which he  
“ sends into the River Thames, to proceed on  
“ upwards till they meet those employed by you  
“ to proceed downwards, in order to sweep the  
“ whole of that River; You are, therefore, to  
“ direct the parties, which you send down, to  
“ proceed until they meet those coming up from  
“ the above-mentioned Rear Admiral; to the  
“ end that such general sweep may be made ac-  
“ cordingly.

“ You are to cause all the men, who shall be  
“ pressed, to be put on board the Tenders which  
“ the Regulating Captains shall station as above-  
“ mentioned for their reception, or any other Ten-  
“ ders which may be in the River Thames; and to  
“ send them away to the Nore, to be put on board  
“ the ‘ Conquestador ’ or disposed of in such other  
“ manner as the above-mentioned Rear Admiral  
“ shall direct; and, in case there shall be more  
“ than the said Tenders can conveniently carry,  
“ you are to cause the Surplus to be received on  
“ board the Ship you command and safely kept

“ there till the Tenders return and there shall be  
 “ an opportunity of sending them down also ;  
 “ which you are to take care to do as soon as possible afterwards.

“ As it is of the utmost consequence to the  
 “ success of this Business that the same be kept  
 “ as secret as possible 'till the moment of its  
 “ execution, you will take particular care, in  
 “ every preparatory step, to act with all the  
 “ caution in your power, and to manage the  
 “ whole in such manner, as, if possible, to prevent  
 “ any suspicion of what may be intended ; and  
 “ finally you are to transmit to our Secretary, as  
 “ soon after the Business of the night shall be over  
 “ as you can possibly collect it, an account of the  
 “ number of men who may have been procured,  
 “ and in what manner you shall have disposed of  
 “ them. Given under our hands the 25th May  
 “ 1778.

“ SANDWICH.

“ LISBURNE.

“ J. H. PENTON.

“ To Captain Duncan, commanding  
 His Majesty's Ship the 'Thunderer,'  
 at Woolwich.

“ By command of their Lordships.

“ ROBERT STEPHENS.”

How much Duncan disliked the press gang the following letter from Mr. William Brandreth, a Naval Officer, shows :



“ Gosport: October 17th 1787.

“ Sir,— . . . . .

. . . On the 22nd September we were alarmed in the morning by a vigorous impress which continued for some days with great heat. On the 27th I was sent for to Southampton, where the next day I received from the Mayor, Aldermen and Common Council assembled at their Hall, a very honourable and strongly enforced testimony of my conduct during the last war, while on the impress service in that Town. I enclosed it to my Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty in a letter offering my services, at the same time expressing an humble hope that the enclosed would be admitted as a plea for my soliciting to be employed again on the same service at that Port. . . . Now, Sir, if I did not presume too much I would ask a line from you to Rear Admiral Gower; my present recommendations urged by an Officer of your highly respected character would make assurance doubly sure, and although I know your objection to that mode of raising men, yet, as it is adopted, I hope and trust I should bring no additional odium on it nor do aught unworthy of the man who is honoured with your friendship.

“ I am your most obedient servant,

“ WILLIAM BRANDRETH.”

With regard to the pay and position of the seamen continual notices occur: “ I do think “ danger remains whenever anything having the

“ appearance of a grievance occurs ; mutiny will  
“ be the consequence if not redressed.”

“ More pay must be found somewhere, and  
“ more regular ; that is to say payments should be  
“ made abroad also at all the ports in Great  
“ Britain and Ireland.”

“ I should wish a gratuity of good and long  
“ service.”

“ Could Seamen have more liberty, the excess  
“ mentioned would not exist.”

“ Certainly the Petty Officer's pay should be  
“ raised, and indeed every description should be  
“ raised.”

“ Clearly agree that the number of Petty  
“ Officers should be increased.”

“ Am rather inclined to give rewards for long  
“ service than bounty.”

Jottings of the above kind are to be found in every part of the Admiral's papers, sometimes collected together, sometimes recorded singly on small pieces of paper. Not unfrequently a man's name is written down on a piece of paper by itself, presumably for reward or other such purpose—‘Archibald Moody’ is on more than one slip of paper. What the Officers and men of the 55th Regiment were to his elder brother, the ship's company of the ‘Valiant,’ the ‘Monarch,’ the ‘Venerable,’ were to the Admiral. British Officers of the highest type have always been remarkable for the sympathy between them and their men. Intimate acquaintance and mutual confidence have enabled British forces often to sweep away or

overcome obstacles which were, humanly speaking, insuperable. The belief among the men that their comfort and interests are in safe and vigilant keeping, and that everything is being done which calm judgment and decision can suggest to minimise the inevitable risks of daring enterprise; the confident knowledge of the Officers that all orders will be obeyed without hesitation or question—these together produce a reciprocal respect and affection, which grows with time and with the memory of dangers incurred in common, until it is elevated almost into passion. It is at its flood-tide at the moment preceding desperate service or when meeting again after separation, and finds expression on the one side in a sensation of stern pride, and on the other in spontaneous outbursts of wild enthusiasm. Although many of the seamen of those days had been recruited by means not likely to conduce to patriotism, contentment, or discipline, and although, judged by present standards, they might be considered rather a rough crew, when it came to action they were more than serviceable under the right sort of Officers.

Mr. Pratt  
in the  
second  
volume of  
his *Gleanings*

In the 'Venerable' at Camperdown "A Seaman  
" of the name of James Covey was brought down,  
" says the Doctor, to the surgery deprived of both  
" his legs; and it was necessary some hours after  
" to amputate still higher. 'I suppose,' said Covey  
" with an oath, 'those scissors will finish the busi-  
" ness of the ball, Master Mate.' 'Indeed my brave  
" fellow' said the Surgeon 'there is some fear of  
" it.' 'Well, never mind' said Covey, 'I have



“ lost my legs to be sure, and mayhap may lose my  
“ life, but we have beat the Dutch, so I’ll have  
“ another cheer for it; Huzzah, Huzzah.’ ”

The Merchant who has been mentioned as having been present at Admiral Duncan’s banquet at Yarmouth “ met several parties ” on the return of the Fleet after Camperdown, “ bearing wounded  
“ men to the hospital, whose haggard and pale  
“ though weather-beaten faces indicated heroically  
“ suppressed pain. I shall not cease to remember  
“ the bearing of one gallant fellow, on being  
“ accosted by a stranger who was induced to  
“ inveigh against war; “ ‘ Only a leg,’ exclaimed  
“ Jack, endeavouring to lift himself upon his  
“ elbow; ‘ only a leg; hurrah, Duncan for  
“ ever.’ ”

Such were some of the ‘ Venerable’s ’ men.

And so ends the record of a British sailor; resolute, fearless, honest, true; who lived in a time of national peril and crisis, and, after a protracted and arduous service, now lies sleeping his long sleep near his Scottish home, with his task performed and his duty done.



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