

months and then became first lieutenant of that ship ; but with regard to the intermediate steps, by which he rose to this command, his own pen must supply the narrative. He says, " I was appointed, in the summer of 1792, to the command of the Trepassey cutter, at Newfoundland, a very small vessel, and facetiously termed by naval men, a machine for making officers. There were two cutters built, it might be said for this very purpose, on an understanding that a lieutenant should be made into each, every year ; one from Admiralty patronage, and the other by the commander in chief for the time being. The first two were Lieutenants Rowley and Halket ; the next pair Caithen and Gilbert ; then Herbert and Holme. I name these officers that the regularity of the system may appear. The lieutenant at the end of the year, or just previously to the sailing of the Admiral for England, (for he never wintered on the station) went through a nominal invaliding ; and their successors were appointed from the cockpit of the Admiral's ship.

" At length, in the year 1792, the Admiralty decided upon putting an end to this certainly most exceptionable method of patronage, and ordered two lieutenants out from England to command these cutters. I was one of these, and arrived at Newfoundland in September. I found the Trepassey a very extraordinary description of a man of war. She was only forty-two tons ; something about the size of one of the Gravesend boats, previously to the adoption of steam vessels upon the Thames. Her crew consisted of *five* men, and a pilot, who performed the functions of every class of

officer below the commander. She had four swivels mounted; and was employed in going along the coast to protect the fisheries, and to enquire into abuses. On the last appointment the Admiral added two midshipmen to each cutter, making the whole number of each complement eight. These vessels lay in the harbour of St. John's during the winter, and were fitted out in the spring, to be in readiness to visit the different ports on their station, as soon as the harbour was clear from ice. "In the month of March, 1793, a small vessel arrived under a flag of truce from the island of St. Pierre, with a letter from the Governor, requesting to know what news had arrived from Europe. It was addressed to the Admiral, and contained evidently an indirect offer of surrender of the islands to his Britannic Majesty, made with a view of putting them under our protection, and of saving them from the sanguinary republicans, who had begun to shew themselves amongst the population. The Admiral was of course in England; and the question was, who should open the letter. There was a military force of one company of the fourth regiment, and another of artillery; and the naval force consisted of the two cutters, *Placentia* and *Trepassey*, commanded by Lieutenant Tucker and myself. The dispatches of course were received by Mr. Tucker, who forthwith called upon the captains of the army to consult as to what steps should be taken.

"At this meeting the question arose as to who was the representative of the Governor. The commission of the Governor stated, that in case of his *death*, the government was to devolve upon the senior officer of

the navy; and it was maintained that the provision made against death, must be equally applicable to his absence. This was denied on the part of the military officers; and until this point was settled no consultation could take place. Mr. Tucker acted for himself, and proceeded to collect a body of volunteers on the island, with which he contemplated sailing for St. Pierre, as soon as a sufficient number could be got together. In the meantime he sent me in the *Trepassey*, with a flag of truce, to give the information to the Governor of St. Pierre, and to prepare him for the event, that he might be in readiness to act in concert.

“On my arrival I found that the island had been taken possession of the day before, by a detachment from Halifax; and the *Alligator* frigate, which had brought them, was then lying in the harbour. The *Trepassey* was immediately dispatched to take possession of *Miguelon*. On the return of the *Trepassey* to St. John's I found the *Pluto*, sloop of war, had arrived, having captured a French corvette from *Martinique*. News also from Europe had reached us, with an account of the murder of the French king, and the commencement of the war. The action of the *Boston* and the *Ambuscade* soon after took place. The Admiral (Sir Richard King) reached his station in July; and having received a letter which informed me, that it was the wish of my friend, Captain E. Pakenham, to have me as his first lieutenant in the *Resistance*, of forty-four guns, I procured the Admiral's permission to go to England, taking my passage in the *Cleopatra*, with that most amiable and distinguished character, Sir Alexander

Ball; a circumstance invaluable to me from its being the means of my acquiring the friendship of such a man.

“ We took a convoy to Cadiz, and while waiting there to collect one for England, it was understood that a Spanish seventy-four was upon the point of sailing for Falmouth with money; as an indemnification of the Nootka Sound affair, in 1790. I eagerly caught at the opportunity of seeing the system of the Spanish navy; and my wish being made known to the Spanish commander, he immediately invited me to take my passage to England with him, in the *St. Elmo*, where I was treated with the greatest hospitality, and marked attention. We sailed for Ferrol on the following day, and from that port the 24th December, and arrived at Falmouth early in January.

“ This ship had been selected as one in the best state of discipline in the Spanish navy, to be sent to England. She was commanded by Don Lorenzo Goycochca, a gallant seaman, who had commanded one of the junk ships destroyed before Gibraltar, in 1781. I had during this voyage an opportunity of appreciating Spanish management at sea. When the ship was brought under double reefed topsails, it was considered superfluous to lay the cloth for dinner; and when I remonstrated, I was told by the captain, that not one officer would be able to sit at table, being all sea-sick; but that he had directed dinner to be got in his own cabin for himself and me. It was the custom in the Spanish navy for the captain and all the officers to mess together in the wardroom, which was appropriated to

this purpose. We had henceforth a very comfortable meal together, whenever the weather prevented a general meeting.

“As the safe arrival of this ship was deemed of great importance, an English pilot from Falmouth was sent into Ferrol, for the purpose of enabling her to approach the coast of England with safety. A few nights before our arrival at Falmouth, the ship having whole sails and topping sails, was taken aback in a heavy squall from the N. E. and I was awoken by the English pilot knocking at my cabin door, calling out, ‘Mr. Brenton, Mr. Brenton, rouse out, Sir; here is the ship running away with these Spaniards.’ When I got upon deck, I found this was literally the case. She was running away at the rate of twelve knots, and every thing in confusion: she was indeed, to use the ludicrous simile of a naval captain, ‘all adrift like a French post-chaise.’ It required some hours to get things to rights, and the wind having moderated and become fair, we then resumed our course, and safely reached Falmouth. The Spanish Inns, (the Posadas) are proverbially bad, wretched in the extreme; and great was the astonishment of the officers of the *St. Elmo* on reaching Williams’s Hotel at Falmouth, by no means at that time a first rate inn. Still, such was the effect produced by the carpet, the fire, and the furniture in general, that it was some time before they could be persuaded that I had not conducted them to some nobleman’s house, in return for their hospitality to me; the *bill* however dispelled this pleasant delusion.”

CHAPTER II.

SERVICE IN THE SYBIL.—STORY OF THE CORFIELDS.—SEVERE WINTER AT SEA.—STORY OF JOHN ICEBERG.—INVALIDED AND COMES ASHORE.—APPLIES FOR EMPLOYMENT, AND APPOINTED TO THE ALLIANCE.—FEELINGS ON THE SUBJECT.—GOES OUT TO THE MEDITERRANEAN.—MADE KNOWN TO SIR JOHN JERVIS, AND APPOINTED TO THE GIBALTAR.—STORM AND EXTREME DANGER OF THE SHIP.—MADE FIRST LIEUTENANT OF THE AIGLE.—BUT THE AIGLE BEING LOST, HE REMAINS FIRST LIEUTENANT OF THE BARFLEUR.—INTERVIEW WITH LORD ST. VINCENT AND THE SUBSEQUENT DECISION.

SOON after his arrival in England, Mr. Brenton was appointed Second Lieutenant to the Sybil; and while the ship was lying at Gravesend, and previous to her quitting the river, an interesting little event occurred, which is so descriptive of the warm-hearted and affectionate character of the Irish, that it seems due to our countrymen of the sister isle to mention it, as related in the journal.

“A boat full of men was seen proceeding to an East Indiaman, and I, who was at the time walking the deck with the captain, was ordered to take a boat and examine them. I found them sheltered under a regular protection signed by the Lords of the Admiralty, and stated to be in force for three days from its date. The date had been omitted, perhaps purposely; and the paper had probably been procured by a crimp, in order to cover the men he was in the

habit of sending down to the ships at Gravesend. The boat therefore was brought alongside the Sybil; and the captain, not finding any prime seamen amongst them, was satisfied with taking two healthy looking Irish lads, Mike and Pat Corfield by name, one about twenty years old, and the other under nineteen. The lads were greatly distressed at being put on board a man of war, of which they had undoubtedly heard many terrible things. It was however past twelve o'clock when they arrived, and the pipe had been just given for dinner. The young Irishmen were accordingly supplied with their portion of bread, soup, and meat; when Pat smiling through his tears said, "Mike, let us send for mother."

This little speech, so original, and so full of affectionate expression, was related to the amusement of the officers for the moment, and was soon forgotten; but many weeks afterwards, when the ship was at Spithead; a boat came off, in which were not only the mother but also the little brother of the Corfields. Their meeting was, as may be supposed, affecting in the extreme, and seemed to interest every one in their favour. The whole family were of course to live, while they remained together, upon the allowance of the two sailors; but the officers having interceded with the captain; little Edmund, the younger brother, about ten years of age, was put on the books, which gave a third allowance; in the mean time the two elder had procured and slung a hammock for the mother, and another for the little fellow, and every accommodation was given them by their shipmates to whom this con-

duct had endeared them. The mother by washing more than furnished her quota for the mess; and the whole were kept by her care so clean and tidy that they were noticed for their good appearance."

In the course of the autumn of this year, 1794, the *Sybil* formed part of the squadron under Rear Admiral Harvey, and was lying many weeks in the Scheldt, for the protection of Flushing; the French being in possession of the isle of Cadsand, and menacing that fortress. This service was at once harassing and mortifying; having none of the excitement or prospect of advantage which a cruize invariably holds out; while it was in no ordinary degree exposed to anxiety and hardship.

The *Sybil* was at length ordered to cruize on the Flemish bank, between the coast of Holland and the Goodwin Sands; and was kept on this duty during the whole of that very severe winter of 1794-5, occasionally calling at Sheerness, to refit and complete provisions. Mr. Brenton was appointed First Lieutenant of the ship in the October of this year. In the month of January, 1795, the ice extended far beyond the great Haze, and the *Sybil* was for many days frozen in at the little Haze, without any communication either with the shore or other ships. The squadron, under Commodore Payne, consisting of the *Jupiter*, *Royal Yacht*, and other ships, were lying at Sheerness at this time, waiting for the ice to break up, that they might proceed to the Elbe, in order to bring over the Princess Caroline, afterwards Princess of Wales, and of so much notoriety in this country. Of this period of service the following notices are given :—

“In February the Sybil was sent to the Weser, to assist in bringing away the British army, after their disastrous retreat through Holland in that awful winter. The sufferings of the troops had been dreadful during the march. They were embarked as they reached Bremer Lee, and sailed in detachments for England. The Sybil and her convoy were to take off the rear, and remained in consequence until the latter end of March. Colonels Barnes and Boardman, the first of the Guards, and the latter of the Oxford Blues, were embarked in the Sybil. About this time an extraordinary species of disease had begun to manifest itself among the marines of the Sybil; and as the discovery of its cause, and the means of its cure, must be ascribed to the acuteness of the latter of these two gentlemen, it may be regarded as a subject of thankfulness that they were passengers. Many of the men were afflicted with an ossification, or hardening of the knee joint; and this had proceeded to such an extent in several cases, that the men were lame for life. The surgeon, who was himself afflicted in the same way, and had been lame from childhood, was at a loss as to the cause of the malady; but Colonel Boardman at once threw a light upon the subject by a remark not unlikely to suggest itself to the mind of a military man. He had observed that the marines, when dressed, had thick woollen breeches, and long worsted stockings, so that during the day time, when on their post, the men had the knees doubly covered. After sunset, when off guard, the parade dress was laid aside, and canvas trowsers substituted, leaving the knee with little pro-

tection from the cold air of the night; and he inferred that the mischief in the joint arose from the sudden and violent change in the temperature maintained around it. The result proved the justness of his conjecture as to the cause of the malady; for on taking proper precautions to maintain the warmth by clothing, no further cases occurred; and the surgeon himself recollected, what it is singular he should ever have forgotten, that his own crippled state had been occasioned by exposure to cold. Trifling as this matter may seem, it is not without use to point out the benefit that may be derived from the observation of intelligent men, even of a different profession.

“ One amusing circumstance occurred also at this time aboard the *Sybil*, which it may not be improper to add, as evincing great readiness of resource in a sailor, though in a case of much less importance than the preceding. One of the quarter-masters, familiarly called by everybody, “ Old John Iceberg, a Swede,” had a favourite cat, which, contrary to the reputed character of those animals, evinced as much attachment to her master as a dog is used to do. It slept in his hammock, and when he had the watch on deck amused itself with playing in the rigging, leaping from it to the spanker boom, and from thence to the boat which hung over the stern. It happened one night that the boat having been kept on shore by bad weather, and puss not being aware of its absence, in the course of her gambols she went overboard, to the utter despair of poor Iceberg. He however soon recollected himself; threw the captain’s dog overboard, and reporting to the

officer on watch that the dog was in the water, volunteered his services to go after it. While in the boat it may naturally be supposed that the first object of his care was the cat, and having picked her up, he proceeded at his leisure to the relief of Echo."

Ill health, the natural consequence of a service so fatiguing, and so exposed to extremities of cold, rendered it necessary for Mr. Brenton to come on shore, in the latter end of 1795. On his recovery, and application to the Admiralty for employment, he found himself appointed Second Lieutenant to the Alliance store ship, under orders for the Mediterranean, a situation but ill according with the feelings of an officer, ambitious of rising in the service, and who depended solely on his own exertions, and the opportunities that might offer for distinguishing himself. Of this illness, and the results to which it led, Mr. Brenton speaks thus in his private memoranda, "I became very unwell, and was recommended to go ashore for the winter of 1795-6, which I the more regretted from the circumstance of Captain Douglas, now Admiral John Erskine Douglas, having been appointed to command the Sybil, an officer of distinguished merit, and great abilities, and from whom I felt that I should learn much. I proceeded immediately to Edinburgh, where my father was regulating captain. I was put under the care of Dr. Munro, by whose judicious treatment I was soon in a state of convalescence. But the idea of being out of employment during an active war, preyed upon my mind. I wrote to the Admiralty in the middle of December, stating my ability to serve again, and re-

questing an appointment. Not receiving an early answer, my impatience to be afloat again induced me, contrary to the advice of my physician, to set off for London. On my arrival I had the mortification to find that I was appointed Second Lieutenant of the Alliance store ship, a station that I at once considered disgraceful and degrading to an officer, who had been for some time First Lieutenant of a frigate. I went to the Admiralty, and laid my case before Admiral Young, then one of the board, by whom I was kindly received. Having heard my story, he acknowledged that the Admiralty had resolved to discountenance any officer going to sick quarters. He admitted that in many cases the innocent would suffer with the guilty; he believed my case to be one of this description, and recommended me to join my ship, in the expectation that I should soon receive something better. I went away, deeply depressed by what I had heard. I felt that all my prospects of promotion and distinction had vanished; and was only supported by the conviction that the disgrace, for such I considered it to be, was unjustly inflicted; that it was contrary to my wish that I had left my ship, but that my physician had declared that my life was endangered by remaining."

In order to explain the violence of the feelings produced in Mr. Brenton's mind by this appointment, it may be necessary to state his own remark. "It had been then for some time the practice, impolitic in every point of view, to appoint officers who had fallen under the censure of a court martial to these store ships. This had been done in forgetfulness of the value of these

vessels, of the very great importance of their cargoes to the fleets and arsenals in foreign stations, and of the small number of officers allowed to them; which seemed to require that the few in command should be men of experience, and men on whose character reliance might be placed. The officer who had been appointed first of the Alliance refused to join her. One who had been just dismissed from his ship, by a court martial, for intemperance, was appointed second; and I was finally appointed first of this store ship. Captain Cumming (late Rear Admiral) commanded her, and did me ample justice by bearing testimony to my conduct, and giving full credit to my exertions under circumstances so discouraging and humiliating.

“The ship was fitted out and sailed in the latter end of March, with a convoy of more than 300 sail for different parts of the world, which were to separate at Cape Finisterre for the several places to which they were bound.

“When crossing the Bay of Biscay a letter was sent from the Admiral’s ship, which had been probably forgotten in England, by which I was informed that I was to be appointed First Lieutenant of the Diamond, of thirty-eight guns, under the command of my friend, Sir Sidney Smith, who had commenced his career in the navy under my father, in the Tortoise store ship; and who, while we were together in Sweden had evinced much regard for me. Hence this intended appointment.

“It is hardly necessary to add, that had this appointment taken place, which but for the singular oversight

that led to the delay of the letter, most certainly would have been the case, I certainly should have followed the fortunes of Sir Sidney Smith, and should probably have shared his long and perilous captivity in France; while I must have forfeited the benefits arising from the patronage of my constant friend, Earl St. Vincent, who, from the moment he first became acquainted with me, lost no opportunity of forwarding my interests, and of placing me in important posts."

On receiving the letter Mr. Brenton says, "I shewed it to my captain, requesting permission to return to England, some vessel probably leaving the fleet, being bound thither at the time. Captain Cumming kindly appealed to me, whether, knowing the state of the ship, and the utter incapacity of the other Lieutenant to do the duty, he could possibly accede to my request. The argument was but too well grounded, and I was under the necessity of submitting. And here we have a striking instance, that the most gloomy and unpromising circumstances may eventually lead to the completion of our most sanguine expectations; whilst the gratification of our immediate wishes might only end in disappointment. I have often felt that the hand of a kind providence was peculiarly manifested in my favour upon this occasion. The Diamond was sent to cruize off the coast of France, and Sir Sidney Smith soon after was taken prisoner, having landed near Havre in an enterprize against the enemy. He was confined for a long time in the Temple. If I had not accompanied my chivalrous friend on this occasion, which it is not improbable might have been the case, I

should at all events have lost the benefit of his influence, and have had very little chance of promotion ; whereas by proceeding to the Mediterranean in the Alliance, I was placed in the way of success, and in a short time attained what I had hitherto hardly ventured to hope.

“ On the arrival of the Alliance at St. Fiorenzo I addressed a letter to the Commander in chief, Sir John Jervis, detailing the circumstances of my present appointment; and requesting that he would not attribute it to misconduct on my part ; referring him to the different captains with whom I had sailed for my character and abilities. To my great delight, in a short time I received an appointment to the Gibraltar, of eighty guns, a situation most highly gratifying, and beyond my most sanguine wishes. The Alliance being ordered with supplies of stores to the fleet off Toulon, I had an immediate opportunity of joining the Gibraltar ; having first waited on the Commander in chief, to thank him for the appointment. Sir John Jervis received me in the kindest manner, saying he considered the sons of officers as children of the service, and that he felt it his duty to provide for them.

“ On joining the Gibraltar I found the ship had been in a most unpleasant state in consequence of a litigious spirit, which had crept in among the officers, and which had led to numerous courts martial ; so that the captain and officers were not upon friendly terms. Captain Pakenham however came forward upon this occasion in the handsomest manner, saying to the officers whom he assembled for the purpose, “ Come, gentlemen, let us now give the new First Lieutenant a

fair chance. Let us bury the hatchet and be friends.' The greatest cordiality and comfort ensued; and consequently the discipline of the ship was rapidly improved. This the Admiral attributed to my exertions, while it was the natural result of restored harmony between the Captain and those under his command.

"The summer was passed in blockading Toulon. In the course of this season evident indications appeared of hostile intentions on the part of the Spaniards, who had a very powerful fleet in the Mediterranean. Sir John Jervis felt it necessary to concentrate his force as much as possible; and for this purpose repaired with the fleet to Fiorenzo bay, in Corsica, leaving a small but active force off Toulon, to watch the movements of the French in that port.

"In the latter part of October, it was found necessary to evacuate Corsica; and the Smyrna convoy having arrived there, the Admiral sailed with fifteen sail of the line for Gibraltar, in the beginning of November; each ship of the line with a Smyrna man in tow. The weather was very bad, and the winds generally shifting, adverse, and squally, so as to render the towing of the convoy a service of difficulty and danger; two of them were lost in consequence, being run down. The fleet arrived at Gibraltar early in December. The Spaniards had by that time declared war; and there was no longer any impediment to their forming a junction with the French fleet, which would make their force exceed forty-three sail of the line. Sir John Jervis, that he might be in readiness to sustain the attack of the enemy, moored his ships in the form of a crescent,

extending from the Ragged staff to Rosia bay; the sternmost ship of the weather line lying off the former place; and the last of the sea line, the Gibraltar, being off Rosia bay, in a most exposed situation, with scarcely any hold for her anchors from the steepness of the bank. Here, on the 10th of December, a most tremendous gale of wind from the E.S.E. came on, at first in heavy squalls with long intervals. The Gibraltar brought her anchors home, and great exertions were made during the hulls to lay them out again. As the night approached the wind increased to a hurricane. I stated my opinion to the captain that the ship could not hold on during the night; he appeared to be of the same opinion, and expressed his intention, should the ship drive, to cut, and make sail at once, so as to keep the straits open. A very heavy sea was at the time breaking round Europa point, and against the Spanish shore on the lee side of the bay. The captain recommended me to retire to my cot, and get a little repose, as I was evidently unwell. I had hardly gone down, when a tremendous squall came on, and the ship began to drive. I ran upon deck as soon as possible; but before I reached it, I heard the sheet cable running out, the anchor having been let go by the captain's order. This change of mind is to be accounted for only by the apprehension the captain was under of the Admiral's displeasure; and the hope he entertained, however feeble, that the ship might be brought up; but of this it soon appeared there was no prospect. She was off the bank in a few minutes, with her three anchors hanging to her bows.

“The cables were immediately cut, and sail made upon the ship; but as the topsails had been furled double reefed, it became necessary to close reef them before they could be set. The foresail was set at once, and the main-tack got on board; but in hauling aft the sheet, it was found to have got a round turn, round the main top gallant yard, in the lee rigging; nor could any efforts clear it from the shaking of the sail, the violence of the wind, and the darkness of the night. The yard was cut away from the main chains, and flew out to leeward, still confined by both parts of the sheet round it, and it was found impossible to get the sheet aft for some time. In the meantime, the topsails split, as they were loosed from the yards; the ship had now lost the shelter of the rock of Gibraltar, and felt the full force of the heavy sea rolling into the bay. It was also seen breaking to a fearful height over the Pearl rock off Cabritta point, which was under our lee; and in order to run her out clear of it, the jib was set; thus co-operating with a deep pitch in a heavy sea, carried away the foretopmast. She now rapidly approached the rock; was soon in the foam occasioned by the breakers; and in another moment struck upon the rock with a dreadful crash, and was thrown nearly on her beam ends; but most providentially this latter circumstance, by decreasing for the moment her draught of water, was the means of carrying her over the rock, when she righted without striking again.

“The panic was great as may easily be conceived, and a general cry of ‘Cut away the masts’ was heard from every part of the ship. The captain having been

carried into the cabin severely hurt from a fall, just before the ship struck, the command had devolved upon me. I prevented the masts from being cut away, not from any prospect of saving the ship, but in the hope of being able to run her into a sandy bay, near Cabritta point. The first order I gave was to sound the well; when, to my great surprise, it was reported that there was no water in it. I therefore ordered the ship to be kept away, under her tattered sail, so as to give her fresh way, and hauling up, gradually succeeded in getting her into the Gut, and free from any danger of the land; when we proceeded to clear the wreck, to shift the sails, and to bend a cable to the spare anchor. It happened providentially that there were on board two anchors belonging to the *Censeur*, a French seventy-four, a prize which had been burnt by accident in *Florenzo* bay, and which were to have been landed at Lisbon, when the fleet should have arrived there. These anchors were immediately got up from the main hatchway, where they had been stowed; and after being stocked, had cables bent to them.

“The gale continued during the remainder of the night, and through the following morning. In the afternoon it became quite moderate, and the *Zealous*, commanded by Captain Hood, was seen standing out of Tangier bay, and approaching the Gibraltar. A boat came on board, bringing information to Captain Pakenham that Captain Hood had slipped the cable, by which the *Zealous* was riding in Tangier bay, and had left a buoy on the cable, with a boat fast to it, in order that the Gibraltar might run in and take advantage of it, in the

natural expectation that she must have lost her anchors in driving out of the bay.

“This was a most judicious measure, and quite characteristic of the excellent officer who suggested it. The Gibraltar availed herself of it; and having got to snug anchorage in smooth water, was soon able to get the anchors which had been stocked, over the bows; which it would not only have been difficult, but dangerous to do while exposed to a heavy sea.”

The perilous situation of the Gibraltar, in this awful night, has furnished an interesting subject for Captain Brenton's pencil; when in a leisure hour, many years afterwards, he made a drawing from recollection of the ship during the most critical moment, and it may perhaps assist the reader to form a notion of the extreme peril to which the ship was exposed, when the circumstances are named, which, under providence, seem to have been the means of her preservation.

The Gibraltar was a Spanish built ship, and on examining the injuries done to the vessel, when docked for repairing; it was found that the whole of the lower part of the ship was a solid mass of mahogany. No other fabric could have stood the violence of the shock when she struck on the reef; and enabled her to float after she was righted.

Captain Pakenham having spoken very highly to the Commander in chief of Mr. Brenton's conduct on this trying occasion, he was pleased to express himself most favourably towards him; and as the Gibraltar, on being surveyed at Lisbon, was found to have sustained so much damage that it was necessary to send her to

England; Sir John Jervis sent for Lieutenant Brenton, and informing him of the Gibraltar's destination, asked him at the same time whether he had any objections to remaining in the fleet; adding, that if such was his wish, he could give him the choice of two ships, the *Diadem*, of sixty-four guns, or the *Aigle* frigate of forty, to either of which he might be appointed First Lieutenant. After some hesitation, and not a little reluctance to quit the Gibraltar, to which ship he had become much attached; he chose the *Aigle*, in the hope that in a cruising ship, he might have the means of distinguishing himself; and obtaining promotion; at least, greater means than could be expected in a ship of the line. Sir John Jervis entirely approved of his choice, and gave him a commission as First Lieutenant of the *Aigle*, then up the Mediterranean; and placed him *pro tempore* in the *Barfleur*, at the request of Vice Admiral Waldegrave, whose flag was flying in that ship. In this situation he was present at the battle of the 14th of February, off Cape St. Vincent; but being now a junior officer, he consequently derived no promotion from the circumstance.

The *Aigle* was about this time lost off Cape Farina; and Admiral Waldegrave having shifted his flag from the *Barfleur* to take the command at Newfoundland, Mr. Brenton, from seniority, became First Lieutenant under the command of Captain Dacres. The events of this summer were confined to the bombardment of Cadiz. At one of these attacks Mr. Brenton volunteered his services, and was engaged in the command of the *Barfleur's* boats. In the month

of August he was removed into the *Ville de Paris*, bearing the flag of Earl St. Vincent; and the fleet soon after sailed for Lisbon.

On the subject of this appointment the following particulars are mentioned by Lieutenant Brenton, "In the month of August, Earl St. Vincent sent for me, and informed me that it had long been his intention to have taken me into the *Ville de Paris*, as one of his Lieutenants. He said there was now a vacancy; but observed at the same time that he scarcely thought it worth my while to quit the *Barfleur* (where he understood I was very happy) for he was firmly convinced that peace with France was at that moment signed; (this was the period of Lord Malmesbury's having been sent to Lille to negotiate). In proof that he held this opinion, his Lordship added that he had just laid a wager to this effect with Sir James Saumarez of one hundred guineas. Under these circumstances I declined the appointment, and returned to my ship.

"On communicating to my excellent friend, Captain Dacres, the result of this interview with the Earl, I found him quite of a different opinion. He expressed great regret at my decision, which he considered as ruinous to my prospects, convinced as he was that there was no prospect of peace.

"Captain Dacres was to dine with the Admiral on that day, when he took an opportunity of requesting him to renew the offer, pledging himself that it would be accepted. The Earl, who had not yet filled up the vacancy, ordered a commission to be made out, appointing me to the *Ville de Paris*, which he gave to Captain Dacres,

who, on coming on board presented it to me, saying, 'There, I have now turned you out of my ship, an act for which you will undoubtedly thank me some of these days.' I certainly did leave the *Barfleur* with a heavy heart, for I highly respected and loved my captain, and the regard was mutual. I was also much attached to my brother officers, and had every reason to believe I carried with me the good wishes of all the ship's company. The *Barfleur* might have emphatically been called a happy ship."

During the winter of 1797-8 Mr. Brenton was employed by his lordship in sounding the Tagus, between Lisbon and Salvatierra, for the purpose of facilitating the passage of the transports up the river to procure water. Mr. Brenton was also sent in the *Thalia*, commanded by Lord Harry Paulet to survey Jeremie Bay, in order to ascertain whether there existed any good anchorage for the fleet. In the following spring the fleet resumed the blockade of Cadiz. The *Vengeance*, French frigate, was lying there ready for sea, and was expected to take advantage of the first opportunity which should offer of making her escape. In order to watch her movements narrowly during the night, two boats belonging to each ship were ordered to rendezvous every evening off the light house, under the command of a Lieutenant of the *Ville de Paris*. This command was latterly confined to two of the Lieutenants, of whom Mr. Brenton was one, and Mr. Melhuish the other. The guard boats were frequently attacked by the enemy's gun boats; and upon one of these occasions Mr. Brenton had an opportunity of distinguishing him-

self, so as to gain the approbation of the Commander in chief, and to induce his lordship to promote him to the command of the *Speedy*, the same in which he had already served as a lieutenant. Adverting to this period, Mr. Brenton says, "This was a service of much animation, and even of enjoyment. The officers in general managed to carry with them some good things, of which the midshipmen were invited to partake, nor were the boat's crew forgotten. In calm weather their voices and their mirth were distinctly heard by the Spanish troops on the batteries; but the noble-minded Spaniard, who commanded in Cadiz, would not on any account allow them to be fired at. He however requested the Spanish Admiral to send off a flag of truce, informing the Earl how completely his boats were exposed to destruction, and requesting that they might not be permitted to persevere in behaviour, which the garrison considered as insulting. The Commander in chief immediately made known this communication to me, as it was my turn to command the boats that night, desiring it might be attended to; but he did it in these words, 'Allow no noise to be made, Sir, by your people; but go still nearer in.'"

Captain Brenton says, relative to his appointment to the *Speedy*, "It was a singular circumstance that I had already served in the *Speedy*, both as second and first lieutenant; and while talking over expected promotion with my messmates, who were naming the favourite sloops to which they should prefer being appointed, I always named the *Speedy*."

Captain Brenton took his passage in the *Blenheim*,

which was bound to Lisbon ; but the day after leaving the fleet, the *Blenheim* having put into Lagos bay, he decided upon going to Lisbon by land, which he did, accompanied by Mr. Jephson, Judge of the Admiralty, and afterwards Sir —— Jephson, Bart. They had a most agreeable and interesting journey ; and in a few days after their arrival at Lisbon the *Speedy* entered the Tagus, and her new commander joined her. From this period (the beginning of September) until the month of February following, the sloop, of which he had taken the command, was kept cruising off Oporto, for the protection of the wine trade.

CHAPTER III.

SERVICE IN THE SPEEDY.—ACTION WITH GUN BOATS OFF GIBRALTAR.—SENT TO PENON DE VELEZ.—ACTION ON THE COAST, AND WITH GUN BOATS.—HIS BROTHER'S DEATH FROM WOUNDS RECEIVED IN ACTION IN THE PETEREL.—LETTER TO HIS FATHER.—MADE POST, AND APPOINTED TO THE TEMPORARY COMMAND OF THE GENEREUX AT PORT MAHON.—SAILS TO GENOA.

IN the month of February, 1799, Captain Brenton was charged with a valuable convoy of victuallers from Lisbon, to supply the fleet off Cadiz. The latter had by stress of weather been driven up the straits, and great apprehensions were entertained for the safety of the convoy under so weak an escort. They were attacked in the bay of Gibraltar, by twenty-three gun boats, and Captain Brenton had the satisfaction of receiving the thanks of the Earl of St. Vincent (who was an eye witness) for the manner in which he had defended his charge. It is fit that on this occasion he should be his own historian, and that the account of the action should be given from his own pen.

“Early in February, I was sent with a convoy of victuallers to the fleet blockading Cadiz; and on my approach towards San Lucar, not seeing any of the look-out ships, which were usually stationed far to the westward,

I suspected that in the preceding very heavy gales from the westward, the fleet might have been driven through the straits, and I felt a considerable anxiety for the fate of my convoy. I in consequence made the signal for them to make all sail for Cape Trafalgar, whilst I proceeded towards Cadiz, taking my station on the foretop gallant yard, with my spy glass, to be in readiness to communicate the earliest information of danger to the convoy, which were not likely to be out of sight, before I should have a full view of Cadiz. I found my expectations respecting our fleet were realized, but the Spaniards were still in port. I then rejoined my convoy, and made all sail for Gibraltar.

“By the repeated signals flying along the coast, I was well aware that the Spanish gun boats were prepared to attack the convoy, and I accordingly formed them into two very clear and compact lines, directing them to preserve this order of sailing by every effort in their power. On passing Cabritta point, I observed the whole of the Spanish gun boats lying under it, evidently waiting for the convoy. They immediately pushed out with sails and oars, and began the attack. The Speedy wore round ahead of the convoy, in order to close up the lee line, which seemed disposed to straggle; and then taking our station on their larboard quarter, we brought to ahead of the gun boats, which immediately desisted from their attack on the convoy, and seemed to unite their efforts upon the Speedy. As soon however as the convoy was so far advanced as to ensure their getting under the guns of Gibraltar, the Speedy followed them. There was but one ship of war in the bay, which

was the Montague, with the flag of Lord St. Vincent; and a boat came off from her, with orders for me to take my convoy over to Tetuan bay; where I was informed the fleet was lying under the command of Lord Keith. I accordingly proceeded thither, and found my arrival had been most anxiously looked for; as the fleet had been on short allowance of some species of provisions, and greatly in want of all to enable them to resume their blockade off Cadiz.

“When the signals were made by the Spaniards, the garrison of Gibraltar, to whom these signals were known, felt great uneasiness at the imminent danger to which the supplies for the fleet were exposed, upon which so much depended. This feeling was very strong in the breast of Lord St. Vincent, who had no means of increasing the force of the convoy; and he was in proportion relieved and gratified by the safe arrival of the convoy. He expressed his warmest approbation to Captain Brenton on his return from Tetuan, as did the Governor and principal officers of the garrison. But little injury was done to the Speedy, or any of her convoy.” *

It is a subject of regret that the official letter, giving the account of this spirited, and well conducted action, does not appear in the public records of the day.

Early in March Captain Brenton says, “The Speedy was ordered to cruize off Penon de Velez; and my orders, when delivered by Earl St. Vincent were accompanied by the following observation, ‘You are to understand that the Spaniards have a garrison at Penon de Velez—that they have no communication whatever

with any part of the coast on which this place is situated—that they get their food, their raiment, and even the water they require, from Malaga, which are carried over to them by vessels under convoy of two rascally brigs—just like your own. Now, Sir, be off; I hope you will fall in with them.’”

Having returned from this duty (the wished-for encounter, as it appears, not having taken place); Captain Brenton continues, “The Speedy was ordered to proceed to Oran, in order to bring down some prizes, which had been taken in there to wait for a convoy to Gibraltar. The wind, during March and April, blew almost a continued heavy gale from the westward. I made various attempts to get down to Gibraltar with my convoy, but without success, bearing up again for Oran.

“On one occasion, having been joined by the *Espoir* sloop of sixteen guns, I had got as far as Cape de Gatte, and observing a very suspicious looking brig come out from under the land, I made the signal for the *Espoir* to chase. Both vessels made all the sail they could carry; and towards evening a very heavy squall coming on with thick weather, the chase and the chaser were both lost sight of. Towards evening the latter came down, not having been able to keep sight of the stranger, and apprehensive of losing the convoy. A heavy gale came on from the westward in the course of the night; and on the following evening, as there was no appearance of its abating, I made the signal to bear up for Oran, where we arrived on the next day; but the gale continuing, no boat was sent on shore. On

the second day after we anchored in Oran, some seamen in blue jackets were seen coming over the hills; and as no boats from any of the convoy had reached the shore, I was anxious to know from whence these seamen could have come, concluding some wreck had taken place upon the coast. By great exertion a boat was got on shore, and soon returned with the captain and five seamen of the brig which had been chased off Cape de Gatte, by the *Espoir*; and which, as I have mentioned, was lost sight of in the squall. The fact is, that in that squall the unfortunate brig was upset; and as she went down, the captain, boatswain, and five men jumped into the boat, and cutting the lashings, were left on the surface as the vessel sank. There was neither oar nor rudder in the boat, but providentially the rudder of the boat was found, amidst other things washed out of the vessel, and a couple of oars. On the following morning, in the height of the gale, the weather being clear, they distinctly saw the convoy, and endeavoured to make signals to them, but without effect, from the sea running so high. When the convoy bore up in the evening for Oran, the captain, finding it impossible, from the direction of the wind, to approach the Spanish shore, kept before the sea, spreading shirts upon the oars for sails, and endeavoured to find shelter in some of the bays of the coast of Africa. Providentially they reached a little cove with a sandy beach, just to the westward of Oran; and having caught a hawk's bill turtle as they approached the shore, by devouring it raw, they acquired sufficient strength to land in a heavy surf, and to beach their boat. The boatswain, who was a strong powerful

man, sank under exhaustion before they reached the land. They were received on board the Speedy; and by the judicious conduct of the surgeon, were soon restored to perfect health.

“The vessel lost was an American brig from Baltimore. Her commander’s name was Brand, and twelve men were lost in her. Mr. Brand’s escape was the more providential, as he was asleep below when she upset; and being thrown out of his bed, by the sudden movement, was enabled to get up the ladder, before the hatchway was filled with water.”

A few days after the convoy had reached Oran, the gale continuing to blow with great violence at times, but at others more moderately; the Terpsichore frigate commanded by Captain Gage, entered the bay of Oran with her convoy from Minorca, bound to Gibraltar also; and about a week later, at the close of a day on which there had been almost a hurricane, a Spanish line of battle ship, with only her foremast standing, and her mainmast lying buried on the poop, came into the bay, and let go her anchor about half a mile from the Speedy, which happened to be the farthest out.

Captain Gage directed Captain B. to watch the motions of the Spaniard, expressing his intentions to attack him, should he move beyond the limits of neutrality. At daylight the Spaniard was seen to cut his cable, and put to sea: the wind had greatly moderated, but a heavy sea continued. The Terpsichore and Speedy slipped their cables, and were immediately in pursuit. The Spanish ship was rolling her main deck ports

in the water; the weather was very thick; the Speedy had approached nearly within gun-shot, and was preparing to open her fire, with her four pounders, into the stern of the enemy, whilst the Terpsichore's fire, which would soon have followed, would, without doubt, have insured the surrender of the helpless Spaniard; when at the moment, the fog cleared away, and shewed the Spanish fleet of eighteen sail of the line in the offing, and at a very short distance. The expected prize at once vanished, and it became necessary for the English vessels to seek their own safety. The Terpsichore returned to Oran, and the Speedy running close in shore got to the westward of the bay.

Of the Spaniards six sail had lost their lower masts, and many their topmasts. The Spaniards availing themselves of a strong S.W. wind shaped their course for Carthagena. On the following morning, the Speedy fell in with a British squadron of five sail of the line, under Admiral Whitshed; who, on being informed by Captain Brenton of the crippled state of the Spaniards, made sail in pursuit of them; and the Speedy returned to Oran, where, having joined the two convoys, they proceeded together to Gibraltar, where they arrived early in May. The Speedy was then sent to resume her station off Oporto, but in the month of July was again detached to take the English mail from Lisbon to Gibraltar. Here upon examining her defects, she was found in such a state as to render it necessary to heave her down.

Earl St. Vincent having given up the command of the fleet to Lord Keith, was at this time at Gibraltar,

with his flag in the *Argo*, waiting for wind to sail to England. The Channel fleet, under Sir Alan Gardner, had formed a junction with the Mediterranean fleet, and had gone up the Mediterranean in pursuit of the combined fleets of France and Spain.

While the *Speedy* was undergoing repair, and was keel out; the combined fleet was seen approaching the straits from the eastward; and a cutter sent out to reconnoitre, was captured by them, in consequence of a partial breeze favouring a Spanish frigate while the cutter was becalmed. Earl St. Vincent ordered the *Speedy* to be immediately righted, and to prepare for sea. Copper was nailed over the defective parts; and by the assistance of the *Argo*, she was ready to proceed on the following evening, with orders to look for Lord Keith, and to communicate to him the information, that the enemy had left the Mediterranean. He fell in with his lordship off *Cabrera*, in the course of a very few days, after leaving *Gibraltar*. He had already received the intelligence from some merchant vessel, that the combined fleet had been seen near the straits, steering to the westward, and was in pursuit of them. The day was beautiful when the *Speedy* fell in with the Admiral; and the immense fleet of thirty-two sail of the line sailing in two divisions, formed a most magnificent spectacle. Lord Keith sent the *Speedy* to *Minorca* with dispatches, with orders to resume her station off *Oporto* on her return. He continued his pursuit; but the enemy had got far too much start of him, and reached *Brest*, long before the British fleet could get up with them.

The following letter from Captain Brenton to his father may here be introduced as carrying on the narrative.

“SPEEDY, OFF CAPE DE GATTE, JULY 17th, 1799.

“MY DEAR SIR,

“Since my last off Lisbon no opportunity whatever occurred for my writing, I had scarcely time to reach Oporto, Lisbon, and Gibraltar, before our quarantine expired; we were ordered instantly into the mole, to heave down. On Sunday, the 8th, the Speedy was keel out, having her copper repaired, and on Tuesday was at sea, on her passage to join Lord Keith, with the intelligence of the Spanish fleet, in conjunction with the French, having passed the straits of Gibraltar to the westward; the particulars you will have, long before you receive this, as the Haarlem, and other vessels, were instantly dispatched for England.

“The Haarlem had but just time to clear the Gut, when the van of the enemy’s fleet appeared in sight, and the rear of them had only passed the rock, when the Speedy came out; but by favour of the night we escaped a rencounter with the gun boats, who were waiting behind Europa, to intercept any vessels going to the eastward. We fell in with Lord Keith yesterday, but have not yet spoke him; his lordship has, as yet, only received the intelligence of the enemy being off Gibraltar, and is in full cry with thirty-two sail of the line, we are however coming up hand over hand with him, owing to light winds and smooth water. I expect to be on board the Queen Charlotte in two hours; and as there is a strong probability of my being ordered to part company instantly, I shall have this letter ready to dispatch, and take another opportunity of being particular. I have the mail on board and passengers for Minorca, by which means I hope to see Wallace, who is in that neighbourhood.

“Lord St. Vincent arrived at Gibraltar a few days before we left it. His lordship is not well. This unexpected event has been of no service to him. His behaviour to me, has (if possible) been

kinder than ever; he appeared pleased with our exertions, and has, I believe, given me some good recommendations to his successor, Lord Keith. I believe I may deem his lordship one of the best friends I ever met with, and should he become premier at the Admiralty, which is by no means impossible, I hope we shall all feel the good effects of his patronage.

“Remember me most affectionately to my mother; I will give her the earliest information of our destiny and late proceedings. If Captain Berkeley of the 90th regiment, should call upon you at Edinburgh, may I request you will deem him a welcome guest. I have much esteem for him, and he deserves it. He is but slowly recovering from a fit of illness, which had for some time deprived him of the use of one side. I was to have given him a letter, but was prevented by his sudden departure.

“Adieu, my dear Sir; I beg my best love to the girls, and to be considered as your ever dutiful and affectionate son,

“J. BRENTON.”

“7 P. M. Just spoke Lord Keith, and have received orders to proceed to Minorca.

“JAHLEEL BRENTON, Esq.

REGULATING CAPTAIN, EDINBURGH.”

After remaining a few days at Port Mahon, the Speedy directed her course for Gibraltar; and when off Cape de Gatte gave chase to three large armed Xebecs, which ran in and anchored in a close line, in a sandy bay to the westward of the cape. The Speedy immediately attacked them under sail, and was joined by the Defender, a brig privateer, belonging to Gibraltar, of twelve guns. Captain Brenton finding he could not keep up an effectual fire under weigh, pushed in, in hopes of finding soundings, which he at length did within pistol shot of the enemy, and let go his anchor.

The engagement continued for more than half an hour, when the Spaniards took to their boats, and their vessels were captured and brought off by the Speedy and Defender. The largest mounted twelve, the second ten, and the third six guns; and in a few days with the Speedy arrived at Gibraltar.

The Speedy again visited Oporto, and was again dispatched from Lisbon to Gibraltar with the mail. On her way back from the rock to Oporto, she chased three Spanish vessels, and drove them on shore; but the surf was so heavy they could not be got off.

The following official letters describe some of the actions in which the Speedy was engaged, and the opinions pronounced on her commander by his superiors.

From the Gazette, Admiralty Office, 21st September, 1799.

Copy of a letter from Earl St. Vincent, K.B. Admiral of the White, &c. to Evan Nepean, Esq. dated 17th Sept. 1799.

“SIR,

“I enclose for the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty, a letter I have received from Captain Brenton, of His Majesty’s Sloop Speedy, giving an account of the capture of three Spanish armed vessels.

“ST. VINCENT.”

“SPEEDY, GIBRALTAR, AUGUST 21st, 1799.

“MY LORD,

“I have the honour to inform your lordship, that on the 9th inst., in company with the Defender, British Privateer of Gibraltar, of fourteen guns, we captured the Spanish armed vessels, as per margin, after an action of two hours and a half.

Upon seeing us they ran into a small sandy bay, five leagues to the eastward of Cape de Gatte, and moored in a close line, within a boat's length of the beach; we engaged them an hour and three quarters under sail, before we could gain soundings, although not more than a cable's length distant from the rocks; but finding the enemy had much the advantage, from our constant change of position, I determined to push for an anchorage, and was fortunate enough to effect one within pistol shot of the centre vessel. After three quarters of an hour close action, the Spaniards took to their boats, cutting the cables of two of the vessels which drove on shore; they were, however, all brought off by our boats, under a constant fire of musketry from the hills. The privateer, having but twenty-two men, was obliged to stand out, to procure assistance from a boat she had in the offing, and could not reach the anchorage, till the conclusion of the action. The conduct of her commander was highly meritorious throughout, and must have considerably accelerated the event. The officers and men under my command behaved in such a manner as would have ensured our success against a more formidable enemy. The *Speedy* had but two men wounded, the *Defender* one, neither dangerous. We found two men dead on board the Spaniards; the remainder of the crews escaped on shore.

“JAHLEEL BRENTON.”

Ships mentioned in the margin:

“*Santo Christo de Garcia*, eight guns, six and nine pounders.

“Name unknown, ten guns, six and nine pounders.

“Name unknown, four guns, sixes.”

“ADMIRALTY OFFICE, OCTOBER 26, 1799.

Copy of a letter from Rear Admiral Duckworth to Evan Nepean, Esq., dated *Leviathan*, off Lisbon, the 13th inst.

“SIR,

“You will be pleased to lay before my Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty the copy of a letter from Captain Brenton, of the *Speedy*, relating the destruction of three Spanish

vessels he chased on the 3rd inst.; it is but justice to this officer to observe, that his exertions and gallantry at all opportunities do him the highest honour.

“ I have the honour to be, &c.

“ J. J. DUCKWORTH.”

“ SPEEDY, AT SEA, OCTOBER 4, 1799.

“ SIR,

“ I have the honour to inform you, that yesterday, whilst running through the gut of Gibraltar, in sight of the British convoy, I observed a number of small vessels, coming out of Algesiras, and concluded they were Spanish gun boats, endeavouring to cut off some of the merchant ships; I therefore steered for them, in order to keep them as far as possible from the body of the fleet; but upon our near approach, perceiving they were Spanish coasters, eight in number, under the protection of a cutter and schooner, made all sail in chase, and soon separated the two sternmost from the body; they ran under the guns of a castle, which opened a fire upon us, and prevented our bringing them off. We continued the pursuit of the others, passing under the shot from Tariffa castle; and at four p.m. came up with four more in a bay to the eastward of Cape Trafalgar: one immediately anchored near a fort, and the other three under a castle which had one gun mounted; as it blew very heavy from the eastward, and being on a lee shore, we could not go as near them as I could wish, but anchored within four cables' length, and bringing our guns to bear upon the castle (which appeared to be in a very ruinous state, and did not return our fire,) and the vessels; we in a short time, compelled the Spaniards to abandon them all, first cutting their cables, by which means they drove on shore. I then sent Lieutenant Parker to endeavour to bring them off, and shortly after Mr. Marshall to assist; or if that was not practicable to set them on fire; neither of which could be effected from the heavy surf breaking entirely over them, and rendering our approach dangerous to the boats. They however boarded them, brought away some of their fire arms, threw the remainder over-

board, leaving them full of water, and complete wrecks. One vessel was laden with brandy and paper; one with English manufacture (cutlery, hardware, &c.); and the third in ballast. I beg leave to express the high satisfaction I received from the conduct of Lieutenant Parker, in boarding the vessel under the walls of the castle, while exposed to musketry from the beach; also of Mr. Ricketts, the purser, who was a volunteer upon that service. The attention of Mr. Marshall, the master, to the anchoring his Majesty's sloop, and the able assistance I have received from him on former occasions, renders him worthy of the fullest confidence.

“ I have the honour to be, &c.

“ J. BRENTON.”

“ TO REAR ADMIRAL DUCKWORTH,” &c.

Early in November of this year, the *Speedy* was again sent from Lisbon, with a convoy to Gibraltar; and on entering the bay was attacked by twelve gun boats, and a ten gun French privateer. They came down in the most determined manner; and surrounded the *Speedy* off Europa point, with the intention of boarding; which Captain Brenton observing, directed the guns to be loaded with grape as far as it could be done with safety; and reserved the fire until the Spaniards rose to board, when the *Speedy's* fire was so destructive as to induce the Spaniards to sheer off, and run to leeward with great precipitation. The convoy in the meantime got safe into Gibraltar, and the *Speedy* was endeavouring to follow them; but it was soon found she had received so much damage, below the water line on the starboard side, from the enemy's shot, that she was filled with water to the lower deck. It became necessary immediately to veer her: and by carrying as much sail as her wounded rigging would

bear on the starboard tack, the leak was got out of the water. But to keep her in this position it became indispensable to stand across the straits, and run for shelter into Tetuan bay ; which they reached late in the evening ; and having repaired their damages, sailed early the next morning for Gibraltar. The Speedy had two men killed upon this occasion.

It was a subject of universal astonishment, that the Spaniards should have made so daring an attempt, as to attack the Speedy under the batteries of Gibraltar, actually within hail, as conversation passed between Captain Mottley (the resident agent for transports at Gibraltar) and Captain Brenton before the Spaniards surrounded the Speedy.

Upon Captain Brenton's return to Gibraltar, he received the thanks and congratulations of Governor O'Hara, and the garrison. "Speedy" was given out that evening for the parole, and "Brenton" for the countersign. Perhaps the full force of this flattering testimony can only be felt by those connected with the military profession.

On arriving at the rock, Captain Brenton waited upon the Governor, to remonstrate upon so extraordinary a circumstance ; but the Governor, General O'Hara, anticipated his complaint, by explaining that in consequence of the Spanish authorities having threatened to bombard Gibraltar from Fort St. Phillip, on account of some fishing-boats having been fired at from the batteries by mistake, having been taken for row boat privateers, he (the Governor) had been obliged to prohibit all discretionary firing ; directing that no gun should be fired

without his express permission. He added, however, that the events of the preceding day convinced him that such a regulation could not be persevered in; that he had that morning issued orders that a most vigilant look out should in future be kept from the batteries; and a signal made when any privateer was seen under weigh, when she was to be fired at on her approach.

Rear Admiral Duckworth was at this time lying in the bay of Gibraltar; and reported Captain Brenton's conduct to the Admiralty, in a manner most flattering to his feelings, as did the Governor, and the Commissioner. The Governor's letter was addressed to Earl St. Vincent, then in England; and his lordship happened to be with Sir Evan Nepean, at the Admiralty, when it arrived. He had no sooner read the forcible appeal made by General O'Hara in favour of Captain Brenton, than he went to Lord Spencer, and laying the letter before him, said, "My lord, I will not leave your room until the request contained in that letter is complied with;" and Lord Spencer immediately wrote an order for Captain Brenton to be put into the first Post vacancy, that should occur in the Mediterranean.

It may perhaps be allowable to introduce here the description of this gallant action as given in the Naval Chronicle; and to add the official letter addressed to Admiral Duckworth.

"It is somewhat astonishing that the following remarkable instance of naval gallantry should never yet have been published; we therefore consider ourselves exceedingly obliged by being enabled to bring before our

readers such particulars, as must be read with the greatest admiration of the distinguished prowess they describe, and which so eminently redound to the credit of the officers and crews, who so ably and bravely defended themselves against such a very superior force. We have also subjoined the official letter sent by Captain Brenton* to Admiral Duckworth, on the occasion ; documents which will prove completely illustrative of the whole transaction. The action certainly merits every commemoration, and the annexed plate is taken from a drawing representing the most interesting period of it.

“ On the evening of the 6th of November, 1799, His Majesty’s sloop, *Speedy*, commanded by Captain Jahleel Brenton, and her convoy, consisting of a ship (transport) laden with wine for the fleet, and a merchant brig bound to Trieste, were attacked upon their entering Gibraltar bay, by twelve Spanish gun boats; two of which were schooners, carrying two twenty-four pounders each, and fifty men; and the other, one twenty-four pounder and forty men ; besides a *Xebec*, French privateer of eight guns. They first attempted the ship, and were prevented from carrying her by the *Speedy* passing between them, which enabled her to reach her anchorage in safety : their efforts were then united against the brig, when the *Speedy* bore up through the centre of them, and in three quarters of an hour obliged them to run for shelter under the guns of Fort Barbary.

* “ This gallant officer has had his bravery rewarded by being promoted to the rank of Post Captain, and now commands the *Cæsar* of eighty-four guns, which at present bears the flag of Admiral Sir J. Saumarez.”

“The crippled state of the Speedy’s rigging, masts, and hull, and especially as the water was up to the lower deck, from shot received below, prevented Captain Brenton from pursuing the advantage he had gained. She had two men killed, and one wounded. The transport was most ably managed by her master, and worked round Europa Point through a very galling fire; the brig took advantage of a strong westerly wind, which sprung up after dark, and continued her voyage to Trieste. The Speedy was under the necessity of running for Tetuan bay, to stop the leaks; which being done, she returned to Gibraltar the following day.

“The Spanish gun boats, after remaining under Fort Barbary for three days, bore up for Malaga, and did not return to Algeiras for two months, leaving the trade unmolested in the Gut of Gibraltar. The Spaniards acknowledged they lost eleven men; four of their boats were seen to strike to the Speedy during the contest, by the inhabitants of Gibraltar, and the report was corroborated by a Danish brig from Malaga a few days after.”

“SPEEDY, GIBRALTAR, NOVEMBER 21, 1799.

“SIR,

“I have the honour to inform you, that on the 6th instant, coming into Gibraltar, with two vessels under convoy, a ship and a brig, we were attacked by twelve of the Spanish gun boats from Algeiras. Having a commanding breeze, we were soon enabled to rescue the ship. The gun boats then united their efforts upon the brig, but bearing up upon their line with a well directed fire, we in a short time obliged them to relinquish their design also; and take shelter under the guns of Fort Barbary. The situation of the Speedy prevented my pursuing the advantage we had gained, having most of our running rigging cut away, our

main top sail yards shot through, and our fore rigging much cut, besides the water being up to the lower deck, from shot received below the water line. Not being able to carry sail upon the larboard tack, I was under the necessity of running for Tetuan Bay, to stop the leaks, and arrived here the day following. I cannot say too much in praise of Lieutenant Parker, Mr. Marshall, the master, and the remainder of the officers and men under my command, from their spirited exertions, and strict attention to their duty, we were enabled to save our convoy and His Majesty's sloop.

"I beg leave to enclose a return of our killed and wounded, and at the same time to add, that much praise is due to Mr. George Robinson, master of the transport *Unity*, for the manner he worked his ship during a very galling fire.

"I have the honour to be, Sir,

"Your very obedient servant,

"J. BRENTON."

"Patrick Blake and Wm. Pring, seamen killed.

"Thomas Riley, seaman wounded."

"To ADMIRAL DUCKWORTH," &c. &c. &c.

A few days after the action, Admiral Duckworth sent for Captain Brenton, and gave him the painful intelligence, that his brother, Lieutenant Brenton, of the *Peterel*, had been dangerously wounded in the boat of that ship, in capturing a Spanish privateer, and had been taken to the hospital at Port Mahon. He kindly ordered the *Speedy* to proceed thither with dispatches; and held out the hope that the wound might not be mortal. This flattering expectation was unhappily not realized, for upon the arrival of the *Speedy* at Port Mahon, Captain Brenton found that his brother had died a week previously, and had been buried with the honours of war. The amiable character, and gallant

conduct, of this promising young man had excited an universal interest.

The letter which Sir Jahleel Brenton wrote to his father on this occasion may be justly inserted, as exhibiting the simple and affectionate feelings which lived within the breast of one so distinguished for daring enterprise. In later years those feelings would have assumed a different form, and been expressed in a different manner ; but it is the object of the memoir to present the man as he was, and the change that was effected will be most completely understood, by comparing what he was at different periods of his life.

. . . . “ Accustomed hitherto to receive only the most pleasing accounts from your sons, I feel an additional pang at the cruel necessity I am under, of destroying that happiness I had long indulged the idea, would last the remainder of your days. You will naturally conceive the nature of this melancholy event; but will at the same time, I trust, derive comfort and consolation from the circumstances attending it, and assist my dear mother in bearing her loss with resignation. Poor Wallace is no more; he died of his wounds the 15th of last month. He died as he lived, a hero; and a pattern to every young man both in public and private life, universally regretted and esteemed. The loss is only on our side. His amiable conduct through life has ensured him felicity for ever: and as a time must arrive when we must quit all who are dear to us, I can conceive no greater alleviation to our grief, than the object having fallen in his country's service, whilst nobly distinguishing himself, which was the case with my dear brother, who had already acquired a high reputation with his brother officers. I shall not attempt to offer consolation; besides feeling the want of it myself, I am convinced your own reflections will have more effect than all I could say on the subject.

“ I was in some measure prepared for the melancholy event.

Admiral Duckworth's account alarmed me, though it left me hopes which I suffered myself to indulge when I wrote you from Gibraltar. The Admiral with the goodness of heart for which he is distinguished, sent me here in hopes of our meeting; a circumstance I shall ever remember. But whilst I am on the subject of gratitude, let me take the earliest opportunity of saying, how much we are all indebted to Lieutenant W. Pemberton, and his amiable wife, for their unwearied care of the poor fellow during his illness. To them he owed much of the comfort of his last moments. Pemberton seldom left him; and his wife was ever studying what was most grateful to his taste, and that in a country where the common necessaries of life were scarcely to be procured. Through their friendship, and the general interest every one took in his welfare, he wanted for nothing. I have long been in habits of intimacy with this worthy couple; they are now endeared to me; and I trust, some day, to have it in my power to acknowledge their kindness.

"I arrived here late last night, and shall sail immediately for Palermo, with dispatches for Lord Nelson. *L'Alceste* sails directly for England; by her you must receive the distressing intelligence. I shall avail myself of the same conveyance to suggest the steps which are likely to be of any service to Edward. Captain Western was promoted to Commander, from his brother having fallen, before Wallace did, and Edward has the same claim. I don't see how Lord Spencer can refuse it, when you apply to him. Let me request, my dear Sir, that you will use all your interest in his favour with Admiral Young, Lord Hood, or any one you think can serve him. I have fortunately had opportunities of acquiring myself friends, who I hope will enable me to go on by myself, and in some measure compensate for your loss. I mean in taking care of my sisters; in other respects I never can. I have a power of attorney to receive my brother's pay and prize money, which he wished to have laid out, either in an annuity for his sisters, or in a purchase, the interest of which might be for them, and the principal their property. I think it will be something considerable, and shall inform you as soon as possible, and request your advice upon the subject. In the mean-

time, my ever dear Sir, let me entreat you to remember, you have still two sons, whose only wishes are your happiness, and that of their dear mother and sisters. May my next be of a more cheerful nature, and that you may see many happy days, is the sincere wish of

“ Dear Sir,

“ Your ever dutiful and affectionate Son,

“ JAHLEEL BRENTON.

“ JANUARY 19th, 1800.”

The Editor is happy in being allowed to add from the recently published Nelson Dispatches, a letter from Lord Nelson, as characteristic of that great and gallant man as it is honourable to the subject of this memoir.

PALESTRO, DECEMBER, 7TH, 1799.

“ SIR,

“ Captain Brenton, of Her Majesty’s sloop the Speedy, having on the 6th of November, with a convoy from the coast of Portugal, when attacked in the Straits by twelve Spanish gun boats, displayed uncommon skill and gallantry, in saving the sloop under his command, and all his convoy; I beg leave to recommend him to their lordship’s notice; and if the merits of a Brother may be allowed to have any weight, I have the sorrow to tell you, that he (the brother James Wallace Brenton) lost his life, when Lieutenant of the Peterel, attempting, with great bravery, to bring off a vessel which the sloop had run ashore. He died of his wounds a few days ago at Minorca Hospital.

“ I have the honour to be,

“ Sir,

“ Your most obedient servant,

“ BRONTE NELSON.”

The Speedy again returned to Gibraltar, and was immediately sent off again with dispatches to the

Commander in chief, then supposed to be off Malta ; but on her arrival at St. Paul's bay, Captain Brenton found Nelson with his flag in the *Foudroyant*, and a squadron, co-operating with the land forces employed in the siege of Valetta. His lordship had recently had the satisfaction of seeing another of the French fleet, which he had so nearly annihilated in Aboukir bay, captured by the *Northumberland* and *Success* frigate. This was the *Genereux*. She had been sent to Minorca ; and Lord Nelson, after warmly applauding Captain Brenton for his conduct, in his late encounter with the gun boats at Gibraltar, congratulated him upon his being made Post, from information which he had received from Lord Keith. The arrangement, by which this promotion took place, was that Captain Dixon, of the *Lion*, (the late Admiral Sir Manley Dixon) should be removed to the *Genereux* ; that Lord William Stuart commanding the *Souverein* (the *Sheer* hulk at Gibraltar, which ship at the time was commanded by a Post Captain, and had charge of the general duties of the port of Gibraltar) should succeed to the *Lion*, and Captain Brenton to take command of the *Souverein*, to be succeeded in the *Speedy* by Lord Cochrane, who was made Commander.

The *Speedy* proceeded through the Phare of Messina on her way to Leghorn, where Captain Brenton was informed he would find the Commander in chief. He arrived there on the 18th of March, but saw no ship of war in the road. He soon however received the melancholy information that the *Queen Charlotte*, the flag ship, had taken fire on the preceding day, and had

blown up; scarcely two hundred men having been saved out of a complement of nearly eight hundred. The cause of this dreadful event arose from a quantity of hay being taken on board, and placed under the half deck, in readiness to be pressed; an operation that was then generally performed by having a strong wooden case placed in the after hatchway, to which a screw was applied, and a bag fitted to receive the hay, when it was brought into a portable compass. This was always a most dangerous operation, and should never be permitted; as the hay when purchased might be pressed on shore. In the present instance, the hay being brought on board loose, was carelessly thrown under the half-deck, between the guns. A match tub with a lighted match had been left there in readiness for a signal gun, and being unobserved by the man who carried the first truss of hay, it was covered over by it, and the whole space soon filled. The hay must have been a long time ignited, but no one coming to it, the fire did not shew itself until the moment when the ship getting under weigh, the wind rushed in through the weather ports, and caused it to break out in a fearful volume of flames, which catching the mainsail was soon at the mast head. Captain Todd, who commanded the ship, with admirable presence of mind, caused the anchors to be immediately let go, which brought the ship head to wind, and gave all who could get forward, a chance of saving their lives. Numerous boats pushed off from Leghorn, as soon as the ship was discovered to be on fire, but as they approached her, her guns becoming heated and being shotted, the Italians were alarmed and could

not be persuaded to approach her. Her own boats, such as could be got into the water, or were already out, were soon filled; and some from the English shipping in the harbour, getting under her bows, enabled the few who escaped to save their lives. The ship at length blew up. Captain Brenton met the few survivors of the officers at the Admiral's table at Leghorn on his arrival. It was a melancholy party, where mixed feelings were evident, and highly contrasted; gratitude for their own escape, being mingled with grief at the loss of so many friends and companions.

Lord Keith presented Captain Brenton with his Post commission, and an order to assume the temporary command of the *Genereux* at Port Mahon; until Captain Dixon, then employed in the *Lion*, at the siege of Malta, should be relieved by Lord William Stuart. The *Speedy* sailed immediately for Minorca, and Captain Brenton took command of the *Genereux* on the 19th April, 1800; giving up the *Speedy* to Lord Cochrane, who was in charge of the *Genereux*, having brought her in after her capture.

The *Genereux* was lying at the dock yard dismantled, and with every thing taken out of her, guns included. Her crew consisted of two men sent from every ship in the fleet, of course not the best; and two hundred and seventy Maltese; but the latter were invaluable; and by their steadiness and exertion Captain Brenton was enabled to get the ship in readiness for sea, and to join the Admiral off Genoa, in the month of May.

Genoa had been invested by the Austrian army for nearly six months, and so closely blockaded by the