

fleets were anxious to avoid an action, and engaged in most elaborate manœuvres, during which the French squadron at anchor in Fort Royal Bay sailed out and effected the desired junction. On the 29th a partial action took place between the van and centre of the British fleet and the French fleet, the former losing 36 killed and 161 wounded, while two of their vessels were terribly shattered; the latter lost 119 killed and 150 wounded which may be accounted for by the vessels being crowded with troops and overmanned. After the action the British fleet bore away for Antigua, the French gave chase, and on the 30th endeavored to cut off some of the British ships which had suffered in the action, but Sir Samuel Hood with the van bore down to protect them, and the Comte de Grasse having ulterior objects in view did not deem it advisable to bring on a general action, but hauled his wind and bore away for Martinique.

In the whole management of the operations of this war the British Generals and Admirals appear to have been governed with the same fatality, they were never able to appreciate the right time to strike a decisive blow, nor the true objective point at which it should be delivered. Instead of fooling away valuable time with Clinton's plots at New York, Sir George Rodney should have returned to the West Indies when he found the Count de Guichen had sailed for Europe, and struck a blow at the French squadron left at Martinique; his whole force should have been launched against De Grasse's fleet and a general action forced before it could make Fort Royal. One day of a Nelson would have changed the destinies of the rebellious colonies and placed the prestige of Britain beyond challenge.

An attempt was made by a French force under the Viscount de Dumas (well known in the old French war of 1754-64), acting under the orders of the Marquis de Bouille, to gain possession of St. Lucie on the 11th of May, but the place was ably defended and the expedition failed.

Another expedition against the island of Tobago, under the Sieur Blanchelaude, who being reinforced by the Marquis de Bouille, compelled the surrender of the island by burning the plantations. On the first intelligence of the French attack on this island Sir Geo. Rodney despatched Admiral Drake with six ships of the line, three frigates and some transports with the 69th Regiment and some other troops to its relief, but the Comte de Grasse having appeared before the island with twenty-five ships of the line, the British Admiral (whose instructions did not warrant running any risk before a superior force) returned to Barbadoes. On his arrival Sir Geo. Rodney sailed with the whole British fleet to the relief of the island, off which he arrived on the 4th June but found it had surrendered on the 2nd, the troops and militia having maintained a vigorous defence against an overwhelming force from the 24th of May.

Had Sir George Rodney sailed at once with the fleet, instead of despatching a squadron, he would have relieved the island and brought on a general action. Judging of his ability in strategy and actual conflict the results could not be doubtful, and would have saved his country much loss and humiliation; but he was a jolly *bon vivant*, very indolent and careless, consequently it was useless to look out for energy or enterprise. An unsuccessful attempt to decoy DeGrasse into a general action off the Grenadilles ended the operations for the present; the French Admiral's plan of operations being to capture the British West Indian possessions in detail, and therefore although he had five sail of the line more than the British he carefully avoided a general action as tending to disarrange or frustrate the plan proposed of cramping and humiliating Great Britain.

Whilst the French fleet was engaged in those operations in the West Indies, the Spaniards were employed on the continent of America in completing the conquest of the Floridas. An expedition from Havana was placed under the command of Don Bernardo de Galves; it consisted of 6000 men with a large train of Artillery and convoyed by some ships of war; arrived off Pensacola on the 9th of March. The British force in West Florida did not consist of more than 950 men, composed of British regular soldiers, German auxiliaries and militia, those being concentrated in Pensacola were invested by the Spanish army, and notwithstanding the disparity of force the Spanish General demanded a reinforcement—after some time they arrived consisting of part of the garrison of Mobile, who marched across the country to Pensacola, and 3000 men brought from Havana by Don Solano, with fifteen ships of the line, augmented this vastly preponderating force. A brave defence, protracted beyond all expectation, was made, but the explosion of one of the principal magazines and the failure of ammunition compelled General Campbell to surrender the Province to the Spaniards.

In Europe the combined forces of France and Spain laid siege to the Castle of St. Philip, the principal Fortress in the island of Minorca, they were commanded by the Duc de Crillon, and consisted of 10,000 Spanish troops and 6000 French. On the 20th August this force landed and invested the Fortress, but the defence made by the garrison protracted the fall of the place until the month of February, 1782.

The combined fleets of France and Spain amounting to 70 sail, fifty being ships of the line, after convoying the armament designed for the conquest of Minorca in the Mediterranean, altered their course and sailed for the coast of England with orders to fight the British fleet. Arriving off the mouth of the Channel they extended themselves in a line across it from the islands of Scilly to Ushant. To oppose this mighty armament the British Ministry could only provide 21

ships of the line under Admiral Darby, who was then cruising in the Channel and was obliged to take shelter in Torbay, off which the combined fleets shortly after appeared, and the Comte de Guichen with the second in command of the Spanish fleet Don Vincent de Dios were eager to attack, but a council of war held for deliberating on the subject over-ruled them by a great majority. What ever may have been the reasons adduced such a decision was particularly fortunate for Great Britain, as there can be no doubt but the result would be the destruction of the fleet and the loss of her naval supremacy.

As has happened more than once when the imbecility of her statesmen and commanders were unequal to the task of successfully defending her, the elements fought for Great Britain, the autumnal equinoctial gales damaged the combined fleets and compelled them to seek the harbors of Brest and Cadiz without any advantage commensurate with their great display of force, while Admiral Darby was enabled to leave his anchorage at Torbay and look after the homeward bound trade which luckily enough did not begin to arrive till the enemy had been out of the Channel, by which time Admiral Darby had 30 sail of the line at sea for their protection.

Great Britain owed her defenceless position and her naval power the humiliation inflicted thereon to the factiousness of the Opposition in Parliament, the want of ability in the Ministry, and the total absence of energy, zeal or enterprise in her naval commanders, most of whom had obtained their positions by seniority, adding to their ordinary stupidity the senility of extreme age.

As the war had extended to the principal maritime powers it became necessary for Great Britain to convoy all her trade, a squadron consisting of an old 80 gun ship that carried no heavier metal than a fifty, an old 60 gun ship that had been condemned and dismantled but was lately refitted, two 71 gun ships, one of 64, one of 50 and one of 44 gun ships with four frigates: this was placed under the command of Vice Admiral Hyde Parker and sent to the Baltic for the protection of British trade as well as to annoy the Dutch. On his return to England with a large convoy, on the 5th of August, being off the Dogger Bank, at daybreak a Dutch squadron commanded by Rear Admiral Zoutman having a large convoy bound for the Baltic under his protection, was discovered steering nearly the same course as the British. The Dutch squadron consisted of one ship of 74, one of 68, one of 64, two of 54, one of 50, one of 44, five of 38, and one of 24 guns with two cutters. At 4 a.m. Admiral Parker placing the convoy in charge of Capt. Sutton of the Tronton frigate ordered him to bear away for England. The Dutch Admiral prepared for action by ordering his frigates and convoy to leeward of his squadron and hauled to the wind on the larboard tack under easy sail. At 6 a.m. the British formed line ahead at two cables length and made