

Edward was succeeded in the command by Admiral Byng. On the 14th of the ensuing month, Captain Stevens in the *Orford*, one of the ships belonging to this fleet, fell in with, and after a sharp contest, took the *Esperance* of 74 guns, commanded by the Count de Bouvet. This vessel was one of the *Louisburg* squadron, and was so extremely old and leaky, that Admiral Byng, after taking out her people, ordered her to be set on fire.

ENGAGEMENT IN THE MEDITERRANEAN.

Preparations for war were now made on both sides, but it was not formally declared till the 18th of May 1756. A formidable fleet had been equipped at Toulon, and a large body of French troops, under M. de Richelieu, had landed on the island of Minorca, and laid siege to Mahon. A fleet was therefore ordered to be got ready with the utmost expedition for the relief of that place, and the command of it was given to Admiral Byng. Many unforeseen delays and difficulties prevented the sailing of this squadron, consisting of only ten sail of the line, till the 6th of April, and even then most of the ships were deficient in their complement of men. Being detained in his passage by calms and contrary winds, it was the 2d of May before the admiral arrived at Gibraltar, where he was joined by Commodore Edgewcombe, who had escaped from Mahon with the ships under his command. Admiral Byng's force was now composed of the following vessels:—

Ships.	Guns.	Men.	Commanders.
Ramillies	90	750	{ Hon. John Byng, admiral of the Blue. Capt. A. Gardiner,