

ples laid down which were proposed to be established by a maritime force—it became the confederation known as the “*Armed Neutrality*.” It thus became evident that all the European powers were ready to take advantage of Britain’s perplexity and to strip the “*Mon of the Seas*” of all his boasted attributes, but thoroughly aroused the insult made that animal show his claws, and use them too, on the Dutch who were bound by treaty to furnish certain succors to Great Britain, and these had been demanded when Spain formed the alliance with France, but the States General had neglected to furnish them or give a satisfactory reason for withholding. The British Ambassador at the Hague now presented a remonstrance on the 21st of March on the subject, and declared if no satisfactory answer was returned within three weeks such neglect would be considered as a declaration that they withdrew from the treaty. This remonstrance being unnoticed, on the 17th April an order of the British Council suspended all treaties existing between the two countries.

Sir Charles Hardy, the Admiral in command of the Channel fleet, having died, was succeeded by Admiral Geary in the beginning of July; he suffered a convoy of thirty sail and two armed ships from Port au Prince, in the West Indies, to escape, he only succeeding in capturing twelve vessels. Towards the end of July a fleet for the East and another for the West Indies were sent out under convoy of the *Ramillies* and two frigates, after the French and Spanish fleets had effected a junction. On the 8th of August the *Ramillies* and her convoy fell in with a division of the combined fleet, commanded by Don Louis de Cordova, by whom over forty sail of merchantmen laden with naval and military stores were taken and carried into Cadiz, the *Ramillies* with the two frigates and a few merchantmen escaped. Admiral Geary resigned a command for which he was unfitted and was succeeded by Admiral Darby.

The hostile fleets appear to have studiously avoided each other this year, but the honor of England was ably sustained in several hard fought actions between single ships—of these the capture of the *Belle Poule*, famed in song and story, by the *Nonsuch*—the *d’Artois* and *Pearl*, by the *Romney*—the *Nymph*, by the *Flora*—and the *Count d’Artois* of 64, by the *Bienfaisant*; and her chivalrous commander amply proved that the daring of British seamen, when unhampered by absurd instructions, will never fail to strike in the right direction at the proper time; nor was this confined to the regular navy, Captains of Privateers have repeatedly upheld the honor of the flag without looking for gain; and at this time Captain Moore of the *Fame* Privateer of Dublin attacked five French Privateers off Cape de Gat and captured four of them.

Admiral Rodney arrived at St. Lucie on the 27th of March, the squadron which he

brought with him raised the British fleet more nearly to an equality with that of the French, although the preponderance in number was still on the side of the latter—but with this superiority they had obtained no commensurate advantage—on the contrary, their trade had been greatly crippled and their force lessened by the capture of several frigates; but till Rodney’s arrival no blow had been struck by the British fleet of decisive nature or that marked the character of its officers with that energy, decision, and daring for which the naval service has been famous.

On the 20th March, seven days before Rodney’s arrival, M. de la Motte Piquet, commanding a French squadron of five sail and a convoy, fell in off Monte Christi with a British squadron of three sail commanded by the Hon. W. Cornwallis—the French squadron consisted of two seventy-four gun ships, one of sixty-four, one of fifty-six and a frigate of thirty-two guns—the English of one sixty-four, one fifty, and one forty-four gun ship. The French being to windward made sail in chase, the British in line ahead, the action commenced at 5 o’clock, p.m., and continued throughout the night and part of the 21st, when as it fell calm both squadrons hove to for the purpose of repairing damages. Next day an attempt was made to renew the action, but it again fell calm, but at daylight on the 23rd three ships hove in sight which proved to be a British sixty-four gun ship and two frigates, Capt. Cornwallis at once bore down and endeavored to renew the action, but the French had suffered so much that M. de la Motte Piquet refused to renew it.

On the 16th April, Admiral Sir G. B. Rodney having received intelligence that the French fleet under the Count de Guichen, consisting of twenty three ships of the line, five frigates, a corvette, a lugger and a cutter, had sailed from Fort Royal harbour in Martinique on the previous night, put to sea immediately and made sail in chase. At 5 p.m., having previously sighted the French fleet, the distance between both fleets was so much shortened that the force of each was rapidly discernible, and the British Admiral formed his fleet in line ahead ordering the frigates to keep sight of the French fleet during the night.

The forces opposed to each other consisted of (on the part of the British) two ships of 90 guns, eleven of 74 guns, one of 70 guns, five of 64 guns, one of 60 guns and six frigates of 32 guns each—total 26 ships.

The French fleet consisted of two ships of 80 guns, eleven of 74 guns, and ten of 64 guns with five frigates and a corvette—total 29 ships.

On the 17th, at daybreak, the wind continuing southerly, the British fleet in line ahead on the starboard tack was to windward of the enemy, who had formed on the same tack. At 6 o’clock, a.m., Rodney, judging from the slowness with which the French

formed line that an attack on their rear would be attended with success, ordered his fleet to wear and form the line on larboard tack at a cable’s length distance, continued under easy sail till 8.30h., a.m., having then reached a desirable position, he made the signal to bear up in line ahead and commence the action; this was however adroitly frustrated by the French Admiral, who at once wore round on the larboard tack, thus recovering his line. Sir George Rodney at once hauled to the wind on the starboard tack, and stood on till 11h., a.m., when being nearly parallel with the French fleet, he made the preparatory signal, and a little before noon made that for the fleet to bear up in line ahead, and close the enemy—this order was either misunderstood or disobeyed by the van division of the British fleet, commanded by Rear Admiral Hyde Parker, who bore away and endeavored to bring the van of the French fleet to anchor, totally ignorant of the value of Rodney’s manœuvre which was to pierce the French fleet at or near its centre, and by doubling on its rear, compel a general engagement in which victory was certain—this is the first instance of that decisive manœuvre in naval tactics which afterwards was used with such effect by Nelson—in this case, however, it failed from the fact that the British van did not support the centre. After a furious action of three hours the French fleet bore up and made sail before the wind. The loss on board the British fleet was 120 killed and 362 wounded, while the ships were crippled and unable to follow. Two captains of Rear Admiral Hyde Parker’s division were tried by a Court-Martial, one of them dismissed the service, the other severely reprimanded. These were victims of expediency, sacrificed to appease popular indignation, but the justice of the King rectified the want of that quality in his Ministers and reinstated the disgraced Captain. The French loss was 158 men killed and 820 wounded. After lying to for twenty-four hours to repair damages the British fleet made sail in pursuit, and on the 20th again got sight of the French fleet but found it impossible to bring it to action, and he then bore away for Fort Royal harbor compelling the French fleet to take shelter under Guadeloup.

On the 15th and 19th of May another partial engagement ensued, when the Count de Guichen returned to Fort Royal. Sir George Rodney put his fleet in the best possible state, as the approach of the Spanish fleet was now a matter of certainty, and it was necessary that they should be intercepted before a junction with the French fleet could be effected. The Spanish fleet sailed from Cadiz on the 28th of April, under the command of Don Joseph Solano; it consisted of 12 ships of the line, a proportionable number of frigates and 83 transports, having on board 12,000 troops and a large train of artillery; its object being to reduce all the British settlements in the West Indies com