

16 guns. Brigs—blown up: Acton, 16 guns; Defence, 16 guns; Hazard, 16 guns; Diligence, 14 guns; Tyrannicide, 14 guns; Providence (sloop), 14. Springbird, 12, burnt. Taken; Nancy, 16, and Rover 10 guns; total, 19 armed vessels mounting 332 guns. The rest of the transports consisting of 24 sail were all destroyed. Immediately on the relief of this post Sir George Collier returned to New York, where he found himself superseded by Admiral Arbuthnot who had arrived from England with some vessels of war, a reinforcement of troops and a supply of provisions, so that "carrying the war into Africa" did not mean, as far as Great Britain was concerned, that the troops should find their food in that country where their military operations were carried on. Sir G. Collier resigned his command into the hands of a thoroughly inefficient Admiral and returned to England.

Notwithstanding the reinforcement Sir H. Clinton, fearful of Count d'Estaing's formidable fleet on the coast of Georgia, decided that he could undertake no active operations determined to concentrate his forces for the defence of New York, and with this view ordered Rhode Island to be evacuated—and this at a time when he had more veteran soldiers under his command than the combined French and American armies.

Nothing else of any moment happened on the sea coast except the surprise of the British post at Paulus Hook by the American Major Lee on the 19th August, and its recovery when the enemy had seized a block-house and two redoubts by the steadiness and bravery of the commandant and about 60 men. That with a good deal of fighting on the Indian frontier, from North to South, are the only events of the campaign in America.

The works at Verplanks and Stoney Point were abandoned towards the close of the season—thus repeating the grand mistake of this war that of leaving the Hudson in uncontrolled possession of the Americans—that ruinous expedient a campaign in the South being decided on, as if the war was to be terminated by skirmishes in the rice swamps of the Carolinas. Howe's campaign at Philadelphia was insufficient to show Clinton the folly of leaving the real strategical line—which would have compelled Washington fight—and one decisive action would have terminated the war—which, however, was to give birth to strange alliances involving grave political errors eventually enveloping the civilized world in a contest the end of which has not yet been reached, nor has the swell of the waves of the tempest evoked subsided; and Europe yet feels the oscillation of the social earthquake which was the effects of the civil war between Great Britain and her colonies.

The reasons which impelled the French Court to embrace the cause of the American insurgents lay on the surface, ostensibly its objects were to recover Canada, underneath

this lay a disreputable Court intrigue in which the French minister and the celebrated poet, banker, speculator, stock-jobber, spy and general intriguer Beaumarchais was engaged—this man having been in communication with Dr. Franklin and Silas Deane from the commencement of the Colonial troubles and having aided the insurgents by supplies of arms and money to the amount of nearly one million pounds sterling, found that the Yankee attorney and the Boston philosopher had led him into a serious scrape as there was neither money nor assets to meet his demands, at the same time he was informed except he could secure an alliance between the French Court and the Rebels no chance of payment remained to him. De Villars was then at the head of the French administration, one of the most unprincipled on record, and he was in Beaumarchais' power, therefore it suited all parties to force the French nation into a war whose ultimate end was the overthrow of an ancient monarchy and the obliteration of all the intriguers and the orders to which they belonged from the face of the earth.

Spain governed by another branch of the Bourbons sympathised to some extent with the French Court, and in September, 1778, the King of Spain offered to act as mediator between the Crown of Great Britain and its rebel subjects, and between the Courts of Versailles and St. James; the former was politely declined England recognising no right of interference on the part of a foreign power, but in the latter case it was accepted.

The conditions offered by the Court of Spain as the basis of reconciliation were found to be totally inadmissible and had been evidently prepared for the sole purpose of enabling her to take part in the contest as an ally of France—they were consequently peremptorily refused. The King of Spain as mediator now presented other terms which he termed "ultimate proposals" from himself, but they were so nearly alike to those offered by France as to be totally inadmissible; in the answer delivered to the Spanish Ambassador a wish was expressed that nothing which had passed might interrupt the harmony subsisting between Great Britain and Spain. It was moreover generally understood that in the event of failure in this negotiation Spain was to declare war against Great Britain and therefore it would be deemed only a matter of prudence on the part of the latter power to watch the treacherous mediator and take such precautions as her peculiarly vulnerable position demanded, but the virulence of faction and the indecision of the responsible advisers of the British Crown allowed the subtle Spaniards to choose their own time at striking a decisive blow at England's naval supremacy.

The offer of mediation was not made till after the arrival of the *Plate fleet*, as the rich armed fleet bearing the produce of the South American colonies was called, and on the 4th of June, 1779, the French fleet sailed from

Brest and steered for the coast of Spain where a junction with the Spanish fleet was effected on the 24th of that month. On the 16th of June a declaration of war was delivered to the British.

In this transaction Spain had been induced to believe that she would by French aid recover Gibraltar, Florida and free her South American Provinces from a dangerous neighbour, if not succeed in obtaining a portion of that neighbor's North American territory.

The position of Great Britain had never before been so critical. With the *Armada* menacing her coasts in 1588, she had the Dutch, those sturdy *Geaux de la mer*, as her staunch allies, but in 1779 she stood alone, with treason under the mask of patriotism sapping her resources and neutralising her vigor. Reinforcements of troops were thrown into Gibraltar, which fortress was also well supplied with provisions and stores and every exertion made to meet the threatened dangers.

Early in May a French expedition was fitted out against the Channel Islands. Sir James Wallace with the 50-gun ship *Experiment*, 32-gun ship *Richmond*, four frigates and some smaller vessels having been descried off the coast, the French squadron ran into Cancale Bay where it was discovered on the 13th May, driven on shore and totally destroyed.

The junction of the French and Spanish fleet brought the combined force to over sixty sail of the line, with nearly an equal number of frigates. The British Channel Fleet, under Sir Charles Hardy, consisted of thirty-eight sail of the line with less than its due proportion of frigates, was so manifestly inferior in the number of ships, guns and men that grave doubts were entertained of the issue of an engagement, and serious apprehensions of an invasion of Great Britain, but the national spirit rose with the danger, and while the Whig opposition were luxuriating in the anticipation of their country's humiliation the people for whose welfare they were so solicitous were rapidly embodying themselves as volunteers and taking such precautions as were necessary to ward off the impending danger, and, as events proved, not an hour too soon. About the middle of August Count d'Orvilliers, with the combined fleet, passed the British fleet under Sir C. Hardy, in the chops of the channel without either being discovered by the other, and sailed as far as Plymouth, capturing the *Ardent*, man-of-war, on her passage out. The British Admiral, a highly respectable imbecile, with his faculties weakened by age, was admirably opposed to the French Admiral, who added to the other's folly an indecision wholly his own. For several days he continued parading in front of Portsmouth without any obstacle to prevent an attempt at landing, till an easterly gale compelled him to bear away out of the channel. As soon as this abated he returned and cruised off the Lands End, but