

EXPEDITION

AGAINST THE

FRENCH WEST INDIA ISLANDS.

CHAPTER I.

EXPEDITION TO THE WEST INDIES DETERMINED ON.... SIR CHARLES GREY AND SIR JOHN JERVIS APPOINTED COMMANDERS IN CHIEF.... THE BOYNE SAILS FROM SPITHEAD.... OCCURRENCES ON THE VOYAGE FROM THENCE TO CARLISLE BAY; BARBADOES.

IN the latter end of the year 1793, his Majesty having determined to send a formidable armament to the West Indies, to reduce the French islands in that quarter, and to secure his own from any attack of the enemy, Lieutenant General Sir Charles Grey, Knight of the Bath, was promoted to the rank of General in America, and Commander in Chief in the West Indies. Several officers of distinguished abilities were also appointed to act under him; and Vice

B

2

Admiral Sir John Jervis, Knight of the Bath, was nominated Commander in Chief of the naval force on the same expedition.

After much delay, occasioned by nearly half the original force being withdrawn from the armament intended for the West Indies, and applied to another purpose, on the 24th of November, 1793, the *Boyne* of 98 guns, Captain Grey commander, having Vice Admiral Sir John Jervis's flag flying at the fore-topmast head, made the signal for sailing to the fleet destined with her for this expedition, and dropped down to St. Helen's, where she lay at single anchor, waiting for those ships that were not ready; the ordnance storeships were particularly tardy. This morning an unfortunate accident befel Mr. Scott, second lieutenant of the *Boyne*, whose arm was broken by a block giving way in the fore part of the ship, where he was stationed; but happily, by the care and skill of Mr. Weir the surgeon, he was nearly recovered by the time the ship reached Barbadoes.

On Tuesday the 26th of November the *Boyne* weighed anchor, and with the rest of the fleet sailed from St. Helen's with a fair wind down channel. On the 27th we lay to off Portland Road, waiting for the *Quebec* frigate, which remained at Spithead to hasten the storeships and transports (that were not at first ready to sail with the *Boyne*), and to convoy them through the Needles.

On the 28th of November, in the morning, we were off the Land's End, and were soon afterwards becalmed for a short time. In the evening, a fresh breeze springing up, we proceeded on our voyage. Before it was dark eight sail were seen from the mast head.

3

On the 29th we passed Commodore Paisley in the *Bellerophon*, with several frigates in company. The Commodore saluted the Admiral's flag with thirteen guns, which was returned from the *Boyne* with eleven guns.

As it may be proper to inform the reader that, in consequence of a particular invitation from the Admiral, the Commander in Chief and his suite, with several of the officers on the staff under him, were passengers in the *Boyne*, I shall here subjoin their names.

His Excellency Sir Charles Grey, K. B. Commander in Chief.

Major General Thomas Dundas.

Lieutenant Colonel Symes, Quarter Master General.

Major Henry Grey, Deputy Quarter Master General.

Lieut. Col. Fisher, Secretary to the Commander in Chief.

Major Lyon, Deputy Adjutant General.

Captain Finch Mason,

Lieut. John Cunningham,

Captain Newton Ogle,

} Aid de Camps to the Com-
 mander in Chief.

Capt. Maitland, Aid de Camp to Major General Dundas.

Dr. Wardle, Surgeon on the Staff.

Also Chevalier Sancée, a brave and ingenious French Officer, whom the Commander in Chief took with him, as being acquainted with the island of Martinique, and the fortifications of Fort Bourbon and St. Louis, having served under the Marquis de Bouillé at the construction of the former works.

4

Thus, by the friendly intercourse subsisting between the two Commanders in Chief, the time on the passage was most usefully employed in forming plans of operation, which could not have been executed with that promptness that distinguished the ensuing campaign, had it been otherwise.

On Tuesday the 3d of December, the *Rose* frigate, Captain Riou, parted company; as did, on the 7th following, Commodore Thompson and part of the convoy, and we proceeded with the greater dispatch on our voyage.

On the 8th of December the wind proved foul, with rain and hazy weather. At night, in the middle watch, we were attacked by a squall of wind and rain, accompanied by a heavy sea, which struck the rudder with such violence, that the men at the wheel losing their hold, were thrown down; and the tiller breaking loose, stove in the gunner's cabin; at the same time the pinnace, a six-oared boat, that was suspended over the stern, was washed away, and totally lost.

On the 9th of December in the morning, the ship was taken aback by a sudden squall of wind, attended with thunder and lightning, with a most tremendous sea; we then wore ship, and stood to the south west. Those who have never failed in a ship of war of the first or second rate, can form no idea of the grandeur and awfulness of the scene when so large a body is struggling with contending elements. As the ship rolls through the high swell her sides appear to twist and bend in a surprising manner. The guns hanging on one side, and pressing against the other, seem

as if, at every roll, they would, by their immense weight, force their way through; which, added to the cracking of the cordage, the roaring of the wind, and a variety of other noises, forms a scene of surprize and alarm to the inexperienced voyager.

This squally weather continued at intervals for four days. On the 12th we saw some sea gulls. On the 13th two strange sail hove in sight; the *Ulysses* chased one of them, and we made sail after the other, and fired several shot at her to bring her to; but in the evening were obliged to give up the pursuit, for fear of parting from our convoy, which however happened in the following night, during a heavy gale of wind.

On Saturday the 14th we saw a gull, and several turtle passed near the ship.

On the 16th land was discovered at four P. M. supposed to be the island of Porto Santo. All this day we sailed at the rate of seven and eight knots an hour. Tuesday the 17th of December we found that during the night we had passed by the island of Madeira; but this morning tacked and stood towards it, and arrived off Funchial, the capital of that island, of which we had a delightful view. As we approached the land the surrounding country had a very beautiful appearance, especially after a long voyage, when the eye has been wearied by the uninteresting sameness of an extended ocean. The town of Funchial, so named from the Portuguese word *funcho*, fennel, which grows in great abundance on the neighbouring rocks, is situated at the bottom of a bay, and is a large ill-built town: it has many churches and convents; but

6

as we did not go on shore, I can give no particular description of them. Immediately behind the town the hills rise gradually one above the other, terminating in prodigious high mountains, which are plentifully covered almost half-way up with plantations of vines, interspersed with churches and elegant houses. High up in the mountains, in a valley is seen a convent, which we were informed is dedicated to our Lady of the Mountain. All the buildings being white, formed very conspicuous, and not unpleasing objects in the landscape. The mountains in this island are very high. Pico Ruevo is supposed to be from its base near a mile in perpendicular height, much higher than any land in England or Wales. The sides of all the hills are well covered to a certain height with vines, above which, to a vast extent, are woods of pine, chestnut, and a variety of other trees unknown to Europe. The principal refreshments to be procured here are wine, water, and onions; the latter are the finest in the world, and in great plenty.

It being the Admiral's determination to lose no time, we only lay-to off Funchal, till the wine intended for the use of the officers and ship's company was taken on board; and it being the birth day of the Queen of Portugal, we saluted the fort in honour of the day with twenty-one guns, which was returned with an equal number. In the evening we made sail for our destination; and fortunately from this time had a fair wind till we got into the trades. On the 24th we passed the tropic of Cancer, lat. at noon 23. 21. N. long. 32. W. The usual ceremony was observed by

7

the crew (having first obtained the Captain's permission): a grotesque Neptune and Amphitrité were drawn by their attendants on the quarter-deck, where, after a solemn ditty chaunted by his aquatic majesty, the usual collections were made, which, from the munificence of the General and his friends, together with the contributions of those officers of the ship who had never crossed the tropic before, amounted to a sum sufficient to supply the ship's company with plenty of vegetables on their arrival at Barbadoes.

The 25th of December, being Christmas day, divine service was performed on the quarter-deck by the Chaplain, the crew appearing as on a Sunday, in clean trowsers and jackets: and here I must beg leave to mention, that I never saw more regularity and decorum in any place of worship than is invariably observed on board of his Majesty's ships of war.

This day we passed an American brig; and the weather being fair, Lieutenant Bowen and Captain Mason went on board her. She was from Cadiz, and reported, that yesterday she passed a Spanish man of war bound for Europe.

On the 26th of December we saw several albigores, dolphins, and grampus, and shoals of flying fish; lat. at noon 22. 10. N. long. 34. 46. W.

On the 29th of December, being Sunday, and the weather fair, divine service was performed as usual.

The heat of the climate now began to be troublesome to those who had been unaccustomed to it.

8

On Monday the 6th of January, 1794, land was discovered from the mast-head, which proved to be the island of Barbadoes; and by noon the Boyne anchored in Carlisle Bay^a.

^a On our arrival we found several of the ships that had parted company on the voyage; and each day after brought more of them, till the whole were collected.