Though the Naval inquiry may branch out into various points, both civil & military; it is to be supposed that the principal object in view is to see whether every possible exertion has been used to increase our number of ships, & to keep them in constant readiness for service; & that if it shall appear to the House that the Admiralty have done every thing in their power to obtain this end, & have carried their exertions infinitely farther than ever was done before in any period; the prejudices that may subsist against the present Naval Administration will insensibly die away, & the Inquiry be attended with applause instead of censure on that important Department.

I will therefore begin by observing what has been done since the year 1771, the time when the Earl of Sandwich last came to the Head of the Board, to the present moment. And here I must first desire that it may be recollected that he came

to the management of a fleet that had been exceedingly neglected for some years past, was greatly out of repair, that there was scarcely any Timber in any of the Dockyards, & a total despondency at the Navy Office as to the means of procuring it; it being generally understood that the Timber of this country was exhausted; which opinion was confirmed to Lord Sandwich by Sir John Williams, who then was, & still is one of the Surveyors of the Navy. But the first Lord of the Admiralty was not of a disposition to join in with these melancholy ideas, without sifting them to the bottom; & after a very little investigation he soon found that the scarcity arose from a combination among the Timber Growers, & Timber Merchants to keep up the price of their Commodity, & from some other inferior causes, particularly the vast unnecessary profusion of Ship-building by the East India Company, who avowedly kept on foot upwards of 16.850 tons of Shipping more than their Trade required, in order to secure their Elections by the votes of the People employed by them in Ship building.

To remedy these inconveniences, a Bill was brought into Parliament

N.B. The Company had then 86 Ships, in tonnage 61.800 –

to restrain the East India Company from building any more Ships, till their tonnage should be reduced to 45.000, for the space of three years.

This Bill was warmly contested by the Opposition, & a reason given (in private conversation) by a leading Admiral now in Parliament for his opposition to the Bill was, that if it passed, Lord Sandwich would gain the credit of repairing the Fleet. However the Bill did pass, & was attended with every good consequence that was expected from it.

In addition to this measure, a door was opened for bringing more timber to market, by giving an allowance for the carriage of timber, that by being too distant from the Dockyards could not be brought out by the Contractors at the price for which they agreed to supply the several Yards. Add to this that large contracts were made for foreign Timber, & continued in force, till the Timber Merchants at home thought proper to desist from the combination, & no longer insisting that the Timber of Great Britain was exhausted, agreed to furnish on reasonable terms whatever quantity we have occasion for; & there is at this moment, notwithstanding the immense consumption during

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the course of the war, full three years Stock in hand; whereas in the year 1771 there was not enough for one year, & in some of the Yards the Men frequently remained idle, because they had no materials to work upon. These facts are illustrated by the accounts of the Timber in the several Dockyards in 1771 & at the present time, extracted from the Books at the Navy Office; by which it will appear that the Stock of timber in the year 1770 consisted of 11.813, & in 1781 of 38.742 Loads; which is about three years consumption. It must then be allowed that Lord Sandwich set out at least with a disposition to repair the Navy. He also attended to the future duration of the Fleet, by establishing a Regulation that all new built Ships should lie a considerable time in their frames to season before they were closed up: this regulation however lasted but for a very short period: for as soon as the horrors of War encreased upon us, it was judged adviseable to revoke the orders for seasoning the Frames, & in 1778 orders were given to go on with the building as fast as possible

vide Orders marked A

without paying any attention to the seasoning. It may not however be improper to observe that by the large stock of timber now in hand in the Dockyards, & by the erection of seasoning sheds in all the Dockyards, by which means the timber is preserved from the weather, & exposed to a thorough air, scarce any is now used but what is perfectly seasoned, as particular care is taken to make use of the oldest timber first.

So much for the state of the Timber: let us now see what care has been taken to keep our other stores compleat, & to supply the want of several essential Articles of which the American war has deprived us. Of large Masts (which are the most difficult to get) we have near three years war consumption; of Iron the same; of Hemp (a perishable Commodity) near two years, which is so much above the common stock, that we have been obliged to hire Ware-houses in London for upwards of 5000 tons. And it is worthy to be observed that in July 1759 they had 728 tons of Hemp in store, & in July 1781 4732 tons; &

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Contracts were made in 1759 for 6.000 tons, & in 1781 for 15.200; This is taken in the month of July, as that is the time when the contracts are usually made.

Of Tar & Pitch we have two years stock in hand, & of Norway Goods, such as smaller kinds of Masts, Oak Plank, Deals, Spars, &c the same.

These comprehend all the material articles of foreign Stores; & notwithstanding the very great difficulties in supplying such a stock, being, as has already been said, cut off from the usual supplies on which we formerly depended, yet such has been our attention to guard against untoward events that might have happened from want of cordiality from the Northern Powers, that we have more than double the quantity now in our possession of every kind than ever was known in any former period.

The manufactured Stores in all the Yards are in equal proportions, & the East & West Indies & America, including upwards of 4.000 tons now loaded to keep up the supply, are sufficiently stored for two years.

This is not an exaggerated, but a real state of our Stores, & as well as every other circumstance already mentioned, will bear the fullest test of examination. As far therefore as that principal & most essential part of the Naval equipment is concerned, namely the being supplied with a sufficient stock of stores, no want of exertion on the part of the Admiralty can bear a Question. I shall now proceed to the proofs of exertion in almost every article of Naval business, & I trust with the same unanswerable demonstration. But before I proceed to proofs founded upon reasoning by comparison of what has been done in former times, I will mention one or two capital Points, that are entirely new, which have been effected by the present Naval Administration.

Is the Coppering the whole Fleet of England no act of Exertion? In the year 1770 there were not above one or two Frigates coppered by way of experiment, & people in general doubted whether the experiment had answered; as it was generally supposed that the corrosive faculties of the Copper would have such an effect upon the

Iron bolts by which the Frames of the Ships are kept together, that it was dangerous to carry the measure farther than to some frigates; & that it was necessary that those frigates which were to be coppered should be fastened with Copper instead of Iron bolts. This measure accordingly was carried into execution for a time; but the industry & superior knowledge of the present Comptroller of the Navy adopted & recommended a Preservative, well proved, & attested to have answered every purpose expected for the space of nine years, which effectually preserves the fastening of the ships from the corrosion of the Copper sheathing; & upon that foundation the whole fleet of England (except a very few ships that are not yet returned from foreign stations) from a first Rate to the smallest Cutter, has now a Copper bottom; & as a conclusive proof of our conviction on this subject, we have returned to Iron bolts, & have in a great measure laid aside Copper ones. It seems highly proper in this place to mention the number

of Ships that have been coppered since this regulation took place, which are as follows

Line of battle Ships	82
Of 50 Guns	14
Frigates from 44 to 20 Guns	115
Sloops & Cutters	102

It is scarcely necessary to mention the immense advantages which in the present war have been derived from our being in possession of this invaluable discovery: it has been called (I believe in the House of Commons) by an Admiral who is often mentioned, a bold measure: So it is; but it is a wise and successful one, & one that all other nations are imitating as fast as their means of procuring the materials will allow them to do. If any one doubts of the efficacy of Copper, let him read the intercepted letters of Monsr de Grasse, who expressly says that he should have annihilated Admiral Hood's fleet, if it had not been for his Ships being coppered, which enabled him to manœuvre as he thought proper, & take any advantage that Wind or Weather might give him to avoid an Action if he judged it advisable so to do.

Perhaps measures taken by this suspected Admiralty may not be allowed as arguments; but I will mention them, Valeant, quantum valere possint. When the combined Fleet to the number of 67 sail of the Line were lately in the Channel, Admiral Darby was ordered to sail & find them out, & to keep sight of them, & take advantage of any circumstance of Separation to attack them: this was a measure attended with no Risque; because his 26 Ships were all coppered, & I have no doubt but that if the Enemy had not retired into Port, before he could get near them, some very signal event would have happened in our favor, as most of the Spanish Ships had been off the ground two or three years, & of course could not sail better than loaded Colliers. The same idea prevailed in the late business of Admiral Kempenfelt; he had every ship in England with him, except those destined for the East & West Indies, & two Ships in the Downs, which could not at that time be spared from the service to which they were allotted of watching the Dutch

ships. He however fell in with a force infinitely superior, but by dint of Copper was in no danger from them, tho in the face of that superior force carried off a considerable part of their Convoy. What would have been said if this disgrace had happened to an English Convoy so superior? but it must have happened if the French had been coppered, & the English had had wooden bottoms.

The next new point of exertion that I shall mention, is a matter very little known in the world, but is the only very material improvement that appears likely to be made, which will enable us to build & repair a much larger number of ships than could otherwise be built or repaired; & that is the establishment of Task work in his Majesty's yards, which I will undertake to prove would save more than a third in Dispatch, & more than double in the expence. I shall annex as a proof of this two articles of works to be done by the Day or Task work, which need no Comment. The Blenheim & Atlas of 98 guns each, the one building, the other undergoing a thorough repair at Chatham have been brought forward at least

Vide articles marked B

eight months by means of Task work. I mention only these two Ships; but all the business of the Task work Yards have gone on in the same proportion, & there is not the least difficulty in proving these Premises at the Bar of the House of Commons. After this strange Proposition being laid down, I shall of course be asked why this very desireable measure is not carried more fully into execution? My answer is that every thing that can be done with discretion has been tried, but has failed with regard to the two Western yards, namely Portsmouth & Plymouth.

Faction, Enthusiasm, Obstinacy & Ignorance have kept the officers of those yards in direct opposition to work in that mode. In the year 1775, which was before we were involved in a war that required the assistance of every Shipwright in the kingdom, Task work was nearly established in all the six Dockyards; but the causes already mentioned, occasioned a general mutiny in all of them except Deptford, which probably from being so immediately under the eye of the Navy Board

adhered to their duty, & went on with the Task work. In the other yards all the men (except a few who had apprentices, & did not dare to desert on that account) laid down their tools, & quitted their work. This fortunately happened at a time when no particular exertions were wanted; & we were enabled by this circumstance to set the men at defiance, & to leave them to shift for themselves for two or three months, till they were starved again into the Dockyards; but they then came under an express engagement, that they should not be called to do Task work without their consent. Since that period by various managements, & pointing out to the men quietly the immense advantages the Task men had over those who worked by the day, the four Eastern yards, namely Deptford, Woolwich, Chatham & Sheerness have been brought to adopt this plan, & are now eager in the execution of it. To explain the advantages which accrue to the Workmen by being employed on Task, it is necessary to state, that in a common Day's work, which consists of 12 hours, the Shipwright's pay is two shillings & a penny; if he works double tides (which generally happens for the greatest part

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of the year in time of extraordinary exertions) he is at work 17 hours, & consequently earns four shillings & two pence. The Jackman works twelve hours only, & at an Average earns five shillings & three pence p^d Day. As to Portsmouth and Plymouth, every thing has been tried to bring them to reason; but it is dangerous at this moment to attempt coercive measures; for if the men in those two yards were to lay down their tools for a month, our principal equipments for home or foreign service would be at a stand, the consequences of which at this critical period, it is unnecessary to expatiate upon.

This is a matter of so much magnitude, that it may possibly occur that the interposition of the Legislature might be useful; but I own I think that would be a very dangerous experiment. In this country of Liberty, the idea of forcing People to work in a manner they dislike, would not be generally approved, & might occasion great uneasiness, possibly general commotions.

What has been now said upon the subjects of Coppering, Jackwork & increase of Stores, will shew

that some new exertions have been executed by the present Admiralty. I shall however mention one more circumstance upon this head, which is the endeavor that has been used to increase the number of Shipwrights in all the Kings yards. Nothing but the increase of working Shipwrights both in the Kings & Merchants yards can increase our ship building. In the early part of the war, Surveyors were sent to the Out ports to procure Shipwrights & circulate the information that the Yards were open to all such able men, as were willing to be employed in them. Publications have been continued from time to time in the neighbourhood of the Yards, inviting good workmen; & the Regulating Captains in different parts of the Kingdom written to on the same subject. The expences of several have been paid from distant Ports, & the age for admission extended from 35 to 45 during the war: besides this, all those who have been dismissed from the yards for small delinquencies have upon their promising better behaviour been readmitted: but all this goes a very little way towards procuring the number for whom we could find employment.

The next measure to be taken for augmenting the Shipwrights in the King's yards, is by allowing a larger number of Apprentices to the working men. But this scheme is slow in its operation, & though it augments the number of Shipwrights at a distant day, does not procure any great addition of strength upon a sudden emergency. However this nursery for Shipwrights has been most carefully attended to, & since the year 1778, no less than 324 additional Apprentices have been allowed in the several Dockyards, which amounts to

Apprentices to each Shipwright; & farther than this the indulgence cannot be allowed without innumerable inconveniences.

Now having said what efforts have been made to put ourselves in a condition to forward the repairs & augmentation of the Fleet, let us examine what has been done in consequence of these efforts, & whether it has exceeded or fallen short of the exertions of former times; & also whether any thing has been omitted by the present Board of Admiralty to carry the effects of these

judicious arrangements into full execution. And here we must begin to enter into comparative reasoning; for tho' it is not to be admitted as absolute Proof, I must contend that it is a very strong presumption in answer to the present attack, if it shou'd appear that much more has been done in this than cou'd ever be reached in any former war.

The period in which the largest number of Line of battle Ships have ever been employed during the late & present Reign, was in the year 1759, when it appears that 97 Ships of the Line were in Commission. But it is to be considered that this number was in consequence of two victorious wars, & that at that period we had ten Ships taken from the Enemy in our Line of battle. However these 97 Ships were greatly inferior to what we had in Commission in the beginning of the year 1780: for though the number then consisted of no more than 89, yet the size of the Ships was so much encreased, that the 97 was a very inferior force to the 89. To make up the list of the year 1759, you must include

29 ships of 80 guns; at present there are only five of that class of ships in Commission. But the fact of our fleet being greater now than in the year 1759 is to be proved by various other evidences: the first is, the different number of seamen now in pay from that of the year 1759; the next from the different tonnage of the shipping at those periods. The whole number of seamen in actual pay on the 30th of September 1759 were 88.477; on the same day in the year 1781 they were 99.831; & the men employed in the line of battle ships at the same periods were in 1759 51.540; in 1781 53.135: the tonnage of the line of battle ships was at the former date 188.195; & in 1781 it was 250.430. Our number of line of battle ships in Commission in November 1781 amounts to no more than 92, & it is very extraordinary that considering our immense losses by the late dreadful hurricanes & other misfortunes which seem to have persecuted us in every part of the Globe, we should still have so many remaining. To

illustrate this position, I will not go farther back than from the first of March 1780 to the 29. September 1781, during which time no less than six ships of the Line in Commission were irrecoverably lost, & 17 others came home in so disabled a state, that a considerable time must elapse before they can again be brought into service; many of them probably never will. The names of these ships will be found in a list hereunto annexed. Had it not been for these calamities, it is a demonstration that our Naval Force of the Line would have been infinitely greater in number as well as in size in the year 1781 than in the year 1759: & nothing is more certain than that if we are not visited by any fresh hurricanes, or other calamity, we shall far exceed the number 97 in the year 1782, as we shall launch ten new ships during that period, & most probably bring forth as many old ones thoroughly repaired.

Vide List marked C

It is to be observed that we have hitherto been talking of Line of battle ships only; but it is very deserving notice that our number of Frigates, which in this extensive war are of equal

importance, have increased near one fourth in number, & greatly in size. For it appears that in 1759 all the ships great & small in the King's pay amounted to 305; the number now in pay is 445. From these premises it is clearly demonstrated that our present Naval force is greater than in the preceding war. I will now proceed to consider what efforts have been used in the branch of ship building, & whether our exertions have exceeded, or been behind those of former times. Something has already been said on this subject, but Demonstration cannot be got at but by an accurate comparison. I must therefore state the number of ships of the Line that were building in Decr 1759 & in 1781, & it will then be easy to draw the conclusion.

It appears from the weekly Progress Decr 28 1759, which was (as has already been said) the year of the highest exertion in the last war, that the number of ships of the line then building both in the Kings & Merchants yards amounted to 17. At the same time in 1781 they consisted of 37: in

Vide List marked D

the year 1770 the number building was only sixteen. The Line of battle ships building in the River by Contract on the 30th of December 1759 were three, in 1781 seventeen.

By this Statement it is evident that we have more than double the number of ships in hand, than we had at the height of the last war, or at the time when the present Board commenced it's existence: therefore it is more than Presumption that we have not been more negligent than our Predecessors in this important article either in time of war or peace, & that when our Administration began, whatever was done in the way of building was almost in it's infancy. But I suppose I shall be told that tho' we have done twice as much as ever was done before, we might still have done more, & might have had more than 37 ships in hand at this moment, when the Fate of the British Empire is at Stake.

The answer to this is, that there is a Line beyond which the exertions of every country cannot go. We cannot, nor ever could do more than employ all the shipwrights that this country affords; the

Law does not allow compulsion upon any race of men but common sailors; & if the trade of this country is to go on, the Merchants will, & always must give more money for ship building than the Crown. The encrease of wages without the encrease of work in the Dockyards, would be exactly so much money thrown away, as the Merchants would rise in proportion: therefore according to my reasoning, there is no possibility of allurring the men by Profit, or getting them by compulsion; & it is on this account that no mode has as yet been found out of extending our naval construction, but by making contracts with all responsible people, who have a Capital sufficient, materials at hand, & a proper place to build in. For as to going on with building in the Kings yards (Chatham excepted, & Deptford & Woolwich in a small degree) it must always be nearly at a stand in time of war, on account of the constant employment of the artificers in refitting the Ships that come from sea, & fitting out those that are wanted for immediate service. The question therefore is, whether

Ships have been built by contract wherever there was a possibility of it's being done? To this I answer that the number now in hand compared with former times is a strong presumptive proof that every effort has been made on this head. But it will be proved positively that ships have been built in nine places at which none were ever set up in the last war; & the Navy Board has so much knowledge of the coast of this Island, that they well know every place where a Ship can be built, or a contract made that can be executed.

No place is proper for building Ships of the Line, where there is not a Dock to receive them after they are launched, or in rivers with good Water, open mouths, & muddy bottoms, where they can lie in safety till put into a state to be brought into the King's yards to be fitted for service. As a proof that there has been no omission with regard to inquiries where ships can be built, a list is annexed, where the eight new places are named where ships are now in hand, & three places where Line of battle Ships never were built before. We have even

Vide List marked Q

erected the Sweed, & set up a Sloop at Leith; but we have received very little encouragement from this experiment, as the Sloop was delayed near a year beyond her time, waiting for materials from England, as will appear from the annexed letters from the person appointed by the Navy Board to superintend the building. It is to be observed likewise that Ships built at a great distance from the Dockyards occasion vast delays & expence in getting their Stores to them, which must be sent from some of the established yards. However, as I have already said, notwithstanding these inconveniences, Ships have been set up, wherever there was any prospect of the Contractors performing their Engagements. Engaging persons to build, who are not equal to the undertaking, gains no ground, & is liable to every kind of abuse. When a Ship is contracted for, a considerable Imprest is made to the Builder, to the amount of the value of the tenth of the Ship: if he is not a man of credit & integrity, he will

Vide Letters marked
H 1, 2, & 3.

delay your business, & employ your money to other purposes, being secure of your work, which you cannot take out of his hands on account of the Imprest advanced, as appears to have been the case with the Builder at Leith.

A Gentleman some time ago thought proper to declare in the House of Commons, that he knew places in the River where sixteen more line of battle ships might be set up immediately. It happened that the very next day a Committee consisting of about ten of the principal Builders in the River attended the Board of Admiralty on some other business, as a Deputation from the whole Body; & being asked how many more line of battle ships could be taken in hand soon, they all declared that there would be room for no more than two in the whole river; & those two are since contracted for.

It has been in the mouths of many persons not disposed to find fault, that particular places named by them could build ships, but had no contracts. This, I think, is already in the general idea, sufficiently answered; but I have heard the names of some of the

places mentioned myself, particularly Woodbridge in Suffolk, & Cromarthe Bay in Scotland; in which latter place it is urged that there is a great stock of timber fit for shipbuilding. As for Woodbridge it has been tried, & found an improper place: it is a Bar harbour with only 11 feet & a half over the Bar at high, & only four at low water. The Kingsfisher of 700 tons was built there in 1687, not equal to a 36 Gun frigate in tonnage; the using that place therefore has been discontinued for above one hundred years, not because it was unknown, but because it was judged an improper place to build in. As to building in Cromarthe bay, we have had so little encouragement from our first experiment in Scotland; & the delays & expence of building at so great a distance from the Dockyards so enormous, that the Navy Board have not thought proper to make any farther inquiries in that part of the Kingdom: but if any one will make an offer to contract there, or elsewhere, they will be attended to, & treated with, provided their

proposals are such as can with propriety be adopted.

It has been asked why we did not set up Line of battle ships upon many of the Slips where we now are building Frigates? To this (without entering into the question of the necessity of a large number of frigates, which are wanted as much as larger ships) I must answer, that every Builder who contracts for a line of battle ship, must build frigates at the same time, in order to make use of his small timber, without which he could not go on. Besides, a slip that is fit for a frigate will not do for a line of battle ship. It may also be asked whether the Builders in the River could not advance something in the time when they have contracted to launch the large ships? To this I answer that on the first probability of a War, when the Contractors had not so many ships to build, Premiums have been given for shortening the time, & in some instances with success. But since that time they have been so fully employed by the Navy Board, that no encouragement could enable them to forward the work.

The evading a Mulct, is tantamount to a Premium given; & yet there are few instances where we are not obliged to inflict the Mulct, on account of their not adhering to the time they engage to launch the Ship. And it is to be farther observed that these mulcts are invariably inflicted, & in no instance remitted; & as the Quantum of the mulct is agreed to be assigned by the Navy Board, no advantage can accrue to the Builder from making any unnecessary delay.

I will say one word more before I leave this Question concerning the exertions in point of ship building & fitting Ships for sea. And here I must desire that it may be laid down as an uncontroverthible rule, that in time of war, you must take those Ships first in hand, that can be soonest got to sea; for if you keep your hands employed upon Ships that must take two or three years before they can be compleated, you cannot work upon those that may be got ready in as many months: therefore as I have already said, at Portsmouth & Plymouth little can be done in the building way, tho' much is effected in repairs

Vide List marked G

& fitting ships for sea. This will be shewn best by the List of ships that have been refitted in those yards during the last four years; & this is exclusive of smaller works done on float in the harbour & at Spithead, which always employ a very considerable number of Shipwrights. I am firmly convinced that more work of this kind has been carried on in these yards since the beginning of the present war, & with more dispatch than ever was used since the Yards were first established. I will just beg to mention one recent example of dispatch of this sort, & then perhaps it may be full time to conclude this part of our discussion.

When Admiral Parker came in after his encounter with the Dutch, his Ships consisting of seven two Deck-Ships were miserably shattered in their Hulls, Masts, Yards & Rigging, as will appear by the annexed State of their defects; yet they were completely masted, rigged, & supplied with every necessary, & were not more than a month before they again went to sea. This could not

Vide List of Defects marked H

have been done, if we had not been attentive to every circumstance that might tend to forward our ships, & obviate the delays that must otherwise attend the refitting them after gales of wind, & general actions.

Made Masts, Bowsprits, lower yards, & fitted Rigging (which in themselves are works of long time & much labor) have been provided at all the yards. But for this circumstance, the squadron under Admiral Parker, after so long an action, requiring to shift almost every Mast, yard, & set of Rigging, could not possibly have been got to sea in so short a time, & which it will be found difficult to match in any period of former wars.

I flatter myself that what has now been said will be thought sufficient to prove that there is not the least foundation to suppose that there has been any neat of exertion in augmenting our Fleet. But it remains to answer Charges that will of course be brought of misconduct in the military part of the business of this Office. These charges are not so easily answered,

because there is no demonstrative evidence that the orders given have been right; the event certainly does not decide that Question; but those who mean to find fault, wait the event, & then adopt whichever side of the Question best suits their purpose. All therefore that can now be said is, that the Orders of importance have always been fully considered, & approved by the whole Cabinet; & it is to be hoped, were wisely calculated to answer the intended purposes.

It will be time enough to answer the military objections that may be brought, when we hear what they are; & it is too wide a field to enter upon minutely, till some specific charges are made. The general topics of accusation, such as that the discipline of the Fleet is lost, & that the Officers have no confidence in the present Naval Administration, & therefore are negligent in the execution of their duty, can be answered only by a flat denial of the Facts; & I do aver that no Naval Administration could be formed that would not have more of these difficulties to struggle.

with. Sea Officers are apt to be discontented if every thing is not done according to their wishes; they are exceedingly jealous of one another, & ready to find fault with every body's conduct but their own; yet they will do their duty, & I do not believe any instance can be produced where orders have been wilfully disobeyed under the Admiralty, or where a want of confidence has appeared on the part of the Officers employed more than at any other period. To be sure Admiral Keppel, & all those who are connected with him, have no confidence in the Admiralty, nor the Admiralty in them; but their number is inconsiderable, & is daily diminishing; & Tom I can never think it for the good of this country to bring them forward to conduct the Naval Affairs: & tho' I acknowledge there are some very good Officers, & very good men among them, they have suffered Politics to lead them so totally, that the good of the service is a very

secondary consideration with them. They have however great perseverance in bringing forward any thing that conveys censure upon the present Admiralty; & this extended by the exertions of the whole Opposition, & the indolence of some half friends, works up impressions that are only founded in imagination, & are the invariable consequences of Factions in the State.

After what I have said, I do not think it will be deemed injudicious (till I am called upon) to wave the discussion of any particular military points; when I am informed what they are, I have no doubt of giving satisfactory answers to any thing these Gentlemen can object to. I will here only desire to observe, that they who are so ready to blame what they think has been omitted, never mention what has been done, & the measures which have been executed to the honor & advantage of this Country.

I have heard it whispered that the Admiralty has been blamed for not ordering formal inquiries to be made into the conduct of those who commanded in the several late undecisive actions at sea,

by which, I suppose, is meant Sir George Rodney, & Admirals Arbuthnot, Graves, & Parker. Here perhaps I may differ from some of my best friends; but I cannot help owning that I have seen so much of the very fatal consequences that have happened from this sort of inquiries, that I am always averse to bringing them forward, except in very flagrant cases, or when a Charge is formally exhibited. If we were disposed to investigate the conduct of Sir George Rodney, & those who commanded under him, the consequence must have been that we must have divided the Fleet in the West Indies into three different factions, Rodney, Rowley & Parker, & have summoned them, & most of the principal Officers under them to England, to give evidence in the trials that must have been instituted. The enormous expence that this would have occasioned, is the least Article in this Question; but the additional Dissensions it would have made in the Fleet, & the having double Officers to the Ships, whose proper Commanders & inferior Officers must have been brought over as witnesses, would have occasioned

such a confusion in the service, that as a very able & respectable Officer told me (before the affair of Keppel & Palliser had gone to extremity) would be of as fatal consequence to the Navy of Great Britain as a defeat from the Enemy: & after all I am convinced that the issue of that Court martial would have been an Acquittal of all Parties.

The same thing may I believe be said with regard to the other undecisive Actions; & I desire it may be remembered that no Official complaint has been made upon any of them, & that I have not long ago been abused for ordering a Court Martial, when a formal charge was laid before the Board from the third in Command.

After having said this, I will only add that in the present state of our Political system, & the weakness which I perceive in Government, who, I think, can bring no inquiry into the miscarriages of their Generals or Admirals to to fair impartial decision; it is most for the good of the whole to avoid Public inquiries, unless, as I have already said, in very flagrant Cases, or where a Charge

is exhibited in form against the Person or Persons who are supposed to have misbehaved. Perhaps I may be in a mistake upon this point; but be that as it may, I shall ever maintain the opinion I have stated.

But to return from this digression; I beg that it may be remembered we are now engaged in a war with the House of Bourbon closely united, & their Naval force unbroken; (it's being unbroken was not the fault of the Admiralty) that these Powers have no Continental struggles to draw their attention, & to exhaust their finances, so that they are enabled to point their whole efforts to their Naval departments; that we are also at war with Holland & America, & that our peace with all the Northern Powers hangs by a very slender thread; & yet during these two last campaigns, notwithstanding our inferiority of force, we have not been brought to disgrace. We have seen all our rich Baltic fleets, & our trade from the East & West Indies arrive in safety; we have at present an established superiority in the

East Indies, where we have reason to expect great successes; we have obliged the Dutch to lay aside all their Fisheries, while ours both in Europe & elsewhere have remained unmolested: We have effectually blocked the Port of Amsterdam, during all the last summer, & had it not been for the subterfuge of Neutral Colours, & from our fear of disgusting the Northern Powers, not a Ship could have got in or out of the Texel. We have taken possession of St Eustatia, Demerary & Essequibo, & under Commodore Johnstone we have brought off the Dutch homeward bound Ships from the Bay of Saldanha: We have twice relieved Gibraltar, & the last time forced the fleet of Spain, tho' equal in numbers to ours, to retreat for refuge into Cadiz: We have kept the Channel open for the ingress & egress of our Trade, except in the absence of the fleet for the relief of Gibraltar, when the St Eustatia fleet fell into the Enemy's hands; & it is very certain that if the intended arrangements of the Admiralty had been successfully executed, which would have been the case

if no sinister accident had interfered, we should have had an equal, if not superior force to have contended for the possession of the Chesapeak. These exertions however meet with little attention, & because we have not done more than ought to have been expected from us, if we had been by a third superior to the Enemy, we are supposed to have been negligent, or as some have said, treacherous, because we have not conquered every where with a decided inferiority on our side. I own I think much more has been done than could have been expected, considering our losses by the Hand of God, & the unnatural combinations against us among the Powers of Europe. Whatever may be the issue of this Inquiry, I can put my hand upon my heart, & say that I have done my duty with an honest intention, & to the best of my ability; & I have no doubt but that every impartial person (if such there is) will on cool & unprejudiced consideration & after having made himself

Master of the subject, allow me some farther degree of of merit, than I think it decent to arrogate to myself.