

sixty guns, and the Panther, of the same force, in the straits, to stop the storeships as they arrived in the bay. On the 13th, the hostile fleets passed the straits, with about forty-seven ships of the line, three of their men-of-war having been disabled by the tempest; and they discovered lord Howe, with thirty-two ships of the line, off Grenada: on the following morning, however, they were out of sight.

The British admiral, now sailing westward, sent his convoy safe into Gibraltar. It contained a reinforcement of troops, with a plentiful supply of ammunition and provisions of every description for the use of the garrison. The enemy did not make their appearance until this great object of the expedition had been completely effected. On the 19th of October, when lord Howe, who had been joined by the Buffalo and Panther, was entering the gulf of Gibraltar with thirty-four ships, he descried the enemy sailing from the north-east towards the straits, with the wind blowing fair from the Mediterranean. Concluding that it would not be wise in him, with so inferior a force, to hazard an engagement in a dangerous road, well known to the enemy, though not to his fleet, lord Howe proceeded to the open ocean. On the 21st of October, he observed the enemy following him at about five leagues to windward, and he immediately formed a line of battle. The enemy had the wind in their favour, and, of course, had the choice both of the time of action and the distance from which they should engage. At sunset the combined fleets began a cannonade, which the British returned with such effect as to produce considerable damage, and to throw their antagonists into evident confusion. The French and Spanish admirals drew off their ships about ten at night; and in the morning they were seen at a great distance sailing away in the direction of Cadiz. Lord Howe was prevented by many considerations from pursuing the enemy:—he had effected the main object of the expedition in relieving Gibraltar; he had received orders from the admiralty to despatch eight of his ships, after relieving the garrison, to the West Indies; the force of the enemy was so superior as to render the issue of a battle extremely doubtful, and, even if he should succeed, he was to expect his ships to be so much damaged, as to disable them from proceeding to the other destined services. Lord Howe was too prudent to rush into a conflict, merely for the sake of fighting, and to incur certain danger without any definite object. He therefore proceeded to England, where, after having on his way detached part of his fleet to the West Indies, he arrived safely with the remainder. And thus, in the protection of her coasts and trade, preventing the Dutch fleet from forming a junction with those of the house of Bourbon, and having effected the relief of Gibraltar, Great Britain secured the three grand objects of the campaign of 1782. A confederacy, extending from the Baltic to the Mediterranean, comprising the three greatest maritime powers in the world, and almost all the naval force of continental Europe, found their mighty efforts against the navy of England recoil on themselves.

The period had now arrived when the various contending parties began to have their eyes open to the nature of the contest in which they were engaged. They perceived, upon reflection, that whatever partial advantages they had gained, the war ultimately tended to the general injury of all the belligerent powers. France had indeed succeeded in her efforts to separate the American colonies from the mother-country, but had been foiled in her principal purpose, of obtaining naval and commercial supremacy. Her operations had been carried on at an enormous expense, which not only annihilated all the treasure that had been heaped up by her reforming economists, but infinitely exceeded her revenue, and overwhelmed her with new debt. The war which caused such unprecedented expenditure, had been far from producing any advantage likely to secure an eventual equivalent. The confederacy in India was crumbling to pieces, and British superiority was again manifest. All the sanguine projects of France against the West Indies had fallen under the victorious arms of Rodney; and America, impoverished by her long and arduous struggle, was more likely to drain than to supply her allies with treasure. Spain had engaged in the war as the tool of French ambition,

which, artfully playing on the weakness, personal prejudices, and vanity of its monarch, dazzled him by the splendid promises of Gibraltar and Jamaica, and thereby blinded him to his real interests, to which nothing could be more contrary than either the encouragement of revolt in the American colonies, or hostilities with England. All her mighty and costly preparations against Gibraltar had fallen under general Elliot's red-hot balls; her projects against Jamaica had been completely defeated by the skill and valour of Rodney; her hopes of naval and commercial aggrandizement, through the depression of England, had perished; her ships had been captured, and her fleets vanquished. In four years, all her extraordinary exertions, all her waste of blood and treasure, had terminated in the conquest of the defenceless province of West Florida, and the barren island of Minorca, which was little better than an hospital. America alone had succeeded in the contest, and attained the objects for which she fought; but she prevailed by efforts which drained her resources, by labours which required a respite as soon as it could be procured consistently with her public engagements. During her short warfare, Holland, in the loss of her settlements, the seizure of her treasures, and the destruction of her trade, had been instructed how dangerous it is for a state, deriving its subsistence from commerce, to provoke to war a neighbour that rules the ocean. England, for the last five years, had been engaged in a war to defend her maritime sovereignty; and great as had been her maritime losses, she had upon the whole maintained that grand object. But her defence, though manifesting her energy, had drained her resources. Her expenditure was enormous; her debt and taxes had far surpassed the anticipation of her most desponding politicians. Trade was interrupted; difficulties and distress pervaded all ranks of her people; increasing demands appeared to portend the derangement of her finances and the downfall of her credit. From all these circumstances, it was obviously the interest of each party individually, and of all conjointly, to cultivate the attainment of peace.

The preliminaries of the treaty between England and France, and England and Spain, were signed at Versailles, on the 20th of January. By the first of these treaties, France obtained an extension of her rights of fishery at Newfoundland, and unrestricted possession of the isles of St. Pierre and Miquelon, on that coast. In the West Indies, St. Lucia was restored, and Tobago ceded to her; while she restored to Great Britain the islands of Grenada, the Grenadines, Nevis, and Montserrat. In Africa, France obtained the cession of the river of Senegal, and its dependencies and forts, with a restoration of Goree; and England the possession of fort James and the river Gambia. In the East Indies, all that France had lost was restored to her, with considerable additions; in particular, England was bound to procure certain districts round Pondicherry and Karical, to be annexed to those places. England farther consented to the abrogation of all the articles relating to Dunkirk, which had been inserted in the treaty of Utrecht, and in every posterior treaty. By the preliminaries with Spain, England relinquished to her Minorca and West Florida, and ceded East Florida, but obtained the restitution of the Bahama islands.

The states-general of the United Provinces having acceded, under the influence of France, to agree to preliminaries of peace with Great Britain, the articles were accordingly signed at Paris on the 2d of September. Of these the most important were the cession of Negapatam to Great Britain, but with a proviso of treating for its restitution in case of an equivalent being offered by the states; and the restoration to the states of Trincomalee, and of all the other places conquered from them. The definitive treaties of peace between Great Britain and the other belligerents, viz. France, Spain, and America, were signed on the following day. Thus terminated the most inauspicious war in which Great Britain was ever engaged, and the country was now restored to the blessings of tranquillity, for which it had so long ardently thirsted.