

To General Blake, 'at Sea.'

Whitehall, 13th June, 1655.

SIR,

I have received yours of the 25th of March, which gives account of the late Transactions between yourself and the Governors of Tunis, concerning the losses which the English have sustained by the piracies of the place; and 'of' the success it pleased God to give in the attempt you made upon their shipping, after their positive refusal to give you satisfaction upon your just demands. And as we have great cause to acknowledge the good hand of God towards us in this Action,-who, in all the circumstances thereof, as they have been represented by you, was pleased to appear very signally with you; so I think myself obliged to take notice of your courage and good conduct therein; and do esteem that you have done therein a very considerable service to this Commonwealth.

I hope you have received the former Despatches which were sent unto you by the way of Legorne, for your coming into Cadiz Bay with the Fleet; as also those which were sent by a Ketch immediately from hence; whereby you had also notice of three-months provisions then preparing to be sent,-which have since been sent away, under convoy of the Frigates the Centurion and Dragon, and 'I' hope they are safely arrived with you, they sailing from hence about the 28th of April.

With this come further Instructions concerning your disposing of the Fleet for the future; whereunto we do refer you. Besides which, we, having taken into consideration the present Design we have in the West Indies, have judged it necessary, That not only the King of Spain's Fleets coming from hence be intercepted (which as well your former Instructions as those now sent unto you require and authorise you to do), but that we endeavour also, as much as in us lies, to hinder him from sending any relief or assistance thither. You are therefore, during your abode with the Fleet in those seas, to inform yourself, by the best means you can, concerning the going of the King of Spain's Fleet for the West Indies; and shall, according to such information as you can gain, use your best endeavours to intercept at sea, and fight with and take them, or otherwise to fire and sink them; as also any other of his ships which you shall understand to be bound for the West Indies with provisions of War, for the aid and assistance of his subjects there; carrying yourself towards other of his ships and people as you are directed by your general Instructions.

I rest,
Your loving friend,
'OLIVER P.'

George, 12th June, 1655.

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR HIGHNESS,-The secret Instructions sent by your Highness, referring me to a former Instruction, touching the Silver Fleet of Spain coming from America, I have received; and shall carefully observe the same. We had information at Cadiz that the Fleet was expected about a month or five weeks hence. We are now off Cape Mary's; intending to spread with our Fleet what we can, and to range this sea, according to the wind and the information we can get; plying likewise over towards Cape Sprat, it being their most likely and usual course. They of Cadiz are very distrustful to us; and there being four Galeons designed for the Mediterranean, and six for New Spain, it is doubtful how they may be employed.

We shall use our best endeavours to put the Instructions in execution, as God shall afford an opportunity; desiring your Highness to rest assured of our diligence, and of the integrity of,-your most humble and faithful servant,

"ROBERT BLAKE."