

To Generals Blake and Montague, at Sea.

Whitehall, 6th May, 1656.

GENTLEMEN,

You will perceive, by the Instructions herewith sent you what is expected by the Council and myself at your hands. And although we are satisfied that you will believe we have sufficient grounds to give you these Directions, yet we have thought fit, for the farther strengthening you unto this Action, to give you a short knowledge of the true state of the Difference between us and the King of Portugal.

You very well know that it is very near two years since we and the Ambassador of Portugal did agree a Treaty; they having wronged us and our Merchants, and taken part with the late King against us. When the Articles were fully agreed by the Ambassador, who had full power and authority to conclude with us, we on our part ratified and confirmed the same, and sent it to the King of Portugal to be ratified and executed by him also. He, delaying to do it according to the first Agreement, in which there were some preliminaries to be performed by him before we could enter upon the whole body of a Treaty,-not only refused to give us satisfaction therein, but instead thereof sent us a pretended Ratification of a Treaty, so different from what was agreed by his Ambassador that it was quite another thing. In 'regard to' some essential Articles, it was proposed that if we condescend to some amendments, the King of Portugal would 'then' agree to confirm the whole.

Whereupon we sent Mr. Maynard to have the Treaty consummated: but finding by the answer he gave us, that there was little reality, and nothing but delays intended, we could not satisfy ourselves without sending another Person, fully instructed, and authorised by us to take away all scruples by yielding to their own amendments; thereby to discern whether they were sincere or not. But, contrary to all expectation, we find, by the account the said Person hath given us, that we are put upon it to recede from all those things that were provisional, either for the good of the State or of our Merchants, or else we must have no Peace with them.

In one of the Articles agreed with the Ambassador, it was expressed, That the Merchants should enjoy liberty of conscience, in the worship of God, in their own houses and aboard their ships; enjoying also the use of English Bibles, and other good books; taking care that they did not exceed this liberty. Now, upon the sending of Mr. Meadows,-unless we will agree to submit this Article to the determination of the Pope, we cannot have it: whereby he would bring us to an owning of the Pope; which, we hope whatever befall us, we shall not, by the grace of God be brought unto. And upon the same issue is that Article put whereby it is provided and agreed by his Ambassador, That any ships coming to that harbour, any of their company that shall run away from the said ships shall be brought back again by the Magistrate; and the Commanders of the said ships 'shall' not 'be' required to pay the said runaways their wages, upon pretence 'that' they are turned Catholics,-which may be a colour for any

knave to leave his duty, or for the Roman Catholics to seduce our men. This we thought necessary to be provided against. Yet to this also, as I said before, they would not consent without the approbation of the Pope, although it was agreed by their Ambassador too.

Upon the whole matter, we find them very false to us, who intended nothing but what was simply honest. And truly we cannot believe that Article that was for our good, was 'ever' really intended by them. And we may now plainly see what the effect is like to be of any Treaty had or made with people or states guided by such principles, who, when they have agreed, have such an evasion as these people have manifestly held forth in their dealing with us. Wherefore we pray you to be very exact in your prosecution of your Instructions; which truly I hope to not arise from the hope of gain, but from a sense of duty. For, seeing we cannot secure our People in their lives, liberties, and estates, by a Pretence of a Treaty; nor yet answer the just demands this Nation hath for wrongs done them; but must in some sort be guilty of bringing our People as it were into a net, by such specious shews which have nothing but falseness and rottenness in them:-we are necessitated, having amongst ourselves found out no possible expedient, though we have industriously sought it, to salve these things; we, out of necessity 'I say; and not out of choice, have concluded to go in this way.

You will receive herewith the Copy of an Instruction given and sent to Mr. Meadows, wherein is a time limited for the King's answer: and we desire that this may not be made use of by the King to delay or deceive us: nor that you upon the first sight hereof, delay to take the best course you can to effect your Instructions,-or that the Portugal should get his Fleet home before you get between him and home, and so the birds be flown.

We know not what your affairs are at the present; but are confident that nothing will be wanting on your part for the effectual accomplishment of this Service. But knowing that all ways, and works, and ourselves, are ever at the perfect disposition of the Lord and His providence, and that our times are in His hands,-we therefore recommend you to the grace and guidance of our good God, who, we hope, hath thoughts of mercy towards us: and that He would guide and bless you is the prayer of,

Your very loving friend,  
'OLIVER P.'