

To Generals Blake and Montague, at Sea.

Whitehall, 28th August, 1656.

GENTLEMEN,

We have received your Letters of the 19th of June brought to us by Captain Lloyd, who arrived here the 11th of July.

By those Letters, and by what Captain Lloyd related by word of mouth,-which is not contradicted by yours of the 1st and 3d of July, 'since' received by the Squadron of Ten Ships (which are all safely arrived in the Channel), nor by any other intelligence received by other hands,-we find That the Spaniard keeps 'within' his Ports, and doth not yet prepare any considerable Fleet to come to Sea; and that, in the condition you and they were then in, they were not to be attempted in their Harbours. And as for any design upon Gibraltar, we see by General Montague's Letter to the Secretary, that nothing therein was feasible without a good Body of Landsmen.-So that, upon the whole, there remains nothing to be done, in those seas for the present, which should require the whole Fleet now with you to remain there. Besides that the Great Ships cannot, without great danger, be kept out, the winter time, upon the coast.

Upon these grounds we are of opinion, with you, That a good Squadron of Frigates will, in this season, be sufficient to answer any opportunity of service which may present itself. And, therefore, we have resolved That about the number of Twenty Ships, such as you shall judge proper and fit for that purpose, be kept in those seas; and the rest be sent home, with the first opportunity of wind and weather:-and desire that you will give order therein accordingly. And in respect it will be necessary that we advise with one of you at least, upon this whole affair; and it being also very inconvenient that you should be both from the head of the Fleet which remains behind, the management thereof being of so great concernment to the Commonwealth,- we would have General Blake to stay with the Fleet, and General Montague to come with the Squadron which comes home.

For the service which these Ships 'that stay' should be applied to,-we need say nothing therein; but refer you to the former Instructions. That which we believe the Enemy will most intend will be the carrying-on his Trade to the West Indies; which if he can effectually do, he will not much care for what else is done upon him. And our intelligence is, That at this time he is fitting out some Ships of war, and others, to send from Cadiz into those parts;-the certainty whereof we suppose you may know. And therefore that which is most to be endeavoured is, the spoiling him in that Trade, by intercepting his Fleets either going to or coming from those parts,-and as much as may be To destroy his correspondencies thither. It will be of great use also to prevent the coming of any Materials for Shipping, or other contraband goods, into Cadiz or any of his Ports: which you can have an eye to; and, as much as may be, prejudice his correspondency with Flanders.

Besides these things, and what other damage you may have an opportunity to do the Enemy, we, in our keeping the said Fleet in those Seas, had an eye to the Preservation of the Trade of this Commonwealth in the Straits and to Portugal: which we suppose could not be driven on without a very good countenance and strength,-in respect the Enemy would otherwise be able with a few ships to obstruct this Trade wholly, and to take all that passed either to or from the one place or the other. But our intention is not To reckon up every particular wherein this Fleet may be useful, but only To let you know our general scope; and to leave the management and improvement thereof to the prudence and direction of him who is to abide upon the place. Whom we beseech the Lord to be present with; and to guide him to that which may be for the good of this Commonwealth, and according to His own will.

These have been our thoughts, and the considerations we have had upon this Affair. If anything else doth occur to you different from what is here expressed, either as to the number of Ships to remain in those seas, or the way and manner of weakening the Enemy and managing the War against him,-we desire to understand your sense and advice hereupon, with all possible speed; sooner, if it may be, than the return of the aforesaid Squadron. And in the mean time we are not willing to tie you up positively to the number of Twenty Ships to remain on that Coast; but give you a latitude to keep a lesser or greater number there, for answering the ends aforesaid, and 'so' as you shall find the occasion to require, which possibly may be very much varied since the last we had from you.-For what concerns the Provisions of victuals and other things which the Fleet will stand in need of, the Commissioners of the Admiralty have direction to write at large to you. Unto whose Letters we refer you;-and desire you and the whole Fleet to rest assured that nothing shall be omitted to be done, here, for your supply and encouragement upon all occasions.

Your loving friend,
'OLIVER P.'