

cruising in the channel about ten days ago which took a number of prizes while our fleet were all, *snug in port*. In the East Indies their privateers have taken a great many country ships & carried them into the isles of Bourbon. In America *you* know they have not been idle. The truth is, our marine has been most shamefully neglected. I hope it will be better managed next year, tho' Lord Chatham is less fit to be at the head of it than you or I to be a bishop, but then he has the *merit* of being Mr Pitt's brother. We expect news of importance every day from the frontier of Spain & Italy, as twenty thousand of the troops employed in the siege of Toulon moved thither & must by this time have reached their destination. Thus you see every thing indicates hostility: you see France surrounded on all sides with powers which it was predicted long ago must have crushed her to the earth: you *have* already seen her repell & defeat all those powers, & you *will* see her oppose to them now, numbers, who to their love of liberty & spirit of enthusiasm, add the discipline of veterans. In this dreadful conflict how many human beings must perish! & how many widows, orphans & relatives must bewail their fate! How many defenceless villages & cottages, the abodes of honest industry & chearful health, must be stained with blood & wasted by devouring flames! Is it only the widows tears & orphans cries that is fit music for the ruthless tyrants that delight in war & desolation? What I most regret is that our country has been so unfortunate as to take any share in this unhappy contest. Had any reasonable man possessed of the least observation gone thro' France when I did & told me afterwards of conquering or subduing them, I should have said, it appears to me to be utterly impossible: you & I differ so completely that one of us must be a fool or something worse. What! conquer four & twenty million of people, with enthusiasm in their hearts & steel in their hands, with a soil & climate the finest in Europe, & with resources for war that are inexhaustable! To attempt such a thing is more absurd than any of Don Quixote's reveries. Did Philip, after a struggle of 17 years, & after executing on