of battle, is, that the fleets may be placed exactly parallel to each other ; for, as the weather line muſt not be aſtern, be- cauſe of the riſk of the wind coming more forward, neither muſt they be ahead of the line to leeward, in caſe the wind ſhould come aft ; for then the lee fleet, keeping cloſe by the wind in the wake of their leading ſhip, might, by this shift, be as far to windward as the oppoſing fleet, or even get the weather gage of them. But it the weather fleet keep ex­actly abreaſt of the other, they will always be in a ſituation to preſerve their advantage without exposing themſelves. It is, notwithſtanding, that thoſe ſhips keeping more away than the line to leeward will find themſelves, when come within gun-shot, in a very diſagreeable ſituation with reſpect to the enemy’s ſhips, which will have it then in their power to rake them as they bear down. This may occaſion much diſorder among the ships of the weather line, which, for that moment, ſhave it not in their power to fire their whole broadlide at the enemy, who has the advantage of beginning the action.

If the lee fleet bear away four points to move their order of battle on the other tack and avoid the action, filing off in ſucceſſion in the wake of the van ſhip, the weather line, by bearing away all together eight points, cannot fail, as both fleets are ſuppoſed to fail equally, to paſs through the middle of their line, and force them to fight with diſadvantage, if their extent be double the diſtance between the two fleets. If the extent of the fleet be Jefs than the above limitation, then the weather fleet will divide the lee fleet more unequally ; and if the diſtance between the fleets be conſiderable, the weather fleet will not be able to break through the line.

If the lee fleet bear away four points all together, being of equal extent with the fleet to windward, and their diſtance from each other equal to half the length of one of the lines; ſhould the weather fleet bear away at the fame time eight points, they will approach very near the ſternmoſt of the retreating fleet ; but they will not have it in their power to cut off any part of that fleet, even with an equality of sailing : ſo that the only advantage gained by this manœuvre, will be an ability of attacking the rear, and bringing it to action.

If the van ſhip and the reft of the weather fleet had a ſufficient velocity to keep the centre ſhip of the lee line on the ſame point of bearing ; in that caſe the leading ſhip may break through the enemy’s line about the middle ſhip of the centre diviſion : for, ſuppoſing the fleets in order of battle, on the ſtarboard tack, steering eaſt, with the wind at ſouth-ſoutheaſt, being at two leagues diſtance from each other, both the lines being four leagues in extent ; then the lee line bearing away all together four points, will run north- eaſt, while the fleet to windward, bearing away all together eight points, will ſteer north ; the van ſhip of which will keep the centre diviſion of the lee line on the point of bear­ing north-west. As ſhe is ſuppoſed to be able to continue in this poſition, it follows, that the van of the weather line muſt cloſe the centre of the flying line to leeward, after having run four leagues. The time and diſtance neceſſary to cut off a retreating fleet may always be known according to the laſt suppoſition. Should the lee fleet get upon the other tack and run large, ſtill preſerving the order of battle, they will be ſtill ſooner cloſed and forced to action by the weather fleet, who have only to keep away from eight to nine points on the ſame tack, or run right before the wind.

The weather fleet can always force the lee one to action, whatever movements they make ; for, if they run with the wind right aft in order of battle, they cannot, ſuppoſing an equality of ſailing, avoid being cloſed or broken nearly about the centre by the weather line, which has only to ſteer two points on each tack nearer the wind than the retreating fleet. So that the rear of the weather fleet having bore away no more than eight points, will be found at the end of a cer­tain time to have approached extremely near the centre of the retreating fleet ; and, in a ſhort time more, will be able to bring their rear to action. The weather fleet have yet another advantage ; becauſe, as their ſhips have the wind on the quarter, they ſail with greater celerity than thoſe of the lee fleet, which run before the wind. The lee fleet being abſolutely determined to fly, has therefore no other expedi∙ ent left to prolong time but to combat in the order of re­treat right before the wind, or on the ſame courſe as the pursuing fleet ; for other advantages are not to be relied on, if pursued by a victorious foe.

If, from all that has been laid, it reſults that it is not poſſible for a fleet of equal force to avoid an action, how then muſt it be with one much inferior ? The more nume­rous has nothing to do but to form a detachment of superior ſailers, which will gain upon the lee fleet and begin the action, while ſome others approach to finiſh it. Whence we may conclude, that when in presence of too powerful an enemy, it will never be poſſible to avoid an action if he is determined to come to one.

*To avoid coming to Action.*

1. When the enemy is to windward.—The lee fleet, which is wiſhing as much as poſſible to avoid an engagement, ought to form the order of retreat to fly from the enemy if they are in view of him, and run on the ſame tack as their chafer. But if he is yet out of fight, and they have intel­ligence of his approach by their frigates which are looking out, they may run large from the hoſtile fleet, without con­fining themſelves to keep the wind exactly aft, unleſs they be in the order of retreat. There are, however, circum- ſtances when the lee fleet may run with the wind att, with­out assuming the order of retreat ; as, for example, when they wiſh to gain time, or reſolved to engage the enemy, if they ſtill continue to purſue them. But except on ſuch extraordinary occaſions, a fleet ſhould not fly before the enemy without being in the order of retreat, as the rear is then in the beſt ſituation to extricate themſelves in caſe of accident.

2. When the enemy is to leeward.—The weather fleet can ſcarcely ever be forced to engage ; becauſe it can al­ways continue oh that tack which increases its diſtance from the enemy, by ſtanding on one tack, while the enemy con­tinues upon the other. If the wind was to remain on the ſame point of the compaſs for any conſiderable ſpace of time, it would be very eaſy for the fleet to windward to keep in fight of the enemy, without being under any apprehensions of being forced to come to action ; but the inconſtancy of the wind obliges the moſt experienced admiral to avoid meet­ing the enemy when he thinks it improper to engage him.

*To double the Enemy, or to bring a Part of his Fleet between two Fires.*

1. When the enemy has the weather-gage.—The fleet which attempts to double an enemy ought always to be ſuperior to him in number of ſhips. The lee fleet ought to endeavour to range exactly abreaſt of, and parallel to, the weather fleet, ſo that the van or rear may extend beyond their line, in order to over-reach them, by tacking in ſucceſ­ſion to double to windward their van or rear, and bring them between two fires. @@Provided this manœuvre be pro­perly executed, it will be impoſſible for the ſhips in the weather line, thus pressed, to continue long in their ports ; for there is no veſſel cloſely attacked by two others of equal force which can long refiſt being overcome, ſince it is al­ways in the power of one of them to get into ſuch a poſi-

@@@[mu] Elements of Rigging and Seamanship, vol. ii. p. 386.