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TO MISS RUTH DENT

My Dear Ruth,

This little book tells the story of the greatest seaman that the world has ever known..

I hope it says enough to make you want one day to read for yourself the many other things about him that I have not room to tell you here..

Yours affectionately,

The Author.

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CHAPTER I

EARLY BOYHOOD—JOINS HIS SHIP

On the 29th of September 1758, or nearly a hundred and fifty years ago, Horatio Nelson, "the greatest of our heroes and the dearest to ourselves," was born.

His father was a country clergyman, who lived at Burnham Thorpe, in the county of Norfolk.

The boy had many brothers and sisters. There were eleven children in the family, only two of whom, however, lived to grow old.

Horatio as a child was weak and sickly, and all his life he was delicate. Even after his many years afloat, we are told that he never quite got over the feeling of sea-sickness.

Although not a strong boy, there was nothing of the milksop about him and at an early age he showed the spirit of absolute fearlessness which in later years was to stand him in such good stead.

"Fear, grandmamma! I never saw fear; what is it?" he once asked while quite a little child.

His father, in bringing up his children, trusted entirely to their own sense of honour, and in this respect Horatio never failed him.

Once, while riding with his brother to school through deep snow, William, the elder, wanted to turn back, as the drifts were thick, and in parts dangerous. "No we must get there if we possibly can. Remember we are on our honour to do so," was Horatio's reply; and his pony and he struggled on, and after some difficulty reached their journey's end in safety. On another occasion, while at school, he lowered himself with sheets from a window, and took a quantity of fine ripe pears from the head-master's favourite tree.

On his return to the dormitory he laid down the spoil before his companions, who had often coveted the fruit, but had not dared to take it because of the severe flogging which would probably follow. Our hero refused to eat a single pear, for greed had not prompted his daring action.



HIS PONY AND HE STRUGGLED ON.

"He only took them," he explained, "because every other boy was afraid."

Horatio's school days were brief.

At the time when he was twelve years old, Spain suddenly attacked the Falkland Islands, a British colony in the far South Atlantic, and forced our colonists to lower their flag. This act naturally aroused great anger in England, and as a result our ships were immediately made ready for war.

At this time both Spain and France had mighty fleets, manned by skilful and brave seamen, and Britain was not yet the all-conquering power at sea which she afterwards became, thanks to Nelson and his sailors.

The boy himself wished to go to sea, and on his uncle, Captain Maurice Suckling, getting command of the *Raisnable*, he begged hard to be allowed to serve in his uncle's ship.

Mr. Nelson, who had always said that in whatever station his son might be placed he would, if possible, climb to the top of the tree, accordingly wrote to his brother-in-law.

"What has poor Horatio done," came the answer, "who is so weak, that he, above all the rest, should be sent to rough it out at sea?"

Still, his uncle said he might come, though he evidently did not approve of his choice of a profession. And so, at an age when boys nowadays have not yet gone to a public school, Nelson said farewell to lessons, and, no doubt to his great delight, started off alone to join the *Raisnable*, then lying at Chatham, in the Medway.

No boy going to school for the first time ever had more reason to feel unhappy.

On leaving the stage-coach at Chatham, he was at a loss where to go, and how to find his ship. Too shy to ask his way, he was wandering about feeling very forlorn and miserable, when fortunately a kind officer saw him, and spoke to him.

On learning that the unhappy-looking youngster was no lost lad, but a midshipman seeking his ship, the officer, who knew Captain Suckling, showed Horatio every kindness, and after giving him a good dinner, finally saw him safely on board the *Raisnable*.

On arrival at the ship another disappointment awaited our hero. His uncle was away, and nobody on board knew anything about young Nelson, nor even expected a boy to arrive at all. However, he had to make the best of it somehow, and with the help of an old sailor, who took pity on his loneliness, he soon settled down to his new life, and from that time till the day of his death, except for a few brief months on shore, his home was on board ship.

These first few hours of misery and loneliness at Chatham Nelson never forgot.

In later years, remembering his own bitter experiences, he always made a point of giving a friendly welcome, and speaking a few words of encouragement and advice, to any young midshipman on first joining his ship; and he took good care that the boy's start in life should not be as trying and forlorn as his own had been.

CHAPTER II

NELSON'S EARLY YEARS AT SEA—HIS FIRST COMMAND

Before, however, war had actually begun, Great Britain and Spain agreed to come to terms, so Horatio was not yet to "smell powder."

Very shortly afterwards the *Raisable* was paid off, and Captain Suckling got the command of the *Triumph*, 74 guns, then the guardship in the Medway. To this ship his nephew followed him, and was on her books for the next two years. During this time, however, the boy, in order to gain experience in his profession, by his uncle's advice went a cruise to the West Indies on board a merchantman. On this voyage he shipped as a volunteer, and as a common seaman he shared the hard work and rough life of a fore-mast hand.

Life in the fore-castle of a merchant ship was, of course, very uncomfortable, but it had its advantages, and he returned after a year's experience, to use his own words, "a practical seaman."

On rejoining the *Triumph* his uncle took care that his time should not be wasted, and among other duties he was continually employed in the cutter and long-boat. Thus he not only became a good pilot, "confident of himself among rocks and sands," as he afterwards wrote, but he was at the same time learning the lessons of responsibility and self-reliance.

Shortly after this, an expedition to the North Pole was fitted out, and although an order was given that no boys were wanted, Nelson so earnestly begged Captain Lutwidge, the commander of the expedition, to let him come, that his wish was granted, and he sailed as the captain's coxswain, a position

for which his lessons in managing a small boat, learnt in the Medway, quite fitted him, in spite of his youth.

In these Arctic seas our hero came near ending his life. One clear moonlight night, while the ship was lying ice-bound, he and another midshipman, armed with a rusty musket between them, slipped down over the side and started off over the frozen sea to try to shoot a Polar bear.

They had to wait some time before one was sighted, but at length a huge white fellow appeared. The middy took careful aim, pulled the trigger, but the musket missed fire.

"Never mind!" shouted young Horatio; "do but let me get a blow at him with the butt end and we shall have him." So saying, he dashed off with raised gun, determined to come to close quarters. Fortunately at this moment the noise of a gun from the ship broke the stillness of the Arctic night, and so startled the bear that, with a defiant growl, he turned tail and shambled off over the frozen snow.

When the boys got back to the ship, Captain Lutwidge, who had witnessed the scene and been thoroughly alarmed for their safety, spoke somewhat sharply to them for this piece of daring folly. Asked what he meant by it, Horatio, with the pout of his lip peculiar to him, could think of no other excuse than that "he wished to kill the bear that he might carry the skin to his father."

On his return from the Pole, he was as eager as ever for more service, and at his own wish he was transhipped, with scarcely a day on shore, to a small ship, the *Seahorse*, under orders to sail for the East Indies.

From the extremes of cold he was to go direct to the extremes of heat. "Nothing less than such a distant voyage could in the least satisfy my desire of maritime knowledge," he afterwards, explained.

On the *Seahorse* he at first did the work of an ordinary seaman aloft, but in a short time he was finally rated as

midshipman and placed on the quarter-deck. We are told that he started from England a thick-set, athletic young man, with a ruddy-brown face and healthy complexion.

The frozen Pole was, however, kinder to him than the sun and heat of India. After two years he was invalided home, his life despaired of, and it was probably owing to the nursing and tender care of Captain Pigot of the *Dolphin*, in which ship he made the return voyage, that our future admiral owed his life.

He arrived in England three years from the time of his departure, no longer stout and strong as he had started, but a mere living skeleton, for some time scarcely able to use his limbs.

When he had recovered, his next duty was that of acting lieutenant of the *Worcester*, 64 guns, then going out to Gibraltar on convoy duty. Nothing of special interest happened while on this ship, but the young man always after remembered with pride the words of his captain, "that he felt as easy when Nelson was upon deck, as any officer of the ship."

Some six months after joining the *Worcester*, another rung of the ladder was reached, another milestone on the road to fame was left behind, for on the 8th April 1777 he passed his examination for lieutenant.

Two days later he got his commission to the *Lowestoft*, a frigate of 32 guns. Once again he visited the West Indies; but whereas before he had shared the hardships and labour of a common seaman in the merchant service, this time he sailed as a full-fledged ward-room officer in the Royal Navy.

Great Britain was now at war with her revolted American colonies, which were soon to be known as the United States.

Promotion on such a station was always rapid, and a frigate, being both fast-sailing and active, was considered a grand school for a young officer.

But even a frigate was not active enough for Nelson's mind, and he soon managed to be transferred to the schooner which acted as tender to the *Lowestoffe*. Here he was able to put into practice the lessons in pilotage learned in the Medway. There was much responsibility laid on his shoulders, and his position gave scope for the fearless self-reliance which he already was seen to possess.

Before leaving the *Lowestoffe* he had distinguished himself by an act of skilful seamanship and great bravery.

The frigate had captured a Yankee privateer, and the first lieutenant had been sent to board the prize. There was a heavy sea running at the time, and after one or two attempts the boat was obliged to return, having failed in her object.

"Have I no officer in the ship who can board her?" exclaimed the captain.

"It is my turn now! If I come back, it is yours," said Nelson, stopping another officer who had hurried to the side, and jumping into the boat himself.

Then, as always, he was "the first on every service, whether by day or night," and his zeal and love of duty were bringing their reward, for promotion was coming fast.

Joining the *Bristol*, Sir Peter Parker's flag-ship, as third lieutenant, in July, he had risen to be first by September. The admiral took a great liking to the eager young lieutenant, and, showing the greatest interest in him and in another young officer, afterwards to become famous as Lord Collingwood, did his best to bring the two young men forward. Both more than bore out their chief's sound judgment, and showed that the fine old sailor had not been mistaken in his men.

At twenty, Nelson was a commander, while a year later he was post-captain of the *Hinchinbrook*. Great Britain was by

this time at war with both France and Spain, and there was a great deal of fighting on shore, in which Nelson had his share and showed great courage.



THERE WAS A HEAVY SEA RUNNING.

In the words of an eye-witness, "he did more than his duty; when anything was to be done, he saw no difficulties."

The climate was a trying one, the work hard, and the food often scarce, and there was little wonder that his health

gave way. For a long time he refused to leave his post, until finally, almost at death's door, he was carried to the admiral's house in Jamaica. Here he had always been treated almost like a son of the house, and now, thanks to Lady Parker's care and nursing, he partly recovered, and was at length able to return to England.

After some nine months' illness, he began to feel a little better, and the first thing he thought of was to apply for a new ship.

The Admiralty gave him the command of the *Albemarle*, a frigate of 28 guns, and though still an invalid, and often in great pain, Nelson was glad to be employed again, and entered on his new duties with cheerfulness.

He had the power of winning men's hearts, and his new ship's company, both officers and men, soon showed that they would do anything to serve him.

After visiting the Baltic, where he was afterwards to become so famous, the *Albemarle* sailed for Quebec, and while on this station Nelson soon gave a proof of his skill and coolness in the face of danger.

His little frigate was met and chased one day by a whole French squadron. Escape seemed impossible, but holding on under every stitch of canvas, Nelson coolly threaded his way among the shoals and sands of Boston Bay, where the big French vessels were afraid to follow for fear of running aground. One frigate, indeed, tried to do so, but on the *Albemarle* clearing for action, thought better of it, and afraid to attack single-handed, turned back and rejoined the other ships. Well might Lord Hood declare that the young captain "knew as much about naval tactics as any officer in the fleet!"

A midshipman on Lord Hood's flagship, no less a person than our future king, William IV., thus gives his early impressions of our hero, whom he met now for the first time,

and with whom he formed a lasting friendship. To him the commander of the *Albemarle* appeared "the merest boy of a captain," but he adds, "there was something irresistibly pleasing in his address and conversation, and an enthusiasm that showed he was no common being."

Peace was soon after declared, and the "boy captain" returned with Hood to England. Of money from the capture of the enemies' vessels he had little, but of honour, which he prized far above riches, he had had his share.

On the *Albemarle* being paid off, his whole ship's company showed the affection they felt for her captain by offering, if he could get another ship, to enter her immediately. Nelson was much touched by this devotion, but he had earned a rest, and after being presented to his sovereign by Hood, he returned once more to his father's quiet rectory, to wait till the Admiralty should again call on his services. While thus on half pay, and being eager to gain any knowledge likely to help him in his profession, he got leave of absence to visit France, in order to learn the language.

Of this holiday he writes: "I hate their country and their manners;" and this view he never altered. To the day of his death the man who broke and destroyed the power of France "hated a Frenchman like the devil."

CHAPTER III

NELSON IN THE WEST INDIES—AND IN THE MEDITERRANEAN

Thanks to Lord Hood, very shortly after Nelson's return to England he was appointed to the command of the frigate *Boreas*.

In this ship he again sailed for the West Indies, taking on board Sir Richard Hughes, the commander-in-chief of the Leeward Islands, and Lady Hughes.

There were some thirty midshipmen on board, and Lady Hughes was much struck with Nelson's interest in and kindness to "the young gentlemen who had the happiness of being on his quarter-deck," as she calls them.

"Well, sir," he would say to some midshipman newly come from a life on shore, and naturally rather timid of going aloft, "I am going a race to the mast-head, and beg I may meet you there."

Encouraged by this, the boy would clamber up somehow, to be met at the top by his captain, who would assure him that it was very foolish to imagine that there was any danger in the feat, and very soon the youngster would be as much at home scaling the rigging as if he were climbing a tree bird-nesting.

When Nelson had to attend any big dinner or state banquet on shore a middy always went with him.

"Your Excellency must excuse me for bringing one of my midshipmen," he said to the Governor of Barbadoes, "as I make it a rule to introduce them to all the good company I can, as they have few to look up to besides myself during the time they are at sea."

Nelson was by this time second in command on the station, so quickly had he risen; and as senior captain he had a great deal of work to do. One of his chief duties was to prevent smuggling between the British colonies and the new United States. This may have been not quite to his liking, and for the first and only time in his life Nelson was to feel that he was unpopular. Bitterly he felt it; but in spite of the cold looks and angry murmurings of those around him—especially of his former friends, the planters—he stuck to his duty, and earned the thanks and gratitude of his king and country.

Some of his West Indian friends remained true to him, especially a Mr. P. Herbert, the President of the island of Nevis, who lived with his niece, Mrs. Nisbet, a young widow of twenty-eight, and her son, a child of three.

The latter soon made great friends with the warm-hearted sailor, who romped and played with him to his heart's content. One day, hearing that Nelson had called, Mr. Herbert hastened to greet him, when, to his astonishment, he found "that great little man, of whom everybody is so afraid, playing under the dining table with Mrs. Nisbet's child."

Mrs. Nisbet was much touched by the kindness to her boy, and Nelson soon won her heart also.

They were married on 11th March 1787, Prince William adding distinction to his friend's wedding by giving away the bride.

Three months after the *Boreas* sailed for England, and, on arrival there, Nelson went with his wife and stepson to live under his father's roof at Burnham Thorpe.

Mr. Nelson was now an old man, and had long been an invalid, but the sight of his dear son, he declared, had given him new life. The latter had intended to go to France to again study the language, but his father begged him so hard to stay and cheer his old age, that Nelson felt it would be cruel to distress the fond parent he might never see again.

While at the parsonage he spent his time quietly, but on the whole happily enough. Sometimes he would dig for hours at a time in the garden, for the sheer pleasure of feeling weary after hard exercise. At other times his boyish spirit came out, and he would go long bird-nesting excursions with Mrs. Nelson as his companion. But on the whole the idle life of a country gentleman did not suit the man whose real home was on the sea.

He took an interest in greyhounds and coursing. "Shoot I cannot, so I have not taken out a licence," he writes to a friend. His habit of carrying his gun at full cock and letting it off without even bringing it to his shoulder was scarcely likely to kill much game, though he proudly relates that he once shot a partridge.

The events of the French Revolution were, however, soon to provide him with more exciting work than shooting and bird-nesting.

In 1793 all Europe was horrified by the news that the French had beheaded their king and queen, and had promised "assistance to all peoples and countries wishing to be free."

This was a direct challenge to all forms of law and order, and was a threat to the loyal people of Britain, who were wisely and kindly governed and had no wish for any change.

The country had need of her seamen, and on the 30th January Nelson got what he had always wished for—the command of a battle-ship, the *Agamemnon*, of 64 guns.

Two days later Great Britain and Holland declared war on the French Republic.

Already Nelson had become known as a brave and kind captain to serve under, and a fresh proof of his popularity was given on his taking up his new command. From his native county, Norfolk, seamen flocked in numbers to his flag, and captains whose ships were filled by the aid of the hated pressgang looked on with envy at the ease with which the

Agamemnon secured a crew. Nor were friends of Nelson's own rank lacking; for, besides his stepson, Josiah Nisbet, who went with him, many of his neighbours, the Norfolk squires, were glad to let their sons serve under him.

Nelson was a good hater, and his advice to his midshipmen was short and to the point:—

"First," he said, "you must always implicitly obey orders without attempting to form any opinion of your own respecting their propriety; secondly, you must consider every man your enemy who speaks ill of the king; and, thirdly, *you must hate a Frenchman as you do the devil.*"

The French were said to have found a way by which they could throw red-hot shot upon their enemy's ships, and thus set them on fire. This caused some alarm in England, but Nelson only laughingly said, "Then we must get so close to those red-hot gentlemen that their shot may go through both sides, when it will not matter whether they are hot or cold." And in this wish to come to close quarters the captain and crew of the *Agamemnon* sailed.

Their first duty was the blockade of the towns of Toulon and Marseilles. This was not exciting work, and Nelson longed for actual fighting.

"All we get here," he writes, "is honour and salt beef;" and greatly did he rejoice when, after nineteen weeks, he was sent to the island of Corsica.

Corsica had lately been given up to France by the Republic of Genoa, without asking the wishes of the natives.

Under their brave chief Paoli, who declared that "the rocks which surrounded him should melt away" before he gave in, they made a brave fight, but the French were too strong. And so the British determined to help these islanders in their struggle for liberty.

To Nelson, in whom Lord Hood had the greatest confidence, was entrusted the siege of Bastia, an important

town, to the capture of which he gave his whole heart and mind. But the task was a hard one. The strength of the enemy was much greater than Hood had fancied, and to have failed against such odds would have been no disgrace. Indeed, had Nelson let his commander-in-chief know how greatly outnumbered he was, the risk might never have been taken.

The captain of the *Agamemnon*, however, was not the man to think of difficulty or danger, and in the end he triumphed.

"I always was of opinion, have ever acted up to it, and never had any reason to repent it, that one Englishman was equal to three Frenchmen," he had declared; and after some sharp fighting the garrison of Bastia, consisting of 4500 men, laid down their arms to less than 1200 British seamen.

Unhurt before Bastia, Nelson was not to be so lucky at his next fight, the siege of Calvi. Here much of his duty lay on shore. The climate was a deadly one; men died around him in scores; he himself was constantly ill, but his pluck and spirits seemed to keep life within him.

"I am the reed among the oaks," he wrote; "I bow before the storm while the sturdy oak is laid low." To add to his sufferings, a shot struck near him, while in the batteries before the town, and blinded him with sand and gravel.

Though he lost the sight of one eye and suffered great pain, he still stuck to his post. "Nothing but the loss of a limb would have kept me from my duty," he declared.

At length Calvi fell, and the wounded captain got back to the *Agamemnon*, now more like floating hospital than a ship of war, so filled was she by the sick and wounded.

Though defeated in Corsica, the French were everywhere else successful.

The combined armies of Great Britain, Austria, and Holland had been driven out of France and Belgium, and the Prussians and Austrians had retreated to the right bank the

Rhine. In Spain also France was victorious, and Italy was soon to be crushed. The fate of Europe hung in the balance; Bonaparte and his conquering armies seemed to have cast a great shadow of fear and oppression over the nations, and all eyes were turned upon England and her sea power as the one means of saving Europe.



NELSON WOUNDED AT CALVI.

With Corsica as a place of shelter for her ships, the influence of Britain had greatly increased in the

Mediterranean. The French saw that to make all their conquests secure the British fleet must be destroyed, and on 8th March 1795 they sent out fifteen ships of the line, with six smaller vessels.

Admiral Hotham, who was now in Lord Hood's place, sailed to meet them with a smaller force. The French, though in much greater strength, did not venture nearer than three miles to our ships. They kept this distance till dawn the next morning, when, still not liking the look of things, they sailed away, and orders for a general chase were given to the British fleet.

The *Agamemnon* got a good start, and being a fast sailer, soon came up with one of the enemy's ships, the *Ca Ira*, of 80 guns.

The latter had run into the vessel in front of her, and lost both her fore and main top-masts.

Nelson saw his chance in her disabled condition, and quickly seized it. The Frenchman "was absolutely large enough to take *Agamemnon* in her hold"; but her size mattered little to the *Agamemnon*'s captain. Down on the enemy she swooped; reserving her fire till at close range, she poured in a storm of shot. The other French ships were meanwhile hastening to the rescue; the British vessel was alone, far in front of her fleet, and Hotham made the signal for recall, but not before the *Ca Ira* had been so damaged that she had to be taken in tow by another French vessel, *Le Censeur*.

Next morning both these ships had fallen so far behind that they were surrounded and had to strike their flags.

Thus Nelson's skill and daring caused the loss of two fine ships; but this was not enough to satisfy him. In vain he pleaded with the admiral to pursue and attack the whole French fleet, which he felt sure would be destroyed.

Hotham, a cool but cautious leader, refused to act. "We must be contented; we have done very well," he replied to all entreaties.

"Now, had we taken ten sail, and had allowed the eleventh to escape, when it had been possible to have got at her, I should never have called it well done," said Nelson

Whether Hotham was too cautious, or whether he was right in acting as he did, it is hard to say; but it is certain that had Nelson been in command he would have risked everything on a battle. His plan was always to attack, and either destroy or severely damage the enemy. His own loss he never thought about.

After the excitement of the battle, Nelson, who always seemed well and in good spirits when there was fighting, began to feel ill, and was much troubled by pain in his wounded eye.

He had been looking forward to Lord Hood's coming out as commander-in-chief. The latter had, to use his own words, always "treated him like a son," and he was much disappointed when Lord Howe was sent in his stead.

Lord Howe was "a great officer in the management of a fleet," he said; "but Lord Hood is equally great in all situations which an admiral can be placed in."

However, it really mattered little to him, as he was at this time given command of a detached squadron, with which he was to help on sea the Austrians, who were fighting the French on land, in the part of Italy known as the Riviera.

On this service, while showing his usual zeal in all purely naval matters, he gave proof of great skill in dealing with political and diplomatic questions.

The duties of a naval officer upholding the honour of his country all over the world are many-sided.

"Soldiers have not the same boldness in undertaking a political measure that we have," Nelson used to say. "We look to the benefit of our country, and risk our fame every day to save her: a soldier obeys orders and no more."

At this time we must remember that the British army had not yet become famous under Wellington. Our power on land was not strong enough to make much way against the all-conquering Frenchmen—Great Britain was looked on purely as a sea power.

"We had yet to see how these *sea-wolves* could fight on land," writes a French historian.

Shortly after Admiral Jervis, afterwards Lord St. Vincent, took command of the fleet.

"You must have a larger ship, for we cannot spare you either as captain or admiral," was his greeting to Nelson. And on the 11th of June the latter, now a commodore, shifted his pendant to the *Captain*, of 74 guns, and bade farewell to the battered, storm-tossed; *Agamemnon*, with her crew "who minded shot as little as peas." The old ship was again to appear in his fleet and share the glories of Copenhagen and Trafalgar. Like her former captain, she ended her career on active service; for, fifteen years after Nelson left her, she grounded off the coast of South America and was totally lost.

CHAPTER IV

BATTLE OF ST. VINCENT

The French, everywhere victors on land, now made an alliance with Spain, with the help of whose large navy they hoped to be able to beat the British at sea.

At Toulon a powerful squadron was being made ready. Genoa signed a treaty with the all-conquering Frenchmen, who were now so powerful that the British fleet was for a time forced to leave the Mediterranean. Bastia was abandoned; the Island of Elba was kept for a short time, but even Elba had to be given up after a little. Before this took place, however, Nelson had a sharp action while on the frigate *Minerve*, which showed that our sailors were still what he declared they always ought to be, "almost invincible."

The *Minerve*, after a hot fight, captured the Spanish frigate *La Sabina*, whose captain, Don Jacobo Stuart, a descendant of the unlucky royal house of Britain, was taken prisoner.

While the *Minerve* was taking possession of her prize, two ships of the line and another Spanish frigate came in sight. A sharp chase followed, and the little *Minerve*, her masts and sails damaged during her late fight, was hard put to it before she could shake off her pursuers and reach a place of safety in the port of Ferrajo.

Don Jacobo had remained a prisoner on board during the pursuit; but no sooner was the *Minerve* safe than Nelson returned him his sword and sent him back under a flag of truce to Spain. Such a generous deed was contrary to the usual custom of war, but Nelson felt it to be worthy of "the dignity of his country" to treat one of their exiled royal family with this respect. The Stuarts all were brave men, whatever their faults, and this Stuart was no exception.

"He was the best officer in Spain, and his men were worthy of such a commander," said Nelson, who always honoured a brave man even though he was an enemy.

Nelson received much praise for this brilliant little action and "dignified retreat," as the admiral called it, before a much larger force of the enemy. It was the first sign of more brilliant victories to follow.

Shortly afterwards the *Minerve* had another exciting escape from the enemy.

Slipping out of Gibraltar in order to join Jervis and his ships, the little vessel was espied by the whole Spanish fleet, which quickly started off in pursuit. They gained fast; one huge ship was already quite close, and Nelson, fairly brought to bay, had already given the order to "clear for action."

"Before the Dons get hold of that bit of bunting I will have a struggle with them," he said, pointing to his flag; "and sooner than give up the frigate I'll run her ashore."

At this anxious moment a shout of "Man overboard" was heard, and Lieutenant Hardy, in whose arms Nelson died at Trafalgar, on the instant lowered a boat and started to save the drowning seaman. Soon those on the *Minerve* saw that the boat, which had by this time picked up the sailor, could not regain the frigate, try as hard as they might.

The leading Spaniard was already within gun-shot; to stop meant almost certain loss of the ship. Nelson's mind was made up on the instant; come what might, he would not desert a shipmate in danger.

"By God, I'll not lose Hardy!" he shouted; "back the mizzen topsail!"

The order was quickly obeyed; the frigate slowed down in face of her pursuers. The Spaniards, astonished at this daring act, for some strange reason failed to press on and the *Minerve*, with Hardy and the rescuing party safe on board, went on her way unharmed.

That same night, in a haze, the little frigate, which seemed to bear a charmed life, had an even more thrilling and mysterious adventure.

Suddenly she found herself sailing in the very midst of a large fleet, which they knew could not be that of Jervis. Partly hidden by the fog, Nelson continued on his way, obeying, the Spanish admiral's signals, and behaving just as though the *Minerve* were one of the enemy's frigates.

It was a time of breathless excitement. Should the fog lift, and the enemy discover the strange ship in their midst, Nelson knew that he would have no mercy shown him and no chance of escape.

Whether he was with the Spanish main fleet or only a portion of it he had no means in the darkness of finding out. He himself thought that he was in company with a squadron on its way to the West Indies. In this case his mind was made up; unprepared as the *Minerve* was for such a long voyage, she would have to sail at her best speed, ahead of the enemy, and trust to reach the islands in time to warn them to be ready to meet an attack.

The suspense was growing greater every minute, with the prospect of dawn and the mist clearing. Suddenly the ships went about and pointed towards Cadiz: the Indies was not their object.

Nelson, now satisfied that he had been sailing in the very middle of the Spanish Grand Fleet, turned and rejoined Jervis; and at seven that evening he went on board his own ship, the *Captain*.

All night the ships sailed in close order prepared for action, our sailors standing to their guns. At daybreak next morning the enemy were in sight, their twenty-seven ships of the line advancing in straggling array.

They were divided in squadrons, six ships in the lee division, the main body of twenty-one sail being in the

weather division. Three ships from the larger division, however, quickly crossed over before the British could get near enough to engage them, and joined the leeward squadron.

The British were at first sailing in two columns, "line ahead," a half-dozen of their faster ships pressing on under full canvas to cut in between the gradually widening gap in the enemy's divisions.

Before the Spaniards had time to form a regular order of battle, and while they were still in confusion, Jervis had split their force in two. He was thus able to fling his whole fighting force on the larger Spanish squadron, before their friends to leeward could come to their aid. When they attempted to do so they were beaten back, after some rough handling.

Nelson, who was in the rear of the British line, now saw that the enemy's leading ships of the weather division were bearing up before the wind, and would in a short time either pass behind the British rear and join the lee division, or else avoid the fight by sailing away before the wind.

In a moment, and without orders, he made up his mind to spoil the foeman's plan. Giving orders to "wear ship," he turned and threw himself on the enemy's van.

He had disobeyed the admiral's orders, but the Spanish admiral's plans had been prevented. The Dons were brought to bay by one ship; it only remained for the other British vessels to hasten up and complete the enemy's ruin.

From the rear on the starboard tack the *Captain* now took the lead on the larboard, and single-handed she at first engaged the foe.

The *Culloden*, *Blenheim*, and the *Excellent*—the latter under the command of Collingwood—were the first to arrive and bring help to the *Captain* in her gallant fight against such odds.

When Collingwood, to use Nelson's own words, "disdaining the parade of taking possession of beaten enemies, with every sail set, pushed up to save his old messmate," Nelson's gallant vessel had suffered severely.

She had lost her fore-topmast, not a sail, shroud, or rope was left, her wheel was shot away.

Thus, unfit for further service in the line, and unable to pursue, there was only one thing left; and, putting her helm a-starboard, Nelson gave the order so dear to a British seaman, "Out cutlasses, and board!"

First into the *San Nicholas* the boarders leapt. Captain Miller had started to lead his men. "No, Miller, I must have that honour!" said Nelson, slipping in front of his junior officer, and heading the attack in person.

Many of our sailors, climbing to the yards which were locked in the Spaniard's main-rigging, dropped down on deck from above. The foe could not resist their furious charge—our seamen swept the decks. The enemy were driven below; such as still remained yielded, and the officers gave up their swords.

Leaving some men to guard the *San Nicholas*, Nelson now turned to the *San Josef*, lying alongside. Again the order to board was given, Nelson, with a shout of "Westminster Abbey, or victory!" leading the way.

Berry, the first man to get on the *San Nicholas*, was again in front, and with his own hand helped Nelson into the main-chains. Hardly had they reached the deck before the Spaniards surrendered, Nelson receiving their swords himself, and coolly handing them over to one of the old *Agamemnon's* crew, who had stuck by his side while the fight lasted. When the *Victory*, the admiral's flagship, passed a few moments later, both of the Spanish ships of the line had struck their flags to Nelson.

Cheer after cheer rose from the *Victory*, and the ringing huzzas were taken up by the whole fleet.



BERRY HELPED NELSON INTO THE MAIN-CHAINS OF THE *SAN JOSEF*.

"Nothing in the world was ever more noble than the action of the Captain from beginning to end." So wrote Sir Gilbert Elliot, who was with the fleet during the fight.

At 4 p.m. the orders to cease fighting, and to cover the four prizes and the crippled *Captain*, were given. The defeated

enemy sailed away, and Nelson went on board the flagship. There Sir John Jervis met him on the quarter-deck, and, taking him in his arms, told Nelson he scarcely knew how to thank him.

On Captain Calder saying that the *Captain's* wearing out of the line—which really won the battle—was an act of disobedience, the admiral replied, "It certainly was so; and if ever you commit such a breach of orders I shall forgive you also."

For this brilliant victory Jervis was made a peer, with the title of Lord St. Vincent. Nelson was offered a baronetcy, which he was too poor to accept, so he was made instead a Knight of the Garter.

Jervis made him a present which he valued highly—the sword of the Spanish rear-admiral. This gift he sent to the city of Norwich, saying that "he knew no place where it would give him or his family more pleasure to have it kept than in the chief city of the county where he was born."

His father wrote that "tears of joy had trickled down his aged cheeks" to read of his son's bravery. "The name and services of Nelson have sounded from the common ballad-singer to the public theatre," he add.

The *Captain* had been so knocked about in the battle as to be of no further use, so Sir Horatio, now a Rear-Admiral of the Blue, shifted his flag to the *Theseus*, a fine ship which had just come from England.

On Nelson's first going to the *Theseus* there was some doubt how the crew would behave. There had lately been a mutiny in England among the sailors, in which the *Theseus* had taken part. Nelson was so beloved that it was felt he was the captain to take command of discontented men.

His tact and kindness, as well as his bravery and renown, won the day.

Very soon after he came on board he received a packet which was dropped one night on the deck, and which enclosed a paper signed by the whole crew, containing these words:—

"Success attend Admiral Nelson! God bless Captain Miller! We thank them for the officers they have placed over us. We are happy and comfortable; and will shed every drop of blood in our veins to support them."

The paper ended by promising that the name of the *Theseus* should be as famous as that of her captain; and the brave sailors kept their word, nor did they ever give trouble by their conduct.

Sir Horatio was now put in command of an in-shore squadron, which had orders to blockade Cadiz. There was a lot of work in small boats, and some fierce fights took place between the little craft on both sides.

At no time in his life was Nelson's bravery greater than in these hand-to-hand conflicts. The danger suited him, for he loved fighting for fighting's sake. Once his barge was boarded by a number of Spaniards, and in the hand-to-hand struggle John Sykes, his faithful coxswain, twice at great risk saved his admiral's life.

During the blockade news came that the Spanish treasure-ships from Mexico had heard that Lord St. Vincent was in wait for them, and had taken refuge at Teneriffe. This was found to be untrue, but a homeward-bound Manilla ship had put into Santa Cruz, and Nelson was told to command an assault on the town, and secure the treasure.

The attack was beaten back, though Nelson and his men fought with splendid bravery.

Nelson, while leading the force, was struck in the right arm by a grape-shot. His step-son, son, Josiah Nisbet, into whose arms he had fallen, with great skill and coolness bound the wound; otherwise he must have bled to death.

Returning to the ship, the wounded admiral refused all help, and, steadying himself with one hand, jumped up the ship's side. Arrived on deck, he called for the surgeon, and quietly told him "to get his instruments ready, for he knew he must lose his arm, and that the sooner it was off the better."

He bore the operation without a murmur, and never even mentioned his own wound in his despatches home. What he minded more was the failure of the attack; and what with fretting over this, and the pain of his wound, he became very ill.

"I am become," he said, "a burden to my friends, and useless to my country." To Lord St. Vincent he wrote: "I hope you will be able to give me a frigate to convey the remains of my carcass to England: a left-handed admiral will never again be considered as useful."

When he reached home, Nelson was greatly cheered by the splendid welcome he got. The freedom of the cities of London and Bristol was given to him, while the king received him most graciously, and decorated him with the Order of the Bath, besides giving him a pension of £1000 a year.

After a time the wound which had caused him so much suffering healed, and Nelson wrote to a London clergyman, begging him to announce in church the next Sunday: "An officer desires to return thanks to Almighty God for his perfect recovery from a severe wound, and also for many mercies bestowed upon him."

As soon as he was well he was given command of the *Vanguard*, 74 guns, in which he sailed to join the squadron off Cadiz. "I do assure you that the arrival of Admiral Nelson has given me new life," wrote St. Vincent, who, now an old man and in failing health, joyfully welcomed the return of the brilliant seaman he so trusted and admired.

CHAPTER V

BATTLE OF THE NILE

Great Britain was now alone in her struggle with France, and Bonaparte resolved that it should be a war to the death. With Great Britain defeated, the conqueror would have the whole of Europe at his feet. First he meant to strike a blow at our power in the East, and a great number of transports, filled with the best and bravest French soldiers, sailed for Egypt under escort of the French fleet. From there they were to go on to India, and with the aid of the rebel Tippoo, try to drive us out of the country.

To prevent this, Nelson was sent from Cadiz with a large force of ships.

Heavy weather was met with, during which the *Vanguard* lost her main and mizzen top-masts, while her foremast snapped off close to the deck. So damaged was she that she had to be taken in tow. In the meantime the frigates of the squadron, thinking the flagship would have to return to refit at Gibraltar, sailed back to that port.

"I thought Hope" (the commander of the frigates) "would have known me better," Nelson bitterly said; and in four days the *Vanguard*, having been what is called "jury-rigged," continued on her way.

The loss of the frigates, "the eyes of the fleet," was a great misfortune, and in the eight weeks' chase which followed Nelson had much cause to regret their absence.

Alexandria reached, there was no news of the enemy, though three days after, while the British were sailing between Cyprus and the island of Rhodes, they actually arrived.

This Nelson of course did not know, and doubling back he reached Syracuse, where he anchored, "having gone a

round of six hundred leagues," to use his own words, "and still as ignorant of the situation as he was twenty-seven days ago."

Already at home people were beginning to murmur, and to wonder what the great Nelson was about to let the foe escape him in this way.

He himself was very sad at his want of success. "My return to Syracuse broke my heart; more people die of broken hearts than we are aware of," he afterwards said.

Again the squadron sailed, and this time the foe were found and brought to bay.

At length on the 1st of August 1798 the look-out at the mast-head made the signal that the French were at anchor in Aboukir Bay, 15 miles east of Alexandria, and thus the long pursuit had ended.

In numbers the two fleets were equal, but Brueys, the French admiral, had larger ships and more guns. To attack him the British would have to advance through unknown and shallow waters.

Brueys did not believe that our vessels could thread their way among the shoals which lay between him and the shore, and in this belief he prepared to meet the attack, which he felt sure must be made from the more open sea on his rear.

Nelson, who in his early days had been famous for his skill and daring as a pilot, was to rudely shake this mistaken idea.

The wind blew along the French line, and he was thus able by attacking their van and centre to throw what force he pleased on a few ships. All his plans were made, and in order that there might be no mistake about his orders being quickly understood, the admiral had caused new signals to be written in the signal-books.

His captains had often met on the *Vanguard* and talked of the coming battle. "First gain the victory," Nelson

had told them, "and then make the best use of it you can." Now they were all eager for the fight, and full of admiration for the admiral's plan of battle. "If we succeed, what will the world say?" exclaimed Captain Berry.

"There is no *if* in the case," answered Nelson; "that we shall succeed is certain: who may live to tell the story, is a very different question."

At 5.30 p.m.—less than three hours after the enemy had been sighted—the signal was given to the British fleet to form line of battle in single column, the ships ranged ahead and astern of each other.

Captain Hood of the *Zealous*, carefully sounding as he went, with Captain Foley of the *Goliath*, led the way, the latter ship ahead of but outside the *Zealous*.

The flagship came sixth in order, so that Nelson could, if he thought it best to do so, change the plan of attack of the other vessels which came after him. The *Vanguard* had six flags flying in different parts of her rigging, so that her colours might not be shot away: "*That they should be struck*," to quote Southey, "*no British admiral considers as a possibility*."

Keeping out of every danger in the way of shoals, the British bore up to battle; so coolly and steadily did they advance, and so skilfully did they haul round every danger, that Brueys felt sure they must have pilots on board.

A brilliant idea here struck Captain Foley. Taking the depth carefully as he went along, he passed round *on the inside* of the leading French ship, and brought up opposite the *Conquerant*, second of the enemy's line. The *Zealous*, *Orion*, *Theseus*, and *Audacious* followed, and placed themselves *between the Frenchmen and the shore*. The *Vanguard*, with the other British ships, passed on the *outside*.

By this means the French were caught between two fires, and within a few minutes five French ships were

defending themselves against the attack of eight British, while the other French vessels to leeward were forced to look on.

The battle was partly hidden by smoke and the fading light. In the growing darkness the *Bellerophon* and the *Majestic* pushed up. The former drew up abreast of the *Orient*, a ship whose power was double her own, and with whom she was soon engaged in a desperate single combat. The *Majestic*, raked by the fire—in which her captain fell—of the first French ship she met, the *Heureux*, sailed on and fell upon the *Mercure*, into whose sides she poured a desperate volley.

For an hour the British ships kept their places, and during the hottest of the fight Nelson was struck on the forehead, and, for the time being, was quite blinded.

With the words, "I am killed," he sank into Berry's arms. With tender care he was carried to the cockpit. Here, as at Santa Cruz, and as afterwards at Trafalgar, he refused to have his wound looked to before his humbler messmates had been attended by the surgeons.

When the admiral's time came it was found that the wound was less serious than at first thought. Rest was ordered, but this the impatient spirit of Nelson could not stand while the battle was raging round him and the result was still uncertain.

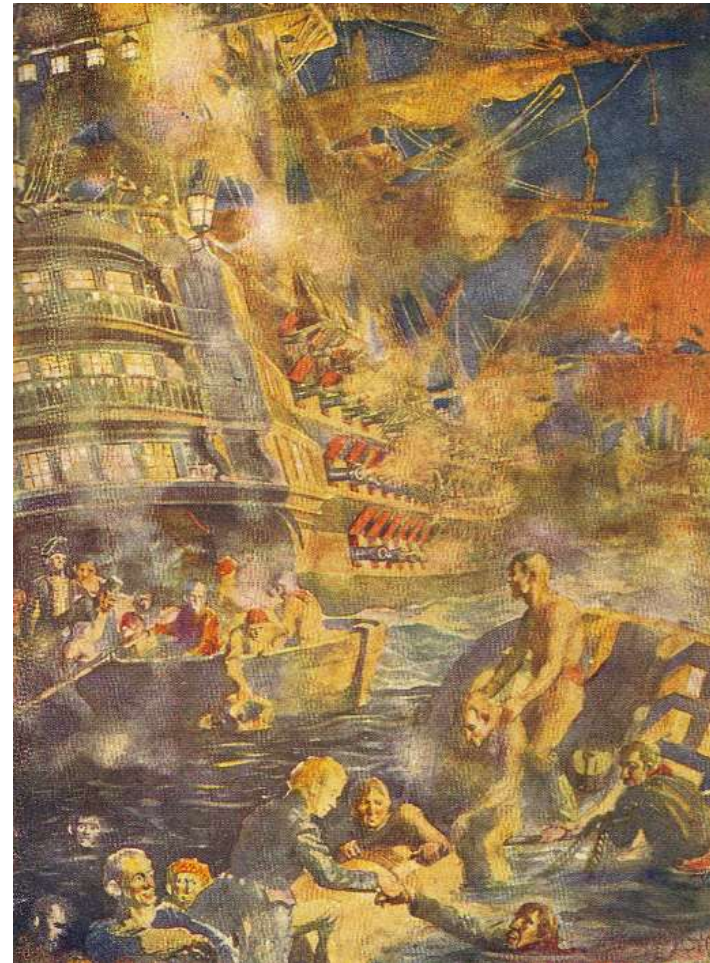
Meanwhile the other British ships were hastening up to throw their weight into the balance and turn the scale towards victory.

The gallant Troubridge had the ill fortune of seeing his ship, the *Culloden*, run aground and stick fast. All efforts to get her off failed, and she lay there a helpless log, while her captain and crew longed to be in the thick of the battle.

Unable to fight, Troubridge was yet able to give his comrades great help, and to play a big part in the victory.

By constant signalling in the growing darkness by means of lanterns, he warned the other captains of his position, and prevented them from sharing his own fate. With this

beacon in the shape of a stranded ship to guide them, they were able, by avoiding the way she had come, to sail on with greater speed and confidence to battle.



THE BATTLE OF THE NILE.

Nelson saw the service Troubridge had done, and pitied him greatly for the accident, while he praised his skill in saving the ship.

"It was Troubridge," said he, "who saved the *Culloden* when none that I know in the service would have attempted it."

"Her misfortune was great in getting aground," he wrote to the Admiralty, "while her more fortunate companions were in full tide of happiness. Captain Troubridge on shore is superior to captains afloat: in the midst of his great misfortunes he made those signals which prevented, certainly, the *Alexander* and *Swiftsure* from running on the shoals. I beg your pardon for writing on a subject which I verily believe has never entered your lordship's head; but my heart, as it ought to be, is warm to my gallant friends."

This letter was sent because he heard that the gold medals given to the captains at the fight might not include Troubridge, whose ship had not been in action.

Pouring their fire on the enemy's centre, the new arrivals, which the *Culloden* had guided, put the fate of the battle beyond doubt.

A little before nine, Admiral Brueys' flagship took fire, and at a quarter to ten she blew up, with a terrific explosion, the flames illuminating the whole bay, and showing a picture of awful grandeur.

A death-like silence followed the explosion; both sides for the time ceased firing. Of the brave foemen who fought their ship to the last, only some seventy were saved by the British crews. Among the many who perished was the commodore's son, Casa Bianca, a brave boy of thirteen, the hero of the poem, "The boy stood on the burning deck," who refused to leave the doomed ship. When dawn broke over the scene of wreck and ruin, the extent of the victory was seen.

The leading French ships had struck; the flagship was no more; the *Tonnant* was still afloat, but mastless; the *Heureux* and *Mercure* ashore.

Three ships of the enemy's line only were still standing, and of these two escaped under Rear-Admiral Villeneuve. The third, the *Timoléon*, ran aground, when she was set fire to by her captain, and went down with her colours flying in all the pride of "no surrender."

The fight had been fierce, and the victory was great. The British crews, who had been "working and fighting at their hardest for near twelve hours," no sooner cast anchor than they dropped on deck completely tired out, and slept where they lay.

On the 2nd of August, "Almighty God having blessed His Majesty's arms with victory"—so ran the memorandum—a public thanksgiving was held throughout the fleet.

On the same day, Nelson sent to the captains, officers, and seamen of the fleet, asking them "to accept the Admiral's most sincere and cordial thanks for their very gallant behaviour in this glorious battle."

Honours fell fast upon the victor. Letters of congratulation from the Czar, the Sultan, the Kings of Sardinia and the two Sicilies reached him. A grateful country gave him the honour of a peerage, under the title of Baron Nelson of the Nile, besides a pension of £2000 a year. The East India Company, who felt that he had saved India by his victory, made him a present of £10,000.

At home the whole country spoke of little else but of Nelson and his glorious deeds. Indeed, throughout all Europe the fame of the great admiral was ringing.

CHAPTER VI

IN THE MEDITERRANEAN—AND AT HOME

After the battle Nelson sailed for Italy. On this voyage he became seriously ill, and for eighteen hours he was not expected to get better.

Feeling his end to be near, he wrote to the chief he so loved, Lord St. Vincent, bidding him farewell.

"I never expect, my dear lord, to see your face again," he said. "It may please God that this will be the finish to that fever of anxiety which I have endured from the middle of June"—during the search for the French fleet. "But he that as it pleases His goodness. I am resigned to His will."

The voyage, however, seemed to do him good, and on arrival at Naples a splendid welcome cheered his drooping spirits.

The Queen of Naples—who was a sister of the unfortunate and beautiful Marie Antoine, the queen whom the French had beheaded—greeted him with every show of joy and delight.

"O brave Nelson! O God! bless and protect our brave deliverer!" she said. "Nelson! Nelson! what do we not owe you! O conqueror! saviour of Italy! The whole of the sea-coast of Italy is saved; and this is owing alone to the generous English."

The people of Naples had all along had kindly feelings to Great Britain, but they had been afraid of seeming too friendly lest they should offend the French.

The latter had now overthrown the Pope and his government, and put in their place a Roman republic. This was a constant danger to the kingdom of Naples. Not only were

they frightened of being attacked, but they also feared that the people would follow the example of the French, raise the standard of revolt, and perhaps treat the king and queen as the French had used their royal family.

At the advice of Nelson, and urged thereto by the queen and Lady Hamilton, her great friend, the wife of the English minister, the king at length made war on the French, and his army marched on Rome.

Nelson in the meanwhile promised that the Bay of Naples should never be left without an English man-of-war to protect the royal family.

At first the Neapolitan army did very well; after some skirmishing they forced the French general to leave Rome, and they then entered the city in triumph.

This was, however, the end of their success. The army was composed of fine stalwart men, and in their bright uniforms had at first so pleased Nelson that the great sea-man compared them to the finest troops in Europe. They were, however, useless when it came to hard knocks and real fighting.

When they attempted to follow up the retreating Frenchmen, the latter, though out-numbered by two to one, turned at bay.

The result was not long in doubt; the well-trained French soldiers utterly broke and beat them, and sent them flying back like a flock of sheep to Naples.

The town was in a state of panic, and unsafe for peaceable people.

The king and queen were in great danger, and Nelson determined to rescue them from their rebel subjects.

Lady Hamilton, with no thought for the danger she was running, found out and carefully explored an underground passage leading from the palace to the seashore. Through this

passage the royal treasures, to the amount of two millions and a half of money, were secretly carried, and safely put on board the British vessels.

On a wild stormy night Nelson himself landed and brought off the whole royal family in three barges, which in face of the storm and heavy sea reached the *Vanguard* without accident.

For two more days the, *Vanguard* waited in the bay to rescue any such people as felt they were in danger. The property of all British merchants had been saved, and they were offered a refuge on board any British ship in the squadron.

At length, when everything had been done to save our countrymen in peril, the fleet sailed; and after meeting the worst storm Nelson had ever sailed through, after a three days' stormy passage, landed the rescued royal family at Palermo, where they were safe from all harm.

All through this exciting time Nelson acted with the most cool bravery and perfect tact. His presence of mind never left him; sailor and fighter first and above all things, he was at the same time bold and skilful in dealing with affairs of state.

"You are as great in the Cabinet as on the ocean," was the praise given by Lord St. Vincent.

"The world knows that Lord Nelson can fight the battles of his country," said Lord Minto; but he went on to say that besides his skill and courage as a seaman, Nelson possessed judgment, ability, and patience, with which to protect his country's honour and interests—qualities "*not always allied to the sort of spirit which, without an instant's hesitation, can attack the whole Spanish line with his single ship.*"

The power of the French in the Mediterranean was now greatly weakened. Their army, watched by the English fleet as a cat watches a mouse, was not allowed to leave Egypt. In

Malta they were being sorely pressed, and to make matters worse, the Portuguese made an alliance with Great Britain, and sent their fleet to be under Nelson's orders.

The British admiral was determined to destroy their power still more.

"*Down, down with the French!* is my constant prayer," wrote Nelson. "Down, down with the French! ought to be placed in the council-room of every country in the world."

Meanwhile, the French, though so thoroughly beaten at Aboukir, had not altogether lost heart, and on the 12th of May news came to Nelson at Palermo that a French fleet had been seen off Oporto, heading towards the Straits of Gibraltar.

The admiral, who had been in poor health and low spirits, fretting at the idle and peaceful life he was leading, on the instant became like a new man.

"Not a moment shall be lost in bringing them to battle," he joyfully exclaimed.

"Your lordship may depend that the squadron under my command shall never fall into the hands of the enemy," he wrote to St. Vincent; adding, "and before we are destroyed I have little doubt that the enemy will have their wings so completely clipped that they may be easily overtaken."

The words, "before we are destroyed," show the sort of fighter Nelson was. He did not fight only for victory and when he felt sure of beating the enemy. For the good of his country he would have hurled a few ships on the whole fleet of the foe, satisfied if he made the enemy suffer—"clipped their wings," to use his own words.

At this time Nelson received a strange present from a Captain Hallwell, in the shape of a coffin made out of the mainmast of the French flagship which blew up at Aboukir. Nelson was greatly pleased with the gift, which he had placed in his cabin just behind where he sat at dinner. "We shall have

hot work of it, indeed," the crew said. "You see the admiral intends to fight till he is killed; and there he is to be buried."

That this battle never took place was due to no fault of Nelson, who waited eagerly for the enemy at Palermo.

At this time he learnt to his great grief that Lord St. Vincent, his old chief and firm friend, was going home.

Admiral Keith, the new commander-in-chief, found a splendid force under him when he took command. This was divided into two divisions—thirteen ships under Nelson cruising in Sicilian waters, while his own force of twenty ships was off Toulon.

Had Nelson's squadron been stronger, he might have forced the enemy to fight, but even Nelson shrank from the foolhardy attempt of wilfully attacking twenty-two French sail with a very much weaker force.

He therefore made up his mind to wait for more ships before going in search of the enemy. Should the French, however, approach either Naples or Sicily, he was ready to fight to the death, and at least damage their fleet so much that they could do no further mischief, and be quite unfitted "even for a summer cruise."

As the enemy made no attempt on either Naples or Sicily, Nelson, with the help of his squadron, began to restore order in the former place.

Troubridge fought manfully in driving out the French. The fighting was for the greater part on shore, and Nelson laughingly called the brave seaman "a first-rate general."

He replied to those who thought as officers ought not to be used in attacking fortifications, "We have but one idea to get close alongside."

"None but a sailor would have placed a battery only 180 yards from the Castle of St. Elmo" (a fortress in Naples), he wrote. "A soldier must have gone according to art, and the

www way"—making with his pen these zigzags like four w's, to show a roundabout way of attack. "My brave Troubridge went straight on, for we had no time to spare."

Soon the whole of the French force was driven out of Naples and the royal family were able to return. They showed how grateful they were to the brave Englishman who had not only saved them from danger, but restored them to their rights, by making Nelson Duke of Bronté, with a property of about £3000 a year; and from that time Nelson signed his name "Nelson and Bronté" in all letters and despatches.

While the British squadron was in the Bay of Naples, Caraccioli, the head of the rebel Neapolitan navy, was captured.

He had been a commodore in his country's navy, but when the rebellion broke out he deserted his king and joined the rebels. On being tried on board the *Foudroyant*, he was found guilty by a court-martial of his fellow-countrymen. He was plainly a traitor, and he suffered the end of traitors, being by Nelson's orders hanged at the yardarms of the *Minerve*, his betrayed royal master's frigate.

For this act Nelson has often been blamed, but we must remember that the man was a traitor; it was necessary to make an example, and the crime of which Caraccioli was guilty was one hateful to all seamen, and to all loyal men.

Keith had now gone back to England, and it might have been expected that Nelson, now an Admiral of the Red, would remain in chief command. But the Admiralty had other views, and shortly afterwards sent Keith back to command in the Mediterranean. Nelson felt this as a slight put upon him.

"Greenwich Hospital seems a fit retreat for me after being evidently thought unfit to command in the Mediterranean," he wrote.

Another event took place which caused him much sorrow and regret. Bonaparte, who had always said, "We will

arrive safe; Fate will never abandon us; we will arrive safe in spite of the enemy," made good his boast by sailing from Egypt in spite of all the watchfulness of the British, and landing safely in France on the 11th of October.

Nelson, who wished that not one Frenchman should be allowed to leave Egypt, was much annoyed at this escape; for had Bonaparte been caught the war would probably have ceased, and the whole course of history been changed.

It was no fault of our admiral's, for his ships were being used in the blockade of Malta.

"If I could have had cruisers, as was my plan, off Cape Bon," he said, "Mr. Bonaparte could not probably have got to France."

Soon after Keith returned, Nelson, "the heaven-born admiral," as one of his captains called him, aided by luck, had a triumphant ending to this period of his career in the Mediterranean; for both *Le Genereux* and the *Guillaume Tell*, the two French ships which had escaped the battle of the Nile, were captured by him.

During the fight with the former, a shot passed through the mizzen stay-sail of the admiral's ship. Nelson, patting one of the midshipmen on the head, asked him laughingly "how he liked the music." Seeing the boy looked rather alarmed, he spoke kindly to him, told him that Charles XII. ran away from the first shot he heard, though afterwards he was called "The Great," from his bravery. "I therefore," said Nelson, "hope much from you in future."

With the capture of the last of the Nile fleet Nelson felt that his work was for the time being done. "My task is done, my health is lost, and the orders of the great Earl St. Vincent are completely fulfilled," he wrote.

Having obtained leave to go home, he started to travel through Germany, where he was treated as a popular hero, and taking ship from Hamburg, he arrived at Yarmouth on the 6th

November 1800, two years and eight months from the time he left Spithead.

On going on shore the admiral received a splendid welcome. He was the idol of the whole nation, his name on every one's lips. The freedom of the city was presented to him; at night bonfires and illuminations were lit in his honour.

His whole journey to London was a triumphal procession, and when he arrived the mob insisted on taking the horses out of the carriage and drawing him in state to the city.

After a short time in London, Nelson went to spend Christmas with his friends, the Hamiltons, at the country house of Mr. Beckford, a mutual friend.

During this visit a curious tale is told by his host of Nelson (as showing what different forms courage may take).

The latter, in order to show his famous visitor some distant part of the estate, took him for a drive in his mail phaeton, drawn by four horses.

The horses were quite under control, but, being fresh, rattled along at a good pace. Nelson sat in silence for a time, with a fixed, drawn face. Finally he could stand it no longer, and saying quietly, "This is too much for me; you must set me down," he insisted on getting out and walking the whole way home.

The man whose whole life was a record of daring and bravery at sea and in action was, after all, only human!

CHAPTER VII

BATTLE OF COPENHAGEN

His time at home was short, for again there were signs of war, and the fleet was once more to be called upon to strike a blow for our national honour.

At this time Great Britain claimed the right of searching the vessels of other countries who were not at war with either England or France, and if any goods were found on board which were being carried to the French, they were seized. This had more than once led to quarrels with Denmark, and there had already been some fighting between British and Danish ships, though there was no actual declaration of war.

Paul I., Czar of Russia, was very angry at the British for not allowing him to take Malta and in revenge he seized three hundred of our merchant ships, which were lying in Russian ports, and made their crews prisoners. Not content with this, he revived an old treaty of 1780, and Russia, Sweden, Denmark, and Prussia formed themselves into an alliance known as the "Armed Neutrality," the object of which was to prevent the British searching, their ships, by force if it were necessary.

Napoleon naturally did his best to help and encourage the northern powers. His own fleet and that of Spain had been crushed, or were unable to do any harm owing to the strict watch the British kept on them, which prevented them coming out of harbour. The northern powers had, however, a fine fleet of some fifty battleships, and he hoped to be able to use these as a weapon against his unyielding foe, Great Britain, who was once again left without an ally in Europe.

Great Britain at first meant to try and reason with Denmark, and in order to show the Danes that she was in earnest, and at the same time prevent the Russian ships from

joining their allies, a fleet under Sir Hyde Parker, with Nelson as second-in-command, set sail on the 14th of March from Yarmouth.

"I hate your pen and ink men. A fleet of British ships of war are the best negotiators in Europe," Nelson had said, and the Government also seemed to think so.

Meanwhile the Danes were toiling manfully at the defence of their capital. Workmen, country peasants, city merchants, students, young and old alike of all classes, enrolled themselves as volunteers, and prepared to make their beloved Copenhagen secure against assault, or lay down their lives in its defence.

Rather less than three weeks from the time they had left England the fleet arrived, and passing the island of Elsinore, dropped anchor about five miles from Copenhagen.

Sir Hyde Parker, who all through acted with an extreme caution, which was very unlike Nelson's methods, was for a long time uncertain whether to take his ships by the narrower Sound or by the more open Great Belt.

At length he decided to risk going by the Sound, and sent word to tell Nelson of his intention.

"I don't care by which passage we go," said the latter, "so that we fight them."

He had been in a great state of anxiety lest his chief might think the fortifications, floating batteries, and ships of the Danes too strong to assault. Now that the attack was to take place, he again felt happy, and was able to give his whole mind to the best means of making victory certain.

In front of Copenhagen there is a large shoal between the two channels through which big ships can sail. Along the land side of the inner channel the Danes were posted in greatest strength.

Here they waited for the British attack, sure that the fleet would enter by the inner channel, and confident in their power to defeat it.

They did not know the great seaman. His plan was quite different to what they thought, and was to go in by the outer channel, and flinging himself on their rear, fight his way up the inner channel.

To make matters still more difficult for our ships; all the buoys had been taken away, so that it was impossible to guess where the channel lay, and easy to run aground on the many shoals and sandbanks.

This was a serious drawback, but Nelson overcame it, though at great risk to himself.

Under cover of darkness and fog, he spent two nights in an open boat, rowing with muffled oars, and silently taking soundings and finding out the depth.

On April 1 the fleet sailed up still closer to the doomed city, and was now only two miles away. After anchoring, Captain Hardy set off in a small rowing boat, and in the most fearless way slipped under the Danish batteries.

Hidden by the darkness, he rounded the Danish flagship. Not daring to heave the lead in the ordinary way, for fear the noise of the splash would betray him, he carefully sounded with a pole.

The slightest whisper would have ruined all, but with bated breath the British seamen continued to take the depth under the batteries and round the ships, and Fortune favoured them. The Danish sentinels never heard them, and they returned to their ship in safety, with a full knowledge of where their vessels could swing, and what parts of the channel they must avoid.

Nelson had only asked for ten ships of the line of light draught, with which to make the attack. Admiral Parker, however, gave him two more vessels than he had asked for, as

he feared there was a great chance of some of the ships sticking fast and falling out of the line. Parker himself drew off, ready to help if he could do so, but more for the purpose of preventing the Russian and Swedish ships, should they come up, from joining their Danish allies.

In the morning the wind, which had hitherto been adverse, changed, and blew fair for the British attack. But now a hitch occurred in the plans, which might have proved fatal.

By eight o'clock not a pilot could be found willing to guide the British fleet.

"I experienced in the Sound the misery of having the honour of our country entrusted to pilots who have no other thought than to keep the ship clear of danger, and their silly heads clear of shot," Nelson used afterwards bitterly to relate.

In justice to the men he so severely blames, we must remember that they were the masters and mates of merchant ships engaged in the Baltic trade. These vessels were small and of shallow draught, and guiding a mighty battleship during the thick of a fight was a different affair to piloting their little craft through the channels they had learned to know in time of peace.

While in this difficulty, Captain Murray, in the *Edgar*, volunteered to lead the line, his master, Mr. Brierly, taking upon him the hard task of pilot.

At about ten in the morning all was ready and the signal to weigh in succession was given.

The *Edgar*, as arranged, advanced, showing the way, and right well did she play her part. Not so fortunate was Nelson's old flag-ship, the *Agamemnon*, which, failing to round the middle ground, went ashore, where she stuck, in spite of all the exertions of her crew to get her off.

Nor did the British misfortunes end here, for the next two ships, the *Bellona* and *Russel*, following close in her

wake, shared the same fate, and thus a quarter of the attacking force was already out of action.

Nelson, who came next, in the *Elephant* was like to come to grief in the same manner. Had he followed his own orders to the fleet, "that each ship should pass her leader on the starboard side," he must have run aground.

In an instant he saw the danger, and ordering his helm to be put hard a-starboard, passed the *Russel* on the larboard beam. The whole line followed him, and entering the true channel the battle was saved.

The rest of the ships all made the dangerous passage in safety, and on reaching their stations anchored by the stern and began to pour both broadsides on the Danes.

Captain Rioux, with the light division of frigates, was now ordered to take the place of the three stranded battleships, and attack the batteries. Gallantly did the light division play its part, firing with deadly effect on the Danish works, and heedless of their own loss.

"Again, again, again,
And the havoc did not slack."

"Here was no manœuvring: it was downright fighting."

"It is warm work, and this day may be the last to any of us at a moment," said Nelson, amid a shower of splinters; "but mark you," he added, his eye kindling with the light of battle, "I would not be elsewhere for thousands."

The pounding at short range was deadly and unceasing; scarcely two hundred yards separated the combatants.

The Danish flagship, fighting to the end with desperate courage, took fire; still, amid the flames, the gunners continued to fire a deadly storm of shot and shell. Only when the fire got the mastery, and with a mighty roar the gallant ship blew up, did she cease to trouble her foes.

Meanwhile, out in the Sound the thunders of the fight was borne to the anxious ears of Sir Hyde Parker. The admiral knew the sore straits from the loss of three ships Nelson was bound to be in, and the odds against which he was fighting. A stormy wind was blowing dead against him, and he could not hope to beat up against it in time to bring aid.

Nelson, he knew, would never give in while he lived: he was not the man to turn back from a fight. At length the admiral could stand the suspense no longer, and the famous signal, No. 39, the order to cease action, was hoisted.

What follows is known to every schoolboy wherever the English tongue is spoken.

Nelson was pacing his quarter-deck when the signal-lieutenant interrupted his walk and reported the signal. "Acknowledge it," replied the admiral shortly, adding fiercely, "Is mine, No. 16" (for close action), "still flying?" On being told that it was, "Then mind you keep it so," he said, turning on his heel and resuming his restless pacing of the deck.

"Leave off action!" he added; "I'm hanged if I do!"

Clapping his glass to his sightless eye, "You know, Foley," he added, turning to his captain, "I've a right to be blind sometimes. I really do not see the signal. *D—n the signal! keep mine for closer action flying.*"

As of Cape St. Vincent, so at Copenhagen, this act of seeming disobedience won the day.

Unfortunately, the squadron of frigates and small craft under Rioux—"the gallant good Rioux" of Campbell's poem—took the order literally. "What will Nelson think of us?" said the brave captain, as he obediently withdrew. Just as he spoke a chain-shot ploughed into the deck, killing a party of marines and striking him down, with the ringing words, "Come, then, my boys, let us all die together," on his lips.

By two o'clock the Danish fire had slackened; half their line were wrecks, the floating batteries were either sunk or nearly silenced; their flagship was ablaze.



NELSON AT THE BATTLE OF COPENHAGEN.

Nelson's humane nature could not bear that so many brave men should be killed, now that their valour was useless and his own victory complete. Calling for pen and ink, he wrote the following:—

"To the brothers of Englishmen, the Dane.

"Lord Nelson has directions to spare Denmark when no longer resisting; but if the firing is continued on the part of Denmark Lord Nelson will be obliged to set on fire all the floating batteries he has taken, without having the power of saving the brave Danes who have defended them."

His secretary was about to close the letter in its envelope with the ordinary wafer then in common use, but Nelson objected to this, and bade him bring wax and a taper, with which the letter was carefully sealed.

"Had I made use of the wafer," he explained to those around him, "it would have been wet when presented to the Crown Prince. He would have inferred that the letter was sent off in a hurry, and that we had some very pressing reason for being in a hurry. *The wax told no tales.*"

The Crown Prince wrote back proposing that they should stop fighting for the time and try to come to terms. Nelson, with great shrewdness, said he must first ask Sir Hyde Parker. He knew that it would take some time before he could get an answer from the latter, and in the meanwhile he would be able to get his battered ships out of reach of the Danish guns, and into the open channel.

By nightfall a truce was agreed upon, and the British were busy floating their own ships which had run aground, and securing their prizes, only one of which could, however, be used again, so fiercely had fought the two nations, both sprung from a race of sea-kings.

"The French and Spanish fight well; but they could not have stood for an hour such a fire as the Danes sustained for four hours," Nelson said.

The British admiral's aim was next to attack the Russian squadron lying in Revel, but in order to do this the fleet would have to pass the batteries which commanded the shoal ground above Copenhagen.

Parker naturally did not care to leave Denmark hostile in his rear, while the Crown Prince was afraid that if he came too quickly to terms he would offend his powerful ally and neighbour, the Czar.

Matters were in this state, when, on April 4, while Nelson was on shore trying to arrange for at least a four months' peace, news was brought that the Czar had been murdered.

With this monarch's death the chief reason for the alliance was taken away, and Napoleon's dreams of a great fleet with which he might attack Great Britain had come to nothing.

Five days after, Denmark agreed to take no further part in the Armed Neutrality, and also promised to take no further steps to prepare her ships for war.

Nelson had again shown himself "as great in the Cabinet as on the ocean." His victory had been a glorious one, but his skill and tact in arranging terms after the battle were equally remarkable. Friend and foe alike agreed that it was he that had brought about the peace.

"Your Lordship's whole conduct, from your first appointment to this hour," wrote Lord St. Vincent, "is the subject of our constant admiration. It does not become me to make comparisons; *all agree there Is but one Nelson.*"

CHAPTER VIII

NAPOLEON'S THREATENED INVASION OF ENGLAND

As soon as peace had been made with the Danes, the British fleet set out for the Baltic, with the object of finding the Swedish squadron.

Nelson had in the meantime shifted his flag to the *St. George*, and as some repairs had to be made to this ship, he was forced to remain behind till she could be got ready.

"We have reports," he had written to Lady Hamilton, "that the Swedish fleet is above the Shallows. All our fellows are longing to be at them, and so do I, as great a boy as any of them, for I consider this as being at school, and going to England as going home for the holidays; therefore I really long to finish my task."

Before his flagship was ready for sea a report came that the Swedish admiral had sailed.

The idea that a fight should take place, and Nelson himself not be present, was not to be thought of. Instantly he ordered a boat to be lowered, and in this he started off to join the fleet.

His only feeling was one of fear lest the fleet should have sailed before he got on board one of the ships.

So great was his hurry that he would not even wait till his overcoat was brought to him.

"No, I am not cold," he kept repeating; "my anxiety for my country will keep me warm."

"Do you think the fleet has sailed?" he added; "if they are, we shall follow them to Carlsrona, by Gad!"

In the words of one of his officers, "The idea of going in a small boat, rowing six oars, without a single morsel of anything to eat or drink, the distance of about ten leagues, must convince the world *that every other earthly consideration than that of saving his country was totally banished from his thoughts.*"

About midnight the tired rowers reached the *Elephant*, up whose side Nelson clambered half dead with cold after his five hours' row in the bitter northern night.

Next morning the Swedes were seen, but they quickly retired into shelter behind the batteries of Carlsrona.

After some letters had passed between them, Parker saw that the Swedish Government sincerely wished for peace, and he gave orders for the fleet to sail to the Gulf of Finland.

They had not got far on their way, however, when a despatch-boat from the Russian ambassador at Copenhagen overtook them. This boat had been sent to tell the British admiral of the Czar Paul's death, and to say that the new emperor had accepted an offer made by Great Britain to end the dispute by agreement, without actually coming to blows.

The fleet returned to Zealand on hearing this news, and cast anchor in Kiöge Bay, where they remained till despatches arrived from home on the 5th of May, recalling Parker, and making Nelson commander-in-chief.

Left to himself, the new commander-in-chief was not long in getting to work. First he politely but firmly told the Swedish admiral that his fleet must remain in port. Next, by going to Revel as soon as Parker had left, he let the Russians see that for their own sake they had better stay where they were.

"I shall now go there as a friend," he had written; "but the two fleets shall not form a junction, unless my orders permit it."

On his arrival with his twelve ships of the line, he went on shore and paid an official visit to the authorities, and the presence of the mightiest seaman of the day, backed as he was by a fleet, had the wished-for effect.

The British ships with their goods and their crews were instantly given up; all Nelson asked for was promptly granted, after which the Czar most prudently, to use Nelson's own words, "begged that he would go away."

Soon after this, to his great delight, now that there was no more fighting to be done, he was relieved, and bidding farewell to the *Baltic* on the 19th of June, he landed at Yarmouth some three weeks after. "To find a proper successor," St. Vincent had written to him, "your lordship knows is no very easy task, for I never saw the man in our profession, excepting yourself and Troubridge, who possessed *the magic art of infusing the same spirit into others which inspired their own actions.*"

On arrival at Yarmouth he was received by vast crowds, who did all they knew to honour the conquering admiral.

Nelson never halted, but quickly making his way through the dense, cheering throng, he went straight to the hospital, where lay so many of his men, wounded in the late battle.

Stopping at every bed, he spoke a few words to each sailor.

"Well, Jack, what's the matter?" he asked of one.

"Lost my right arm, your honour," came the answer.

Nelson stopped, then holding up his own empty sleeve, shook it at the sailor, and said playfully—

"Well, Jack, then you and I are spoilt for fishermen. Cheer up, my brave fellow."

At every bed he came to he said something kind and encouraging. And the surgeon said the admiral did more good than a doctor; every eye seemed to sparkle, and every sufferer to forget his pain when Nelson spoke to him.

Before leaving for the Baltic, Nelson, who, after the Nile, described his career as having been far beyond his greatest hopes in the way of honour and rewards, had serious thoughts of giving up the sea and settling down to a life of peace on shore.

There was yet, however, much of his finest work to do.

Lord St. Vincent had from the first begged him not to retire, and events abroad were in such a dangerous state that Nelson could not possibly leave the service and desert the country he so well and bravely served.

Baffled in his attempt on India, his fleet destroyed at the Nile, Napoleon had declared that he had no choice left but to make a descent on Britain.

To meet this danger the presence of the great admiral was of the greatest importance. The knowledge that he was at the head of the plans made for the defence of his country would alone calm the public mind. At the same time the very name of Nelson was enough to make the enemy think twice before making any attempt in which they were likely to meet him in battle.

In answer to the call of his country, Nelson undertook its defence, and, as usual, entered on his task with energy and zeal.

He found the country quite unprepared to meet an invasion. "Everything must have a beginning," he wrote to Lord St. Vincent, "and we are literally at the foundation of our fabric of defence."

Calais, Boulogne, and Dieppe, although the ports nearest to England, were not in Nelson's opinion suitable for

the embarking of troops; that the attack would come from Flanders he thought more likely.

"Great preparations at Ostend," he writes; "Augereau commands that part of the army. I hope to let him feel the bottom of the Goodwin Sand."

That Napoleon thought of making a serious invasion of the country seemed scarcely possible. That he might be able to land some troops, and with them make a dash on London, both Nelson and the nation thought possible.

The aim of the British defence was, as it is to this day, to keep the enemy away from our coasts and attack them the instant they came out of port.

Should the French get a calm day they would most probably row over in boats, in which case our fleet might not be able to get at them, with no wind to fill their sails.

In that case the British were to attack them in small boats, no matter how great the enemy's superiority in numbers might be.

"The courage of Britons," Nelson proudly boasted, "will never, I believe, allow one Frenchman to leave the beach."

The boats would take some twelve hours to row over from France. Although they started in a calm, a breeze might quite well spring up in this time. In that case the British fleet were to make an onslaught on the small craft and transports. Their cannon would mow through the ranks of transports, the loss of the enemy would be terrible, but, as Nelson grimly said, "No delicacy can be observed on this great occasion."

"Whatever plans may be adopted," he wrote, "the moment the enemy touch our coast, be it where it may, they are to be attacked by *every man afloat and on shore: this must be perfectly understood. Never fear the event.*"

England was now like a large armed camp; the great shadow of invasion was hanging over the country. "Bony" himself, with whose name nurses were used to frighten children, was coming over to try and conquer Britain as he had conquered Europe. Small wonder that the whole country sprang to arms!

Having drawn up his plan of defence, the admiral, only three weeks after his return, again hoisted his flag, this time at Sheerness, on the *Unité* frigate.

No time was lost; in all his actions he used every haste, "in order to give an example to the country and the service of the advantage of all getting to their posts as speedily as possible."

Nelson never spared himself. One day he would be at Sheerness inspecting the thirty ships there under his command; two days later he would hold a review on land of the "Sea Fencibles," a force newly raised to meet the invasion; again he would appear off Boulogne, where the French admiral, La Touche Tréville, with his fleet, lay moored.

On August 15 an attack was made on Boulogne with fifty-seven boats. The British fought gallantly, but luck was against them, and they were beaten back.

Nelson, however, had seen enough of the French flat-bottomed clumsy craft to feel sure that they would be no match at sea for his own swift cutters. He also saw that there was little on a great scale that could be done, and that owing to tides and sandbanks any attack on the enemy while in port was scarcely worth the risk of so much loss of life to our brave seamen.

At length the French also saw that the invasion of England was too difficult to be thought of, and peace was made.

Nelson, though his flag still continued to fly as commander-in-chief, went on shore and took up his abode at

Merton, an estate which he had newly bought, and which was the only home of his own he ever had on English soil.

That the peace would last he never for a moment thought likely. And though he might long for quiet and rest, still he was ready at the call of his country. "Whenever it is necessary, I am your admiral," he wrote to the Prime Minister.

Already there had been some talk of his returning to the Mediterranean. His very presence there would, in the words of Lord Minto, "show Bonaparte, if he hoists his flag, it will not be in joke."

On the 16th of May war was again declared, and four days later Nelson sailed in the *Victory*.

CHAPTER IX

NELSON IN CHIEF COMMAND IN THE MEDITERRANEAN—IN PURSUIT OF THE ENEMY

Nelson was now in chief command of the Mediterranean squadron. Great Britain was once more waging war single-handed against the French Empire. The rest of Europe was crushed: everywhere on land the French were victors, and resistance was for the time being at an end.

Spain was a mere vassal of France; she did not indeed at this period supply her fleet, but gave to Napoleon a money tribute instead. Portugal, the ancient friend of Britain, had at the bidding of the tyrant been forced to close her ports to Nelson's ships.

Never before had Nelson been so impatient to get at the foe.

"If the Devil stands at the door," he said, we shall sail to-morrow forenoon."

So eager was he to reach the Mediterranean that having been ordered to keep the *Victory* waiting to join Admiral Cornwallis off Brest, he left the ship, and with his suite got into a frigate, in which he pressed on to join the fleet, "going out in all the discomfort of a convict," as St. Vincent said, and sleeping seven or eight in a cabin, from his own account.

The French fleet were in Toulon, and off this port Nelson set himself to wait the coming out of the enemy.

On his arrival he early found an opportunity of showing his zeal and love for the honour and interests of his own service.

There were at that time several artillery-men serving on board the bomb-vessels. Some of the young officers did not like their men being made to perform other duties than those of soldiers, and were very angry at having to take their orders from naval officers. There thus arose some ill-feeling between the navy and army.

"With all content and smiles around me," Nelson wrote to Lord St. Vincent, "up start these artillery boys and set us at defiance."

"You and I are on the eve of quitting the theatre of our exploits," he adds, with a feeling that his end was near, "but we hold it due to our successors never, whilst we have a tongue to speak or hand to write, to allow the navy to be in the smallest degree injured in its discipline by our conduct."

Nelson felt that a soldier, no matter how high his rank, must, when on board ship, take his orders from a sailor. He was backed up in this by an Act of Parliament.

"It is the old history," he said, "trying to do away the Act of Parliament: but I trust they will never succeed; for when they do, farewell to our naval superiority. We should be prettily commanded." "Although my career is nearly run, yet it would embitter my future days and expiring moments *to hear of our navy sacrificed to our army.*"

As a means to put an end to all dispute, he suggested that the navy should have a separate corps of artillery attached to them, and it is to this that we owe that splendid body of men, the Royal Marine Artillery, or "Blue Marines," as they are called in the navy.

The watch off Toulon was a long and weary one.

"I have made up my mind never to go into port till after the battle, if they make me wait a year," Nelson had said, and for almost two years did our fleet remain ready for action; nor during that time did it ever go into harbour. When, after the long months of waiting, it was called upon to pursue the

enemy for four thousand miles, it was found, to quote Nelson's words, "in a perfect state of readiness to act."

This management of the fleet was really as great a triumph in many ways as his most brilliant victories had been.

The people at nearly every port were in dread of the French, and it was very difficult to get supplies, so great was their fear of rousing Napoleon's anger.

No British ships were allowed to enter Spanish ports, though from these very ports the French privateers sailed out and attacked our merchantmen.

Nelson pitied the once proud mistress of the world, who was now too weak to resist, and had no choice left but to obey the all-conquering French. "We ought," he said, "by mutual consent to be the very best friends, and both to be ever hostile to France."

At the same time, though willing to make every allowance for the miserable situation in which Spain had placed herself, he plainly let the Spaniards feel that he must be treated with respect. He had strictly observed Spain's neutrality by giving up French vessels taken within gunshot of the Spanish shore, yet from the coasts of Spain these same French vessels sailed out and attacked our ships.

Nelson said this must stop. "In whatever place the Spaniards allow the French to attack us," he told the British ambassador at Madrid, "assure them that I shall order the French to be attacked."

Meanwhile, the station off Toulon Nelson called his home. His ships, thanks to his great care, were in fairly good repair; his men were in the right fighting trim. "Let them come as soon as they please," he wrote, "I never saw a fleet together so well officered and manned."

La Touche Tréville, who had commanded at Boulogne when Nelson's attack of boats had been beaten back, was now the admiral of the French fleet.

One day, while the main body of the British fleet was out of sight, Rear-Admiral Campbell, with only three ships, appeared in the offing. Seeing this, La Touche, with every sail set, left port and bore down on the three vessels, on which, as was natural, the little squadron retired.

The new experience of pursuing, instead of being pursued, so delighted the Frenchman that he published a most boastful and quite untrue account of how he had chased Nelson and the whole British fleet.

This idle brag stung Nelson to the quick, and he promptly sent home a copy of the *Victory's* log on the day in question to show what the real facts were.

"As for myself," he said, "if my character was not established by that time *for not being apt to run away*, it would not be worth my while to put the world right."

At the time, he wrote, "Monsieur La Touche came out with eight sail of the line and six frigates, cut a caper off Sepet, and went in again."

Two months later, when a copy of the French admiral's letter reached him, he broke out in wrath.

"You will have seen Monsieur La Touche's letter of how he chased me, and how I ran. He is a poltroon, liar, and a miscreant. I keep his letter, and, by Gad! if I take him, he shall *eat* it."

In vain did Nelson try to draw his enemy out to fight by every means he could think of. The Frenchman would not walk into the trap, nor be tempted into giving battle until the appointed time came.

The dread of missing the enemy in a fog was one of Nelson's chief anxieties, and he kept thinking of his long chase of Admiral Brueys before the battle of the Nile.

"If I should miss these fellows my heart will break," he kept repeating.

"If that admiral were to cheat me out of my hopes of meeting him," he added, "it would kill me much easier than one of his balls."

The life on board ship was meanwhile a dull one; daily they cruised about, one day passing very much like another. The weather in these parts is stormy; even during the summer there was a gale almost every week, followed by two days' heavy swell. The health of the crews was, considering the life they were leading, wonderfully good, and for this they had to thank Nelson. The admiral took every care for the comfort of his men, and did his very best to secure lemons, onions, and other fresh food, without which disease must have broken out.

The patience with which our fleet bore the long watch off Toulon is, in Nelson's own words, a "record of perseverance at sea which had never been surpassed." From May 1803 to August 1805 the admiral himself was only out of his ship three times; on each of these occasions he was absent less than an hour, and was "upon the king's service," as the saying went.

The whole fleet bore the long wait patiently; the men behaved well, and all earned Nelson's thanks. The officers were not behind the men in doing their duty either. "Such a gallant set of fellows! Such a band of brothers! My heart swells at the thought of them," wrote Nelson.

In October the patience of Great Britain was tired out, and war was declared against Spain. About three months after, while the British fleet was at anchor off the coast of Sardinia, the Toulon fleet at last put to sea and joined the Spaniards. On getting this news the British fleet weighed and put to sea, while next morning the signal was made to prepare for battle.

A chase somewhat like the former pursuit of Brueys now began, stormy weather keeping pursuers and pursued apart.

After seeing that Sardinia, Naples, and Sicily were safe, as before Nelson made for Egypt. Not finding the enemy

there this time, he doubled back for Malta, where news reached him that they had dispersed in a gale and put back to Toulon.

"These gentlemen are not accustomed to a Gulf of Lions gale; we have buffeted them for one and twenty months and not carried away a spar," Nelson declared with pride.

From the 21st of January till he anchored in Cagliari Bay on the 27th of February, the ships had been cleared for action, without a bulkhead up, night or day.

During this chase of the enemy and weary buffeting against foul winds, a despatch-vessel had been wrecked, a convoy had been way-laid, and the two small ships protecting it taken.

To add to these small losses, another despatch-vessel had gone ashore off Cadiz and fallen into the hands of the enemy.

The captain of the latter, Captain Layman, had earned Nelson's praise and esteem by his smartness and bravery at Copenhagen, and Nelson could not bear that a brave man should be blamed.

The admiral never turned his back upon a friend, more especially did he stick by a friend in misfortune.

"Dear Parker is my child, for I found him in distress," he had written of a captain wounded in the attack of boats at Boulogne. To this other captain in distress, the great seaman's tender heart went out, and he wrote to the Admiralty on his behalf.

"My dear Lord," he began, "give me leave to recommend Captain Layman to your kind protection; for notwithstanding the court-martial has thought him worthy of censure for his running in with the land, yet, my Lord, allow me to say that Captain Layman's misfortune was, perhaps, conceiving other people's abilities were equal to his own, which indeed very few people's are.

"Captain Layman has served with me in three ships, and I am well acquainted with his bravery, zeal, judgment, and activity; nor do I regret the loss of the *Raven* compared to the value of Captain Layman's services, which are a national loss.

"You must, my dear Lord, forgive the warmth which I express for Captain Layman; but he is in adversity, and therefore has the more claim to my attention and regard.

"If I had been censured every time I have run my ship, or fleets under my command, into great danger, I should long ago have been out of the service, and never in the House of Peers.

"I am, my dear Lord, most faithfully,
"Your obedient servant,

"NELSON AND BRONTE."

Small wonder the whole fleet adored "Our Nel," as they called him, and who, they said, was "as brave as a lion, but as gentle as a lamb."

On the 4th of April, while bearing up for his old station, Toulon, he learnt that Villeneuve had five days previously put to sea, with eleven ships of the line, seven frigates, and two brigs.

At first he searched for them down the Mediterranean, still thinking that Egypt must be their object. At length he heard that the enemy had passed the Straits of Gibraltar, and might be half-way to Ireland or Jamaica, an attack on both of which places had been thought likely.

Beating up against adverse winds, Nelson, who said that his "good fortune had flown away," could only pass the narrow straits on the 5th of May, when a favouring wind at last sprung up.

Just before this, a Scotsman, Donald Campbell, who was at that time an admiral in the Portuguese service, came on board the *Victory* with the news that the combined fleets were on their way to the West Indies.

Though the enemy were in far greater numbers than the British, the admiral started off in hot pursuit with only ten sail of the line and three frigates.

"Take you a Frenchman apiece," he told his captains, "and leave me his Spaniards" (there were six Spanish battleships). "When I haul down my colours, I expect you to do the same, and not till then."

Meanwhile Nelson was suffering the same torture of mind and spirit as when once before the enemy escaped him before the battle of the Nile.

"Oh, French fleet! French fleet!" he wrote, "if I can but once get up with you, I'll make you pay dearly for all that you have made me suffer."

By June 4 the British were at Barbadoes, where, misled by reports, they expected to find the enemy. They entered the Gulf of Paria with their ships cleared for action, only to find the enemy gone.

Coming to the rapid but, as it happened, correct decision that the enemy had returned to Europe, Nelson lost no time in sailing after them.

As going out he had been able to gain ten days on them, and they had only five days' start of him on the return to Europe, Nelson thought he would be able to come up with Villeneuve before the latter had done much harm.

For three weeks the combined fleet had the West Indies at their mercy, and as they had not attacked the islands, Nelson felt no great alarm as to what they would do in Europe.

On the 19th of June he was back again at Gibraltar, and the next day he went on shore for the first time since June 18, 1803. Thus for two years he had not had his foot on dry land.

Though he had not found the enemy, he had at least chased them out of the West Indies, which were then among Britain's most wealthy and important colonies.

Had the enemy been met, though they were in far greater numbers, Nelson had determined to attack them, come what might to his own squadron.

"Though we are but eleven to eighteen or twenty, we won't part without a battle," he kept repeating.

That this fight he had in his mind never took place was due to no fault of Nelson's. A few days later, however, Admiral Calder with fifteen ships met twenty of the enemy, and a drawn battle took place. The British admiral, though he had the best of the fight, thought it more prudent to draw off and let the enemy escape, after they had been roughly handled.

This made the people in England very angry, for the country could not but feel how different the result would have been if their beloved admiral had been in Calder's place. Nelson, they knew, would never have left the enemy, even though half his own ships had been destroyed.

Nelson's truly great spirit could not bear that his unfortunate brother admiral should be blamed.

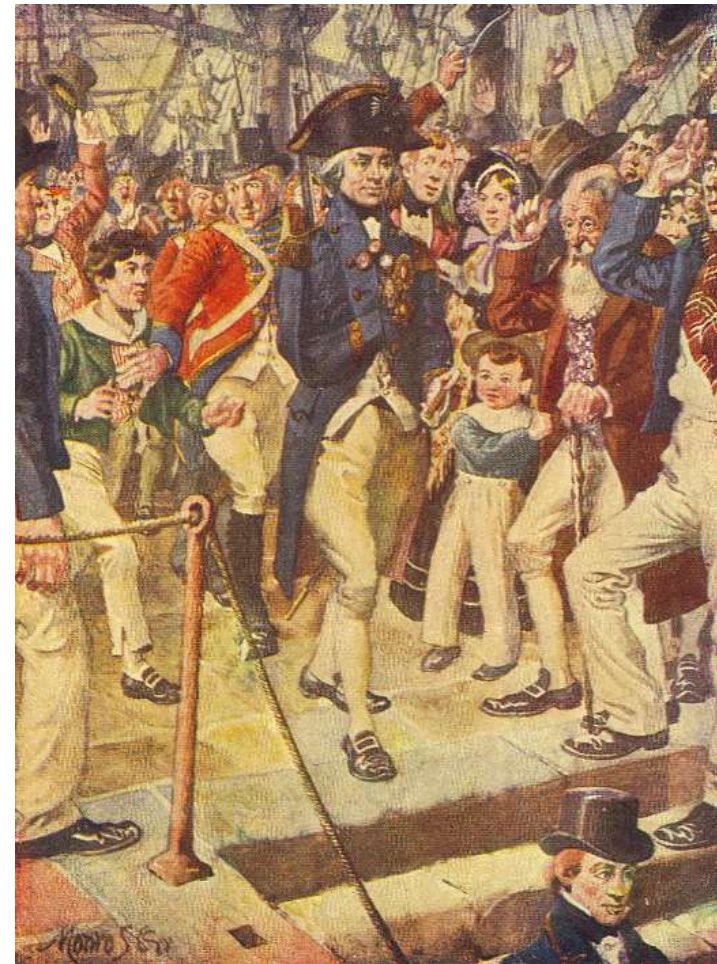
"It most sincerely grieves me," he wrote, "that in any of the papers it should be insinuated that Lord Nelson could have done better. Who can say what will be the event of a battle? I could have fought the enemy, so did my friend Calder; but who can say that he will be more successful than another?"

On August 18 the *Victory* anchored at Portsmouth and the long chase was at an end.

Nelson no sooner landed than he posted up to London, where he had much to talk about, not only with the Admiralty but with the Secretary for War.

On this visit to London the famous meeting between Nelson, "the greatest sailor since our world began," and the Duke of Wellington, the conqueror of Napoleon, "the great world's victor's victor," took place. Neither knew who the other was. They were both waiting in the anteroom of the

Secretary of State. At first "the Iron Duke" found Nelson's talk trifling and silly. But when the war and the state of Europe were touched upon, then in an instant the somewhat boastful trifler vanished, and Nelson, the statesman, sailor, and saviour of his country appeared in his true colours.



NELSON LEAVING PORTSMOUTH TO JOIN THE *VICTORY*.

On the 2nd of September Captain Blackwood called at Merton at five in the morning. Nelson, who was already up

and dressed, eagerly greeted him with the words, "I am sure you bring me news of the French and Spanish fleets, and I think I shall yet have to beat them."

On Blackwood telling him that the French squadron had arrived off Cadiz, he could scarcely conceal his joy. "Depend upon it, Blackwood," he exclaimed, "I shall yet give Mr. Villeneuve a drubbing."

All haste was made to get ready the fleet Nelson had chosen. He stuck to the *Victory* as his flagship. Already a feeling of his coming death was upon him: he knew "*they meant to make a dead set at the Victory,*" he told his brother.

In his private journal are found these words:—

"Friday night (Sept. 13), at half-past ten, I drove from dear, dear Merton to go to serve my king and country. May the great God, whom I adore, enable me to fulfil the expectations of my country.

"And, if it is His good pleasure that I should return, my thanks will never cease being offered up to the throne of His mercy.

"If it is His good providence to cut short my days upon earth, I bow with the greatest submission, relying that He will protect those so dear to me, whom I may leave behind! His will be done. Amen! Amen! Amen!" Nelson had felt his reception at Court after his return from Copenhagen to be a cold one. Now, his leave-taking must have assured him of the love and admiration of a whole nation.

Vast crowds had gathered at Portsmouth to catch a glimpse of, and to bid God-speed to, the national hero.

To quote Southey: "They pressed forward to obtain sight of his face. Many were in tears, and many knelt down before him and blessed him as he passed.

"England has had many heroes, but never one who so entirely possessed the love of his fellow-countrymen as Nelson."

On the 25th the *Victory* was off Lisbon, and letters were sent on shore begging that the fleet's arrival might be kept secret.

At all costs Villeneuve was to be tempted to put to sea and give battle.

"Day by day," wrote Nelson, "I am expecting the allied fleet to put to sea—every day, hour, and moment. I am convinced that you estimate, as I do, the importance of not letting those rogues escape us without a fair fight, *which I pant for by day and dream of by night.*"

On September 28 the *Victory* reached the fleet; the day after was Nelson's birthday.

The reception he met with, he declared, "caused the sweetest sensation of his life."

The officers who came on board to welcome his return—"the band of brothers," as he called them—forgot his rank as commander-in-chief, in the joy with which they greeted him.

"When I came to explain to them the 'Nelson touch,'" the admiral writes to Lady Hamilton, "it was like an electric shock. Some shed tears; all approved."

The "Nelson touch," which has passed into a saying common in the navy to this day, was the great admiral's plan of attack or conduct of war.

"The business of an English commander-in-chief"—so ran Nelson's famous order—"is first to bring an enemy's fleet to battle, on the most advantageous terms to himself (I mean that of laying his ships close on board the enemy as quickly as possible); and, secondly, to continue them there without separating until their business is decided."

"First, to lay his ships close on board the enemy; and, secondly, to continue them there." Surely this, in a few simple words, is the secret of England's naval greatness, and Nelson's own fame.

On the 19th of October Nelson was to have his longed-for wish granted.

The day previous he had noted in his diary—

"Fine weather; wind easterly: the combined fleets cannot have finer weather to put to sea."

Next morning the signal was flashed throughout the British fleet, with what feelings of joy we can well imagine—

"THE ENEMY ARE COMING OUT OF PORT."

CHAPTER X

TRAFALGAR—DEATH OF NELSON

The rival Fleets were made up as follows:—

Franco-Spanish,	33 ships of the line, firing a broadside of 30,000 lbs.
British,	27 ships of the line, firing a broadside of 29,000 lbs.

It will thus be seen that though Nelson had fewer ships, yet the destructive power of his fire was almost as great as that of his enemies.

On the 13th of October Nelson's old ship, the *Agamemnon*, under the command of "the hero of a hundred fights," Captain Berry, joined the fleet. "Here comes Berry. Now we shall have a fight!" joyfully exclaimed his chief.

At last the action for which the great admiral was so eagerly longing was about to take place.

On the 21st October, forty-eight years earlier, his uncle, Captain Maurice Suckling, had greatly distinguished himself in a desperate action against a superior force of the enemy. "The 21st will be our day; it is the happiest day in the year for my family," Nelson had declared a few days previously.

"This day or to-morrow will be a fortunate one for you young gentlemen," he said to a group of midshipmen. And again on the evening of the 20th he said, "To-morrow I will do that which will give you younger gentlemen something to talk and think about for the rest of your lives, but I shall not live to know about it myself."

The morning of the 21st showed the sea to be calm, with only a slight swell; the wind was light, and made the progress of the sailing ships slow.

To understand the battle we must picture to ourselves the allied fleet moving in two long lines abreast. Nelson, on the other hand, divided his ships into two columns which moved to battle in "line-a-head" and "line-a-bearing," or what we might almost call Indian file. Thus, while the Franco-Spanish fleet came on in a crescent shape, Nelson sailed to meet them in two perpendicular lines, which he flung right on their centre.

His object was, as ever, destruction, and complete destruction, of the enemy, no matter what loss he himself might sustain.

"In cases where signals cannot be seen or clearly understood, no captain can do wrong if he places his ship alongside that of an enemy." These were roughly his orders to the fleet. Before entering the battle he thought deeply for a suitable signal to give to his ships and men. Finally he decided on the now immortal words: "England expects that every man will do his duty." Amidst ringing cheers the flags spelt this sentence out to the fleet. "You must be quick," Nelson said to his signalers, "for I have another signal to make—'Close Action!'"

Duty and close action, these were the watchwords of Nelson's life and career. No more fitting sentiments could come from him on the day of his death and last and greatest victory.

Nelson's own ship, the *Victory*, led his column. Collingwood, in the *Royal Sovereign*, led the other column.

The battle began about noon. The allies commenced firing at long range. Nelson, confident in the better discipline and fighting powers of his crews, pressed on in silence, withholding his fire.

The *Victory* was under a storm of shot and shell. In a minute fifty of her men were killed or wounded. One shot alone killed a party of eight marines; another actually went screaming on its way between Nelson and Captain Hardy. Still the British stood to their guns, but the order to fire did not yet come.

At last the weary waiting and suspense were at an end. The *Victory* was at length to speak and to hit back. "This is too warm work to last long," Nelson said to Captain Hardy.

When close between the French ship *Redoubtable*, and the huge Spanish *Santisima Trinidad*, the longed-for order came; the *Victory's* broadsides poured in at close range. The effect was nearly instantaneous; so close were the combatants that the flames from Nelson's guns set fire to the French and Spanish ships.

The enemy fought with unflinching courage. Twice was the order given to cease firing on the *Redoubtable*, as it was thought that she had struck her flag and that her guns were silenced. Twice did the *Redoubtable* reply with shouts of defiance and a storm of shot.

From this ship, which he had twice spared, came the hero's death. Conspicuous by the medals which covered his breast, the admiral made an easy mark for the French sharpshooters stationed in the mizzen-top.

"In honour I gained them, in honour I shall die with them," he declared when his officers begged him to take them off before action.

Recognising Lord Nelson, a French sharp-shooter took careful aim and fired. "They have done for me at last, Hardy," the admiral exclaimed, sinking to the deck.

In mortal agony he was carried below. Heedless of his own pain, he gave orders that a handkerchief should be spread over his face and medals, lest his men should see, and be disheartened by the knowledge, that he was hit.

"You can do nothing for me," he said to the surgeon who hastened to his side, and he bade him go and attend to those whose lives he had a chance of saving.



"THEY HAVE DONE FOR ME AT LAST, HARDY."

From the first he knew he had only a few hours to live; but in spirit he was still on his quarter-deck, and his thoughts were of the battle raging round him, not of his own suffering.

He repeatedly asked for Hardy, who could not as yet be spared from his duty on the quarter-deck.

At length, feeling victory was assured, Hardy left the deck. "Well, Hardy, how goes the battle?" was his chief's first eager question.

On Hardy bringing the joyful news that all was going well, and that twelve or fourteen of the enemies' ships had struck, "I hope none of *our* ships have struck, Hardy?" Nelson anxiously exclaimed. "No, my lord, there is no fear of that," came the answer. Nelson then again shook hands with him, and, assuring him that he was dying, said farewell to his old and well-tried friend.

Again Hardy returned. This time he confirmed the capture of fourteen or fifteen ships. (There were really eighteen.) "That is well," replied the dying admiral, "but I bargained for twenty." "Anchor! Hardy, anchor!" He gave the order, ever mindful of the well-being of his fleet, and in those last moments feeling sure that a storm was coming on. This was indeed the case, and in the gale that followed the battle, many ships which had been captured foundered and were lost.

The end was now near. The shouts of triumph and victory were in his dying ear.

"Thank God, I have done my duty. God be praised, I have done my duty," he kept repeating at intervals.

Finally, with the words, "God and my country," the mighty spirit left the pain-racked body. Nelson, "the saviour of our silver-coasted isle," the greatest seaman the world has ever seen, had fought his last fight, gained his most splendid victory.

The destruction was complete; the naval power of our foes was shattered; the British loss was almost trifling in comparison with that of the enemy. Some 4400 of the allies were killed, about 2500 were wounded, and many were

prisoners. On the British side there were 402 killed, and about 1129 seriously wounded.

Seventeen of the enemies' ships were in the hands of the conquerors, and one had blown up.

Nelson, before battle, had prayed for a great and glorious victory, and that no misconduct in any one might tarnish it. "May humanity after victory be the predominant feature in the British fleet," so ran his prayer.

His wishes were fulfilled, and our tars spared no effort to save the lives of their gallant foes, now that the battle was over.

Of the whole allied force only eleven sail of the line succeeded in making good their escape to Cadiz. Nelson's fondest hopes had been realised: the enemy were annihilated.

In those days news traveled slowly, and the official despatches did not reach London till November 6, or rather more than a fortnight after the battle.

They were carried by post-chaise, to which was fastened a pole with the Union Jack flying above the Tricolour. Thus, as the horses galloped through the country on their way to London, was the news of victory conveyed to the country-people and wayfarers. The mail-coaches took up the tale and spread the tidings. Many were draped in black, and the triumphant flag they carried was wreathed in crape, to tell the people that though a glorious victory had been won, Nelson, the national hero, had laid down his life to gain it.

"I had their huzzas before: I have their hearts now," Nelson had written to Hardy before he embarked from England for the last time. Then cheering crowds had followed him, striving to get a glimpse of his well-loved face, or even to touch the hem of his garment.

Now, amid the mourning of a whole nation, he was followed by a sorrowing people to his resting-place in St.

Paul's. Sir Peter Parker, his early admiral, who had been one of the first to discover his genius, was chief mourner.

As Lady Londonderry then wrote: "He now begins his immortal career, having nothing to achieve left, and bequeathing to the English fleet a legacy which they alone are able to improve."

That legacy the British fleet to this day strive to guard jealously.

Nelson, the boy who knew no fear, had gained his great end. He had saved his beloved country; nay, he had saved the whole of Europe. He had made the British navy a force which no power has since dared to attack: he had secured to us India and our colonies.

In the words of Southey we may bid farewell to our greatest national hero:—

"He has left us a name and an example which are at this moment inspiring hundreds of the youth of England—a name which is our pride, and an example which will continue to be our shield and strength."

THE END.