

DEEDS THAT WON
THE EMPIRE

. . . " In our halls is hung
Armoury of the invincible Knights of old :
We must be free or die, who speak the tongue
That Shakespeare spoke ; the faith and morals hold
Which Milton held. In everything we are sprung
Of earth's first blood, have titles manifold."

—WORDSWORTH.

" Fair is our lot—O goodly is our heritage
(Humble ye, my people, and be fearful in your mirth !),
For the Lord our God Most High,
He hath made the deep as dry,
He hath smote for us a pathway to the ends of the earth."

—KIPLING



WELLINGTON

After a painting by JOHN SIMPSON

DEEDS THAT ~~WON~~ ^{SONE}
THE EMPIRE

HISTORIC BATTLE SCENES

BY

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(“VEDETTE”)

WITH PORTRAITS AND PLANS

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PREFACE

THE tales here told are written, not to glorify war, but to nourish patriotism. They represent an effort to renew in popular memory the great traditions of the Imperial race to which we belong.

The history of the Empire of which we are subjects—the story of the struggles and sufferings by which it has been built up—is the best legacy which the past has bequeathed to us. But it is a treasure strangely neglected. The State makes primary education its anxious care, yet it does not make its own history a vital part of that education. There is real danger that for the average youth the great names of British story may become meaningless sounds, that his imagination will take no colour from the rich and deep tints of history. And what a pallid, cold-blooded citizenship this must produce!

War belongs, no doubt, to an imperfect stage of society; it has a side of pure brutality. But it is not all brutal. Wordsworth's daring line about "God's most perfect instrument" has a great truth behind it. What examples are to be found in the tales here retold, not merely of heroic daring, but of even finer qualities—of heroic fortitude; of loyalty to duty stronger than the

love of life; of the temper which dreads dishonour more than it fears death; of the patriotism which makes of the Fatherland a passion. These are the elements of robust citizenship. They represent some, at least, of the qualities by which the Empire, in a sterner time than ours, was won, and by which, in even these ease-loving days, it must be maintained.

These sketches appeared originally in the *Melbourne Argus*, and are republished by the kind consent of the proprietors. Each sketch is complete in itself; though no formal quotation of authorities is given, yet all the available literature on each event described has been laid under contribution. The sketches are found to be historically accurate.

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EARL ST. VINCENT

After a painting by SIR W. BEECHEY, R.A.

THE FIGHT OFF CAPE ST. VINCENT

THE SCEPTRE OF THE SEA.

“ Old England’s sons are English yet,
Old England’s hearts are strong ;
And still she wears her coronet
Aflame with sword and song.
As in their pride our fathers died,
If need be, so die we ;
So wield we still, gainsay who will,
The sceptre of the sea.

We’ve Raleighs still for Raleigh’s part,
We’ve Nelsons yet unknown ;
The pulses of the Lion-Heart
Beat on through Wellington.
Hold, Britain, hold thy creed of old,
Strong foe and steadfast friend,
And still unto thy motto true,
‘ Defy not, but defend.’

Men whisper that our arm is weak,
Men say our blood is cold,
And that our hearts no longer speak
That clarion note of old ;
But let the spear and sword draw near
The sleeping lion’s den,
Our island shore shall start once more
To life, with armèd men.”

—HERMAN CHARLES MERIVALE.

ON the night of February 13, 1797, an English fleet of fifteen ships of the line, in close order and in readiness for instant battle, was under easy sail off Cape St. Vincent. It was a moonless night, black with haze,

and the great ships moved in silence like gigantic spectres over the sea. Every now and again there came floating from the south-east the dull sound of a far-off gun. It was the grand fleet of Spain, consisting of twenty-seven ships of line, under Admiral Don Josef de Cordova: one great ship calling to another through the night, little dreaming that the sound of their guns was so keenly noted by the eager but silent fleet of their enemies to leeward. The morning of the 14th—a day famous in the naval history of the empire—broke dim and hazy: grey sea, grey fog, grey dawn, making all things strangely obscure. At half-past six, however, the keen-sighted British outlooks caught a glimpse of the huge straggling line of Spaniards, stretching apparently through miles of sea haze. "They are thumpers!" as the signal lieutenant of the *Bryleur* reported with emphasis to his captain: "they loom like Beachy Head in a fog!" The Spanish fleet was, indeed, the mightiest ever sent from Spanish ports since "that great fleet invincible" of 1588 carried into the English waters—but not out of them!—

"The richest spoils of Mexico, the stoutest hearts of Spain."

The Admiral's flag was borne by the *Santissima Trinidad*, a floating mountain, the largest ship at that time on the sea, and carrying on her four decks 130 guns. Next came six three-deckers carrying 112 guns each, two ships of the line of 80 guns each, and seventeen carrying 74 guns, with no less than twelve 34-gun frigates to act as a flying cordon of skirmishers. Spain had joined France against England on September 12, 1796, and Don Cordova, at the head of this immense fleet, had

sailed from Cadiz to execute a daring and splendid strategy. He was to pick up the Toulon fleet, brush away the English squadron blockading Brest, add the great French fleet lying imprisoned there to his forces, and enter the British Channel with above a hundred sail of the line under his flag, and sweep in triumph to the mouth of the Thames! If the plan succeeded, Portugal would fall, a descent was to be made on Ireland; the British flag, it was reckoned, would be swept from the seas.

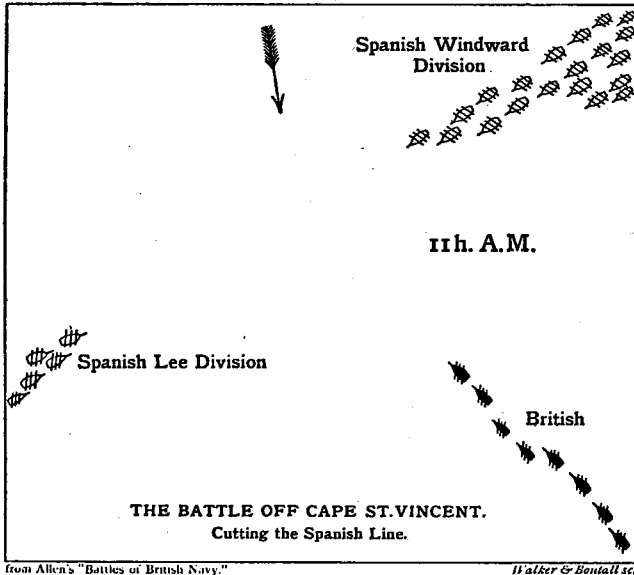
Sir John Jervis was lying in the track of the Spaniards to defeat this ingenious plan. Five ships of the line had been withdrawn from the squadron blockading Brest to strengthen him; still he had only fifteen ships against the twenty-seven huge Spaniards in front of him; whilst, if the French Toulon fleet behind him broke out, he ran the risk of being crushed, so to speak, betwixt the upper and the nether millstone. Never, perhaps, was the naval supremacy of England challenged so boldly and with such a prospect of success as at this moment. The northern powers had coalesced under Russia, and only a few weeks later the English guns were thundering over the roofs of Copenhagen, while the united flags of France and Spain were preparing to sweep through the narrow seas. The "splendid isolation" of to-day is no novelty. In 1796, as it threatened to be in 1896, Great Britain stood singly against a world in arms, and it is scarcely too much to say that her fate hung on the fortunes of the fleet that, in the grey dawn of St. Valentine's Day, a hundred years ago, was searching the skyline for the topmasts of Don Cordova's huge three-deckers.

Fifteen to twenty-seven is enormous odds, but, on

the testimony of Nelson himself, a better fleet never carried the fortunes of a great country than that under Sir John Jervis. The mere names of the ships or of their commanders awaken more sonorous echoes than the famous catalogue of the ships in the "Iliad." Trowbridge, in the *Culloden*, led the van; the line was formed of such ships as the *Victory*, the flagship, the *Barfleur*, the *Blenheim*, the *Captain*, with Nelson as commodore, the *Excellent*, under Collingwood, the *Colossus*, under Murray, the *Orion*, under Sir James Saumarez, &c. Finer sailors and more daring leaders never bore down upon an enemy's fleet. The picture offered by the two fleets in the cold haze of that fateful morning, as a matter of fact, reflected the difference in their fighting and sea-going qualities. The Spanish fleet, a line of monsters, straggled, formless and shapeless, over miles of sea space, distracted with signals, fluttering with many-coloured flags. The English fleet, grim and silent, bore down upon the enemy in two compact and firm-drawn columns, ship following ship so closely and so exactly that bowsprit and stern almost touched, while an air-line drawn from the foremast of the leading ship to the mizzenmast of the last ship in each column would have touched almost every mast betwixt. Stately, measured, threatening, in perfect fighting order, the compact line of the British bore down on the Spaniards.

Nothing is more striking in the battle of St. Vincent than the swift and resolute fashion in which Sir John Jervis leaped, so to speak, at his enemy's throat, with the silent but deadly leap of a bulldog. As the fog lifted, about nine o'clock, with the suddenness and dramatic effect of the lifting of a curtain in a great

theatre, it revealed to the British admiral a great opportunity. The weather division of the Spanish fleet, twenty-one gigantic ships, resembled nothing so much as a confused and swaying forest of masts; the leeward



division—six ships in a cluster, almost as confused—was parted by an interval of nearly three miles from the main body of the fleet, and into that fatal gap, as with the swift and deadly thrust of a rapier, Jervis drove his fleet in one unswerving line, the two columns

melting into one, ship following hard on ship. The Spaniards strove furiously to close their line, the twenty-one huge ships bearing down from the windward, the smaller squadron clawing desperately up from the leeward. But the British fleet—a long line of gliding pyramids of sails, leaning over to the pressure of the wind, with “the meteor flag” flying from the peak of each vessel, and the curving lines of guns awaiting grim and silent beneath—was too swift. As it swept through the gap, the Spanish vice-admiral, in the *Principe de Asturias*, a great three-decker of 112 guns, tried the daring feat of breaking through the British line to join the severed squadron. He struck the English fleet almost exactly at the flagship, the *Victory*. The *Victory* was thrown into stays to meet her, the Spaniard swung round in response, and, exactly as her quarter was exposed to the broadside of the *Victory*, the thunder of a tremendous broadside rolled from that ship. The unfortunate Spaniard was smitten as with a tempest of iron, and the next moment, with sails torn, topmasts hanging to leeward, ropes hanging loose in every direction, and her decks splashed red with the blood of her slaughtered crew, she broke off to windward. The iron line of the British was unpierceable! The leading three-decker of the Spanish lee division in like manner bore up, as though to break through the British line to join her admiral; but the grim succession of three-deckers, following swift on each other like the links of a moving iron chain, was too disquieting a prospect to be faced. It was not in Spanish seamanship, or, for the matter of that, in Spanish flesh and blood, to beat up in the teeth of such threatening lines of iron

lips. The Spanish ships swung sullenly back to leeward, and the fleet of Don Cordova was cloven in twain, as though by the stroke of some gigantic sword-blade.

As soon as Sir John Jervis saw the steady line of his fleet drawn fair across the gap in the Spanish line, he flung his leading ships up to windward on the mass of the Spanish fleet, by this time beating up to windward. The *Culloden* led, thrust itself betwixt the hindmost Spanish three-deckers, and broke into flame and thunder on either side. Six minutes after her came the *Blenheim*; then, in quick succession, the *Prince George*, the *Orion*, the *Colossus*. It was a crash of swaying masts and bellying sails, while below rose the shouting of the crews, and, like the thrusts of fiery swords, the flames shot out from the sides of the great three-deckers against each other, and over all rolled the thunder and the smoke of a Titanic sea-fight. Nothing more murderous than close fighting betwixt the huge wooden ships of those days can well be imagined. The *Victory*, the largest British ship present in the action, was only 186 feet long and 52 feet broad; yet in that little area 1000 men fought, 100 great guns thundered. A Spanish ship like the *San Josef* was 194 feet in length and 54 feet in breadth; but in that area 112 guns were mounted, while the three decks were thronged with some 1300 men. When floating batteries like these swept each other with the flame of swiftly repeated broadsides at a distance of a few score yards, the destruction may be better imagined than described. The Spanish had an advantage in the number of guns and men, but the British established an instant mastery by their silent discipline, their perfect seaman-

ship, and the speed with which their guns were worked. They fired at least three broadsides to every two the Spaniards discharged, and their fire had a deadly precision compared with which that of the Spaniards was mere distracted spluttering.

Meanwhile the dramatic crisis of the battle came swiftly on. The Spanish admiral was resolute to join the severed fragments of his fleet. The *Culloden*, the *Blenheim*, the *Prince George*, and the *Orion* were thundering amongst his rearmost ships, and as the British line swept up, each ship tacked as it crossed the gap in the Spanish line, bore up to windward and added the thunder of its guns to the storm of battle raging amongst the hindmost Spaniards. But naturally the section of the British line that had not yet passed the gap shortened with every minute, and the leading Spanish ships at last saw the sea to their leeward clear of the enemy, and the track open to their own lee squadron. Instantly they swung round to leeward, the great four-decker, the flagship, with a company of sister giants, the *San Josef* and the *Salvador del Mundo*, of 112 guns each, the *San Nicolas*, and three other great ships of 80 guns. It was a bold and clever stroke. This great squadron, with the breeze behind it, had but to sweep past the rear of the British line, join the lee squadron, and bear up, and the Spanish fleet in one unbroken mass would confront the enemy. The rear of the British line was held by Collingwood in the *Excellent*; next to him came the *Diadem*; the third ship was the *Captain*, under Nelson. We may imagine how Nelson's solitary eye was fixed on the great Spanish three-deckers that formed the Spanish van as they suddenly swung round and came sweeping

down to cross his stern. Not Napoleon himself had a vision more swift and keen for the changing physiognomy of a great battle than Nelson, and he met the Spanish admiral with a counter-stroke as brilliant and daring as can be found in the whole history of naval warfare. The British fleet saw the *Captain* suddenly swing out of line to leeward—in the direction from the Spanish line, that is—but with swift curve the *Captain* doubled back, shot between the two English ships that formed the rear of the line, and bore up straight in the path of the Spanish flagship, with its four decks, and the huge battleships on either side of it.

The *Captain*, it should be remembered, was the smallest 74 in the British fleet, and as the great Spanish ships closed round her and broke into flame it seemed as if each one of them was big enough to hoist the *Captain* on board like a jolly-boat. Nelson's act was like that of a single stockman who undertakes to "head off" a drove of angry bulls as they break away from the herd; but the "bulls" in this case were a group of the mightiest battleships then afloat. Nelson's sudden movement was a breach of orders; it left a gap in the British line; to dash unsupported into the Spanish van seemed mere madness, and the spectacle, as the *Captain* opened fire on the huge *Santissima Trinidad*, was simply amazing. Nelson was in action at once with the flagship of 130 guns, two ships of 112 guns, one of 80 guns, and two of 74 guns! To the spectators who watched the sight the sides of the *Captain* seemed to throb with quick-following pulses of flame as its crew poured their shot into the huge hulks on every side of them. The Spaniards formed a mass so tangled that

they could scarcely fire at the little *Captain* without injuring each other; yet the English ship seemed to shrivel beneath even the imperfect fire that did reach her. Her foremast was shot away, her wheel-post shattered, her rigging torn, some of her guns dismantled, and the ship was practically incapable of further service either in the line or in chase. But Nelson had accomplished his purpose: he had stopped the rush of the Spanish van.

At this moment the *Excellent*, under Collingwood, swept into the storm of battle that raged round the *Captain*, and poured three tremendous broadsides into the Spanish three-decker the *Salvador del Mundo* that practically disabled her. "We were not further from her," the domestic but hard-fighting Collingwood wrote to his wife, "than the length of our garden." Then, with a fine feat of seamanship, the *Excellent* passed between the *Captain* and the *San Nicolas*, scourging that unfortunate ship with flame at a distance of ten yards, and then passed on to bestow its favours on the *Santissima Trinidad* — "such a ship," Collingwood afterwards confided to his wife, "as I never saw before!" Collingwood tormented that monster with his fire so vehemently that she actually struck, though possession of her was not taken before the other Spanish ships, coming up, rescued her, and she survived to carry the Spanish flag in the great fight of Trafalgar.

Meanwhile the crippled *Captain*, though actually disabled, had performed one of the most dramatic and brilliant feats in the history of naval warfare. Nelson put his helm to starboard, and ran, or rather drifted, on the quarter-gallery of the *San Nicolas*, and at once

boarded that leviathan. Nelson himself crept through the quarter-gallery window in the stern of the Spaniard, and found himself in the officers' cabins. The officers tried to show fight, but there was no denying the boarders who followed Nelson, and with shout and oath, with flash of pistol and ring of steel, the party swept through on to the main deck. But the *San Nicolas* had been boarded also at other points. "The first man who jumped into the enemy's mizzen-chains," says Nelson, "was the first lieutenant of the ship, afterwards Captain Berry." The English sailors dropped from their spritsail yard on to the Spaniard's deck, and by the time Nelson reached the poop of the *San Nicolas* he found his lieutenant in the act of hauling down the Spanish flag. Nelson proceeded to collect the swords of the Spanish officers, when a fire was opened upon them from the stern gallery of the admiral's ship, the *San Josef*, of 112 guns, whose sides were grinding against those of the *San Nicolas*. What could Nelson do? To keep his prize he must assault a still bigger ship. Of course he never hesitated! He flung his boarders up the side of the huge *San Josef*, but he himself, with his solitary arm, had to be assisted to climb the main chains of that vessel, his lieutenant this time dutifully assisting his commodore up instead of indecorously going ahead of him. "At this moment," as Nelson records the incident, "a Spanish officer looked over the quarter-deck rail and said they surrendered. It was not long before I was on the quarter-deck, where the Spanish captain, with a bow, presented me his sword, and said the admiral was dying of his wounds. I asked him, on his honour, if the ship was surrendered. He

declared she was; on which I gave him my hand, and desired him to call on his officers and ship's company and tell them of it, which he did; and on the quarter-deck of a Spanish first-rate—extravagant as the story may seem—did I receive the swords of vanquished Spaniards, which, as I received, I gave to William Fearney, one of my bargemen, who put them with the greatest *sang-froid* under his arm," a circle of "old Agamemmons," with smoke-blackened faces, looking on in grim approval.

This is the story of how a British fleet of fifteen vessels defeated a Spanish fleet of twenty-seven, and captured four of their finest ships. It is the story, too, of how a single English ship, the smallest 74 in the fleet—but made unconquerable by the presence of Nelson—stayed the advance of a whole squadron of Spanish three-deckers, and took two ships, each bigger than itself, by boarding. Was there ever a finer deed wrought under "the meteor flag"! Nelson disobeyed orders by leaving the English line and flinging himself on the van of the Spaniards, but he saved the battle. Calder, Jervis's captain, complained to the admiral that Nelson had "disobeyed orders." "He certainly did," answered Jervis; "and if ever you commit such a breach of your orders I will forgive you also."



GENERAL WOLFE

After a painting by SCHACK in the National Portrait Gallery

THE HEIGHTS OF ABRAHAM

“Sound, sound the clarion, fill the air!
To all the sensual world proclaim,
One crowded hour of glorious life
Is worth an age without a name.”

—SIR WALTER SCOTT.

THE year 1759 is a golden one in British history. A great French army that threatened Hanover was overthrown at Minden, chiefly by the heroic stupidity of six British regiments, who, mistaking their orders, charged the entire French cavalry in line, and destroyed them. “I have seen,” said the astonished French general, “what I never thought to be possible—a single line of infantry break through three lines of cavalry ranked in order of battle, and tumble them into ruin!” Contades omitted to add that this astonishing infantry, charging cavalry in open formation, was scourged during their entire advance by powerful batteries on their flank. At Quiberon, in the same year, Hawke, amid a tempest, destroyed a mighty fleet that threatened England with invasion; and on the heights of Abraham, Wolfe broke the French power in America. “We are forced,” said Horace Walpole, the wit of his day, “to ask every morning what new victory there is, for fear of missing one.” Yet, of all the great deeds of that *annus mirabilis*, the victory which overthrew Montcalm and gave Quebec to England—a

victory achieved by the genius of Pitt and the dash of Wolfe—was, if not the most shining in quality, the most far-reaching in its results. "With the triumph of Wolfe on the heights of Abraham," says Greaves, "began the history of the United States."

The hero of that historic fight wore a singularly heroic aspect. Wolfe's face, in the famous picture by West, resembles that of a nervous and sentimental boy. He was an adjutant at sixteen, and only thirty-three when he fell, mortally wounded, under the walls of Quebec. His forehead and chin receded; his nose, tip-tilted heavenwards, formed with his other features the point of an obtuse triangle. His hair was fiery red, his shoulders narrow, his legs a pair of attenuated spindle-shanks; he was a chronic invalid. But between his fiery poll and his plebeian and upturned nose flashed a pair of eyes—keen, piercing, and steady—worthy of Cæsar or of Napoleon. In warlike genius he was on land as Nelson was on sea, chivalrous, fiery, intense. A "magnetic" man, with a strange gift of impressing himself on the imagination of his soldiers, and of so penetrating the whole force he commanded with his own spirit that in his hands it became a terrible and almost resistless instrument of war. The gift for choosing fit agents is one of the highest qualities of genius; and it is a sign of Pitt's piercing insight into character that, for the great task of overthrowing the French power in Canada, he chose what seemed to commonplace vision a rickety, hypochondriacal, and very youthful colonel like Wolfe.

Pitt's strategy for the American campaign was successful, not to say grandiose. A line of strong French posts, ranging from Duquesne, on the Ohio, to Ticon-

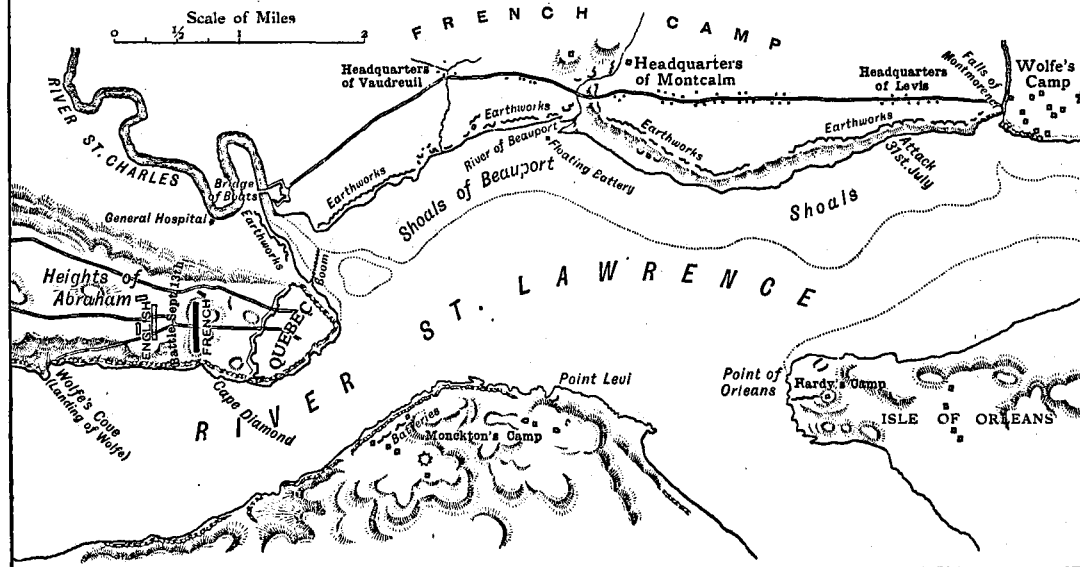
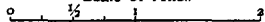
deroga, on Lake Champlain, held the English settlements on the coast girdled, as in an iron band, from all extension westward; while Quebec, perched in almost impregnable strength on the frowning cliffs which look down on the St. Lawrence, was the centre of the French power in Canada. Pitt's plan was that Amherst, with 12,000 men, should capture Ticonderoga; Prideaux, with another powerful force, should carry Montreal; and Wolfe, with 7000 men, should invest Quebec, where Amherst and Prideaux were to join him. Two-thirds of this great plan broke down. Amherst and Prideaux, indeed, succeeded in their local operations, but neither was able to join Wolfe, who had to carry out with one army the task for which three were designed.

On June 21, 1759, the advanced squadron of the fleet conveying Wolfe came working up the St. Lawrence. To deceive the enemy they flew the white flag, and, as the eight great ships came abreast of the Island of Orleans, the good people of Quebec persuaded themselves it was a French fleet bringing supplies and reinforcements. The bells rang a welcome; flags waved. Boats put eagerly off to greet the approaching ships. But as these swung round at their anchorage the white flag of France disappeared, and the red ensign of Great Britain flew in its place. The crowds, struck suddenly dumb, watched the gleam of the hostile flag with chap-fallen faces. A priest, who was staring at the ships through a telescope, actually dropped dead with the excitement and passion created by the sight of the British fleet. On June 26 the main body of the fleet, bringing Wolfe himself with 7000 troops, was in sight of the lofty cliffs on which Quebec stands; Cook, after-

SIEGE OF QUEBEC

1759.

Scale of Miles



wards the famous navigator, master of the *Mercury*, sounding ahead of the fleet. Wolfe at once seized the Isle of Orleans, which shelters the basin of Quebec to the east, and divides the St. Lawrence into two branches, and, with a few officers, quickly stood on the western point of the isle. At a glance the desperate nature of the task committed to him was apparent.

Quebec stands on the rocky nose of a promontory, shaped roughly like a bull's-head, looking eastward. The St. Lawrence flows eastward under the chin of the head; the St. Charles runs, so to speak, down its nose from the north to meet the St. Lawrence. The city itself stands on lofty cliffs, and as Wolfe looked upon it on that June evening far away, it was girt and crowned with batteries. The banks of the St. Lawrence, that define what we have called the throat of the bull, are precipitous and lofty, and seem by mere natural strength to defy attack, though it was just here, by an ant-like track up 250 feet of almost perpendicular cliff, Wolfe actually climbed to the plains of Abraham. To the east of Quebec is a curve of lofty shore, seven miles long, between the St. Charles and the Montmorenci. When Wolfe's eye followed those seven miles of curving shore, he saw the tents of a French army double his own in strength, and commanded by the most brilliant French soldier of his generation, Montcalm. Quebec, in a word, was a great natural fortress, attacked by 9000 troops and defended by 16,000; and if a daring military genius urged the English attack, a soldier as daring and well-nigh as able as Wolfe directed the French defence.

Montcalm gave a proof of his fine quality as a soldier within twenty-four hours of the appearance of the

British fleet. The very afternoon the British ships dropped anchor a terrific tempest swept over the harbour, drove the transports from their moorings, dashed the great ships of war against each other, and wrought immense mischief. The tempest dropped as quickly as it had arisen. The night fell black and moonless. Towards midnight the British sentinels on the point of the Isle of Orleans saw drifting silently through the gloom the outlines of a cluster of ships. They were eight huge fire-ships, floating mines packed with explosives. The nerve of the French sailors, fortunately for the British, failed them, and they fired the ships too soon. But the spectacle of these flaming monsters as they drifted towards the British fleet was appalling. The river showed ebony-black under the white flames. The glare lit up the river cliffs, the roofs of the city, the tents of Montcalm, the slopes of the distant hills, the black hulls of the British ships. It was one of the most stupendous exhibitions of fireworks ever witnessed! But it was almost as harmless as a display of fireworks. The boats from the British fleet were by this time in the water, and pulling with steady daring to meet these drifting volcanoes. They were grappled, towed to the banks, and stranded, and there they spluttered and smoked and flamed till the white light of the dawn broke over them. The only mischief achieved by these fire-ships was to burn alive one of their own captains and five or six of his men, who failed to escape in their boats.

Wolfe, in addition to the Isle of Orleans, seized Point Levi, opposite the city, and this gave him complete command of the basin of Quebec; from his bat-

teries on Point Levi, too, he could fire directly on the city, and destroy it if he could not capture it. He himself landed the main body of his troops on the east bank of the Montmorenci, Montcalm's position, strongly entrenched, being between him and the city. Between the two armies, however, ran the deep gorge through which the swift current of the Montmorenci rushes down to join the St. Lawrence. The gorge is barely a gunshot in width, but of stupendous depth. The Montmorenci tumbles over its rocky bed with a speed that turns the flashing waters almost to the whiteness of snow. Was there ever a more curious military position adopted by a great general in the face of superior forces! Wolfe's tiny army was distributed into three camps: his right wing on the Montmorenci was six miles distant from his left wing at Point Levi, and between the centre, on the Isle of Orleans, and the two wings, ran the two branches of the St. Lawrence. That Wolfe deliberately made such a distribution of his forces under the very eyes of Montcalm showed his amazing daring. And yet beyond firing across the Montmorenci on Montcalm's left wing, and bombarding the city from Point Levi, the British general could accomplish nothing. Montcalm knew that winter must compel Wolfe to retreat, and he remained stubbornly but warily on the defensive.

On July 18 the British performed a daring feat. In the darkness of the night two of the men-of-war and several sloops ran past the Quebec batteries and reached the river above the town; they destroyed some fire-ships they found there, and cut off Montcalm's communication by water with Montreal. This rendered it

necessary for the French to establish guards on the line of precipices between Quebec and Cap-Rouge. On July 28 the French repeated the experiment of fire-ships on a still more gigantic scale. A vast fire-raft was constructed, composed of some seventy schooners, boats, and rafts, chained together, and loaded with combustibles and explosives. The fire-raft is described as being 100 fathoms in length, and its appearance, as it came drifting on the current, a mass of roaring fire, discharging every instant a shower of missiles, was terrifying. But the British sailors dashed down upon it, broke the huge raft into fragments, and towed them easily ashore. "Hang it, Jack," one sailor was heard to say to his mate as he tugged at the oar, "didst thee ever take hell in tow before?"

Time was on Montcalm's side, and unless Wolfe could draw him from his impregnable entrenchments and compel him to fight, the game was lost. When the tide fell, a stretch of shoal a few score yards wide was left bare on the French side of the Montmorenci. The slope that covered this was steep, slippery with grass, crowned by a great battery, and swept by the cross-fire of entrenchments on either flank. Montcalm, too, holding the interior lines, could bring to the defence of this point twice the force with which Wolfe could attack it. Yet to Wolfe's keen eyes this seemed the one vulnerable point in Montcalm's front, and on July 31 he made a desperate leap upon it.

The attack was planned with great art. The British batteries thundered across the Montmorenci, and a feint was made of fording that river higher up, so as to distract the attention of the French, whilst the boats

of the fleet threatened a landing near Quebec itself. At half-past five the tide was at its lowest, and the boat-flotilla, swinging round at a signal, pulled at speed for the patch of muddy foreshore already selected. The Grenadiers and Royal Americans leaped ashore in the mud, and—waiting neither for orders, nor leaders, nor supports—dashed up the hill to storm the redoubt. They reached the first redoubt, tumbled over it and through it, only to find themselves breathless in a semi-circle of fire. The men fell fast, but yet struggled fiercely upwards. A furious storm of rain broke over the combatants at that moment, and made the steep grass-covered slope as slippery as mere glass. "We could not see half-way down the hill," writes the French officer in command of the battery on the summit. But through the smoke and the driving rain they could still see the Grenadiers and Royal Americans in ragged clusters, scarce able to stand, yet striving desperately to climb upwards. The reckless ardour of the Grenadiers had spoiled Wolfe's attack, the sudden storm helped to save the French, and Wolfe withdrew his broken but furious battalions, having lost some 500 of his best men and officers.

The exultant French regarded the siege as practically over; but Wolfe was a man of heroic and quenchless tenacity, and never so dangerous as when he seemed to be in the last straits. He held doggedly on, in spite of cold and tempest and disease. His own frail body broke down, and for the first time the shadow of depression fell on the British camps when they no longer saw the red head and lean and scraggy body of their general moving amongst them. For a week, between

August 22 and August 29, he lay apparently a dying man, his face, with its curious angles, white with pain and haggard with disease. But he struggled out again, and framed yet new plans of attack. On September 10 the captains of the men-of-war held a council on board the flagship, and resolved that the approach of winter required the fleet to leave Quebec without delay. By this time, too, Wolfe's scanty force was diminished one-seventh by disease or losses in battle. Wolfe, however, had now formed the plan which ultimately gave him success, though at the cost of his own life.

From a tiny little cove, now known as Wolfe's Cove, five miles to the west of Quebec, a path, scarcely accessible to a goat, climbs up the face of the great cliff, nearly 250 feet high. The place was so inaccessible that only a post of 100 men kept guard over it. Up that track, in the blackness of the night, Wolfe resolved to lead his army to the attack on Quebec! It needed the most exquisite combinations to bring the attacking force to that point from three separate quarters, in the gloom of night, at a given moment, and without a sound that could alarm the enemy. Wolfe withdrew his force from the Montmorenci, embarked them on board his ships, and made every sign of departure. Montcalm mistrusted these signs, and suspected Wolfe would make at least one more leap on Quebec before withdrawing. Yet he did not in the least suspect Wolfe's real designs. He discussed, in fact, the very plan Wolfe adopted, but dismissed it by saying, "We need not suppose that the enemy have wings." The British ships were kept moving up and down the river front for several days, so as to distract and perplex the

enemy. On September 12 Wolfe's plans were complete, and he issued his final orders. One sentence in them curiously anticipates Nelson's famous signal at Trafalgar. "Officers and men," wrote Wolfe, "*will remember what their country expects of them.*" A feint on Beauport, five miles to the east of Quebec, as evening fell, made Montcalm mass his troops there; but it was at a point five miles west of Quebec the real attack was directed.

At two o'clock at night two lanterns appeared for a minute in the maintop shrouds of the *Sunderland*. It was the signal, and from the fleet, from the Isle of Orleans, and from Point Levi, the English boats stole silently out, freighted with some 1700 troops, and converged towards the point in the black wall of cliffs agreed upon. Wolfe himself was in the leading boat of the flotilla. As the boats drifted silently through the darkness on that desperate adventure, Wolfe, to the officers about him, commenced to recite Gray's "Elegy":—

"The boast of heraldry, the pomp of power,
And all that beauty, all that wealth e'er gave,
Await alike the inevitable hour.
The paths of glory lead but to the grave."

"Now, gentlemen," he added, "I would rather have written that poem than take Quebec." Wolfe, in fact, was half poet, half soldier. Suddenly from the great wall of rock and forest to their left broke the challenge of a French sentinel—" *Qui vive?*" A Highland officer of Fraser's regiment, who spoke French fluently, answered the challenge. "*France.*" "*A quel regiment?*" "*De la Reine,*" answered the Highlander. As it happened

the French expected a flotilla of provision boats, and after a little further dialogue, in which the cool Highlander completely deceived the French sentries, the British were allowed to slip past in the darkness. The tiny cove was safely reached, the boats stole silently up without a blunder, twenty-four volunteers from the Light Infantry leaped from their boat and led the way in single file up the path, that ran like a thread along the face of the cliff. Wolfe sat eagerly listening in his boat below. Suddenly from the summit he saw the flash of the muskets and heard the stern shout which told him his men were up. A clear, firm order, and the troops sitting silent in the boats leaped ashore, and the long file of soldiers, like a chain of ants, went up the face of the cliff, Wolfe amongst the foremost, and formed in order on the plateau, the boats meanwhile rowing back at speed to bring up the remainder of the troops. Wolfe was at last within Montcalm's guard!

When the morning of the 13th dawned, the British army, in line of battle, stood looking down on Quebec. Montcalm quickly heard the news, and came riding furiously across the St. Charles and past the city to the scene of danger. He rode, as those who saw him tell, with a fixed look, and uttering not a word. The vigilance of months was rendered worthless by that amazing night escalade. When he reached the slopes Montcalm saw before him the silent red wall of British infantry, the Highlanders with waving tartans and wind-blown plumes—all in battle array. It was not a detachment, but an army!

The fight lasted fifteen minutes, and might be told in almost as many words. Montcalm brought on his

men in three powerful columns, in number double that of Wolfe's force. The British troops stood grimly silent, though they were tormented by the fire of Indians and Canadians lying in the grass. The French advanced eagerly, with a tumult of shouts and a confused fire; the British moved forward a few rods, halted, dressed their lines, and when the French were within forty paces threw in one fierce volley, so sharply timed that the explosion of 4000 muskets sounded like the sudden blast of a cannon. Again, again, and yet again, the flame ran from end to end of the steadfast line. When the smoke lifted, the French column were wrecked. The British instantly charged. The spirit of the clan awoke in Fraser's Highlanders: they flung ~~aside their muskets, drew~~ their broadswords, and with a fierce Celtic slogan rushed on the enemy. Never was a charged pressed more ruthlessly home. After the fight one of the British officers wrote: "There was not a bayonet in the three leading British regiments, nor a broadsword amongst the Highlanders, that was not crimson with the blood of a foeman." Wolfe himself charged at the head of the Grenadiers, his bright uniform making him conspicuous. He was shot in the wrist, wrapped a handkerchief round the wound, and still ran forward. Two other bullets struck him—one, it is said, fired by a British deserter, a sergeant broken by Wolfe for brutality to a private. "Don't let the soldiers see me drop," said Wolfe, as he fell, to an officer running beside him. An officer of the Grenadiers, a gentleman volunteer, and a private carried Wolfe to a redoubt near. He refused to allow a surgeon to be called. "There is no need," he said, "it is all over with me."

Then one of the little group, casting a look at the smoke-covered battlefield, cried, "They run! See how they run!" "Who run?" said the dying Wolfe, like a man roused from sleep. "The enemy, sir," was the answer. A flash of life came back to Wolfe; the eager spirit thrust from it the swoon of death; he gave a clear, emphatic order for cutting off the enemy's retreat; then, turning on his side, he added, "Now God be praised, I die in peace."

That fight determined that the North American continent should be the heritage of the Anglo-Saxon race. And, somehow, the popular instinct, when news reached England, realised the historic significance of the event. "When we first heard of Wolfe's glorious deed," writes Thackeray in "The Virginians"—"of that army marshalled in darkness and carried silently up the midnight river—of those rocks scaled by the intrepid leader and his troops—of the defeat of Montcalm on the open plain by the sheer valour of his conqueror—were all intoxicated in England by the news." "Not merely all London but half England flamed into indignations. One spot alone was dark—Blackheath, where, solitary amidst a rejoicing nation, Wolfe's mother mourned for her heroic son—like Milton's Lycida: "dead ere his prime."



LORD HAWKE

After a painting by FRANCIS COTES, R.A.

THE GREAT LORD HAWKE

THE ENGLISH FLAG

"What is the flag of England? Winds of the world, declare!

The lean white bear hath seen it in the long, long Arctic night,
The musk-ox knows the standard that flouts the Northern light.

Never was isle so little, never was sea so lone,
But over the scud and the palm-trees an English flag has flown.
I have wrenched it free from the halliard to hang for a wisp on the Horn
I have chased it north to the Lizard—ribboned and rolled and torn ;
I have spread its folds o'er the dying, adrift in a hopeless sea ;
I have hurled it swift on the slaver, and seen the slave set free.

Never the lotos closes, never the wild-fowl wake,
But a soul goes out on the East Wind, that died for England's sake—
Man or woman or suckling, mother or bride or maid—
Because on the bones of the English, the English flag is stayed.

The dead dumb fog hath wrapped it—the frozen dew has kissed—
The naked stars have seen it, a fellow-tar in the mist.
What is the flag of England? Ye have but my breath to dare ;
Ye have but my waves to conquer. Go forth, for it is there !"

—KIPLING.

"THE great Lord Hawke" is Burke's phrase, and is one of the best-earned epithets in literature. Yet what does the average Englishman to-day remember of the great sailor who, through the bitter November gales of 1759, kept dogged and tireless watch over the French fleet in Brest, destroyed that fleet with heroic daring amongst the sands of Quiberon, while the

fury of a Bay of Biscay tempest almost drowned the roar of his guns, and so crushed a threatened invasion of England?

Hawke has been thrown by all-devouring Time into his wallet as mere "alms for oblivion"; yet amongst all the sea-dogs who ever sailed beneath "the blood-red flag" no one ever less deserved that fate. Campbell, in "Ye Mariners of England," groups "Blake and mighty Nelson" together as the two great typical English sailors. Hawke stands midway betwixt them, in point both of time and of achievements, though he had more in him of Blake than of Nelson. He lacked, no doubt, the dazzling electric strain that ran through the war-like genius of Nelson. Hawke's fighting quality was of the grim, dour home-spun character; but it was a true genius for battle, and as long as Great Britain is a sea-power the memory of the great sailor who crushed Conflans off Quiberon deserves to live.

Hawke, too, was a great man in the age of little men. The fame of the English navy had sunk to the lowest point. Its ships were rotten; its captains had lost the fighting tradition; its fleets were paralysed by a childish system of tactics which made a decisive battle almost impossible. Hawke describes the *Portland*, a ship of which he was in command, as "iron-sick"; the wood was too rotten, that is, to hold the iron bolts, so that "not a man in the ship had a dry place to sleep in." His men were "tumbling down with scurvy"; his mainmast was so pulverised by dry rot that a walking-stick could be thrust into it. Of another ship, the *Ramilies*—his favourite ship, too—he says, "It became water-logged whenever it blowed hard." The ships' bottoms

grew a rank crop of grass, slime, shells, barnacles, &c., till the sluggish vessels needed almost a gale to move them. Marines were not yet invented; the navy had no uniform. The French ships of that day were better built, better armed, and sometimes better fought than British ships. A British 70-gun ship in armament and weight of fire was only equal to a French ship of 52 guns. Every considerable fight was promptly followed by a crop of court-martials, in which captains were tried for misconduct before the enemy, such as to-day is unthinkable. Admiral Matthews was broken by court-martial for having, with an excess of daring, pierced the French line off Toulon, and thus sacrificed pedantic tactics to victory. But the list of court-martials held during the second quarter of the eighteenth century on British captains for beginning to fight too late, or for leaving off too soon, would, if published, astonish this generation. After the fight off Toulon in 1744, two admirals and six post-captains were court-martialled. Admiral Byng was shot on his own deck, not exactly as Voltaire's *mot* describes it, *pour encourager les autres*, and not quite for cowardice, for Byng was no coward. But he had no gleam of unselfish patriotic fire, and nothing of the gallant fighting impulse we have learned to believe is characteristic of the British sailor. He lost Minorca, and disgraced the British flag because he was too dainty to face the stern discomforts of a fight. The corrupt and ignoble temper of English politics—the legacy of Walpole's evil régime—poisoned the blood of the navy. No one can have forgotten Macaulay's picture of Newcastle, at that inoment Prime Minister of England; the sly, greedy, fawning politician, as corrupt as Walpole,

without his genius ; without honour, without truth, who loved office only less than he loved his own neck. A Prime Minister like Newcastle made possible an admiral like Byng. Horace Walpole tells the story of how, when the much-enduring British public broke into one of its rare but terrible fits of passion after the disgrace of Minorca, and Newcastle was trembling for his own head, a deputation from the city of London waited upon him, demanding that Byng should be put upon his trial. "Oh, indeed," replied Newcastle, with fawning gestures, "he shall be tried immediately. He shall be hanged directly!" It was an age of base men, and the navy—neglected, starved, dishonoured—had lost the great traditions of the past, and did not yet feel the thrill of the nobler spirit soon to sweep over it.

But in 1759 the dazzling intellect and masterful will of the first Pitt controlled the fortunes of England, and the spirit of the nation was beginning to awake. Burns and Wilberforce and the younger Pitt were born that year; Minden was fought; Wolfe saw with dying eyes the French battalions broken on the plains of Abraham and Canada won. But the great event of the year is Hawke's defeat of Conflans off Quiberon. Hawke was the son of a barrister; he entered the navy at fourteen years of age as a volunteer, obtained the rating of an able seaman at nineteen years of age, was a third lieutenant at twenty-four, and became captain at thirty. He knew the details of his profession as well as any sea-dog of the fore-castle, was quite modern in the keen and humane interest he took in his men, had something of Wellington's high-minded allegiance to duty, while his fighting had a stern but sober thoroughness worthy of Cromwell's

Ironsides. The British people came to realise that he was a sailor with the strain of a bulldog in him; an indomitable fighter, who, ordered to blockade a hostile port, would hang on, in spite of storms and scurvy, while he had a man left who could pull a rope or fire a gun; a fighter, too, of the type dear to the British imagination, who took the shortest course to the enemy's line, and would exchange broadsides at pistol-shot distance while his ship floated.

In 1759 a great French army threatened the shores of England. At Havre and Dunkirk huge flotillas of flat-bottomed boats lay at their moorings; 18,000 French veterans were ready to embark. A great fleet under the command of Conflans—one of the ablest seamen France has ever produced—was gathered at Brest. A French squadron was to break out of Toulon, join Conflans, sweep the narrow seas, and convoy the French expedition to English shores. The strategy, if it had succeeded, might have changed the fate of the world.

To Hawke was entrusted the task of blockading Conflans in Brest, and a greater feat of seamanship is not to be found in British records. The French fleet consisted of 25 ships, manned by 15,200 men, and carrying 1598 guns. The British fleet numbered 23 ships, with 13,295 men, and carrying 1596 guns. The two fleets, that is, were nearly equal, the advantage, on the whole, being on the side of the French. Hawke therefore had to blockade a fleet equal to his own, the French ships lying snugly in harbour, the English ships scourged by November gales and rolling in the huge seas of the Bay of Biscay. Sir Cloudesley Shovel, himself a seaman of the highest quality, said that "an admiral would de-

serve to be broke who kept great ships out after the end of September, and to be shot if after October." Hawke maintained his blockade of Brest for six months. His captains broke down in health, his men were dying from scurvy, the bottoms of his ships grew foul; it was a stormy season in the stormiest of seas. Again and again the wild north-west gales blew the British admiral off his cruising ground. But he fought his way back, sent his ships, singly or in couples, to Torbay or Plymouth for a moment's breathing space, but himself held on, with a grim courage and an unslumbering vigilance which have never been surpassed. On November 6, a tremendous westerly gale swept over the English cruising-ground. Hawke battled with it for three days, and then ran, storm-driven and half-dismantled, to Torbay for shelter on the 10th. He put to sea again on the 12th. The gale had veered round to the south-west, but blew as furiously as ever, and Hawke was once more driven back on the 13th to Torbay. He struggled out again on the 14th, to find that the French had escaped! The gale that blew Hawke from his post brought a French squadron down the Channel, which ran into Brest and joined Conflans there; and on the 14th, when Hawke was desperately fighting his way back to his post, Conflans put to sea, and, with the gale behind him, ran on his course to Quiberon. There he hoped to brush aside the squadron keeping guard over the French transports, embark the powerful French force assembled there, and swoop down on the English coast. The wild weather, Conflans reckoned, would keep Hawke storm-bound in Torbay till this scheme was carried out.

But Hawke with his whole fleet, fighting his way in

the teeth of the gale, reached Ushant on the very day Conflans broke out of Brest, and, fast as the French fleet ran before the gale, the white sails of Hawke's ships, showing over the stormy rim of the horizon, came on the Frenchman's track. Hawke's frigates, outrunning those heavy sea-waggon, his line-of-battle ships, hung on Conflans' rear. The main body of the British fleet followed, staggering under their pyramids of sails, with wet decks and the wild north-west gale on their quarter. Hawke's best sailers gained steadily on the laggards of Conflans' fleet. Had Hawke obeyed the puerile tactics of his day he would have dressed his line and refused to attack at all unless he could bring his entire fleet into action. But, as Hawke himself said afterwards, he "had determined to attack them in the old way and make downright work of them," and he signalled his leading ships to attack the moment they brought an enemy's ship within fire. Conflans could not abandon his slower ships, and he reluctantly swung round his van and formed line to meet the attack.

As the main body of the English came up, the French admiral suddenly adopted a strategy which might well have baffled a less daring adversary than Hawke. He ran boldly in shore towards the mouth of the Vilaine. It was a wild stretch of most dangerous coast; the granite Breton hills above; splinters of rocky islets, on which the huge sea rollers tore themselves into white foam, below; and more dangerous still, and stretching far out to sea, wide reaches of shoal and quicksand. From the north-west the gale blew more wildly than ever; the sky was black with flying clouds; on the Breton hills the spectators clustered in thou-

sands. The roar of the furious breakers and the shrill note of the gale filled the very air with tumult. Confians had pilots familiar with the coast, yet it was bold seamanship on his part to run down to a lee shore on such a day of tempest. Hawke had no pilots and no charts; but he saw before him, half hidden in mist and spray, the great hulls of the ships over which he had kept watch so long in Brest harbour, and he anticipated Nelson's strategy forty years afterwards. "Where there is room for the enemy to swing," said Nelson, "there is room for me to anchor." "Where there's a passage for the enemy," argued Hawke, "there is a passage for me! Where a Frenchman can sail, an Englishman can follow! Their pilots shall be ours. If they go to pieces in the shoals, they will serve as beacons for us."

And so, on the wild November afternoon, with the great billows that the Bay of Biscay hurls on that stretch of iron-bound coast riding shoreward in league-long rollers, Hawke flung himself into the boiling caldron of rocks and shoals and quicksands. No more daring deed was ever done at sea. Measured by mere fighting courage, there were thousands of men in the British fleet as brave as Hawke. But the iron nerve that, without an instant's pause, in a scene so wild, on a shore so perilous, and a sea sown so thick with unknown dangers, flung a whole fleet into battle, was probably possessed by no other man than Hawke amongst the 30,000 gallant sailors who fought at Quiberon.

The fight, taking all its incidents into account, is perhaps as dramatic as anything known in the history of war. The British ships came rolling on, grim and silent, throwing huge sheets of spray from their

bluff bows. An 80-gun French ship, *Le Formidable*, lay in their track, and each huge British liner, as it swept past to attack the main body of the French, vomited on the unfortunate *Le Formidable* a dreadful broadside. And upon each British ship, in turn, as it rolled past in spray and flame, the gallant Frenchman flung an answering broadside. Soon the thunder of the guns deepened as ship after ship found its antagonist. The short November day was already darkening; the thunder of surf and of tempest answered in yet wilder notes the deep-throated guns; the wildly rolling fleets offered one of the strangest sights the sea has ever witnessed.

Soon Hawke himself, in the *Royal George*, of 100 guns, came on, stern and majestic, seeking some fitting antagonist. This was the great ship that afterwards sank ignobly at its anchorage at Spithead, with "twice four hundred men," a tale which, for every English boy, is made famous in Cowper's immortal ballad. But what an image of terror and of battle the *Royal George* seemed as in the bitter November storm she bore down on the French fleet! Hawke disdained meaner foes, and bade his pilot lay him alongside Conflans' flagship, *Le Soleil Royal*. Shoals were foaming on every side, and the pilot warned Hawke he could not carry the *Royal George* farther in without risking the ship. "You have done your duty," said Hawke, "in pointing out the risk; and now lay me alongside of *Le Soleil Royal*."

A French 70-gun ship, *La Superbe*, threw itself betwixt Hawke and Conflans. Slowly the huge mass of the *Royal George* bore up, so as to bring its broadside to bear on *La Superbe*, and then the English guns broke

into a tempest of flame. Through spray and mist the masts of the unfortunate Frenchman seemed to tumble; a tempest of cries was heard; the British sailors ran back their guns to reload. A sudden gust cleared the atmosphere, and *La Superbe* had vanished. Her top-masts gleamed wet, for a moment, through the green seas, but with her crew of 650 men she had sunk, as though crushed by a thunderbolt, beneath a single broadside from the *Royal George*. Then from the nearer hills the crowds of French spectators saw Hawke's blue flag and Conflans' white pennon approach each other, and the two great ships, with slanting decks and fluttering canvas, and rigging blown to leeward, began their fierce duel. Other French ships crowded to their admiral's aid, and at one time no less than seven French line-of-battle ships were pouring their fire into the mighty and shot-torn bulk of the *Royal George*.

Howe, in the *Magnanime*, was engaged in fierce conflict, meanwhile, with the *Thesée*, when a sister English ship, the *Montague*, was flung by a huge sea on the quarter of Howe's ship, and practically disabled it. The *Torbay*, under Captain Keppel, took Howe's place with the *Thesée*, and both ships had their lower-deck ports open, so as to fight with their heaviest guns. The unfortunate Frenchman rolled to a great sea; the wide-open ports dipped, the green water rushed through, quenched the fire of the guns, and swept the sailors from their quarters. The great ship shivered, rolled over still more wildly, and then, with 700 men, went down like a stone. The British ship, with better luck and better seamanship, got its ports closed and was

saved. Several French ships by this time had struck, but the sea was too wild to allow them to be taken possession of. Night was falling fast, the roar of the tempest still deepened, and no less than seven huge French liners, throwing their guns overboard, ran for shelter across the bar of the Vilaine, the pursuing English following them almost within reach of the spray flung from the rocks. Hawke then, by signals, brought his fleet to anchor for the night under the lee of the island of Dumet.

It was a wild night, filled with the thunder of the surf and the shriek of the gale, and all through it, as the English ships rode, madly straining at their anchors, they could hear the sounds of distress guns. One of the ships that perished that night was a fine English seventy-four, the *Resolution*. The morning broke as wild as the night. To leeward two great line-of-battle ships could be seen on the rocks; but in the very middle of the English fleet, its masts gone, its hull battered with shot, was the flagship of Conflans, *Le Soleil Royal*. In the darkness and tempest of the night the unfortunate Frenchman, all unwitting, had anchored in the very midst of his foes. As soon as, through the grey and misty light of the November dawn, the English ships were discovered, Conflans cut his cables and drifted ashore. The *Essex*, 64 guns, was ordered to pursue her, and her captain, an impetuous Irishman, obeyed his orders so literally that he too ran ashore, and the *Essex* became a total wreck.

"When I consider," Hawke wrote to the Admiralty, "the season of the year, the hard gales on the day of action, a flying enemy, the shortness of the day, and

the coast they were on, I can boldly affirm that all that could possibly be done has been done." History confirms that judgment. There is no other record of great sea-fight fought under conditions so wild, and scarcely any other sea-battle has achieved results more decisive. Trafalgar itself scarcely exceeds it in the quality of effectiveness. Quiberon saved England from invasion. It destroyed for the moment the naval power of France. Its political results in France cannot be described here, but they were of the first importance. The victory gave a new complexion to English naval warfare. Rodney and Howe were Hawke's pupils. Nelson himself, who was a post-captain when Hawke died, learned his tactics in Hawke's school. No sailor ever served England better than Hawke. And yet such is the irony of human affairs, that on the very day when Hawke was adding the thunder of his guns to the diapason of surf and tempest off Quiberon, and crushing the fleet that threatened England with invasion, a London mob was burning his effigy for having allowed the French to escape his blockade.



GENERAL PICTON

After a painting by SIR MARTIN ARCHER SHEE, P.R.A.

THE NIGHT ATTACK ON BADAJOS

“ Hand to hand, and foot to foot :
Nothing there, save death, was mute :
Stroke, and thrust, and flash, and cry
For quarter or for victory,
Mingle there with the volleying thunder,
Which makes the distant cities wonder
How the sounding battle goes,
If with them, or for their foes ;
If they must mourn, or must rejoice
In that annihilating voice,
Which pierces the deep hills through and through
With an echo dread and new.

From the point of encountering blades to the hilt,
Sabres and swords with blood were gilt ;
But the rampart is won, and the spoil begun,
And all but the after carnage done.”

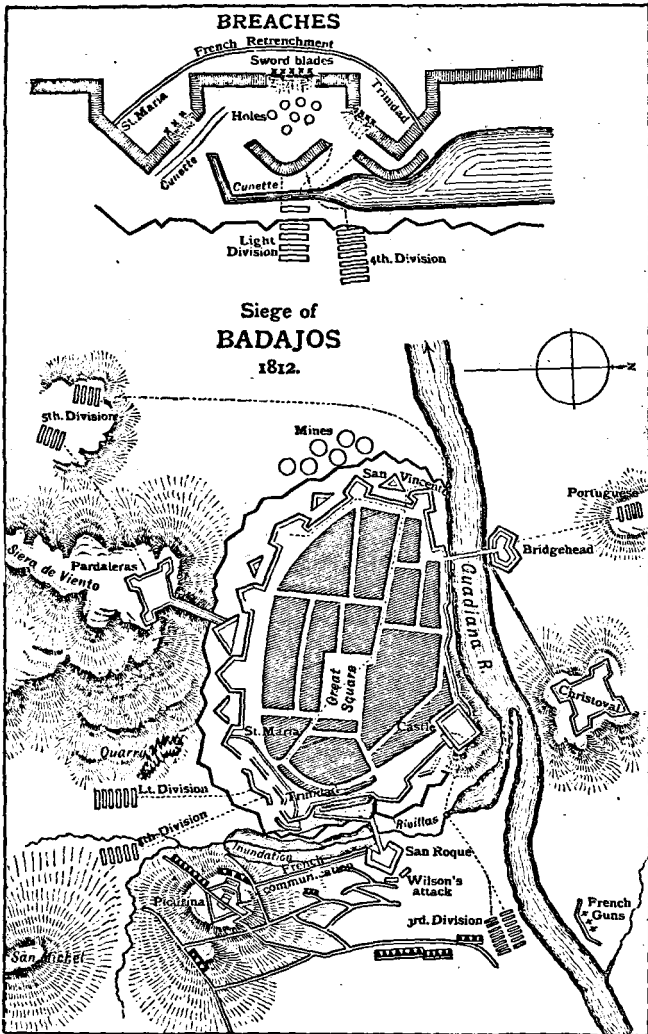
—BYRON.

IT would be difficult to find in the whole history of war a more thrilling and heroic chapter than that which tells the story of the six great campaigns of the Peninsular war. This was, perhaps, the least selfish war of which history tells. It was not a war of aggrandisement or of conquest : it was waged to deliver not merely Spain, but the whole of Europe, from that military despotism with which the genius and ambition of Napoleon threatened to overwhelm the civilised world. And on what a scale Great Britain, when aroused, can fight, let the Peninsular war tell. At its close the fleets of Great Britain rode triumphant on every sea ; and in

the Peninsula between 1808-14 her land forces fought and won nineteen pitched battles, made or sustained ten fierce and bloody sieges, took four great fortresses, twice expelled the French from Portugal and once from Spain. Great Britain expended in these campaigns more than £100,000,000 sterling on her own troops, besides subsidising the forces of Spain and Portugal. This "nation of shopkeepers" proved that when kindled to action it could wage war on a scale and in a fashion that might have moved the wonder of Alexander or of Cæsar, and from motives, it may be added, too lofty for either Cæsar or Alexander so much as to comprehend. It is worth while to tell afresh the story of some of the more picturesque incidents in that great strife.

On April 6, 1812, Badajos was stormed by Wellington; and the story forms one of the most tragical and splendid incidents in the military history of the world. Of "the night of horrors at Badajos," Napier says, "posterity can scarcely be expected to credit the tale." No tale, however, is better authenticated, or, as an example of what disciplined human valour is capable of achieving, better deserves to be told. Wellington was preparing for his great forward movement into Spain, the campaign which led to Vittoria, the battle in which "40,000 Frenchmen were beaten in forty minutes." As a preliminary he had to capture, under the vigilant eyes of Soult and Marmont, the two great border fortresses, Ciudad Rodrigo and Badajos. He had, to use Napier's phrase, "jumped with both feet" on the first-named fortress, and captured it in twelve days with a loss of 1200 men and 90 officers.

But Badajos was a still harder task. The city stands on a rocky ridge which forms the last spur of the



from Napier's "Peninsular War."

H. Walter & Howell sc.

Toledo range, and is of extraordinary strength. The river Rivillas falls almost at right angles into the Guadiana and in the angle formed by their junction stands Badajoz, oval in shape, girdled with elaborate defences, with the Guadiana 500 yards wide as its defence to the north, the Rivillas serving as a wet ditch to the west, and no less than five great fortified outposts—Saint Roque, Christoval, Picurina, Pardaleras, and a fortified bridge-head across the Guadiana—as the outer zone of its defence. Twice the English had already assailed Badajoz, but had assailed it in vain. It was now held by a garrison 5000 strong, under a soldier, General Phillipson, with a reputation for defence, and the utmost art had been employed in adding to its defences. On the other hand Wellington had no means of transport and no battery train, and he had to make all his preparations under the keen-eyed vigilance of the French. Perhaps the strangest collection of artillery ever employed in a great siege was that which Wellington collected from every available quarry and used at Badajoz. Of the fifty-two pieces, some date from the days of Philip II. and the Spanish Armada, some were cast in the reign of Philip III., others in that of John IV. of Portugal, who reigned in 1640; there were 24-pounders of George II.'s day, and Russian nagars; the bulk of the extraordinary medley being obsolete brass engines which required from seven to ten minutes to cool between each discharge.

Wellington, however, was strong in his own warlike genius and in the quality of the troops he commanded. He employed 18,000 men in the siege, and it may well be doubted whether—if we put the question of equipment aside—a more perfect fighting instrument than

the force under his orders ever existed. The men were veterans, but the officers on the whole were young, so there was steadiness in the ranks and fire in the leading. Hill and Graham covered the siege, Picton and Barnard, Kempt and Colville led the assaults. The trenches were held by the third, fourth, and fifth divisions, and by the famous light division. Of the latter it has been said that the Macedonian phalanx of Alexander the Great, the Tenth Legion of Caesar, the famous Spanish infantry of Alva, or the iron soldiers who followed Cortes to Mexico, did not exceed it in warlike quality. Wellington's troops, too, had a personal grudge against Badajos, and had two defeats to avenge. Perhaps no siege in history, as a matter of fact, ever witnessed either more furious valour in the assault, or more of cool and skilled courage in the defence. The siege lasted exactly twenty days, and cost the besiegers 5000 men, or an average loss of 250 per day. It was waged throughout in stormy weather, with the rivers steadily rising, and the tempests perpetually blowing; yet the thunder of the attack never paused for an instant.

Wellington's engineers attacked the city at the eastern end of the oval, where the Rivillas served it as a gigantic wet ditch; and the Picurina, a fortified hill, ringed by a ditch fourteen feet deep, a rampart sixteen feet high, and a zone of mines, acted as an outwork. Wellington, curiously enough, believed in night attacks, a sure proof of his faith in the quality of the men he commanded; and on the eighth night of the siege, at nine o'clock, 500 men of the third division were suddenly flung on the Picurina. The fort broke into a ring of flame, by the light of which the dark figures of the stormers were

seen leaping with fierce hardihood into the ditch and struggling madly up the ramparts, or tearing furiously at the palisades. But the defences were strong, and the assailants fell literally in scores. Napier tells how "the axemen of the light division, compassing the fort like prowling wolves," discovered the gate at the rear, and so broke into the fort. The engineer officer who led the attack declares that "the place would never have been taken had it not been for the coolness of these men" in absolutely walking round the fort to its rear, discovering the gate, and hewing it down under a tempest of bullets. The assault lasted an hour, and in that period, out of the 500 men who attacked, no less than 300, with 19 officers, were killed or wounded! Three men out of every five in the attacking force, that is, were disabled, and yet they won!

There followed twelve days of furious industry, of trenches pushed tirelessly forward through mud and wet, and of cannonading that only ceased when the guns grew too hot to be used. Captain MacCarthy, of the 50th Regiment, has left a curious little monograph on the siege, full of incidents, half tragic and half amusing, but which show the temper of Wellington's troops. Thus he tells how an engineer officer, when marking out the ground for a breaching-battery very near the wall, which was always lined with French soldiers in eager search of human targets, "used to challenge them to prove the perfection of their shooting by lifting up the skirts of his coat in defiance several times in the course of his survey; driving in his stakes and measuring his distances with great deliberation, and concluding by an extra shake of his

coat-tails and an ironical bow before he stepped under shelter!"

On the night of April 6, Wellington determined to assault. No less than seven attacks were to be delivered. Two of them—on the bridge-head across the Guadiana and on the Pardaleras—were mere feints. But on the extreme right Picton with the third division was to cross the Rivillas and escalate the castle, whose walls rose time-stained and grim, from eighteen to twenty-four feet high. Leith with the fifth division was to attack the opposite or western extremity of the town, the bastion of St. Vincente, where the glacis was mined, the ditch deep, and the scarp thirty feet high. Against the actual breaches Colville and Andrew Barnard were to lead the light division and the fourth division, the former attacking the bastion of Santa Maria and the latter the Trinidad. The hour was fixed for ten o'clock, and the story of that night attack, as told in Napier's immortal prose, is one of the great battle-pictures of literature; and any one who tries to tell the tale will find himself slipping insensibly into Napier's cadences.

The night was black; a strange silence lay on rampart and trench, broken from time to time by the deep voices of the sentinels that proclaimed all was well in Badajos. "*Sentinelle garde à vous,*" the cry of the sentinels, was translated by the British private as "All's well in Badahoo!" A lighted carcass thrown from the castle discovered Picton's men standing in ordered array, and compelled them to attack at once. MacCarthy, who acted as guide across the tangle of wet trenches and the narrow bridge that spanned the Rivillas, has left an amusing account of the scene. At

one time Picton declared MacCarthy was leading them wrong, and, drawing his sword, swore he would cut him down. The column reached the trench, however, at the foot of the castle walls, and was instantly overwhelmed with the fire of the besieged. MacCarthy says we can only picture the scene by "supposing that all the stars, planets, and meteors of the firmament, with innumerable moons emitting smaller ones in their course, were descending on the heads of the besiegers." MacCarthy himself, a typical and gallant Irishman, addressed his general with the exultant remark, "'Tis a glorious night, sir—a glorious night!" and, rushing forward to the head of the stormers, shouted, "Up with the ladders!" The five ladders were raised, the troops swarmed up, an officer leading, but the first files were at once crushed by cannon fire, and the ladders slipped into the angle of the abutments. "Dreadful their fall," records MacCarthy of the slaughtered stormers, "and appalling their appearance at daylight." One ladder remained, and, a private soldier leading, the eager red-coated crowd swarmed up it. The brave fellow leading was shot as soon as his head appeared above the parapet; but the next man to him—again a private—leaped over the parapet, and was followed quickly by others, and this thin stream of desperate men climbed singly, and in the teeth of the flashing musketry, up that solitary ladder, and carried the castle.

In the meanwhile the fourth and light divisions had flung themselves with cool and silent speed on the breaches. The storming party of each division leaped into the ditch. It was mined, the fuse was kindled, and the ditch, crowded with eager soldiery, became in

a moment a sort of flaming crater, and the storming parties, 500 strong, were in one fierce explosion dashed to pieces. In the light of that dreadful flame the whole scene became visible—the black ramparts, crowded with dark figures and glittering arms, on the one side; on the other the red columns of the British, broad and deep, moving steadily forward like a stream of human lava. The light division stood at the brink of the smoking ditch for an instant, amazed at the sight. "Then," says Napier, "with a shout that matched even the sound of the explosion," they leaped into it and swarmed up to the breach. The fourth division came running up and descended with equal fury, but the ditch opposite the Trinidad was filled with water; the head of the division leaped into it, and, as Napier puts it, "about 100 of the fusiliers, the men of Albuera, perished there." The breaches were impassable. Across the top of the great slope of broken wall glittered a fringe of sword-blades, sharp-pointed, keen-edged on both sides, fixed in ponderous beams chained together and set deep in the ruins. For ten feet in front the ascent was covered with loose planks, studded with sharp iron points. Behind the glittering edge of sword-blades stood the solid ranks of the French, each man supplied with three muskets, and their fire scourged the British ranks like a tempest.

Hundreds had fallen, hundreds were still falling; but the British clung doggedly to the lower slopes, and every few minutes an officer would leap forward with a shout, a swarm of men would instantly follow him, and, like leaves blown by a whirlwind, they swept up the ascent. But under the incessant fire of the French

the assailants melted away. One private reached the sword-blades, and actually thrust his head beneath them till his brains were beaten out, so desperate was his resolve to get into Badajos. The breach, as Napier describes it, "yawning and glittering with steel, resembled the mouth of a huge dragon belching forth smoke and flame." But for two hours, and until 2000 men had fallen, the stubborn British persisted in their attacks. Currie, of the 52nd, a cool and most daring soldier, found a narrow ramp beyond the Santa Maria breach only half-ruined; he forced his way back through the tumult and carnage to where Wellington stood watching the scene, obtained an unbroken battalion from the reserve, and led it towards the broken ramp. But his men were caught in the whirling madness of the ditch and swallowed up in the tumult. Nicholas, of the engineers, and Shaw, of the 43rd, with some fifty soldiers, actually climbed into the Santa Maria bastion, and from thence tried to force their way into the breach. Every man was shot down except Shaw, who stood alone on the bastion. "With inexpressible coolness he looked at his watch, said it was too late to carry the breaches," and then leaped down! The British could not penetrate the breach; but they would not retreat. They could only die where they stood. The buglers of the reserve were sent to the crest of the glacis to sound the retreat; the troops in the ditch would not believe the signal to be genuine, and struck their own buglers who attempted to repeat it. "Gathering in dark groups, and leaning on their muskets," says Napier, "they looked up in sullen desperation at Trinidad, while the enemy, stepping out on the ramparts, and aiming their shots by

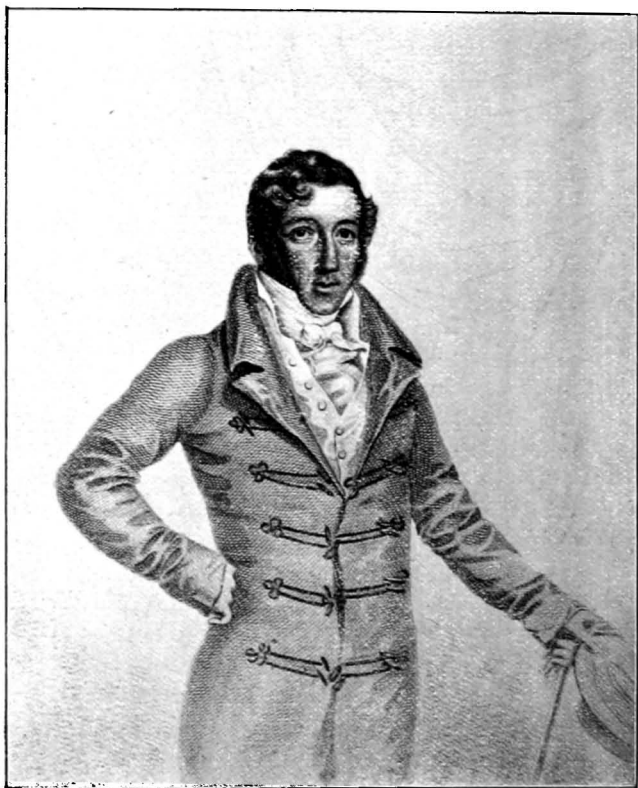
the light of fireballs, which they threw over, asked as their victims fell, 'Why they did not come' into Badajos.'"

All this while, curiously enough, Picton was actually in Badajos, and held the castle securely, but made no attempt to clear the breach. On the extreme west of the town, however, at the bastion of San Vincente, the fifth division made an attack as desperate as that which was failing at the breaches. When the stormers actually reached the bastion, the Portuguese battalions, who formed part of the attack, dismayed by the tremendous fire which broke out on them, flung down their ladders and fled. The British, however, snatched the ladders up, forced the barrier, jumped into the ditch, and tried to climb the walls. These were thirty feet high, and the ladders were too short. A mine was sprung in the ditch under the soldiers' feet; beams of wood, stones, broken waggons, and live shells were poured upon their heads from above. Showers of grape from the flank swept the ditch.

The stubborn soldiers, however, discovered a low spot in the rampart, placed three ladders against it, and climbed with reckless valour. The first man was pushed up by his comrades; he, in turn, dragged others up, and the unconquerable British at length broke through and swept the bastion. The tumult still stormed and raged at the eastern breaches, where the men of the light and fourth division were dying silently, and the men of the fifth division marched at speed across the town to take the great eastern breach in the rear. The streets were empty, but the silent houses were bright with lamps. The men of the fifth

pressed on; they captured mules carrying ammunition to the breaches, and the French, startled by the tramp of the fast-approaching column, and finding themselves taken in the rear, fled. The light and fourth divisions broke through the gap hitherto barred by flame and steel, and Badajos was won!

In that dreadful night assault the English lost 3500 men. "Let it be considered," says Napier, "that this frightful carnage took place in the space of less than a hundred yards square—that the slain died not all suddenly, nor by one manner of death—that some perished by steel, some by shot, some by water; that some were crushed and mangled by heavy weights, some trampled upon, some dashed to atoms by the fiery explosions—that for hours this destruction was endured without shrinking, and the town was won at last. Let these things be considered, and it must be admitted a British army bears with it an awful power. And false would it be to say the French were feeble men. The garrison stood and fought manfully and with good discipline, behaving worthily. Shame there was none on any side. Yet who shall do justice to the bravery of the British soldiers or the noble emulation of the officers? . . . No age, no nation, ever sent forth braver troops to battle than those who stormed Badajos."



LORD COCHRANE

After a painting by WALTON

THE FIRE-SHIPS IN THE BASQUE ROADS

“ Ship after ship, the whole night long, their high-built galleons came ;
Ship after ship, the whole night long, with her battle-thunder and flame ;
Ship after ship, the whole night long, drew back with her dead and her
shame.

For some were sunk and many were shattered, and so could fight us no
more—

God of battles, was ever a battle like this in the world before?”

—TENNYSON.

ON the night of April 11, 1809, Lord Cochrane steered his floating mine against the gigantic boom that covered the French fleet lying in Aix Roads. The story is one of the most picturesque and exciting in the naval annals of Great Britain. Marryat has embalmed the great adventure and its chief actor in the pages of “Frank Mildmay,” and Lord Cochrane himself—like the Earl of Peterborough in the seventeenth century, who captured Barcelona with a handful of men, and Gordon in the nineteenth century, who won great battles in China walking-stick in hand—was a man who stamped himself, as with characters of fire, upon the popular imagination.

To the courage of a knight-errant Cochrane added the shrewd and humorous sagacity of a Scotchman. If he had commanded fleets he would have rivalled the victories of Nelson, and perhaps even have outshone the Nile and Trafalgar. And to warlike genius of the first order Cochrane added a certain weird and inquisitive inge-

nunity which his enemies found simply resistless. Was there ever a cruise in naval history like that of Cochrane in his brig misnamed the *Speedy*, a mere coasting tub that would neither steer nor tack, and whose entire broadside Cochrane himself could carry in his pockets! But in this wretched little brig, with its four-pounders, Cochrane captured in one brief year more than 50 vessels carrying an aggregate of 122 guns, took 500 prisoners, kept the whole Spanish coast, off which he cruised, in perpetual alarm, and finished by attacking and capturing a Spanish frigate, the *Gamo*, of 32 heavy guns and 319 men. What we have called the impish daring and resource of Cochrane is shown in this strange fight. He ran the little *Speedy* close under the guns of the huge *Gamo*, and the Spanish ship was actually unable to depress its guns sufficiently to harm its tiny antagonist. When the Spaniards tried to board, Cochrane simply shoved his pigmy craft a few yards away from the side of his foe, and this curious fight went on for an hour. Then, in his turn, Cochrane boarded, leaving nobody but the doctor on board the *Speedy*. But he played the Spaniards a characteristic trick. One half his men boarded the *Gamo* by the head, with their faces elaborately blackened; and when, out of the white smoke forward, some forty demons with black faces broke upon the astonished Spaniards, they naturally regarded the whole business as partaking of the black art, and incontinently fled below! The number of Spaniards killed and wounded in this fight by the little *Speedy* exceeded the number of its own entire crew; and when the fight was over, 45 British sailors had to keep guard over 263 Spanish prisoners.

Afterwards, in command of the *Impérieuse*, a fine frigate, Cochrane played a still more dashing part on the Spanish coast, destroying batteries, cutting off supplies from the French ports, blowing up coast roads, and keeping perspiring battalions of the enemy marching to and fro to meet his descents. On the French coast, again, Cochrane held large bodies of French troops paralysed by his single frigate. He proposed to the English Government to take possession of the French islands in the Bay of Biscay, and to allow him, with a small squadron of frigates, to operate against the French seaboard. Had this request been granted, he says, "neither the Peninsular war nor its enormous cost to the nation from 1809 onwards would ever have been heard of!" "It would have been easy," he adds, "as it always will be easy in case of future wars, so to harass the French coasts as to find full employment for their troops at home, and so to render operations in foreign countries impossible." If England and France were once more engaged in war—*absit omen!*—the story of Cochrane's exploits on the Spanish and French coasts might prove a very valuable inspiration and object-lesson. Cochrane's professional reward for his great services in the *Impérieuse* was an official rebuke for expending more sails, stores, gunpowder and shot than any other captain afloat in the same time!

The fight in the Basque Roads, however—or rather in the Aix Roads—has great historical importance. It crowned the work of Trafalgar. It finally destroyed French power on the sea, and gave England an absolute supremacy. No fleet actions took place after its date between "the meteor flag" and the tricolour, for the

simple reason that no French fleet remained in existence. Cochrane's fire-ships completed the work of the Nile and Trafalgar.

Early in 1809 the French fleet in Brest, long blockaded by Lord Gambier, caught the British napping, slipped out unobserved, raised the blockades at L'Orient and Rochefort, added the squadrons lying in these two places to its own strength, and, anchoring in the Aix Roads, prepared for a dash on the West Indies. The success with which the blockade at Brest had been evaded, and the menace offered to the West Indian trade, alarmed the British Admiralty. Lord Gambier, with a powerful fleet, kept guard outside the Aix Roads; but if the blockade failed once, it might fail again. Eager to destroy the last fleet France possessed, the Admiralty strongly urged Lord Gambier to attack the enemy with fire-ships; but Gambier, grown old, had visibly lost nerve, and he pronounced the use of fire-ships a "horrible and unchristian mode of warfare." Lord Mulgrave, the first Lord of the Admiralty, knowing Cochrane's ingenuity and daring, sent for him, and proposed to send him to the Basque Roads to invent and execute some plan for destroying the French fleet. The Scotchman was uppermost in Cochrane in this interview, and he declined the adventure on the ground that to send a young post-captain to execute such an enterprise would be regarded as an insult by the whole fleet, and he would have every man's hand against him. Lord Mulgrave, however, was peremptory, and Cochrane yielded, but on reaching the blockading fleet was met by a tempest of wrath from all his seniors. "Why," they asked, "was Cochrane sent out? We could have

done the business as well as he. Why did not Lord Gambier let us do it?" Lord Gambier, who had fallen into a sort of gentle and pious melancholy, was really more occupied in distributing tracts among his crews than in trying to reach his enemies; and Harvey, his second in command, an old Trafalgar sea-dog, when Cochrane arrived with his commission, interviewed his admiral, denounced him in a white-heat on his own quarter-deck, and ended by telling him that "if Nelson had been there he would not have anchored in the Basque Roads at all, but would have dashed at the enemy at once." This outburst, no doubt, relieved Admiral Harvey's feelings, but it cost him his flag, and he was court-martialled, and dismissed from the service for the performance.

Cochrane, however, set himself with characteristic daring and coolness to carry out his task. The French fleet consisted of one huge ship of 120 guns, two of 80 guns, eight seventy-fours, a 50-gun ship, and two 40-gun frigates—fourteen ships in all. It was drawn up in two lines under the shelter of powerful shore batteries, with the frigates as out-guards. As a protection against fire-ships, a gigantic boom had been constructed half a mile in length, forming two sides of a triangle, with the apex towards the British fleet. Over this huge floating barrier powerful boat squadrons kept watch every night. Cochrane's plan of attack was marked by real genius. He constructed three explosion vessels, floating mines on the largest scale. Each of these terrific vessels contained no less than *fifteen hundred* barrels of gunpowder, bound together with cables, with wedges and moistened sand rammed down betwixt them; forming, in brief,

one gigantic bomb, with 1500 barrels of gunpowder for its charge. On the top of this huge powder magazine was piled, as a sort of agreeable condiment, hundreds of live shells and thousands of hand grenades; the whole, by every form of marine ingenuity, compacted into a solid mass which, at the touch of a fuse, could be turned into a sort of floating Vesuvius. These were to be followed by a squadron of fire-ships. Cochrane who, better, perhaps, than any soldier or sailor that ever lived, knew how to strike at his foes through their own imagination, calculated that when these three huge explosion vessels, with twenty fire-ships behind them, went off in a sort of saltpetre earthquake, the astonished Frenchmen would imagine *every* fire-ship to be a floating mine, and, instead of trying to board them and divert them from their fleet, would be simply anxious to get out of their way with the utmost possible despatch. The French, meanwhile, having watched their enemy lying inert for weeks, and confident in the gigantic boom which acted as their shield to the front, and the show of batteries which kept guard over them on either flank and to the rear, awaited the coming attack in a spirit of half-contemptuous gaiety. They had struck their topmasts and unbent their sails, and by way of challenge dressed their fleet with flags. One ship, the *Calcutta*, had been captured from the English, and by way of special insult they hung out the British ensign under that ship's quarter-gallery, an affront whose deadly quality only a sailor can understand.

The night of the 9th set in stormily. The tide ran fast, and the skies were black and the sea heavy—so heavy, indeed, that the boats of the English fleet which

FIRE-SHIPS IN THE BASQUE ROADS

were intended to follow and cover the fire-ships, never left the side of the flagship. Cochrane, however, had called the officers commanding the fire-ships on board his frigate, given them their last instructions, and at half-past eight P.M. he himself, accompanied only by a lieutenant and four sailors, cut the moorings of the chief explosion vessel, and drifted off towards the French fleet. Seated, that is, on top of 1500 barrels of gunpowder and a sort of haystack of grenades, he calmly floated off, with a squadron of fire-ships behind him, towards the French fleet, backed by great shore batteries, with seventy-three armed boats as a line of skirmishers. "It seemed to me," says Marryat, who was an actor in the scene, "like entering the gates of hell!"

The great floating mine drifted on through blackness and storm till, just as it struck the boom, Cochrane, who previously made his five assistants get into the boat, with his own hand lit the fuse and in turn jumped into the boat. How frantically the little crew pulled to get clear of the ignited mine may be imagined; but wind and sea were against them. The fuse, which was calculated to burn for twelve minutes, lasted for only five. Then the 1500 barrels of gunpowder went simultaneously off, peopling the black sky with a flaming torrent of shells, grenades, and rockets, and raising a mountainous wave that nearly swamped the unfortunate boat and its crew. The fault of the fuse, however, saved the lives of the daring six, as the missiles from the exploding vessel fell far *outside* them. "The effect," says Cochrane, who, like Cæsar, could write history as well as make it, "constituted one of the grandest artificial spectacles imaginable. For a moment

the sky was red with the lurid glare arising from the simultaneous ignition of 1500 barrels of powder. On this gigantic flash subsiding the air seemed alive with shells, grenades, rockets, and masses of timber, the wreck of the shattered vessel." Then came blackness, punctuated in flame by the explosion of the next floating mine. Then, through sea-wrack and night, came the squadron of fire-ships, each one a pyramid of kindling flame. But the first explosion had achieved all that Cochrane expected. It dismissed the huge boom into chips, and the French fleet lay open to attack. The captain of the second explosion vessel was so determined to do his work effectually that the entire crew was actually blown out of the vessel and one member of the party killed, while the toil of the boats in which, after the fire-ships had been abandoned, they and their crews had to fight their way back in the teeth of the gale, was so severe that several men died of mere fatigue. The physical effects of the floating mines and the drifting fire-ships, as a matter of fact, were not very great. The boom, indeed, was destroyed, but out of twenty fire-ships only four actually reached the enemy's position, and not one did any damage. Cochrane's explosion vessels, however, were addressed not so much to the French ships as to the alarmed imagination of French sailors, and the effect achieved was overwhelming. All the French ships save one cut or slipped their cables, and ran ashore in wild confusion. Cochrane cut the moorings of his explosion vessel at half-past eight o'clock; by midnight, or in less than four hours, the boom had been destroyed, and thirteen French ships—the solitary fleet that remained to France—were lying helplessly ashore. Never,

perhaps, was a result so great achieved in a time so brief, in a fashion so dramatic, or with a loss so trifling.

When the grey morning broke, with the exception of two vessels, the whole French fleet was lying helplessly aground on the Palles shoal. Some were lying on their bilge with the keel exposed, others were frantically casting their guns overboard and trying to get afloat again. Meanwhile Gambier and the British fleet were lying fourteen miles distant in the Basque Roads, and Cochrane in the *Impérieuse* was watching, with powder-blackened face, the curious spectacle of the entire fleet he had driven ashore, and the yet more amazing spectacle of a British fleet declining to come in and finally destroy its enemy. For here comes a chapter in the story on which Englishmen do not love to dwell. Cochrane tried to whip the muddy-spirited Gambier into enterprise by emphatic and quick-following signal. At six A.M. he signalled, "*All the enemy's ships except two are on shore,*" but this extracted from drowsy Gambier no other response than the answering pennant. Cochrane repeated his impatient signals at half-hour intervals, and with emphasis ever more shrill—" *The enemy's ships can be destroyed*"; "*Half the fleet can destroy the enemy*"; "*The frigates alone can destroy the enemy*"; but still no response save the indifferent pennant. As the tide flowed in, the French ships showed signs of getting afloat, and Cochrane signalled, "*The enemy is preparing to heave off*"; even this brought no response from the pensive Gambier. At eleven o'clock the British fleet weighed and stood in, but then, to Cochrane's speechless wrath, re-anchored at a distance of three and a half miles, and by this time two of the French three-deckers were afloat.

Gambier finally despatched a single mortar-vessel in to bombard the stranded ships, but by this time Cochrane had become desperate. He adopted a device which recalls Nelson's use of his blind eye at Copenhagen. At one o'clock he hove his anchor atrip and drifted, stern foremost, towards the enemy. He dare not make sail lest his trick should be detected and a signal of recall hoisted on the flagship. Cochrane coolly determined, in a word, to force the hand of his sluggish admiral. He drifted with his solitary frigate down to the hostile fleet and batteries, which Gambier thought it scarcely safe to attack with eleven ships of the line. When near the enemy's position he suddenly made sail and ran up the signal, "*In want of assistance*"; next followed a yet more peremptory message, "*In distress.*" Even Gambier could not see an English frigate destroyed under the very guns of an English fleet without moving to its help, and he sent some of his ships in. But meanwhile, Cochrane, though technically "in distress," was enjoying what he must have felt to be a singularly good time. He calmly took up a position which enabled him to engage an 80-gun ship, one of 74 guns, and, in particular, that French ship which, on the previous day, had hung the British flag under her quarter-gallery. For half-an-hour he fought these three ships single-handed, and the *Calcutta* actually struck to him, its captain afterwards being court-martialled and shot by the French themselves for surrendering to a frigate. Then the other British ships came up, and ship after ship of the French fleet struck or was destroyed. Night fell before the work was completed, and during the night Gambier, for some mysterious reason, recalled

his ships; but Cochrane, in the *Impérieuse*, clung to his post. He persuaded Captain Seymour, in the *Pallas*, to remain with him, with four brigs, and with this tiny force he proposed to attack *L'Océan*, the French flagship of 120 guns, which had just got afloat; but Gambier peremptorily recalled him at dawn, before the fight was renewed. Never before or since was a victory so complete and so nearly bloodless. Five seamen were killed in the fire-ships, and five in the attack on the French fleet and about twenty wounded; and with this microscopic "butcher's bill" a great fleet, the last naval hope of France, was practically destroyed. For so much does the genius and daring of a single man count!

That the French fleet was not utterly destroyed was due solely to Gambier's want of resolution. And yet, such is the irony of history, that of the two chief actors in this drama, Gambier, who marred it, was rewarded with the thanks of Parliament; Cochrane, who gave to it all its unique splendour, had his professional career abruptly terminated!

That wild night in the Aix Roads, and the solitary and daring attack on the French fleet which followed next day, were practically Cochrane's last acts as a British sailor. He achieved dazzling exploits under the flag of Chili and Brazil; but the most original warlike genius the English navy has ever known, fought no more battles for England.

THE MAN WHO SPOILED NAPOLEON'S "DESTINY"!

"Oh, who shall lightly say that Fame
Is nothing but an empty name!
Whilst in that sound there is a charm
The nerves to brace, the heart to warm.
As, thinking of the mighty dead,
The young from slothful couch will start,
And vow, with lifted hands outspread,
Like them to act a noble part?"

—JOANNA BAILLIE.

FROM March 18 to May 20, 1799—for more than sixty days and nights, that is—a little, half-forgotten, and more than half-ruined Syrian town was the scene of one of the fiercest and most dramatic sieges recorded in military history. And rarely has there been a struggle so apparently one-sided. A handful of British sailors and Turkish irregulars were holding Acre, a town without regular defences, against Napoleon, the most brilliant military genius of his generation, with an army of 10,000 war-hardened veterans, the "Army of Italy"—soldiers who had dared the snows of the Alps and conquered Italy, and to whom victory was a familiar experience. In their ranks military daring had reached, perhaps, its very highest point. And yet the sailors inside that ring of crumbling wall won! At the blood-stained trenches of Acre Napoleon experienced his first



SIR SIDNEY SMITH

After a painting by SIR R. K. PORTER

defeat; and, years after, at St. Helena, he said of Sir Sidney Smith, the gallant sailor who baffled him, "That man made me miss my destiny." It is a curious fact that one Englishman thwarted Napoleon's career in the East, and another ended his career in the West, and it may be doubted which of the two Napoleon hated most—Wellington, who finally overthrew him at Waterloo, or Sidney Smith, who, to use Napoleon's own words, made him "miss his destiny," and exchange the empire of the East for a lonely pinnacle of rock in the Atlantic.

Sidney Smith was a sailor of the school of Nelson and of Dundonald—a man, that is, with a spark of that warlike genius which begins where mechanical rules end. He was a man of singular physical beauty, with a certain magnetism and fire about him which made men willing to die for him, and women who had never spoken to him fall headlong in love with him. His whole career is curiously picturesque. He became a midddy at the tender age of eleven years; went through fierce sea-fights, and was actually mate of the watch when fourteen years old. He was a fellow-middy with William IV. in the fight off Cape St. Vincent, became commander when he was eighteen years of age, and captain before he was quite nineteen. But the British marine, even in those tumultuous days, scarcely yielded enough of the rapture of fighting to this post-captain in his teens. He took service under the Swedish flag, saw hard fighting against the Russians, became the close personal friend of the King, and was knighted by him. One of the feats at this period of his life with which tradition, with more or less of plausibility, credits Sidney Smith, is that of swimming by night through

the Russian fleet, a distance of two miles, carrying a letter enclosed in a bladder to the Swedish admiral.

Sidney Smith afterwards entered the Turkish service. When war broke out betwixt France and England in 1790, he purchased a tiny craft at Smyrna, picked up in that port a hybrid crew, and hurried to join Lord Hood, who was then holding Toulon. When the British abandoned the port—and it is curious to recollect that the duel between Sidney Smith and Napoleon, which reached its climax at Acre, began here—Sidney Smith volunteered to burn the French fleet, a task which he performed with an audacity and skill worthy of Dundonald or Nelson, and for which the French never forgave him.

Sidney Smith was given the command of an English frigate, and fought a dozen brilliant fights in the Channel. He carried with his boats a famous French privateer off Havre de Grace; but during the fight on the deck of the captured ship it drifted into the mouth of the Seine above the forts. The wind dropped, the tide was too strong to be stemmed, and Sidney Smith himself was captured. He had so harried the French coast that the French refused to treat him as an ordinary prisoner of war, and threw him into that ill-omened prison, the Temple, from whose iron-barred windows the unfortunate sailor watched for two years the horrors of the Reign of Terror in its last stages, the tossing crowds, the tumbrils rolling past, crowded with victims for the guillotine. Sidney Smith escaped at last by a singularly audacious trick. Two confederates, dressed in dashing uniform, one wearing the dress of an adjutant, and the other that of an officer of still higher

rank, presented themselves at the Temple with forged orders for the transfer of Sidney Smith.

The governor surrendered his prisoner, but insisted on sending a guard of six men with him. The sham adjutant cheerfully acquiesced, but, after a moment's pause, turned to Sidney Smith, and said, if he would give his parole as an officer not to attempt to escape, they would dispense with the escort. Sidney Smith, with due gravity, replied to his confederate, "Sir, I swear on the faith of an officer to accompany you wherever you choose to conduct me." The governor was satisfied, and the two sham officers proceeded to "conduct" their friend with the utmost possible despatch to the French coast. Another English officer, who had escaped — Captain Wright — joined Sidney Smith outside Rouen, and the problem was how to get through the barriers without a passport. Smith sent Wright on first, and he was duly challenged for his passport by the sentinel; whereupon Sidney Smith, with a majestic air of official authority, marched up and said in faultless Parisian French, "I answer for this citizen, I know him;" whereupon the deluded sentinel saluted and allowed them both to pass!

Sidney Smith's escape from the Temple made him a popular hero in England. He was known to have great influence with the Turkish authorities, and he was sent to the East in the double office of envoy-extraordinary to the Porte, and commander of the squadron at Alexandria. By one of the curious coincidences which marked Sidney Smith's career, he became acquainted while in the Temple with a French Royalist officer named Philippeaux, an engineer of signal ability, and

who had been a schoolfellow and a close chum of Napoleon himself at Brienne. Smith took his French friend with him to the East, and he played a great part in the defence of Acre. Napoleon had swept north through the desert to Syria, had captured Gaza and Jaffa, and was about to attack Acre, which lay between him and his ultimate goal, Constantinople. Here Sidney Smith resolved to bar his way, and in his flagship the *Tigre*, with the *Theseus*, under Captain Miller, and two gunboats, he sailed to Acre to assist in its defence. Philippeaux took charge of the fortifications, and thus, in the breaches of a remote Syrian town, the quondam prisoner of the Temple and the ancient school friend of Napoleon joined hands to wreck that dream of a great Eastern empire which lurked in the cells of Napoleon's masterful intellect.

Acre represents a blunted arrow-head jutting out from a point in the Syrian coast. Napoleon could only attack, so to speak, the *neck* of the arrow, which was protected by a ditch and a weak wall, and flanked by towers; but Sidney Smith, having command of the sea, could sweep the four faces of the town with the fire of his guns, as well as command all the sea-roads in its vicinity. He guessed, from the delay of the French in opening fire, that they were waiting for their siege-train to arrive by sea. He kept vigilant watch, pounced on the French flotilla as it rounded the promontory of Mount Carmel, captured nine of the vessels, carried them with their guns and warlike material to Acre, and mounted his thirty-four captured pieces on the batteries of the town. Thus the disgusted French saw the very guns which were intended to batter down the defences

of Acre—and which were glorious with the memories of a dozen victories in Italy—frowning at them, loaded with English powder and shot, and manned by English sailors.

It is needless to say that a siege directed by Napoleon—the siege of what he looked upon as a contemptible and almost defenceless town, the single barrier betwixt his ambition and its goal—was urged with amazing fire and vehemence. The wall was battered day and night, a breach fifty feet wide made, and more than twelve assaults delivered, with all the fire and daring of which French soldiers, gallantly led, are capable. So sustained was the fighting, that on one occasion the combat raged in the ditch and on the breach for *twenty-five* successive hours. So close and fierce was it that one half-ruined tower was held by *both* besiegers and besieged for twelve hours in succession, and neither would yield. At the breach, again, the two lines of desperately fighting men on repeated occasions clashed bayonets together, and wrestled and stabbed and died, till the survivors were parted by the barrier of the dead which grew beneath their feet.

Sidney Smith, however, fought like a sailor, and with all the cool ingenuity and resourcefulness of a sailor. His ships, drawn up on two faces of the town, smote the French stormers on either flank till they learned to build up a dreadful screen, made up partly of stones plucked from the breach, and partly of the dead bodies of their comrades. Smith, too, perched guns in all sorts of unexpected positions—a 24-pounder in the lighthouse, under the command of an exultant middy; two 68-pounders under the charge of “old Bray,” the

carpenter of the *Tigre*, and, as Sidney Smith himself reports, "one of the bravest and most intelligent men I ever served with"; and yet a third gun, a French brass 18-pounder, in one of the ravelins, under a master's mate. Bray dropped his shells with the nicest accuracy in the centre of the French columns as they swept up the breach; and the middy perched aloft, and the master's mate from the ravelin, smote them on either flank with case-shot, while the *Theseus* and the *Tigre* added to the tumult the thunder of their broadsides, and the captured French gunboats contributed the yelp of their lighter pieces.

The great feature of the siege, however, was the fierceness and the number of the sorties. Sidney Smith's sorties actually exceeded in number and vehemence Napoleon's assaults. He broke the strength of Napoleon's attacks, that is, by anticipating them. A crowd of Turkish irregulars, with a few naval officers leading them, and a solid mass of Jack-tars in the centre, would break from a sally-port, or rush vehemently down through the gap in the wall, and scour the French trenches, overturn the gabions, spike the guns, and slay the guards. The French reserves hurried fiercely up, always scourged, however, by the flank fire of the ships, and drove back the sortie. But the process was renewed the same night or the next day with unlesened fire and daring. The French engineers, despairing of success on the surface, betook themselves to mining; whereupon the besieged made a desperate sortie and reached the mouth of the mine. Lieutenant Wright, who led them, and who had already received two shots in his sword-arm, leaped down the mine followed by his

sailors, slew the miners, destroyed their work, and safely regained the town.

The British sustained one startling disaster. Captain Miller of the *Theseus*, whose ammunition ran short, carefully collected such French shells as fell into the town without exploding, and duly returned them, alight, and supplied with better fuses, to their original senders. He had collected some seventy shells on the *Theseus*, and was preparing them for use against the French. The carpenter of the ship was endeavouring to get the fuses out of the loaded shells with an auger, and a middy undertook to assist him, in characteristic middy fashion, with a mallet and a spike-nail. A huge shell under his treatment suddenly exploded on the quarter-deck of the *Theseus*, and the other sixty-nine shells followed suit. The too ingenious middy disappeared into space; forty seamen, with Captain Miller himself, were killed; and forty-seven, including the two lieutenants of the ship, the chaplain, and the surgeon, were seriously wounded. The whole of the poop was blown to pieces, and the ship was left a wreck with fire breaking out at half-a-dozen points. The fire was subdued, and the *Theseus* survived in a half-gutted condition, but the disaster was a severe blow to Sir Sidney's resources.

As evening fell on May 7, the white sails of a fleet became visible over the sea rim, and all firing ceased while besiegers and besieged watched the approaching ships. Was it a French fleet or a Turkish? Did it bring succour to the besieged or a triumph to the besiegers? The approaching ships flew the crescent. It was the Turkish fleet from Rhodes bringing rein-

forcements. But the wind was sinking, and Napoleon, who had watched the approach of the hostile ships with feelings which may be guessed, calculated that there remained six hours before they could cast anchor in the bay. Eleven assaults had been already made, in which eight French generals and the best officers in every branch of the service had perished. There remained time for a twelfth assault. He might yet pluck victory from the very edge of defeat. At ten o'clock that night the French artillery was brought up close to the counterscarp to batter down the curtain, and a new breach was made. Lannes led his division against the shot-wrecked tower, and General Rimbaud took his grenadiers with a resistless rush through the new breach. All night the combat raged, the men fighting desperately hand to hand. When the rays of the level morning sun broke through the pall of smoke which hung sullenly over the combatants, the tricolour flew on the outer angle of the tower, and still the ships bringing reinforcements had not reached the harbour! Sidney Smith, at this crisis, landed every man from the English ships, and led them, pike in hand, to the breach, and the shouting and madness of the conflict awoke once more. To use Sidney Smith's own words, "the muzzles of the muskets touched each other—the spear-heads were locked together." But Sidney Smith's sailors, with the brave Turks who rallied to their help, were not to be denied.

Lannes' grenadiers were tumbled headlong from the tower, Lannes himself being wounded, while Rimbaud's brave men, who were actually past the breach, were

swept into ruin, their general killed, and the French soldiers within the breach all captured or slain.

One of the dramatic incidents of the siege was the assault made by Kleber's troops. They had not taken part in the siege hitherto, but had won a brilliant victory over the Arabs at Mount Tabor. On reaching the camp, flushed with their triumph, and seeing how slight were the apparent defences of the town, they demanded clamorously to be led to the assault. Napoleon consented. Kleber, who was of gigantic stature, with a head of hair worthy of a German music-master or of a Soudan dervish, led his grenadiers to the edge of the breach and stood there, while with gesture and voice—a voice audible even above the fierce and sustained crackle of the musketry—he urged his men on. Napoleon, standing on a gun in the nearest French battery, watched the sight with eager eyes—the French grenadiers running furiously up the breach, the grim line of levelled muskets that barred it, the sudden roar of the English guns as from every side they smote the staggering French column. Vainly single officers struggled out of the torn mass, ran gesticulating up the breach, and died at the muzzles of the British muskets. The men could not follow, or only died as they leaped forward. The French grenadiers, still fighting, swearing, and screaming, were swept back past the point where Kleber stood, hoarse with shouting, black with gunpowder, furious with rage. The last assault on Acre had failed. The French sick, field artillery, and baggage silently defiled that night to the rear. The heavy guns were buried in the sand, and after sixty days of open trenches

Napoleon, for the first time in his life, though not for the last, ordered a retreat.

Napoleon buried in the breaches of Acre not merely 3000 of his bravest troops, but the golden dream of his life. "In that miserable fort," as he said, "lay the fate of the East." Napoleon expected to find in it the pasha's treasures, and arms for 300,000 men. "When I have captured it," he said to Bourrienne, "I shall march upon Damascus and Aleppo. I shall arm the tribes; I shall reach Constantinople; I shall overturn the Turkish Empire; I shall found in the East a new and grand empire. Perhaps I shall return to Paris by Adrianople and Vienna!" Napoleon was cheerfully willing to pay the price of what religion he had to accomplish this dream. He was willing, that is, to turn Turk. Henri IV. said "Paris was worth a mass," and was not the East, said Napoleon, "worth a turban and a pair of trousers?" In his conversation at St. Helena with Las Cases he seriously defended this policy. His army, he added, would have shared his "conversion," and have taken their new creed with a Parisian laugh. "Had I but captured Acre," Napoleon added, "I would have reached Constantinople and the Indies; I would have changed the face of the world. But that man made me miss my destiny."

Las Cases dwells upon the curious correspondence which existed between Philippeaux, who engineered the defences of Acre, and Napoleon, who attacked it. "They were," he says, "of the same nation, of the same age, of the same rank, of the same corps, and of the same school." But if Philippeaux was in a sense the brains of the defence, Sidney Smith was the sword.

There was, perhaps, it may be regretfully confessed, a streak of the charlatan in him. He shocked the judgment of more sober men. Wellington's stern, sober sense was affronted by him, and he described him as "a mere vaporiser." "Of all the men whom I ever knew who have any reputation," Wellington told Croker, "the man who least deserved it is Sir Sidney Smith." Wellington's temperament made it impossible for him to understand Sidney Smith's erratic and dazzling genius. Napoleon's phrase is the best epitaph of the man who defended Acre. It is true Napoleon himself describes Sidney Smith afterwards as "a young fool," who was "capable of invading France with 800 men." But such "young fools" are often the makers of history.

GREAT SEA-DUELS

'The captain stood on the carronade : 'First Lieutenant,' says he,
'Send all my merry men after here, for they must list to me.
I haven't the gift of the gab, my sons, because I'm bred to the sea.
That ship there is a Frenchman, who means to fight with we.
And odds, bobs, hammer and tongs, long as I've been to sea,
I've fought 'gainst every odds—but I've gained the victory !

That ship there is a Frenchman, and if we don't take she,
'Tis a thousand bullets to one, that she will capture we.
I haven't the gift of the gab, my boys ; so each man to his gun ;
If she's not mine in half-an-hour, I'll flog each mother's son.
For odds, bobs, hammer and tongs, long as I've been to sea,
I've fought 'gainst every odds—and I've gained the victory !'"

—MARRYAT.

BRITISH naval history is rich in the records of what may be called great sea-duels—combats, that is, of single ship against single ship, waged often with extraordinary fierceness and daring. They resemble the combat of knight against knight, with flash of cannon instead of thrust of lance, and the floor of the lonely sea for the trampled lists.

He must have a very slow-beating imagination who cannot realise the picturesqueness of these ancient sea-duels. Two frigates cruising for prey catch the far-off gleam of each other's topsails over the rim of the horizon. They approach each other warily, two high-sniffing sea-mastiffs. A glimpse of fluttering colour—the red flag and the *drapeau blanc*, or the Union Jack and the tricolour—reveals to each ship its foe. The

men stand grimly at quarters; the captain, with perhaps a solitary lieutenant, and a middy as aide-de-camp, is on his quarter-deck. There is the manœuvring for the weather-gage, the thunder of the sudden broadside, the hurtle and crash of the shot, the stern, quick word of command as the clumsy guns are run in to be reloaded and fired again and again with furious haste. The ships drift into closer wrestle. Masts and yards come tumbling on to the blood-splashed decks. There is the grinding shock of the great wooden hulls as they meet, the wild leap of the boarders, the clash of cutlass on cutlass, the shout of victory, the sight of the fluttering flag as it sinks reluctantly from the mizzen of the beaten ship. Then the smoke drifts away, and on the tossing sea-floor lie, little better than dismantled wrecks, victor and vanquished.

No great issue, perhaps, ever hung upon these lonely sea-combats; but as object-lessons in the qualities by which the empire has been won, and by which it must be maintained, these ancient sea-fights have real and permanent value. What better examples of cool hardihood, of chivalrous loyalty to the flag, of self-reliant energy, need be imagined or desired? The generation that carries the heavy burden of the empire to-day cannot afford to forget the tale of such exploits.

One of the most famous frigate fights in British history is that between the *Arethusa* and *La Belle Poule*, fought off Brest on June 17, 1778. Who is not familiar with the name and fame of "the saucy *Arethusa*"? Yet there is a curious absence of detail as to the fight. The combat, indeed, owes its enduring fame to two somewhat irrelevant circumstances—first,

that it was fought when France and England were not actually at war, but were trembling on the verge of it. The sound of the *Arethusa's* guns, indeed, was the signal of war between the two nations. The other fact is that an ingenious rhymester — scarcely a poet — crystallised the fight into a set of verses in which there is something of the true smack of the sea, and an echo, if not of the cannon's roar, yet of the rough-voiced mirth of the fore-castle; and the sea-fight lies embalmed, so to speak, and made immortal in the sea-song.

The *Arethusa* was a stumpy little frigate, scanty in crew, light in guns, attached to the fleet of Admiral Keppel, then cruising off Brest. Keppel had as perplexed and delicate a charge as was ever entrusted to a British admiral. Great Britain was at war with her American colonies, and there was every sign that France intended to add herself to the fight. No fewer than thirty-two sail of the line and twelve frigates were gathered in Brest roads, and another fleet of almost equal strength in Toulon. Spain, too, was slowly collecting a mighty armament. What would happen to England if the Toulon and Brest fleets united, were joined by a third fleet from Spain, and the mighty array of ships thus collected swept up the British Channel? On June 13, 1778, Keppel, with twenty-one ships of the line and three frigates, was despatched to keep watch over the Brest fleet. War had not been proclaimed, but Keppel was to prevent a junction of the Brest and Toulon fleets, by persuasion if he could, but by gun-powder in the last resort.

Keppel's force was much inferior to that of the Brest fleet, and as soon as the topsails of the British ships

were visible from the French coast, two French frigates, the *Licorne* and *La Belle Poule*, with two lighter craft, bore down upon them to reconnoitre. But Keppel could not afford to let the French admiral know his exact force, and signalled to his own outlying ships to bring the French frigates under his lee.

At nine o'clock at night the *Licorne* was overtaken by the *Milford*, and with some rough sailorly persuasion, and a hint of broadsides, her head was turned towards the British fleet. The next morning, in the grey dawn, the Frenchman, having meditated on affairs during the night, made a wild dash for freedom. The *America*, an English 64—double, that is, the *Licorne's* size—overtook her, and fired a shot across her bow to bring her to. Longford, the captain of the *America*, stood on the gunwale of his own ship politely urging the captain of the *Licorne* to return with him. With a burst of Celtic passion the French captain fired his whole broadside into the big Englishman, and then instantly hauled down his flag so as to escape any answering broadside!

Meanwhile the *Arethusa* was in eager pursuit of the *Belle Poule*; a fox-terrier chasing a mastiff! The *Belle Poule* was a splendid ship, with heavy metal, and a crew more than twice as numerous as that of the tiny *Arethusa*. But Marshall, its captain, was a singularly gallant sailor, and not the man to count odds. The song tells the story of the fight in an amusing fashion:—

“Come all ye jolly sailors bold,
Whose hearts are cast in honour's mould,
While England's glory I unfold.
Huzza to the *Arethusa*!

She is a frigate tight and brave
 As ever stemmed the dashing wave ;
 Her men are staunch -
 To their fav'rite launch,
 And when the foe shall meet our fire,
 Sooner than strike we'll all expire
 On board the *Arethusa*.

On deck five hundred men did dance,
 The stoutest they could find in France ;
 We, with two hundred, did advance
 On board the *Arethusa*.

Our captain hailed the Frenchman, 'Ho !'
 The Frenchman then cried out, 'Hallo !'
 ' Bear down, d'ye see,
 To our Admiral's lee.'

' No, no,' says the Frenchman, ' that can't be.'
 ' Then I must lug you along with me,'
 Says the saucy *Arethusa* !"

As a matter of fact Marshall hung doggedly on the Frenchman's quarter for two long hours, fighting a ship twice as big as his own. The *Belle Poule* was eager to escape ; Marshall was resolute that it should not escape, and, try as he might, the Frenchman, during that fierce two hours' wrestle, failed to shake off his tiny but dogged antagonist. The *Arethusa's* masts were shot away, its jib-boom hung a tangled wreck over its bows, its bulwarks were shattered, its decks were splashed red with blood, half its guns were dismounted, and nearly every third man in its crew struck down. But still it hung, with quenchless and obstinate courage, on the *Belle Poule's* quarter, and by its perfect seamanship and the quickness and the deadly precision with which its lighter guns worked, reduced its towering foe to a condition of

wreck almost as complete as its own. The terrier, in fact, was proving too much for the mastiff.

Suddenly the wind fell. With topmasts hanging over the side, and canvas torn to ribbons, the *Arethusa* lay shattered and moveless on the sea. The shot-torn but loftier sails of the *Belle Poule*, however, yet held wind enough to drift her out of the reach of the *Arethusa's* fire. Both ships were close under the French cliffs; but the *Belle Poule*, like a broken-winged bird, struggled into a tiny cove in the rocks, and nothing remained for the *Arethusa* but to cut away her wreckage, hoist what sail she could, and drag herself sullenly back under jury-masts to the British fleet. But the story of that two hours' heroic fight maintained against such odds sent a thrill of grim exultation through Great Britain. Menaced by the combination of so many mighty states, while her sea-dogs were of this fighting temper, what had Great Britain to fear? In the streets of many a British seaport, and in many a British forecastle, the story of how the *Arethusa* fought was sung in deep-throated chorus:—

“The fight was off the Frenchman's land;
We forced them back upon their strand;
For we fought till not a stick would stand
Of the gallant *Arethusa*!”

A fight even more dramatic in its character is that fought on August 10, 1805, between the *Phœnix* and the *Didon*. The *Didon* was one of the finest and fastest French frigates afloat, armed with guns of special calibre, and manned by a crew which formed, perhaps, the very élite of the French navy. The men had been specially

picked to form the crew of the only French ship which was commanded by a Bonaparte, the *Pomone*, selected for the command of Captain Jerome Bonaparte. Captain Jerome Bonaparte, however, was not just now afloat, and the *Didon* had been selected, on account of its great speed and heavy armament, for a service of great importance. She was manned by the crew chosen for the *Pomone*, placed under an officer of special skill and daring—Captain Milias—and despatched with orders for carrying out one more of those naval “combinations” which Napoleon often attempted, but never quite accomplished. The *Didon*, in a word, was to bring up the Rochefort squadron to join the Franco-Spanish fleet under Villeneuve.

On that fatal August 10, however, it seemed to Captain Milias that fortune had thrust into his hands a golden opportunity of snapping up a British sloop of war, and carrying her as a trophy into Rochefort. An American merchantman fell in with him, and its master reported that he had been brought to on the previous day by a British man-of-war, and compelled to produce his papers. The American told the French captain that he had been allowed to go round the Englishman’s decks and count his guns—omitting, no doubt, to add that he was half-drunk while doing it. Contemplated through an American’s prejudices, inflamed with grog, the British ship seemed a very poor thing indeed. She carried, the American told the captain of the *Didon*, only twenty guns of light calibre, and her captain and officers were “so cocky” that if they had a chance they would probably lay themselves alongside even the *Didon* and become an easy prey. The American pointed out to

the eagerly listening Frenchmen the topgallant sails of the ship he was describing showing above the sky-line to windward. Captain Milius thought he saw glory and cheap victory beckoning him, and he put his helm down, and stood under easy sail towards the fast-rising top-sails of the Englishman.

Now, the *Phoenix* was, perhaps, the smallest frigate in the British navy; a stocky little craft, scarcely above the rating of a sloop; and its captain, Baker, a man with something of Dundonald's gift for ruse, had disguised his ship so as to look as much as possible like a sloop. Baker, too, who believed that light guns quickly handled were capable of more effective mischief than the slow fire of heavier guns, had changed his heavier metal for 18-pounders. The two ships, therefore, were very unequal in fighting force. The broadside of the *Didon* was nearly fifty per cent. heavier than that of the *Phoenix*; her crew was nearly fifty per cent. more numerous, and she was splendidly equipped at every point.

The yellow sides and royal yards rigged aloft told the "cocky" *Phoenix* that the big ship to leeward was a Frenchman, and, with all sails spread, she bore down in the chase. Baker was eager to engage his enemy to leeward, that she might not escape, and he held his fire till he could reach the desired position. The *Didon*, however, a quick and weatherly ship, was able to keep ahead of the *Phoenix*, and thrice poured in a heavy broadside upon the grimly silent British ship without receiving a shot in reply. Baker's men were falling fast at their quarters, and, impatient at being both foiled and raked, he at last ran fiercely at his enemy to windward. The heads of both ships swung parallel, and at

pistol-distance broadside furiously answered broadside. In order to come up with her opponent, however, the *Phœnix* had all sail spread, and she gradually forged ahead. As soon as the two ships were clear, the *Didon*, by a fine stroke of seamanship, hauled up, crossed the stern of the *Phœnix*, and raked her, and then repeated the pleasant operation. The rigging of the *Phœnix* was so shattered that for a few minutes she was out of hand. Baker, however, was a fine seaman, and his crew were in a high state of discipline; and when the *Didon* once more bore up to rake her antagonist, the British ship, with her sails thrown aback, evaded the Frenchman's fire. But the stem of the *Didon* smote with a crash on the starboard quarter of the *Phœnix*; the ships were lying parallel; the broadside of neither could be brought to bear. The Frenchmen, immensely superior in numbers, made an impetuous rush across their forecastle, and leaped on the quarter-deck of the *Phœnix*. The marines of that ship, however, drawn up in a steady line across the deck, resisted the whole rush of the French boarders; and the British sailors, tumbling up from their guns, cutlass and boarding-pike in hand, and wroth with the audacity of the "French lubbers" daring to board the "cocky little *Phœnix*," with one rush, pushed fiercely home, swept the Frenchmen back on to their own vessel.

On the French forecastle stood a brass 36-pounder carronade; this commanded the whole of the British ship, and with it the French opened a most destructive fire. The British ship, as it happened, could not bring a single gun to bear in return. Baker, however, had fitted the cabin window on either quarter of his ship to serve as a port, in preparation for exactly such a

contingency as this; and the aftermost main-deck gun was dragged into the cabin, the improvised port thrown open, and Baker himself, with a cluster of officers and men, was eagerly employed in fitting tackles to enable the gun to be worked. As the sides of the two ships were actually grinding together the Frenchmen saw the preparations being made; a double squad of marines was brought up at a run to the larboard gangway, and opened a swift and deadly fire into the cabin, crowded with English sailors busy rigging their gun. The men dropped in clusters; the floor of the cabin was covered with the slain, its walls were splashed with blood. But Baker and the few men not yet struck down kept coolly to their task. The gun was loaded under the actual flash of the French muskets, its muzzle was thrust through the port, and it was fired! Its charge of langrage swept the French ship from her larboard bow to her starboard quarter, and struck down in an instant twenty-four men. The deadly fire was renewed again and again, the British marines on the quarter-deck meanwhile keeping down with their musketry the fire of the great French carronade.

That fierce and bloody wrestle lasted for nearly thirty minutes, then the *Didon* began to fore-reach. Her great bowsprit ground slowly along the side of the *Phoenix*. It crossed the line of the second aftermost gun on the British main-deck. Its flames on the instant smote the Frenchman's head-rails to splinters, and destroyed the gammoning of her bowsprit. Gun after gun of the two ships was brought in succession to bear; but in this close and deadly contest the *Phoenix* had the advantage. Her guns were lighter, her men better

drilled, and their fierce energy overbore the Frenchmen. Presently the *Didon*, with her foremast tottering, her maintopmast gone, her decks a blood-stained wreck, passed out of gunshot ahead.

In the tangle between the two ships the fly of the British white ensign at the gaff end dropped on the *Didon's* forecastle. The Frenchmen tore it off, and, as the ships moved apart, they waved it triumphantly from the *Didon's* stern. All the colours of the *Phœnix*, indeed, in one way or another had vanished, and the only response the exasperated British tars could make to the insult of the *Didon* was to immediately lash a boat's ensign to the larboard, and the Union Jack to the starboard end of their cross jack yard-arm.

The wind had dropped; both ships were now lying in a semi-wrecked condition out of gunshot of each other, and it became a question of which could soonest repair damages and get into fighting condition again. Both ships, as it happened, had begun the fight with nearly all canvas spread, and from their splintered masts the sails now hung one wild network of rags. In each ship a desperate race to effect repairs began. On the Frenchman's decks arose a babel of sounds, the shouts of officers, the tumult of the men's voices. The British, on the other hand, worked in grim and orderly silence, with no sound but the cool, stern orders of the officers. In such a race the British were sure to win, and fortune aided them. The two ships were rolling heavily in the windless swell, and a little before noon the British saw the wounded foremast of their enemy suddenly snap and tumble, with all its canvas, upon the unfortunate *Didon's* decks. This gave new and exultant

vigour to the British. Shot-holes were plugged, dismounted guns refitted, fresh braces rove, the torn rigging spliced, new canvas spread. The wind blew softly again, and a little after noon the *Phœnix*, sorely battered indeed, but in fighting trim, with guns loaded, and the survivors of her crew at quarters, bore down on the *Didon*, and took her position on that ship's weather bow. Just when the word "Fire!" was about to be given, the *Didon's* flag fluttered reluctantly down; she had struck!

The toils of the *Phœnix*, however, were not even yet ended. The ship she had captured was practically a wreck, its mainmast tottering to its fall, while the prisoners greatly exceeded in numbers their captors. The little *Phœnix* courageously took her big prize in tow, and laid her course for Plymouth. Once the pair of crippled frigates were chased by the whole of Ville-neuve's fleet; once, by a few chance words overheard, a plot amongst the French prisoners for seizing the *Phœnix* and then retaking the *Didon* was detected—almost too late—and thwarted. The *Phœnix*, and her prize too, reached Gibraltar when a thick fog lay on the straits, a fog which, as the sorely damaged ships crept through it, was full of the sound of signal guns and the ringing of bells. The Franco-Spanish fleet, in a word, a procession of giants, went slowly past the crippled ships in the fog, and never saw them!

On September 3, however, the *Phœnix* safely brought her hard-won and stubborn-guarded prize safely into Plymouth Sound.

The fight between the two ships was marked by many heroic incidents. During the action the very invalids

in the sick-bay of the *Phoenix* crept from their cots and tried to take some feeble part in the fight. The purser is not usually part of the fighting staff of a ship, but the acting purser of the *Phoenix*, while her captain was in the smoke-filled cabin below, trying to rig up a gun to bear on the *Didon*, took charge of the quarter-deck, kept his post right opposite the brazen mouth of the great carronade we have described, and, with a few marines, kept down the fire. A little midddy had the distinction of saving his captain's life. The *Didon's* bowsprit was thrust, like the shaft of a gigantic lance, over the quarter of the *Phoenix*, and a Frenchman, lying along it, levelled his musket at Captain Baker, not six paces distant, and took deliberate aim. A midddy named Phillips, armed with a musket as big as himself, saw the levelled piece of the Frenchman; he gave his captain an unceremonious jostle aside just as the Frenchman's musket flashed, and with almost the same movement discharged his own piece at the enemy. The French bullet tore off the rim of Captain Baker's hat, but the body of the man who fired it fell with a splash betwixt the two ships into the water. Here was a story, indeed, for a midddy to tell, to the admiration of all the gun-rooms in the fleet.

The midddy of the period, however, was half imp, half hero. Another youthful Nelson, ætat. sixteen, at the hottest stage of the fight—probably at the moment the acting-purser was in command on the quarter-deck—found an opportunity of getting at the purser's stores. With jaws widely distended, he was in the act of sucking—in the fashion so delightful to boys—a huge orange, when a musket ball, after passing through the

head of a seaman, went clean through both the youth's distended cheeks, and this without touching a single tooth. Whether this affected the flavour of the orange is not told, but the historian gravely records that "when the wound in each cheek healed, a pair of not unseemly dimples remained." Happy midday! He would scarcely envy Nelson his peerage.

THE BLOOD-STAINED HILL OF BUSACO

Who would not fight for England?
Who would not fling a life
I' the ring, to meet a tyrant's gage,
And glory in the strife?

Now, fair befall our England,
On her proud and perilous road;
And woe and wail to those who make
Her footprints red with blood!
Up with our red-cross banner—roll
A thunder-peal of drums!

Fight on there, every valiant soul,
And, courage! England comes!
Now, fair befall our England,
On her proud and perilous road;
And woe and wail to those who make
Her footprints red with blood!

Now, victory to our England!
And where'er she lifts her hand
In Freedom's fight, to rescue Right,
God bless the dear old land!
And when the storm has passed away,
In glory and in calm
May she sit down i' the green o' the day,
And sing her peaceful psalm!
Now, victory to our England!
And where'er she lifts her hand
In Freedom's fight, to rescue Right,
God bless the dear old land!"

—GERALD MASSEY.

BUSACO is, perhaps, the most picturesque of Penin-
sular battles. In the wild nature of the ground
over which it raged, the dramatic incidents which

marked its progress, the furious daring of the assault, and the stern valour of the defence, it is almost without a rival. The French had every advantage in the fight, save one. They were 65,000 strong, an army of veterans, many of them the men of Austerlitz and Marengo. Massena led; Ney was second in command; both facts being pledges of daring generalship. The English were falling sullenly back in the long retreat which ended at Torres Vedras, and the French were in exultant pursuit. Massena had announced that he was going to "drive the leopard into the sea"; and French soldiers, it may be added, are never so dangerous as when on fire with the *elan* of success.

Wellington's army was inferior to its foe in numbers, and of mixed nationality, and it is probable that retreat had loosened the fibre of even British discipline, if not of British courage. Two days before Busaco, for example, the light division, the very flower of the English army, was encamped in a pine-wood about which a peasant had warned them that it was "haunted." During the night, without signal or visible cause, officers and men, as though suddenly smitten with frenzy, started from their sleep and dispersed in all directions. Nor could the mysterious panic be stayed until some officer, shrewder than the rest, shouted the order, "Prepare to receive cavalry," when the instinct of discipline asserted itself, the men rushed into rallying squares, and, with huge shouts of laughter, recovered themselves from their panic.

But battle is to the British soldier a tonic, and when Wellington drew up his lines in challenge of battle to his pursuer, on the great hill of Busaco, his red-coated

soldiery were at least full of a grim satisfaction. One of the combatants has described the diverse aspects of the two hosts on the night before the fight. "The French were all bustle and gaiety; but along the whole English line the soldiers, in stern silence, examined their flints, cleaned their locks and barrels, and then stretched themselves on the ground to rest, each with his firelock within his grasp." The single advantage of the British lay in their position. Busaco is a great hill, one of the loftiest and most rugged in Portugal, eight miles in breadth, and barring the road by which Massena was moving on Lisbon. "There are certainly," said Wellington, "many bad roads in Portugal, but the enemy has taken decidedly the worst in the whole kingdom."

The great ridge, with its gloomy tree-clad heights and cloven crest, round which the mists hung in sullen vapour, was an ideal position for defence. In its front was a valley forming a natural ditch so deep that the eye could scarcely pierce its depths. The ravine at one point was so narrow that the English and French guns waged duel across it, but on the British side the chasm was almost perpendicular.

From their eyrie perch on September 27, 1810, the English watched Massena's great host coming on. Every eminence sparkled with their bayonets, every road was crowded with their waggons; it seemed not so much the march of an army as the movement of a nation. The vision of "grim Busaco's iron ridge," glittering with bayonets, arrested the march of the French. But Ney, whose military glance was keen and sure, saw that the English arrangements were not yet

complete; an unfilled gap, three miles wide, parted the right wing from the left, and he was eager for an immediate attack. Massena, however, was ten miles in the rear. According to Marbot, who has left a spirited account of Busaco, Massena put off the attack till the next day, and thus threw away a great opportunity. In the gloomy depths of the ravines, however, a war of skirmishers broke out, and the muskets rang loudly through the echoing valleys, while the puffs of eddying white smoke rose through the black pines. But night fell, and the mountain heights above were crowned with the bivouac fires of 100,000 warriors, over whom the serene sky glittered. Presently a bitter wind broke on the mountain summits, and all through the night the soldiers shivered under its keen blast.

Massena's plan of attack was simple and daring. Ney was to climb the steep front on the English left, and assail the light division under Craufurd; Regnier, with a *corps d'elite*, was to attack the English left, held by Picton's division. Regnier formed his attack into five columns while the stars were yet glittering coldly in the morning sky. They had first to plunge into the savage depths of the ravine, and then climb the steep slope leading to the English position. The vigour of the attack was magnificent. General Merle, who had won fame at Austerlitz, personally led the charge. At a run the columns went down the ravine; at a run scarcely less swift, they swept up the hostile slope. The guns smote the columns from end to end, and the attack left behind it a broad crimson trail of the dead and dying. But it never paused. A wave of steel and fire and martial tumult, it swept up the hill,

broke over the crest in a spray of flame, brushed aside a Portuguese regiment in its path like a wisp of straw, and broke on the lines of the third division.

The pressure was too great for even the solid English line to sustain; it, too, yielded to the impetuous French, part of whom seized the rocks at the highest point of the hill, while another part wheeled to the right, intending to sweep the summit of the sierra. It was an astonishing feat. Only French soldiers, magnificently led and in a mood of victory, could have done it; and only British soldiers, it may be added, whom defeat hardens, could have restored such a reverse.

Picton was in command, and he sent at the French a wing of the 88th, the famous Connaught Rangers, led by Colonel Wallace, an officer in whom Wellington reposed great confidence. Wallace's address was brief and pertinent. "Press them to the muzzle, Connaught Rangers; press on to the rascals." There is no better fighting material in the world than an Irish regiment well led and in a high state of discipline, and this matchless regiment, with levelled bayonets, ran in on the French with a grim and silent fury there was no denying. Vain was resistance. Marbot says of the Rangers that "their first volley, delivered at fifteen paces, stretched more than 500 men on the ground"; and the threatening gleam of the bayonet followed fiercely on the flame of the musket.

The French were borne, shouting, struggling, and fighting desperately, over the crest and down the deep slope to the ravine below. In a whirlwind of dust and fire and clamour went the whole body of furious soldiery into the valley, leaving a broad track of broken

arms and dying men. According to the records of the 88th, "Twenty minutes sufficed to the heroes of Marengo and Austerlitz that they yield to the Rangers of Connaught!" As the breathless Rangers re-formed triumphantly on the ridge, Wellington galloped up and declared he had never witnessed a more gallant charge.

But a wing of Regnier's attack had formed at right angles across the ridge. It was pressing forward with stern resolution; it swept before it the light companies of the 74th and 88th regiments, and unless this attack could be arrested the position and the battle were lost. Picton rallied his broken lines within *sixty yards* of the French muskets, a feat not the least marvellous in a marvellous fight, and then sent them furiously at the exulting French, who held a strong position amongst the rocks. It is always difficult to disentangle the confusion which marks a great fight. Napier says that it was Cameron who formed line with the 38th under a violent fire, and, without returning a shot, ran in upon the French grenadiers with the bayonet and hurled them triumphantly over the crest. Picton, on the other hand, declares that it was the light companies of the 74th and the 88th, under Major Smith, an officer of great daring—who fell in the moment of victory—that flung the last French down over the cliff. Who can decide when such experts, and actors in the actual scene, differ?

The result, however, as seen from the French side, is clear. The French, Marbot records, "found themselves driven in a heap down the deep descent up which they had climbed, and the English lines followed

them half-way down firing murderous volleys. At this point we lost a general, 2 colonels, 80 officers, and 700 or 800 men." "The English," he adds in explanation of this dreadful loss of life, "were the best marksmen in Europe, the only troops who were perfectly practised in the use of small arms, whence their firing was far more accurate than that of any other infantry."

A gleam of humour at this point crosses the grim visage of battle. Picton, on lying down in his bivouac the night before the battle, had adorned his head with a picturesque and highly coloured nightcap. The sudden attack of the French woke him; he clapped on cloak and cocked hat, and rode to the fighting line, when he personally led the attack which flung the last of Regnier's troops down the slope. At the moment of the charge he took off his cocked hat to wave the troops onward; this revealed the domestic head-dress he unconsciously wore, and the astonished soldiers beheld their general on flame with warlike fury gesticulating martially in a nightcap! A great shout of laughter went up from the men as they stopped for a moment to realise the spectacle; then with a tempest of mingled laughter and cheers they flung themselves on the enemy.

Meanwhile Ney had formed his attack on the English left, held by Craufurd and the famous light division. Marbot praises the characteristic tactics of the British in such fights. "After having, as we do," he says, "garnished their front with skirmishers, they post their principal forces out of sight, holding them all the time sufficiently near to the key of the position to be able to

attack the enemy the instant they reach it; and this attack, made unexpectedly on assailants who have lost heavily, and think the victory already theirs, succeeds almost invariably." "We had," he adds, "a melancholy experience of this art at Busaco." Craufurd, a soldier of fine skill, made exactly such a disposition of his men. Some rocks at the edge of the ravine formed natural embrasures for the English guns under Ross; below them the Rifles were flung out as skirmishers; behind them the German infantry were the only visible troops; but in a fold of the hill, unseen, Craufurd held the 43rd and 52nd regiments drawn up in line.

Ney's attack, as might be expected, was sudden and furious. The English, in the grey dawn, looking down the ravine, saw three huge masses start from the French lines and swarm up the slope. To climb an ascent so steep, vexed by skirmishers on either flank, and scourged by the guns which flashed from the summit, was a great and most daring feat—yet the French did it. Busaco, indeed, is memorable as showing the French fighting quality at its highest point. General Simon led Loison's attack right up to the lips of the English guns, and in the dreadful charge its order was never disturbed nor its speed arrested. "Ross's guns," says Napier, "were worked with incredible quickness, yet their range was palpably contracted every round; the enemy's shot came singing up in a sharper key; the English skirmishers, breathless and begrimed with powder, rushed over the edge of the ascent; the artillery drew back"—and over the edge of the hill came the bearskins and the gleaming bayonets of the French! General Simon led the attack so fiercely home that

he was the first to leap across the English entrenchments, when an infantry soldier, lingering stubbornly after his comrades had fallen back, shot him point-blank through the face. The unfortunate general, when the fight was over, was found lying in the redoubt amongst the dying and the dead, with scarcely a human feature left. He recovered, was sent as a prisoner to England, and was afterwards exchanged, but his horrible wound made it impossible for him to serve again.

Craufurd had been watching meanwhile with grim coolness the onward rush of the French. They came storming and exultant, a wave of martial figures, edged with a spray of fire and a tossing fringe of bayonets, over the summit of the hill; when suddenly Craufurd, in a shrill tone, called on his reserves to attack. In an instant there rose, as if out of the ground, before the eyes of the astonished French, the serried lines of the 43rd and 52nd, and what a moment before was empty space was now filled with the frowning visage of battle. The British lines broke into one stern and deep-toned shout, and 1800 bayonets, in one long line of gleaming points, came swiftly down upon the French. To stand against that moving hedge of deadly and level steel was impossible; yet each man in the leading section of the French raised his musket and fired, and two officers and ten soldiers fell before them. Not a Frenchman had missed his mark! They could do no more. "The head of their column," to quote Napier, "was violently thrown back upon the rear, both flanks were overlapped at the same moment by the English wings, and three terrible discharges at five yards' distance shattered the wavering

mass." Before those darting points of flame the pride of the French shrivelled. Shining victory was converted, in almost the passage of an instant, into bloody defeat; and a shattered mass, with ranks broken, and colours abandoned, and discipline forgotten, the French were swept into the depths of the ravine out of which they had climbed.

One of the dramatic episodes of the fight at this juncture is that of Captain Jones—known in his regiment as "Jack Jones" of the 52nd. Jones was a fiery Welshman, and led his company in the rush on General Simon's column. The French were desperately trying to deploy, a *chef-de-bataillon* giving the necessary orders with great vehemence. Jones ran ahead of his charging men, outstripping them by speed of foot, challenged the French officer with a warlike gesture to single combat, and slew him with one fierce thrust before his own troops, and the 52nd, as they came on at the run, saw the duel and its result, were lifted by it to a mood of victory, and raised a sudden shout of exultation, which broke the French as by a blast of musketry fire.

For hours the battle spluttered and smouldered amongst the skirmishers in the ravines, and some gallant episodes followed. Towards evening, for example, a French company, with signal audacity, and apparently on its own private impulse, seized a cluster of houses only half a musket shot from the light division, and held it while Craufurd scourged them with the fire of twelve guns. They were only turned out at the point of the bayonet by the 43rd. But the battle was practically over, and the English had beaten, by sheer

hard fighting, the best troops and the best marshals of France.

In the fierceness of actual fighting, Busaco has never been surpassed, and seldom did the wounded and dying lie thicker on a battlefield than where the hostile lines struggled together on that fatal September 27. The *mêlée* at some points was too close for even the bayonet to be used, and the men fought with fists or with the butt-end of their muskets. From the rush which swept Regnier's men down the slope the Connaught Rangers came back with faces and hands and weapons literally splashed red with blood. The firing was so fierce that Wellington, with his whole staff, dismounted. Napier, however—one of the famous fighting trio of that name, who afterwards conquered Scinde—fiercely refused to dismount, or even cover his red uniform with a cloak. "This is the uniform of my regiment," he said, "and in it I will show, or fall this day." He had scarcely uttered the words when a bullet smashed through his face and shattered his jaw to pieces. As he was carried past Lord Wellington he waved his hand and whispered through his torn mouth, "I could not die at a better moment!" Of such stuff were the men who fought under Wellington in the Peninsula.



NELSON

After a painting by L. F. ABBOTT in the National Portrait Gallery

OF NELSON AND THE NILE

“ Britannia needs no bulwarks,
No towers along the steep ;
Her march is o'er the mountain waves,
Her home is on the deep.
With thunders from her native oak,
She quells the floods below,
As they roar on the shore
When the stormy winds do blow ;
When the battle rages loud and long,
And the stormy winds do blow.

The meteor flag of England
Shall yet terrific burn,
Till danger's troubled night depart,
And the star of peace return.
Then, then, ye ocean warriors,
Our song and feast shall flow
To the fame of your name,
When the storm has ceased to blow ;
When the fiery fight is heard no more,
And the storm has ceased to blow.”

—CAMPBELL.

ABOUKIR BAY resembles nothing so much as a piece bitten out of the Egyptian pancake. A crescent-shaped bay, patchy with shoals, stretching from the Rosetta mouth of the Nile to Aboukir, or, as it is now called, Nelson Island, that island being simply the outer point of a sandbank that projects from the western horn of the bay. Flat shores, grey-blue Mediterranean waters, two horns of land six miles apart, that to the north projecting farthest and forming a low island—

this, ninety-eight years ago, was the scene of what might almost be described as the greatest sea-fight in history.

On the evening of August 1, 1798, thirteen great battleships lay drawn up in a single line parallel with the shore, and as close to it as the sandbanks permitted. The head ship was almost stem on to the shoal which, running out at right angles to the shore, forms Aboukir Island. The nose of each succeeding ship was exactly 160 yards from the stern of the ship before it, and, allowing for one or two gaps, each ship was bound by a great cable to its neighbour. It was a thread of beads, only each "bead" was a battleship, whose decks swarmed with brave men, and from whose sides gaped the iron lips of more than a thousand heavy guns. The line was not exactly straight; it formed a very obtuse angle, the projecting point at the centre being formed by the *Orient*, the biggest warship at that moment afloat, a giant of 120 guns.

Next to her came the *Franklin*, of 80 guns, a vessel which, if not the biggest, was perhaps the finest sample of naval architecture in existence. The line of ships was more than one mile and a half long, and consisted of the gigantic flagship, three ships of the line of 80 guns, and nine of 74 guns. In addition, it had a fringe of gunboats and frigates, while a battery of mortars on the island guarded, as with a sword of fire, the gap betwixt the headmost ship and the island. This great fleet had convoyed Napoleon, with 36,000 troops crowded into 400 transports, from France, had captured Malta on the voyage, and three weeks before had safely landed Napoleon and his soldiers in Egypt.

The French admiral, Bruéys, knew that Nelson was coming furiously in his track, and after a consultation with all his captains he had drawn up his ships in the order which we have described, a position he believed to be unassailable. And at three o'clock on the afternoon of August 1, 1798, his look-outs were eagerly watching the white topsails showing above the lee line, the van of Nelson's fleet.

Napoleon had kept the secret of his Egyptian expedition well, and the great Toulon fleet, with its swarm of transports, had vanished round the coast of Corsica and gone off into mere space, as far as a bewildered British Admiralty knew. A fleet of thirteen 74-gun ships and one of 50 guns was placed under Nelson's flag. He was ordered to pursue and destroy the vanished French fleet, and with characteristic energy he set out on one of the most dramatic sea-chases known to history. With the instinct of genius he guessed that Napoleon's destination was Egypt; but while the French fleet coasted Sardinia and went to the west of Sicily, Nelson ran down the Italian coast to Naples, called there for information, found none, and, carrying all sail, swept through the straits of Messina.

On the night of June 22 the two fleets actually crossed each other's tracks. The French fleet, including the transports, numbered 572 vessels, and their lights, it might be imagined, would have lit up many leagues of sea. Yet, through this forest of hostile masts the English fleet, with keen eyes watching at every mast-head, swept and saw nothing. Nelson, for one thing, had no frigates to serve as eyes and ears for him; his

fleet in sailor-like fashion formed a compact body, three parallel lines of phantom-like pyramids of canvas sweeping in the darkness across the floor of the sea. Above all a haze filled the night; and it is not too much to say that the drifting grey vapour which hid the French ships from Nelson's lookout men changed the face of history.

Nelson used to explain that his ideal of perfect enjoyment would be to have the chance of "trying Bonaparte on a wind"; and if he had caught sound of bell or gleam of lantern from the great French fleet, and brought it to action in the darkness of that foggy night, can any one doubt what the result would have been? Nelson would have done off the coast of Sicily on June 22, 1798, what Wellington did on June 18, 1815; and in that case there would have been no Marengo or Austerlitz, no retreat from Moscow, no Peninsular war, and no Waterloo. For so much, in distracted human affairs, may a patch of drifting vapour count!

Nelson, in a word, overran his prey. He reached Alexandria to find the coast empty; doubled back to Sicily, zigzagging on his way by Cyprus and Candia; and twelve hours after he had left Alexandria the topsails of the French fleet hove in sight from that port. Napoleon's troops were safely landed, and the French admiral had some four weeks in which to prepare for Nelson's return, and at 3 P.M. on August 1 the gliding topsails of the *Swiftsure* above Aboukir Island showed that the tireless Englishman had, after nearly three months of pursuit, overtaken his enemy.

The French, if frigates be included, counted seventeen

ships to fourteen, and ship for ship they had the advantage over the British alike in crew, tonnage, and weight of fire. In size the English ships scarcely averaged 1500 tons; the French ships exceeded 2000 tons. Nelson had only seventy-fours, his heaviest gun being a 32-pounder. The average French 80-gun ship in every detail of fighting strength exceeded an English ninety-eight, and Bruéys had three such ships in his fleet; while his own flagship, the *Orient*, was fully equal to two English seventy-fours. Its weight of ball on the lower deck alone exceeded that from the whole broadside of the *Bellerophon*, the ship that engaged it. The French, in brief, had an advantage in guns of about twenty per cent., and in men of over thirty per cent. Bruéys, moreover, was lying in a carefully chosen position in a dangerous bay, of which his enemies possessed no chart, and the head of his line was protected by a powerful shore battery.

Nothing in this great fight is more dramatic than the swiftness and vehemence of Nelson's attack. He simply leaped upon his enemy at sight. Four of his ships were miles off in the offing, but Nelson did not wait for them. In the long pursuit he had assembled his captains repeatedly in his cabin, and discussed every possible manner of attacking the French fleet. If he found the fleet as he guessed, drawn up in battle-line close in-shore and anchored, his plan was to place one of his ships on the bows, another on the quarter, of each French ship in succession.

It has been debated who actually evolved the idea of rounding the head of the French line and attacking on both faces. One version is that Foley, in the *Goliath*,

who led the British line, owed the suggestion to a keen-eyed midly who pointed out that the anchor buoy of the headmost French ship was at such a distance from the ship itself as to prove there was room to pass. But the weight of evidence seems to prove that Nelson himself, as he rounded Aboukir Island, and scanned with fierce and questioning vision Bruéys' formation, with that swiftness of glance in which he almost rivalled Napoleon, saw his chance in the gap between the leading French ship and the shore. "Where a French ship can swing," he held, "an English ship can either sail or anchor." And he determined to double on the French line and attack on both faces at once. He explained his plan to Berry, his captain, who in his delight exclaimed, "If we succeed, what will the world say?" "There is no 'if' in the case," said Nelson; "that we shall succeed is certain; who will live to tell the story is a very different question."

Bruéys had calculated that the English fleet must come down perpendicularly to his centre, and each ship in the process be raked by a line of fire a mile and a half long; but the moment the English ships rounded the island they tacked, hugged the shore, and swept through the gap between the leading vessel and the land. The British ships were so close to each other that Nelson, speaking from his own quarter-deck, was able to ask Hood in the *Zealous*, if he thought they had water enough to round the French line. Hood replied that he had no chart, but would lead and take soundings as he went.

So the British line came on, the men on the yards taking in canvas, the leadsmen in the chains coolly

calling the soundings. The battery roared from the island, the leading French ships broke into smoke and flame, but the steady British line glided on. The *Goliath* by this time led; and at half-past five the shadow of its tall masts cast by the westering sun fell over the decks of the *Guerrier*, and as Foley, its captain, swept past the Frenchman's bows, he poured in a furious broadside, bore swiftly up, and dropped—as Nelson, with that minute attention to detail which marks a great commander, had ordered all his captains—an anchor from the stern, so that, without having to “swing,” he was instantly in a fighting position on his enemy's quarter. Foley, however, dropped his anchor a moment too late, and drifted on to the second ship in the line; but Hood, in the *Zealous*, coming swiftly after, also raked the *Guerrier*, and, anchoring from the stern at the exact moment, took the place on its quarter Foley should have taken.

The *Orion* came into battle next, blasted the unfortunate *Guerrier*, whose foremast had already gone, with a third broadside, and swept outside the *Zealous* and *Goliath* down to the third ship on the French line. A French frigate, the *Sérieuse*, of thirty-six guns, anchored inside the French line, ventured to fire on the *Orion* as it swept past, whereupon Saumarez, its commander, discharged his starboard broadside into that frigate. The *Sérieuse* reeled under the shock of the British guns, its masts disappeared like chips, and the unfortunate Frenchman went down like a stone; while Saumarez, laying himself on the larboard bow of the *Franklin* and the quarter of the *Peuple Sôvrain*, broke upon them in thunder. The *Theseus*

Miller, who commanded the *Theseus*, in a letter to his wife described the fight. "In running along the enemy's line in the wake of the *Zealous* and *Goliath*, I observed," he says, "their shot sweep just over us, and knowing well that at such a moment Frenchmen would not have coolness enough to change their elevation, I closed them suddenly, and, running under the arch of their shot, reserved my fire, every gun being loaded with two, and some with three round shot, until I had the *Guerrier's* masts in a line, and her jib-boom about six feet clear of our rigging. We then opened with such effect that a second breath could not be drawn before her main and mizzen-mast were also gone. This was precisely at sunset, or forty-four minutes past six."

The *Audacious*, meanwhile, was too impatient to tack round the head of the French line; it broke through the gap betwixt the first and second ships of the enemy, delivered itself, in a comfortable manner, of a raking broadside into both as it passed, took its position on the larboard bow of the *Conquerant*, and gave itself up to the joy of battle. Within thirty minutes from the beginning of the fight, that is, five British line-of-battle ships were inside the French line, comfortably established on the bows or quarters of the leading ships. Nelson himself, in the *Vanguard*, anchored on the outside of the French line, within eighty yards of the *Spartiate's* starboard beam; the *Minotaur*, the *Bel-lerophon*, and the *Majestic*, coming up in swift succession, and at less than five minutes' interval from each other, flung themselves on the next ships.

How the thunder of the battle deepened, and how

the quick flashes of the guns grew brighter as the night gathered rapidly over sea, must be imagined. But Nelson's swift and brilliant strategy was triumphant. Each ship in the French van resembled nothing so much as a walnut in the jaws of a nut-cracker. They were being "cracked" in succession, and the rear of the line could only look on with agitated feelings and watch the operation.

The fire of the British ships for fury and precision was overwhelming. The head of the *Guerrier* was simply shot away; the anchors hanging from her bows were cut in two; her main-deck ports, from the bowsprit to the gangway, were driven into one; her masts, fallen inboard, lay with their tangle of rigging on the unhappy crew; while some of her main-deck beams—all supports being torn away—fell on the guns. Hood, in the *Zealous*, who was pounding the unfortunate *Guerrier*, says, "At last, being tired of killing men in that way, I sent a lieutenant on board, who was allowed, as I had instructed him, to hoist a light, and haul it down as a sign of submission." But all the damage was not on the side of the French. The great French flagship, the *Orient*, by this time had added her mighty voice to the tumult, and the *Bellerophon*, who was engaged with her, had a bad time of it. It was the story of Tom Sayers and Heenan over again—a dwarf fighting a giant. Her mizzen-mast and mainmast were shot away, and after maintaining the dreadful duel for more than an hour, and having 200 of her crew struck down, at 8.20 P.M. the *Bellerophon* cut her cable and drifted, a disabled wreck, out of the fire.

Meanwhile the four ships Nelson had left in the

offing were beating furiously up to add themselves to the fight. Night had fallen by the time Troubridge, in the *Culloden*, came round the island; and then, in full sight of the great battle, the *Culloden* ran hopelessly ashore! She was, perhaps, the finest ship of the British fleet, and the emotions of its crew and commander as they listened to the tumult, and watched through the darkness the darting fires of the Titanic combat they could not share, may be imagined. "Our army," according to well-known authorities, "swore terribly in Flanders." The expletives discharged that night along the decks and in the fore-castle of the *Culloden* would probably have made even a Flanders veteran open his eyes in astonishment.

The *Swiftsure* and the *Alexander*, taking warning by the *Culloden's* fate, swept round her and bore safely up to the fight. The *Swiftsure*, bearing down through the darkness to the combat, came across a vessel drifting, dismasted and lightless, a mere wreck. Holliwell, the captain of the *Swiftsure*, was about to fire, thinking it was an enemy, but on second thoughts hailed instead, and got for an answer the words, "*Bellerophon*; going out of action, disabled." The *Swiftsure* passed on, and five minutes after the *Bellerophon* had drifted from the bows of the *Orient* the *Swiftsure*, coming mysteriously up out of the darkness, took her place, and broke into a tempest of fire.

At nine o'clock the great French flagship burst into flame. The painters had been at work upon her on the morning of that day, and had left oil and combustibles about. The nearest English ships concentrated their

fire, both of musketry and of cannon, on the burning patch, and made the task of extinguishing it hopeless. Bruéys, the French admiral, had already been cut in two by a cannon shot, and Casabianca, his commodore, was wounded. The fire spread, the flames leaped up the masts and crept athwart the decks of the great ship. The moon had just risen, and the whole scene was perhaps the strangest ever witnessed—the great burning ship, the white light of the moon above, the darting points of red flame from the iron lips of hundreds of guns below, the drifting battle-smoke, the cries of ten thousand combatants—all crowded into an area of a few hundred square yards!

The British ships, hanging like hounds on the flanks of the *Orient*, knew that the explosion might come at any moment, and they made every preparation for it, closing their hatchways, and gathering their firemen at quarters. But they would not withdraw their ships a single yard! At ten o'clock the great French ship blew up with a flame that for a moment lit shore and sea, and a sound that hushed into stillness the whole tumult of the battle. Out of a crew of over a thousand men only seventy were saved! For ten minutes after that dreadful sight the warring fleets seemed stupefied. Not a shout was heard, not a shot fired. Then the French ship next the missing flagship broke into wrathful fire, and the battle awoke in full passion once more.

The fighting raged with partial intermissions all through the night, and when morning broke Bruéys' curved line of mighty battleships, a mile and a half long, had vanished. Of the French ships, one had been

blown up, one was sunk, one was ashore, four had fled, the rest were prizes. It was the most complete and dramatic victory in naval history. The French fought on the whole with magnificent courage; but, though stronger in the mass, Nelson's strategy and the seamanship of his captains made the British stronger at every point of actual battle. The rear of the French line did not fire a shot or lose a man. The wonder is that when Nelson's strategy was developed, and its fatal character understood, Villeneuve, who commanded the French rear, and was a man of undoubted courage, did not cut his cables, make sail, and come to the help of his comrades. A few hundred yards would have carried him to the heart of the fight. Can any one doubt whether, if the positions had been reversed, Nelson would have watched the destruction of half his fleet as a mere spectator? If nothing better had offered, he would have pulled in a wash-tub into the fight!

Villeneuve afterwards offered three explanations of his own inertness—(1) he "could not spare any of his anchors"; (2) "he had no instructions"! (3) "on board the ships in the rear the idea of weighing and going to the help of the ships engaged occurred to no one"! In justice to the French, however, it may be admitted that nothing could surpass the fierceness and valour with which, say, the *Tonnant* was fought. Its captain, Du Petit-Thuars, fought his ship magnificently, had first both his arms and then one of his legs shot away, and died entreating his officers not to strike. Of the ten French ships engaged, the captains of eight were killed or wounded. Nelson took the seven wounded captains

on board the *Vanguard*, and, as they recovered, they dined regularly with him. One of the captains had lost his nose, another an eye, another most of his teeth, with musket-shots, &c. Nelson, who himself had been wounded, and was still half-blind as a result, at one of his dinners offered by mischance a case of toothpicks to the captain on his left, who had lost all his teeth. He discovered his error, and in his confusion handed his snuff-box to the captain on his right, who had lost his nose!

What was the secret of the British victory? Nelson's brilliant strategy was only possible by virtue of the magnificent seamanship of his captains, and the new fashion of close and desperate fighting, which Hood and Jarvis and Nelson himself had created. It is a French writer, Captain Gravière, who says that the French naval habit of evading battle where they could, and of accepting action from an enemy rather than forcing it upon him, had ruined the *morale* of the French navy. The long blockades had made Nelson's captains perfect seamen, and he taught them that close fighting at pistol-shot distance was the secret of victory. "No English captain," he said, "can do wrong who, in fight, lays a ship alongside an enemy." It was a captain of Nelson's school—a Scotchman—who at Camperdown, unable, just as the action began, to read some complicated signal from his chief, flung his signal-book on the deck, and in broad Scotch exclaimed, "D— me! up with the hellem an' gang in the middle o't." That trick of "ganging into the middle o't" was irresistible.

The battle of the Nile destroyed the naval prestige of France, made England supreme in the Mediter-

nean, saved India, left Napoleon and his army
actically prisoners in Egypt, and united Austria,
ussia, and Turkey in league against France. The
ght battle in Aboukir Bay, in a word, changed the
e of history.

THE FUSILEERS AT ALBUERA

“ And nearer, fast and nearer,
Doth the red whirlwind come ;
And louder still, and still more loud,
From underneath that rolling cloud,
Is heard the trumpet’s war-note proud,
The trampling and the hum.
And plainly, and more plainly,
Now through the gloom appears,
Far to left and far to right,
In broken gleams of dark-blue light,
The long array of helmets bright,
The long array of spears.”

—MACAULAY.

ALBUERA is the fiercest, bloodiest, and most amazing fight in the mighty drama of the Peninsular war. On May 11, 1811, the English guns were thundering sullenly over Badajos. Wellington was beyond the Guadiana, pressing Marmont; and Beresford, with much pluck but little skill, was besieging the great frontier fortress. Soult, however, a master of war, was swooping down from Seville to raise the siege. On the 14th he reached Villafranca, only thirty miles distant, and fired salvos from his heaviest guns all through the night to warn the garrison of approaching succour. Beresford could not both maintain the siege and fight Soult; and, on the night of the 13th he abandoned his trenches, burnt his gabions and fascines, and marched to meet Soult at Albuera,



LORD BERESFORD

After a painting by SIR W. BEECHEY, R.A.

a low ridge, with a shallow river in front, which barred the road to Badajos. As the morning of May 16, 1811, broke, heavy with clouds, and wild with gusty rain-storms, the two armies grimly gazed at each other in stern pause, ere they joined in the wrestle of actual battle.

All the advantages, save one, were on the side of the French. Soult was the ablest of the French marshals. If he had not Ney's *elan* in attack, or Massena's stubborn resource in retreat, yet he had a military genius, since Lannes was dead, second only to that of Napoleon himself. He had under his command 20,000 war-hardened infantry, 40 guns, and 4000 magnificent cavalry, commanded by Latour Maubourg, one of the most brilliant of French cavalry generals. Beresford, the British commander, had the dogged fighting courage, half Dutch and half English, of his name and blood; but as a commander he was scarcely third-rate. Of his army of 30,000, 15,000 were Spanish, half drilled, and more than half starved—they had lived for days on horse-flesh—under Blake, a general who had lost all the good qualities of Irish character, and acquired all the bad ones peculiar to Spanish temper. Of Beresford's remaining troop 8000 were Portuguese; he had only 7000 British soldiers.

Beresford ought not to have fought. He had abandoned the siege at Badajos, and no reason for giving battle remained. The condition of Blake's men, no doubt, made retreat difficult. They had reached the point at which they must either halt or lie down and die. The real force driving Beresford to battle, however, was the fighting effervescence in his own blood and the warlike impatience of his

English troops. They had taken no part in the late great battles under Wellington; Busaco had been fought and Fuentes de Onoro gained without them; and they were in the mood, both officers and men, of fierce determination to fight *somebody*! This was intimated somewhat roughly to Beresford, and he had not that iron ascendancy over his troops Wellington possessed. As a matter of fact, he was himself as stubbornly eager to fight as any private in the ranks.

The superiority of Soult's warlike genius was shown before a shot was fired. Beresford regarded the bridge that crossed the Albuera and the village that clustered at the bridge-head as the key of his position. He occupied the village with Alten's German brigade, covered the bridge with the fire of powerful batteries, and held in reserve above it his best British brigade, the fusiliers, under Cole, the very regiments who, four hours later, on the extreme right of Beresford's position, were actually to win the battle. Soult's sure vision, however, as he surveyed his enemies on the evening of the 15th, saw that Beresford's right was his weak point. It was a rough, broken table-land, curving till it looked into the rear of Beresford's line. It was weakly held by Blake and his Spaniards. Immediately in its front was a low wooded hill, behind which, as a screen, an attacking force could be gathered.

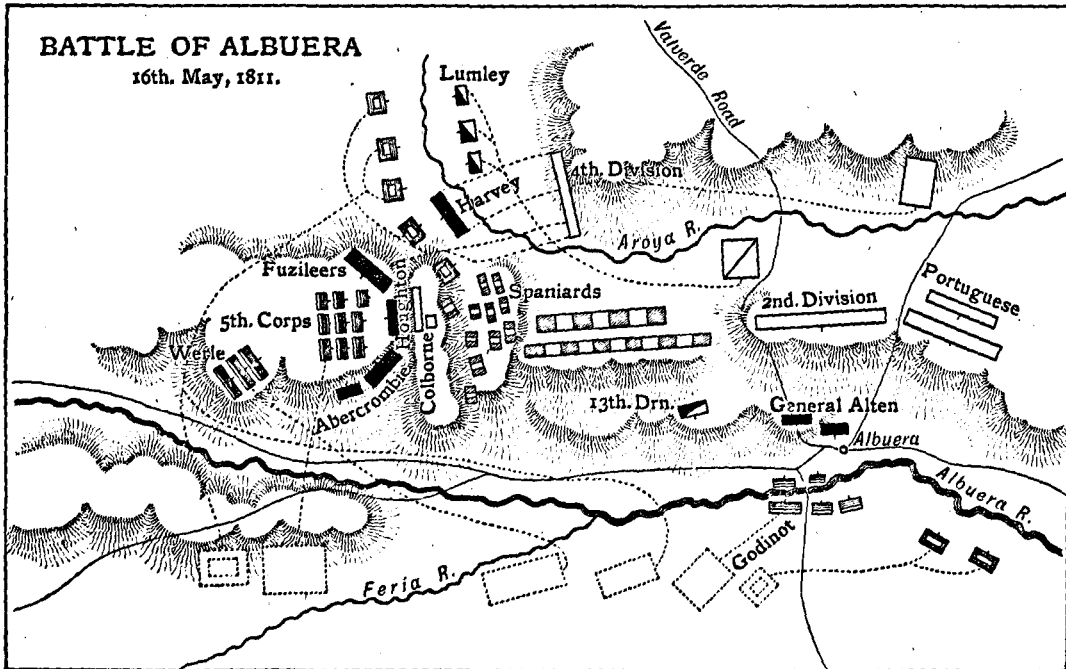
In the night Soult placed behind this hill the fifth corps, under Gerard, the whole of his cavalry, under Latour Maubourg, and the strength of his artillery. When the morning broke, Soult had 15,000 men and 30 guns within ten minutes' march of Beresford's right

wing, and nobody suspected it. No gleam of colour, no murmur of packed battalions, no ring of steel, no sound of marching feet warned the deluded English general of the battle-storm about to break on his right wing. A commander with such an unexpected tempest ready to burst on the weakest point of his line was by all the rules of war pre-doomed.

At nine o'clock Soult launched an attack at the bridge, the point where Beresford expected him, but it was only a feint. Beresford, however, with all his faults, had the soldierly brain to which the actual thunder of the cannon gave clearness. He noticed that the French battalions supporting the attack on the bridge did not press on closely. As a matter of fact, as soon as the smoke of artillery from the battle raging at the bridge swept over the field, they swung smartly to the left, and at the double hastened to add themselves to the thunderbolt which Soult was launching at Beresford's right. But Beresford, meanwhile, had guessed Soult's secret, and he sent officer after officer ordering and entreating Blake to change front so as to meet Soult's attack on his flank, and he finally rode thither himself to enforce his commands. Blake, however, was immovable through pride, and his men through sheer physical weakness. They could die, but they could not march or deploy. Blake at last tried to change front, but as he did so the French attack smote him. Pressing up the gentle rise, Gerard's men scourged poor Blake's flank with their fire; the French artillery, coming swiftly on, halted every fifty yards to thunder on the unhappy Spaniards; while Latour Maubourg's lancers and hus-

BATTLE OF ALBUERA

16th. May, 1811.



sars, galloping in a wider sweep, gathered momentum for a wild ride on Blake's actual rear.

Beresford tried to persuade the Spaniards to charge as the French were thus circling round them. Shouts and gesticulations were in vain. He was a man of giant height and strength, and he actually seized a Spanish ensign in his iron grip, and carried him bodily, flag and all, at a run for fifty yards towards the moving French lines, and planted him there. When released, however, the bewildered Spaniard simply took to his heels and ran back to his friends, as a terrified sheep might run back to the flock. In half-an-hour Beresford's battle had grown desperate. Two-thirds of the French, in compact order of battle, were perpendicular to his right; the Spaniards were falling into disorder. Soult saw the victory in his grasp, and eagerly pushed forward his reserves. Over the whole hill, mingled with furious blasts of rain, rolled the tumult of a disorderly and broken fight. Ten minutes more would have enabled Soult to fling Beresford's right, a shattered and routed mass, on the only possible line of retreat, and with the French superiority in cavalry his army would have been blotted out.

The share of the British in the fight consisted of three great attacks delivered by way of counter-stroke to Soult's overwhelming rush on the hill held by Blake. The first attack was delivered by the second division, under Colborne, led by General Stewart in person. Stewart was a sort of British version of Ney, a man of vehement spirit, with a daring that grew even more flame-like in the eddying tumult and tempest of actual battle. He saw Soult's attack crumpling up Blake's

helpless battalions, while the flash of the French artillery every moment grew closer. It was the crisis of the fight, and Stewart brought on Colborne's men at a run. Colborne himself, a fine soldier with cool judgment, wished to halt and form his men in order of battle before plunging into the confused vortex of the fight above; but Stewart, full of breathless ardour, hurried the brigade up the hill in column of companies, reached the Spanish right, and began to form line by succession of battalions as they arrived.

At this moment a wild tempest of rain was sweeping over the British as, at the double, they came up the hill; the eddying fog, thick and slab with the smoke of powder, hid everything twenty yards from the panting soldiers. Suddenly the wall of changing fog to their right sparkled into swiftly moving spots of red; it shone the next instant with the gleam of a thousand steel points; above the thunder of the cannon, the shouts of contending men, rose the awful sound of a tempest of galloping hoofs. The French lancers and hussars caught the English in open order, and in five fierce and bloody minutes almost trampled them out of existence! Two-thirds of the brigade went down. The 31st Regiment flung itself promptly into square, and stood fast—a tiny island, edged with steel and flame, amid the mad tumult; but the French lancers, drunk with excitement, mad with battle fury, swept over the whole slope of the hill. They captured six guns, and might have done yet more fatal mischief but that they occupied themselves in galloping to and fro across the line of their original charge, spearing the wounded.

One lancer charged Beresford as he sat, solitary and

huge, on his horse amid the broken English regiments. But Beresford was at least a magnificent trooper; he put the lance aside with one hand, and caught the Frenchman by the throat, lifted him clean from his saddle, and dashed him senseless on the ground! The ensign who carried the colours of the 3rd Buffs covered them with his body till he was slain by a dozen lance-thrusts; the ensign who carried the other colours of the same regiment tore the flag from its staff and thrust it into his breast, and it was found there, stiff with his blood, after the fight. The Spaniards, meanwhile, were firing incessantly but on general principles merely, and into space or into the ranks of their own allies as might happen; and the 29th, advancing to the help of Colborne's broken men, finding the Spaniards in their path and firing into their lines, broke sternly into volleys on them in turn. Seldom has a battlefield witnessed a tumult so distracted and wild.

The first English counter-stroke had failed, but the second followed swiftly. The furious rain and fog which had proved so fatal to Colborne's men for a moment, was in favour of Beresford. Soult, though eagerly watching the conflict, could not see the ruin into which the British had fallen, and hesitated to launch his reserves into the fight. The 31st still sternly held its own against the French cavalry, and this gave time for Stewart to bring up Houghton's brigade. But this time Stewart, though he brought up his men with as much vehemence as before, brought them up in order of battle. The 29th, the 48th, and the 57th swept up the hill in line, led by Houghton, hat in hand. He fell, pierced by three bullets; but over his dead body, eager

to close, the British line still swept. They reached the crest. A deep and narrow ravine arrested their bayonet charge; but with stubborn valour they held the ground they had gained, scourged with musketry fire at pistol-shot distance, and by artillery at fifty yards' range, while a French column smote them with its musketry on their flank. The men fell fast, but fought as they fell. Stewart was twice wounded; Colonel Dutworth, of the 48th, slain; of the 57th, out of 570 men, 430, with their colonel, Inglis, fell. The men, after the battle, were found lying dead in ranks exactly as they fought. "Die hard! my men, die hard!" said Inglis when the bullet struck him; and the 57th have borne the name of "Die hards" ever since. At Inkerman, indeed, more than fifty years afterwards, the "Die hard!" of Inglis served to harden the valour of the 57th in a fight as stern as Albuera itself.

But ammunition began to fail. Houghton's men would not yield, but it was plain that in a few more minutes there would be none of them left, save the dead and the wounded. And at this dreadful moment Beresford, distracted with the tumult and horror of the fight, wavered! He called up Alten's men from the bridge to cover his retreat, and prepared to yield the fatal hill. At this juncture, however, a mind more masterful and daring than his own launched a third British attack against the victorious French and won the dreadful day.

Colonel Hardinge, afterwards famous in Indian battles, acted as quartermaster-general of the Portuguese army; on his own responsibility he organised the third English attack. Cole had just come up the

road from Badajos with two brigades, and Hardinge urged him to lead his men straight up the hill; then riding to Abercrombie's brigade, he ordered him to sweep round the flank of the hill. Beresford, on learning of this movement, accepted it, and sent back Alten's men to retake the bridge which they had abandoned.

Abercrombie's men swept to the left of the hill, and Cole, a gallant and able soldier, using the Portuguese regiments in his brigade as a guard against a flank attack of the French cavalry, led his two fusileer regiments, the 7th and 23rd, straight to the crest.

At this moment the French reserves were coming on, the fragments of Houghton's brigade were falling back, the field was heaped with carcasses, the lancers were riding furiously about the captured artillery, and with a storm of exultant shouts the French were sweeping on to assured victory. It was the dramatic moment of the fight. Suddenly through the fog, coming rapidly on with stern faces and flashing volleys, appeared the long line of Cole's fusileers on the right of Houghton's staggering groups, while at the same exact moment Abercrombie's line broke through the mist on their left. As these grim and threatening lines became visible, the French shouts suddenly died down. It was the old contest of the British line—the "thin red line"—against the favourite French attack in column, and the story can only be told in Napier's resonant prose. The passage which describes the attack of the fusileers is one of the classic passages of English battle literature, and in its syllables can still almost be heard the tread of marching feet, the shrill

clangour of smitten steel, and the thunder of the musketry volleys:—

“Such a gallant line,” says Napier, “arising from amid the smoke, and rapidly separating itself from the confused and broken multitude, startled the enemy’s masses, which were increasing and pressing forward as to assured victory; they wavered, hesitated, and then, vomiting forth a storm of fire, hastily endeavoured to enlarge their front, while the fearful discharge of grape from all their artillery whistled through the British ranks. Myert was killed, Cole and the three colonels—Ellis, Blackeney, and Hawkshawe—fell wounded, and the fusileer battalions, struck by the iron tempest, reeled and staggered like sinking ships. Suddenly and sternly recovering, they closed on their terrible enemies, and then was seen with what a strength and majesty the British soldier fights. In vain did Soult, by voice and gesture, animate his Frenchmen; in vain did the hardiest veterans break from the crowded columns and sacrifice their lives to gain time for the mass to open on such a fair field; in vain did the mass itself bear up, and, fiercely striving, fire indiscriminately on friends and foes, while the horsemen, hovering on the flanks, threatened to charge the advancing line.

“Nothing could stop that astonishing infantry. No sudden burst of undisciplined valour, no nervous enthusiasm weakened the stability of their order; their flashing eyes were bent on the dark columns in front, their measured tread shook the ground, their dreadful volleys swept away the head of every formation, their deafening shouts overpowered the dissonant cries that broke from all parts of the tumultuous crowd as slowly

and with a horrid carnage it was driven by the incessant vigour of the attack to the farthest edge of the hill. In vain did the French reserves mix with the struggling multitude to sustain the fight; their efforts only increased the irremediable confusion, and the mighty mass, breaking off like a loosened cliff, went headlong down the ascent. The rain flowed after in streams discoloured with blood, and 1800 unwounded men, the remnant of 6000 unconquerable British soldiers, stood triumphant on the fatal hill."

The battle of Albuera lasted four hours; its slaughter was dreadful. Within the space of a few hundred feet square were strewn some 7000 bodies, and over this Aceldama the artillery had galloped, the cavalry had charged! The 3rd Buffs went into the fight with 24 officers and 750 rank and file; at the roll-call next morning there were only 5 officers and 35 men. One company of the Royal Fusileers came out of the fight commanded by a corporal; every officer and sergeant had been killed. Albuera is essentially a soldier's fight. The bayonet of the private, not the brain of the general, won it; and never was the fighting quality of our race more brilliantly shown. Soult summed up the battle in words that deserve to be memorable. "There is no beating those troops," he wrote, "*in spite of their generals!*" "I always thought them bad soldiers," he added, with a Frenchman's love of paradox; "now I am sure of it. For I turned their right, pierced their centre, they were everywhere broken, the day was mine, and yet *they did not know it*, and would not run!"

THE "SHANNON" AND THE "CHESAPEAKE"

" The signal to engage shall be
A whistle and a hollo ;
Be one and all but firm, like me,
And conquest soon will follow !
You, Gunnel, keep the helm in hand—
Thus, thus, boys ! steady, steady,
Till right ahead you see the land—
Then soon as you are ready,
The signal to engage shall be
A whistle and a hollo ;
Be one and all but firm, like me,
And conquest soon will follow !"

—C. DIBDIN.

ON the early morning of June 1, 1813, a solitary British frigate, H.M.S. *Shannon*, was cruising within sight of Boston lighthouse. She was a ship of about 1000 tons, and bore every mark of long and hard service. No gleam of colour sparkled about her. Her sides were rusty, her sails weather-stained; a solitary flag flew from her mizzen-peak, and even its blue had been bleached by sun and rain and wind to a dingy grey. A less romantic and more severely practical ship did not float, and her captain was of the same type as the ship.

Captain Philip Bowes Vere Broke was an Englishman *pur sang*, and of a type happy not uncommon.



SIR PHILIP DOWES VERE BROKE

After a painting by LANE

His fame will live as long as the British flag flies, yet a more sober and prosaic figure can hardly be imagined. He was not, like Nelson, a quarter-deck Napoleon; he had no gleam of Dundonald's matchless *ruse de guerre*. He was as deeply religious as Havelock or one of Cromwell's major-generals; he had the frugality of a Scotchman, and the heavy-footed common-sense of a Hollander. He was as nautical as a web-footed bird, and had no more "nerves" than a fish. A domestic Englishman, whose heart was always with the little girls at Brokehall, in Suffolk, but for whom the service of his country was a piety, and who might have competed with Lawrence for his self-chosen epitaph, "Here lies one who tried to do his duty."

A sober-suited, half-melancholy common-sense was Broke's characteristic, and he had applied it to the working of his ship, till he had made the vessel, perhaps, the most formidable fighting machine of her size afloat. He drilled his gunners until, from the swaying platform of their decks, they shot with a deadly coolness and accuracy nothing floating could resist. Broke, as a matter of fact, owed his famous victory over the *Chesapeake* to one of his matter-of-fact precautions. The first broadside fired by the *Chesapeake* sent a 32-pound shot through one of the gun-room cabins into the magazine passage of the *Shannon*, where it might easily have ignited some grains of loose powder and blown the ship up, if Broke had not taken the precaution of elaborately *damping* that passage before the action began. The prosaic side of Broke's character is very amusing. In his diary he records his world-famous victory thus:—

"June 1st.—Off Boston. Moderate."

"N.W.—W(rote) Laurence."

"P.M.—Took *Chesapeake*."

Was ever a shining victory packed into fewer or duller words? Broke's scorn of the histrionic is shown by his reply to one of his own men who, when the *Chesapeake*, one blaze of fluttering colours, was bearing down upon her drab-coloured opponent, said to his commander, eyeing the bleached and solitary flag at the *Shannon's* peak, "Mayn't we have three ensigns, sir, like she has?" "No," said Broke, "we have always been an *unassuming* ship!"

And yet, this unromantic English sailor had a gleam of Don Quixote in him. On this pleasant summer morning he was waiting alone, under easy sail, outside a hostile port, strongly fortified and full of armed vessels, waiting for an enemy's ship bigger than himself to come out and fight him. He had sent in the previous day, by way of challenge, a letter that recalls the days of chivalry. "As the *Chesapeake*," he wrote to Laurence, its captain, "appears now ready for sea, I request that you will do me the favour to meet the *Shannon* with her, ship to ship." He proceeds to explain the exact armament of the *Shannon*, the number of her crew, the interesting circumstance that he is short of provisions and water, and that he has sent away his consort so that the terms of the duel may be fair. "If you will favour me," he says, "with any plan of signals or telegraph, I will warn you should any of my friends be too nigh, while you are in sight, until I can detach them out of the way. Or," he suggests coaxingly, "I would sail under a flag of truce to any place you think safest

from our cruisers, hauling it down when fair, to begin hostilities. . . . Choose your terms," he concludes, "but let us meet." Having sent in this amazing letter, this middle-aged, unromantic, but hard-fighting captain climbs at daybreak to his own maintop, and sits there till half-past eleven, watching the challenged ship, to see if her foretopsail is unloosed and she is coming out to fight.

It is easy to understand the causes which kindled a British sailor of even Broke's unimaginative temperament into flame. On June 18, 1812, the United States, with magnificent audacity, declared war against Great Britain. England at that moment had 621 efficient cruisers at sea, 102 being line-of-battle ships. The American navy consisted of 8 frigates and 12 corvettes. It is true that England was at war at the same moment with half the civilised world; but what reasonable chance had the tiny naval power of the United States against the mighty fleets of England, commanded by men trained in the school of Nelson, and rich with the traditions of the Nile and Trafalgar? As a matter of fact, in the war which followed, the commerce of the United States was swept out of existence. But the Americans were of the same fighting stock as the English; to the Viking blood, indeed, they added Yankee ingenuity and resource, making a very formidable combination; and up to the June morning when the *Shannon* was waiting outside Boston Harbour for the *Chesapeake*, the naval honours of the war belonged to the Americans. The Americans had no fleet, and the campaign was one of single ship against single ship, but in these combats the Americans had scored more

successes in twelve months than French seamen had gained in twelve years. The *Guerrière*, the *Java*, and the *Macedonian* had each been captured in single combat, and every British post-captain betwixt Portsmouth and Halifax was swearing with mere fury.

The Americans were shrewd enough to invent a new type of frigate which, in strength of frame, weight of metal, and general fighting power, was to a British frigate of the same class almost what an ironclad would be to a wooden ship. The *Constitution*, for example, was in size to the average British frigate as 15.3 to 10.9; in weight of metal as 76 to 51; and in crew as 46 to 25. Broke, however, had a well-founded belief in his ship and his men, and he proposed, in his sober fashion, to restore the tarnished honour of his flag by capturing single-handed the best American frigate afloat.

The *Chesapeake* was a fine ship, perfectly equipped, under a daring and popular commander. Laurence was a man of brilliant ingenuity and courage, and had won fame four months before by capturing in the *Hornet*, after a hard fight, the British brig-of-war *Peacock*. For this feat he had been promoted to the *Chesapeake*, and in his brief speech from the quarter-deck just before the fight with the *Shannon* began, he called up the memory of the fight which made him a popular hero by exhorting his crew to "*Peacock* her, my lads! *Peacock* her!" The *Chesapeake* was larger than the *Shannon*, its crew was nearly a hundred men stronger, its weight of fire 598 lbs. as against the *Shannon's* 538 lbs. Her guns fired double-headed shot, and bars of wrought iron connected by links and loosely tied by a few rope yarns, which, when discharged from



CAPTAIN LAURENCE

From an engraving by WILLIAMSON



CAPTAIN LAURENCE

From an engraving by WILLIAMSON

the gun, spread out and formed a flying iron chain six feet long. Its canister shot contained jagged pieces of iron, broken bolts, and nails. As the British had a reputation for boarding, a large barrel of unslacked lime was provided to fling in the faces of the boarders. An early shot from the *Shannon*, by the way, struck this cask of lime and scattered its contents in the faces of the Americans themselves. Part of the equipment of the *Chesapeake* consisted of several hundred pairs of handcuffs, intended for the wrists of English prisoners. Boston citizens prepared a banquet in honour of the victors for the same evening, and a small fleet of pleasure-boats followed the *Chesapeake* as she came gallantly out to the fight.

Never was a braver, shorter, or more murderous fight. Laurence, the most gallant of men, bore steadily down, without firing a shot, to the starboard quarter of the *Shannon*. When within fifty yards he luffed; his men sprang into the shrouds and gave three cheers. Broke fought with characteristic silence and composure. He forbade his men to cheer, enforced the sternest silence along his deck, and ordered the captain of each gun to fire as his piece bore on the enemy. "Fire into her quarters," he said, "main-deck into main-deck quarter-deck into quarter-deck. Kill the men, and the ship is yours."

The sails of the *Chesapeake* swept betwixt the slanting rays of the evening sun and the *Shannon* the drifting shadow darkened the English main-deck ports, the rush of the enemy's cut-water could be heard through the grim silence of the *Shannon's* decks. Suddenly there broke out the first gun from the

Shannon; then her whole side leaped into flame. Never was a more fatal broadside discharged. A tempest of shot, splinters, torn hammocks, cut rigging, and wreck of every kind was hurled like a cloud across the deck of the *Chesapeake*, and of one hundred and fifty men at stations there, more than a hundred were killed or wounded. A more fatal loss to the Americans instantly followed, as Captain Laurence, the fiery soul of his ship, was shot through the abdomen by an English marine, and fell mortally wounded.

The answering thunder of the *Chesapeake's* guns, of course, rolled out, and then, following quick, the overwhelming blast of the *Shannon's* broadside once more: Each ship, indeed, fired two full broadsides, and, as the guns fell quickly out of range, part of another broadside. The firing of the *Chesapeake* was furious and deadly enough to have disabled an ordinary ship. It is computed that forty effective shots would be enough to disable a frigate; the *Shannon* during the six minutes of the firing was struck by no less than 158 shot, a fact which proves the steadiness and power of the American fire. But the fire of the *Shannon* was overwhelming. In those same six fatal minutes she smote the *Chesapeake* with no less than 362 shots, an average of 60 shots of all sizes every minute, as against the *Chesapeake's* 28 shots. The *Chesapeake* was fir-built, and the British shot riddled her. One *Shannon* broadside partly raked the *Chesapeake* and literally smashed the stern cabins and battery to mere splinters, as completely as though a procession of aerolites had torn through it.

The swift, deadly, concentrated fire of the British

in two quick-following broadsides practically decided the combat. The partially disabled vessels drifted together, and the *Chesapeake* fell on board the *Shannon*, her quarter striking the starboard main-chains. Broke, as the ships ground together, looked over the blood-splashed decks of the American and saw the men deserting the quarter-deck guns, under the terror of another broadside at so short a distance. "Follow me who can," he shouted, and with characteristic coolness "stepped"—in his own phrase—across the *Chesapeake's* bulwark. He was followed by some 32 seamen and 18 marines—50 British boarders leaping upon a ship with a crew of 400 men, a force which, even after the dreadful broadsides of the *Shannon*, still numbered 270 unwounded men in its ranks.

It is absurd to deny to the Americans courage of the very finest quality, but the amazing and unexpected severity of the *Shannon's* fire had destroyed for the moment their morale, and the British were in a mood of victory. The boatswain of the *Shannon*, an old *Rodney* man, lashed the two ships together, and in the act had his left arm literally hacked off by repeated strokes of a cutlass and was killed. One British midshipman, followed by five topmen, crept along the *Shannon's* foreyard and stormed the *Chesapeake's* foretop, killing the men stationed there, and then swarmed down by a back-stay to join the fighting on the deck. Another middy tried to attack the *Chesapeake's* mizzen-top from the starboard mainyard arm, but being hindered by the foot of the topsail, stretched himself out on the mainyard arm, and from that post shot three of the enemy in succession.

Meanwhile the fight on the deck had been short and sharp; some of the Americans leaped overboard and others rushed below; and Laurence, lying wounded in his steerage, saw the wild reflux of his own men down the after ladders. On asking what it meant, he was told, "The ship is boarded, and those are the *Chesapeake's* men driven from the upper decks by the English." This so exasperated the dying man that he called out repeatedly, "Then blow her up; blow her up."

The fight lasted exactly thirteen minutes—the broadsides occupied six minutes, the boarding seven—and in thirteen minutes after the first shot the British flag was flying over the American ship. The *Shannon* and *Chesapeake* were bearing up, side by side, for Halifax. The spectators in the pleasure-boats were left ruefully staring at the spectacle; those American handcuffs, so thoughtfully provided, were on American wrists; and the Boston citizens had to consume, with what appetite they might, their own banquet. The carnage on the two ships was dreadful. In thirteen minutes 252 men were either killed or wounded, an average of nearly twenty men for every minute the fight lasted. In the combat betwixt these two frigates, in fact, nearly as many men were struck down as in the whole battle of Navarino! The *Shannon* itself lost as many men as any 74-gun ship ever lost in battle.

Judge Haliburton, famous as "Sam Slick," when a youth of seventeen, boarded the *Chesapeake* as the two battered ships sailed into Halifax. "The deck," he wrote, "had not been cleaned, and the coils and

folks of rope were steeped in gore as if in a slaughter-house. Pieces of skin with pendent hair were adhering to the sides of the ship; and in one place I noticed portions of fingers protruding, as if thrust through the outer walls of the frigate."

Watts, the first lieutenant of the *Shannon*, was killed by the fire of his own ship in a very remarkable manner. He boarded with his captain, with his own hands pulled down the *Chesapeake's* flag, and hastily bent on the halliards the English ensign, as he thought, *above* the Stars and Stripes, and then rehoisted it. In the hurry he had bent the English flag *under* the Stars and Stripes instead of above it, and the gunners of the *Shannon*, seeing the American stripes going up first, opened fire instantly on the group at the foot of the mizzen-mast, blew the top of their own unfortunate lieutenant's head off with a grape shot, and killed three or four of their own men.

Captain Broke was desperately wounded in a curious fashion. A group of Americans, who had laid down their arms, saw the British captain standing for a moment alone on the break of the forecastle. It seemed a golden chance. They snatched up weapons lying on the deck, and leaped upon him. Warned by the shout of the sentry, Broke turned round to find three of the enemy with uplifted weapons rushing on him. He parried the middle fellow's pike and wounded him in the face, but was instantly struck down with a blow from the butt-end of a musket, which laid bare his skull. He also received a slash from the cutlass of the third man, which clove a portion of skull completely away and left the brain bare. He fell, and was

grappled on the deck by the man he had first wounded, a powerful fellow, who got uppermost and raised a bayonet to thrust through Broke. At this moment a British marine came running up, and concluding that the man underneath *must* be an American, also raised his bayonet to give the *coup de grace*. "Pooh, pooh, you fool," said Broke in the most matter-of-fact fashion, "don't you know your captain?" whereupon the marine changed the direction of his thrust and slew the American.

The news reached London on July 7, and was carried straight to the House of Commons, where Lord Cochrane was just concluding a fierce denunciation of the Admiralty on the ground of the disasters suffered from the Americans, and Croker, the Secretary to the Admiralty, was able to tell the story of the fight off Boston to the wildly cheering House, as a complete defence of his department. Broke was at once created a Baronet and a Knight of the Bath. In America, on the other hand, the story of the fight was received with mingled wrath and incredulity. "I remember," says Rush, afterwards U.S. Minister at the Court of St. James, "at the first rumour of it, the universal incredulity. I remember how the post-offices were thronged for successive days with anxious thousands; how collections of citizens rode out for miles on the highway to get the earliest news the mail brought. At last, when the certainty was known, I remember the public gloom, the universal badges of mourning. 'Don't give up the ship,' the dying words of Laurence, were on every tongue."

It was a great fight, the most memorable and dra-

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matic sea-duel in naval history. The combatants were men of the same stock, and fought with equal bravery. Both nations, in fact, may be proud of a fight so frank, so fair, so gallant. The world, we may hope, will never witness another *Shannon* engaged in the fierce wrestle of battle with another *Chesapeake*, for the Union Jack and the Stars and Stripes are knitted together by a bond woven of common blood and speech and political ideals that grows stronger every year.

For years the *Shannon* and the *Chesapeake* lay peacefully side by side in the Medway, and the two famous ships might well have been preserved as trophies. The *Chesapeake* was bought by the Admiralty after the fight for exactly £21,314, 11s. 11¼d., and six years afterwards she was sold as mere old timber for £500, was broken up, and to-day stands as a Hampshire flour-mill, peacefully grinding English corn; but still on the mill-timbers can be seen the marks of the grape and round shot of the *Shannon*.

THE GREAT BREACH OF CIUDAD RODRIGO

“Attend, all ye who list to hear our noble England’s praise,
I tell of the thrice famous deeds she wrought in ancient days.”

—MACAULAY.

THE three great and memorable sieges of the Peninsular war are those of Ciudad Rodrigo, Badajos, and San Sebastian. The annals of battle record nowhere a more furious daring in assault or a more gallant courage in defence than that which raged in turn round each of these three great fortresses. Of the three sieges that of Badajos was the most picturesque and bloody; that of San Sebastian the most sullen and exasperated; that of Ciudad Rodrigo the swiftest and most brilliant. A great siege tests the fighting quality of any army as nothing else can test it. In the night watches in the trenches, in the dogged toil of the batteries, and the crowded perils of the breach, all the frippery and much of the real discipline of an army dissolves. The soldiers fall back upon what may be called the primitive fighting qualities—the hardihood of the individual soldier, the daring with which the officers will lead, the dogged loyalty with which the men will follow. As an illustration of the warlike qualities in our race by which empire has been achieved, nothing better can be desired than

the story of how the breaches were won at Ciudad Rodrigo.

At the end of 1811 the English and the French were watching each other jealously across the Spanish border. The armies of Marmont and of Soult, 67,000 strong, lay within touch of each other, barring Wellington's entrance into Spain. Wellington, with 35,000 men, of whom not more than 10,000 men were British, lay within sight of the Spanish frontier. It was the winter time. Wellington's army was wasted by sickness, his horses were dying of mere starvation, his men had received no pay for three months, and his muleteers none for eight months. He had no siege-train, his regiments were ragged and hungry, and the French generals confidently reckoned the British army as, for the moment at least, *une quantité négligeable*.

And yet at that precise moment, Wellington, subtle and daring, was meditating a leap upon the great frontier fortress of Ciudad Rodrigo, in the Spanish province of Salamanca. Its capture would give him a safe base of operations against Spain; it was the great frontier *place d'armes* for the French; the whole siege-equipage, and stores of the army of Portugal were contained in it. The problem of how, in the depth of winter, without materials for a siege, to snatch a place so strong from under the very eyes of two armies, each stronger than his own, was a problem which might have taxed the warlike genius of a Cæsar. But Wellington accomplished it with a combination of subtlety and audacity simply marvellous.

He kept the secret of his design so perfectly that

his own engineers never suspected it, and his adjutant-general, Murray, went home on leave without dreaming anything was going to happen. Wellington collected artillery ostensibly for the purpose of arming Almeida, but the guns were trans-shipped at sea and brought secretly to the mouth of the Douro. No less than 800 mule-carts were constructed without anybody guessing their purpose. Wellington, while these preparations were on foot, was keenly watching Marmont and Soult, till he saw that they were lulled into a state of mere yawning security, and then, in Napier's expressive phrase, he "instantly jumped with both feet upon Ciudad Rodrigo."

This famous fortress, in shape, roughly resembles a triangle with the angles truncated. The base, looking to the south, is covered by the Agueda, a river given to sudden inundations; the fortifications were strong and formidably armed; as outworks it had to the east the great fortified Convent of San Francisco, to the west a similar building called Santa Cruz; whilst almost parallel with the northern face rose two rocky ridges called the Great and Small Teson, the nearest within 600 yards of the city ramparts, and crowned by a formidable redoubt called Francisco. The siege began on January 8. The soil was rocky and covered with snow, the nights were black, the weather bitter. The men lacked entrenching tools. They had to encamp on the side of the Agueda farthest from the city, and ford that river every time the trenches were relieved. The 1st, 3rd, and light divisions formed the attacking force; each division held the trenches in turn for twenty-four hours. Let the reader imagine

what degree of hardihood it took to wade in the grey and bitter winter dawn through a half-frozen river, and without fire or warm food, and under a ceaseless rain of shells from the enemy's guns, to toil in the frozen trenches, or to keep watch, while the icicles hung from eyebrow and beard, over the edge of the battery for twenty-four hours in succession.

Nothing in this great siege is more wonderful than the fierce speed with which Wellington urged his operations. Massena, who had besieged and captured the city the year before in the height of summer, spent a month in bombarding it before he ventured to assault. Wellington broke ground on January 8, under a tempest of mingled hail and rain; he stormed it on the night of the 19th.

He began operations by leaping on the strong work that crowned the Great Teson the very night the siege began. Two companies from each regiment of the light division were detailed by the officer of the day, Colonel Colborne, for the assault. Colborne (afterwards Lord Seaton), a cool and gallant soldier, called his officers together in a group and explained with great minuteness how they were to attack. He then launched his men against the redoubt with a vehemence so swift that, to those who watched the scene under the light of a wintry moon, the column of redcoats, like the thrust of a crimson sword-blade, spanned the ditch, shot up the glacis, and broke through the parapet with a single movement. The accidental explosion of a French shell burst the gate open, and the remainder of the attacking party instantly swept through it. There was fierce musketry fire and a tumult of shout-

ing for a moment or two, but in twenty minutes from Colborne's launching his attack every Frenchman in the redoubt was killed, wounded, or a prisoner.

The fashion in which the gate was blown open was very curious. A French sergeant was in the act of throwing a live shell upon the storming party in the ditch, when he was struck by an English bullet. The lighted shell fell from his hands within the parapet, was kicked away by the nearest French in mere self-preservation; it rolled towards the gate, exploded, burst it open, and instantly the British broke in.

For ten days a desperate artillery duel raged between the besiegers and the besieged. The parallels were resolutely pushed on in spite of rocky soil, broken tools, bitter weather, and the incessant pelting of the French guns. The temper of the British troops is illustrated by an incident which George Napier—the youngest of the three Napiers—relates. The three brothers were gallant and remarkable soldiers. Charles Napier in India and elsewhere made history; William, in his wonderful tale of the Peninsular war, wrote history; and George, if he had not the literary genius of the one nor the strategic skill of the other, was a most gallant soldier. "I was a field-officer of the trenches," he says, "when a 13-inch shell from the town fell in the midst of us. I called to the men to lie down flat, and they instantly obeyed orders, except one of them, an Irishman and an old marine, but a most worthless drunken dog, who trotted up to the shell, the fuse of which was still burning, and striking it with his spade, knocked the fuse out; then taking the immense shell in his hands, brought it to me, saying, 'There she is for

you now, yer 'anner. I've knocked the life out of the crater.'"

The besieged brought fifty heavy guns to reply to the thirty light pieces by which they were assailed, and day and night the bellow of eighty pieces boomed sullenly over the doomed city and echoed faintly back from the nearer hills, while the walls crashed to the stroke of the bullet. The English fire made up by fierceness and accuracy for what it lacked in weight; but the sap made no progress, the guns showed signs of being worn out, and although two apparent breaches had been made, the counterscarp was not destroyed. Yet Wellington determined to attack, and, in his characteristic fashion, to attack by night. The siege had lasted ten days, and Marmont, with an army stronger than his own, was lying within four marches. That he had not appeared already on the scene was wonderful.

In a general order issued on the evening of the 19th Wellington wrote, "Ciudad Rodrigo *must* be stormed this evening." The great breach was a sloping gap in the wall at its northern angle, about a hundred feet wide. The French had crowned it with two guns loaded with grape; the slope was strewn with bombs, hand-grenades, and bags of powder; a great mine pierced it beneath; a deep ditch had been cut betwixt the breach and the adjoining ramparts, and these were crowded with riflemen. The third division, under General Mackinnon, was to attack the breach, its forlorn hope being led by Ensign Mackie, its storming party by General Mackinnon himself. The lesser breach was a tiny gap, scarcely twenty feet wide, to the left of the great breach; this was to be attacked

by the light division, under Craufurd, its forlorn hope of twenty-five men being led by Gurwood, and its storming party by George Napier. General Pack, with a Portuguese brigade, was to make a sham attack on the eastern face, while a fourth attack was to be made on the southern front by a company of the 83rd and some Portuguese troops. In the storming party of the 83rd were the Earl of March, afterwards Duke of Richmond; Lord Fitzroy Somerset, afterwards Lord Raglan; and the Prince of Orange—all volunteers without Wellington's knowledge!

At 7 o'clock a curious silence fell suddenly on the battered city and the engirdling trenches. Not a light gleamed from the frowning parapets, not a murmur arose from the blackened trenches. Suddenly a shout broke out on the right of the English attack; it ran, a wave of stormy sound, along the line of the trenches. The men who were to attack the great breach leaped into the open. In a moment the space betwixt the hostile lines was covered with the stormers, and the gloomy half-seen face of the great fortress broke into a tempest of fire.

Nothing could be finer than the vehement courage of the assault, unless it were the cool and steady fortitude of the defence. Swift as was the upward rush of the stormers, the race of the 5th, 77th, and 94th regiments was almost swifter. Scorning to wait for the ladders, they leaped into the great ditch, outpaced even the forlorn hope, and pushed vehemently up the great breach, whilst their red ranks were torn by shell and shot. The fire, too, ran through the tangle of broken stones over which they climbed; the hand-grenades

and powder-bags by which it was strewn exploded. The men were walking on fire! Yet the attack could not be denied. The Frenchmen—shooting, stabbing, yelling—were driven behind their entrenchments. There the fire of the houses commanding the breach came to their help, and they made a gallant stand. "None would go back on either side, and yet the British could not get forward, and men and officers falling in heaps choked up the passage, which from minute to minute was raked with grape from two guns flanking the top of the breach at the distance of a few yards. Thus striving, and trampling alike upon the dead and the wounded, these brave men maintained the combat."

It was the attack on the smaller breach which really carried Ciudad Rodrigo; and George Napier, who led it, has left a graphic narrative of the exciting experiences of that dreadful night. The light division was to attack, and Craufurd, with whom Napier was a favourite, gave him command of the storming party. He was to ask for 100 volunteers from each of the three British regiments—the 43rd, 52nd, and the Rifle Corps—in the division. Napier halted these regiments just as they had forded the bitterly cold river on their way to the trenches. "Soldiers," he said, "I want 100 men from each regiment to form the storming party which is to lead the light division to-night. Those who will go with me come forward!" Instantly there was a rush forward of the whole division, and Napier had to take his 300 men out of a tumult of nearly 1500 candidates. He formed them into three companies, under Captains Ferguson, Jones, and Mitchell. Gurwood, of the 52nd, led the forlorn hope, consisting

of twenty-five men and two sergeants. Wellington himself came to the trench and showed Napier and Colborne, through the gloom of the early night, the exact position of the breach. A staff-officer looking on, said, "Your men are not loaded. Why don't you make them load?" Napier replied, "If we don't do the business with the bayonet we shall not do it all. I shall not load." "Let him alone," said Wellington; "let him go his own way." Picton had adopted the same grim policy with the third division. As each regiment passed him, filing into the trenches, his injunction was, "No powder! We'll do the thing with the *could* iron."

A party of Portuguese carrying bags filled with grass were to run with the storming party and throw the bags into the ditch, as the leap was too deep for the men. But the Portuguese hesitated, the tumult of the attack on the great breach suddenly broke on the night, and the forlorn hope went running up, leaped into the ditch a depth of eleven feet, and clambered up the steep slope beyond, while Napier with his stormers came with a run behind them. In the dark for a moment the breach was lost, but found again, and up the steep quarry of broken stone the attack swept. About two-thirds of the way up Napier's arm was smashed by a grape-shot, and he fell. His men, checked for a moment, lifted their muskets to the gap above them, whence the French were firing vehemently, and forgetting their pieces were unloaded, snapped them. "Push on with the bayonet, men!" shouted Napier, as he lay bleeding. The officers leaped to the front, the men with a stern shout followed; they

were crushed to a front of not more than three or four. They had to climb without firing a shot in reply up to the muzzles of the French muskets.

But nothing could stop the men of the light division. A 24-pounder was placed across the narrow gap in the ramparts; the stormers leaped over it, and the 43rd and 52nd, coming up in sections abreast, followed. The 43rd wheeled to the right towards the great breach, the 52nd to the left, sweeping the ramparts as they went.

Meanwhile the other two attacks had broken into the town; but at the great breach the dreadful fight still raged, until the 43rd, coming swiftly along the ramparts, and brushing all opposition aside, took the defence in the rear. The British there had, as a matter of fact, at that exact moment pierced the French defence. The two guns that scourged the breach had wrought deadly havoc amongst the stormers, and a sergeant and two privates of the 88th—Irishmen all, and whose names deserve to be preserved—Brazel, Kelly, and Swan—laid down their firelocks that they might climb more lightly, and, armed only with their bayonets, forced themselves through the embrasure amongst the French gunners. They were furiously attacked, and Swan's arm was hewed off by a sabre stroke; but they stopped the service of the gun, slew five or six of the French gunners, and held the post until the men of the 5th, climbing behind them, broke into the battery.

So Ciudad Rodrigo was won, and its governor surrendered his sword to the youthful lieutenant leading the forlorn hope of the light division, who, with smoke-

blackened face, torn uniform, and staggering from a dreadful wound, still kept at the head of his men.

In the eleven days of the siege Wellington lost 1300 men and officers, out of whom 650 men and 60 officers were struck down on the slopes of the breaches. Two notable soldiers died in the attack—Craufurd, the famous leader of the light division, as he brought his men up to the lesser breach; and Mackinnon, who commanded a brigade of the third division, at the great breach. Mackinnon was a gallant Highlander, a soldier of great promise, beloved by his men. His "children," as he called them, followed him up the great breach till the bursting of a French mine destroyed all the leading files, including their general. Craufurd was buried in the lesser breach itself, and Mackinnon in the great breach—fitting graves for soldiers so gallant.

Alison says that with the rush of the English stormers up the breaches of Ciudad Rodrigo "began the fall of the French Empire." That siege, so fierce and brilliant, was, as a matter of fact, the first of that swift-following succession of strokes which drove the French in ruin out of Spain, and it coincided in point of time with the turn of the tide against Napoleon in Russia. Apart from all political results, however, it was a splendid feat of arms. The French found themselves almost unable to believe the evidence of their senses. "On the 16th," Marmont wrote to the Emperor, "the English batteries opened their fire at a great distance. On the 19th the place was taken by storm. There is something so *incomprehensible* in this that I allow myself no observations." Napoleon, however, relieved his

feelings with some very emphatic observations. "The fall of Ciudad Rodrigo," he wrote to Marmont, "is an affront to you. Why had you not advices from it twice a week? What were you doing with the five divisions of Souham? It is a strange mode of carrying on war," &c. Unhappy Marmont!

HOW THE "HERMIONE" WAS RECAPTURED

"They cleared the cruiser from end to end,
From conning-tower to hold;
They fought as they fought in Nelson's fleet—
They were stripped to the waist, they were bare to the feet,
As it was in the days of old."

—KIPLING.

THE story of how the *Hermione* was lost is one of the scandals and the tragedies of British naval history; the tale of how it was re-won is one of its glories. The *Hermione* was a 32-gun frigate, cruising off Porto Rico, in the West Indies. On the evening of September 21, 1797, the men were on drill, reefing top-sails. The captain, Pigot, was a rough and daring sailor, a type of the brutal school of naval officer long extinct. The traditions of the navy were harsh; the despotic power over the lives and fortunes of his crew which the captain of a man-of-war carried in the palm of his hand, when made the servant of a ferocious temper, easily turned a ship into a floating hell. The terrible mutinies which broke out in British fleets a hundred years ago had some justification, at least, in the cruelties, as well as the hardships, to which the sailors of that period were exposed.

Pigot was rough in speech, vehement in temper, cursed with a semi-lunatic delight in cruelty, and he

tormented his men to the verge of desperation. On this fatal night, Pigot, standing at the break of his quarter-deck, stormed at the men aloft, and swore with many oaths he would flog the last man off the mizzen-top yard; and the men knew how well he would keep his word. The most active sailor, as the men lay out on the yard, naturally takes the earing, and is, of course, the last man off, as well as on, the yard. Pigot's method, that is, would punish not the worst sailors, but the best! The two outermost men on the mizzen-top yard of the *Hermione* that night, determined to escape the threatened flogging. They made a desperate spring to get over their comrades crowding into the ratlines, missed their foothold, fell on the quarter-deck beside their furious captain, and were instantly killed. The captain's epitaph on the unfortunate sailors was, "Throw the lubbers overboard!"

All the next day a sullen gloom lay on the ship. Mutiny was breeding. It began, as night fell, in a childish fashion, by the men throwing double-headed shot about the deck. The noise brought down the first lieutenant to restore order. He was knocked down. In the jostle of fierce tempers, murder awoke; knives gleamed. A sailor, as he bent over the fallen officer, saw the naked, undefended throat, and thrust his knife into it. The sight kindled the men's passions to flame. The unfortunate lieutenant was killed with a dozen stabs, and his body thrown overboard. The men had now tasted blood. In the flame of murderous temper suddenly let loose, all the bonds of discipline were in a moment consumed. A wild rush was made for the officers' cabins. The captain tried to break his way out,

was wounded, and driven back; the men swept in, and, to quote the realistic official account, "seated in his cabin the captain was stabbed by his own coxswain and three other mutineers, and, forced out of the cabin windows, was heard to speak as he went astern." With mutiny comes anarchy. The men made no distinction between their officers, cruel or gentle; not only the captain, but the three lieutenants, the purser, the surgeon, the lieutenant of marines, the boatswain, the captain's clerk were murdered, and even one of the two midshipmen on board was hunted like a rat through the ship, killed, and thrown overboard. The only officers spared were the master, the gunner, and one midshipman.

Having captured the ship, the mutineers were puzzled how to proceed. Every man-of-war on the station, they knew, would be swiftly on their track. Every British port was sealed to them. They would be pursued by a retribution which would neither loiter nor slumber. On the open sea there was no safety for mutineers. They turned the head of the *Hermione* towards the nearest Spanish port, La Guayra, and, reaching it, surrendered the ship to the Spanish authorities, saying they had turned their officers adrift in the jolly-boat. The Spaniards were not disposed to scrutinise too closely the story. A transaction which put into their hands a fine British frigate was welcomed with rapture. The British admiral in command of the station sent in a flag of truce with the true account of the mutiny, and called upon the Spanish authorities, as a matter of honour, to surrender the *Hermione*, and hand over for punishment the murderers who had carried it off. The appeal, however, was wasted.

The *Hermione*, a handsome ship of 715 tons, when under the British flag, was armed with thirty-two 12-pounders, and had a complement of 220 men. The Spaniards cut new ports in her, increased her broadsides to forty-four guns, and gave her a complement, including a detachment of soldiers and artillerymen, of nearly 400 men. She thus became the most formidable ship carrying the Spanish flag in West Indian waters.

But the *Hermione*, under its new flag, had a very anxious existence. It became a point of honour with every British vessel on the station to look out for the ship which had become the symbol of mutiny, and make a dash at her, no matter what the odds. The brutal murders which attended the mutiny shocked even the fore-castle imagination, while the British officers were naturally eager to destroy the ship which represented revolt against discipline. Both fore and aft, too, the fact that what had been a British frigate was now carrying the flag of Spain was resented with a degree of exasperation which assured to the *Hermione*, under its new name and flag, a very warm time if it came under the fire of a British ship. The Spaniards kept the *Hermione* for just two years, but kept her principally in port, as the moment she showed her nose in the open sea some British ship or other, sleeplessly on the watch for her, bore down with disconcerting eagerness.

In September 1799 the *Hermione* was lying in Puerto Cabello, while the *Surprise*, a 28-gun frigate, under Captain Edward Hamilton, was waiting outside, specially detailed by the admiral, Sir Hyde Parker, to attack her the instant she put to sea. The *Surprise* had less than half the complement of the

Hermione, and not much more than half her weight of metal. But Hamilton was not only willing to fight the *Hermione* in the open sea against such odds; he told the admiral that if he would give him a barge and twenty men he would undertake to carry the *Hermione* with his boats while lying in harbour. Parker pronounced the scheme too desperate to be entertained, and refused Hamilton the additional boat's crew for which he asked. Yet this was the very plan which Hamilton actually carried out without the reinforcement for which he had asked!

Hamilton, to tempt the *Hermione* out, kept carefully out of sight of Puerto Cabello to leeward, yet in such a position that if the *Hermione* left the harbour her topsails must become visible to the look-outs on the masts-heads of the *Surprise*; and he kept that post until his provisions failed. Then, as the *Hermione* would not come out to him, he determined to go into the *Hermione*. Hamilton was a silent, much-meditating man, not apt to share his counsels with anybody. In the cells of his brooding and solitary brain he prepared, down to the minutest details, his plan for a dash at the *Hermione*—a ship, it must be remembered, not only more than double his own in strength, but lying moored head and stern in a strongly fortified port, under the fire of batteries mounting nearly 200 guns, and protected, in addition, by several gunboats. In a boat attack, too, Hamilton could carry only part of his crew with him; he must leave enough hands on board his own ship to work her. As a matter of fact, he put in his boats less than 100 men, and with them, in the blackness of night, rowed off to attack a ship that carried 400 men,

and was protected by the fire, including her own broadsides, of nearly 300 guns! The odds were indeed so great that the imagination of even British sailors, if allowed to meditate long upon them, might become chilled. Hamilton therefore breathed not a whisper of his plans, even to his officers, till he was ready to put them into execution, and, when he did announce them, carried them out with cool but unfaltering speed.

On the evening of October 24, Hamilton invited all the officers not on actual duty to dine in his cabin. The scene may be easily pictured. The captain at the head of his table, the merry officers on either side, the jest, the laughter, the toasts; nobody there but the silent, meditative captain dreaming of the daring deed to be that night attempted. When dinner was over, and the officers alone, with a gesture Hamilton arrested the attention of the party, and explained in a few grim sentences his purpose. The little party of brave men about him listened eagerly and with kindling eyes. "We'll stand by you, captain," said one. "We'll all follow you," said another. Hamilton bade his officers follow him at once to the quarter-deck. A roll of the drum called the men instantly to quarters, and, when the officers reported every man at his station, they were all sent aft to where, on the break of the quarter-deck, the captain waited.

It was night, starless and black, but a couple of lanterns shed a few broken rays on the massed seamen with their wondering, upturned faces, and the tall figure of the silent captain. Hamilton explained in a dozen curt sentences that they must run into port for supplies; that if they left their station some more fortunate ship would have the glory of taking the *Hermione*. "Our

only chance, lads," he added, "is to cut her out to-night!" As that sentence, with a keen ring on its last word, swept over the attentive sailors, they made the natural response, a sudden growling cheer. "I lead you myself," added Hamilton, whereupon came another cheer; "and here are the orders for the six boats to be employed, with the names of the officers and men." Instantly the crews were mustered, while the officers, standing in a cluster round the captain, heard the details of the expedition. Every seaman was to be dressed in blue, without a patch of white visible; the password was "Britannia," the answer "Ireland"—Hamilton himself being an Irishman.

By half-past seven the boats were actually hoisted out and lowered, the men armed and in their places, and each little crew instructed as to the exact part it was to play in the exciting drama. The orders given were curiously minute. The launch, for example, was to board on the starboard bow, but three of its men, before boarding, were first to cut the bower cable, for which purpose a little platform was rigged up on the launch's quarter, and sharp axes provided. The jolly-boat was to board on the starboard quarter, cut the stern cable, and send two men aloft to loose the mizzen topsail. The gig, under the command of the doctor, was to board on the larboard bow, and instantly send four men aloft to loose the fore topsail. If the *Hermione* was reached without any alarm being given, only the boarders were to leap on board; the ordinary crews of the boats were to take the frigate in tow. Thus, if Hamilton's plans were carried out, the Spaniards would find themselves suddenly boarded at six different points, their cables cut, their

topsails dropped, and their ship being towed out—and all this at the same instant of time. “The rendezvous,” said Hamilton to his officers, as the little cluster of boats drew away from the *Surprise*, “is the *Hermione’s* quarter-deck!”

Hamilton himself led, standing up in his pinnace, with his night-glass fixed on the doomed ship, and the boats followed with stem almost touching stern, and a rope passed from each boat to the one behind. Can a more impressive picture of human daring be imagined than these six boats pulling silently over the black waters and through the black night to fling themselves, under the fire of two hundred guns, on a foe four times more numerous than themselves! The boats had stolen to within less than a mile of the *Hermione*, when a Spanish challenge rang out of the darkness before them. Two Spanish gunboats were on guard within the harbour, and they at once opened fire on the chain of boats gliding mysteriously through the gloom. There was no longer any possibility of surprise, and Hamilton instantly threw off the rope that connected him with the next boat and shouted to his men to pull. The men, with a loud “Hurrah!” dashed their oars into the water, and the boats leaped forward towards the *Hermione*. But Hamilton’s boats—two of them commanded by midshipmen—could not find themselves so close to a couple of Spanish gunboats without “going” for them. Two of the six boats swung aside and dashed at the gunboats; only three followed Hamilton at the utmost speed towards the *Hermione*.

That ship, meanwhile, was awake. Lights flashed

from every port; a clamour of voices broke on the quiet of the night; the sound of the drum rolled along the decks, the men ran to quarters. Hamilton, in the pinnace, dashed past the bows of the *Hermione* to reach his station, but a rope, stretched from the *Hermione* to her anchor-buoy, caught the rudder of the pinnace and stopped her in full course, the coxswain reporting the boat "aground." The pinnace had swung round till her starboard oars touched the bend of the *Hermione*, and Hamilton gave the word to "board." Hamilton himself led, and swung himself up till his feet rested on the anchor hanging from the *Hermione's* cat-head. It was covered with mud, having been weighed that day, and his feet slipping off it, Hamilton hung by the lanyard of the *Hermione's* foreshroud. The crew of the pinnace meanwhile climbing with the agility of cats and the eagerness of boys, had tumbled over their own captain's shoulders as well as the bulwarks of the *Hermione*, and were on that vessel's forecastle, where Hamilton in another moment joined them. Here were sixteen men on board a vessel with a hostile crew four hundred strong.

Hamilton ran to the break of the forecastle and looked down, and to his amazement found the whole crew of the *Hermione* at quarters on the main-deck, with battle-lanterns lit, and firing with the utmost energy at the darkness, in which their excited fancy saw the tall masts of at least a squadron of frigates bearing down to attack them. Hamilton, followed by his fifteen men, ran aft to the agreed rendezvous on the *Hermione's* quarter-deck. The doctor, with his crew, had meantime boarded, and forgetting all about the

rendezvous, and obeying only the natural fighting impulse in their own blood, charged upon the Spaniards in the gangway.

Hamilton sent his men down to assist in the fight, waiting alone on the quarter-deck till his other boats boarded. Here four Spaniards rushed suddenly upon him; one struck him over the head with a musket with a force that broke the weapon itself, and knocked him semi-senseless upon the combings of the hatchway. Two British sailors, who saw their commander's peril, rescued him, and, with blood streaming down from his battered head upon his uniform, Hamilton flung himself into the fight at the gangway. At this juncture the black cutter, in command of the first lieutenant, with the *Surprise's* marines on board, dashed up to the side of the *Hermione*, and the men came tumbling over the larboard gangway. They had made previously two unsuccessful attempts to board. They came up first by the steps of the larboard gangway, the lieutenant leading. He was incontinently knocked down, and tumbled all his men with him as he fell back into the boat. They then tried the starboard of the *Hermione*, and were again beaten back, and only succeeded on a third attempt.

Three boats' crews of the British were now together on the deck of the *Hermione*. They did not number fifty men in all, but the marines were instantly formed up and a volley was fired down the after hatchway. Then, following the flash of their muskets, with the captain leading, the whole party leaped down upon the main-deck, driving the Spaniards before them. Some sixty Spaniards took refuge in the cabin, and shouted they

surrendered, whereupon they were ordered to throw down their arms, and the doors were locked upon them, turning them into prisoners. On the main-deck and under the fore-castle, however, the fighting was fierce and deadly; but by this time the other boats had come up, and the cables fore and aft were cut, as had been arranged. The men detailed for that task had raced up the Spaniard's rigging, and while the desperate fight raged below, had cast loose the topsails of the *Hermione*. Three of the boats, too, had taken her in tow. She began to move seaward, and that movement, with the sound of the rippling water along the ship's sides, appalled the Spaniards, and persuaded them the ship was lost.

On the quarter-deck the gunner and two men—all three wounded—stood at the wheel, and flung the head of the *Hermione* seaward. They were fiercely attacked, but while one man clung to the wheel and kept control of the ship, the gunner and his mate kept off the Spaniards. Presently the foretopsail filled with the land breeze, the water rippled louder along the sides of the moving vessel, the ship swayed to the wind. The batteries by this time were thundering from the shore, but though they shot away many ropes, they fired with signal ill-success. Only fifty British sailors and marines, it must be remembered, were actually on the deck of the *Hermione*, and amongst the crowd of sullen and exasperated Spaniards below, who had surrendered, but were still furious with the astonishment of the attack and the passion of the fight, there arose a shout to "blow up the ship." The British had to fire down through the hatchway upon the

swaying crowd to enforce order. By two o'clock the struggle was over, the *Hermione* was beyond the fire of the batteries, and the crews of the boats towing her came on board.

There is no more surprising fight in British history. The mere swiftness with which the adventure was carried out is marvellous. It was past six P.M. when Hamilton disclosed his plan to his officers, the *Hermione* at that moment lying some eight miles distant; by two o'clock the captured ship, with the British flag flying from her peak, was clear of the harbour. Only half a hundred men actually got on board the *Hermione*, but what a resolute, hard-smiting, strong-fisted band they were may be judged by the results. Of the Spaniards, 119 were killed, and 97 wounded, most of them dangerously. Hamilton's 50 men, that is, in those few minutes of fierce fighting, cut down four times their own number! Not one of the British, as it happened, was killed, and only 12 wounded, Captain Hamilton himself receiving no less than five serious wounds. The *Hermione* was restored to her place in the British Navy List, but under a new name—the *Retribution*—and the story of that heroic night attack will be for all time one of the most stirring incidents in the long record of brave deeds performed by British seamen.



MARSHAL SOULT

After a portrait by ROUILLARD

FRENCH AND ENGLISH IN THE PASSES

“ Beating from the wasted vines
Back to France her banded swarms,
Back to France with countless blows,
Till o'er the hills her eagles flew
Beyond the Pyrenean pines ;
Follow'd up in valley and glen
With blare of bugle, clamour of men,
Roll of cannon and clash of arms,
And England pouring on her foes,
Such a war had such a close.”

—TENNYSON.

“ I N both the passes, and on the heights above them, there was desperate fighting. They fought on the mountain-tops, which could scarcely have witnessed any other combat than that of the Pyrenean eagles; they fought among jagged rocks and over profound abysses; they fought amidst clouds and mists, for those mountain-tops were 5000 feet above the level of the plain of France, and the rains, which had fallen in torrents, were evaporating in the morning and noon-day sun, were steaming heavenward and clothing the loftiest peaks with fantastic wreaths.” These words describe, with picturesque force, the most brilliant and desperate, and yet, perhaps, the least known chapter in the great drama of the Peninsular war: the furious combats waged between British and French in the

gloomy valleys and on the mist-shrouded summits of the Western Pyrenees. The great campaign, which found its climax at Vittoria, lasted six weeks. In that brief period Wellington marched with 100,000 men 600 miles, passed six great rivers, gained one historic and decisive battle, invested two fortresses, and drove 120,000 veteran troops from Spain. There is no more brilliant chapter in military history; and, at its close, to quote Napier's clarion-like sentences, "the English general, emerging from the chaos of the Peninsular struggle, stood on the summit of the Pyrenees a recognised conqueror. From those lofty pinnacles the clangour of his trumpets pealed clear and loud, and the splendour of his genius appeared as a flaming beacon to warring nations."

But the great barrier of the Pyrenees stretched across Wellington's path, a tangle of mountains sixty miles in length; a wild table-land rough with crags, fierce with mountain torrents, shaggy with forests, a labyrinth of savage and snow-clad hills. On either flank a great fortress—San Sebastian and Pampeluna—was held by the French, and Wellington was besieging both at once, and besieging them without battering trains. The echoes of Vittoria had aroused Napoleon, then fighting desperately on the Elbe, and ten days after Vittoria the French Emperor, acting with the lightning-like decision characteristic of his genius, had despatched Soult, the ablest of all his generals, to bar the passes of the Pyrenees against Wellington. Soult travelled day and night to the scene of his new command, gathering reinforcements on every side as he went, and in an incredibly short period he had assembled on the French

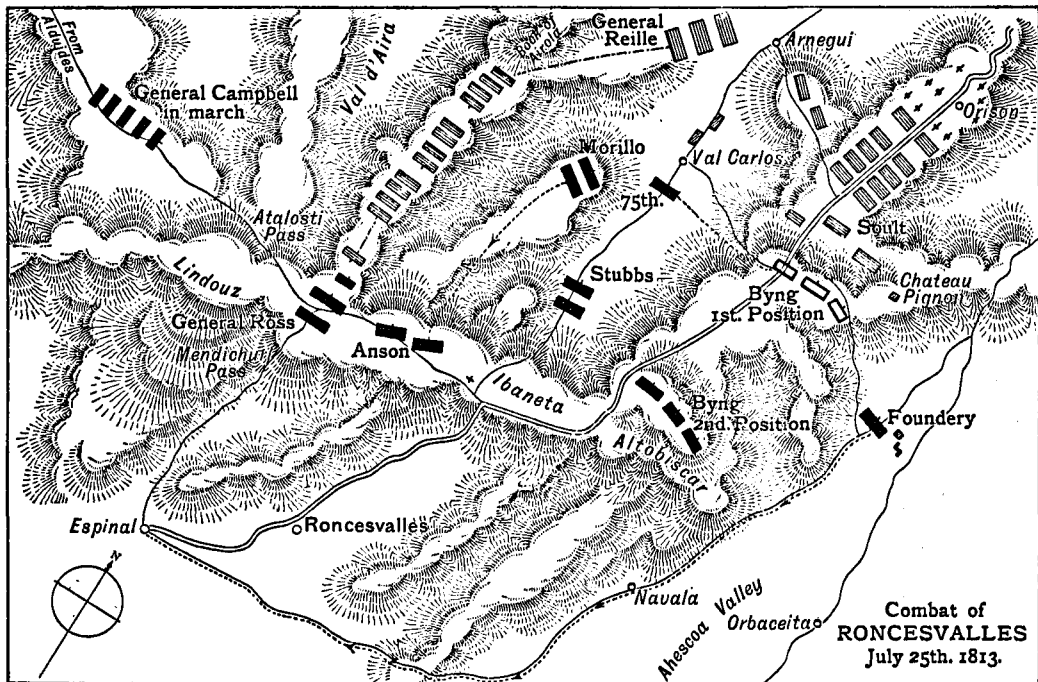
side of the Pyrenees a great and perfectly equipped force of 75,000 men.

Wellington could not advance and leave San Sebastian and Pampeluna on either flank held by the enemy. Some eight separate passes pierce the giant chain of the Pyrenees. Soult was free to choose any one of them for his advance to the relief of either of the besieged fortresses, but Wellington had to keep guard over the whole eight, and the force holding each pass was almost completely isolated from its comrades. Thus all the advantages of position were with Soult. He could pour his whole force through one or two selected passes, brush aside the relatively scanty force which held it, relieve San Sebastian or Pampeluna, and, with the relieved fortress as his base, fling himself on Wellington's flank while the allied armies were scattered over the slopes of the Pyrenees for sixty miles. And Soult was exactly the general to avail himself of these advantages. He had the swift vision, the resolute will, and the daring of a great commander. "It is on Spanish soil," he said in a proclamation to his troops, "your tents must next be pitched. Let the account of our successes be dated from Vittoria, and let the fête-day of his Imperial Majesty be celebrated in that city." These were brave words, and having uttered them, Soult led his gallant troops, with gallant purpose, into the gloomy passes of the Pyrenees, and for days following the roar of battle sank and swelled over the snow-clad peaks. But when the Imperial fête-day arrived—August 15—Soult's great army was pouring back from those same passes a shattered host, and the allied troops, sternly following them, were threatening French soil!

Soult judged Pampeluna to be in greater peril than San Sebastian, and moved by his left to force the passes of Roncesvalles and Maya. The rain fell furiously, the mountain streams were in flood, gloomy mists shrouded the hill-tops; but by July 24, with more than 60,000 fighting men, and nearly seventy guns, Soult was pouring along the passes he had chosen. It is impossible to do more than pick out a few of the purple patches in the swift succession of heroic combats that followed: fights waged on mountain summits 5000 feet above the sea-level, in shaggy forests, under tempests of rain and snow. D'Erlon, with a force of 20,000 men, took the British by surprise in the pass of Maya. Ross, an eager and hardy soldier, unexpectedly encountering the French advance guard, instantly shouted the order to "Charge!" and with a handful of the 20th flung himself upon the enemy, and actually checked their advance until Cole, who had only 10,000 bayonets to oppose to 30,000, had got into fighting form. A thick fog fell like a pall on the combatants, and checked the fight, and Cole, in the night, fell back. The French columns were in movement at daybreak, but still the fog hid the whole landscape, and the guides of the French feared to lead them up the slippery crags. At Maya, however, the French in force broke upon Stewart's division, holding that pass. The British regiments, as they came running up, not in mass, but by companies, and breathless with the run, were flung with furious haste upon the French. The 34th, the 39th, the 28th in succession crashed into the fight, but were flung back by overpowering numbers. It was a battle of 4000 men against 13,000.

The famous 50th, fiercely advancing, checked the French rush at one point; but Soult's men were full of the *elan* of victory, and swept past the British flanks. The 71st and 92nd were brought into the fight, and the latter especially clung sternly to their position till two men out of every three were shot down, the mound of dead and dying forming a solid barrier between the wasted survivors of the regiment and the shouting edge of the French advance. "The stern valour of the 92nd," says Napier, "principally composed of Irishmen would have graced Thermopylæ." No one need question the fighting quality of the Irish soldier, but, as a matter of fact, there were 825 Highlanders in the regiment, and 61 Irishmen. The British, however, were steadily pushed back, ammunition failed, and the soldiers were actually defending the highest crag with stones, when Barnes, with a brigade of the seventh division, coming breathlessly up the pass, plunged into the fight, and checked the French. Soult had gained ten of the thirty miles of road toward Pampeluna, but at an ominous cost, and, meanwhile, the plan of his attack was developed, and Wellington was in swift movement to bar his path.

Soult had now swung into the pass of Roncesvalles, and was on the point of attacking Cole, who held the pass with a very inadequate force, when, at that exact moment, Wellington, having despatched his aides in various directions to bring up the troops, galloped alone along the mountain flank to the British line. He was recognised; the nearest troops raised a shout; it ran, gathering volume as it travelled down all the slope, where the British stood waiting for the French



attack. That sudden shout, stern and exultant, reached the French lines, and they halted. At the same moment, round the shoulder of the hill on the opposite side of the pass, Soult appeared, and the two generals, near enough to see each other's features, eagerly scrutinised one another. "Yonder is a great commander," said Wellington, as if speaking to himself, "but he is cautious, and will delay his attack to ascertain the cause of these cheers. That will give time for the sixth division to arrive, and I shall beat him." Wellington's forecast of Soult's action was curiously accurate. He made no attack that day. The sixth division came up, and Soult was beaten!

There were two combats of Sauroren, and each was, in Wellington's own phrase, "bludgeon work"—a battle of soldiers rather than of generals, a tangle of fierce charges and counter-charges, of volleys delivered so close that they scorched the very clothes of the opposing lines, and sustained so fiercely that they died down only because the lines of desperately firing men crumbled into ruin and silence. Nothing could be finer than the way in which a French column, swiftly, sternly, and without firing a shot, swept up a craggy steep crowned by rocks like castles, held by some Portuguese battalions, and won the position. Ross's brigade, in return, with equal vehemence recharged the position from its side, and dashed the French out of it; the French in still greater force came back, a shouting mass, and crushed Ross's men. Then Wellington sent forward Byng's brigade at running pace, and hurled the French down the mountain side. At another point in the pass the French renewed their assault four times; in their second

assault they gained the summit. The 40th were in reserve at that point; they waited in steady silence till the edge of the French line, a confused mass of tossing bayonets and perspiring faces, came clear over the crest; then, running forward with extraordinary fury, they flung them, a broken, tumultuous mass, down the slope. In the later charges, so fierce and resolute were the French officers that they were seen dragging their tired soldiers up the hill by their belts!

It is idle to attempt the tale of this wild mountain fighting. Soult at last fell back, and Wellington followed, swift and vehement, on his track, and moved Alten's column to intercept the French retreat. The story of Alten's march is a marvellous record of soldierly endurance. His men pressed on with speed for nineteen consecutive hours, and covered forty miles of mountain tracks, wilder than the Otway Ranges, or the paths of the Australian Alps between Bright and Omeo. The weather was close; many men fell and died, convulsed and frothing at the mouth. Still, their officers leading, the regiment kept up its quick step, till, as evening fell, the head of the column reached the edge of the precipice overlooking the bridge across which, in all the confusion of a hurried retreat, the French troops were crowding. "We overlooked the enemy," says Cook in his "Memoirs," "at stone's-throw. The river separated us; but the French were wedged in a narrow road, with inaccessible rocks on one side, and the river on the other." Who can describe the scene that followed! Some of the French fired vertically up at the British; others ran; others shouted for quarter; some pointed with eager gestures to the wounded, whom they carried.

on branches of trees, as if entreating the British not to fire.

In nine days of continual marching, ten desperate actions had been fought, at what cost of life can hardly be reckoned. Napier, after roughly calculating the losses, says: "Let this suffice. It is not needful to sound the stream of blood in all its horrid depths." But the fighting sowed the wild passes of the Pyrenees thick with the graves of brave men.

Soult actually fought his way to within sight of the walls of Pampeluna, and its beleaguered garrison waved frantic welcomes to his columns as, from the flanks of the overshadowing hills, they looked down on the city. Then broken as by the stroke of a thunderbolt, and driven like wild birds caught in a tempest, the French poured back through the passes to French soil again. "I never saw such fighting," was Wellington's comment on the struggle.

For the weeks that followed, Soult could only look on while San Sebastian and Pampeluna fell. Then the allied outposts were advanced to the slopes looking down on France and the distant sea. It is recorded that the Highlanders of Hill's division, like Xenophon's Greeks 2000 years before them, broke into cheers when they caught their first glimpse of the sea, the great, wrinkled, azure-tinted floor, flecked with white sails. It was "the way home!" Bearn and Gascony and Languedoc lay stretched like a map under their feet. But the weather was bitter, the snow lay thick in the passes, sentinels were frozen at the outposts, and a curious stream of desertions began. The warm plains of sunny France tempted the half-frozen troops,

and Southey computes, with an arithmetical precision which is half-humorous, that the average weekly proportion of desertions was 25 Spaniards, 15 Irish, 12 English, 6 Scotch, and half a Portuguese! One indignant English colonel drew up his regiment on parade, and told the men that "if any of them wanted to join the French they had better do so at once. He gave them free leave. He wouldn't have men in the regiment who wished to join the enemy!"

Meanwhile Soult was trying to construct on French soil lines of defence as mighty as those of Wellington at Torres Vedras; and on October 7, Wellington pushed his left across the Bidassoa, the stream that marks the boundaries of Spain and France. On the French side the hills rise to a great height. One huge shoulder, called La Rhune, commands the whole stream; another lofty ridge, called the "Boar's Back," offered almost equal facilities for defence. The only road that crossed the hills rose steeply, with sharp zigzags, and for weeks the French had toiled to make the whole position impregnable. The British soldiers had watched while the mountain sides were scarred with trenches, and the road was blocked with abattis, and redoubt rose above redoubt like a gigantic staircase climbing the sky. The Bidassoa at its mouth is wide, and the tides rose sixteen feet.

But on the night of October 7—a night wild with rain and sleet—Wellington's troops marched silently to their assigned posts on the banks of the river. When day broke, at a signal-gun seven columns could be seen moving at once in a line of five miles, and

before Soult could detect Wellington's plan the river was crossed, the French entrenched camps on the Bidassoa won! The next morning the heights were attacked. The Rifles carried the Boar's Back with a single effort. The Bayonette Crest, a huge spur guarded by battery above battery, and crowned by a great redoubt, was attacked by Colborne's brigade and some Portuguese. The tale of how the hill was climbed, and the batteries carried in swift succession, cannot be told here. It was a warlike feat of the most splendid quality. Other columns moving along the flanks of the great hill alarmed the French lest they should be cut off, and they abandoned the redoubt on the summit. Colborne, accompanied by only one of his staff and half-a-dozen files of riflemen, came suddenly round a shoulder of the hill on the whole garrison of the redoubt, 300 strong, in retreat. With great presence of mind, he ordered them, in the sharpest tones of authority, to "lay down their arms," and, believing themselves cut off, they obeyed!

A column of Spanish troops moving up the flanks of the great Rhune found their way barred by a strong line of abattis and the fire of two French regiments. The column halted, and their officers vainly strove to get the Spaniards to attack. An officer of the 43rd named Havelock—a name yet more famous in later wars—attached to Alten's staff, was sent to see what caused the stoppage of the column. He found the Spaniards checked by the great abattis, through which flashed, fierce and fast, the fire of the French. Waving his hat, he shouted to the Spaniards to "follow him," and, putting his horse at the abattis, at one leap went

headlong amongst the French. There is a swift contagion in valour. He was only a light-haired lad, and the Spaniards with one vehement shout for "el chico blanco"—"the fair lad"—swept over abattis and French together!

FAMOUS CUTTING-OUT EXPEDITIONS

" We have fed our sea for a thousand years,
And she calls us, still unfed,
Though there's never a wave of all her waves
But marks our English dead :
We have strawed our best to the weed's unrest,
To the shark and the sheering gull.
If blood be the price of admiralty,
Lord God, we ha' paid in full !

There's never a flood goes shoreward now
But lifts a keel we manned ;
There's never an ebb goes seaward now
But drops our dead on the sand.

We must feed our sea for a thousand years,
For that is our doom and pride,
As it was when they sailed with the Golden Hind,
Or the wreck that struck last tide—
Or the wreck that lies on the spouting reef
Where the ghastly blue lights flare.
If blood be the price of admiralty,
If blood be the price of admiralty,
If blood be the price of admiralty,
Lord God, we ha' bought it fair !"

—KIPLING.

AS illustrations of cool daring, of the courage that does not count numbers or depend on noise, nor flinch from flame or steel, few things are more wonderful than the many cutting-out stories to be found in the history of the British navy. The soldier in the forlorn hope, scrambling up the breach swept by grape

and barred by a triple line of steadfast bayonets, must be a brave man. But it may be doubted whether he shows a courage so cool and high as that of a boat's crew of sailors in a cutting-out expedition.

The ship to be attacked lies, perhaps, floating in a tropic haze five miles off, and the attacking party must pull slowly, in a sweltering heat, up to the iron lips of her guns. The greedy, restless sea is under them, and a single shot may turn the eager boat's crew at any instant into a cluster of drowning wretches. When the ship is reached, officers and men must clamor over bulwarks and boarding-netting, exposed, almost helplessly, as they climb, to thrust of pike and shot of musket, and then leap down, singly and without order, on to the deck crowded with foes. Or, perhaps, the ship to be cut out lies in a hostile port under the guard of powerful batteries, and the boats must dash in through the darkness, and their crews tumble, at three or four separate points, on to the deck of the foe, cut her cables, let fall her sails, and—while the mad fight still rages on her deck and the great battery booms from the cliff overhead—carry the ship out of the harbour. These, surely, are deeds of which only a sailor's courage is capable! Let a few such stories be taken from faded naval records and told afresh to a new generation.

In July 1800 the 14-gun cutter *Viper*, commanded by acting-Lieutenant Jeremiah Coghlan, was attached to Sir Edward Pellew's squadron off Port Louis. Coghlan, as his name tells, was of Irish blood. He had just emerged from the chrysalis stage of a midshipman, and, flushed with the joy of an independent