



FAMOUS FIGHTERS  
OF THE FLEET



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## FAMOUS FIGHTERS OF THE FLEET





THE ENEMY IN SIGHT—'FULL SPEED AHEAD!'  
Looking down, on board a battleship, from the forward fighting-top.

FAMOUS FIGHTERS OF THE FLEET  
GLIMPSES THROUGH THE CANNON SMOKE IN THE DAYS  
OF THE OLD NAVY

BY

EDWARD FRASER

They left us a kingdom none can take,  
The realm of the circling sea,  
To be ruled by the rightful sons of Blake  
And the Rodneys yet to be.

HENRY NEWBOLT.

As it was in the days of long ago,  
And as it still shall be.

RUDYARD KIPLING.

*WITH ILLUSTRATIONS*

London

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1904

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## DEDICATION

The lasses and the little ones, Jack Tars, they look to  
you;  
The despots over yonder, let 'em do whate'er they  
please,  
God bless the little isle where a man may still be true,  
God bless the noble isle that is Mistress of the Seas.

TENNYSON.

## PREFACE

THIS book, as far as its subject is concerned, is something of an experiment, something of a new departure. It is an attempt to interest people by recalling some of the associations of the brave days of old that cluster

round and attach to certain historic man-of-war names. As far as that goes, indeed, having for its subject, as it has, the doings in battle of famous hearts of oak of the fighting times—

Those oaken giants of the ancient race  
That ruled all seas,

the book ought not to require an elaborate introduction, any special pleading on its behalf, among those whose pride it is to count themselves the

Sons and sires of seamen  
Whose realm is all the sea.

Further, it may possibly be, that in a degree, this book may serve as a reminder, even to some of those who to-day man His Majesty's Fleet, of what an inheritance is theirs, and how tremendous an obligation. The heroism of the Old Navy lives evermore in the man-of-war names of the modern navy, and should lead our sailors more even than they do, to 'glory,' in Kinglake's stirring language, in their ships' 'ancient names, connecting each with its great traditions, and founding upon the cherished syllables that consciousness of power which is a condition of ascendancy in war.'

The names of the men-of-war, the stories of which are told here, stand in the forefront among the famous names of the Sea Service for their associations with great and dashing exploits. They are possibly not the most widely known of all, not so familiar to everybody as are certain other names similarly associated with other famous feats of arms of the fighting days,—but that, after all, is perhaps all the more reason that their stories should be told now. 'We are few, but of the right sort,' said Nelson on one of the memorable occasions of his life, and it is hoped that the half-dozen stories within these covers may with justice say the same for themselves. The story of Lord Charles Beresford's little *Condor*, if not an Old Navy event, has much in keeping with the old order, and is included on its merits as being as gallant a piece of fighting-work in its way as has been done in the British Navy in our time.

My aim throughout has been to interest my readers. That a man-of-war's life-record is not necessarily a dull subject, a mere collection of dry facts, nor its incidents all matters of common knowledge, the following pages, it

is hoped, will show. In the main, as far as possible, the accounts and impressions of eye-witnesses of the various events related, as written down while the events were in progress or were still fresh in recollection, old logs and letters, diaries and journals, and the newspapers of the time, have been relied on. Strangely appealing and mutely eloquent at times are some of our old ship logs, with their pages faded and yellow and blurred, often with the stain on them of what was once, more than a century ago, a fleck of fresh sea spray that rested there just as it was whisked in through an open port; now and then indeed with on them a dull rusty brown smear or spot, grimly suggestive of something else. And, too, a terse, blunt note, scrawled painfully down after a day under fire by the hard fist of some rough Old Navy skipper, gone long since to his last reckoning, says more—a good deal more—often, than pages could do of smoother prose, by people who were not on the spot.

Practically all the literature of the subject in book form has been laid under contribution. Among modern writers I am particularly indebted to Captain Mahan and Professor J.K. Laughton, R.N., of King's College, London, and to Mr. David Hannay, to whose brilliant monograph on Rodney I am in a special degree under obligation.

For myself, I am well aware of the pitfalls that beset the path of the landsman who presumes to write of nautical matters. So, indeed, it has ever been since Agur the son of Jakeh, in the days of King Solomon, placed it on record that "the way of a ship in the midst of the sea" was "too wonderful." For any shortcomings of mine in this regard I ask the kindly indulgence of my naval readers.

Throughout the stories, I trust, the amplest justice has been done, and the fullest credit given, to those who were our gallant foes on the several occasions.

In conclusion, I am greatly indebted to Lord Selborne, First Lord of the Admiralty, for allowing me to use information which has proved invaluable for my purposes; to Mr. A.B. Tucker of the *Graphic* for assistance with my proofs and maps, and suggestions as to certain footnotes; and to Commander C.N. Robinson, R.N., for placing at my disposal his fine collection of old naval prints and drawings.

E.F.

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'READY, AYE READY!' OUR CRUISER *MONMOUTH* OF TO-DAY

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## I

### THE *MONMOUTHS* IN WAR

#### HOW ARTHUR GARDINER FOUGHT THE *FOUDROYANT*

Aye stout were her timbers and stoutly commanded,  
In the annals of glory unchalleng'd her name;  
Aye ready for battle when duty demanded,  
Aye ready to conquer—or die in her fame!

*Old Song.*

THE *Monmouth* of to-day is one of our 'County Cruisers'—and among them one of the smartest and best. Her special rôle in war-time will be to help in safeguarding the commerce of the British Empire on the high seas, to see that the corn-ships and the cattle-ships from across the Atlantic, on which the people of these islands depend for their existence from day to day, reach port without molestation by the 'corsair cruisers' of the enemy. It will be her duty to patrol on the trade routes far and wide, and chase off

hostile ships at sight, or run them down and fight them. All that, with other duties at times thrown in:—

For this is our office, to spy and make room.  
As hiding, yet guiding the foe to their doom;  
Surrounding, confounding, to bait and betray  
And tempt them to battle the seas' width away.

For her work, whatever it may be, the *Monmouth* is well equipped. She carries quick-firing guns and Krupp steel armour on her sides, and can steam at high speed—23 knots, or, on occasion, a trifle more.

A glance round on board this brand new twentieth-century cruiser of ours may be of interest at the outset.

An ugly customer to tackle looks the *Monmouth* in her 'war-paint' of sombre Navy grey, devoid, as are our modern men-of-war, of all that has to do with prettiness and the merely decorative.

Mis arreos son las armas,  
Mi descanso el pelear,

My ornaments are arms,  
My pastime is in war,

is the motto of the Royal Navy of our day.

A big ship is the *Monmouth*, a first-class cruiser of not far short of 10,000 tons displacement,—9800 tons, to be exact,—a floating weight heavier than all the mass of iron and steel in the Eiffel Tower. She measures over all, from end to end, from ram to rudder, 463½ feet. To give an idea, in another way, of the ship's size. If she were stood on end inside St. Paul's Cathedral, her bows would project 60 feet above the cross over the dome. Set up on end beside the Clock Tower at Westminster, the ship's length would overtop the tower by half as high again. The Monument piled on the top of the Nelson Column would need an extra 50 feet to equal the *Monmouth* from stem to stern. Propped up against Beachy Head, the *Monmouth* would overtop the turf at the edge of the cliff summit fully 90 feet. Laid lengthways inside St. Paul's, the *Monmouth* would fill the whole length of the nave and chancel from the western door to the reredos. Placed along the front of Buckingham Palace, the *Monmouth's* hull would overlap the façade

for 50 feet on either side. In width the ship is 66 feet broad amidships,—22 yards, just the length of a cricket-pitch, or one foot wider than London Bridge after its recent enlargement. It takes 5 tons weight of paint to coat the hull above water, and 6 tons to coat it below; and costs, the single item of paint by itself, every time it is laid on—£800.

Her three funnels each stand up 75 feet into the air—very nearly the height of the Round Tower of Windsor Castle above the mound at its foot. Each funnel weighs 20 tons, and costs £400 to make—a year's pay of a colonel of hussars. In diameter each is the exact size, to an inch, of the 'Two-penny Tube.' If they were laid flat, a life-guardsmen in King's Birthday regimentals could trot through them. Each lower mast is a steel tube, 80 feet from end to end and weighing 20 tons. The rudder weighs 18 tons; and the ram, a steel casting, 19 tons. The propellers each weigh 12 tons, and are each 16 feet across from tip to tip. The stern-post weighs 20 tons.

The armour on the conning-tower is 10 inches thick, and weighs 65 tons, the weight of a Great Western express engine. It cost £7500—a sum equal to the lumped salaries for one year of all the Sea Lords of the Admiralty. The 10 inches of nickel steel of which it is made can stand a harder blow than the 17 inches of iron armour on the turrets of the old *Inflexible*. The conning-tower is the main 'fighting station' of the ship, the nerve-centre of the mighty organisation. Thence in action, from behind a ring-fence of solid metal, are controlled the huge engines, far down below, impelled by

The strength of twice ten thousand horse  
That serve the one command,

—if one may vary Mr. Kipling,—engines of the power of twenty-two thousand horses, the strength of an army corps of cavalry; also the steering of the ship and the firing of the guns. By means of a simple arrangement in the three primary colours—red, blue, and yellow—painted in bands round the walls of the conning-tower inside, the captain can tell at a glance, at any moment, which of his guns, and how many of them, can train on an enemy at any given point.

The *Monmouth's* 'fighting-weight' is another matter. Fourteen 6-inch guns, Vickers-Maxims of the latest pattern, contribute something to that. This is the sort of weapon the 6-inch gun is. Imagine one set up in Trafalgar Square to fire with extreme elevation. Its 100-pound shells would drop on Kingston

Bridge in one direction; beyond Harrow, ten miles off, in another. Other shells would burst over Barnet; sweep the woodland rides of Epping Forest; startle the tennis-players on the trim lawns of Chislehurst in Kent. And not many seconds would elapse between the flash of the discharge and the shell doing its work. Ten miles, of course, is the farthest that the gun could shoot, its 'estimated extreme range.' In war-time that sort of firing would not be worth while, as it would be impossible to mark the shots. Seven miles, roughly, or 12,000 yards, is the limit the gun is sighted for. Then again, imagine our gun firing at a mark. At 2000 yards, the minimum engaging distance in naval war because of torpedoes, aiming from Trafalgar Square at a target set up, say, in Ludgate Circus or at Hyde Park Corner, the shot would smash through a slab of wrought iron 14 inches thick as easily as a stone goes through a pane of glass. Firing at 6000 yards, the maximum distance for opening action in ordinary circumstances, at a target set up at Hammersmith, for example, the shot would cut a hole clean through 6½ inches of wrought iron—armour 2 inches thicker than our first ironclad, the *Warrior*, had on her sides. Fired with a full charge of 25 lbs. of cordite, the shot leaves the gun at a speed of 2775 feet (or half a mile and forty-five yards) a second—a pace capable of carrying it in a minute as far as Reading; with energy sufficient to toss Cleopatra's Needle 30 feet into the air as lightly as a schoolboy flings up a wicket, or heave the biggest railway express engine 100 feet high, to hurl an elephant over the Eiffel Tower, or a cart-horse out of sight to three times the height of Snowdon.

Every round from one of the *Monmouth's* 6-inch guns costs the country £12. The gun itself costs £1700. As a fact, each gun takes five months of work, night and day, to make; and weighs 7½ tons, like all modern naval guns of any size, it is a 'wire gun,' constructed of steel tape wound round an inner tube or 'barrel,' in the same way that the string is laid round the handle of a cricket-bat, and jacketed over by an outer steel tube. Upwards of 18,200 yards of steel 'wire' are used for each 6-inch gun, 10½ miles of it—a length that, pulled out straight, would stretch for half the distance between Dover and Calais. The set of sights for each gun, as an item by itself, costs £80.

The *Monmouth's* 6-inch guns are each capable of firing from five to eight shots a minute, and there are on board, besides, ten 12-pounders, three 3-

pounders, and some Maxims. The 12-pounders cost £300 each, and take four months to make.

In action, the *Monmouth*, fighting both broadsides at once, would let fly at the enemy at each discharge two-thirds of a ton of projectiles; within the first minute 3½ tons weight of metal; every five minutes, 18 tons—all bursting shells. That is the *Monmouth's* 'fighting-weight.'

To supply her guns the *Monmouth* carries, stowed away in the different magazines far down in the recesses of the hold, 200 tons weight of ammunition—30 to 40 tons of it in cordite cartridges; the rest in shot and loaded shell, with each projectile painted its differentiating colour—white-banded 'armour-piercers,' red-tipped shrapnel, yellow lyddite, and so on.

Electricity works the great hooded turrets on the forecastle and quarter-deck, each of 4-inch nickel steel and carrying a pair of 6-inch guns, mounted side by side in double-barrelled sporting-gun fashion on a twin mounting, training the eighty odd tons of dead-weight to right and left, or from one side of the ship to the other, through three-quarters of a circle, as easily as one wheels one's arm-chair in front of the fire after dinner. Electricity also 'feeds' the guns, both in the turrets and in the casemates, as fast as they can be fired, bringing up the ammunition to the guns directly from the magazines.

The 4-inch Krupp steel armour on the *Monmouth's* sides at the water-line, from the ram for three-quarters of the ship's length aft, cost to manufacture, in round figures, £60,000—equal to the total yearly income of four Archbishops of Canterbury or six Lord Chancellors. Two 'turtle-back' decks of thin steel armour further help to keep out shot. Altogether, in dead-weight, the armour all over the ship—on the sides, decks, bulkheads, conning-tower, casemates, barbettes, ammunition-supply tubes—amounts to 1800 tons, a fifth of the ship's entire displacement weight in sea-going trim.

Then another detail, and the most important of all. Speed, for a cruiser, is, of course, the prime essential. It means the power of picking out a foe, of running down a foe, the command of the weather-gage, the choice of the range, the power of bringing on or refusing battle. Twenty-three knots an hour, or 26½ statute miles, is the *Monmouth's* best pace. Twenty-three knots an hour means the covering of a land mile in 2 minutes 36 seconds; or 100

yards in 7-4/5 seconds. In modern athletics 9-3/5 seconds is the record for 100 yards. The record for the Oxford and Cambridge boat race works out at under 11 knots an hour—considerably less than the *Monmouth's* everyday cruising speed in time of peace.

How it is done is, of course, an engine-room affair. Two main engines drive the ship: one engine to each of the immense 16-foot-wide twin-screws. At full speed they work up to an aggregate power of twenty-two thousand horses: eleven thousand horses each engine. Thirty-one boilers, of the much-maligned Belleville type, supply the steam. What that means the staff below have good reason to know. The thirty-one boilers, with their 'economisers,' provide seven thousand tubes to be looked after and kept clean. Collectively, the boiler-tubes offer to the fires in the stoke-hold a total heating-surface of 50,300 square feet: an area, that is, of an acre and a sixth, a space about equal to Trafalgar Square within the roadway, or the floor-space of the Albert Hall. Each boiler has two furnaces to heat it, making sixty-two in all. When all are alight they burn 40 tons of coal at once, on a grate-area of 1610 square feet; practically giving off a square space of flame 170 yards each way.

The main engines, however, are by no means all. There are on board sixty-five separate 'auxiliary engines' besides. The weight of the machinery alone on board the *Monmouth*, amounts to 1750 tons—a fourth of the total weight of the ship.

Six hundred and eighty officers and men form the complement of the *Monmouth*, and their pay costs the nation £32,000 a year. To feed them, 'bare navy,' costs two-thirds of that sum a year. The ship herself, as she floats, represents to the country a value not very far short of three-quarters of a million sterling, or, put in concrete form, 8 tons of sovereigns—a railway truck packed tight. Our first ironclad, the *Warrior*, cost less than half the amount expended on the *Monmouth*. The *Collingwood*, a first-class battleship of eighteen years ago, cost to complete £20,000 less than the price paid for the *Monmouth* cruiser of to-day. Ten *Victorys* or *Royal Georges* could have been built and fitted for sea at the cost of this one cruiser of ours.

Such, in brief, are some of the 'points' of our modern *Monmouth*. The reputation that she has to live up to, the ancestry of her famous name, in

particular the magnificent feat of arms that one of our *Monmouths*, the most famous of all, once achieved—these have now to be told.

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The *Monmouth*, as a fact, bears a name that ranks second to none for brilliant associations and memories of heroism. Hardly another man-of-war has so many 'battle honours' to its credit. No ship of the Old Navy perhaps ever won such distinction in battle for sheer hard fighting as did the six *Monmouths*, one after the other, from which our cruiser *Monmouth* of to-day takes her name. Were it possible for His Majesty's ships-of-war to have ship flags for display at reviews or on other ceremonial occasions, just as the regiments of the army use regimental colours, the *Monmouth's* flag would show a record of upwards of thirty fights, and even then the list would not be complete. No flag, probably, could display the detailed record of the occasions on which *Monmouths* of old did their duty before the enemy at sea.

The navy owes the name to Charles the Second, who introduced it on the roll of the fleet as a mark of special favour and a paternal compliment to Lucy Walters' ill-starred son, the vanquished of Sedgemoor, whose headless body now lies beneath the altar of the Chapel of St. Peter ad Vincula in the Tower.

That was in the year of the Dutch attack on Chatham, and the same year saw our first *Monmouth's* first fight. Mr. Pepys's 'complaints' notwithstanding, the *Monmouth* made a good show on the occasion.<sup>[1]</sup> Her allotted duty was to bar the approach to the iron chain stretched across the Medway below Upnor Castle, and Captain Clarke, the *Monmouth's* captain, kept his ship at her post until the position was no longer tenable. The *Monmouth* later on was in the thick of the fight in the tremendous battle off Solebay, where James, Duke of York, defeated the Dutch fleet under Admiral Ruyter after nearly sixteen hours at close quarters; in Prince Rupert's three battles with the Dutch in 1673; and at La Hogue.

Our second *Monmouth* was with Rooke when he made his swoop on the Vigo galleons—which dashing affair is commemorated to this day in the name of Vigo Street, off Regent Street;—took a distinguished part in the

capture of Gibraltar; fought the French off Malaga; and helped Byng—Sir George Byng, Viscount Torrington, the father of the other Byng known to English history, the Byng who beat the enemy and was not shot—to settle the Spanish fleet off Cape Passaro in the year 1718.

The next *Monmouth* had a hand in defeating two French fleets within six months—first with Anson and then with Hawke, in May and October 1747. This was the *Monmouth* whose brilliant capture of the great French flagship the *Foudroyant* in a desperate ship-to-ship duel at night forms our main story here.

The fourth *Monmouth*, at the close of a hot and bloody day, after a drawn battle with the French in the West Indies, in July 1779, received the unique compliment of being toasted that same night at dinner by the officers of the enemy's flagship—'To the brave little black English ship!' Nor is it easy to match another story of how this same *Monmouth*, in battle in the East Indies in 1782, resisted the fiercest onsets of the mighty De Suffren and his best captains, holding her own at bay, and stubbornly standing up to five French seventy-fours at once. Her main and mizen masts were shot down; the wheel was cleared of the men at it three times; the colours were shot away twice. Still, though, the *Monmouth* fought on—until help came. Only three men were left alive on the *Monmouth's* quarter-deck when the fight was over; one being her captain, James Alms, a sturdy son of Sussex, who stood at his post dauntlessly to the end, though twice wounded by splinters, with his coat ripped half off by a shot, with two bullet-holes through his hat, and his wig set on fire.

Yet another *Monmouth* proved herself the bravest of the brave at Camperdown.

The brief summary of the *Monmouths'* deeds of valour here given is, of course, not nearly all. It would take a big book to do adequate justice to the *Monmouths'* war record—and there need not be a dull page in the volume.

So we pass on to what is by common consent accounted the brightest gem in the *Monmouth's* coronet of fame, her fight with the *Foudroyant*, a French ship powerful enough to have sent the *Monmouth* to the bottom at the first broadside, a set-to that lasted half through a February night, and ended the right way.

Now clear the ring, for hand to hand  
The manly wrestlers take their stand.

It was in February 1758, in the middle of the Seven Years' War. The British Mediterranean fleet in that month was blockading a French squadron that had sought shelter in the Spanish naval harbour of Carthagena. The squadron, numbering seven ships of the line and two frigates, had set sail from Toulon in January to reinforce the French fleet on the coast of Canada, and assist in the defence of Louisbourg, Cape Breton, which, as was known at Versailles, was to be attacked in force in the following summer. They counted on being able to evade the British Mediterranean fleet and give it the slip by running through the Straits of Gibraltar under cover of a dark winter's night. But *ils se faisaient un tableau*, that fault against which Napoleon in later days was always cautioning his generals. It all depended on the chance of their getting past Gibraltar unseen.

Unfortunately for the French plans, the British Admiralty were well aware of what was to be attempted. The fitting-out of the squadron at Toulon had been carried on with the greatest secrecy, but not so secretly that the British admiral at the head of the Mediterranean fleet had not learnt all about it. Admiral Osborn had also been warned from home of the probable destination of the French ships. The result was that when the French came they found him cruising with twelve line-of-battle ships a little to eastward of the Rock, and with a chain of look-out frigates stretching right across from Ceuta to Cape de Gata. M. de la Clue, the French admiral, found his way out of the Mediterranean barred, and having only seven ships of the line with him to the British commander's twelve, he turned aside and ran into the 'neutral' harbour of Carthagena.<sup>[2]</sup> He only got inside the port in the nick of time. Just as M. de la Clue's ships let go anchor within the Spanish batteries. Admiral Osborn's ships, duly warned by signals from their look-out frigates of every movement of the French squadron, came hastening up.

De la Clue sent off an urgent appeal for reinforcements, and in response five fresh ships of the line and a frigate were despatched from Toulon, in charge of the Marquis du Quesne, *Chef d'Escadre*, or, as we call the rank, Commodore. With these additional ships De la Clue would have the same numbers exactly as his adversary, and should, the French considered, be able to fight his way out. The Toulon ships sailed for Carthagena on the 25th of February with the idea of running the gauntlet of the blockading

fleet and joining M. de la Clue at night. Again, however, Admiral Osborn was forewarned of the enemy's approach, and his look-out frigates did their work. Two of the French ships, pushing ahead of the others, managed, during the night of the 27th of February, to get past the British scouting frigates off Cape Palos and turn into Carthagea unseen, but the main French force, three ships of the line and the frigate, were caught in the act.

Soon after daybreak on the 28th of February—a bright, clear morning—the British frigate *Gibraltar*, cruising some twenty leagues north-east of Cape Palos, spied four strange sail away on the horizon to the north-east of her. The *Gibraltar's* signals were repeated by the *St. George* and the *Culloden* and then Admiral Osborn ordered part of his fleet off Carthagea to head towards the strangers and chase. He had at the same time, of course, to keep his grip on M. de la Clue inside Carthagea and prevent him from making use of the opportunity to break out.

The strangers showed no colours and were too far off to be identified, but it was certain they could only be French ships. Indeed, too, as the English turned towards them, they began to edge away. A little later they divided and went off on different courses. One ship, a two-decker, stood in directly for the land. The smallest, the frigate, stood seaward, to the south-west. To cut off the two-decker and stop her from getting into Spanish waters the *Monarch* and *Montague* were detached and went off chasing to the north-west. The frigate was already practically out of reach. A little later the remaining two French ships, both two-deckers, were seen to draw apart. One of them headed as if to work round into Carthagea. The other, the biggest ship of the whole squadron, held on down the coast, as though to draw the British after her. In pursuit of the first of these two two-deckers went the *Revenge* and the *Berwick*. The *Monmouth* and the *Swiftsure*, with the *Hampton Court* following them, went after the big ship. Of what force the French ships were, or their identity, nobody of course could tell as yet. They were too far off for the ports on their broadsides to be counted.

It is with the *Monmouth* and her chase that we are particularly concerned.

From off the *Monmouth's* deck all that at first could be seen of the chase was that she 'loomed large,' as the old sea phrase went—looked likely to be a tough customer. That, though, was so much the better. Going ahead before the wind with every reef shaken out, on her best point of sailing, the

*Monmouth* soon outstripped the *Swiftsure* and the *Hampton Court*. By early in the afternoon she had left them both some leagues astern—mere dots on the far horizon. At the same time she was overhauling the big Frenchman fast. The *Monmouth* had the reputation of being the fastest line-of-battle ship in the Royal Navy. 'She never gave chase to any ship that she did not come up with,' said the newspapers of her, when, in 1767, the *Monmouth*, unfit for further service and worn out after twenty-five years on the effective list of the fleet, was brought in to be broken up. To-day the ship displayed a speed in keeping with her reputation. Hand over hand the *Monmouth* drew up nearer and nearer to her prospective foe, which loomed ever larger and larger. From the stranger's vast bulk and what gun-ports of her double tier could be counted end-on, from nearly dead astern, the chase was either an eighty-gun ship or an eighty-four.

If that was really so, it made all the difference in the world. French eighty-fours were at that day the most powerfully armed ships afloat. A French eighty-four carried 42-pounders as her main armament, and threw a broadside of 1136 lbs. at every discharge. That, in point of fact, was heavier metal than the *Royal George* herself, the biggest first-rate in the British fleet, could throw. The *Monmouth* was a small third-rate, one of the very smallest ships of the line in the Royal Navy, a sixty-four. Her heaviest guns were 24-pounders. Her total broadside amounted only to some 540 lbs. There would also be on board the eighty-four from 800 to 900 men, as against 470 in the *Monmouth*.

Who and what was the stranger? One man on board the *Monmouth* knew, and apparently one man only.

The captain of the *Monmouth* knew. He had already identified the ship ahead of him as the great *Foudroyant* of 84 guns, until recently the flagship of the French Mediterranean fleet. Arthur Gardiner had good reason to know the *Foudroyant*.

Gardiner had been Byng's flag-captain, and the *Foudroyant* had been the flagship of the French fleet off Minorca. The evidence at Byng's trial had absolutely exonerated Captain Gardiner.<sup>[3]</sup> It showed that Admiral Byng himself had practically taken the charge of the flagship out of his captain's hands, and had rejected his advice to go straight for the enemy without waiting for ships that were out of station, but in spite of that Gardiner had

refused to be satisfied. He felt his connection with the affair bitterly, as a personal disgrace, he said. Indeed, as he told one of his friends, he only lived to find an opportunity of wiping out what was a slur on his good name, a stain on his honour. Apparently the idea became fixed in Captain Gardiner's mind that he was a marked man, that people said things of him; especially, that it was thought he had been 'shy' about laying his ship alongside the French flagship. That was intolerable, and out of it grew a feeling of peculiar antipathy towards this particular ship, the *Foudroyant*, that had become a sort of monomania with Captain Gardiner. It must, in these circumstances, have seemed to Captain Gardiner like the hand of Providence, when, some four months after the Byng court-martial, he was appointed to the *Monmouth* and ordered out to the Mediterranean. And now his day had actually come. There was the very *Foudroyant* right ahead of him, by herself, and with his own ship overtaking her fast.

At a quarter-past one in the afternoon the *Foudroyant* ran a red flag up to the foretopgallant mast-head.<sup>[4]</sup> Apparently it was meant as a signal to her nearest consort, the ship that the *Revenge* and *Berwick* were in pursuit of, *L'Orphée*, to hoist her colours and commence firing. As the *Monmouth* as yet was out of gunshot, three or four miles distant, the *Foudroyant* had no need for the moment to hoist her own colours—nor did she show any until towards four o'clock, when the *Monmouth* had at length begun to come within range. Then, exactly at six minutes to the hour, as an eye-witness notes, the French flag was displayed on the *Foudroyant's* ensign staff, and a commodore's broad pennant at the main.

The *Monmouth's* men had not long to wait.

On the stroke of four o'clock a spurt of flame leapt from one of the stern-chase ports of the *Foudroyant*, and as the smoke blew away to leeward the boom of a heavy gun came over the waters towards the *Monmouth*. It was the first shot. The ball splashed in the water not far off, and then the *Foudroyant* fired a second shot—followed quickly by a third. The enemy had got the range. That, too, was enough for Captain Gardiner. His heavier guns could at least carry as far as the *Foudroyant's* guns, and without waiting longer the *Monmouth's* bow-chasers took up the game. 'Soon after being in gunshot of our chase,' says Lieutenant Carkett, the first lieutenant of the *Monmouth*, in his journal, 'she, having up French colours, began to fire her stern-chase at us, which we soon after returned with our bow-chase,

and continued for about an hour, then ceased firing as she did, except a single gun now and then.<sup>[5]</sup>

By this time, about five o'clock, the wind had fallen very light, but the *Monmouth* still continued to gain steadily on her opponent. She was single-handed. The *Swiftsure* and the *Hampton Court* were hull down on the horizon, though they were still following with all sail set. The rest of the fleet was quite out of sight.

Just before the *Foudroyant* began firing, Captain Gardiner, as we are told, called all hands aft. His address to them was brief, but what he said was to the point. 'That ship has to be taken, my lads, above our match though she looks. I shall fight her until the *Monmouth* sinks.' Then they piped down and returned to quarters.

A little before this, while pacing up and down the quarter-deck with Lieutenant Campbell, a young army officer from Gibraltar who was on board in charge of a small detachment of soldiers (600 men from the Gibraltar garrison had been lent to Admiral Osborn to assist on deck in ships that were short-handed), he had said to the young officer, pointing to the *Foudroyant* ahead of them: 'Whatever happens to you and me, that ship must go into Gibraltar.'

In that spirit Captain Gardiner took the *Monmouth* into action as the evening began to close in—

Her ports all up, her battle-lanterns lit,  
And her leashed thunders gathering for their  
leap.

Captain Gardiner had a worthy antagonist. The Marquis du Quesne-Menneville, whose broad pennant flew at the *Foudroyant's* mast-head that day, had the reputation of being as able an officer as any in the French service. No braver man ever wore the *bleu du Roi*. And he commanded a man-of-war that was, by common consent, considered the finest ship in all King Louis's navy. Only a short time before this a French officer, a prisoner of war, in conversation with one of his captors, had said of the *Foudroyant*: 'No single ship in the world can take her, not even your new *Royal George*! She can fight all to-day, and to-morrow, and the next day, and still go on fighting!' The *Foudroyant's* weight of metal, indeed, was heavy enough to

have sent the *Monmouth* to the bottom at a single discharge. M. du Quesne, however, did not think fit to let the *Monmouth* come up alongside. He would not venture to bring-to and accept the *Monmouth's* challenge because of the *Swiftsure* and the *Hampton Court*. They were a long way off, several hours distant, but they were to him, as far as the *Foudroyant* was concerned, an enemy 'in being,' and he kept on before the wind.

'At half-past seven,' says Lieutenant Carkett, 'we came very nigh her, gave our ship a yaw, and discharged what guns we could bring to bear on her.' This meant checking the ship's way and hauling up at an angle to her course, turning off as it were to let fly a broadside right ahead. Apparently the *Monmouth* lost ground in so doing. According to the first lieutenant's log, Captain Gardiner did not repeat the man[oe]uvre, and it took the *Monmouth* nearly an hour to regain the distance that she dropped back.

'At half-past eight,' says Lieutenant Carkett, 'we came to a close engagement.'



IN ACTION AT MIDNIGHT

The *Monmouth* now ranged up on the *Foudroyant's* larboard quarter and hurled into her a crashing broadside of round-shot and grape, at half musket range. It was the first heavy blow, and it got home. Then fastening with a bulldog's grip on her big opponent, the *Monmouth* set to and blazed away fiercely into the French ship as fast as the guns could be loaded and run out.

Nothing could be more masterly than the way the British captain handled his ship. Captain Gardiner knew his business. He meant to settle his personal score with the *Foudroyant* once for all; but he had no idea of sacrificing needlessly the life of a single man. There was to be no reckless clapping of the little *Monmouth* side by side with the *Foudroyant*. Gardiner was well aware of the weight of his opponent's metal. He laid the *Monmouth* on the *Foudroyant's* quarter and kept her there, skilfully placing her in a way that allowed every gun on the *Monmouth's* broadside to train on the enemy, while, at the same time, the French were unable to bring a number of their guns in the fore-part of the ship to bear.

It was of course quite dark when the battle at close quarters began—half-past eight on a February evening. The moon, within two days of the last quarter, would not rise till between eleven and midnight. Each ship, however, had her distinguishing lights hoisted, and the gleam of the battle-lanterns through the *Foudroyant's* ports gave the *Monmouth's* men sufficient mark to lay their guns by. More they did not want.

The *Swiftsure* at this time was about nine miles off, as her log notes, steering for the spot by the flash of the guns.

The *Hampton Court* was a couple of miles or so astern of the *Swiftsure*.

The enemy, for their part, with their heavier guns, smote the *Monmouth* hard and answered back her fire with equal spirit. Even now though, the French commodore would not risk bringing-to for a space and making an effort to get the *Monmouth* fairly under his broadside, where his crushing superiority in gun-power might well have been decisive. He held on instead, drifting slowly before the light wind, fighting as he went. So far there was little to disquiet M. du Quesne in the way that things were going. As a fact, during the first hour, the terrific punishment that the *Foudroyant's* 42-pounders were able to inflict told heavily on the *Monmouth*, and it looked as though the *Foudroyant* could well hold her own to the end. Captain Gardiner, however, stuck to his task unflinchingly. All the time an incessant

fire of musketry was kept up from the *Foudroyant's* tops, and from her towering bulwarks, which were lined with soldiers all along the length of the ship.

They did considerable execution among the men at the upper-deck guns, and, among their other victims, wounded Captain Gardiner himself with a musket bullet through the arm. It was an ugly wound, but the gallant captain of the *Monmouth* refused to quit the deck, and had the wound bound up as he stood. This was about a quarter to nine.

Fate, however, unhappily had more in store for Arthur Gardiner that night. At half-past nine, the captain received a second and a mortal wound. 'Captain Gardiner received a mortal wound which obliged him to be conveyed off the deck,' Lieutenant Carkett briefly records. A grape-shot struck Gardiner on the forehead, according to the journal of Lieutenant Baron,<sup>[6]</sup> the third lieutenant, and he was carried below insensible, to linger in the cockpit until four next morning, when he died, 'having been speechless since he received his wound.'

Neither account exactly tallies with the story of Gardiner's fall that reached England. According to that, poor Gardiner was conscious for some moments after he was struck down, and was able to recognise Carkett, as the first lieutenant bent over him. He bade Carkett, it was said, as his last orders, 'to fight the *Foudroyant* to the last, and sink alongside rather than quit her.' In reply, the account proceeds, Carkett swore to the captain to fight the battle out to the very last, and sent on the spot for the carpenter and had the *Monmouth's* ensign nailed to the staff, after which he declared with an oath that he would shoot dead on the spot any man who should even whisper a thought of lowering it. So, indeed, it well may have been. Robert Carkett could be trusted to die hard. He was just the man to make such a threat and to keep it. Lieutenant Carkett was a rough sea-dog.

As senior officer after Captain Gardiner's fall, Carkett took charge on the quarter-deck, and the battle went on with even more desperate fury than before:—

Spars were splinter'd, decks were shatter'd,  
Bullets fell like rain;  
Over mast and deck were scatter'd  
Blood and brains of men.

Hour after hour, from half-past nine to twelve o'clock, the *Monmouth* hung doggedly on the quarter of the great *Foudroyant* and refused to be shaken off. She kept pace with the Frenchman steadily, not losing a foot, and not drawing nearer; mercilessly pounding away into the *Foudroyant's* hull at a short seventy-yards range, as fast as the shot could be brought to the guns. Nor did the *Foudroyant's* fire in reply slacken appreciably until midnight was past. Then, at length, the enemy seemed to tire, and the *Foudroyant's* fire began to grow irregular and gradually to weaken.



THE *MONMOUTH* FIGHTING THE *FOUDROYANT* AT CLOSE  
QUARTERS. THE FINAL ROUND—1.30 A.M.

'At half past [one] her main-mast was shot away. She then ceased firing'  
(Log of Lieutenant Carkett of the *Monmouth*).

It was the beginning of the end. Aided by the clear moonlight,—by half-an-hour after midnight the moon was well up,—the *Monmouth's* gunners made better practice than before. They redoubled their efforts, as gun after gun in the *Foudroyant's* ports stopped firing, until, a few minutes after one o'clock, the big vessel ceased resisting altogether, and not a shot came from her. The *Foudroyant* lay helpless, like a log on the water, dismasted, hammered to a standstill, a silenced and beaten ship.

Lieutenant Carkett in his log thus summarises what passed in the last hour. 'Half-past 12: Our mizen was shot away. At 1 A.M. the enemy's was shot away. Also at half-past her main-mast was shot away. She then ceased firing, having slackened her fire for some time before.'

Still, though, the *Foudroyant* made no sign of giving in. *Lassata, nondum satiata*—all was not quite over yet. So the *Monmouth* continued her

cannonade. Until the enemy made the customary sign of surrender, Lieutenant Carkett had no option but to go on firing. Commodore du Quesne was holding out *pour l'honneur du pavillon*: and also for his own personal credit. He had not long to wait. Within a few minutes of the *Foudroyant's* fire giving over the *Swiftsure* arrived on the scene. Ranging up under the *Monmouth's* stern, she hailed across requesting her to stop her fire.

The *Monmouth* held her hand. She had done her work, and there was no need to do more now. As the *Monmouth's* gunner, reporting on the night's expenditure, stated, the ship had fired away no fewer than 80 barrels of gunpowder (about four tons weight of powder), with 1546 round-shot, 540 grape-shot, and 156 double-headed shot.

Then the *Swiftsure* rounded in to pass between the *Monmouth* and the *Foudroyant*. All her batteries were lighted up, showing the men standing ready by the guns. Captain Stanhope as he came abreast hailed the *Foudroyant*, asking if she had surrendered. Her ensign was down. It had been shot away about the same time that the mizen-mast went. The reply came instantly—two shotted guns in rapid succession, and a sharp crackle of musketry. M. le Marquis's honour was not satisfied yet. What followed was inevitable. The *Swiftsure* had now to administer the *coup de grâce* according to the rules of naval war. As the sound of the *Foudroyant's* defiance died away, the *Swiftsure's* double tier burst into flame, and the British seventy-four's broadside crashed into the French ship, sweeping her decks from stem to stern. It was enough. The next instant down came the *Foudroyant's* lights and she called for quarter. The battle was over.

The Marquis du Quesne had refused to surrender to the *Monmouth* single-handed. It was a point of honour. In the presence of a second British ship and a fresh ship, a seventy-four, his honour was fully satisfied. All the same, when the *Swiftsure's* officer came on board to receive his sword, he insisted on being taken on board the *Monmouth* and surrendering it to the commanding officer of that ship, to Lieutenant Carkett, giving it up, we are told, 'with great politeness.' A story was told afterwards that the French commodore expressed himself in bitter terms, and shed tears next morning when in full daylight, at close quarters, he saw the small size of the *Monmouth* as compared with his own splendid ship. But that is as it may be.

The *Hampton Court* came up some ten minutes after the *Swiftsure* had arrived.

It remained now only to count the cost and overhaul damages.

How things stood on board the *Monmouth* they knew before the night was out. Captain Gardiner was the only officer who had fallen. The four lieutenants of the ship had escaped without a scratch, as had the *Monmouth's* two marine officers and Lieutenant Campbell. It was otherwise, unfortunately, among the men. The casualties between decks amounted to upwards of 24 per cent of the entire ship's company. The figures as officially returned were—29 killed and 81 wounded—110 altogether. Not a boat was left that could swim; the mizen-mast had been shot right away, smashed through close above the deck; the main-mast, riddled with holes, was tottering; every one of the sails had to be stripped from its yard and new sails bent; most of the rigging was lying in tangled heaps about the decks.

In the *Foudroyant*, the prize-crew that was placed in charge had their work cut out for them in looking after prisoners below and stopping leaks and dangerous shot-holes. The deadly shooting of the *Monmouth* had in parts almost rent the *Foudroyant* open. More than seventy shot-holes through the hull were counted, low down, at or near the water-line. All over the hull, more than a hundred shot-holes were to be seen, gaping holes with jagged and splintered edges; and more shots than one had gone through some of the holes. Some of the *Monmouth's* shots had even gone right through from side to side, leaving enormous rents in the *Foudroyant* on the unengaged side of the ship where they had smashed their way out. To give an idea of the terrible hammering that the *Foudroyant* underwent, it may be stated that the repairs to the hull at Portsmouth took eight months to execute, at an expense of £7000, just half the total sum at which the Admiralty Prize Court valued the whole ship for purchase from her captors. As far as could be made out, the *Foudroyant's* casualties amounted to 190 officers and men killed and wounded; but the French practice of throwing the dead overboard in action as they fell, made it impossible to arrive at the exact figures.

As well as could be managed on the spot, the two ships were cleared of wreckage and put in sea-going trim, and at noon next day, the 1st of March, they set out to rejoin Admiral Osborn, the *Swiftsure* towing the *Foudroyant*,

and the *Monmouth* under her own canvas, under jury-rig, with the *Hampton Court* close by in case of need.

They found the admiral with the rest of the fleet off Carthage. With them was the French *Orphée*, which the *Revenge* and *Berwick* had run down and taken within two miles of Carthage mole. M. de la Clue had missed his chance entirely. He had not stirred, although with the two men-of-war that had got in the night before he had had nine ships of the line, and the British admiral, with five of his ships detached in chase of Du Quesne's squadron, only seven. All that the French admiral had done the livelong day on the 28th had been to man and arm his boats and send them down to paddle about aimlessly at the mouth of the harbour.

The *Monmouth* and *Revenge* were ordered to Gibraltar to repair, accompanied by their two prizes. On the way the dead of the *Monmouth* and the remains of Captain Gardiner were committed to the deep, off Cape de Gata, at half-past three on Saturday afternoon, the 4th of March. All four ships hove-to and half-masted their ensigns during the funeral service, and the bodies were passed overboard to the booming of the *Monmouth's* minute-guns—his ship's last tribute to her dead captain. No tablet exists to Arthur Gardiner's memory in Westminster Abbey or elsewhere; but that, after all, matters little.

There is in the lone, lone sea  
A spot unmark'd but holy,  
For there the gallant and the free  
In his ocean bed lies lowly.  
Down, down beneath the deep,  
That oft in triumph bore him,  
He sleeps a sound and peaceful sleep,  
With the salt waves dashing o'er him.

He sleeps serene and safe  
From tempest and from billow,  
Where storms that high above him chafe  
Scarce rock his peaceful pillow.  
The sea and him in death  
They did not dare to sever;  
It was his home when he had breath,

'Tis now his home for ever.

Sleep on, thou mighty dead,  
A glorious tomb they've found thee,  
The broad blue sky above thee spread,  
The boundless ocean round thee.  
No vulgar foot treads here,  
No hand profane shall move thee,  
But gallant hearts shall proudly steer  
And warriors shout above thee.

And though no stone may tell thy name, thy  
worth, thy glory,  
They rest in hearts that love thee well, they  
grace Britannia's story.<sup>[7]</sup>

At Gibraltar the *Foudroyant* was measured and found to be 12 feet longer than the *Royal George*. She was berthed alongside the mole with the *Monmouth* lying next her, and an officer present graphically describes the disparity of size between them in these terms: 'It was like the Monument overlooking a ninepin!'

The French prisoners were still on board the *Foudroyant*. They went to England in the ship, most of them to be shut up in Porchester Castle, the great war-prison of the South of England in those times. The visitor to the ruins of Porchester Castle to-day, if he explores in a certain part of the keep, will find at one spot, rudely cut in the wall, a string of French names, under a sort of scroll similarly carved roughly in the stonework, with the legend '*Vive le vaisseau le Foudroyant—1758*,' the handiwork, it can hardly be doubted, of some of these very men. The Marquis du Quesne and his first and second captains came to England by themselves, in the *Gibraltar* frigate, and were interned on parole at Northampton. The other surviving officers of the ship were paroled at Maidstone.

All England rang with Arthur Gardiner's name when, in the first week in April, the *Gibraltar* arrived at Spithead with Admiral Osborn's despatches, and the *London Gazette* told the story of how Gardiner had died 'as he was encouraging his people and inquiring what damage they had sustained between decks.' Everywhere, we are told, the news of the taking of the

'mighty *Foudroyant*' and how it was done excited the liveliest enthusiasm. Inn signboards were repainted with pictures of the fight, a favourite way with our eighteenth-century forefathers of commemorating great events; and a ballad was composed about it which was set to a popular tune of the day and sung all over the country. One of the signboards so painted was in existence a very few years ago,—and may be so still,—at Lostwithiel in Cornwall, bearing a representation of two old-fashioned men-of-war in desperate combat, with the legend 'The memorable battle of the *Monmouth* and *Foudroyant*.'<sup>[8]</sup> Of the ballad and its music no trace is to be found, although some lines on the fight, apparently contemporary, are in print. One can, though, hardly fancy them being set to any sort of tune, still less anybody trying to sing them. Their shortcomings as verse too are obvious, but one must remember that it was the period when the Poet Laureate was Colley Cibber. There was no market in the days of George the Second for what our present Poet Laureate calls 'the higher kind of poetry.'

#### STANZAS

On the capture of the *Foudroyant*, of 84 guns, by the *Monmouth*, of 64,  
Anno 1758.

As Louis sat in regal state,  
The monarch, insolently great,  
Accosts his crouching slaves,  
'Yon stubborn isle at last must bend,  
For now my *Foudroyant* I send,  
The terror of the waves.

'When once he bursts in dreadful roar,  
And vomits death from shore to shore,  
My glory to maintain;  
Repenting Britons then will see  
Their folly to dispute with me  
The empire of the main.'

He spake, th' obedient sails were spread,  
And Neptune reared his awful head,  
To view the glorious sight;  
The Tritons and the Nereids came,

And floated round the high-built frame,  
With wonder and delight.

Then Neptune thus the Gods address'd:  
'The sight is noble, 'tis confess'd,  
The structure we admire;  
But yet this monst'rous pile shall meet  
With one small ship from Britain's fleet,  
And strike to Britons' fire.'

As from his lips the sentence flew,  
Behold his fav'rite sails in view,  
And signal made to chase;  
Swift as Camilla o'er the plain,  
The *Monmouth* skimm'd along the main,  
Unrivall'd in the race.

Close to her mighty foe she came,  
Resolv'd to sink or gain a name  
Which Envy might admire;  
Devouring guns tumultous sound,  
Destructive slaughter flam'd around,  
And seas appear'd on fire.

When lo! th' heroic Gardiner fell,  
Whose worth the Muse attempts to tell,  
But finds her efforts vain;  
Some other bard must sing his praise,  
And bold as fancy's thoughts must raise  
The sadly mournful strain.

Carkett, who well his place supply'd,  
The mangling bolts of death defy'd,  
Which furious round him rag'd;  
While Hammick<sup>[9]</sup> points his guns with care,  
Nor sends one faithless shot in air,  
But skilfully engag'd.

Baron and Winzar's<sup>[10]</sup> conduct show'd  
Their hearts with untam'd courage glow'd,  
    And manly rage display'd;  
Whilst every seaman firmly stood,  
'Midst heaps of limbs and streams of blood  
    Undaunted, undismay'd.

Austin<sup>[11]</sup> and Campbell next the Muse  
Thro' fiery deluges pursues,  
    Serenely calm and great;  
With their's the youthful Preston's<sup>[12]</sup> name  
Must shine, enrolled in list of fame,  
    Above the reach of fate.

Hark! how Destruction's tempests blow,  
And drive to deep despair the foe,  
    Who trembling fly asunder;  
The *Foudroyant* her horror ceas'd,  
And whilst the *Monmouth's* fire increas'd,  
    Lost all her pow'r to thunder.

Now, haughty Louis, cease to boast,  
The mighty *Foudroyant* is lost,  
    And must be thine no more;  
No gasconade will now avail,  
Behold he trims the new-dress'd sail,  
    To deck Britannia's shore.

If e'er again his voice be heard,  
With British thunder-bolts prepar'd,  
    And on thy coast appears;  
His dreadful tongue such sounds will send,  
As all the neighb'ring rocks shall rend,  
    And shake all France with fears.

What is more interesting is that one of the *Foudroyant's* officers, while a prisoner of war on board and on the way to England, wrote a set of verses in honour of the captain of the *Monmouth*. They appeared in the *Gentleman's Magazine* for July 1758 in this form:—

CHATHAM, *July 23.*

MR. URBAN—By inserting the following Elegy, which was written by a French officer, taken prisoner on board the *Foudroyant*, you will oblige many of your readers, and particularly your humble servant,

P. COCHET.

ÉLÉGIE SUR LA MORT DU CAPT. GARDINER

Ce héros respectable a fini ses beaux jours,  
Il a trop peu vécu, ce sage capitaine,  
Le *Monmouth* pleure encore l'objet de son  
amour  
Et moi la cause de ma gêne.

Aux combats il étoit un terrible ennemi,  
Son exemple animoit le c[oe]ur le plus  
timide,  
Au milieu des hazards le foible est affermi,  
Ayant un tel chef pour son guide.

O *Monmouth!* quelle nuit, lorsque le  
*Foudroyant*,  
Par ses bouches d'arain menaçoit votre ruine,  
Vous tenez contre lui, vous êtes triomphant,  
La victoire pour vous s'incline,

Conduit par ce héros, vos canons vomissoient  
La foudre à gros bouillons, et la mort tout  
ensemble,  
Il inspiroit sa force à ceux qui combattoient,  
Ha! l'ennemi le sent et tremble.

O! quel funeste coup, ce héros n'est donc plus?  
Le brave Gardiner tombe et finit sa vie,  
Mais il vit dans nos c[oe]urs, il vit par ses  
vertus,  
Est-ce le ciel qui nous l'envie?

Quelle aimable douceur envers ses prisonniers,  
Sa tendresse pour eux égalait son courage,  
Il ne ressembloit point aux inhumains guerriers,  
Qui ne respirent que carnage.

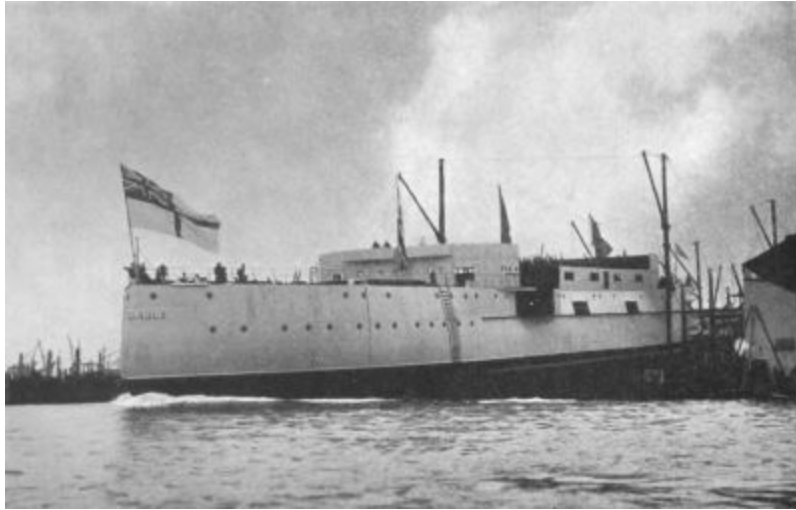
Whatever may be the quality or literary merit of these verses, there could, surely, be no higher tribute to the memory of a British officer, the tribute of an enemy in the bitter hour of defeat; and the incident in all its circumstances is unique. With it we may close the story.

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The 'little black ship' *Monmouth* (Captain Fanshawe's ship), to which the officers of the French flagship *Languedoc* drank at dinner on the night of the 6th of July 1779, was the next successor to Gardiner's *Monmouth*, and it was this *Monmouth* on board which, in the East Indies, Captain Alms, on the 12th of April 1782 (actually the same day on which Rodney was fighting his battle in the West Indies) made so heroic a stand. The Camperdown *Monmouth* came next, and after her a *Monmouth* that was never commissioned at all. Finally we come to our modern *Monmouth* cruiser of the present hour.

The quondam French *Foudroyant*, as a man-of-war of the Royal Navy, fought for England and did well. Her successor of the same name in the navy had strangely varied fortunes. She began her life as one of Nelson's flagships; and when she was worn out was sold to a German shipbreaker, by whom she was re-sold at an immense profit to Mr. G. Wheatly Cobb, of Caldicot Castle, Chepstow, in Monmouthshire curiously, who interested himself in the fate of the *Foudroyant*, and 'for Nelson's sake,' as he himself put it, spent £25,000 out of his own pocket in re-purchasing her and re-building and fitting her out to make the old veteran of the sea look, as far as possible, as she appeared in Nelson's time. A cruel fate, however, cut short

the nobly conceived project. Our second *Foudroyant* ended her days off Blackpool, of all places in the world, where, in the summer of 1897, in the hundredth year of her existence, she was wrecked in a gale.



'SUCCESS TO THE *FORMIDABLE!*' November 17, 1898

### FOOTNOTES:

[1] Pepys's *Diary*, June 30, 1667.—'Several complaints, I hear, of the *Monmouth's* coming away too soon from the chaine, where she was placed with the two guardships to secure it.'

[2] Spanish neutrality was a by-word at this period. England and Spain were not at war yet, but the family relationship between the Bourbons of Versailles and the Escorial caused the latter Power to put the loosest construction on their obligations.

[3] Summary of evidence at the court-martial on Admiral Byng, quoted in Entick's *New Naval History* (published shortly after Byng's trial), p. 872:—

Tuesday 11 [Jan. 1757]. Captain Gardiner of the *Ramillies* under Examination and Cross-Examination all Day. He ... said that he advised the Admiral to bear down, that the Admiral objected thereto, lest an Accident of a similar Nature with that of Admiral Mathews should be the Consequence.

Wednesday 12. Captain Gardiner was again examined and made it appear that the Admiral took the whole Command of the Ship from him, and no thing done that day but what he ordered.

Byng's words as to bearing down were these: 'You see, Captain Gardiner, that the signal for the line is out and that I am ahead of the ships *Louisa* and *Trident*' (which two ships, according to the order of battle, should have been ahead of the admiral). 'You would not have me, as the admiral of the fleet, run down as if I were going to engage a single ship. It was Mr. Mathews' misfortune to be

prejudiced by not carrying down his force together, which I shall endeavour to avoid.' One of Byng's ships, ahead of the flagship, had broken down. He would not pass her and go at the enemy, but stopped to re-form and 'dress' his line, during which time the enemy severely mauled Byng's leading ships. The French then drew out of range, and Byng, without further fighting, retired to Gibraltar. At the trial Gardiner was asked what he himself considered being 'properly engaged.' 'What I call properly engaged,' was the answer, 'is, within musket shot.' See *Minutes of the Court-Martial, etc.*, published by Order, 1757 (folio).

[4] Log of the *Revenge*, Captain Storr. Admiralty documents, Captains' logs, at the Public Record Office.

[5] Admiralty documents, Captains' logs, *Monmouth*, at the Public Record Office.

[6] Captains' logs, *Monmouth*, at the Public Record Office (Admiralty documents).

[7] *Poems, chiefly Religious*: Rev. H.F. Lyte, 1833.

[8] The 'Monmouth' inn, to which the signboard belonged (now known as the 'Monmouth' hotel) was actually so named in 1758 in honour of Gardiner's *Monmouth*.

[9] Stephen Hammick, Second Lieutenant of the *Monmouth*, in command on the lower deck.

[10] David Winzar, Fourth Lieutenant of the *Monmouth*.

[11] Captain of Marines.

[12] Lieutenant of Marines.

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## II

### RODNEY'S SHIP ON RODNEY'S DAY THE *FORMIDABLE* THAT BROKE THE LINE

Brave Rodney made the French to rue  
The Twelfth of April 'Eighty two.

*Old Song.*

The West Indies is the Station for honour.

NELSON.

'*WHO can feel any pride in a mere blustering adjective? We do seriously believe that the Admiralty would add something to the popularisation of the navy by a reform of the naming system. It is proper enough to christen new ships after famous old vessels of the past, and the 'Admirals' also are very proper and pleasant, but why this mania for adjectives and such futilities?*'

So a London newspaper commented on the selection of the name *Formidable* for the great first-class battleship that to-day bears that name proudly lettered at her stern. Well, we shall see what we shall see. When all is said and done, it may appear, perhaps, that some of us are not so unreasonable after all in taking pride in seeing this 'blustering adjective' inscribed as a man-of-war name on the roll of our modern British fleet. Handsome is, every nursery knows, that handsome does. It is more than highly probable that should the day for 'the real thing,' as Mr. Kipling calls it, come in our present *Formidable's* time, those to whose lot it may fall to face the *Formidable* from the enemy's side will think that, in regard to this particular ship at least, there is something in a name.

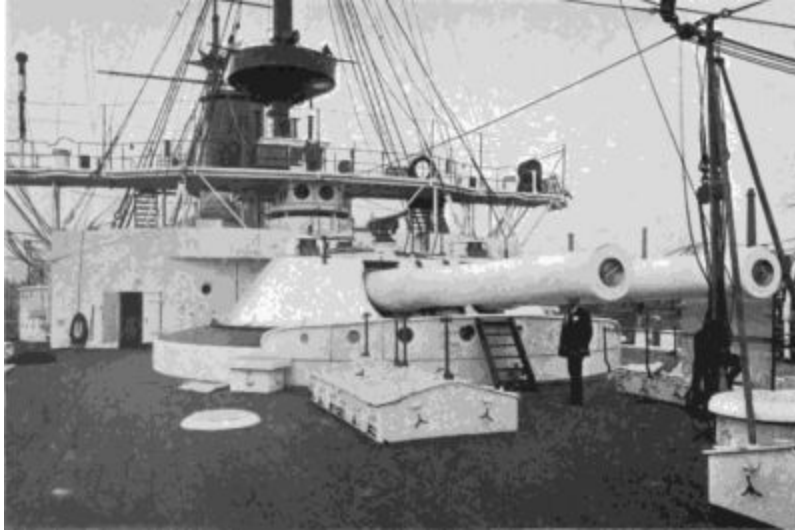
This is the sort of vessel that our twentieth-century battleship the *Formidable* is, glancing at some of her points—the details on which she relies to make good the intention of her name. Hard hitting is the *Formidable's* business in life, so to speak, her *raison d'être*; her forte, the dealing of knock-down blows. To that end she carries the most powerful guns in existence: 50-ton breech-loaders, a foot in diameter in the bore; capable of hurling gigantic shells each between three and four feet long and weighing 850 lbs., or 7½ cwts., with a bursting charge of three-quarters of a hundredweight of powder or lyddite, through three feet of iron at a mile and a half off, or all the way across from Shakespeare's Cliff at Dover on to the sand dunes round Calais. Each firing charge of cordite weighs by itself nearly 2 cwts.—the weight of a sack of coal as delivered at a house-holder's door from a tradesman's cart,—and each gun by itself takes a year to construct. The *Formidable's* guns could silence the old 'Woolwich Infants' and the mighty 80-ton guns that the famous *Inflexible* carried, from a range miles beyond the farthest that the older guns could reach. Yet these less than twenty years ago were reckoned a wonder of the world.

A finger's pressure, nothing more,  
The ponderous cannon's thund'ring roar,

A passing cloud of smoke, and lo!  
The waves engulf the haughty foe!

wrote a versifier once about what the guns of the *Inflexible* could do. With less than half the weight, they are considerably more powerful weapons than the 110-ton monsters of the *Benbow* and *Sans Pareil* and the ill-fated *Victoria*, one of which was tested at Shoeburyness against a specially-built-up target of enormous proportions, and sent its shot, as easily as one can push one's finger into a lump of putty, clean through 20 inches of steel-faced compound armour, 8 inches of cast iron, 20 feet of oak, 5 feet of granite, 11 feet of concrete, and lastly 6 feet of brick—to a depth of 44 feet 4 inches altogether. As to the actual size of the guns, of the ship's heavier pieces: each is 41 feet long—13 yards and 2 feet from muzzle to breech. Pace this out on a gravel garden-walk, and imagine the length covered by a gigantic steel tube, three-quarters of a yard across at one end and swelling gradually to over 5 feet thick at the other—that may give some idea of the bulk of a *Formidable* gun. Such a piece of ordnance would have suited the mood of old Marshal Soult when he refused to fight a duel on the score of his dignity. 'A marshal of France,' growled the old gentleman at his challenger's seconds on their calling to offer him the choice of weapons, 'a marshal of France only fights with cannon!'

Four of these weapons form the *Formidable's* 'main armament.' They are mounted, two on the quarter-deck and two on the forecastle, each pair in a circular barbette 37½ feet in diameter, walled round with 12-inch thick Harveyed steel of immense resisting capacity, and weighing upwards of 315 tons. They can load at any angle of elevation or of training, and the ammunition-supply mechanism ensures the guns being loaded as fast as they can fire. *Bis dat qui cito dat*, 'who gives quickly gives twice,' is the maxim of the modern navy gunner. As far as her 12-inch guns are concerned, the *Formidable* could let the enemy have two 850-lb. lyddite shells from each gun every eighty seconds. The ship's magazines and shell-rooms stow eighty rounds for each gun. Fired at the same time, the four guns exert a combined force enough to lift the whole ship up bodily ten feet.



'UT VENIANT OMNES!'—THE BIG 50-TON GUNS OF THE  
*FORMIDABLE*

To support the 'main armament' and provide for all comers, down to hostile torpedo boats, there are on board the *Formidable*, as 'secondary armament,' twelve 6-inch Vickers guns of the latest pattern (mounted six a side), sixteen 12-pounders and six 3-pounders (mounted in the fighting-tops—three in each top), with Maxims and light boat and field guns. In battle, fighting an enemy end-on, this embodiment of a 'blustering adjective' would, within the first five minutes, have sent at the enemy upwards of 7 tons of bursting shells; fighting broadside-on, over 16 tons.

The *Formidable* is no less efficiently fitted for standing up to the enemy and taking her share of hard knocks. On her sides amidships, shielding from injury the engines and boilers, the 'vitals' of the ship as they are called, a wide belt of Harveyed steel armour extends. It is 9 inches thick, and 217 feet long by 15 feet deep, and is built up of some seventy odd plates or slabs of solid steel fitted together, each one of just the surface area of a billiard-table with an extra yard added to its length, and weighing each upwards of 12 tons. Each plate separately takes from a fortnight to three weeks to make. Where the 9-inch armour leaves off, towards the ends of the ship, a thinner steel belt, 3 inches thick, with an armoured deck, also of 3-inch steel, carries forward the protection. At the bows it joins on to the ship's enormous ram—a ponderous forging of 35 tons of steel.

Such, roughly indicated, are some of the main features in regard to offence and defence of this Titanic 'bruiser of the sea,' His Majesty's battleship the

*Formidable*. Below, the ship has twenty Belleville boilers, capable of raising steam at a pressure of 300 lbs. to the square inch; engines of 15,000 horse-power, capable of driving the ship's immense hull, a length of 430 feet over all from stem to rudder, through the water, full speed ahead, at 18 knots an hour (nearly twenty land miles), each of the great 17-foot twin-screws thrashing round at the rate of 108 revolutions a minute. She can stow coal enough to carry her without re-coaling, at an average cruising speed of 10 knots, from Spithead to Buenos Ayres or through the Suez Canal as far as the Bay of Bengal.

A million sterling of the nation's money, with a trifle of forty odd thousand pounds added, is what the *Formidable* represents—£1,040,000 literally cast on the waters. Of that sum the guns by themselves cost £74,500—more, in fact, than it cost to build and rig and fit the *Victory* for sea. And her upkeep in commission—interest on first cost, wear and tear, crew, victualling, coal, stores, and ordnance stores—costs £163,000 a year. In action every shot from the *Formidable's* big guns would cost £80—a sum equivalent to the annual pay of two midshipmen *plus* a naval cadet.

These features of the *Formidable* are enough to show that in the case of this particular modern battleship, at any rate, the name is not misapplied, not unsuitable, nor without justification: that it is something more than a 'futility,' something more than a 'merely blustering adjective.' We may trust the honour of the flag to the *Formidable's* keeping, assured that should the hour of trial come in her time she has the means of taking her own part with power and advantage. Grant her, when that time comes, 'good sea-room and a willing enemy,' as the war toast of the Old Navy used to go, and the British Empire may rest assured that, as far as this particular ship is concerned,

... in the battle's dance of death,  
She'll dance the strongest down.

There is, though, another justification, and of the amplest kind, for the presence on the roll of the British fleet of the name *Formidable*. This 'merely blustering adjective' has a meaning there that is all its own—a *raison d'être* not only for the Royal Navy but for all the world in that connection that is *sui generis*. The British fleet does not owe the name to any whim or fancy of a modern Admiralty First Lord. *Vixere fortes ante*

*Agamemnon*—there have been famous *Formidables* before the present ship. *Formidable*, indeed, is one of our best 'trophy names'—a name that came into the British service as spoil of war, won from the enemy in very exceptional circumstances. It stands in a special sense as a memento of one of the most brilliant exploits in our annals—of that tremendous November afternoon battle of 1759, fought in a wild Atlantic storm amid the reefs of Quiberon Bay, on that historic occasion, so happily described in Mr. Henry Newbolt's stirring verse,<sup>[13]</sup> 'when Hawke came swooping from the west.'

'Twas long past noon of a wild November day  
When Hawke came swooping from the west;  
He heard the breakers thundering in Quiberon  
Bay,  
But he flew the flag for battle, line abreast.  
Down upon the quicksands roaring out of sight  
Fiercely beat the storm-wind, darkly fell the  
night,  
But they took the foe for pilot and the cannon's  
glare for light  
When Hawke came swooping from the west.

One result of Hawke's swoop was, of course, the stopping of all French invasion schemes for the rest of the Seven Years' War. Henceforward there was no need to watch the southward beacons night after night; no need of more shore batteries at Brighton and elsewhere along the Sussex coast; no further need to cover the South of England with standing camps for Pitt's new militiamen to learn their drill in; no more need to shock the good ladies of Hampshire with the sight of bare-legged Highlanders marching to and fro.

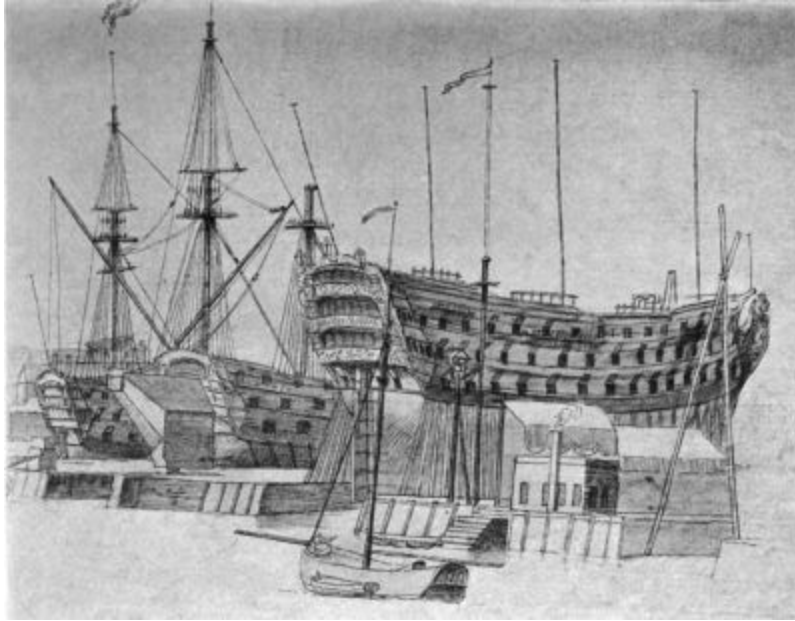
The guns that should have conquered us, they  
rusted on the shore,  
The men that would have mastered us, they  
drummed and marched no more;  
For England was England, and a mighty brood  
she bore  
When Hawke came swooping from the west.

The other result of Hawke's swoop was the *Formidable*—the French flagship *Formidable*—the sole trophy that the stormy weather allowed Hawke to bring off from the fight. The Royal Navy took over the fine prize, a magnificent two-decker of eighty guns, enrolled her name as it stood on the list of the British fleet, and in due course handed the name on from one successor to another, until we come in the end to our own fine steel-clad battleship, the *Formidable* that to-day graces

The proud Armado of King Edward's ships,  
in the words of poor Kit Marlowe's 'mighty'—and prophetic—line.<sup>[14]</sup>

Then we have another justification, the most notable of all. The *Formidable's* name has acquired a new significance since the days of Hawke. To-day it has to the Royal Navy a more recent meaning. It stands on the roll of the fleet as the special memorial of another achievement, as a memento of another admiral's 'stricken field,' in special honour of Rodney's most famous feat of arms, of the great victory that has given Rodney his place in the history of the British Empire. On that day a *Formidable* was Rodney's flagship; the second ship of the name, the immediate successor of Hawke's great prize, our first British-built man-of-war *Formidable*.<sup>[15]</sup> 'If ever,' wrote Froude, 'the naval exploits of this country are done into an epic poem—and since the *Iliad* there has been no subject better fitted for such treatment or better deserving it—the West Indies will be the scene of the most brilliant cantos.' In at least one of those cantos Rodney's *Formidable* would be a central figure.

We now come directly to the place, time, and circumstances of the event, taking up the tale a little before the fighting actually opens.



### RODNEY'S *FORMIDABLE* ON THE DAY BEFORE HER LAUNCH

[Note, to the right of the ship, the canvas 'booths' or stands for the Commissioner of Chatham Dockyard and officers and guests of distinction. The launching flagstuffs on board were usually set up on the day before a launch, to fly the Jack at the bows, the Admiralty flag, Royal Standard, and Union flag where the three masts would be; and the 'St. George's ensign' (White Ensign) on the ensign staff.]

It begins, first of all, in Gros Islet Bay, St. Lucia, a locality that one wants a fairly large map to find. The name is hardly a familiar one, yet it has a place of its own, of special interest in our naval annals. Gros Islet Bay was Rodney's headquarters in the West Indies during March 1782 and the first week of April, at the time that the *Formidable* was Rodney's flagship. Rodney was in Gros Islet Bay with his fleet of 36 sail of the line, and the French admiral De Grasse, at the head of 34 of the line, was facing him in Fort Royal Bay, Martinique, distant some thirty miles—about as far off as Boulogne is from Folkestone. So the lists were set.



RODNEY'S SWORD

Rodney had come out from England specially to save the British West Indies from De Grasse. And even more than the fate of the 'sugar islands' depended on his efforts. 'The fate of this Empire,' were the last words of the First Lord of the Admiralty (Lord Sandwich) to Rodney before he sailed, 'the fate of this Empire is in your hands!' He forced his way across the ocean in mid-winter, battling through a series of fierce storms that day after day threatened to tear the masts out of his ship. 'Ushant,' wrote Rodney to his wife, 'we have weathered in a storm but two leagues, the sea mountains high, which made a fair breach over the *Formidable* and the *Namur*, but it was necessary for the public service that every risk should be run. Persist and conquer is a maxim that I hold good in war, even against the elements, and it has answered.' It did answer. Rodney arrived to find that there were still four islands left to Great Britain. All our West Indian possessions had fallen except Jamaica, Barbados, Antigua, and St. Lucia. St. Kitts, Nevis, Montserrat, and Demerara had been taken, actually, while Rodney was on his way out. De Grasse when Rodney arrived was refitting for a yet more audacious project at Fort Royal, Martinique, the Portsmouth of the French navy in the West Indies; and to be on the spot to intercept him and bring him to decisive battle at the first chance, Rodney anchored his fleet in the nearest available harbour, within touch and almost within sight of the French fleet, in the roadstead of Gros Islet Bay, St. Lucia.

Both fleets during March and the first week of April were hard at work refitting. Twelve of Rodney's ships had come out from England with him and wanted little; the others of the thirty-six, however, belonged to the fleet originally on the station, and after the trying time of it they had had during the past six months, including two sharp fights with the French, were badly in need of a refit. De Grasse's fleet was in like case. The arrival of convoys from home, however, with war stores and supplies of all kinds for both fleets, towards the end of March, made it all but certain that the month of April would not go by without a battle in the open sea.

Those days in Gros Islet Bay proved to Rodney of vital importance. Secret intelligence came to hand which disclosed to him the enemy's entire plan of campaign. A gigantic and startling project was on foot. An elaborate and wide-reaching combination had been designed in which a Franco-Spanish army and a Franco-Spanish fleet were both to take part, the operations being projected on a scale far beyond anything hitherto attempted in the war

on either side. It aimed at nothing less than the sweeping of the British flag out of the West Indies by one tremendous and overmastering *coup*.

De Grasse's fleet was to be the chief factor in the situation, the mainspring of the movement. The preliminary dispositions had already been made. Thirteen Spanish ships of the line were at that moment waiting off Cape Haitien in San Domingo, accompanied by transports with 24,000 troops on board. They were expecting to be joined by a force of 10,000 French soldiers from Brest, escorted by five or six men-of-war which were already overdue. According to the grand plan, De Grasse with his fleet, thirty-four of the line, with store-ships and the convoy that had arrived in March, was to move out from Fort Royal, with some five or six thousand more troops on board the men-of-war, and cross over and join hands with the assemblage off San Domingo. The united armada, making up some sixty ships of the line, against which Rodney's thirty-six and the handful of ships at Port Royal could not hope to stand, were then to swoop down on Jamaica and capture it out of hand. There were only 3500 British regulars in Jamaica, and the planter militia and armed negroes were of little account. Jamaica taken, said the enemy, Barbados would fall at the first summons, and Antigua and St. Lucia would follow, making an end of the British West Indies. So confident were the enemy of success that, as it was reported, Don Bernardo Galvez, the Spanish Commander-in-Chief, had already been publicly addressed at Havana as 'Governor of Jamaica,' which island, according to the secret arrangement between the allies (already drafted), was to be Spain's share of the spoil.

Rodney's fleet—the *Formidable* and her thirty-five consorts off St. Lucia—were all that stood between the scheme and its fulfilment. Realising to the utmost what depended on him, Rodney pressed on his preparations for sea with intensified vigour, so as to be ready to fall on De Grasse immediately he left Fort Royal.



From Dugald's engraving of Gatherson's portrait.

*G. Rodney*

[Facsimile of the signature to despatch announcing the victory over De Grasse].

Original in the

[Facsimile of the signature to despatch announcing the victory over De Grasse.]

During March and the early part of April—except for ten days lost in a futile attempt to cut off De Grasse's convoy from France on its way to Fort Royal—Rodney was busy refitting: a task that taxed all his energies owing to the state to which some of the ships had been reduced, short of powder, shot, sea stores of all kinds, bread, even anchors. All the fleet, too, had to be watered, which proved a slow and difficult business owing to the bad weather. 'I think,' wrote Rodney in March, 'the winter season has followed us: nothing but violent hard gales, and such a sea that half the boats of the fleet have been stove in watering, which has delayed us much in refitting.'

Incidentally the admiral had other matters to attend to. One—it will be interesting to make a small point of it here—was to correspond personally with his opponent. The subject was the interchange of prisoners taken at St. Kitts and earlier in the campaign. The British sloop-of-war *Alert* was the intermediary, going and coming under a flag of truce. Nothing could exceed the courteous tone of Rodney's correspondence with the French admiral; and, on the other hand, De Grasse was civility itself. He treated Captain

Vashon of the *Alert*, while that officer was at Fort Royal, with every consideration, made him his guest for the time, and expressed in conversation with the British captain the highest esteem and consideration for 'le Chevalier Rodney.'

Rodney wrote to De Grasse, for instance, in one letter, after dealing in the pleasantest way with the business in hand:—

It will make me happy if at any time this island produces anything worthy your acceptance, or that may be the least useful to your table. As the merchant ships which have lately arrived from Europe may have brought different species of necessaries that may be agreeable to your Excellency, it will make me happy, Sir, to obey your commands.

The bearing of the two admirals to one another in their personal dealings affords a pleasing instance of the high-bred, chivalrous courtesy that was so characteristic of the old-time fighting days. It was the way with the men of the *ancien régime* on both sides the Channel when they met in war never to forget that, first and foremost, they were gentlemen. In this spirit, almost at that very moment, indeed, De Crillon at Gibraltar was exchanging similar compliments with the 'old Cock of the Rock,' General Eliott—'Eliott the Brave': the same spirit that at Fontenoy, as all the world knows, moved one side to challenge the other to fire first. It was the same chivalrous spirit that prompted the captains of the British fleet in the East Indies to pay their unique compliment to the great De Suffren at the close of this war. Hostilities were over, peace had been proclaimed, and the rival fleets, so lately enemies, met, both on their way home, in Table Bay. They had fought five fierce battles within sixteen months—each one a drawn action, with honours divided. On finding the Bailli de Suffren and his fleet in Table Bay when they arrived, the British captains, brave old Commodore King, the senior officer, at their head, proceeded in a body to call on the gallant leader of their quondam foes, and pay the homage of brave men to the brilliant tactician they had more than once been hard put to it to keep at bay. Their generous tribute delighted the warm-hearted Provençal immensely, as he described, by the spontaneity and peculiar graciousness of the act. The intercourse between Rodney and De Grasse was in essentials of the same kind: the outcome of two warriors' sense of *noblesse oblige* the one to the other; the obligation, as a point of honour, on both sides—

To set the cause above renown,  
To love the game beyond the prize,  
To honour while you strike him down  
The foe that comes with fearless eyes.

To count the life of battle good,  
And dear the land that gave you birth,  
And dearer yet the brotherhood  
That binds the brave of all the earth.<sup>[16]</sup>

It was, as it were, the swordsmen's obligatory recognition of each other in 'the Salute' when they first come face to face, ere the sword-blades cross and clash in fight; one of the courtesies of war between destined opponents, wishing one another well until the striking of the appointed hour—

Health and high fortune till we meet,  
And then—what pleases Heaven!

'Always be polite,' said Bismarck once to Moritz Busch; 'be polite to the foot of the scaffold, but hang your man nevertheless!' Nothing could be nicer than Rodney's attentions, but he was in deadly earnest all the same—he meant, at the proper time, 'to hang his man nevertheless!'



### THE PITONS OF ST. LUCIA

Another incidental detail. It was while Rodney's fleet off Gros Islet Bay was getting ready for sea that, according to local tradition, the grim little real-life tragedy of the Pitons took place. The Pitons or 'Sugar Loaves,' as, from their general shape, they are to this day commonly called by seafaring men,

are two gigantic cones of rock, of volcanic origin, that thrust themselves up out of the sea off the south-westernmost end of St. Lucia, rising abruptly, almost sheer from the water's edge. The larger of the two, the Grand Piton, towers up to a height of some 2720 feet, or nearly seven times the height of St. Paul's Cathedral; the smaller has an elevation some 300 feet less. A number of sailors, the story goes, either stragglers from a watering-party or, possibly, men from the *Russell*, a seventy-four, then undergoing repairs in the *carénage*, managed to get on to the Grand Piton, clambering up on to its lower slopes 'by means of lianes and scrub.' Their intention was to try and scale the huge mass and plant a Jack flag they had brought with them on the boulders at the summit. The Grand Piton is covered almost to the top with dense bush, but there are bare patches and open areas of rock surface and ledges here and there. How many landed or started to climb is not stated, but, according to the story told at St. Lucia to this day, lookers-on with telescopes made out four men, including one man with the flag, more than half-way up. Immediately afterwards one of the party was seen to stagger and fall, and then roll down a little way and disappear. The others went on until some two or three hundred feet higher up, when a second man dropped. The two survivors went on steadily higher still, and then suddenly one of the two was seen to go down. His companion apparently took no notice. He pressed on with his flag, intent only on getting to the top. He nearly succeeded. The last man seemed to have almost reached the summit when he, like his messmates, was seen to stop, stagger, throw up his arms, and drop. So the local people tell visitors to St. Lucia to this day. What was it? What made the men fall dead so suddenly? How they met their death no man ever knew. Few human feet besides theirs, if indeed any, have ever tried to scale the Pitons, and the bones of Rodney's sailors lie up there on the windy height as they fell—what the weather and a hundred and twenty years' exposure in the open has left of them. Was it sunstroke? Local opinion attributes their fate to another cause. The Pitons, like the whole island of St. Lucia itself, are known to swarm with venomous serpents, the deadly *fer de lance*—'perhaps the deadliest snake in the world' it has been called—an ugly monster, in average length from 3 to 5 feet, as thick as a boy's wrist, of a dull red or reddish-yellow colour, fiercely aggressive in its ways, ever ready to strike at sight, and its bite practically instant death. *Craspedocephalus*—the name in itself is almost enough to kill—would

account for everything. Whatever the cause really was, at any rate the Grand Piton has ever since kept its secret to itself.

At Fort Royal, meanwhile, everybody, from the great French Admiral De Grasse himself down to the smallest *mousse*, was in the highest spirits and assured of victory. To one and all the hour was at hand for the development of the grand scheme that was to lay all the West Indies at the feet of France. Hardly a finer fleet, perhaps, had ever assembled under a French admiral than that lying there at that moment in attendance on the orders of De Grasse. There were thirty-four ships of the line, the finest men-of-war in the French navy among them, and their captains were some of the smartest and most dashing and most highly trained officers that ever trod a French quarter-deck. A specially interesting set they were, as it happened, in many ways.



THE COUNT DE GRASSE

De Grasse himself was a man of reputation, a talented and highly trained officer, able to map out the strategy of a campaign in advance with any man of his time, as his admirably planned and executed Chesapeake campaign had just proved to all the world. He was just fifty-nine—five years younger

than Rodney. Both men had followed the sea for half-a-century, the young De Grasse taking service under the Order of Malta, in which seven-and-twenty of his ancestors had been enrolled before him, just about the time that the schoolboy Rodney was leaving Harrow to enter the Royal Navy as the last of the 'King's Letter Boys.' Since then De Grasse, as an officer of the French navy in the regular line, had served all over the world, and done well for his country and himself. He had fought against England in three wars and been taken prisoner once. In the present war, indeed, he had already taken part in six fleet actions, and in three of them as *chef d'escadre* and third in command had had opportunity of learning something of Rodney's methods on the day of battle. Such was Joseph Paul de Grasse-Briançon, Knight of Malta, Grand Cross of the Order of St. Louis, Chevalier of the Order of Cincinnatus, Count de Grasse and Marquis de Grasse-Tilly, thirty-fifth of his line, of the *noblesse* of Provence, overlord of forty fiefs, the man in whose hands rested the fate of the campaign now about to open. 'Fresh from the victorious thunder of the American cannon' as he was, not a man under his orders doubted his ability to achieve success in the grand project that had been committed to his hands.

The Marquis de Vaudreuil was De Grasse's second in command. There was no better gentleman, from all accounts—never a nobler specimen of a French naval officer of the old school than Louis Philippe de Rigaud, Marquis de Vaudreuil. He looks it in his portrait at Versailles—a *beau sabreur* of the sea, *rusé*, ready-witted in emergency, a 'first-class fighting man' in all respects. The son of a sailor, the grandson of a sailor, the great-grandson of a sailor, he belonged to a family that had sent its sons to serve 'on the ships of the King' ever since France had had a navy. '*Il a de l'eau de mer autour du c[oe]ur*' is an old Breton saying that applied in the case of the scions of the Norman house of De Vaudreuil. He was a year younger than De Grasse, and like his chief had once had to go through the bitter experience of having to raise his hat on the quarter-deck of a foeman's ship as he gave up his sword to a foreigner in token of surrender.<sup>[17]</sup> Like De Grasse also, De Vaudreuil had taken part in six fleet battles since the war began. He was there by his own choice. There was not a man in the fleet who had not heard how, only a little time before, De Vaudreuil had refused the King's personal offer of a lucrative colonial governorship—De Vaudreuil was a poor man—rather than be absent from what to him was the post of duty. 'I am a sailor, your Majesty,' was the fine reply, 'and in war-

time a sailor's place is on the sea.<sup>[18]</sup> No officer in the whole French navy was more personally popular than was this courtly son of old-time France—'*noble de sang, d'armes, et de nom.*'

The circumnavigator Bougainville, *chef d'escadre*, was third in command, and about to add another experience to the many he had gone through in his crowded life. Professor of mathematics, barrister, author, major of militia, diplomatist, colonel of light dragoons, A.D.C. at Quebec and on the Rhine, circumnavigator, flag-captain—there were few things within his reach that Louis Antoine de Bougainville, the clever son of a country lawyer, had not tried his hand at in his time.<sup>[19]</sup>

Of the other officers, a third almost of the *Annuaire de la Noblesse*, the Debrett of Versailles, was represented at Fort Royal. Among the senior officers alone there were four Marquises, two Viscounts, five Counts, six Chevaliers, two Barons, nineteen 'de's,' only two plain Messieurs. There was a second De Vaudreuil, the Vicomte's younger brother, the Comte de Vaudreuil, a man of another kind—a smart, hard-fighting officer, but better known for his feats of gallantry than for his feats of arms, in particular as the favoured first lover of that haughty young beauty Gabrielle Yolande de Polignac, daintiest of Court ladies of the hour, '*avec le visage d'un ange et*'—perhaps it will be kinder to say no more. The Comte de Vaugiraud was Captain of the Fleet. Baron d'Escars, of the house of Fitz-James, notorious for his fanatical hatred of Great Britain, was captain of the *Glorieux*. The Sieur de la Clochette, an impetuous and brilliant officer—whose name as captain of the *Belle Poule* in her duel with the 'Saucy' *Arethusa* at the outset of the war, the French navy still remembers—commanded the *Hercule*. Comte d'Albert de Rions, by reputation the ablest tactician in the French navy, after De Suffren, was the senior captain. A De la Charette commanded the black *Bourgogne*;<sup>[20]</sup> a De Castellan, the *Auguste*; De la Vicomté, the *Hector*; and so on. There is, indeed, as one runs down the list of the French captains at Fort Royal, quite a ring of mediæval chivalry, of old-time romance, about their names. De Mortemart, De Monteclerc, De Saint Césaire, De Champmartin, De Castellane-Majastre, Le Gardeur de Tilly, to take half-a-dozen other names at random—one might almost be checking off one of Bayard's *compagnies d'élite*, or calling over a muster-roll of the Lances of Du Guesclin. In the junior ranks were a De Tourville, the Vicomte de Betsy, two scions of the historic house of St. Simon, a

Grimaldi, a Lascaris, a De Lauzun, a De Sevigné, a MacMahon, a Talleyrand, a De Ségur, a De Rochefoucauld, a Montesquieu. Brueys d'Aigalliers, of a noble family of Languedoc, who later on took service under the Revolution, and perished fighting Nelson at the Nile, was one of the lieutenants. La Pérouse, the explorer, was a *capitaine de frégate*. Bruix and Denis Decrès, Napoleon's Ministers of Marine in later days, were two of the midshipmen. Magon, who fell a rear-admiral at Trafalgar, was an *enseigne de vaisseau*. L'Hermitte, Troude, Willaumez, Emeriau, Bourayne, others of Napoleon's admirals, were among the boy *volontiers d'honneur* (naval cadets) in various ships of the Fort Royal fleet. De Grasse's personal staff comprised the Vicomte de Grasse, the admiral's nephew, the Comte de Cibon, and the Marquis de Beaulieu.

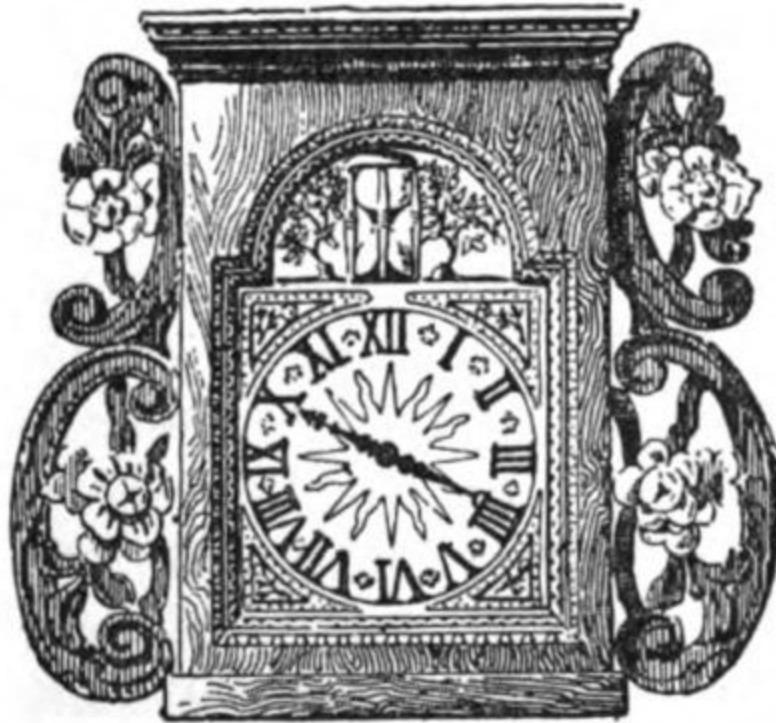
It was a glittering and gallant crowd that walked the quarter-deck with all the gay *abandon* of their race those balmy, fragrant West Indian evenings of April 1782, while the band played 'Vive Henri Quatre!' and 'Charmante Gabrielle,' high spirited, and heedless of the coming days. What were they not going to do, '*pour en finir avec ces Anglais—bêtes!*' Jamaica first, *cela s'entend!* Then the sack of Barbados,—the spoil of the goldsmiths and silversmiths of Bridgetown and the mansions of the planters, whose sideboards, groaning under the weight of gold and silver plate, 'astonished and stirred the envy of every passing visitor,' as travellers had told ever since the time of old Père Labat, 'gold and silver plate so abundant that the plunder of it would pay the cost of an expedition for the reduction of the island!' *Vive la France! Vive la Gloire!* Light-hearted and gay, how many of them gave a thought to something else? What of those who would not live to see the coming battle through? How many of them all would kneel next Sunday three weeks to receive the *aumônier's* blessing at early mass? Ah well!—what mattered it!—*Fortune de guerre!* Perhaps so. Perhaps, indeed, better so—at any rate, for some of them. Those who were to fall in the coming fight were to be envied, rather, in their ending. It was better, surely, to go down there and then, to be dropped overboard in the clear, deep water alongside, eight hundred and fifty fathoms down, to sleep the last sleep beneath the lapping wavelets of the blue Caribbean, dead on the field of honour, than to survive for what was yet to come for France, to experience the fate that was to befall so many a gallant French officer who outlived the cannon thunders of Rodney's day. To be laid to rest there in those soft summer seas was at least a better fortune than to have to undergo the cruel

doom that a few years later overtook so many of their messmates who outlasted the fight. Better be smashed in two by an English cannon-ball on the quarter-deck, than perish hideously in the dungeons of Draguignan, or go in the tumbrils to a death of ignominy and cold-blooded horror, clattering over the cobble-stones to the Place de Grève, while all round the mob of Paris howled and danced and cursed—the hapless lot of so many a gallant naval officer among the rest of the gentlemen of old-time France,

... those gallant fellows who died by guillotine,  
For honour and the fleur-de-lis and Antoinette  
the Queen.

It was better too, surely, than what befell so many others of those who escaped the Terror; better than to have to drag out year after year a pitiful existence as an *émigré* in London, in squalid lodgings in Somers Town, driven, poor fellows, to earn a wretched and precarious livelihood by teaching French for a few pence a lesson, or as dancing-masters, and then after it all be put away in a cheap grave in the grimy soil of St. Pancras old churchyard. It was better than that. *Vive la Gloire! Vixerunt.* Each one has had his day—

And somewhere, 'mid the distant stars,  
He knows, mayhap, what glory is.

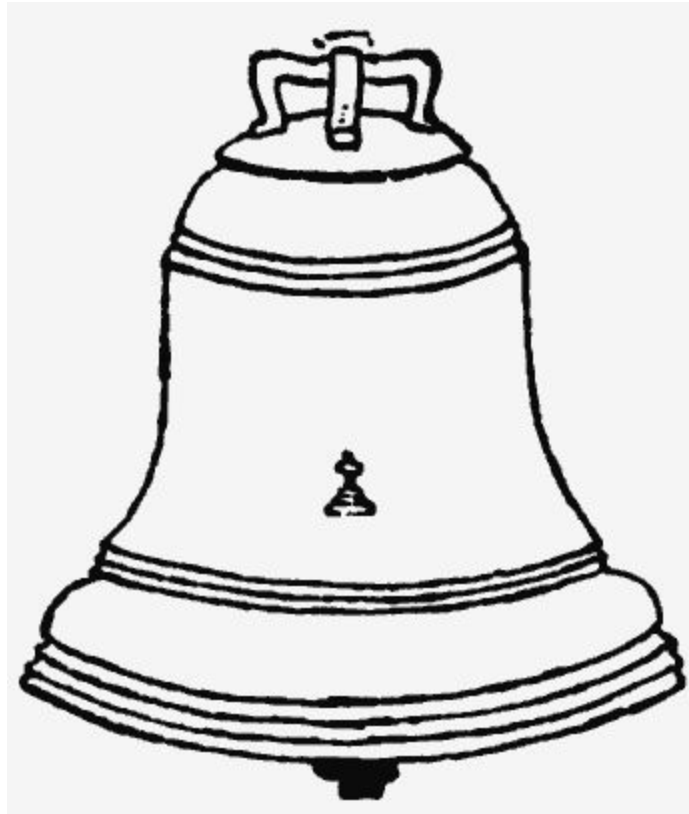


CLOCK-FACE FROM THE *VILLE DE PARIS*

Now in the Museum of the Royal United Service Institution, Whitehall. The clock-face was set up at the break of the poop, above the quarter-deck. It was the duty of a sentry to move the hands on every hour.

The ships were worthy of the men. The pick of the French fleet was with De Grasse—one ship of a hundred and four guns, five of eighty-four, three eighties, nineteen seventy-fours, six sixty-fours—thirty-four sail of the line altogether, besides sixteen frigates. A fine show they made with their yellow sides, belted with black at the water-line, and dark blue bulwarks, with red ports, gilded figure-heads and balustraded galleries, and gleaming brass Gribeauval guns, the newest type of ordnance from the foundries of Indret and La Ruelle. The magnificent *Ville de Paris*, 'leviathan of ships,' was De Grasse's flagship, the finest and largest first-rate in the world, the splendid present offered by the citizens of Paris to the King at the close of the Seven Years' War, as their contribution towards making good the losses that France had suffered in the war. Four and a half million livres she was said to have cost, nearly four times the price of the British *Royal George* or the

*Victory*. Seven others of the fifteen powerful men-of-war that the provinces and corporations of France, following the example of the capital, then offered to the State, were at Fort Royal, on which no money nor pains had been spared to make them equal in efficiency to the finest ships afloat.



BELL OF THE *VILLE DE PARIS*

Now in the Museum of the Royal United Service Institution, Whitehall.

A small army of soldiers was at Fort Royal, as well as De Grasse's fleet. There were between five and six thousand troops there, waiting under canvas for the order to embark on board the men-of-war. Bouillé commanded them,—the Marquis de Bouillé, the conqueror of St. Kitts and Nevis and Montserrat and Dominica and St. Eustatius, 'tiger-spring Bouillé,'<sup>[21]</sup> though better known to fame, perhaps, for his share in the events of a later day, as Commandant-General of Metz and the 'last refuge of royalty.' Varennes, however, was a name that De Bouillé, possibly, had as yet not heard of. Postmaster Drouet still rode in the ranks of the Condé dragoons. Some of the smartest corps in the French service were there: Regiment de Foix, dashing d'Armagnac, Artillerie de Metz, Regiments de Béarn, de Touraine, and de Monsieur, red-coated Irishmen of the Walsh and

Dillon corps, half a battalion of Royal Contois, two battalions of Auxerrois, brought from York Town with De Grasse, after having witnessed the march out of the surrendered British army. One of the most striking of the great paintings on the walls of the *Galerie des Batailles* at Versailles shows an aide-de-camp, a cocked-hatted, high-gaitered young dandy, garbed in Bourbon white with the mauve facings and silver lace of Auxerrois receiving orders from Washington just before the last attack. De Bouillé's division had already its place on paper as one of the wings of the 'Army of Jamaica.'

Now we turn to Gros Islet Bay and the British fleet. Rodney's ships lay at anchor to the south of Pigeon Island, off the north-west of St. Lucia, in the roadstead in front of Gros Islet Bay, about half-a-mile off shore, a stretch of deep water extending a mile and a half. The Gros Islet, from which the bay takes its name, was the old French name for Pigeon Island. There was also a village of the name on the shore opposite the island. Seven miles along the coast to the south was the *carénage*, where ships could be hove down and repaired; now called Castries, and an important port and naval station, destined, with the opening of the Panama Canal, to become the Valetta of the West Indies. The watering place for the fleet was at Trou Gascon in the bay.

Rodney's thirty-six sail of the line in Gros Islet Bay were thus made up: five three-deckers (four of 98 guns, *Formidable*, *Barfleur*, *Prince George*, and *Duke*, and one of 90, the *Namur*), and thirty-one two-deckers (twenty of them 74's, one a 70-gun ship, and ten 64's). They were as a rule older and slower vessels than the French ships: nearly a third of them, in fact, had seen service in the Seven Years' War. In guns the British fleet mounted 2620 pieces all told, against 2526 on the French side, but the enemy's metal was considerably the heavier. Most of De Grasse's ships carried 36-pounders (French weight, equivalent to 42-pounders by British reckoning), as against the 32-pounders that were Rodney's heaviest guns. According to the British Flag Captain, Sir Charles Douglas, the difference between the fleets in weight of metal worked out at 4396 lbs. (nearly two tons) in favour of the enemy. It made the French stronger, Douglas held, by 'the weight of metal of four 84's.' That was the difference on paper. In point of fact, certain details of equipment reversed the disparity. Most of Rodney's ships had their guns fitted with locks and priming-tubes, in place of the old port-fires

and powder-horns which the French still used. Also, they had been supplied with certain devices for quickening the service of the guns, increasing their rate of fire, and giving them a wider arc of training on the broadside. All that gave Rodney a very real advantage in hard-hitting power, without counting the carronades<sup>[22]</sup> or 'smashers' that most of the British ships mounted as extra to their regulation armaments.

In all respects Rodney's fleet was in the very highest order, and its discipline and general smartness left little to be desired. Thanks to the energy and skill of Dr. Blane, Rodney's Physician of the Fleet, no previous British fleet in time of war perhaps had ever been so free from sickness. In some ships there was not a man unfit to go to quarters. The *Ajax*, to name one ship, had no sick list. In the *Formidable*, out of 900 men on board, only two were unfit for duty. Before leaving Plymouth, Dr. Blane had had Teneriffe wine supplied to the flagship instead of rum, together with molasses and pickled cabbages, and the dietary had had a marvellous effect on the health of the men. For the first four months of the commission there was not a single death from sickness.<sup>[23]</sup>

As we glanced at De Grasse's captains, so we may glance at the gallant fellows in whose hands rested the fate of the British Empire. They were of another class than the captains of the enemy. There were no counts or viscounts with long pedigrees and high-sounding romantic names among Rodney's captains. Few of them were of 'the offspring of the sons and daughters of fashion,' though of course some were men of birth and breeding. Rodney himself, a baronet and K.B. (distinctions won on his own account), was a man of family. Sir Samuel Hood, also a self-made baronet, was a Somersetshire parson's son. Rear-Admiral Francis Samuel Drake, the third in command, a descendant of the great Sir Francis of Elizabethan days, belonged to the ordinary country gentleman class—man for man, no doubt, as good as any nobleman of France, but as denizens of another world to a Lord Chamberlain or a master of the ceremonies. Among the captains, Lord Robert Manners, of the *Resolution*, was the Marquis of Granby's second son; the Hon. William Cornwallis, of the *Canada*, was a younger son of Earl Cornwallis; Captain Reynolds, of the *Monarch*, was heir-presumptive to the Ducie peerage; Captain Lord Cranstoun, a volunteer on board the *Formidable*, was a baron of the Scottish peerage. These four, with Sir Charles Douglas, the Captain of the Fleet, another self-made baronet

(for war service), and Sir James Wallace, a knight, constituted, with the admiral and Hood, the social *élite* of Rodney's fleet—a list that hardly comes into comparison with De Grasse's little Versailles. The bulk of the British captains were the sons of ordinary folk, sons of squires and country parsons, and old naval officers to some extent, drawn from all over the three kingdoms—the sort of men that had officered the Royal Navy for the past hundred years, the men to whom Great Britain to-day owes her place among the nations. That, indeed, is literally the case. Also, not a few of those who to-day serve His Majesty King Edward on the quarter-deck are lineal representatives of Rodney's officers who in that April week of the year 1782 were in Gros Islet Bay, watching hour by hour for the *Formidable* to hoist the sailing-flags. It is an interesting instance of hereditary inclination—of how the naval spirit runs in families. Two-thirds of Rodney's captains, practically, are represented at the present hour in the Royal Navy by direct descendants. One has only to turn over the pages of the current Navy List to find Hoods and Inglefields and Parrys, and Graveses and Gardners, Fanshawes and Dumaresqs, a Buckner, a Blur, a Burnett, a Balfour, a Savage, a Symons, a Charrington, an Inglis, a Wallace, a Byron, a Cornish, a Truscott, a Saumarez, Knights and Wilsons, and Williamses and Wilkinsons and Thomsons, besides others, who either trace their descent directly from Rodney's captains or come of the same stock.

All in Gros Islet Bay were burning with anxiety to meet the enemy, absolutely confident of the result. About that, from the highest to the lowest, there were no two opinions. 'Their fate,' wrote Rodney himself in a letter on the 4th of April, 'is only delayed a short time, for have it they must and shall.' That was the common sentiment with all. The fleet was prepared to sail at an hour's notice. All leave was stopped. Not an officer or man was allowed out of his ship except on duty. Rodney meant that the blow, when it fell, should come, in the language of the prize-ring, as a 'knock-out' blow. It should be, to use Rodney's own words, 'the great event that must restore the empire of the seas to Great Britain.'

De Grasse was closely watched from hour to hour. Every movement at Fort Royal was signalled to the *Formidable* practically as it was made. A chain of Rodney's frigates reported everything that De Grasse did—a line of ships that stretched across the thirty miles of sea between Gros Islet Bay and the fleet in Fort Royal. To and fro they tacked day and night, patrolling

ceaselessly, observing all that passed and sending word of it along the chain. Two line-of-battle ships, the *Magnificent* and the fast-sailing *Agamemnon*, stiffened the frigate line at the end nearest the enemy. Captain George Anson Byron, of the *Andromache*, was in command of the look-out squadron—'an active, brisk, and intelligent officer,' Rodney calls him, the second son of old John Byron, 'Foul Weather Jack.' A signal-station on Pigeon Island, set up near the edge of a steep cliff 340 feet high (nearly the height of Beachy Head), kept touch with the frigates and linked them with the battle fleet. From the look-out post the men on duty could see not only the nearer frigates of the chain, but also right across to the mountains of Martinique, and in clear weather catch the white glint of the topgallant sails of the more distant vessels in front of Fort Royal, on the far horizon and hull down. The admiral himself, we are told, used to land on Pigeon Island nearly every day, and go up to the signal station, where, under an awning made from a sail, he would sit in an arm-chair with his telescope at his eye, scanning the frigate line. On the site of Rodney's signal-station there now stands a small fort, called 'Fort Rodney,' and visitors are shown what is said to be the actual slab of rock on which the admiral's chair was placed.

On the 3rd of April Captain Byron sent in the message that the enemy's preparations for sea appeared complete. On the 5th he signalled across that he could see the French soldiers being embarked on board the men-of-war. The fateful hour was on the point of striking. Then the news that Rodney wanted came. Just before eight on the morning of Sunday, the 8th of April, the signal was seen flying at the mast-head of the nearest of the frigates: 'THE ENEMY ARE COMING OUT OF PORT.'

The whole fleet was at sea, says Dr. Blane, 'in a little more than two hours.' In rapid succession the *Formidable* signalled, first to recall all boats and watering parties on board their ships at once, then for the fleet to 'Prepare to sail.' Following on that, at nine o'clock, according to the *Formidable's* log, the signal was made—'Prepare for battle!' Before half-past ten all was ready. The *Formidable* now loosed her main-topsail and fired a gun; to prepare to weigh anchor. That done, down dropped the foretopsail, and off went a second gun—'Weigh!' A quarter of an hour later—

With boats on board, with anchors weighed,  
The fleet rides ready in the bay.

The whole fleet was under sail and moving out to sea by a little before eleven. Rodney had started on his chase.

Before noon the rear ships were clearing Pigeon Island and Point du Cap, the northernmost headland of St. Lucia, was on the beam. The *Magnificent* and *Agamemnon*, falling back from their advanced positions while the frigates held on ahead, now came into the fleet. De Grasse, they reported, had come out and gone off to the north-west, with thirty-five sail of the line, ten frigates, and an immense convoy of merchantmen and store-ships, numbering upwards of a hundred and fifty sail. The convoy had left Fort Royal at daybreak, some time in advance of the men-of-war, working up along the coast towards St. Pierre under a small escort.

As the British fleet gained the open sea it formed up in order of sailing, Hood's squadron leading.

Nothing could be seen of the enemy from the fleet. Not even from the mast-head was a glimpse of the French to be got. Touch, though, was well maintained by the frigates, who kept Rodney continuously informed of the course the enemy were taking. Diamond Rock, a solitary haystack-shaped mass off the Morne du Diamant, the south-western point of Martinique, began to rise on the sea-line ahead towards three o'clock. Half-an-hour later they could make out the bluff shoulder of Cape Solomon, on the southern side of Fort Royal Bay. Nothing of the enemy, though, was visible even from the mast-head of the battle-fleet, until, at eight minutes after four. Hood's ship, the *Barfleur*, flagship of the van squadron, suddenly made a signal that she saw them. Enthusiastic cheers burst out in response from ship to ship all down the line. From the *Formidable*, farther astern, they did not get their first sight of the enemy until nearly two hours later, not long before sunset. Then they sighted five strange sail on the horizon to the north-west, 'which we suppose,' says the *Formidable's* log, 'to be part of the French fleet.' Darkness came on soon after that. 'During the night,' says Sir Charles Douglas, 'we followed them, under as much canvas as we could in prudence carry, the wind blowing very fresh at N.E. by E.'

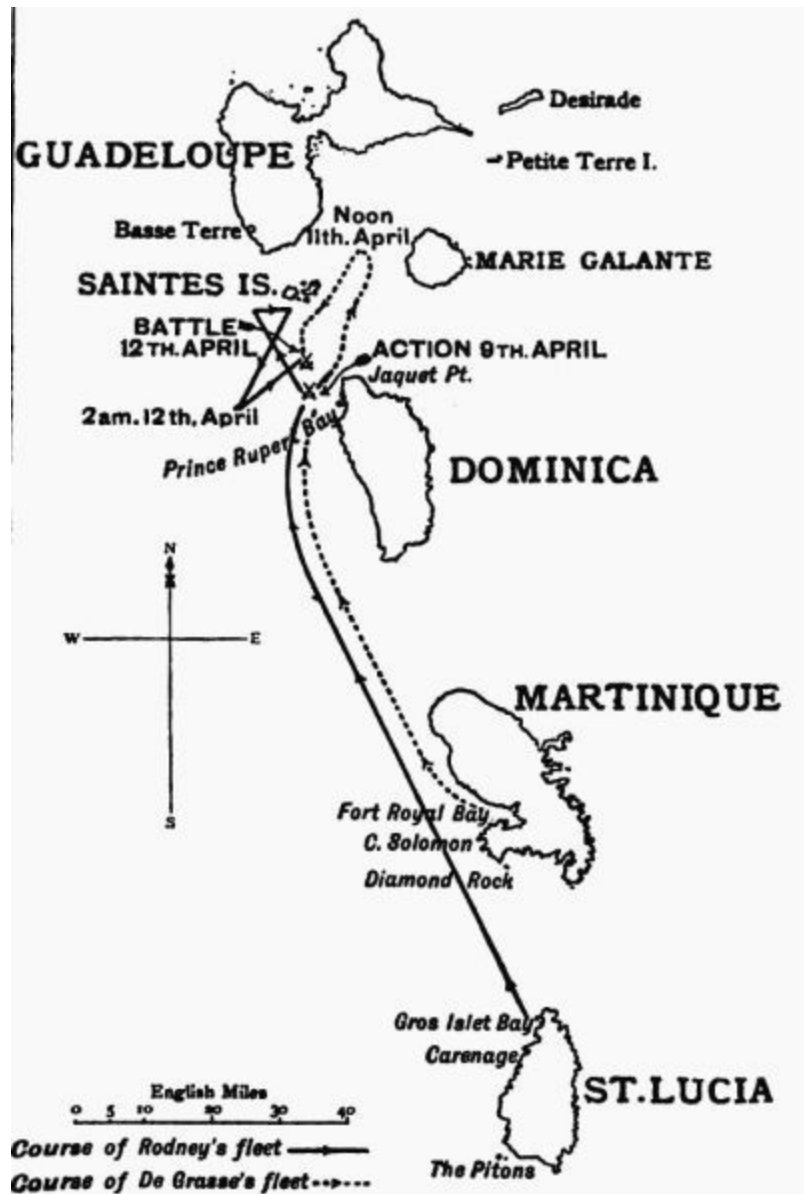


CHART SHOWING RODNEY'S PURSUIT OF DE GRASSE, AND THE ENGAGEMENTS OF APRIL 9 AND 12

At nine o'clock one of the headmost of the frigates, dropping back from the van, hailed the *Formidable* to the effect that they had De Grasse's lights well in view. By midnight the enemy's signal-flares were distinctly visible from the British flagship, and an occasional signal-gun was heard. At two in the morning (the 9th of April) the *St. Albans* dropped back alongside the *Formidable* and hailed across that she and the *Valiant*, sailing to windward, had seen the enemy's lights. The *Formidable* had sighted them for herself

just before. Satisfied with the progress made, Rodney now brought the fleet to. Daylight was wanted for the next move.

Clear daylight came about half-past five. It disclosed the entire force of the enemy, both men-of-war and convoy. They were full in sight to the north-east, an irregular array of ships stretching along under the high land of Dominica, and from six to twelve miles off. The leading French ships were trying to weather the northernmost point of the island and work round into the stretch of open water between Dominica and the next island to northward, Guadeloupe, but their progress was slow. Since midnight the wind had fallen away until it was now nearly a dead calm. The bulk of De Grasse's ships were lying off Prince Rupert's Bay with barely steerage way. Rodney, farther to seaward, was in like case. Until nearly seven o'clock it was impossible to move on either side. Then there came a change. Towards seven o'clock the sea-breeze from the north-east, blowing through the channel between Dominica and Guadeloupe, began to reach Hood's ships at the head of the British line. The breeze carried Hood forward and out into the channel; but at the same time it caused him to break away and separate from his own fleet. Rodney himself with the whole of the British centre, and Drake with the rear squadron, were left at some distance astern, beyond the reach of the breeze. They remained unable to get clear of the belt of calm under the lee of Dominica.<sup>[24]</sup> A gap was formed in the British line as Hood was swept more and more ahead, and it widened rapidly.

The opportunity was too good for De Grasse to miss. He had the windward berth, and fourteen or fifteen of his ships, helped by the same breeze that carried Hood forward, were simultaneously getting clear of the island and into the channel. Only eight ships were with Hood. De Grasse saw a chance of dealing his opponent a telling blow by crippling Hood before the British centre and rear squadrons could move to his support. He signalled to De Vaudreuil, who led the French line, to bring Hood's isolated squadron to action at once.

An incident of the most exciting and extra-ordinary kind occurred while De Vaudreuil, who well knew what kind of action his leader intended him to fight, was preparing to carry out his orders. Two French ships, to leeward of the rest, attempted to cut across the head of Hood's ships, which were sailing in close order at one cable interval. The two had got separated from their consorts during the night, and were taking the nearest way to rejoin.

One of them shirked coming to close quarters, and made a sweep round well ahead of Hood. The other, in the coolest and most insolent way, stood directly for the leader of the British column. She approached deliberately and aggressively, and came on as though she did not care if she came into collision with anybody or not. Her ports were closed down, her ensign staff showed no colours. On the reckless Frenchman came, and the next instant, to the astonishment of the whole squadron, the *Alfred*, Hood's leading ship, herself gave way, and sheered out of line. The *Alfred* bore up to allow the enemy's seventy-four to pass. The amazing display of impudence was attended with complete impunity. Everything was done in dumb show. Not a gun went off on either side. Hood's men in the eight ships were all at quarters and ready, fidgeting with suppressed excitement but in hand. Their guns were pointed and run out and all training on the Frenchmen—yet not a shot was, or could be, fired. No signal to 'commence action' had gone up. Until it did, until the red flag broke at the *Formidable's* foretopmast-head, no captain dared begin. Why Rodney delayed the signal was inexplicable. The *Formidable* was between five and six miles from Hood at that moment; but on board the flagship they must have seen what was taking place. At any rate it was a fine display of British discipline. In breathless silence the French ship forged slowly past the *Alfred's* broadside, every gun of which was kept pointed on her, training round and following her as she went by. She made no sign, but held stolidly on for her own fleet, until she had reached a safe distance from the British ships. Then, as if in bravado, the French captain hauled his ports up, ran his guns out, and displayed his colours. Immediately afterwards the *Formidable* made the signal—'Engage.'

De Vaudreuil at the same moment opened his attack—such as it was. He had had his instructions from De Grasse as to the sort of attack he was to deliver. It was not to be pressed home. No risks were to be run. Hood was to be dealt with by long-range fire from the French 36-pounders, and his ships dismasted and crippled, the French ships themselves meanwhile keeping off as much as possible out of harm's way. With fifteen ships to the British eight, De Grasse anticipated being able to handle Hood so roughly that Rodney would be forced after the fight to stop behind to attend to the repairs of his second in command's squadron, which would let him go on his way to San Domingo without further interference. That was what was in the French admiral's mind. De Grasse would not see that he had only to go

one step farther. The gods had favoured him, the odds were all on his side: a little boldness, a little of the *furia francese* at point-blank range, and Rodney's whole fleet would be out of action for the rest of the campaign. Had De Vaudreuil made use of his superiority on the spot and attacked Hood vigorously at close quarters, there would have been no question of repairs. Hood's squadron would have ceased to exist as a fighting force: twenty-five per cent of Rodney's total strength would have been shorn away at one stroke.<sup>[25]</sup> When De Vaudreuil began firing, the nearest ships of Rodney's squadron were four miles from Hood, and still becalmed; Admiral Drake and the rear squadron, all also becalmed, were from ten to twelve miles off. It was an anxious moment for the British, until they saw how things were shaping themselves.

De Vaudreuil attacked in a very clever fashion, with a remarkably artistic display of minor tactics. He circled his ships round and round and blazed away with a continuous fire on his opponent, who kept a close line for most of the time, with main-topsails to the mast. At times two or three of the French ships—sometimes, indeed, more—were firing at once on individual British ships. The *Barfleur*, we are told, 'had at one time seven and generally three ships upon her.'<sup>[26]</sup> Hood remained very little the worse for his hammering, and after three-quarters of an hour's firing De Vaudreuil gave over for a time.

The attack was renewed a little before noon with some fresh ships. The breeze had reached the French main body, enabling De Grasse and three-quarters of his fleet to arrive on the scene. It also brought up some of the headmost ships of Rodney's own squadron, the *Formidable* among them, but these were far fewer than the French, who throughout had a superiority within the fighting zone of nearly two to one. The rear division of Rodney's squadron and the whole of Drake's still remained becalmed a long way astern. Once again De Grasse refused to seize his chance and push his advantage home. 'Had the French fleet come down as they ought,' said Rodney, 'in all probability half my fleet would have suffered extremely; but they, as usual, kept an awful distance, and only made a cannonade!'<sup>[27]</sup> For upwards of an hour and a half the firing went on, and then it ceased for the day. Rodney's rear division and Drake's ships had at last got a breeze and were beginning to work up into action. On seeing that, De Grasse broke off the fighting abruptly and drew off out of range. His half-hearted game had

failed entirely. None of Hood's ships had suffered damage that could not be repaired at sea within twenty-four hours. On the other hand, the straight shooting of Hood's gunners, long as the range had been, had severely mauled some of De Vaudreuil's ships. On board the *Formidable*, in the short time she was in action, three men were killed and ten wounded; the killed including an officer. Lieutenant Hill—'my best lieutenant,' as Rodney called him.

De Grasse employed the afternoon in working to windward towards the Saints, a group of islets about six miles to southward of Guadeloupe. Rodney, after reversing the order of his line so as to bring Drake's fresh ships to the van and place Hood's squadron in rear, hove-to in order to give the damaged ships an opportunity for attending to their repairs.

They remained hove-to until daybreak next morning (Wednesday, the 10th of April), when once more Rodney took up the chase. The French were in sight, some twelve miles off. All day Rodney chased hard, beating up against a stiff north-easterly breeze. The French admiral showed no disposition to turn on his pursuers and fight. 'The French,' wrote Rodney, 'always had it in their power to come into action, which they cautiously avoided.' De Grasse held on his course, and gaining steadily during the day led by fifteen miles at nightfall. He was by then near the Saints. Rodney's last signal before sunset was 'General chase,' so as to give his ships every chance of doing their best independently. There was little fear of missing the enemy. Throughout the night the flashes of the French signal-guns and their signal-flares and false fires were plainly visible.

In spite of Rodney's efforts, however, the French gained on him in the night. To the British admiral's bitter disappointment, on Thursday morning the enemy were nearly out of sight. Only a few of their ships were to be seen. De Grasse, indeed, had secured so long a lead that already a large part of his fleet had weathered the Saints. It looked, in fact, as though the enemy were going to get away clear after all. Rodney, however, was not a man to despair. 'Persist and conquer,' was, as he himself said, his favourite maxim in war. He held doggedly on, trusting to the chapter of accidents. It was, no doubt, all he could do. Anyway, as events proved, it was the right thing.

He had his reward, and before he had waited very long. Early in the afternoon two of De Grasse's ships were made out to be in difficulties. They

had dropped astern of the French line and to leeward, and were drifting in the direction of the course of the advancing British. During Wednesday night the *Zélé*, a seventy-four, had collided with another French ship, losing her main-topmast in the collision. Unable to make good her damage, after trying in vain to keep up with her consorts, the unfortunate vessel had dropped gradually to leeward, in company with the *Magnanime*, also a seventy-four, whose foreyard had been carried away in tacking. The two ships were several miles to leeward of the French fleet when, early in the afternoon, they came under Rodney's attention. At that time they were still a long way to windward of the weathermost of the British fleet, but their situation offered Rodney an opening. Supposing he made a show of trying to cut the two French ships off—how would De Grasse take it? Would he turn back and come to the rescue? Rodney felt sure that he would. De Grasse, he was positive, would never let two of his ships be snapped up by an enemy in full view of his own fleet without making an effort to save them. That being so, there could only be one outcome. 'I flattered myself,' said Rodney, 'he would give me an opportunity of engaging next day.'

The signal to chase the two ships was made at once, and within a few minutes the weathermost of the British ships were drawing out directly towards them. They were Rodney's fliers, and they sailed fast. They 'gained on the French so fast that the two French ships,' according to Sir Charles Douglas, who was watching the chase from the quarter-deck of the *Formidable*, 'began to make signals for help to three or four of the enemy, all then in sight from the mast-head.' That was just what Rodney wanted. What he hoped for followed. De Grasse could not stand by and see two of his ships cut off. The French admiral, observing the signals of distress, went about and bore down to the rescue under full sail. 'De Grasse,' said Captain Douglas, describing the afternoon's work, 'bore down *en corps*, our chasers still menacing their game until the Count's headmost ships had got very near them, when they and the rest of the fleet were recalled into close order by signal.'<sup>[28]</sup> By five o'clock De Grasse had lost all the advantage of position that he had toiled so hard to secure during the past two days. He saved his two ships, and he was still to windward; but it was more than an even chance now that Rodney would be able to force on a battle next day. 'I hope we shall do most effective business to-morrow,' were Hood's words in a note to Rodney that evening.

Rodney made it his business that De Grasse should not have the chance of evading battle on the morrow. With that one aim he issued his orders for the night. He saw his way to outman[oe]uvre the French under cover of the dark. All lights on board every ship were to be doused except one lantern at the stern of the *America*, told off as the 'guide of the fleet.' On a signal, given from the *Formidable* after dark, the whole fleet, in order of sailing and under press of canvas, was to stand to the south, 'which was away from the French,' until two o'clock in the morning. Then, on a gun signal from the *Formidable*, all would tack together and beat up until daylight.

Everything turned out exactly as Rodney anticipated. From the British fleet they marked the flashes of De Grasse's signal-guns from time to time during the night, and could guess what he was doing. The French admiral, on the other hand, saw nothing and heard nothing of the British fleet. He had not the least idea of Rodney's whereabouts all the night through, and was immensely surprised when daylight showed up the complete success of Rodney's clever move. 'We had no conception,' said one of De Grasse's officers afterwards, 'that the British fleet could be so near.'

Rodney at daybreak was asleep in his cabin. Having set things in train, he had lain down to get what rest he might before the fateful morrow came. He had not been able to sleep at all for anxiety during the three previous nights. The admiral was sleeping peacefully when, a little before half-past five, Sir Charles Douglas entered the cabin and awoke Rodney with the news that 'God had given him his enemy on the lee bow!'

Rodney was on deck a very few minutes later. It was broad daylight. This is the situation as it presented itself before Rodney's eyes that morning. The British fleet in line ahead, not a ship out of station, was steering east-north-east on the starboard tack. The wind was from the south-east. Right ahead lay the open channel between Dominica and Guadeloupe, divided by the chain of islets known as 'the Saints'—Columbus's name for them in commemoration of their discovery on All Saints' Day. They lay off the south end of Martinique, six miles from shore, with, on the other side, between them and Dominica, a wide space of open water, fifteen miles across—'The Saints' Passage,' as it was called. Prince Rupert's Bay in Dominica lay some miles away on Rodney's starboard beam. The enemy were to the north-east of the British fleet, as Douglas had said, 'broad on the lee bow.' They were out of formation, a straggling array of ships, making

towards the south on the port tack and pointing diagonally across the Saints' Passage.<sup>[29]</sup> The French had had a bad night and were widely separated. Most of their ships were far off on the horizon, nearly twelve miles away. A small group of five or six ships, with a big three-decker in the midst of them, were not more than eight miles from Rodney. That, however, was not all. Rodney, after his first glance ahead, turned his attention in another direction. What he saw was enough to astonish him. There, under his very eyes, by an extraordinary chance, the situation of yesterday afternoon was repeating itself. Dead to leeward of the British fleet, and only five or six miles off, were two isolated French ships. One was a seventy-four, with her foremast down and bowsprit gone. The other was a frigate, which had the crippled ship in tow. The two were going off before the wind, apparently bound for Basse Terre, Guadeloupe.

There had been another collision in the French fleet. The hapless *Zélé*, whose earlier misfortunes had been the cause of De Grasse turning back on Thursday afternoon, had during the previous night had a second collision. While tacking shortly after midnight, she had blundered clumsily into the *Ville de Paris* with disastrous consequences. In her present state the *Zélé* was a danger to his fleet, and De Grasse told off La Pérouse of the *Astrée* to tow the crippled ship off at once into Basse Terre. It proved, though, for one reason and another, not so easy a thing to do in the dark, and the first streaks of dawn were showing before the towing-cable had been got across. After that, when at length the two moved away they crawled off dead slow, making barely five knots. All the time, ever since midnight, the wind and set of the tide had been carrying not only the *Zélé* and the *Astrée*, but also the *Ville de Paris* and the half-dozen ships with her that were standing by, steadily to leeward, away from the main body of the French fleet, and ever nearer to the course on which Rodney, in the dark, all unknown to De Grasse, was fast approaching. The French had entirely lost touch with Rodney since sunset, owing to his having put out his lights.

From the *Formidable's* quarter-deck Rodney marked the situation of the *Zélé*. He saw what it meant. A flutter of signal-flags broke overhead, and within two minutes four of Hood's smartest ships—the *Monarch*, *Valiant*, *Centaur*, and the *Belliqueux*—were sweeping out of the line with all sail set, heading straight for the *Zélé* and the frigate. De Grasse saw it. To lose the *Zélé* like that would be a personal disgrace; but that was not all the

mischief. The great De Bouillé himself, Commander-in-Chief of the French army, was on board the *Astrée*. It was terribly awkward. De Grasse at once signalled to his fleet in the distance to make all sail and close on the *Ville de Paris*, forming line on the port tack.<sup>[30]</sup> He himself meanwhile with the ships nearest him bore down towards the British four to frighten them off. That was just the false step that Rodney wanted him to take—the outcome of "an impulse of hasty unbalanced judgment."<sup>[31]</sup> By another move he might have forced Rodney to recall his chasers before they could reach the *Zélé*, at the same time also keeping the weather-gage for himself. By hurrying down under sail ahead of his fleet De Grasse not only delayed the formation of his line, as his ships had the farther to go to reach their stations, but he also carried his fleet bodily to leeward and within Rodney's reach. A worse blunder still was the forming line on the port tack—the opposite to that on which Rodney was standing. By continuing on the port tack, the French, after the first exchange of fire in the open channel, could not help running into the belt of calms and variable airs off the coast of Dominica, which would render further man[oe]uvring on their part impossible. It was a glaring blunder, and his own fleet saw it. 'What evil genius,' exclaimed De Vaudreuil's flag-captain, Du Pavillon, who had the reputation of being one of the ablest officers in the French navy, as he read off the flags at the *Ville de Paris's* mast-head with his glass, 'What evil genius has inspired the admiral!'

When the French had come far enough to leeward to suit his purpose, Rodney recalled his chasing ships and went to breakfast.

The men had already breakfasted, and every ship was ready, cleared for action: the decks were rid of unnecessary gear and sanded down, the yards slung and sheets stoppered, fire screens rigged, the guns cast loose, and run out, the galley fires extinguished and the magazines opened. On board the *Formidable* during these preliminary moments, Sir Charles Douglas with Captain Symonds went round below and inspected the gun-locks throughout the ship and the supplies of quill priming tubes—eighty tubes with a couple of Kentish flints to each gun.

The Admiral's breakfast party, we are told, sat down in a very cheerful and confident mood. Douglas of course formed one of the party, and Captain Symonds; Paget the admiral's secretary. Dr. Blane, and the flag-lieutenant were the others. One chair was vacant, that of Lord Cranstoun. Lord

Cranstoun was remaining behind on deck to watch the movements of the enemy. When the others were half-way through the meal he came hurrying into the cabin with the announcement that the course on which they were standing must carry them through the enemy's line. Everybody glanced at Rodney expecting him to say something;—but the admiral made no remark and calmly went on with his meal.

When they went on deck again after breakfast the enemy had hauled up rather nearer to the wind than before, but were still standing on the port tack and heading to cross the bows of the British fleet. De Grasse's line was not yet formed. The ships farthest off when the French Admiral first made his signal had not yet had time to join, though they were hastening down with all sail set.

The spectacle at every point was inspiring, and was girt round by a magnificent setting. On one hand, right ahead, the Saints' group stretched away to the north-east, islet beyond islet, all showing up clear in the golden sunshine of the cloudless morning against the towering darker background of the Souffrière of Guadeloupe. On the horizon, due east, a faint greyish-blue blur marked the low-lying island of Marie Galante. Away on the starboard beam and not far distant the mountain masses of Dominica, crowned by the jagged volcanic summit of the mighty Diablotin, the loftiest peak of the Antilles, overtopped the scene and closed in the view. 'If superior beings,' wrote Dr. Blane, 'make a sport of the quarrels of mortals, they could not have chosen a better theatre for the magnificent exhibition.'<sup>[32]</sup>

The fleets in themselves afforded a spectacle in keeping with the surroundings. Nothing could have been finer than the show they made that morning: nearly eighty men-of-war all told, three-deckers, two-deckers, and frigates in battle array, their lofty canvas glinting white in the bright sunshine, with gleaming yellow sides, tiers on tiers of ports, wide open with the red port-lids lashed back showing the brass muzzles of the shotted guns, all gliding forward in stately order across a placid sea of the deepest blue, shimmering under a cloudless sky.

The Blue Ensign led the British line, the colours of Drake's squadron; twelve ships all with blue ensigns at the stern. The White Ensign was in the centre, waving over the *Formidable* and her division of twelve; Rodney's

own colour as admiral of the White. Hood's twelve in rear wore the Red Ensign, Hood being a flag officer of the Red. On the French side, Bougainville led with the 'Escadre Bleue,' De la Clochette having the post of honour in the van ship. De Grasse himself, with the 'Corvette Blanche' at the mast-head of the mighty *Ville de Paris*, was in the centre. De Vaudreuil with the 'Blanche et Bleu' at the fore, the service term for the parti-coloured flag that French seconds-in-command flew, brought up the rear.<sup>[33]</sup>

After calling in his chasers Rodney closed his fleet to one cable interval all along the line. His van ships continued meanwhile to lead obliquely across the course that the French were steering, making towards the spot where, as both sides could see, the two lines were bound to intersect. The headmost ships of the French fleet passed over the spot first; just, it so happened, as the leading ships of the British fleet came within range. For that the French had been watching. As soon as they saw that their shots could reach the enemy they opened fire.

De Grasse did not intend, if he could help it, to fight a pitched battle. It was not his policy to fight the battle out. Since he must fight he would confine the day's proceedings to a mere passing cannonade, after which he would work to windward and slip away. He knew he had the heels of Rodney; the events of the past two days had shown that. Thus at the last moment De Grasse thought he might snatch a strategical advantage in the great game. His gunners, however, did not shoot straight enough. They failed to do the execution among Rodney's masts and spars that their admiral hoped for. The British fleet came steadily on with little to show by way of damage except a few rope-ends dangling loose and some shot-holes through the sails.

The *Marlborough*, a powerful 74, one of the finest men-of-war that Deptford dockyard ever sent to sea, led the line. She kept her helm steady and held her way forward without checking for an instant, unswerving, regardless of the storm of shot that hurtled overhead or splashed in the sea alongside. Taylor Penny, the *Marlborough's* captain, a gallant son of Dorset and a veteran now serving in his third war, was not the man to mind a cannonade. The *Marlborough* stood on silently until she had come within 150 yards of the French line. Then, when nearly opposite the fifth ship from the enemy's van, her helm went swiftly up and the ship's huge bulk swung

round to port. The next minute she began to range along the enemy broadside on, in the opposite direction to that the French were taking. Not a shot had come from the *Marlborough's* ports all this time. Four French ships in turn passed her and fired at her, but Captain Penny took no notice. The flagship had made no sign. No order to 'commence action' had been given. Every telescope on board was kept fixed on the *Formidable*, while below the captains of the guns fidgeted impatiently with the firing lanyards. They had to practise patience. Eight bells clanged out on board the silent *Marlborough*, and still they waited. Then, instantaneously the signal was made. The *Formidable's* signal halyards were seen to twitch, and a little ball of bunting slid swiftly aloft to the mast-head. There was a jerk, and the next instant the red flag for battle—the 'bloody flag,' as the navy called it—was 'abroad,' flying out upon the breeze. It went up just as the *Marlborough* came abreast of the French *Dauphin Royal*, the ninth ship in De Grasse's line, and as the flag 'broke' the *Marlborough's* opening broadside flashed off with a thundering crash, guns, carronades, and musketry all together.

The British ships nearest astern of the *Marlborough* opened fire at the same moment. Each in her station, a cable's length apart, they had been following close in the *Marlborough's* wake, equally ready and eager to begin.

There were sixteen ships in the line between the *Marlborough* and the *Formidable*, each 200 yards apart (the length of a cable), and the men of Rodney's flagship had to wait some little time yet for their turn. Their eyes, though, had something to look at, for most of the ships ahead of them were full in their view meanwhile. What they saw was worth seeing.

The *Arrogant*, a veteran 74 of the Seven Years' War time, backed the *Marlborough* up; an exceptionally ugly customer for an enemy to tackle, for her guns were fitted with all the newest improvements,—locks, tubes, and sweep-pieces,—and her men knew how to make the best of them. Captain Douglas, watching the *Arrogant* from the *Formidable*, noted that he saw her firing three broadsides to the enemy's one—one broadside meeting the enemy as they came up; the second right into their ports as they passed; the third a slashing good-bye salute, training three-quarters aft into the Frenchmen's stern. Some of the enemy struck back savagely as the *Arrogant* went by, but the tough Suffolk oak of the old ship's timbers could take hard knocks, and the Harwich dockyard-men's work came through the hammering little the worse. The *Alcide*, Captain Charles Thomson,

followed next, a British-built model of one of old 'Dreadnought' Boscawen's prizes, whose French name she had also taken; then the *Nonsuch*, Captain Truscott; and the *Conqueror*, Captain George Balfour, a gallant Scot who had won post-rank for an act of exceptional daring in battle five-and-twenty years before.

These five 74's headed the British fleet and 'broke the bowling.' They ranged forward alongside the French within pistol-shot, 'sliding down slowly,' as Captain Douglas, looking on from the *Formidable's* quarter-deck, described it. They passed parallel to the French and to leeward, on the opposite tack, from the ninth ship of the enemy to their rear ship, exchanging fire with every ship of the enemy, one after the other as each came by, until they had passed and overlapped the end of the French line. Forward they went, ship following ship, keeping exact station and each lashing out, broadside after broadside, into the enemy as they swept along, as fast as the powder could be brought to the guns.

Admiral Drake followed in the wake of the *Conqueror*, with the *Princessa*, an ex-Spanish two-decker, a 70-gun ship, but bigger than Hood's *Barfleur*, one of the prizes that Rodney had made in his moonlight battle with Langara off Cape St. Vincent that wild January midnight two years before when he was on his way to relieve Gibraltar. The big *Prince George* (Captain Williams), a giant 98-gun three-decker, the hardest hitter of the van squadron in weight of metal, seconded Drake.

Keppel's pet ship, the ever-ready old *Torbay*, came next in the line, with, astern of her, the *Anson*, a small 64, Captain William Blair—to-day, poor fellow, in his last fight. In the heat of the action a round-shot, sweeping some three feet above the deck, struck Captain Blair at the waist, smashing his body right in two and carrying half of it across the deck and up against the bulwarks on the farther side. The van squadron was completed by the *Fame*, 74, and the *Russell*, Captain James Saumarez, the famous admiral of later days, then a young post-captain twenty-five years old, whom a stroke of unexpected good luck a few weeks before had transferred from a small fireship to the quarter-deck of one of the best line-of-battle ships in Rodney's fleet.

Each ship as she reached the spot at which her immediate leader had turned put her helm up sharply and ranged along in the wake of the ship next

ahead, firing into every Frenchman that she passed, keeping meanwhile her leader's three masts in one and checking her distance with the sextant. That was at the outset, as they came round and steadied into line alongside the enemy. As the firing became general the smoke, rolling heavily down from windward, smothered the British ships in a dense fog and blanketed them in, shutting out the view all round, except now and again as a glimpse ahead was caught in an occasional rift here and there.

Rodney's squadron followed Drake's without a break. The *America*, Captain Thompson, led them, a cable's length astern of the *Russell*. Her name is out of the Navy List now, but it had a meaning of its own in those days, commemorating as it did a former gift of a man-of-war to Great Britain by those colonists of North America who had become since then her deadliest foes.

The *Hercules*, 74, commanded by a 'character' of the day, Captain Henry Savage, came next. Her captain's doings that morning were of peculiar interest. Savage took his ship into action with two ensigns up, one nailed to the staff, the other at the peak, with the halyards so belayed that the flag could not easily be hauled down. Beyond a casual gun, he would not let a shot be fired until he had come right abreast of the French admiral. Then he opened with a full broadside into the *Ville de Paris*, every gun double-shotted, at less than 50 yards. Not thirty seconds elapsed between the first gun and the last, said the *Hercules'* first lieutenant. As the men reloaded, Captain Savage, who, a martyr to gout, had been sitting in an arm-chair on deck waving his hat and calling out uncomplimentary epithets to the Frenchmen as he passed each ship, forgetting his pain in his excitement, jumped on an arm chest and struck up a line of a song of the day—

Oh! what a charming thing's a battle!

Once she had passed the *Ville de Paris* there was no more holding back on board the *Hercules*. They fired as fast as the guns could be loaded and run out, using rammers that Captain Savage himself had invented for quick loading. 'Her side,' said the officers of the ship astern of the *Hercules*, 'was in a constant blaze.' Captain Savage, who had resumed his arm-chair, soon afterwards received a bad wound, and had to be taken to the cockpit. As he went below he told his officers 'to point between wind and water and sink the d—d rascals!' He returned on deck in a few minutes and sat the battle

out bandaged up, fixed in his arm-chair, which was set by the ship's side in the gangway, and shouting out expletives as before. As the *Hercules* cleared the rear of the French fleet, Captain Savage luffed up directly into the wake of the enemy, at right angles to their line, and by way of a parting kick sent a raking last broadside crash into the rearmost French ship's cabin windows as she disappeared in the smoke.

Captain Buckner's *Prothée*, a 64, taken from the French two years before, followed the *Hercules* in the line, and after her came the smart *Resolution*, 74. The captain of the *Resolution*, Lord Robert Manners, was the first on board her to fall. A round-shot struck him down, smashing his left leg and injuring the right badly, and at the same moment a heavy splinter fractured his right arm. Lord Robert was carried down to the cockpit, where it was found necessary to amputate his left leg, the heroic young officer—he was only twenty-four and chloroform or anæsthetics of any kind were as yet unknown—'making jocular remarks on the operation with a smiling countenance during its most painful steps.'<sup>[34]</sup> Captain Manners' injuries unfortunately proved mortal. He seemed to be getting better, and was on his way home in the frigate that carried Rodney's despatches, when mortification suddenly set in, and he was dead within twenty-four hours. 'I would rather have lost two seventy-fours than Lord Robert Manners,' King George is reported to have said when His Majesty received the news of the death. A monument to him, conjointly with Captains Bayne of the *Alfred* (killed on the 9th) and Blair of the *Anson*, was erected by order of Parliament in Westminster Abbey. Another brave fellow on board the *Resolution*, as the ship's surgeon related, was a seaman whose name history has not preserved. He was standing by his gun as the ship sheered abreast of De Grasse's flagship. The gun was all ready and just going to fire when a shot came in at the port and took his leg off at the knee. As quick as thought the man pulled off his neckcloth and tied his leg above the stump. The next instant he seized his shot-off limb and thrust it into the muzzle of the gun, which went off two seconds later. 'My foot,' shouted the man exultantly, 'is the first to board the *Ville de Paris*!' Such was the spirit in which Rodney's tars went into the fight that day.



MONUMENT OF THE THREE CAPTAINS—BLAIR, BAYNE, AND  
LORD ROBERT MANNERS—IN WESTMINSTER ABBEY

The big *Duke*, of 98 guns, 'a splendidly efficient three-decker,' with a large effigy of 'Butcher' Cumberland of Culloden fame, in the war-paint of a British general, at her bows for the ship's figure-head, came on in the wake of the *Resolution*.<sup>[35]</sup> Her captain was Alan Gardner, the Lord Gardner of later days, an officer and seaman worthy of such a ship. There was no more efficient man-of-war in Rodney's line than the *Duke*, nor one more perfectly equipped, not excepting the *Formidable* herself. And her men were worthy of their captain and their ship. Captain Gardner had the honour of leading Rodney himself into the battle as the flagship's 'second ahead.' The *Formidable* came into action next immediately astern of the *Duke*.

The *Formidable* fired her first gun, by the ship's log, exactly at eight minutes after eight o'clock: it was just as she was opposite the fifth ship from the French van. The enemy had already opened fire on the British flagship, 'in stemming towards them,' but without drawing Rodney's fire until he got closer, when the admiral returned it 'by giving some little elevation to his guns to good effect.' Rodney stood on in his place in line

until he had come almost abreast of the ninth French ship. At that point, within pistol-shot of the enemy, the *Formidable* put up her helm and swung over to port to follow her consorts ahead. A smashing broadside of round-shot into the nearest of the Frenchmen announced that the British flagship had begun, and with that the *Formidable's* men settled to their morning's work, 'keeping up,' as Captain Douglas bore witness, 'a most unsupportable, quick, and well-directed fire.'

As they rounded-to alongside the French fleet, coming bows on towards them, they plunged abruptly into the dense fog-bank of smoke that hung heavily along the firing lines, clinging thickly over all, sluggish and inert and almost opaque, blurring everything out except quite close at hand. For those on board the *Formidable* it was like passing at a step from a sunny street into a cellar, a transition in the blinking of an eye from a radiant April morning to the gloom and darkness of November midnight. On deck, in the open, the dark haze that shrouded everything in was at times impenetrable. The ship had to grope her way forward blindfold, steering, actually, by the flashes of the *Duke's* guns, which kept up 'a most dreadful fire.' When now and then the smoke lifted or thinned a little, it became possible to catch a glimpse of the upper canvas of some approaching enemy in the act of nearing them, and fire at her as she came up, but for great part of the time they had to fire blindly or by guess work, unable to make out anything at all until an enemy suddenly loomed up close at hand, right abreast. Then a blaze of fire and the enemy had gone, disappeared, swallowed up in the smoke.

Below, between decks, for most of the time they were worse off. Not the faintest gleam of light came in through the ports—only smoke, pouring back into the ship with every discharge of the guns, thick and suffocating, blotting out everything from sight and filling every corner of the ship with hot sulphurous fumes. Except close underneath the horn battle-lanterns, that swung overhead above the guns and threw a weak glimmer on the white glistening shoulders of the seamen—as they fought their pieces, stripped to the buff and dripping with sweat, naked except for their breeches, tugging and swaying with bent backs at the training tackle, barefooted, for the decks, though sanded down, soon got slippery—all was impenetrable darkness, ink black. The din below was fearful, incessant, deafening, with the reverberating crashes from the firing; the continuous trundling roll and

thumping to and fro of the heavy gun-carriages, flung about by main force backwards and forwards as the guns were run in and out; the rattle and clatter of gear; the hoarse shoutings of orders. Now and again a sudden terrific crash, mingled with the harsh rending noise of splintering timber, would shake the ship's frame from end to end and overpower every other sound for the moment, as an enemy's broadside beat furiously against the stout oak planking of the ship's sides, followed by yells of agony from somewhere in the dark within the ship, and the gruff abrupt 'Close up there! Close up!' from the captains of the guns, signifying that some poor fellows had gone down.



FIGHTING THE GUNS ON THE MAIN DECK. 1782.

[This would seem to have been drawn in 1782, when Rowlandson paid his flying visit to see the remains of the *Royal George*, and was probably worked up from a sketch on board one of the obsolete guardships in harbour with certain fancy touches of the artist's own.]

Rodney was on the quarter-deck, seated for most of the time in an arm-chair. He was badly crippled after his last attack of gout, from which he had hardly recovered. Every now and again the admiral would rise and pass aft through his cabin under the poop to the stern gallery to look out astern and see what might be made out of the battle from there, or go forward to the gangway at the side, clear of the piled-up hammocks on the quarter-deck bulwarks, to look out ahead. His gout, it would seem, would not let him mount the ladder to the poop. It was during one of the admiral's intervals of rest probably, while he was sitting down for a few minutes in the middle of

the men as they worked the quarter-deck guns, that Rodney, as we are told, made the discovery that one of the gunners there was a woman. Brought up on the spot before the admiral and taxed with disobedience of orders in not staying to help in the cockpit, the delinquent threw herself on Rodney's mercy. She was, she said, a sailor's wife. Her husband had been wounded and carried below, whereupon she had come up to take his place at his gun. It was of course a breach of discipline, and Rodney reprimanded the woman sharply. Then he softened, gave her ten guineas, and sent her down to nurse her husband.

Here is another incidental personal detail about Rodney on that morning. In one of his passings to and fro, between the quarter-deck and the stern walk, as Rodney went through his cabin he saw some lemons lying on a side table. The old gentleman was hot and his throat parched with the sulphurous fumes of the all-pervading powder smoke. He called to a midshipman near by to make him a glass of lemonade. The boy did so, and having nothing to stir the glass with, picked up a knife on the table that had been used by some one for cutting up a lemon. Quite happy, he stirred the admiral's drink with the black and sticky blade. Rodney turned and caught sight of the performance. 'Child, child!' he exclaimed, with a grimace, as the boy was about to present the glass to him, 'that may do for the midshipmen's mess. Drink the stuff yourself and go and send my steward here!' The midshipman obeyed both orders.

It was about twenty minutes to nine, as the *Formidable* was nearing the centre of the French line, that the vast bulk of the *Ville de Paris* began to loom up ahead of them. There was no mistaking De Grasse's flagship. Her towering canvas, her tall sides and lofty bulwarks, her triple tier of ports, all these marked out the pride of the French fleet among the other ships, even without the identifying feature of the figure-head, the great shield at the bows with the arms of Paris heraldically emblazoned in gold and crimson and blue. Just before this, as Captain Fanshawe of the *Namur*, next astern of Rodney, noted, our ships had slackened fire to let the smoke drift off. Each flagship could thus distinguish the other easily as they closed. Each, of course, bore at her mast-head her Commander-in-Chief's personal standard; the *Ville de Paris* De Grasse's plain white Bourbon flag, the 'Cornette Blanche'; the *Formidable*, Rodney's flag as Admiral of the White, the red cross flag of St. George.

It was a dramatic moment as the two leaders drew together to cross swords. The *Formidable's* men felt it. They redoubled their efforts and blazed away with every gun that would train into the imposing-looking French three-decker's bows as she came on, leading off with a tremendous cannonade of round-shot and grape that made terrible havoc along the crowded decks of the *Ville de Paris*. To the utter surprise of all there was next to no reply. A loose, irregular discharge came back, fired hurriedly and badly aimed. That was all. With a weak, half-hearted fire from about half her guns, the *Ville de Paris* surged past the *Formidable* and vanished in the smoke astern. It was indeed a pitiful exhibition. The fierce broadsides of Rodney's ships ahead had done their work. Every British captain had reserved at least one of his broadsides for the *Ville de Paris*, 'sickening' her, in the expressive Old Navy phrase, and after that the startling rapidity of the outburst with which the *Formidable* greeted her approach had completed the demoralisation on board. It flurried and staggered the French flagship's crew, and before they could recover themselves they had gone astern. As De Grasse went by some of the *Formidable's* batteries got off four double-shotted rounds into the *Ville de Paris*, none less than three, with such magnificent smartness did Rodney's gunners handle their guns.

What did De Grasse himself think of his men's poor show? What did he think now—he could hardly have forgotten it—of his polite challenge to Rodney from Fort Royal by Captain Vashon a few weeks ago 'that nothing would give him greater pleasure than to meet 'le Chevalier Rodney,' and that he 'looked forward to personally welcoming the British Admiral on board the *Ville de Paris*'? It was the second opportunity for a personal encounter with his antagonist that De Grasse had lost that week.<sup>[36]</sup> He was to have no more. As to his welcome of 'le Chevalier Rodney,' he would have the opportunity of making the acquaintance of the British Admiral face to face and within twenty-four hours—though not on board the *Ville de Paris*. The French flagship took her hammering from the *Formidable* and passed on to run the gauntlet of the other British ships astern.

It was apparently just as the *Ville de Paris* was passing that a French cannon-ball struck a fowl-coop on deck where a number of pullets for the admiral's table were kept. The coop was smashed to splinters and the fowls flew out. One of them, the story goes, a little bantam cock, fluttered up and perched on a spar above the quarter-deck, where it set-to crowing lustily

and clapping its wings at every broadside from the guns. Rodney passed at the moment and pointed the bird out to Dr. Blane. 'Look at that fellow,' said Rodney, 'look at him; I declare he is a credit to his country.' The Admiral gave orders that the little cock should not be killed, but be taken care of and made a special pet for the remainder of its days.

Following in the wake of the *Ville de Paris* came the big *Couronne*, a powerful eighty-four, whose efficiency in war Rodney had personally tested on a former day; the *Eveill e*, Le Gardeur de Tilly's little sixty-four, showing signs of what she had gone through; and then the *Sceptre*, the Comte de Vaudreuil's ship, a seventy-four.

As the *Sceptre* went astern, Rodney, with Blane at his elbow, walked out from the quarter-deck on to the starboard gangway at the side of the ship to get a better view. As he got there he saw another French ship nearing them. It was the *Glorieux*, reeling under the terrific punishment she had just undergone from the *Duke's* guns. Her captain, D'Escars, had been struck down, and the ship wrecked from end to end; left lying a log on the water, 'shorn,' in Blane's words, 'of all her masts, bowsprit, and ensign staff, but with the white flag nailed to the stump of one of the masts, breathing defiance as it were in her last moments.' According to the French accounts they nailed their colours to the mast as the *Glorieux* was approaching the *Formidable*, the operation affording opportunity for a fine little bit of heroic by-play. While they were nailing up the flag a sergeant of the Auxerrois regiment (a company of which was on board), Choissat by name, fastened a white cloth to his halberd and sprang on the bulwark rail and held it up, waving it defiantly. A bullet from either the *Formidable* or the *Duke* broke Choissat's right arm, whereupon the brave fellow caught the halberd with his left hand and held it up until the ship's flag had been secured. He lived through the fight and was given a commission for his heroism.

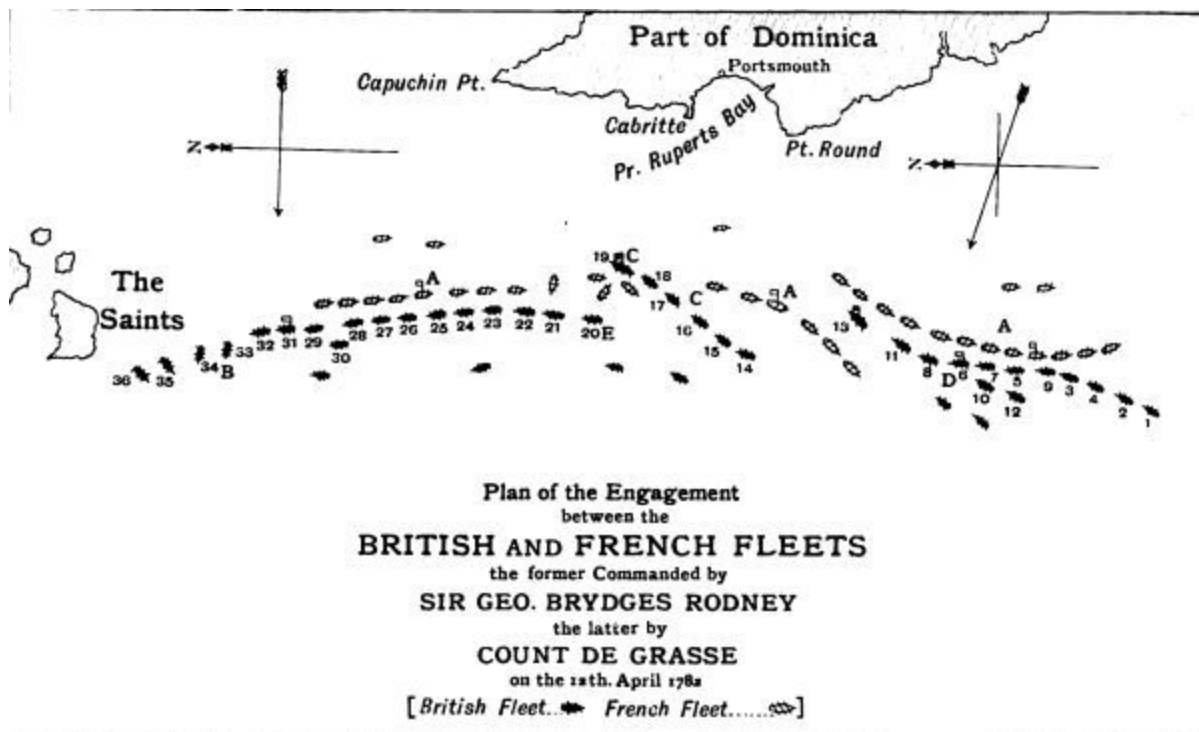
Rodney marked the oncoming of the *Glorieux* as the stricken vessel dropped slowly down on them. Then, a second later, seeing that the French seventy-four was drifting in such a way that she would brush close past them and almost collide, he turned abruptly to Dr. Blane. Both the Admiral's aides-de-camp were out of the way. 'Run down,' he told the doctor, 'and tell them to elevate their metal.' Blane went. He guessed the Admiral's meaning, thanks to *Hudibras*, a couplet from which came opportunely into his mind.

Thus cannon shoot the higher pitches,  
The lower you let down their breeches.

'If this holds true,' says Dr. Blane, telling the story for himself, 'so must the converse of it, that is the muzzles must be lower by the elevation of the breeches. The Admiral's meaning could be no other than that of taking the enemy between wind and water.'<sup>[37]</sup> Blane hurried down and gave the order. In the interests of historic truth, in view of what immediately followed, it would have been well if he had not left the deck.

At the very moment that Rodney was sending Blane below, the wind suddenly shifted. It veered to the southward and headed the French fleet off, taking them all aback and throwing them out of order all along their line. It checked their way, and cast every ship round with her head to starboard, half-right as it were, setting the whole line *en échelon*. For the British, on the other hand, the shift of wind made things more favourable than before. It sent Rodney's ships briskly forward. Its effect was instantly apparent in the immediate neighbourhood of the *Formidable*. The mastless hull of the *Glorieux* drove down steadily on the *Formidable*. The ship next astern of her in the French line, the *Diadème*, a seventy-four, hung back and then swung round sharply at right angles, paying off on the wrong tack. A wide gap was made at once in the enemy's line, and just opposite the *Formidable*. What was to be done?

Ink enough to float the *Formidable* herself has been spilled over the incidents of the next three minutes on board the British flagship, and we cannot even now say that we know the true story. According to one officer, who, as a quarter-deck midshipman, was an eye-witness of what took place, but did not put pen to paper about it until half a century after the event, a highly dramatic—and in the interests of discipline not very edifying—scene followed, between Rodney personally and Sir Charles Douglas his flag-captain.



## HOW THE FRENCH LINE WAS BROKEN

[No. 19 C is the *Formidable*. The centre one of the three French flagships is the *Ville de Paris*. No. 13 is the *Bedford*. No. 6 D is the *Barfleur*.]

Here is Midshipman Dashwood's narrative as he wrote it down from memory some forty years or so after both Rodney and Sir Charles Douglas had been laid in the grave. Dashwood was then an admiral, Sir Charles Dashwood, K.C.B. The account was written for Sir Howard Douglas, son of Rodney's flag-captain. <sup>[38]</sup>

I shall simply relate facts, to which I was an eye-witness, and can vouch for their truth. Being one of the aides-de-camp to the Commander-in-Chief on that memorable day, it was my duty to attend both on him and the Captain of the Fleet, as occasion might require. It so happened, that some time after the battle had commenced, and whilst we were warmly engaged, I was standing near Sir Charles Douglas, who was leaning on the hammocks (which in those days were stowed across the fore part of the quarter-deck), his head resting on one hand and his eye occasionally glancing on the enemy's line, and

apparently in deep meditation, as if some great event were crossing his mind. Suddenly raising his head and turning quickly round he said, 'Dash! where's Sir George?' 'In the after-cabin, sir,' I replied. He immediately went aft; I followed; and on meeting Sir George coming from the cabin close to the wheel, he took off his cocked hat with his right hand, holding his long spy-glass in his left, and making a low and profound bow, said, 'Sir George, I give you joy of the victory!' 'Pooh!' said the Chief, as if half angry; 'the day is not half won yet.' 'Break the line. Sir George, ... the day is your own, and I will insure you the victory.' 'No,' said the admiral, 'I will not break my line.' After another request and another refusal Sir Charles desired the helm to be put a-port, Sir George ordered it to starboard. On your father ordering it again to port, the admiral sternly said, 'Remember, Sir Charles, that I am Commander-in-Chief—starboard, sir,' addressing the Master, who, during this controversy, had placed the helm amidships. Both the Admiral and the Captain then separated, the former going aft, and the latter forward. In the course of a couple of minutes or so each turned, and again met nearly on the same spot, when Sir Charles quietly and coolly again addressed the Chief, 'Only break the line, Sir George, and the day is your own.' The Admiral then said, in a quick and hurried way, 'Well, well, do as you like,' and immediately turned round and walked into the after cabin. The words 'Port the helm!' were scarcely uttered when Sir Charles ordered me down with directions to commence firing on the larboard side.

How far an admiral's recollection of something that happened when he was a midshipman seventeen years of age is likely to be trustworthy is the point. Sir Charles Dashwood's account was called forth by the great magazine controversy of 1830 over the question as to who was the actual originator of the man[oe]uvre of 'Breaking the Line,' on the 12th of April 1782. A claim to the credit of it for his father, made by Sir Howard Douglas, as set forth by him in the preface of a book that he wrote on *Naval Gunnery*, raised the storm, and half England took sides in the discussion.

Against Admiral Dashwood's memory for fifty-year-old details have to be set the disciplinary improbabilities of the story for one thing, particularly in the case of an officer so notoriously strict and punctilious as was Rodney. It is incredible, not only that he would have taken part in an altercation before

the men on the quarter-deck, but also that the most brilliant naval tactician of the time could have missed seeing so obvious an opportunity. It is also significant that not a word that anything unusual had happened on board Rodney's flagship, in the most famous battle of the whole war, ever found its way into print from any one of those on the *Formidable's* quarter-deck, and near by at the moment, during the lifetime of either Rodney or Sir Charles Douglas, or until the flag-captain's son burst his bombshell. And it is possible to pick other holes in the case set up against Rodney. It is easily probable that Captain Douglas called Rodney's attention to the gap in the enemy's line, but without any theatricals. It would have been his duty to do so. He had then to stand back and take his orders. The admiral, by nature, and as his whole career proved, 'a man quick to see an opportunity, prompt to seize it,'<sup>[39]</sup> would hardly require teaching his business, least of all a man with Rodney's fighting record.

Blane returned on deck at the moment that Midshipman Dashwood was flying down the ladder to the batteries below with the order to open fire on the port side. It was just as the *Formidable* was swinging her bows slowly round to pass through between the wreck of the *Glorieux* and the *Diadème*. He apparently saw no trace of excitement about the admiral, no sign of loss of temper, nothing to suggest that anything unusual had just been happening. On the contrary, Rodney was in quite a jocular mood. 'Now comes the struggle,' was Rodney's greeting to the doctor, with one of those classical allusions that came so naturally to the gentlemen of that day, pointing to the hulk of the dismasted *Glorieux* as it drifted close alongside them,—'Now comes the struggle for the body of Patroclus!' Blane looked down on to the *Glorieux'* deck and right into her port-holes. 'The *Formidable,*' he tells us, 'was so near that I could see the cannoniers throwing away their sponges and handspikes in order to save themselves by running below!'

The British flagship swept through the gap, pouring a broadside into the *Glorieux* to the right and the *Diadème* to the left. The *Glorieux* was at that moment 'close to our starboard side and almost in contact therewith, about a ship's breadth from us.' On the larboard side, eye-witnesses related, the *Formidable's* three tiers of guns went off with 'one platoon report.' After it the *Diadème* had vanished. She was seen no more from the *Formidable*, nor apparently by any other ship of the British fleet. Rodney himself believed—

and reported to the Admiralty in his official despatch—that she had been sent to the bottom, with all hands there and then.<sup>[40]</sup>



THE *FORMIDABLE* BREAKING THE LINE. April 12, 1782

[The original water-colour was painted for the Duke of Rutland (elder brother of Captain Lord Robert Manners, mortally wounded in the battle), and is at Belvoir Castle.]

Immediately after that, as the smoke cleared off, a group of three or four French ships were made out near at hand, all huddled together in a mass. They were the ships that had been following the *Diadème*. Thrown aback by the shift of wind, and further disordered by the sudden turning round of the *Diadème* herself right across their bows, they had got jammed together in confusion, 'almost, if not quite, in contact with each other.' They were full in the path of the *Formidable* as she went through the line. She had to pass quite close to them. At the same instant the *Duke* was about to pass on the farther side of the group. Captain Gardner had seen the admiral, astern of him, swing round suddenly to break through the enemy's line, and guessing what was intended, had of his own accord followed suit, forcing his way through between the two Frenchmen nearest himself at the moment. Thus the hapless group of French ships found itself all at once placed under fire on two sides from the most powerful three-deckers in the British fleet, they themselves also at that moment being hardly able to fire a shot in reply. It was a shattering and an overwhelming stroke. It practically crushed the French centre out of existence as a fighting entity. Rodney's men had only to fire 'into the brown.' Dr. Blane, who was watching it all from the

*Formidable's* gangway, by Rodney's side, describes what he saw. 'The unfortunate group, composing now only one large single object to fire at, was attacked ... all at once, receiving several broadsides from each ship, not a single shot missing, and dreadful must have been the slaughter.'

Captain Fanshawe's hard-hitting *Namur*, a 90-gun ship, followed the *Formidable*; then came Inglis's *St. Albans*, a 64; Cornwallis's *Canada*, one of the deadliest fighting 74's in Rodney's fleet; Dumaresq's *Repulse*, another 64, manned by a smart set of Guernsey lads; and Nicholas Charrington's 74, the *Ajax*. One after the other these all filed close past the helpless crowd of panic-stricken Frenchmen, firing into them fast and furiously. Each one, at the same time, passed close and fired into the luckless *Glorieux* on the farther side,—still quivering after the last tremendous salvo from, to use Captain Douglas's own expression, 'the *Formidable's* thundering starboard side,' racked through and through by that awful tornado of 8 cwts. of solid shot, lying like a log on the water, a bare hulk under a mass of splintered spars, torn canvas and tangled rigging. Captain Inglis of the *St. Albans* was watching her and made note of what he saw. The *Glorieux*, said Inglis, did not return a single shot to the *St. Albans'* broadside, although the rags of her colours could be seen still fluttering defiantly from where they had been nailed to the stump of the mizen mast. Only one man was to be seen on deck, on the poop, and he, poor fellow, dropped to the *St. Albans'* marines. After his ship had passed the *Glorieux* Inglis looked back at her and watched the *Canada* give her a staggering broadside. 'From the dust, the pieces of timber, and the smoke which flew to a great distance from the side opposite of that where she had received the blow, it seemed as if the ship (literally speaking) had been blown out of the water, and as if the whole of the mass had been driven to windward'!

With the smashing of the French centre the fate of the day was settled. The end might be some hours off—as it was in fact,—but from now onwards it was plainly in sight. 'From this moment,' says Blane, 'victory declared itself. All was disorder and confusion throughout the enemy's fleet from end to end.'

As a fact, to make things worse still for the enemy, De Grasse's line had been broken through in yet another place. At the same moment that Rodney's ships were crossing the French line at the centre, Hood's division was breaking through it in the rear. It was quite unintentional with Hood

and his captains, a blunder in the smoke fog; but it had a most telling effect on the fortunes of the day. It completed the ruin of De Grasse's array. The same southerly shift of the wind which had caused the gap in the centre was the cause primarily of Hood's going through farther along the line. The *Bedford*, Commodore Affleck, the rear ship of Rodney's centre squadron, was following in her place, astern of the *Ajax*, when she suddenly lost her leader in the smoke. At that instant the shift of wind broke up the French. Unaware of what she was doing, the *Bedford*, keeping her helm steady and holding straight ahead, pushed through the nearest gap in the enemy's line. So little, in fact, was the *Bedford's* captain aware of what was happening, that the first intimation he had of what he had done was the sudden discovery that he had no enemy to starboard to fire at. As the best thing to be done he ported helm and stood on along the larboard side of the enemy's ships ahead, which belonged to De Grasse's *corps de bataille*, the French centre squadron. Hood's leading ships, the *Prince William* and the *Magnificent*, followed the *Bedford*, and in the wake of them, through the widening gap, poured the rest of Hood's ships, ten in number. They pressed in, sweeping across the stern of the *Hector*, the rear ship of the French van, and between her and the *César*, the leader of De Grasse's squadron. Thus at one stroke were the ships of the French van cut off *en bloc* from the centre and the rear. One after the other, as they passed, Hood's twelve ships (or thirteen counting in the *Bedford* as one) cannonaded the *César* and the *Hector*, crippling both hopelessly, and reducing them to a state little better than that in which Rodney's five followers had left the *Glorieux*.

To give an idea of the wide expanse over which the battle was at this moment raging, it should be said that Hood's *Barfleur*, when she broke the line, was 2¼ miles from the *Formidable*. The *Marlborough*, away in the van, was 3½ miles off, and had already come out of action, having ceased firing after passing the French rearmost ships. Hood's rear ship, the *Royal Oak*, fired her parting broadside into the stern of the ill-starred *César* a few minutes after eleven, with which the first stage of the battle came to an end. The *Formidable* had ceased firing more than an hour before.

The two fleets, after passing through each other, drifted slowly apart, the breeze falling gradually away to light airs and mere catspaws, after which it dropped altogether and left both sides becalmed, to look at each other from a distance and repair damages. They lay like this, out of range for most of the ships, for upwards of an hour.

Each was left by the events of the morning in a straggling and broken-up array, but, as the clearing off of the smoke disclosed, in widely different circumstances. The British, though the three squadrons were all separated, were yet more or less within touch, and with each of their groups fairly well together. They were about four miles from the nearest of the French ships, and having regard to the quarter whence the breeze would in ordinary course spring up during the afternoon, to windward of them. The French, on the other hand, were in hopeless disorder at all points and all dead to leeward. They were lying anyhow, in three irregular groups or clusters of ships, and widely separated. The centre group comprised the *Ville de Paris*, herself, with five or six ships, all more or less crippled. Two miles from De Grasse and to leeward of him lay twelve ships of Bougainville's van squadron. Three or four miles away to westward was De Vaudreuil with the rear squadron. Such was the position on both sides when, between noon and one o'clock, the anticipated breeze suddenly sprang up, coming very light and fitful at first, then steadily and from the expected quarter.

One grim detail must be noted. As the two fleets drifted apart and men had time to look round, they saw, we are told, an awful sight, which struck horror into Briton and Frenchman alike. On all sides the water was alive with ravening sharks, that had swarmed up from the bottom, attracted to the spot, summoned to their banquet, by the splashes in the water and the noise of the cannonade. Right and left the surface of the sea was furrowed by the

fins of the greedy monsters as they swam about, snapping savagely all round. Under the murderous fire of the British gunners most of the French ships had been turned into veritable slaughter-houses. Each ship had been packed with troops for the Jamaica expedition. Every seventy-four that morning, including the hundred and fifty or two hundred soldiers on board, had carried not fewer than nine hundred men at least. Some ships had had still more on board. The *Ville de Paris*, for one, carried thirteen hundred. Awful indeed had been the slaughter as the English broadsides, aimed at the French port-holes at point-blank range, swept the decks and tore lanes through the closely-packed masses of men as they stood helplessly at quarters. It was the dreadful sequel that interested the sharks. In order to get the dead out of the way at once in the turmoil of the fighting, and give room to work the guns, most of the bodies of the fallen had been pitched overboard then and there—the dead, and, as some said, the not quite dead as well. Many a poor fellow had gone overboard with the spars and rigging as they crashed over the side, shot away in action. *Requin* is, of course, the French for shark. As a fact, it is a popular corruption of the word 'requiem,' which was the old French name for the monster down to the seventeenth century. Littré explains why:—'à cause,' he says, 'qu'il n'y a plus à dire qu'un requiem pour celui qu'un requin saisit.'

The British were the first to feel the breeze as it came again after mid-day, and every captain began to cast his ship's head round to follow in the direction of the enemy. Hood, who at the outset remained becalmed after Rodney and Drake had begun to move again, was seen getting out his boats to tow the *Barfleur* round into the breeze. To over-take the French as soon as possible was the business of the afternoon for Rodney's captains.

De Grasse's business, on the other hand, was to get away without further fighting if he could, or at least to try and re-form. It was not an easy task, in the scattered state of his fleet and in the presence of an enemy who had the weather-gage. The *Ville de Paris* signalled for all to re-form line on the ships farthest to leeward, at the point farthest off from the British, and she headed in that direction herself. It was 'playing for safety,' so to speak, at the cost of abandoning some of his ships. What the rally so far to leeward would inevitably mean for certain of De Grasse's worst-damaged ships was soon seen. The more manageable of the French ships were able to make their way to leeward; but it was another matter for the cripples—in especial

for the shattered trio—for the dismasted *Glorieux* and the partially wrecked *César* and *Hector*. For them it meant that they were to be left to their fate, left lying, between the two fleets, hardly able to move at all, full in the way of the advancing British. And so it proved in the result. On the hapless three, in due course, on each in her turn, fell the first blows of the reopening battle.

The *Glorieux* was the first of the French to yield, in spite of an extremely gallant effort to save her. About one o'clock, as the breeze began to freshen, the French frigate *Richmond* was ordered to close the *Glorieux* and pass a towing cable on board. The effort was made under fire, for Rodney's nearest ships were already within range of the *Glorieux*. Midshipman Denis Decrès, *aspirant de marine* of the *Richmond*, had charge of the boat, round which the English cannon-balls splashed on all sides. He did his work, despite its difficulties, and won widespread fame and promotion for his gallantry. He lived to become an admiral, Napoleon's favourite Minister of Marine and a Peer of France, Duc Decrès. On his grand monument in Père la Chaise is a sculptured panel in relief, to commemorate this particular incident in Admiral Decrès' career. It is elaborately carved, and represents a naval battle in grey marble, smoke-clouds, cannon firing, and so forth, with, in the centre, a small boat with a rope, a boy standing up at the stern, and near by a big dismasted man-of-war. Over the panel is the legend—'Remorque portée au *Glorieux*: 1782.' The attempt, however, was palpably a hopeless one. The stricken seventy-four was water-logged and could hardly stir. The officers of the *Glorieux* recognised the state of things at once. They hailed across to the frigate to cast off the tow and shift for herself. De Mortemart, the captain of the *Richmond*, however, was not inclined to abandon a consort in distress. Although some of the British ships were already threatening to cut him off, as well as the *Glorieux*, he flatly refused to leave her. After that, as the only thing to be done, the hopeless ship's company of the *Glorieux* cut the rope. So the two ships parted. The *Richmond* had to move away, and in the end she only saved herself with difficulty. Another French ship that tried at the last moment to create a forlorn-hope diversion in favour of the *Glorieux*, was De Glandevé's *Souverain*, but she in turn had to give up the attempt, and, hunted like a hare among hounds, was hard put to it in the end to get clear. Now, without further respite, the British dogs of war ran in and closed on the doomed *Glorieux*. Trogoff de Kerlessi, her first lieutenant, and the senior surviving officer on board, could do no more. As

the first British ship came up, he with his own hand stripped away the tattered shreds of the *Glorieux*' ensign, that still remained nailed to the stump of the mizen mast, and called across to the British to take possession. There was no other course left. The decks of the *Glorieux* were shambles from end to end—'a scene of complete horror,' in the words of Dr. Blane. 'The numbers killed were so great, that the surviving, either from want of leisure or through dismay, had not thrown the bodies of the killed overboard, so that the decks were covered with blood and mangled limbs of the dead, as well as wounded and dying.' Baron d'Escars, the captain, had fallen some time previously, about nine o'clock,—one of the victims of the *Formidable's* awful first broadside. 'On boarding her,' adds Blane, 'our officers ... were shown the stains of blood on the gunnel where his body was thrown overboard.'

The *Royal Oak*, one of Hood's squadron, was ordered to take the *Glorieux* in tow. Captain Burnett had almost exhausted his ammunition, and he utilised the opportunity to ransack the prize's magazines and transfer on board his own ship all the powder barrels the *Glorieux* had left, to fight any further Frenchmen he might encounter with their own powder. Several others of Rodney's ships, indeed, were equally short of powder after their morning's work, and another of Hood's squadron, the *Monarch*, was at that very moment alongside the *Andromache*, lifting forty barrels out of the frigate to enable herself to continue in action.

The *César* was the second French ship to meet her fate. She was the next to drop astern, and the *Centaur* and the *Bedford* went at her together as they came up. Though little better than a wreck, the *César* made a heroic defence for nearly half-an-hour. Hailed by the *Centaur* to surrender, the Comte de Marigny, the *César's* captain, replied by nailing his colours to the mast with his own hand and opening fire. De Marigny fell dangerously wounded within the first five minutes, but Captain Paul, his commander, took charge and made a desperate defence. He held out until, one after the other, his masts had gone overboard, the mizen carrying the ensign staff with it. After that, no rescue being possible, with six feet of water in the hold, and with only thirty-six rounds for her guns left in the magazine, the *César* surrendered to the *Centaur*.

Elsewhere at this time, towards four o'clock, there was a good deal of 'partial and desultory' firing, to use Dr. Blane's term, going on here and

there, principally in the direction of De Grasse's squadron. The French admiral's attempt to rally and re-form line had failed. Bougainville's ships kept away in a body, apparently too much occupied in repairing their own damages to pay attention to their commander-in-chief. Many of De Vaudreuil's seemed equally shy, although De Vaudreuil himself, with two or three of his command, gallantly beat to windward and joined the *Ville de Paris*, making up a forlorn-hope band round De Grasse that comprised the rearmost formed group of the French fleet. They moved away at the best speed they were capable of, but owing to the state of the *Ville de Paris's* masts and spars, the rate of sailing was dangerously slow.

De Grasse's group, numbering, with De Vaudreuil's accession and others, nine ships in all, formed, as it were, a lodestone to the British captains. It drew towards it all who could possibly make for the spot. The great French flagship in the centre, with the commander-in-chief's flag at the mast-head, was for all eyes the supreme attraction. Each followed as well as the wind, which was variable and at times very light, and the state of his own masts and spars, would let him.

The French *Hector* was their first victim, between five and six o'clock in the evening,—the third Frenchman to surrender. She had been badly hammered by Hood's squadron when it broke the line, losing so many men that to supply the main and upper deck batteries the quarter-deck and fore-castle guns had to be abandoned, but had been able to keep up with the *Ville de Paris* for most of the afternoon. For the last two and a half hours, according to a letter from one of the *Hector's* officers, they had been firing their stern chasers to try and keep the advancing British back, but in vain. Then, towards the end of the time, two British seventy-fours drew out and ranged alongside the *Hector*. They were the *Canada* and the *Alcide*. The two pushed up abreast and came to close quarters. Their attack was met by the *Hector* in a spirit worthy of her heroic name. She struck out right and left like a wounded tigress at bay. She looked, in the words of an eye-witness, 'like a blazing furnace vomiting fire and iron.' The display was brilliant, but it could not last. De la Vicomté, the gallant captain of the *Hector*, was struck down, mortally wounded, and with his fall the spirit of the defence flickered out. 'Some men on the main deck having run from their quarters,' says the letter just referred to, 'the captain was putting his foot on the ladder to go below to kill with his own hand the dastards, when a cannon-ball

smashed his thigh.' He was carried to the cockpit, and a few minutes later De Beaumanoir, the first lieutenant, 'seeing the ship being knocked to pieces and powder running short,' after a hasty consultation with the other surviving officers, hauled the ensign down and hailed the *Alcide* that they had surrendered.

A fourth ship, the *Ardent*, was taken about the same time. She was one of Bougainville's squadron, and the only ship of all the French van that, on seeing how things were likely to fare with the commander-in-chief, had turned back to lend him a hand. In so doing she met her fate. The *Ardent* was intercepted and cut off by the British *Belliqueux* and the *Prince William*, who brought her to close action, and after a sharp set-to of a quarter of an hour, made her lower her colours. Some English prisoners, taken a few weeks before out of a merchantman prize, happened to be on board, and their red ensign was hoisted in token of surrender. The taking of the *Ardent* was peculiarly gratifying to the British fleet. In point of fact it was a recapture. The *Ardent* was a British-built man-of-war which had fallen into the hands of the enemy in very discreditable circumstances earlier in the war. It was this same ship that the Franco-Spanish combined fleet had snapped up, practically without her firing a shot, off Plymouth Sound three years before, when they were parading the English Channel in triumph at the time they compelled the Channel Fleet to retreat before them to Spithead. It was a satisfactory stroke of retaliation, although if it had taken place six weeks earlier it would have been still more satisfactory. Then the Vicomte de Marigny—Charles René Louis, of an old Norman family, elder brother to Comte Bernard, the captain of the *César*—the officer who had been the original captor of the *Ardent*, would have been on board. In honour of his capture of a British man-of-war, 'si vaillamment,' Charles de Marigny had been posted to the prize by the King of France's special command, his commission being accompanied by a picture in oils representing his feat, painted at the instance of His Most Christian Majesty, and sent by the King's order to be hung in the cabin of the *Ardent*, with the legend over it: 'Donné par le Roi au brave Vicomte de Marigny.'<sup>[41]</sup> The Vicomte, unfortunately for the dramatic completeness of the situation, had been sent home with De Grasse's despatch after the capture of St. Kitts, and he had taken the oil-painting with him. Still, though, even without De Marigny, it was a good thing to have the *Ardent* back under her old flag once more.

We now come to the closing fight of the day, to the story of the fate of the noblest victim of all. It was next the turn of the *Ville de Paris* herself. Between half-past five and six o'clock the course of the pursuit had brought the headmost of Rodney's ships well up with the rearmost group of the enemy, close astern of De Grasse himself and the little group of ships that kept company with the *Ville de Paris*. There were ships both of Rodney's own squadron and of Hood's squadron among the British at that point, although most of them were Hood's, hustled forward in chase by their chief's incessant signals during the afternoon. The *Barfleur* herself, with every inch of canvas set and stuns'ls out aloft and alow, was following among the foremost and eagerly pressing on. The *Formidable* and great part of Rodney's squadron were in rear, a little way off. As they neared the enemy the headmost ships came streaming on and firing briskly, steering to overlap the French on either side.

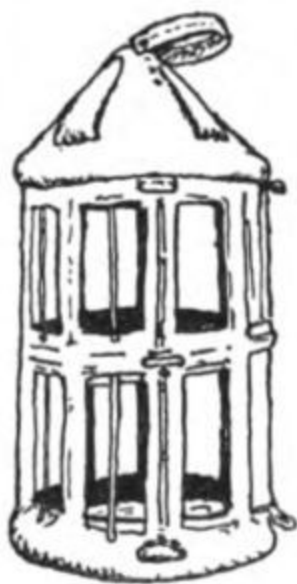
The French, for their part, were in a straggling line, with irregular gaps between the ships. They comprised the *Ville de Paris*, originally in the centre but now fallen back to be almost last ship; the *Triomphante*, De Vaudreuil's flagship; De la Charette's *Bourgogne*, Macarty Mactaigne's *Magnifique*, De Rions' *Pluton*, and the *Marseillais*, commanded by De Castellane-Majastre. All these belonged to De Vaudreuil's squadron, and had rallied with their chief to try and help the admiral. Three of De Grasse's own ships were with them—all that had stood by the chief,—the *Languedoc* and the *Couronne* (the *Ville de Paris*'s two 'seconds' in the original line of battle) and the younger De Vaudreuil's *Sceptre*. Like his brother, that officer was at the post of greatest danger, in accordance with the traditions of his House. The last three had dropped back to join De Grasse about four o'clock. None of Bougainville's ships were near De Grasse; the only one that had tried to reach him had been the *Ardent*, now, as the result, in Rodney's hands. Round this devoted band of nine ships the British attack concentrated, and for a second time the battle blazed up fiercely. The encounter was, however, too one-sided to endure. Stout-heartedly as they defended themselves, and most of them were fighting both broadsides at once, the French last-hope band were thrown into disorder and broken up.

The British *Canada*, Cornwallis's hard-hitting seventy-four, fresh from her victorious bout with the French *Hector*, came on in the forefront of the pursuing British and fastened at once on the *Ville de Paris*. The French

flagship by now had fallen quite to the rear. The *Couronne* had failed her admiral at the last moment. De Grasse, as he himself reported to Versailles, had personally hailed her just before, and ordered her to keep station close in the flagship's wake. They had answered back, 'Oui, Général!' but as the *Canada* came up the *Couronne* shifted out of the way and edged off past the flagship, letting Cornwallis in.<sup>[42]</sup> Cornwallis knew what he had to do, and pointed his guns high. Stationing the *Canada* on the quarter of the *Ville de Paris*, out of direct reach of De Grasse's broadside, he hung on there fixedly, pounding his hardest meanwhile into the French flagship with every gun the *Canada* could bring to bear, cutting away spars and rigging and holding the great vessel back until other British ships were at hand to take up the task. The *Canada* then moved off after the other French ships farther on, passing over the work of holding the *Ville de Paris* to Saumarez of the *Russell*, the only captain of Admiral Drake's squadron who was 'in at the death'—thanks to his own intelligent anticipation of probable events earlier in the day. The *Russell* during the afternoon had had a series of long-range encounters with four of the French fleet elsewhere, but she was fresh enough for the business before her. Saumarez pushed in boldly, hauled up under the stern of the *Ville de Paris*, and gave her a raking broadside that swept the giant three-decker from end to end. After that the *Russell* placed herself on the lee quarter of the *Ville de Paris*, to prevent her from edging off after the other French ships of her group, which were now giving way everywhere as the attack on them was being driven home. There she remained until Hood himself with the *Barfleur* came on the scene.

De Grasse by this had been practically abandoned to his fate. Even De Vaudreuil's devotion could help him no further now. The *Languedoc* made one despairing attempt to come to her flagship's rescue, but could not get through. Beaten back by the *Duke* and another ship, she turned away and fled, hoisting all sail. On board the *Ville de Paris* every spar had been shot down, stripped from the masts, which had themselves been riddled and were tottering. The rudder had been smashed away, and the ship could not be steered; many guns were disabled; one gun had burst, killing sixteen men and injuring thirty. There was hardly a yard of space along her sides that had not a shot-hole through it. From three to four hundred of her crew—the exact numbers were never returned—were dead or in the cockpit. Those who were still at quarters were dead-beat and nearly dropping from exhaustion, having been without food since daybreak. All the cartridges in

the magazines were exhausted, and they had to supply the guns by ladling loose powder into them from open barrels brought up on deck. The 'fighting lanterns' between decks were mostly extinguished, the candles burned out; all was dark below, and they waded ankle-deep and stumbled amid the horrible *débris* of what that morning had been living human beings. Even then De Grasse would not give in; not at least to any British captain. He stoutly resisted until, a little after six o'clock, he caught sight of Hood's flag at the *Barfleur's* mast-head, showing above the smoke a little way off. He would wait until Hood came up and then surrender. It was a point of honour: his flagship should lower her colours only to a flagship.



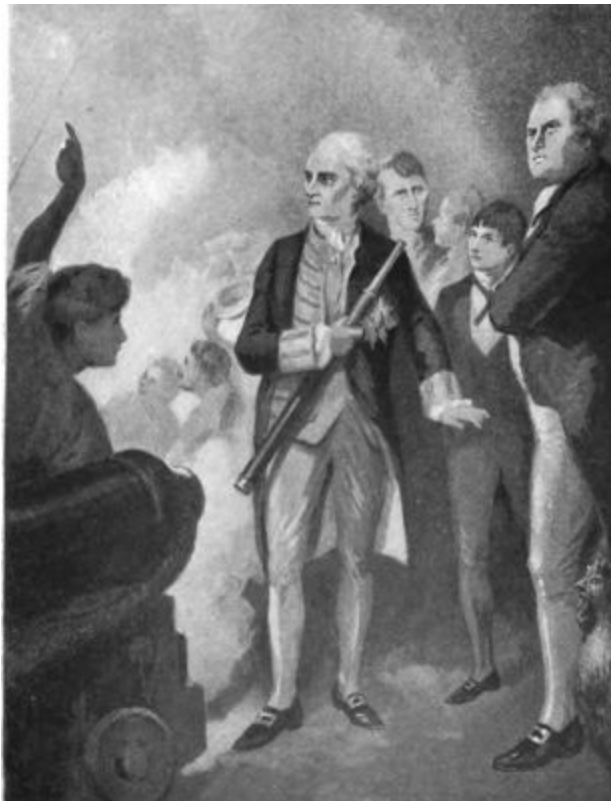
#### ONE OF THE 'FIGHTING LANTERNS' OF THE *VILLE DE PARIS*

Now in the Museum of the Royal United Service Institution, Whitehall.

As the *Barfleur* got nearer, De Grasse fired a challenging gun. It was to attract the approaching flagship's attention. Hood marked the gun and understood it. He at once headed the *Barfleur* directly for the *Ville de Paris*. 'I concluded,' said Hood, 'the Count de Grasse had a mind to be my prisoner, as an old acquaintance, and therefore met his wishes by looking towards him.' As the *Barfleur* began to close with the French flagship, De Grasse made a show of opening fire on her, 'which I,' continued Hood, 'totally disregarded till I had proved, by firing a single gun from the quarter-deck, that I was within point blank.'<sup>[43]</sup> That was the *Barfleur's* distance. Ranging up to the *Ville de Paris* Hood greeted the French admiral with one

tremendous salvo of round-shot and grape at close quarters that crashed through the sides of De Grasse's doomed flagship as though they were cardboard. That one broadside struck down sixty men. All was over for the French admiral now. In less than ten minutes the end had come. De Grasse stepped to the taffrail, and with his own hand pulled the *Ville de Paris's* ensign down. The battle of the 'Glorious Twelfth of April' had been fought and won. As the *Ville de Paris's* ensign dropped the sun's rim touched the sea-line.

There were but three unwounded men on the *Ville de Paris's* quarter-deck when the admiral hauled down the flag. De Grasse himself was one. More than a third of the flagship's immense company, officers and men, had gone down, while he himself, at the most exposed point of all from the first shot to the last and seeming to court death throughout, had come through the day unscathed, except for a contusion across the loins from a splinter which did not break the skin.



DE GRASSE'S FLAG COMES DOWN. RODNEY WATCHING THE SURRENDER OF THE *VILLE DE PARIS*

[Immediately behind Rodney's left shoulder is seen the head of Lord Cranstoun. Midshipman Dashwood is readily recognisable, and the tall, bulky man on the extreme right of the picture is Sir Charles Douglas with the little bantam cock near his feet. The picture was shown at the Royal Academy Exhibition of 1784.]

The grand finale was witnessed from the *Formidable*, now close at hand and drawing up, but just too late to share in the honour of the event. Dr. Blane saw the French flag drop. 'The *Formidable* was right astern, and having come within shot, was yawing in order to give the enemy a raking broadside, when, Sir Charles Douglas and I standing together on the quarter-deck, the position of our ship opened a view of the enemy's stern between the foresail and the jib boom, between which we saw the French flag hauled down!'<sup>[44]</sup>

Some one else saw it too—De Vaudreuil. He was about a quarter of a mile off at the moment, and still fighting. It made him senior officer, commander-in-chief. There was now no De Grasse to keep pace with for the honour of the flag. He could consider his own safety. De Vaudreuil at once clapped on every sail that his masts could bear and made off, hoisting as he did so the signal to rally to the north-west. The *Bourgogne* was the nearest ship to him. Across to her De Vaudreuil shouted orders to make all sail and follow, and as he passed the other ships ahead of him he hailed each to the same effect in turn.

Captain Knight of the *Barfleur*—son of Dr. Johnson's old friend, Admiral Sir Joseph Knight, with whom the Doctor once stayed for a week on board the *Ramillies* at Chatham, and afterwards expressed the opinion that 'No man will be a sailor who has contrivance enough to get himself into gaol'—received De Grasse's surrender. A party of seamen and marines from the *Barfleur* under the first-lieutenant at the same time took possession of the prize. They put off within five minutes of the surrender, and arrived not a moment too soon. With the hauling down of the flag all discipline on board vanished. 'The moment the *Ville de Paris* struck,' wrote Captain Douglas, 'her worthless, disorderly crew broke open the chests and trunks of all their officers, and with lighted candles in their hands, stove in the doors of the store-rooms in quest of wine and other liquors, to the great danger of all on board from fire.'<sup>[45]</sup>

Lord Cranstoun in a boat from the *Formidable* reached the *Ville de Paris* a few minutes after Captain Knight. He described De Grasse as 'a tall, robust, and martial figure, presenting in that moment an object of respect, no less than of concern and sympathy.' He looked pale and apparently dazed at the tremendous catastrophe that had befallen him. According to Lord Cranstoun the French admiral 'could not recover from the astonishment into which he was plunged, the expressions of which he often iterated, at seeing in the course of so short a time, his vessel taken, his fleet defeated, and himself a prisoner.' Lord Cranstoun brought De Grasse a courteous message from Rodney, to the effect that if he wished he might remain for the night 'at his ease' on board the *Ville de Paris*, 'with every testimony of attention and regard manifested towards him on the part of the British commander.'<sup>[46]</sup>



'COUNT DE GRASSE, THE FRENCH ADMIRAL, RESIGNING HIS SWORD TO ADMIRAL RODNEY AFTER BEING DEFEATED BY THAT GALLANT COMMANDER IN THE WEST INDIES. APRIL 12, 1782.'

The state of things on board was appalling, 'altogether terrible,' said Lord Cranstoun. The quarter-deck was 'covered with dead and wounded....

Between the foremast and main-mast, at every step he took,' Lord Cranstoun told Sir Nathaniel Wraxall, 'he was over his buckles in blood.'<sup>[47]</sup> Below, where the cattle (to provide the troops on board with meat) had been stalled between the guns, things were even more horrible, for 'they had suffered not less than the crew and troops from the effects of the cannon.' De Grasse himself, incidentally, gives an idea of the state to which the *Ville de Paris* had been reduced at the end. In his official report to Versailles on the battle he said, 'I was reduced to such a state that the enemy on the morning of the 13th, to strike the ship's pennant, were obliged to cut away the masts for fear, in sending a man to get at the pennant, all would go overboard or come down in a crash on deck.'

Immediately after the surrender of the *Ville de Paris* Rodney made the signal for the fleet to cease firing and bring-to. There was to be no pursuit. It was a decision for which Rodney has been bitterly criticised. He had, however, his reasons, and he put them in writing; but it was, all said and done, a very grave error of judgment on the part of the British leader. 'Come, come,' he is said to have exclaimed in reply to a suggestion that was made to him by Hood, that part of the fleet at any rate might follow up the enemy, 'we have done very handsomely!' It was not the old Rodney of the *Eagle* who said that, one must remember. Rodney in April 1782 was a man broken in health, racked with gout, a man grown prematurely old,—ten years, at least, older than his real age,—and utterly worn out after twelve anxious hours on deck under a burning sun. Before that, also, as Rodney himself said, he had had no proper rest for four nights. Most unfortunately, as it proved, Rodney underestimated the force of the smashing blow that he had dealt the enemy, and formed an entirely erroneous estimate of the condition of the ships that had escaped. He allowed himself to form a picture of their condition that was totally at variance with the facts, and did not think it wise to risk a pursuit in the dark. He made up his mind that the enemy had gone off 'in a collected body,' and that his own fleet had suffered more severe damage than was actually the case. There is no need here to press the matter further, or to recall Hood's bitter animadversions on his chief's breakdown, or what certain of the captains are said to have thought. Rodney was commander-in-chief and all responsibility for the safety of the British West Indies rested on his shoulders. Also his reasons for bringing-to commended themselves to him at the time.

The short tropical evening closed in, and darkness fell on the scene—the darkness of a sultry black night without moon or stars. Each ship, of course, had her poop lantern showing, and lights gleamed out through the ports of all as the working parties moved about between decks, busily engaged in cleaning up and taking temporary measures to clear away the marks of battle, as far as might be done in an hour or two, preparatory to turning-in for the night.

Yet before the wearied men could get to their hammocks one more event was to happen, to mark the dread closing of a tremendous day. Nor was it out of keeping with what had gone before. Towards nine o'clock, all of a sudden, a burst of roaring flame shot up from one of the French prizes, illuminating the sky and sea for many miles all round. De Vaudreuil and his fugitive fifteen, far away to northward by now, below the horizon, could see the reflection and guessed what it was. Bougainville, in the other direction, flying towards Curaçao, saw it too. The victim was the captured *César*. One of her own disorderly crew, it came out later, did the mischief. They had been as usual clapped under hatchways after the surrender, but had the hold to themselves. There the rabble—as on board the *Ville de Paris*, all bonds of discipline had ceased to exist with the striking of the flag—had broken into the spirit-room and held a wild orgy among themselves, regardless of consequences. A drunken French soldier, seeking for more drink with a pannikin in one hand and a naked light in the other, dropped the flaring candle into an open cask of ratafia. Who-o-o-f!!! Instantly the whole place was ablaze from end to end, and the flames leapt along in a flash from deck to deck throughout the ship. There was no checking them, and the splintered woodwork everywhere was in the best state to feed the fire. Out of mercy to the prisoners below the hatches were lifted off, and those who could escape given a chance. That, unfortunately, at the same time made things worse for the ship. The more sober of the Frenchmen joined the small British prize-crew of fifty-eight men and a lieutenant, and lent a hand to try and get the flames under. Half-a-dozen thought of their wounded captain, the Comte Bernard de Marigny, who was lying badly wounded in the cabin. These made their way into the cabin, and told De Marigny that the ship was expected every minute to blow up. 'So much the better,' was all the Captain replied, very quietly, according to French accounts, 'the English won't keep her! Shut my door, my friends, and leave me. Try and save yourselves!'<sup>[48]</sup> The British prize-crew—they were all from the *Centaur*—fought the fire

heroically, and spared no efforts to beat the flames back, but in vain. The British lieutenant in command was seen at the last in the stern gallery giving his orders. All the *César's* boats had been knocked to pieces in the battle. Outside, all round, were the boats of the fleet lying on their oars, ready to save all they could, but, for various reasons, unable to get near the ship. One of the reasons has been specially recorded—the sharks. Again the sharks were on the spot, 'not yet glutted,' said Dr. Blane, 'with the carnage of the preceding day.' What the men on the boats saw and told the doctor, was, in Blane's words, 'too horrid to describe.' A solid belt of sharks surrounded the burning *César*, a closely packed mass of struggling, huge-girthed brutes, rolling and tumbling about all round, jostling one another and scraping their rough backs together as they plunged and wallowed about all over the surface. Attracted by the glare they had come crowding to the spot, 'every shark in those waters seemed to be there,' and swarmed thronging close round the vessel, surging up and snapping and tearing at the poor frenzied wretches who were clinging on alongside on fragments of spars and wreckage that had dropped overboard. One by one the sharks picked the poor fellows off. The boats meanwhile could not, dared not, force their way through. They could only look helplessly on and wait for the end:—

Watch the wild wreck; but not to save.

The end came between ten and eleven. The *César*, half burned to the water's edge, blew up with a dull heavy roar—'not a loud explosion,' notes an onlooker. Indeed there was not much powder left to blow up in the bravely defended ship's magazines. It was merely a belching up of flame and sparks, like the blowing out of the pinch of powder at the bottom of a squib or Roman candle; just enough to rend the remains of the hull apart and scatter its contents. Then all was black darkness. A few twinkling sparks high overhead caught the eye, as the burning fragments poised in mid-air and turned for the downward drop, followed by splashes in the sea all round, and here and there, out of sight,

A solitary shriek, the bubbling cry  
Of some strong swimmer in his agony,

as some shark claimed its last victim, and then all was over. Silence and darkness fell once more on the heaving waters, and the boats pulled sadly

and wearily back to their ships. Such was the tragedy of the *César*. A handful of survivors were picked up, though how they escaped is not stated. All were Frenchmen. Not one of the British prize-crew escaped.

Now at last Rodney's day was over: the 'Glorious Twelfth' reached its last hour in silence and passed away.

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'The battle is over and the British fleet victorious, De Grasse is in my cabin, the *Ville de Paris* and four ships of the line are in our possession and one sunk, their whole fleet completely mauled.' So ran the opening sentence of Rodney's first letter after the battle, written on the morning of the 13th. Writing to a brother-admiral he spoke of the battle as having been 'long and bloody, but never doubtful in my opinion.' Eleven hours was Rodney's estimate of its duration, and he added, 'by persons appointed to observe there was never seven minutes' respite during the engagement.'

For the enemy it had been a sanguinary and costly day. The French losses in the battle—including the crews of four ships taken by Hood a week later—amounted, in round numbers, to 'at least 15,000 men.' Seven thousand of the number were either killed, wounded, or drowned. Six French captains were among the dead,<sup>[49]</sup> who, reckoned by themselves, were 3000. Over a thousand of the casualties were in the *Ville de Paris* and the *César* alone. Among the 8000 prisoners were 2000 soldiers. The monetary loss to France, in the value of *matériel* taken, was put at just half a million sterling; and that sum does not include the treasure-chest of De Bouillé's army, thirty-six boxes of money containing coin to the value of £25,000.<sup>[50]</sup> Also on board the captured ships, by a curious chance, was found the whole of the French army's siege-train for Jamaica, heavy guns and carriages, and equipment complete.

Such were some of the first fruits. The immediate collapse of the campaign against Jamaica was another of the fruits of the victory, and there were yet other results of wider-reaching effect. The blow that Rodney dealt on the 12th of April reacted on the sea campaign in Home waters, and strengthened Howe's hand for the final effort of the war, the relief of

Gibraltar. 'On that memorable day,' says Froude, 'was the English Empire saved.'

For the British the 'butcher's bill,' as the tars of Rodney's day called it, proved comparatively light. The Admiral's first despatch gave the figures as 230 killed and 759 wounded; corrected later to 337 killed and 766 wounded, or 1103 in all. Of the total the *Formidable's* share was surprisingly small, only 14 killed and 39 wounded, yet hers was the third heaviest return sent in. The French officers of De Grasse's suite, indeed, when they were told the figures, refused at first to accept them. 'It was with difficulty,' says Dr. Blane, 'we could make the French officers believe that the returns of killed and wounded made by our ships to the Admiral were true. One of them flatly contradicted me, saying we always gave the world a false account of our losses. I then walked him over the decks of the *Formidable* and bade him remark what number of shot-holes there were, and also how little her rigging had suffered, and asked if that degree of damage was likely to be connected with the loss of more than fourteen men, which was our number killed, and the greatest number of any in the fleet except the *Royal Oak* and *Monarch*. He was visibly mortified to see how little our ship had suffered, and then owned that our fire must have been much better kept up and directed than theirs.'<sup>[51]</sup> It was, of course, the demoralising effect of Rodney's gunnery on the enemy at the outset that made all the difference.

The *Formidable*, as to that, had taken her own part effectively. The gunner's return showed that the British flagship had fired eighty broadsides—35 tons of shot. Rodney himself was enthusiastic over his ship's performance. 'The *Formidable*,' he wrote, 'proved herself worthy of her name!'

De Grasse came on board the *Formidable* next morning, and stayed there as Rodney's guest for two days while the *Ville de Paris*, for the time being in tow of the *Namur*, was being cleansed and made habitable. A night's rest worked wonders in the French admiral. 'He bears his reverse of fortune with equanimity, conscious as he says that he has done his duty, and I found him very affable and communicative.' So Dr. Blane wrote. He and Captain Douglas acted as interpreters between the admirals: Rodney—it is rather curious, if we remember a certain story—could not speak a word of French.<sup>[52]</sup> De Grasse was very frank with everybody. For one thing, he said, he did not wonder that he had been beaten. From what he had seen he considered

that the French navy was 'a hundred years behind that of Great Britain.' Wrote Rodney himself of one conversation:—'Comte de Grasse, who at this moment is sitting in my stern gallery, tells me he thought his fleet superior to mine, and does so still, though I had two more in number; and I am of his opinion, as his was composed of all large ships and ten of mine only sixty-fours.'<sup>[53]</sup>

Rodney remained in the neighbourhood of Dominica for four days, refitting and repairing damages. His frigates meanwhile searched the bays among the islands to northward, St. Kitts and Eustatius in particular, for traces of French fugitives in that quarter. None, however, were found. The only news brought back was that several crippled French ships, one identified as De Vaudreuil's *Triomphante*, had been sighted by the islanders passing on the day after the battle. On the morning of the 17th Hood was despatched with the least damaged of the British ships to cruise off the south of San Domingo and intercept any of De Vaudreuil's laggards. Rodney himself moved off in the afternoon of the same day with the more seriously damaged ships and the prizes in tow, for Jamaica, following on much the same course towards San Domingo. He met Hood four days later, returning with four French prizes, two ships of the line and two frigates, the proceeds of a smart little affair that Hood had had with a force of the enemy in the Mona Passage. Rodney then continued his course for Port Royal where he arrived on the 29th, to be received as the saviour of the colony.



## THE 'RODNEY TEMPLE,' SPANISH TOWN, JAMAICA

[The two guns from the *Ville de Paris* are visible behind the railings.]

'All Jamaica,' wrote Rodney, 'went mad with joy.' So much so, indeed, that the Admiral did not set foot on shore for a week, 'to avoid being pestered with addresses, etc.' To this day Rodney is the *genius loci* in Jamaica. The statue to him, by Bacon, voted by the House of Assembly 'as a mark of gratitude and veneration,' is one of the sights of the island. It represents the Admiral in the dress of a Roman Emperor, and stands, flanked by two brass guns from the *Ville de Paris* presented by Rodney himself, under an imposing classic temple that takes up one side of 'the Square' in the centre of Spanish Town, the old capital of Jamaica; with the 'King's House,' the residence of the Governor, on one hand, and the House of Assembly on the other, and facing it, across the gardens of the square, the Court House.



## ADMIRAL DE GRASSE AS A PRISONER OF WAR

[Stated to have been 'drawn from the life by a celebrated artist,' while De Grasse was in London on parole as a prisoner of war. The background is, of course, artistic fancy work.]

The fleet remained refitting at Port Royal for upwards of nine weeks. Port Royal dockyard proved to be in an almost hopeless state of neglect and confusion, totally unfitted to supply the needs of a great fleet in the condition of Rodney's. De Grasse left for England in the interval, as a passenger in the first convoy sailing. We may take leave of him here. How the French admiral—the first commander-in-chief of an enemy brought to this country since Marshal Tallard came over after Blenheim—landed on Southsea beach in the presence of a cheering crowd; how King George received him in the most kindly and gracious manner, while English society showed him every mark of courteous sympathy, are matters beyond our present scope.<sup>[54]</sup> Nor can the unfortunate admiral's after fate be referred to at length. It will be enough to say that De Grasse later on published an open letter complaining that he had been betrayed by his captains. This caused an outburst of indignation in France which led to a *Conseil de Guerre* on every officer from De Vaudreuil downwards. The tribunal exonerated everybody,<sup>[55]</sup> laying all the blame on De Grasse himself, and the admiral was banished from Court in disgrace, which meant social ostracism and the cold shoulder for the rest of his days.<sup>[56]</sup>

The *Ville de Paris* followed her late admiral with the next convoy to England—never, however, to arrive there. She went to the bottom in a terrific storm which fell on the convoy in mid-Atlantic, but when, or exactly where, or how, is to this day unknown. Of all on board, upwards of five hundred officers and men, one seaman only was saved. He was picked up after the storm one morning, clinging to some floating wreckage—an imbecile. Mind and memory had gone. The only thing that the man could say was that a day or two before he had seen the *Glorieux* go down suddenly. All after that, all about his own ship, everything, except that he was 'Wilson of the *Ville de Paris*,'—was a blank.

Rodney was detained at Port Royal until the 10th of July. Then with all the fleet repaired and fit for service, just as he was on the point of sailing to blockade the enemy off Cape Haitien, a ship from England, the *Jupiter*, arrived bringing a curt order from the Admiralty to 'strike his flag and come home.' It was the first word of any kind he had had from England since the battle; indeed, since the beginning of April, when he was in Gros Islet Bay before the battle. To add to the sting of the blow Rodney's successor was on board the ship that brought the order:—Admiral Pigot, an absolute

nonentity, a man who had never served at sea since he was a captain, and then without distinction. That was the sort of man sent out to supersede the first naval commander of the age on the morrow of his greatest triumph. It was all a matter of party politics, a shameless political job. Rodney was a Tory in politics and had been appointed by a Tory First Lord. The Whigs had come into power since he last heard from England, and the new Ministry on coming into office had promptly cancelled his appointment and sent out one of their own partisans, hitherto only known as a naval M.P., to replace, in the presence of the enemy, the ablest sea officer that Great Britain possessed.

The Ministry having discarded Rodney, what took place when the startling news of Rodney's victory, with the capture of De Grasse and the finest man-of-war in the world, reached England, was indeed the irony of fate. It made up a striking and intensely dramatic situation. When Rodney was ordered home the news of the battle had not arrived. It came on the 18th of May, when Captain Byron of the *Andromache*, and Lord Cranstoun, who had accompanied him, arrived with Rodney's despatches at the Admiralty at two in the morning. Admiral Pigot had only left London for Plymouth two or three days before. The Admiralty and the Ministry were aghast, amazed, absolutely nonplussed. They had recalled the victor in the hour of the greatest victory that the Royal Navy had ever won perhaps since the defeat of the Spanish Armada. It was an extremely awkward position. Admiral Pigot must be stopped at all cost, and Rodney's order of recall torn up. That was the only thing to be done. A King's messenger with relays of horses was sent galloping down to Plymouth as fast as man could ride. He carried with him a letter of compliment and congratulation to Rodney, written at seven on the morning of the 18th, which was to go instead of the other. The messenger got to Plymouth just too late. He arrived there at two in the afternoon of the 19th, to find that Pigot had sailed on the evening before. A swift cutter was sent after the *Jupiter*, but failed to catch her up. So the Whig Ministry were left face to face with the unenviable situation that their own narrow partisanship had created.

'A generation ago,' says a writer in one of the earlier numbers of the *Quarterly Review*, 'men were still living who could tell of the flame of indignation which ran through the country when it was known that the new Whig Government had recalled Admiral Rodney, because the expedition

which he commanded had been planned by the Tories.' No doubt that was so. But the flame burned itself out quickly. The Whigs in Parliament and outside it were able to counter the Tory reproaches by retorting that whatever was the case then, when the recall of Rodney was first notified, three weeks before the despatches came, not a voice had been raised against it. All over the country at the same time, Whigs and Tories made common cause in heaping adulation on the victor, and expressing their general feelings in exuberant rejoicings. In London, after the Park and Tower guns and the pealing of the church bells had confirmed the breakfast-table rumour, 'the whole town was in an uproar,' we are told, everybody making the day a holiday and hanging out flags. All London was illuminated that night, the very poorest finding a candle to stick in every pane in their windows. Wraxall, writing in 1816 (the year after Waterloo) his recollections of how London received the news of Rodney's victory, says: 'When I reflect on the emotions to which it gave rise in London, I cannot compare them with any other occurrence of the same kind that we have since witnessed in this country.'<sup>[57]</sup> Dr. Blane writing some years afterwards from what he was told, says that even the cripples and invalids in hospital 'demonstrated their joy on hearing of this victory, by hoisting shreds of coloured cloth on their crutches.' Lady Rodney and her daughters went to the theatre that evening. 'When we went in,' wrote Miss Jane Rodney to her father, 'the whole house testified by their claps and huzzas, the joy they felt at the news, and their love for you, and their acclamations lasted for, I am sure, five minutes.'<sup>[58]</sup> The versifiers of course seized on the occasion, and they found editors ready to take their 'copy.'

The Grass in Paris streets so long had grown  
That farmer Rodney thought it should be mown,  
So up his Formidable scythe he took  
And cut the Grass of Paris at one stroke—

was one effusion that is among the best. Throughout the country, as the laurel-bedecked stage-coaches passed the news along, there was hardly a village that did not ring its bells and have its bonfire. Half the taverns, we are told, painted out their 'Markis o' Granby' signboards for 'The Admiral Rodney,' and Rodney's is to this day the most common of naval names on inn signboards. There are, as a fact, more 'Lord Rodneys' up and down the country than 'Lord Nelsons.'

Rodney, at Port Royal, accepted the situation with quiet dignity. He said nothing, handed over the command to Admiral Pigot, and shifted out of the *Formidable* forthwith into the smaller *Montagu*, then under orders to proceed to England. Twelve days after Pigot's arrival, Rodney sailed. There is no need to carry the story further. How Rodney was rewarded by the country, and how he passed his closing years, are matters of general history.

One of the *Formidable's* men on Rodney's day was a smart young seaman named Stephens. He lived to be 'Mr.' Stephens, the boatswain of the famous *Shannon* when she met the *Chesapeake*, on which occasion, too, he lost an arm. He found a place in Captain Broke's despatch, and had the further distinction of being asked by the officers to sit for a statuette of himself to be made, which became one of the special treasures of the last of the *Shannon's* officers, the late Admiral of the Fleet, Sir Provo Wallis. The last surviving officer of Rodney's flagship was Sir Charles Dashwood, who died in 1847, Vice-Admiral of the White, and K.C.B. The last survivor of all, both of the *Formidable's* company in 1782, and of all who fought in the battle itself, was a seaman of the *Formidable*, George Neale, who died at Coventry in 1849.

We will close the story with one final word about the *Formidable's* after career. She outlasted Rodney by nineteen years, and served in the interim throughout the war with the French Revolution and with Napoleon. Had it not been for an accidental delay she would have been Duncan's flagship at Camperdown. The *Formidable* had been fitted for Admiral Duncan's flag, and sailed from the Downs for the Texel on the very day that the battle was fought. Her end came in 1813, in which year the fine old veteran of the sea was struck off the Navy List as unfit for further service, and handed over to the shipbreaker.

To Dead Man's Bay when her day is past,  
To Dead Man's Bay comes the ship at last.

Thus for the present we close the record of this 'blustering adjective' from the point of view of naval history. Enough has been told. 'A nation,' says Guizot, 'is safe in the greatest crisis of its fate if it can remember its own history.' Those who on a future day may serve in our present *Formidable* before an enemy, will be none the worse for remembering the associations of old-time victory that form part and parcel of their ship's famous name, in

virtue of which, that name finds its place to-day on the roll of the Royal Navy for 'one of the best' among the battle-ships of the British Fleet.<sup>[59]</sup> 'No man,' wrote a young officer of the famous *Bellerophon*, in his last letter home on the evening before Trafalgar, 'can be a coward on board the *Billy Ruff'n*.' No man on board the *Formidable*, who knows the story of his ship, should be found wanting on the day of battle. It will rest as a point of honour with those who then man the *Formidable* to remember Rodney and prove the *Formidable* 'worthy of her name.'

## FOOTNOTES:

[13] *Admirals All, and Other Verses*, p. 15.

[14] *Edward the Third*, Act III. Sc. 1.

[15] Built at Chatham in 1777 as a 98-gun three-decker of 1945 tons. The *Formidable* taken at Quiberon was broken up some ten years previously.

[16] From Mr. Newbolt's verses on a memorial brass in Clifton College chapel.

[17] He was captain of the French frigate *L'Aréthuse* on May 18, 1759, when she was cut off and captured, off the Brittany coast, by a British squadron; to become a British frigate, and later on the 'Saucy' *Arethusa* of the celebrated ballad.

[18] Hennequin's *Biographie Maritime*, art. 'Vaudreuil'; also L. Dussieux's *Généraux et Marins du XVIII. Siècle*, p. 260. The governorship of the island of Dominica was offered to De Vaudreuil after its capture from Great Britain through treachery. Some of the creole inhabitants of Dominica invited the French over from Martinique, and, on the night of their landing, made the garrison of the principal fort in the island drunk, plugged up the touch-holes of their cannon, and put sand in the locks of their muskets.

[19] Bougainville was born in 1729. He was granted the *particule nobiliaire* by order of the King as a special favour, escaped the guillotine during the Terror by the merest chance, and died a Senator of the Empire in 1811. Bougainville's name is commemorated in the French navy to-day in a corvette used as a training ship for cadets. The vessel is well known as a visitor to Dartmouth and Plymouth Sound every year.

[20] It was the practice of the Comte de la Charette to blacken the sides of each ship that he commanded. Ordinarily, at this period, ships' sides were of a yellow colour—the planking simply varnished over.

[21] Carlyle, *French Revolution*, vol. ii. bk. ii. chap. i.

[22] Carronades were short pieces of large calibre, throwing heavy shot, but with a very limited range. They were only of use for fighting at close quarters, when, however, they were terribly destructive. They were invented and first made at the Carron Ironworks in Scotland—whence the name.

[23] Sir Gilbert Blane, *Dissertations on Medical Science*, vol. i. p. 86.

[24] It extends sometimes to as far as six or seven miles seaward.—*West India Pilot*.

[25] 'De Grasse's action,' says Captain Mahan (*The Influence of Sea Power upon History*, p. 290), 'was justified by the court which tried him, in which were many officers of high rank and doubtless of distinction, as being "an act of prudence on the part of the admiral dictated to him by the ulterior projects of the cruise." Three days later he was signally beaten by the fleet he had failed to attack at disadvantage, and all the ulterior projects of the cruise went down with him.'

[26] *Annual Register*, 1782 (History of Europe), p. 206.

[27] Mundy's *Life of Rodney*, vol. ii. p. 251.

[28] *United Service Journal*, 1833, part i. p. 512, Sir C. Douglas's narrative.

[29] Imagine this page the surface of the sea, the top being north, the foot south, and so on. The wind would be blowing diagonally across from the right-hand corner at the foot of the page. Rodney's ships would be approaching slantwise towards the centre of the page from near the left-hand lower corner. De Grasse's fleet would be coming down to meet them near the centre from a point at the top of the page about two inches from the left-hand corner.

[30] To make sure that they saw the signal and obeyed it without delay, De Grasse kept firing gun after gun to enforce it, until all had answered.

[31] Captain Mahan in *The Royal Navy: A History*, vol. iii. p. 528.

[32] Mundy's *Life of Rodney*, vol. ii. pp. 235-236.

[33] British flag-officers were at this time still divided, for purposes of promotion, into groups and subdivisions, as Admirals, Vice-Admirals, and Rear-Admirals of the Red, White, and Blue (except that there was no Admiral of the Red), which had existed since the middle of the seventeenth century, although the original purpose of the arrangement, in accordance with the tactical formations of fleets for battle, had long ceased to exist. The French, on the other hand, had no permanent subsidiary gradations in their flag-officers' list, and held to their original tactical distribution of squadrons; the senior officer commanding the Escadre Blanche, the second the Escadre Blanche et Bleue, the third the Escadre Bleue.

[34] *Hist. MSS. Commission: Report XIV*. Duke of Rutland's MSS. at Belvoir Castle, vol. iii. p. 55. At Belvoir Castle there are preserved, besides eight brass cannon of French make, the carved tiller of the *Resolution*, and some bottles of wine stamped with the Manners peacock, which were in the ship as part of the captain's stores.

[35] There is a very fine model of the *Duke*, representing her exactly as she appeared on the 12th of April 1782, in the naval collection at South Kensington Museum.

[36] The first was in the fighting on the 9th of April. 'De Grasse had sent me a message that he could not meet me in March, but that he certainly would attack us in April. He did not keep his promise, for I attacked him. In the first day's action, when the *Formidable* came abreast of the *Ville de Paris*, I ordered the

main topsail to be laid aback. [This was a well-understood form of personal challenge at sea.] De Grasse, who was about three miles to windward, did not accept the challenge, but kept his wind and did not fire one shot the whole day.' (Letter to Lady Rodney, May 4, 1782; quoted in Mundy's *Life*, etc., vol. ii. p. 291.)

[37] Sir Gilbert Blane, *Dissertations on Medical Science*, vol. i. p. 88 *et seq.*

[38] Sir C. Dashwood's letter is dated Torquay, 8th July 1829. It is quoted in full in the *United Service Journal* for 1833, part i. p. 73.

[39] Professor J. Knox Laughton, R.N., *Dictionary of National Biography*, art. 'Rodney.'

[40] The *Diadème's* name appears in De Vaudreuil's official return of the ships rallied by him which reached Cap François, San Domingo, on the 25th of April.

[41] Hennequin, *Biographie Maritime*, vol. i. p. 356.

[42] Navy Records Society: *The Naval Miscellany*, vol. i. p. 234. A letter apparently from a lieutenant of the *Ville de Paris* gives details.

[43] Navy Records Society, *Letters of Sir Samuel Hood*, pp. 102-103.

[44] Sir Gilbert Blane, *Dissertations on Medical Science*, vol. i.

[45] *United Service Journal* for 1833, vol. i. p. 514.

[46] De Grasse, it is stated, had not once left the quarter-deck since daybreak. See also *Historical Memoirs of my Own Time*, Sir N.W. Wraxall, vol. iii. p. 108.

[47] Wraxall's *Memoirs*, iii. p. 107. Lord Cranstoun told Sir N.W. Wraxall that *he* 'was sent after the *Ville de Paris* struck to take possession of her, as well as to receive De Grasse's sword.' In the memoir of Captain Knight of the *Barfleur* (*Naval Chronicle*, xi. pp. 428-429) it is stated that 'Captain Knight received and presented to his Admiral the sword of Count de Grasse and those of all the surviving officers of the *Ville de Paris*, who, with the exception of the Count (he, by desire of Sir Samuel Hood, remaining in his own ship), lodged that night in the captain's cabin of the *Barfleur*.' Our illustration depicts a third version of the incident.

[48] Hennequin, *Biographie Maritime*, vol. i. art. 'Marigny.'

[49] They were:—the Chevalier du Pavillon, De Vaudreuil's flag-captain; De la Clochette; De la Vicomté; Comte Bernard de Marigny; De Saint Césaire; and D'Escars of the *Glorieux*.

[50] Half a million sterling was the French monetary loss in one of the biggest sea battles ever fought. Japan lost upwards of a million and a quarter by the sinking of one battleship alone, the *Hatsuse*; and Russia, a million and eight thousand pounds by the sinking of the *Petropavlovsk*.

[51] Blane's *Dissertations on Medical Science*, vol. i., as before.

[52] It is certainly curious that a man of the world such as Rodney was should not have known French. Most people have heard the story—the truth of which is well established—of Rodney's detention in Paris, at the outset of the war, owing to his debts, and how the Duc de Biron advanced him the money which enabled Rodney to leave for England.

[53] It is rather difficult to reconcile these two statements by De Grasse, one to Dr. Blane and the other to Rodney.

[54] According to the *London Magazine* for August 1782, King George, at an audience granted to De Grasse shortly after the French admiral's arrival in England, returned him the sword that De Grasse had surrendered to Rodney. 'This *etiquette*,' the *London Magazine* proceeds, 'enabled the Count to appear at Court.' He spent the week he was in London, we are told, 'in paying visits to the great officers of State and some of the principal nobility of the kingdom, by whom he was entertained in a sumptuous and hospitable style. He likewise took a view of the Bank and other public edifices, and of Vauxhall and other places of amusement.... Every mark of respect was shown to him, even by the common people, in testimony of his valour.'

[55] Practically everybody: four or five officers were called before the court at the close of the proceedings, and formally reprimanded for not having done all they might. De Vaudreuil came off with flying colours, and all documents containing reflections on him were ordered to be suppressed. The warmest commendation was bestowed on the captains who rallied with De Vaudreuil to the support of De Grasse.

[56] 'The most virulent expressions of disgust were hurled on his misfortune and his fame; epigrams circulated from mouth to mouth, and even the women carried ornaments called "à la De Grasse," having on one side a heart and on the other none.' (Sir E. Cust's *Annals of the Wars of the Eighteenth Century*, vol. iii. p. 329). Also General Mundy in his *Life of Lord Rodney* (vol. ii. p. 290, note), says of De Grasse: 'On his return to France he was disgraced by his Court, and in the gardens of the Tuileries his life was nearly sacrificed to the fury of an exasperated mob.'

[57] Wraxall's *Memoirs*, iii. p. 104. Several of the medals, in silver and bronze, struck to commemorate the great occasion are now in private collections. A lady's fan of the period, bearing a portrait of Rodney with emblematical devices in honour of the victory, was on view two or three years ago at a small exhibition of fans of the eighteenth century in Bond Street.

[58] Letter quoted in Mundy's *Life of Lord Rodney*, vol. ii. p. 309.

[59] Mr. Schetky, the artist, whose picture of Rodney's victory is reproduced in this book, relates in a note the following anecdote. 'It is in reference to this famous action (Rodney's victory) that the story is told of the old one-legged veteran, a patient in the Edinburgh Infirmary, who, being asked by Dr. John Barclay, "Where did you lose your leg, my man?" briefly replied, "At the 12th of April, your honour." The doctor, not immediately calling to mind that great day, inquired again, "What 12th of April?" Jack looked him in the face with supreme contempt, and retorted indignantly, "WHAT 12th of April? Who ever heard of any 12th of April but ONE."'

### III

WON AT THE CANNON'S MOUTH

HIS MAJESTY'S SHIP *UNDAUNTED*

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

SCOTT.

THERE is no incident quite like it in all the annals of the Royal Navy. There is hardly a finer tale, all said and done, hardly a more stirring story, than that which tells how we came by our first *Undaunted*—why there is an *Undaunted* to-day on the roll of the British fleet. Better name for British fighting ship there could be none; none, assuredly, of happier omen. In a sense, indeed, it is, so to speak, a self-made name. No Admiralty Lord of high degree in the comfortable surroundings of a sanctum at Whitehall first made choice of or appointed it. No lady fair with customary libation of foaming wine on dockyard gala day wished 'God speed' to our first *Undaunted*. In quite another way, indeed, was the name first given. Amid the clash and ring of hostile steel, in the heat of a hard-fought fight, with shells bursting round, and grape-shot hurtling through the powder smoke, with bullets flying thick, while men closed hand to hand with cutlass and bayonet and boarding pike, came the first idea of the name *Undaunted*, and the scene of its first appointment, of its first bestowal on a British man-of-war, was the quarter-deck of a British flagship, as the last echoes of battle were dying down.



THE FIRST CAPTAIN OF THE FIRST *UNDAUNTED*—CAPTAIN  
ROBERT FAULKNOR

The West Indies, Nelson's 'station for honour,' was the scene of the event, off the island of Martinique, and Thursday the 20th of March 1794 was the day. There had been turbulent doings in Martinique for the past six weeks. Ever since the second week of February, day after day, almost incessantly, the quiet valleys and hillsides of the fair island had re-echoed with the crackle of musketry and the booming of cannon. It was the old story, of course, red-coats fighting blue; the old story—with the old result. We were in the second year of the war with the French Revolution, and a British army had been sent over to drive the French from their West Indian possessions. Martinique was the first to be attacked, and three columns of British troops had landed there at different points to fight their way inland until they met, driving the French field force and garrisons before them. Outmatched in the open, the French troops and local militiamen had in the end fallen back on Fort Royal, whither General Rochambeau, the French Commander-in-Chief in the West Indies, had called in all his forces and massed his battalions to make a final stand at bay. The fate of Martinique

depended on their power of holding out until help from outside should reach them.

A large and powerful British fleet under Vice-Admiral Sir John Jervis, the future Earl St. Vincent, had escorted the troops across the Atlantic. After assisting the soldiers in the earlier stages of the campaign it had closed in and fastened its grip on the seaward approaches to Fort Royal.

Fort Royal was the headquarters station of the French in the West Indies. It was situated at the head of a deep bay, Cul de Sac Royal as it was called. The place was strongly fortified, and was the great arsenal and dockyard of France across the Atlantic. For a hundred years past and more French fleets and squadrons had fitted there for war, and had put in to repair after battle. Thence Du Casse had sailed to fight Benbow. From there, as we have seen, De Grasse put out to meet his fate off the 'Saints' at the hands of Rodney. Two fortified positions of considerable strength and with heavy cannon, besides outlying redoubts and batteries, defended the town of Fort Royal; one position fronting inland, the other facing towards the sea.

Against the former, Fort Bourbon, an entrenched work set on high ground at the back of the town of Fort Royal, the main force of our soldiers was to operate, attacking with a siege train of heavy guns and mortars and opening zigzags and parallels in the orthodox way. Fort Louis on the sea front, blocking the entrance to the *carénage*, or man-of-war harbour, and the dockyard, was to be attacked by the Naval Brigade, assisted by a number of grenadier and light infantry companies, with siege batteries made up of ships' 24-pounders. At the entrance to Fort Royal Bay, to 'keep the ring,' as it were, rode the big two-deckers and frigates of the fleet.

The bombardment began on the 7th of March and lasted ten days, during which time the enemy resisted stoutly. Their sorties were, however, beaten back, and by the 16th of the month the advanced batteries of the second parallel had been pushed forward to within 500 yards of Fort Bourbon. The sappers and miners had in the same time got nearer still to Fort Louis. As yet though no date had been fixed for the assault.

On the 17th of March an accidental circumstance suddenly brought on the crisis. Lieutenant Bowen of the flagship *Boyne*, who commanded the guard boats of the fleet, heard that there were some British seamen prisoners on board a French frigate that lay in the *carénage* moored close under the walls

of Fort Louis. He was a young fellow of exceptional daring, and a fine piece of work suggested itself to his mind. It was to dash in on his own account and try and cut out the French ship and rescue the prisoners. Young Bowen said nothing about it to any one. He took his boats in and made the attempt. He boarded the frigate in the face of a sharp fire, only, however, to find that the prisoners had been removed. Then he tried to bring the prize off. It proved, however, impossible. The frigate had been moored with chains and had no sails bent to her yards. Lieutenant Bowen had to retire, but his daring attempt gave an idea to the British admiral. It took shape on paper, and the co-operation of the military on shore was arranged for. Sir John Jervis's plan was to send in all the boats of the fleet *en masse*, carrying landing parties of sailors and marines, and attempt Fort Louis itself by a *coup de main*. At the same time, it was arranged, a brigade of troops, detached from before Fort Bourbon, should move down and threaten the town of Fort Royal and the landward bastions of Fort Louis.

The plan was put in hand at once, and Thursday the 20th of March was fixed on for the attempt. It was to be made in broad daylight, going straight at the enemy. This, briefly, was to be the order of the attack. The *Asia*, a 64-gun ship, Captain John Brown, with the *Zebra*, a 16-gun sloop of war, Commander Robert Faulknor, were to push on ahead of the boats. Having got as close in to the ramparts as the tide would allow, the *Asia* was to batter away at the fort and breach the sea-wall. The *Zebra* at the same time was to sweep the ramparts with grape and canister and cover the approach of the boats with the storming parties, which were to come up a little astern of her. All the boats in the fleet—flat-bottomed boats, barges, and pinnaces, carrying 1200 seamen and marines—were to be employed, each provided with a number of bamboo scaling-ladders of from 20 to 36 feet long. Everything was ready by the appointed time, seven on Wednesday night, and at five o'clock on the morning of the 20th the signal was given to set off.

Promptly the *Zebra* led in. There was a brisk north-easterly breeze blowing, and standing right before it she headed directly for the French batteries. The enemy on their side opened fire on her at once, a long-range cannonade, but without effect. She was a small object to hit. Without checking her course the *Zebra* held on steadily. The *Asia* followed, and all went well until just as she was getting within grape-shot range. Then suddenly an amazing thing

happened. To the blank astonishment of the whole squadron, the 64 suddenly wore round and stood out of the bay. She turned round deliberately and drew off from the enemy. What was the matter? Something very serious indeed must have happened on board. Sir John Jervis himself, the admiral, thought it could only be that Captain Brown had been killed, and sent off his flag-captain to take charge. It was not that, however. Not a man had been touched by a shot. Captain Grey<sup>[60]</sup> was only a few moments on board, and then went down the side into his boat to return to the flagship, after which the *Asia* stood in again. It was a great relief to all—when suddenly, just as she got to the same spot as before, within grape-shot range, round went the *Asia's* bows once more, and she for the second time put back. What on earth had happened now?

This is the story. It is not a very nice one.

A French naval officer who had deserted to the British was on board the *Asia* in charge of the pilotage arrangements for the day's attack. He was a M. de Tourelles, a Royalist, formerly harbour-master at Fort Royal. He had volunteered for the post and had been accepted for his pilot knowledge. The failure of the *Asia* was due to Lieutenant de Tourelles' nerves. All of a sudden, as the enemy's opening shots began to fly overhead through the *Asia's* rigging, M. de Tourelles got alarmed and lost his head. Whether it was sheer cowardice, or a qualm of conscience at the part he was taking against his own countrymen, or a fear for his own skin if anything went wrong and the French got hold of him—from one cause or another M. de Tourelles broke down abjectly. Before any one on board knew what was happening, he had put the *Asia's* helm hard over and rounded the ship out of action. That was the first failure, and the Frenchman's explanation was that he had somehow got out of his reckoning. After Captain Grey of the *Boyne* came on board M. de Tourelles said he would try again. He did so; and the same thing happened again. There was, though, another failure on board besides that of the pilot. Once more, to the surprise of all on deck in the *Asia*, Captain Brown did nothing. He was an officer who had seen service—of the same seniority as Nelson on the post list, and not far off flag rank in the ordinary course—yet he let the Frenchman for the second time carry the ship out of battle. Lookers-on expected him to pistol De Tourelles on the spot, or cut him down; at the least to send him below under arrest and take charge himself. The tide was flowing, it was nearly three-quarters high

water, and he might well have risked touching on a shoal and borne up directly for the batteries. Captain Brown, however, did nothing of the kind. The *Asia* for the second time headed tamely out of action, this time to remain out.<sup>[61]</sup>

It was a disheartening spectacle and a bad start. The whole attack indeed was jeopardised. The *Asia* dropped back nearly outside the bay. The boats lay on their oars just within the bay. The *Zebra*, all by herself, entirely unsupported, was some distance ahead; all the time under fire from the enemy, stormed at by round-shot and shell and grape from every gun that the French could bring to bear on her.

Fortunately Commander Faulknor was not of the stamp of Captain Brown. He might well have anticipated a signal of recall and turned his little sloop away to retire out of range and wait for further orders. But he was not that sort of man. When he saw the *Asia* go about and retreat for the first time, although he had already got so far in as to be within musket-shot of the nearest French battery, he lay-to and waited. The French were already firing at him, but not the smallest notice would he allow to be taken of the enemy's shots. The *Asia*, as he saw, headed in and came on again; after which, for the second time she turned away and stood back. Commander Faulknor knew what that meant. He saw that he had been left in the lurch. He saw now that he must expect no assistance from the *Asia*, the big ship that was to have been the mainstay of the attack. The odds against him might well have daunted the bravest man. They did not, however, daunt Robert Faulknor. He then and there determined to undertake the whole duty of tackling the French batteries and covering the boat attack single-handed, with his own little ship and her crew of one hundred men all told.

It was a daring resolution, for Fort Louis was a very formidable work, mounting heavy guns and strongly held. It crowned a rocky eminence that jutted out menacingly into Fort Royal Bay. The sea face rose abruptly from the water's edge, with a wall and parapet, 15 feet high, scored with embrasures for big guns all along that side. In rear of the parapet three lofty tiers of platforms, rising one above another, with the muzzles of guns showing at all points, frowned fiercely down on all who should venture to approach in hostile guise. Fort Louis guarded the fairway into the *carénage*, or man-of-war harbour, round a bend immediately in rear of the fort, and it

also covered the town and warehouses of Fort Royal proper, the civil settlement, which fringed the harbour on the farther side.

The perilous nature of the task he was taking in hand did not, however, count with the gallant officer who had charge of the *Zebra*. He was used to taking risks. Commander Faulknor had already in this campaign shown the stuff he was made of, and that not once nor twice. He was not the man to blench here.

The commander of the *Zebra* was indeed a man in a thousand. Hardly a finer fellow in every respect than Robert Faulknor ever trod the quarter-deck of a British man-of-war in any age. He could not, perhaps, well help being so. If ever a British naval officer had the sea 'in his blood,' as the old saying went, Faulknor had it. Not many families ever did more for the Sea Service than the Faulknors of Hampshire in the eighteenth century. A round dozen of its sons, as captains and admirals, walked the quarter-deck in the times between Queen Anne and William the Fourth. As a fact, he owed his very origin to a naval romance. His father was 'Bob Faulknor of the *Bellona*,' perhaps the most popular man in the service in his day, who in the first year of George the Third's reign took a big French 74, the *Courageux*, off the coast of Spain, in a ship-to-ship duel fought out to the bitter end, and won a fortune and a beautiful bride, our hero's mother, at one and the same time. The newspapers were full of the dashing fight, a story full of incidents of heroism on the part of the *Bellona's* captain, and the young lady reading the story there, gave her heart to the gallant captain she had never seen. Meeting 'Captain Bob' on his return to England at a ball, quite by chance, he for his part, in turn, fell violently in love with her, and they married and lived afterwards the happiest of wedded lives. Commander Faulknor's grandfather was old Admiral Balchen's flag-captain, who was lost with his veteran chief and upwards of a thousand officers and men, in the wreck of the *Victory* of George the Second's fleet, the predecessor of Nelson's *Victory*, off the Caskets near Alderney, one stormy October night of the year 1744. Commander Faulknor's great-grandfather got his lieutenant's commission three years after the battle of La Hogue, fought all through 'Queen Anne's War,' and died in George the First's reign, Lieutenant-Governor of Greenwich Hospital. Such was the stock that Commander Faulknor came of.

Faulknor gave orders to let fall the foresail and hoist every stitch of canvas that the ship's masts would stand. Then he again headed the *Zebra* up the bay, pointing in directly for the ramparts of Fort Louis. All round her, as the little sloop dashed forward, the water leaped and splashed, torn into spray under the tornado of grape and canister and round shot—any single one of which hitting the *Zebra* fairly must have torn the little vessel open and sent her to the bottom like a stone—with which the French batteries met her as she came on. But it made no difference. A special Providence—in the form of a drizzling squall that suddenly came on, blowing in from the sea right in the faces of the French gunners—seemed to be protecting the ship and her men, and she passed through practically unscathed. One shot cut the main-topmast away, but that was all. The balls whizzed through the rigging and within a few inches of the men's heads but not a single man was harmed.

At the instant that the *Zebra* was seen to make sail and move ahead, the boats of the squadron set off rowing after her at their best speed, while the Naval Brigade batteries on shore, facing the flanking bastions of Fort Louis on either side, redoubled their fire on the enemy's works to distract the attention of the French as far as possible. At the same time, to hold Fort Bourbon on the hill behind Fort Louis in check and prevent reinforcements being sent down to assist the lower fort, the British siege batteries up above burst out into a tremendous fire of round-shot and shell that swept the French ramparts in the upper fort from end to end.

On board the *Zebra* it was an anxious time for every one; and with it all, simultaneously, Commander Faulknor had yet another trial sprung upon him. The risk from the enemy's shot was not the severest ordeal that the captain of the *Zebra* had to go through. By an extraordinary coincidence, exactly the same thing happened on board the *Zebra* as had already happened with such unfortunate results on board the *Asia*.<sup>[62]</sup> The pilot's nerve failed. The pilot of the *Zebra* was an old man-of-war's man, who had been employed for many years in the West Indies on account of his pilot knowledge of the islands. He now broke down at the critical moment. But, as has been said, Commander Faulknor was not a Captain Brown.

As he gave the pilot the order 'to place the sloop close under the walls of Fort Royal,' he instinctively noticed that something was wrong. The man, he thought, seemed to hesitate. He turned aside to one of his officers.

'I think Mr. —— seems confused, as if he doesn't know what he is about. Has he been in action before?'

'Many times, Sir,' was the reply; 'he has been twenty-four years in the service.'

But Faulknor was not satisfied. He eyed the pilot closely and then stepped up to him and asked him a trifling question to test him. His suspicions were fully confirmed. The pilot's 'agitation was such as to render him incapable of giving any answer.' Recovering himself to some extent a moment later the wretched man, keeping his eyes on the deck, in a low voice addressed Faulknor, who was bending over him, with this startling admission:

'I see your Honour knows me. I am unfit to guide her. I don't know what is come over me. I dreamt last night I should be killed, and I am so afraid I don't know what I am about. I never in all my life felt afraid before.'

One cannot help feeling pity for the unhappy fellow; but it was no time for pity. Commander Faulknor could do only one thing, and he did it. Without for an instant losing his presence of mind, he replied to the man in a still lower tone:

'The fate of this expedition depends on the helm in your hand. Give it to me, and go and hide your head in whatever you fancy the safest part of the ship. But mind—fears are catching. If I hear you tell yours to one of your messmates, your life shall answer for it to-morrow!'



## CAPTAIN FAULKNOR STORMING FORT LOUIS

'The poor fellow,' in the words of the *Naval Chronicle*, 'panic-struck, went away, and overcome with shame sat down upon the arm chest, whilst Captain Faulknor seized the helm and with his own hand laid the *Zebra* close to the walls of the Fort, but before he had got upon them at the head of his gallant followers, a cannon-ball struck the arm chest and blew the pilot to atoms.' He was the only man killed of all the *Zebra's* crew that day.

Would the pilot have escaped had he pulled himself together and stuck to the helm? This is what Commander Faulknor wrote home to his mother after the fight.<sup>[63]</sup> 'I had a ship's cartouch box, which is made of thick wood, buckled round my body with pistol cartridges in it, for the pistol I carried by my side. As the *Zebra* came close to the fort, a grape-shot struck, or rather grazed my right-hand knuckle, and shattered the cartouch in the centre of my body: had it not miraculously been there I must have been killed on the spot.'

Faulknor ran the *Zebra* in and laid her as close under the French guns as the depth of water at that state of the tide would allow, within fifteen feet of the walls of Fort Louis. The next instant 'the scaling-ladders flew from the rigging, the boats in tow astern became the bridge, and Captain Faulknor headed his boarders over the parapet into the fort.'

The boats of the squadron, led by Captains Nugent and Riou—the gallant, good Riou, killed before Copenhagen seven years later, as all the world knows—were coming up astern, flying through the water after the *Zebra*, as fast as the men, bending their hardest to their oars, could send them forward; but they were still some way off.

Faulknor and his men clambered up the parapet, through the embrasures, and sprang over into the fort. Right in front of them, drawn up in rear of the ramparts, stood with muskets at the present, a whole French regiment, the 33rd of the Line, a veteran battalion of the old Royal Army of France, and one not yet disorganised by Republican methods, the Régiment de Touraine. It met the first appearance of the sailors, as they set foot on the ramparts, with a crashing volley. Only three of the *Zebra's* men were hit, and they had only flesh wounds. With a cheer up went the cutlasses and the sailors made a rush in on the French bayonets, to settle the matter hand to hand. But no! A sudden panic seized the Frenchmen. Down, clattering to the ground, went

their muskets all along the line, and up went their hands, as the Régiment de Touraine, panic-stricken, screamed and yelled for quarter. It was given. Faulknor turned round short, flung himself before his leading men, and by main force stopped them as they were in the act of closing. 'I take some credit to myself,' he related to his mother, 'that after the *Zebra* had stood a heavy fire, and when we had the power to retaliate, for we were mounted upon the walls, I would not allow a man to be hurt, on their being panic-struck and calling for mercy.'

The iron gates leading to the citadel of Fort Louis then barred the way, but these were burst in and the little band of sailors rushed through, the heroic Faulknor leading. They fought their way steadily and swiftly, until within seven minutes of forcing their entry they had got up to the very topmost platform of Fort Louis. That was instantly seized and the place was theirs. The commandant of the fort and his staff yielded themselves up as prisoners of war, and the French flag was hauled down, an English Jack going up in its place, 'amidst the shouts of triumph from the armed boats, from the squadron, and from the army, which thus announced its arrival outside.' Five stands of military colours were taken with the garrison. 'The sword and colours of Fort Royal,' wrote Faulknor home, 'were delivered to me by the Governor of the fort.'

This is the modest way in which Faulknor recorded the events of the day in the *Zebra's* log:—

*March 20.*—At 5 A.M. we weighed and came to sail. At 8 A.M. the enemy began to fire on us from Fort Royal, which they con<sup>d</sup> till noon, when we ran in under their fire to the fort. I, together with the officers and seamen, stormed the fort, with the loss of one man killed and five wounded. The rigging, masts, and sails much cut, and kedge anchor, which hung under the bowspritt, cut away the spritsail yard and carried away the jib-boom. A heavy and well-directed fire was kept up from our battery's and gun-boats whilst we were running in, and the flat boats under the command of Commodore Thompson followed us with 500 seamen.<sup>[64]</sup>

A touch that helps to show us something of the chivalrous character of Commander Faulknor must be noted in passing. 'The British ensign being

displayed over the fort, Captain Faulknor sent his second lieutenant to the casements (*sic*), where the French officers' families, (and) the sick and wounded were, to assure them of protection.'

'After that,' we are told, 'Mr. Hill (the second lieutenant) had the proud duty of letting down the drawbridge to the Commander-in-Chief of the Army.'

The securing of the capture, the holding of the fort was, of course, for other people to do. The 100 officers and men of the *Zebra* were too few to do it. But the boats of the squadron were now alongside the walls and landing their men, and the soldiers were at the gates. There was no object in remaining ashore longer. Captain Faulknor handed over his capture to the senior officer present, and quietly drawing the *Zebra's* company off, marched them down and returned on board. Then he sent his boats and had the French frigate lying in the *carénage* taken possession of—the *Bien Venu* was her name—which was done without resistance, after which, in the most ordinary and matter-of-fact way, just as it were going out of a morning from Portsmouth Harbour to Spithead, he made sail and stood out to rejoin the squadron.

The unprecedented scene that followed, is indeed the climax of the whole story. 'Such compliments, that it is impossible for me to relate them—compliments ... without example in the navy,'—were Commander Faulknor's own comments on the extraordinary reception that was accorded him.

As the little *Zebra* was seen approaching, the *Boyne*, Sir John Jervis's flagship, manned yards and rigging. Then, a moment later, when the *Zebra* had neared the *Boyne* and was shaping her course to pass under the flagship's stern on her way to reach her station among the other ships, the 'flagship's band, drawn up on the poop, struck up "See the Conquering Hero comes!"' and a tremendous burst of enthusiastic cheering, repeated again and again, rang echoing out to welcome the daring little ship. It was a splendid scene, stirring and magnificent, and worthy of the occasion, but it was not all. There was more to come. The admiral had a part of his own to play.

'Old Jarvie' did it in a way peculiar to himself. The man of iron had his other side. They did not know the real Jervis who spoke of him as a tyrant, unsympathetic and saturnine, pitiless and a grim martinet, who hanged men

on Sunday for the sake of discipline. This was an occasion after Jervis's own heart. None knew better than he how to reward merit: none ever did it better. A signal was made to the *Zebra* for Commander Faulknor to come on board the flagship. While the order was being obeyed, as the *Zebra* was lowering her boat Sir John had all hands on board the *Boyne* called aft and the guard of marines paraded under arms on the quarter-deck. All the officers were sent for to attend the admiral. The *Zebra's* boat sheered alongside, and Commander Faulknor came up the gangway. As he set foot on the flagship's quarter-deck the admiral, before the assembled officers, stepped forward to meet him. He greeted the young commander with unusual warmth and publicly embraced him. Then he ceremoniously handed Faulknor a commission promoting him post-captain on the spot.

'Captain Faulknor,' said Sir John Jervis, 'by your daring courage this day a French frigate has fallen into our hands. I have ordered her to be taken into our service, and here is your commission to command her, in which I have named her, Sir, after yourself,—the *Undaunted*.'

The ship in question was of course the frigate *Bien Venu*, which had been moored in the *carénage* under the walls of Fort Louis, and had been taken possession of by Faulknor's men after the fort had fallen.

In such exceptionally heroic circumstances was the name 'Undaunted' first introduced on the roll of the British fleet. It has remained there ever since to this day. A more happily chosen name in such a case there surely could be none—better name for British fighting ship there surely could be none.

'No language of mine,' wrote Sir John Jervis, in his despatch to the Admiralty that very afternoon, 'can express the merit of Captain Faulknor upon this occasion, but, as every officer and man in the army and squadron bears testimony, this incomparable action cannot fail of being recorded in the page of history.'

'The idol of the squadron,' 'the admiration of the whole army,' were other expressions that Jervis used in regard to Captain Faulknor.

Captain Faulknor, though, did more than storm and take Fort Louis. By the same act, with the same stroke, he brought about the fall of Fort Bourbon and the capture of the town of Fort Royal, 'rushed' by a column of the besieging troops simultaneously with the storming of Fort Louis. In

addition, beyond that, it brought about the formal surrender to England of the entire island of Martinique. All collapsed like a house of cards. General Rochambeau, startled at seeing Fort Louis, his bulwark towards the sea, which covered the only way by which he might hope for relief, snatched abruptly from him, while his own garrison was thrown into a state of hopeless demoralisation by the rabble of fugitive soldiers, bolting before Faulknor's men, and flying in wild disorder for refuge to Fort Bourbon, despaired of making a further stand. He beat the *chamade*, and sent in a flag of truce. At half-past two that afternoon one of Rochambeau's aides-de-camp from Fort Bourbon appeared before the British outposts with a letter from the French Governor, offering to treat and asking for terms. Commissioners on each side were named, and two days were spent in discussing details, but the French position, with Fort Louis gone, was doomed. Within 48 hours of Captain Faulknor's hoisting the British flag on Fort Louis the terms of surrender were agreed on and ready for signature.

It was a great capture. Sixty-eight guns and 55 mortars and howitzers were taken in Fort Louis alone; and more than twice as many more came into our possession with the fall of Fort Bourbon, besides immense supplies of ammunition and stores, shot and shell, and a large number of prisoners. These last included four regiments of infantry, among them one of the most famous corps of the French army of the old *régime*, the 37th of the line, the Régiment de Maréchal Turenne. On their behalf, indeed, a special effort was made by the French commissioners in drawing up the terms of surrender, to save the credit of so famous a regiment. They demanded that it should keep its colours and arms on being shipped back to France with the rest of the army, on condition of taking no further part in the war, but the attempt failed, and the Régiment de Maréchal Turenne had to share the lot of the other regiments, except that its officers were allowed to keep their swords.<sup>[65]</sup> It went back to France to meet its end as a regiment under Napoleon in Russia, drowned almost to a man in the terrible catastrophe which sealed the doom of the *Grande Armée* at the passage of the Bridge of the Beresina.

On the afternoon of the 23rd the gates of the fort were delivered over to the charge of the British, the French being confined to quarters inside, and guards were mounted under the command of Prince Edward, afterwards the Duke of Kent, the father of Queen Victoria and grandfather of King

Edward, who was in command of a brigade of the attacking troops, and had been present throughout the siege.

The colours taken at Martinique were sent home, and, by command of King George, were placed in St. Paul's Cathedral. They were carried through London in triumph, from St. James's Palace to St. Paul's, the Tower guns firing a salute, escorted by Life Guards, Grenadiers, and Foot Guards, with the band of the First Guards playing the procession along the streets, which were filled with cheering crowds. At St. Paul's they were received at the great west door of the cathedral by the Dean and Chapter, with a full choir. Where are those colours now? Not a rag, not a staff, remains. As was the fate of the captured flags won at Camperdown, at St. Vincent, and at Trafalgar, they were left to rot uncared for, and then at the time of the reaction in the years after Waterloo, the rags that were left were pulled down and bundled out of sight. What remained of the flags was thrown on a dust-heap and the poles were handed out among the vergers as broom and scrubbing-brush handles and for poking down rats' nests.



THE DEATH OF CAPTAIN FAULK NOR

On the morning of the 24th the French garrison marched out of Fort Bourbon. They were granted the honours of war, to make their exit with flags flying, bayonets fixed, drums beating, 30 rounds a man, and 2 field-pieces each with 12 rounds, and march down—between a double line of British seamen and soldiers—to the place of embarkation. They laid down their arms on the parade of Fort Royal, and filed on board the transports that had brought the British troops out, to set sail for France next day. The Island of Martinique was signed away from France with the capitulation of Fort Bourbon.

One last word must be said here of Captain Faulknor. He did not live to enjoy the benefits of his promotion long. Within ten months he was dead, killed in action, struck down in the performance of a deed of valour equal to anything that has in our own time won the Victoria Cross. In January 1795, when in command of the *Blanche*, a fine 32-gun frigate, to which he had been transferred, and while still in the West Indies, he fell in with a big French 36-gun frigate, the *Pique*, brought her to close action, and fought her for five hours, from midnight until five A.M., when the French ship surrendered. Captain Faulknor was shot dead, with a bullet through the heart, in the third hour of the fight, while in the act of lashing the *Pique's* bowsprit to the capstan of his own ship. He died, mourned by the whole country as a national loss, as the monument to him erected by order of Parliament in St. Paul's Cathedral testifies to this day.

Not once or twice in our rough island story  
The path of duty was the way to glory.

Since Faulknor's *Undaunted*, five British men-of-war have borne the name, and in every instance with distinction. Three of them may be referred to here. One *Undaunted*—the *Undaunted* of the Napoleonic war—crowned a career of exceptional brilliancy—a career that is one continuous record of daring exploits, which indeed won for her captain the *sobriquet*, taken from the name of his ship, of 'Undaunted Ussher'—by carrying Napoleon a prisoner of war to Elba. This same ship was later the last man-of-war to fly the flag of a Lord High Admiral of England at sea.<sup>[66]</sup> Another, in more recent times, as flagship on the East Indies station, had the honour of escorting his present Majesty King Edward, then Prince of Wales, through the Indian Ocean on his historic visit to India. Yet another *Undaunted*, our present cruiser of the name, was Lord Charles Beresford's first ship as a

captain of the Royal Navy—with the Mediterranean fleet under Sir George Tryon,—and proved herself during a memorable commission *nulli secundus* for smartness and efficiency, in the spirit of her well-remembered duty call:

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'Undaunted,' be ready!  
'Undaunted,' be steady!  
'Undaunted,' stand by for a job!



'BILLY BLUE'—ADMIRAL THE HON. SIR WILLIAM CORNWALLIS,  
G.C.B.

[This portrait was drawn in 1775, and shows Cornwallis as a Captain at the age of 32. No later portrait of him is in existence apparently.]

#### FOOTNOTES:

[60] Captain George Grey, flag-captain in the *Boyne* to Sir John Jervis.

[61] In his 'public letter' Sir John Jervis throws all the blame on M. de Tourelles' 'want of precision,' and Captain Brown's name appears at the head of those to whom the admiral declares himself 'greatly indebted' (James's *Naval History*, i. p. 244). On the other hand, Captain Brenton (*Naval History*, vol. i. p. 183) says:

'I once heard a lady ask Lord St. Vincent why he did not bring Captain Brown to a court-martial. I think his Lordship replied, "I thought it best to let him go home quietly." Captain Brown should have demanded a court-martial on himself.'

[62] *Naval Chronicle*, vol. xvi. pp. 31-32.

[63] *Naval Chronicle*, vol. xvi. p. 33.

[64] Public Record Office. Admiralty documents: Captains' Logs, *Zebra*.

[65] *London Gazette*, April 21, 1794. Articles of Capitulation of Fort Bourbon, No. 3. 'The 37th regiment, formerly Marshal Turenne's, shall keep their colours and arms. Answer: Refused; being contrary to all customs of war. The officers may keep their swords.'

[66] H.R.H. The Duke of Clarence, afterwards William IV., in 1827.

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## IV

### 'BILLY BLUE': A BALLAD OF THE FLEET ONE OF THE *ROYAL SOVEREIGN'S* DAYS

Slowly they mov'd, and wedged in firm array,  
The close compacted squadron won its way.

HOMER, *Iliad* (Pope's  
version).

Could common prudence have allowed me to let loose their valour on the enemy, I hardly know what might not have been accomplished by such men.—ADMIRAL CORNWALLIS, *June 17, 1795*. (From the official despatch.)

FIGHTING days abound in the story of the *Royal Sovereign*. There is hardly a more famous name in the annals of the Royal Navy, and its record goes back to a hundred years before the Spanish Armada.

Our first *Sovereign* was one of the consorts of the *Great Harry* in Henry the Eighth's Navy, and fought the French in battle side by side with that 'greate shipp.'

The second was Charles the First's *Sovereign of the Seas*, built out of the ship-money tax which began the quarrel with Parliament that in the end brought the King's head to the block. 'Her building,' says Evelyn, 'cost his Ma'tie the affections of his subjects, who quarrell'd with him for a trifle, refusing to contribute either to their own safety or to his glory.'<sup>[67]</sup> The ship did brilliant service with Blake and Monk against Tromp and Ruyter, and won from the Dutch the *sobriquet* of the 'Golden Devil,' in allusion to her gorgeous ornamentation and the death-dealing broadsides from her heavy guns. As the *Royal Sovereign*, the name bestowed on her by Charles the Second at the Restoration, in place of the original form, the ship added laurels to her fame. She was in the thick of the fray in the 'Four Days' Fight' of 1666—the 'Four Days' Fight' was what the courtiers of Whitehall called the battle, the ruder 'tarpaulins' who fought the guns called it the 'Four Days' Bloody Blunder';—in the 'St. James's Day Fight' of the same year; at Solebay; and in all the other fleet battles of the Second and Third Dutch Wars. Among the men of note who flew their flags on board the *Royal Sovereign* in battle were James, Duke of York (afterwards King James the Second), and Prince Rupert. This same man-of-war, too, in William the Third's time, was one of the flagships at La Hogue, where she had 'a very hott dispute' with one of the French flagships. She was also flagship of the admiral in command at the burning of the famous *Soleil Royal* and two other French first-rates in Cherbourg Bay. A sleepy old bo'sun's mate, one January night, four years after La Hogue, left a lighted candle-end in his cabin in the *Royal Sovereign*, and then went on deck to keep his watch, forgetting all about it. So the quondam *Sovereign of the Seas* came to her end. In accordance with the sentence of the court-martial<sup>[68]</sup> on the wretched man, he was rowed up the Medway past the fleet lying there with a halter round his neck, and was then publicly flogged on his bare back, after which he was landed at Chatham dockyard with every mark of degradation, and taken off to be imprisoned in the Marshalsea for life.

The third *Royal Sovereign*, partly built, in accordance with an Admiralty order, out of as much of the timbers of the old ship as could be saved—'such part of the remains of the said ship as shall be serviceable'<sup>[69]</sup>—was launched in the presence of the great Duke of Marlborough, who presided on the occasion. It was in the cabin of this *Royal Sovereign* that Admiral Rooke planned his swoop on the Vigo galleons, and the ship also served as

flagship to Sir Cloudisley Shovell.<sup>[70]</sup> She lasted long enough to be flagship at Portsmouth during the Seven Years' War, and it was on board her, one stormy March morning, that Admiral Boscawen signed the order for the firing party that shot Admiral Byng.

The fourth *Royal Sovereign* fought as a flagship with Lord Howe on the 'Glorious First of June,' and was Collingwood's ship at Trafalgar. 'See how that noble fellow Collingwood takes his ship into action!' exclaimed Nelson, as he saw the *Royal Sovereign* open fire and break the line. Nor did any other ship in all the British fleet make a more brilliant fight of it that day than the *Royal Sovereign* and her 'Tars of the Tyne,' as Collingwood himself called the sturdy Northumbrian lads who formed nine-tenths of his flagship's crew.

Our fifth *Royal Sovereign* was an ironclad of the 'sixties, and the sixth is the present battleship of the name, now in the Home Fleet, which was named and launched with much *éclat* by Queen Victoria at Portsmouth on the 26th of February 1891, and served for many years as flagship of the Channel Fleet.

Such in brief outline are some of the leading events in the story of the *Royal Sovereign*.

The historic event here related in ballad form belongs to the story of the *Royal Sovereign* of the great war with the French Revolution, the fourth ship of the name. 'Cornwallis's Retreat' was the name that our ancestors had for it. It took place on the 17th of June 1795, and the *Royal Sovereign* was the British flagship on the occasion. The event, no doubt, is unknown to most of us. Nine out of ten people probably never heard of it. It is one of the forgotten episodes of our annals. Nothing is said of it in our general histories. One finds it alluded to in naval books, but little mention is made of it outside that class of literature. Even that famous naval dining club, the 'Royal Naval Club of 1765 and 1785,' which meets regularly at intervals throughout the year to commemorate notable events in the annals of the Sea Service—La Hogue, Rodney's battle, the 'Glorious First of June,' the battle of Cape St. Vincent, Camperdown, and so on—does not celebrate the 17th of June, the anniversary day of 'Cornwallis's Retreat.' Yet, surely, it is deserving of the honour? As a display of cool valour in the face of tremendous odds, of down-right heroism and unflinching endurance,

crowned in the end with complete success, this feat of Admiral the Honourable William Cornwallis's distinguished career deserves, there is no gainsaying, to be reckoned among the finest exploits in our history.<sup>[71]</sup>

It may partly be, of course, because of the term 'retreat' that the event of the 17th of June 1795 has nowadays been forgotten by the Navy and the nation. Englishmen do not like retreats. Everybody knows the story of how Napoleon once told a captured British drummer boy to prove his identity by beating the British Army 'retreat,' and how the little lad scornfully flung down his drum, and looking Bonaparte in the face replied, 'There is no such drum-beat in the British Army. We don't do it!'<sup>[72]</sup> To our forefathers of a hundred years ago, however, 'Cornwallis's Retreat,' as they themselves called it, was a source of infinite pride and gratification. They did not hesitate to compare it, and not unreasonably, with that famous tale of history, Xenophon's *Retreat of the Ten Thousand*.

Here is the story, told in plain unconventional ballad form, as it were by one present on the occasion. The details are historical, and the words attributed to the admiral are his own, as reported at the time. 'Billy Blue,' it should be added, was a favourite nickname for Cornwallis in the Navy, although whether it had come into vogue as early as the date of the incident is another thing.



'CORNWALLIS'S RETREAT'

[On the left are the French frigates in a body to windward. The two leading British ships are the *Bellerophon* and the *Brunswick*, the slowest sailers of the squadron. To the right centre is the *Royal*

*Sovereign* bearing down to help the *Triumph* and the *Mars*. On the right is the *Pallas* frigate (Captain the Hon. H. Curzon), Cornwallis's repeating frigate.]

## BILLY BLUE

### A BALLAD OF THE FLEET

It was just at break o' day,  
We were cruising in the Bay,  
With Blue Billy in the *Sov'ren* in the van,  
When the French fleet bound for Brest,  
From Belleisle came heading West—  
'Twas so, my lads, the saucy game began.

Bil

ly Blue—

Here's to you, Billy Blue, here's to you!

Washing decks was hardly done,  
When we heard the warning gun,  
And we saw 'em, black and clear against the  
sky;

Twelve big ships of the line,—  
And with frigates, twenty-nine,  
On the easterly horizon drawing nigh.

Bil

ly Blue, etc.

We'd the *Triumph* and the *Mars*,  
And the *Sov'ren*—pride of tars,  
*Billy Ruff'n*, and the *Brunswick*, known to fame;  
With the *Pallas*, and the *Phaeton*,  
Frigates that the flag did wait on—  
Seven ships to uphold Old England's name.

Bil

ly Blue, etc.

From the *Phaeton* frigate first,

In a flash the numbers burst,  
As the signal bunting 'broke' and fluttered free;  
But we cheer'd from ship to ship,  
And we set the guns to strip,  
For to fight 'em we could trust old Blue Billee!

Bil

ly Blue, etc.

He was shavin', so they say,  
When he heard the news that day,  
And his skipper came his wishes for to larn;  
But he only said, 'All right,  
Let 'em bark, for we can bite,  
For all they're like to try on us, I don't care a  
darn!'

Bil

ly Blue, etc.

'No, I don't care a rap  
For any Frenchy chap,  
When they come they'll get the dressing they  
deserve;  
I've the best four in the fleet,  
That the Frenchmen well could meet,  
With the "Fightin' *Billy Ruff'n*" in reserve.'<sup>[73]</sup>

Bil

ly Blue, etc.

'As she broke the line with Howe,  
So she's game to do it now,  
And repeat her "First o' June" here in these  
seas;  
With their name for dauntless pluck,  
And the *Billy Ruff'n's* luck,  
I will fight as many Frenchmen as you please!'

Bil

ly Blue, etc.

But it wasn't merely bluff,  
For he saw the job was tough,  
And the signal promptly flew to 'Go about':  
With the slowest ship in front,  
And his own to bear the brunt,—  
So we headed back for England, guns run out.

Bil

ly Blue, etc.

To the *Sov'ren's* lads he told  
Like some hero chief of old,  
As he bade 'em from the quarter-deck 'Good  
luck';

'To no foe upon the sea.

You may take it, men, from me,

Is the ensign of the *Sov'ren* to be struck!'

Bil

ly Blue, etc.

'Let the odds be what they will,  
We must go on fighting still,  
For the honour of the *Sov'ren's* old renown;  
And when, men, all is done,  
As we fire our last gun,  
With our colours flying still, we'll go down!'<sup>[74]</sup>

Bil

ly Blue, etc.

Soon we heard the *Branle-bas*  
What cheers up the Frenchy tar,  
And their 'Vives' for 'La Nation!' and 'La Patrie!'  
'Tis the way, as you should know,  
With the maritime Crappo,  
When he's got to do his fightin' on the sea.

Bil

ly Blue, etc.

Then they came on, looking slaughter,  
Like to blow us from the water,  
As they near'd to port and starboard and astarn;  
But we put in double shot,  
And we paid 'em back so hot,  
That they looked at one another with consarn.

Bil

ly Blue, etc.

'Just a broadside or two—*Certainement*,  
For the honour of their flag—*cela*  
*s'entend*,  
But it's more than very fine, seven ships to  
twenty-nine!—

Most decidedly 'no go,'  
Not at all *comme il faut*,  
And a bit of British insolence for punishment  
condign!'

Bil

ly Blue, etc.

'Just a broadside, if they like,  
Then forthwith their colours strike  
Having rendered to their flag the homage due:  
It's sheer madness to pretend,  
They can fight us to the end—  
There's no other course the *Rosbifs* can pursue!'

Bil

ly Blue, etc.

Next the *Triumph* they attacked,  
And the *Mars* got badly whacked,  
'Twas the *Sov'ren* with her broadsides beat 'em  
back:

Her three tiers all aflame,  
Sweeping round the flagship came,

Leaving death and Frenchmen's wreckage in her track.

Bil

ly Blue, etc.

And they didn't let us rest,  
For they did their level best,  
Fighting on and off from eight till after five;  
Till at length they seemed to see,  
That it wasn't going to be,  
That they shouldn't take us dead, nor yet alive.

Bil

ly Blue, etc.

How it ended, is a story,  
Not at all to France's glory,  
Of a little game the *Phaeton's* men did play;  
Making Mossoo go in fear,  
That the Channel Fleet was near,  
And think perhaps he'd better run away.

Bil

ly Blue, etc.

For Blue Billy sent the *Phaeton*,  
When the pass looked like a strait one,  
To cruise out in the offing,—just in sight:  
'At a fitting time,' said he  
'You will signal down to me,  
That Lord Bridport will be with us before  
night.'

Bil

ly Blue, etc.

'You will fire guns, you know,  
And to 'gallant sheets let go,  
As the custom is, reporting fleets at sea;  
With a signal that they're 'friends'—

Which I think will serve our ends,  
To humbug those chaps astarn with Monsieur  
V!<sup>[75]</sup>

Bil  
ly Blue, etc.

The Frenchmen cried 'Morblo!'  
And they shuffled to and fro,  
Till they judg'd they'd haul their wind and go  
about;  
To Belleisle back all the way,  
At anchor there to stay,  
Till they learnt the coast was clear to venture  
out.

Bil  
ly Blue, etc.

Yet no Channel Fleet was near,  
To excuse the Frenchmen's fear,  
For Lord Bridport was still cruising leagues  
afar,<sup>[76]</sup>

And a well-worn *ruse de guerre*  
Was a hardy game to dare,  
With French frigates—seventeen—the plot to  
mar.

Bil  
ly Blue, etc.

It so happened, for the rest,  
Just to point the *Phaeton's* jest,  
By the merest chance—it wasn't meant at all—  
Distant coasters passing by,  
Chanced to fleck the evening sky,  
And still faster to impel the flying Gaul.

Bil  
ly Blue, etc.

Here's to Stopford of the *Phaeton*,  
And Flag-Captain Whitby bold,  
To Fitzgerald of the *Brunswick*, tried and true,  
Gallant Gower of the *Triumph*,  
Gallant Cotton of the *Mars*,  
Lord Cranstoun—*Billy Ruff'n*—here's to you!

Bil

ly Blue, etc.

Aye, Blue Billy:—here's to him, with three  
times three,

To the honour of his name upon the sea!

'He upheld Old England's credit,' said the  
country in its pride:

'Cornwallis's Retreat,'

Greek Xenophon's great feat,

In its spirit we may claim to set beside.

Bil

ly Blue, etc.

E'en our foes, the *Parley Voos*,

At this feat of Billy Blue's

Professed to be astounded—'*Etonnés*':—

'*Hors de ligne*' 'twas, so to speak,

'*Une affaire trop héroïque*,'

'*Le Déterminé*,' they call him to this day.

Bil

ly Blue—

Here's to you, Billy Blue, here's to  
you!

For the magnificent display made by one and all on the occasion, Admiral Cornwallis and the captains of his squadron were thanked by both Houses of Parliament, while every ordinary seaman on board the ships was specially rated 'A.B.'<sup>[77]</sup> Of his men, indeed, Cornwallis himself said in his official despatch, 'Could common prudence have allowed me to let loose their valour on the enemy, I hardly know what might not have been

accomplished by such men.' The last survivor of Cornwallis's squadron, one of the midshipmen of the flagship *Royal Sovereign*, died in the year 1869.

'Billy Blue'<sup>[78]</sup> himself lived to command the Channel Fleet in the great war with Napoleon, and, in conjunction with Nelson at the head of the Mediterranean Fleet, to save England from invasion in 1805, when the Grand Army stood on the heights above Boulogne every day expecting an opportunity to cross over, 'battling,' in the words of Captain Mahan, 'the wild gales of the Bay of Biscay in that tremendous and sustained vigilance concerning which Collingwood wrote that "Admirals need be made of iron.'" A man-of-war of 74 guns, a model of which is one of the treasures of the Royal United Service Institution at Whitehall, was in 1813 named the *Cornwallis* in honour of Admiral Cornwallis, and that ship's immediate successor is our fine modern battleship the *Cornwallis* of to-day.



### THE 'FIGHTING' *TÉMÉRAIRE* TUGGED TO HER LAST BERTH TO BE BROKEN UP

[This print of Turner's *Téméraire* differs from the painting. The sky was engraved by R. Dickens principally in dry-point, and was toned down by J.T. Willmore; the ship and tug were engraved in line by Saddler. The rigging of the *Téméraire* and the mast and funnel of the tug do not correspond with the picture at the National Gallery, but Turner permitted it as making a better engraving.]

## FOOTNOTES:

[67] *Evelyn's Diary*, July 16, 1641.

[68] The court-martial was held at Chatham on January 27, 1696, and comprised two admirals and seventeen captains. The minutes of the evidence and the sentence are in the Public Record Office. (*Admiralty (Secretary's Dept.) In-Letters*, 5256.)

[69] Public Record Office, *Admiralty Out-Letters*: Order of October 29, 1697.

[70] Sir Cloudesley Shovel is the popular form of the name. It is here given as the admiral himself spelled it.

[71] The Naval Medal was granted for Cornwallis's Retreat with a clasp inscribed '17 June 1795.' The *Gazette* notification records the service that the medal was granted for thus: 'Brilliant repulse of a fleet four times superior in force.'

[72] Compare the curious definition of the term 'Retreat' in Falconer's *Naval Dictionary* (2nd edition, 1789). 'RETREAT:—The order or disposition in which a fleet of French men-of-war decline engagement, or fly from a pursuing enemy. (Note) The reader who wishes to be expert in this manœuvre will find it copiously described by several ingenious French writers ... who have given accurate instructions deduced from experience for putting in practice when occasion requires. As it is not properly a term of the British marine, a more circumstantial account of it might be considered foreign to our plan.'

[73] 'The *Bellerophon*,' wrote Cornwallis to the Admiralty, 'I was glad to keep in some measure in reserve.... I considered that ship as a treasure in store, having heard of her former achievements and observing the spirit manifested by all on board.' Quite unaccountably, as it so happened, the *Bellerophon*, the fastest 74 in the service, sailed very badly that day. According to one of her men, the reason was this: 'it warn't in the natur' of her to run from an enemy.'

[74] Admiral Cornwallis's actual words were, 'Remember, men, the *Sovereign's* flag and ensign are never to be struck to an enemy. She goes down with them flying.'

[75] 'Monsieur V.' was the familiar term for the French admiral then in command of the Brest Fleet—Admiral Villaret-Joyeuse. The words of the last line are the actual words Cornwallis used.

[76] Severe comment was made at the time on Lord Bridport for so disposing his fleet as to leave Cornwallis's squadron isolated and in such a situation of extreme peril.

[77] 'Landmen' or 'Landsmen,' 'Ordinary Seamen,' and 'Able Seamen' or 'A.B.s' were the three classes or ratings into which men before the mast were divided, usually according to ability and length of service. 'A.B.' was the highest rating, entitling those of the rate to increased pay, and affording opportunities for promotion.

[78] It should have been mentioned earlier that he was the same officer who so ably commanded the *Canada* in Rodney's fleet on the 12th of April 1782, and

took a leading part in bringing about the surrender of De Grasse, as has been described.

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V

THE 'FIGHTING' *TÉMÉRAIRE*  
WHERE, HOW, AND WHEN SHE MADE HER NAME

Heard ye the thunder of battle  
Low in the south and afar?  
Saw ye the flush of the death-cloud,  
Crimson o'er Trafalgar?  
Such another day never  
England will look on again,  
When the battle fought was the hottest,  
And the hero of heroes was slain.

FRANCIS TURNER  
PALGRAVE.

In England's song for ever  
She's the *Fighting Téméraire*.

HENRY NEWBOLT.

TRAFALGAR was her day. It was at Trafalgar that the *Téméraire* made her mark and won undying fame.

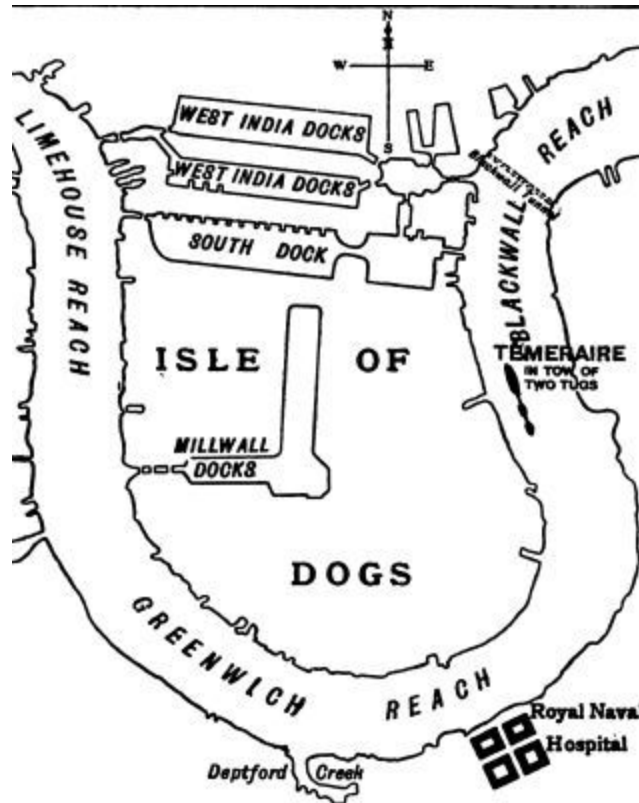
First of all—

She came to Nelson's aid,  
The battle's brunt to bear,  
And nobly sought to lead the van,  
The Brave Old *Téméraire*.

Then she was 'the *Victory's* companion in her closing strife,' as Mr. Ruskin has called the *Téméraire*, 'prevailing over the fatal vessel that had given

Nelson death.<sup>[79]</sup> That is one of the reasons why people remember the *Téméraire*. There is another—that all the world knows. To learn it one has only to visit the National Gallery. Turner's masterpiece has made the *Téméraire's* name a household word all the world over. But, all the same, had Turner never painted his picture at all, even without the aid of Turner's magic brush, the *Téméraire* must surely, for the part she took in the greatest sea-fight of history, have achieved for her name an immortal renown.

How Turner came to paint his 'Fighting *Téméraire*' is a story in itself. The famous picture came into being by the merest accident; as the outcome of a happy chance, as the result of a casual meeting with the old ship at a water-picnic on the Thames one autumn evening of the year 1838.<sup>[80]</sup> Turner, with Clarkson Stanfield and some friends, was boating off Greenwich marshes in Blackwall Reach when the old ship passed them, coming up the river from Sheerness to meet her destined end off Rotherhithe, where the shipbreaker Beatson's men were waiting for her. She had been sold out of the service some days before for £5530, barely the market value of the copper bolts that held her timbers together—just a twelfth of the prime cost of the ship's hull in labour and materials, or one-twentieth of the total value of the ship, gunned and equipped for sea. Forlorn enough, and a thing for pity, looked the grand old man-of-war as the Sheerness men had left her, her sails stripped from the yards, her tiers of ports without guns and closed down, her hull with its last coat of dockyard drab all rusty-looking and weather-stained, cast off and discarded, as it were a broken warrior being borne to a pauper's grave.



['Turner saw the tug and ship just before entering Greenwich Reach, and when before rounding the Isle of Dogs she would be steering about South-South-East up Blackwall Reach, with the summer setting sun astern of her in the North-North-West.'—Mr. R.C. LESLIE in the *Athenæum*.]

Two tugs had the ship in tow, as contemporary accounts of the *Téméraire's* arrival in the river relate, not one, as Turner has painted the memorable scene.<sup>[81]</sup> In Turner's picture the *Téméraire* is shown passing the water-party before she rounded the Isle of Dogs, when heading south-south-east up Blackwall Reach, with the September sun setting astern of the ship to the north-west. 'There's a fine picture, Turner,' said Stanfield, pointing to the war-worn veteran of the sea as she stemmed her way past them, and Turner went home full of the idea to reproduce the scene on canvas, with touches of his own, to give the world a picture 'of all pictures of subjects not involving human pain,' says Mr. Ruskin, 'the most pathetic that ever was painted.'<sup>[82]</sup>

Now the sunset breezes shiver,  
*Téméraire! Téméraire!*  
And she's fading down the river,  
*Téméraire! Téméraire!*  
Now the sunset breezes shiver,  
And she's fading down the river,  
But in England's song for ever  
She's the *Fighting Téméraire*.<sup>[83]</sup>

The *Fighting Téméraire* tugged to her last berth to be broken up,' was the title Turner gave his picture when he sent it in to the Royal Academy Exhibition of 1839. He added these lines, composed apparently by himself

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'The flag that braved the battle and the breeze  
No longer owns her.'

The *'Fighting' Téméraire* was an Essex ship, built—nine-tenths of her—of oak cut in Hainault forest and sent across to Chatham dockyard, where the *Téméraire's* keel was laid in July 1793.<sup>[84]</sup> Tuesday, the 11th of September 1798, was the day of her launch, 'a squally day with drenching rain.' She was a three-decker, a second-rate, 'a ninety-eight,' in the Navy parlance of the time, a ship carrying ninety-eight guns (32-pounders, 18's, and long 12's, with twelve carronades as well), throwing a broadside weight of metal at each discharge of 1336 lbs., very nearly twelve cwts.—three-fifths of a ton of solid cast iron. 'She is one of the finest ships that we have seen,' wrote an officer who inspected the *Téméraire* on the stocks a little while before she was launched.

An Essex man captained the *Téméraire* at Trafalgar, Eliab Harvey, of Rolls Park, Chigwell, Essex. He was a great-grandson of Eliab Harvey, brother of Dr. William Harvey the discoverer of the circulation of the blood, by whose side he now lies buried in the family vault under the Harvey Chapel in Hempstead Church, near Saffron Walden. All Essex, we are told, was represented at the funeral, or followed the coffin to its last resting-place. Captain Harvey, during the time that he commanded the *Téméraire*, had also a seat in Parliament for the county of Essex, in accordance with a political usage of those days which enabled officers on active service to represent constituencies at Westminster, although Ministers apparently did

not always find it satisfactory. 'I don't like your M.P. Navy Captains,' said Castlereagh once; 'they are always off Cape Finisterre when they are wanted, and when they are sent for they say they don't like being "whistled up merely to give a vote.'" Those who know their Marryat will remember the case of the Hon. Captain Delmar, M.P., of H.M.S. *Paragon*, a frigate in the Channel Squadron, 'which was never sea-going except in the Recess.' It was better though than this with the *Téméraire*, which Captain Harvey commissioned for the 'Western Squadron,' as in those days the Channel Fleet was generally called, at Plymouth, in November 1803, six months after the outbreak of the Great War with Napoleon.

Strange as it may seem to us, the *Téméraire's* name at that moment had for most people an unpleasant ring about it. The shadow of a terrible tragedy rested just then over the name *Téméraire*. The public had not yet got over the shock with which, barely two years before, the whole country had learnt that the crew of one of the flagships of the Channel Fleet, while lying in Bantry Bay, had mutinied, and offered violence to their Admiral and officers, using ugly threats and proposing to point guns loaded with grape-shot to sweep the quarter-deck. Nor had people forgotten the grim sequel, the relentless severity of the retribution that fell on the ringleaders; how eleven of the *Téméraire's* men had been hanged at the yard-arm, two flogged through the fleet at Spithead, receiving two hundred lashes each, seven sent to the hulks for life. The newspapers had been full of the terrible story, as related day by day in the evidence at the two courts-martial that sat at Portsmouth to try the mutineers. The trial lasted five days, and the report of it in the *Times* of the 13th of January 1802 took up the whole paper, all but two columns. Nor had the following paragraph which appeared in the *Naval Chronicle*, done any good to the *Téméraire's* reputation:—'Plymouth, October 7th, 1802; The seamen of the *Téméraire* of 98-guns, Rear-Admiral Campbell, paid off, put on crape hat-bands round their straw hats in memory of the mutineers in that ship who were executed for the mutiny in Bantry Bay last year.' That unhappy episode in the ship's story was, however, as far as the *Téméraire* herself was concerned, now past and done with. Now the *Téméraire* had a new ship's company throughout; captain, officers, and men, with a future of their own before them.

Captain Harvey manned his ship to a large extent with Liverpool men, sent round from the Mersey by tender, and sailed from Cawsand Bay on the 11th

of March 1804, to join Admiral Cornwallis off Brest.

It was perhaps the most critical period in our national history. On the heights above Boulogne lay Napoleon's Grand Army, 160,000 men, waiting for the French fleet to put to sea and secure its passage across the Straits of Dover.<sup>[85]</sup> The fate of England depended on the British Navy. There were twenty-one French line-of-battle ships in Brest, six others at Rochefort, and five sheltering in the Spanish port of Ferrol. At Brest, also, there were known to be upwards of 20,000 French soldiers; and another 20,000 under Augereau were under canvas at Rochefort, 'supposed against Ireland,' according to Admiral Cornwallis's instructions from the Admiralty. It was the business of the Channel Fleet to hold the enemy in check at all points from Ushant Island, off Brest, to Cape Finisterre, and prevent aid from elsewhere arriving to enable them to put to sea. At the same time, as his appointed part in the great strategic plan of campaign, Nelson off Toulon kept his tireless watch over the French Mediterranean Fleet. Thus the toils were set, the gambit was opened.

'They were dull, weary, eventless months,' says Captain Mahan in one of his most telling passages,<sup>[86]</sup> 'those months of watching and waiting of the big ships before the French arsenals. Purposeless they surely seemed to many, but they saved England. The world has never seen a more impressive demonstration of the influence of sea-power upon its history. Those far-distant storm-beaten ships, upon which the Grand Army never looked, stood between it and the dominion of the world.'

It was Napoleon with all the resources of his Empire in its full vigour at his back, Napoleon at the zenith of his intellect and genius for war, Napoleon in the year before Austerlitz—baffled and held at arm's length by the British Navy. One has only to glance at the daily newspapers of 1804 to realise the superb self-confidence with which Great Britain braced herself to meet the threatening peril. The nation knew its strength and on what, under Providence, it relied; the nation knew it and the Navy knew it—as we too, after forgetting it for a time, have in these later years at length come again to recognise the vital root-fact of Great Britain's existence—

No track of men, no footsteps to and fro  
Lead to her gates. The path lies o'er the sea  
Invincible.

Six months of pitching and rolling in the dreary Bay of Biscay was the *Téméraire's* lot at the outset, as one of Vice-Admiral Calder's squadron watching Rochefort. The most disliked of all billets perhaps was blockade duty off the Basque Roads, ever facing the dreary sand dunes of Aix and Oléron, stretching wearily along the featureless coast, there and back, between Sables d'Olonne and the mouth of the Gironde, buffeted week in week out by persistent gales and rough weather. All there was to do, practically, was now and again to stop some wretched neutral passing by—usually a Portuguese trading brig, or a Prussian galliot, for or from Bordeaux—and examine her papers; but for days together sometimes—

The Wind at the West or thereabout,  
Nothing gone in and nothing come out,

was all that went down in their logs, according to the refrain on the dull routine of their daily life of a gun-room ditty composed on board one of the ships blockading Rochefort. Every two or three months, as her turn came round, one or other of the ships would part company for a week or ten days and proceed to Cawsand Bay—communicating on the way with the fleet off Brest to take letters for England—to fill up her water-casks and take in fresh stores and provisions, overhaul spars and rigging, and then return bringing bullocks and bread and vegetables for the squadron. That was their only relaxation. In her turn, towards the end of May, the *Téméraire* went in to Cawsand Bay, as the 'Plymouth Report' of the Naval Chronicle records.

*May 26.*—Came in from the Channel Fleet, which she left all well, last Wednesday, the *Téméraire* of 98 guns. The enemy as usual. Our frigates frequently go in to reconnoitre within a mile and a half of the outer-most ships, and within range of their shots and shells of which the enemy give them plenty but without damage.

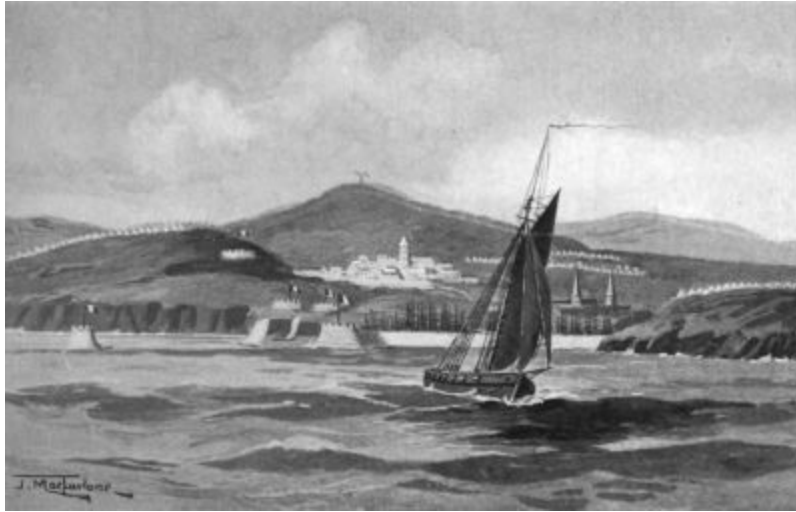
In August, when Collingwood had relieved Calder, a closer watch on the enemy than before was maintained, owing to the prevalence of rumours that the French were on the point of putting to sea. Collingwood, we are told, frequently passed the night on the quarter-deck of his flagship, at intervals lying down on a gun-carriage to snatch a short sleep, 'from which Admiral Collingwood would rise from time to time to sweep the horizon with his night glass lest the enemy should escape in the dark.'<sup>[87]</sup> The French,

though, remained quiet all the time. One or two of their ships would come out now and then and exercise at sail drill in Basque Roads, and they had a small sham fight once, but no attempt was made to run or force the blockade.

September saw the *Téméraire* transferred from the Rochefort squadron to 'the Team' off Brest, as the big ship division of Cornwallis's main fleet was familiarly called in the Navy. There was more to do and see off Brest, perhaps, but the life there was no less hard and toilsome. The three-deckers cruised by themselves outside Ushant, patrolling night and day; keeping far out to seaward when the wind was from the west, and, as the standing order ran, 'well up with Ushant in an easterly wind.' Off Black Rocks, between Ushant and the mainland, cruised four or six two-deckers, the 'Inshore Squadron'; while close in, off the mouth of Brest Harbour itself, just out of gunshot of the shore batteries, watching every move in the French fleet as it lay at anchor in the roadstead, were frigates and cutters on the look-out. Every day they expected the enemy to leave port, but, as it had been off Rochefort, in vain.

Then the winter storms set in, hard gales continuously and squally weather. Twice during October severe storms from the south-west compelled Cornwallis to stand off the coast and bear up for Torbay: to lie there with the 'Blue Peter' at the fore, and not a soul allowed on shore, until at the first sign of the wind shifting anchors were weighed for Brest again. In November a rough north-easter drove part of the fleet off the station many leagues out into the Atlantic. The rest found shelter on the enemy's own coast, in Douarnenez Bay, less than twenty miles from Brest, and rode the storm out there. 'It is with great satisfaction,' says the *Times* of the 16th of November 1804, 'we understand that our fleet off Brest, has withstood the violent gales which have of late prevailed, and continues to maintain that vigilant position, which, we trust, will effectually obstruct the designs of the enemy.'<sup>[88]</sup> December and the January of the New Year (1805) brought worse weather still, a succession of fierce gales—'it blows harder than ever we remember,' wrote the *Naval Chronicle's* Portsmouth correspondent in January—that crippled half the fleet and forced Cornwallis to spend all February and half March repairing damages in Torbay. Seven of the big ships, leaking seriously, with hulls strained, gear swept overboard, masts

sprung, spars carried away, had to go into dock at Plymouth, among them the *Téméraire*, whose repairs took two months to make good.



#### CAMP OF THE GRAND ARMY AT BOULOGNE, 1804

[The tents north of the harbour (to the reader's left) belong to Vandamme's Division of Marshal Soult's Army Corps (the 4th). Those to the south belong to an outlying brigade of Marshal Ney's Corps (the 6th). The camp inland is that of Suchet's and St. Hilaire's Divisions of Soult's Corps. Napoleon's headquarters were near Mont Lambert, the hill crowned by a signal station. In the centre of the sketch are seen the masts of the 'Invasion Flotilla' behind a breakwater mounting heavy guns.]

She rejoined the flag off Brest in April, just as the startling news came to hand that the French Toulon Fleet had appeared off Cadiz, joined hands with the Spanish Fleet there and gone off westward. Their destination was unknown and there was no news of Lord Nelson. All that month of May the *Téméraire* and her consorts off Brest held themselves ready to clear for action at the shortest notice, daily expecting the sails of Admiral Villeneuve's fleet to appear on the horizon to the south-west. As if awaiting Villeneuve's arrival, also, the whole of the Brest fleet had come out of harbour and was riding at single anchor, twenty-one sail of the line completely equipped for sea, under the cliff batteries of Bertheaume Bay. The British fleet off Brest for the moment could only muster seventeen sail. In England, meanwhile, the newspapers were full of accounts of how the

Grand Army at Boulogne, now vauntingly styled *l'Armée d'Angleterre*, was duly holding embarkation and landing parades and drills on the sea-shore under the eyes of Soult and Ney. At the end of the month intelligence arrived that Villeneuve was in the West Indies, and that Nelson had gone in pursuit of him. June passed in waiting for information of Villeneuve's return to Europe, the Channel Fleet being continuously reinforced from England, which enabled Collingwood and a 'Special Service' squadron to be detached to keep guard off Cadiz and the Straits of Gibraltar. On the 11th of July came the news that Villeneuve had been sighted in Mid-Atlantic, homeward bound; after which, a fortnight later, came the further news that Admiral Calder had had an indecisive battle with the enemy off Cape Finisterre, and that Villeneuve had put into Ferrol. Calder himself rejoined Cornwallis a few days afterwards, and then Nelson came in with his fleet.

Cornwallis, from the ships now at his disposal, immediately made up a new fleet of eighteen sail of the line to blockade Villeneuve in Ferrol. It was placed under Calder's orders and sent off on the 16th of August. The *Téméraire* sailed with Calder, and so the story of her service with the 'Western Squadron' ends.

Before they arrived off Ferrol they heard from a frigate that Villeneuve had left the port. He had put to sea as though intending to cross the Bay of Biscay direct to Brest, but when two days out, had suddenly, for some unfathomable reason of his own, gone about and stood southward. Whither he was bound could only be guessed, but Calder's orders were to follow the French wherever they might go, and he made for the Straits of Gibraltar under all sail.

Did he pass over a certain spot, some ninety miles north-west of Cape Finisterre, where a mass of frigate wreckage and splinters and jagged chips was floating about—like the ring of fluttered feathers that one sometimes sees at the corner of a wood on an autumn afternoon telling how a sparrowhawk has passed that way? That flotsam off Finisterre, could it have spoken, would have told a tale; the story of the incident on which the campaign of Trafalgar hinged:—*why* Admiral Villeneuve had gone south instead of north.<sup>[89]</sup>

Off Cadiz Calder found Collingwood with half a dozen ships, and learned that the French were refitting in that port. Collingwood had had the

narrowest of narrow escapes of being cut off and overpowered by the enemy's sudden appearance off Cadiz,<sup>[90]</sup> but he had cleverly got out of their way in the nick of time, and was now 'observing' them, making believe by sham signals every day that he was in touch with a large British fleet in the offing. Collingwood as the senior officer took Calder under his orders, and the united forces continued to watch Cadiz until at the end of September Lord Nelson himself arrived from England to take the supreme command.

For three weeks, as we all know, Nelson kept watch and ward over the enemy in Cadiz, until on the morning of Saturday the 19th of October his look-out frigates off the mouth of Cadiz harbour at last made the longed-for signal that the combined fleet was coming out of port.

They began to come out between seven and eight o'clock on Saturday morning, and from that time until the two fleets were in presence of each other off Cape Trafalgar on Monday morning, every move the enemy made was signalled to Nelson, lying out of sight from Cadiz, off Cape St Mary, by flag signals passed along a chain of ships in the day-time, and with rockets and blue lights and the firing of guns at night. 'For two days,' writes Midshipman Hercules Robinson of the frigate *Euryalus*, Captain Blackwood's ship, in charge of the look-out squadron, 'there was not a movement that we did not communicate, till I thought that Blackwood, who gave the orders, and Bruce our signal mid, and Soper our signal man who executed them, must have died of it; and when we had brought the two fleets fairly together we took our place between the two lines of lights, as a cab might in Regent Street, the watch was called and Blackwood turned in quietly to wait for the morning.'<sup>[91]</sup> So close to the enemy did the *Euryalus* keep all Sunday night that, in the words of one of the men on board (a marine named Pearce) in a letter home, 'their lights looked like a street well lighted up.'

Monday was Trafalgar Day. The enemy when first sighted from the British Fleet at daybreak were about eleven or twelve miles off, 'a forest of masts to leeward,' as one officer described them, standing along the coast towards the Straits of Gibraltar. Nelson at once headed eastward, straight for them: —'ere it was well light the signals were flying through the fleet to bear up and form the order of sailing in two columns.' Then, immediately after that, up went the flags 'Prepare for battle,' Signal No. 13, and in response

throughout the fleet, the drums on board every ship at once struck up the stirring old war-beat of the Navy, 'Hearts of Oak'—

Come cheer up, my lads, 'tis to glory we steer,  
To add something more to this wonderful year.

By seven o'clock every ship in the fleet had been cleared for action and all were ready for the enemy. A quarter of an hour was sufficient to clear for action on board a smart ship in 'Eighteen hundred and War time,' as our grandfathers called the days when the 'Fighting' *Téméraire* was at sea.

So admirably had Nelson organised his fleet and arranged things beforehand that three signals were all that he needed to make to set the day's work in train. At twenty minutes to seven the *Victory* signalled—'Form the order of sailing in two columns.' Then, a moment later, up went 'No. 13,'—the fighting flags—two flags, the upper one comprising three horizontal bands, yellow, red, yellow; the lower, three vertical bands, blue, white, blue—'Prepare for battle.' Ten minutes later another signal went up—'Bear up and sail large on the course steered by the Admiral.' The whole fleet on that headed directly for the enemy under all sail. These three signals were all that were necessary for the tactics of the battle, and all that Nelson made. What other signals were made from the *Victory* during the day, until after the fight had been won, dealt with subsidiary points and were merely incidental.

Here is the opening entry for the day in the *Téméraire's* log. 'At daylight saw the enemy's fleet in the S.E. Cleared ship for action and made all sail. Light airs. Standing for the enemy.'

At eight o'clock all hands throughout the fleet were piped to breakfast. 'The officers,' we are told by one of them, 'now met at breakfast, and though each seemed to exult in the hope of a glorious termination to the contest so near at hand, a fearful presage was experienced that all would not again unite at that festive board.' More than one seemed 'particularly impressed with a persuasion that he would not survive the day.... The sound of the drum, however, soon put an end to our meditations; and, after a hasty, and, alas, a final farewell to some, we repaired to our respective posts.'<sup>[92]</sup>

All on board now went to quarters, to their stations for the battle; the cooks' fires were put out, and the magazines opened and powder sent up to the

guns.

At nine o'clock the two fleets were about six miles apart. It was a gloriously fine morning, with the sky almost cloudless. A light breeze blew from the north-west, before which, with every sail set, the fleet bore down towards the enemy, the ships lifting on the swell as the long surging rollers from the ocean bore them forward.

At this point we may for one moment glance across at the enemy and see how they on their side have been faring. With the Combined Fleet,<sup>[93]</sup> as it happened, the situation was by no means promising. The coming event was already casting its shadow before. Things had already begun to shape themselves awkwardly. Admiral Villeneuve had found it advisable to go about, and the Combined Franco-Spanish Fleet was now standing northward, heading back towards Cadiz, and forming into line of battle as they went along. The sight of the British fleet that morning had been an unpleasant surprise for Admiral Villeneuve. His look-out ships on the previous evening had reported the British fleet to him as not more than eighteen sail of the line, and to leeward. There were now in sight,—he could see them with his own eyes—upwards of ten sail of the line, including several three-deckers, more than that. Also—what weighed even more with Admiral Villeneuve—they were to windward of him. That meant that a stronger force than Villeneuve cared to meet was within striking distance of him and had the weather gage. Whether he went on or whether he went back, he would have to fight. He had cast the die. He had crossed the Rubicon.

'Twas vain to seek retreat and vain to fear,  
Himself had challenged and the foe drew near.

As the best thing, if not indeed the only thing he could do in the circumstances, he decided to turn back and make for Cadiz. If he could not avoid a battle, he trusted to be able to get sufficiently near Cadiz to have the port open to him after the battle, for his damaged ships or as a place of general refuge should things go wrong.

With such thoughts in his mind, Villeneuve, just about the time that Nelson was sitting down to breakfast, issued orders for the Combined Fleet to go about, every ship independently, and form in line of battle on the port tack, with half a cable interval between ships. They were still in the middle of the

manœuvre at nine o'clock. It was not till after ten o'clock that anything approaching the line of battle as ordered had been formed, and then hardly half-a-dozen ships were in station. All the enemy's efforts, at the end of two hours, resulted in the formation of a crescent or bow-shaped array of ships, sagging in the centre away to leeward like a slack cord, with the ships distributed irregularly along its length, here in single file and with wide gaps between, there in two's and three's. As things turned out this malformation proved ideal for the occasion; but it was entirely by chance.

It has been said, indeed, that Admiral Villeneuve had already begun to anticipate defeat. As he took in the grouping and disposition of the British fleet, the double column of attack and how the leaders were pointing, there broke from his lips, we are told, an exclamation of blank dismay. Before a shot was fired Villeneuve had already admitted himself beaten. There was no precedent known to him for a battle formation such as Nelson was adopting.<sup>[94]</sup> There was nothing like it in Paul Hoste, nothing like it in the pages of De Morogues or Ramatuelle. No text-book could help him, and to improvise a new order of battle for himself on the spur of the moment was beyond Admiral Villeneuve's capacity. Practically he could only await events and meet an absolutely new form of attack, specially devised for the occasion by the greatest master of the art of naval war that ever lived, with an order of battle that was not new in the days of the Grand Monarque, with tactics such as Tourville had employed at La Hogue. It was like the Prussian General Rùchel at Jena opposing Napoleon with the tactics of Frederick at Kolin; attempting to foil Ney and Murat by giving the order 'Right shoulders up.'

There were on the Franco-Spanish side thirty-three ships (eighteen French and fifteen Spanish); in the British fleet twenty-seven. Nelson's plan of battle at the outset, as we shall presently see, reversed the odds and turned them into odds in his own favour, of twenty-seven against twenty-three. That is, the odds reckoned numerically, by counting ships. The average British ship of the line in 1805 could fire three broadsides while a French ship was firing two, which vastly increased the odds in Nelson's favour. The British fleet came on in two columns; one (Nelson's own) comprising twelve ships; the other (Collingwood's column) of fifteen. Nelson's plan of battle was for Collingwood to break the enemy's line at about a third of its length from the rear, and hold fast in close action the ships cut off. He

himself, after that, would break through the remaining two-thirds of the Franco-Spanish line midway, and fall on the enemy's centre, joining hands with Collingwood. With the wind as it then was, a little to the north of west, the ten ships of the enemy's van squadron would be cut off by these tactics and thrust to leeward, out of the battle. They would have to work up round laboriously against the wind before they could get to the aid of their consorts, a business that must take a considerable time. Meanwhile the whole force of the British fleet would have been brought to bear on two-thirds of the enemy with, as Nelson confidently trusted, decisive results.

Throughout the British fleet the men were in the highest spirits, eager and ready for the fray, and at the same time cool and confident. 'As we neared the French fleet,' an officer in the *Ajax* relates,<sup>[95]</sup> 'I was sent below with orders, and was much struck with the preparations made by the bluejackets, the majority of whom were stripped to the waist; a handkerchief was tightly bound round their heads and over the ears, to deaden the noise of the cannon, many men being deaf for days after an action. The men were variously occupied; some were sharpening their cutlasses, others polishing the guns, as though an inspection were about to take place instead of a mortal combat, whilst three or four, as if in mere bravado, were dancing a horn-pipe; but all seemed deeply anxious to come to close quarters with the enemy. Occasionally they would look out of the ports, and speculate as to the various ships of the enemy, many of which had been on former occasions engaged by our vessels.' Elsewhere, we are told, the men kept pointing out various ships in the Franco-Spanish line, as seen through the open ports, and calling to one another, 'What a fine sight them ships will make at Spithead!' Particularly keen was every man that his ship should if possible get alongside the huge Spanish four-decker which all could see, near the centre of the enemy's fleet, the *Santisima Trinidad*. On board the *Bellerophon*, one of Collingwood's leading ships, the men at quarters on the main deck chalked '*Billy Ruff'n*, Victory or Death' on their guns.<sup>[96]</sup>

How keen was the rivalry among the ships at the head of Nelson's line, as the morning advanced, is shown by two incidents in which the *Neptune*—a 98-gun three-decker like the *Téméraire*, the ship next in the line to her—and the *Téméraire* herself, both figured.

The *Téméraire* had the post of honour in Nelson's line, that of 'second,' or chief supporter to the *Victory*, but the *Neptune* had gradually drawn up level

with her. Not content with that, the *Neptune* began to edge past the *Téméraire*, until, forging ahead, she had come up alongside the flagship herself. Indeed, it appeared as though she was ambitious of passing ahead of the *Victory*, and leading Nelson into the battle. The Admiral himself stopped her. Nelson at the moment that the *Neptune* began to draw up level with the *Victory*, happened to be in the stern gallery leading out of his cabin, observing how the rear ships of the fleet were coming on. He saw what was taking place, and at once hailed the *Neptune*. '*Neptune* there,' he called out in a sharp, rasping tone, 'take in your stuns'ls and drop astarn. I shall break the line myself!'<sup>[97]</sup> The *Neptune* had to comply forthwith, and on her falling back the *Téméraire* pushed up and resumed her allotted berth as the ship next to the *Victory*.

Then came the incident that specially concerned the *Téméraire*. A little time after the *Neptune* had resumed her station the *Téméraire* was herself hailed from the *Victory* and ordered to pass the flagship and lead the line. Captain Blackwood of the *Euryalus*, who with the other frigate captains was on board the flagship, in his anxiety for Nelson's personal safety that day, on having his first suggestion that Nelson should direct the battle from on board the *Euryalus* set aside by the admiral, next suggested that the *Téméraire* should be allowed to lead the *Victory* into battle, to help in drawing off some of the enemy's fire. The enemy's fire, urged Blackwood, would be certain to fall with exceptional severity on the leader of the line, particularly when the leading ship was so easily recognisable a vessel as the British flagship. Nelson assented—or seemed to assent. 'Oh yes,' the admiral answered, with a significant smile and giving a look towards Captain Hardy, 'let her go ahead—if she *can*!' Blackwood went aft and himself hailed the *Téméraire* to move up, and she was also signalled to do so.

The hail was heard. Blackwood had a voice about which a number of good stories used to be told in the Navy. 'It could,' one of his officers once said, 'carry half a mile.'

At once the *Téméraire* made every effort to press forward. She was, as the sailors said, 'flying light' that day; having been away from port for some time she was carrying less dead-weight than usual, most of her sea-stores and heavy casks of beef and water having been used up. Fast sailer as the *Victory* was—she was admittedly the fastest three-decker in all the Royal

Navy—the *Téméraire* before long began to close on the flagship and overlap her, by degrees working up closer to the *Victory*, and finally racing her side by side, almost abreast. It was a grand moment for Captain Harvey and his gallant *Téméraires*. But the goal was not yet won.

Nelson's mood had yet to be taken into account, and Nelson was in no humour to see his flagship passed. No ship in the world should give the *Victory* a lead on the day of battle. As the *Téméraire* sheered alongside, the admiral stepped up briskly to the *Victory's* poop and from there hailed across in a curt tone to the quarter-deck of the *Téméraire*. Speaking with a strong nasal twang, in his Norfolk accent, as we are told, he called over: 'I'll thank you, Captain Harvey, to keep your proper station, which is *astarn* of the *Victory*!'

The *Téméraire* had to drop back, exactly as the *Neptune* had previously had to do, and content herself with following in the *Victory's* wake. She closed up astern and kept so near that her jib-boom, in Captain Harvey's own words, 'almost touched the stern of the *Victory*.'<sup>[98]</sup>

The same spirit of eager anxiety to get early into battle prevailed everywhere, coupled with the utmost friendliness and good-comradeship. The *Tonnant*, the second ship in Collingwood's line, was ordered in the course of the morning to give up the place of honour to the faster *Belleisle*. As the *Belleisle* was passing her. Captain Tyler of the *Tonnant* on a carronade slide and called across to the other captain (Hargood): 'A glorious day for old England: we shall have one a-piece before night!' A moment later the *Tonnant's* band, by way of greeting to the *Belleisle*, began to play 'Britons Strike Home.'<sup>[99]</sup>

Such was the spirit in which Nelson's Captains went into battle at Trafalgar as the hour for the opening of the fight drew on.

There is, as it happens, no note in the *Téméraire's* log of Nelson's famous signal, 'England expects that every man will do his duty'; but it is on record that it was received by Signal Midshipman Eaton, who acknowledged it to the *Victory*. We know from Captain Blackwood, who was with the Admiral at the time, how it was received by all the ships near by with 'a shout of answering acclamation,' and the *Téméraire* was the nearest ship of all to the *Victory* at that moment. After the battle the *Téméraire's* officers had the

words engraved on a brass plate which was let into the quarter-deck in front of the steering wheel, where it remained till the ship came to her end.

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At noon, almost to the minute, the first shot was fired—by the enemy. It came from a French ship lying nearly opposite the head of Collingwood's line, the *Fougueux*. It was aimed at the *Royal Sovereign*—to try the range. The shot went home, and at once other French and Spanish ships near by took up the firing. The *Royal Sovereign* was about 400 yards off at the moment, about three-quarters gunshot.

At the same time the enemy all along their line hoisted their colours, the Spaniards in addition hanging up large wooden crosses at their gaffs. Why they did so has never been explained. Some of the Spanish captains had held special religious services on board their ships at an earlier hour that morning,<sup>[100]</sup> but it is not known that that had any connection with the display of the crosses.

A midshipman fired the first shot on the British side at Trafalgar—by accident. It came from the *Bellerophon*. To the surprise of the whole fleet, as they were nearing the enemy a spurt of smoke flew out from the side of the *Bellerophon* followed by the boom of a single gun. It was, according to the *Spartiate's* log—the *Bellerophon* herself does not record it—just as Nelson's great message was going up. On board every other ship they were holding their hands: the officers of the batteries had orders to wait until their ship was in the act of passing through the enemy. A boy midshipman of the *Bellerophon* tripped, or caught his foot, in the loose end of a gun-lock lanyard and let off one of the ship's 32-pounders. His name is not on record, nor what they did to him. The shot had the unfortunate effect of drawing the enemy's attention specially to the *Bellerophon*, and as they got the ship's range a little later they turned their guns on her and pounded at her heavily, under the impression that the gun had been meant as a signal, and that some officer of distinction was on board that particular ship.

Collingwood opened the battle on the British side and first of all broke the enemy's line at Trafalgar, as all the world knows. All the world knows also how he did it. The *Royal Sovereign's* first broadside, as she broke through

immediately astern of the Spanish flagship *Santa Ana*, struck down 400 men and dismounted fourteen guns. 'Il rompaît todos,' it smashed down everything—as a Spanish officer on board the *Santa Ana* afterwards wrote. 'What sheep,'—asked in broken English the Spanish officer who came on board Collingwood's flagship on the surrender of the *Santa Ana* to give up his sword on behalf of the wounded Vice-Admiral Alava,—'What sheep is dis?' He was told. '*Royal Sovereign!*' the Spaniard exclaimed, 'Madre de Dios! she should be named de *Royal Devil!*'

The ships immediately facing Nelson as he advanced began their firing a few minutes after the others, the *Victory* and *Téméraire* and the leading ships of that column being farther off from the enemy. The *Bucentaure*, an 80-gun ship, on board which Admiral Villeneuve was, led off here.

Of the opening scene on the enemy's side at that point, we have a vivid narrative from a French officer—Captain Lucas of the *Redoutable*, a ship destined to fill a large part in the *Téméraire's* story.<sup>[101]</sup> 'At half-past eleven,' says Captain Lucas,—giving the time, as it would appear, according to his own watch, which was slow,—'the fleet hoisted its colours, and those of the *Redoutable* were done in an imposing manner, the drums and fifes playing, and the soldiers<sup>[102]</sup> presenting arms as the flag was hoisted. The enemy's column, which was directed against our fleet, was now on the port side, and the flagship *Bucentaure* began firing. I ordered a number of the chief gunners to mount to the forecastle and told them to notice how many of our ships fired badly. They found that all their shots carried too low. I then ordered them to aim at dismasting, and above all to aim well. At a quarter to twelve the *Redoutable* opened fire with a shot from the first gun-division which cut through the foretopsail yard of the *Victory*, causing it to lie over the foremast, whilst shouts of joy resounded all over the ship.'

Lord Nelson held his fire. No notice was taken of the firing of the French and Spaniards, except that, in response to the enemy's opening shots, the whole British fleet simultaneously hoisted their colours. Nelson showed a Vice-Admiral of the White's flag at the fore in the *Victory*; Collingwood the flag of a Vice-Admiral of the Blue at the fore in the *Royal Sovereign*; Lord Northesk, the third in command, a Rear-Admiral of the White's flag at the mizen of the *Britannia*. All the ships in both divisions displayed the White Ensign at the peak, and, by Nelson's particular order, to ensure that there should be no firing into friends in the smoke and confusion of battle, and in

case colours got shot away, every ship flew at least two other British flags besides their ensigns: Jacks or Union flags, one on the foretopmast stay and one on the main-topmast stay. Some ships showed more; the *Victory*, for instance, flew five British flags; the *Orion* flew (including her ensign) four.

A young officer of the *Neptune*, the ship next astern to the *Téméraire*, Midshipman Badcock, thus describes what things were like near him about this time. 'Lord Nelson's van was strong: three three-deckers—*Victory*, *Téméraire*, *Neptune*—and four seventy-fours, their jib-booms nearly over the others' taffrails, the bands playing "God Save the King," "Rule, Britannia," and "Britons Strike Home"; the crews stationed on the forecastle of the different ships, cheering the ship ahead of them when the enemy began to fire, sent those feelings to our hearts that ensured victory.'<sup>[103]</sup> 'The *Téméraire* at this moment,' Captain Harvey himself says, in a letter to his wife after the battle, 'almost touched the stern of the *Victory*, which station she had taken about a quarter of an hour previous to the enemy having commenced their fire upon the *Victory*.'

The *Téméraire's* log thus describes the opening of the battle:—

P.M. Variable light winds. Running down with lower topmast and topgallant studding sails set, on the larboard side, within a ship's length of the *Victory*, steering for the fourteenth ship of the enemy's line from the van. Quarter past noon, cut away the studding sails and hauled to the wind. At 18 minutes past noon the enemy began to fire. At 25 minutes past noon the *Victory* opened her fire. Immediately put our helm a-port to steer clear of the *Victory*, and opened our fire on the *Santisima Trinidad* and two ships ahead of her, when the action became general.

Nelson broke through immediately astern of the French *Bucentaure*, the ship on board which he had himself made up his mind, from her position, Villeneuve would most likely be found. For some unknown reason the French admiral's flag was not flying that day. Nelson, however, as they advanced, had kept the *Victory's* bowsprit pointing for the *Santisima Trinidad*. Something instinctively told him that he should find the enemy's Commander-in-Chief on board one of the two ships immediately astern of the big Spanish four-decker, probably in the ship next astern. He was right.

Villeneuve was on board that ship; the next astern to the *Santisima Trinidad*, the *Bucentaure*.

As the *Victory* steered through the enemy's line the *Téméraire* put her helm over to port and drew out from her leader's wake. She had to find a passage through the enemy for herself. It was not easy. Immediately ahead of her the French *Redoutable*, a seventy-four, the ship following the *Bucentaure*, barred the way. The *Téméraire* for some little time drifted along slowly. She had received serious damage aloft to sails and rigging during the previous half-hour as she and the *Victory* were nearing the enemy under fire, and the breeze was dropping lighter every minute. She opened a brisk cannonade on the *Redoutable* and on the French *Neptune*, a large 80-gun ship that came next astern of her.

The *Redoutable's* fire shot away the head of the *Téméraire's* mizen-topmast. She held on, however, standing to the south-east and outside the enemy's line, until at length she bore up to avoid being raked by the *Neptune* and to go through the line. There was scarcely any wind at all now, and the smoke hung heavily all round. Slowly the *Téméraire* forged her way ahead, groping her course forward in some little uncertainty as to her own whereabouts. As she passed through the line, she unavoidably gave a chance to the French *Neptune*, which ship, getting her port broadside to bear on the *Téméraire's* starboard bow, attacked her fiercely. The *Neptune* shot away the *Téméraire's* main-topmast and foreyard, and crippled the foremast and bowsprit, besides causing other damage which rendered the *Téméraire* almost unmanageable. In the dense smoke all round her officers hardly knew for the moment where they had got to. 'We were engaged with the *Santisima Trinidad* and the other ships,' wrote Captain Harvey in his letter home, 'when for a minute or two I ceased my fire, fearing I might, from the thickness of the smoke, be firing into the *Victory*.'

Then for a brief space there was a rift in the smoke. It showed the *Victory* alongside a French two-decker (the *Redoutable*), and foul of her. The two ships were seen not far off and were drifting down directly on to the *Téméraire*. Every effort was made to move out of the way and keep clear, but in her disabled state it was impossible to get the *Téméraire* under control. Within the past few minutes, under the *Neptune's* punishing fire, all three of the *Téméraire's* topmasts had been shot away, her mizen yard had come down, the rudder head had been smashed off. All that could be done

was to cannonade the *Redoutable* as she gradually drifted nearer until the actual collision came.

That took place just as Captain Lucas was about to make an attempt to board the *Victory*. His musketry from the tops seemed to have almost cleared the *Victory's* upper decks of men, and, mad as was the idea of so settling with a British first-rate, and Lord Nelson's flagship to boot, the captain of the *Redoutable* actually entertained it. A sweeping *mitraille* of grape from the 68-pounder carronade on the *Victory's* forecastle, fired into the thick of the French boarders as they crowded on the gangways from below, did not daunt him, and he still persevered after the first rush had been checked by the impossibility of getting across the space between the bulwarks of the two ships. That difficulty Captain Lucas saw his way to meet. 'I gave the order,' he says, 'to cut the supports of the main yard and to cause it to serve as a bridge. Midshipman Yon and four seamen sprang on board by means of the anchor of the *Victory*, and we observed that there was no one left in the batteries. At that moment, when our men were hastening to follow, the ship *Téméraire*, which had noticed that the *Victory* fought no longer, and that she would be captured without fail, came full sail on our starboard side, and we were subjected to the full fire of her artillery.'

It proved for the *Redoutable*, in the language of the prize-ring, a 'knock-out' blow. As the *Téméraire* came into collision with the *Redoutable* she fired her entire broadside, double-shotted, full into the French boarding-parties as they stood massed thickly and packed along the *Redoutable's* upper decks from end to end. It meant instant annihilation. It was a massacre. The awful tornado of the *Téméraire's* fire swept the *Redoutable's* crowded decks clear of men, as a garden broom sweeps a path clear of autumn leaves. It struck down everything. At one blow it hurled into eternity nearly a third of the *Redoutable's* whole crew. Midshipman Yon, we are told, disappeared, and was never seen again. Lieutenant Dupotet, at the head of the boarders, was struck down, mangled and dying. Captain Lucas himself received an ugly flesh wound—his first after seeing service in nine battles.

Speaking of the *Téméraire's* onslaught Captain Lucas in his official report says: 'It is impossible to describe the carnage produced by the murderous broadside of this ship; more than 200 of our brave men were killed or wounded; I was wounded also at the same time, but not sufficiently to prevent me staying at my post.'



CAPTAIN LUCAS

The gallant captain of the *Redoubtable* stayed at his post. He set his teeth and refused to admit that his ship had received her *coup de grâce*. In spite of his awful losses the gallant fellow still tried to make a show of fight. 'I ordered the rest of the crew to place themselves promptly in the batteries and fire at the *Téméraire* the guns that her fire had not dismounted. This order was carried out.' At the same time the *Redoubtable* met the *Téméraire*, as she swung alongside, with a hail of bullets from the tops that almost cleared the upper deck of Captain Harvey's ship, while the topmen also flung down hand grenades and fire-balls. The *Redoubtable's* topmen, indeed, flung the fire-balls about with criminal recklessness.<sup>[104]</sup> They endangered their own ship. Some of the fire-balls falling short rebounded back on board the *Redoubtable* and set the French ship herself on fire. One fell blazing on board the *Téméraire* and caused a fire below that nearly led to a catastrophe which threatened to involve *Téméraire*, *Redoubtable*, and *Victory* alike in one common destruction. The pluck and presence of mind of the *Téméraire's* master-at-arms, Mr. John Toohig, saved the after-magazine, and with it the ship. The fire-ball, as it was, caused a serious explosion and loss

of life on the main deck. At the same time the *Téméraire* was set ablaze elsewhere, on the upper deck, by a fire that had been caused on board the *Redoubtable* by one of her own fire-balls falling short, and had spread across to the *Téméraire*, and also to the *Victory* on the other side, but the flames in all three ships were fortunately got under before they had time to take serious hold.

The *Téméraire's* captain very soon had something else to think of besides the *Redoubtable*. Hardly had the *Redoubtable* been lashed fast alongside than another enemy came on the scene, and one that was apparently approaching with the fixed intention of attacking the *Téméraire* at close quarters. The French *Neptune* was at the same time remaining near by, barely a ship's length off, firing her hardest into the *Téméraire*.

The newcomer was the French *Fougueux*, the ship that had fired the first shot in the battle. She had already had a rough time of it elsewhere, but she was still full of fight, and with nearly 700 men on board, was likely to prove a dangerous foe to a ship situated as was the *Téméraire* at that moment. The *Fougueux* had been *matelot d'arrière*, or 'second astern' to the Spanish flagship *Santa Ana*, just as the *Redoubtable* had been the *Bucentaure's* second. In that capacity she had experienced some hard knocks at Collingwood's hands, and then, after a brisk exchange of fire with the British *Belleisle*, as that ship followed Collingwood into the fight, she had had a sharp set-to with the *Mars*. Through all this the *Fougueux* had not come unscathed, but she was still a very formidable opponent for the *Téméraire* to tackle.

The *Fougueux* came on as though bent on rescuing the *Redoubtable*. It did not look an impossible task. Both the *Victory* and the *Téméraire* showed signs of having undergone a very severe mauling, and there was the French *Neptune* near by, apparently quite fresh and ready to lend a hand, only waiting for an opportunity to join in the fray. The *Téméraire* particularly, looked in a bad way. Under the *Neptune's* punishing fire, she had been reduced aloft to the appearance of a wreck. Her topmasts had gone, her foreyard was gone, her foremast was tottering, all her rigging was torn and tangled, her sails hung down in rags. Her ensign, too, had been shot away, or at least was down owing to the fall of the gaff; very few men were to be seen alive on her upper deck; not a shot came from her guns on the broadside facing the *Fougueux*.

Captain Baudoin, the captain of the *Fougueux*, seemed at first uncertain whether he would lie off to leeward, and with the *Neptune's* help rake and cannonade the *Téméraire* into submission, or come to close quarters at once and board. The second alternative seemed to promise quicker results, and he adopted it. He made up his mind to bring the matter to an issue on the spot before other British ships could interfere, and carry the *Téméraire* by a *coup de main*. The few people he saw about on the *Téméraire's* upper deck was one inducement to try boarding her. He could not know, of course, that Captain Harvey had ordered everybody who could possibly be spared to go below so as to avoid unnecessary loss of life from the *Redoubtable's* musketry. Another was that the *Téméraire's* attention seemed to be wholly devoted to the *Redoubtable*. Captain Baudoin put the *Fougueux's* head directly for the *Téméraire*, and as they closed, the French ship's shrouds quickly became black with men, cutlass in hand, while more swarmed on the forecastle and gangways cheering and shouting 'À l'abordage! à l'abordage!' So the *Fougueux* neared the *Téméraire*. For her part, as it befell, the *Téméraire* had for some time foreseen what was coming. She was by no means so incapable of meeting a new antagonist as she looked.

The *Téméraire*, as it happened, had not yet fired a single shot from her guns on the starboard broadside. She had her triple tier of 32-pounders and long 18's ranged there all ready, all double-shotted and clear for action. To man these guns was quick work. Without checking the fire that the *Téméraire* was keeping up into the *Redoubtable* and the *Neptune*, Lieutenant Kennedy, the first lieutenant, rapidly called away sufficient hands from the guns on the port side to man all the starboard batteries. Then the gallant officer and his men waited—the captain of each gun standing ready with arm raised and his firing lanyard out-stretched stiff as wire—all eagerly watching the coming on of the *Fougueux*. Not a sign that the guns were manned came from the *Téméraire's* ports, as nearer and nearer the French seventy-four swept down on her. Now she was 200 yards off—now 150—now 100—now 80 yards! Confidently came the *Fougueux* on as to certain conquest, amid wild tempestuous shoutings of 'A l'abordage!' 'Vive l'Empereur! Vive l'Empereur!' The supreme moment came.

'*Téméraires*—stand by—fire!'

Holding back until the yard-arms of the two ships all but touched, with a deafening thunder-burst that for the instant overpowered all other sounds of

battle, the *Téméraire's* whole starboard broadside went off at once, in one salvo, like one gigantic gun. A terrific crash re-echoed back, with yells and shrieks. There was no more shouting from the *Fougueux*. As the smoke drifted off, the *Téméraire's* men looked and saw the enemy's rigging and forecastle and decks swept clean and bare. The next minute, with her whole side practically beaten in, crushed in like an eggshell trampled under foot, the hapless seventy-four ran, blundering blindly, in hopeless confusion, right into the *Téméraire*.<sup>[105]</sup>

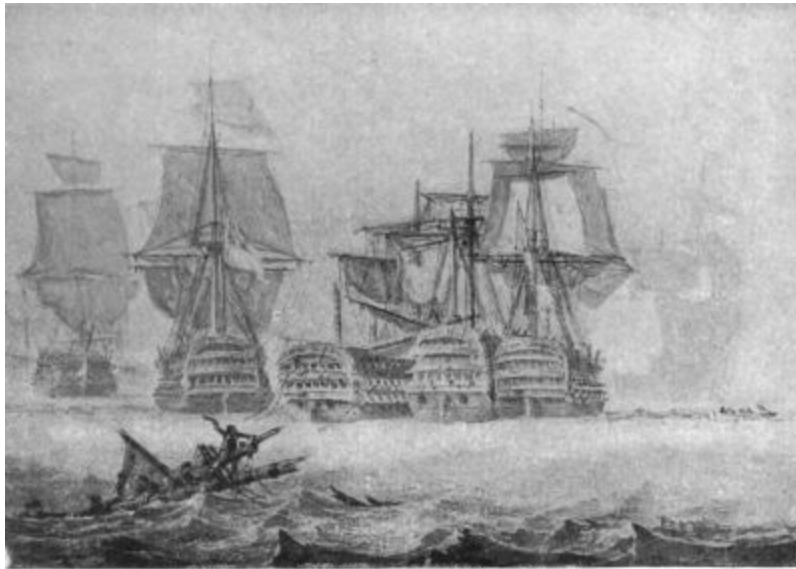
Like the *Redoutable* she was promptly lashed fast, and then—'Boarders away!' was the call. A master's mate, a little midddy, twenty seamen, six marines, followed close behind Lieutenant Kennedy as he clambered into the *Fougueux's* main rigging, and thence down on to the *Fougueux's* quarter-deck. One of the seamen with the boarding-party had a Union Jack rolled round his neck. 'It'll come handy perhaps,' said the brave fellow as he followed his messmates over the side. There was a sharp tussle on the quarter-deck of the *Fougueux*, where Captain Baudoin, struck down by the *Téméraire's* broadside, lay mortally wounded. Second-Captain Bazin hastily rallied seventy or eighty men, called up from below to meet the boarders, but the impetuous onset of the nine-and-twenty *Téméraires* carried everything before it despite the odds. The *Fougueux's* second captain was cut down. A lieutenant who took his place was shot dead with a pistol bullet through the heart. The Frenchmen then gave way and broke and were driven off the quarter-deck pell-mell. Slashing and stabbing their way, without a single fresh man from the ship, in less than twelve minutes Lieutenant Kennedy's party were masters of the *Fougueux*. They hustled the surrendered Frenchmen down into the hold, clapped the hatches on them, and then the Union Jack came in 'handy' to hoist over the tricolour on the *Fougueux's* ensign staff.

So the *Redoutable's* would-be rescuer was added to the row of four ships, all fast to one another side by side, the *Victory*, *Redoutable*, *Téméraire*, and *Fougueux*.

Relieved from the hostile presence of the *Fougueux*, the *Téméraire* turned her attention to finishing off the *Redoutable*, now plainly at her last gasp, though still unsubdued. Her guns were silenced, but musket shots still came from the tops. A few minutes later the *Victory* broke herself clear and

steered away from the group. She boomed herself off, leaving Captain Harvey to receive in due course the submission of the *Redoubtable*.

But even now Captain Lucas would not give up. 'The *Téméraire*, to quote Captain Lucas's own words once more, 'hailed us to give ourselves up and not prolong a useless resistance. I ordered some soldiers near me to answer this summons by firing, which was done with alacrity.' The end, though, was at last really at hand. Scarcely had the British flagship broken away than the *Redoubtable's* main and mizen masts came down. The main-mast crashed over the *Téméraire's* poop, and in its fall formed a bridge from ship to ship, across which a party of the *Téméraire's* officers and men, headed by the second lieutenant, John Wallace, promptly clambered. With more than 500 of his original crew of 600 odd *hors de combat*, dead or wounded, there was no opposition possible, and Captain Lucas had to yield up his sword.



*Victory. Redoubtable. Téméraire. Fougueux.*

*Victory. Redoubtable. Téméraire. Fougueux.*

BATTLE OF TRAFALGAR. OCTOBER 21, 1805—2.15 P.M.

No captain, perhaps, ever fought his ship better against overwhelming odds than Captain Lucas fought the *Redoubtable* at Trafalgar. Napoleon had him specially exchanged as soon as possible, and sent for him to St. Cloud where, in the presence of the assembled *État Major*, he decorated him with his own hand with the Grand Cross of the Legion of Honour.<sup>[106]</sup> 'Had my other captains,' said the Emperor, 'behaved as you did, the event of the battle would have been very different.' There is an ironclad *Redoubtable* in

the French navy to-day which bears the name in remembrance of the gallant two-decker lost with honour at Trafalgar.

The *Téméraire*, however, had still one of her first foes left. The French *Neptune* was still dangerously near. She was lying where she had been from the first, pounding away steadily into the *Téméraire* from a short distance off, 'willing to wound but still afraid to strike.' It says little for the courage of the French captain that he had not ventured to force home an attack at close quarters, and less still for the gunnery of his men that it had not before this reduced the *Téméraire* to a sinking state. Not far off, also, there was, as the *Téméraire's* log notes, 'a Spanish two-decked ship ... on the larboard bow or nearly ahead, who had raked us during great part of the action.' On seeing the *Victory* move off, the French *Neptune* apparently took heart of grace. She now made as if she really meant at last to close with the *Téméraire*. It was not very brave of the *Neptune*, seeing how the *Téméraire* was situated, with five-sixths of her guns blocked in by the two prizes alongside. But all the same the *Téméraire* did her best to give the *Neptune* a warm reception. By clearing away the wreckage from aloft that overlay most of the *Téméraire's* upper-deck guns, Captain Harvey was able to get some of these into action and keep the *Neptune* off. Then a few minutes later assistance arrived. The approach of the *Leviathan*, a British seventy-four, once more daunted the *Neptune*, and she sheered off and withdrew altogether from the scene.

After that came a well-earned breathing space for the *Téméraire* and her gallant crew, a brief half-hour's pause that Captain Harvey and his men made use of in putting prize-crews in charge of the *Redoutable* and *Fougueux*, and doing what they could towards repairing their own damages and clearing away their wrecked top-hamper. The *Sirius* frigate during this spell, in response to a signal from Captain Harvey, took the *Téméraire* and her prizes in tow.

A note in the *Téméraire's* log shows how intermixed some of the British ships had now got. 'The *Royal Sovereign*,' it says, 'was a short distance to leeward, and the *Colossus*, dismasted, with one of the enemy's two-deckers on board of her, who had struck, and appeared to be Spanish.'

In the half-hour that the *Téméraire* stood by, the battle passed through its crisis, although fighting went on fiercely at many points for another two

hours yet. Before half-past two, six or seven of the enemy had given in and could be seen 'lying with British ensigns displayed at the stern over tricolours or Spanish flags.' By three o'clock nearly a third of the enemy's fleet had either struck their colours or were on the point of striking them, and another third were hauling out of line and preparing to quit the battle and run for Cadiz. The Spanish flagship *Santa Ana*, with every mast down and her starboard side shattered to matchwood, had surrendered to the *Royal Sovereign*. The French flagship *Bucentaure* had hauled down her ensign and Admiral Villeneuve was a prisoner on board the British *Mars*.

The surrender of the *Bucentaure*—although perhaps it only comes incidentally into the *Téméraire's* story—was one of the most dramatic events of Trafalgar. When the French flagship, beaten to a standstill, with her three masts shot down, one after the other within five minutes, was on the point of surrendering, Admiral Villeneuve ordered a boat to be lowered to take him on board another French ship. 'Le *Bucentaure*,' said Villeneuve as he gave the order, 'à rempli sa tâche, la mienne n'est pas encore achevée.'<sup>[107]</sup> But every one of the *Bucentaure's* boats was found to have been smashed to pieces. Then Villeneuve's flag-captain, Majendie, hurried aft and clambering into the wreckage of the ship's stern gallery with his speaking-trumpet hailed the *Santisima Trinidad* to send a boat at once. There was no reply. The *Trinidad* was lying quite close to the *Bucentaure* at that moment, so close that only a very few yards separated Majendie from her as he hailed, but the tremendous thunder of the guns all round completely overpowered his voice. Nor did any one on board the Spanish ship see him. There was no means of attracting help from elsewhere. The *Bucentaure* had indeed done her work—and Villeneuve's too. There was left now but one thing to do. The colours of the *Bucentaure* were hauled down to the nearest British ship,—a seventy-four named, by something of a coincidence, the *Conqueror*,—'and a white handkerchief was waved from her in token of submission.' Captain Israel Pellew was in command of the *Conqueror*. He was at the moment unable to spare Lieutenant Couch, his First Lieutenant, to whom in ordinary course the duty of boarding the prize would have fallen, and being unaware, from the absence throughout the battle of Villeneuve's flag from the *Bucentaure's* mast-head, that the enemy's Commander-in-Chief had surrendered to him, he told Captain Atcherley of the *Conqueror's* marines to go in the First Lieutenant's place and take possession of the *Bucentaure*. Atcherley went off in a small boat

with two seamen and a corporal and two marines. He was pulled alongside and clambered on board the prize, little dreaming whom he was going to meet and the reception in store for him. This is what then took place.



### VILLENEUVE'S SWORD

As Atcherley gained the *Bucentaure's* upper-deck and the British officer's red coat showed itself on the quarter-deck of the French flagship, four French officers of rank stepped forward all bowing and presenting their swords. One was a tall, thin, sad-faced man of about forty-two, in a long-tailed uniform coat with flat high collar and dark green corduroy breeches, gold-laced at the sides. It was Admiral Villeneuve himself. The second was a short, rotund, jolly-faced man, a typical *boulevardier* in appearance:—Flag-Captain Majendie.<sup>[108]</sup> The third was Second-Captain Prigny of the *Bucentaure*; and the fourth a soldier resplendent in the full-dress uniform—somewhat besmirched by powder-smoke—of a Brigadier of the Grand Army, General de Contamine, the officer in charge of the four thousand troops that were serving on board the French Fleet that day.

'To whom,' asked Admiral Villeneuve in good English, 'have I the honour of surrendering?'

'To Captain Pellew of the *Conqueror*.'

'I am glad to have struck to the fortunate Sir Edward Pellew.'

'It is his brother, Sir,' said Captain Atcherley.

'His brother! What; are there two of them? Hélas!'

'Fortune de guerre!' said Captain Majendie with a shrug of his wide shoulders as he became a prisoner of war to the British Navy for the third time in his life. Prigny and De Contamine said nothing, as far as we know.

Captain Atcherley politely suggested that the swords of such high officers had better be handed to an officer of superior rank to himself—to Captain Pellew. He then went below to secure the magazines, passing between decks amid an awful scene of carnage and destruction. 'The dead thrown

back as they fell lay along the middle of the decks in heaps, and the shot passing through these had frightfully mangled the bodies.... More than four hundred had been killed and wounded, of whom an extraordinary proportion had lost their heads. A raking shot which entered in the lower deck had glanced along the beams and through the thickest of the people, and a French officer declared that this shot alone had killed or disabled nearly forty men.<sup>[109]</sup>

Atcherley locked up the magazines and put the keys in his pocket, posted his two marines as sentries at the doors of the Admiral's and flag-captain's cabins, and then returning on deck, he conducted Villeneuve, Majendie, and Second-Captain Prigny down the side into his little boat which rowed off in search of the *Conqueror*. The ship, however, had ranged ahead to engage another enemy, and as her whereabouts could not be discovered in the smoke, the prisoners were temporarily placed on board the nearest British ship, which happened to be the *Mars*.

The battle, however, even though both the French Commander-in-Chief and the Spanish Second in Command<sup>[110]</sup> and also the big *Santisima Trinidad* with the Spanish Third in Command,<sup>[111]</sup> had surrendered, was not yet over. There were still a number of ships of the enemy that were yet apparently unbeaten, besides one group that had hardly fired a shot as yet.

At three o'clock, or a few minutes after that, the *Téméraire's* men had again to stand to their guns. Fresh foes were seen approaching.

These were five of the ships of Villeneuve's van squadron under Rear-Admiral Dumanoir. Admiral Villeneuve's last signal had been to order Dumanoir's squadron, which had been cut off by Nelson's tactics and had so far not been engaged at all, to head round and come to the rescue of the centre and rear. There were originally ten ships under Dumanoir's command, but five of them, after they came round, broke away, and edged off to leeward towards where Admiral Gravina (the Spanish Commander-in-Chief, now left by Villeneuve's surrender the senior officer on the enemy's side) was rallying some of the rear ships to try and escape into Cadiz. What befell these does not concern us.

Dumanoir's remnant of five (four French ships and one Spaniard) stood along a little to windward of the ships engaged as far as where the *Téméraire* lay, making it appear as though they were coming down to

attack. 'At 3,' says the *Téméraire's* log, 'observed five of the enemy in good order, starboard side. Sent the men from the quarter-deck guns to assist on the other decks. The *Sirius* made sail from us, when four of the enemy's ships opened their fire on our starboard side; having but few guns clear of the prizes, cut them loose.' 'While they were about three-quarters of a mile to windward,' says Captain Harvey describing what happened in his letter home, 'they opened their guns upon the *Téméraire* and her prizes, and for some time I could return no guns; but when those we could fight with were brought to bear upon the enemy, the gentlemen thought proper to haul to a more respectable distance, and thus towards evening with me ended this most glorious action.'<sup>[112]</sup> Dumanoir's fire did little harm to the *Téméraire* herself. It mortally wounded one of her midshipmen who was on board the *Redoubtable*, and cut away the *Fougueux's* main and mizen masts,—the *Fougueux* had been cleared away from alongside the *Téméraire* a few moments previously, and allowed to swing athwart the *Téméraire's* stern, end-on to Dumanoir's ships as they passed by,—but that was practically all they did.

'Half-past 4,' says the *Téméraire's* log, 'ceased firing.' The *Téméraire* had now played her part. It only remained to house and secure the guns.

The battle was over—although near by there were still some three or four of the enemy who had not yet gone through the formality of lowering their ensigns. They were feebly firing, though they could neither fight nor fly. All could see that the inevitable end could hardly be long deferred. The knife was already at the throats of the last of the destined victims of the day. The *Téméraire's* last gun, as a fact, went at the same instant that Nelson, in the cockpit of the *Victory*, breathed his last.

Three-quarters of an hour later all resistance on the part of the enemy had ceased, and there was a silence on the sea. Trafalgar had been fought and won. Seventeen of the enemy had surrendered—eight French ships and nine Spaniards. One French ship, in addition, was on fire and her crew were being rescued by the boats of the nearest British ships. The remainder of the enemy had run out of the battle and were in full flight, some in one direction, some in another.

The scene all round at that moment, as it appeared from the *Téméraire*, was one that the last survivor of Trafalgar could hardly have forgotten to his

dying day—

Nobly, nobly, Cape Saint Vincent to the north-  
west died away,

Sunset ran, one glorious blood-red, reeking into  
Cadiz Bay,

Bluish 'mid the burning water, full in face,  
Trafalgar lay.

Cape Trafalgar was sighted from off the deck, we are told, just as the battle was ending, and was made at about eight miles off. On either hand lay ships with shattered bulwarks and hulls gashed all over and riddled from the water-line upwards with gaping and splintered shot-holes, the yellow strakes between the ports seared and scorched by the back-blast from the guns and crusted over with half-burned powder. Some also had several of their ports knocked into one, or their port-lids unhung or wrenched away; others had their figure-heads clean gone, and their bowsprits smashed off short; others, in addition, had their stern and quarter galleries beaten in; and there were ugly smears and stains down the sides of all where the scuppers opened overboard. No fewer than nine ships were lying entirely dismantled—'ras comme des pontons,' as a Frenchman put it. In these everything on deck above the bulwarks was gone, shorn roughly off—rigging, spars, masts—everything. A short stump, only a few feet high, remained in one or two of the ships to show where a tall mast had that morning stood—that was all. All else had disappeared—smashed down, shot by the board and lying over the sides amid the tangled confusion of broken spars, torn rigging, and ragged sails. Eight of the dismasted ships were trophies of the battle, French or Spanish prizes—the *Bucentaure* and the *Santisima Trinidad* among them. The ninth was a British ship, the cruelly battered *Belleisle*, which had undergone a terrific mauling. The burning ship was the French *Achille*, which lay not far off—a mass of flames from end to end. She had been set on fire by accident in the last hour of the battle, and was now blazing fiercely from stem to stern, sending off heavy volumes of dense black smoke into the clear evening air, as the hapless vessel lay burning to the water's edge, or until the flames should reach the magazine. Over yonder a group of British ships, several with topmasts and yards gone, were closing on a big three-decker that had only her foremast left standing, Collingwood's *Royal Sovereign*. Nearer, the battered ships of Nelson's

column formed another group, collecting round the *Victory*. Far to the north-west, towards Cadiz, could be seen the sails of eleven ships that were escaping with Gravina. Among these fugitives was the *Téméraire's* first antagonist, the French *Neptune*, which, by carefully avoiding every attempt to bring her to close action, had got through the battle with a loss of only 13 men killed and 37 wounded. Black dots against the western sky, now ablaze in all the wild glory of a stormy October sunset, Dumanoir's flying ships could be seen—four in number—standing away into the Atlantic. The fifth ship of the group, the Spanish *Neptuno*, had been cut off and taken as the battle closed by the British *Minotaur* and *Spartiate*.

All the while during the final scene Nelson's flag remained flying at the *Victory's* mast-head—although the Admiral had for nearly an hour now been lying dead. Those on board were, perhaps, loth to lower it before they must. In accordance with one of the old fighting instructions of the navy, the commander-in-chief's ship in action kept her Admiral's flag flying in all circumstances until the battle was over, whatever might have happened to the Admiral meantime. Whether he was disabled or whether he was killed, the flag must still fly to the end of the action in its accustomed place. As a fact, at Trafalgar, Flag-Captain Hardy of the *Victory* had had the entire handling of the British fleet from the moment that Nelson was struck down until the last shot had been fired. His descendants treasure to this day the silver pencil-case that Hardy 'used to write down signals during the battle of Trafalgar, with the marks of his teeth on it made in moments of excitement!' It was shown at the Naval Exhibition at Chelsea in 1891, one newspaper speaking of it as 'something like a relic!' Nelson's flag flew till sunset, and, in consequence, except the *Victory* and the *Royal Sovereign*, to which Captain Hardy, of course, had sent the news specially, and Captain Blackwood's *Euryalus*, barely half a dozen ships of the fleet were aware of Nelson's death that night; or even that he had been wounded. In the *Téméraire* herself the news was not known, owing to the dispersal of the fleet caused by the stormy weather of the three following days, until the 24th, when Captain Harvey first learnt what had happened by a casual signal from the *Defiance*.

This is what was said on the spot of the way the *Téméraire* had done her work. 'I congratulate you most sincerely,' wrote Collingwood to Captain Harvey, on the 28th of October, 'on the noble and distinguished part the

*Téméraire* took in the battle; nothing could be finer; I have not words in which I can sufficiently express my admiration of it.<sup>[113]</sup> This from a man so temperate in his language as Collingwood was at all times was indeed high praise.

Her day's work at Trafalgar cost the *Téméraire* in casualties exactly 123 killed and wounded; or as Captain Harvey put it: 'Killed, 47; badly wounded, 31; slightly wounded, 45—in all, 123.' Captain Busigny and Lieutenant Kingston of the Marines, one midshipman (John Pitts) and Mr Oades, the carpenter, were the officers killed; one lieutenant of the Royal Navy, the surviving lieutenant of Marines, a master's-mate and a midshipman, with the *Téméraire's* boatswain, were the officers wounded. Forty-three more of the *Téméraire's* men were drowned on board the *Fougueux* and the *Redoutable*, in the storm after the battle.

As everybody knows, all Nelson's Trafalgar prizes except four perished in the storm after the battle, or were set on fire or scuttled. Whose fault it was, or how it came about that Nelson's dying order to anchor immediately the battle was over, which would probably have preserved all the prizes, was set aside, we need not discuss. Both the *Téméraire's* prizes were among the ships that were lost—the *Fougueux* being wrecked a few miles south of Cadiz and the *Redoutable* foundering in deep water. The *Redoutable* foundered during the night of the 22nd, carrying down with her 13 of the *Téméraire's* men. She was in tow of the *Swiftsure*, which had relieved the *Téméraire* of her, when, about five on the previous afternoon, she made signals of distress. The straining of the dismasted hull as it pitched and rolled in the heavy seas had reopened the shot-holes below the water-line and the ship was filling. The *Swiftsure* hove-to and lowered her boats, which in two trips brought off safely many of the prisoners and the wounded, and part of the *Téméraire's* prize crew. Then, however, the attempt had to be given up. 'The weather was so bad and the sea so high,' that, in the words of the *Swiftsure's* log, 'it was impossible for the boats to pass.' They were still, though, keeping the *Redoutable* in tow, hoping she might live out the night, when, at half-past ten, all of a sudden, the prize foundered by the stern. The sinking was so sudden at the last that the *Swiftsure's* men had no time to cast loose the tow-rope and had to chop it in two with axes. During the night a few of the *Redoutable's* men were picked

up floating on rafts that they had made, but upwards of 190 hapless fellows went down in the ship.

The *Téméraire* herself had a bad time of it in the storm. All Tuesday, the 22nd, the *Sirius* kept her in tow, but it was so rough that little could be done on board towards refitting the ship or attempting to rig jury-masts or repair damages. On the 23rd the *Sirius* was called off by signal to recover prizes adrift which the sortie that the refugee ships in Cadiz attempted that day was threatening. The *Africa* was told off to take the *Téméraire* in tow, but the storm came on worse than ever during the afternoon, and the *Africa*, whose badly damaged masts were threatening to roll over the side every minute, could do nothing but stand by. 'The state of the *Téméraire* is so bad,' wrote Captain Harvey, that night, 'that we have been in constant apprehension of our lives, every sail and yard having been destroyed, and nothing but the lower masts left standing, the rudder-head almost shot off and is since gone, and lower masts all shot through and through in many places.'

The *Téméraire*, however, managed to come through all safely, and she again held her own by herself throughout the 24th and all the next day. Unaided, she brought up in the end in safety off San Lucar, at the mouth of the Guadalquivir some 25 miles north of Cadiz, at seven on the morning of the 25th. Here the men stopped shot-holes above water, cleared away wreckage and completed the knotting and splicing of the damaged rigging and cleaning up of the ship, and got up jury-masts and lower yards:—five days' hard work. On the 30th of October, the *Defiance* took the *Téméraire* in tow for Gibraltar, where the ship let go anchor on the afternoon of the 2nd of November, twelve days after Trafalgar.

At Gibraltar the *Téméraire* was patched up and refitted sufficiently to enable her to proceed to England under sail. The *Victory* had arrived four days before, and was lying at anchor with Nelson's flag and her ensign at half-mast, as were the other ships of the fleet, upwards of a dozen, that had as yet come in. Four days afterwards the *Euryalus*, from which Admiral Collingwood had removed into the *Queen*, sailed for England, carrying on board Collingwood's completed Trafalgar despatch,<sup>[114]</sup> the captured French and Spanish ensigns (to be hung up in St. Paul's and left there to perish through neglect), and Admiral Villeneuve himself, going to meet his doom. Within six months the hapless French Admiral was dead—by his own hand.

The story, so long believed in England, that Admiral Villeneuve's death was another foul murder to be charged against Napoleon has every probability against it. Paroled on his arrival at Spithead, and exchanged on the usual terms, Villeneuve had landed at Morlaix in Brittany, and was on his way to report himself in Paris, when one evening a sealed letter from the Minister of Marine was handed to him. Next morning he was found in his bedroom at the inn where he had put up, stabbed to the heart. A letter taking leave of his wife was found in the room. He was buried that night without any honours.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Villeneuve". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right and then curves back under the main text.

#### VILLENEUVE'S SIGNATURE

Poor Villeneuve! It was a pitiful and hapless closing to a career that had opened with such bright promise for a certain young *garde de la Marine* on the quarter-deck of De Suffren's *Héros*<sup>[115]</sup>; a sad, unworthy ending for one in whose veins ran the blood of eight-and-twenty knights of St. Louis, St. Esprit, and St. Michel; for one who in his own right was of the highest of the old *noblesse* of Royal France, for a member of a House that had given one of the most famous of Grand Masters to the Order, and a Saint and ten Bishops to the Church.<sup>[116]</sup> Poor Villeneuve! —where moulders his unhappy dust? The summer visitor from England, at the price of a cheap ticket, may see where the poor remains of the vanquished of Trafalgar rest to-day—if, that is, he can find the place. Beneath no storied monument is it, among his country's greater dead; not in the vault of the Villeneuves where his high-born kinsmen sleep:—not there. In a forgotten spot in the old burial-ground at distant Rennes, a Provençal he among stranger Bretons, the most luckless of his line lies there in a suicide's desolate grave. And it is all the more pitiful too, when one thinks of our own Trafalgar chiefs laid to their rest together in honour in St. Paul's. Side by side in the vaulted crypt

beneath the Cathedral dome rest our three Trafalgar admirals in honour evermore. Brothers-in-arms in life, like brothers in death they lie; till, pealing out on land and sea, the dread Archangel's trump shall sound their final call to quarters. Poor Villeneuve! What a contrast!



THE *TÉMÉRAIRE* ENTERING PORTSMOUTH HARBOUR ON HER RETURN FROM TRAFALGAR. DEC. 20, 1805

The *Téméraire* followed the *Euryalus* to England some days later. She brought on board, like the other returning ships, three hundred French prisoners, together with, as her special passenger. Captain Infernet of the French *Intrépide*. She arrived at Spithead on the 5th of December, the day after the *Victory*, with Nelson's remains on board, had anchored at St. Helens, and on the 20th of December went up Portsmouth Harbour to go into dock. It so chanced that an artist, John Christian Schetky, afterwards marine painter to King George the Fourth, William the Fourth, and Queen Victoria, was at Portsmouth on the day the *Téméraire* came in, cheered to the echo on all sides by crowds on the Platform and Point batteries and by every boat and ship that she passed. Sketchbook in hand Mr. Schetky made good use of his opportunity.

Captain Harvey arrived in England to find himself a Rear-Admiral, one of the officers specially promoted in honour of Trafalgar, included in the promotion caused by the creation of the rank of Admiral of the Red. He handed over the *Téméraire* to Acting-Captain Larmour who, six weeks later, paid the ship off for a refit and repair in Portsmouth dockyard which lasted several months. Admiral Harvey was one of the pall-bearers at Nelson's

funeral. When in January 1815 he became a K.C.B. he was granted as a special motto above his crest, the name *Téméraire*, together with as supporters to the Harvey family arms,—a triton with a laurel-wreathed trident, and a sea-horse with a naval crown inscribed 'Trafalgar,' bearing underneath all as an additional motto the legend *Redoutable et Fougueux*.

How for six years after Trafalgar the *Téméraire* did her duty before the enemy, at one time helping to keep Marshal Soult out of Cadiz, at another taking her part in holding in check the powerful new fleet that Napoleon created in Toulon to avenge Trafalgar on some future day that never came—all that is another story. Her last shotted guns were fired to silence a French battery in Hyères Bay, near the entrance to Toulon harbour, which rashly opened fire on the *Téméraire* one day. The *Téméraire* closed with the battery and gave the French gunners one tremendous broadside that practically cleared the battery out. Not a shot came from it again. The war story of the *Téméraire* ends six months later with her final paying off at Plymouth.

There only remained for the *Téméraire*, after that, to complete her allotted span and await the striking of the inevitable hour.

For age will rust the brightest blade,  
And time will break the stoutest bow;  
Was never wight so starkly made,  
But age and time will bring him low.

She outlasted, indeed, her old captain at Trafalgar. In 1836, six years after Sir Eliab Harvey had been gathered to his fathers, his old ship entered on her last turn of duty, harbour service at Sheerness as Guardship of Ordinary, Captain-Superintendent's ship for the Fleet Reserve in the Medway. By an interesting coincidence, the officer who last of all hoisted his pennant on board the 'Fighting' *Téméraire* was the man who had been her first lieutenant at Trafalgar, now a grey-headed old post-captain, holding his last appointment before retiring from the Service as Captain-Superintendent of Sheerness dockyard, Captain Thomas Fortescue Kennedy. Actually the last guns that were ever fired on board the 'Fighting' *Téméraire* were for the Royal Salute in honour of Queen Victoria's Coronation Day. Six weeks after that, on the 16th of August 1838, the *Téméraire* was put up for auction and sold for £5530 to Mr. Beatson, the Rotherhithe shipbreaker. She was sold

out of the Navy 'all standing,' with her masts and yards still in her, just as her guard-ship crew left the vessel, as Turner saw her and has faithfully painted her: a fact, also, that explains what has puzzled many critics of the famous picture, the removal to be broken up of a man-of-war rigged and masted and with yards across.

So we come, at length, to the *Téméraire's* final hour and her appointed end.

Her deck, once red with heroes' blood,  
Where knelt the vanquished foe,  
When winds were hurrying o'er the flood  
And waves were white below;  
No more shall feel the victor's tread,  
Nor know the conquered knee—  
The harpies of the shore shall pluck  
The eagle of the sea.

All the way up the river on her last day, we are told, the *Téméraire* was cheered as she passed along by the crews of the merchant ships and the people on board the river steamboats 'surprised as well as delighted by the novel spectacle of a 98-gun ship in the Pool,'<sup>[117]</sup> while after they had begun to break the *Téméraire* up at Rotherhithe numbers of people came to visit 'the ship that helped to avenge Nelson at Trafalgar,' attracted by reports of the finding of Trafalgar relics on board. One of these was a round-shot, found deeply embedded in the centre of one of the *Téméraire's* main-deck beams with a French sailor's red cap, which had evidently been used as an improvised wad in the hurry of the fighting, stuck fast to it. Another was the brass memorial tablet (already spoken of), let into the quarter-deck near the wheel, and bearing the inscription, 'England expects that every man will do his duty.'<sup>[118]</sup>

Two gigantic figures, quarter-gallery decorations, taken from the *Téméraire* during her breaking up, are still in existence, preserved by the successors to the firm at whose hands the old ship met her fate.<sup>[119]</sup> Any one, also, who cares to make a pilgrimage among the byways of riverside London on the south side, may come across a church within a stone's-throw of where the final scene in the *Téméraire's* career was enacted—St. Paul's, Globe Street, Rotherhithe—in which the altar, altar rails, and sanctuary chairs are all

made of heart-of-oak carved from the frame timbers of the 'Fighting' *Téméraire*.



#### RELICS OF THE 'FIGHTING' *TÉMÉRAIRE*

Two quarter-gallery figures now in the possession of Messrs. H. Castle & Sons, Millbank.

So the story reaches its close. It can hardly end better than with the eloquent passage in which Mr. Ruskin has delivered what is, in intent, the funeral oration at the passing of the 'Fighting' *Téméraire*.<sup>[120]</sup>

'This particular ship, crowned in the Trafalgar hour of trial with chief victory, prevailing over the fatal vessel that had given Nelson death—surely, if anything without a soul deserved honour or affection, we owed them here. Those sails that strained so full bent into the battle, that broad bow that struck the surf aside, enlarging silently in steadfast haste, full front to the shot, resistless and without reply, those triple ports whose choirs of flame rang forth in their courses into the fierce revenging monotone, which, when it died away, left no answering voice to rise any more upon the sea against the strength of England—those sides that were wet with the long runlets of English life-blood, like press planks at vintage, gleaming goodly

crimson down to the cast and clash of the washing foam—those pale masts that stayed themselves up against the war-ruin, shaking out their ensigns through the thunder, till sail and ensign drooped—steeped in the death-stilled pause of Andalusian air, burning with its witness-clouds of human souls at rest—surely for these some sacred care might have been left in our thoughts, some quiet space amidst the lapse of English waters? Nay, not so, we have stern keepers to trust her glory to—the fire and the worm. Never more shall sunset lay golden robe on her, nor starlight tremble on the waves that part at her gliding. Perhaps, where the low gate opens to some cottage garden, the tired traveller may ask idly why the moss grows so green on its rugged wood, and even the sailor's child may not answer, nor know, that the night dew lies deep in the war-rents of the wood of the old *Téméraire*.'

There's a far bell ringing  
At the setting of the sun  
And a phantom voice is singing  
Of the great days done.  
There's a far bell ringing,  
And a phantom voice is singing  
Of renown for ever clinging  
To the great days done.



ALEXANDRIA—JULY 11, 1882. THE *CONDOR* ATTACKING FORT MARABOUT

FOOTNOTES:

[79] Ruskin, *Notes on the Turner Collection*, p. 80.

[80] Thornbury's *Life of Turner*, vol. i. pp. 335-336.

[81] 'She was towed up the river by two steam tugs; every vessel that she passed appeared like a pigmy.'—*Gentleman's Magazine*, 'Domestic Occurrences,' September 16, 1838.

[82] Ruskin, *Notes on the Turner Collection*, p. 81.

[83] The *Téméraire*, of course, was fading *up* the river, but the exigences of euphony no doubt required the inversion.

[84] The *Téméraire*, from which the Trafalgar *Téméraire* took her name, was a French 74, captured by Admiral Boscawen in his battle with De la Clue off Lagos in August 1759. She served in the British navy for some years, and after being utilised as a floating battery at Plymouth during the American War, was finally sold out of the service in 1783.

[85] "'Thirty-six hours' calm, and England is ours," so says one of the French papers in announcing that the invasion of England is to be attempted before the 14th July. A division of the Imperial Guard has already arrived at Havre on its way to Boulogne, where the Emperor will arrive within a week.'—*The Observer*, June 24, 1804.

'By an American gentleman just arrived from the Continent, we have received positive and authentic information that the Boulogne flotilla is in a complete state of equipment and ready to embrace the first opportunity of putting to sea. Whether that opportunity will ever be permitted to the enemy by our blockading squadrons remains to be seen. The troops stationed on the uplands above Boulogne, and in its vicinity, amount to upwards of 160,000 men.'—*The Times*, August 14, 1804.

[86] Captain Mahan, *The Influence of Sea Power upon the French Revolution and Empire*, vol. ii. p. 118.

[87] *Memoirs and Correspondence of Lord Collingwood*, by G.L. Newnham Collingwood, p. 93.

[88] Says the *Observer* for the 18th of December: 'The motto of Admiral Cornwallis seems to be that from Dryden: "Endure and Conquer." We could dwell upon this theme for ever. Others have simply taught the British Navy (apt scholars enough) to triumph. He has first instructed them in manly perseverance and endurance so opposite to the impetuosity of their natures. We could name the periods, and these too frequently occurring, when a damaged yard or topmast was a sufficient excuse for a good fortnight in port, and this with officers of acknowledged gallantry. What a contrast have we now! The hardy veteran deserves an Order of Merit to be invented on purpose for him.' Without detracting from the admiral's merits this is a little hard on some of Cornwallis's predecessors—on Hawke, for instance, who in the Seven Years' War blockaded Brest throughout 'one of the worst winters on record.' Says Horace Walpole, writing on the 14th of January 1760: 'What milksops the Marlboroughs and Turennes, the Blakes and the Van Tromps appear now, who whipped into winter quarters the moment their noses looked blue. There is Hawke in the Bay weathering *this* winter, after conquering in a storm.'

[89] The capture of Admiral Villeneuve's frigate the *Didon*, sent out on a mission of the highest importance, by the British frigate *Phœnix*, prevented Villeneuve's junction with another French fleet cruising in the Bay of Biscay. Hearing nothing

of his colleague, Villeneuve, after leaving Ferrol, became nervous and turned south, instead of pushing on across the Bay for Brest as Napoleon expected him to do.

[90] Wrote Collingwood to his wife on the 21st of August: 'I have very little time to write to you, but must tell you what a squeeze we were like to have got yesterday. While we were cruising off the town, down came the combined fleet of thirty-three sail of men-of-war: we were only three poor things, with a frigate and a bomb, and drew off towards the Straits, not very ambitious, as you may suppose, to try our strength against such odds. They followed us as we retired, with sixteen large ships; but on our approaching the Straits they left us, and joined their friends in Cadiz, where they are fitting and replenishing their provisions. We, in our turn, followed them back, and to-day have been looking into Cadiz, where their fleet is now as thick as a wood' (*Memoirs and Correspondence of Lord Collingwood*, by G.L. Newnham Collingwood, p. 109).

[91] Rear-Admiral Hercules Robinson's *Sea Drift*, p. 209.

[92] Narrative by Lieut. P. Harris Nicolas, Royal Marines, of the *Belleisle*, quoted in the *Memoir of Admiral Sir William Hargood, G.C.B.*, Appendix E, p. 279.

[93] The 'Combined Fleet' was the everyday term in the Navy for the fleets of France and Spain while acting together. It was used also by the French and Spaniards themselves.

[94] Admiral Duncan at Camperdown, eight years before, attacked in a double column formation, but the circumstances otherwise were totally different.

[95] *Memoirs and Services of General Sir S.B. Ellis, K.C.B., of the Royal Marines*, p. 4. General Ellis was a second lieutenant of Marines in the *Ajax* at Trafalgar.

[96] Letter from Lieut. W. Price Cumby, first lieutenant of the *Bellerophon*.

[97] *Personal Narrative of Events*, Vice-Admiral Wm. Stanhope Lovell (formerly Badcock), p. 45.

[98] James's *Naval History*, vol. iii. p. 391.

[99] Lieut. P. Harris Nicolas, Royal Marines, in the *Memoir of Admiral Sir William Hargood, G.C.B.*, Appendix E, p. 279.

[100] *Episodios Nacionales*, par B. Perez Galdos. *Trafalgar*, p. 157. Octava edicion. Madrid, 1893.

[101] *Combat de Trafalgar. Rapport fait au Ministre de la Marine et des Colonies*, par E. Lucas, commandant le *Redoutable*, etc. Published by H. Letuaire. Hyères, 1891.

[102] There were nearly 4000 French soldiers distributed among Admiral Villeneuve's fleet, mostly embarked for the West Indies when it originally sailed from Toulon.

[103] *Personal Narrative of Events*, Vice-Admiral Wm. Stanhope Lovell (formerly Badcock), pp. 46, 47.

[104] 'Les grenades pleuvent des hunes du *Redoutable*.'—*Monumens des Victoires et Conquêtes des Français*, vol. xvi. p. 174.

[105] A terrible account of the awful carnage and destruction caused on board the *Fougueux* by the *Téméraire's* broadside is given in a letter by Captain Pierre Servaux of the Marine Artillery on board the French ship, which was published in Paris in the *Figaro* on the 21st of October 1898.

[106] 6th May 1806. *Biographie Maritime, etc.*, par M. Hennequin, Chef de Bureau au Ministère de la Marine. Paris, 1837; vol. iii. p. 85. Captain Lucas was born in 1764, and died in 1819. Two pictures of 'The *Redoutable* at Trafalgar' have been exhibited at the Salon.

[107] *Histoire de la Marine Française sous le Consulat et L'Empire*, par E. Chevalier, p. 214. See also *Monumens des Victoires et Conquêtes des Français*, vol. xvi.

[108] See Rear-Admiral Hercules Robinson's *Sea-Drift*, p. 208.

[109] *Life of Admiral Viscount Exmouth*, by Edward Osler, Appendix A, p. 377.

[110] Vice-Admiral Alava in the *Santa Ana*, who had surrendered to Collingwood in the *Royal Sovereign*.

[111] Rear-Admiral Don B. Hidalgo Cisneros.

[112] Admiral Dumanoir, writing from Tiverton in Devon, where he was interned as a prisoner of war, to the *Times* on January 2, 1806, in reply to certain adverse comments on his conduct, pleads that he was 'handled very severely' in his attack. Dumanoir and his ships were intercepted off Cape Finisterre, ten days after Trafalgar, and captured bodily by Sir Richard Strachan's squadron. One of his ships is afloat to this day, our only existing Trafalgar prize, and with the *Victory* the last left of all that fought at Trafalgar—the Devonport training-ship *Implacable*. The *Implacable* fought at Trafalgar as the *Duguay Trouin*. On being taken into the British service in 1806, the Admiralty gave the ship her present name.

[113] Marshall's *Naval Biography*, vol. i. part i. p. 275.

[114] Collingwood sent off his first short despatch announcing the battle and Nelson's death, by the *Pickle*, a 4-gun schooner, on the 26th of October. The completed despatch gave full details of the battle and the casualty lists from most of the ships.

[115] Vice-Admiral Pierre Charles Jean Baptiste Sylvestre de Villeneuve-Flayosc was born on December 31, 1763, five years after Nelson. He became *garde de la Marine* at fifteen. At the Revolution he dropped the *particle nobiliaire* from his name, and was thenceforward known simply as Villeneuve. Napoleon took a fancy to him after Villeneuve's escape from the battle of the Nile, as a 'lucky man,' and to that fancy Villeneuve owed his command at Trafalgar.

[116] Grand Master Héliion de Villeneuve, Grand Master of Rhodes; buried at Malta: Sainte Roseleyne de Villeneuve, Abbess of La Celle Roubaud.

[117] *Gentleman's Magazine*, 'Domestic Occurrences,' September 16, 1838.

[118] See *Notes and Queries*, 7th Series, vol. vi. p. 371.

[119] Messrs. H. Castle and Sons, of the Baltic Wharf, Millbank, S.W., to whose courtesy the author is indebted for the photographs of the two figures here

reproduced.

[120] Ruskin, *Notes on the Turner Collection*, pp. 81-82.

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## VI

'WELL DONE, CONDOR!'

ALEXANDRIA, 1882

But little recked they of doubts or fears that vexed the soul of the wise,  
They did as the world did round them, and they claimed their share of the  
prize.

SIR RENNELL RODD.

THE modern story of what Lord Charles Beresford's *Condor* did at the bombardment of Alexandria on the 11th of July 1882 closes our series. Everybody knows in a general way something about it, but the details of the fight deserve attention on their own account. It was no doubt only one incident of the day, but all the same it was a good piece of work.

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This briefly is how the situation came into being at the outset.

The bombardment of Alexandria was brought about by the usurpation of power in Egypt by Arabi Pasha and the so-called National Party early in 1882, raising the cry of 'Egypt for the Egyptians.' Great Britain, alarmed at their avowed hostility towards her, was forced to intervene on behalf of her interests in Egypt, and to ensure the safety of the Suez Canal. Diplomacy, and all efforts to induce the Sultan, as suzerain of the Khedive, to take action, having failed, in June the British Mediterranean Fleet was ordered to the scene, at first by way of demonstration. A French squadron arrived at the same time, France being specially interested in Egypt under the Joint Control agreement, and other Great Powers sent representative ships. In reply Arabi and his partisans began throwing up works and mounting

additional guns at Alexandria, and then riots broke out in the city and at Cairo leading to a massacre of Europeans. At the end of June the arming of the forts, which had been suspended under direct orders from Constantinople, was defiantly resumed, drawing strong remonstrances from the British Admiral, Sir Beauchamp Seymour, as the late Lord Alcester then was. The discovery of a plot to wreck part of the Suez Canal and to block Alexandria harbour, and the activity displayed on the fortifications, resulted in leave being telegraphed from England to the British Admiral to take action if necessary. Thereupon, on the 6th of July, Admiral Seymour demanded the immediate disarmament of the harbour forts on pain of bombardment. An evasive reply was given, while the mounting of heavy guns proceeded with increased vigour at night, as the searchlights of the fleet disclosed. On the 10th the British Admiral notified to the Governor of Alexandria that, unless in the course of that day certain of the harbour forts were evacuated and handed over to him to dismantle, he would open fire next morning. The foreign consuls were informed of Sir Beauchamp Seymour's intention, and during the day all the foreign men-of-war withdrew outside, the French squadron proceeding to Port Said.

The British Fleet off Alexandria comprised eight battle-ships and five gun-vessels. When the British Admiral's ultimatum was sent off on the morning of the 10th two of the battle-ships, the *Invincible*, on board which Admiral Seymour had his flag, and the *Monarch*, with the gun-vessel *Condor* commanded by Lord Charles Beresford, and the other gun-vessels, were inside the harbour. The rest of the fleet, the battle-ships *Alexandra*, *Sultan*, *Inflexible*, *Téméraire*, *Superb*, and *Penelope*, were lying outside.

At this point we take up the story of the *Condor*, and of the part she played in the events of the hour. As it happened, Mr. Frederic Villiers, the well-known artist and correspondent of the *Graphic*, was on board as the guest of Lord Charles Beresford. His vivid narrative of events gives a striking account of all that passed under his eyes.<sup>[121]</sup>

For the last day or two everything had been ready and all the ships were kept cleared for action. The Egyptians were expected to throw off the mask and try to take the British fleet by surprise. Special precautions were taken on board the *Condor*, which lay well up the harbour in proximity to the Ras-el-Tin battery. There an exceptionally dangerous piece, a breech-loading gun firing a 250-lb. shot, and mounted on the Moncrieff

disappearing system, was known to be in position. The *Condor* was a small second-class gun-boat of some 780 tons, and the thin iron sheeting on her sides was hardly stouter than a piece of cardboard. A rifle bullet could penetrate it, and there was not a scrap of armour about the ship. To protect his ship as far as possible against the big gun, Lord Charles, we are told, converted 'the shore side of the *Condor* into a temporary ironclad by dressing her in chain armour. Every scrap of spare iron and chain on board was hung over her bulwarks, giving her a rakish list to starboard.' Also, as Mr. Villiers relates, 'all available canvas had been got out and draped round the inboard of the ship's bulwarks. Hammocks had been slung round the wheel to protect the steersmen from splinters. The main-topmast was lowered, the bowsprit run in and the Gatling in the main-top surrounded with canvas. Even the idlers, who constituted the engine-room artificers, stewards, and odd hands on board, were continually practised in drill.'

Shortly before sunset on the 10th Lord Charles Beresford, who had been for instructions on board the flagship, returned on board the *Condor* and turned up all hands. 'He at once,' says Mr. Villiers, 'called the crew together and from the bridge addressed them to this effect.

"My men, the Admiral's orders to the *Condor* are to keep out of action, to transfer signals, and to more or less nurse her bigger sisters, if they get into trouble." Eloquent groans burst from the men. "But," continued Beresford, "if an opportunity should occur," and he (their commander) rather had an idea that it would, "the *Condor* was to take advantage of it and to prove her guns." The crowd of upturned faces listening to these significant remarks now shone with satisfaction in the ruddy after-glow of the sunset, and then Lord Charles added: "No matter what happened, he was confident that they would give a good account of themselves and their smart little ship." To see the gleam in their eyes, who could doubt that within them beat hearts as stout as in those hearts of oak of the grand old days?

The Admiral's instructions in writing, as issued to the commanders of the gun-vessels early next morning, ran thus. 'They are,' he said, 'to take up a position as far out of the line of fire or of forts, or of the *Inflexible*, as convenient, moving away immediately it is found that fire is being directed on them. They will take advantage of every opportunity of annoying the enemy, especially where camps are to be seen, or where infantry or other

troops are seen; but they are to avoid as much as possible the fire of the enemy's heavy guns.'

'There was little sleep that night,' says Mr. Villiers. 'As I lay in my cot ... I could catch the familiar squeaking noise of the fiddle coming from the fo'c'sle, as the crew passed the feverish hours before the impending action with a horn-pipe or some popular ditty. Even the old gun-boat seemed to bestir herself long before dawn, for the hissing of steam and rattle of coal told me that the engineers were firing her for the eventful struggle with Arabi's forts. At the first peep of day the *Condor* steamed off from her moorings, and followed the other vessels out of the harbour, as they took up their stations for bombarding.'

Even then, though, it seemed possible that there might be a slip 'twixt cup and lip.

At daybreak on the 11th the despatch boat *Helicon*, which had been ordered to remain in harbour to the last, was seen standing out. She had signals flying that she had on board Egyptian officers with a letter from the Egyptian Government. The signal caused dismay for the moment among the men. They were already at quarters, braced up and eagerly awaiting the order to begin firing. Were the enemy going to back down at the last moment? But the suspense was not for long. The message, which purported to be a reply to the British Admiral's ultimatum, was on the face of it merely a subterfuge to gain time. The bearers of it were sent back again with a written statement that their proposals were inadmissible. The Egyptian gunners in the batteries on shore, indeed, could be seen ready for action at their guns. As soon as the officers had been returned to shore the day's work began.

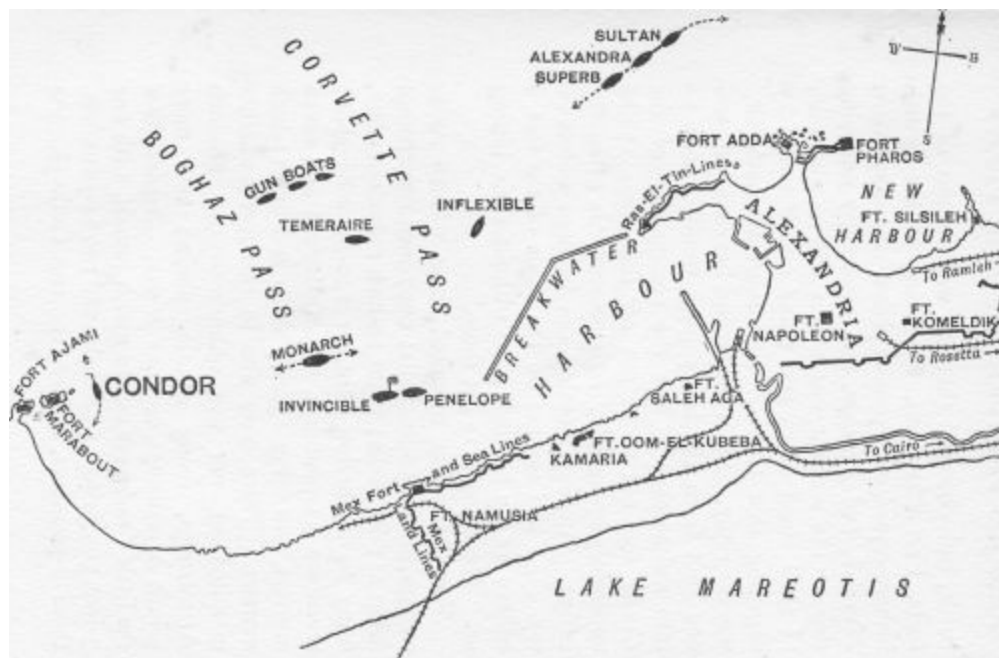
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The opening scene may perhaps be best described in the words of the correspondent of the *Standard* newspaper, Mr. Cameron, afterwards killed in battle in the Soudan, who was on board the flagship *Invincible*. 'At half-past six,' he says, 'a quiet order was passed round the decks, "Load with common shell." A gleam of satisfaction shone on the men's faces. Half-an-hour later a signal was made to the *Alexandra* to fire the challenging gun.

That was done, and, the Egyptians continuing hostile preparations, the flags ran up at the *Invincible's* mast-head for the fleet to commence action. The order was given on board the *Invincible* to begin "independent firing." A deafening salvo from five 9-inch guns went from the side of the *Invincible*, while overhead the ten Nordenfelt guns in the tops swelled the din which burst forth from all the ships with a succession of drum-like tappings.

'The smoke from the very commencement of the engagement was so dense that we could see nothing of the effect which our fire was producing, nor of what the enemy were doing; but soon after we began, a sharp scream overhead, followed by the uplifting columns of spray to seaward as the shots struck the water, made it clear that the enemy were replying to our iron salute.... They appeared to have got our range pretty accurately, and round and conical shot whistled thickly through the masts. I went round the ship and found the men fighting the main-deck guns all stripped to the waist. Between each shot they had to sit down and wait until the smoke cleared a little.'

Meanwhile the *Condor* and the other gun-vessels lay in the offing, behind the battle-ships that were engaging Fort Mex, looking on and awaiting their opportunity. The first thing that came the *Condor's* way was to assist the *Téméraire*, which had got aground. The *Téméraire* was got off about eight o'clock, and immediately after that the *Condor's* chance offered.



BOMBARDMENT OF ALEXANDRIA: JULY 11, 1882—9 A.M.  
(In the course of the morning the *Inflexible* and *Téméraire*, and the  
*Alexandra*, *Sultan*, and *Superb*, shifted their positions.)

Lord Charles Beresford, as he watched the battle, had observed that the westernmost of the forts, Fort Marabout, was firing at the British inshore-squadron opposite Mex, the *Invincible*, *Monarch*, and *Penelope*, and apparently annoying them. He sent for one of his officers and said, 'I shall stand down and make myself useful by engaging that fort.' 'You must be mad, sir,' was the reply. 'It is the second heaviest fort, and one shot from the heavy guns would knock us into smithereens.' But the commander of the *Condor* was not to be put off that way. 'The apparently impossible,' he answered, 'is often the easiest. Anyway, nothing can be done unless we try.... If I can get on the angle of the fort, I believe we can hit their guns without their hitting us. The thing is to get there.'

Fort Marabout mounted three 9-inch Armstrongs, firing 250-lb. shells; one 7-inch Armstrong, firing 115-lb. shells; eight 10-inch muzzle-loaders, firing 84-lb. hollow shot, or 100-lb. solid shot; seventeen 32-pounders, smooth-bores; and seven mortars, two firing 13-inch shells and five 11-inch mortars. There were also in this fort—whether mounted or not was unknown—two 10-inch Armstrongs, firing 400-lb. shells; two more 9-inch Armstrongs, and one 7-inch. Against that the little *Condor* set out to match herself, with one 7-inch gun, firing 12-lb. shells, and two 64-pounders, three 7-pounders, and one or two Gatlings. As has been said also, the little sloop had not an inch of armour on her sides or deck:—boilers, engines, magazines, all were open to the lightest of the enemy's shot. All the same they steamed off towards the grey ramparts of the big fort without a moment of doubt or hesitation.

Mr. Villiers carries on the story.

'The *Condor* steamed ahead. Our men stripped off their jackets. The decks were sanded, and the racers, or rails, on which the guns run were oiled.

'As we neared Fort Marabout, its terraces and embrasures bristling with Armstrong guns, not a man aboard but knew the peril of our audacity,—for a little gun-boat, one of the smallest in Her Majesty's service, to dare to attack the second most powerful fortress in Alexandria,—but the shout of enthusiasm from the crew when the order was given to "open fire!" readily

showed their confidence in their beloved leader. The guns, run out "all a-port," blazed away. The smoke hung heavily about the decks. The flash of the cannonade lit up for a moment the faces of the men, already begrimed with powder, and steaming with exertion, for the morning was hot and sultry. The captain from the bridge, glass in hand, watching anxiously the aim of her gunners, would shout from time to time: "What was that, my men?" "Sixteen hundred yards. Sir!" "Then give them eighteen this time, and drop it in." "Aye, aye, Sir!"

'Then a shout from the men on the main-mast told us on deck that the shot had made its mark. The little ship quaked again with the blast of her guns. The men were now almost black with powder, and continually dipped their heads in the sponge buckets to keep the grit from their eyes. One of our shots had fallen well within the enemy's works; another had taken a yard of scarp off—for a slight breeze had lifted the fog of smoke, and all on board could plainly see the enemy working in their embrasures. The Arab gunners now trained one of their Armstrongs in our direction. Our engine-bell sounded, and the *Condor* at once steamed ahead. A puff of smoke from the fort, a dull boom, a rush of shell through the air, and a jet of water shot up far astern, followed by a shout from our men. The enemy had missed us. When the Arabs reloaded and brought to bear, the *Condor* steamed back again, and the shell whistled across her bows.



VICE-ADMIRAL LORD CHARLES BERESFORD, K.C.B.

'The enemy's fire on the ships attacking Fort Mex slackened, and soon ceased altogether. Irritated by the constant fire of the little *Condor*, the Egyptian gunners now devoted their entire attention to us. They set about slewing their other Armstrongs in our direction. Their long black muzzles slowly turned their gaping mouths towards us. We looked at each other, then some of us looked at the captain, for the situation was becoming critical.... In an instant he decided,' proceeds Mr. Villiers, 'and gave the order for the *Condor* to run in closer, and we came within 1200 yards. We all saw in a moment the wisdom of the seeming audacity. We were well within their guard; though the Gypies blazed at us, they could only practise at our masts; they could not depress their guns sufficiently to hull us. We cheered again and again as their abortive attempts to get at us failed, for a shot below water-mark, with the lurch the *Condor* was already making with all her guns aboardside, would have sent her down to Davy Jones's locker in less than ten minutes.

'The Egyptians, in their rage, opened fire with their smooth-bores from the lower parapet. The round-shot would whistle through our rigging, making

us lie low awhile; but we would scramble to our feet again, dropping another 9-inch shell well within their works, scattering their gunners, and making things quite unpleasant for them. Only once did the enemy touch us, when a deep thud started the little ship trembling from stem to stern. The carpenter was ordered below. There was an anxious moment or two, when at last he returned, reporting the glad news that "all was well"; we had only been grazed.'

It may be noted, by the way, that at twelve hundred yards a gun like the 9-inch guns on Fort Marabout has a velocity of 1233 feet a second, and a penetrative power equal to carrying their 250-lb. shot clean through a target of wrought iron nine and a half inches thick. Had only one of these projectiles hit fairly, there would have been an end of the *Condor*, there and then. That is certain. At the same time, at twelve hundred yards the time of flight of a shot from muzzle to mark would be 2.72 seconds, and the shot in that period would drop 75½ feet. It was not an impossible task for the Egyptian gunners on the ramparts to hit the *Condor*. That they failed utterly was the *Condor's* luck—the fortune of war, pure and simple. The *Condor's* crew through it all seemed to bear charmed lives. Shots fell thick in the water all round, as other ships observed, or cut the rigging overhead. One big shot tore the awning over the quarter-deck. A 10-inch shell struck the water close underneath the ship's bows, and the column of water sent up by the splash knocked an officer and two men off the forecastle.

To resume with Mr. Villiers.

'It was a scorching, thirsty time on deck. The particles of carbon from the powder floating in the air dried our throats till we almost choked. The captain's steward was always ready to quench the thirst of the guests, Mr. Moberly Bell, the now famous manager of the *Times*, and myself, with cool drinks whenever we found time between the shots to rush below; but just as the tumbler reached our lips the blast of the guns would almost shatter the glass against one's teeth, and we would rush on deck to see how the shot had told.

'All the time the navigating lieutenant, with eyes fixed on the chart, was calmly moving the vessel up and down a narrow tortuous passage which we could distinctly see, by peering over the side of the vessel, for the reefs on

either flank of the narrow channel glistened from out the blue-black of the waters.'

Here is Lord Charles Beresford's own account of the *Condor's* day at Alexandria, as briefly given once to an interviewer. 'The *Téméraire* got aground on the northern part of the Boghaz Pass, so we went down and towed her off. Whilst doing so the Marabout Fort opened fire on the English ships inside the bar. The idea struck me that the *Condor* being small, with low freeboard, might get through the zone of fire and under the fort. It wasn't altogether easy work, for had one shell struck the *Condor* fair and square we should have been sunk to a dead certainty. However, she was easy to handle, and when once we were on the angle of the fort and under it we were all right. My dodge was to throw a couple of missiles into the fort at a time, and then back or fill, as the case might be, so that just when the Egyptians thought they had got our right range, the *Condor* was out of the way, and so it went on pretty well all day.<sup>[122]</sup> The men behaved splendidly,—upon my word, I don't think they have their equals!'

For upwards of two hours the *Condor* fought Fort Marabout, and then the Admiral, apparently thinking that she had as much as she could manage, signalled to the *Beacon*, another gun-vessel (Commander G.W. Hand), and the senior officer's ship of the flotilla, for the *Bittern*, *Cygnets*, and *Decoy* to go to her assistance. The fort, though, had already, by that, been practically subdued. The Egyptians had had enough, and soon afterwards ceased firing, although they kept their flag flying until next day, when the officer who is now Admiral Sir A.K. Wilson, V.C., landed, and hauled it down. He presented the colours of Marabout to Lord Charles Beresford, in whose possession they are now, together with another trophy of the fight, a fragment of one of the *Condor's* shells which was found to have passed through the magazine of Fort Marabout, and did not explode until outside. Among his most treasured mementos Lord Charles also preserves the *Condor's* binnacle, as taken from the ship when, some ten or twelve years later, she passed into the shipbreakers' hands at Dead Man's Bay, Plymouth Sound.

In her action with Fort Marabout the *Condor* expended over nineteen and a half hundredweights of powder (a ton all but fifty-four pounds), and two hundred and one projectiles:—65 rounds of 7-inch shell, 128 64-pounder shells, and eight 7-pounder shells; besides 200 rounds of Gatling gun

ammunition, 13 war-rockets, and 1000 rounds of Martini-Henry small-arm ammunition.

When the gun-boats had finished their work Admiral Seymour made the signal of recall, and they returned, passing close to the *Invincible* to their stations.

Now it was that the celebrated signal to the *Condor* was made. The little vessel was passing the flagship, from on board which the *Invincible's* men were cheering her enthusiastically, when the Admiral on the quarter-deck turned to his flag-lieutenant, Lieutenant Hedworth Lambton,—the future captain of the *Powerful* and the man who saved Ladysmith,—and said, as if musing to himself, 'I should like to tell them something.' Lieutenant Lambton made a suggestion, and within less than a minute, the flags went up at the *Invincible's* mast-head making the words, 'WELL DONE, *CONDOR*!' That is the story of the *Condor* at Alexandria. The day ended for her with covering the landing-party sent ashore at the close of the bombardment to spike the guns of Fort Mex.

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The story of the *Condor* alone, of all the ships at the bombardment of Alexandria, has been told. For one reason or another, what the little gun-boat did in the action appealed specially to people at the time, and attracted universal attention. It was, of course, largely a matter of opportunity—the seizing of an exceptional chance for an effort of individual daring. All at Alexandria did well, and the *Condor* had the best of the luck. In fairness, a few words must be also said of others of the ships present on the occasion, and of the part that they individually took in the fighting.

In addition to the *Condor*, another ship won the honour of a special signal 'WELL DONE!' from the Admiral—the big *Inflexible*, captained on that day by the officer who is now Admiral Sir John Arbuthnot Fisher, G.C.B., First Sea Lord of the Admiralty. The *Inflexible* during the earlier part of the engagement was posted outside the reefs off the 'Corvette Pass' entrance to Alexandria harbour, enfilading the Lighthouse batteries. 'It is invidious to particularise,' says the *Times* correspondent, who was on board another ship in the fleet, 'but the *Inflexible's* firing to-day was certainly second to none.'

Describing how the *Inflexible* shifted her position, and at ranges between 3000 and 5000 yards shelled the Mex Fort with one turret, and the Ras-el-Tin batteries with the other, the correspondent continues: 'Every shell seemed either to burst right over the Ras-el-Tin works, or to pitch upon the very parapet of the Mex Fort upon the hill.' It was just after this that Admiral Seymour signalled, 'Well done, *Inflexible*!' The *Inflexible* bore the brunt of the firing from the Ras-el-Tin batteries for three and a half hours, until she had silenced the Egyptian guns. After that, with the aid of the *Téméraire*, she silenced the Lighthouse Fort and Fort Adda, the front of which strongly fortified work her fire is said to have literally blown in.

It was on board the *Inflexible* also that the late Commander Younghusband performed an exploit of great daring—though only characteristic of the man, and of the spirit that has ever existed in the service to which he belonged. In the midst of the fighting the vent of one of the *Inflexible's* 80-ton guns had become choked; with the result that for the time being the gun was completely out of action. Lieutenant Younghusband (as the gallant officer then was) calmly got inside the gun—a muzzle-loader—and caused himself to be rammed by the hydraulic rammer right up the bore of the gun (a tube 16 inches in diameter) until he reached the powder-chamber, when he managed with his fingers to remedy the defect, all the time at imminent risk of suffocation from the powder gases. When he had done his work, a rope fastened to his feet hauled him back and drew him out of the gun.

The *Inflexible* at Alexandria had numerous dents made in her armour, and the unarmoured part of the hull was pierced by shot in several places. Her most serious injury was from a 10-inch shell, which struck the ship below the water-line outside the central armoured 'citadel,' and, glancing up, passed through her decks, killing one of the men, and mortally wounding Lieutenant Francis Jackson as he was directing the fire of one of the light guns on the superstructure.

Her due, too, must be given to the 'Old *Alex*,' as the Navy used to call the favourite flagship of the Fleet during the closing years of Queen Victoria's reign. On board the *Alexandra* (Captain C.F. Hotham) Mr. Israel Harding, the chief gunner of the ship, won the V.C. Just at ten o'clock, about three hours after the action began, a 10-inch spherical shell crashed through the *Alexandra's* side, at a part where the ship was unarmoured, and with its fuse burning rolled along the main-deck. With great gallantry and presence of

mind, Mr. Harding, who from below had heard the shout, 'There's a live shell just above the hatchway!' rushed up the ladder, and taking some water from a tub near by, dashed it upon the burning fuse, after which he seized the shell and plunged it bodily into the tub, rendering it harmless. For this act of valour, which undoubtedly saved many lives, Mr. Harding was deservedly awarded the Victoria Cross. The shell was presented to His Majesty King Edward, then Prince of Wales. It was in the circumstances by no means an inappropriate presentation. The *Alexandra* was so named in honour of Her Majesty Queen Alexandra, then Princess of Wales, who launched the ship on an April day of the year 1875 that Chatham is not likely to forget. On the stocks, until a few days before she was sent afloat, the ship had been known as the *Superb*, and her re-naming as the *Alexandra* was meant as a special compliment to her royal sponsor, which met with universal applause. It drew forth, among other poetical tributes elsewhere, the following Latin verses in the *Times*:—

#### THE LAUNCH OF THE ALEXANDRA

Fulcra securifera fabri succidite dextra;  
Omen habet primas si bene tangit aquas.  
Dicite—Sit Felix—proraeque invergite vina;  
Nomen *Alexandrae* dulce *Superba* tulit.  
Nomine mutato, sit et omine fausta secundo;  
Sit sine rivali, nec tamen ipsa ferox.  
Jam neque tormentis opus est, nec triplice  
lamna,  
Forma tumescentes sola serenat aquas.  
Te capiente capi qui non velit ipse phaselus,  
'Ferreus, et verè ferreus iste fuit.'

H.K.

To add to the *éclat* of the *Alexandra's* launch, the Archbishop of Canterbury (Dr. Tait), with the Bishop of Rochester, conducted the religious service on the occasion—the first time that a religious service of any kind had been used at the launch of a British man-of-war since the Reformation. To Queen Alexandra we owe the restoration of the ancient usage of invoking, at the outset of their existence, the protection of Almighty God on the ships by which our homes and our Empire are guarded, and also on those who are to

man them; and the practice, so instituted, has continued to be observed at the launches of all British men-of-war, ever since the launch of the *Alexandra*.

The *Alexandra* came out of action after the bombardment of Alexandria with twenty-four hits from shot or shell on the hull outside the armour-plating, and with several dents in her armour, one of her funnels damaged, and her rigging a good deal cut about. Most of the enemy's shots, fortunately, had been aimed too high.<sup>[123]</sup>

The *Invincible* (Captain R.H. More-Molyneux), on board which ship Sir Beauchamp Seymour had his flag for the day,—the *Alexandra* was really his flagship, but he had removed into the *Invincible* a short time before because of her lighter draught in order to enter the harbour,—had also numerous dents in her armour near the water-line, and the unarmoured parts of her hull had holes through it in several places. Her part in the fighting was for most of the time at anchor off Fort Mex, and the precision of her firing was enthusiastically applauded by the officers of the American ships who watched it from the offing. It was from the *Invincible* that the landing-party of four officers and twelve men—all volunteers—went off, towards the close of the action, to disable the guns of Fort Mex. The duty was an extremely dangerous one. There was no means of knowing what troops the enemy might not have under cover close behind the fort. To effect their landing the little party—the officers were Lieutenants Barton Bradford and Poore, Flag-Lieutenant Lambton, and Major Tulloch of the Welsh Regiment (Military Staff Officer to the Admiral)—had to swim through the surf. No opposition, however, met them, and after bursting the guns with charges of gun-cotton the party returned on board without a casualty.

Less is on record about what took place on board the other ships. All did their duty, and it was not their fault that no chances of special distinction came their way. The *Superb*<sup>[124]</sup> (Captain T. Le H. Warde) was hit badly near the water-line, just above the armour-belt, by a shell that shattered a hole in the hull 10 feet long by 4 feet wide. One shot made a hole, 10 inches across, in the fore part of the ship near one of her torpedo-ports, and another a hole, a foot across, a little aft of her battery; besides which her armour was dented and her foremast shot through. The *Sultan* (Captain W.J. Hunt-Grubbe, C.B., A.D.C.) had an armour-plate on the water-line dented and 'started,' four boats damaged, and one funnel shot through. The *Penelope*

(Captain St. G.C. d'Arcy-Irvine) was hulled eight times, and one of her guns had its muzzle chipped. The *Téméraire* and *Monarch* (Captains H.F. Nicholson and H. Fairfax, C.B., A.D.C.)—though the value of the work they did and the way they were handled were second to none—came out of action with little or no damage to report.

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Here we break off finally and close the book. Alike in our stories of the far-off past and the last story of the nearer past, the men whose names have been mentioned, round whom the incidents related centred, are, after all, only typical of their fellows in the Sea Service at the present hour. As occasion will prove too, when the time next comes for Great Britain to stand to her arms once more in defence on the sea of her rights and the honour of the flag against a European foe, the enemy, whosoever he may be, will find the spirit of the Cornwallis's and Rodney's and Faulknors and the Gardiners of the older day—to name no other, no more recent names—burning as brightly as of yore in the breasts of those who in that hour will officer and man the war-ships of the British Fleet.

No wonder England holds  
Dominion o'er the seas—  
Still the Red Cross shall face the world,  
While she has men like these!

## FOOTNOTES:

[121] *Pictures of Many Wars*, pp. 177, etc.

[122] This is very much the way that the late Admiral Sir W.R. Mends, G.C.B., (then a captain) handled the *Arethusa* frigate (now a training-ship in the Thames) under sail at the bombardment of Odessa on the 22nd of April 1854, to the enthusiastic admiration of the whole fleet.

[123] The first officer to hoist his flag in the *Alexandra* was the late Admiral of the Fleet Sir Geoffrey Phipps Hornby, G.C.B. She was afterwards the flagship, also in the Mediterranean, of the late Duke of Edinburgh. Sir Geoffrey Hornby hoisted his flag on board on Monday, the 15th of January 1877, and the *Alexandra* was his flagship when in the following year, at the most critical moment for Europe of the Russo-Turkish War, Sir Geoffrey, with a division of the Mediterranean Fleet, made the passage of the Dardanelles. Speaking of the close association between the *Alexandra* and the royal lady who so auspiciously sent the splendid battleship afloat, Sir Geoffrey Hornby's biographer, his daughter, Mrs. Fred. Egerton, says: 'H.R.H. was recognised, so to speak, as the patron saint of the ship. Her birthday, December 1, became the fête day of the ship; a Danish cross, with a garland of oak leaves between the arms of the cross, was adopted as the crest, and a photograph of the Princess, presented by her to the officers, received the place of honour in the wardroom.'

[124] One of Lord Beaconsfield's 'purchased squadron,' an ironclad built in England for Turkey, and bought, with the *Belleisle*, *Orion*, and *Neptune*, at the time of the 'scare' of 1878, during the Russo-Turkish War, when the crossing of the Balkans by the Russian armies threatened Constantinople and strained the diplomatic relations between Great Britain and Russia almost to breaking-point.

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