

pedition. The Indians who accompanied it regarded him with wonder, and as a superior being under especial protection, seeing that he survived all dangers unharmed—whether those arising from the fire of the enemy to which he so fearlessly exposed himself, from the poisoned water of springs occasionally met with and inadvertently imbibed by the thirsty traveller in those regions, or from the innumerable venomous reptiles with which they abound.

But it is more than probable that, but for an unforeseen event, Nelson's career would have ended at San Juan, soon after its capture, in consequence of the fever which set in and consigned to the grave so many of those who participated in that expedition. As it was, his health had experienced a severe and lasting injury, when most opportunely despatches arrived from Jamaica informing him that Admiral Sir Peter Parker had appointed him to the command of the *Janus* of 44 guns. This necessitated his immediate return to join the West Indian fleet; and thus was Nelson providentially withdrawn from a scene of death when his health was in a most precarious state.

We cannot leave this part of our reference to Nelson's antecedents without citing a passage from the official despatches of Major Polson to Governor Dalling, announcing the surrender of Fort San Juan:—‘I want words to express the obligations I owe that gentleman (Captain Nelson, of the *Hinchinbrook*). He was the first on every service, whether by day or night. There was not a gun fired but was pointed by him. . . .’ On his return to Jamaica, Nelson sent his congratulations to Governor Dalling, who said, in reply, ‘Thanks to you, my friend, for your kind congratulations: to you, without compliment, do I attribute in a great measure the cause.’

Dalling also adverted to Captain Nelson's services in a private letter

addressed to Lord George Germain, and dated at Jamaica, June 29th, 1780. In this letter occur the following words: ‘Unfortunately for the service, he was obliged to return, being appointed to another ship at this island. I most humbly entreat that His Majesty will be graciously pleased, through your lordship, to manifest a satisfaction of Captain Nelson's conduct; and, in case that a squadron should have been determined on for the Southern ocean, that he may be employed on that service. Captain Nelson's constitution is rather too delicate for the service, under my direction, on this Northern one; as such minds, my lord, are most devoutly to be wished, for Government's sake, I once more venture to urge this suit.’

Eventually the condition of his health enforced his removal from the West India Station and his return to Europe.

In the month of August, 1781, he was appointed to commission the *Albemarle* frigate, 28 guns. His instructions were to proceed in this ship to the Baltic, taking under his command two other war-ships, the *Argo* and *Enterprise*, and such others as might be sent to reinforce him.

Of this service, Nelson, in his own memoirs, remarks:

‘It would almost be supposed that it was on purpose to try my constitution that I was kept the whole winter in the North Sea.’

His biographers refer to the fact as a species of ‘cruelty practised by the Lords of the Admiralty, and as an example of bad policy often pursued toward convalescent officers whose professional worth and merit have been publicly acknowledged. ‘It would be difficult,’ they observe, ‘to fix on any station more fatally adapted to destroy the feeble constitution of an officer worn out by the sultry heats of San Juan, and the climate of the West Indies, than the cold and aguish atmosphere of the North Sea.’