

LORD BERESFORD, ENGLAND'S FAMOUS SEA DOG IN NEW ROLE

Long Expected Memoirs Give Insight Into Remarkable Versatility of Man For So Many Years Vivifying Spirit of Britain's Navy.

By J. P. Collins.

London, Nov. 12.—The jovial daredevil spirit of the British navy has found many expositions in song and story, but has rarely been better exemplified than in the long-expected memoirs of Lord Charles Beresford. He has taken a hand at so many games as earnest—war, service reform, politics, travel and sport—that he has incurred the animosity of a good many of those solid and worthy Britons who prefer their public men to wear one label, and to stick to it. But his countrymen at large have always given "Charlie" Beresford a patent of versatility, as well as popularity, and have never forgotten that he is above everything a fighting man. So that if the fable of the book is versatility it is a single personality that dominates the narrative and invests it with a downright and boundless vitality, and these two volumes of memoirs just published could be the memoirs of no one else in the wide, wide world.

Broken but Unbending.

As his Irish compatriots say, he had the "kind" family; for the house of Beresford was always notorious for its horseman's vivacity and dash. It was said of his brother, the late "Bull" Beresford, famed through Zululand and India, that he had broken every bone in his body at different times, and there is a catalogue of Lord Charles's fractures given here—seven in all—which makes him a close runner-up. We read that he has at various times broken his chest bone, a piece of which was cut out in his boyhood, leaving a cavity; pelvis, right leg, right hand, foot, five ribs, one collar bone three times, the other once, his nose three times. Yet he was sent to sea as a lad because he was delicate, and when he entered his first ship, the Marlborough sailing ship, as a cadet, one of her sailors cheerfully begged him not to go on this voyage. He entered up his name as William with one "L," but it was the era of admirals who were indignant about schooling and contemptuous about books. It was also the days of rough handling and hard fare, before Sir William Martin's reforms in navy discipline had set in. Beresford and the "splendid" system made the men's life a burden; and "promotion by paint" was common. Seamanship was taught by means of drills instead of the reality, and a discipline which, Lord Charles admits, could not compare with the standards of today was enforced by means of the "cat" (that is to say the whip or "cat-of-nine-tails") and unlimited bad language. Here is an example which Lord Charles gives as a typical talk between officer and man:

Officer—Why didn't you—well, do so and so, when I told you?
Man—Why didn't I? Because if I had I should have been—well, killed, and so would you.
Officer—Don't you answer me! I shall put you in the report.
Man—Put me in the ruddy report, then.
And the next day the commander, having heard both sides, would say to the officer:
"Why, the man was quite right. And to the man, 'You had no right to argue with the officer. Don't do it again. Now get away with you.'"
And everyone would part the best of friends.

A few more yarns of Lord Charles's cadet days may not be amiss:
When we lay in Corfu harbor the Marlborough was challenged by a crew of antilegionnaires. It was, I think, on this occasion that John Gleanville headed a deputation to me, asking me to be coxswain.

"Well, sir," he said, "it's like this here, sir, if you'll pardon me. Yew be young-like, and what we was thinking was whether you have the power of language that'd be required."
I said I would do my best. I did, I astonished myself. As for the antilegionnaires, they rowed themselves right under. There was a little rowing, and they rowed the boat under and there they were struggling in the water.

"What! Yew bairn never going to pick them up?" cried John Gleanville, in the heat of his excitement.
Another time, when cruising in the Mediterranean, Marlborough had gone to the rescue of a Turkish liner, carrying troops, which had run aground on the Filloia rocks, twelve miles by sea from Malta harbor.

I was so eager to see my old ship again that I hired a duck punt and pulled all by myself. The sea was calm, or I must have been drowned. I found a party from the Marlborough rolling the Turkish vessel to get her up. Each British sailor took a Turkish sailor by the scruff of the neck and ran with him from side to side of the ship, until she rolled herself into deep water.

During his prosecution at Plymouth in the early days, there was a turnpike gate outside the town, and he surmounted it in a characteristic way.
I was driving a brother officer home late one night, after dining at a house some distance away, and when we came to the toll-gate the keeper was in bed, and all my knocking and shouting failed to wake him up. So I proceeded to leave a large stone through his window. That fetched him, and down he came, grumbling and swearing. I thrust a sovereign—the only coin I had—into his hand to pay for his broken window and the toll. It was bad tactics, for he promptly retreated into his house (with my sovereign), leaving me still on the wrong side of the gate. There was nothing for it but to break the rest of his windows, but still he wouldn't come out. Evidently a surly fellow, unfit to take charge of turnpike gates, an office demanding tact and courtesy; and we thought it well to remove his temptation. So my companion and I wrenched the gate from its hinges and fastened



LORD CHARLES BERESFORD

it to the cart, vertically, so that it projected over our heads like a kind of ornamental roof, its weight nearly lifting the mare between the shafts off her legs and making her kick like blazes. Then we drove into Plymouth, gate and all. The gate was reduced to firewood before the gate. Next day the town was pacified with vain offers of reward for information concerning "some evil-disposed person or persons unknown who," etc.

Lord Charles as a cadet played the usual pranks. One trick of his was tried on his captain in the Marlborough, who used to fish from the stern gallery when the ship was at anchor; and the idea is hardly new.
The captain tied his line to the rail and went back into his cabin, returning every few minutes to see if he had a fish. Beneath the stern gallery opening of the ports of the gun room (where the cadets mess), with a hooked stick I drew in his line, attached a red ring to the hook, dropped it in again, and when the captain came to feel his line I jerked it. He hauled it up in a hurry. Instantly after he sent for all the midshipmen; and for some reason or other he picked me out at once.

Better known to the navy is the anecdote of a certain fussy admiral famous a generation ago.

He was walking along the road to Sheerness dressed in plain clothes, when a blue-jacket, who was slightly intoxicated, lurching against him, "Man, man," said my friend with his picked eloquence, "do you know what you are doing? Man, you are colliding with the commander-in-chief."
"Ho," returned the seaman, totally unimpressed; "har you, indeed? Then all I've got to say is to say you've got a ruddy good billet—an' what's more, you take care you don't lose it by getting drunk."

In the marvelous celerity which the men attained in sail-drill and rigging exploits had to be discouraged as damaging to heart and lungs, but Lord Charles pins his faith to the dangers of reefing or furling in a gale as counterbalancing blasphemy and instilling into the crew a real sense of security. The fact is, he says, that "there is a deep sense of religion in those who go down to the sea in ships, and do their business in the great waters. Every minister of God, irrespective of the denomination to which he belongs, is treated with respect."

Li Hung Chang and Bismarck.
In China once, when he was invited to frame an army for it, as Gordon had done a generation before, Lord Charles met Li Hung Chang, but he was less to tell us about him than about the comic side of Chinese democracy.

China is one of the most democratic countries in the world. I have seen the great Li Hung Chang stepping into the Yamen over the bodies of the coolies who refused to move and who chafed him as he passed. I have seen a whole Council huddle up their fans and disperse like startled poultry, because a coolie put his head in at the door and exhorted the old gentlemen to be quick, because it was going to rain, and the coolies were going home.

Here is what he has to tell us about an interview he had with Bismarck in 1889 about fleets and things:
Bismarck said that he could not understand why my own people did not listen to him; (nor said I) for (said he) the British fleet was the greatest factor for peace in Europe. We had a most interesting conversation upon matters of defence and preparation for

war; and his tone was most friendly towards the English. He very kindly presented me with his signed photograph. I stayed with him for two hours; and we drank much beer; and all the time his gigantic boar-hound, lying beside him, stared fixedly at me with a red and lurid eye.

Half a Century of the "Salt Horse" School.
Fifty years of hard naval service is enough for any man. He had seen the era of sail go out and the age of steam and electricity in. He says that when he handed down his flag at Portsmouth as Chief of the Channel Fleet on March 24, 1909.

It was a satisfaction to me when I came to shore, and it is satisfaction to me now, to think that I pulled my pound in the navy.
Doubtless, like other men, of action, I have made mistakes. But I may justly claim that I have held one purpose with a single mind—to do my best for the good of the service and for the welfare of the officers and men of the royal navy; and in following that purpose I have tried to disregard consequences which might affect my own fortunes, and which in fact, have often proved injurious to them.

Several times I have talked with Lord "Charlie" at length upon naval affairs. Last year when the Titanic disaster had crushed us with its suddenness and weight, I expounded to him on my own initiative an idea which has since been debated pretty widely and deserves some day to be taken up in earnest. This is the establishment of a permanent patrol of boats along the northern edge of the transatlantic navigation belt, with frequent changes of crews, but always well within a class of trained and hardened sea scouts, equipped with every modern appliance in the way of wireless and the saving of life and property. Lord Charles nodded with approval of the idea, and said it would be capital work for rescue bands if good pay were forthcoming, but he shook his head when we discussed this point of finance. I said that the cost of a boat, like the Titanic would equip a complete patrol for five or ten years and he agreed; but he said there was a world of difference between the price that ship owners were bound to pay through accidental loss and the price they were asked to pay voluntarily for the safeguarding of human life. And he was right.

The other occasions have been in times when we discussed the rapid

progress made in recent years by the engineering and gunnery ratings, as compared with the executive, but he says that he always advocated this levelling up of the service, though he was brought up in the strictest branch of the executive or "salt horse school," as it was called.

Lively Times at Westminster.
The same independent spirit which marked his sailing attended him in Parliament, and he is our prize instance of a man who has combined both roles. When in the sixties he was junior lord of the admiralty, "responsible for the provision of coal and stores among other trifles," a Clerk came into his rooms with a sheaf of papers in one hand and a wet quilt in the other, and this is what happened:

"Will you sign the estimates?" says he. "What?" said the Clerk. "The estimates for the year?" he repeated. "My good friend," I said, "I have not seen them." The clerk looked mildly perturbed. He said: "The other lords have signed them, sir; it would be very inconvenient if you don't." "I am very sorry," said I, "but I am afraid I am inconvenient in this office already. But I shall certainly not sign the estimates." The clerk's countenance betrayed consternation.

"I must tell the First Lord, sir," said he, as one who presents an ultimatum. "I don't care a fig, whom you tell," said I. "I cannot sign the estimates because I have not read them."
A solution, was found by the First Lord, Lord George Hamilton, who said that one signature more or less "didn't matter." That interesting and laborious bureaucrat took the same line later over Lord Charles's demand for several millions to bring the navy up to the point of efficiency. It was refused. Lord Charles resigned, and Lord George quietly adopted the measure as his own shortly afterwards. He was merely doing as Mr. Goschen had done under the Liberal regime a few years earlier, and Lord Charles' content to be the victim to both cases so long as the navy got the benefit. He paid the penalty for the temerity, however, in more ways than one, as we shall see.

Riding a Pig Down Park Lane.
Among many miscellaneous "stunts" which Lord Charles can put to his credit is the fact that, as he claims, he is the only man alive who ever rode a pig down that boulevard of lords and millionaires, Park Lane.

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