

at Ushant, and lastly a desponding and angry return to Portsmouth. The sailors, who loved "Nel," and rowed that he was "brave as a lion and gentle as a lamb," shared in the regret and vexation of their commander. A great opportunity of glory had been lost, above all, a chance of thrashing the French. "I would not," he once wrote to Mr Elliot, the minister at Naples, "upon any consideration have a Frenchman in the fleet except as a prisoner, they are all alike. Not a Frenchman comes here. Forgive me, but my mother hated the French." That was the clue to the prejudice which was part of Nelson's blood and of his brain. Admiral Latouche had boasted that he had once chased Nelson, our hero kept the letter containing the boast, and swore if he ever took the writer, he should eat it. He was never cruel to Frenchmen, yet his advice to his midshipmen, to whom he was always gentle as a father, was,

"Hate all Frenchmen as you do the devil,

"Obey orders without questioning,

"Treat every one, who hates your king, as your enemy."

At Portsmouth, Nelson learned that Sir Robert Calder had fallen in with the French fleet off Finisterre, and had only scratched them when he ought to have run his cutlass through their hearts. The Victory unloaded, Nelson, embowered down at ever-pleasant Merton, making hay, watching sheep, catching trout in the winding Wandle, idolising Lady Hamilton, that beautiful but wanton woman, forgot ambition, and grew more intent on rick awnings than French canvas. One daybreak, Captain Blackwood brought word that the French had refitted at Vigo and got into Cadiz. Nelson paced "the quarter-deck" walk in his garden restlessly. He pretended to be indifferent, and quoted a playful proverb "Let the man trudge it, who's lost his budget." He was happy, and his health was better. "He wouldn't give sixpence to call the king his uncle." Lady Hamilton knew the heart of the brave man she loved, and pressed him to go. The French fleet was his property; it was the reward of his two years' watching. He would be miserable if any one else had it. "Nelson, offer your services." The tears came into his eyes at her heroism. At half-past ten that night he started in a post-chaise for London. His diary for that day lays bare his heart before us.

"Friday night (Sept. 13), at half-past ten," he says, "I drove from dear, dear Merton; where I left all which I hold dear in this world, to go to serve my king and country. May the great God, whom I adore, enable me to fulfil the expectations of my country! and, if it is His good pleasure that I should return, my thanks will never cease being offered up to the throne of His mercy. If it is His good providence to cut short my days upon earth, I bow with the greatest submission, relying that He will protect those so dear to me, whom I may leave behind! His will be done. Amen! Amen! Amen!"

The probability of his death had entered his mind, that is evident; presentiments are never anything, after all, but such probabilities.

The embarkation of Nelson at Portsmouth was a scene worthy of Grecian history. Although he tried to steal secretly to his ship, crowds collected, eager to see the face of the hero they venerated. Many of the rugged sailors were in tears; old men-of-war's-men knelt and prayed God to bless him as he passed to the boat. They knew he was the sailor's friend and father; they knew him to be as humane as he was fearless, unselfish, and eager to pour out his blood for England. No basely-earned money had defiled his hands, his heart was pure crystal: it had no flaw. As Southey says finely, "Nelson had served his country with all his heart, with all his soul, and with all his strength, and therefore they loved him as truly and fervently as he had loved England." That one-eyed, one-armed, shrunken invalid officer, was still the tower and the bulwark of his native land.

On arriving at Cadiz, Nelson took all an old sportsman's precautions not to flurry the game he had been so long stalking. The French wanted encouraging. They were shy. Nelson

kept his arrival as secret as possible. The Gibraltar Gazette did not publish the number of his vessels. He kept fifty miles to the west of Cadiz, near Cape St. Mary; for it has been often observed, rats won't bolt when terriers are too near the holes. He instantly seized all the Danish vessels carrying provisions to Cadiz for the French fleet. His final stratagem was the bait that at last drew forth the enemy. He detached some vessels on an imaginary service, knowing that fresh ships were almost daily arriving for him from England. This brought out Villeneuve at last, although he had just declared in a council of war that he would not stir from Cadiz till his fleet was one-third stronger than the English.

Nelson still wanted frigates, "the eyes of the fleet," as he always called them; moreover, he dreaded the junction of the Carthagen fleet on the one side, and of the Brest squadron on the other. Yet at this crisis, with only twenty-three English ships to face thirty-three French, his great heart and romantic chivalrous nature roused him to an act of the utmost generosity. Sir Robert Calder had to go back to England to be tried by court-martial for his behaviour in the last action off Finisterre. Sir Robert was one of Nelson's few enemies, and he therefore treated him with the most considerate respect. He wished him to share in the glory of the coming battle, but Sir Robert being eager for his justification, Nelson sent him home in his own ninety-gun ship, which could ill be spared. This was chivalry carried almost too far for the national good.

On the 9th, Nelson had written to his favourite officer, the brave and simple-hearted Collingwood, enclosing him his plan of attack, wishing to give full scope to his captain's judgment in carrying out his intentions.

"My dear Coll," he said, in his hearty way, "we can have no little jealousies. We have only one great object in view, that of annihilating our enemies, and getting a glorious peace for our country. No man has more confidence in another than I have in you: and no man will render your services more justice than your very old friend, NELSON AND BROSTE."

The order of attack was grand in its simplicity. The true sea-warrior instinct and experience had struck out a plan as admirable as if it had been forged by the brain of a Newton. The fleet was to move in two lines, and like two swift sword-fish pierce into the enemy, it was to be preceded by an advanced squadron of eight of the swiftest two-deckers. Collingwood was to chop the enemy in two about the twelfth vertebra from the tail ship. Nelson himself was to give the coup de grace at the centre—the heart—whilst the advanced squadron was to cut off about three or four from where he would break through. In this way the assailants would always be one-fourth superior to those portions they broke off. There was professional genius in these well-aimed blows.

Nothing was sham, mysterious, nor inflated about his directions. His "precise object" was a close and decisive action: therefore, "if signals were not seen or clearly understood, no captain would do wrong," he said, "if he placed his ship alongside that of an enemy." One of his last orders was that the name and family of every man killed or wounded in the action should be, as soon as possible, returned to him, to transmit to the Patriotic Fund.

About half-past nine on the morning of the 19th, the Mars, the nearest of the line of scout-ships, repeated the signal that the enemy was at last stealing out of port. The wind was light, with partial breezes. Nelson instantly gave the signal for a chase in the south-east quarter. About two, the repeating ships announced the French fleet at sea. The next day, seeing nothing, and the wind blowing fresh from the south-west, Nelson began to fear the French had run back to shelter. A little before sunset, however, Blackwood, in the Euryalus, reported that the French were still pressing westward, and that way Nelson had determined they should not go but over his sunken fleet. Still, however, thinking they were inclined to run for Cadiz, Nelson kept warily off that night.

At daybreak, the French fleet of thirty-three sail of the line, and seven large frigates, formed a crescent, in close line of battle, off Cape Trafalgar, near the southernmost point of Andalusia. They were on the starboard tack, about twelve miles to leeward, and standing to the south. Eighteen of the enemy were French, and fifteen Spanish. Nelson had twenty-seven sail of the line, and four frigates. The French vessels were larger and heavier than ours, and they had on board four thousand skilled troops, and many dreaded and extremely skillful Tyrolese riflemen.

Soon after daylight, Nelson was on deck, eagerly eyeing the French crescent. He had on his admiral's frock-coat—his "fighting coat," as he called it—which he had worn in many victories, but he did not put on the sword which his uncle, Captain Suckling, had used, when, on that very day many years before, he had beaten off a French squadron. Nelson had wished this day to be the day of battle, and had even half superstitiously expected the coincidence. He wore, as usual, on his left breast, four stars of various orders of knighthood, one of them being the Order of the Bath, which he specially valued as the personal and free gift of the king. Dr. Scott, the chaplain, Mr. Scott, Lord Nelson's public secretary, and Mr. Beatty, the surgeon, trembled when he thus made himself a conspicuous mark for the enemy by these decorations. "In honour," he had exclaimed on a former similar occasion, "I gained them (the orders), and in honour I will die with them." Other captains had been more prudent, others equally reckless. Captain Rotherham, of the Royal Sovereign, had been warned not to wear his large gold-laced cocked-hat. "Let me alone," said the old bull-dog, testily; "I have always fought in my cocked-hat, and I always shall." And so in his cocked-hat he paced the deck and went into action. Collingwood, that brave Newcastle man, could be brave and prudent too. He ordered his lieutenant (Clavell) to pull off his boots and put on silk stockings, as he himself had done. "For," said he, "if we should get shot in the leg, it would be more manageable for the surgeon." He was also very particular that his boatswain bent all the old sails, to save newer canvas.

The blue liquid battle-plain was ready for the fight. There was no need of digging graves in that vast cemetery. Europe and Africa were watching the combatants. Already the shot was piled, and the powder passed up from the magazines. The sailors stood laughing by their guns, thinking what a fine sight the captured French vessels would make at Spithead. The men that in half an hour would be stretched dead and mangled on the red and splintered planks, were busy getting their tompons and fire-buckets and cartridges ready, or lashing cutlasses round the masts ready to hand. As the men were clearing Nelson's cabin and removing any bulkheads that were still left, they had to displace the picture of Lady Hamilton—that high-spirited and beautiful woman, originally a maid-servant, then an artist's model, who had obtained so extraordinary a hold over Nelson's mind—the admiral called out to the men, anxiously "Take care of my guardian angel!"

This picture (probably by Romney) was at once his idol and talisman. He also wore a miniature of Lady Hamilton next his heart.

Nelson seldom began a battle without prayer. He had always a profound sense of God's omnipresence and omniscience. He now retired to his cabin, and wrote a simple but fervid prayer. He annexed to this prayer in his diary a sort of will—his last request to his country in case he fell, as he seems to have expected to do. It was headed, "October 21, 1805.—Then in sight of the combined fleets of France and Spain, distant about ten miles."

He recommended Lady Hamilton to his country for her great services to the nation. 1. For obtaining, in 1796, the letter from the King of Spain to the King of Naples, announcing his intention of declaring war against England, which had given to Sir John Jervis an opportunity of striking a first blow, which, however, he did not do. 2. For using her influence with