

July 19, about sunrise the Armada made its appearance off Lizard Point, which the Spanish commandant mistook for Rams Head, Plymouth, and put back for the night. Thomas Fleming, a pirate, who had been taken by the Spanish, made his escape and ran into Plymouth with intelligence of great importance. The English being thus put in possession of the intentions and exact movements of the Spanish made full preparations. Beacon fires were lit up—the telegraph of that day. The fire on one hill flared to that of another till the whole country was aroused, and the yeomanry of all parts came flocking to the coast, armed with everything they could lay hands upon, each one fully resolved to do his part of defence.

As the morning of the 20th of July dawned the enemy was seen on the horizon, drawn up in the form of a crescent, extending seven miles from one extreme to the other. Seeing the English in battle array he made for the Channel. He was allowed to pass. Howard sent his own little pinnace, the *Disdain*, to fire the first shot. It was immediately supported by Drake, Hawkins and Frobisher, and the result of the first engagement was the capture of a large gallion, Don Pedro, of the Andalusian squadron, with 400 men and 5000 ducats of treasure. Next day the fleet did nothing, but it was signalized by the vengeance of a Dutch gunner belonging to the Armada, who, to revenge an insult offered to his wife and daughter, fired the king's treasure ship and blew it up, with much loss and damage.

When the Armada moved again ours had the advantage of the wind, and could close in or draw off at pleasure; and the lightly-handled English vessels which fired four shots for the Spanish one, hung boldly on the rear of the great fleet as it moved on, and, according to the phrase of the British seamen, plucked his feathers one by one. Gallion after gallion was sunk, captured or driven ashore, and yet the Spaniard could not bring them to close action. Now halting, now moving slowly on, the running fight continued through the week, when the Armada dropped anchor in Calais roads.

The time had now come for sharper work. The Armada was on the point of joining the Duke of Parma, or supposed to be so, and harassed as the Spaniard had been, his loss in ships and men left him yet much numerically stronger than the English, whose supplies of both food and ammunition were fast running out. It was now Howard's time to wish for an engagement. He lighted eight fire ships, and at midnight sent them with wind and tide into the midst of the Spanish fleet. This sudden apparition at such an hour, joined with their superstition, created a wild panic. The gallions cut their cables, and drifted with the wind and tide. Drake, seeing this, resolved they should not come together again, and at dawn the next morning the English ships closed fairly in, and the action continued all day. When the sun went down almost the last cartridge of the English was spent.

Three great gallions had sunk, three drifted helplessly on the Flemish coast, but the bulk remained, and even to the courageous Drake "*the fleet yet seemed wonderfully great and strong.*" Within the Armada itself, however, the case was different. Here all hope was gone. Huddled together with the winds and the deadly English fire, sails torn, masts shot away, the crowded hulks had become mere slaughter houses. 4000 men besides the wrecked had fallen bravely at their post, and Medina, the commander, was in despair. Looking to his captain he cried, "Senor Oquenda, we are lost, what are we to do?" "Send for more ammunition," he said, but a council of war resolved upon retreat, and the only course open was the circuitous one to the north, and the first south wind saw them in full flight in that direction, but it was a flight to destruction. No sooner had they reached the Orkneys than the storms peculiar to these regions broke upon them with a fury before which all concert of action or union of purpose disappeared.