

A Warning voice from the Spanish Armada.

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The Battale off the Goodwins

About 8 A.M. on Monday, the 8th August, 1588, the fleets neared each other. Lord Howard had determined his plan of attack, in three independent squadrons; but this was upset by his remaining behind to assist some small vessels, whose boats were capturing a great galleass, which had grounded at Calais; so the impetuous Drake had the opportunity of leading his squadrons against the centre of the Spanish line, in which he was followed by the equally pushing Forbisher and Hawkins. Lord Henry Seymour and Sir W. Winter attacked the starboard wing.

This was a real battle of guns. The English necessarily adhered to avoiding being hoarded by the Spaniards, and kept at musket shot, that is to say, probably not exceeding 200 yards; it is difficult to understand how they avoided it, as they speak of being surrounded by these great galleons. The Spaniards must have been dispirited and the English inspired by the night before; for the wing attacked by Winter ran into the body of the fleet, and fouled each other; and the small English vessels remained thus firing on all sides for eight hours. Winter says he fired 500 shot, which, as he had 30 guns, would be 25 rounds a gun. By 4 P.M. the Spaniards had suffered considerably; all their best ships were injured in their hulls and rigging, three large ships sunk, two or three others drifted on shore or into the clutches of the Dutch fleet; one ship is said to have had 350 shot in her, another was shot "through" six times. Strange to say, the English fleet suffered comparatively little damage; there is no mention of one single ship being put *hors de combat*, and not 100 men killed whereas the Spaniards lost more than 4000: Drake's ships was pierced by 40 shot. The height of the Spanish guns above the water will probably account for part of this difference of injury, but still they carried guns in their waists, and we must put it down mainly to the superior skill and confidence of the English seamen.

At 4 or 5 P.M., Medina Sidona was warned by his pilots that he was drifting on the dangerous lee shore of Flanders, with an increasing wind from more to the northward, so he made sail away to the N.N.E., evidently unwillingly, for he retreated in good order. The English were not loth to stop either. Winter says, "When every man was weary and our cartridges spent, we ceased;" and says Lord Howard, "We put on a brag countenance, and followed the enemy." They must have felt that they had won, but they did not know how great a victory it was; how serious a battle both sides thought it. may be judged from Lord Howard: "Some make little accounts of the Spanish forces by sea, but I do warrant you, all the world never saw such a force as theirs was; and some Spaniards taken say, 'It exceeded Lepanto.'" But neither side as yet realized that that day's fight had settled the question of the command of the sea for many years.

Now the question I would put to naval tacticians of the present day is, whether such a fight is possible with ironclads? Is it practicable to build an ironclad of comparatively small size, and which shall nevertheless carry a few of the largest guns, and

yet be swifter and handier than what we may call the line of battle ironclads? For if it is possible to construct such a vessel, it seems that they would be able to make a fair fight against the larger vessels at long range. The tactics adopted by the English fleet against the Armada were quite different from the ordinary practice of the time. The gurs were then considered so inferior to the ships, that in all naval actions the object of the attacking fleet was to get alongside as soon as possible, and determine the issue by the personal combat of the fighting men on board. The battle of Lepanto was so fought. The English fleet would have gladly followed the usual system, had they dared: they adopted the other plan in desperation of the circumstances. The remarkable thing about it is, that it entirely succeeded, and its success equally astonished both sides. It is true, the Spanish ships were unwieldy and badly handled, but they were manœuvred during the battle, and with great gallantry and some effect. It was really a question of the comparative manœuvring power of the two fleets, as well as of their seamanship and gunnery.

Now, let us consider the difference between guns and ships at that time and at the present. The gun was evidently then really superior to the ship, if guns and ships were properly handled. So much was this known to be the case, that the guns continued much the same for two hundred years after, while attention was turned to improving the ships. And this went on until, in Nelson's days, the ships became again more powerful than the guns, and the plan of battle again was to get alongside. Then, in our own day, the guns took a start, but the ships almost immediately counterbalanced the improvement by the adoption of armour plating; and just now, we find naval tacticians recommending rams and attached torpedoes, showing that they consider the ship to be superior to the gun. No person can venture to say, at the present moment, to what extent the use of iron in ships and guns can be carried, or that we have arrived at the ultimate speed of ships. But there is this point to be considered—ships have apparently arrived at a resting place, and are large vessels with slow manœuvring power, whereas the gun is still advancing, not only in size, but, what is equally important to the question, in facility of working. The size of ships has increased five fold since the Armada; the size of guns has increased twenty fold; there are fewer of them carried, but each is more effective, and is likely to become more accurate and quick in firing.

This is an important question for us, for if there is a possibility of the gun becoming again superior, it will evidently be to the advantage of those maritime nations which cannot afford great ironclads, to be able to use small, quick, handy vessels, at long range, with a prospect of success. And, in such case, it would be necessary for a great maritime power to have a proportion of such vessels to match them. This would not dispense with the necessity of having the larger vessels as well; but they would be reserved for grand maritime warfare; that is to say, a war for the command of the sea, which can only be settled in two ways—either by great naval actions or by the invasion and conquest of one of the powers.

The Great Storm.

The story of the subsequent proceedings of the Armada is interesting to us, as exhibiting the superior seamanship of the English, acting, as it were, in spite of the

economical tendencies of the Government. Medina Sidonia made another gallant attempt to face his pursuing foe, but, owing to the faulty navigation and seamanship in his fleet and to the adverse heavens, it only resulted in the whole Armada being nearly stranded on the shoals off the mouth of the Scheldt. Then he appears to have lost spirit, and to have had thoughts of surrendering altogether. It is true that he had many sick and wounded on board, many of the vessels were disabled, his men discouraged, and his pilots ignorant of the sea they were entering. But one has only to consider the condition of the English fleet he was flying from, to learn the true cause of the failure of the expedition. Hawkins writes, on August 11th, still much afraid of the Armada, "has no victual, money, powder, or shot; men have been long unpaid;" Lord Howard, on the 7th, "powder and shot well nigh all spent; made for the 'Forth to refresh our ships with victuals, whereof most stood in wonderful need.'" Yet they followed the Spaniards (out of gun shot) up to 55° 15' N. lat., where they left them on the 12th August; but only to refit, still expecting the terrible Parma to burst forth from the coast of Flanders, for, says the humble minded victor, "I long to do some exploit on their shipping." Then came the great storm, like the final judgment of Heaven on the undertaking; for it was not only a most unusual event to happen in August, but the bad weather lasted all through August and September; and though the English fleet was exposed to the first burst of it, they did not lose a ship. They reassembled at Harwich, to find that their economical Government had made no preparation for their sick and wounded, not even for the pay due to the seamen; and to receive, in reply to their earnest request to go to sea again, such wise official reflections from Lord Burghley as these:—"To spend in time convenient is wisdom; to continue charges without needful cause bringeth repentance."

And yet, at the moment, the Armada, still consisted of upwards of 100 ships, and if they had gone to Denmark to refit, as some expected, they would still have been more than a match in material strength for the English fleet; and at that moment Parma had still his 16,000 men fully equipped. When one reads, in "Froude's History," of the Spanish ships strewn along the coast of Scotland, and of whole fleets and armies wrecked in Ireland, and of still a remnant returning to Spain, one cannot but acknowledge, with Motley, "that the danger was at last averted, is to be ascribed to the enthusiasm of the British nation—to the heroism of the little English fleet—to the effective support of the Hollanders—and to the tempest;—very little credit is due to the diplomatic or military efforts of Elizabeth's Government."

CONCLUSION.

The spirit of a nation lies in its aristocracy, but its strength rests in the people. If this is true, the story of the Spanish Armada teaches a lesson to Statesmen in peace as well as war, for the English nation, then, of little repute in Europe, showed both the will and the power to maintain their independence against the strongest, and a capability of doing something more than that. And this was not owing to unlimited freedom in trade or in person or in politics, but, as far as it was due to human foresight, was mainly the result of laws having the special object of regulating each person's position and duties in civil life, from highest to lowest, and which were not afraid of their responsibility—