

After waiting several years Philip at length thought it was time to carry out his long fostered plan. His troubles with the Netherlands and France were at an end, and he found an opportunity to prepare to meet other enemies. The undertaking was an important one, and the preparations were perfectly adequate in importance. The fleet which then rested in the harbours of Spain, was the greatest ever seen on the ocean. One hundred and thirty-five sail of men of war, carrying eight thousand seamen and nineteen thousand soldiers obeyed the command of the Duke of Medina Sidonia. From the very moment when the expedition started storms beat upon the Spanish vessels. Elizabeth on the other side was inspired with a due sense of the urgent necessity there was for defence. She called on her subjects and soon a fleet of thirty-four men of war, and fifty-three coasters was held in readiness; besides there were forty-three hired ships. Howard of Effingham a Catholic was named Admiral, Drake as lieutenant. On July 19th the Duke of Medina was discovered off Lizard Point. "The Armada formed in the shape of a crescent, the turns of which lay some miles asunder, and with a gentle breeze from the southwest proudly advanced up the channel. It was a magnificent and imposing spectacle." Howard exchanged a brisk cannonade with Ricaldez the commander of the rear division, and compelled the Duke to despatch several ships to his assistance. In this action neither fleet suffered any considerable loss; but during the night several disasters befell the Spanish fleet, and it was six days before it anchored in Calais. The Duke of Parma commanding a land army, was to cross and enter England but this never became an accomplished fact. The story is easily told.

Fire, wind and storms all combined for the destruction of the once invincible Armada. Some of the ships were wrecked on the coasts of Ireland, Germany and the Netherlands, and but eighty ships sadly damaged returned to Spain.

When Philip heard the news of the defeat he very coolly said, "I thank God who has given me so many resources, that I can bear without inconvenience so heavy a loss. One branch has been lopt off; but the tree is still flourishing and able to supply its place." This victory occasioned much rejoicing in England. A medal was struck commemorating the triumph over the Armada, and on it was inscribed: "The Lord sent his wind and scattered them." The truth of this is very doubtful. There is a story told of Columbus when he came to America on his first voyage, that in mid-ocean the devil raised a terrible storm to oppose this great man whose main object was the propagation of Christianity. The storm was visible from a great distance and gradually approached and assumed enormous proportions, and it was only after Columbus had called on God for assistance that this tempest was quelled. Perhaps the same may be said of the storms which opposed the invasion of England by the Spaniards. There is one thing certain that Elizabeth as soon as the Spaniards were scattered resumed her diabolical persecutions of the Catholics.

Englishmen find reason for joy in this victory, and what does this joy mean? It simply amounts to this that they rejoice over the defeat of a man, whose duty it was to punish them for robberies committed on individuals, for the murder of their lawful sovereign, and for interference in matters which did not concern them.

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