

A Warning voice from the Spanish Armada.

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THE ATTACK AND THE DEFENCE.

The plan for the invasion of England, originally proposed by Parma and finally adopted by Philip, was virtually the same as that of all other intended invasions of this country, since England was one united kingdom: namely, to land the main body of the invading forces as near to London as possible, and to make straight for that naval part of the expedition from Spain, should first clear the seas of the hostile fleets, before the military part from the Netherlands could venture to cross over. Philip does not appear to have realised the probability of a great naval action; his idea was to effect the junction without the knowledge of his enemy, and so to take England by surprise. This involved the dangerous expedient of passing with his fleet along the whole south flank of his enemy's position; an operation which looks impracticable with a force like the Armada, in those days of slow sailing vessels; Sir W. Monson, however, says that if they had followed Philip's orders, they might have got to Calais in time to defeat the Dutch fleet, before the arrival of the English fleet, and so to have embarked Parma's forces. As it turned out, it was precisely this scheme of secret combination of the two parts of the expedition which ruined it. Had the Armada come the year before, when the Queen and Burleigh were writing official reminders to the Lords Lieutenants, this plan would probably have succeeded.

Philip's original idea appears to have been three or four simultaneous invasions; one in Ireland, the Armada in the Isle of Wight or some western port, Parma on the east coast, and a force from Scotland.

The report in England (according to Stowe, and probably spread by Philip) was, that a French force was to be landed in the west, Parma in Kent, and another force in Yorkshire. The Queen must have well known that Franco was in no condition to assist in such an undertaking. This plan of Philip's would have had a good chance of success provided the whole expedition had been previously arranged for it; as it was not so arranged, Parma objected, and Philip so far yielded, that it was settled, that after Parma's force landed, and succeed (of which they had little doubt), the Armada was to return and take the Isle of Wight, as a stronghold, and after that to proceed to Ireland.

There was a fair prospect of success, from the Spanish point of view. Parma had obtained information about England, and had selected the neighbourhood of Deal for the landing place and the time after harvest, because of the fertility of Kent and the unwarlike character of its inhabitants (there was a greater force of horse and foot raised in Kent, than in any other county); there were no fortified cities in England as in the Netherlands, and London, even then remarkable for its wealth, was altogether defenceless. It was long since the English infantry had appeared with success on the battle fields of Europe, and altogether there was little expectation of a defence like that the Netherlands had made. The fault of the failure in this promising programme lay not in his calculations and preparations.

Sailing of the Armada.

On the 30th May, 1588 (new style, which

will be followed throughout.) The Armada at last cleared out from Lisbon; the character of their movements is well illustrated by their having waited a month for a fair wind, and then being three weeks in reaching Capo Finisterre (300 N. miles). And then they were dispersed by a storm, which proved the inefficiency of some of the ships: of the four great galleys, one foundered, and two were captured by the slaves on board, led by a Welshman of the name of Gwynne, who must be recorded as one of the heroes of the Armada time. The fleet sheltered in Corunna Harbour (called the Groine by the English), and were so injured and had so many sick, that it was the 22nd of July before they put to sea again.

The instructions issued to the fleet by the Duke of Medina Sidonia (given in Bruce), show a religious zeal, but a military martinetism quite unsuited for a naval expedition.

The English fleet lying at Plymouth, appears to have been remarkably deficient in intelligence as to the movements of the enemy; which may be partly accounted for by the Queen's refusal to allow men of war to cruise off the coast of Spain. They had been ordered to cruise in "the Sleeve," as they then called it, against the advice of the Lord Admiral: provisions were the turning point of a cruise then, and what the Lord Admiral feared most was meeting the Spanish fleet when he was short of them, and he even thought it would be part of their plan to starve him out of their way. This is what would occur now, substituting coal for provisions. The last they heard of them was their being driven into "the Groine" by the storm; the Queen heard of this too, and characteristically ordered some of her warships to be immediately dismantled; an order the Lord Admiral fortunately delayed to execute, as he almost immediately heard of the arrival of the Armada at the Lizard. There is a fine letter from Lord Howard to Secretary Walsingham, of July 6th, showing his noble and sailorlike character; after discussing in good seamanlike style, the *pros* and *cons* of the case, he finishes with, "we must proceed by the likeliest ways, and leave unto God to direct for the best, and so I bid you heartily farewell.

From on board Her Majesty's good ship the 'Ark,' the 6th day of July, 1588.

From your assured loving friend,
C. HOWARD."

It turned out that what they had been doing was for the best; for the Spaniards at Corunna, were also deceived by a report that the English fleet had been dismantled in Plymouth Harbour, and by the advice of De Valdez, their best sailor, Medina Sidonia determined to disobey his orders and attack the English fleet in harbour; for which Valdez was afterwards imprisoned for life. They would, however, have succeeded in surprising Lord Howard in harbour, but owing to their ignorance of the English coast, they mistook the Lizard for the Ram's Head at Plymouth, and stood for the night, intending to enter in the morning. By which delay Lord Howard had time to warp his ships (60 in one night) out of the Catwater where they then lay; and to the disagreeable surprise of the Armada, as they came along the Cornish coast on the afternoon of Saturday, the 30th July, about 15 miles west of Plymouth, they found some 70 English vessels ready to receive them.

What a night that of Friday, the 29th of July, 1588, must have been in England: when the thought of it warmed the philosopher Macaulay into patriotic verse:—

It was about the lovely close of a warm summer day
There came a gallant merchant ship full sail to Plymouth Bay;
Her crew hath seen Castillo's black fleet, beyond Aurling's Isle,
At earliest twilight, on the waves its heaving many a mile,
Night sunk upon the dusky beach, and on the purple sea,
Such night in England ne'er had been, and ne'er again shall be,
From Whitby to the Berwick bounds, from Lynn to Milford Bay,
That time of slumber was as bright and busy as the day;
For swift to east and west the ghostly war-games spread,
High on St. Michael's Mount it shone; it shone on Beachy Head,
For on the deep the Spaniards saw, along each southern shore,
Capo beyond Capo in endless range, those twinkling points of fire.

The running Fight in Channel.

And now we come to that remarkable running fight which lasted nine days and extended over 400 miles; but I am not going to attempt a detailed description of this tournament of ships along the coast of England, when there exists so admirable a picture of it in that charming book "Westward Ho," and such full account of it in Motley and Froude. There are, however, some points about it, which are, I think, worthy of attention in these days of discussion on naval tactics; a fleet of comparatively small ships, over that time and distance, got the better of one of large ships, by artillery at long range. And this was done, not by construction or armament, for these were generally the same in both fleets, but by three qualities; swiftness and handiness of the ships, and good seamanship. There are some reservations to be made in the first of this long fight, but the final battle appears to me to teach a clear lesson about guns, as I shall point out when we come to it.

The Spanish fleet sailed in what Admiral Monson calls "the proportion of a half moon." The centre advanced, the wings thrown back; the Admiral in the centre, with the Rear Admiral behind him, the great galleys and galleasses on the flanks. As there was no sailing close on a wind in those days, the orders were simple; no ship was to go ahead of the Admiral, or astern of the Rear Admiral: Haklitt, speaking of their good order of sailing, says they were "three or four in a rank," following close up one after the other; and Camden says they stretched seven miles; this agrees with the drawings in Adam's and Ryther's book. And in this order they advanced slowly along the coast of England, before a S.W. wind and a smooth sea, such as one expects to find in the channel in August. The Duke of Medina Sidonia, after finding out his mistake about the English fleet, resolved to make straight for his rendezvous at Calais without stopping for anything. The English fleet would have got to close quarters and boarded, if they had dared; but the Spanish vessels were too high to run such risks, and Lord Howard knew well that the issue to England depended mainly on his thirty ships of war. So he let the Armada pass, and kept behind, that was to windward, and ordered that his ships should not allow themselves to get closer to the enemy than good cannon range, 200 to 400 yards. Divided into four independent squadrons, they carried out this idea so well, that even, when by a blast of N.E. wind the Spaniards got the weather gage, they could not close upon any English ships; and the Spanish Admiral was obliged to place his best galleys in the rear to cover his progress.

The Spaniards describe the English fleet, during the progress in the Channel, as sail-