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## THE REVIEWER.

### LIFE OF ADMIRAL HOWE.

BY SIR JOHN BARROW.

Concluded.

The most splendid and important service of Lord Howe's life, was the victory of the first of June, 1794. It revived the ancient fame of the British navy, and led to the subsequent triumphs of Sir John Jervis and Nelson. Though less decisive in its immediate results than the engagements of Cape St. Vincent and the Nile, yet as occurring at the commencement of the war, it exerted a more powerful influence. It re-kindled the resolution, and gathered up the flagging spirits of British seamen, and emboldened them to those desperate, but triumphant displays of courage which followed. Lord Howe's temperament was vastly different from both of his illustrious contemporaries, yet it is not too much to assert that he prepared the way for their triumphs by the spirit he diffused through the navy. He put to sea on the 2nd of May, and after searching fruitlessly for the French fleet for some weeks, discovered it on the 28th very far distant in the south-east, the wind blowing fresh from the south by west, with a rough sea. This and the three following days were employed in a series of manœuvres, which led to no decisive result, but on the 1st June the fleets engaged in good earnest. The following brief account of the battle is quoted from Mr. James, the indefatigable and accurate historian of naval actions.

The enemy was discovered this morning about three or four miles to leeward in order of battle, under an easy sail, to the westward. The fleet being duly arranged in the same order on the larboard line of bearing, and notice given of the intention to pass through the enemy's line for engaging them to leeward, at about thirty minutes after eight, A.M., the signal (36) was made for each ship to steer for and engage her opponent in the enemy's line; whereupon the fleet bore up accordingly. The action commenced on the part of the British fleet soon after nine. The *Defence*, *Marlborough*, and *Royal George*, *Queen*, and *Brunswick*, being the only ships which pushed through the enemy's line, together with the *Charlotte*, for engaging them to leeward. The *Gibraltar* omitted to cross the French admiral for engaging his second ahead, as his station required. The *Cæsar's* main-top-sail was backed, and whilst distant from the enemy, though the signal for closer engagement was abroad.

Soon after ten A.M., the French admiral, engaged by the *Charlotte*, drawing ahead (as he had continued to do from the beginning of the action, though the main-sail, top-gallant-sails, etc., were set in the *Charlotte* for keeping him on the same bearing when standing down to fetch under his stern), he bore away to the northward. The fore-top-mast, and soon after the main-top-mast (of which the weather-leech of the sail had been some time before cut in two and the sail rendered useless), in the *Charlotte* going over the side, no hinderance of the movement, or pursuit of the French admiral could be made. But he hauled to the wind again on the larboard tack, about three miles to leeward, and formed with eleven or twelve more of his ships not disabled by the loss (at least) of any of their masts. Ten of the enemy's ships, almost all of them totally dismasted, were left to windward; but three of them with their sprit-sails, or sails raised on the stump of the fore-mast, joined the French admiral; the ships of the fleet being either so much dispersed, or disabled in their masts and rigging in the different actions, as to be prevented from opposing the escape of those French ships, or of assembling in force to renew the engagement. And when those three ships had joined the other, the enemy stood away large to the northward; leaving seven of their dismasted ships in our possession, one of which sunk while the prisoners were removing, and many of the crew perished with the ship.—pp. 232—234.

Sir John Barrow has interwoven in his narrative, the accounts furnished by several eye-witnesses of the engagement, and the daring heroism detailed is highly illustrative of the intrepidity of British seamen.

'The conduct of the *Marlborough*,' he remarks 'as described partly by Captain Berkeley and partly by her First Lieutenant, Monckton, after the former was carried off deck wounded, is so noble, and at the same time attended with such remarkable circumstances, that it ought not to be passed over:—

'The *Marlborough* engaged the *Impetueux* for about twenty minutes, when she payed round off and dropt with his bowsprit

over our quarter, where he lay exposed to a very heavy raking fire which we kept up. Every creature was driven from the decks, and some of my men boarded her, but were called back. I had now the satisfaction to see all his masts go over the side. At this moment a seventy-four, which was astern of the *Impetueux*, attempted to weather and rake us; but he met with so severe a reception that he dropt on board his consort's quarter, and then luffing up, boarded the *Marlborough* upon the bow; but the steadiness of our troops, and the good use made of our guns and carronades, prevented him from availing himself of his situation. In a few minutes I had the pleasure of seeing this ship's masts follow the example of the other, and they both lay without firing a gun or without any colours, which makes me suppose they had struck, as not a soul was upon deck to answer; and what confirmed me in this opinion—'wards, when we were dismasted and lay alongside the *Impetueux*, within half-pistol shot was, that no attempt was made against us, until our fleet came up and took possession of them.

'I now attempted to back off from the two wrecks, and unfortunately accomplished it just as the French admiral came under our stern, who backed his maintopsail and raked us, by which he did us considerable damage, and carried away our three masts. It was from this ship I received my wound, and therefore the remainder is the account of my first lieutenant.'

'Lieutenant Monckton thus proceeds:—'At the time Captain Berkeley was obliged to quit the deck, we were still on board, but backing clear of our opponents; our masts being then shot away by the three-decker under our stern, carried away the ensign staff, and deprived us of hoisting any colours for a few minutes. I ordered the wreck to be cleared away from the colour chest, and spread a Union Jack at the spritsail-yard and a St. George's ensign at the stump of the foremast; but perceiving that the latter was mistaken by some of our ships for the tri-coloured flag, I ordered the flag to be cut off. At this time we were laying along the *Impetueux*, within pistol-shot; and, finding that she did not return a gun, and perceiving she was on fire, I ordered our ship to cease firing at her, and suffered them quietly to extinguish the flames which I could have easily prevented with our musketry. While clearing away the wreck, the rear of the enemy's fleet was coming up, and perceiving that they must range close to us, and being determined never to see the British flag struck, I ordered the men to lie down at their quarters to receive their fire, and to return it afterwards if possible; but being dismasted, she rolled so deep that our lower-deck ports could not be opened. The event was as I expected; the enemy's rear passed us to leeward very close, and we fairly ran the gauntlet of every ship which could get a gun to bear, but luckily without giving us any shot between wind and water, or killing any men, except two, who imprudently disobeyed their officers and got up at their quarters. Two of their ships, which had tacked, now came to windward of us, and gave us their fire, upon which one of their hulks hoisted a national flag, but upon our firing some guns at her she hauled it down again; and a three-decker having tacked also, stood towards us, with a full intention, I believe, to sink us if possible: the *Royal George*, however, who I supposed had tacked after her, came up, and, engaging her very closely, carried away her main and mizen-masts, and saved the *Marlborough* from the intended close attack. I then made the signal for assistance on a boat's mast; but this was almost instantly shot away. At five the *Aquilon* took us in tow, and soon after we joined the fleet.'

'A curious incident is said to have occurred on board this ship. When she was entirely dismasted, and otherwise disabled, by the extreme severity of the conflict,—the captain (the Hon. C. Berkeley), and the second lieutenant (Sir Michael Seymour), severely wounded the latter having his arm shot off, and the ship so roughly treated, that a whisper of surrender was said to have been uttered, which Lieutenant Monckton overhearing, resolutely exclaimed, 'he would nail her colours to the stump of the mast.' At this moment a cock, having by the wreck been liberated from the broken coop, suddenly perched himself on the stump of the main-mast, clapped his wings, and crowded aloud; in an instant three hearty cheers rang throughout the ship's company, and no more talk of surrender. At the same time the *Aquilon* frigate, commanded by the Hon. Sir Robert Stopford, seeing the helpless state the *Marlborough* was in, came to her assistance and towed her out of the line. The gallant admiral, in reply to a question about the cock says, 'it partakes of a cock-and-a-bull story, but there is no mistake in the cheers of the crew on my taking her in tow.' It is nevertheless a true story: through the kindness of Sir Thomas Hardy, an inquiry was made among the old pensioners of

the *Marlborough* in Greenwich hospital, and two of the most intelligent, Alexander Boswell and William Brett, fully corroborate the circumstance; and the latter states that, on the arrival of the ship at Plymouth, the cock was given to Lord George Lennox, the governor, by desire of Captain Berkeley. Lady Hardy has been good enough to ascertain from her aunt, Lady Mary Lennox, that the story is perfectly true, that the cock lived to a good old age, and that while the *Marlborough* remained at Plymouth it was daily visited by parties of her crew.—pp. 271—276.

The following anecdote of Captain Gambier will be read with pleasure, and is in happy accordance with his subsequent character.

'The *Defence*, Captain Gambier, behaved most gallantly, and was terribly cut up and totally dismasted; she was one of the few that passed through the enemy's line, got into the midst of the French ships, and lost her main and mizen-masts. Captain Gambier was an excellent officer, and a gentleman of strict principles of religion and morality. At the close of the action, Captain Pakenham, a rattling good-humoured Irishman, hailed him from the *Invincible*, 'Well Jimmy, I see you are pretty well mauled; but never mind Jimmy, whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth.' Another incident took place in the little *Defence*: the lieutenant of the after-part of the main-deck, seeing a three-decker, the *Republican*, (which shot away her remaining mast,) suddenly bearing down towards them, struck with a kind of momentary panic, ran up to the quarter-deck, and addressing the captain with great eagerness, exclaimed, 'D—my eyes, Sir, but here is a whole mountain coming upon us; what shall we do?' Captain Gambier, unmoved, and looking gravely at him, said in a solemn tone, 'How dare you, Sir, at this awful moment, come to me with an oath in your mouth? Go down, Sir, and encourage your men to stand to their guns, like brave British seamen.' On asking Captain (then Lord) Gambier, some years afterwards, if the story was true, he replied, he believed something of the kind occurred.—p. 277.

The whole nation was enraptured by the tidings of this victory, and the following letters which passed on the occasion between George the Third and Mrs. Howe, the sister of the Admiral, sufficiently bespeak the importance attached to it.

*Windsor, 11th of June, 1794.*

'Mrs. Howe's zeal for the great cause in which this country is engaged, added to her becoming ardour for the glory of her family, must make her feel with redoubled joy the glorious news brought by Sir Roger Curtis; she will, I hope, be satisfied now that *Earl Richard* has, with twenty-five sail of the line, attacked twenty-six of the enemy, taking six and sunk two: besides, it is not improbable that some of the disabled ships of the enemy may not be able to reach their own shore. I own I could not refrain from expressing my sentiments on the occasion, but will not detain her by adding more.

(Signed)

'GEORGE R.'

To which gracious communication Mrs. Howe returned the following admirable reply:—

'When Mrs. Howe heard last night of the victory obtained by your Majesty's fleet, she did not feel a possibility of any addition to her felicity, but the approbation expressed by your Majesty of what has been performed, and the honour done her by so precious and so gracious a notice of it, under the hand of her adored Sovereign, has proved the contrary: and she has only to regret that a woman cannot throw herself at your Majesty's feet this morning at the levee, and there to have endeavoured to express her heartfelt gratitude.—pp. 263, 264.

Having already indulged so copiously in extracts from this volume, we must pass over several which we had marked, and restrict ourselves to the following comparison of Howe, St. Vincent, and Nelson, three of the most distinguished names occurring in the naval history of our country:

'Howe unquestionably led the way. He was his own sole instructor in naval matters—not brought up in any particular school—hardly indeed can it be said there was any school in the early part of his career. Whatever he gained, from the various commanders under whom he served, must have been by comparison, observation, and reflection. At that time, there was very little system observed in the navy, and still less of science. Naval tactics, evolutions, and signals, were then but feebly creeping into use, in humble imitation of the French, and had made but slow progress—rarely attempted indeed to be carried into practice except by