

about fifty ships of the line, were to cover and support the attack. The preparations on land kept pace with those by sea. Twelve thousand French troops were brought as allies of the Spanish army. The humanity of the English on this occasion added a brighter lustre than belonged even to the brilliant defence of the fortress against so formidable a foe. When the Spanish vessels, ignited by red-hot shot, were in flames, the garrison rendered every assistance to the crews, who must otherwise have miserably perished. The loss sustained by the combined fleets and allied armies was never correctly ascertained, but a French officer who was present, states in a letter that "the number makes a man shudder." The siege of Gibraltar was definitely relinquished in February, 1783, and no effort has since been made, nor is it probable will be made, to deprive England of the fortress.

The rock of Gibraltar projects into the sea for about three miles. Its northern extremity is known as Europa Point; and the southern and eastern sides are rugged and steep, affording natural defences of a formidable character against the attack of an enemy. It is only on the western side, fronting the bay, that the rock gradually declines to the sea, and the town of Gibraltar is so built that an attack upon it, however well planned, however strong or long continued, is almost certain of failure.

The Bay of Gibraltar formed by two points already named, is more than four miles across. The depth of its waters, and the protection afforded by the headland, render the harbor remarkably secure and well adapted for vessels of every description. The extreme depth of the waters within the bay is 110 fathoms. The security of the harbour has been still further increased by two moles, extending 1100 and the other 700 feet in the bay. The breadth of the strait between Europa and Africa is fourteen miles.

Gibraltar has a population of between twenty and thirty thousand, including the garrison and troops. The fortress is erected on the western side of the rock, and the fortifications are of extraordinary extent and strength. "The principal batteries are all casemated, and traverses are constructed to prevent that mischief that might issue from the explosion of shells. Vast galleries have been excavated in the solid rock and mounted with heavy cannon; and communications have been established between the different batteries by passages cut in the rock to protect the troops from the enemy's fire. In fact, the whole rock is lined with the most formidable batteries, from the water to the summit, and from the Land Gate to Europa Point; so that if properly victualled and garrisoned, Gibraltar may be said to be impregnable."

Its position and its strength confer on Gibraltar advantages which render its position to the English of the utmost importance. It has with singular propriety received the name of the key of the Mediterranean. In peace it protects the English commerce and fleets; in war it affords equal facilities for harassing their foes. In both these respects its value can scarcely be over-estimated. In 1704 it was made a free port, and was consequently a most convenient *entrepot* for English and foreign goods intended for the Spanish or African market. But as a place of commerce Gibraltar has lost its old importance, and it does not seem very likely that it will ever regain it.