

IN THE DAYS OF THE GREAT ARMADA.

(By Orona Temple in Sunday at Home.)



ENGLISH FLEET IN PURSUIT OF ARMADA.

CHAPTER V.

It was not only Robert Bulteel who watched with flashing eyes and bated breath the lessening line of white water that lay between the Spaniards and their pursuers. Effingham, dressed daintily as a man might dress for courtly service, stood on his good ship's towering poop, searching that scurried "half moon" for the noblest game at which to strike.

His glance happened to fall on Robert Bulteel. He had already learned something of his worth, and reckoned him true metal. To him he said, "There must be no grappling-irons used with such fellows as these. The enemy has an army on board; we have none. We must fight and fly, and turn and fight again; our strength lies in our heels to-day, eh, Bulteel?"

And Robert replied grimly, "Our heels have good cock's spurs thereon, my lord. Let them feel the sting of them as soon as may rightly be."

A signal ran up to the peak of the Admiral's ship, and presently a galley, with all sail set, and urged forward also by oars pulled with a will, shot in advance of the English line and discharged her cannon at the huge "San Matteo," the bulkiest and gaudiest of the Spanish rear-guard.

A hoarse cheer rang out from English throats as the sound of the guns trembled and died on the air. But there was little time henceforth for cheering, or little silence in which cheering might be heard; the iron mouths had it all their own way, and the thunder of the cannon roared and rolled, and the soft smoke clouds rose and rioted, until the sweet peace of the summer Sabbath was turned into horror of darkness and death.

The galley which had the honor of leading the attack, was called the "Defiance," a suitable name for her work that day. It was strange to see a thing so small fling itself forward against such odds; the Duke of Medina, commanding the Spaniards, scarcely thought it worth his while to point his ordinance at so insignificant a foe.

But he soon found that his guns, point them as deftly as he might, were almost fired in vain, for the lofty hulls and huge "castles" of the foreign ships carried their guns so far above the water-line that the shots, in spite of all the gunners' efforts, went clear over the English ships; while every discharge of Effingham's cannon sent their iron messengers crashing through the gilded timbers of those unwieldy galleons.

And still, before the brisk south-west breeze, the battle swept on. Still the great vessels crowded sail, and pressed upon their course. And still behind them hurried the "Ark-Raleigh" and her scanty fleet of consorts, handled deftly by all the daring of Drake and the courage of Frobisher; and by that of many scores of other gallant souls, who were as ready as they to dare and to die for the sake of England's queen and England's faith.

From Dartmouth and Brixham, from Weymouth and the Solent, from Portsmouth and the Sussex fishing-towns, small

ships and trading coasters ran out to join in this huge chase.

Surely never before on the broad seas had such a sight been seen. It was the hawks harrying the eagles, the dog-fish pursuing the sharks!

For four and twenty hours the south wind held, and the Spanish vessels, still disdainful of their adversaries, still reckoning on joining the forces of the Duke of Parma, went slowly on their way; and behind them came the English, hovering in their rear, and using with sharp effect the "spurs" of which Robert had talked.

Just as the night had fallen on that 22nd of June, Dan Lavin's sloop made good her way to the side of the "Ark-Raleigh," and placed herself under the Lord Admiral's orders.

"Our teeth are not, so to speak, too sharp," shrieked Lavin, his words but half-heard through the rush of the sea (the guns were silent a while, now that the dusk made cannonading dangerous to friends as well as foes). "We cannot bite very deep, but we have pitch-pine on board, and tar that will blaze fathoms high! Set the old-sloop, the "Saucy Susan," a-fire, my lord, an' it please you! She'll be torchlight for the others to dance by at the least."

Dan Lavin was just an Exmouth merchant; the sum total of his worldly gear was easily reckoned; a small huckster's shop, and that same sloop—the "Saucy Susan," constituted the greater part; but he was in downright earnest as he hallooed out, "Set her a-fire, an' it please you, my lord!"

It was that spirit of self-sacrifice, of willing and heart-whole surrender that went farther than winds or waves to save old England just then.

Once the Duke of Medina turned round on his pursuers and showed determined fight. The wind changed, favoring his plan of driving Effingham on to the lee shore; and he signalled his captains to take the wind of the English and once and for ever rid themselves of the ships that hung like a cloud of wasps upon their rear.

An easy order to give; a difficult thing to do.

Such seamen as Sir Francis Drake were not to be out-manceuvred; and that affair ended in the capture of the treasure-galleon, "a huge ship of Biscay," which, with her commander Don Pedro de Valdez, was sent by Drake a prize to Weymouth.

At this distance of time, when we know the end so well, it is difficult fully to understand the excitement that filled the land whilst this long sea-fight went on. The first shot was fired on the 22nd of July, it was not until the 1st of August that the struggle was over, and the beaten Armada, the word "invincible" resting on it now as a scorn and derision, made its weary way into the North Sea. Nine days of wild excitement! nine days of terrible danger! It was no wonder that Doris grew white and sick when she waited, as did many another maiden, woman, wife or mother, for such news as might come. The thunder of the cannonade had long died away, the

chase had swept on towards the narrow seas; but the great treasure-galleon which had been sent to Weymouth, gave ample room for talk.

She had been set on fire by her own crew; and Drake, when he captured her and extinguished the flames, found more than fifty wounded men in her, pitifully maimed and scorched.

An awful thing it was to see these wretched beings, so those who came from Weymouth reported; but enemies as they were they had to be tended and succored—the heretics they came to despoil being of wider charity than their friends who had left them to perish miserably.

Doris listened to these tales, and to others quite as terrible, and she shuddered to remember that it was against such men that Robert had gone with his life in his hand. And Earle, the young lad Earle? Her father was very gentle to her in those days. He never seemed to notice the querulous tone that had come into her voice of late, or the nervous way she had of starting at any sudden step or sound. Himself a suffering invalid, he had learned to feel for the suffering of others, though his was bodily and Doris's was mental pain, and some folks fail to see any bond between the two.

He did not fret about Earle. His life had shown him how powerlessly we lie in the hands of the Ruler of the world. Men may plot and plan, and spend their very souls in striving to ward off danger and to gather good; but the "Judge of all things" does what seems to him best and men's hopes and fears vanish like the smoke of a parched scroll at the breath of his decree. Thomas Clatworthy, through sore sorrow and wrenching pain, had learned this truth, and he was not only content but humbly thankful to lie still in hands which were loving as well as great.

To these hands he could trust his boy. The house was dreary now that Earle had gone; one missed his foot upon the stair, and the sound of his laughter through the old rooms. There was his last half-finished work, a decoy-cage he had been busy with, standing amid chips and scraps of wire upon the little bench.

He had suddenly left his boyhood behind him and had gone out with men to bear the brunt of the battle. And such a battle!

"May the God of his fathers bless the lad," sighed Clatworthy, "and hold him safe for life—and for more than life; that he also may know that it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps."

Some such words Doris overheard, and she moved uneasily; she could scarcely bear the sound of the muttered prayer; it jarred on her nerves like a blow. She did not know the calm comfort that such confidence can bring; but keeping her eyes low down on her earthly love, she beat against her "fate," as Earle's captured and caged wild birds might beat against the bars.

She went out restlessly one morning into the fragrant air that came early from the sea across the fields where the clover nestles amongst the stalks of corn. In the year 1588 maidens rose betimes, and Doris was a notable housekeeper. Already she had set the serving-woman to her day's task, and had weighed and measured the day's stores; already she had been busy with sundry cooking contrivances to tempt her father's appetite; and had turned the camomile flowers which were drying in the still room, and filtered the "tisane" which Dame Townshend, a sick neighbor, was to profit by. Already she had fed her chick-

ens, and gathered the eggs from the hen-house; yet, it was early enough to see the grass all diamonded with dew, and the rays of the sun yet shining bright upon the eastern waves.

Poor little motherless Doris! Very lonely she felt at that hour now that her morning duties were over, and it was not yet time to go to her father's bedside to spell through a Psalm to him as was her daily custom. Doris was no scholar, and "the reading" was more of a toil than anything else; but she loved her father dearly, in spite of her occasional waywardness, and to do anything to please him was almost always a pleasure to herself in the end. How he suffered—that patient kind-voiced father—and how he had suffered in those terrible days before Doris was born, when the old house on the hill had been desolated by cruel men working the devil's work in the Name of Christ.

The girl thought of those times as she stood there, watching as she so often watched that pathway through the rye.

(To be Continued.)

THOUGHTS FOR THE NEW YEAR.

Once more the billows breasted, once more a voyage o'er;  
How near may be the haven, how close may be the shore!  
My soul, consult the reckoning, and look upon the chart,  
And ere the Old Year dieth, take counsel with thy heart.  
'Tis sad, the looking backward; and yet 'tis glorious too  
How skillful was our Pilot—what straits he brought us through;  
A peaceful voyage had it been, though storms might seem to 'whelm,  
If only we had trusted Him who never left the helm!  
If only we had trusted him! sole guardian that He sought;  
Nor questioned of the course He took, when waves tempestuous wrought;  
If only we had trusted him, upon the ocean lone,  
One-half the sorrow of the way we never need have known.  
As if he could forsake the souls for whom his blood was shed!  
As if He could forget their cry in hours of pain and dread!  
He sends us on a lonely path—He suffers angry skies,  
And listens then in hope to hear one trusting word arise.  
For trust is love, and love is trust, and when the heart is won,  
The need for many a bitter grief, for many a stroke, is done—  
Oh, hast thou learned thus much, my soul, since this old year was born?  
Then hang thy brightest colors forth to greet the New Year's morn!  
The flag of Hope! now cast it out to flutter from the mast!  
Let Faith her pennon fair unfold, we'll wave it to the last!  
Without a fear for sea or sky, we'll trust the Pilot's hand,  
For sure the course, and safe the bark, that yields to Christ's command.  
Then forth once more with courage fresh, as chime the New Year bells,  
He may have come ere once again that midnight echo swells;  
Or we may rest, our voyage o'er, beside the crystal sea,  
Beyond the tossing waves of time—for aye with him to be!  
—The Christian.



DAN LAVIN AND HIS SLOOP.