

THE NELSON CENTENARY.

TRAFALGAR, FOUGHT OCT. 21, 1805; THE GREATEST OF NAVAL BATTLES, CONSEQUENCES MOMENTOUS TO ALL THE WORLD, THE CENTENARY OF TRAFALGAR CHIEFLY IN HONOUR OF NELSON; HIS CHARACTERISTICS, BATTLE OF ST. VINCENT INITIATED HIS FAME, BATTLE IN ABOUKIR BAY, DARING TACTICS, BATTLE OF COPENHAGEN, DISOBEDIENCE OF ORDERS AND INGENIOUS EXPLANATION, CHASES AND MISSES THE ENEMY'S FLEET, RETIRES FROM SERVICE; VOLUNTEERS AND GIVEN COMMAND OF THE VICTORY, BATTLE OFF CAPE TRAFALGAR, DEATH, THE AGE OF GREAT NAVAL COMMANDERS; LORD NELSON THE MOST ILLUSTRIOUS.

Of all naval battles Trafalgar takes the lead in the importance of its consequences. It terminated an era which was disastrous to the best interests of the world's progress in civilisation. Had Nelson's fleet been destroyed, England would have been invaded, subjected to the horrors of war, almost certainly conquered and such bitter and revengeful memories implanted as would never have been effaced. There would have been no British Empire to-day had Trafalgar not been an overwhelming victory for the British fleet. An expedition was fully organized for a descent upon England, for the success of which it was essential that the English Channel be free for the invading fleet to cross. Trafalgar so blocked that scheme it was never heard of again, but a souvenir of it survives in the shape of a medal prematurely struck in honour of the successful invasion of England.

The centenary of Trafalgar is being very properly celebrated rather in memory of Nelson than of his final triumph as a naval hero.

Horatio Nelson was born, as were many other distinguished men, in a country rectory. He was a frail but very active child, who showed gleams of a high destiny. In his 12th year he entered naval life on board his uncle's ship, the "Raissonable," from which he was transferred to the "Triumph." Before his 21st year he was captain of a frigate. A year later he was the leader in a dashing exploit on the Isthmus of Panama, which brought him under the favourable notice of the authorities. After visiting Quebec he returned home and was presented at Court in his 25th year.

His daring, almost reckless tactics when attacking an enemy, his swiftness in detecting and taking advantage of any false move by an antagonist, his independence of orders, when he saw an advantage to be won by following his own course, and the extraordinary success of his exploits caused Captain Horatio Nelson to become a national hero.

He won his rank as admiral at the battle of St. Vincent by a brilliant manoeuvre taken against orders, which resulted in victory. This battle was the first move by Spain, France and Holland to invade England on a grand scale. The enemy's ships were superior in number and size to the British, but they had no Nelson in command. It was at St. Vincent that he boarded and took the "San Josef" of 112 guns, and then "San Nicholas." When leading the boarding party he exclaimed, "Westminster Abbey, or victory!" A phrase that made England ring with his praise. For St. Vincent he received promotion and the Order of the Bath.

In 1798 he was watching the French fleet which he found anchored in Aboukir Bay. He startled the French Admiral by thrusting the English vessels between him and the shore, a very risky procedure which caused one British vessel to run aground. A battle opened at 6 p.m., and lasted all night until noon next day. For this he was created Baron Nelson of the Nile and of Burnham Thorpe, his native village. He was thanked by Parliament and granted an annuity of £2,000. He received also magnificent presents from the Emperor of Russia and other potentates.

In 1801 trouble with the Danes led to the battle of Copenhagen where the defence was so valorous that Sir Hyde Parker hoisted the signal to cease firing. Nelson is said to have put his telescope to his blind eye and declared that he did not see this signal! Anyway he continued the fight until the Danes were defeated.

Out of this affair arose the "Danish Claims," which were annually discussed in Parliament for many years. The British shipowners claimed compensation for the losses inflicted on their vessels during the bombardment. The Danes paid for those, but the British government spent the money in purchasing a solid gold dinner-service for the King!

In 1805 Napoleon's victorious career reached its zenith and in the same year it was checked. The movements of the French fleet were such as to call for watchfulness. Nelson tracked them to the West Indies and back, then, being very sick, he struck his flag at Spithead and was thought to have retired from the service. News, however, came which caused him to volunteer for service. On 15th Sept. he took command of the "Victory" and on 29th, his birthday, he arrived off Cadiz. On 19th October, the enemy's fleet left that port and were chased to near Cape Trafalgar, where an action was commenced at noon. Here it was that Nelson's last never-to-be-forgotten signal was to run to the mast-head, "ENGLAND EXPECTS EVERY MAN TO DO HIS DUTY," which was met by three cheers from every ship.

Over the order of this battle there has been a most