

Chapter V

1798

Nelson rejoins Earl St. Vincent in the Vanguard—Sails in Pursuit of the French in Egypt—Returns to Sicily, and sails again to Egypt—Battle of the Nile.

Early in the year 1798, Sir Horatio Nelson hoisted his flag in the *Vanguard*, and was ordered to rejoin Earl St. Vincent. Upon his departure, his father addressed him with that affectionate solemnity by which all his letters were distinguished. "I trust in the Lord," said he, "that He will prosper your going out and your coming in. I earnestly desired once more to see you, and that wish has been heard. If I should presume to say, I hope to see you again, the question would be readily asked, How old art thou? *Vale! vale! Domine vale!*" It is said that a gloomy foreboding hung on the spirits of Lady Nelson at their parting. This could have arisen only from the dread of losing him by the chance of war. Any apprehension of losing his affections could hardly have existed, for all his correspondence to this time shows that he thought himself happy in his marriage; and his private character had hitherto been as spotless as his public conduct. One of the last things he said to her was, that his own ambition was satisfied, but that he went to raise her to that rank in which he had long wished to see her.

Immediately on his rejoining the fleet, he was despatched to the Mediterranean with a small squadron, in order to ascertain, if possible, the object of the great expedition which at that time was fitting out under Buonaparte at Toulon. The defeat of this armament, whatever might be its destination, was deemed by the British government an object paramount to every other; and Earl St. Vincent was directed, if he thought it necessary, to take his whole force into the Mediterranean, to relinquish, for that purpose, the blockade of the Spanish fleet, as a thing of inferior moment; but if he should deem a detachment sufficient, "I think it almost necessary," said the first lord of the Admiralty in his secret instructions, "to suggest to you the propriety of putting it under Sir Horatio Nelson." It is to the honour of Earl St. Vincent that he had already made the same choice. This appointment to a service in which so much honour might be acquired, gave great offence to the senior admirals of the fleet. Sir William Parker, who was a very excellent naval officer, and as gallant a man as any in the navy, and Sir John Orde, who on all occasions of service had acquitted himself with great honour, each wrote to Lord Spencer, complaining that so marked a preference should have been given to a junior of the same fleet. This resentment is what most men in a like case would feel; and if the preference thus given to Nelson had not originated in a clear perception that (as his friend Collingwood said of him a little while before) his spirit was equal to all undertakings, and his resources fitted to all occasions, an injustice would have been done to them by his appointment. But if the service were conducted with undeviating respect to seniority, the naval and military character would soon be brought down to the dead level of mediocrity.

The armament at Toulon consisted of thirteen ships of the line, seven forty-gun frigates, with twenty-four smaller vessels of war, and nearly 200 transports. Mr. Udney, our consul at Leghorn, was the first person who procured certain intelligence of the enemy's design against Malta; and, from his own sagacity, foresaw that Egypt must be their after object. Nelson sailed from Gibraltar on the 9th of May, with the *Vanguard*, *Orion*, and *Alexander*, seventy-fours; the *Caroline*, *Flora*, *Emerald*, and *Terpsichore* frigates; and the *Bonne Citoyenne*, sloop of war, to watch this formidable armament. On the 19th, when they were in the Gulf of Lyons, a gale came on from the N.W. It moderated so much on

the 20th as to enable them to get their top-gallant masts and yards aloft. After dark it again began to blow strong, but the ships had been prepared for a gale, and therefore Nelson's mind was easy. Shortly after midnight, however, his main-topmast went over the side, and the mizentopmast soon afterward. The night was so tempestuous that it was impossible for any signal either to be seen or heard; and Nelson determined, as soon as it should be daybreak, to wear, and scud before the gale; but at half-past three the fore-mast went in three pieces, and the bowsprit was found to be sprung in three places.

When day broke they succeeded in wearing the ship with a remnant of the spritsail. This was hardly to have been expected. The *Vanguard* was at that time twenty-five leagues south of the island of Hieres; with her head lying to the N.E., and if she had not wore, the ship must have drifted to Corsica. Captain Ball, in the *Alexander*, took her in tow, to carry her into the Sardinian harbour of St. Pietro. Nelson, apprehensive that this attempt might endanger both vessels, ordered him to cast off; but that excellent officer, with a spirit like his commanders, replied, he was confident he could save the *Vanguard*, and, by God's help, he would do it. There had been a previous coolness between these great men; but from this time Nelson became fully sensible of the extraordinary talents of Captain Ball, and a sincere friendship subsisted between them during the remainder of their lives. "I ought not," said the admiral, writing to his wife—"I ought not to call what has happened to the *Vanguard* by the cold name of accident: I believe firmly it was the Almighty's goodness, to check my consummate vanity. I hope it has made me a better officer, as I feel confident it has made me a better man. Figure to yourself, on Sunday evening at sunset, a vain man walking in his cabin, with a squadron around him, who looked up to their chief to lead them to glory, and in whom their chief placed the firmest reliance that the proudest ships of equal numbers belonging to France would have lowered their flags; figure to yourself, on Monday morning, when the sun rose, this proud man, his ship dismasted, his fleet dispersed, and himself in such distress that the meanest frigate out of France would have been an unwelcome guest." Nelson had, indeed, more reason to refuse the cold name of accident to this tempest than he was then aware of, for on that very day the French fleet sailed from Toulon, and must have passed within a few leagues of his little squadron, which was thus preserved by the thick weather that came on.

The British Government at this time, with a becoming spirit, gave orders that any port in the Mediterranean should be considered as hostile where the governor or chief magistrate should refuse to let our ships of war procure supplies of provisions, or of any article which they might require.

In these orders the ports of Sardinia were excepted. The continental possessions of the King of Sardinia were at this time completely at the mercy of the French, and that prince was now discovering, when too late, that the terms to which he had consented, for the purpose of escaping immediate danger, necessarily involved the loss of the dominions which they were intended to preserve. The citadel of Turin was now occupied by French troops; and his wretched court feared to afford the common rights of humanity to British ships, lest it should give the French occasion to seize on the remainder of his dominions—a measure for which it was certain they would soon make a pretext, if they did not find one. Nelson was informed that he could not be permitted to enter the port of St Pietro. Regardless of this interdict, which, under his circumstances, it would have been an act of suicidal folly to have regarded, he anchored in the harbour; and, by the exertions of Sir James Saumarez, Captain Ball, and Captain Berry, the *Vanguard* was refitted in four days; months would have been employed in refitting her in England. Nelson, with that proper sense of merit, wherever it was found, which proved at once the goodness and the greatness of his character, especially recommended to Earl St. Vincent the carpenter of the *Alexander*, under whose directions the ship had been repaired; stating, that he was an old and faithful servant of the Crown, who had been nearly thirty years a warrant carpenter, and

begging most earnestly that the Commander-in-Chief would recommend him to the particular notice of the Board of Admiralty. He did not leave the harbour without expressing his sense of the treatment which he had received there, in a letter to the Viceroy of Sardinia. "Sir," it said, "having, by a gale of wind, sustained some trifling damages, I anchored a small part of his Majesty's fleet under my orders off this island, and was surprised to hear, by an officer sent by the governor, that admittance was to be refused to the flag of his Britannic Majesty into this port. When I reflect, that my most gracious sovereign is the oldest, I believe, and certainly the most faithful ally which the King of Sardinia ever had, I could feel the sorrow which it must have been to his majesty to have given such an order; and also for your excellency, who had to direct its execution. I cannot but look at the African shore, where the followers of Mahomet are performing the part of the good Samaritan, which I look for in vain at St. Peter's, where it is said the Christian religion is professed."

The delay which was thus occasioned was useful to him in many respects; it enabled him to complete his supply of water, and to receive a reinforcement which Earl St. Vincent, being himself reinforced from England, was enabled to send him. It consisted of the best ships of his fleet; the *Culloden*, seventy-four, Captain T. Troubridge; *Goliath*, seventy-four, Captain T. Foley; *Minotaur*, seventy-four, Captain T. Louis; *Defence*, seventy-four, Captain John Peyton; *Bellerophon*, seventy-four, Captain H.D.E. Darby; *Majestic*, seventy-four, Captain G. B. Westcott; *Zealous*, seventy-four, Captain S. Hood; *Swiftsure*, seventy-four, Captain B. Hallowell; *Theseus*, seventy-four, Captain R. W. Miller; *Audacious*, seventy-four, Captain Davidge Gould. The *Leander*, fifty, Captain T. E. Thompson, was afterwards added. These ships were made ready for the service as soon as Earl St. Vincent received advice from England that he was to be reinforced. As soon as the reinforcement was seen from the mast-head of the admiral's ship, off Cadiz Bay, signal was immediately made to Captain Troubridge to put to sea; and he was out of sight before the ships from home cast anchor in the British station. Troubridge took with him no instructions to Nelson as to the course he was to steer, nor any certain account of the enemy's destination; everything was left to his own judgment. Unfortunately, the frigates had been separated from him in the tempest and had not been able to rejoin: they sought him unsuccessfully in the Bay of Naples, where they obtained no tidings of his course: and he sailed without them.

The first news of the enemy's armament was that it had surprised Malta, Nelson formed a plan for attacking it while at anchor at Gozo; but on the 22nd of June intelligence reached him that the French had left that island on the 16th, the day after their arrival. It was clear that their destination was eastward—he thought for Egypt—and for Egypt, therefore, he made all sail. Had the frigates been with him, he could scarcely have failed to gain information of the enemy; for want of them, he only spoke three vessels on the way: two came from Alexandria, one from the Archipelago, and neither of them had seen anything of the French. He arrived off Alexandria on the 28th, and the enemy were not there, neither was there any account of them; but the governor was endeavouring to put the city in a state of defence, having received advice from Leghorn that the French expedition was intended against Egypt, after it had taken Malta. Nelson then shaped his course to the northward for Caramania, and steered from thence along the southern side of Candia, carrying a press of sail both night and day, with a contrary wind. It would have been his delight, he said, to have tried Bonaparte on a wind. It would have been the delight of Europe, too, and the blessing of the world, if that fleet had been overtaken with its general on board. But of the myriads and millions of human beings who would have been preserved by that day's victory, there is not one to whom such essential benefit would have resulted as to Bonaparte himself. It would have spared him his defeat at Acre—his only disgrace; for to have been defeated by Nelson upon the seas would not have been disgraceful; it would have spared him all his after enormities. Hitherto his career had been glorious; the baneful principles of his heart had never yet

passed his lips; history would have represented him as a soldier of fortune, who had faithfully served the cause in which he engaged; and whose career had been distinguished by a series of successes unexampled in modern times. A romantic obscurity would have hung over the expedition to Egypt, and he would have escaped the perpetration of those crimes which have incarnadined his soul with a deeper dye than that of the purple for which he committed them—those acts of perfidy, midnight murder, usurpation, and remorseless tyranny, which have consigned his name to universal execration, now and for ever.

Conceiving that when an officer is not successful in his plans it is absolutely necessary that he should explain the motives upon which they were founded, Nelson wrote at this time an account and vindication of his conduct for having carried the fleet to Egypt. The objection which he anticipated was that he ought not to have made so long a voyage without more certain information. "My answer," said he, "is ready. Who was I to get it from? The governments of Naples and Sicily either knew not, or chose to keep me in ignorance. Was I to wait patiently until I heard certain accounts? If Egypt were their object, before I could hear of them they would have been in India. To do nothing was disgraceful; therefore I made use of my understanding. I am before your lordships' judgment; and if, under all circumstances, it is decided that I am wrong, I ought, for the sake of our country, to be superseded; for at this moment, when I know the French are not in Alexandria, I hold the same opinion as off Cape Passaro—that, under all circumstances, I was right in steering for Alexandria; and by that opinion I must stand or fall." Captain Ball, to whom he showed this paper, told him he should recommend a friend never to begin a defence of his conduct before he was accused of error: he might give the fullest reasons for what he had done, expressed in such terms as would evince that he had acted from the strongest conviction of being right; and of course he must expect that the public would view it in the same light. Captain Ball judged rightly of the public, whose first impulses, though, from want of sufficient information, they must frequently be erroneous, are generally founded upon just feelings. But the public are easily misled, and there are always persons ready to mislead them. Nelson had not yet attained that fame which compels envy to be silent; and when it was known in England that he had returned after an unsuccessful pursuit, it was said that he deserved impeachment; and Earl St. Vincent was severely censured for having sent so young an officer upon so important a service.

Baffled in his pursuit, he returned to Sicily. The Neapolitan ministry had determined to give his squadron no assistance, being resolved to do nothing which could possibly endanger their peace with the French Directory; by means, however, of Lady Hamilton's influence at court, he procured secret orders to the Sicilian governors; and under those orders obtained everything which he wanted at Syracuse—a timely supply; without which, he always said, he could not have recommenced his pursuit with any hope of success. "It is an old saying," said he in his letter, "that the devil's children have the devil's luck. I cannot to this moment learn, beyond vague conjecture, where the French fleet have gone to; and having gone a round of 600 leagues, at this season of the year, with an expedition incredible, here I am, as ignorant of the situation of the enemy as I was twenty-seven days ago. Every moment I have to regret the frigates having left me; had one-half of them been with me, I could not have wanted information. Should the French be so strongly secured in port that I cannot get at them, I shall immediately shift my flag into some other ship, and send the *Vanguard* to Naples to be refitted; for hardly any person but myself would have continued on service so long in such a wretched state." Vexed, however, and disappointed as he was, Nelson, with the true spirit of a hero, was still full of hope. "Thanks to your exertions," said he, writing to Sir. William and Lady Hamilton, "we have victualled and watered; and surely watering at the fountain of Arethusa, we must have victory. We shall sail with the first breeze; and be assured I will return either crowned with laurel or covered with cypress." Earl St. Vincent he assured, that if the French were above water he would find them out: he

still held his opinion that they were bound for Egypt: "but," said he to the First Lord of the Admiralty, "be they bound to the Antipodes, your lordship may rely that I will not lose a moment in bringing them to action."

On the 25th of July he sailed from Syracuse for the Morea. Anxious beyond measure, and irritated that the enemy should so long have eluded him, the tediousness of the nights made him impatient; and the officer of the watch was repeatedly called on to let him know the hour, and convince him, who measured time by his own eagerness, that it was not yet daybreak. The squadron made the Gulf of Coron on the 28th. Troubridge entered the port, and returned with intelligence that the French fleet had been seen about four weeks before steering to the S.E. from Candia. Nelson then determined immediately to return to Alexandria; and the British fleet accordingly, with every sail set, stood once more for the coast of Egypt. On the 1st of August, about 10 in the morning, they came in sight of Alexandria: the port had been vacant and solitary when they saw it last; it was now crowded with ships; and they perceived with exultation that the tri-coloured flag was flying upon the walls. At four in the afternoon, Captain Hood, in the *Zealous*, made the signal for the enemy's fleet. For many preceding days Nelson had hardly taken either sleep or food: he now ordered his dinner to be served, while preparations were making for battle; and when his officers rose from table, and went to their separate stations, he said to them, "Before this time to-morrow I shall have gained a peerage or Westminster Abbey."

The French, steering direct for Candia, had made an angular passage for Alexandria; whereas Nelson, in pursuit of them, made straight for that place, and thus materially shortened the distance. The comparative smallness of his force made it necessary to sail in close order, and it covered a less space than it would have done if the frigates had been with him: the weather also was constantly hazy. These circumstances prevented the English from discovering the enemy on the way to Egypt, though it appeared, upon examining the journals of the French officers taken in the action, that the two fleets must actually have crossed on the night of the 22nd of June. During the return to Syracuse, the chances of falling in with them were become fewer.

Why Buonaparte, having effected his landing, should not have suffered the fleet to return, has never yet been explained. This much is certain, that it was detained by his command, though, with his accustomed falsehood, he accused Admiral Brueys, after that officer's death, of having lingered on the coast contrary to orders. The French fleet arrived at Alexandria on the 1st of July, and Brueys, not being able to enter the port, which time and neglect had ruined, moored his ships in Aboukir Bay, in a strong and compact line of battle; the headmost vessel, according to his own account, being as close as possible to a shoal on the N.W., and the rest of the fleet forming a kind of curve along the line of deep water, so as not to be turned by any means in the S.W. By Buonaparte's desire he had offered a reward of 10,000 livres to any pilot of the country who would carry the squadron in, but none could be found who would venture to take charge of a single vessel drawing more than twenty feet. He had therefore made the best of his situation, and chosen the strongest position which he could possibly take in an open road. The commissary of the fleet said they were moored in such a manner as to bid defiance to a force more than double their own. This presumption could not then be thought unreasonable. Admiral Barrington, when moored in a similar manner off St. Lucia, in the year 1778, beat off the Comte d'Estaing in three several attacks, though his force was inferior by almost one-third to that which assailed it. Here, the advantage in numbers, both in ships, guns, and men, was in favour of the French. They had thirteen ships of the line and four frigates, carrying 1196 guns and 11,230 men. The English had the same number of ships of the line and one fifty-gun ship, carrying 1012 guns and 8068 men. The English ships were all seventy-fours; the French had three eighty-gun ships, and one three-decker

of one hundred and twenty.

During the whole pursuit it had been Nelson's practice, whenever circumstances would permit, to have his captains on board the *Vanguard*, and explain to them his own ideas of the different and best modes of attack, and such plans as he proposed to execute on falling in with the enemy, whatever their situation might be. There is no possible position, it is said, which he did not take into calculation. His officers were thus fully acquainted with his principles of tactics; and such was his confidence in their abilities that the only thing determined upon, in case they should find the French at anchor, was for the ships to form as most convenient for their mutual support, and to anchor by the stern. "First gain the victory," he said, "and then make the best use of it you can." The moment he perceived the position of the French, that intuitive genius with which Nelson was endowed displayed itself; and it instantly struck him that where there was room for an enemy's ship to swing, there was room for one of ours to anchor. The plan which he intended to pursue, therefore, was to keep entirely on the outer side of the French line, and station his ships, as far as he was able, one on the outer bow, and another on the outer quarter, of each of the enemy's. This plan of doubling on the enemy's ships was projected by Lord Hood, when he designed to attack the French fleet at their anchorage in Gourjean Road. Lord Hood found it impossible to make the attempt; but the thought was not lost upon Nelson, who acknowledged himself, on this occasion, indebted for it to his old and excellent commander. Captain Berry, when he comprehended the scope of the design, exclaimed with transport, "If we succeed, what will the world say?" "There is no *if* in the case," replied the admiral: "that we shall succeed is certain; who may live to tell the story is a very different question."

As the squadron advanced, they were assailed by a shower of shot and shells from the batteries on the island, and the enemy opened a steady fire from the starboard side of their whole line, within half gunshot distance, full into the bows of our van ships. It was received in silence: the men on board every ship were employed aloft in furling sails, and below in tending the braces and making ready for anchoring. A miserable sight for the French; who, with all their skill, and all their courage, and all their advantages of numbers and situation, were upon that element on which, when the hour of trial comes, a Frenchman has no hope. Admiral Brueys was a brave and able man; yet the indelible character of his country broke out in one of his letters, wherein he delivered it as his private opinion, that the English had missed him, because, not being superior in force, they did not think it prudent to try their strength with him. The moment was now come in which he was to be undeceived.

A French brig was instructed to decoy the English by manoeuvring so as to tempt them toward a shoal lying off the island of Bekier; but Nelson either knew the danger or suspected some deceit; and the lure was unsuccessful. Captain Foley led the way in the *Goliath*, outsailing the *Zealous*, which for some minutes disputed this post of honour with him. He had long conceived that if the enemy were moored in line of battle in with the land, the best plan of attack would be to lead between them and the shore, because the French guns on that side were not likely to be manned, nor even ready for action. Intending, therefore, to fix himself on the inner bow of the *Guerrier*, he kept as near the edge of the bank as the depth of water would admit; but his anchor hung, and having opened his fire he drifted to the second ship, the *Conquérant*, before it was clear; then anchored by the stern inside of her, and in ten minutes shot away her mast. Hood, in the *Zealous*, perceiving this, took the station which the *Goliath* intended to have occupied, and totally disabled the *Guerrier* in twelve minutes. The third ship which doubled the enemy's van was the *Orion*, Sir J. Saumarez; she passed to windward of the *Zealous*, and opened her larboard guns as long as they bore on *Guerrier*; then, passing inside the *Goliath*, sunk a frigate which annoyed her, hauled round toward the French line, and anchoring inside, between the fifth and sixth ships from the *Guerrier*, took her station on the larboard bow of the *Franklin* and the

quarter of the *Peuple Souverain*, receiving and returning the fire of both. The sun was now nearly down. The *Audacious*, Captain Could, pouring a heavy fire into the *Guerrier* and the *Conquérant*, fixed herself on the larboard bow of the latter, and when that ship struck, passed on to the *Peuple Souverain*. The *Theseus*, Capt Miller, followed, brought down the *Guerrier's* remaining main and mizzen masts, then anchored inside of the *Spartiate*, the third in the French line.

While these advanced ships doubled the French line, the *Vanguard* was the first that anchored on the outer side of the enemy, within half pistol-shot of their third ship, the *Spartiate*. Nelson had six colours flying in different parts of his rigging, lest they should be shot away; that they should be struck, no British admiral considers as a possibility. He veered half a cable, and instantly opened a tremendous fire; under cover of which the other four ships of his division, the *Minotaur*, *Bellerophon*, *Defence*, and *Majestic*, sailed on ahead of the admiral. In a few minutes, every man stationed at the first six guns in the fore part of the *Vanguard* deck was killed or wounded. These guns were three times cleared. Captain Louis, in the *Minotaur*, anchored just ahead, and took off the fire of the *Aquilon*, the fourth in the enemy's line. The *Bellerophon*, Captain Darby, passed ahead, and dropped her stern anchor on the starboard bow of the *Orient*, seventh in the line, Brueys' own ship, of one hundred and twenty guns, whose difference of force was in proportion of more than seven to three, and whose weight of ball, from the lower deck alone, exceeded that from the whole broadside of the *Bellerophon*. Captain Peyton, in the *Defence*, took his station ahead of the *Minotaur*, and engaged the *Franklin*, the sixth in the line, by which judicious movement the British line remained unbroken. The *Majestic*, Captain Westcott, got entangled with the main rigging of one of the French ships astern of the *Orient*, and suffered dreadfully from that three-decker's fire; but she swung clear, and closely engaging the *Heureux*, the ninth ship on the starboard bow, received also the fire of the *Tonnant*, which was the eighth in the line. The other four ships of the British squadron, having been detached previous to the discovery of the French, were at a considerable distance when the action began. It commenced at half after six; about seven night closed, and there was no other light than that from the fire of the contending fleets.

Troubridge, in the *Culloden*, then foremost of the remaining ships, was two leagues astern. He came on sounding, as the others had done: as he advanced, the increasing darkness increased the difficulty of the navigation; and suddenly, after having found eleven fathoms water, before the lead could be hove again he was fast aground; nor could all his own exertions, joined with those of the *Leander* and the *Mutiné* brig, which came to his assistance, get him off in time to bear a part in the action. His ship, however, served as a beacon to the *Alexander* and *Swiftsure*, which would else, from the course which they were holding, have gone considerably further on the reef, and must inevitably have been lost. These ships entered the bay, and took their stations in the darkness, in a manner still spoken of with admiration by all who remember it. Captain Hallowell, in the *Swiftsure*, as he was bearing down, fell in with what seemed to be a strange sail. Nelson had directed his ships to hoist four lights horizontally at the mizzen peak as soon as it became dark; and this vessel had no such distinction. Hallowell, however, with great judgment, ordered his men not to fire: if she was an enemy, he said, she was in too disabled a state to escape; but from her sails being loose, and the way in which her head was, it was probable she might be an English ship. It was the *Bellerophon*, overpowered by the huge *Orient*: her lights had gone overboard, nearly 200 of her crew were killed or wounded, all her masts and cables had been shot away; and she was drifting out of the line toward the leeside of the bay. Her station, at this important time, was occupied by the *Swiftsure*, which opened a steady fire on the quarter of the *Franklin* and the bows of the French admiral. At the same instant, Captain Ball, with the *Alexander*, passed under his stern, and anchored within-side on his larboard quarter, raking; him, and keeping up a severe fire of musketry upon his decks. The last ship which arrived to complete the destruction of the

enemy was the *Leander*. Captain Thompson, finding that nothing could be done that night to get off the *Culloden*, advanced with the intention of anchoring athwart-hawse of the *Orient*. The *Franklin* was so near her ahead that there was not room for him to pass clear of the two; he therefore took his station athwart-hawse of the latter in such a position as to rake both.

The two first ships of the French line had been dismasted within a quarter of an hour after the commencement of the action; and the others had in that time suffered so severely that victory was already certain. The third, fourth, and fifth were taken possession of at half-past eight.

Meantime Nelson received a severe wound on the head from a piece of langridge shot. Captain Berry caught him in his arms as he was falling. The great effusion of blood occasioned an apprehension that the wound was mortal: Nelson himself thought so; a large flap of the skin of the forehead, cut from the bone, had fallen over one eye; and the other being blind, he was in total darkness. When he was carried down, the surgeon—in the midst of a scene scarcely to be conceived by those who have never seen a cockpit in time of action, and the heroism which is displayed amid its horrors,—with a natural and pardonable eagerness, quitted the poor fellow then under his hands, that he might instantly attend the admiral. "No!" said Nelson, "I will take my turn with my brave fellows." Nor would he suffer his own wound to be examined till every man who had been previously wounded was properly attended to. Fully believing that the wound was mortal, and that he was about to die, as he had ever desired, in battle, and in victory, he called the chaplain, and desired him to deliver what he supposed to be his dying remembrance to lady Nelson; he then sent for Captain Louis on board from the *Minotaur*, that he might thank him personally for the great assistance which he had rendered to the *Vanguard*; and ever mindful of those who deserved to be his friends, appointed Captain Hardy from the brig to the command of his own ship, Captain Berry having to go home with the news of the victory. When the surgeon came in due time to examine his wound (for it was in vain to entreat him to let it be examined sooner), the most anxious silence prevailed; and the joy of the wounded men, and of the whole crew, when they heard that the hurt was merely superficial, gave Nelson deeper pleasure than the unexpected assurance that his life was in no danger. The surgeon requested, and as far as he could, ordered him to remain quiet; but Nelson could not rest. He called for his secretary, Mr. Campbell, to write the despatches. Campbell had himself been wounded, and was so affected at the blind and suffering state of the admiral that he was unable to write. The chaplain was then sent for; but before he came, Nelson with his characteristic eagerness took the pen, and contrived to trace a few words, marking his devout sense of the success which had already been obtained. He was now left alone; when suddenly a cry was heard on the deck that the *Orient* was on fire. In the confusion he found his way up, unassisted and unnoticed; and, to the astonishment of every one, appeared on the quarter-decks where he immediately gave order that the boats should be sent to the relief of the enemy.

It was soon after nine that the fire on, board the *Orient* broke out. Brueys was dead; he had received three wounds, yet would not leave his post: a fourth cut him almost in two. He desired not to be carried below, but to be left to die upon deck. The flames soon mastered his ship. Her sides had just been painted; and the oil-jars and paint buckets were lying on the poop. By the prodigious light of this conflagration, the situation of the two fleets could now be perceived, the colours of both being clearly distinguishable. About ten o'clock the ship blew up, with a shock which was felt to the very bottom of every vessel. Many of her officers and men jumped overboard, some clinging to the spars and pieces of wreck with which the sea was strewn, others swimming to escape from the destruction which they momentarily dreaded. Some were picked up by our boats; and some even in the heat and fury of the action were dragged into the lower ports of the nearest British ships by the British sailors. The greater part of her crew, however, stood the danger till the last, and continued to fire from the lower deck. This

tremendous explosion was followed by a silence not less awful: the firing immediately ceased on both sides; and the first sound which broke the silence, was the dash of her shattered masts and yards, falling into the water from the vast height to which they had been exploded. It is upon record that a battle between two armies was once broken off by an earthquake. Such an event would be felt like a miracle; but no incident in war, produced by human means, has ever equalled the sublimity of this co-instantaneous pause, and all its circumstances.

About seventy of the *Orient's* crew were saved by the English boats. Among the many hundreds who perished were the commodore, Casa-Bianca, and his son, a brave boy, only ten years old. They were seen floating on a shattered mast when the ship blew up. She had money on board (the plunder of Malta) to the amount of £600,000 sterling. The masses of burning wreck, which were scattered by the explosion, excited for some moments apprehensions in the English which they had never felt from any other danger. Two large pieces fell into the main and fore tops of the *Swiftsure* without injuring any person. A port-fire also fell into the main-royal of the *Alexander*; the fire which it occasioned was speedily extinguished. Captain Ball had provided, as far as human foresight could provide, against any such danger. All the shrouds and sails of his ship, not absolutely necessary for its immediate management, were thoroughly wetted, and so rolled up that they were as hard and as little inflammable as so many solid cylinders.

The firing recommenced with the ships to leeward of the centre, and continued till about three. At daybreak, the *Guillaume Tell* and the *Genereux*, the two rear ships of the enemy, were the only French ships of the line which had their colours flying; they cut their cables in the forenoon, not having been engaged, and stood out to sea, and two frigates with them. The *Zealous* pursued; but as there was no other ship in a condition to support Captain Hood, he was recalled. It was generally believed by the officers that if Nelson had not been wounded, not one of these ships could have escaped. The four certainly could not if the *Culloden* had got into action; and if the frigates belonging to the squadron had been present, not one of the enemy's fleet would have left Aboukir Bay. These four vessels, however, were all that escaped; and the victory was the most complete and glorious in the annals of naval history. "Victory," said Nelson, "is not a name strong enough for such a scene:" he called it a conquest. Of thirteen sail of the line, nine were taken and two burned. Of the four frigates, one was sunk, another, the *Artemise*, was burned in a villanous manner by her captain, M. Estandlet, who, having fired a broadside at the *Theseus*, struck his colours, then set fire to the ship and escaped with most of his crew to shore. The British loss, in killed and wounded, amounted to 895 Westcott was the only captain who fell; 3105 of the French, including the wounded, were sent on shore by cartel, and 5225 perished.

As soon as the conquest was completed, Nelson sent orders through the fleet to return thanksgiving in every ship for the victory with which Almighty God had blessed his majesty's arms. The French at Rosetta, who with miserable fear beheld the engagement, were at a loss to understand the stillness of the fleet during the performance of this solemn duty; but it seemed to affect many of the prisoners, officers as well as men; and graceless and godless as the officers were, some of them remarked that it was no wonder such order was Preserved in the British navy, when the minds of our men could be Impressed with such sentiments after so great a victory, and at a moment of such confusion. The French at Rosetta, seeing their four ships sail out of the bay unmolested, endeavoured to persuade themselves that they were in possession of the place of battle. But it was in vain thus to attempt, against their own secret and certain conviction, to deceive themselves; and even if they could have succeeded in this, the bonfires which the Arabs kindled along the whole coast, and over the country, for the three following nights, would soon have undeceived them. Thousands of Arabs and Egyptians

lined the shore, and covered the house tops during the action, rejoicing in the destruction which had overtaken their invaders. Long after the battle, innumerable bodies were seen floating about the bay, in spite of all the exertions which were made to sink them, as well from fear of pestilence as from the loathing and horror which the sight occasioned. Great numbers were cast up upon the Isle of Bekier (Nelson's Island, as it has since been called), and our sailors raised mounds of sand over them. Even after an interval of nearly three years Dr. Clarke saw them, and assisted in interring heaps of human bodies, which, having been thrown up by the sea where there were no jackals to devour them, presented a sight loathsome to humanity. The shore, for an extent of four leagues, was covered with wreck; and the Arabs found employment for many days in burning on the beach the fragments which were cast up, for the sake of the iron. Part of the *Orient's* main-mast was picked up by the *Swiftsure*. Captain Hallowell ordered his carpenter to make a coffin of it; the iron, as well as the wood, was taken from the wreck of the same ship; it was finished as well and handsomely as the workman's skill and materials would permit; and Hallowell then sent it to the admiral with the following letter:—"Sir, I have taken the liberty of presenting you a coffin made from the main mast of *l'Orient*, that when you have finished your military career in this world you may be buried in one of your trophies. But that that period may be far distant is the earnest wish of your sincere friend, Benjamin Hallowell."—An offering so strange, and yet so suited to the occasion, was received by Nelson in the spirit with which it was sent. As if he felt it good for him, now that he was at the summit of his wishes, to have death before his eyes, he ordered the coffin to be placed upright in his cabin. Such a piece of furniture, however, was more suitable to his own feelings than to those of his guests and attendants; and an old favourite servant entreated him so earnestly to let it be removed, that at length he consented to have the coffin carried below; but he gave strict orders that it should be safely stowed, and reserved for the purpose for which its brave and worthy donor had designed it.

The victory was complete; but Nelson could not pursue it as he would have done for want of means. Had he been provided with small craft, nothing could have prevented the destruction of the store-ships and transports in the port of Alexandria: four bomb-vessels would at that time have burned the whole in a few hours. "Were I to die this moment," said he in his despatches to the Admiralty, "*want of frigates* would be found stamped on my heart! No words of mine can express what I have suffered, and am suffering, for want of them." He had also to bear up against great bodily suffering: the blow had so shaken his head, that from its constant and violent aching, and the perpetual sickness which accompanied the pain, he could scarcely persuade himself that the skull was not fractured. Had it not been for Troubridge, Ball, Hood, and Hallowell, he declared that he should have sunk under the fatigue of refitting the squadron. "All," he said, "had done well; but these officers were his supporters." But, amidst his sufferings and exertions, Nelson could yet think of all the consequences of his victory; and that no advantage from it might be lost, he despatched an officer overland to India, with letters to the governor of Bombay, informing him of the arrival of the French in Egypt, the total destruction of their fleet, and the consequent preservation of India from any attempt against it on the part of this formidable armament. "He knew that Bombay," he said, "was their first object, if they could get there; but he trusted that Almighty God would overthrow in Egypt these pests of the human race. Buonaparte had never yet had to contend with an English officer, and he would endeavour to make him respect us." This despatch he sent upon his own responsibility, with letters of credit upon the East India Company, addressed to the British consuls, vice-consuls, and merchants on his route; Nelson saying, "that if he had done wrong, he hoped the bills would be paid, and he would repay the Company; for, as an Englishman, he should be proud that it had been in his power to put our settlements on their guard." The information which by this means reached India was of great importance. Orders had just been received for defensive preparations, upon a scale proportionate to the apprehended danger; and the extraordinary expenses which would otherwise have been incurred were thus prevented.

Nelson was now at the summit of glory; congratulations, rewards, and honours were showered upon him by all the states, and princes, and powers to whom his victory gave a respite. The first communication of this nature which he received was from the Turkish sultan, who, as soon as the invasion of Egypt was known, had called upon "all true believers to take arms against those swinish infidels the French, that they might deliver these blessed habitations from their accursed hands;" and who had ordered his "pashas to turn night into day in their efforts to take vengeance." The present of "his imperial majesty, the powerful, formidable, and most magnificent Grand Seignior," was a pelisse of sables, with broad sleeves, valued at 5,000 dollars.; and a diamond aigrette, valued at 18,000 dollars, the most honourable badge among the Turks; and in this instance more especially honourable, because it was taken from one of the royal turbans. "If it were worth a million," said Nelson to his wife, "my pleasure would be to see it in your possession." The sultan also sent, in a spirit worthy of imitation, a purse of 2,000 sequins, to be distributed among the wounded. The mother of the sultan sent him a box, set with diamonds, valued at 1,000 pounds. The Czar Paul, in whom the better part of his strangely compounded nature at this time predominated, presented him with his portrait, set in diamonds, in a gold box, accompanied with a letter of congratulation, written by his own hand. The king of Sardinia also wrote to him, and sent a gold box set with diamonds. Honours in profusion were awaiting him at Naples. In his own country the king granted these honourable augmentations to his armorial ensign: a chief undulated, *Argent*: thereon waves of the sea; from which a palm tree issuant, between a disabled ship on the dexter, and a ruinous battery on the sinister all proper; and for his crest, on a naval crown, OR, the chelengk, or plume, presented to him by the Turk, with the motto, *Palman qui meruit ferat*. And to his supporters, being a sailor on the dexter, and a lion on the sinister, were given these honourable augmentations: a palm branch in the sailor's hand, and another in the paw of the lion, both proper; with a tri-coloured flag and staff in the lion's mouth. He was created Baron Nelson of the Nile, and of Burnham Thorpe, with a pension of £2,000 for his own life, and those of his two immediate successors. When the grant was moved in the House of Commons, General Walpole expressed an opinion that a higher degree of rank ought to be conferred. Mr. Pitt made answer, that he thought it needless to enter into that question. "Admiral Nelson's fame," he said, "would be co-equal with the British name; and it would be remembered that he had obtained the greatest naval victory on record, when no man would think of asking whether he had been created a baron, a viscount, or an earl." It was strange that, in the very act of conferring a title, the minister should have excused himself for not having conferred a higher one, by representing all titles, on such an occasion, as nugatory and superfluous. True, indeed, whatever title had been bestowed, whether viscount, earl, marquis, duke, or prince, if our laws had so permitted, he who received it would have been Nelson still. That name he had ennobled beyond all addition of nobility; it was the name by which England loved him, France feared him, Italy, Egypt, and Turkey celebrated him, and by which he will continue to be known while the present kingdoms and languages of the world endure, and as long as their history after them shall be held in remembrance. It depended upon the degree of rank what should be the fashion of his coronet, in what page of the red book his name was to be inserted, and what precedence should be allowed his lady in the drawing-room and at the ball. That Nelson's honours were affected thus far, and no further, might be conceded to Mr. Pitt and his colleagues in administration; but the degree of rank which they thought proper to allot was the measure of their gratitude, though not of his service. This Nelson felt, and this he expressed, with indignation, among his friends.

Whatever may have been the motives of the ministry, and whatever the formalities with which they excused their conduct to themselves, the importance and magnitude of the victory were universally acknowledged. A grant of £10,000 was voted to Nelson by the East India Company; the Turkish Company presented him with a piece of plate; the City of London presented a sword to him, and to each of his captains; gold medals were distributed to the captains; and the first lieutenants of all the

ships were promoted, as had been done after Lord Howe's victory. Nelson was exceedingly anxious that the captain and first lieutenant of the *Culloden* should not be passed over because of their misfortune. To Troubridge himself he said, "Let us rejoice that the ship which got on shore was commanded by an officer whose character is so thoroughly established." To the Admiralty he stated that Captain Troubridge's conduct was as fully entitled to praise as that of any one officer in the squadron, and as highly deserving of reward. "It was Troubridge," said he, "who equipped the squadron so soon at Syracuse; it was Troubridge who exerted himself for me after the action; it was Troubridge who saved the *Culloden*, when none that I know in the service would have attempted it." The gold medal, therefore, by the king's express desire, was given to Captain Troubridge, "for his services both before and since, and for the great and wonderful exertion which he made at the time of the action in saving and getting off his ship." The private letter from the Admiralty to Nelson informed him that the first lieutenants of all the ships *Engaged* were to be promoted. Nelson instantly wrote to the commander-in-chief: "I sincerely hope," said he, "this is not intended to exclude the first lieutenant of the *Culloden*. For heaven's sake—for my sake, if it be so—get it altered. Our dear friend Troubridge has endured enough. His sufferings were, in every respect, more than any of us." To the Admiralty he wrote in terms equally warm. "I hope, and believe, the word *Engaged* is not intended to exclude the *Culloden*. The merits of that ship, and her gallant Captain, are too well known to benefit by anything I could say. Her misfortune was great in getting aground, while her more fortunate companions were in the full tide of happiness. No: I am confident that my good Lord Spencer will never add misery to misfortune. Captain Troubridge on shore is superior to captains afloat: in the midst of his great misfortunes he made those signals which prevented certainly the *Alexander* and *Swiftsure* from running on the shoals. I beg your pardon for writing on a subject which, I verily believe, has never entered your lordship's head; but my heart, as it ought to be, is warm to my gallant friends." Thus feelingly alive was Nelson to the claims, and interests, and feelings of others. The Admiralty replied, that the exception was necessary, as the ship had not been in action; but they desired the commander-in-chief to promote the lieutenant upon the first vacancy which should occur.

Nelson, in remembrance of an old and uninterrupted friendship, appointed Alexander Davison sole prize agent for the captured ships: upon which Davison ordered medals to be struck in gold, for the captains; in silver, for the lieutenants and warrant officers; in gilt metal for the petty officers; and in copper for the seamen and marines. The cost of this act of liberality amounted nearly to £2,000. It is worthy of record on another account;—for some of the gallant men, who received no other honorary badge of their conduct on that memorable day than this copper medal from a private individual, years afterwards, when they died upon a foreign station, made it their last request, that the medals might carefully be sent home to their respective friends. So sensible are brave men of honour, in whatever rank they may be placed.

Three of the frigates, whose presence would have been so essential a few weeks sooner, joined the squadron on the twelfth day after the action. The fourth joined a few days after them. Nelson thus received despatches, which rendered it necessary for him to return to Naples. Before he left Egypt he burned three of the prizes; they could not have been fitted for a passage to Gibraltar in less than a month, and that at a great expense, and with the loss of the services of at least two sail of the line. "I rest assured," he said to the Admiralty, "that they will be paid for, and have held out that assurance to the squadron. For if an admiral, after a victory, is to look after the captured ships, and not to the distressing of the enemy, very dearly, indeed, must the nation pay for the prizes. I trust that £60,000 will be deemed a very moderate sum for them: and when the services, time, and men, with the expense of fitting the three ships for a voyage to England, are considered, government will save nearly as much as they are valued at. Paying for prizes," he continued, "is no new idea of mine, and would often prove

an amazing saving to the state, even without taking into calculation what the nation loses by the attention of admirals to the property of the captors; an attention absolutely necessary, as a recompence for the exertions of the officers and men. An admiral may be amply rewarded by his own feelings, and by the approbation of his superiors; but what reward have the inferior officers and men but the value of the prizes? If an admiral takes that from them, on any consideration, he cannot expect to be well supported." To Earl St. Vincent he said, "If he could have been sure that government would have paid a reasonable value for them, he would have ordered two of the other prizes to be burnt, for they would cost more in refitting, and by the loss of ships attending them, than they were worth."

Having sent the six remaining prizes forward, under Sir James Saumarez, Nelson left Captain Hood, in the *Zealous* off Alexandria, with the *Swiftsure*, *Goliath*, *Alcmene*, *Zealous*, and *Emerald*, and stood out to sea himself on the seventeenth day after the battle.

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