

Chapter VI

1798 - 1800

Nelson returns to Naples—State of that Court and Kingdom—General Mack—The French approach Naples—Flight of the Royal Family—Successes of the Allies in Italy—Transactions in the Bay of Naples—Expulsion of the French from the Neapolitan and Roman States—Nelson is made Duke of Bronte—He leaves the Mediterranean and returns to England.

Nelson's health had suffered greatly while he was in the *Agamemnon*. "My complaint," he said, "is as if a girth were buckled taut over my breast, and my endeavour in the night is to get it loose." After the battle of Cape St. Vincent he felt a little rest to be so essential to his recovery, that he declared he would not continue to serve longer than the ensuing summer, unless it should be absolutely necessary; for in his own strong language, he had then been four years and nine months without one moment's repose for body or mind. A few months' intermission of labour he had obtained—not of rest, for it was purchased with the loss of a limb; and the greater part of the time had been a season of constant pain. As soon as his shattered frame had sufficiently recovered for him to resume his duties, he was called to services of greater importance than any on which he had hitherto been employed, which brought with them commensurate fatigue and care.

The anxiety which he endured during his long pursuit of the enemy, was rather changed in its direction than abated by their defeat; and this constant wakefulness of thought, added to the effect of his wound, and the exertions from which it was not possible for one of so ardent and wide-reaching a mind to spare himself, nearly proved fatal. On his way back to Italy he was seized with fever. For eighteen hours his life was despaired of; and even when the disorder took a favourable turn, and he was so far recovered as again to appear on deck, he himself thought that his end was approaching—such was the weakness to which the fever and cough had reduced him. Writing to Earl St. Vincent on the passage, he said to him, "I never expect, my dear lord, to see your face again. It may please God that this will be the finish to that fever of anxiety which I have endured from the middle of June; but be that as it pleases his goodness. I am resigned to his will."

The kindest attentions of the warmest friendship were awaiting him at Naples. "Come here," said Sir William Hamilton, "for God's sake, my dear friend, as soon as the service will permit you. A pleasant apartment is ready for you in my house, and Emma is looking out for the softest pillows to repose the few wearied limbs you have left." Happy would it have been for Nelson if warm and careful friendship had been all that waited him there. He himself saw at that time the character of the Neapolitan court, as it first struck an Englishman, in its true light; and when he was on the way, he declared that he detested the voyage to Naples, and that nothing but necessity could have forced him to it. But never was any hero, on his return from victory, welcomed with more heartfelt joy. Before the battle of Aboukir the Court at Naples had been trembling for its existence. The language which the Directory held towards it was well described by Sir William Hamilton as being exactly the language of a highwayman. The Neapolitans were told that Benevento might be added to their dominions, provided they would pay a large sum, sufficient to satisfy the Directory; and they were warned, that if the proposal were refused, or even if there were any delay in accepting it, the French would revolutionise all Italy. The joy, therefore, of the Court at Nelson's success was in proportion to the dismay from which that success relieved them. The queen was a daughter of Maria Theresa, and sister of Maria Antoinette. Had she

been the wisest and gentlest of her sex, it would not have been possible for her to have regarded the French without hatred and horror; and the progress of revolutionary opinions, while it perpetually reminded her of her sister's fate, excited no unreasonable apprehensions for her own. Her feelings, naturally ardent, and little accustomed to restraint, were excited to the highest pitch when the news of the victory arrived. Lady Hamilton, her constant friend and favourite, who was present, says, "It is not possible to describe her transports; she wept, she kissed her husband, her children, walked frantically about the room, burst into tears again, and again kissed and embraced every person near her; exclaiming, 'O brave Nelson! O God! bless and protect our brave deliverer! O Nelson! Nelson! what do we not owe you! O conqueror—saviour of Italy! O that my swollen heart could now tell him personally what we owe to him!'" She herself wrote to the Neapolitan ambassador at London upon the occasion, in terms which show the fulness of her joy, and the height of the hopes which it had excited. "I wish I could give wings," said she, "to the bearer of the news, and at the same time to our most sincere gratitude. The whole of the sea-coast of Italy saved; and this is owing alone to the generous English. This battle, or, to speak more correctly, this total defeat of the regicide squadron, was obtained by the valour of this brave admiral, seconded by a navy which is the terror of its enemies. The victory is so complete that I can still scarcely believe it; and if it were not the brave English nation, which is accustomed to perform prodigies by sea, I could not persuade myself that it had happened. It would have moved you to have seen all my children, boys and girls, hanging on my neck, and crying for joy at the happy news. Recommend the hero to his master: he has filled the whole of Italy with admiration of the English. Great hopes were entertained of some advantages being gained by his bravery, but no one could look for so total a destruction. All here are drunk with joy."

Such being the feelings of the royal family, it may well be supposed with what delight, and with what honours Nelson would be welcomed. Early on the 22nd of September the poor wretched *Vanguard*, as he called his shattered vessel, appeared in sight of Naples. The *Culloden* and *Alexander* had preceded her by some days, and given notice of her approach. Many hundred boats and barges were ready to go forth and meet him, with music and streamers and every demonstration of joy and triumph. Sir William and Lady Hamilton led the way in their state barge. They had seen Nelson only for a few days, four years ago, but they then perceived in him that heroic spirit which was now so fully and gloriously manifested to the world. Emma Lady Hamilton, who from this time so greatly influenced his future life, was a woman whose personal accomplishments have seldom been equalled, and whose powers of mind were not less fascinating than her person. She was passionately attached to the queen; and by her influence the British fleet had obtained those supplies at Syracuse, without which, Nelson always asserted, the battle of Aboukir could not have been fought. During the long interval which passed before any tidings were received, her anxiety had been hardly less than that of Nelson himself, while pursuing an enemy of whom he could obtain no information; and when the tidings were brought her by a joyful bearer, open-mouthed, its effect was such that she fell like one who had been shot. She and Sir William had literally been made ill by their hopes and fears, and joy at a catastrophe so far exceeding all that they had dared to hope for. Their admiration for the hero necessarily produced a degree of proportionate gratitude and affection; and when their barge came alongside the *Vanguard*, at the sight of Nelson, Lady Hamilton sprang up the ship's side, and exclaiming, "O God! is it possible!" fell into his arms more, he says, like one dead than alive. He described the meeting as "terribly affecting." These friends had scarcely recovered from their tears, when the king, who went out to meet him three leagues in the royal barge, came on board and took him by the hand, calling him his deliverer and preserver. From all the boats around he was saluted with the same appellations: the multitude who surrounded him when he landed repeated the same enthusiastic cries; and the lazzaroni displayed their joy by holding up birds in cages, and giving them their liberty as he passed.

His birth-day, which occurred a week after his arrival, was celebrated with one of the most splendid fetes ever beheld at Naples. But, notwithstanding the splendour with which he was encircled, and the flattering honours with which all ranks welcomed him, Nelson was fully sensible of the depravity, as well as weakness, of those by whom he was surrounded. "What precious moments," said he, "the courts of Naples and Vienna are losing! Three months would liberate Italy! but this court is so enervated that the happy moment will be lost. I am very unwell; and their miserable conduct is not likely to cool my irritable temper. It is a country of fiddlers and poets, whores and scoundrels." This sense of their ruinous weakness he always retained; nor was he ever blind to the mingled folly and treachery of the Neapolitan ministers, and the complication in iniquities under which the country groaned; but he insensibly, under the influence of Lady Hamilton, formed an affection for the court, to whose misgovernment the miserable condition of the country was so greatly to be imputed. By the kindness of her nature, as well as by her attractions, she had won his heart. Earl St. Vincent, writing to her at this time, says, "Pray do not let your fascinating Neapolitan dames approach too near our invaluable friend Nelson, for he is made of flesh and blood, and cannot resist their temptations." But this was addressed to the very person from whom he was in danger.

The state of Naples may be described in few words. The king was one of the Spanish Bourbons. As the Caesars have shown us to what wickedness the moral nature of princes may be perverted, so in this family, the degradation to which their intellectual nature can be reduced has been not less conspicuously evinced. Ferdinand, like the rest of his race, was passionately fond of field sports, and cared for nothing else. His queen had all the vices of the house of Austria, with little to mitigate, and nothing to ennoble them—provided she could have her pleasures, and the king his sports, they cared not in what manner the revenue was raised or administered. Of course a system of favouritism existed at court, and the vilest and most impudent corruption prevailed in every department of state, and in every branch of administration, from the highest to the lowest. It is only the institutions of Christianity, and the vicinity of better-regulated states, which prevent kingdoms, under such circumstances of misrule, from sinking into a barbarism like that of Turkey. A sense of better things was kept alive in some of the Neapolitans by literature, and by their intercourse with happier countries. These persons naturally looked to France, at the commencement of the Revolution, and during all the horrors of that Revolution still cherished a hope that, by the aid of France, they might be enabled to establish a new order of things in Naples. They were grievously mistaken in supposing that the principles of liberty would ever be supported by France, but they were not mistaken in believing that no government could be worse than their own; and therefore they considered any change as desirable. In this opinion men of the most different characters agreed. Many of the nobles, who were not in favour, wished for a revolution, that they might obtain the ascendancy to which they thought themselves entitled; men of desperate fortunes desired it, in the hope of enriching themselves; knaves and intriguers sold themselves to the French to promote it; and a few enlightened men, and true lovers of their country, joined in the same cause, from the purest and noblest motives. All these were confounded under the common name of Jacobins; and the Jacobins of the continental kingdoms were regarded by the English with more hatred than they deserved. They were classed with Phillippe Egalite, Marat, and Hebert; whereas they deserved rather to be ranked, if not with Locke, and Sydney, and Russell, at least with Argyle and Monmouth, and those who, having the same object as the prime movers of our own Revolution, failed in their premature but not unworthy attempt.

No circumstances could be more unfavourable to the best interests of Europe, than those which placed England in strict alliance with the superannuated and abominable governments of the continent. The subjects of those governments who wished for freedom thus became enemies to England, and dupes and agents of France. They looked to their own grinding grievances, and did not see the danger with

which the liberties of the world were threatened. England, on the other hand, saw the danger in its true magnitude, but was blind to these grievances, and found herself compelled to support systems which had formerly been equally the object of her abhorrence and her contempt. This was the state of Nelson's mind; he knew that there could be no peace for Europe till the pride of France was humbled, and her strength broken; and he regarded all those who were the friends of France as traitors to the common cause, as well as to their own individual sovereigns. There are situations in which the most opposite and hostile parties may mean equally well, and yet act equally wrong. The court of Naples, unconscious of committing any crime by continuing the system of misrule to which they had succeeded, conceived that, in maintaining things as they were, they were maintaining their own rights, and preserving the people from such horrors as had been perpetrated in France. The Neapolitan revolutionists thought that without a total change of system, any relief from the present evils was impossible, and they believed themselves justified in bringing about that change by any means. Both parties knew that it was the fixed intention of the French to revolutionise Naples. The revolutionists supposed that it was for the purpose of establishing a free government; the court, and all disinterested persons, were perfectly aware that the enemy had no other object than conquest and plunder.

The battle of the Nile shook the power of France. Her most successful general, and her finest army, were blocked up in Egypt—hopeless, as it appeared, of return; and the government was in the hands of men without talents, without character, and divided among themselves. Austria, whom Buonaparte had terrified into a peace, at a time when constancy on her part would probably have led to his destruction, took advantage of the crisis to renew the war. Russia also was preparing to enter the field with unbroken forces, led by a general, whose extraordinary military genius would have entitled him to a high and honourable rank in history, if it had not been sullied by all the ferocity of a barbarian. Naples, seeing its destruction at hand, and thinking that the only means of averting it was by meeting the danger, after long vacillations, which were produced by the fears and treachery of its council, agreed at last to join this new coalition with a numerical force of 80,000 men. Nelson told the king, in plain terms, that he had his choice, either to advance, trusting to God for his blessing on a just cause, and prepared to die sword in hand, or to remain quiet, and be kicked out of his kingdom; one of these things must happen. The king made answer he would go on, and trust in God and Nelson; and Nelson, who would else have returned to Egypt, for the purpose of destroying the French shipping in Alexandria, gave up his intention at the desire of the Neapolitan court, and resolved to remain on that station, in the hope that he might be useful to the movements of the army. He suspected also, with reason, that the continuance of his fleet was so earnestly requested, because the royal family thought their persons would be safer, in case of any mishap, under the British flag, than under their own.

His first object was the recovery of Malta—an island which the King of Naples pretended to claim. The Maltese, whom the villanous knights of their order had betrayed to France, had taken up arms against their rapacious invaders, with a spirit and unanimity worthy of the highest praise. They blockaded the French garrison by land, and a small squadron, under Captain Ball, began to blockade them by sea, on the 12th of October. Twelve days afterwards Nelson arrived. "It is as I suspected," he says: "the ministers at Naples know nothing of the situation of the island. Not a house or bastion of the town is in possession of the islanders: and the Marquis de Niza tells us they want arms, victuals, and support. He does not know that any Neapolitan officers are on the island; perhaps, although I have their names, none are arrived; and it is very certain, by the marquis's account, that no supplies have been sent by the governors of Syracuse and Messina." The little island of Gozo, dependent upon Malta, which had also been seized and garrisoned by the French, capitulated soon after his arrival, and was taken possession of by the British, in the name of his Sicilian Majesty—a power who had no better claim to it than France. Having seen this effected, and reinforced Captain Ball, he left that able officer

to perform a most arduous and important part, and returned himself to cooperate with the intended movements of the Neapolitans.

General Mack was at the head of the Neapolitan troops. All that is now doubtful concerning this man is, whether he was a coward or a traitor. At that time he was assiduously extolled as a most consummate commander, to whom Europe might look for deliverance. And when he was introduced by the king and queen to the British admiral, the queen said to him, "Be to us by land, general, what my hero Nelson has been by sea." Mack, on his part, did not fail to praise the force which he was appointed to command. "It was," he said, "the finest army in Europe." Nelson agreed with him that there could not be finer men; but when the general, at a review, so directed the operations of a mock fight, that by an unhappy blunder his own troops were surrounded, instead of those of the enemy, he turned to his friends and exclaimed with bitterness, that the fellow did not understand his business. Another circumstance, not less characteristic, confirmed Nelson in his judgment. "General Mack:" said he, in one of his letters, "cannot move without five carriages! I have formed my opinion. I heartily pray I may be mistaken."

While Mack, at the head of 32,000 men, marched into the Roman state, 5000 Neapolitans were embarked on board the British and Portuguese squadron, to take possession of Leghorn. This was effected without opposition; and the Grand Duke of Tuscany, whose neutrality had been so outrageously violated by the French, was better satisfied with the measure than some of the Neapolitans themselves. Nasselli, their general, refused to seize the French vessels at Leghorn, because he and the Duke di Sangro, who was ambassador at the Tuscan court, maintained that the king of Naples was not at war with France. "What!" said Nelson, "has not the king received, as a conquest made by him, the republican flag taken at Gozo? Is not his own flag flying there, and at Malta, not only by his permission, but by his order? Is not his flag shot at every day by the French, and their shot returned from batteries which bear that flag? Are not two frigates and a corvette placed under my orders ready to fight the French, meet them where they may? Has not the king sent publicly from Naples guns, mortars, &c., with officers and artillery, against the French in Malta? If these acts are not tantamount to any written paper, I give up all knowledge of what is war." This reasoning was of less avail than argument addressed to the general's fears. Nelson told him that, if he permitted the many hundred French who were then in the mole to remain neutral, till they had a fair opportunity of being active, they had one sure resource, if all other schemes failed, which was to set one vessel on fire; the mole would be destroyed, probably the town also, and the port ruined for twenty years. This representation made Naselli agree to the half measure of laying an embargo on the vessels; among them were a great number of French privateers, some of which were of such force as to threaten the greatest mischief to our commerce, and about seventy sail of vessels belonging to the Ligurian republic, as Genoa was now called, laden with corn, and ready to sail for Genoa and France; where their arrival would have expedited the entrance of more French troops into Italy. "The general," said Nelson, "saw, I believe, the consequence of permitting these vessels to depart, in the same light as myself; but there is this difference between us: he prudently, and certainly safely, waits the orders of his court, taking no responsibility upon himself; I act from the circumstances of the moment, as I feel may be most advantageous for the cause which I serve, taking all responsibility on myself." It was in vain to hope for anything vigorous or manly from such men as Nelson was compelled to act with. The crews of the French ships and their allies were ordered to depart in two days. Four days elapsed and nobody obeyed the order; nor, in spite of the representations of the British minister, Mr. Wyndham, were any means taken to enforce it: the true Neapolitan shuffle, as Nelson called it, took place on all occasions. After an absence of ten days he returned to Naples; and receiving intelligence there from Mr. Wyndham that the privateers were at last to be disarmed, the corn landed, and the crews sent

away, he expressed his satisfaction at the news in characteristic language, saying, "So far I am content. The enemy will be distressed; and, thank God, I shall get no money. The world, I know, think that money is our god; and now they will be undeceived as far as relates to us. Down, down with the French! is my constant prayer."

Odes, sonnets, and congratulatory poems of every description were poured in upon Nelson on his arrival at Naples. An Irish Franciscan, who was one of the poets, not being content with panegyric upon this occasion, ventured on a flight of prophecy, and predicted that Lord Nelson would take Rome with his ships. His lordship reminded Father M'Cormick that ships could not ascend the Tiber; but the father, who had probably forgotten this circumstance, met the objection with a bold front, and declared he saw that it would come to pass notwithstanding. Rejoicings of this kind were of short duration. The King of Naples was with the army which had entered Rome; but the castle of St. Angelo was held by the French, and 13,000 French were strongly posted in the Roman states at Castellana. Mack had marched against them with 20,000 men. Nelson saw that the event was doubtful, or rather that there could be very little hope of the result. But the immediate fate of Naples, as he well knew, hung upon the issue. "If Mack is defeated," said he, "in fourteen days this country is lost; for the emperor has not yet moved his army, and Naples has not the power of resisting the enemy. It was not a case for choice, but of necessity, which induced the king to march out of his kingdom, and not wait till the French had collected a force sufficient to drive him out of it in a week." He had no reliance upon the Neapolitan officers, who, as he described them, seemed frightened at a drawn sword or a loaded gun; and he was perfectly aware of the consequences which the sluggish movements and deceitful policy of the Austrians were likely to bring down upon themselves and all their continental allies. "A delayed war on the part of the emperor," said he, writing to the British minister at Vienna, "will be destructive to this monarchy of Naples; and, of course, to the newly-acquired dominions of the Emperor in Italy. Had the war commenced in September or October, all Italy would, at this moment, have been liberated. This month is worse than the last; the next will render the contest doubtful; and, in six months, when the Neapolitan republic will be organised, armed, and with its numerous resources called forth, the emperor will not only be defeated in Italy, but will totter on his throne at Vienna. *Down, down with the French!* ought to be written in the council-room of every country in the world; and may Almighty God give right thoughts to every sovereign, is my constant prayer!" His perfect foresight of the immediate event was clearly shown in this letter, when he desired the ambassador to assure the empress (who was a daughter of the house of Naples) that, notwithstanding the councils which had shaken the throne of her father and mother, he would remain there, ready to save their persons, and her brothers and sisters; and that he had also left ships at Leghorn to save the lives of the grand duke and her sister: "For all," said he, "must be a republic, if the emperor does not act with expedition and vigour."

His fears were soon verified. "The Neapolitan officers," said Nelson, "did not lose much honour, for, God knows, they had not much to lose; but they lost all they had." General St. Philip commanded the right wing, of 19,000 men. He fell in with 3000 of the enemy; and, as soon as he came near enough, deserted to them. One of his men had virtue enough to level a musket at him, and shot him through the arm; but the wound was not sufficient to prevent him from joining with the French in pursuit of his own countrymen. Cannon, tents, baggage, and military chest, were all forsaken by the runaways, though they lost only forty men; for the French having put them to flight and got possession of everything, did not pursue an army of more than three times their own number. The main body of the Neapolitans, under Mack, did not behave better. The king returned to Naples, where every day brought with it tidings of some new disgrace from the army and the discovery of some new treachery at home; till, four days after his return, the general sent him advice that there was no prospect of stopping the progress of the enemy, and that the royal family must look to their own personal safety. The state of

the public mind at Naples was such, at this time, that neither the British minister nor the British Admiral thought it prudent to appear at court. Their motions were watched; and the revolutionists had even formed a plan for seizing and detaining them as hostages, to prevent an attack on the city after the French should have taken possession of it. A letter which Nelson addressed at this time to the First Lord of the Admiralty, shows in what manner he contemplated the possible issue of the storm, it was in these words:—"My dear lord, there is an old saying, that when things are at the worst they must mend: now the mind of man cannot fancy things worse than they are here. But, thank God! my health is better, my mind never firmer, and my heart in the right trim to comfort, relieve, and protect those whom it is my duty to afford assistance to. Pray, my lord, assure our gracious sovereign that while I live, I will support his glory; and that if I fall, it shall be in a manner worthy of your lordship's faithful and obliged Nelson. I must not write more. Every word may be a text for a long letter."

Meantime Lady Hamilton arranged every thing for the removal of the royal family. This was conducted on her part with the greatest address, and without suspicion, because she had been in habits of constant correspondence with the queen. It was known that the removal could not be effected without danger; for the mob, and especially the lazzaroni, were attached to the king; and as at this time they felt a natural presumption in their own numbers and strength, they insisted that he should not leave Naples. Several persons fell victims to their fury; among others was a messenger from Vienna, whose body was dragged under the windows of the palace in the king's sight. The king and queen spoke to the mob, and pacified them; but it would not have been safe, while they were in this agitated state, to have embarked the effects of the royal family openly. Lady Hamilton, like a heroine of modern romance, explored with no little danger a subterraneous passage leading from the palace to the sea-side: through this passage the royal treasures, the choicest pieces of painting and sculpture, and other property to the amount of two millions and a half, were conveyed to the shore, and stowed safely on board the English ships. On the night of the 21st, at half-past eight, Nelson landed, brought out the whole royal family, embarked them in three barges, and carried them safely, through a tremendous sea, to the *Vanguard*. Notice was then immediately given to the British merchants, that they would be received on board any ships in the squadron. Their property had previously been embarked in transports. Two days were passed in the bay, for the purpose of taking such persons on board as required an asylum; and, on the night of the 23rd, the fleet sailed. The next day a more violent storm arose than Nelson had ever before encountered. On the 25th, the youngest of the princes was taken ill, and died in Lady Hamilton's arms. During this whole trying season, Lady Hamilton waited upon the royal family with the zeal of the most devoted servant, at a time when, except one man, no person belonging to the court assisted them.

On the morning of the 26th the royal family were landed at Palermo. It was soon seen that their flight had not been premature. Prince Pignatelli, who had been left as vicar-general and viceroy, with orders to defend the kingdom to the last rock in Calabria, sent plenipotentiaries to the French camp before Capua; and they, for the sake of saving the capital, signed an armistice, by which the greater part of the kingdom was given up to the enemy: a cession that necessarily led to the loss of the whole. This was on the 10th of January. The French advanced towards Naples. Mack, under pretext of taking shelter from the fury of the lazzaroni, fled to the French General Championet, who sent him under an escort to Milan; but as France hoped for further services from this wretched traitor, it was thought prudent to treat him apparently as a prisoner of war. The Neapolitan army disappeared in a few days: of the men, some, following their officers, deserted to the enemy; the greater part took the opportunity of disbanding themselves. The lazzaroni proved true to their country; they attacked the enemy's advanced posts, drove them in, and were not dispirited by the murderous defeat which they suffered from the main body. Flying into the city, they continued to defend it, even after the French had planted their

artillery in the principal streets. Had there been a man of genius to have directed their enthusiasm, or had there been any correspondent feelings in the higher ranks, Naples might have set a glorious example to Europe, and have proved the grave of every Frenchman who entered it. But the vices of the government had extinguished all other patriotism than that of the rabble, who had no other than that sort of loyalty which was like the fidelity of a dog to its master. This fidelity the French and their adherents counteracted by another kind of devotion: the priests affirmed that St. Januarius had declared in favour of the revolution. The miracle of his blood was performed with the usual success, and more than usual effect, on the very evening when, after two days of desperate fighting, the French obtained possession of Naples. A French guard of honour was stationed at his church. Championet gave, "Respect for St. Januarius!" as the word for the army; and the next day TE DEUM was sung by the archbishop in the cathedral; and the inhabitants were invited to attend the ceremony, and join in thanksgiving for the glorious entry of the French; who, it was said, being under the peculiar protection of Providence, had regenerated the Neapolitans, and were come to establish and consolidate their happiness.

It seems to have been Nelson's opinion that the Austrian cabinet regarded the conquest of Naples with complacency, and that its measures were directed so as designedly not to prevent the French from overrunning it. That cabinet was assuredly capable of any folly, and of any baseness; and it is not improbable that at this time, calculating upon the success of the new coalition, it indulged a dream of adding extensively to its former Italian possessions; and, therefore, left the few remaining powers of Italy to be overthrown, as a means which would facilitate its own ambitious views. The King of Sardinia, finding it impossible longer to endure the exactions of France and the insults of the French commissary, went to Leghorn, embarked on board a Danish frigate, and sailed, under British protection, to Sardinia—that part of his dominions which the maritime supremacy of England rendered a secure asylum. On his arrival he published a protest against the conduct of France, declaring, upon the faith and word of a king, that he had never infringed, even in the slightest degree, the treaties which he had made with the French republic. Tuscany was soon occupied by French troops—a fate which bolder policy might, perhaps, have failed to avert, but which its weak and timid neutrality rendered inevitable. Nelson began to fear even for Sicily. "Oh, my dear sir," said he, writing to Commodore Duckworth, "one thousand English troops would save Messina; and I fear General Stuart cannot give me men to save this most important island!" But his representations were not lost upon Sir Charles Stuart. This officer hastened immediately from Minorca with 1000 men, assisted in the measures of defence which were taken, and did not return before he had satisfied himself that, if the Neapolitans were excluded from the management of affairs, and the spirit of the peasantry properly directed, Sicily was safe. Before his coming, Nelson had offered the king, if no resources should arrive, to defend Messina with the ship's company of an English man-of-war.

Russia had now entered into the war. Corfu, surrendered to a Russian and Turkish fleet, acting now, for the first time, in strange confederacy yet against a power which was certainly the common and worst enemy of both. Troubridge having given up the blockade of Alexandria to Sir Sidney Smith, joined Nelson, bringing with him a considerable addition of strength; and in himself what Nelson valued more, a man, upon whose sagacity, indefatigable zeal, and inexhaustible resources, he could place full reliance. Troubridge was intrusted to commence the operations against the French in the bay of Naples. Meantime Cardinal Ruffo, a man of questionable character, but of a temper fitted for such times, having landed in Calabria, raised what he called a Christian army, composed of the best and the vilest materials—loyal peasants, enthusiastic priests and friars, galley slaves, the emptying of the jails, and banditti. The islands in the bay of Naples were joyfully delivered up by the inhabitants, who were in a state of famine already, from the effect of this baleful revolution. Troubridge distributed among

them all his flour, and Nelson pressed the Sicilian court incessantly for supplies; telling them that £10,000 given away in provisions would, at this time, purchase a kingdom. Money, he was told, they had not to give; and the wisdom and integrity which might have supplied its wants were not to be found. "There is nothing," said he, "which I propose, that is not, so far as orders go, implicitly complied with; but the execution is dreadful, and almost makes me mad. My desire to serve their majesties faithfully, as is my duty, has been such that I am almost blind and worn out; and cannot in my present state hold out much longer."

Before any government can be overthrown by the consent of the people, the government must be intolerably oppressive, or the people thoroughly corrupted. Bad as the misrule at Naples had been, its consequences had been felt far less there than in Sicily; and the peasantry had that attachment to the soil which gives birth to so many of the noblest as well as of the happiest feelings. In all the islands the people were perfectly frantic with joy when they saw the Neapolitan colours hoisted. At Procida, Troubridge could not procure even a rag of the tri-coloured flag to lay at the king's feet: it was rent into ten thousand pieces by the inhabitants, and entirely destroyed. "The horrid treatment of the French," he said, "had made them mad." It exasperated the ferocity of a character which neither the laws nor the religion under which they lived tended to mitigate. Their hatred was especially directed against the Neapolitan revolutionists; and the fishermen, in concert among themselves, chose each his own victim, whom he would stiletto when the day of vengeance should arrive. The head of one was sent off one morning to Troubridge, with his basket of grapes for breakfast; and a note from the Italian who had, what he called, the glory of presenting it, saying, he had killed the man as he was running away, and begging his excellency to accept the head, and consider it as a proof of the writer's attachment to the crown. With the first successes of the court the work of punishment began. The judge at Ischia said it was necessary to have a bishop to degrade the traitorous priests before he could execute them; upon which Troubridge advised him to hang them first, and send them to him afterwards, if he did not think that degradation sufficient. This was said with the straightforward feeling of a sailor, who cared as little for canon-law as he knew about it; but when he discovered that the judge's orders were to go through the business in a summary manner, under his sanction, he told him at once that could not be, for the prisoners were not British subjects; and he declined having anything to do with it. There were manifestly persons about the court, who, while they thirsted for the pleasure of vengeance, were devising how to throw the odium of it upon the English. They wanted to employ an English man-of-war to carry the priests to Palermo for degradation, and then bring them back for execution; and they applied to Troubridge for a hangman, which he indignantly refused. He, meantime, was almost heartbroken by the situation in which he found himself. He had promised relief to the islanders, relying upon the queen's promise to him. He had distributed the whole of his private stock,—there was plenty of grain at Palermo, and in its neighbourhood, and yet none was sent him: the enemy, he complained, had more interest there than the king; and the distress for bread which he witnessed was such, he said, that it would move even a Frenchman to pity.

Nelson's heart, too, was at this time a-shore. "To tell you," he says, writing to Lady Hamilton, "how dreary and uncomfortable the *Vanguard* appears, is only telling you what it is to go from the pleasantest society to a solitary cell, or from the dearest friends to no friends. I am now perfectly the GREAT MAN—not a creature near me. From my heart I wish myself the little man again. You and good Sir William have spoiled me for any place but with you."

His mind was not in a happier state respecting public affairs. "As to politics," said he, "at this time they are my abomination: the ministers of kings and princes are as great scoundrels as ever lived. The brother of the emperor is just going to marry the great Something of Russia, and it is more than

expected that a kingdom is to be found for him in Italy, and that the king of Naples will be sacrificed." Had there been a wise and manly spirit in the Italian states, or had the conduct of Austria been directed by anything like a principle of honour, a more favourable opportunity could not have been desired for restoring order and prosperity in Europe, than the misconduct of the French Directory at this time afforded. But Nelson perceived selfishness and knavery wherever he looked; and even the pleasure of seeing a cause prosper, in which he was so zealously engaged, was poisoned by his sense of the rascality of those with whom he was compelled to act. At this juncture intelligence arrived that the French fleet had escaped from Brest, under cover of a fog, passed Cadiz unseen by Lord Keith's squadron, in hazy weather, and entered the Mediterranean. It was said to consist of twenty-four sail of the line, six frigates, and three sloops. The object of the French was to liberate the Spanish fleet, form a junction with them, act against Minorca and Sicily, and overpower our naval force in the Mediterranean, by falling in with detached squadrons, and thus destroying it in detail. When they arrived off Carthagena, they requested the Spanish ships to make sail and join; but the Spaniards replied they had not men to man them. To this it was answered that the French had men enough on board for that purpose. But the Spaniards seem to have been apprehensive of delivering up their ships thus entirely into the power of such allies, and refused to come out. The fleet from Cadiz, however, consisting of from seventeen to twenty sail of the line, got out, under Masaredo, a man who then bore an honourable name, which he has since rendered infamous by betraying his country. They met with a violent storm off the coast of Oran, which dismasted many of their ships, and so effectually disabled them as to prevent the junction, and frustrate a well-planned expedition.

Before this occurred, and while the junction was as probable as it would have been formidable, Nelson was in a state of the greatest anxiety. "What a state am I in!" said he to Earl St. Vincent. "If I go, I risk, and more than risk, Sicily; for we know, from experience, that more depends upon opinion than upon acts themselves; and, as I stay, my heart is breaking." His first business was to summon Troubridge to join him, with all the ships of the line under his command, and a frigate, if possible. Then hearing that the French had entered the Mediterranean, and expecting them at Palermo, where he had only his own ship—with that single ship he prepared to make all the resistance possible. Troubridge having joined him, he left Captain E. J. Foote, of the *Seahorse*, to command the smaller vessels in the bay of Naples, and sailed with six ships—one a Portuguese, and a Portuguese corvette—telling Earl St. Vincent that the squadron should never fall into the hands of the enemy. "And before we are destroyed," said he, "I have little doubt but they will have their wings so completely clipped that they may be easily overtaken." It was just at this time that he received from Captain Hallowell the present of the coffin. Such a present was regarded by the men with natural astonishment. One of his old shipmates in the *Agamemnon* said, "We shall have hot work of it indeed! You see the admiral intends to fight till he is killed; and there he is to be buried." Nelson placed it upright against the bulkhead of his cabin, behind his chair, where he sat at dinner. The gift suited him at this time. It is said that he was disappointed in the step-son whom he had loved so dearly from his childhood, and who had saved his life at Teneriffe; and it is certain that he had now formed an infatuated attachment for Lady Hamilton, which totally weaned his affections from his wife. Farther than this, there is no reason to believe that this most unfortunate attachment was criminal; but this was criminality enough, and it brought with it its punishment. Nelson was dissatisfied with himself, and therefore weary of the world. This feeling he now frequently expressed. "There is no true happiness in this life," said he, "and in my present state I could quit it with a smile." And in a letter to his old friend Davison he said, "Believe me, my only wish is to sink with honour into the grave; and when that shall please God, I shall meet death with a smile. Not that I am insensible to the honours and riches my king and country have heaped upon me—so much more than any officer could deserve; yet am I ready to quit this world of trouble, and envy none but those of the estate six feet by two."

Well had it been for Nelson if he had made no other sacrifices to this unhappy attachment than his peace of mind; but it led to the only blot upon his public character. While he sailed from Palermo, with the intention of collecting his whole force, and keeping off Maretimo, either to receive reinforcements there if the French were bound upwards, or to hasten to Minorca if that should be their destination, Captain Foote, in the *Sea-horse*, with the Neapolitan frigates, and some small vessels, under his command, was left to act with a land force consisting of a few regular troops, of four different nations, and with the armed rabble which Cardinal Ruffo called the Christian army. His directions were to cooperate to the utmost of his power with the royalists, at whose head Ruffo had been placed, and he had no other instructions whatever. Ruffo advancing without any plan, but relying upon the enemy's want of numbers, which prevented them from attempting to act upon the offensive, and ready to take advantage of any accident which might occur, approached Naples. Fort St. Elmo, which commands the town, was wholly garrisoned by the French troops; the castles of Uovo and Nuovo, which commanded the anchorage, were chiefly defended by Neapolitan revolutionists, the powerful men among them having taken shelter there. If these castles were taken, the reduction of Fort St. Elmo would be greatly expedited. They were strong places, and there was reason to apprehend that the French fleet might arrive to relieve them. Ruffo proposed to the garrison to capitulate, on condition that their persons and property should be guaranteed, and that they should, at their own option, either be sent to Toulon or remain at Naples, without being molested either in their persons or families. This capitulation was accepted: it was signed by the cardinal, and the Russian and Turkish commanders; and lastly, by Captain Foote, as commander of the British force. About six-and-thirty hours afterwards Nelson arrived in the bay with a force which had joined him during his cruise, consisting of seventeen sail of the line, with 1700 troops on board, and the *Prince Royal* of Naples in the admiral's ship. A flag of truce was flying on the castles, and on board the *Seahorse*. Nelson made a signal to annul the treaty; declaring that he would grant rebels no other terms than those of unconditional submission. The cardinal objected to this: nor could all the arguments of Nelson, Sir W. Hamilton, and Lady Hamilton, who took an active part in the conference, convince him that a treaty of such a nature, solemnly concluded, could honourably be set aside. He retired at last, silenced by Nelson's authority, but not convinced. Captain Foote was sent out of the bay; and the garrisons, taken out of the castles under pretence of carrying the treaty into effect, were delivered over as rebels to the vengeance of the Sicilian court. A deplorable transaction! a stain upon the memory of Nelson and the honour of England! To palliate it would be in vain; to justify it would be wicked: there is no alternative, for one who will not make himself a participator in guilt, but to record the disgraceful story with sorrow and with shame.

Prince Francesco Caraccioli, a younger branch of one of the noblest Neapolitan families, escaped from one of these castles before it capitulated. He was at the head of the marine, and was nearly seventy years of age, bearing a high character, both for professional and personal merit. He had accompanied the court to Sicily; but when the revolutionary government, or Parthenopean Republic, as it was called, issued an edict, ordering all absent Neapolitans to return on pain of confiscation of their property, he solicited and obtained permission of the king to return, his estates being very great. It is said that the king, when he granted him this permission, warned him not to take any part in politics; expressing at the same time his own persuasion that he should recover his kingdom. But neither the king, nor he himself, ought to have imagined that, in such times, a man of such reputation would be permitted to remain inactive; and it soon appeared that Caraccioli was again in command of the navy, and serving under the republic against his late sovereign. The sailors reported that he was forced to act thus; and this was believed, till it was seen that he directed ably the offensive operations of the revolutionists, and did not avail himself of opportunities for escaping when they offered. When the recovery of Naples was evidently near, he applied to Cardinal Ruffo, and to the Duke of Calvirano, for protection;

expressing his hope that the few days during which he had been forced to obey the French would not outweigh forty years of faithful services; but perhaps not receiving such assurances as he wished, and knowing too well the temper of the Sicilian court, he endeavoured to secrete himself, and a price was set upon his head. More unfortunately for others than for himself, he was brought in alive, having been discovered in the disguise of a peasant, and carried one morning on board Lord Nelson's ship, with his hands tied behind him.

Caraccioli was well known to the British officers, and had been ever highly esteemed by all who knew him. Captain Hardy ordered him immediately to be unbound, and to be treated with all those attentions which he felt due to a man who, when last on board the *Foudroyant*, had been received as an admiral and a prince. Sir William and Lady Hamilton were in the ship; but Nelson, it is affirmed, saw no one except his own officers during the tragedy which ensued. His own determination was made; and he issued an order to the Neapolitan commodore, Count Thurn, to assemble a court-martial of Neapolitan officers, on board the British flag-ship, proceed immediately to try the prisoner, and report to him, if the charges were proved, what punishment he ought to suffer. These proceedings were as rapid as possible; Caraccioli was brought on board at nine in the forenoon, and the trial began at ten. It lasted two hours: he averred in his defence that he had acted under compulsion, having been compelled to serve as a common soldier, till he consented to take command of the fleet. This, the apologists of Lord Nelson say, he failed in proving. They forget that the possibility of proving it was not allowed him, for he was brought to trial within an hour after he was legally in arrest; and how, in that time, was he to collect his witnesses? He was found guilty, and sentenced to death; and Nelson gave orders that the sentence should be carried into effect that evening, at five o'clock, on board the Sicilian frigate, *La Minerva*, by hanging him at the fore-yard-arm till sunset; when the body was to be cut down and thrown into the sea. Caraccioli requested Lieut. Parkinson, under whose custody he was placed, to intercede with Lord Nelson for a second trial—for this, among other reasons, that Count Thurn, who presided at the court-martial, was notoriously his personal enemy. Nelson made answer, that the prisoner had been fairly tried by the officers of his own country, and he could not interfere; forgetting that, if he felt himself justified in ordering the trial and the execution, no human being could ever have questioned the propriety of his interfering on the side of mercy. Caraccioli then entreated that he might be shot. "I am an old man, sir," said he: "I leave no family to lament me, and therefore cannot be supposed to be very anxious about prolonging my life; but the disgrace of being hanged is dreadful to me." When this was repeated to Nelson, he only told the lieutenant, with much agitation, to go and attend his duty. As a last hope, Caraccioli asked the lieutenant if he thought an application to Lady Hamilton would be beneficial? Parkinson went to seek her; she was not to be seen on this occasion; but she was present at the execution. She had the most devoted attachment to the Neapolitan court; and the hatred which she felt against those whom she regarded as its enemies, made her at this time forget what was due to the character of her sex as well as of her country. Here, also, a faithful historian is called upon to pronounce a severe and unqualified condemnation of Nelson's conduct. Had he the authority of his Sicilian majesty for proceeding as he did? If so, why was not that authority produced? If not, why were the proceedings hurried on without it? Why was the trial precipitated, so that it was impossible for the prisoner, if he had been innocent, to provide the witnesses, who might have proved him so? Why was a second trial refused, when the known animosity of the president of the court against the prisoner was considered? Why was the execution hastened, so as to preclude any appeal for mercy, and render the prerogative of mercy useless? Doubtless, the British Admiral seemed to himself to be acting under a rigid sense of justice; but to all other persons it was obvious that he was influenced by an infatuated attachment—a baneful passion, which destroyed his domestic happiness, and now, in a second instance, stained ineffaceably his public character.

The body was carried out to a considerable distance, and sunk in the bay, with three double-headed shot, weighing 250 lbs., tied to its legs. Between two or three weeks afterward, when the king was on board the *Foudroyant*, a Neapolitan fisherman came to the ship, and solemnly declared that Caraccioli had risen from the bottom of the sea, and was coming as fast as he could to Naples, swimming half out of the water. Such an account was listened to like a tale of idle credulity. The day being fair, Nelson, to please the king, stood out to sea; but the ship had not proceeded far before a body was distinctly seen, upright in the water, and approaching them. It was soon recognised to be indeed the corpse of Caraccioli, which had risen and floated, while the great weights attached to the legs kept the body in a position like that of a living man. A fact so extraordinary astonished the king, and perhaps excited some feeling of superstitious fear, akin to regret. He gave permission for the body to be taken on shore and receive Christian burial. It produced no better effect. Naples exhibited more dreadful scenes than it had witnessed in the days of Massaniello. After the mob had had their fill of blood and plunder, the reins were given to justice—if that can be called justice which annuls its own stipulations, looks to the naked facts alone, disregarding all motives and all circumstances; and without considering character, or science, or sex, or youth, sacrifices its victims, not for the public weal, but for the gratification of greedy vengeance.

The castles of St. Elmo, Gaieta, and Capua remained to be subdued. On the land side there was no danger that the French in these garrisons should be relieved, for Suvarof was now beginning to drive the enemy before him; but Nelson thought his presence necessary in the bay of Naples: and when Lord Keith, having received intelligence that the French and Spanish fleets had formed a junction, and sailed for Carthage, ordered him to repair to Minorca with the whole or the greater part of his force, he sent Admiral Duckworth with a small part only. This was a dilemma which he had foreseen.

"Should such an order come at this moment," he said, in a letter previously written to the Admiralty, "it would be a case for some consideration, whether Minorca is to be risked, or the two kingdoms of Naples and Sicily; I rather think my decision would be to risk the former." And after he had acted upon this opinion, he wrote in these terms to the Duke of Clarence, with whose high notions of obedience he was well acquainted: "I am well aware of the consequences of disobeying my orders; but as I have often before risked my life for the good cause, so I with cheerfulness did my commission; for although a military tribunal may think me criminal, the world will approve of my conduct; and I regard not my own safety when the honour of my king is at stake."

Nelson was right in his judgment: no attempt was made on Minorca: and the expulsion of the French from Naples may rather be said to have been effected than accelerated by the English and Portuguese of the allied fleet, acting upon shore, under Troubridge. The French commandant at St. Elmo, relying upon the strength of the place, and the nature of the force which attacked it, had insulted Captain Foote in the grossest terms; but *citoyen* Mejan was soon taught better manners, when Troubridge, in spite of every obstacle, opened five batteries upon the fort. He was informed that none of his letters, with the insolent printed words at the top, *Liberté, Egalité, Guerre aux Tyrans, &c.* would be received; but that if he wrote like a soldier and a gentleman he would be answered in the same style. The Frenchman then began to flatter his antagonist upon the *bienfaisance* and *humanité* which, he said, were the least of the many virtues which distinguished Monsieur Troubridge. Monsieur Troubridge's *bienfaisance* was at this time thinking of mining the fort. "If we can accomplish that," said he, "I am a strong advocate to send them, hostages and all, to Old Nick, and surprise him with a group of nobility and republicans. Meantime," he added, "it was some satisfaction to perceive that the shells fell well, and broke some of their shins." Finally, to complete his character, Mejan offered to surrender for 150,000 ducats. Great Britain, perhaps, has made but too little use of this kind of artillery, which France has found so effectual towards subjugating the continent: but Troubridge had the prey within his reach;

and in the course of a few days, his last battery, "after much trouble and palaver," as he said, "brought the vagabonds to their senses."

Troubridge had more difficulties to overcome this siege, from the character of the Neapolitans who pretended to assist him, and whom he made useful, than even from the strength of the place and the skill of the French. "Such damned cowards and villains," he declared, "he had never seen before." The men at the advanced posts carried on, what he called, "a diabolical good understanding" with the enemy, and the workmen would sometimes take fright and run away. "I make the best I can," said he, "of the degenerate race I have to deal with; the whole means of guns, ammunition, pioneers, &c., with all materials, rest with them. With fair promises to the men, and threats of instant death if I find any one erring, a little spur has been given." Nelson said of him with truth, upon this occasion, that he was a first-rate general. "I find, sir," said he afterwards in a letter to the Duke of Clarence, "that General Koehler does not approve of such irregular proceedings as naval officers attacking and defending fortifications. We have but one idea—to get close alongside. None but a sailor would have placed a battery only 180 yards from the Castle of St. Elmo; a soldier must have gone according to art, and the way. My brave Troubridge went straight on, for we had no time to spare."

Troubridge then proceeded to Capua, and took the command of the motley besieging force. One thousand of the best men in the fleet were sent to assist in the siege. Just at this time Nelson received a peremptory order from Lord Keith to sail with the whole of his force for the protection of Minorca; or, at least, to retain no more than was absolutely necessary at Sicily. "You will easily conceive my feelings," said he in communicating this to Earl St. Vincent; "but my mind, as your lordship knows, was perfectly prepared for this order; and it is now, more than ever, made up. At this moment I will not part with a single ship; as I cannot do that without drawing a hundred and twenty men from each ship, now at the siege of Capua. I am fully aware of the act I have committed; but I am prepared for any fate which may await my disobedience. Capua and Gaieta will soon fall; and the moment the scoundrels of French are out of this kingdom I shall send eight or nine ships of the line to Minorca. I have done what I thought right—others may think differently; but it will be my consolation that I have gained a kingdom, seated a faithful ally of his Majesty firmly on his throne, and restored happiness to millions."

At Capua, Troubridge had the same difficulties as at St. Elmo; and being farther from Naples, and from the fleet, was less able to overcome them. The powder was so bad that he suspected treachery; and when he asked Nelson to spare him forty casks from the ships, he told him it would be necessary that some Englishmen should accompany it, or they would steal one-half, and change the other. "All the men you see," said he, "gentle and simple, are such notorious villains, that it is misery to be with them." Capua, however, soon fell; Gaieta immediately afterwards surrendered to Captain Louis of the *Minotaur*. Here the commanding officer acted more unlike a Frenchman, Captain Louis said, than any one he had ever met; meaning that he acted like a man of honour. He required, however, that the garrison should carry away their horses, and other pillaged property: to which Nelson replied, "That no property which they did not bring with them into the country could be theirs: and that the greatest care should be taken to prevent them from carrying it away." "I am sorry," said he to Captain Louis, "that you have entered into any altercation. There is no way of dealing with a Frenchman but to knock him down; to be civil to them is only to be laughed at, when they are enemies."

The whole kingdom of Naples was thus delivered by Nelson from the French. The Admiralty, however, thought it expedient to censure him for disobeying Lord Keith's orders, and thus hazarding Minorca, without, as it appeared to them, any sufficient reason; and also for having landed seamen for the siege of Capua, to form part of an army employed in operations at a distance from the coast; where,

in case of defeat, they might have been prevented from returning to their ships; and they enjoined him, "not to employ the seamen in like manner in future." This reprimand was issued before the event was known; though, indeed, the event would not affect the principle upon which it proceeded. When Nelson communicated the tidings of his complete success, he said, in his public letter, "that it would not be the less acceptable for having been principally brought about by British sailors." His judgment in thus employing them had been justified by the result; and his joy was evidently heightened by the gratification of a professional and becoming pride. To the first lord he said, at the same time, "I certainly, from having only a left hand, cannot enter into details which may explain the motives that actuated my conduct. My principle is, to assist in driving the French to the devil, and in restoring peace and happiness to mankind. I feel that I am fitter to do the action than to describe it." He then added that he would take care of Minorca.

In expelling the French from Naples, Nelson had, with characteristic zeal and ability, discharged his duty; but he deceived himself when he imagined that he had seated Ferdinand firmly on his throne, and that he had restored happiness to millions. These objects might have been accomplished if it had been possible to inspire virtue and wisdom into a vicious and infatuated court; and if Nelson's eyes had not been, as it were, spell-bound by that unhappy attachment, which had now completely mastered him, he would have seen things as they were; and might, perhaps, have awakened the Sicilian court to a sense of their interest, if not of their duty. That court employed itself in a miserable round of folly and festivity, while the prisons of Naples were filled with groans, and the scaffolds streamed with blood. St. Januarius was solemnly removed from his rank as patron saint of the kingdom, having been convicted of Jacobinism; and St. Antonio as solemnly installed in his place. The king, instead of re-establishing order at Naples by his presence, speedily returned to Palermo, to indulge in his favourite amusements. Nelson, and the ambassador's family, accompanied the court; and Troubridge remained, groaning over the villany and frivolity of those with whom he was compelled to deal. A party of officers applied to him for a passage to Palermo, to see the procession of St. Rosalia: he recommended them to exercise their troops, and not behave like children. It was grief enough for him that the court should be busied in these follies, and Nelson involved in them. "I dread, my lord," said he, "all the feasting, &c. at Palermo. I am sure your health will be hurt. If so, all their saints will be damned by the navy. The king would be better employed digesting a good government; everything gives way to their pleasures. The money spent at Palermo gives discontent here; fifty thousand people are unemployed, trade discouraged, manufactures at a stand. It is the interest of many here to keep the king away: they all dread reform. Their villanies are so deeply rooted, that if some method is not taken to dig them out, this government cannot hold together. Out of twenty millions of ducats, collected as the revenue, only thirteen millions reach the treasury; and the king pays four ducats where he should pay one. He is surrounded by thieves; and none of them have honour or honesty enough to tell him the real and true state of things." In another letter he expressed his sense of the miserable state of Naples. "There are upwards of forty thousand families," said he, "who have relations confined. If some act of oblivion is not passed, there will be no end of persecution; for the people of this country have no idea of anything but revenge, and to gain a point would swear ten thousand false oaths. Constant efforts are made to get a man taken up, in order to rob him. The confiscated property does not reach the king's treasury. All thieves! It is selling for nothing. His own people, whom he employs, are buying it up, and the vagabonds pocket the whole. I should not be surprised to hear that they brought a bill of expenses against him for the sale."

The Sicilian court, however, were at this time duly sensible of the services which had been rendered them by the British fleet, and their gratitude to Nelson was shown with proper and princely munificence. They gave him the dukedom and domain of Bronte, worth about £3,000 a year. It was

some days before he could be persuaded to accept it; the argument which finally prevailed is said to have been suggested by the queen, and urged, at her request, by Lady Hamilton upon her knees. "He considered his own honour too much," she said, "if he persisted in refusing what the king and queen felt to be absolutely necessary for the preservation of theirs." The king himself, also, is said to have addressed him in words, which show that the sense of rank will sometimes confer a virtue upon those who seem to be most unworthy of the lot to which they have been born: "Lord Nelson, do you wish that your name alone should pass with honour to posterity; and that I, Ferdinand Bourbon, should appear ungrateful?" He gave him also, when the dukedom was accepted, a diamond-hilted sword, which his father, Char. III. of Spain, had given him on his accession to the throne of the two Sicilies. Nelson said, "the reward was magnificent, and worthy of a king, and he was determined that the inhabitants on the domain should be the happiest in all his Sicilian majesty's dominions. Yet," said he, speaking of these and the other remunerations which were made him for his services, "these presents, rich as they are, do not elevate me. My pride is, that at Constantinople, from the grand seignior to the lowest Turk, the name of Nelson is familiar in their mouths; and in this country I am everything which a grateful monarch and people can call me." Nelson, however, had a pardonable pride in the outward and visible signs of honour which he had so fairly won. He was fond of his Sicilian title; the signification, perhaps, pleased him; Duke of Thunder was what in Dahomy would be called a *strong name*; it was to a sailor's taste; and certainly, to no man could it ever be more applicable. But a simple offering, which he received not long afterwards, from the island of Zante, affected him with a deeper and finer feeling. The Greeks of that little community sent him a golden-headed sword and a truncheon, set round with all the diamonds that the island could furnish, in a single row. They thanked him "for having, by his victory, preserved that part of Greece from the horrors of anarchy; and prayed that his exploits might accelerate the day, in which, amidst the glory and peace of thrones, the miseries of the human race would cease." This unexpected tribute touched Nelson to the heart. "No officer," he said, "had ever received from any country a higher acknowledgment of his services."

The French still occupied the Roman states; from which, according to their own admission, they had extorted in jewels, plate, specie, and requisitions of every kind, to the enormous amount of eight millions sterling; yet they affected to appear as deliverers among the people whom they were thus cruelly plundering; and they distributed portraits of Buonaparte, with the blasphemous inscription, "This is the true likeness of the holy saviour of the world!" The people, detesting the impiety, and groaning beneath the exactions of these perfidious robbers, were ready to join any regular force that should come to their assistance; but they dreaded Cardinal Ruffo's rabble, and declared they would resist him as a banditti, who came only for the purpose of pillage. Nelson perceived that no object was now so essential for the tranquillity of Naples as the recovery of Rome; which in the present state of things, when Suvarof was driving the French before him, would complete the deliverance of Italy. He applied, therefore, to Sir James St. Clair Erskine, who in the absence of General Fox commanded at Minorca, to assist in this great object with 1200 men. "The field of glory," said he, "is a large one, and was never more open to any one than at this moment to you. Rome would throw open her gates and receive you as her deliverer; and the pope would owe his restoration to a heretic." But Sir James Erskine looked only at the difficulties of the undertaking. "Twelve hundred men, he thought, would be too small a force to be committed in such an enterprise; for Civita Vecchia was a regular fortress; the local situation and climate also were such, that even if this force were adequate, it would be proper to delay the expedition till October. General Fox, too, was soon expected; and during his absence, and under existing circumstances, he did not feel justified in sending away such a detachment."

What this general thought it imprudent to attempt, Nelson and Troubridge effected without his assistance, by a small detachment from the fleet. Troubridge first sent Captain Hallowell to Civita

Vecchia to offer the garrison there and at Castle St. Angelo the same terms which had been granted to Gaieta. Hallowell perceived, by the overstrained civility of the officers who came off to him, and the compliments which they paid to the English nation, that they were sensible of their own weakness and their inability to offer any effectual resistance; but the French know, that while they are in a condition to serve their government, they can rely upon it for every possible exertion in their support; and this reliance gives them hope and confidence to the last. Upon Hallowell's report, Troubridge, who had now been made Sir Thomas for his services, sent Captain Louis with a squadron to enforce the terms which he had offered; and, as soon as he could leave Naples, he himself followed. The French, who had no longer any hope from the fate of arms, relied upon their skill in negotiation, and proposed terms to Troubridge with that effrontery which characterises their public proceedings; but which is as often successful as it is impudent. They had a man of the right stamp to deal with. Their ambassador at Rome began by saying, that the Roman territory was the property of the French by right of conquest. The British commodore settled that point, by replying, "It is mine by reconquest." A capitulation was soon concluded for all the Roman states, and Captain Louis rowed up the Tiber in his barge, hoisted English colours on the capitol, and acted for the time as governor of Rome. The prophecy of the Irish poet was thus accomplished, and the friar reaped the fruits; for Nelson, who was struck with the oddity of the circumstance, and not a little pleased with it, obtained preferment for him from the King of Sicily, and recommended him to the Pope.

Having thus completed his work upon the continent of Italy, Nelson's whole attention was directed towards Malta; where Captain Ball, with most inadequate means, was besieging the French garrison. Never was any officer engaged in more anxious and painful service: the smallest reinforcement from France would, at any moment, have turned the scale against him; and had it not been for his consummate ability, and the love and veneration with which the Maltese regarded him, Malta must have remained in the hands of the enemy. Men, money, food—all things were wanting. The garrison consisted of 5000 troops; the besieging force of 500 English and Portuguese marines, and about 1500 armed peasants. Long and repeatedly did Nelson solicit troops to effect the reduction of this important place. "It has been no fault of the navy," said he, "that Malta has not been attacked by land; but we have neither the means ourselves nor influence with those who have." The same causes of demurrer existed which prevented British troops from assisting in the expulsion of the French from Rome. Sir James Erskine was expecting General Fox; he could not act without orders; and not having, like Nelson, that lively spring of hope within him, which partakes enough of the nature of faith to work miracles in war, he thought it "evident that unless a respectable land force, in numbers sufficient to undertake the siege of such a garrison, in one of the strongest places of Europe, and supplied with proportionate artillery and stores, were sent against it, no reasonable hope could be entertained of its surrender." Nelson groaned over the spirit of over-reasoning caution and unreasoning obedience. "My heart," said he, "is almost broken. If the enemy gets supplies in, we may bid adieu to Malta; all the force we can collect would then be of little use against the strongest place in Europe. To say that an officer is never, for any object, to alter his orders, is what I cannot comprehend. The circumstances of this war so often vary, that an officer has almost every moment to consider, what would my superiors direct, did they know what was passing under my nose?" "But, sir," said he writing to the Duke of Clarence, "I find few think as I do. To obey orders is all perfection. To serve my king, and to destroy the French, I consider as the great order of all, from which little ones spring; and if one of these militate against it (for who can tell exactly at a distance?) I go back and obey the great order and object, to down—down with the damned French villains!—my blood boils at the name of Frenchmen!"

At length, General Fox arrived at Minorca—and at length permitted Col. Graham to go to Malta, but with means miserably limited. In fact, the expedition was at a stand for want of money; when

Troubridge arriving at Messina to co-operate in it, and finding this fresh delay, immediately offered all that he could command of his own. "I procured him, my lord," said he to Nelson, "1500 of my cobs—every farthing and every atom of me shall be devoted to the cause." "What can this mean?" said Nelson, when he learned that Col. Graham was ordered not to incur any expenses for stores, or any articles except provisions!—"the cause cannot stand still for want of a little money. If nobody will pay it, I will sell Bronte and the Emperor of Russia's box." And he actually pledged Bronte for £6,600 if there should be any difficulty about paying the bills. The long-delayed expedition was thus, at last, sent forth; but Troubridge little imagined in what scenes of misery he was to bear his part. He looked to Sicily for supplies: it was the interest, as well as the duty of the Sicilian government to use every exertion for furnishing them; and Nelson and the British ambassador were on the spot to press upon them the necessity of exertion. But, though Nelson saw with what a knavish crew the Sicilian court was surrounded, he was blind to the vices of the court itself; and resigning himself wholly to Lady Hamilton's influence, never even suspected the crooked policy which it was remorselessly pursuing. The Maltese and the British in Malta severely felt it. Troubridge, who had the truest affection for Nelson, knew his infatuation, and feared that it might prove injurious to his character, as well as fatal to an enterprise which had begun so well, and been carried on so patiently.

"My lord," said he, writing to him from the siege, "we are dying off fast for want. I learn that Sir William Hamilton says Prince Luzzi refused corn some time ago, and Sir William does not think it worth while making another application. If that be the case, I wish he commanded this distressing scene instead of me. Puglia had an immense harvest; near thirty sail left Messina before I did, to load corn. Will they let us have any? If not, a short time will decide the business. The German interest prevails. I wish I was at your Lordship's elbow for an hour. *All, all*, will be thrown on you!—I will parry the blow as much as in my power: I foresee much mischief brewing. God bless your Lordship; I am miserable I cannot assist your operations more. Many happy returns of the day to you—(it was the first of the new year)—I never spent so miserable a one. I am not very tender-hearted; but really the distress here would even move a Neapolitan." Soon afterwards he wrote, "I have this day saved thirty thousand people from starving; but with this day my ability ceases. As the government are bent on starving us, I see no alternative but to leave these poor unhappy people to perish, without our being witnesses of their distress. I curse the day I ever served the Neapolitan government. We have characters, my lord, to lose; these people have none. Do not suffer their infamous conduct to fall on us. Our country is just, but severe. Such is the fever of my brain this minute, that I assure you, on my honour, if the Palermo traitors were here, I would shoot them first, and then myself. Girgenti is full of corn; the money is ready to pay for it; we do not ask it as a gift. Oh! could you see the horrid distress I daily experience, something would be done. Some engine is at work against us at Naples; and I believe I hit on the proper person. If you complain he will be immediately promoted, agreeably to the Neapolitan custom. All I write to you is known at the queen's. For my own part, I look upon the Neapolitans as the worst of intriguing enemies: every hour shows me their infamy and duplicity. I pray your lordship be cautious: your honest, open manner of acting will be made a handle of. When I see you, and tell of their infamous tricks, you will be as much surprised as I am. The whole will fall on you."

Nelson was not, and could not be, insensible to the distress which his friend so earnestly represented. He begged, almost on his knees, he said, small supplies of money and corn, to keep the Maltese from starving. And when the court granted a small supply, protesting their poverty, he believed their protestations, and was satisfied with their professions, instead of insisting that the restrictions upon the exportation of corn should be withdrawn. The anxiety, however, which he endured, affected him so deeply that he said it had broken his spirit for ever. Happily, all that Troubridge with so much reason

foreboded, did not come to pass. For Captain Ball, with more decision than Nelson himself would have shown at that time and upon that occasion, ventured upon a resolute measure, for which his name would deserve always to be held in veneration by the Maltese, even if it had no other claims to the love and reverence of a grateful people. Finding it hopeless longer to look for succour or common humanity from the deceitful and infatuated court of Sicily, which persisted in prohibiting by sanguinary edicts the exportation of supplies, at his own risk, he sent his first lieutenant to the port of Girgenti, with orders to seize and bring with him to Malta the ships which were there lying laden with corn; of the numbers of which he had received accurate information. These orders were executed to the great delight and advantage of the shipowners and proprietors: the necessity of raising the siege was removed, and Captain Ball waited in calmness for the consequences to himself. The Neapolitan government complained to the English ambassador, and the complaint was communicated to Nelson, who, in return, requested Sir William Hamilton would fully and plainly state, that the act ought not to be considered as any intended disrespect to his Sicilian Majesty, but as of the most absolute and imperious necessity; the alternative being either of abandoning Malta to the French, or of anticipating the king's orders for carrying the corn in those vessels to Malta. "I trust," he added, "that the government of the country will never again force any of our royal master's servants to so unpleasant an alternative." Thus ended the complaint of the Neapolitan court. "The sole result was," says Mr. Coleridge, "that the governor of Malta became an especial object of its hatred, its fears, and its respect."

Nelson himself, at the beginning of February, sailed for that island. On the way he fell in with a French squadron bound for its relief, and consisting of the *Genereux*, seventy-four, three frigates, and a corvette. One of these frigates and the line-of-battle ship were taken; the others escaped, but failed in their purpose of reaching La Valette. This success was peculiarly gratifying to Nelson, for many reasons. During some months he had acted as commander-in-chief in the Mediterranean, while Lord Keith was in England. Lord Keith was now returned; and Nelson had, upon his own plan, and at his own risk, left him to sail for Malta, "for which," said he, "if I had not succeeded, I might have been broke: and if I had not acted thus, the *Genereux* never would have been taken." This ship was one of those which had escaped from Aboukir. Two frigates, and the *Guillaume Tell*, eighty-six were all that now remained of the fleet which Buonaparte had conducted to Egypt. The *Guillaume Tell* was at this time closely watched in the harbour of La Valette; and shortly afterwards, attempting to make her escape from thence, was taken after an action, in which greater skill was never displayed by British ships, nor greater gallantry by an enemy. She was taken by the *Foudroyant*, *Lion*, and *Penelope* frigate. Nelson, rejoicing at what he called this glorious finish to the whole French Mediterranean fleet, rejoiced also that he was not present to have taken a sprig of these brave men's laurels. "They are," said he, "and I glory in them, my children; they served in my school; and all of us caught our professional zeal and fire from the great and good Earl St. Vincent. What a pleasure, what happiness, to have the Nile fleet all taken, under my orders and regulations!" The two frigates still remained in La Valette; before its surrender they stole out; one was taken in the attempt; the other was the only ship of the whole fleet which escaped capture or destruction.

Letters were found on board the *Guillaume Tell* showing that the French were now become hopeless of preserving the conquest which they had so foully acquired. Troubridge and his brother officers were anxious that Nelson should have the honour of signing the capitulation. They told, him that they absolutely, as far as they dared, insisted on his staying to do this; but their earnest and affectionate entreaties were vain. Sir William Hamilton had just been superseded: Nelson had no feeling of cordiality towards Lord Keith; and thinking that after Earl St. Vincent no man had so good a claim to the command in the Mediterranean as himself, he applied for permission to return to England; telling

the First Lord of the Admiralty that his spirit could not submit patiently, and that he was a broken-hearted man. From the time of his return from Egypt, amid all the honours which were showered upon him, he had suffered many mortifications. Sir Sidney Smith had been sent to Egypt with orders to take under his command the squadron which Nelson had left there. Sir Sidney appears to have thought that this command was to be independent of Nelson; and Nelson himself thinking so, determined to return, saying to Earl St. Vincent, "I do feel, for I am a man, that it is impossible for me to serve in these seas with a squadron under a junior officer." Earl St. Vincent seems to have dissuaded him from this resolution: some heart-burnings, however, still remained, and some incautious expressions of Sir Sidney's were noticed by him in terms of evident displeasure. But this did not continue long, as no man bore more willing testimony than Nelson to the admirable defence of Acre.

He differed from Sir Sidney as to the policy which ought to be pursued toward the French in Egypt; and strictly commanded him, in the strongest language, not, on any pretence, to permit a single Frenchman to leave the country, saying that he considered it nothing short of madness to permit that band of thieves to return to Europe. "No," said he, "to Egypt they went with their own consent, and there they shall remain while Nelson commands this squadron; for never, never, will he consent to the return of one ship or Frenchman. I wish them to perish in Egypt, and give an awful lesson to the world of the justice of the Almighty." If Nelson had not thoroughly understood the character of the enemy against whom he was engaged, their conduct in Egypt would have disclosed it. After the battle of the Nile he had landed all his prisoners, upon a solemn engagement made between Troubridge on one side and Captain Barre on the other, that none of them should serve until regularly exchanged. They were no sooner on shore than part of them were drafted into the different regiments, and the remainder formed into a corps, called the Nautic Legion. This occasioned Captain Hallowell to say that the French had forfeited all claim to respect from us. "The army of Buonaparte," said he, "are entirely destitute of every principle of honour: they have always acted like licentious thieves." Buonaparte's escape was the more regretted by Nelson, because, if he had had sufficient force, he thought it would certainly have been prevented. He wished to keep ships upon the watch to intercept anything coming from Egypt; but the Admiralty calculated upon the assistance of the Russian fleet, which failed when it was most wanted. The ships which should have been thus employed were then required for more pressing services; and the bloody Corsican was thus enabled to reach Europe in safety; there to become the guilty instrument of a wider-spreading destruction than any with which the world had ever before been visited.

Nelson had other causes of chagrin. Earl St. Vincent, for whom he felt such high respect, and whom Sir John Orde had challenged for having nominated Nelson instead of himself to the command of the Nile squadron, laid claim to prize money, as commander-in-chief, after he had quitted the station. The point was contested, and decided against him. Nelson, perhaps, felt this the more, because his own feelings, with regard to money, were so different. An opinion had been given by Dr. Lawrence, which would have excluded the junior flag-officers from prize-money. When this was made known to him, his reply was in these words: "Notwithstanding Dr. Lawrence's opinion, I do not believe I have any right to exclude the junior flag-officers; and if I have, I desire that no such claim may be made: no, not if it were sixty times the sum—and, poor as I am, I were never to see prize-money."

A ship could not be spared to convey him to England; he therefore travelled through Germany to Hamburgh, in company with his inseparable friends, Sir William and Lady Hamilton. The Queen of Naples went with them to Vienna. While they were at Leghorn, upon a report that the French were approaching (for, through the folly of weak courts and the treachery of venal cabinets, they had now recovered their ascendancy in Italy), the people rose tumultuously, and would fain have persuaded Nelson to lead them against the enemy. Public honours, and yet more gratifying testimonials of public

admiration, awaited Nelson wherever he went. The Prince of Esterhazy entertained him in a style of Hungarian magnificence—a hundred grenadiers, each six feet in height, constantly waiting at table. At Madgeburgh, the master of the hotel where he was entertained contrived to show him for money—admitting the curious to mount a ladder, and peep at him through a small window. A wine merchant at Hamburgh, who was above seventy years of age, requested to speak with Lady Hamilton; and told her he had some Rhenish wine, of the vintage of 1625, which had been in his own possession more than half-a-century: he had preserved it for some extraordinary occasion; and that which had now arrived was far beyond any that he could ever have expected. His request was, that her ladyship would prevail upon Lord Nelson to accept six dozen of this incomparable wine: part of it would then have the honour to flow into the heart's blood of that immortal hero; and this thought would make him happy during the remainder of his life. Nelson, when this singular request was reported to him, went into the room, and taking the worthy old gentleman kindly by the hand, consented to receive six bottles, provided the donor would dine with him next day. Twelve were sent; and Nelson, saying that he hoped yet to win half-a-dozen more great victories, promised to lay by six bottles of his Hamburgh friend's wine, for the purpose of drinking one after each. A German pastor, between seventy and eighty years of age, travelled forty miles, with the Bible of his parish church, to request that Nelson would write his name on the first leaf of it. He called him the Saviour of the Christian world. The old man's hope deceived him. There was no Nelson upon shore, or Europe would have been saved; but in his foresight of the horrors with which all Germany and all Christendom were threatened by France, the pastor could not possibly have apprehended more than has actually taken place.

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