

# Chapter VIII

1801 - 1805

*Sir Hyde Parker is recalled and Nelson appointed Commander—He goes to Revel—Settlement of Affairs in the Baltic—Unsuccessful Attempt upon the Flotilla at Boulogne—Peace of Amiens—Nelson takes Command in the Mediterranean on the Renewal of the War—Escape of the Toulon Fleet—Nelson chases them to the West Indies and back—Delivers up his Squadron to Admiral Cornwallis and lands in England.*

When Nelson informed Earl St. Vincent that the armistice had been concluded, he told him also, without reserve, his own discontent at the dilatoriness and indecision which he witnessed, and could not remedy. "No man," said he, "but those who are on the spot, can tell what I have gone through, and do suffer. I make no scruple in saying, that I would have been at Revel fourteen days ago! that, without this armistice, the fleet would never have gone, but by order of the Admiralty; and with it, I daresay, we shall not go this week. I wanted Sir Hyde to let me, at least, go and cruise off Carlsrona, to prevent the Revel ships from getting in. I said I would not go to Revel to take any of those laurels which I was sure he would reap there. Think for me, my dear lord: and if I have deserved well, let me return; if ill, for Heaven's sake supersede me, for I cannot exist in this state."

Fatigue, incessant anxiety, and a climate little suited to one of a tender constitution, which had now for many years been accustomed to more genial latitudes, made him at this time seriously determine upon returning home. "If the northern business were not settled," he said, "they must send more admirals; for the keen air of the north had cut him to the heart." He felt the want of activity and decision in the commander-in-chief more keenly; and this affected his spirits, and, consequently, his health, more than the inclemency of the Baltic. Soon after the armistice was signed, Sir Hyde proceeded to the eastward with such ships as were fit for service, leaving Nelson to follow with the rest, as soon as those which had received slight damages should be repaired, and the rest sent to England. In passing between the isles of Amak and Salholm, most of the ships touched the ground, and some of them stuck fast for a while: no serious injury, however, was sustained. It was intended to act against the Russians first, before the breaking up of the frost should enable them to leave Revel; but learning on the way that the Swedes had put to sea to effect a junction with them, Sir Hyde altered his course, in hopes of intercepting this part of the enemy's force. Nelson had, at this time, provided for the more pressing emergencies of the service, and prepared on the 18th to follow the fleet. The *St. George* drew too much water to pass the channel between the isles without being lightened; the guns were therefore taken out, and put on board an American vessel; a contrary wind, however, prevented Nelson from moving; and on that same evening, while he was thus delayed, information reached him of the relative situation of the Swedish and British fleets, and the probability of an action. The fleet was nearly ten leagues distant, and both wind and current contrary, but it was not possible that Nelson could wait for a favourable season under such an expectation. He ordered his boat immediately, and stepped into it. Night was setting in, one of the cold spring nights of the north; and it was discovered, soon after they left the ship, that in their haste they had forgotten to provide him with a boat-cloak. He, however, forbade them to return for one; and when one of his companions offered his own great-coat, and urged him to make use of it, he replied, "I thank you very much; but, to tell you the truth, my anxiety keeps me sufficiently warm at present."

"Do you think," said he presently, "that our fleet has quitted Bornholm? If it has, we must follow it to Carlsrona." About midnight he reached it, and once more got on board the *Elephant*. On the following morning the Swedes were discovered; as soon, however, as they perceived the English approaching, they retired, and took shelter in Carlsrona, behind the batteries on the island, at the entrance of that port. Sir Hyde sent in a flag of truce, stating that Denmark had concluded an armistice, and requiring an explicit declaration from the court of Sweden, whether it would adhere to or abandon the hostile measures which it had taken against the rights and interests of Great Britain? The commander, Vice-Admiral Cronstadt, replied, "That he could not answer a question which did not come within the particular circle of his duty; but that the king was then at Maloe, and would soon be at Carlsrona." Gustavus shortly afterwards arrived, and an answer was then returned to this effect: "That his Swedish majesty would not, for a moment, fail to fulfil, with fidelity and sincerity, the engagements he had entered into with his allies; but he would not refuse to listen to equitable proposals made by deputies furnished with proper authority by the King of Great Britain to the united northern powers." Satisfied with this answer, and with the known disposition of the Swedish court, Sir Hyde sailed for the Gulf of Finland; but he had not proceeded far before a despatch boat from the Russian ambassador at Copenhagen arrived, bringing intelligence of the death of the Emperor Paul, and that his successor Alexander had accepted the offer made by England to his father of terminating the dispute by a convention: the British admiral was, therefore, required to desist from all further hostilities.

It was Nelson's maxim, that, to negotiate with effect, force should be at hand, and in a situation to act. The fleet, having been reinforced from England, amounted to eighteen sail of the line, and the wind was fair for Revel. There he would have sailed immediately to place himself between that division of the Russian fleet and the squadron at Cronstadt, in case this offer should prove insincere. Sir Hyde, on the other hand, believed that the death of Paul had effected all which was necessary. The manner of that death, indeed, rendered it apparent that a change of policy would take place in the cabinet of Petersburg; but Nelson never trusted anything to the uncertain events of time, which could possibly be secured by promptitude or resolution. It was not, therefore, without severe mortification, that he saw the commander-in-chief return to the coast of Zealand, and anchor in Kioge Bay, there to wait patiently for what might happen.

There the fleet remained till dispatches arrived from home, on the 5th of May, recalling Sir Hyde, and appointing Nelson commander-in-chief.

Nelson wrote to Earl St. Vincent that he was unable to hold this honourable station. Admiral Graves also was so ill as to be confined to his bed; and he entreated that some person might come out and take the command. "I will endeavour," said he, "to do my best while I remain; but, my dear lord, I shall either soon go to heaven, I hope, or must rest quiet for a time. If Sir Hyde were gone, I would now be under sail." On the day when this was written, he received news of his appointment. Not a moment was now lost. His first signal, as commander-in-chief, was to hoist in all launches and prepare to weigh; and on the 7th he sailed from Kioge. Part of his fleet was left at Bornholm, to watch the Swedes, from whom he required and obtained an assurance that the British trade in the Cattegat and in the Baltic should not be molested; and saying how unpleasant it would be to him if anything should happen which might for a moment disturb the returning harmony between Sweden and Great Britain, he apprised them that he was not directed to abstain from hostilities should he meet with the Swedish fleet at sea. Meantime he himself, with ten sail of the line, two frigates, a brig, and a schooner, made for the Gulf of Finland. Paul, in one of the freaks of his tyranny, had seized upon all the British effects in Russia, and even considered British subjects as his prisoners. "I will have all the English shipping and property restored," said Nelson, "but I will do nothing violently, neither commit the affairs of my

country, nor suffer Russia to mix the affairs of Denmark or Sweden with the detention of our ships." The wind was fair, and carried him in four days to Revel Roads. But the Bay had been clear of firm ice on the 29th of April, while the English were lying idly at Kioge. The Russians had cut through the ice in the mole six feet thick, and their whole squadron had sailed for Cronstadt on the 3rd. Before that time it had lain at the mercy of the English. "Nothing," Nelson said, "if it had been right to make the attack, could have saved one ship of them in two hours after our entering the bay."

It so happened that there was no cause to regret the opportunity which had been lost, and Nelson immediately put the intentions of Russia to the proof. He sent on shore, to say that he came with friendly views, and was ready to return a salute. On their part the salute was delayed, till a message was sent to them to inquire for what reason; and the officer whose neglect had occasioned the delay, was put under arrest. Nelson wrote to the emperor, proposing to wait on him personally and congratulate him on his accession, and urged the immediate release of British subjects, and restoration of British property.

The answer arrived on the 16th: Nelson, meantime, had exchanged visits with the governor, and the most friendly intercourse had subsisted between the ships and the shore. Alexander's ministers, in their reply, expressed their surprise at the arrival of a British fleet in a Russian port, and their wish that it should return: they professed, on the part of Russia, the most friendly disposition towards Great Britain; but declined the personal visit of Lord Nelson, unless he came in a single ship. There was a suspicion implied in this which stung Nelson; and he said the Russian ministers would never have written thus if their fleet had been at Revel. He wrote an immediate reply, expressing what he felt; he told the court of Petersburg, "That the word of a British admiral, when given in explanation of any part of his conduct, was as sacred as that of any sovereign's in Europe." And he repeated, "that, under other circumstances, it would have been his anxious wish to have paid his personal respects to the emperor, and signed with his own hand the act of amity between the two countries." Having despatched this, he stood out to sea immediately, leaving a brig to bring off the provisions which had been contracted for, and to settle the accounts. "I hope all is right," said he, writing to our ambassador at Berlin; "but seamen are but bad negotiators; for we put to issue in five minutes what diplomatic forms would be five months doing."

On his way down the Baltic, however, he met the Russian admiral, Tchitchagof, whom the emperor, in reply to Sir Hyde's overtures, had sent to communicate personally with the British commander-in-chief. The reply was such as had been wished and expected; and these negotiators going, seamen-like, straight to their object, satisfied each other of the friendly intentions of their respective governments. Nelson then anchored off Rostock; and there he received an answer to his last despatch from Revel, in which the Russian court expressed their regret that there should have been any misconception between them; informed him that the British vessels which Paul had detained were ordered to be liberated, and invited him to Petersburg, in whatever mode might be most agreeable to himself. Other honours awaited him: the Duke of Mecklenburgh Strelitz, the queen's brother, came to visit him on board his ship; and towns of the inland parts of Mecklenburgh sent deputations, with their public books of record, that they might have the name of Nelson in them written by his own hand.

From Rostock the fleet returned to Kioge Bay. Nelson saw that the temper of the Danes towards England was such as naturally arose from the chastisement which they had so recently received. "In this nation," said he, "we shall not be forgiven for having the upper hand of them: I only thank God we have, or they would try to humble us to the dust." He saw also that the Danish cabinet was completely subservient to France: a French officer was at this time the companion and counsellor of the Crown

Prince; and things were done in such open violation of the armistice, that Nelson thought a second infliction of vengeance would soon be necessary. He wrote to the Admiralty, requesting a clear and explicit reply to his inquiry, Whether the commander-in-chief was at liberty to hold the language becoming a British admiral? "Which, very probably," said he, "if I am here, will break the armistice, and set Copenhagen in a blaze. I see everything which is dirty and mean going on, and the Prince Royal at the head of it. Ships have been masted, guns taken on board, floating batteries prepared, and except hauling out and completing their rigging, everything is done in defiance of the treaty. My heart burns at seeing the word of a prince, nearly allied to our good king, so falsified; but his conduct is such, that he will lose his kingdom if he goes on; for Jacobins rule in Denmark. I have made no representations yet, as it would be useless to do so until I have the power of correction. All I beg, in the name of the future commander-in-chief, is, that the orders may be clear; for enough is done to break twenty treaties, if it should be wished, or to make the Prince Royal humble himself before British generosity."

Nelson was not deceived in his judgment of the Danish cabinet, but the battle of Copenhagen had crippled its power. The death of the Czar Paul had broken the confederacy; and that cabinet, therefore, was compelled to defer till a more convenient season the indulgence of its enmity towards Great Britain. Soon afterwards Admiral Sir Charles Maurice Pole arrived to take the command. The business, military and political, had by that time been so far completed that the presence of the British fleet soon became no longer necessary. Sir Charles, however, made the short time of his command memorable, by passing the Great Belt for the first time with line-of-battle ships, working through the channel against adverse winds. When Nelson left the fleet, this speedy termination of the expedition, though confidently expected, was not certain; and he, in his unwillingness to weaken the British force, thought at one time of traversing Jutland in his boat, by the canal to Tonningen on the Eyder and finding his way home from thence. This intention was not executed; but he returned in a brig, declining to accept a frigate, which few admirals would have done, especially if, like him, they suffered from sea-sickness in a small vessel. On his arrival at Yarmouth, the first thing he did was to visit the hospital and see the men who had been wounded in the late battle—that victory which had added new glory to the name of Nelson, and which was of more importance even than the battle of the Nile to the honour, the strength, and security of England.

The feelings of Nelson's friends, upon the news of his great victory at Copenhagen, were highly described by Sir William Hamilton in a letter to him. "We can only expect," he says, "what we know well, and often said before, that Nelson *was, is, and to the last will ever be, the first*. Emma did not know whether she was on her head or heels—in such a hurry to tell your great news, that she could utter nothing but tears of joy and tenderness. I went to Davison, and found him still in bed, having had a severe fit of the gout, and with your letter, which he had just received; and he cried like a child; but, what was very extraordinary, assured me that, from the instant he had read your letter, all pain had left him, and that he felt himself able to get up and walk about. Your brother, Mrs. Nelson, and Horace dined with us. Your brother was more extraordinary than ever. He would get up suddenly and cut a caper, rubbing his hands every time that the thought of your fresh laurels came into his head. But I am sure that no one really rejoiced more at heart than I did. I have lived too long to have ecstasies! But with calm reflection, I felt for my friend having got to the very summit of glory! the *ne plus ultra*! that he has had another opportunity of rendering his country the most important service, and manifesting again his judgment, his intrepidity, and his humanity."

He had not been many weeks on shore before he was called upon to undertake a service, for which no Nelson was required. Buonaparte, who was now first consul, and in reality sole ruler of France, was

making preparations, upon a great scale, for invading England; but his schemes in the Baltic had been baffled; fleets could not be created as they were wanted; and his armies, therefore, were to come over in gun-boats, and such small craft as could be rapidly built or collected for the occasion. From the former governments of France such threats have only been matter of insult and policy: in Buonaparte they were sincere; for this adventurer, intoxicated with success, already began to imagine that all things were to be submitted to his fortune. We had not at that time proved the superiority of our soldiers over the French; and the unreflecting multitude were not to be persuaded that an invasion could only be effected by numerous and powerful fleets. A general alarm was excited; and, in condescension to this unworthy feeling, Nelson was appointed to a command, extending from Orfordness to Beachy Head, on both shores—a sort of service, he said, for which he felt no other ability than what might be found in his zeal.

To this service, however, such as it was, he applied with his wonted alacrity; though in no cheerful frame of mind. To Lady Hamilton, his only female correspondent, he says at this time; "I am not in very good spirits; and, except that our country demands all our services and abilities to bring about an honourable peace, nothing should prevent my being the bearer of my own letter. But, my dear friend, I know you are so true and loyal an Englishwoman, that you would hate those who would not stand forth in defence of our king, laws, religion, and all that is dear to us. It is your sex that makes us go forth, and seem to tell us, 'None but the brave deserve the fair'; and if we fall, we still live in the hearts of those females. It is your sex that rewards us; it is your sex who cherish our memories; and you, my dear honoured friend, are, believe me, the first, the best of your sex. I have been the world around, and in every corner of it, and never yet saw your equal, or even one who could be put in comparison with you. You know how to reward virtue, honour, and courage, and never to ask if it is placed in a prince, duke, lord, or peasant." Having hoisted his flag in the *Medusa* frigate, he went to reconnoitre Boulogne the point from which it was supposed the great attempt would be made, and which the French, in fear of an attack themselves, were fortifying with all care. He approached near enough to sink two of their floating batteries, and to destroy a few gun-boats which were without the pier. What damage was done within could not be ascertained. "Boulogne," he said, "was certainly not a very pleasant place that morning; but," he added, "it is not my wish to injure the poor inhabitants; and the town is spared as much as the nature of the service will admit." Enough was done to show the enemy that they could not, with impunity, come outside their own ports. Nelson was satisfied by what he saw, that they meant to make an attempt from this place, but that it was impracticable; for the least wind at W.N.W. and they were lost. The ports of Flushing and Flanders were better points: there we could not tell by our eyes what means of transport were provided. From thence, therefore, if it came forth at all, the expedition would come. "And what a forlorn undertaking!" said he: "consider cross tides, &c. As for rowing, that is impossible. It is perfectly right to be prepared for a mad government; but with the active force which has been given me, I may pronounce it almost impracticable."

That force had been got together with an alacrity which has seldom been equalled. On the 28th of July, we were, in Nelson's own words, literally at the foundation of our fabric of defence, and twelve days afterwards we were so prepared on the enemy's coast that he did not believe they could get three miles from their ports. The *Medusa*, returning to our own shores, anchored in the rolling ground off Harwich; and when Nelson wished to get to the Nore in her, the wind rendered it impossible to proceed there by the usual channel. In haste to be at the Nore, remembering that he had been a tolerable pilot for the mouth of the Thames in his younger days, and thinking it necessary that he should know all that could be known of the navigation, he requested the maritime surveyor of the coast, Mr. Spence, to get him into the Swin by any channel; for neither the pilots which he had on board, nor the Harwich ones, would take charge of the ship. No vessel drawing more than fourteen feet

had ever before ventured over the Naze. Mr. Spence, however, who had surveyed the channel, carried her safely through. The channel has since been called Nelson's, though he himself wished it to be named after the *Medusa*: his name needed no new memorial.

Nelson's eye was upon Flushing. "To take possession of that place," he said, "would be a week's expedition for four or five thousand troops." This, however, required a consultation with the Admiralty; and that something might be done, meantime he resolved upon attacking the flotilla in the mouth of the Boulogne harbour. This resolution was made in deference to the opinion of others, and to the public feeling, which was so preposterously excited. He himself scrupled not to assert that the French army would never embark at Boulogne for the invasion of England; and he owned that this boat warfare was not exactly congenial to his feelings. Into Helvoet or Flushing he should be happy to lead, if Government turned their thoughts that way. "While I serve," said he, "I will do it actively, and to the very best of my abilities. I require nursing like a child," he added; "my mind carries me beyond my strength, and will do me up; but such is my nature."

The attack was made by the boats of the squadron in five divisions, under Captains Somerville, Parker, Cotgrave, Jones, and Conn. The previous essay had taught the French the weak parts of their position; and they omitted no means of strengthening it, and of guarding against the expected attempt. The boats put off about half-an-hour before midnight; but, owing to the darkness, and tide and half-tide, which must always make night attacks so uncertain on the coasts of the Channel, the divisions separated. One could not arrive at all; another not till near daybreak. The others made their attack gallantly; but the enemy were fully prepared: every vessel was defended by long poles, headed with iron spikes, projecting from their sides: strong nettings were braced up to their lower yards; they were moored by the bottom to the shore, they were strongly manned with soldiers, and protected by land batteries, and the shore was lined with troops. Many were taken possession of; and, though they could not have been brought out, would have been burned, had not the French resorted to a mode of offence, which they have often used, but which no other people have ever been wicked enough to employ. The moment the firing ceased on board one of their own vessels they fired upon it from the shore, perfectly regardless of their own men.

The commander of one of the French divisions acted like a generous enemy. He hailed the boats as they approached, and cried out in English: "Let me advise you, my brave Englishmen, to keep your distance: you can do nothing here; and it is only uselessly shedding the blood of brave men to make the attempt." The French official account boasted of the victory. "The combat," it said, "took place in sight of both countries; it was the first of the kind, and the historian would have cause to make this remark." They guessed our loss at four or five hundred; it amounted to one hundred and seventy-two. In his private letters to the Admiralty, Nelson affirmed, that had our force arrived as he intended, it was not all the chains in France which could have prevented our men from bringing off the whole of the vessels. There had been no error committed, and never did Englishmen display more courage. Upon this point Nelson was fully satisfied; but he said he should never bring himself again to allow any attack wherein he was not personally concerned; and that his mind suffered more than if he had had a leg shot off in the affair. He grieved particularly for Captain Parker, an excellent officer, to whom he was greatly attached, and who had an aged father looking to him for assistance. His thigh was shattered in the action; and the wound proved mortal, after some weeks of suffering and manly resignation. During this interval, Nelson's anxiety was very great. "Dear Parker is my child," said he; "for I found him in distress." And when he received the tidings of his death, he replied: "You will judge of my feelings: God's will be done. I beg that his hair may be cut off and given me; it shall be buried in my grave. Poor Mr. Parker! What a son has he lost! If I were to say I was content, I should

lie; but I shall endeavour to submit with all the fortitude in my power. His loss has made a wound in my heart, which time will hardly heal."

"You ask me, my dear friend," he says to Lady Hamilton, "if I am going on more expeditions? and even if I was to forfeit your friendship, which is dearer to me than all the world, I can tell you nothing. For, I go out: I see the enemy, and can get at them, it is my duty: and you would naturally hate me, if I kept back one moment. I long to pay them for their tricks t'other day, the debt of a drubbing, which surely I'll pay: but *when, where* or *how*, it is impossible, your own good sense must tell you, for me or mortal man to say." Yet he now wished to be relieved from this service. The country, he said, had attached a confidence to his name, which he had submitted to, and therefore had cheerfully repaired to the station; but this boat business, though it might be part of a great plan of invasion, could never be the only one, and he did not think it was a command for a vice-admiral. It was not that he wanted a more lucrative situation; for, seriously indisposed as he was, and low-spirited from private considerations, he did not know, if the Mediterranean were vacant, that he should be equal to undertake it. He was offended with the Admiralty for refusing him leave to go to town when he had solicited: in reply to a friendly letter from Troubridge he says, "I am at this moment as firmly of opinion as ever, that Lord St. Vincent and yourself should have allowed of my coming to town for my own affairs, for every one knows I left it without a thought for myself."

His letters at this time breathe an angry feeling toward Troubridge, who was now become, he said, one of his lords and masters. "I have a letter from him," he says, "recommending me to wear flannel shirts. Does he care for me? NO: but never mind. They shall work hard to get me again. The cold has settled in my bowels. I wish the Admiralty had my complaint: but they have no bowels, at least for me. I daresay Master Troubridge is grown fat; I know I am grown lean with my complaint, which, but for their indifference about my health, could never have happened; or, at least, I should have got well long ago in a warm room with a good fire and sincere friend." In the same tone of bitterness he complained that he was not able to promote those whom he thought deserving. "Troubridge," he says, "has so completely prevented my ever mentioning anybody's service, that I am become a cipher, and he has gained a victory over Nelson's spirit. I am kept here, for what?—he may be able to tell, I cannot. But long it cannot, shall not be." An end was put to this uncomfortable state of mind when, fortunately (on that account) for him, as well as happily for the nation, the peace of Amiens was just at this time signed. Nelson rejoiced that the experiment was made, but was well aware that it was an experiment. He saw what he called the misery of peace, unless the utmost vigilance and prudence were exerted; and he expressed, in bitter terms, his proper indignation at the manner in which the mob of London welcomed the French general who brought the ratification saying, "that they made him ashamed of his country."

He had purchased a house and estate at Merton, in Surrey, meaning to pass his days there in the society of Sir William and Lady Hamilton. He had indulged in pleasant dreams when looking on to this as his place of residence and rest. "To be sure," he says, "we shall employ the tradespeople of our village in preference to any others in what we want for common use, and give them every encouragement to be kind and attentive to us." "Have we a nice church at Merton? We will set an example of goodness to the under-parishioners. I admire the pigs and poultry. Sheep are certainly most beneficial to eat off the grass. Do you get paid for them, and take care that they are kept on the premises all night, for that is the time they do good to the land. They should be folded. Is your head-man a good person, and true to our interest? I intend to have a farming-book. I expect that all animals will increase where you are, for I never expect that you will suffer any to be killed. No person can take amiss our not visiting. The answer from me will always be very civil thanks, but that I wish to live retired. We shall have our sea-

friends; and I know Sir William thinks they are the best." This place he had never seen till he was now welcomed there by the friends to whom he had so passionately devoted himself, and who were not less sincerely attached to him. The place, and everything which Lady Hamilton had done to it, delighted him; and he declared that the longest liver should possess it all. Here he amused himself with angling in the Wandle, having been a good fly-fisher in former days, and learning now to practise with his left hand what he could no longer pursue as a solitary diversion. His pensions for his victories, and for the loss of his eye and arm, amounted with his half-pay to about L3400 a-year. From this he gave L1800 to Lady Nelson, L200 to a brother's widow, and L150 for the education of his children; and he paid L500 interest for borrowed money; so that Nelson was comparatively a poor man; and though much of the pecuniary embarrassment which he endured was occasioned by the separation from his wife—even if that cause had not existed, his income would not have been sufficient for the rank which he held, and the claims which would necessarily be made upon his bounty. The depression of spirits under which he had long laboured arose partly from this state of his circumstances, and partly from the other disquietudes in which his connection with Lady Hamilton had involved him—a connection which it was not possible his father could behold without sorrow and displeasure. Mr. Nelson, however, was soon persuaded that the attachment, which Lady Nelson regarded with natural jealousy and resentment, did not in reality pass the bounds of ardent and romantic admiration: a passion which the manners and accomplishments of Lady Hamilton, fascinating as they were, would not have been able to excite, if they had not been accompanied by more uncommon intellectual endowments, and by a character which, both in its strength and in its weakness, resembled his own. It did not, therefore, require much explanation to reconcile him to his son—an event the more essential to Nelson's happiness, because, a few months afterwards, the good old man died at the age of seventy-nine.

Soon after the conclusion of peace, tidings arrived of our final and decisive successes in Egypt; in consequence of which, the common council voted their thanks to the army and navy for bringing the campaign to so glorious a conclusion. When Nelson, after the action of Cape St. Vincent, had been entertained at a city feast, he had observed to the lord mayor, "that, if the city continued its generosity, the navy would ruin them in gifts." To which the lord mayor replied, putting his hand upon the admiral's shoulder: "Do you find victories and we will find rewards." Nelson, as he said, had kept his word, had doubly fulfilled his part of the contract, but no thanks had been voted for the battle of Copenhagen; and feeling that he and his companions in that day's glory had a fair and honourable claim to this reward, he took the present opportunity of addressing a letter to the lord mayor, complaining of the omission and the injustice. "The smallest services," said he, "rendered by the army or navy to the country, have always been noticed by the great city of London with one exception—the glorious 2nd of April—a day when the greatest dangers of navigation were overcome; and the Danish force, which they thought impregnable, totally taken or destroyed, by the consummate skill of our commanders, and by the undaunted bravery of as gallant a band as ever defended the rights of this country. For myself, if I were only personally concerned, I should bear the stigma, attempted to be now first placed upon my brow, with humility. But, my lord, I am the natural guardian of the fame of all the officers of the navy, army, and marines who fought, and so profusely bled, under my command on that day. Again I disclaim for myself more merit than naturally falls to a successful commander; but when I am called upon to speak of the merits of the captains of his Majesty's ships, and of the officers and men, whether seamen, marines, or soldiers, whom I that day had the happiness to command, I then say, that never was the glory of this country upheld with more determined bravery than on that occasion: and if I may be allowed to give an opinion as a Briton, then I say, that more important service was never rendered to our king and country. It is my duty, my lord, to prove to the brave fellows, my companions in danger, that I have not failed at every proper place to represent, as well as I am able, their bravery and meritorious conduct."



Another honour, of greater import, was withheld from the conquerors. The king had given medals to those captains who were engaged in the battles of the 1st of June, of Cape St. Vincent, of Camperdown, and of the Nile. Then came the victory at Copenhagen, which Nelson truly called the most difficult achievement, the hardest-fought battle, the most glorious result that ever graced the annals of our country. He, of course, expected the medal; and in writing to Earl St. Vincent, said, "He longed to have it, and would not give it up to be made an English duke." The medal, however, was not given:—"For what reason," said Nelson, "Lord St. Vincent best knows." Words plainly implying a suspicion that it was withheld by some feeling of jealousy; and that suspicion estranged him, during the remaining period of his life, from one who had at one time been essentially, as well as sincerely, his friend; and of whose professional abilities he ever entertained the highest opinion.

The happiness which Nelson enjoyed in the society of his chosen friends was of no long continuance. Sir William Hamilton, who was far advanced in years, died early in 1803; a mild, amiable, and accomplished man, who has thus in a letter described his own philosophy: "My study of antiquities," he says, "has kept me in constant thought of the perpetual fluctuation of everything. The whole art is really to live all the *days* of our life; and not with anxious care disturb the sweetest hour that life affords—which is the present. Admire the Creator, and all His works, to us incomprehensible; and do all the good you can upon earth; and take the chance of eternity without dismay." He expired in his wife's arms, holding Nelson by the hand; and almost in his last words, left her to his protection; requesting him that he would see justice done her by the government, as he knew what she had done for her country. He left her her portrait in enamel, calling him his dearest friend; the most virtuous, loyal, and truly brave character he had ever known. The codicil, containing this bequest, concluded with these words, "God bless him, and shame fall on those who do not say amen." Sir William's pension of £1,200 a year ceased with his death. Nelson applied to Mr. Addington in Lady Hamilton's behalf, stating the important service which she had rendered to the fleet at Syracuse; and Mr. Addington, it is said, acknowledged that she had a just claim upon the gratitude of the country. This barren acknowledgment was all that was obtained; but a sum, equal to the pension which her husband had enjoyed, was settled on her by Nelson, and paid in monthly payments during his life. A few weeks after this event, the war was renewed; and the day after his Majesty's message to Parliament, Nelson departed to take the command of the Mediterranean fleet. The war he thought, could not be long; just enough to make him independent in pecuniary matters.

He took his station immediately off Toulon; and there, with incessant vigilance, waited for the coming out of the enemy. The expectation of acquiring a competent fortune did not last long. "Somehow," he says, "my mind is not sharp enough for prize-money. Lord Keith would have made £20,000, and I have not made £6,000." More than once he says that the prizes taken in the Mediterranean had not paid his expenses; and once he expresses himself as if it were a consolation to think that some ball might soon close all his accounts with this world of care and vexation. At this time the widow of his brother, being then blind and advanced in years, was distressed for money, and about to sell her plate; he wrote to Lady Hamilton, requesting of her to find out what her debts were, and saying that, if the amount was within his power, he would certainly pay it, and rather pinch himself than that she should want. Before he had finished the letter, an account arrived that a sum was payable to him for some neutral taken four years before, which enabled him to do this without being the poorer; and he seems to have felt at the moment that what was thus disposed of by a cheerful giver, shall be paid to him again. One from whom he had looked for very different conduct, had compared his own wealth, in no becoming manner, with Nelson's limited means. "I know," said he to Lady Hamilton, "the full extent of the obligation I owe him, and he may be useful to me again; but I can never forget his unkindness to you. But, I guess many reasons influenced his conduct in bragging of his riches and my honourable poverty;

but, as I have often said, and with honest pride, what I have is my own: it never cost the widow a tear, or the nation a farthing. I got what I have with my pure blood, from the enemies of my country. Our house, my own Emma, is built upon a solid foundation; and will last to us, when his houses and lands may belong to others than his children."

His hope was that peace might soon be made, or that he should be relieved from his command, and retire to Merton, where at that distance he was planning and directing improvements. On his birthday he writes, "This day, my dearest Emma, I consider as more fortunate than common days, as by my coming into this world it has brought me so intimately acquainted with you. I well know that you will keep it, and have my dear Horatio to drink my health. Forty-six years of toil and trouble! How few more the common lot of mankind leads us to expect! and therefore it is almost time to think of spending the few last years in peace and quietness." It is painful to think that this language was not addressed to his wife, but to one with whom he promised himself "many many happy years, when that impediment," as he calls her, "shall be removed, if God pleased; and they might be surrounded by their children's children."

When he had been fourteen months off Toulon, he received a vote of thanks from the city of London for his skill and perseverance in blockading that port, so as to prevent the French from putting to sea. Nelson had not forgotten the wrong which the city had done to the Baltic fleet by their omission, and did not lose the opportunity which this vote afforded of recurring to that point. "I do assure your lordship," said he, in his answer to the lord mayor, "that there is not that man breathing who sets a higher value upon the thanks of his fellow-citizens of London than myself; but I should feel as much ashamed to receive them for a particular service marked in the resolution, if I felt that I did not come within that line of service, as I should feel hurt at having a great victory passed over without notice. I beg to inform your lordship, that the port of Toulon has never been blockaded by me; quite the reverse. Every opportunity has been offered the enemy to put to sea; for it is there that we hope to realise the hopes and expectations of our country." Nelson then remarked that the junior flag-officers of his fleet had been omitted in this vote of thanks; and his surprise at the omission was expressed with more asperity, perhaps, than an offence so entirely and manifestly unintentional deserved; but it arose from that generous regard for the feelings as well as the interests of all who were under his command, which made him as much beloved in the fleets of Britain as he was dreaded in those of the enemy.

Never was any commander more beloved. He governed men by their reason and their affections; they knew that he was incapable of caprice or tyranny and they obeyed him with alacrity and joy, because he possessed their confidence as well as their love. "Our Nel," they used to say, "is as brave as a lion and as gentle as a lamb." Severe discipline he detested, though he had been bred in a severe school. He never inflicted corporal punishment if it were possible to avoid it; and when compelled to enforce it, he, who was familiar with wounds and death, suffered like a woman. In his whole life, Nelson was never known to act unkindly towards an officer. If he was asked to prosecute one for ill behaviour, he used to answer, "That there was no occasion for him to ruin a poor devil who was sufficiently his own enemy to ruin himself." But in Nelson there was more than the easiness and humanity of a happy nature: he did not merely abstain from injury; his was an active and watchful benevolence, ever desirous not only to render justice, but to do good. During the peace he had spoken in parliament upon the abuses respecting prize-money, and had submitted plans to government for more easily manning the navy, and preventing desertion from it, by bettering the condition of the seamen. He proposed that their certificates should be registered, and that every man who had served, with a good character, five years in war, should receive a bounty of two guineas annually after that time, and of four guineas after eight years. "This," he said, "might, at first sight, appear an enormous sum for the state to pay; but the

average life of seamen is, from hard service, finished at forty-five. He cannot, therefore, enjoy the annuity many years, and the interest of the money saved by their not deserting would go far to pay the whole expense."

To his midshipmen he ever showed the most winning kindness, encouraging the diffident, tempering the hasty, counselling and befriending both. "Recollect," he used to say, "that you must be a seaman to be an officer; and also that you cannot be a good officer without being a gentleman." A lieutenant wrote to him to say that he was dissatisfied with his captain. Nelson's answer was in that spirit of perfect wisdom and perfect goodness which regulated his whole conduct towards those who were under his command. "I have just received your letter, and am truly sorry that any difference should arise between your captain, who has the reputation of being one of the bright officers of the service, and yourself, a very young man, and a very young officer, who must naturally have much to learn; therefore the chance is that you are perfectly wrong in the disagreement. However, as your present situation must be very disagreeable, I will certainly take an early opportunity of removing you, provided your conduct to your present captain be such that another may not refuse to receive you." The gentleness and benignity of his disposition never made him forget what was due to discipline. Being on one occasion applied to, to save a young officer from a court-martial, which he had provoked by his misconduct, his reply was, "That he would do everything in his power to oblige so gallant and good an officer as Sir John Warren," in whose name the intercession had been made. "But what," he added, "would he do if he were here? Exactly what I have done, and am still willing to do. The young man must write such a letter of contrition as would be an acknowledgment of his great fault; and with a sincere promise, if his captain will intercede to prevent the impending court-martial, never to so misbehave again. On his captain's enclosing me such a letter, with a request to cancel the order for the trial, I might be induced to do it; but the letters and reprimand will be given in the public order-book of the fleet, and read to all the officers. The young man has pushed himself forward to notice, and he must take the consequence. It was upon the quarter-deck, in the face of the ship's company, that he treated his captain with contempt; and I am in duty bound to support the authority and consequence of every officer under my command. A poor ignorant seaman is for ever punished for contempt to *his* superiors."

A dispute occurred in the fleet while it was off Toulon, which called forth Nelson's zeal for the rights and interests of the navy. Some young artillery officers, serving on board the bomb vessels, refused to let their men perform any other duty but what related to the mortars. They wished to have it established that their corps was not subject to the captain's authority. The same pretensions were made in the Channel fleet about the same time, and the artillery rested their claims to separate and independent authority on board, upon a clause in the act, which they interpreted in their favour. Nelson took up the subject with all the earnestness which its importance deserved. "There is no real happiness in this world," said he, writing to Earl St. Vincent, as first lord. "With all content and smiles around me, up start these artillery boys (I understand they are not beyond that age), and set us at defiance; speaking in the most disrespectful manner of the navy and its commanders. I know you, my dear lord, so well, that with your quickness the matter would have been settled, and perhaps some of them been broke. I am perhaps more patient, but I do assure you not less resolved, if my plan of conciliation is not attended to. You and I are on the eve of quitting the theatre of our exploits; but we hold it due to our successors never, whilst we have a tongue to speak or a hand to write, to allow the navy to be in the smallest degree injured in its discipline by our conduct." To Troubridge he wrote in the same spirit: "It is the old history, trying to do away the act of parliament; but I trust they will never succeed; for when they do, farewell to our naval superiority. We should be prettily commanded! Let them once gain the step of being independent of the navy on board a ship, and they will soon have the other, and

command us. But, thank God! my dear Troubridge, the king himself cannot do away the act of parliament. Although my career is nearly run, yet it would embitter my future days, and expiring moments, to hear of our navy being sacrificed to the army." As the surest way of preventing such disputes, he suggested that the navy should have it's own corps of artillery; and a corps of marine artillery was accordingly established.

Instead of lessening the power of the commander, Nelson would have wished to see it increased: it was absolutely necessary, he thought, that merit should be rewarded at the moment, and that the officers of the fleet should look up to the commander-in-chief for their reward. He himself was never more happy than when he could promote those who were deserving of promotion. Many were the services which he thus rendered unsolicited; and frequently the officer, in whose behalf he had interested himself with the Admiralty, did not know to whose friendly interference he was indebted for his good fortune. He used to say, "I wish it to appear as a God-send." The love which he bore the navy made him promote the interests, and honour the memory, of all who had added to its glories. "The near relations of brother officers," he said, "he considered as legacies to the service." Upon mention being made to him of a son of Rodney, by the Duke of Clarence, his reply was: "I agree with your Royal Highness most entirely, that the son of a Rodney ought to be the *protégé* of every person in the kingdom, and particularly of the sea-officers. Had I known that there had been this claimant, some of my own lieutenants must have given way to such a name, and he should have been placed in the *Victory*: she is full, and I have twenty on my list; but, whatever numbers I have, the name of Rodney must cut many of them out." Such was the proper sense which Nelson felt of what was due to splendid services and illustrious names. His feelings toward the brave men who had served with him are shown by a note in his diary, which was probably not intended for any other eye than his own: "Nov. 7. I had the comfort of making an old *Agamemnon*, George Jones, a gunner into the *Chameleon* brig."

When Nelson took the command, it was expected that the Mediterranean would be an active scene. Nelson well understood the character of the perfidious Corsican, who was now sole tyrant of France; and knowing that he was as ready to attack his friends as his enemies, knew, therefore, that nothing could be more uncertain than the direction of the fleet from Toulon, whenever it should put to sea. "It had as many destinations," he said, "as there were countries." The momentous revolutions of the last ten years had given him ample matter for reflection, as well as opportunities for observation: the film was cleared from his eyes; and now, when the French no longer went abroad with the cry of liberty and equality, he saw that the oppression and misrule of the powers which had been opposed to them, had been the main causes of their success, and that those causes would still prepare the way before them. Even in Sicily, where, if it had been possible longer to blind himself, Nelson would willingly have seen no evil, he perceived that the people wished for a change, and acknowledged that they had reason to wish for it. In Sardinia the same burden of misgovernment was felt; and the people, like the Sicilians, were impoverished by a government so utterly incompetent to perform its first and most essential duties that it did not protect its own coasts from the Barbary pirates. He would fain have had us purchase this island (the finest in the Mediterranean) from its sovereign, who did not receive £5000 a year from it after its wretched establishment was paid. There was reason to think that France was preparing to possess herself of this important point, which afforded our fleet facilities for watching Toulon, not to be obtained elsewhere. An expedition was preparing at Corsica for the purpose; and all the Sardes, who had taken part with revolutionary France, were ordered to assemble there. It was certain that if the attack were made it would succeed. Nelson thought that the only means to prevent Sardinia from becoming French was to make it English, and that half a million would give the king a rich price, and England a cheap purchase. A better, and therefore a wiser policy, would have been to exert our influence in removing the abuses of the government, for foreign dominion is always, in some

degree, an evil and allegiance neither can nor ought to be made a thing of bargain and sale. Sardinia, like Sicily and Corsica, is large enough to form a separate state. Let us hope that these islands may one day be made free and independent. Freedom and independence will bring with them industry and prosperity; and wherever these are found, arts and letters will flourish, and the improvement of the human race proceed.

The proposed attack was postponed. Views of wider ambition were opening upon Buonaparte, who now almost undisguisedly aspired to make himself master of the continent of Europe; and Austria was preparing for another struggle, to be conducted as weakly and terminated as miserably as the former. Spain, too, was once more to be involved in war by the policy of France: that perfidious government having in view the double object of employing the Spanish resources against England, and exhausting them in order to render Spain herself finally its prey. Nelson, who knew that England and the Peninsula ought to be in alliance, for the common interest of both, frequently expressed his hopes that Spain might resume her natural rank among the nations. "We ought," he said, "by mutual consent, to be the very best friends, and both to be ever hostile to France." But he saw that Buonaparte was meditating the destruction of Spain; and that, while the wretched court of Madrid professed to remain neutral, the appearances of neutrality were scarcely preserved. An order of the year 1771, excluding British ships of war from the Spanish ports, was revived, and put in force: while French privateers, from these very ports, annoyed the British trade, carried their prizes in, and sold them even at Barcelona. Nelson complained of this to the captain-general of Catalonia, informing him that he claimed, for every British ship or squadron, the right of lying, as long as it pleased, in the ports of Spain, while that right was allowed to other powers. To the British Ambassador he said: "I am ready to make large allowances for the miserable situation Spain has placed herself in; but there is a certain line, beyond which I cannot submit to be treated with disrespect. We have given up French vessels taken within gunshot of the Spanish shore, and yet French vessels are permitted to attack our ships from the Spanish shore. Your excellency may assure the Spanish government that, in whatever place the Spaniards allow the French to attack us, in that place I shall order the French to be attacked."

During this state of things, to which the weakness of Spain, and not her will, consented, the enemy's fleet did not venture to put to sea. Nelson watched it with unremitting and almost unexampled perseverance. The station off Toulon he called his home. "We are in the right fighting trim," said he: "let them come as soon as they please. I never saw a fleet altogether so well officered and manned; would to God the ships were half as good! The finest ones in the service would soon be destroyed by such terrible weather. I know well enough that if I were to go into Malta I should save the ships during this bad season; but if I am to watch the French I must be at sea; and if at sea, must have bad weather; and if the ships are not fit to stand bad weather, they are useless." Then only he was satisfied and at ease when he had the enemy in view. Mr. Elliot, our minister at Naples, seems at this time to have proposed to send a confidential Frenchman to him with information. "I should be very happy," he replied, "to receive authentic intelligence of the destination of the French squadron, their route, and time of sailing. Anything short of this is useless; and I assure your excellency, that I would not upon any consideration have a Frenchman in the fleet, except as a prisoner. I put no confidence in them. You think yours good; the queen thinks the same; I believe they are all alike. Whatever information you can get me I shall be very thankful for; but not a Frenchman comes here. Forgive me, but my mother hated the French."

M. Latouche Treville, who had commanded at Boulogne, commanded now at Toulon. "He was sent for on purpose," said Nelson, "as he *beat me* at Boulogne, to beat me again; but he seems very loath to try." One day, while the main body of our fleet was out of sight of land, Rear-Admiral Campbell,

reconnoitring with the *Canopus*, *Donegal*, and *Amazon*, stood in close to the port; and M. Latouche, taking advantage of a breeze which sprung up, pushed out with four ships of the line and three heavy frigates, and chased him about four leagues. The Frenchman, delighted at having found himself in so novel a situation, published a boastful account, affirming that he had given chase to the whole British fleet, and that Nelson had fled before him! Nelson thought it due to the Admiralty to send home a copy of the *Victory's* log upon this occasion. "As for himself," he said, "if his character was not established by that time for not being apt to run away, it was not worth his while to put the world right."—"If this fleet gets fairly up with M. Latouche," said he to one of his correspondents, "his letter, with all his ingenuity, must be different from his last. We had fancied that we chased him into Toulon; for, blind as I am, I could see his water line, when he clued his topsails up, shutting in Sepet. But from the time of his meeting Captain Hawker in the *Isis*, I never heard of his acting otherwise than as a poltroon and a liar. Contempt is the best mode of treating such a miscreant." In spite, however, of contempt, the impudence of this Frenchman half angered him. He said to his brother: "You will have seen Latouche's letter; how he chased me and how I ran. I keep it; and if I take him, by God he shall eat it."

Nelson, who used to say, that in sea affairs nothing is impossible, and nothing improbable, feared the more that this Frenchman might get out and elude his vigilance; because he was so especially desirous of catching him, and administering to him his own lying letter in a sandwich. M. Latouche, however, escaped him in another way. He died, according to the French papers, in consequence of walking so often up to the signal-post upon Sepet, to watch the British fleet. "I always pronounced that would be his death," said Nelson. "If he had come out and fought me, it would at least have added ten years to my life." The patience with which he had watched Toulon, he spoke of, truly, as a perseverance at sea which had never been surpassed. From May, 1803, to August, 1805, he himself went out of his ship but three times; each of those times was upon the king's service, and neither time of absence exceeded an hour. In 1804 the *Swift* cutter going out with despatches was taken, and all the despatches and letters fell into the hands of the enemy. "A very pretty piece of work," says Nelson; "I am not surprised at the capture, but am very much so that any despatches should be sent in a vessel with twenty-three men, not equal to cope with any row-boat privateer. The loss of the *Hindostan* was great enough; but for importance it is lost in comparison to the probable knowledge the enemy will obtain of our connexions with foreign countries. Foreigners for ever say, and it is true, we dare not trust England: one way or other we are sure to be committed." In a subsequent letter he says, speaking of the same capture: "I find, my dearest Emma, that your picture is very much admired by the French Consul at Barcelona, and that he has not sent it to be admired, which I am sure it would be, by Buonaparte. They pretend that there were three pictures taken. I wish I had them; but they are all gone as irretrievably as the despatches, unless we may read them in a book, as we printed their correspondence from Egypt. But from us what can they find out? That I love you most dearly, and hate the French most damnably. Dr. Scott went to Barcelona to try to get the private letters, but I fancy they are all gone to Paris. The Swedish and American Consuls told him that the French Consul had your picture and read your letters; and the Doctor thinks one of them, probably, read the letters. By the master's account of the cutter, I would not have trusted an old pair of shoes in her. He tells me she did not sail, but was a good sea-boat. I hope Mr. Marsden will not trust any more of my private letters in such a conveyance: if they choose to trust the affairs of the public in such a thing, I cannot help it."

While he was on this station, the weather had been so unusually severe that he said the Mediterranean seemed altered. It was his rule never to contend with the gales; but either run to the southward to escape their violence, or furl all the sails, and make the ships as easy as possible. The men, though he said flesh and blood could hardly stand it, continued in excellent health, which he ascribed, in great measure, to a plentiful supply of lemons and onions. For himself, he thought he could only last till the

battle was over. One battle more it was his hope that he might fight. "However," said he, "whatever happens, I have run a glorious race." "A few months rest," he says, "I must have very soon. If I am in my grave, what are the mines of Peru to me? But to say the truth, I have no idea of killing myself. I may, with care, live yet to do good service to the state. My cough is very bad, and my side, where I was struck on the 14th of February, is very much swelled: at times a lump as large as my fist, brought on occasionally by violent coughing. But I hope and believe my lungs are yet safe." He was afraid of blindness and this was the only evil which he could not contemplate without unhappiness. More alarming symptoms he regarded with less apprehension, describing his own "shattered carcass" as in the worst plight of any in the fleet; and he says, "I have felt the blood gushing up the left side of my head; and, the moment it covers the brain, I am fast asleep." The fleet was in worse trim than the men; but when he compared it with the enemy's, it was with a right English feeling. "The French fleet yesterday," said he, in one of his letters, "was to appearance in high feather, and as fine as paint could make them; but when they may sail, or where they may go, I am very sorry to say is a secret I am not acquainted with. Our weather-beaten ships, I have no fear, will make their sides like a plum-pudding." "Yesterday," he says, on another occasion, "a rear-admiral and seven sail of ships put their nose outside the harbour. If they go on playing this game, some day we shall lay salt on their tails."

Hostilities at length commenced between Great Britain and Spain. That country, whose miserable government made her subservient to France, was once more destined to lavish her resources and her blood in furtherance of the designs of a perfidious ally. The immediate occasion of the war was the seizure of four treasure-ships by the English. The act was perfectly justifiable, for those treasures were intended to furnish means for France; but the circumstances which attended it were as unhappy as they were unforeseen. Four frigates had been despatched to intercept them. They met with an equal force. Resistance, therefore, became a point of honour on the part of the Spaniards, and one of their ships soon blew up with all on board. Had a stronger squadron been sent, this deplorable catastrophe might have been spared: a catastrophe which excited not more indignation in Spain than it did grief in those who were its unwilling instruments, in the English government, and in the English people. On the 5th of October this unhappy affair occurred, and Nelson was not apprised of it till the twelfth of the ensuing month. He had, indeed, sufficient mortification at the breaking out of this Spanish war; an event which, it might reasonably have been supposed, would amply enrich the officers of the Mediterranean fleet, and repay them for the severe and unremitting duty on which they had been so long employed. But of this harvest they were deprived; for Sir John Orde was sent with a small squadron, and a separate command, to Cadiz. Nelson's feelings were never wounded so deeply as now. "I had thought," said he, writing in the first flow and freshness of indignation; "Fancied—but nay; it must have been a dream, an idle dream; yet I confess it, I *did* fancy that I had done my country service; and thus they use me! And under what circumstances, and with what pointed aggravation? Yet, if I know my own thoughts, it is not for myself, or on my own account chiefly, that I feel the sting and the disappointment. No! it is for my brave officers: for my noble minded friends and comrades. Such a gallant set of fellows! Such a band of brothers! My heart swells at the thought of them."

War between Spain and England was now declared; and on the eighteenth of January, the Toulon fleet, having the Spaniards to co-operate with them, put to sea. Nelson was at anchor off the coast of Sardinia, where the Madelena islands form one of the finest harbours in the world, when, at three in the afternoon of the nineteenth, the *Active* and *Seahorse* frigates brought this long-hoped-for intelligence. They had been close to the enemy at ten on the preceding night, but lost sight of them in about four hours. The fleet immediately unmoored and weighed, and at six in the evening ran through the strait between Biche and Sardinia: a passage so narrow that the ships could only pass one at a time, each following the stern-lights of its leader. From the position of the enemy, when they were last seen,

it was inferred that they must be bound round the southern end of Sardinia. Signal was made the next morning to prepare for battle. Bad weather came on, baffling the one fleet in its object, and the other in its pursuit. Nelson beat about the Sicilian seas for ten days, without obtaining any other information of the enemy than that one of their ships had put into Ajaccio, dismasted; and having seen that Sardinia, Naples, and Sicily were safe, believing Egypt to be their destination, for Egypt he ran. The disappointment and distress which he had experienced in his former pursuits of the French through the same seas were now renewed; but Nelson, while he endured these anxious and unhappy feelings, was still consoled by the same confidence as on the former occasion—that, though his judgment might be erroneous, under all circumstances he was right in having formed it. "I have consulted no man," said he to the Admiralty; "therefore the whole blame of ignorance in forming my judgment must rest with me. I would allow no man to take from me an atom of my glory had I fallen in with the French fleet; nor do I desire any man to partake any of the responsibility. All is mine, right or wrong." Then stating the grounds upon which he had proceeded, he added, "At this moment of sorrow, I still feel that I have acted right." In the same spirit he said to Sir Alexander Ball: "When I call to remembrance all the circumstances, I approve, if nobody else does, of my own conduct."

Baffled thus, he bore up for Malta, and met intelligence from Naples that the French, having been dispersed in a gale, had put back to Toulon. From the same quarter he learned that a great number of saddles and muskets had been embarked; and this confirmed him in his opinion that Egypt was their destination. That they should have put him back in consequence of storms which he had weathered, gave him a consoling sense of British superiority. "These gentlemen," said he, "are not accustomed to a Gulf of Lyons gale: we have buffeted them for one-and-twenty months, and not carried away a spar." He, however, who had so often braved these gales, was now, though not mastered by them, vexatiously thwarted and impeded; and on February 27th he was compelled to anchor in Pula Bay in the Gulf of Cagliari. From the 21st of January the fleet had remained ready for battle, without a bulk-head up night or day. He anchored here that he might not be driven to leeward. As soon as the weather moderated he put to sea again; and after again beating about against contrary winds, another gale drove him to anchor in the Gulf of Palma on the 8th of March. This he made his rendezvous: he knew that the French troops still remained embarked; and wishing to lead them into a belief that he was stationed upon the Spanish coast, he made his appearance off Barcelona with that intent. About the end of the month he began to fear that the plan of the expedition was abandoned; and sailing once more towards his old station off Toulon on the 4th of April, he met the *Phoebe*, with news that Villeneuve had put to sea on the last of March, with eleven ships of the line, seven frigates, and two brigs. When last seen they were steering towards the coast of Africa. Nelson first covered the channel between Sardinia and Barbary, so as to satisfy himself that Villeneuve was not taking the same route for Egypt which Gantheaume had taken before him, when he attempted to carry reinforcements thither. Certain of this, he bore up on the 7th for Palermo, lest the French should pass to the north of Corsica, and he despatched cruisers in all directions. On the 11th he felt assured that they were not gone down the Mediterranean; and sending off frigates to Gibraltar, to Lisbon, and to Admiral Cornwallis, who commanded the squadron off Brest, he endeavoured to get to the westward, beating against westerly winds. After five days a neutral gave intelligence that the French had been seen off Cape de Gatte on the 7th. It was soon after ascertained that they had passed the Straits of Gibraltar on the day following; and Nelson, knowing that they might already be half way to Ireland or to Jamaica, exclaimed that he was miserable. One gleam of comfort only came across him in the reflection, that his vigilance had rendered it impossible for them to undertake any expedition in the Mediterranean.

Eight days after this certain intelligence had been obtained, he described his state of mind thus forcibly in writing to the governor of Malta: "My good fortune, my dear Ball, seems flown away. I cannot get a



fair wind, or even a side-wind. Dead foul!—Dead foul! But my mind is fully made up what to do when I leave the supposing there is no certain account of the enemy's destination. I believe this ill-luck will go near to kill me; but as these are times for exertion, I must not be cast down, whatever I may feel." In spite of every exertion which could be made by all the zeal and all the skill of British seamen, he did not get in sight of Gibraltar till the 30th of April; and the wind was then so adverse that it was impossible to pass the Gut. He anchored in Mazari Bay, on the Barbary shore; obtained supplies from Tetuan; and when, on the 5th, a breeze from the eastward sprang up at last, sailed once more, hoping to hear of the enemy from Sir John Orde, who commanded off Cadiz, or from Lisbon. "If nothing is heard of them," said he to the Admiralty, "I shall probably think the rumours which have been spread are true, that their object is the West Indies; and, in that case, I think it my duty to follow them—or to the Antipodes, should I believe that to be their destination." At the time when this resolution was taken, the physician of the fleet had ordered him to return to England before the hot months.

Nelson had formed his judgment of their destination, and made up his mind accordingly, when Donald Campbell, at that time an admiral in the Portuguese service, the same person who had given important tidings to Earl St. Vincent of the movements of that fleet from which he won his title, a second time gave timely and momentous intelligence to the flag of his country. He went on board the *Victory*, and communicated to Nelson his certain knowledge that the combined Spanish and French fleets were bound for the West Indies. Hitherto all things had favoured the enemy. While the British commander was beating up again strong southerly and westerly gales, they had wind to their wish from the N.E., and had done in nine days what he was a whole month in accomplishing. Villeneuve, finding the Spaniards at Carthagena were not in a fit state of equipment to join him, dared not wait, but hastened on to Cadiz. Sir John Orde necessarily retired at his approach. Admiral Gravina, with six Spanish ships of the line and two French, come out to him, and they sailed without a moment's loss of time. They had about three thousand French troops on board, and fifteen hundred Spanish: six hundred were under orders, expecting them at Martinique, and one thousand at Guadaloupe. General Lauriston commanded the troops. The combined fleet now consisted of eighteen sail of the line, six forty-four gun frigates, one of twenty-six guns, three corvettes, and a brig. They were joined afterwards by two new French line-of-battle ships, and one forty-four. Nelson pursued them with ten sail of the line and three frigates. "Take you a Frenchman apiece," said he to his captains, "and leave me the Spaniards: when I haul down my colours, I expect you to do the same, and not till then."

The enemy had five-and-thirty days' start; but he calculated that he should gain eight or ten days upon them by his exertions. May 15th he made Madeira, and on June 4th reached Barbadoes, whither he had sent despatches before him; and where he found Admiral Cochrane, with two ships, part of our squadron in those seas being at Jamaica. He found here also accounts that the combined fleets had been seen from St. Lucia on the 28th, standing to the southward, and that Tobago and Trinidad were their objects. This Nelson doubted; but he was alone in his opinion, and yielded it with these foreboding words: "If your intelligence proves false, you lose me the French fleet." Sir W. Myers offered to embark here with 2000 troops; they were taken on board, and the next morning he sailed for Tobago. Here accident confirmed the false intelligence which had, whether from intention or error, misled him. A merchant at Tobago, in the general alarm, not knowing whether this fleet was friend or foe, sent out a schooner to reconnoitre, and acquaint him by signal. The signal which he had chosen happened to be the very one which had been appointed by Col. Shipley of the engineers to signify that the enemy were at Trinidad; and as this was at the close of the day, there was no opportunity of discovering the mistake. An American brig was met with about the same time, the master of which, with that propensity to deceive the English and assist the French in any manner which has been but too common among his countrymen, affirmed that he had been boarded off Granada a few days before by

the French, who were standing towards the Bocas of Trinidad. This fresh intelligence removed all doubts. The ships were cleared for action before daylight, and Nelson entered the Bay of Paria on the 7th, hoping and expecting to make the mouths of the Orinoco as famous in the annals of the British navy as those of the Nile. Not an enemy was there; and it was discovered that accident and artifice had combined to lead him so far to leeward, that there could have been little hope of fetching to windward of Granada for any other fleet. Nelson, however, with skill and exertions never exceeded, and almost unexampled, bore for that island.

Advices met him on the way, that the combined fleets, having captured the Diamond Rock, were then at Martinique on the fourth, and were expected to sail that night for the attack of Granada. On the 9th Nelson arrived off that island; and there learned that they had passed to leeward of Antigua the preceding day, and had taken a homeward-bound convoy. Had it not been for false information, upon which Nelson had acted reluctantly, and in opposition to his own judgment, he would have been off Port Royal just as they were leaving; it, and the battle would have been fought on the spot where Rodney defeated De Grasse. This he remembered in his vexation; but he had saved the colonies, and above 200 ships laden for Europe, which would else have fallen into the enemy's hands; and he had the satisfaction of knowing that the mere terror of his name had effected this, and had put to flight the allied enemies, whose force nearly doubled that before which they fled. That they were flying back to Europe he believed, and for Europe he steered in pursuit on the 13th, having disembarked the troops at Antigua, and taking with him the *Spartiate*, seventy-four; the only addition to the squadron with which he was pursuing so superior a force. Five days afterwards the *Amazon* brought intelligence that she had spoke a schooner who had seen them on the evening of the 15th, steering to the north; and by computation, eighty-seven leagues off. Nelson's diary at this time denotes his great anxiety and his perpetual and all-observing vigilance. "June 21. Midnight, nearly calm, saw three planks, which I think came from the French fleet. Very miserable, which is very foolish." On the 17th of July he came in sight of Cape St. Vincent, and steered for Gibraltar. "June 18th," his diary says, "Cape Spartel in sight, but no French fleet, nor any information about them. How sorrowful this makes me! but I cannot help myself." The next day he anchored at Gibraltar; and on the 20th, says he, "I went on shore for the first time since June 16, 1803; and from having my foot out of the *Victory* two years, wanting ten days."

Here he communicated with his old friend Collingwood; who, having been detached with a squadron, when the disappearance of the combined fleets, and of Nelson in their pursuit, was known in England, had taken his station off Cadiz. He thought that Ireland was the enemy's ultimate object; that they would now liberate the Ferrol squadron, which was blocked up by Sir Robert Calder, call for the Rochefort ships, and then appear off Ushant with 33 or 34 sail; there to be joined: by the Brest fleet. With this great force he supposed they would make for Ireland—the real mark and bent of all their operations; and their flight to the West Indies, he thought, had been merely undertaken to take off Nelson's force, which was the great impediment to their undertaking.

Collingwood was gifted with great political penetration. As yet, however, all was conjecture concerning the enemy; and Nelson, having victualled and watered at Tetuan, stood for Ceuta on the 24th, still without information of their course. Next day intelligence arrived that the *Curieux* brig had seen them on the 19th, standing to the northward. He proceeded off Cape St. Vincent, rather cruising for intelligence than knowing whither to betake himself; and here a case occurred that more than any other event in real history resembles those whimsical proofs of sagacity which Voltaire, in his *Zadig*, has borrowed from the Orientals. One of our frigates spoke an American, who, a little to the westward of the Azores, had fallen in with an armed vessel, appearing to be a dismasted privateer, deserted by her crew, which had been run on board by another ship, and had been set fire to; but the fire had gone out. A log-book and a few seamen's jackets were found in the cabin; and these were brought to Nelson.

The log-book closed with these words: "Two large vessels in the W.N.W.:" and this led him to conclude that the vessel had been an English privateer, cruising off the Western Islands. But there was in this book a scrap of dirty paper, filled with figures. Nelson, immediately upon seeing it, observed that the figures were written by a Frenchman; and after studying this for a while, said, "I can explain the whole. The jackets are of French manufacture, and prove that the privateer was in possession of the enemy. She had been chased and taken by the two ships that were seen in the W.N.W. The prizemaster, going on board in a hurry, forgot to take with him his reckoning: there is none in the log-book; and the dirty paper contains her work for the number of days since the privateer last left Corvo; with an unaccounted-for run, which I take to have been the chase, in his endeavour to find out her situation by back reckonings. By some mismanagement, I conclude she was run on board of by one of the enemy's ships, and dismasted. Not liking delay (for I am satisfied that those two ships were the advanced ones of the French squadron), and fancying we were close at their heels, they set fire to the vessel, and abandoned her in a hurry. If this explanation be correct, I infer from it that they are gone more to the northward; and more to the northward I will look for them." This course accordingly he held, but still without success. Still persevering, and still disappointed, he returned near enough to Cadiz to ascertain that they were not there; traversed the Bay of Biscay; and then, as a last hope, stood over for the north-west coast of Ireland against adverse winds, till, on the evening of the 12th of August, he learned that they had not been heard of there. Frustrated thus in all his hopes, after a pursuit, to which, for its extent, rapidity, and perseverance, no parallel can be produced, he judged it best to reinforce the Channel fleet with his squadron, lest the enemy, as Collingwood apprehended, should bear down upon Brest with their whole collected force. On the 15th he joined Admiral Cornwallis off Ushant. No news had yet been obtained of the enemy; and on the same evening he received orders to proceed, with the *Victory* and *Superb*, to Portsmouth.

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