ALFRED THAYER MAHAN

THE LIFE OF NELSON, VOLUME 1

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Содержание

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PREFACE

The Life of Nelson has been written so often, that an explanation—almost an apology—seems due for any renewal of the attempt; but, not to mention the attractiveness of the theme in itself, it is essential to the completeness and rounding off of the author's discussion of the Influence of Sea Power, that he present a study, from his own point of view, of the one man who in himself summed up and embodied the greatness of the possibilities which Sea Power comprehends,—the man for whom genius and opportunity worked together, to make him the personification of the Navy of Great Britain, the dominant factor in the periods hitherto treated. In the century and a half embraced in those periods, the tide of influence and of power has swelled higher and higher, floating upward before the eyes of mankind many a distinguished name; but it is not until their close that one arises in whom all the promises of the past find their

finished realization, their perfect fulfilment. Thenceforward the name of Nelson is enrolled among those few presented to us by History, the simple mention of which suggests, not merely a personality or a career, but a great force or a great era concrete in a single man, who is its standard-bearer before the nations.

Yet, in this process of exaltation, the man himself, even when so very human and so very near our own time as Nelson is, suffers from an association which merges his individuality in the splendor of his surroundings; and it is perhaps pardonable to hope that the subject is not so far exhausted but that a new worker, gleaning after the reapers, may contribute something further towards disengaging the figure of the hero from the glory that cloaks it. The aim of the present writer, while not neglecting other sources of knowledge, has been to make Nelson describe himself, – tell the story of his own inner life as well as of his external actions. To realize this object, it has not seemed the best way to insert numerous letters, because, in the career of a man of action, each one commonly deals with a variety of subjects, which bear to one another little relation, except that, at the moment of writing, they all formed part of the multifold life the writer was then leading. It is true, life in general is passed in that way; but it is not by such distraction of interest among minute details that a particular life is best understood. Few letters, therefore, have been inserted entire; and those which have, have been chosen because of their unity of subject, and of their value as characteristic.

The author's method has been to make a careful study of Nelson's voluminous correspondence, analyzing it, in order to detect the leading features of temperament, traits of thought, and motives of action; and thence to conceive within himself, by gradual familiarity even more than by formal effort, the character therein revealed. The impression thus produced he has sought to convey to others, partly in the form of ordinary narrative,—daily living with his hero,—and partly by such grouping of incidents and utterances, not always, nor even nearly, simultaneous, as shall serve by their joint evidence to emphasize particular traits, or particular opinions, more forcibly than when such testimonies are scattered far apart; as they would be, if recounted in a strict order of time.

A like method of treatment has been pursued in regard to that purely external part of Nelson's career in which are embraced his military actions, as well as his public and private life. The same aim is kept in view of showing clearly, not only what he did, but the principles which dominated his military thought, and guided his military actions, throughout his life; or, it may be, such changes as must inevitably occur in the development of a man who truly lives. This cannot be done satisfactorily without concentrating the evidence from time to time; and it is therefore a duty a writer owes to his readers, if they wish such acquaintance with his subject as he thinks he has succeeded in acquiring for himself.

The author has received individual assistance from several

persons. To a general expression of thanks he wishes to add his special acknowledgments to the present Earl Nelson, through whose aid he has obtained information of interest which otherwise probably would have escaped him; and to Lords Radstock and De Saumarez, both of whom have been good enough to place in his hands letters contemporary with Nelson, and touching incidentally matters that throw light on his career. Material of the same kind has also been furnished him by Professor John Knox Laughton, whose knowledge of Nelson and of the Navy of that period is second to none; it is not the least of the writer's advantages that he has had before him, to check possible errors in either fact or conclusions, the admirable, though brief, Life of Nelson published by Mr. Laughton two years since.

Illustrative anecdotes have also been supplied by Admiral Sir William R. Mends, G.C.B., who has shown his continued interest in the work by the trouble he has taken for it; by Mr. Stuart J. Reid, of Blackwell Cliff, East Grinstead; and by Mr. Edgar Goble, of Fareham, Hants. Mr. B.F. Stevens, of 4 Trafalgar Square, has also kindly exerted himself on several occasions to obtain needed information. To Mrs. F.H.B. Eccles, of Sherwell House, Plymouth, granddaughter of Josiah Nisbet, Nelson's stepson, the author is indebted for reminiscences of Lady Nelson, and for her portrait here published; and his thanks are also due to Lieutenant-Colonel W. Clement D. Esdaile, of Burley Manor, Ringwood, Hants, through whom he was brought

into communication with Mrs. Eccles, and who has in other ways helped him.

Throughout the writing of the book constant assistance has been received from Mr. Robert B. Marston, to whom cordial acknowledgment is made for the untiring pains taken in prosecuting necessary inquiries, which could not have been done without great delay by one not living in England. Suggestions valuable to the completeness of the work have been given also by Mr. Marston.

For the portrait of Mrs. Philip Ward, the "Horatia" whom Nelson called generally his adopted daughter, but at times spoke of as his daughter simply, and whom, on the last morning of his life, he commended to the care of his Country, the author has to thank Mr. and Mrs. Nelson Ward, of 15 Lancaster Road, Belsize Park, London. Mr. Nelson Ward is her son.

To the more usual sources of information already in print, it is not necessary to refer in detail; but it is right to mention especially the collection of Hamilton and Nelson letters, published by Mr. Alfred Morrison, a copy of which by his polite attention was sent the writer, and upon which must necessarily be based such account of Nelson's relations with Lady Hamilton as, unfortunately, cannot be omitted wholly from a life so profoundly affected by them.

A.T. MAHAN.

MARCH, 1897.

CHAPTER I.
THE FIRST TWENTY-FIVE YEARS

1758-1783

It is the appointed lot of some of History's chosen few to come upon the scene at the moment when a great tendency is nearing its crisis and culmination. Specially gifted with qualities needed to realize the fulness of its possibilities, they so identify themselves with it by their deeds that they thenceforth personify to the world the movement which brought them forth, and of which their own achievements are at once the climax and the most dazzling illustration. Fewer still, but happiest of all, viewed from the standpoint of fame, are those whose departure is as well timed as their appearance, who do not survive the instant of perfected success, to linger on subjected to the searching tests of common life, but pass from our ken in a blaze of glory which thenceforth forever encircles their names. In that evening light break away and vanish the ominous clouds wherewith human frailties or tyrant passions had threatened to darken their renown; and their sun goes down with a lustre which the lapse of time is powerless to dim. Such was the privilege of the stainless Wolfe; such, beyond all others, that of Nelson. Rarely has a man been

more favored in the hour of his appearing; never one so fortunate in the moment of his death.

Yet, however accidental, or providential, this rarely allotted portion, this crowning incident of an heroic career, it is after all but an incident. It the man has not contrived; but to it he has contributed much, without which his passing hour would have faded to memory, undistinguished among those of the myriads, great and small, who have died as nobly and are forever forgotten. A sun has set; but before its setting it has run a course, be it long or short, and has gathered a radiance which fixes upon its parting beams the rapt attention of beholders. The man's self and the man's works, what he was and what he did, the nature which brought forth such fruits, the thoughts which issued in such acts, hopes, fears, desires, quick intuitions, painful struggles, lofty ambitions, happy opportunities, have blended to form that luminous whole, known and seen of all, but not to be understood except by a patient effort to resolve the great result into its several rays, to separate the strands whose twisting has made so strong a cord.

Concerning the man's external acts, it will often happen that their true value and significance can best be learned, not from his own personal recital, but from an analytic study of the deeds themselves. Yet into them, too, often enters, not only the subtile working of their author's natural qualities, but also a certain previous history of well-defined opinions, of settled principles firmly held, of trains of thought and reasoning, of intuitions

wrought into rational convictions, all of which betray both temperament and character. Of these intellectual antecedents, the existence and development may be gleaned from his writings, confirming the inference reached somewhat mechanically by the scrutiny of his actions. They play to the latter the part of the soul to the body, and thus contribute to the rather anatomical result of the dissecting process a spiritual element it would otherwise lack. But if this is so even of the outward career, it is far more deeply true of the inner history, of that underlying native character, which masterfully moulds and colors every life, yet evades the last analysis except when the obscure workings of heart and mind have been laid bare by their owner's words, recording the feelings of the fleeting hour with no view to future inspection. In these revelations of self, made without thought of the world outside, is to be found, if anywhere, the clue to that complex and often contradictory mingling of qualities which go to form the oneness of the man's personality. This discordance between essential unity and superficial diversities must be harmonized, if a true conception of his being is to be formed. We know the faces of our friends, but we see each as one. The features can, if we will, be separately considered, catalogued, and valued; but who ever thus thinks habitually of one he knows well? Yet to know well must be the aim of biography,—so to present the traits in their totality, without suppression of any, and in their true relative proportions, as to produce, not the blurred or distorted outlines seen through an imperfect lens, but the vivid apprehension which

follows long intimacy with its continual, though unconscious, process of correction.

For such a treatment of Nelson's character, copious, if imperfect, material is afforded in his extensive and varied correspondence. From it the author aims, first, to draw forth a distinct and living image of the man himself, as sketched therein at random and loosely by his own hand. It is sought to reach the result by keeping the reader in constant contact, as by daily acquaintance, with a personality of mingled weakness and strength, of grave faults as well as of great virtues, but one whose charm was felt in life by all who knew it. The second object, far less ambitious, is to present a clear narrative of the military career, of the mighty deeds of arms, of this first of British seamen, whom the gifts of Nature and the course of History have united to make, in his victories and in their results, the representative figure of the greatest sea-power that the world has known.

It will not be thought surprising that we have, of the first thirty years of Nelson's life, no such daily informal record as that which illustrates the comparatively brief but teeming period of his active fighting career, from 1793 to 1805, when he at once, with inevitable directness and singular rapidity, rose to prominence, and established intimate relations with numbers of his contemporaries. A few anecdotes, more or less characteristic, have been preserved concerning his boyhood and youth. In his early manhood we have his own account, both explicit and

implied in many casual unpremeditated phrases, of the motives which governed his public conduct in an episode occurring when, scarcely yet more than a youth, he commanded a frigate in the West Indies,—the whole singularly confirmatory, it might better be said prophetic, of the distinguishing qualities afterwards so brilliantly manifested in his maturity. But beyond these, it is only by the closest attention and careful gleaning that can be found, in the defective and discontinuous collection of letters which remains from his first thirty years, the indisputable tokens, in most important particulars, of the man that was to be.

The external details of this generally uneventful period can be rapidly summarized. He was born on the 29th of September, 1758, the fifth son and sixth child of Edmund Nelson, then rector of the parish of Burnham Thorpe, in Norfolk, a county which lies along the eastern coast of England, bordering the North Sea. His mother, whose name before marriage was Catherine Suckling, was grandniece to Sir Robert Walpole, the famous prime minister of Great Britain during twenty years of the reigns of the first two Georges. Sir Robert's second brother was called Horatio; and it was from the latter, or from his son, that the future hero took his baptismal name, which, in a more common form, was also that of Sir Robert's younger son, the celebrated letter and memoir writer, Horace Walpole.

Of the eleven children borne by Nelson's mother in her eighteen wedded years, only two lived to grow old. She herself died at forty-two; and her brother, Captain Maurice Suckling,

of the Royal Navy, was also cut off in the prime of his age. As the earlier Nelsons were unusually long-lived, it seems probable that a certain delicacy of constitution was transmitted through the Sucklings to the generation to which the admiral belonged. He was himself, at various periods through life, a great sufferer, and frequently an invalid; allusions to illness, often of a most prostrating type, and to his susceptibility to the influences of climate or weather, occur repeatedly and at brief intervals throughout his correspondence. This is a factor in his career which should not be lost to mind; for on the one hand it explains in part the fretfulness which at times appears, and on the other brings out with increased force the general kindly sweetness of his temper, which breathed with slight abatement through such depressing conditions. It enhances, too, the strength of purpose that trod bodily weakness under foot, almost unconsciously, at the call of duty or of honor. It is notable, in his letters, that the necessity for exertion, even when involving severe exposure, is apt to be followed, though without apparent recognition of a connection between the two, by the remark that he has not for a long time been so well. He probably experienced, as have others, that it is not the greater hardships of the profession, much less the dangers, but its uncertainties and petty vexations, which tell most severely on a high-strung organization like his own.

Captain Maurice Suckling, R.N.

The immediate occasion of his going to sea was as follows. In 1770 the Falkland Islands, a desolate and then unimportant group, lying in the South Atlantic, to the eastward of Patagonia, were claimed as a possession by both Spain and Great Britain. The latter had upon them a settlement called Port Egmont, before which, in the year named, an overwhelming Spanish squadron suddenly appeared, and compelled the British occupants to lower their flag. The insult aroused public indignation in England to the highest pitch; and while peremptory demands for reparation were despatched to Spain, a number of ships of war were ordered at once into commission. Among these was the "Raisonnable," of sixty-four guns, to the command of which was appointed Nelson's uncle, Captain Maurice Suckling. The latter had some time before promised to provide for one of his sister's children, the family being very poor; and, the custom of the day permitting naval captains, as a kind of patronage, to take into the King's service on board their own ships a certain number of lads, as midshipmen or otherwise, the opportunity of giving a nephew a start in life was now in his hands. The story is that Horatio, though then but twelve years old, realized the burden of pecuniary care that his father was carrying, and himself volunteered the wish that his uncle would take him to sea. However it happened, the suggestion staggered Suckling, who well knew the lad's puny frame and fragile constitution. "What has poor little Horatio done," cried he, "that he, being so weak, should be sent to rough it at sea? But let him come, and if a cannon-ball takes off

his head, he will at least be provided for." Under such gloomy foreboding began the most dazzling career that the sea, the mother of so many heroes, has ever seen.[1] Spain, after a short hesitation, yielded the British demands, so that war did not come, and the "Raisonnable," with other ships, was again put out of commission. The incident of the Falkland Islands, however, had served the purpose of introducing Nelson to his profession, for which otherwise the opportunity might not have offered. Being so young when thus embarked, he, in common with many of the most successful seamen of that day, got scanty schooling; nor did he, as some others did, by after application remedy the eccentricities of style, and even of grammar, which are apt to result from such early neglect. His letters, vigorous and direct as they are, present neither the polished diction of Collingwood, nor the usual even correctness of St. Vincent and Saumarez, but are,

[1] The precise date of Nelson's entering the Navy, which would be that of his being rated upon the books of the "Raisonnable," is not stated. Accepting the times during which he was borne upon the books of different ships, as given by Sir Harris Nicolas (Letters and Despatches of Lord Nelson, vol. i. p. 4, note), and with them calculating back from October 15, 1773, the day mentioned by Nelson himself as that on which he was paid off from the "Carcass" (Nicolas, p. 5), the date of entry upon the books of the "Raisonnable" would be November 27, 1770; unless, which is unlikely, there were any lost days. The news of the Port Egmont business reached England in October, 1770. Clarke and M'Arthur (Life of Nelson, vol. i. p. 14, note) infer January 1, 1771, for his entry upon the "Raisonnable's" books; but this would not allow the times which Nicolas gives with minute exactness. For his actually joining the "Raisonnable" they give, loosely, the spring of 1771,—March or April. This is very possible, as rating back, for the sake of gaining constructive time needed to qualify for promotion, was tolerated by the practice of the day.

on the contrary, constantly disfigured by awkward expressions and bad English. There was rarely, however, danger of mistaking his meaning, as was sometimes charged against Lord Howe.

Here, before fairly parting with the humble home life, of which the motherless boy had seen, and was throughout his career to see so little, is a fit place to introduce two anecdotes associated with those early days which his biographers have transmitted to us. We of these critical times have learned to look with incredulity, not always unmixed with derision, upon stories relating to the childhood of distinguished men; but it can safely be said that the two now to be given are in entire keeping, not merely with particular traits, but with the great ruling tenor of Nelson's whole life. He and his elder brother were going to school one winter day upon their ponies. Finding the snow so deep as to delay them seriously, they went back, and the elder reported that they could not get on. The father very judiciously replied: "If that be so, I have of course nothing to say; but I wish you to try again, and I leave it to your honour not to turn back, unless necessary." On the second attempt, the elder was more than once for returning; but Horatio stuck it out, repeating continually, "Remember it was left to our honour," and the difficult journey was accomplished.

The children in this instance seem to have felt that there was danger in going on. The other recorded occurrence shows in the lad that indifference to personal benefit, as distinguished from the sense of conspicuous achievement, which was ever a

prominent characteristic of the man. The master of his school had a very fine pear-tree, whose fruit the boys coveted, but upon which none dared hazard an attempt. At last Nelson, who did not share their desires, undertook the risk, climbed the tree by night, and carried off the pears, but refused to eat any of them,—saying that he had taken them only because the others were afraid.

Trivial though these incidents may seem, they are so merely because they belong to the day of small things. To those accustomed to watch children, they will not appear unworthy of note. Taken together, they illustrate, as really as do his greatest deeds, the two forms assumed at different times by the one incentive which always most powerfully determined Nelson's action through life,—the motive to which an appeal was never made in vain. No material considerations, neither danger on the one hand, nor gain on the other, ever affected him as did that idealized conception which presented itself, now as duty, now as honor, according as it bore for the moment upon his relations to the state or to his own personality. "In my mind's eye," said he to his friend Captain Hardy, who afterwards bent over him as his spirit was parting amid the tumult of his last victory, "I ever saw a radiant orb suspended which beckoned me onward to renown." Nelson did not often verge upon the poetical in words, but to the poetry of lofty aspiration his inmost being always answered true.

To the young naval officer of a century ago, especially if without political or social influence, it was a weighty advantage to be attached to some one commanding officer in

active employment, who by favorable opportunity or through professional friendships could push the fortunes of those in whom he was interested. Much of the promotion was then in the hands of the admirals on foreign stations; and this local power to reward distinguished service, though liable to abuse in many ways, conduced greatly to stimulate the zeal and efforts of officers who felt themselves immediately under the eye of one who could make or mar their future. Each naval captain, also, could in his degree affect more or less the prospects of those dependent upon him. Thus Suckling, though not going to sea himself, continued with intelligent solicitude his promised care of the young Nelson. When the "Raisonnable" was paid off, he was transferred to the command of the "Triumph," of seventy-four guns, stationed as guard-ship in the river Medway; and to her also he took with him his nephew, who was borne upon her books for the two following years, which were, however, far from being a period of inactive harbor life. Having considerable professional interest, he saw to the lad's being kept afloat, and obtained for him from time to time such service as seemed most desirable to his enterprising spirit.

The distinction between the merchant seaman and the man-of-war's man, or even the naval officer, in those days of sailing ships and simple weapons was much less sharply marked than it has since become. Skill in seamanship, from the use of the marlinespike and the sail-needle up to the full equipping of a ship and the handling of her under canvas, was in either

service the prime essential. In both alike, cannon and small arms were carried; and the ship's company, in the peaceful trader as well as in the ship of war, expected to repel force with force, when meeting upon equal terms. With a reduced number of naval vessels in commission, and their quarter-decks consequently over-crowded with young officers, a youth was more likely to find on board them a life of untasked idleness than a call to professional occupation and improvement. Nelson therefore was sent by his careful guardian to a merchant-ship trading to the West Indies, to learn upon her, as a foremast hand, the elements of his profession, under conditions which, from the comparative fewness of the crew and the activity of the life, would tend to develop his powers most rapidly. In this vessel he imbibed, along with nautical knowledge, the prejudice which has usually existed, more or less, in the merchant marine against the naval service, due probably to the more rigorous exactions and longer terms of enlistment in the latter, although the life in other respects is one of less hardship; but in Nelson's day the feeling had been intensified by the practice of impressment, and by the severe, almost brutal discipline that obtained on board some ships of war, through the arbitrary use of their powers by captains, then insufficiently controlled by law. In this cruise he seems to have spent a little over a year; a time, however, that was not lost to him for the accomplishment of the period of service technically required to qualify as a lieutenant, his name continuing throughout on the books of the "Triumph," to which

he returned in July, 1772.

Suckling's care next insured for him a continuance of active, semi-detached duty, in the boats of the "Triumph,"—an employment very different from, and more responsible than, that in which he had recently been occupied, and particularly calculated to develop in so apt a nature the fearlessness of responsibility, both professional and personal, that was among the most prominent features of Nelson's character. "The test of a man's courage is responsibility," said that great admiral and shrewd judge of men, the Earl of St. Vincent, after a long and varied experience of naval officers; and none ever shone more brightly under this supreme proof than the lad whose career is now opening before us. It may be interesting, too, to note that this condition of more or less detached service, so early begun, in which, though not in chief command, he held an authority temporarily independent, and was immediately answerable for all that happened on the spot, was the singular characteristic of most of his brilliant course, during which, until 1803, two years before Trafalgar, he was only for brief periods commander-in-chief, yet almost always acted apart from his superior. Many a man, gallant, fearless, and capable, within signal distance of his admiral, has, when out of sight of the flag, succumbed with feeble knees to the burden of independent responsible action, though not beyond his professional powers. This strength, like all Nature's best gifts, is inborn; yet, both for the happy possessor and for the merely average man, it is susceptible of high development only by being

early exercised, which was the good fortune of Nelson.

Of these two years of somewhat irregular service, while nominally attached to the "Triumph," it will be well to give the account in his own words; for, having been written a full quarter of a century later, they record the deepest and most lasting impressions made upon him during that susceptible period when first becoming familiar with the calling he was to adorn:—

> "The business with Spain being accommodated, I was sent in a West India ship belonging to the house of Hibbert, Purrier, and Horton, with Mr. John Rathbone, who had formerly been in the Navy, in the Dreadnought with Captain Suckling. From this voyage I returned to the Triumph at Chatham in July, 1772; and, if I did not improve in my education, I returned a practical Seaman, with a horror of the Royal Navy, and with a saying, then constant with the Seamen, *'Aft the most honour, forward the better man*!' It was many weeks before I got the least reconciled to a Man-of-War, so deep was the prejudice rooted; and what pains were taken to instil this erroneous principle in a young mind! However, as my ambition was to be a Seaman, it was always held out as a reward, that if I attended well to my navigation, I should go in the cutter and decked long-boat, which was attached to the Commanding officer's ship at Chatham. Thus by degrees I became a good pilot, for vessels of that description, from Chatham to the Tower of London, down the Swin, and the North Foreland; and confident of myself amongst rocks and sands, which has many times since been of great comfort to me. In this way I was trained,

till the expedition towards the North Pole was fitted out; when, although no boys were allowed to go in the Ships, (as of no use,) yet nothing could prevent my using every interest to go with Captain Lutwidge in the Carcass; and, as I fancied I was to fill a man's place, I begged I might be his cockswain; which, finding my ardent desire for going with him, Captain Lutwidge complied with, and has continued the strictest friendship to this moment. Lord Mulgrave, whom I then first knew, maintained his kindest friendship and regard to the last moment of his life. When the boats were fitting out to quit the two Ships blocked up in the ice, I exerted myself to have the command of a four-oared cutter raised upon, which was given me, with twelve men; and I prided myself in fancying I could navigate her better than any other boat in the Ship."

It will be recognized from this brief yet suggestive and characteristic narrative, that, however valuable and even indispensable may have been his uncle's assistance in forwarding his wishes, it was his own ambition and his own impulse that even at this early day gave direction to his course, and obtained opportunities which would scarcely have been offered spontaneously to one of his physical frailty. In this Arctic expedition he underwent the experiences common to all who tempt those icebound seas. During it occurred an incident illustrative of Nelson's recklessness of personal danger,—a very different thing from official recklessness, which he never showed even in his moments of greatest daring and highest inspiration.

The story is so hackneyed by frequent repetition as to make its relation a weariness to the biographer, the more so that the trait of extreme rashness in youth is one by no means so rare as to be specially significant of Nelson's character. It will be given in the words of his first biographers:—

> "There is also an anecdote recollected by Admiral Lutwidge, which marked the filial attention of his gallant cockswain. Among the gentlemen on the quarter-deck of the Carcass, who were not rated midshipmen, there was, besides young Nelson, a daring shipmate of his, to whom he had become attached. One night, during the mid-watch, it was concerted between them that they should steal together from the ship, and endeavour to obtain a bear's skin. The clearness of the nights in those high latitudes rendered the accomplishment of this object extremely difficult: they, however, seem to have taken advantage of the haze of an approaching fog, and thus to have escaped unnoticed. Nelson in high spirits led the way over the frightful chasms in the ice, armed with a rusty musket. It was not, however, long before the adventurers were missed by those on board; and, as the fog had come on very thick, the anxiety of Captain Lutwidge and his officers was very great. Between three and four in the morning the mist somewhat dispersed, and the hunters were discovered at a considerable distance, attacking a large bear. The signal was instantly made for their return; but it was in vain that Nelson's companion urged him to obey it. He was at this time divided by a chasm in the ice from his shaggy antagonist, which

probably saved his life; for the musket had flashed in the pan, and their ammunition was expended. 'Never mind,' exclaimed Horatio, 'do but let me get a blow at this devil with the but-end of my musket, and we shall have him.' His companion, finding that entreaty was in vain, regained the ship. The captain, seeing the young man's danger, ordered a gun to be fired to terrify the enraged animal. This had the desired effect; but Nelson was obliged to return without his bear, somewhat agitated with the apprehension of the consequence of this adventure. Captain Lutwidge, though he could not but admire so daring a disposition, reprimanded him rather sternly for such rashness, and for conduct so unworthy of the situation he occupied; and desired to know what motive he could have for hunting a bear? Being thought by his captain to have acted in a manner unworthy of his situation, made a deep impression on the high-minded cockswain; who, pouting his lip, as he was wont to do when agitated, replied, 'Sir, I wished to kill the bear, that I might carry its skin to my father.'"

Upon his return to England from the Arctic Seas, Nelson again by his own choice determined his immediate future. Within a fortnight of leaving the "Carcass," he was, through his uncle's influence, received on board by the captain of the "Seahorse," of twenty guns, one of the ships composing a squadron that was just then fitting out for the East Indies. To quote himself, "Nothing less than such a distant voyage could in the least satisfy my desire of maritime knowledge." During an absence of three years he for much of the time, as formerly in his West India cruise, did

the duty of a seaman aloft, from which he was afterwards rated midshipman, and placed, this time finally, upon the quarter-deck as an officer. In the ordinary course of cruising in peace times, he visited every part of the station from Bengal to Bussorah; but the climate, trying even to vigorous Europeans, proved too much for his frail health. After a couple of years he broke down and was invalided home, reaching England in September, 1776. His escape from death was attributed by himself to the kind care of Captain Pigot of the "Dolphin," in which ship he came back. At this period we are told that, when well, he was of florid countenance, rather stout and athletic; but, as the result of his illness, he was reduced to a mere skeleton, and for some time entirely lost the use of his limbs,—a distressing symptom, that returned upon him a few years later after his Central American expedition in 1780, and confirms the impression of extreme fragility of constitution, which is frequently indicated in other ways.

During this absence in the East Indies Captain Suckling, in April, 1775, had been named Comptroller of the Navy, —a civil position, but one that carried with it power and consequent influence. This probably told for much in obtaining for Nelson, who was but just eighteen, and had not yet passed the examinations for his first promotion, an acting appointment as lieutenant. With this he joined a small ship-of-the-line, the "Worcester," of sixty-four guns, on board which he remained for six months, engaged in convoy duty between the Channel and

Gibraltar, seeing from her decks for the first time the waters of the Mediterranean and its approaches, since then indissolubly associated with his name and his glory. He took with him a letter from his uncle to the captain of his new ship; but while such introduction, coming from so influential a quarter, doubtless contributed powerfully to clear from his path the obstacles commonly encountered by young men, Nelson had gained for himself a reputation for professional capacity, which, here as throughout his life, quickly won him the full confidence of his superiors. In later years, when his admiral's flag was flying, he recorded, with evident pride in the recollection, that while on board the "Worcester," notwithstanding his youth, his captain used to say, "He felt as easy when I was upon deck as any officer of the ship." It is doubtful, indeed, whether Nelson ever possessed in a high degree the delicate knack of handling a ship with the utmost dexterity and precision. He certainly had not the reputation for so doing. Codrington,—a thorough Nelsonian, to use his own somewhat factious expression—used to say in later years, "Lord Nelson was no seaman; even in the earlier stages of the profession his genius had soared higher, and all his energies were turned to becoming a great commander." His apprenticeship, before reaching command, was probably too short; and, as captain, his generous disposition to trust others to do work for which he knew them fitted, would naturally lead him to throw the manipulation of the vessel upon his subordinates. But although, absorbed by broader and deeper

thoughts of the responsibilities and opportunities of a naval commander, to which he was naturally attracted by both his genius and his temperament, he was excelled in technical skill by many who had no touch of his own inspiration, he nevertheless possessed a thoroughly competent knowledge of his profession as a simple seaman; which, joined to his zeal, energy, and intelligence, would more than justify the confidence expressed by his early commander. Of this knowledge he gave full proof a year later, when, before a board of captains, strangers to him, he successfully passed his examinations for a lieutenancy. His uncle Suckling, as Comptroller of the Navy, was indeed on the Board; but he concealed the fact of relationship until the other members had expressed themselves satisfied.

His examination was held within a week of his leaving the "Worcester," on the 8th of April, 1777; and Suckling once more, but for the last time in his life, was able to exert his influence in behalf of his relative by promptly securing for him, not only his promotion to lieutenant, which many waited for long, but with it his commission, dated April 10, to the "Lowestoffe," a frigate of thirty-two guns. This class of vessel was in the old days considered particularly desirable for young officers, being more active than ships-of-the-line, while at the same time more comfortable, and a better school for the forming of an officer, than were the smaller cruisers; and his uncle probably felt that Nelson, whose service hitherto had been mainly upon the latter, needed yet to perfect the habits and methods distinctive of a ship

of war, for he now wrote him a letter upon the proprieties of naval conduct, excellently conceived, yet embracing particulars that should scarcely have been necessary to one who had served his time on board well-ordered ships. The appointment to the "Lowestoffe" was further fortunate, both for him and for us, as in the commander of the vessel, Captain William Locker, he found, not only an admirable officer and gentleman, but a friend for whom he formed a lasting attachment, ending only with Locker's death in 1800, two years after the Battle of the Nile. To this friendship we owe the fullest record, at his own hands, of his early career; for Locker kept the numerous letters written him by Nelson while still an unknown young man. Of sixty-seven which now remain, covering the years from 1777 to 1783, all but thirty were to this one correspondent.

Captain William Locker, R.N

In another respect the appointment to the "Lowestoffe" was fortunate for Nelson. The ship was destined to the West Indies—or, to speak more precisely, to Jamaica, which was a command distinct from that of the eastern Caribbean, or Lesser Antilles, officially styled the Leeward Islands Station. Great Britain was then fully embarked in the war with her North American colonies, which ended in their independence; and the course of events was hastening her to the rupture with France and Spain that followed within a year. In this protracted contest the chief scene of naval hostilities was to be the West Indies; but beyond even the casualties of war, the baneful climate of that region insured numerous vacancies by prostration and death, with consequent chances of promotion for those who escaped the fevers, and found favor in the eyes of their commander-in-chief. The brutal levity of the old toast, "A bloody war and a sickly season," nowhere found surer fulfilment than on those pestilence-stricken coasts. Captain Locker's health soon gave way. Arriving at Jamaica on the 19th of July, 1777, we find Nelson in the following month writing to him from the ship during an absence produced by a serious illness, from which fatal results were feared. The letter, like all those to Locker, was marked by that tone of quick, eager sympathy, of genial inclination always to say the kindest thing, that characterized his correspondence, and, generally, his intercourse with others,—traits that through life made him, beyond most men, acceptable and beloved. He was, from first to last, not merely one of

those whose services are forced upon others by sheer weight of ability, because indispensable,—though this, too, he was,—but men wanted him because, although at times irritable, especially after the wounds received in later years, he was an easy yoke-fellow, pleasant to deal with, cordial and ready to support those above him, a tolerant and appreciative master to subordinates. It may even be said that, in matters indifferent to him, he too readily reflected the feelings, views, and wishes of those about him; but when they clashed with his own fixed convictions, he was immovable. As he himself said in such a case, "I feel I am perfectly right, and you know upon those occasions I am not famous for giving up a point."

Of his connection with the "Lowestoffe" he himself, in the short autobiographical sketch before quoted, mentions two circumstances, which, from the very fact of their remaining so long in his memory, illustrate temperament. "Even a frigate," he says, "was not sufficiently active for my mind, and I got into a schooner, tender to the Lowestoffe. In this vessel I made myself a complete pilot for all the passages through the [Keys] Islands situated on the north side Hispaniola." This kind of service, it will be noted, was in direct sequence, as to training, to his handling of the "Triumph's" long-boat in the lower waters of the Thames, and would naturally contribute to increase that "confidence in himself among rocks and sands," which was afterwards to be so "great a comfort" to him. In his later career he had frequent and pressing need of that particular form of professional judgment

and self-reliance for which these early experiences stood him in good stead. As he afterwards wrote to the First Lord of the Admiralty, when pleading the cause of a daring and skilful officer who had run his ship ashore: "If I had been censured every time I have run my ship, or fleets under my command, into great danger, I should long ago have been *out* of the service, and never *in* the House of Peers." At the critical instants of the Nile and Copenhagen, as well as in the less conspicuous but more prolonged anxieties of the operations off Corsica and along the Riviera of Genoa, this early habit, grafted upon the singularly steady nerve wherewith he was endowed by nature, sustained him at a height of daring and achievement to which very few have been able to rise.

The other incident recorded by him as happening while on board the "Lowestoffe," he himself cites as illustrative of temperament. "Whilst in this frigate, an event happened which presaged my character; and, as it conveys no dishonour to the officer alluded to, I shall insert it. Blowing a gale of wind, and a very heavy sea, the frigate captured an American letter-of-marque. The first Lieutenant was ordered to board her, which he did not do, owing to the very heavy sea. On his return, the Captain said, 'Have I no officer in the ship who can board the prize?' On which the Master ran to the gangway, to get into the boat: when I stopped him, saying, 'It is my turn now; and if I come back, it is yours.' This little incident," he continues, "has often occurred to my mind; and I know it is my disposition, that

difficulties and dangers do but increase my desire of attempting them." An action of this sort, in its results unimportant, gives keener satisfaction in the remembrance than do greater deeds, because more purely individual,—entirely one's own. It is upon such as this, rather than upon his victories, that Nelson in his narrative dwells caressingly. His personal daring at St. Vincent, and against the gunboats off Cadiz, ministered more directly to his self-esteem, to that consciousness of high desert which was dear to him, than did the Battle of the Nile, whose honors he, though ungrudgingly, shared with his "band of brothers."

When the "Lowestoffe" had been a year upon the station, it became very doubtful whether Locker could continue in her, and finally he did go home ill. It was probably due to this uncertainty that he obtained the transfer of Nelson, in whom he had become most affectionately interested, to the "Bristol," flagship of Sir Peter Parker, the commander-in-chief. Here, under the admiral's own eye, warmly recommended by his last captain, and with a singular faculty for enlisting the love and esteem of all with whom he was brought into contact, the young officer's prospects were of the fairest; nor did the event belie them. Joining the "Bristol" as her third lieutenant, not earlier than July, 1778, he had by the end of September risen "by succession"—to use his own phrase—to be first; a promotion by seniority whose rapidity attests the rate at which vacancies occurred. Both Parker and his wife became very fond of him, cared for him in illness, and in later years she wrote to him upon each of the occasions

on which he most brilliantly distinguished himself—after St. Vincent, the Nile, and Copenhagen. "Your mother," said she after the first, "could not have heard of your deeds with more affection; nor could she be more rejoiced at your personal escape from all the dangers of that glorious day;" and again, after the Nile, "Sir Peter and I have ever regarded you as a son." The letter following the victory at Copenhagen has not been published; but Nelson, whose heart was never reluctant to gratitude nor to own obligation, wrote in reply: "Believe me when I say that I am as sensible as ever that I owe my present position in life to your and good Sir Peter's partiality for me, and friendly remembrance of Maurice Suckling."

This last allusion indicates some disinterestedness in Parker's patronage, and its vital importance to Nelson at that time. Captain Suckling had died in July, 1778, and with him departed the only powerful support upon which the young lieutenant could then count, apart from his own merits and the friends obtained by them. There was in those days an immense difference in prospects between the nephew of the Comptroller of the Navy and a man unknown at headquarters. By what leading principles, if any, Sir Peter Parker was guided in the distribution of his favors, can scarcely now be ascertained; but that he brought rapidly forward two men of such great yet widely differing merit as Nelson and Collingwood, is a proof that his judgment was sound and the station one where vacancies were frequent. Collingwood, who was then a lieutenant on board a sloop-of-

war, went to the "Lowestoffe" in Nelson's place. When the latter, in December, 1778, was made commander into the brig "Badger," the other was transferred to the vacant room in the "Bristol;" and when Nelson, on the 11th of June, 1779, became post-captain in the "Hinchinbrook" frigate, Collingwood again followed him as commander of the "Badger." Finally, when through a death vacancy a better frigate offered for Nelson, Collingwood also was posted into the "Hinchinbrook;" this ship thus having the singular distinction of conferring the highest rank obtainable by selection, and so fixing the final position of the two life-long friends who led the columns at Trafalgar, the crowning achievement of the British Navy as well as of their own illustrious careers. The coincidence at the earlier date may have been partly factitious, due to a fad of the commander-in-chief; but it assumes a different and very impressive aspect viewed in the light of their later close association, especially when it is recalled that Collingwood also succeeded, upon Nelson's death, to the Mediterranean command, and was there worn out, as his predecessor fell, in the discharge of his duty upon that important station, which thus proved fatal to them both. Few historic parallels are so complete. Sir Peter Parker, living until 1811, survived both his illustrious juniors, and at the age of eighty-two followed Nelson's coffin, as chief mourner at the imposing obsequies, where the nation, from the highest to the lowest, mingled the exultation of triumph with weeping for the loss of its best-beloved.

Of Nelson's exterior at this time, his early biographers have secured an account which, besides its value as a portrait, possesses the further interest of mentioning explicitly that charm of manner which was one of his best birth-gifts, reflecting, as it did, the generous and kindly temper of his heart. "The personal appearance of Captain Nelson at this period of his life, owing to his delicate health and diminutive figure, was far from expressing the greatness of his intellectual powers. From his earliest years, like Cleomenes, the hero of Sparta, he had been enamoured of glory, and had possessed a greatness of mind. Nelson preserved, also, a similar temperance and simplicity of manners. Nature, as Plutarch adds of the noble Spartan, had given a spur to his mind which rendered him impetuous in the pursuit of whatever he deemed honourable. The demeanour of this extraordinary young man was entirely the demeanour of a British seaman; when the energies of his mind were not called forth by some object of duty, or professional interest, he seemed to retire within himself, and to care but little for the refined courtesies of polished life." No saving sense of humor seems to have suggested that the profane might here ask, "Is this the British seaman?" "In his dress he had all the cleanliness of an Englishman, though his manner of wearing it gave him an air of negligence; and yet his general address and conversation, when he wished to please, possessed a charm that was irresistible."[2]

In June, 1779, when posted into the "Hinchinbrook," Nelson

[2] Clarke and M'Arthur, vol. i. p. 31.

wanted still three months of being twenty-one. By the custom of the British Navy, then and now, promotions from the grade of Captain to that of Admiral are made by seniority only. Once a captain, therefore, a man's future was assured, so far as concerned the possibility of juniors passing over his head,—neither favor nor merit could procure that; his rank relatively to others was finally fixed. The practical difficulty of getting at a captain of conspicuous ability, to make of him a flag-officer, was met by one of those clumsy yet adequate expedients by which the practical English mind contrives to reconcile respect for precedent with the demands of emergency. There being then no legal limit to the number of admirals, a promotion was in such case made of all captains down to and including the one wanted; and Lord St. Vincent, one of the most thorough-going of naval statesmen, is credited with the declaration that he would promote a hundred down the list of captains, if necessary, to reach the one demanded by the needs of the country. Even with this rough-riding over obstacles,—for the other officers promoted, however useful in their former grade, not being wanted as admirals, remained perforce unemployed,—the advantage of reaching post-rank betimes is evident enough; and to this chiefly Nelson referred in acknowledging his permanent indebtedness to Sir Peter Parker. With this early start, every artificial impediment was cleared from his path; his extraordinary ability was able to assert itself, and could be given due opportunity, without a too violent straining of service methods. He had, indeed, to wait

eighteen years for his flag-rank; but even so, he obtained it while still in the very prime of his energies, before he was thirty-nine, —a good fortune equalled by none of his most distinguished contemporaries.[3]

A somewhat singular feature of this early promotion of Nelson is that it was accorded without the claim of service in actual battle,—a circumstance that seems yet more remarkable when contrasted with the stormy and incessant warfare of his later career. While he was thus striding ahead, his equals in years, Saumarez and Pellew, were fighting their way up step by step, gaining each as the reward of a distinct meritorious action, only to find themselves outstripped by one who had scarcely seen a gun fired in anger. The result was mainly due to the nature of the station, where sickness made vacancies more rapidly than the deadliest engagement. But while this is true, and must be taken into the account, it was characteristic of Nelson that his value transpired through the simplest intercourse, and amid the commonplace incidents of service. Locker and Parker each in turn felt this. A little later, while he and Collingwood were still unknown captains, the latter, usually measured and formal in his language, wrote to him in these singularly strong words: "My regard for you, my dear Nelson, my respect and veneration for your character, I hope and believe, will never lessen." So, some years afterwards, but before he became renowned or had wrought

[3] Collingwood was nearly fifty when he got his flag. Howe was forty-five, St. Vincent fifty-three, Saumarez forty-four, Exmouth (Pellew) forty-eight.

his more brilliant achievements, an envious brother captain said to him, "You did just as you pleased in Lord Hood's time, the same in Admiral Hotham's, and now again with Sir John Jervis; it makes no difference to you who is Commander-in-chief." This power of winning confidence and inspiring attachment was one of the strongest elements in Nelson's success, alike as a subordinate and when himself in chief command.

With his mind ever fixed upon glory, or rather upon honor,—the word he himself most often used, and which more accurately expresses his desire for fame; honor, which is to glory what character is to reputation,—the same hard fortune persisted in denying to him, during the War of the American Revolution, the opportunities for distinction which he so ardently coveted. In the "Badger" and in the "Hinchinbrook," during the year 1779, his service was confined to routine cruising about Jamaica and along the Mosquito coast of Central America. A gleam of better things for a moment shone upon him in August of that year, when the French fleet, under Count D'Estaing, appeared in Haiti, numbering twenty-two ships-of-the-line, with transports reported to be carrying twenty thousand troops. All Jamaica was in an uproar of apprehension, believing an attack upon the island to be imminent; for its conquest was known to be one of the great objects of the enemy. Nelson was at the time living on shore, the "Hinchinbrook" seemingly[4] not having returned to the

[4] This appears certain from his letters of July 28 and August 12, which explicitly mention that ship's absence.

port since his appointment to her, and he eagerly accepted the duty of commanding the land batteries. The odds were great, —"You must not be surprised to hear of my learning to speak French," he wrote, laughingly, to Locker in England,—but if so, the greater the honor attendant, whether upon success or defeat. D'Estaing, however, passed on to America to encounter disaster at Savannah, and Nelson's hopes were again disappointed.

In January, 1780, an opportunity for service offered, which ended in no conspicuous or permanent result, but nevertheless conferred distinction upon one who, to use his own expression, was determined to climb to the top of the tree, and to neglect no chance, however slight, that could help him on. War with Spain had then been about seven months declared, and the British governor of Jamaica had sagaciously determined to master Lake Nicaragua, and the course of the river San Juan, its outlet to the Caribbean Sea. The object of the attempt was twofold, both military and commercial. The route was recognized then, as it is now, as one of the most important, if not the most important, of those affording easy transit from the Pacific to the Atlantic by way of the Isthmus. To a nation of the mercantile aptitudes of Great Britain, such a natural highway was necessarily an object of desire. In her hands it would not only draw to itself the wealth of the surrounding regions, but would likewise promote the development of her trade, both north and south, along the eastern and western coasts of the two Americas. But the pecuniary gain was not all. The military tenure of this short

and narrow strip, supported at either end, upon the Pacific and the Atlantic, by naval detachments, all the more easily to be maintained there by the use of the belt itself, would effectually sever the northern and southern colonies of Spain, both by actual interposition, and by depriving them of one of their most vital lines of intercommunication. To seek control of so valuable and central a link in a great network of maritime interests was as natural and inevitable to Great Britain a century ago, as it now is to try to dominate the Mediterranean and the Suez Canal, which fulfil a like function to her Eastern possessions and Eastern commerce.

Preoccupied, however, with numerous and more pressing cares in many quarters of the world, and overweighted in a universal struggle with outnumbering foes, Great Britain could spare but scanty forces to her West India Islands, and from them Governor Dalling could muster but five hundred men for his Nicaraguan undertaking. Nelson was directed to convoy these with the "Hinchinbrook" to the mouth of the San Juan del Norte, where was the port now commonly called Greytown, in those days a fine and spacious harbor. There his charge ended; but his mental constitution never allowed him to look upon a military task as well done while anything remained to do. In the spirit of his famous saying, fifteen years later, "Were ten ships out of eleven taken, I would never call it well done if the eleventh escaped, if able to get at her," he determined to go with the troops. With his temperament it was impossible to turn his back

upon the little body of soldiers, whose toilsome advance up the tropical stream might be aided and hastened by his ready seamen.

The first objective of the expedition was Fort San Juan, a powerful work controlling the river of the same name, and thereby the only natural water transit between the sea and Lake Nicaragua. Upon the possession of this, as a position of vantage and a safe depot for supplies and reinforcements, Dalling based his hopes of future advance, both west and south. Nelson took with him forty-seven seamen and marines from his ship's company; the former, aided by some Indians, doing most of the labor of forcing the boats against the current, through shoal and tortuous channels, under his own constant supervision and encouragement. A small outpost that withstood their progress was by him intrepidly stormed, sword in hand, by sudden assault; and upon reaching Fort San Juan he urgently recommended the same summary method to the officer commanding the troops. The latter, however, was not one of the men who recognize the necessity for exceptional action. Regular approaches, though the slower, were the surer way of reducing a fortified place, and entailed less bloodshed. Professional rule commonly demanded them, and to professional rule he submitted. Nelson argued that through delays, which, however incurred, were now past discussion, the expedition had reached its destination in April, at the end of the healthy, dry season, instead of shortly after its beginning, in January. Consequently, owing to the fall of the water, much additional trouble had been experienced in the

advance, the men were proportionately weakened by toil and exposure, and the wet months, with their dire train of tropical diseases, were at hand. Therefore, though more might fall by the enemy's weapons in a direct attack, the ultimate loss would be less than by the protracted and sickly labors of the spade; while with San Juan subdued, the force could receive all the care possible in such a climate, and under the best conditions await the return of good weather for further progress.

In military enterprises there will frequently arise the question, Is time or life in this case of the greater value? Those regularly ordered and careful procedures which most economize the blood of the soldier may, by their inevitable delays, seriously imperil the objects of the campaign as a whole; or they may even, while less sanguinary, entail indirectly a greater loss of men than do prompter measures. In such doubtful matters Nelson's judgment was usually sound; and his instinct, which ever inclined to instant and vigorous action, was commonly by itself alone an accurate guide, in a profession whose prizes are bestowed upon quick resolve more often than upon deliberate consultation. The same intuition that in his prime dictated his instant, unhesitating onslaught at the Nile, depriving the French of all opportunity for further preparation,—that caused him in the maturity of his renown, before Copenhagen, to write, "every hour's delay makes the enemy stronger; we shall never be so good a match for them as at this moment,"—that induced him at Trafalgar to modify his deliberately prepared plan in favor of one vastly more hazardous,

but which seized and held the otherwise fleeting chance,—led him here also at San Juan, unknown, and scarcely more than a boy, to press the policy of immediate attack.

The decision was not in his hands, and he was overruled; whereupon, with his usual readiness to do his utmost, he accepted the course he disapproved, and, without nursing a grievance, became at once active in erecting batteries and serving the guns. "When unfortunate contentions," says one dispassionate narrator, "had slackened the ardour for public service, Captain Nelson did not suffer any narrow spirit to influence his conduct. He did more than his duty: where anything was to be done, he saw no difficulties." Great as his merits were, he was never insensible to them; and, in the sketch of his career, furnished by him to his chief biographers, he records his exploits with naïve self-satisfaction, resembling the sententious tablets of Eastern conquerors: "I boarded, if I may be allowed the expression, an outpost of the enemy, situated on an island in the river; I made batteries, and afterwards fought them, and was a principal cause of our success." But this simple, almost childlike, delight in his own performances, which continually crops out in his correspondence, did not exaggerate their deserts. Major Polson, commanding the land forces, wrote to Governor Dalling: "I want words to express the obligations I owe to Captain Nelson. He was the first on every service, whether by day or night. There was not a gun fired but was pointed by him, or by Captain Despard, Chief Engineer." Dalling, after some delay, wrote in the same

sense to the Minister of War in London, warmly recommending Nelson to the notice of the home Government.

While the siege was in progress, Nelson received word of his appointment to a better ship, the "Janus," of forty-four guns, and it became necessary for him to join her. He left Fort San Juan only the day before it surrendered, and returned to Jamaica; but his health now gave way wholly, and his command of the "Janus," for the most part merely nominal, soon came to an end altogether. Dalling had truly said, "Captain Nelson's constitution is rather too delicate for service in this northern ocean."[5] Before starting on the expedition, he had himself written to his friend Locker: "If my health is not much better than it is at present, I shall certainly come home after this trip, as all the doctors are against my staying so long in this country. You know my old complaint in my breast: it is turned out to be the gout got there. I have twice been given over since you left this country with that cursed disorder, the gout." In such weakness he lived and worked through a month of a short campaign, in which, of the "Hinchinbrook's" crew of two hundred, one hundred and forty-five were buried in his time or that of his successor, Collingwood,—a mortality which he justly cites as a further proof of the necessity for expedition in such climates. But, though he survived, he escaped by the skin of his teeth. Worn out by dysentery and fatigue, he was carried

[5] The Caribbean was formerly thus styled in contradistinction to the South Sea, the Pacific, which was so called because its first discoverers saw it to the south from the Isthmus.

ashore in his cot, and soon after taken to Sir Peter Parker's house, where Lady Parker herself nursed him through. Her kindness to him and his own debility are touchingly shown by a note written from the mountains, where he was carried in his convalescence: "Oh, Mr. Ross, what would I give to be at Port Royal! Lady Parker not here, and the servants letting me lay as if a log, and take no notice." By September, 1780, it was apparent that perfect restoration, without change of climate, was impossible, and in the autumn, having been somewhat over three years on the station, he sailed for home in the "Lion," of sixty-four guns, Captain Cornwallis,[6] to whose careful attention, as formerly to that of Captain Pigot, he gratefully attributed his life. The expedition with which he had been associated ended in failure, for although a part of the force pushed on to Lake Nicaragua, sickness compelled the abandonment of the conquests, which were repossessed by the Spaniards.

Arriving in England, Nelson went to Bath, and there passed through a period of extreme suffering and tedious recovery. "I have been so ill since I have been here," says one of his letters, "that I was obliged to be carried to and from bed, with the most excruciating tortures." Exact dates are wanting; but he seems to have been under treatment near three months, when, on the 28th of January, 1781, he wrote to Locker, in his often uncouth style:

[6] Cornwallis was an officer of marked gallantry and conduct, who distinguished himself on several occasions, as captain, during the War of 1778, and as admiral during the wars of the French Revolution. He was brother to Lord Cornwallis, who surrendered at Yorktown, in 1781.

"Although I have not quite recovered the use of my limbs, yet my inside is a new man;" and again, three weeks later, "I have now the perfect use of all my limbs, except my left arm, which I can hardly tell what is the matter with it. From the shoulder to my fingers' ends are as if half dead." He remained in Bath until the middle of March, latterly more for the mild climate than because feeling the necessity of prosecuting his cure; yet that his health was far from securely re-established is evident, for a severe relapse followed his return to London. On the 7th of May, 1781, he writes to his brother: "You will say, why does not he come into Norfolk? I will tell you: I have entirely lost the use of my left arm, and very near of my left leg and thigh." In estimating Nelson's heroism, the sickly fragility of his bodily frame must be kept in memory; not to excuse shortcomings of nerve or enterprise, for there were none, but to exalt duly the extraordinary mental energy which rather mocked at difficulties than triumphed over them.

While yet an invalid he had again applied for employment, and, as the war was still raging, was appointed in August, 1781, to the "Albemarle," a small frigate of twenty-eight guns. He was pleased with the ship, the first commissioned by himself at home, with a long cruise in prospect; and, together with his expressions of content with her, there appears that manifestation of complete satisfaction with his officers and crew, with those surrounding him as subordinates, that so singularly characterized his habit of mind. "I have an exceeding good ship's company. Not

a man or officer in her I would wish to change.... I am perfectly satisfied with both officers and ship's company." Down to the month before Trafalgar, when, to the bidding of the First Lord of the Admiralty to choose his own officers, he replied, "Choose yourself, my lord; the same spirit actuates the whole profession, you cannot choose wrong," there is rarely, it might almost be said never, anything but praise for those beneath him. With the "Agamemnon," "We are all well; indeed, nobody can be ill with my ship's company, they are so fine a set." At the Nile, "I had the happiness to command a band of brothers; therefore night was to my advantage. Each knew his duty, and I was sure each would feel for a French ship. *My friends* readily conceived my plan." His ships in the Mediterranean, in 1803, "are the best commanded and the very best manned" in the navy. So his frequent praise of others in his despatches and letters has none of the formal, perfunctory ring of an official paper; it springs evidently from the warmest appreciation and admiration, is heartfelt, showing no deceptive exterior, but the true native fibre of the man, full of the charity which is kind and thinketh no evil. It was not always so toward those above him. Under the timid and dilatory action of Hotham and Hyde Parker, under the somewhat commonplace although exact and energetic movements of Lord Keith, he was restive, and freely showed what he felt. On the other hand, around Hood and Jervis, who commanded his professional respect and esteem, he quickly threw the same halo of excellence, arising from his tendency to idealize, that colored the medium through

which he invariably saw the men whom he himself commanded. The disposition to invest those near to him with merits, which must in part at least have been imaginary, is a most noteworthy feature of his character, and goes far to explain the attraction he exerted over others, the enthusiasm which ever followed him, the greatness of his success, and also, unhappily, the otherwise almost inexplicable but enduring infatuation which enslaved his later years, and has left the most serious blot upon his memory.

Though thus pleased with his surroundings, his own health continued indifferent. He excuses himself for delay in correspondence, because "so ill as to be scarce kept out of bed." In such a state, and for one whose frame had been racked and weakened by three years spent in the damp heat of the tropics, a winter's trip to the Baltic was hardly the best prescription; but thither the "Albemarle" was sent,—"it would almost be supposed," he wrote, "to try my constitution." He was away on this cruise from October to December, 1781, reaching Yarmouth on the 17th of the latter month, with a large convoy of a hundred and ten sail of merchant-ships, all that then remained of two hundred and sixty that had started from Elsinore on the 8th. "They behaved, as all convoys that ever I saw did, shamefully ill; parting company every day." After being several days wind-bound in Yarmouth Roads, he arrived in the Downs on the first day of 1782. The bitter cold of the North had pierced him almost as keenly as it did twenty years later in the Copenhagen expedition. "I believe the Doctor has saved my life

since I saw you," he wrote to his brother. The ship was then ordered to Portsmouth to take in eight months' provisions,—a sure indication that she was intended for a distant voyage. Nelson himself surmised that she would join the squadron of Sir Richard Bickerton, then fitting out to reinforce the fleet in the East Indies. Had this happened, he would have been on hand to hear much and perchance see something of one of his own professional forerunners, the great French Admiral Suffren, as well as of the latter's doughty antagonist, Sir Edward Hughes; for Bickerton arrived in time to take part in the last of the five pitched battles between those two hard fighters. Unluckily, a severe accident had befallen the "Albemarle,"—a large East Indiaman having dragged down upon her during a heavy gale in the Downs. The injuries received by this collision were so extensive that the ship was under repairs at Portsmouth for six weeks, during which time Bickerton sailed.

While thus detained in one of the principal dockyards and naval stations of the kingdom, another large detachment, belonging to the Channel fleet, assembled before Nelson's eyes. It comprised twelve sail-of-the-line, under Admiral Barrington; and among these was the "Foudroyant," the most famous ship of her time, then commanded by Captain John Jervis, with whom, as the Earl of St. Vincent, Nelson was afterwards closely associated; but the young frigate captain did not now come in contact with his stately superior, who in later years so highly valued and loved him. It was for him still the day of small

things. Though thus thrown in the midst of the din and bustle of extensive naval preparations, he had not the fortune to be directly connected with them; and consequently no occasion arose for becoming known to admirals who could recognize his worth, and give him the opportunities without which distinction cannot be achieved. It is, however, a significant and instructive fact that, while thus persistently dissociated from the great operations then in progress, and employed wholly in detached service, Nelson's natural genius for war asserted itself, controlling the direction of his thoughts and interests, and fixing them to that broad field of his profession from which he was as yet debarred. "The height of his ambition," an acquaintance of this period tells us, "was to command a line-of-battle ship; as for prize money," for which frigates offered the best chances, "it never entered his thoughts." A few months later, while still in the "Albemarle," it was said of him by Lord Hood, the most original tactician of the day, that he knew as much about naval tactics as any officer in the fleet. When this high encomium was bestowed, Nelson had barely passed his twenty-fourth birthday.

Meanwhile the "Albemarle" was again ordered upon convoy duty, this time to Quebec. This destination also was distasteful on account of the climate. "I want much to get off from this d–d voyage," he wrote. "Mr. Adair," an eminent London surgeon, who the year before had treated him for the paralysis of his limbs, "has told me that if I was sent to a cold damp climate it would make me worse than ever." He himself had

scruples about applying for an exchange, and the efforts of some friends who interfered proved useless. The "Albemarle" started with a convoy of thirty-odd vessels on the 10th of April, 1782; and after a short stop at Cork, anchored at St. John's, Newfoundland, on May 27, whence she reached Quebec July 1. Three days later she again sailed on a cruise that lasted over two months, spent chiefly about Boston Bay and Cape Cod. During this time several enemy's vessels were taken or destroyed; but, with the bad luck that so often followed Nelson in the matter of prize-money, none of the captures reached port, and the cruise was pecuniarily unprofitable. It afforded him, however, an opportunity for displaying conduct and gaining deserved reputation, which he valued more highly. On the 14th of August the sudden lifting of a fog showed the "Albemarle" within gunshot of a French squadron, of four ships-of-the-line and a frigate, that had just come out of Boston. A close chase followed, lasting nine or ten hours; but Nelson threw off the heavy ships by running among the shoals of George's Bank, which he ventured to do, trusting to the cool head and aptitude for pilotage acquired in earlier life. The frigate followed warily, watching for a chance to strike at advantage; but when the ships-of-the-line had been dropped far enough to be unable to help their consort, the British vessel hove-to[7] in defiance, and the enemy fell back upon his supports.

Shortly after this escape, so many of the ship's company fell ill

[7] That is, stopped.

with scurvy that Nelson decided to go back to Quebec, where he arrived on the 17th of September. "For eight weeks," he wrote, "myself and all the officers lived upon salt beef; nor had the ship's company had a fresh meal since the 7th of April." The fears for his health that he had expressed before sailing from England had happily proved groundless, and a month's stay in port which now followed, at the most delightful and invigorating of the American seasons, wrought wonders for him. His letters to Locker state that the voyage agreed with him better than he had expected; while from the St. Lawrence he wrote to his father, "Health, that greatest of blessings, is what I never truly enjoyed until I saw *Fair* Canada. The change it has wrought, I am convinced, is truly wonderful." This happy result had been due, in part at least, to surroundings that told favorably upon his sensitive nervous system, and not to the bracing climate alone. He had been actively occupied afloat, and had fallen desperately in love with a fair Canadian, around whom his ardent imagination threw that glamour of exaggerated charm in which he saw all who were dear to him, except his wife. Her he seems from the first to have looked upon with affection indeed, but without rapture or illusion. The Canadian affair came near ending in an imprudent offer, from which he was with difficulty deterred by a cool-headed friend. The story runs that, the ship being ordered to New York and ready for sea, he had bidden her good-bye and gone on board, expecting to sail next day; but that, unable to bear the approaching separation, he returned to the city, and was on his

way to the lady's home when his friend met him.

Tearing himself away from his mistress by a violent effort, Nelson, on the 20th of October, sailed for New York. Arriving on the 13th of November, he found there a large part of the West India fleet, under Lord Hood, who had been second in command to Rodney on the occasion of the latter's celebrated victory over De Grasse in the previous April. Rodney had since then been recalled to England, while Hood had gone to Boston to look after a division of the beaten French fleet, which was there refitting. He was now on his return to the islands, where the enemy was expected to make a vigorous aggressive campaign the following spring. Extensive preparations were in fact on foot for the reduction of Jamaica, frustrated six months before by De Grasse's mishap. Nelson thus found himself again in tantalizing contact with the stirring circumstance that preludes hostilities, in which he himself had little hope to share; for the "Albemarle" belonged to the North American station, where all active naval operations had ceased with the surrender of Cornwallis the year before. He went, therefore, to Hood, and begged to be transferred to his squadron. In vain did Admiral Digby, his own commander-in-chief, tell him that he was on a good station for prize-money. "Yes," he replied, "but the West Indies is the station for honour."

Digby was reluctant to part with a frigate, as all admirals were; but Hood, either from an intuitive faculty for judging men, or from his conversations with Nelson eliciting the latter's singular knowledge of the higher part of his profession, wished to push

an officer of so much promise, and succeeded in obtaining the transfer of the "Albemarle" to his squadron. "I am a candidate with Lord Hood for a line-of-battle ship," wrote Nelson to Locker; "he has honoured me highly, by a letter, for wishing to go off this station to a station of service, and has promised me his friendship." A few months later he wrote again: "My situation in Lord Hood's fleet must be in the highest degree flattering to any young man. He treats me as if I were his son, and will, I am convinced, give me anything I can ask of him." This was really the beginning, the outstart, of Nelson's great career; for Hood's interest in him, then aroused, and deepened by experience to the utmost confidence and appreciation, made itself felt the instant the French Revolutionary War began. Nelson then came at once under his orders, went with him to the Mediterranean, and there speedily made his mark, being transferred from admiral to admiral with ever-growing tokens of reliance. Despite the lapse of time, and the long interval of peace, it is no exaggeration to say that there is a direct connection of cause and effect between his transfer to Hood's fleet, in the harbor of New York, and the battle of Cape St. Vincent, in 1797, when he emerged from merely professional distinction to national renown, standing head and shoulders above all competitors. In the four days that followed his arrival in New York, Nelson took the tide at the flood, and was borne on to fortune. Yet in this, as in many other instant and happy decisions, we may not see the mere casting of a die, the chance result of an irreflective impulse.

The determination to change into Hood's squadron, with its powerful, far-reaching effect upon his future, was in necessary logical sequence to Nelson's whole habit of thought, and wish, and previous preparation. He was swept into the current that carried him on to fame by the irresistible tendency of his own conscious will and cherished purpose. Opportunity flitted by; he was ready, and grasped it.

At this turning-point the commendable diligence of his principal biographers has again secured for us a striking description of the young captain's personal appearance, and of the impression produced by his manner upon an interested acquaintance, who afterwards became a warm friend and admirer as well as a frequent correspondent. The narrator—then Prince William Henry, afterwards King William IV.—gave the following account, apparently at some period between 1805, when Nelson fell, and 1809, when the first edition of Clarke and M'Arthur's Life appeared. "I was then a midshipman on board the Barfleur," Lord Hood's flagship, "lying in the Narrows off Staten Island, and had the watch on deck, when Captain Nelson, of the Albemarle, came in his barge alongside, who appeared to be the merest boy of a captain I ever beheld; and his dress was worthy of attention. He had on a full-laced uniform; his lank unpowdered hair was tied in a stiff Hessian tail, of an extraordinary length; the old-fashioned flaps of his waistcoat added to the general quaintness of his figure, and produced an appearance which particularly attracted my notice; for I had

never seen anything like it before, nor could I imagine who he was, nor what he came about. My doubts were, however, removed when Lord Hood introduced me to him. There was something irresistibly pleasing in his address and conversation; and an enthusiasm, when speaking on professional subjects, that showed he was no common being." The Countess of Minto, in her Life of Lord Minto, speaks of Nelson's "shock head" at the time (1794) when he was a frequent visitor at the house of Minto, then Sir Gilbert Elliott, and Viceroy of Corsica; a trivial detail, but confirmatory, so far, of the picture drawn by the prince. The latter continued: "Nelson, after this, went with us to the West Indies, and served under Lord Hood's flag during his indefatigable cruise off Cape François.... I found him warmly attached to my father [King George III.], and singularly humane. He had the honour of the King's service and the independence of the British navy particularly at heart; and his mind glowed with this idea as much when he was simply captain of the Albemarle, and had obtained none of the honours of his Country, as when he was afterwards decorated with so much well-earned distinction."

The war of 1778 was now fast drawing to its close; the preliminaries of peace being signed in January, 1783, though not ratified till the following September. Hood cruised off Cap François, a naval station of the French at the west end of Haiti, to intercept the fleet from Boston, which was understood to be on its way to the Caribbean; but the enemy, learning his whereabouts, went through the Mona Passage, east of the island,

thus avoiding a meeting, and was next heard of by the British as being off Curaçao far to the southward. Nelson, therefore, had no opportunity to show his prowess in battle; and as only three letters remain covering this uneventful period, little is known of his movements, except that he made an abortive attempt to recapture Turk's Island from the French with a small force of ships he was able to gather at short notice. An interesting indication of the spirit which animated him transpires in the first of the three letters mentioned. He had received unexpected orders to wait in New York after Hood's leaving. "I was to have sailed with the fleet this day, but for some private reasons, when my ship was under sail from New York to join Lord Hood, at Sandy Hook, I was sent for on shore, and told I was to be kept forty-eight hours after the sailing of the fleet. It is much to my private advantage," allowing more latitude for picking up prizes, without having to share with the other ships, "but I had much rather have sailed with the fleet." "Money," he continues, "is the great object here," on the North American Station, "nothing else is attended to,"—a motive of action which he always rejected with disdain, although by no means insensible to the value of money, nor ever thoroughly at his ease in the matter of income, owing largely to the lavish liberality with which he responded to the calls upon his generosity or benevolence. A year later he wrote in the same strain: "I have closed the war without a fortune; but I trust, and, from the attention that has been paid to me, believe, that there is not a speck in my character. True honour, I hope, predominates

in my mind far above riches."

When news of the peace reached the West Indies, Hood was ordered to return with his fleet to England. Nelson went home at the same time, being directed first to accompany Prince William Henry in a visit to Havana. The "Albemarle" reached Spithead on the 25th of June, 1783, and was paid off a week later, her captain going on half-pay until the following April. The cruise of nearly two years' duration closed with this characteristic comment: "Not an officer has been changed, except the second lieutenant, since the Albemarle was commissioned; therefore, it is needless to say, I am happy in my ship's company." And again he writes: "My ship was paid off last week, and in such a manner that must flatter any officer, in particular in these turbulent times. The whole ship's company offered, if I could get a ship, to enter for her immediately." Nelson was keenly alive to the impolicy and injury to the service involved in the frequent changes of officers and men from ship to ship. "The disgust of the seamen to the Navy," he wrote immediately after leaving the Albemarle, "is all owing to the infernal plan of turning them over from ship to ship, so that men cannot be attached to their officers, or the officers care twopence about them." This element of personal attachment is never left out of calculation safely.

Nelson was now nearly twenty-five. In direct achievement he had accomplished little, and to most he was unknown; but he did not deceive himself in believing that his reputation was established, and his promise, as a capable man of action,

understood by those who knew him, and especially by the brilliant admiral under whom he had last served. Within a week of his release from the ship Hood carried him to Court, and presented him to the King,—an evident proof of his approbation; and Nelson notes that the sovereign was exceedingly attentive. The next few months were spent in London, or at his old home in Norfolk, to which and to his family he was always fondly attached. Toward the end of October he obtained a leave of absence, in order to visit France and acquire the French language. His impressions of that country, as far as he went,—from Calais to St. Omer,—are given in lively enough style in a few letters; but they differ little from what might be expected from any very young man deeply tinged with insular prejudice. "I hate their country and their manners," he wrote, soon after his return; and his biographers were quite right in saying that he had been brought up in the old anti-Gallican school, with prejudices not to be eradicated by a flying visit. He duly records his disgust with two British naval captains, one of whom was afterwards among his most valued and valuable friends, for wearing epaulettes, at that time confined to the French service. "I hold them a little *cheap*," he said, "for putting on any part of a Frenchman's uniform."

It is more interesting to notice that his impressionable fancy was again taken by an attractive young Englishwoman, the daughter of a clergyman named Andrews, living at St. Omer. "Two very beautiful young ladies," he writes to Locker and to

his brother; "I must take care of my heart, I assure you." "My heart is quite secured against the French beauties; I almost wish I could say as much for an English young lady, the daughter of a clergyman, with whom I am just going to dine, and spend the day. She has such accomplishments that, had I a million of money, I am sure I should at this moment make her an offer of them." "The most accomplished woman my eyes ever beheld," he repeats, a month later. The sentimental raptures of a young man about a handsome girl have in themselves too much of the commonplace to justify mention. What is remarkable, and suggests an explanation of the deplorable vagary of his later years, is that his attachment to his wife, even in the days of courtship, elicited no such extravagance of admiration as that into which he freely lapses in his earlier fancies, and yet more in his last absorbing passion. Respect and tenderness for her he certainly felt and expressed; but there is no indication that she ever enkindled his ardent imagination, or filled for him the place of an ideal, which his mental constitution imperatively demanded as an object of worship. The present attachment went so far with him that he wrote to his uncle William Suckling, asking for an allowance to enable him to marry. "If nothing can be done for me," said he, gloomily, "I know what I have to trust to. Life is not worth preserving without happiness; and I care not where I may linger out a miserable existence. I am prepared to hear your refusal, and have fixed my resolution if that should happen.... I pray you may never know the pangs which at this instant tear my

heart." If, as is said by the gentlemen into whose hands this letter passed, Suckling consented to help him, as he certainly did at the time of his actual marriage, it seems probable that the lady refused him.

CHAPTER II.
THE CRUISE OF THE "BOREAS."—CONTROVERSY OVER THE ENFORCEMENT OF THE NAVIGATION ACT.—RETURN TO ENGLAND.—RETIREMENT UNTIL THE OUTBREAK OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION. —APPOINTED TO COMMAND THE "AGAMEMNON," 64

1784-1793. AGE, 26-34

Whatever the cause, Nelson's visit to France ended prematurely and abruptly. Early in January, 1784, after an absence of two months, he went back to England, announcing to his friends that his coming was only temporary, partly on business, partly for treatment; for his delicate health again occasioned him anxiety. "The frost, thank God, is broke," he

wrote; "cold weather is death to me." But even while speaking confidently of his speedy return to the Continent, he dropped a hint that he was disposed to resume the active pursuit of his profession, although on leaving the "Albemarle," six months before, he had said that he could not afford to live afloat, in peace times, in the style then prevalent. "My stay in England will be but very short, without the First Lord in the Admiralty thinks proper to employ me. I shall offer my services." He did see Lord Howe, at that time First Lord, asking him for a ship; and he renewed his cordial relations with Hood, then living in London. On the 18th of March Howe appointed him to the command of the frigate "Boreas." Occupation in peace, with a reduced establishment, was not easy to get, and his brother, an inveterate wirepuller, must needs know to whose favor Nelson owed it. "You ask," replied the hero, "by what interest did I get a ship? I answer, having served with credit was my recommendation to Lord Howe. Anything in reason that I can ask, I am sure of obtaining from his justice." The statement was no more than fair to Howe; but in his knowledge of the merits of Nelson, whose claim lay rather in evident promise than in conspicuous performance, we can probably trace the friendly intervention of Lord Hood.

Nelson's wish was that the "Boreas" should go to the East Indies. To this he inclined, apparently, because the station was to be under the command of Commodore Cornwallis, in whose ship he had returned from Jamaica as an invalid in 1780, and to whom

on that occasion he was indebted for the most friendly care. He was not long allowed to indulge this hope, for five days after receiving his appointment he wrote that the ship was bound to the Leeward Islands, and that he had been asked to take as passengers the wife and family of the commander-in-chief, Sir Richard Hughes, who had already gone out. In a small vessel, for such the "Boreas" was, the request, which he could not well refuse, gave Nelson cause of reasonable discontent, entailing crowding and a large outlay of money. "I shall be pretty well filled with *lumber*," he wrote; and later, on the voyage out, "I shall not be sorry to part with them, although they are very pleasant, good people; but they are an incredible expense." The incident, annoying though it was, was not without compensations. After arriving on the station, he soon became involved in a serious difference with Sir Richard Hughes; and the latter, though a weak man and in the wrong, might have acted more peremptorily, had he not laid himself under such obligations. On the other hand, Lady Hughes, many years later, shortly after Nelson's death, committed to writing some recollections of his personal traits and actions during the passage, so characteristic, even though trivial, that we could ill have spared them.

"I was too much affected when we met at Bath," wrote she to Mr. Matcham, Nelson's brother-in-law, "to say every particular in which was always displayed the infinite cleverness and goodness of heart of our dearly beloved Hero. As a woman, I can only be a judge of those things that I could comprehend

—such as his attention to the young gentlemen who had the happiness of being on his quarter-deck. It may reasonably be supposed that among the number of thirty, there must be timid as well as bold; the timid he never rebuked, but always wished to show them he desired nothing of them that he would not instantly do himself: and I have known him say, 'Well, Sir, I am going a race to the masthead, and beg I may meet you there.' No denial could be given to such a wish, and the poor fellow instantly began his march. His Lordship never took the least notice with what alacrity it was done, but when he met in the top, instantly began speaking in the most cheerful manner, and saying how much a person was to be pitied that could fancy there was any danger, or even anything disagreeable, in the attempt. After this excellent example, I have seen the timid youth lead another, and rehearse his captain's words. In like manner, he every day went into the school-room, and saw them do their nautical business, and at twelve o'clock he was the first upon deck with his quadrant. No one there could be behindhand in their business when their captain set them so good an example. One other circumstance I must mention which will close the subject, which was the day we landed at Barbadoes. We were to dine at the Governor's. Our dear captain said, 'You must permit me, Lady Hughes, to carry one of my aid-de-camps with me;' and when he presented him to the Governor, he said, 'Your Excellency must excuse me for bringing one of my midshipmen, as I make it a rule to introduce them to all the good company I can, as they have few to look up

to besides myself during the time they are at sea.' This kindness and attention made the young people adore him; and even his wishes, could they have been known, would have been instantly complied with."

The charm and wisdom of such a bearing is patent; but it was the natural character of the man that thus shone out, and no mere result of conscientious care. To the last, through all his ill-health, anxiety, and sufferings, the same genial sweetness of manner, the outcome of an unaffected, cordial good-will to all, was shown to those who came in contact with him. Captain Duff, who met him for the first time three weeks before Trafalgar, and who fell in the battle, wrote to his wife in almost the same words as Lady Hughes: "You ask me about Lord Nelson, and how I like him. I have already answered that question as every person must do that ever served under him. He is so good and pleasant a man, that we all wish to do what he likes, without any kind of orders. I have been myself very lucky with most of my admirals, but I really think the present the pleasantest I have met with." There do, it is true, occur in Nelson's letters occasional, though very rare, expressions of that passing annoyance with individuals which is inseparable from the close and long-continued contact of ship life. Thus, shortly before leaving the "Boreas," he writes: "I begin to be very strict in my Ship. Whenever I may set off in another, I shall be indifferent whether I ever speak to an Officer in her, but upon duty." One wonders what passing and soon forgotten breeze, was responsible for this most un-Nelson-like

outburst. But to the end it remained true that between the officers and crews under Nelson's command and their chief, there was always that cordial regard which can only spring from the hearty sympathy of the commander with those beneath him.

While thoughtful and considerate, even to gentleness, for the weak and dependent, the singular energy that quickened Nelson's frail and puny frame showed itself on occasion in instant resentment of any official slight to himself or his ship, or injury to the interests of the country. During the "Boreas's" stay at Madeira, the British Consul neglected to return his visit, on the plea that the Government allowed him no boat. Nelson declined any further intercourse with him. While lying in the Downs, he learns that sixteen British seamen are detained by force on board a Dutch Indiaman. He requires their delivery to him; and when their effects were withheld, on the alleged ground of their being in debt to the ship, he stops all intercourse between it and the shore, sending an armed cutter to enforce his order. "The Admiralty," he wrote, "have fortunately approved my conduct in the business," and added grimly, "a thing they are not very guilty of where there is a likelihood of a scrape." When entering the harbor of Fort Royal, Martinique, the principal French island in the Lesser Antilles, the officer at the citadel neglected to hoist the colors, a ceremonial observance customary when a ship of war approached. Nelson at once demanded an explanation and received ample amends; the offending party being placed under arrest. To the governor of some of the British West India islands,

he wrote making suggestions for the better discharge of certain duties, in which both of them were interested. He received, it is said, a testy message that "old generals were not in the habit of taking advice from young gentlemen." "I have the honour, Sir," replied Nelson, "of being as old as the prime minister of England, and think myself as capable of commanding one of his majesty's ships as that minister is of governing the state;" and throughout he held to the stand he had taken.

The most remarkable instance, however, of this promptness to assert the dignity and rights of his official position, allowing no man to despise his youth, occurred very soon after his arrival upon the station, and brought him to a direct issue with his commander-in-chief,—if not, indeed, with an authoritative precedent set by so great a man as Lord Rodney. Young though he still was in years,—only twenty-six,—Nelson was by date of commission the senior captain in the small squadron, of some half-dozen vessels, to which the economies of the administration had reduced the Leeward Islands station. Being thus next in rank to the admiral, the latter, who made his headquarters at Barbadoes in the southern part of the station, sent him to the northern division, centring about the island of Antigua. Having remained in harbor, as was usual, during the hurricane months, Nelson cruised during the winter and until February, 1785, when some damage received compelled the "Boreas" to put into Antigua for repairs. Here he found a vessel of the squadron, whose own captain was of course junior to him,

flying a Commodore's broad pendant, which asserted the official presence of a captain superior to himself in rank and command, and duly qualified to give him orders. He at once asked the meaning of this from the ship's proper commander, and was informed by him that Captain Moutray, an old officer, twenty years his senior on the post list, and then acting as Commissioner of the Navy, a civil office connected with the dockyard at Antigua, had directed it to be hoisted, and claimed to exercise control over all men-of-war in the harbor, during the admiral's absence.

Nelson was not wholly unprepared for this, for Hughes had notified him and the other captains that Moutray was authorized by himself to take this step. Being then away from the island, he had replied guardedly that if Commissioner Moutray *was put into commission*, he would have great pleasure in serving under him,—thus reserving his decision to the moment for action. He now took the ground that an officer not commissioned afloat, but holding only a civil appointment, could not exercise naval command,—that an order authorizing him to do so was invalid,—that to entitle him to such command he must be put into military commission by being attached to a ship in commission. He therefore flatly declined to obey Moutray's orders, refusing to admit his claim to be considered a commodore, or entitled to military obedience, unless he produced a commission. This he held to when Moutray gave him a written order to put himself under his command.

On technical points of this kind Nelson was a clear and accurate thinker, and in the admiral he had to do with a muddle-headed, irresolute superior. Hughes had already been badly worried and prodded, on matters concerning his own neglected duties, by his unquiet young subordinate, who was never satisfied to leave bad enough alone, but kept raising knotty points to harass an easy-going old gentleman, who wanted only to be allowed to shut his eyes to what went on under his nose. He was now exasperated by Nelson's contumacy, but he was also a little afraid of him, and supported his own order by no more decisive action than laying the case before the Admiralty, who informed Nelson that he should have referred his doubts to the admiral, instead of deciding for himself in a matter that concerned "the exercise of the functions of his [the admiral's] appointment." This was rather begging the question, for Nelson expressed no doubts, either to Hughes or in his explanatory letter to the Admiralty. The latter in turn shirked thus the decision of the question,—for, if Nelson was right, Hughes's order was illegal and not entitled to obedience; if he was wrong, he had been guilty of flagrant insubordination, and should have been sharply dealt with. The Government probably thought that the admiral had blundered in undertaking to give military authority to a civil official,—a step so generally disastrous in experience that it is now explicitly forbidden by the regulations of most navies. It is worthy of note that twenty years later, when commander-in-chief in the Mediterranean, Nelson directed the captains of ships cruising

in the Straits of Gibraltar to consult on all occasions with the Commissioner of the Navy resident in Gibraltar, as well as to receive his advice, if proffered,—adding that the commissioner's opinion of their conduct would have great weight with himself; but he did not put them under his orders.[8]

Reasoning from Nelson's position, as the pendant was flying without proper authority on board a ship under his immediate command, he should, as senior captain afloat, have gone further and hauled it down. Of his authority to do so he felt no doubt, as is evident from his letter to the Admiralty; but his motive for refraining was characteristic. He was unwilling to wound Moutray; just as, before Trafalgar, in direct disregard of the Admiralty's orders, he allowed an admiral going home under charges to take with him his flagship, a vessel of the first force and likely to be sorely needed in the approaching battle, because he was reluctant to add to the distress the officer was undergoing already. "I did not choose to order the Commissioner's pendant to be struck, as Mr. Moutray is an old officer of high military character; and it might hurt his feelings to be supposed wrong by so young an officer." The question solved itself shortly by the Commissioner's returning to England; but the controversy seems to have made no change in the friendly and even affectionate relations existing between him and his wife and Nelson. For Mrs. Moutray the latter had formed one of those strong idealizing attachments which sprang up from time to time along his path.

[8] Nicolas, vol. v. p. 356.

"You may be certain," he writes to his brother at the very period the discussion was pending, "I never passed English Harbour without a call, but alas! I am not to have much comfort. My dear, sweet friend is going home. I am really an April day; happy on her account, but truly grieved were I only to consider myself. Her equal I never saw in any country or in any situation. If my dear Kate [his sister] goes to Bath next winter she will be known to her, for my dear friend promised to make herself known. What an acquisition to any female to be acquainted with, what an example to take pattern from." "My sweet, amiable friend sails the 20th for England. I took my leave of her three days ago with a heavy heart. What a treasure of a woman." Returning to Antigua a few weeks later, he writes again in a sentimental vein very rare in him: "This country appears now intolerable, my dear friend being absent. It is barren indeed. English Harbour I hate the sight of, and Windsor I detest. I went once up the hill to look at the spot where I spent more happy days than in any one spot in the world. E'en the trees drooped their heads, and the tamarind tree died:—all was melancholy: the road is covered with thistles; let them grow. I shall never pull one of them up." His regard for this attractive woman seems to have lasted through his life; for she survived him, and to her Collingwood addressed a letter after Trafalgar, giving some particulars of Nelson's death. Her only son also died under the latter's immediate command, ten years later, when serving in Corsica.

The chief interest of the dispute over Moutray's position lies

not in the somewhat obscure point involved, but in the illustration it affords of Nelson's singular independence and tenacity in a matter of principle. Under a conviction of right he throughout life feared no responsibility and shrank from no consequences. It is difficult for the non-military mind to realize how great is the moral effort of disobeying a superior, whose order on the one hand covers all responsibility, and on the other entails the most serious personal and professional injury, if violated without due cause; the burden of proving which rests upon the junior. For the latter it is, justly and necessarily, not enough that his own intentions or convictions were honest: he has to show, not that he meant to do right, but that he actually did right, in disobeying in the particular instance. Under no less rigorous exactions can due military subordination be maintained. The whole bent of advantage and life-long training, therefore, draws in one direction, and is withstood by nothing, unless either strong personal character supplies a motive, or established professional standing permits a man to presume upon it, and to exercise a certain right to independence of action. At this time Nelson was practically unknown, and in refusing compliance with an order he took a risk that no other captain on the station would have assumed, as was shown by their failure a few months later to support their convictions in an analogous controversy, upon which Nelson had entered even before the Moutray business. In both cases he staked all upon legal points, considered by him vital to the welfare of the navy and the country. The spirit was

identically the same that led him to swing his ship out of the line at Cape St. Vincent without waiting for signals. After that day and the Nile he could afford to take liberties, and sometimes took them with less justification than in his early career.

When the Moutray question arose, Nelson was already engaged in a more far-reaching dispute, not only with his commander-in-chief, but with the colonial authorities and the popular sentiment of the West India Islands. Like most men, great and small, he shared the prepossessions of his day and generation; differing, however, from others, in that he held his opinions as principles, from asserting which he was not to be deterred by the ill-will or dislike of those immediately about him. Upon arriving in the West Indies he found nourishing a system of trade extremely beneficial to the islands, but which his education condemned as hurtful to Great Britain, as it certainly was contrary to then existing laws that had for a century previous regulated the commerce of the kingdom. In 1784, a year only had elapsed since the United States had been formally recognized as independent, thereby becoming, in British estimation as well as in their own, a nation foreign to the British flag. By the Navigation Laws, first established by Cromwell, but continued under the restored monarchy without serious modification until 1794, trade with the Colonies was reserved to vessels built in Great Britain or her dependencies, and manned in three-fourths part by British subjects. The chief object and advantage of the law were conceived to be, not merely a monopoly of the trade,

—concerning the economical wisdom of which serious doubts began to be felt,—but the fostering of the British merchant service as a nursery of seamen, upon whom, in time of war, the navy could draw. The military strength of the Empire was thought to be involved in the enforcement of the Navigation Act.[9]

Before the United States declared their independence, they, as British colonies, enjoyed the privilege of trading with their fellow-colonists under what was then the common flag; and the nearness of the two regions contributed to the advantage of both in this traffic, in which the continental communities were the chief suppliers of many articles essential to the islands, notably provisions and lumber. This mutual intercourse and dependence promoted a sympathy which was scarcely disguised in the West Indies during the War of Independence; indeed, Nelson wrote that many of the inhabitants were as arrant rebels as those who had renounced their allegiance. Under these conditions, when peace was restored, the old relations were readily resumed; and as there had really been considerable inconvenience and loss to the islanders from the deprivation of American products, the renewal was eagerly promoted by popular sentiment. The local authorities, as usual and natural, yielded to the pressure around them, and in entire disregard of the known policy of the home

[9] Thus Collingwood, rarely other than sober and restrained in his language, wrote to Hughes: "It is from the idea that the greatness and superiority of the British navy very much depends upon preserving inviolate the Act of Navigation, excluding foreigners from access to the colonies, that I am induced to make this representation to you." Nicolas, vol. i. p. 172.

government permitted American vessels to trade openly under their own colors. In Jamaica the governor had even gone so far as to authorize formally a free trade, during pleasure, with the United States, contrary to the explicit orders of his superiors in Great Britain. Where scruples were felt or hesitation was shown, advantage was taken of the exceptions of the law, which allowed vessels in distress to sell so much of their cargoes as would pay for necessary repairs. With the tendency of commerce to evade restrictions by liberal stretching of the conscience, the merchant captain and the colonial officer found little difficulty in arranging that the damage should be great enough to cover the sale of the whole lading.

After laying up in Antigua during the hurricane season of 1784, Nelson was summoned to Barbadoes in November, with the other captains, to receive orders for the winter's cruising. These, when issued, were found to direct only the examination of anchorages, and the gathering of information about supplies of wood and water. Nelson's attention had been drawn already to the American traffic; and he, with his friend Collingwood, who was again on the station, went to the admiral, and urged that it was the duty of ships of war to enforce the Navigation Laws. The admiral professed ignorance of these; and Nelson himself remarks that British vessels up to that time had been so much cheaper built than others, that they had, without artificial protection, naturally absorbed their own colonial trade,—the question, therefore, had dropped out of sight till it was revived by American competition.

A copy of the Act being then produced, Hughes gave an order requiring his vessels to enforce it; making special mention of the changed relations of the United States to Great Britain, whereby they were "to be considered as foreigners, and excluded from all commerce with the islands in these seas."

With these instructions Nelson sailed again for the north, where the Virgin Islands, with those of Montserrat, Nevis, and St. Christopher, were put under his especial charge,—the sloop "Rattler," Captain Wilfred Collingwood, a brother of the well-known admiral, being associated with the "Boreas." At first the two officers confined their action to warning off American vessels, and at times forcing them to leave ports where they had anchored; but they found that either the vessels returned during the absence of the ships of war, or that permissions to land, upon what they thought trivial grounds, were given by the Customs' officials, in virtue of the exceptions to the law above mentioned.

There matters stood until the 11th of January, 1785, Nelson acting by the authority of the commander-in-chief, but exercising his own discretion, and with forbearance, in carrying out his instructions. On the day named he received another order from the admiral, modifying the first upon the grounds of a more mature consideration, and of "the opinion of the King's Attorney-General" in the islands. Nelson was now directed, in case of a foreign merchant-ship coming within the limits of his station, to cause her to anchor near his own vessel and to report her arrival, and situation in all respects, to the governor of the colony where

he then was; "and if, after such report shall have been made and received, the governor or his representative shall think proper to admit the said foreigner into the port or harbour of the island where you may be, *you are on no account to hinder or prevent such foreign vessel from going in accordingly, or to interfere any further in her subsequent proceedings*."

Here the admiral not only raised, but also decided, the point as to whether the enforcement of the Navigation Act rested with naval officers, or was vested only in the civil authorities of the islands. Nelson was convinced that an essential part of the duty of ships of war, and especially when peace took from them so much of their military function, was to afford to the commerce of the nation proper protection, of which a necessary feature, according to the ideas of the age, was the interdiction of foreign traders. A seaman, he plausibly argued, could decide better than an unprofessional man the questions of injuries and distress upon which the unlawful traffic largely hinged. "In judging of their distress, no person can know better than the sea officers," he wrote to Hughes. "The governors may be imposed upon by false declarations; we, who are on the spot, cannot." He was aware, also, that a petition for relaxing the Act in favor of the American trade with the West Indies had been referred to the home government, by which it had been explicitly rejected. Strengthened by this knowledge, but actuated, after all, chiefly by his invariable resoluteness to assume responsibility where he felt he was right, he replied to the admiral's letter with a clear

statement of the facts, concluding with the words: "Whilst I have the honour to command an English man-of-war, I never shall allow myself to be subservient to the will of any Governor, nor coöperate with him in doing *illegal acts*.... If I rightly understand your order of the 29th of December, it is founded upon an Opinion of the King's Attorney-General, viz.: 'That it is legal for Governors or their representatives to admit foreigners into the ports of their government, if they think fit.' How the King's Attorney-General conceives he has a right to give an illegal opinion, which I assert the above is, he must answer for. I know the Navigation Laws." As he summed up the matter in a letter to his friend Locker: "Sir Richard Hughes was a delicate business. I must either disobey my orders, or disobey Acts of Parliament, which the admiral was disobeying. I determined upon the former, trusting to the uprightness of my intention. In short, I wrote the Admiral that I should decline obeying his orders, till I had an opportunity of seeing and talking to him, at the same time making him an apology."

Hughes's first impulse was to supersede his recalcitrant subordinate, and bring him to trial. He learned, however, that many of the other captains, of whom the court must be formed, shared his junior's views, although they shrank, with the submissiveness of military men, from the decisive act of disobedience. The result of a trial must therefore be doubtful. He was, moreover, a fiddler, as Nelson continually styled him, shifting back and forth, from opinion to opinion, and

to be relied upon for only one thing,—to dodge responsibility, if possible. Consequently, no official action was taken; the commander-in-chief contented himself with washing his hands of all accountability. He had given orders which would clear himself, in case Nelson's conduct was censured in England. If, on the contrary, it was approved, it would redound to the credit of the station.

The matter was soon brought to a test. The governors and all the officials, particularly of the Custom House, resented the action of the naval officers; but the vigilance of the latter so seriously interrupted the forbidden traffic under American colors, that recourse was had to giving British registers to the vessels concerned, allowing them to trade under British flags. This, however, was equally contrary to the Navigation Act, which forbade British registry to foreign-built ships, except when prizes taken in war; and the disguise wast too thin to baffle men like Collingwood and Nelson. The latter reported the practice to the home Government, in order that any measures deemed necessary might be taken. Meanwhile he patiently persisted in turning away all vessels, not British built, which he encountered, confining himself for the time to this merely passive prevention; but finding at last that this was not a sufficient deterrent, he gave notice that after the 1st of May, 1785, he would seize all American vessels trading to the islands, "let them be registered by whom they might." Accordingly, on the 2d of May he arrested an American-built schooner, owned in Philadelphia and manned entirely by

Americans, but having a British register issued at the island of St. Christopher.

The Crown lawyer was now called upon to prosecute the suit. He expressed grave doubts as to a naval captain's power to act by virtue simply of his commission, the sole authority alleged by the captor; and, although he proceeded with the case, his manner so betrayed his uncertainty that Nelson felt it necessary to plead for himself. To the confusion of all opponents the judge decided in his favor, saying he had an undoubted right to seize vessels transgressing the Navigation Laws. The principle thus established, Nelson on the 23d of the same month, at the island of Nevis, upon the same grounds, seized four vessels,—one of which had been registered at Dominica by Governor Orde, a naval captain senior in rank to himself, and with whom he came into unpleasant contact upon several occasions in his later life.

There was no serious question as to the condemnation of the four last seizures, the facts being clear and the principle settled;[10] but the rage of the inhabitants of Nevis led them to seek revenge upon Nelson for the injury they could no longer prevent. He had summoned the masters of the ships on board the "Boreas,"

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[10] Nelson's letters are contradictory on this point. In a letter to Locker of March 3, 1786, he says, "Before the first vessel was tried I had seized four others;" whereas in the formal and detailed narrative drawn up—without date, but later than the letter to Locker—he says the first vessel was tried and condemned May 17, the other four seized May 23. (Nicolas, vol. i. pp. 177, 178.) The author has followed the latter, because from the particularity of dates it seems to have been compiled from memoranda, that of Locker written from memory,—both nearly a year after the events.

and, after satisfying himself that the vessels were not entitled to British registers, had sent marines to hold them, and to prevent essential witnesses from leaving them, until the cases were tried. Upon these circumstances was based an accusation of assault and imprisonment, the masters swearing that they had made their statements under bodily fear. Writs were issued against Nelson, damages being laid at four thousand pounds, a sum which to him meant ruin. Although he asserted that there was absolutely no truth in the charges, which are certainly in entire contradiction to the general, if not invariable, tenor of his life and conduct, he was advised by the Crown lawyers not to subject himself to trial, as in the state of public feeling he could not expect a fair verdict. To avoid arrest, he was forced to confine himself to the ship for seven weeks, during which the marshal made several attempts to serve the writ, but without success. On the day that the case of the seized ships came up, he was able to be present in court only by the safe conduct of the judge.

Two days after the seizure of the four vessels, Sir Richard Hughes, who was making a tour of the station under his command, arrived at Nevis; but he had no support to give his zealous lieutenant. "He did not appear to be pleased with my conduct," wrote Nelson to Locker. "At least he did not approve it, but told me I should get into a scrape. Seven weeks I was kept a close prisoner to my ship; nor did I ever learn that the admiral took any steps for my release. He did not even acquaint the Admiralty Board how cruelly I had been treated; nor of

the attempts which had been made to take me out of my ship by force, and that indignity offered under the fly of his flag." "I had the governor, the Customs, all the planters upon me; subscriptions were soon filled to prosecute; and my admiral stood neuter, although his flag was then in the roads." To this lack of countenance on the part of his superior, and direct persecution by those injuriously affected by his action, there was added a general social ostracism, to which he frequently alludes, and which was particularly emphasized by its contrast with the habits of hospitality prevalent among the small and wealthy planter community. One friend, however, stood by him, and offered to become his bail in the sum of ten thousand pounds,—Mr. Herbert, the President of Nevis, and one of the wealthiest men in the island. He had, Nelson said, suffered more than any one else from the interruption of the trade, but he considered that the young captain had done only his duty. Possibly there may have been a warmer feeling underlying this esteem, for he was the uncle of the lady whom Nelson afterwards married, and to whom he seems to have been paying attention already.

Despite his indomitable pluck and resolve, the confinement, uncertainty, and contention told heavily on Nelson's health and spirits. His temper was too kindly and social not to feel the general alienation. It could not affect his purpose; but the sense of right-doing, which sustained him in that, did not make his road otherwise easier. It is, indeed, especially to be noticed that there was not in him that hard, unyielding fibre, upon which care,

or neglect, or anxiety, makes little impression. He was, on the contrary, extremely sympathetic, even emotional; and although insensible to bodily fear, he was by no means so to censure, or to risk of other misfortune. To this susceptibility to worry, strong witness is borne by an expression of his, used at the very time of which we are now writing. One of his friends—Captain Pole of the Navy—had detained and sent in a neutral vessel for breach of belligerent rights. After long legal proceedings, extending over five years, she was condemned, and proved to be a very valuable prize to the captors. "Our friend Charles Pole," he writes, "has been fortunate in his trial; but the lottery is so very much against an officer, that never will I knowingly involve myself in a doubtful cause. Prize-money is doubtless very acceptable; but my mind would have suffered so much, that no pecuniary compensation, at so late a period, would have made me amends." Contrasting this utterance with the resolution shown by him at this time, in fighting what he considered the cause of his country in the West Indies, it can be seen how much stronger with him was the influence of duty than that exercised by any considerations of merely material advantage. In the one he could find support; in the other not. But in neither case was he insensible to care, nor could he escape the physical consequences of anxiety upon a delicate frame and nervous organization. Of this, his harassment in the pursuit of the French fleet in 1798, during Bonaparte's Egyptian expedition, gave a very conspicuous illustration.

With such a temperament, being now very much in the position of an individual fighting a corporation, he appealed to the home Government; addressing, on the 29th of June, 1785, a memorial to the King, setting forth the facts of the case, as already given, adding that his health was much impaired, and asking for assistance. He received a reply to this in the following September, informing him that the King had directed that he should be defended by the Crown lawyers. This implied approval of his course was succeeded, in November, by a letter from the Secretary of the Treasury, through the usual official channels of the Admiralty, acquainting him that the Government was "of opinion that the commander-in-chief of the Leeward Islands, and officers under him, have shown a very commendable zeal, in endeavouring to put a stop to the very illicit practices which were carrying on in the islands, in open violation of the law, and to the great detriment of the navigation and trade of his Majesty's dominions." Verily, Hughes had his reward. Here he was commended in express terms for doing that which he had been too prudent to do, for zeal which he had never shown, for maintaining a law which he had given orders not to maintain. "I own I was surprised," wrote Nelson, "that the commander-in-chief should be thanked for an act which he did not order, but which, if I understand the meaning of words, by his order of the 29th December, 1784, he ordered not to be." "To the end of the station,[11] his order of the 29th of December was never

[11] This word is used by Nelson, apparently, as equivalent to "season,"—the cruising

repealed, so that I always acted with a rod over me." How heavily the responsibility he assumed was felt by others, is clearly shown in another statement made by him. "The Captains Collingwood were the only officers, with myself, who ever attempted to hinder the illicit trade with America; *and I stood singly with respect to seizing*, for the other officers were fearful of being brought into scrapes."

Backed by the royal approval, and with his legal expenses guaranteed, Nelson's course was now smooth. He continued in all parts of the station to suppress the contraband trade, and his unpopularity, of course, also continued; but excitement necessarily subsided as it became clear that submission was unavoidable, and as men adapted themselves to the new conditions. The whole procedure now looks somewhat barbarous and blundering, but in no essential principle differs from the methods of protection to which the world at present seems again tending. It is not for us to throw stones at it. The results, then, were completely successful, judged by the standards of the time. "At this moment," wrote Nelson some few months later, "there are nearly fifty sail employed in the trade between the Islands of St. Kitts, Nevis, and America, which are truly British built, owned, and navigated. Had I been an idle spectator, my firm belief is that not a single vessel would have belonged to those islands in the foreign trade." His own action was further endorsed

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period in the West Indies. "The admiral wishes to remain another station," he writes elsewhere.

by the ministry, which now gave captains of ships-of-war much more extensive powers, thereby justifying his contention that it was within their office to enforce the Navigation Act. Nor was this increased activity of the executive branch of the government the only result of Nelson's persistence. His sagacious study of the whole question, under the local conditions of the West Indies, led to his making several suggestions for more surely carrying out the spirit of the Law; and these were embodied the next year in a formal Act of the Legislature.

With so vivid a career as that of Nelson ahead, the delay imposed by this wrangling episode is somewhat dreary; but it undeniably shows his characteristics in the strongest light. Duty, not ease; honor, not gain; the ideal, not the material,—such, not indeed without frailty and blemish, were ever his motives. And, while he craved his reward in the approval and recognition of those around and above him, he could find consolation for the lack of them in his own sense of right-doing. "That thing called Honour," he writes to a friend soon after the "Boreas" cruise, "is now, alas! thought of no more. My integrity cannot be mended, I hope; but my fortune, God knows, has grown worse for the service; so much for serving my country. But I have invariably laid down, and followed close, a plan of what ought to be uppermost in the breast of an officer: that it is much better to serve an ungrateful Country than to give up his own fame. Posterity will do him justice; a uniform conduct of honour and integrity seldom fails of bringing a man to the goal of fame at

last."

This struggle with Sir Richard Hughes, in which Nelson took the undesirable, and to a naval officer invidious, step of disobeying orders, showed clearly, not only the loftiness of his motives, but the distinguishing features which constituted the strength of his character, both personal and military. There was an acute perception of the right thing to do, an entire readiness to assume all the responsibility of doing it, and above all an accurate judgment of the best way to do it,—to act with impunity to himself and with most chances of success to his cause. Its analogy to a military situation is striking. There was a wrong condition of things to be righted—a victory to be won. To achieve this a great risk must be taken, and he was willing to take it; but in so doing he made such choice of his ground as to be practically unassailable—to attain his end without lasting harm to himself. That Nelson would have managed better had he been ten years older is very probable. Likely enough he betrayed some of the carelessness of sensibilities which the inexperience of youth is too apt to show towards age; but, upon a careful review of the whole, it appears to the writer that his general course of action was distinctly right, judged by the standards of the time and the well-settled principles of military obedience, and that he pursued an extremely difficult line of conduct with singular resolution, with sound judgment, and, in the main, with an unusual amount of tact, without which he could scarcely have failed, however well purposing, to lay himself open to serious consequences.

Certainly he achieved success.

It was in the midst of this legal warfare, and of the preoccupations arising from it, that Nelson first met the lady who became his wife. She was by birth a Miss Frances Woolward, her mother being a sister of the Mr. Herbert already mentioned as President of the Council in Nevis. She was born in the first half of 1758,[12] and was therefore a few months older than Nelson. In 1779 she had married Dr. Josiah Nisbet, of Nevis, and the next year was left a widow with one son, who bore his father's full name. After her husband's death, being apparently portionless, she came to live with Herbert, who looked upon and treated her as his own child, although he also had an only daughter. When Nelson first arrived at Nevis, in January, 1785,[13] she was absent, visiting friends in a neighboring island, so that they did not then meet,—a circumstance somewhat fortunate for us, because it led to a description of him being sent to her in a letter from a lady of Herbert's family, not improbably her cousin, Miss Herbert. Nelson had then become a somewhat conspicuous factor in the contracted interests of the island society, owing to the stand he had already publicly assumed with reference to the contraband

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[12] Lady Nelson's tombstone in Littleham Churchyard, Exmouth, reads that she died May 6, 1831, "aged 73." She would then have been born before May 6, 1758. Nicolas (vol. i. p. 217) says that she died May 4, 1831, aged 68, but does not mention his authority.

[13] Prior to May, 1785, the only stops of the "Boreas" at Nevis were January 6-8, February 1-4, and March 11-15. (Boreas's Log in Nicolas's Letters and Despatches of Lord Nelson, vol. vii. Addenda, pp. viii, ix.)

trade. People were talking about him, although he had not as yet enforced the extreme measures which made him so unpopular. "We have at last," so ran the letter, "seen the little captain of the Boreas of whom so much has been said. He came up just before dinner, much heated, and was very silent; but seemed, according to the old adage, to think the more. He declined drinking any wine; but after dinner, when the president, as usual, gave the three following toasts, 'the King,' 'the Queen and Royal Family,' and 'Lord Hood,' this strange man regularly filled his glass, and observed that those were always bumper toasts with him; which, having drank, he uniformly passed the bottle, and relapsed into his former taciturnity. It was impossible, during this visit, for any of us to make out his real character; there was such a reserve and sternness in his behaviour, with occasional sallies, though very transient, of a superior mind. Being placed by him, I endeavoured to rouse his attention by showing him all the civilities in my power; but I drew out little more than 'Yes' and 'No.' If you, Fanny, had been there, we think you would have made something of him, for you have been in the habit of attending to these odd sort of people."

Mrs. Nisbet very quickly made something of him. Little direct description has been transmitted to us concerning the looks or characteristics of the woman who now, at the time when marriage was possible to him, had the misfortune to appear in the line of succession of Nelson's early fancies, and to attract the too easily aroused admiration and affection of a man whose

attachment she had not the inborn power to bind. That Nelson was naturally inconstant, beyond the volatility inherent in youth, is sufficiently disproved by the strength and endurance of his devotion to the one woman, in whom he either found or imagined the qualities that appealed to the heroic side of his character. How completely she mastered all the approaches to his heart, and retained her supremacy, once established, to the end, is evidenced by the whole tenor of his correspondence with her, by his mention of her in letters to others, by the recorded expressions he used in speaking to or about her. Despite all that he certainly knew of her, and much more that it is unreasonable to doubt he must have known of her history, there is no mistaking the profound emotions she stirred in his spirit, which show themselves continually in spontaneous outbreaks of passionate fondness and extravagant admiration, whose ring is too true and strong for doubt concerning their reality to find a place.

Many men are swayed by strong and wayward impulses; but to most the fetters imposed by social conventions, by inherited or implanted standards of seemliness and decorum, suffice to steady them in the path of outward propriety. Of how great and absorbing a passion Lord Nelson was capable is shown by the immensity of the sacrifice that he made to it. Principle apart, —and principle wholly failed him,—all else that most appeals to man's self-respect and regard for the esteem of others was powerless to exert control. Loyalty to friendship, the sanctity which man is naturally fain to see in the woman he loves, and,

in Nelson's own case, a peculiar reluctance to wound another,—all these were trampled under foot, and ruthlessly piled on the holocaust which he offered to her whom he worshipped. He could fling to the winds, as others cannot, considerations of interest or expediency, as he flung them over and over in his professional career. My motto, he said once and again, is "All or nothing." The same disregard of consequences that hazarded all for all, in battle or for duty, broke through the barriers within which prudence, reputation, decency, or even weakness and cowardice, confine the actions of lesser men. And it must be remembered that the admitted great stain upon Nelson's fame, which it would be wicked to deny, lies not in a general looseness of life, but in the notoriety of one relation,—a notoriety due chiefly to the reckless singleness of heart which was not ashamed to own its love, but rather gloried in the public exhibition of a faith in the worthiness of its object, and a constancy, which never wavered to the hour of his death.[14] The pitifulness of it is to see the incongruity between such faith, such devotion, and the distasteful inadequacy of their object.

To answer the demands of a nature capable of such energetic manifestation—to fulfil the imagination of one who could so cast himself at the feet of an ideal—was beyond the gentle,

[14] The author is satisfied, from casual expressions in Nelson's letters to Lady Hamilton, that his famous two years' confinement to the ship, 1803-1805, and, to a less extent, the similar seclusion practised in the Baltic and the Downs, proceeded, in large part at least, from a romantic and chivalrous resolve to leave no room for doubt, in the mind of Lady Hamilton or of the world, that he was entirely faithful to her.

well-ordered, and somewhat prosaic charms with which alone Mrs. Nisbet was invested by Nelson, even when most loverlike in tone. "My greatest wish," he writes in the first of his letters to her that has been preserved, "is to be united to you; and the foundation of all conjugal happiness, real love and esteem, is, I trust, what you believe I possess in the strongest degree toward you." Fifteen months later, and but a short time before their wedding, he says again: "His Royal Highness often tells me, he believes I am married; for he never saw a lover so easy, or say so little of the object he has a regard for. When I tell him I certainly am not, he says, 'Then he is sure I must have a great esteem for you, and that it is not what is (vulgarly), I do not much like the use of that word, called love.' He is right: my love is founded on esteem, the only foundation that can make the passion last." But general maxims, even when less disputable than this, do not admit of universal application; and if an affection was to hold its own in a nature enthusiastic and imaginative as that of Nelson, it had need to strike root deeper than that surface soil indicated by mere esteem, at least when the latter rests simply upon an assemblage of upright and amiable qualities, and not upon that force of character which compels dependence as well as appreciation. At their last parting he solemnly avowed that his esteem was not lessened; while he was destined also to afford a conspicuous illustration of how enduring a passion may flourish where no just title to esteem exists.

The progress of his wooing was rapid enough. On the 12th

of May he mentions their first meeting; on the 28th of June he writes to his brother: "*Entre, nous*.—Do not be surprised to hear I am a *Benedict*, for if at all, it will be before a month. Do not tell." On the 11th of September is dated his first letter to her, already quoted, in which he addresses her as "My dear Fanny," and alludes to the understanding existing between them. At the expiration of six months he wrote, formally announcing his engagement, to Mr. William Suckling, his mother's brother. He anticipates the latter's doubts as to the permanence of this fancy: "This Horatio, you will say, is for ever in love;" but he considers that six months without change settles that question. "My present attachment is of pretty long standing; but I was determined to be fixed before I broke this matter to any person." He then explains the situation,—that the lady herself has little or nothing; that Mr. Herbert, though rich, is not likely to help the young couple much, and he asks his uncle's assistance. This Suckling consented to give, and for several years continued liberally to extend. But still, impatient though Nelson always was to complete whatever he had on hand, various causes delayed the wedding for another year. Even with Suckling's help the question of means was pressing; and while, with pardonable self-justification, he gloried to his betrothed that "the world is convinced that I am superior to pecuniary considerations in my public and private life, as in both instances I might have been rich," he nevertheless owned to regretting that he "had not given greater attention to making money." Besides, as he wrote to his brother, "What should I do

carrying a wife in a ship, and when I marry I do not mean to part with my wife." The cruising duty of the "Boreas" took her from port to port of the limited area embraced in the Leeward Islands Station, and Nevis was among the least important of the points demanding his attention. He was, therefore, frequently away from his betrothed during this period, and absence rather fanned than cooled the impetuous ardor which he carried into all his undertakings. Whether it were the pursuit of a love affair, or the chase of an enemy's fleet, delays served only to increase the vehemence with which Nelson chafed against difficulties. "Duty," he tells Mrs. Nisbet, "is the great business of a sea officer,—all private considerations must give way to it, however painful it is;" but he owns he wishes "the American vessels at the Devil, and the whole continent of America to boot," because they detain him from her side.

There is no singularity in the experience that obstacles tend rather to inflame than to check a lover's eagerness. What is noteworthy in Nelson's letters at this time is the utter absence of any illusions, of any tendency to exaggerate and glorify the qualities of the woman who for the nonce possessed his heart. There is not a sign of the perturbation of feeling, of the stirring of the soul, that was afterwards so painfully elicited by another influence. "The dear object," he writes to his brother, "you must like. Her sense, polite manners, and, to you I may say, beauty, you will much admire. She possesses sense far superior to half the people of our acquaintance, and her manners are

Mrs. Moutray's." The same calm, measured tone pervades all his mention of her to others. His letters to herself, on the other hand, are often pleasing in the quiet, simple, and generally unaffected tenderness which inspires them. In a more ordinary man, destined to more commonplace fortunes, they might well be regarded as promising that enduring wedded love which strikes root downward and bears fruit upward, steadily growing in depth and devotion as the years roll by. But Nelson was not an ordinary man, and from that more humble happiness a childless marriage further debarred him. He could rise far higher, and, alas! descend far lower as he followed the radiant vision,—the image of his own mind rather than an external reality,—the ideal, which, whether in fame or in love, beckoned him onward. The calm, even, and wholly matter-of-fact appreciation of his wife's estimable traits can now be seen in the light of his after career, and its doubtful augury descried; for to idealize was an essential attribute of his temperament. Her failure, even in the heyday of courtship, to arouse in him any extravagance of emotion, any illusive exaltation of her merits, left vacant that throne in his mind which could be permanently occupied only by a highly wrought excellence,—even though that were the purely subjective creation of his own enthusiasm. This hold Lady Nelson never gained; and the long absence from 1793 to 1797, during the opening period of the war of the French Revolution, probably did to death an affection which owed what languid life it retained chiefly to propinquity and custom. Both Saumarez and Codrington, who

served under him, speak passingly of the lightness with which his family ties sat upon Nelson in the years following his short stay at home in 1797. The house was empty, swept, and garnished, when the simple-minded, if lion-hearted, seaman came under the spell of one whose fascinations had overpowered the resistance of a cool-headed man of the world, leading him in his old age, with open eyes, to do what every prepossession and every reasonable conviction of his life condemned as folly.

In the summer of 1786 Sir Richard Hughes was recalled to England. During the later part of his association with Nelson, the strain which had characterized their earlier relations had not only disappeared, but had been succeeded by feelings approaching cordiality. The Government's approval of his subordinate's action, and of himself as credited with supporting it, had removed that element of apprehension which in timid men induces irritation; and Hughes, who, though irresolute, was naturally kindly, had been still farther placated by the prize-money falling to him from the vessels condemned through the zeal of Nelson. The latter, who never harbored malice, easily forgave the past, and responded to this change of tone. "I have been upon the best terms with the Admiral," he wrote from Barbadoes to his intended wife in April, 1786, "and I declare I think I could ever remain so. He is always remarkably kind and civil to every one;" and again, a few days earlier, "The admiral is highly pleased with my conduct here, as you will believe, by sending me such fine lines with a white hat. I well know I am

not of abilities to deserve what he has said of me: but I take it as they are meant, to show his regard for me; and his politeness and attention to me are great: nor shall I forget it. I like the man, although not all his acts." He then directs that the lines shall not be shown to any one, "as the compliment is paid to me at the expense of the officers of the squadron," an injunction thoroughly characteristic of the man's kindly consideration for others. It was creditable to Hughes that, after being so braved, and his instructions set at naught, by his junior, he had candor enough to see and acknowledge his merit; but the fact still remained that in the hour of trial he had failed Nelson, nor did the latter, though he forgave, forget it. As he wrote to Locker in September, 1786, after the admiral's departure, "Instead of being supported by my admiral, I was obliged to keep him up, for he was frightened at this business;" of which business he truly said, emphasizing, but not at all exaggerating, the gravity of the responsibility he had taken in defiance of his superior: "After loss of health and risk of fortune, another is thanked for what I did against his orders. *Either I deserved to be sent out of the service*,[15] or at least to have had some little notice taken of me."

Nelson indeed, in the West Indies, as an unknown captain, had done that which as a junior admiral he did later at Copenhagen, at a moment far more critical to Great Britain. By his own

[15] The author has italicized these words because they accurately express the just penalty that military law would have required of Nelson, had he not shown adequate grounds for his disobedience. They measure, therefore, the responsibility he shouldered, and the reward he deserved.

unusual powers of impulse and resolve he had enforced, as far as was possible against the passive, inert lethargy—not to say timidity—of his superior, the course of action which at the moment was essential to the interests of his country. Truly great in his strength to endure, he knew not the perturbations nor the vacillations that fret the temper, and cripple the action, of smaller men; and, however harassed and distressed externally, the calmness of a clear insight and an unshaken purpose guided his footsteps, unwavering, in the path of duty, through all opposition, to the goal of success. It is reported that an officer of the "Boreas," speaking to him of the vexations and odium he had undergone, used the word "pity." Nelson's reply showed the profound confidence which throughout had animated him, keenly as he had undoubtedly felt the temporary anxieties. "Pity, did you say? I shall live, Sir, to be envied; and to that point I shall always direct my course."

By the departure of Sir Richard Hughes Nelson was left senior officer upon the station until his own return home, a twelvemonth later. In November he renewed his acquaintance with Prince William Henry, whom he had known as a midshipman in 1782, and who now came to the Leeward Islands a post-captain, in command of the frigate "Pegasus." The two young men were not far apart in age, and an intimacy between them soon arose, which ended only with the death of Nelson. The latter had a profound reverence for royalty, both as an institution and as represented in its members; and to this, in the present case,

was added a strong personal esteem, based upon the zeal and efficiency in the discharge of official duties, which he recognized in one whose rank would assure him impunity for any mere indifference. The prince, on the other hand, quickly yielded to the charm of Nelson's intercourse, so vividly felt by most who knew him, and to the contagious enthusiasm which animated his conversation when talking of his profession. This, also, his ardent imagination endowed with possibilities and aspirations, not greater, indeed, than its deserts, but which only the intuitions of a genius like his could realize and vivify, imparting to slower temperaments something of his own fire. To this association the prince afterwards attributed the awakening of that strong interest in maritime affairs which he retained to the day of his death. The two friends dined alternately one with the other, and, in their association of some six months at this time, they together fought over all the naval battles that during the recent war had illustrated the waters through which they were then cruising.

The incessant energy displayed by Nelson, and the agitations through which he passed during the three years of this stay upon the West Indian station, again produced distressing symptoms in his general health. To use his own words, the activity of the mind was "too much for my puny constitution." "I am worn to a skeleton," he writes to Mr. Suckling in July, 1786; and three months later to Locker, "I have been since June so very ill that I have only a faint recollection of anything which I did. My complaint was in my breast, such a one as I had going out to

Jamaica [in 1777]. The Doctor thought I was in a consumption, and quite gave me up." This fear, however, proved unfounded; nor does there appear at any time to have been any serious trouble with his lungs.

On the 11th[16] of March, 1787, the marriage of Captain Nelson to Mrs. Nisbet took place at Nevis. Prince William Henry, whose rule it was never to visit in any private house, made an exception on this occasion, having exacted from Nelson a promise that the wedding should wait until he could be present; and he gave away the bride. Three months later, on the 7th of June, the "Boreas" sailed for England, and on the 4th of July anchored at Spithead. Whether Mrs. Nelson accompanied him in the ship does not appear certainly; but from several expressions in his letters it seems most probable that she did. Five days after his arrival he sent a message from her to Locker, in terms which indicate that she was with him.

A newly married man, who had just concluded a full cruise of such arduous and unremitting exertions, might reasonably have wished and expected a period of relaxation; but the return of the "Boreas" coincided with a very disturbed state of European politics. In the neighboring republic of Holland two parties were striving for the mastery; one of which was closely attached to France, the other, that of the Stadtholder, to Great Britain. In

[16] Sir Harris Nicolas (Nelson's Despatches and Letters, vol. i. p. 217) gives March 12 as the day of the wedding, upon the ground of a letter of Lady Nelson's. Her mention of the date is, however, rather casual; and March 11 is given in the parish register of the church in Nevis.

1785 the former had gained the upper hand; and, by a treaty signed on Christmas Day of that year, a decided preponderance in the councils of the United Provinces had been given to France. The enfeebled condition of the latter country, however, had allowed little prospect of permanence to this arrangement; and, in the summer of 1787, an insult offered by the French party to the wife of the Stadtholder led to a forcible intervention by the King of Prussia, whose sister she was. Louis XVI. prepared to support his partisans, and notified his purpose to Great Britain; whereupon the latter, whose traditional policy for over a century had been to resist the progress of French influence in the Low Countries, replied that she could not remain a quiet spectator, and at once began to arm. "The Dutch business," wrote Nelson, "is becoming every day more serious; and I hardly think we can keep from a war, without giving forever the weight of the Dutch to the French, and allowing the Stadtholdership to be abolished, —things which I should suppose hardly possible." Already his eager spirit was panting for the fray. "If we are to have a bustle, I do not want to come on shore; I begin to think I am fonder of the sea than ever." Only five months married!

The threatening aspect of affairs necessitated the "Boreas" being kept in commission,—the more so because the economies introduced by Mr. Pitt into the administration of the two military services had reduced the available naval force below that which France could at once send out. "The Boreas is kept in readiness to go to sea with the squadron at Spithead," wrote Nelson; "but

in my poor opinion we shall go no further at present. The French have eight sail in Brest water ready for sea: therefore I think we shall not court the French out of port,"—singular illustration of the unreadiness of Great Britain in the years immediately preceding the French Revolution. He looks for war, however, the following summer. As not only ships, but men also, were urgently needed, the impress service was hastily organized. His friend Locker was summoned from his long retirement to superintend that work in Exeter, and the "Boreas" was ordered to the Thames on the same business, arriving on the 20th of August at the Nore. There her duty was to board passing vessels, and take from them as many of their crew as were above the number barely necessary for the safety of the ship. She herself, besides acting as receiving ship for the men thus pressed, was to be kept in readiness to sail at a moment's warning. Mrs. Nelson had therefore to leave her and go to London. "Here we are," wrote Nelson on the 23d of September, "laying seven miles from the land on the Impress service, and I am as much separated from my wife as if I were in the East Indies;" and he closes the letter with the words, "I am this moment getting under sail after some ships."

His early biographers say that Nelson keenly felt and resented the kind of service in which he was then engaged; so much so that, moved also by other causes of irritation, he decided at one time to quit the Navy. No indication of such feeling, however, appears in his letters. On the contrary, one of the surest signs with him of pleasurable, or at least of interested, excitement,

was now manifested in his improving health. As he himself said, many years later, "To say the truth, when I am actively employed I am not so bad."[17] A month after reaching England, though then midsummer, he wrote: "It is not kind in one's native air to treat a poor wanderer as it has me since my arrival. The rain and cold at first gave me a sore throat and its accompaniments; the hot weather has given me a slow fever, not absolutely bad enough to keep my bed, yet enough to hinder me from doing anything;" and again, "I have scarcely been able to hold up my head." In blustering October, on the other hand, while in the midst of the detested Impress work, he says: "My health, thank God, was never better, and I am fit for any quarter of the globe;" although "it rains hard, and we have had very bad weather of late." Whatever momentary vexation he may have vented in a hasty expression, it was entirely inconsistent with his general tone to take amiss an employment whose vital importance he would have been the first to admit. Lack of zeal, or haggling about the duty assigned him, was entirely foreign to his character; that the country needed the men who were to be pressed was reason sufficient for one of his temper. If, indeed, there had been an apparent intention to keep him in such inglorious occupation, and out of the expected war, he might have chafed; but his orders to be constantly ready indicated the intention to send him at once to

[17] The same symptom will be noted in the anxious pursuit of Villeneuve to the West Indies in 1805, where he grew better, although for some months he had had in his hands the Admiralty's permission to return home on account of his health.

the front, if hostilities began. Doubtless he was disappointed that the application he made for a ship-of-the-line was not granted; but he knew that, being still a very young captain, what he asked was a favor, and its refusal not a grievance, nor does he seem to have looked upon it otherwise.

There were, however, some annoyances, which, joined to the lack of appreciation for his eminent services to the interests of the nation in the West Indies, must have keenly stung him. Without the slightest necessity, except that laid upon him by his own public spirit, he had fought and struggled, and endured three years of hot water to serve the Government. He might have gone easy, as did the admiral and the other captains; but instead of so doing he had destroyed the contraband trade, and re-established the working of laws upon which the prosperity and security of the kingdom were thought to depend. For this he had received a perfunctory, formal acknowledgment, though none apparently from the Admiralty, the head of his own service. But he soon found that, if slow to thank, they were prompt to blame, and that with no light hand nor disposition to make allowances. He had run his head against various regulations of the bureaucracy; and this let him know, with all the amenities of official censure, that if they could not recognize what he had done well, they were perfectly clear-sighted as to where he had gone wrong.

So far from appreciation, there seems even to have been a prejudice against Nelson in high quarters, due not only to the discomposure felt by the routine official, at the rude irregularities

of the man who is more concerned to do his work than nice about the formalities surrounding it, but also to misrepresentation by the powerful interests he had offended through his independent course in the West Indies. After Hughes had gone home, Nelson, as senior officer on the station, began to examine the modes of conducting government business, and especially of making purchases. Conceiving that there were serious irregularities in these, he suggested to the Civil Department of the Navy, under whose cognizance the transactions fell, some alterations in the procedure, by which the senior naval officer would have more control over the purchases than simply to certify that so much money was wanted. The Comptroller of the Navy replied that the old forms were sufficient,—"a circumstance which hurt me," wrote Nelson; while all the civil functionaries resented his interference with their methods, and seem to have received the tacit support, if not the direct sympathy, of the Navy Board, as the Civil Department was then called. His disposition to look into matters, however, had become known, and the long struggle over the contraband trade had given him in the islands a reputation for tenacity and success. It was probably in dependence upon these that two merchants came to him, two months before he left the station, and told him of the existence of very extensive frauds, dating back several years, in which were implicated both civil officials of the Navy and private parties on shore. It is possible that the informants themselves had shared in some of these transactions, and they certainly demanded in payment a

part of the sums recovered; but, as Nelson truly said, the question was not as to their character, but how to stop the continuance of embezzlements which had then amounted to over two millions sterling.

The reports made by him upon this subject reached London about a month before the return of the "Boreas;" but the war scare, and the urgent call upon all departments of the Navy to mobilize the available force, prevented any immediate steps being taken. His letters were acknowledged, and the intention expressed to investigate the matter, but nothing more was then done. October, however, the Prussian troops occupied Amsterdam, reinstating the Stadtholder in all his privileges, and restoring to power the partisans of Great Britain; while France remained passive, her power for external action paralyzed by the dying convulsions of the monarchy. The curtain had just risen upon the opening scene in the great drama of the Revolution,—the first Assembly of Notables. Warlike preparations consequently ceased, and on the 30th of November, 1787, the cruise of the "Boreas" came to an end.

It was during this last month of servitude, and immediately before quitting the ship, that Nelson is said to have used the vehement expressions of discontent with "an ungrateful service," recorded by his biographers, concluding with his resolve to go at once to London and resign his commission. In the absence of the faintest trace, in his letters, of dissatisfaction with the duty to which the ship was assigned, it is reasonable to attribute

this exasperation to his soreness under the numerous reprimands he had received,—a feeling which plainly transpires in some of his replies, despite the forms of official respect that he scrupulously observed. Even in much later days, when his distinguished reputation might have enabled him to sustain with indifference this supercilious rudeness, he winced under it with over-sensitiveness. "Do not, my dear lord," he wrote to Earl Spencer a year after the battle of the Nile, "let the Admiralty write harshly to me—my generous soul cannot bear it, being conscious it is entirely unmerited." This freedom of censure, often felt by him to be undeserved, or at least excessive, and its sharp contrast with the scanty recognition of his unwearied efforts,—of whose value he himself was by no means forgetful, —though not unusual in the experience of officers, are quite sufficient to account for the sense of neglect and unjust treatment by which he was then outraged. This feeling was probably accentuated, also, by a renewal of the legal persecution which had been begun in the West Indies; for towards the end of the year he received formal notice of suits being instituted against him for the seizure of the American vessels, and it is likely enough that some intimation of what was coming reached him before leaving the "Boreas." Scanty thanks, liberal blame, and the prospect of an expensive lawsuit based upon his official action, constituted, for a poor man lately married, causes of disturbance which might well have upset his equanimity.

Lord Howe, who was then at the head of the Admiralty,

though formal and unbending in outward bearing, was a just and kind man, and one fully appreciative of professional worth. A mutual friend acquainted him with Nelson's irritation, and Howe wrote a private letter asking that he would call upon him as soon as he came to town. Though quick to resent, Nelson was easily soothed by attention and pleased by compliment, even when it rose to flattery,—which Howe's was not likely to do. A short interview gave the First Lord a clearer idea than he before had of the extent, value, and wholly voluntary character of the services rendered by the young captain in the West Indies; and he indicated the completeness of his satisfaction by offering to present him to the King, which was accordingly done at the next levee. George III. received him graciously; and the resentment of Nelson, whose loyalty was of the most extreme type, melted away in the sunshine of royal favor.

Thus reconciled to the service, and convinced, as in his less morbid moods he often said, that gratitude and honor, though long deferred, were sure to follow upon steadfast performance of duty, he speedily renewed his efforts to bring to light the frauds practised in the colonies. His letters on the subject to Mr. Pitt, the Prime Minister, had been turned over to the Secretary of the Treasury, Mr. George Rose, and upon the latter Nelson now called. Rose received him at first with that courteous nonchalance which is the defensive armor of the beset official,—the name of his visitor, and the business with which it was connected, had for the moment slipped his mind. Nelson's

mastery of his subject, however, and his warmth in it, soon roused the attention of his hearer, who, being then pressed for time, asked to see him again the next day, stipulating only that the interview should be early, before office hours. "It cannot be too early for me," replied Nelson, whose habit, in his career as admiral, was to get through his correspondence before eight o'clock,—"six o'clock, if you please."

The arrangement was so made, and the consequent meeting lasted from six to nine the next morning. Of its general nature and results we have an authentic outline, given in later years to Nelson's biographers by Rose, who became, and to the last remained, his warm personal friend. The conversation ranged, apparently, over all the chief occurrences in the West Indies during the cruise of the "Boreas," including both the naval frauds and the contraband trade. The breadth and acuteness of Nelson's intellect have been too much overlooked, in the admiration excited by his unusually grand moral endowments of resolution, dash, and fearlessness of responsibility. Though scarcely what could be called an educated man, he was one of close and constant observation, thereby gaining a great deal of information; and to the use of this he brought a practical sagacity, which coped with the civil or political questions placed before it, *for action*, much as it did with military questions—for, after all, good generalship, on its intellectual side, is simply the application, to the solution of a military problem, of a mind naturally gifted therefor, and stored with experience, either personal or

of others. As a strategist and tactician, Nelson made full proof of high native endowments, of wisdom garnered through fruitful study and meditation, and of clear insight into the determining conditions of the various military situations with which he had to deal. To Mr. Rose, the young captain of barely thirty years displayed a precise knowledge of several political subjects, connected with the commerce of the country, that would not naturally come under his notice as an officer, and which therefore the mere seaman would probably not have imbibed. Not only so, but his suggestions for dealing practically with the interests at stake were so judicious, that Rose, a valued associate of Pitt and intimately acquainted with the financial measures of that brilliant administrator, complimented him warmly upon the justice and correctness of his views, the result, as they were, of reflection based upon a mastery of the data involved. With Nelson's consent, he undertook to lay them before the prime minister, as the direct testimony of a singularly competent first-hand observer.

It is to be noted, however, of Nelson, that this accuracy of mental perception, this power of penetrating to the root of a matter, disregarding unessential details and fastening solely on decisive features, was largely dependent upon the necessity laid upon him for action; which is probably equivalent to saying that it was usually elicited by a sobering sense of responsibility. In his letters and despatches may be found many wild guesses, inconsistent from week to week, colored by changing moods

and humors,—the mere passing comments of a mind off guard, —the records of evanescent impressions as numerous, fickle, and unfounded as those of the most ordinary mortal. It is when urgency presses and danger threatens, when the need for action comes, that his mental energies are aroused, and he begins to speak, as it were, *ex cathedrâ*. Then the unsubstantial haze rolls away; and the solid features of the scene one by one appear, until, amid all the unavoidable uncertainties of imperfect information, it becomes plain that the man has a firm grasp upon the great landmarks by which he must guide his course. Like the blind, who at first saw men as trees walking, and then saw everything clearly, so his mental illumination gradually reduces confusion to order, and from perplexity evolves correct decision. But what shall be said of those flashes of insight, as at Cape St. Vincent, elicited in a moment, as by the stroke of iron on rock, where all the previous processes of ordered thought and labored reasoning are condensed into one vivid inspiration, and transmuted without a pause into instant heroic action? Is that we call "genius" purely a mystery, of which our only account is to give it a name? Or is it true, as Napoleon said, that "on the field of battle the happiest inspiration is often but a recollection"?

From Rose Nelson went to the Comptroller of the Navy, Sir Charles Middleton, who afterwards, as Lord Barham, sent him forth to Trafalgar. Middleton had replied promptly to the first report of the fraudulent transactions, giving assurance of his readiness to act, and urging that all the information

possible should be secured, as he feared that the allegations were substantially true. He now showed the instructions of the Navy Board, under which its colonial employees acted, to Nelson, who said that, if honestly followed, they must prevent the unlawful practices; but that he believed they were habitually violated, and that he himself, though senior officer on the station, had never before seen the instructions. This failure to intrust supervision to the one person upon whom all responsibility should ultimately have rested, practically neutralized the otherwise laudable methods prescribed by the Board. It was simply another instance of the jealousy between the civil and military branches of the naval organization, which, as is well known, resulted in constant strained relations between the Admiralty and the Naval Commissioners, until the latter Board was at last abolished.

It is, fortunately, unnecessary to follow farther this dreary record of old-time dishonesty. Nelson continued to interest himself strenuously in the matter for two years after his return to England, both by letter and interview with persons in authority. His own position and influence were too insignificant to effect anything, except by moving the home officials, whose administration was compromised and embarrassed by the malpractices of their representatives. Though uphill work, it was far from fruitless. "His representations," said Mr. Rose, in a memorandum furnished to his biographers, "were all attended to, and every step which he recommended was adopted. He thus put the investigation into a proper course; which ended in the

detection and punishment of some of the parties whose conduct was complained of." The broad result appears to have been that the guilty for the most part escaped punishment, unless, indeed, some of them lost their positions, of which no certain information exists; but the corrupt combination was broken up, and measures were adopted to prevent the recurrence of the same iniquities. Upon Nelson himself the effect was twofold. His energy and intelligence could not fail to impress the powerful men with whom he was in this way brought into contact. The affair increased his reputation, and made him more widely known than as a simple captain in the Navy he would otherwise have been. As the various public Boards whose money had been stolen realized the amount of the thefts, and the extent of the conspiracy to rob the Government, they felt their obligations to him, and expressed them in formal, but warm, letters of thanks. On the other hand, the principal culprits had command of both money and influence; and by means of these, as so often happens, they not only impeded inquiry, but, according to Southey, who wrote not very long after the events, "succeeded in raising prejudices against Nelson at the Board of Admiralty which it was many years before he could subdue." Clarke and M'Arthur make the same assertion.

That these prejudices did at one time exist is beyond doubt, and that they should have been fostered by this means is perfectly in keeping with common experience. Such intrigues, however, work in the dark and by indirection; it is not often easy to

trace their course. The independence and single-mindedness with which Nelson followed his convictions, and the outspoken frankness with which he expressed his views and feelings, not improbably gave a handle to malicious misrepresentation. His known intimacy with Prince William Henry, upon whose favor he to some extent relied, was also more likely to do him harm than good; and he entertained for the royal captain prepossessions not far removed from partisanship, at a time when the prince avowed himself not a friend to the present minister. "Amidst that variety of business which demanded his attention on his return to England," say his biographers, "he failed not, by every means in his power, to fulfil the promise which he had made to his Royal Highness Prince William of counteracting whatever had been opposed to the merited reputation of his illustrious pupil, and to the friendship they had invariably preserved for each other." It was a difficult task. Opinionated and headstrong as the King, his father, the young man was an uneasy subordinate to the Admiralty, and made those above him realize that he was full as conscious of his personal rank as of his official position as a captain in the Navy. It was, indeed, this self-assertive temperament that afterwards frustrated his natural ambition to be the active head of the service. Having such an ally, there is something ominous for Nelson's own prospects to find him writing in evident sympathy: "The great folks above now see he will not be a cypher, therefore many of the rising people must submit to act subordinate to him,

which is not so palatable; and I think a Lord of the Admiralty is hurt to see him so able, after what he has said about him. He has certainly not taken a leaf out of his book, for he is steady in his command and not violent." Upon this follows, "He has wrote Lord Hood what I cannot but approve,"—a sentence unquestionably vague, but which sounds combative. Nelson had already felt it necessary to caution the prince to be careful in the choice of those to whom he told his mind.

In fact, at the time when the letter just quoted was written, the conduct of the prince had been such as necessarily, and not wholly unjustly, to prejudice an officer who displayed marked partisanship for him, such as certainly was indicated by Nelson's expressions. He had brought his ship from Newfoundland to Ireland in flat disobedience of orders, issued by the commander of the station, to go to Quebec. When this action became known to the Admiralty by his arrival at Cork, in December, 1787, it was at once reported to the King, who himself directed that the prince should proceed to Plymouth with his ship, should remain within the limits of the port for as many months as he had been absent from his station, and should then be sent back to Halifax. The Prince of Wales, afterwards George IV., who was already at variance with the King, took advantage of this flagrant breach of discipline to flaunt his opposition before the world. In company with his second brother, the Duke of York, he went down to Plymouth, and paid a ceremonious visit to Prince William on board his ship. The round of festivities necessitated by their

presence emphasized the disagreement between the sovereign and the heir to the throne, and drew to it public attention. Immediately after this, in January, 1788, Nelson also visited the prince, having been summoned by him from London. He could, indeed, scarcely decline, nor was he at all the man to turn his back on a friend in difficulty; but, in his fight against corruption, the matter could scarcely fail to be represented by his opponents under the worst light to the King, to whom corruption was less odious than insubordination. If, in conversation, Nelson uttered such expressions as he wrote to his friend Locker, he had only himself to blame for the disfavor which followed; for, to a naval officer, the prince's conduct should have appeared absolutely indefensible. In the course of the same year the King became insane, and the famous struggle about the Regency took place. The prince had meantime returned to America, in accordance with his orders, and by the time he again reached England the King had recovered. He could, therefore, have refrained from any indication of his own sympathies; but instead of this he openly associated himself with the party of the Prince of Wales, whose course throughout, when it became known to his father, had bitterly displeased the latter, and accentuated the breach between them. At a banquet given by the Spanish ambassador in celebration of the King's recovery, the three princes sat at a table separate from the rest of the royal family. A formal reconciliation took place in September, 1789; but the Duke of Clarence, as he had then become, continued attached to the Prince of Wales's

clique. Those who know how party considerations influenced naval appointments at that time, will in these facts find at least a partial explanation of the cloud which then hung over Nelson.

Lord Chatham, brother of the minister to whom Prince William was not a friend, became head of the Admiralty in July, 1788, and so remained until after the war with France began in 1793. With him was associated Lord Hood, between whom and Nelson there arose what the latter called "a difference of opinion," which led to a cessation of "familiar correspondence." The exact date at which this occurred does not appear, but it was probably before May, 1790; for Hood refused to use his influence to get Nelson a ship, in the armament which was then ordered on account of a difficulty with Spain, whereas eighteen months before he had assured him that in case of hostilities he need not fear not having a good ship. This refusal was the more marked, because "almost the whole service was then called out." On the same occasion, Nelson wrote, "he made a speech never to be effaced from my memory, viz.: that the King was impressed with an unfavourable opinion of me." Knowing Nelson's value as an officer as well as Hood did, there can scarcely remain a doubt that some serious indiscretion, real or imagined, must have caused this alienation; but of what it was there is no trace, unless in his evident siding with the prince, who was then out of favor with both the King and the administration.

The five years—from 1788 to 1792 inclusive—intervening between the cruise of the "Boreas" and the outbreak of war with

the French Republic, were thus marked by a variety of unpleasant circumstances, of which the most disagreeable, to a man of Nelson's active temperament, was the apparently fixed resolve of the authorities to deny him employment. He was harassed, indeed, by the recurring threats of prosecution for the West India seizures; but both the Admiralty and the Treasury agreed that he should be defended at the expense of the Crown,—a fact which tends to show that his subsequent disfavor arose from some other cause than disapproval of his official action, however some incidents may have been misrepresented. On its private side, his life during this period seems to have been happy, though uneventful; but in the failure of children he was deprived, both then and afterwards, of that sweetest of interests, continuous yet ever new in its gradual unfolding, which brings to the most monotonous existence its daily tribute of novelty and incident. The fond, almost rapturous, expressions with which he greeted the daughter afterwards born to him out of wedlock, shows the blank in his home,—none the less real because not consciously realized.

The lack of stimulus to his mind from his surroundings at this time is also manifested by the fewness of his letters. But thirty remain to show his occupation during the five years, and seventeen of these are purely official in character. From the year 1791 no record survives. His wife being with him, one line of correspondence was thereby closed; but even to his brother, and to his friend Locker, he finds nothing to write. For the ordinary

country amusements and pursuits of the English gentry he had scant liking; and, barring the occasional worry over his neglect by the Admiralty, there was little else to engage his attention. The first few months after his release from the "Boreas" were spent in the West of England, chiefly at Bath, for the recovery of Mrs. Nelson's health as well as his own; but toward the latter part of 1788 the young couple went to live with his father at the parsonage of Burnham Thorpe, and there made their home until he was again called into active service. "It is extremely interesting," say his biographers, "to contemplate this great man, when thus removed from the busy scenes in which he had borne so distinguished a part to the remote village of Burnham Thorpe;" but the interest seems by their account to be limited to the energy with which he dug in the garden, or, from sheer want of something to do, reverted to the bird-nesting of his boyhood. His favorite amusement, we are told, was coursing, and he once shot a partridge; but his habit of carrying his gun at full cock, and firing as soon as a bird rose, without bringing the piece to his shoulder, made him a dangerous companion in a shooting-party. His own account is somewhat different: "Shoot I cannot, therefore I have not taken out a license; but notwithstanding the neglect I have met with I am happy;" and again, to his brother, he says: "It was not my intention to have gone to the coursing meeting, for, to say the truth, I have rarely escaped a wet jacket and a violent cold; besides, to me, even the ride to the Smee is longer than any pleasure I find in the sport will compensate

for." The fact is that Nelson cared for none of these things, and the only deduction of real interest from his letters at this time is the absolute failure of his home life and affections to content his aspirations,—the emptiness both of mind and heart, which caused his passionate eagerness for external employment to fill the void. Earnestness appears only when he is brooding over the slight with which he was treated, and the resultant thwarting of his career. For both mind and heart the future held in store for him the most engrossing emotions, but it did not therefore bring him happiness.

Of his frames of mind during this period of neglect and disfavor, his biographers give a very strongly colored picture, for which, it is to be presumed, they drew upon contemporary witnesses that were to them still accessible. "With a mortified and dejected spirit, he looked forward to a continuance of inactivity and neglect.... During this interval of disappointment and mortification, his latent ambition would at times burst forth, and despise all restraint. At others, a sudden melancholy seemed to overshadow his noble faculties, and to affect his temper; at those moments the remonstrances of his wife and venerable father alone could calm the tempest of his passions." That Nelson keenly felt the cold indifference he now underwent, is thoroughly in keeping with the sensitiveness to censure, expressed or implied, which his correspondence frequently betrays, while his frail organization and uncertain health would naturally entail periods of depression or nervous exasperation; but the general

tenor of his letters, few as they at this time were, shows rather dignified acceptance of a treatment he had not merited, and a steady resolve not to waver in his readiness to serve his country, nor to cease asking an opportunity to do so. Many years later, at a time of still more sickening suspense, he wrote: "I am in truth half dead, but what man can do shall be done,—I am not made to despair;" and now, according to a not improbable story, he closed an application for employment with the words, "If your Lordships should be pleased to appoint me to a cockle boat, I shall feel grateful." Hood, whose pupil he in a sense was, and who shared his genius, said of himself, when under a condition of enforced inactivity: "This proves very strongly the different frames of men's minds; some are full of anxiety, impatience, and apprehension, while others, under similar circumstances, are perfectly cool, tranquil, and indifferent."

The latter half of the year 1792 was marked by the rapid progress in France of the political distemper, which was so soon to culminate in the worst excesses of the Revolution. The quick succession of symptoms, each more alarming than the other,—the suspension of the royal power at the tumultuous bidding of a mob, the September massacres, the abolition of royalty, the aggressive character of the National Convention shown by the decrees of November 19 and December 15,—roused the apprehensions of most thoughtful men throughout Europe; and their concern was increased by the growing popular effervescence in other countries than France. The British cabinet,

as was natural, shifted more slowly than did the irresponsible members of the community; nor could Pitt lightly surrender his strong instinctive prepossessions in favor of peace, with the continuance of which was identified the exercise of his own best powers.

During this stormy and anxious period, Nelson shared the feelings of his day and class. It is noteworthy, however, that, in regarding the perils of the time, he was no mere panic-monger, but showed the same discriminating carefulness of observation that had distinguished him as captain of the "Boreas," and had elicited the admiration of Mr. Rose. Strenuous and even bigoted royalist as he always was, satisfied of the excellence of the British Constitution, and condemning utterly the proceedings of the more or less seditious societies then forming throughout the kingdom, he yet recognized the substantial grievances of the working-men, as evident in the district immediately under his eye. The sympathetic qualities which made him, fortune's own favorite in his profession, keenly alive to the hardships, neglect, and injustice undergone by the common seaman, now engaged him to set forth the sad lot of the ill-paid rural peasantry. In his letters to the Duke of Clarence, he on the one hand strongly blames the weakness and timidity of the justices and country gentlemen, in their attitude towards the abettors of lawlessness; but, on the other, he dwells upon the sufferings of the poor, prepares a careful statement of their earnings and unavoidable expenses, and insists upon the necessity of the living wage.

The field laborers, he said, "do not want loyalty, many of their superiors, in many instances, might have imitated their conduct to advantage; but hunger is a sharp thorn, and they are not only in want of food sufficient, but of clothes and firing."

Under the threatening outlook, he considers that every individual will soon "be called forth to show himself;" and for his own part, he writes on the 3d of November, he sees no way so proper as asking for a ship. But, even at that late moment, neither Pitt nor his associates had abandoned the hope of peace, and this, as well as other applications of Nelson's, received only a formal acknowledgment without encouragement. Roused, however, by the Convention's decree of November 19, which extended the succor of France to all people who should wish to recover their liberty, and charged the generals of the republic to make good the offer with the forces under their command, the ministry decided to abandon their guarded attitude; and their new resolution was confirmed by the reception, on the 28th of November, of deputations from British revolutionary societies at the bar of the Convention, on which occasion the president of the latter affected to draw a dividing line between the British government and the British nation. On the 1st of December the militia was called out by proclamation, and Parliament summoned to meet on the 15th of the month. On the latter day the Convention put forth another decree, announcing in the most explicit terms its purpose to overthrow all existing governments in countries where the Republican armies could penetrate. Pitt now changed

his front with an instantaneousness and absoluteness which gave the highest proof of his capacity as a leader of men. It was not so much that war was then determined, as that the purpose was formed, once for all, to accept the challenge contained in the French decree, unless France would discontinue her avowed course of aggression. Orders were immediately given to increase largely the number of ships of war in commission.

When danger looms close at hand, the best men, if known, are not left in the cold shade of official disfavor. "Post nubila Phoebus," was the expression of Nelson, astonished for a rarity into Latin by the suddenness with which the sun now burst upon him through the clouds. "The Admiralty so smile upon me, that really I am as much surprised as when they frowned." On the 6th of January, 1793, the First Lord, with many apologies for previous neglect, promised to give him a seventy-four-gun ship as soon as it was in his power to do so, and that meanwhile, if he chose to take a sixty-four, he could have one as soon as she was ready. On the 30th he was appointed to the "Agamemnon," of the latter rate. Within the preceding fortnight Louis XVI. had been beheaded, and the French ambassador ordered to leave England. On February 1, 1793, two days after Nelson's orders were issued, the Republic declared war against Great Britain and Holland.

CHAPTER III.
NELSON'S DEPARTURE FROM ENGLAND IN THE "AGAMEMNON."—SERVICES IN THE MEDITERRANEAN UNTIL THE RECOVERY OF TOULON BY THE FRENCH.—LORD HOOD IN COMMAND

FEBRUARY-DECEMBER, 1793. AGE, 34

Nelson's page in history covers a little more than twelve years, from February, 1793, to October, 1805. Its opening coincides with the moment when the wild passions of the French Revolution, still at fiercest heat, and which had hitherto raged like flame uncontrolled, operative only for destruction, were being rapidly mastered, guided, and regulated for efficient work, by the terrors of the Revolutionary Tribunal and the Committee of Public Safety. In the object to which these tremendous forces were now about to be applied lay the threat

to the peace of Europe, which aroused Great Britain to action, and sent into the field her yet unknown champion from the Norfolk parsonage. The representatives of the French people had imparted to the original movement of their nation,—which aimed only at internal reforms, however radical,—a new direction, of avowed purposeful aggression upon all political institutions exterior to, and differing from, their own. This became the one characteristic common to the successive forms of government, which culminated in the pure military despotism of Napoleon.

To beat back that spirit of aggression was the mission of Nelson. Therein is found the true significance of his career, which mounts higher and higher in strenuous effort and gigantic achievement, as the blast of the Revolution swells fiercer and stronger under the mighty impulse of the great Corsican. At each of the momentous crises, so far removed in time and place,—at the Nile, at Copenhagen, at Trafalgar,—as the unfolding drama of the age reveals to the onlooker the schemes of the arch-planner about to touch success, over against Napoleon rises ever Nelson; and as the latter in the hour of victory drops upon the stage where he has played so chief a part, his task is seen to be accomplished, his triumph secured. In the very act of dying he has dealt the foe a blow from which recovery is impossible. Moscow and Waterloo are the inevitable consequences of Trafalgar; as the glories of that day were but the fit and assured ending of the illustrious course which was begun upon the quarter-deck of the "Agamemnon."

With the exception of the "Victory," under whose flag he fell after two years of arduous, heart-breaking uncertainties, no ship has such intimate association with the career and name of Nelson as has the "Agamemnon." And this is but natural, for to her he was the captain, solely, simply, and entirely; identified with her alone, glorying in her excellences and in her achievements, one in purpose and in spirit with her officers and seamen; sharing their hopes, their dangers, and their triumphs; quickening them with his own ardor, moulding them into his own image, until vessel and crew, as one living organism, reflected in act the heroic and unyielding energy that inspired his feeble frame. Although, for a brief and teeming period, he while in command of her controlled also a number of smaller vessels on detached service, it was not until after he had removed to another ship that he became the squadron-commander, whose relations to the vessel on which he himself dwelt were no longer immediate, nor differed, save in his bodily presence, from those he bore to others of the same division. A personality such as Nelson's makes itself indeed felt throughout its entire sphere of action, be that large or small; but, withal, diffusion contends in vain with the inevitable law that forever couples it with slackening power, nor was it possible even for him to lavish on the various units of a fleet, and on the diverse conflicting claims of a great theatre of war, the same degree of interest and influence that he concentrated upon the "Agamemnon," and upon the brilliant though contracted services through which he carried her. Bonds such as these are

not lightly broken, and to the "Agamemnon" Nelson clave for three long years and more, persistently refusing larger ships, until the exhausted hulk could no longer respond to the demands of her masters, and separation became inevitable. When he quitted her, at the moment of her departure for England, it was simply a question whether he would abandon the Mediterranean, and the prospect of a great future there opening before him, or sever a few weeks earlier a companionship which must in any event end upon her arrival home.

There is yet another point of view from which his command of the "Agamemnon" is seen to hold a peculiar relation to Nelson's story. This was the period in which expectation passed into fulfilment, when development, long arrested by unpropitious circumstances, resumed its outward progress under the benign influence of a favoring environment, and the bud, whose rare promise had long been noted by a few discerning eyes, unfolded into the brilliant flower, destined in the magnificence of its maturity to draw the attention of a world. To the fulness of his glorious course these three years were what the days of early manhood are to ripened age; and they are marked by the same elasticity, hopefulness, and sanguine looking to the future that characterize youth, before illusions vanish and even success is found to disappoint. Happiness was his then, as at no other time before or after; for the surrounding conditions of enterprise, of difficulties to be overcome, and dangers to be met, were in complete correspondence with those native powers that had so

long struggled painfully for room to exert themselves. His health revived, and his very being seemed to expand in this congenial atmosphere, which to him was as life from the dead. As with untiring steps he sped onward and upward,—counting naught done while aught remained to do, forgetting what was behind as he pressed on to what was before,—the ardor of pursuit, the delight of achievement, the joy of the giant running his course, sustained in him that glow of animation, that gladness in the mere fact of existence, physical or moral, in which, if anywhere, this earth's content is found. Lack of recognition, even, wrung from him only the undaunted words: "Never mind! some day I will have a gazette of my own." Not till his dreams were realized, till aspiration had issued in the completest and most brilliant triumph ever wrought upon the seas, and he had for his gazette the loud homage of every mouth in Europe,—not till six months after the battle of the Nile,—did Nelson write: "There is no true happiness in this life, and in my present state I could quit it with a smile. My only wish is to sink with honour into the grave."

The preparation of the Mediterranean fleet, to which the "Agamemnon" was assigned, was singularly protracted, and in the face of a well-ordered enemy the delay must have led to disastrous results. Nelson himself joined his ship at Chatham on the 7th of February, a week after his orders were issued; but not until the 16th of March did she leave the dockyard, and then only for Sheerness, where she remained four weeks longer. By that time it seems probable, from remarks in his

letters, that the material equipment of the vessel was complete; but until the 14th of April she remained over a hundred men short of her complement. "Yet, I think," wrote Nelson, "that we shall be far from ill-manned, even if the rest be not so good as they ought to be." Mobilization in those days had not been perfected into a science, even in theory, and the difficulty of raising crews on the outbreak of war was experienced by all nations, but by none more than by Great Britain. Her wants were greatest, and for supply depended upon a merchant service scattered in all quarters of the globe. "Men are very hard to be got," Nelson said to his brother, "and without a press I have no idea that our fleet can be manned." It does not appear that this crude and violent, yet unavoidable, method was employed for the "Agamemnon," except so far as her crew was completed from the guard-ship. Dependence was placed upon the ordinary wiles of the recruiting-sergeant, and upon Nelson's own popularity in the adjacent counties of Suffolk and Norfolk, from which the bulk of his ship's company was actually drawn. "I have sent out a lieutenant and four midshipmen," he writes to Locker, "to get men at every seaport in Norfolk, and to forward them to Lynn and Yarmouth; my friends in Yorkshire and the North tell me they will send what men they can lay hands on;" but at the same time he hopes that Locker, then Commander-in-chief at the Nore, will not turn away any who from other districts may present themselves for the "Agamemnon." Coming mainly from the same neighborhood gave to the crew a certain homogeneousness

of character, affording ground for appeal to local pride, a most powerful incentive in moments of difficulty and emulation; and this feeling was enhanced by the thought that their captain too was a Norfolk man. To one possessing the sympathetic qualities of Nelson, who so readily shared the emotions and gained the affections of his associates, it was easy to bind into a living whole the units animated by this common sentiment.

His stepson, Josiah Nisbet, at this time about thirteen years old, now entered the service as a midshipman, and accompanied him on board the "Agamemnon." The oncoming of a great war naturally roused to a yet higher pitch the impulse towards the sea, which in all generations has stirred the blood of English boys. Of these, Nelson, using his captain's privilege, received a number as midshipmen upon his quarter-deck, among them several from the sons of neighbors and friends, and therefore, like the crew, Norfolk lads. It is told that to one, whose father he knew to be a strong Whig, of the party which in the past few years had sympathized with the general current of the French Revolution, he gave the following pithy counsels for his guidance in professional life: "First, you must always implicitly obey orders, without attempting to form any opinion of your own respecting their propriety; secondly, you must consider every man as your enemy who speaks ill of your king; and thirdly, you must hate a Frenchman as you do the devil." On the last two items Nelson's practice was in full accord with his precept; but to the first, his statement of which, sound enough in the general, is open

to criticism as being too absolute, he was certainly not obedient. Not to form an opinion is pushing the principle of subordination to an indefensible extreme, even for a junior officer, though the caution not to express it is wise, as well as becoming to the modesty of youth. Lord Howe's advice to Codrington, to watch carefully all that passed and to form his own conclusions, but to keep them to himself, was in every respect more reasonable and profitable. But in fact this dictum of Nelson's was simply another instance of hating the French as he did the devil. The French were pushing independence and private judgment to one extreme, and he instinctively adopted the other.

It was not till near the end of April that the "Agamemnon" finally left the Thames, anchoring at Spithead on the 28th of that month. Still the fleet which Lord Hood was to command was not ready. While awaiting her consorts, the ship made a short cruise in the Channel, and a few days later sailed as one of a division of five ships-of-the-line under Admiral Hotham, to occupy a station fifty to a hundred miles west of the Channel Islands. Nelson's disposition not to form any opinion of his own respecting the propriety of orders was thus evidenced: "What we have been sent out for is best known to the great folks in London: to us, it appears, only to hum the nation and make tools of us, for where we have been stationed no enemy was likely to be met with, or where we could protect our own trade." There can be no doubt that not only was the practical management of the Navy at this time exceedingly bad, but that no sound

ideas even prevailed upon the subject. Hotham's squadron gained from neutral vessels two important pieces of information,—that Nantes, Bordeaux, and L'Orient were filled with English vessels, prizes to French cruisers; and that the enemy kept eight sail-of-the-line, with frigates in proportion, constantly moving in detachments about the Bay of Biscay. Under the dispositions adopted by the British Admiralty, these hostile divisions gave, to the commerce destroying of the smaller depredators, a support that sufficiently accounts for the notorious sufferings of British trade during the opening years of the war. Nelson had no mastery of the terminology of warfare,—he never talked about strategy and little about tactics,—but, though without those valuable aids to precision of thought, he had pondered, studied, and reasoned, and he had, besides, what is given to few,—real genius and insight. Accordingly he at once pierced to the root of the trouble,—the enemy's squadrons, rather than the petty cruisers dependent upon them, to which the damage was commonly attributed. "They are always at sea, and England not willing to send a squadron to interrupt them." But, while instancing this intuitive perception of a man gifted with rare penetration, it is necessary to guard against rash conclusions that might be drawn from it, and to remark that it by no means follows that education is unnecessary to the common run of men, because a genius is in advance of his times. It is well also to note that even in him this flash of insight, though unerring in its indications, lacked the definiteness of conviction which results from ordered thought.

However accurate, it is but a glimmer,—not yet a fixed light.

Hotham's division joined the main body under Lord Hood, off the Scilly Islands, on the 23d of May, the total force then consisting of eleven sail-of-the-line, with the usual smaller vessels. It remained cruising in that neighborhood until the 6th of June, keeping the approaches of the Channel open for a homeward-bound convoy of merchantmen, which passed on that day. The fleet then bore up for the Straits, and on the 14th six ships, the "Agamemnon" among them, parted company for Cadiz, there to fill up with water, in order to avoid the delays which would arise if the scanty resources of Gibraltar had to supply all the vessels. On the 23d this division left Cadiz, reaching Gibraltar the same evening; and on the 27th Hood, having now with him fifteen of the line, sailed for Toulon.

Nelson's mind was already busy with the prospects of the campaign, and the various naval factors that went to make up the military situation. "Time must discover what we are going after," he writes to his brother; while to Locker he propounds the problem which always has perplexed the British mind, and still does,—how to make the French fight, if they are unwilling. So long as that question remains unsolved, the British government has to bear the uncertainties, exposure, and expense of a difficult and protracted defensive. "We have done nothing," he says, "and the same prospect appears before us: the French cannot come out, and we have no means of getting at them in Toulon." In "cannot come out," he alludes to the presence of a Spanish

fleet of twenty-four ships-of-the-line. This, in conjunction with Hood's force, would far exceed the French in Toulon, which the highest estimate then placed at twenty-one of the line. He had, however, already measured the capabilities of the Spanish Navy. They have very fine ships, he admits, but they are shockingly manned,—so much so that if only the barges' crews of the six British vessels that entered Cadiz, numbering at the most seventy-five to a hundred men, but all picked, could have got on board one of their first-rates, he was certain they could have captured her, although her ship's company numbered nearly a thousand. "If those we are to meet in the Mediterranean are no better manned," he continues, "much service cannot be expected of them." The prediction proved true, for no sooner did Hood find the Spanish admiral than the latter informed him he must go to Cartagena, having nineteen hundred sick in his fleet. The officer who brought this message said it was no wonder they were sickly, for they had been sixty days at sea. This excited Nelson's derision—not unjustly. "From the circumstance of having been longer than that time at sea, do we attribute our getting healthy. It has stamped with me the extent of their nautical abilities: long may they remain in their present state." The last sentence reveals his intuitive appreciation of the fact that the Spain of that day could in no true sense be the ally of Great Britain; for, at the moment he penned the wish, the impotence or defection of their allies would leave the British fleet actually inferior to the enemy in those waters. He never forgot these impressions, nor

the bungling efforts of the Spaniards to form a line of battle. Up to the end of his life the prospect of a Spanish war involved no military anxieties, but only the prospect of more prize money.

Among the various rumors of that troubled time, there came one that the French were fitting their ships with forges to bring their shot to a red heat, and so set fire to the enemy's vessel in which they might lodge. Nelson was promptly ready with a counter and quite adequate tactical move. "This, if true," he wrote, "I humbly conceive would have been as well kept secret; but as it is known, we must take care to get so close that their red shots may go *through* both sides, when it will not matter whether they are hot or cold." It is somewhat odd that the extremely diligent and painstaking Sir Harris Nicolas, in his version of this letter, should have dropped the concluding sentence, one of the most important and characteristic occurring in Nelson's correspondence at this time.

On the 14th of July Nelson notes that the fleet had received orders to consider Marseilles and Toulon as invested, and to take all vessels of whatever nation bound into those ports. He at once recognized the importance of this step, and the accurate judgment that dictated it. The British could not, as he said, get at the enemy in his fortified harbor; but they might by this means exercise the pressure that would force him to come out. Undoubtedly, whether on a large or on a small scale, whether it concern the whole plan of a war or of a campaign, or merely the question of a single military position, the best way to compel an

unwilling foe to action, and to spoil his waiting game which is so onerous to the would-be assailant, is to attack him elsewhere, to cut short his resources, and make his position untenable by exhaustion. "This has pleased us," Nelson wrote; "if we make these red-hot gentlemen hungry, they may be induced to come out."

The investment by sea of these two harbors, but especially of Toulon, as being an important dockyard, was accordingly the opening move made by the British admiral. On the 16th of July he approached the latter port, and from that time until August 25 a close blockade was maintained, with the exception of a very few days, during which Hood took the fleet off Nice, and thence to Genoa, to remonstrate with that republic upon its supplying the south of France with grain, and bringing back French property under neutral papers. "Our being here is a farce if this trade is allowed," said Nelson, and rightly; for so far as appearances then went, the only influence the British squadrons could exert was by curtailing the supplies of southern France. That district raised only grain enough for three months' consumption; for the remainder of the year's food it depended almost wholly upon Sicily and Barbary, its communications with the interior being so bad that the more abundant fields of distant French provinces could not send their surplus.

In the chaotic state in which France was then plunged, the utmost uncertainty prevailed as to the course events might take, and rumors of all descriptions were current, the wildest scarcely

exceeding in improbability the fantastic horrors that actually prevailed throughout the land during these opening days of the Reign of Terror. The expectation that found most favor in the fleet was that Provence would separate from the rest of France, and proclaim itself an independent republic under the protection of Great Britain; but few looked for the amazing result which shortly followed, in the delivery of Toulon by its citizens into the hands of Lord Hood. This Nelson attributed purely to the suffering caused by the strictness of the blockade. "At Marseilles and Toulon," wrote he on the 20th of August, "they are almost starving, yet nothing brings them to their senses. Although the Convention has denounced them as traitors, yet even these people will not declare for anything but Liberty and Equality." Three days later, Commissioners from both cities went on board Hood's flagship to treat for peace, upon the basis of re-establishing the monarchy, and recognizing as king the son of Louis XVI. The admiral accepted the proposal, on condition that the port and arsenal of Toulon should be delivered to him for safe keeping, until the restoration of the young prince was effected. On the 27th of August the city ran up the white flag of the Bourbons, and the British fleet, together with the Spanish, which at this moment arrived on the scene, anchored in the outer port. The allied troops took possession of the forts commanding the harbor, while the dockyards and thirty ships-of-the-line were delivered to the navies.

"The perseverance of our fleet has been great," wrote Nelson,

"and to that only can be attributed our unexampled success. Not even a boat could get into Marseilles or Toulon, or on the coast, with provisions; and the old saying, 'that hunger will tame a lion,' was never more strongly exemplified." In this he deceived himself, however natural the illusion. The opposition of Toulon to the Paris Government was part of a general movement of revolt, which spread throughout the provinces in May and June, 1793, upon the violent overthrow of the Girondists in the National Convention. The latter then proclaimed several cities outlawed, Toulon among them; and the bloody severities it exercised were the chief determining cause of the sudden treason, the offspring of fear more than of hunger,—though the latter doubtless contributed,—which precipitated the great southern arsenal into the arms of the Republic's most dangerous foe. Marseilles fell before the Conventional troops, and the resultant panic in the sister city occasioned the hasty step, which in less troubled moments would have been regarded with just horror. But in truth Nelson, despite his acute military perceptions, had not yet developed that keen political sagacity, the fruit of riper judgment grounded on wider information, which he afterwards showed. His ambition was yet limited to the sphere of the "Agamemnon," his horizon bounded by the petty round of the day's events. He rose, as yet, to no apprehension of the mighty crisis hanging over Europe, to no appreciation of the profound meanings of the opening strife. "I hardly think the War can last," he writes to his wife, "for what are we at

war about?" and again, "I think we shall be in England in the winter or spring." Even some months later, in December, before Toulon had reverted to the French, he is completely blind to the importance of the Mediterranean in the great struggle, and expresses a wish to exchange to the West Indies, "for I think our Sea War is over in these seas."

It is probable, indeed, that in his zeal, thoroughness, and fidelity to the least of the duties then falling to him, is to be seen a surer indication of his great future than in any wider speculations about matters as yet too high for his position. The recent coolness between him and Lord Hood had been rapidly disappearing under the admiral's reviving appreciation and his own aptitude to conciliation. "Lord Hood is very civil," he writes on more than one occasion, "I think we may be good friends again;" and the offer of a seventy-four-gun ship in place of his smaller vessel was further proof of his superior's confidence. Nelson refused the proposal. "I cannot give up my officers," he said, in the spirit that so endeared him to his followers; but the compliment was felt, and was enhanced by the admiral's approval of his motives. The prospective occupation of Toulon gave occasion for a yet more nattering evidence of the esteem in which he was held. As soon as the agreement with the city was completed, but the day before taking possession, Hood despatched him in haste to Oneglia, a small port on the Riviera of Genoa, and thence to Naples, to seek from the latter court and that of Turin[18] a

[18] Turin was capital of the Kingdom of Sardinia, which embraced the island of that

reinforcement of ten thousand troops to hold the new acquisition. The "Agamemnon" being a fast sailer undoubtedly contributed much to this selection; but the character of the commanding officer could not but be considered on so important, and in some ways delicate, a mission. "I should have liked to have stayed one day longer with the fleet, when they entered the harbour," he wrote to Mrs. Nelson, "but service could not be neglected for any private gratification,"—a sentiment she had to hear pretty often, as betrothed and as wife, but which was no platitude on the lips of one who gave it constant demonstration in his acts. "Duty is the great business of a sea officer," he told his intended bride in early manhood, to comfort her and himself under a prolonged separation. "Thank God! I have done my duty," was the spoken thought that most solaced his death hour, as his heart yearned towards those at home whom he should see no more.

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name and the Province of Piedmont.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.