

THE ADMIRAL



1798

1895

Douglas Sladen



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The Admiral

Second Edition.

The Admiral

A Romance of Nelson in the
Year of the Nile

By

Douglas Sladen

Author of "A Japanese Marriage," etc

A law unto himself

London

Hutchinson and Co

Paternoster Row

1898

NOTE.

The cover is an exact reproduction in the original colours of a rare old print. The dates have of course been added. The clouds, to which Nelson points with his sword, express the wars and rumours of wars, with which the year 1798 was overhung. The sword indicates the spirit with which he approached questions of national honour.

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PREFACE.

SOME years ago, Professor J. K. Laughton's admirable selection of "Letters and Dispatches of Horatio, Viscount Nelson," inspired me with such an interest in Nelson's wonderfully human and graphic correspondence that I studied the larger and earlier "Dispatches and Letters of Lord Nelson," collected by Sir Harris Nicolas. The present book is the outcome of a long and affectionate study of these two works, and the well-thumbed pages of Southey and Jeaffreson.

But since, at the time of my first visit to Sicily, a little more than two years ago, I had definitely before me the project of writing a Nelson novel for the one-hundredth anniversary of the Battle of the Nile (August 1st, 1898), I have read most of the important works dealing with Lord Nelson's life, especially Captain Mahan's

Preface

“Life of Nelson,” which is a monument of impartiality, research, and the application of professional knowledge to literature. I have also, by the kindness of Lord Dundonald, Mr. Morrison, and others, had the opportunity of seeing a quantity of unpublished Nelsoniana, which have been of the utmost value to me in forming a final opinion of the character of my hero.

The main object of this book is to present to the reader, in the year of the centenary of the Nile, the real Nelson, without extenuation or malice. No doubt it would have been easier to ensure popularity by passing over the weaknesses in his character and representing him only as an ever-victorious warrior. But this did not seem to me the right course to pursue with a character like Nelson. Those who have studied his letters in the pages of Nicolas and Laughton, and those who have studied his life in the pages of Captain Mahan (who, it must be remembered, is a professional writer, the chief naval expert of the United States, writing upon the greatest English sea-strategist), cannot fail to have been impressed by the intensely human note which he struck in almost every letter.

People love to read about Nelson, not only

because he was the greatest sea-commander who ever lived, but because his own personal character was so extraordinarily vehement and interesting. He was a law unto himself. As a commander he forced his way into recognition by detecting, and acting in defiance of, the errors of his superiors, even of men like St. Vincent. He continued to do so when he was an Admiral commanding fleets whose destruction would have meant almost national ruin. And he was as much a law unto himself in his private life. "A law unto himself" might have been his motto. It was the keynote of his force.

But even Nelson, absolutely fearless as he was of danger and responsibility, could hardly have extorted the liberty to assert this force of character if it had not been tempered by one of the most lovable dispositions recorded of a public man. Nearly all who were ever thrown into contact with him were his willing slaves, or affectionate friends—even the grim old St. Vincent and the austere Hood. He was the most considerate, the most sympathetic, the most generous of shipmates. His very simplicity was fascinating, and he was wonderfully simple where his affections were concerned, though he showed such intuition in gauging the character of a knave

or an enemy, and in forecasting the movements of politicians, as well as of hostile commanders.

Nelson had the same faith in those he loved as he had in his own genius. In the hour of danger his spirit rose to the sublime, and the bodily ailments to which he was so constantly a prey, left him. In the hours of waiting, when anxieties were accumulating and action was impossible, his state of health sank very low. His passion for Lady Hamilton shows how infatuated he could become over a woman who appealed to his imagination. Few women in history have possessed her great qualities in a higher degree than Lady Hamilton at the time when Nelson first came under her influence, in 1798, after the Battle of the Nile. Her letters to Mr. Greville and Sir William Hamilton prove that she must have had a delightful disposition, and the part she took in the stirring events of 1798 and 1799 shows her imagination, her daring, and her ability.

I have endeavoured, at the risk of raising a stormy discussion, to present the character of Nelson exactly as it was in 1798 and the first half of 1799; and to present a general view of the historical events in which he formed the central figure, though I am aware that certain passages

in the book, such as Chapter XVII., form rather heavy reading for a novel. But, to bring out the character of Nelson, it was necessary to detail the tangled political problems with which he was confronted. As Captain Mahan pointed out, Nelson was one of the most astute politicians of his day, as well as the greatest sea-commander.

A large part of the book is in Nelson's own words. Appreciating the importance, in treating a national hero, of keeping as close as possible to history, *I have, wherever it was feasible, used, whether in dialogue or description, the actual words of Nelson and his contemporaries.* These I have derived from his own published and unpublished correspondence and journals, from the narratives of his officers, and similar sources. Similarly, I have derived my chapter on his visit to Pompeii largely from an account of a visit to Pompeii written in 1802. The style of the narrator of the story, Captain Thomas Trinder, is founded upon unpublished journals and letters of the time, in the possession of my father. They were mostly written by his godfather, Mr. Henry Brooke, who lived at Walmer, and may be taken as fair specimens of the writing of the travelled and better-educated Kentish gentleman of his day. Mr. Brooke was one of the last heads of

Preface

the now abolished Alien Office, and as such had much to do with the French princes exiled in England during the Napoleonic régime. He was also present at the restoration of the French monarchy. Some of the pieces of queer grammar, such as "I have wrote," were probably idiomatic at the time, others are mere loose writing.

The scene of the book is mostly laid in Naples and Sicily, and to acquire the requisite local knowledge I have paid two long visits to these places in 1896-8. The Mont'alto Palace and the Castle of the Favara, in fact nearly all the buildings described, actually exist, though in most cases they are much decayed or altered. The Hamiltons' Palace at Naples, though now divided into apartments, remains much as it was, except that, in Nelson's time, the sea came close up to it. The features of the sea-front of Naples are very much altered since then; but the Comte de la Ville, who is at the head of the *Storia Patria*, the excellent historical society of Naples, was kind enough to show me almost contemporary plans of the places described. And here I wish to take the opportunity of pointing out that the Neapolitans and Sicilians of to-day differ as much from the corrupt hangers-on of the Bourbons as the English public men of to-day differ from the

venal followers of Sir Robert Walpole. I need hardly say that the denunciations of them, and above all of the French, are not my own, but always derived from Nelson's expressed sentiments, and nearly always given in his exact words.

In criticising the characters of my heroines it must be remembered that the morals of the Neapolitan court in the time of Maria Carolina are indescribable in an English novel ; but this, as a matter of fact, is the one point in which I have shrunk from presenting things without extenuation. It will be noticed that at the period of which I write, the year of the Nile, I believe Lady Hamilton to have been a lovely and enchanting woman, and that I believe that the connection between Nelson and her began as a pure romance, each worshipping the other as the most splendid human being in the world. The beautiful letter of hero-worship which she wrote to him after the battle of the Nile I first saw in its entirety in Professor Laughton's sumptuous volume, "The Companions of Nelson."

Before I conclude I have to express my thanks to Mr. E. Neville-Rolfe, British Consul at Naples ; to the Marquis A. de Gregorio, and the Messrs. Whitaker, of Palermo ; and to Miss A. Mason, a great-niece of Nelson, besides those whom I

have mentioned above. I am also indebted to the writings of Mr. Clark Russell ; to the highly valuable and hitherto unpublished Nelson documents which have been appearing in *Literature* ; to the accurate and splendidly illustrated Nelsoniana which have been appearing in the popular illustrated Service paper, *The Army and Navy Illustrated*, and in the *English Illustrated Magazine* ; and to Lord Charles Beresford's and Mr. H. W. Wilson's "Nelson and his Times," which was published as a supplement to the *Daily Mail*. I have followed Lord Charles's view of Nelson himself more closely than any other, because it is so sympathetic, and is written by one who is at once a brilliant naval expert and the sea-commander to whom the nation looks for exploits like Nelson's.

I am prepared for much censure and acrimonious discussion, especially over the very point upon which I take my stand, that a novel dealing with the character of Nelson ought above all things to be a human document. He is, to me, the most intensely human figure in History.

DOUGLAS SLADEN.

PALAZZO MONTELEONE, PALERMO,
April 6th, 1898.

CONTENTS

PROLOGUE.

	PAGE
INTRODUCING THE READER TO THE LADY KATHERINE FLEET	1

CHAPTER I.

OF THE FINDING OF LORD NELSON'S JOURNAL	11
---	----

CHAPTER II.

INTRODUCING THE ADMIRAL	19
-----------------------------------	----

CHAPTER III.

OF THE LETTERS OF A BOY AND A GIRL	28
--	----

CHAPTER IV.

OF OUR ENTRY INTO SYRACUSE	31
--------------------------------------	----

CHAPTER V.

IN WHICH WILL HAS HIS FIRST CHANCE, AND HIS FIRST ESCAPADE, AND HIS FIRST MEETING WITH THE PRINCESS OF FAVARA	37
---	----

CHAPTER VI.

AT THE FOUNTAIN OF CYANE AND THE PAPYRUS BEDS OF THE ANAPO	52
---	----

	PAGE
CHAPTER VII.	
SATISFYING A PRINCE'S HONOUR	63
CHAPTER VIII.	
OF THE BATTLE OF THE NILE, ON THE FIRST OF AUGUST, 1798.	76
CHAPTER IX.	
HOW THE ADMIRAL BEGAN HIS FRIENDSHIP WITH LADY HAMILTON	101
CHAPTER X.	
WHAT HAPPENED AT THE BALL GIVEN BY LADY HAMILTON IN HONOUR OF THE ADMIRAL	112
CHAPTER XI.	
HOW THE ADMIRAL ENTERED THE MAZE OF NEAPOLITAN POLITICS	127
CHAPTER XII.	
OF A VISIT TO POMPEII IN 1798, IN WHICH THERE WERE LOVERS, AND OF THE SUPPER IN THE INN AT RESINA	139
CHAPTER XIII.	
OF THE SUPPER AT THE PALACE THAT FOLLOWED	166
CHAPTER XIV.	
WHAT THE ADMIRAL WROTE OF MY LADY IN HIS JOURNAL	181

Contents

XV

CHAPTER XV.

	PAGE
OF THE VOYAGE TO MALTA, WITH THE ACCOUNT OF WHAT HAPPENED AT CASERTA	191

CHAPTER XVI.

WHAT THE ADMIRAL WROTE IN HIS JOURNAL ABOUT LOVE	213
---	-----

CHAPTER XVII.

WHICH THE IDLE READER MAY SKIP, AS POLITICS. IT SETS FORTH THE COWARDICE AND UNRAVELS THE INTRIGUES WHICH LED TO THE FALL OF NAPLES .	227
---	-----

CHAPTER XVIII.

HOW THE NEAPOLITANS DECLARED WAR, AND HOW THEY WAGED IT	257
--	-----

CHAPTER XIX.

HOW TWO MILLIONS AND A HALF OF TREASURE WERE SMUGGLED FROM THE PALACE TO THE BRITISH AMBASSADOR'S	265
---	-----

CHAPTER XX.

HOW THE <i>VANGUARD</i> TOOK THE ROYAL FAMILY TO PALERMO IN THE GREATEST STORM THE ADMIRAL EVER KNEW	288
--	-----

CHAPTER XXI.

HOW WILL WAS ENTERTAINED BY THE PRINCESS AT HER PALACE OF THE FAVARA	309
---	-----

Contents

	PAGE
CHAPTER XXII.	
HOW ALL EUROPE WAS AT SIXES AND SEVENS	321
CHAPTER XXIII.	
OF THE LOVE OF THE ADMIRAL AND MY LADY	334
CHAPTER XXIV.	
HOW THE ADMIRAL WENT TO THE FAVARA, AND THE PROPHECY BEGAN ITS FULFILMENT	346
CHAPTER XXV.	
HOW THE ADMIRAL TOOK NAPLES, AND OF THE HANGING OF CARACCIOLO	365
CHAPTER XXVI.	
OF THE STRANGE PLIGHT IN WHICH WILL FOUND KATHERINE	386
CHAPTER XXVII.	
OF THE DEATH OF DONNA RUSIDDA, THE RESURRECTION OF CARACCIOLO, AND THE HAPPY ENDING	404

THE ADMIRAL

PROLOGUE.—Introducing the
Reader to the Lady Katherine
Fleet

MY Lord Eastry belonged to the grand old race of East Kent squires, who brought up their sons to fear nothing and hate the French, aye, and brought up their daughters to be the wives and mothers of men who should sail the salt seas till too stiff with age or wounds to climb to their quarter-decks. For how could their sons help going to sea when they saw the boatmen of Deal from their open beach defying the guns of the French and the might of the fiercest storms that blew?

My Lord Eastry began his bold life as younger son of a squire, who bore the old Kent name of Fleet. But of John Fleet, the eldest, there is only an empty memorial in Eastry Church, which records that "his body lies in the great South Seas in the hope of a joyful resurrection." His ship, full of honour and glory and prize-money, was spoken two days east of Trinidad in the great storm of 1759; and mariners maintain that fighting Jack Fleet's black frigate sails there still, whenever the cyclone is coming down, with canvas enough on her to overset a hundred-gun ship. And Dick had his call on the glorious

The Admiral

1st of June—had the van-ship and sailed into the French with the grand air of his family, as if he never could have his belly full of fighting—laid alongside half a dozen of them at one time and another, and had a chain-shot through his middle just as he sent the *Vengeur* to the bottom with her colours in the act of striking. Once he was hard pressed, though; and Harry, the Lord Eastry that, as he lay dying, drank Wellington's health when the news was brought of Waterloo, saw it and, leaving the line flat in neglect of signals, bore up to him. Lord! what a family they were to fight! When the tall *Ramillies* ran in between the *Brunswick* and the *Achille* to receive her fire, it was like an explosion of devils from hell. The men, men of the Cinque Ports that all had a dead father or a dead brother to charge to the French, would have followed Jack, Dick, or Harry into Nebuchadnezzar's fiery furnace.

Well, Harry Fleet—the Lord Harry, as they called him in the Channel—came safe out of the great battle; and not so many months afterwards fell upon a great convoy guarded by ships that should have blown his squadron of frigates out of the water, drove their escort under the guns of Martinique, and carried the convoy, with the army on board them that should have taken our Indies, safe into Antigua, from which he brought home more prize-money than ever. He was just too late to close the eyes of his father, the tough old squire of Eastry who lived his fourscore-and-odd years like his fathers before him, the few of them that did not die with their shoes on and the flag overhead.

They made him the Lord Eastry and a Knight of the Bath, but he had had so much lead through his leg by that time, that he could never fight a ship again, so he came to the old home at Eastry to find his fourteen-year old daughter the most wonderful bit of woman's flesh in all the halls of Kent. Captain Jack and Captain Dick

were never married. What children they may have had fell not into any list of the landed gentry, and so it came that the long-descended lands of the Fleets, and Admiral my Lord Eastry's prodigious coffers of prize-money must all come to Katherine Fleet, now the Lady Katherine.

Now, no man that ever breathed was less of a coxcomb than Admiral Harry, but as the name of his ancient family was to pass out of the earth with his death, he looked to it that the son-in-law who succeeded to his honours and his great estate should be of such rank and fame that it might be no regret even for the Fleets of Eastry to be lost in their greater honours: some Duke it might be, or at least an Earl, whose belted ancestors had fought for the White or Red Rose; and Katherine Fleet, aged now eighteen, might have had any such an one as came within the magic of her moods.

There are some women who are not completely graceful, and yet give the onlooker a great sense of satisfaction. There is a sort of wild freedom, a declaration of strength and health, an evidence of courage and high spirits, which bespeak an animal perfection too intense for the gentle ease of grace. Katherine was one of those mettlesome women who make men's blood tingle, and whose own red blood never runs cold in the direst peril. I suppose she was tall. She would have looked it had she been more than common short. She was such a noble creature, and she had the same blue eyes that were worth a dozen pikes to the Lord Eastry, when, in his old frigate days, he had jumped aboard a Frenchman and a wave had checked half his boarding party—gay blue eyes withal, that could laugh like her dimples and white teeth—gay blue eyes that could be as loving or reckless as the mobile mouth. And she had the pure curves of cheek and eyebrow which are almost necessary to beauty absolute like hers.

What follows, I, Thomas Trinder, Captain retired on

half-pay in His Majesty's Navy, and now of Beach Cottage, Walmer, who am writing this chronicle, had from Will the night before I led his sister to Ripple Church.

One March night of 1798 was Katherine's coming-out ball. And her father's hopes looked like fulfilment, for the greatest of Kentish peers, the young Marquis of Dover, had been spending week after week at his mansion of Pegwell, where never within the memory of the countryside, which noted all his doings, had he spent two days on end. And Katherine in a ballroom was a witch. She danced as such women do, light-footed and tireless, radiating health and high spirits, and with the unconscious smile of conquest on their lips, until the victor comes who makes them replace it with the most exquisite gentleness.

People looked to see that in Lady Katherine, before the night was dead, for Ralph, Marquis of Dover, Earl of River, Viscount Ripple, and Baron Waldershare, all in the Peerage of England, and Lord Lieutenant of the County of Kent. For he was a fine man, who rode straight to hounds, and had already climbed high in the Government, and Katherine had shown herself well inclined to him.

* * * * *

The great minuet was to be at midnight, and Katherine was promised to Lord Dover for it. In his fine scarlet uniform of Lord Lieutenant, he was already waiting for her in the door of the great barn with transepts like a church, which had been turned into a ball-room, decked with the trophies of Lord Eastry's wars.

For in another two or three minutes the first stroke would clang from the tower of Eastry's little Norman church. Katherine had been up to her room,—she had girlish vanity enough to wish to look her best in the great minuet,—and now she was stepping down the stairway with an eloquent hesitancy, her left hand clearing from her lovely

feet the heavy shimmery satin, which, young as she was, it seemed natural for such an imperial woman to wear. Dividing the line between her beautiful throat and her shoulders, were the famous pearls that were the trophy of Lord Eastry's wildest exploit.

Who could doubt but that when she went out from that minuet, it would be to have the greatest name in all the kingdom of Kent offered for her keeping?

But suddenly, through the open, ivy-shrouded Elizabethan pane at the turn of the stair, came a low voice,—a young voice, with the low distinctness which I shall never forget,—“Kitty Fleet, Kitty Fleet, is it you, Kitty Fleet?”

A light came over the girl's face, which, I am prepared to swear, the great Marquess of Dover had never seen, as she replied,

“Hush, Will! keep in the shadow, and I'll come—but only for a minute.”

But, instead of doing as she bade him, he came right into the door,—into the full blaze of light. He was then a fair boy of eighteen, and I can tell you that his charming figure was shown off to great advantage by the quaint dress of our day,—the tight-fitting Nankeen hose and short dark blue jacket. And when he bared his head he showed fair hair, as glossy and golden as Katherine's own, in a very long queue. I can picture him fidgeting with his sugar-loaf beaver, for he had something great on his mind.

“Oh, Will,” she whispered, “we shall be discovered.”

“No matter.”

“But why?” began Kitty; and suddenly prepared to fly, as the first stroke of twelve rang out painfully clear to her anxious ear.

“I'm going with the Admiral, Kitty, and you know what that means.”

“Yes,—that is, what does it mean?”

"It means,—well, it's Admiral Nelson: and it means that I shall never come back at all, or come back a man."

"When do you start, Will?" asked Katherine, forgetting all about the minuet and her marquess, and coming forward to take his hands and look into his face. At eighteen it was a beautiful face, but even then so proud that its natural frankness was almost obscured. And yet you forgave its haughtiness, for you felt that such pride would not stoop to anything cowardly or mean, anything that would prevent its keeping itself aloof and aloft. As she took his hands in hers I know how the stern, clean-cut mouth melted into one of the irresistible smiles that such mouths mostly have once in a way.

"Oh, Will!" she said, "I was wondering why did you not come to my coming-out ball—you, Will, my best friend."

"To see my Lord Dover's triumph when he had won you, Kitty?" he asked almost bitterly: "I could not bear it. No, I should not have come at all if I had not been going by the morning coach with my mother to Portsmouth."

"Why, Will, what is Lord Dover to me?" she asked.

"He means to marry you."

"I don't mean to marry him."

"But what will your father say?"

"My father will say nothing. I have no need to marry the first lover with a title who presents himself. I am a lord's daughter, passing rich—and passably good-looking, Will?"

"Be serious, Kitty."

"Indeed I must, and say good-bye, Will," she cried, as the strokes had ceased ringing out from Eastry Tower some two or three minutes, "for the minuet was for twelve o'clock, and I am engaged to Lord Dover—for that only. Good-bye, dear Will."

With a sudden impulse she sprang forward, and laying her hands on his shoulders kissed him.

Hardly had she finished, when—

“What’s this, what’s this?” cried a bluff voice, with an accompanying thud of a lame man’s stick on the polished oak floor—“Will Hardres off to fight the French! Nay, lad, not so sudden! the coach does not start till six, and Cissy’s at school, and your mother going with you. This way, this way!”

He led Will into the ball-room and up to the Marquess.

“I have a favour to ask you, my Lord Dover. I wish Will Hardres here,” the nobleman bowed, “to lead the minuet with my daughter. We Fleets think it the greatest honour in the world to fight the French in a King’s ship; and Will is to have the special honour of sailing with Admiral Nelson—a greater man, to my mind, than St. Vincent, or Hood, or Howe.”

“As you please,” said the Marquess, in such a chilling way that Will, as he said, could have killed him, and I know the kind of light which came into Katherine’s eyes.

“I cannot take my Lord Marquess’s place,” said Will.

“Then, by G—d, you shall take my daughter herself, if she’ll have you,” said Lord Eastry, more thoroughly roused and vexed with himself for the slight he had put upon the Marquess.

“By G—d, he shall, if he’ll have me,” said Katherine, also roused, and using her father’s not very elegant language.

Poor Will, the very pattern of good manners, which were well nigh all that his widowed mother had to bestow upon him, was dumfounded. In a moment of pique Katherine and her father had bestowed her hand upon him—that which he coveted more than anything else in the world, and dared not covet; and the bestowal had been made in a manner and language so extraordinary that he was at a loss how to effect the acceptance.

For the moment the Marquess came to the rescue.

“I think I am to have the honour—for the minuet.”

It was not natural to Katherine not to be gracious ; and she had months of remembered kindnesses to this man's credit. Indeed she had come within an ace of thinking of him as her husband. So she accepted the situation with womanly tact, she afterwards maintaining that she spoke as little as she might.

She danced the minuet with grave sweetness and gentleness, which, in a mischievous girl like Katherine, who was little more than a child, was, in itself, an ominous sign for the Marquess.

She also cast from time to time a tender glance, a speaking smile, to Will.

"It seems to me," said his lordship, bitterly—he could not be chilling to Katherine, who had his heart—"that you are stepping with me, and dancing with that boy."

"I am but lately affianced to him, my lord," retorted Katherine, this time with mischief in her eyes.

"You don't mean to say that you're taking this tomfoolery seriously, Lady Katherine—Kitty?"

"It is no tomfoolery to me, my lord," she said, with a flash of rising anger that warned him. "I had kissed him my love, before you nettled my father into giving me the leave he might never have given otherwise."

By this time the minuet was over, and Katherine had suffered herself to be led into one of the aisles of the barn which had been rigged into a ball-room.

"Oh, Kitty," cried the Marquess, with a change of tone, which made her woman's heart gentle to him, "I won't call it that name again, because it makes you angry ; but tell me that you did not mean it seriously, for you know I have loved you three months past, and been waiting for the opportunity you have always fenced off with some jest or piece of mischief."

"And could you not guess why, my lord?"

"Why?" he echoed, sadly.

"Because I knew I did not love you honestly, and, warmly as I liked you, I was waiting to see if I could love you. You may rely on it, that when I felt myself conquered, I should have thrown down my weapons and surrendered at discretion."

"And can you not love me yet?"

"Never now, my lord, more than a friend."

"Why so suddenly?"

"Why? Because events have been like runaway horses to-night. They have taken the bits between their teeth and dashed us over a precipice."

"Against your will?"

"Nay, not against my will; but it was a leap I might never have dared to take."

"And you mean to marry him, Kitty?"

"Yes, my lord; when he is a man."

"And when will that be?"

"I know not; but manhood comes quickly in these piping times, and lives are short," she added, with a little break in her voice.

"And he goes to sea to-morrow?"

"It is to-day," she answered, with a bigger break.

"Then I am an ill friend to be keeping you from him," he said, his better nature asserting itself at the sight of the sorrow of the woman he loved so well. "Good-bye, Kitty," he said gravely, bowing to kiss her hand.

"Good-bye, my lord. You are not angry with me?"

"No; not with you. Not angry, but hurt, and heart-sick. You will be my friend still, little Lady Kitty?"

"I am five feet six, Lord Dover. Is that tall enough to be the friend of a Marquess and the Lord Lieutenant of Kent?"

"It is tall enough for my heart, Kitty."

"You must not talk of your heart any more, or I shall not let you come and see me."

The Admiral

“But I may come and see you still, and walk and ride with you still. How often may I come and see you?”

“As often as you can bring me news of the fleet—Admiral Nelson’s fleet.”

This account of the leave-taking from Lord Dover I had from Katherine, the day I had the honour of becoming her brother-in-law, through Will’s sister Cecilia. But what took place at her leave-taking from her boy-lover I never had, for that is sacred to the girl and boy, who have the honour of being lovers still.

CHAPTER I.—Of the finding of Lord Nelson's Journal.

I WAS sitting with Will in the morning-room of his mansion of Eastry, which he had with Katherine, when one of his footmen came in to announce that a lady wished to speak to him very particularly. She refused to give her name, but she came on a matter of great importance connected with Lord Nelson, whose confidence Captain Hardres had enjoyed. It was, she told the footman, a very intimate personal matter in connection with his late Lordship.

Now, Will was not ordinarily what is called an approachable person; but she had hit upon the password to which he never could turn a deaf ear, and he directed that she should be shown in.

No sooner had she entered the door, carrying a bundle, which, to the footman's evident distress, she had refused to trust out of her own hands, than, seeing me, she stopped. But Will said, in cold tones that would have frightened any one not sure of her mission, "This gentleman also had the honour of serving under the Admiral." To all who had served under that immortal man he was always "the Admiral."

She looked at us both, and I am vain enough to think that she felt my presence would make what she had come to say easier, rather than more difficult, though Will's face

had softened when he saw that she was a gentlewoman of reduced circumstances.

The bundle she had brought with her, tied up in a piece of faded green silk, contained something hard and square. When she unknotted it and produced three leather-bound volumes of the kind used for journals, and opened one at random, Will might have seen a ghost.

This was in the year 1819, you must remember,—long years after the Admiral had seen his work finished, and had passed away like Moses in sight of the fulfilled promise. And Will, who had been in constant personal attendance nearer and more confidential than a secretary, saw before him, as plainly as his eyes could show him, three volumes of the identical kind always employed by the Admiral for his private affairs, and written, as it seemed to Will, by the Admiral's very own hand. And Will, though he was not wise in book-learning, nor had given much attention to such matters, had had the very best opportunities for observing the Admiral's writing. He knew every turn in the clear but shaky characters, written with the left hand by one accustomed till he was more than thirty-five years old to penning with his right. The binding, the paper, and the ink, as well as the handwriting, were the counterparts of what Will had seen so often before the Admiral on his desk.

The old lady did not offer a word of explanation until we had examined them for some minutes, and, looking up, had laid them down, and then she told us a likely story enough.

It came out that she was Mrs. Hunter, and the good soul who had taken my Lady Hamilton, then like to die, and in great destitution, into her house at Boulogne, and had sheltered her and maintained and nursed her free of charge until her death.

"These three volumes," she said, "were her Ladyship's last and greatest treasure, which she never would have far

away from her, and which, when she was alone, she read to her great comfort."

When Lady Hamilton, some hours before her death, felt that the end was surely coming, not having (after all the fortune which had poured through her hands) the wherewithal to pay a lawyer's fee for drawing up a will, she had given her these books, bidding her to sell them, and take what they brought to recompense her for her kindness and the expense to which she had been put. They were, her Ladyship said, journals of the years 1798, 1799 and 1800; the happiest years of her life, which she had spent in his Lordship's friendship on the shores of their beloved Mediterranean, and presented by him to her as a memorial of them. Had the ungrateful nation not neglected his last charge that it should maintain her, she would have bequeathed these volumes to it; but seeing that Mrs. Hunter had proved herself her best friend since Lord Nelson's glorious death, it was right that she should have them to sell and recompense herself.

Accordingly, having been given by My Lady Captain Hardres's name, among others of his Lordship's dearest friends,—Will bowed gravely,—and the sailing packet which had brought her from Boulogne having landed her at Dover, she had come to him first, as being the nearest of the gentlemen mentioned (Eastry is but a few miles from Dover); and then she came direct to the point—would Will purchase these journals of the Admiral?

She named a very great price; but then Will, living in such a mansion-house as Eastry, in the style that he affected, was clearly a man of great means.

As I expected, he would not promise her at once, and inquired where she would sleep for the night; and, I think, he was about to require her to leave them with him until the morning, which I am sure to the simple soul would have seemed like leaving her purse in a strange house,

when Katherine came in, looking like her own daughter, with the added gentleness of years of happy wifedom, though she was a mettlesome creature, and not to be frightened by Will or the devil.

Will put his arm round her youthful waist, and led her into the oriel to repeat everything, she glancing from time to time at Mrs. Hunter. When he had finished they came back again, and Will began, with some hesitation, "Mrs. ——," when Katherine, reading what was in his eyes, said, "You are never going to let her who performed the last offices for the woman the Admiral loved with all the wealth of his great heart—you are never going to let the lady sleep in a poor village inn, when there are two of the Admiral's officers in this very house?"

To which Will replied gallantly, "You are the mistress of this house, Kitty, and such an invitation should come from a lady."

I think he was glad of the proposal, for it gave him the opportunity of judging the woman that would sell the books, as well as the books she would sell. Though no talker, Will was, as silent men are apt to be, an observer of character, and I could tell that he was not wholly satisfied.

And so it was settled that a groom or a gardener should bring her box from the inn, and she dined and slept and breakfasted the following morning at Eastry Place. Will had her on his right hand at meals, and talked with her while we were in the ladies' company after dinner; though I own we joined them late, for we had the journals at the table while we sat over Madeira wine that had laid in the Goodwin Sands for many a year in a wreck that was bared by their shifting—as fine a wine as ever came into East Kent, duty or no duty.

Katherine, of course, saw much more of her than we, and had the more opportunity of judging her. Katherine

was no mean judge, though ever inclined to condone those whom her judgment condemned. To Katherine's eye, as well as our own, the creature had certain faults. As she felt the more at home her garrulity and vanity ran away with her, till she almost claimed her share of credit for the Admiral's victories by some retrospective process of merit. In fact, like other garrulous persons, she was inclined to fire without loading. But there did not seem any reason to doubt that she was the Mrs. Hunter who had befriended Lady Hamilton, which was, after all, the chief query.

Well, Will and I turned those journals over and over, at first while we were sitting over our Madeira, and afterwards far into the night over our pipes and grog; and, try where we would, we could find nothing that seemed in the penmanship of another hand, or that the Admiral, knowing him as we did, might not have put down in a journal; for he was ever fond of his pen, and in the wont of writing down what he felt strongly, and more especially is it true that when he was out of health, which was so often the case, he would examine himself and discuss from every point what he had done or should do.

In a matter like that of his affection for my Lady Hamilton, it was of course impossible for him, by reason of his position in the Service, as well as of his greatness, to talk with any on the ship; and what he could not say in words it was quite in keeping with his habits for him to commit carefully to paper, it may be, all along with the idea of presenting them for My Lady's reading as another proof of his sincere esteem, but more likely at first, at any rate, to ease his soul. And therefore, when the morning came and we had risen from breakfast, after a short absence with Katherine, Will came to Mrs. Hunter, whom he had left with me in the gentle sunshine on the terrace, and said that he should give her the price she asked. Which he did, by order on Mr. Laurie's bank at Dover.

I think we were all glad to be rid of Mrs. Hunter, even Katherine, who made excuses for her as being old, and a woman, though I know of few men worthy to be compared with such a woman as Katherine. It was Katherine who decided him, for she had read her Roman history and knew the story about the Sybil bringing nine precious books to the Roman King, and, when he would not have them at her price, destroying three of them, and offering him the six for the same price, and when he would not have the six, destroying three more, until he gave her for the last three the money for which he might have had the whole nine.

She did not, she confessed, expect Mrs. Hunter to burn her books; but, remembering the regret of the King when he found the value of the three remaining books which he had bought, thought that Will might feel just such a regret if he lost for ever the opportunity of buying what seemed to be the journals of the Admiral, to whom England and he owed everything. The story of the Sybilline books was new to Will, and impressed him mightily. I daresay it did not lose anything in the telling. Katherine was, after all, a woman, and she had read it in her childhood.

This was, as I have said, in the year 1819, four years after the death of her Ladyship. If Mrs. Hunter had brought them to us at once, upon the death of her Ladyship, while the country was ringing with the announcement of it, ten days after she died, in the *Morning Post*, and with the talk of the Admiral's brother, the Earl, going over to Calais to see what papers she might have left behind her, I think Will might have done something about them there and then. The Earl's visit in search of papers would be taken by some as sufficient evidence that he knew of the existence of these journals, though I would not dare to say so much.

But, as it was, he bought them rather for our private reading, to recall our adored Admiral; and it was not until he had had them in his possession for years, that the thought came to him of giving them to the public to counteract the false and erroneous statements and judgments, which seemed to be for ever on the increase.

Now Will, living inland at Eastry, with the affairs of a great estate to administer, had little leisure or inclination for writing, even if he had had the power, but he was a man of action only, one of the kind that make history and leave it for smaller men, like myself, to chronicle it; while I, living at Walmer, on the sea-shore, in the midst of many retired naval men, and much discussion of naval affairs, had fallen into a pernicious habit of writing letters to the *Post*, giving an old salt's plain condemnations of this and the other shortcomings, and writing over the signature of 'Cinque Ports' indignant refutations of anything that was said against the memory of the Admiral. So Will had come to look upon me for as great a writer as the mysterious Scotchman, who wrote, the year before we had the journals, "The Heart of Midlothian" and "The Bride of Lammermoor," and who, if you could believe the reviewers, was the only writer in the three kingdoms worthy of any consideration for any writing but poetry. Having married Will's sister, and having nothing to do but to make the best living I could on my stored-up prize money and my half-pay, I often took her to Eastry. It was on one of these visits, while we were keeping the fire warm before we went to bed, that Will took the pipe from between his lips, and said to me,—

"Thomas, I have been thinking."

Unless his mind lay fallow, he must have thought a good deal in his long, frequent silences. However, Will was not a man to jest with, so I made no comment of this kind, but waited to hear, understanding that he had a decision to communicate to me.

The Admiral

“Thomas, I have been thinking that we are getting on in years.”

This seemed indisputable, but I did not know that I wished to be reminded of it. I again waited, until he came to the point that we, from our close personal attendance on him, knew much about the Admiral which perhaps ought not to be lost to the world, and that he thought that I should write it down, and give with it such portions of the Admiral's journals as seemed necessary for letting the public know how sincerely that immortal man always endeavoured to do the right.

CHAPTER II.—Introducing the Admiral.

AND now it is time for me to tell you how first I met Will.

I was the jest of the ship. The mids in the gun-room hit off the key-note of my personal appearance when they christened me Tubby the very first day I went on shipboard; and Tubby I remained till I was given a command on the captured sloop *St. Malo*, in the year 18—. It was recognised at once that I could stand a good deal more than my share of gun-room wit without quarrelling, though I showed no deficiency in pluck when it came to going aloft in heavy weather, or steering a boat under heavy fire; and I was popular, I believe, though no one thought me worth considering. I was not born to be considered: I was born to attach myself to a strong nature, to subordinate myself to its will and enjoy its glory as if it were my own. My friendship with Will has filled my life. For all the years during which we were shipmates, my thoughts were hardly ever off Will Hardres; and now that we are both of us laid on the shelf on this windy coast of Kent, because Europe is so exhausted that there will never be any wars again, my little crib is within an old pony's amble of his mansion-house of Eastry, and my wife, his sister, leads me the same dance as Will led me—God bless her!

I am not like to forget the first day we met. The wind

The Admiral

was roaring; the sky was a feather-bed of clouds; the ships were forging up and down at their anchors; their cables and timbers were cracking rather than creaking, even under the lee of the land; and the waves looked like sweeping away the narrow spit of shore which shuts out the sea and makes Brading Harbour.

We had a noble fleet. A few men-of-war on their way out to join my Lord St. Vincent, Commander-in-Chief in the Mediterranean, and with them the Portugal, Gibraltar, and Mediterranean convoy, lay in the roads between St. Helen's, in the Isle of Wight, and Spithead, on the morning of that 8th of April, 1798, waiting for the gale to drop or shift from the south-west, till when they were wind-bound,—for the Mediterranean.

Our ship, the *Vanguard*, a fine seventy-four, was one of the nearest in-shore, for we had the Admiral aboard.

Walking up and down the slippery deck with Berry, our Captain, was a most remarkable-looking little man. His shoulders were made to appear narrower than they really were by the loss of his right arm and the way he pulled his coat round it. A certain peculiarity in his gait was probably due to the same cause. The flowing hair which almost concealed his ears, the ruddy skin and bright blue eyes would alone have attracted attention. It was a small face, with certain very marked features. The forehead was lofty, though narrow; the nose was long, and almost straight; the chin, though very strong, was not broad; and his mouth, which was noticeably large, was the most extraordinarily sensitive mouth I have ever seen. In remarking its size, it was not the length that you noted, but the range and flexibility of the lips. This contributed largely to the wonderful expressiveness of the face.

His eyebrows, too, were very marked; they were bent rather than curved, and had a curious little upward curl at the end. But his eyes, with his mouth, were the

features of his face. For being of the bright blue which is hardly ever dissociated from courage and resoluteness, they gave the face its strength ; and they were the most remarkable I have ever seen in this way,—that while cruelty, or at the least callousness, and insensibility to any emotions but animal passions and anger, are frequently the other characteristics of eyes of this particular bright blue, his eyes had instead the tenderness, the sensibility, the imaginativeness of large eyes which sometimes look greyish-brown and sometimes brownish-grey.

And herein lay the index to his whole character. For once in the world, dark-eyed genius was found in the same body as blue-eyed recklessness. He had at once head and heart and backbone. And sometimes his poor little weakling body was wrung almost dry of blood by the mighty soul which struggled within it. But as Will's eyes first fell on him that day he was a little thin man, crooked with the loss of his arm, and with wild hair tumbling over a small weather-ruddied face with petulant eyes and mouth.

That was his expression when worried with forced inaction, or being chained to mere routine with no prospect of an occasion which demanded ability to meet it. But when such an occasion arose this expression was replaced by the smiling serenity and confidence of the portrait painted in the year of the Nile.

The narrowness of chin and forehead, and the general smallness of the face, I have always considered as the physiognomical expression of the concentration and intensity of his character.

This little man was the great Admiral who was one day to be Lord Nelson, and leave such a name behind him as no sailor who ever sailed the sea left before him, or is ever like to leave. I was standing to take orders, when suddenly the Admiral cried out, "The devil take

The Admiral

this wind, Berry! If the *Boadicea's* news be true, the French in Brest will be ready for sea before it blows out, and I shall have to fight them with my hands tied by the convoy. I hate this convoying,—I don't mind what the odds are in a fair fight. But they shall sink every King's ship among us before they get away with any of my convoy. Sink, I say!—there shall be no question of capturing any fighting ship in my fleet. I hope that trial of Williamson's will have its effect on officers going into action. I was sorry for him: I do not grudge him getting off with his life; I daresay that there were some favourable circumstances, and it is ever a virtue to lean to the side of mercy. But as to myself, upon the general question that if a man does not do his utmost in time of action, I think but one punishment ought to be inflicted. Not that I take a man's merit from his list of killed and wounded, for but little may be in his power; and if he does his utmost in the station he is placed, he has equal merit to the man who may have his ship beat to pieces, but not his good fortune. I would have every man believe I shall only take my chance of being shot by the enemy, but if I do not take that chance I am certain of being shot by my friends."

"I am sure, sir, that there is no captain in this fleet but thinks the same."

"I am glad of that, Berry. I'm glad of that. But I say, the devil take this wind!—I shall never be quit of the seasickness till we are out of this. Why, this very morning . . . but no matter. We want some luck, Berry."

"I fear we cannot command that, sir; though Nelson's luck is a proverb in the service. I know of no charm for luck except to whistle for the wind. I do not know how to unwhistle it."

"Is it a proverb, Berry, my luck?"

"You may take my word for that, sir."

The great little Admiral stroked his firm chin, and a glad light broke into his eyes.

"Strange!" he said, "that they talk of men being born under a lucky star. That is not the way I look at it, but I have always believed that I was born to do the work of Providence, which is perhaps what they mean. And I think that Providence gives its little signs to those whom it chooses for its instruments. But I have had no signs here—everything is as thick as St. Helen's Church. It is not a church now, you know, Berry, only a tower—only the shell of a tower, I think, kept standing and washed with white as a beacon to mariners. And, even lying in-shore like this, we cannot see the beacon, it is so thick. However long is it since we were able to communicate with shore, Berry?"

"More than a week, sir."

"And we have to take that draft on board to fill the places of those sick and missing men?"

"Yes, sir, thirty of them."

"Thirty-one: at fewest there were twenty-five in hospital and either five or six missing, when I wrote to their Lordships; but since then I find that William O'Brien is missing, and that he boasted to his watch that he always meant to desert when he got the opportunity."

"He was not a Norfolk man, sir."

"No, Berry; I would not lose him so lightly if he were a Norfolk man. There is the greatest difference between a forced man and a man who voluntarily offers his life to preserve his country. These Norfolk lads are all volunteers, come for the honour of the country, because their Admiral is a Burnham man."

"A hundred and more of them."

They were silent for a bit, but presently the Admiral began again.

"I am sorry that young Hardres could not get to us—

him that Lord Eastry wrote to me to have Thomas Irwine's place, 'the finest and bravest boy Lord Eastry knew.' He was the sort we want. I met Harry Fleet when he was captain of the *Ramillies*, and a finer captain never sailed, of the old bull-dog sort, who did not know as much as I like my captains to know, but who always laid their ships alongside of the enemy. They were wonderful men to fight, those three Fleets! And this young Hardres was the finest and bravest boy Harry Fleet ever knew. What's that coming along from the west'ard, youngster? You take my glass: I can't use it yet without feeling dizzy. I can't quite shake off that miserable sea-sickness, while we are lying-to doing nothing."

"Looks like a Portsmouth smack, sir," I said, after peeping for a bit; "but she's only carrying such a rag of sail that I cannot quite make her out."

"It takes a bold man," said the Admiral, "to carry that on a day like this. He must have despatches on board from the Admiralty, or he'd never have put out."

"There are two passengers, I make out now, sir."

"Very important despatches, Berry. The French must have got out of Brest."

"They'll be alongside in a minute, sir, with this wind."

As she came alongside and caught the rope I flung to her, the man at the tiller sang out to lower the gangway. "Lady on board, sir."

The Captain looked at the Admiral. The weather was too rough for lowering a gangway.

"Lower away," said the Admiral, with that little smile he wore after he had prayed, when going into battle: "please God nothing shall ever frighten me—not even a lady."

The gangway was lowered, and strong arms, using all their dexterity, flung the larger bundle of oilskins into the arms of the sailor standing on the bottom step; they were

going to follow with the thinner, taller bundle, but it shook them off with indignation. The larger bundle was passed up; the other scrambled up and stood on the deck bareheaded in front of the Admiral and the Captain. The Admiral conducted them along the slippery and unsteady deck to his state-room under the quarter-deck, and with his own hands peeled the oilskins from the lady, while the Captain gave orders for cordials, and the other bundle slipped back to the door of the state-room and began to lay off its oilskins there.

It was a little, slim, fair woman who stood before the hero, quite thinly clad when she removed the cloak under the oilskins, and evidently a widow, but of some years' standing. She was the gentlest-looking creature imaginable, except for a certain firmness about the pathetic little mouth. The Admiral had signed to me to follow; he gave me the oilskins to hold. It was just like him: not until he had made the most solicitous inquiries and had offered her everything in the ship, did he ask whom he had the honour of addressing.

She took a sip of the cordial, and put her hand up to her silky fair hair, and finding how wet it was, gave it a little shake, as if she expected to dry herself like a dog. And after the shake she looked at the Admiral, who was re-beginning his inquiry with a considerable amount of trepidation, when she cut him short with:

"I am Mrs. Hardres: is it too late? We have been waiting in Portsmouth since the beginning of the storm, and this is the first day we have been able to get a boat to bring us off."

"My missing midshipman," he cried gaily. "Madam, it is never too late to get a good officer; but where is he?"

"Will!" called his mother. But there was no Will to be found. The Admiral, with the smile for which any man in his fleet was ready to die, flew to the door of the state-room

in front of Mrs. Hardres. She knew where to look for her son. He was standing just outside the door in his new midshipman's rig. His oilskins were lying folded in a neat pile on the deck beside him, though it had come on to rain in torrents.

"Come in, Will," said the Admiral, in his best-pleased manner; and his satisfaction as he scanned him, face and figure, was evident, though he expressed it indirectly.

"He's a big fellow for a midshipman, Mrs. Hardres. I was a post captain at twenty-one."

"The only son of a widow, Sir Horatio. But the time has come when the widow must give her mite."

Tears came into the Admiral's eyes. I never knew a man of such delicate sensibilities: though he did not know what fear meant, he could weep like a child.

"How old are you, Will?"

"Eighteen, sir," said Will.

"You must make haste and be a lieutenant."

Our Admiral would not hear of Mrs. Hardres going off until the storm abated. In those days regulations were not so hard-and-fast about the presence of ladies on board a man-of-war, and the men who had brought her were willing enough to stay. They had run down to the ship before the wind, and they knew what it meant beating back against that wind and that sea. Towards evening the sea fell a good bit, and the thick weather cleared off, though it continued to blow; and shortly before dark we made out an Admiralty tender, which proved to have our thirty men aboard. The Admiral was delighted, and making his excuses to Mrs. Hardres, went off to write despatches.

When he had written them and paraded the new draft, he stepped up to Mrs. Hardres and said:—

"You shall go back, madam, in the state that befits a gallant officer's mother. Lieutenant Morris, of the tender, shall take charge of you," and at the same time he gave

the men who had brought her their golden guinea apiece, for bringing him luck.

“We shall have a change in the wind now, Berry,” he said, “within a day or two. I know that this lady’s coming is the sign I was waiting for.”

And dinner was then served, put forward for Mrs. Hardres. And then, after many protestations of the Admiral’s kindness, and a grim, silent leave-taking, with hardly-kept-back tears, from her boy, the gangway was let down again. As she was leaving the ship, she said, “You will take care of him, Sir Horatio?”

The Admiral looked at her in his way.

“I do not mean in the face of the enemy,” she said warmly, the pitiful mouth, for the moment, taking the proud curves of her son’s; “but I have only a slender purse,—his father was killed when he was a lieutenant.”

“As regards that last, my dear madam, you may be perfectly easy, for your son will be a very lucky fellow if he gets on shore twice in a year. And for the rest, I shall look after him as if he were my own son, and you know where I should wish my son to be in the moment of honour.”

CHAPTER III.—Of the Letters of a Boy and a Girl.

WILL duly wrote to Katherine from every port we touched at : one on April 23rd, when we arrived at Lisbon—one on April 30th, when we joined the Earl of St. Vincent's fleet off Cadiz—one on May 7th, from Gibraltar, the day before we sailed with a small squadron of observation up the Mediterranean—one on May 25th, when we put into S. Pierre's in Sardinia to repair damages after we had been disabled and partly dismasted in the great storm off Toulon—and one on June 17th, when we were in the Bay of Naples after Captain Troubridge's squadron had joined us. The only one I saw of them was the last, he not knowing whether it was *Trowbridge* or *Troubridge*—a point I daresay Katherine would have waived for a message that came a little straighter from his heart.

“From His Majesty's ship *Vanguard*.

“Off Naples, June 17th, 1798.

“DEAR KITTY,—I am no letter writer, besides all the news there is of our being in pursuit of the French fleet and the Admiral being joined by Ten of the Line under Captain Thomas Trowbridge, making Thirteen in all, besides the *Leander*, 50 guns, I doubt not you will see in the *Gazette*. For the rest, I have not been on shore once, and the Admiral treats me with so much goodness as his own—that is Lady Nelson's, son—Lieut. Nisbet. You may know how often I think of you, because

sailors have watches every day of four hours at a time when they may do nothing. I read your letter which I had by the Squadron before I go on watch.

“Yours affectly,

“WILL HARDRES.

“To the Lady Katherine Fleet,

“At the House of my Lord Eastry,

“Near Dover.”

But it was not till we were joined by Captain Troubridge's Squadron off Toulon, on June 7th, that Katherine's first letter reached him, having missed us at Gibraltar. We were by this time fast friends, though I was rather what a schoolboy would call his fag, and he had such pride in his letter that he showed it to me. It was not dated.

“Eastry Place,

“Near Dover.

“TO MY DEAREST WILL,—As I am to marry you, I may have the writing, and am wishing to say not to lose your heart to the black-browed dames I have read of in the *Beauty's Garland*. The Marquess has shown me much goodness; although he often comes to walk or ride with me he brings his *aide-de-camp* (he is Lord Lieutenant, you know) or, when he has one at Pegwell with him, his sister. They are very proud. The Ladies St. Radigunde all made great matches, but I never was frightened, as I let his sister the Dutchess know, and then wished I had not, for she paid me compliments that vexed me—‘splendid creature,’ and such, and vowed that I was the very woman to be his Marchioness, and that I should be his Marchioness, to which I replied setting her in her place, which alas! only increased her devotion.

“Will, dear, I miss you always, but the many times I thought of marrying you before we were promised on that night, I never doubted but that you would be much away on the seas. The wives of our family love their husbands dearly, and are content with a little. Indeed, Will, though I think I should not write it, they are most of their lives but mothers, and many is the Fleet who never saw his father. But I have no fear that I shall not

The Admiral

see you for the marrying of me, and with you to be on the sea, as Admiral Nelson told your mother, save perhaps for two days in the year, it is only I who have to promise not to wander.

“Your loving

“KATHERINE.

“P.S.—My father says not to go on a frigate; there is treasure in plenty here, and though frigates are good for prize-money, an Admiral's ship is the path to promotion.

“To MR. WILL HARDRES,

“On His Majesty's ship *Vanguard*, etc., etc.,

“Mediterranean.”

At Naples, when we lay off on June 17th, and again at Syracuse, we missed our letters; and it was not till after the Nile that we had them, when Will had at one time three from Katherine, writ by different ships.

CHAPTER IV.—Of our Entry
into Syracuse.

THE Admiral bettered his promise to Mrs. Hardres. He was not only a father to Will, but attached him to his person as a sort of supernumerary member of his staff. And Will wanted a good friend, for there is no denying that he was none too popular with those who should have been his mates. With the Admiral and the high officers he was a great favourite. His manner to them was a marvel—so dignified, as well as respectful. Give Will a chance of shining, and he always shone, and I loved him from the day he came on board. Will Hardres always seemed to me to be the grandest man I ever knew. I am sure I expected him to be a greater man than the Admiral himself some day. His mother brought him up in certain principles. He was too proud to be tempted from them, too courageous to be daunted from them. I do not think he was much above the average in strength or activity but I never saw such courage in any man except the Admiral. With the other midshipmen, some of them little boys, he was not likely to have much in sympathy. He was a good deal older than most midshipmen, and big for his age, and, so far as habits were concerned, the difference was still greater.

The junior lieutenants, on the other hand, disliked his haughtiness and self-assurance, though they all of them saw

that he had corresponding courage. By all rights they should have patronised him, but he could much more properly patronise them. The climax, of course, was the Admiral's very marked favour. But this signified less by the fact that he dined at the Admiral's table, and was in almost constant attendance on his person.

I shall let you know how Will first made his mark. One summer morning, July 19th, 1798, as I remember it, we found ourselves off Syracuse. It was not the first time, either, during our long chase after the French, so we all knew the place well by sight.

We could make out the old castle of Maniace, eight hundred years old, they say, standing at the end of the island of Ortygia ; if it had not been for the great high walls stopping there, we should never have known where this island left off. And we could make out the opposite shore with its low cliffs, where the Athenians would have been safe if they could have reached it, as the chaplain explained to us mid's last time we sighted the place. The Admiral was very busy with his glass, and Captain Berry was standing by him with some reports, which seemed to trouble him.

"It seems to me, Berry," he said, "that we are short of nearly everything. But this question of running out of water is a serious one. We must see to that. There are polacres in the Little Port, I see, and we could hire or even impress them to bring off water and supplies ; but could we tranship with this sea on ?"

"You can do anything, sir ; but I think it will be very difficult and dangerous."

"But the Great Port, Berry, I read in the *Mirror*, that though it was one of the most famous ports of antiquity, it has been too silted up for large ships of the last few centuries to be able to enter it, though the water inside is in places too deep for the best anchorage. There is a footnote which says the passage is so well known to be

impossible, that it is never attempted. Now, Berry, it is equally well known that in the course of centuries channels change, and I shall try it. Of course, we shall take the utmost care, and at the worst only one vessel can strike; and we have force enough to haul her off. I shall lead myself."

"I know it is useless to ask if there is any need for this, sir; but it would be so bad for the fleet if anything should happen to your ship."

"Our ship, Berry?"

"Captain Troubridge, sir, every captain in the fleet, would volunteer."

"It is my post where there is risk: I shall try it. Head the ship for the opening, and signal to the fleet to prepare to follow."

The Captain stepped away to give the necessary orders. I felt rooted to the spot, where I had been standing, just within earshot.

"Here, youngster," called the Admiral, "come and see a bit of navigation that may go down in the annals of the Navy."

It is a matter of ancient history now, how the *Vanguard* sailed in without a check. We did not have one anxious sounding as we swept round and brought up abreast of the Marina, just opposite the cathedral, which used to be the Temple of somebody, and has half its columns outside and the other half inside, doing duty as the pillars of an aisle. The Marina is a sort of carriage drive dividing the landing quays from the ancient wall, which in other parts is washed by the sea itself. It is handsomely laid out with shade-trees and flowers, and at one end terminated by the natural rocks from which rushes the famous Fountain of Arethusa. This pleased the Admiral extravagantly. He said several times: "I shall water my ships at the Fountain of Arethusa, and then Fortune cannot fail to smile upon me."

The Admiral

We brought up in beautiful order, with our larboard resting on a shore with ruins all along the horizon, which the chaplain told us formed four-fifths of the city in the ancient times. The island of Ortygia, which is occupied by the present city, was the smallest of the five quarters. On the sky-line was the Castle of Euryalus, which might have been a mediæval fortress, with its fine square towers and high curtain wall, though it was built by the Athenians in the famous siege. Our starboard ran up to the entrance of the port, under the Castle of Maniace.

As we were running in, the flag was hoisted on the Castle, to which we replied by showing English colours. Almost at the same time a boat came aboard with the Captain of the Port and an Adjutant of the town to offer us any refreshments of which we might be in need, and to point out that it would not be necessary for us to lose the wind by entering the harbour, for that they could be brought to us as we lay off. But since the Admiral would not listen to him, and held straight on, a second boat boarded us soon after, this time with the Town Major and the Second Commandant of Artillery to confer with the Admiral, repeating the compliments and offers of assistance, and at the same time acquainting him that the Governor's orders and instructions prevented his admitting into the harbour more than three or four ships at one time, even though they should belong to an allied and friendly power, as the English nation was. But the Admiral having a Royal letter with orders that the whole squadron should be admitted, proceeded to enter the harbour without waiting, and anchored, as I have said.

No sooner had we let go the anchor than the Admiral hailed Will.

"Will," he said (he always called him Will), "ask Mr. Comyn to come to me. I believe he knows a little Italian, and I take it that the Governor will be able to speak

Italian as well as Sicilian, though one never knows. These Sicilian magnificoes, though their language is no better than a dialect of Italian, make it a point of honour not to know the mother-language, and hate the people on the mainland better than any one in Europe. However, Comyn can talk a little French too."

"If I may interrupt, sir," said Will, "I can speak both languages very well. My mother"—here he blushed—could not afford me any better schooling than I could have at the village school and of the Rector. But she did her best to make up for it by teaching me these languages. She was brought up in these countries; my father married her while he was serving in the Mediterranean.

"Bravo!" said the Admiral. "I do not like employing a black coat on these occasions, especially in a priest-ridden country like this, where the bare sight of a Protestant clergyman fills them with envy, hatred, and malice, because they are no longer able to Inquisition him and burn him. Will, I must promote you lieutenant; we can rig you out from Vassall's sea-chest—he's about your build: we could hardly send a midshipman on an affair of this sort. And you shall go ashore in my barge, so as to observe ceremony. When you get there, demand to be taken with your guard to the Governor, and when you see him——" He turned round to me with more coldness than I thought necessary, and said, "You can leave us, Trinder, and ask the Captain, with my compliments, if he will order my barge to be lowered and manned, with a guard of marines for the officer carrying despatches. And ask Mr. Vassall to come to me."

I shall never forget Will as he was rowed away from the flag-ship, sitting in the stern-sheets of the Admiral's barge. Vassall's uniform—it was his best full-dress parade uniform, and he was richer than most of us, being the son of a wealthy Jamaica planter and careful of his appearance—

well, his uniform fitted Will almost as trimly as if it had been made for him; and there Will sat, with that fair, proud face of his, which I would back against the Apollo Belvedere, though I have never seen it, set as stern as a statue's.

The Admiral himself could not have had it written in his features more plainly that he had the guns of the squadron behind him—a fine squadron, with which we hoped to break up the French fleet and capture the convoy with “Bony” and all his army on board. There Will sat, as if there were no one in the barge with him—no sea, no land, no walls between him and the Governor of Syracuse. And as the barge sheered off I caught the Admiral's eye looking at him. What would not Sir Horatio have given to have had such a son?

CHAPTER V.—In which Will has his first Chance, and his first Escapade, and his first Meeting with the Princess of Favara.

I SHOULD have said that ten minutes before the barge left, the Admiral hailed me.

“Go and make yourself ready, Trinder. Mr. Hardres must not steer the barge now.”

And so I went with him. But though I was his particular mate, and never away from him for five minutes when he was not with the Admiral, he took no more account of me than any common seaman. He seemed wrapt up in his mission, and I saw that he had the Admiral’s great quality of not letting an opportunity pass.

When we reached the long landing steps under the Marina, we were met by a ragged rabble of a guard under an officer who spoke French. Now, I knew a very little of French, and could make out that Will demanded to be taken at once into the presence of the Governor, with myself and his guard.

“*Oui*, Monsieur the Vice-Admiral,” said the officer with the greatest possible alacrity.

Like every one else in the city, he was bursting to know the reason of the advent of this formidable fleet. England was at peace with the Two Sicilies, he knew. So, for the matter of that, was France; though all the time his King, and, what was more to the point, his Queen, were dying to cut the throat of every Frenchman, and ready to declare

war the moment they could get sufficient protection from the Allies. In the state of confusion Europe was then in no one would have been surprised at any of the belligerents seizing any point of vantage they happened to require, in the territories of the feeble principalities of Italy. The townspeople, mad with delight, imagined that this fine fleet had come to occupy Syracuse, and defend it against the dreaded operations of the French. So delighted were they to see us, that the Governor wrote afterwards to Sir John Acton, that they would have carried the ships one by one to their houses, if it had been possible. And in any case resistance would have been impossible. For centuries it had been the cardinal belief that no large ship could cross the bar at the entrance to the Great Port. Consequently, the inner face of the city all along the Marina was hardly fortified ; certainly not in a state to resist any kind of naval attack more formidable than an assault by boats. A frigate could have defied the landward guns of the Castle, and laid the town in ashes. If the Syracusans had not been too ignorant to know anything about the political questions with which Europe was boiling, they might have thought that the English had come there to seize the town, because the Two Sicilies had not declared war upon the French. That the town was about to be seized upon some pretext or other, they felt certain ; else why this imposing force—the greatest expedition which had ever come to the city since the famous siege by the Athenians? And the Athenians, God bless them, came before the days of gunpowder.

The officer, forming his ragged troops in some sort of order, led the way to the ancient castello, built by the Greek, Georgio Maniace, when he reconquered Syracuse from the Arabs, before the Norman conquest. A lovely, but rather tumbledown black-and-white marble gateway had been built by him to support the two famous bronze rams, made by ancient Greeks in classical times. Seven hundred and

seventy years afterwards the gate and its rams were still there to give our entry becoming state. The rams were really very comical, and I had it just on my lips, when I caught Will's hard blue eye, and brought my face to attention. Nor was that the only comical thing about the castle, which was so little used that a fine crop of dwarf stocks were growing right up to the guns.

The Governor, Don Giuseppe delle Torre, had chosen rather an *al fresco* scene for the reception.

To be brief, he had had a space cleared among the powder and shot and flour barrels in the deep bomb-proof vaults, which are a feature of fortresses in these parts. There was hardly any light, and there were only three chairs, two of which he hastily assigned to us. I noticed that a bed, with very fine but much-worn Spanish hangings, was being erected in one corner ; and I wondered if, as the next move, he would not have the powder taken out and thrown into the sea. In which he would have shown his wisdom, as the castle could not possibly have made any resistance to our fleet, and it might have blown up if a chance shot had found its way into the magazine.

Also, I wondered if Will was noticing all these comical details, and looked at him. The icy contempt on his face showed that he had taken the Governor's measure.

When we had been bowed into our seats, the Governor bowed again and waited for Will to begin.

Generally the stronger waits for the weaker, but in this case the explanation could only come from us. Will began by inquiring, could his Excellency speak Italian? His Excellency, for a wonder, knew what was nominally his native language. Will came to the point at once. He presented the Royal despatch, written in the name of His Majesty, and signed by the Captain-General, the Chevalier Acton, enjoining the Governor in the most pressing manner to welcome and admit the English squadron, going beyond

what is usual, and mentioning many novel and unexpected possibilities by reason of His Majesty's goodwill and friendship towards the English nation.

Would his Excellency, then, give the proper orders for the fleet of his High and Mighty Majesty, the King of Great Britain and Ireland, to be supplied at a proper price with such water and other stores as it might need ?

His Excellency's face fell. Then, noticing Will's youth, he began a long and specious apology. His High and Mighty Majesty, the King of Great Britain and Ireland, was, he admitted, a very good friend of his August Majesty the King of the Two Sicilies ; but in order to prevent a French fleet being quartered upon him, his August Majesty the King of the Two Sicilies had been compelled to enter into a compact not to admit more than three or four ships of any nation into any of his ports at one time. At the same time the French declared that they would treat it as an act of war if any nation at war with them (meaning, of course, us) was allowed to take in supplies in his August Majesty's ports. He would therefore be unable to accede to the request, much as he desired to do anything for the great Admiral Nelson, the good friend of his country. Would the Illustrissimo Vice-Admiral convey to the Admiral his most profound and heartfelt apologies for not being able to comply ? For himself, he must again say that, if only he were able, it would give him the deepest gratification, and so on and so on.

There was a look of unmitigated scorn on Will's fine face. He did not believe one word that the Don was saying, and waited with diplomatic impatience, formally restrained but clearly hinted, until the Governor had finished ; when he replied in cold, calm tones that the Governor had here orders from his Sovereign, countersigned by the Chevalier Acton, superseding all general orders, and directing him to act as Admiral Nelson might

wish. The Governor stoutly maintained that the despatch gave no instructions about the admission of the entire squadron; whereas we, through the good Lady Hamilton, by whose influence they had been procured for us, knew positively that this was intended. And here, perhaps, Will's diplomacy failed him, for he had such a contempt for the whole nation, that he could not but consider the possibility of further secret orders having been issued that the Royal despatch, overriding the general policy of the country, should itself be ignored. He did not know then—in fact none of us, from the Admiral downward, did know—how completely Ferdinand gave over politics to his imperious spouse in order to be allowed to devote himself to the pleasures of the chase, the pleasures of the table, and intrigues of a non-political kind.

In brief, the Governor refused to allow us to take in water or stores of any kind until we withdrew our squadron.

"Then," said Will, looking positively majestic as he felt himself the mouthpiece of his country, "I have the honour to present your Excellency with the schedule of the Admiral's requirements." This with a deep bow. And, with another deep bow, "I have the honour to inform your Excellency that if permission for their supply is not sent on board within twelve hours, the Admiral is prepared to enforce his requirements with the guns of his ships. I have the honour to wish your Excellency," this with a still deeper bow, "a very good morning."

"Stay! stay! not so fast, *Illustrissimo*. Would you graciously write down this cartel, so that I may make no mistake? Ah, you have been reading it!" he said, catching sight of a second scroll.

"I am afraid this will not do. It is in English—the Admiral's note of the words I should use for the *manifesto*."

“And you assure me that what you have said is the exact translation of this?”

“Put into the roundabout and compliment-paying phrases which your language demands—yes.”

“Then it is quite sufficient, *Illustrissimo*. Tell your terrible Admiral that he will not have to fire his guns into us; that I shall be rejoiced from the bottom of my heart to supply him with whatever he requires, water, provisions, powder even, at the most reasonable prices. With this piece of paper in my hands, I have only yielded to force. His August Majesty will not declare war upon his High and Mighty Majesty for this breach of the peace.”

But he added to himself, as we learned from the ladies of his party on the next evening, that he did not feel so certain that France would not regard it as an act of war.

This whole affair of Syracuse has not even yet been cleared up, and it must be remembered that I am writing a good many years after the event. To this day the Admiralty is in the dark as to whether the Governor did receive secret orders, overriding the Royal despatch, and supposing he did, if it formed part of those orders that he was to yield, but only to yield to a pretence of force. One thing is quite certain—that, as soon as force was mentioned, he showed the greatest good-will; and the Admiral wrote in two separate letters to Sir William and Lady Hamilton, both written the day before he left: “I have no complaint to make of private attention. Every body of persons have been on board to offer me civilities.” And in the other letter: “My dear friends, thanks to your exertions we have victualled and watered; and surely, watering at the fountain of Arethusa, we must have victory. We shall sail with the first breeze; and, be assured, I will return either crowned with laurel or covered with cypress.”

A day or two afterwards the breeze did come in the

afternoon, as it always does at Syracuse. In the morning the Admiral wrote :

“The fleet is unmoored, and the moment the wind comes off the land, we shall go out of the delightful harbour, where our present wants have been most amply supplied, and where every attention had been paid to us.”

But I am anticipating. The Governor was as good as his word, and we were soon in the thick of taking in stores and water ; and as there was no hope of going out in less than two days at the earliest, the inhabitants began to organise a round of hospitalities.

The very next evening, the Governor, who had recovered so far from his fright of our cannon as to have his state bed moved back from the subterranean magazine of the castle, gave a ball in our honour at his palace. The Admiral had in the afternoon paid him a state visit, accompanied by his staff.

To the English it might sound a formidable undertaking to ask the officers of a whole fleet to a ball at a few hours' notice, but in Sicily it is very different. The palaces of the nobles were built, many of them, in the Middle Ages, when it was necessary to house the retainers, who were, in fact, the nobleman's army, within the walls of his town palace when he happened to be there, as much as it was necessary to house them within the walls of his castle when he was in the country on his estates. When the custom of each noble maintaining a private army died out, their palaces were naturally a great deal larger than they required for their diminished establishments, and each palace could afford to have noble suites of entertaining rooms not used at ordinary times, but ready, with a little taking off of covers, for any *fêtes*, like a ball at carnival time. As most nobles grew their own wine, they had an unlimited supply maturing in their cellars, and fruit in Sicily is as a drug in the market. There remained

The Admiral

nothing, therefore, but for the ladies to bring out their gala dresses from their chests, and to summon all the banquet-cooks in Syracuse to the Governor's kitchen.

I must say that we were received with very great ceremony, for though they were of an old-fashioned style and sadly needed freshening up, a plentiful supply of private coaches met us at the landing steps, and drove us along the Marina, and up through the sea-gate to the Governor's palace, which was situated in the main street near the centre of the town. It was quite light when we drove in through the lofty gateway, under the great Spanish balcony of heavy ironwork bulging out like the bows of a first-rate, and ornamented at the ends with splendid hammered-iron roses. Once through the gateway we found ourselves in a courtyard, round which the palace was built. At the far end was a wide sweeping stone outside-stairway, with a heavy stone parapet, which went almost round two sides of the court. On the post at the bottom end of the parapet was seated a queer lion, carved out of the post itself at some time during the Middle Ages. This stairway, and the terrace which led from it into the principal apartments, were strewn with rich carpets of very ancient date, but more out of repair than any gentleman would use in England. The rooms inside, too, reminded me more of an English nobleman's seat which was never used by its owner, but maintained in its ancient condition as a show place; for the silk hangings of the walls were broken or threadbare in places, and the carpets, likewise ancient, were in the like state. And though chandeliers of rock-crystal hung in all the state rooms, and we saw fine old cabinets here and there, there did not seem to be a good new piece in the whole establishment, and the servants, whose name was legion, were as dilapidated as the hangings.

The dresses of the ladies, too, were not such as we saw

at Palermo, when the King and Queen were holding their Court there after the flight from Naples; but, while made of most valuable brocades, they had the appearance of being used for a lifetime on the rare occasions on which they were required. The ball consisted largely of eating the fine fruits and drinking the good Sicilian wines, both of which were very welcome in a Sicilian July, after a long spell at sea. For but few of the English officers and the Sicilian ladies were able to dance sufficiently well together, and it seemed not to be etiquette for the Sicilian gentlemen to be dancing while any English officers were without partners.

The few officers who spoke the language of the country conversed with the younger ladies, who never moved from the sides of their mothers, except to dance; and as the music was of the poorest order, the proceedings were sufficiently doleful. But I must say that Will, as I afterwards found was his invariable fortune, fell upon his feet.

He was attending the Admiral, who was, of course, conversing with the Governor, who even in the midst of the festivities would from time to time try and extract a promise from the Admiral to withdraw his ships. The conversation was through the interpretations of Will and the chaplain; and by the Governor was standing a young girl attended by a brother in place of a mother. I may say at once that she was of extraordinary beauty: somewhat tall and slender, distinguished to an unusual degree by the singular grace of figure and carriage characteristic of young Sicilian women. Her hair, which waved beautifully, was dusky rather than dark; and a dusky complexion, almost transparent in its purity, was thrown up by the wonderful Sicilian eyes, which are not brown, but of a very dark grey, looking blue in some lights and black in others; while the note of delicate refinement suggested by the

slight, beautifully carried figure, was maintained by the delicacy of the thin nose of classical straightness, and the thin mouth.

Thin mouths are ordinarily taken to be typical of cruelty, but this by no means exhausts the category. There is another kind of thin lips typical of sensibility, and yet another typical of passion, to some degree of animal passion, but more of an intense ardour of devotion. Donna Rusidda's lips had both these last two elements in them. Devotion and extreme sensibility mingled curiously with the archness of her face.

Donna Rosalia * (or Rusidda) di Mardolce and her brother Don Ruggiero, who was the Prince of Favara, were Palermitans. They lived in the old half-Arabic palace of the Favara, which was the great Emperor Frederic II.'s favourite summer residence, and which had come down to them through many generations. But they were connected with Syracuse through their mother, who belonged to the ancient family of the Mont' alti. The palace of the Mont' alti, which we saw the next day, must, when it was built, four hundred years ago, have been one of the most beautiful in Syracuse. The Gothic windows, rather in the Venetian style, of its upper storey have an Arabic delicacy and airiness. But in our day quite a mean street had grown up about it, and the last of the Mont' alti, the widower uncle with whom the young Prince and his sister were staying, lived in a mere corner of his palace, only able to maintain his rusty equipages by practising the strictest economy in every other way. People prophesied that these, too, would go soon, and the last of the Mont' alti of Milocca, the proudest barons of Syracuse in the Middle Ages, seek death by his own hand, when he could no longer afford the last poor appurtenances of his rank.

* Rosalia is pronounced Rōsā-lēā. Rusidda is a pet abbreviation of it.

However, I shall have little more to say of him : he only comes into my chronicle because "Rusidda Favara," as she was generally called, was staying under his roof when she and Will met.

How far Will admired her I could not tell. There were only certain moods which were easily reflected in his face, such as anger and scorn. He had more than the ordinary English resolution to conceal his gentler moods. Except when he was annoyed, his hard, handsome face was almost inscrutable. He certainly talked to her and her brother a good deal ; they had been at the Neapolitan Court much in their richer days, and spoke Italian fluently. During the conversation she seems to have told Will about the windows of her room, the beautiful Arab-Gothic windows which I was mentioning—a conversation which was shortly to show my young sir in a new light. The function did not last late ; indeed, it dragged along somewhat too mournfully for that, and we rowed back to our respective ships.

I had not been asleep a great while—I cannot say for certain how long—when I heard my door open, and some one came in with a subdued "H'sh !"

I recognised Will.

"Tubby," he whispered, coming up to my bunk, "will you come with me ?"

I would have gone with Will to the devil, so I made no conditions, but rose and began to put my things on. I only whispered one word—"Ashore ?" I felt certain that it was so, because there was nothing else to rise for in this secret fashion, except a practical jest, and Will was the last man in the world to play a practical jest on a brother officer. His aloofness was their principal complaint against him, and but for his fierce temper and remarkable courage he might have been thought young-ladyish, so unlike was he to the ordinary roystering young naval officer of that piping time.

I did not even ask how we were to get ashore, I concluded that Will had seen to that; and I knew that our getting away depended on our not being overheard, so kept silence. Will crept stealthily, I following, to the starboard shrouds of the mizzen. Then he slipped over the side into the mizzen chains, whispering as he went, "Stop in the chains."

He had, I observed, a coil of rope with him. Nothing happened for a little while. I supposed that there was some boat that he was looking for, and kept as still as a mouse. Apparently he saw nothing, but presently he took a piece of phosphorus out of his pocket and rubbed the sole of his foot. So he told me afterwards, for I only saw a bit of something shining. He chose this part because if the watch came along and peeped over he had only to set his foot down. Directly afterwards I heard a low, muffled sound, and a boat slid almost noiselessly beneath us. Will made fast one end of his rope to the shrouds, and knotted a loop in the rope at a distance as far as he could judge of about five feet from the water, whispering to me to follow if he made a certain signal. The loop was, of course, to enable him to stop if the boat was not all right. We both had our shoes hung round our necks so that we could walk the more silently. I found myself in the high-peaked bow of one of the little boats which all Italians call a *barca*. The boatmen pulled us to the landing steps very quickly and very quietly. There was a sentry there, but fortunately he was one of the guard who had escorted us to the Governor in the morning. He challenged, Will said something to him, and the man recognised him as the "Vice-Admiral" who had arrived in the Admiral's barge in the morning. And as his countrymen seldom did important business without some passing of secret messages, he took it that Will bore some such secret communication between the Admiral and the Governor.

The boatman, I observed by the light of the sentry's wretched lamp—a little flat earthenware vessel with a hole in the top, through which some strands of cotton found their way into the oil—had left his *barca* and was accompanying us, carrying a mysterious bundle.

We had, of course, put on our shoes in the boat. The man led the way. As soon as we were out of sight of the sentry Will followed close at his heels, and I, who had not the smallest knowledge of what we were to do, unless it were to have a knife put into us in this evil-looking, cut-throat city, kept close to Will, you may be sure. First he led us to a place where we had to climb the city wall, which was not kept too well mended or guarded, on the side towards the Great Harbour. The man went first and drew his bundle up after him by a line which he seemed to have brought for the purpose. We followed, and then went through a very network of narrow, black, winding streets, with great doors every few yards, out of every one of which I expected some one to spring upon us, not very much caring, because after all, I remembered that it was my profession to be killed. At last we crossed a big, open space, and, taking one or two turns more through narrow lanes, came to a great house standing up gaunt and black against the sky, which was clear and starlit, though there was no moon.

As we went along, having no longer any necessity for silence, Will had unfolded his intention to me, and it fairly took away my breath. Indeed, I did not believe that he would put it into execution. But when he came to the great house which was our destination, taking the bundle from the boatman, he unwrapped a stringed instrument, a sort of lute or zither it seemed to me. I waited to see him assemble the passers-by. In Sicily people seem hardly to go to bed all night in the summer. And even more I expected the fortress-like gates of the palace to open and some one to

rush out. But nothing of the kind happened. The passers-by smiled, and the gates of the palace remained as sealed as if they never would open until the day of judgment.

Will had, in the meantime, struck up a tinkly little tune—he was evidently familiar with the instrument—with some Italian words which I did not understand, but took to be a serenade. He had a fair voice and played well enough. After a while I let go of the handle of my dirk which I had brought with me and gripped ready to strike. Will went on singing.

As my eyes grew accustomed to the darkness, I made out that the palace under which we stood had the beautiful moresco windows high up on its front which identified it as the palace of the Mont' alti, concerning which Will had told me—the palace where Donna Rusidda was visiting with her uncle.

Will sang on, and presently the shutter of one of these windows was opened just a chink, and a ray of light stabbed the darkness.

Will sang on, and the opening widened gradually, revealing first a hand and then the graceful head of Donna Rusidda; and finally she flung the shutters right back and stood in full view at the window, inclining graciously. Will sang one or two more songs, and then, making a very fine salute, and bowing, put his lute or zither under his arm and joined me where I was standing in the shadow. The zither was duly wrapped up again by the light of a flickering oil lamp which hung under a much venerated image of the Virgin and Child let into the wall of the Piazza, the open space which I have mentioned as being close to the palace. The boatman then led the way back to his *barca*, and rowed us swiftly and silently out to the flag-ship, under the star-board mizzen chains, where we found our rope still hanging. We then took our shoes off and tied them together and hung them round our necks, and Will made the boatman

a liberal present, which I dare swear took a month's money from his pocket.

Creeping very cautiously, we reached our bunks without detection, and I turned round and went to sleep, thinking that Master Will had had monstrous little play for his money.

CHAPTER VI.—At the Fountain of Cyane and the Papyrus Beds of the Anapo.

ON the next day, having taken in all manner of supplies to our complete satisfaction, and there not being wind enough to take us out, as was too obvious even for the Governor to protest, the Admiral expressed his desire to see the remains of ancient Syracuse, more particularly those parts connected with the siege, and the surrender of the Athenians, which last shocked him very much. “To surrender,” he said, “is to lose all your men and none of the enemy’s, to give him much larger stores of arms and ammunition. To surrender is shameful; to die fighting against insuperable odds is the finest kind of death. If those Athenians had gone on fighting their way, though it might have cost the Syracusans only one man for their two, or one man for their three, depend upon it some of them would have got through to the friendly city of Catania.”*

In the morning the Governor had arranged that we were to visit the river Anapo, the only place, it is said, where the papyrus used for the books of antiquity continues to grow in a natural state, taking on our way the few stones which mark the position near which the Athenians met their last defeat.

We had to rise betimes to do this, but the Governor explained that at Syracuse there was always what he

* Catana was the ancient name.

called a little storm in the afternoon. The Admiral replied that he did not imagine that any storm which they could have in that bay would be like to frighten his Majesty's sailors, but if it came he should be glad to oblige the Governor by sailing out on it to get a day nearer to those rascally French.

Quite early in the morning, before one breakfasts in England, we rowed across the Great Port in the Admiral's barge to the low-lying mouth of the river. The Admiral made me coxswain for the day, out of the goodness of his heart, I know, that Will should have a companion. We could not enter the river for a bar with only a few inches of water on it; but we were met by a very comical sight, for no sooner had we grounded a few feet off the land than a mounted orderly came on board. He had on enormous top boots and spurs, and a kind of sabre a great deal too large for him, and he was all belts, and had on his head the most wonderful kind of ancient Roman helmet, with a huge brass cockscomb and the most extravagant plumes of horsehair I have ever seen, calling to mind the pictures of Sir William Johnson's Indian braves during the late war in America. But for all this he was mounted, not on his horse, which he might very well have ridden out to us, but sitting a-straddle on the left shoulder of a tall fisherman, who threw him aboard with so little ceremony that, if he had not been caught by our men, he would surely have fallen over his sabre and broken it.

He pointed out on the shore a number of lumbering coaches, the upper parts of which were mostly all glass. Some of these, he told us, were empty, and for us, because the part of the river below the ancient bridge (which the chaplain said was built by the Athenians) had become too choked even for the river boats, which were to meet us at that point. It being summer, he assured us that the coaches would not become quagmired in doing this

journey, which was only so many hundred yards. The Governor, it appeared, did not like salt water well enough to adventure the row across the bay, but had driven round in his coach. There were fishermen ready, he said in conclusion, to carry the English officers ashore.

After asking the Admiral's leave, he then made signs, and one of the inarticulate noises with which the Italians express much ; and a number of fishermen, pretty well naked except for their short shirts and hanging red caps, rushed into the water to the side of the barge. But our English seamen were too quick for them, and, leaping overboard, carried the Admiral and the captains who were with him in true English hump-back style, though Will obtained the Admiral's permission for him and me to try this queer shoulder-riding, which is not to be commended above once.

We noticed that the officer who had come out to the Admiral from the Governor, remounted with trepidation. No sooner were we ashore than the Governor, with his principal officers, stepping down from their coaches, advanced to meet us with bows which took us some trouble to return with sufficient stooping. We feared to heel over. They had a party of ladies with them, as we could see, though we were not presented to them until we reached the boats which were to take us up the river.

Before we started, the Governor asked us if we would make a slight detour now to see the Temple of Jupiter, which the Admiral had mentioned as one of the spots he desired most to investigate. The Admiral said that he was in the Governor's hands, and the coaches therefore turned off along what they call a road in Sicily, but which is no better than a ploughed field. Our officer with the plumes, who seemed a good fellow, assured Will and myself, who were with him of the party in the first coach, that this was a good country road, and that we were fortunate in not having to bump over broken rock.

When we came up with the ladies, I must say we were most agreeably astonished, for the boats, which had the same high noses as the *barca* in which Will and I had adventured the night before, only were in every way lighter and longer, were spread with rich cloths, and had fine silken canopies. The ladies, too, being no longer in their ancestral state dresses, but in robes of thin silk, mostly the thin white which the Italians know so well how to wear, were a most beautiful sight, for they were all young, and might have been chosen for their appearance.

Among the number was Donna Rusidda, and it was arranged, with evident design, that Will should have a place by her.

Seldom have I seen so gracious a sight as that procession presented.

I took particular note of this when we reached the first bed of the Egyptian papyrus, which grows somewhat after the manner of the palmetto, with branching stems, tufted at the tops. But there is this difference between it and the palmetto—that its leaves, instead of being papery, are like horses' tails, made of the greenest grass, each blade being as round as twine. They make a pleasant whispering noise, if there is a wind ever so light, and they are five, ten, and fifteen feet high. There is a bend in the river where the bed begins, so I caught sight of the next *barca* almost broadside, as she swung round; and the effect was, I say, very beautiful, for their deck cloths and their silk canopies were of the Governor's colours, crimson edged with silver and very rich facings, and these contrasted with the green of the papyrus on the banks, which almost arched over our heads, so narrow was the waterway. And I am sure that, to those in the other *barcas*, the contrast of the white dresses of the ladies and the bright blue uniforms of His Majesty's officers, made a splendid bouquet of colour.

The Admiral sat with the Governor on a kind of little dais

raised on the stern, the like of which the other boats had not. Mr. Comyn was no longer with him for interpreting, since Thucydides tells us nothing about *fêtes* on the Anapo with court ladies. He was learned in the classics, Mr. Comyn, and the Admiral was always much interested to hear what the classics had to say about this or the other spot, famous in Greek or Roman history, when we came to it. The Admiral and the Governor were surrounded by the most beautiful of the ladies, Will sitting close to the Admiral's right hand to interpret, as occasion arose, and with Donna Rusidda on his right hand. She looked as beautiful as an angel in her filmy white robes, which brought out the marvellous clearness of her cheeks and the soulfulness of her eyes. Moreover, leaning against the cushioned side of a boat is a test whether a lady have grace or not, in which she came out uncommon well.

The Admiral was in high spirits, leaning out of the boat to try and gather a papyrus stalk (it was from the stalk that the ancients got their paper), and laughing like a boy when his arm, in its best State uniform, was dragged under water. Presently he spied with that eye of his, which took in every object of a view at a single glance, a fine green and blue lizard sitting on a papyrus stalk outlined against the sky. The chaplain, who was in the middle of the boat, would have it—I know not if he was right—that this was the famous chameleon.

“Catch him, Trinder,” said the Admiral, and I made up my mind to have him if I had to tumble into the water for it (it was good weather for dipping in); but the boatman, seeing what I was going to do, knocked the stalk away with his oar, jabbering like a monkey, and my lizard was gone. The Governor spoke to him sharply in Sicilian, and turning to Will, made a long apology in Italian for him to translate to the Admiral, which was to the effect that this lizard had the evil eye, or something of the sort, and it was most

unlucky to anger it. The Admiral gave one of his hearty laughs, and the incident passed off; but presently, as we were passing right through a thick tuft, Will said to me, "There is another: you catch him. I'll stop the boatman."

The long *barca* glided swishing under the overhanging papyrus to where the great lizard lay shamming sleep against the stalk. The boatman saw us looking, and raised his oar again. Quick as lightning, Will caught it, and was ready to strike the man or seize him by the throat as occasion was; but another person had seen it, and a stern voice came from the dais—"Mr. Hardres!"

Will looked back, still holding the oar. The Admiral did not use this name in ordinary.

"We don't want to carry any ill fortune with us while we are trying to fight the French."

Will dropped the oar and saluted; and the Admiral, smiling again, said we might not be able to get enough wind even to frighten the Governor, with the chaplain's chameleon on board. But Donna Rusidda arched her eyebrows and said to Will,—

"We of the Favara have lasted six centuries, and we have always defied Fate."

To which Will replied, "Don Comyn there, our *padre*, as you would call him, says he believes the Admiral is like the Roman Sylla—that there is no name by which he would so gladly be called as Faustus, the favourite of the Gods."

We were not over long in the river Anapo, I believe, because the Governor would have us see the fountain of Cyané, from which the river named after it, the Cyano, derives its clear, plentiful water. The tributary was decidedly deeper than the river, and here and there the overarching clumps—I might almost speak of them as an avenue, for they sometimes met above our heads—broke off for a while, and the banks would be bordered with sedges of the leaves of the yellow iris, which blossoms here in great

abundance in the spring. So Donna Rusidda informed Will. We quite missed the rustle of the papyrus against our canopy when we came to these open spots, though I daresay the boatmen were glad enough, for they must have impeded the way of the boat very much.

The fountain was no great distance up—perhaps a mile or so, and it certainly was a natural curiosity. It was the shape of the bowl of an egg-cup, and the Governor claimed that it was fifty feet deep; and I dare swear it was over thirty, though one could see every pebble on the bottom, and see great mullet, looking quite blue, at what they considered a safe depth from the attentions of man. It was curious to see these sea fish running up to half a dozen pounds' weight so far from the sea, in water fresh from the fountain head, and icy cold. I was rather thankful that Will had his Donna Rusidda beside him, for he would have been itching to slip out of his clothes somehow, and dive for the stones, which looked like turquoises, at the bottom of the spring. The prospect of groping about with his eyes open under thirty or forty feet of water, clearer than glass, would have been irresistible.

As it was, he did nothing worse to shock the Governor than attempt to drink some of the same water during the *al fresco* banquet held, while the *barcas* were moored to the low papyrus bushes round the fountain or, as I should call it, the spring, which was the only place on the whole river where there was room for two or three boats together.

Whether his Excellency considered all water unwholesome, or that Will's rushing to drink it in place of wine was a reflection on his hospitality, did not appear. I do not know when I have seen such a scene, which in a different way reminded me of the pictures of a certain Watteau captured by my Lord Eastry in one of his prizes, and now hanging in Will's gallery; though I do not maintain that the Governor's ladies, beautiful and appropriate as their

light summer robes were, approached the Watteau ladies in elegance of costume. But, on the other hand, the prim fountain with Diana in the centre, supported by two dolphins, with their lips curled and their tails plaited, certainly did not come up to our clear pool, as deep as many a house is high, carrying on its bosom three or four great *barcas*, hanging with crimson and silver, and ringed all round by overhanging palmetto-like clumps of the feathery papyrus of old Egypt. Nor, I confess, do the men in Monsieur Watteau's pictures, who are generally dancing, come up to men like Captain Troubridge and Captain Berry, in the uniform of His Majesty's Navy. And every little detail, each feather in the plumes of the papyrus, each jewel, every burnished nail within reflecting distance of the water, was mirrored as clearly as the bright blue uniforms and shining epaulettes of His Majesty's officers, and the great masses of crimson in the boat-hangings. We had music, too, from the Governor's—well, I call them lute-players—especially brought over from Naples, wearing the old doublet and hose, crimson and silver liveries of the Governor's family, which their forerunners had worn when Tommaso de Vigilia painted them three centuries before in the pictures hanging in the Governor's palace. I could believe that these were the same liveries, for in Sicily servants' fête-liveries are not made for them, but made for the household, and handed on from one servant to another, as a saddle from horse to horse.

I don't know how long the banquet may have lasted, there was such profusion of pastrycooks' viands and fruits and wines. The Governor looked as if he expected Will to die when he took an empty goblet and, dipping it into the clear water, drank it off two or three times filled; though, as we had put into his port for the purpose of getting water for our ships, it did not appear why we should consider it unfit for drink. Had I been enjoying Will's place beside

Donna Rusidda, and able to converse with her elegantly, as he was, I think I should have been content for our *barca* to have swayed gently on the bubbling waters of the spring—to give you some idea of the size of the spring there were four of these *barcas* floating on it at one time—for the rest of that summer day. But I could see that Will was fidgeting to be off, and presently he asked the Admiral if he and I might leap ashore off the high beak of our *barca*, which was overhanging some part of the bank. He made the excuse of some strange flower or the like. The boatman, seeing our intent, uttered some swift warning in Sicilian, which the Governor very politely translated to Will to tell the Admiral; but Master Will only used general terms of its not being safe, and the Admiral said, “My Lord, a jump like that would not frighten my officers.”

But, jumping together, we got more than we bargained for: we shot through the bank like a couple of bullets. We were almost up to our middles in thick black slime, of which you could not have dreamed the possibility so near that transparent water. Luckily for us, or I verily believe we might have been swallowed up, the good-natured boatman had unshipped the oars and held them out to us, and we were able to pull ourselves up on to the *barca*, where we sat on the end to dry our blackened legs in the sun, and presently the *barcas* swung round and dropped down stream.

The sun was now so powerful that long before we were back at the mouth of the river we were dry enough to have accepted the invitation of the courteous Sicilians and gone back among them to sit without fear of soiling them, more especially since we had removed our shoes and stockings—there was much naked-foot work on board ship in those days—but Will said that he could not sit beside ladies in such a plight, and I had never any say but Will’s say, though I did not know what was in his mind.

The town of Syracuse looks as I could imagine the cities of the Bible would have looked, when one sees it from the mouth of the Anapo at the opposite side of the great port on a July noon. Not a film of smoke rises from the low flat roofs of the mellow white-and-yellow houses, which, in their turn, seem to be crouching down within the shadow of the city walls. There is even a temple, for the cathedral is but the Temple of Minerva, with the columns still protruding from the northern face.

I should have said that only Will and I went to the mouth of the river, walking from where the water became too shallow for the *barcas*; the rest of the Admiral's party rumbled off in the coaches to see the ruins of Epipolæ and Achradina, and the Greek castle of Euryalus and the street of tombs, the theatre, amphitheatre, and much more that I cannot remember of ancient Syracuse, though the Admiral had had Mr. Comyn to tell the younger officers about them most carefully. Will and I had been dismissed, as not being in fit condition to ride in gilt coaches with crimson velvet hangings, and had orders to have the barge at the landing-stairs under the Marina at such a time. I know that I was glad to be excused from parading in state round miles of old stones. The Admiral would not willingly miss a stone that had any ancient history hanging about it; and with a guide telling the story first in Sicilian, and the Governor, who was slow at taking the drift, putting it into Italian for Mr. Comyn, and Mr. Comyn, who was slow with his Italian, putting it into English for the Admiral, and the Admiral, not being satisfied, putting his questions and persisting with them till he understood his point, it would be a long day. The roads, too, were such that the coaches went slower than a walk. Will had more in his mind, but this I did not know then.

You may be sure that the Admiral had not embarked on this inland voyage of discovery before he had made certain

that the wind would be lacking to carry the fleet, which had now everything on board, out. Seeing that the day was one of those days without enough air to blow a candle out, he said to Will :

“ I am afraid that we have offended his Chameleonskip after all.” And somehow I believe that Will's translation of this to the Governor was a very lame affair.

CHAPTER VII. — Satisfying a Prince's Honour.

COMING to where the road into the city and the road to the ruins divided, at a spot where a few almost-buried columns marked the site of the ancient market-place—the Agora is the Greek term, I believe—the Prince of Favara and his sister made their excuses and bade their servants drive home to the Mont' alti palace; and here they waited till sunset, within their palace, in the best poor state that the Marchese's reduced circumstances permitted.

Not having received the expected communication—either while Will was in his company on the Anapo, nor in the hours which elapsed in the interval—at sunset, the Prince, with two gentlemen of his acquaintance, rowed out in a private *barca* to the *Vanguard*, there to demand to see Will. Now Will, as it chanced, was the officer on watch, so they found their man easily.

“You will understand why I have come,” said the Prince, adding a great many roundabout and studiedly ceremonious phrases.

“Not I,” said Will, with equally studied carelessness, having noticed something in the Prince's manner.

I was present, and had some inkling that a storm was brewing; though otherwise I knew nothing of what it was about, until I had it from Will afterwards.

“Last night you did my sister, the Princess of Favara, the honour of paying her your addresses in the recognised Sicilian fashion of appealing to the lady herself in the first instance, to know if your attentions would be acceptable. I may tell you that the ladies of a house like ours, if our possessions are diminished, do not make their decision in so brief a period—though this is nothing unusual for people of no family. But though courtships in Sicily are not of long duration, as far as the lady’s decision to accept or reject the addresses is concerned, the accepted suitor goes immediately to the father or guardian, states that he has the lady’s consent, gives an account of his position and property, and, if everything is satisfactory, arrangements are then made. You have not done this. As you did my sister the honour of offering her your attentions, and as she did you the honour of accepting them, I have come here to know why you have not called upon me.”

As Will maintained an air of indifference and silence, the Prince went on to say: “I should have mentioned that there are two circumstances which made my sister accept the suit of a stranger upon so brief an acquaintance. She was aware that your ship will sail as soon as the wind springs up, and it was in defiance of the prophecy that the last of our house will come to an evil end by reason of love for a fair-haired stranger from the north. It is the motto of our family that we fear neither man nor fate, and it has been our pride to live up to our motto. It seemed to both my sister and myself that you were the man indicated by the prophecy, and it was our duty to defy it. When you came below her window last night, she consulted me as to whether you were the man indicated, and as it seemed to us both that you were, she accepted you.”

“But, my good sir,” said Will, speaking very rapidly in his excellent Italian “I am already engaged to another

lady in England. I only understood that serenading was the custom of the country. I was not in the least aware that it constituted an offer of marriage, which I was not in a position to make. However, though I cannot marry your sister, I am perfectly willing to offer you the satisfaction which a gentleman expects; and at four bells—that is, at eight o'clock—till when it is my watch, I shall be at your service. I must trust to you to find a place where we shall not be disturbed."

"The *Latomia dei Cappucini* beside the ancient wheel-well will do excellently, and a carriage shall be waiting at the landing-stage to convey yourself and your seconds at eight o'clock. Will you give me the names of two or your brother officers who may confer with my seconds after you have decided your choice of weapons. It is your choice. I am the challenger, although you anticipated me in expressing your readiness to give me satisfaction."

"The sword is the only weapon for gentlemen," says Will, as fine as you please; though he was but eighteen years old and young in the art of fence, while his adversary, being a Sicilian gentleman and nearer thirty, was like to be an expert swordsman. And then, though they had been so mighty civil to each other as to who was the challenger, I heard the Prince whisper to Will as I went down to the ward-room to see who would act for Will—for, mind you, there was not one of them that liked him—I heard him whisper, "*A l'outrance*," and Will replied, with the most contemptuous indifference, "If you wish it."

Now Will, being the officer on duty, had no time to waste in talking on what I have just writ down, though he must perforce attend to the Sicilian Prince who was come on board about a matter so serious. All he said to me was—"Tell them I am going to fight this Italian at eight o'clock, and ask if any of them will act for me. There is not one of them upon whom I have any personal claim."

It was with some trepidation that I knocked at the door of the ward-room. I knew that most of them were not on terms with him, and had a sinking feeling at my heart that I should have to go back and confess that he had not a friend to serve him in this pinch, in which case the matter would have to remain until the Captain came on board and told off two officers to do it. But when I went in and told my errand, every officer in the room got up and laid his sword on the table. So it fell, of course, to the two seniors present, one of whom was the First Lieutenant, Mr. Galwey; and they spoke in the highest terms of Will; and all present then went on deck.

When the two chosen to act as Will's seconds went forward to meet the Prince's seconds, a most curious thing happened, for, the chaplain being ashore with the Admiral, there was not a man on board save Will who could speak their lingo. So here we had the strange spectacle of the principal in a duel acting as the interpreter between his own and his adversary's seconds.

And, the matter being settled in this fashion, the Prince and his seconds went presently ashore. As soon as he was off watch, Will and his seconds followed, and Will wrote in the boat a line to his mother in the very probable event of his death, though I had no fear but that he would give a good account of himself. Will's seconds had asked that I should be allowed to accompany him as being his nearest friend; and it was granted willingly.

We did not go through the town when we landed, but skirted along the sea front to where the road from the drawbridge conducts to the ruins or ancient Syracuse; and no sooner were we on the mainland, than we turned up to the right and drove for about a mile till we came to the Capuchin nunnery which stands on the brink of one of the most remarkable monuments in the world, the vast Latomia or quarry in which the unfortunate Athenians, captured at

the siege of Syracuse, were confined. The singularity of the Latomia is that the quarries cut into enormous natural caverns, which had existed, probably unknown, beneath a thin shell of stone and earth. They went on quarrying until all the roof of the cavern had been cut away and its sides were as perpendicular as cliffs down to a few feet from the bottom, where fresh caverns, and shallower in depth, begin and stretch away into the bowels of the earth. This Latomia, so vividly described by Thucydides, as Mr. Comyn afterwards told us, seemed about a mile in length, varying in breadth from a few yards to a hundred yards, and was, in depth, of perhaps a hundred feet. It was largely covered with undergrowth, though there were some fine orange and lemon groves, valued, I was told, because, being somewhat sheltered from the sun, they came on when other crops were over. In the centre of one of these lemon groves, near the antique well, was an open glade and a lawn, used I do not know for what purpose. And here the duel was to take place.

No sooner had the fight begun than my worst fears were realised, for I saw by the Prince's pose and the first few passes, that he was a practised swordsman. But he was fighting with a demon rather than with a man. I never saw a human being with such a fighting fury as Will, who sprang at him like a leopard. I do not see, however, how this should have prevailed, with Will's ignorance of fence, had not the mossy ground on which the Prince was standing proved rotten, as mossy ground will at times, the surface rubbing off and leaving a slippery mud. The Prince's foot slipped, and Will struck his sword out of his hand. The Prince called out to him to despatch him; but Will said, with his air, "My honour is satisfied—I am not one to kill a fallen man."

The Prince protested that he should send fresh seconds the next morning, when the seconds on both sides decided

that the duel could not proceed. And so the matter was left.

You can imagine what shakings of the hand we gave Will as we took him back to the landing-place for having defended in such a way the honour of the ship; and I believe that our two lieutenants were settled in their own minds that there should be no second duel, considering the handsome way in which Will had given the Prince his life, though, with one of Will's temper, it was not easy to see how the duel was to be prevented, if the Prince sent fresh seconds, save by the authority of the Captain, who could confine him to the ship, or the Admiral.

Considering that Will was one of the Admiral's staff, the First Lieutenant, his senior second, concluded to lay the whole matter before the Admiral when he came on board. And he came on board very soon afterwards in the highest of spirits, for he always loved a good day ashore as well as any A.B. in his fleet.

"God bless my soul!" cried the Admiral, when he had heard the First Lieutenant's story, which, of course, was told in whispers that I did not overhear, "I'll go and see the young man—His Highness, I suppose I ought to call him—myself. I can't afford to delay the fleet if a breeze springs up to let us get at the French, and I hope that none of my officers will ever shirk a situation."

The barge was still at the gangway, the Lieutenant had hailed them to await orders, and the Admiral prepared to descend.

"Have you supped, sir?" asked the Lieutenant; and the Admiral without pausing replied, "I shall have a better appetite if I wait till this matter is finished."

When he landed a few minutes afterwards, he hired a coach—there are always two or three hackneys at the landing-place with such a large fleet in port—and bade the man drive to the Prince of Favara's. The Prince was

well known in Syracuse, though he had no palace of his own there, but was visiting with his uncle ; and the man drove the Admiral without delay to the Palazzo Mont' alti.

The Admiral, who had taken the chaplain with him as interpreter, in the enforced absence of Will, asked if the Prince were in ; and the porter replied in the affirmative, not knowing that the Prince, who had entered the palace with his seconds immediately after the duel, had left by the garden door and gone to sup in a favourite tavern near the Marina. Three or four servants passed the English officers from the great gate across the courtyard, up the staircase which wound round it, terminating in an arcade, and through a succession of fine chambers into the principal salon, which had a large mirror at each end with a kind of sofa arranged under it, facing about a dozen chairs arranged in a horseshoe. Along the sides of the room were more couches interrupted by mirrors with wide marble shelves in front of them, supported by gilded lions' legs. Lustres hung on each side of the mirrors, and they supported tall Chinese vases on French stands of gilded bronze. The floor was tiled and covered with patterns, a good many tiles going to form each pattern, and there was a small carpet at each end of the room where the chairs were arranged. The Admiral commented on all these to his chaplain, for there was a goodish delay. In fact, they were so busy taking in the details in order to pass the time, that it was only when they heard the light tapping of a woman's heels on the tiles close beside them, that they perceived that some one had entered the room.

The Admiral, as his wont was even over trifles, had been full of animation when he was speaking, which changed to an air of grave respectfulness when he perceived that it was Donna Rusidda herself who had entered. She was alone, out of compliment to the Admiral, or because she did not wish the ancient lady, whom she maintained as

The Admiral

a kind of duenna, to hear what passed between them. The Admiral had brought me with him, saying, "You keep the conscience of our young scapegrace, Trinder: you had best come along and answer for him."

Donna Rusidda naturally did not know the whole of the affair, though she had had it from her maid already that a duel had been fought on her account, which had been terminated by the disarmament of her brother, who had announced his intention of finding fresh seconds to renew it on the following day, as his late seconds would not consent to its being proceeded with. It was, indeed, for this purpose that he had gone to the albergo by the Marina, where, that being a resort of the young bloods, he was likely to meet with friends to accommodate him.

I thought I had never seen any one look more lovely than this girl, whose clear dusky cheeks were flushed till the blood showed rosily through them with the treble excitement. For she had come alone into the presence of strangers, and the strangers were so famous, and come upon a mission which concerned her so closely. And though the Admiral had not then won the victory with which he was shortly to astonish the world, the connection between the noble families of the Two Sicilies and Spain was very strong, their kings being of the same family; and his achievements of taking the two Spanish three-deckers one after the other, with a handful of boarders from his seventy-four, was fresh in their memories. It was this little one-armed man, with the sensitive mouth, who had led the boarders in that heroic fight at St. Vincent.

She was glad she had come in without his noticing her and seen his animation as he was discussing the unfamiliar aspects of the Mont' alti salon with his chaplain. She had seen his natural energy instead of the quiet air of dignity and respect which he put on for her. She had come, she explained, to tell them that her brother was out; she had

despatched a messenger for him, and begged that they would remain and give her the honour of receiving them until her brother arrived. "Meanwhile, might she offer them some slight refreshment?" Servants were entering with fruit and wine and cakes. The Admiral begged her to excuse them. He had come like the Roman Senator of old, who went to Carthage with peace and war in his robe, and he would not break bread in the house of the Mont' alti until he knew whether he should leave them as a friend or an enemy. In fact, now that one of the squadron that he was engaging, to use his metaphor, was in range, he was nothing but a commander. The Admiral, as is well known, was never held to be indifferent to the charm of women; and the slender girl, with her dark beauty thrown up by the white and pearls of her evening attire, was remarkable even among Italian women in their heyday for her exquisite grace. She had, too, the kind of face which might be called, with equal truth, haunting and haunted,—it haunts my memory still,—and she had in her eyes, or perhaps it was in her expression, the look of one born to be the victim of a great misfortune.

The Admiral received her with dignity as well as profound respect, and as the interview proceeded without either side caring to commit itself until the Prince of Favara arrived, this dignity settled into an air of dignified resolution. He looked as I have seen him look when he was going into action, before he had quite settled some detail in the attack. When all was plain fighting, he smiled. As the small, slender figure, braced with the air of a commander's expectancy, stood before her, she had some opportunity of knowing what manner of man this Nelson was, when he was about to hurl a fleet of England on a fleet of France.

I can see it all before me, as distinctly as on the night of that 21st of July, '98: the world's great Admiral, that

was to be, in his attitude of "prepare for action," and the enemy represented by that gentle, half-terrified, half-mystified Southern beauty, with the background of the high, vaulted, half-furnished chamber in the mediæval Sicilian palace. It was now quite dusk, and the candles in the sconces on each side of the mirrors gave only a half light. There were no candles in the vast crystal chandelier which hung from the ceiling.

Presently we heard footsteps through the suite of reception-rooms leading to the salon, and the Prince of Favara entered with his uncle the Marchese, and two other Sicilian gentlemen. The Marchese had, it appeared, gone out with him to assist him in finding seconds. They did not seem so astonished as might have been expected at the presence of Donna Rusidda, for they had spoken with her duenna in the chamber leading immediately into ours. But they had the look of men who had come in full of some excitement, suddenly checked by an important piece of news, and greeted the Admiral with marked civility.

It was clearly for him to speak, and he began with his usual courage and directness. "I have come, your Highness, to express my regret that an officer of my fleet should have been guilty of a practical jest upon a lady; but I understand that he has already given you the satisfaction of a gentleman."

"Your Excellency is mistaken," said the Prince: "I am not satisfied. I have just arranged with these gentlemen, the Conte di Noto and the Conte di Spaccaforno, to seek his seconds and arrange for the completion of the duel *à l'outrance*."

"I understand that he has given you your life, your Highness, which is sufficient satisfaction for any gentleman that I have met in a profession which exists for the purpose of fighting."

"It may be sufficient by the English code, your Excellency,"

said the Prince firmly, but quite courteously ; “ but according to the code of our country such an insult can only be wiped out by the death of one of the combatants. I shall insist on the meeting being resumed, or brand Signor——”

“ Hardres,” said the Admiral.

“ ——as a coward who insulted a lady and then ran away in the great fleet of England.”

“ It seems to me a strange kind of cowardice for a boy of eighteen, just studying the art of fence, to meet a man of thirty, and an accomplished swordsman, and when he has——partly by accident, I will allow——disarmed his adversary, to suffer him to depart untouched, especially when he knows that that adversary had it in his heart to kill him without mercy, and indeed protested that a new duel must be fought.”

But the Prince only replied, “ I shall brand him as a coward.”

“ I think, your Highness,” said the Admiral, with a wicked look upon his face, such as I think I never saw again in all the years that I had the honour of serving under him, “ that you will need all the courage you have to-morrow morning, when the duello is resumed. You will take it up exactly where it ceased. You were lying on your back, I believe, with your sword a dozen yards away in a garlic bed or something of the kind, and Lieutenant Hardres was standing over you, sword in hand. No interference will be tolerated by the guard, which I shall land to see fair play, and the guns of the ships will be trained on Syracuse.”

The Prince’s face did blench as the chaplain translated the words delivered by the Admiral in a voice that was like a volley of grape shot; and after a few minutes’ conference with the Marchese, he replied courteously, but with a quiet ring of sarcasm :—

“ If you will allow me, your Excellency, I will go with you when you return to your ship, and have my throat cut

by Signor Hardres at once. The solution you pronounce is, I see, the correct one. Unfortunately I had no precedent to go upon. A Sicilian, in Signor Hardres's place, would have killed me, as I would have killed him. I am at your service whenever you are ready to go."

The Admiral's face cleared of wrath like the sky after a thunderstorm: he was ever the most generous of men, but he had a look of mystification when Donna Rusidda, who had been present all the while, but had taken no part in the proceedings till this moment, said:

"Uncle Marchese, you have lived many years, and are referred to by every one on matters of manners and breeding." He bowed. "What happens when a lady, having begun by accepting the suit of a cavalier, sees something to make her change her mind and desire to be relieved of the suit?"

"Such a thing was never done in my time, Donna niece, by a lady of a family like ours, but tradition is clear upon the point: the quarrel then belongs to the rejected suitor, who would have the right to ask a gentleman's satisfaction from the kinsman to whom it fell to represent her. But he would also have the right to be indifferent."

"If, then, I say, and I swear by my patron, Santa Rosalia, that it is true, that I am no longer willing to receive the suit of Signor Hardres, the quarrel is, as you say, his, and it will be for him to demand the fresh duello, not for the Prince, my brother."

"It is so," said the Marchese.

"Then, Signor Admiral," said the girl, with a most beautiful expression on her face—which I, not knowing the Sicilians so well as I did afterwards, imagined to express a woman's holy joy in peace-making—"will you have it conveyed to Signor Hardres that I wish to withdraw my acceptance of his suit, and that the quarrel is now his own."

“I can answer for it that your brother will hear no more from him, madam,” replied the Admiral, stooping very low to kiss her hand—for he, too, used the same interpretation as I. “And then, your Excellency,” he said, bowing to the Marchese, “and your Highness,” bowing to the Prince, “as I have full power to represent Lieutenant Hardres, we may regard this incident as at an end. And now, madam,” he added, looking at Donna Rusidda straight in the face with his most gracious smile, “I shall, if you invite me again, partake of this excellent entertainment, for I have not yet supped.”

The invitation was, of course, graciously repeated; and I was glad to see that the Prince had some of his sister’s graciousness, for he took one of the trays—the servants had been sent from the room—and brought it, saying, “Hungry work, your Excellency!” And the smile with which he said this, and the smile with which the Admiral received it, laid the foundation of the friendship which, until its tragical termination, played so conspicuous a part in the Admiral’s life.

CHAPTER VIII.—Of the Battle of the Nile, on the First of August, 1798.

A FEW days later, when a breeze, blowing right out of the Great Port, sprang up, as was its wont, in the afternoon, the fleet made all haste to stand out and away after the French, not before the Admiral had read Master Will a sharp lecture for his folly in getting into such a scrape, and suspended him from personal attendance for two weeks—a sentence which was never finished, for in the meantime events happened of such a magnitude that all everyday matters, except such as had regard to the ships being in their best fighting and sailing trim, were forgotten as completely as if they had been swallowed in the Deluge.

I don't believe that Will was half sorry at the prospect of having to spend the two weeks with his fellow-officers in the ward-room. In the case of friendship between a man of forty and a boy of eighteen, it is almost inevitable that the man must like the boy far more strongly than the boy likes him, and that the man should crave for the boy's society while the boy accepts or tolerates the man's. In the long chase after the French, from the time he left Syracuse on July 25th to the time that he sighted their tops in the afternoon of that memorable August 1st, there were tedious hours, when he felt an intense craving for the boy whom he had adopted more completely than his

own stepson, Josiah Nisbet, who was also a lieutenant on the ship.

But for Will these were pleasant hours. He had up to that minute not only seen but little of his fellow-officers—he had hardly even been on speaking terms with them outside of professional duties. But they could not help feeling that he had done the ship and the service credit by the way in which he had maintained his quarrel against the Prince. And while they regarded the offence of serenading in jest as a very venial one, they regarded his fortnight's suspension as a purely formal punishment. Will might have been quite a hero if his pride had allowed him to be "hail fellow, well met." But it was as impossible for him to change it as it is for a leopard to change his spots or his skin (I forget how the phrase runs), and so he enjoyed a modified kind of popularity, and a much heightened respect from the ward-room at large, while some of the older men, like the First Lieutenant, Mr. Galwey, who had acted for him, made a friend of one who clearly had exceptional qualities. It produced a most unexpected and notable passage in my life; for the Admiral, having accustomed himself to the keeping of Will at his elbow, ready to perform whatever little duty might present itself, was lost without him, and being accustomed to the sight of me, whom he had often admitted as company for Will, used me as a kind of supernumerary until Will's offence should have been condoned.

I must not be taken to imply that he extended to me the strong personal interest which he felt in Will. I had the duties, not the confidence. But nevertheless I saw much of him during that very critical week of his life, and it was at this time that the change came over him—the black shadow of doubt which had kept him irritable and depressed giving way to one of his irresistible convictions.

Not that he had ever been in doubt as to his principles

of action, for he had never had but one principle, and that was to have his cannon within pistol-shot of the French. But he was fearful of not getting there in time; for the French, in his opinion, had two objective points to strike at—the Neapolitan kingdom, which was defenceless without his fleet, and India which was also defenceless if the army in the French fleet should arrive in Egypt with ships of Tippoo Saib waiting at Suez to embark them for India, and no British ships at the mouth of the Nile to prevent their disembarking. I think the greatest ambition in all his life was to destroy Buonaparte and his army of 40,000 men, whom he knew to be in the convoy guarded by the French fleet. We had thirteen ships of the line, but none above seventy-fours—one fifty-gun ship and one brig. Had we had frigates we should have found the French long ere that; for frigates, as even landsmen know, are the eyes of a fleet, and had we possessed frigates they would have been of the highest service in capturing the transports of the convoy. But had we met them I am convinced that the absence of frigates would not have prevented the most terrible calamity which ever befel the French army. The convoy we knew to be immense, to convey such an army and its supplies for a distant expedition; and we knew it to be guarded by a fleet far superior, on paper, to ourselves. I say advisedly on paper, because the presence of our Admiral was of itself sufficient to neutralise the disparity, and because of the disadvantage at which any fleet fights which has not only to defeat an enemy, but also to save its helpless transports.

As far as we could judge from various sources of information, their fleet consisted of sixteen of the line, one of them the tremendous *L'Orient* of 120 guns, and three or four others of eighty, but three of them Venetian and not French, and therefore not likely to be so well served. Besides which they had frigates and a cloud of small armed vessels, gunboats and the like.

But their superiority of force hardly entered into the Admiral's calculations. His orders were the same for whatever force, and had we fallen in with the French the scene must have been appalling ; for recognising the impossibility of rapidly taking possession of so many prizes, especially as they were crowded with armed men and we were without frigates, his orders were to destroy and not to capture.

He may, too, have been urged to this by the belief that the army was commanded by Buonaparte, whom he considered to be the arch-fiend, as he considered all French to be the enemies of the human race.

For the purpose of attacking the convoy, he divided our own fleet into three squadrons : the *Vanguard*, the *Minotaur*, the 50-gun ship *Leander*, the *Audacious*, the *Defence*, and the *Zealous* under himself ; the *Orion*, *Goliath*, *Majestic*, and *Bellerophon* under Captain Saumarez ; and the *Culloden*, *Alexander*, *Swiftsure*, and *Theseus* under Captain Troubridge. Two of these squadrons were to engage the ships of war, no matter what their force, while the third was to dash among the transports and sink and destroy as many as it could. The scene, even to a man-of-war's-man, is awful to picture. Transport after transport settling down by the head or stern, the water covered with their boats and black with struggling men ; Buonaparte, if he were not already on the largest warship, fleeing to it ; half the British warships engaging every French fighting-ship till they sank themselves or had sunk, taken or driven their antagonists to desert the convoy, and the others running in among the transports and thrashing them down like apples off a tree.

But it was not to be so : the Admiral's prophecy was literally fulfilled as far as that convoy, the most momentous which ever left the shores of France, was concerned—“no frigates ; to which has been and may again be attributed the loss of the French fleet.”

You may imagine how it weighed upon such a mind,

to have the *élite* of my Lord St. Vincent's fleet under his command for some weeks, and with the enemy about to strike some vital blow—and yet no sign of him! He wrote to Troubridge—"Do not fret at anything: I wish I never had; but my return to Syracuse in 1798 broke my heart, which on any extraordinary anxiety now shows itself—be that feeling pain or pleasure"; and again, "On the 18th I had near died with the swellings of some of the vessels of the heart. More people, perhaps, die of broken hearts than we are aware of." And he wrote to his chief, Lord St. Vincent: "Every moment I have to regret the frigates having left me. Your lordship deprived yourself of frigates to make mine certainly the first squadron in the world, and I feel that I have zeal and activity to do credit to your appointment, and yet to be unsuccessful hurts me most sensibly. But if they are above water I will find them out, and if possible bring them to battle. You have done your part in giving me so fine a fleet, and I hope to do mine in making use of them." And added to this he had the mortification of seeing the Neapolitan Government, whose forces were hardly worthy a place in the line of battle, refusing supplies which was the one service they could perform for the allies without whose fleet they felt like children left in the dark to wolves. The loss of frigates by the pusillanimity of the commander, who returned to Gibraltar because he thought that Nelson must give up, being baffled as to the whereabouts of the French fleet, the ingratitude of the Neapolitans, the malignity of Admirals Parker and Orde, who had been passed over because the safety of Europe depended on the fleet's winning a decisive victory, weighed heavily on the Admiral's spirits, and brought on that irritability and sickness which so frequently followed inaction and disappointment in this extraordinary fighter. But for some reason, the fair wind which carried us out of the great harbour of Syracuse blew away these

vapours from his brain. He augured that we were on the scent, and the confidence and cheerfulness borne of good omens returned to him. We had a fine stiff sailing breeze, and he crowded on every stitch of canvas we could use, although the flagship, which had never been properly repaired since the gale which had dismasted her off Toulon, was hardly in a condition to bear it. We stood straight for Cerigo, which is the island that lies at the foot of the Morea, as some island lies broken off at the foot of every peninsula. As we neared the Gulf of Koron, having no frigates, the *Culloden* was detailed to enter it for intelligence; and on her return the next day she brought with her a French brig, and information that the enemy's fleet had been seen steering south-east from Kandia about fourteen days before. And on the same day Captain Ball of the *Alexander* obtained the like intelligence from a vessel passing close to the fleet. The Admiral immediately bore up under all sail for Alexandria. We left Syracuse on July 25th, and made such an extraordinary passage that on the evening of the 31st the Admiral made the signal for the fleet to close, we being so near Alexandria. Early on the morning of the 1st, we having no frigates, the *Alexander* and the *Swiftsure* were sent ahead to look out; and "at ten a.m. the *Alexander* made a signal supposed for the land, all the fleet in company." At four o'clock the Pharos Tower was visible in that clear atmosphere, from where I was standing by the Admiral on the poop, though it was at the distance of four or five leagues to the south-south-west. The Admiral was by this time extraordinarily anxious in scanning every ship in the fleet, and the whole horizon with the eye of an eagle.

Suddenly I saw what I can only describe as a holy joy beam over his face. The *Zealous* was signalling, and almost before the signalling began he cried out, "My God! it's the French."

The Admiral

Sure enough it was the French. And as the signal blew out stiff on the north-west wind—"the French fleet, sixteen sail of the line"—a thrill of joy went through every soul in the ship, and, I can swear, in all the other ships. Men laughed and cried; their hearts were too full for them to cheer. There was but one thought in every breast, that the Lord had delivered the French into the hands of Gideon—Gideon, the little man with only one arm and one eye, and halt a constitution, over whom I, the midshipman, standing by his side to take orders, towered.

His first order was a most characteristic one: "Send for Mr. Hardres—this is a moment at which no fighting man should be in disgrace." His next was to order dinner to be prepared. That we should fight, every one in the fleet took for granted. It was not the Admiral's habit to leave the enemy time to prepare. To force them to risk he would take any risk himself. In those latitudes, where there is no twilight, day drops dead into night, even on an August day, before seven of the clock. It would be as much as we could do to lay alongside of them before nightfall. We should have to fight them in absolute darkness. But the Admiral reckoned every difficulty in his favour. He had some opinion of French gunnery, but none of their courage as seamen; while of his own captains he had the highest opinion, and placed the firmest reliance on them for valour and conduct. It had been his practice during the whole of the cruise, whenever the weather and circumstances would permit, to have his captains on board the *Vanguard*, where he would fully develop to them his own ideas as to the different and best modes of attack, and such plans as he proposed to execute upon falling in with the enemy, whatever their position or situation might be, by day or by night. There was no possible position which could be found that he did not take into his calculation, and or the most advantageous attack of which he had not

digested or arranged the best possible disposition of the force which he commanded. With the masterly ideas of the Admiral, therefore, on the subject of naval tactics every one of the captains was most thoroughly acquainted; and upon surveying the situation of the enemy they could ascertain with precision what were his ideas and intentions without the aid of any further instructions, by which means signals became almost unnecessary, much time was saved, and the attention of every captain could almost undistractedly be paid to the conduct of his particular ship—a circumstance from which upon this occasion the advantages to the general service were almost incalculable.

We found the enemy laying at anchor in line of battle in a bay upon the larboard, which we afterwards knew to be Aboukir Bay. Having given his orders about Will and the dinner with apparent unconcern, of which I doubt not, now, he had judged the moral effect, he turned to the Captain—"Haul on the wind, Berry!"

A top-gallant breeze was blowing, and the Captain gave orders to take in the royals as we hauled upon the wind. The whole squadron followed suit except the *Alexander* and *Swiftsure*, which were some miles to the eastward, scouting; and the *Culloden*, which was some miles to the westward, towing a prize of which the whole fleet had been talking till it saw the tall masts of the French—a vessel loaded with wine.

"Signal the *Alexander* and *Swiftsure*," said the Admiral; his quick eye had seen that Troubridge had already divined and cast off the wine brig. "Signal, 'Prepare for battle—attack the van and centre.'"

Every captain knew that the Admiral's idea was to crush the enemy's van and centre as they lay at anchor, according to the oft-discussed plan, and then make the best use he could of the victory. Each ship got a bower cable out abaft and bent it forward. We stood in close line of battle,

every ship sounding all the time carefully. There was not a chart of the Bay in the whole fleet, except a rude sketch taken by Captain Hallowell in a prize. The French were lying under the shelter of the cape, and with the head of their van up to the island, which had a battery of guns and mortars, and they were flanked by numerous gunboats and four frigates.

"Stiff work, sir," said the Captain, eyeing the formidable array with its communications to the land secured at either end.

"Might be worse, Berry," replied the Admiral, looking at them with the eye of a seaman determined on attack. And as ideas began to chase through his eager and penetrating mind, he jerked out, "They can't get away anyhow, they're anchored,—and where there's room for an enemy's ship to swing there is room for one of ours to anchor."

"Are you going to force the passage, sir, and take them on the inside?"

"Of course: they're so strongly secured on the outside that the guns won't be manned on the inside. If I know the French they won't even be cleared for action, for they didn't expect us, Berry. You can wager that they felt sure of having till to-morrow, even after they saw us coming in. Who leads, Berry?"

"The *Goliath*."

"Foley won't want any telling. It was this plan which took his imagination so that night, in case we had an enemy supported by the shore. See, there he goes, brave fellow!" he shouted, as Foley, coming up to the leading French vessel, the *Guerrier*, and receiving her fire at considerable disadvantage while half her men were aloft preparing to furl sail, swung round her, and to the vast astonishment of her company tried to bring up on her inner side. In this he failed, in spite of all his precautions: the anchor hung, and he found himself on the inner quarter of the *Conquérant*,

the second ship. The *Zealous*, which was close behind him, anchored abreast of the *Guerrier*; and the *Orion*, *Theseus*, and *Audacious*, the next three ships, followed them inside; the *Audacious* bringing up on the bow of the *Conquérant*; the *Theseus* abreast of the *Spartiate*, but dividing her fire between the hapless *Conquérant* and the *Aquilon*; and the *Orion* dividing hers between the *Peuple Souverain* and the *Franklin*.

While they were taking up their positions, and had the best part of their ships' companies engaged in navigating the ships, they should have been very severely handled by the French. But the Admiral's instinct was, as ever, correct: the larboard guns which trained on the land were neither manned nor ready. The French, of course, did all they could in the time to reply to the English fire; but their hurried attempts were unavailing, and in three minutes' time every mast of the *Guerrier* and *Conquérant* was overboard, though they were bare sticks without a sail set. We were the sixth ship—you must bear in mind that our fleet at this moment only consisted of ten ships, because the *Alexander* and *Swiftsure* were away to leeward, and the *Culloden* away to windward, and the *Leander*, which was but a fifty-gun ship, was a long way behind. I suppose the Admiral had chosen this place, sixth in the line, because it was doubtful whether the vessel in this place should follow the other five or lead on the outside. You can imagine that we, who had never seen a shot fired from the ship, were in a fine state of excitement. I suppose I must have winced as a round shot went through the mizzen-stay close to where I was in attendance on the Admiral, for he patted me on the shoulder and said to me, "How do you like that music?" he having on his own face his fighting smile of serene superiority. Indeed, he had not long since come up from his dinner, which was being served when we came into range of the French guns.

We did not reply for some time : we had to pay so much attention to navigating ; and I own that, though I became as indifferent to fire as becomes an English sailor, I was a little startled at finding the shot whizzing over us steadily when I followed the Admiral up on deck. He had been good-naturedly allowing me to eat at his table.

"Never you mind, youngster," he said, as he patted me. "D'ye know that Charles XII. ran away from the first shot he heard, though afterwards called the Great because of his bravery. I therefore hope much of you in future."

This put me on my mettle, especially as Will was there with his proud fair face flushed with the fighting fever, and helping to carry a man, who was pouring out blood, to the companion ; for, mind you, it is one thing to have round shot coming close enough to hear them whistle, and another thing to see a man, who has been your shipmate for months, bleeding to death in your arms in the first quarter of an hour of your first battle.

"Where shall I lay the ship, sir ?" asked the Captain.

"Alongside of the first ship that has any fight in her."

"There is no one engaged with number three, sir, though she is getting a few shot from the *Goliath* and the *Theseus*. She's in line with them, sir : I'm afraid some of our shot may hit them."

"Not if you lay her at the right distance, Berry. Half a pistol shot is a very good distance for fighting ; you can be sure of your shot not going wild then."

"How would it do, sir, if we reduced our sail to working order and passed under her stern, and laid ourselves on the inside of the next ? We shall be a bit awkwardly placed if we lay ourselves alongside of the third of their line, because we shall be raked by the fourth."

"No, Berry ; it would never do for the Admiral to be afraid of a broadside."

This was very fine and completely in the spirit of our

Admiral ; but I can tell you that we had to pay for it, for while we had been coming up the *Aquilon* was double shooting her guns for us.

“Shorten sail,” was the order, and “Back the main top-sail.” As we laid ourselves alongside of the third ship—that was the *Spartiate*, the fourth—that was the *Aquilon*, raked us with double-shotted guns. The concussion was awful ; the crashing of masts and yards, and the yells and death groans which arose from our bows, attested the precision of their aim. The men in the fore-castle would have been fairly staggered if it had not been for Will. I could see St. Vincent’s men looking as if they had received their death-warrant ; and I am sure I felt quite sick, as I was covered with human blood spouting from the quivering limbs and mangled bodies all round. But Will, who was scarce nineteen, with colour unchanged and eyes flashing brighter, exposed himself in the most reckless and daring manner, and this in spite not only of the cannonade but of a tremendous fire of musketry. Time after time our forward guns were cleared for a minute and re-manned.

There was the usual serio-comedy which creeps into the most awful moments of our lives ; for there in the midst of it all was a marine lying, apparently dead, on the deck. Not being able to see how he came by his death, Will turned him over to examine, and found that he was not only alive but uninjured. Drawing his sword Will obliged the man to rise under pain of immediate death ; and, you would not believe it, the poor wretch had scarcely stood upright, when a bar that connects grape shot passed through both thigh-bones and could not be extricated. After two days of torture death relieved his sufferings. While Will himself stood upright and uninjured, and while he was attending to this one, the marine who stood on his other side, waiting to take his order, had his head carried off by a thirty-two pounder, while a large splinter from the foremast stripped

the right thigh-bone of the midshipman who was with him from the knee-pan to the hip. He lived to the next day, and then sank under his sufferings.

By this we were nearly unmanageable, and cracking masts and yards in close contact with the *Spartiate*.

Presently the Admiral came along, cool as an orange ; and though I was getting a little accustomed now to the awful scene that was going on round me, I was not particularly sorry when he called to me :

“Youngster, get the number of wounded from the surgeon.”

But when I entered the cockpit, stumbling over the wounded, and came to the surgeon’s assistants, I own I was unnerved a little, for I found them busily employed taking our old Quartermaster’s right arm out of the socket, whose only son, well known to me, I had just seen broken to pieces by a round shot which dashed him into the gun he was serving.

“Is my boy doing well, sir?” he gasped in a low agonised voice.

“I hope so,” I answered reverently, and I felt fit to choke, and the old man groaned heavily. He suspected the truth from the tone of my voice.

“Pour a glass of Madeira down his throat,” said the surgeon : “he is sinking fast.”

The complication of noises in this den of misery, from the shrill cry from agonised youth to the deep and hollow groan of death, the imprecations of some and the prayers of others, the roaring of the guns, and the hopes and fears that pervaded the wounded, formed a very shocking scene, and is still deeply impressed on my memory. But nothing shocked me so much as the cold hard voice of the surgeon : “I am too busy to count the wounded—say the cockpit is full, and some bad cases.”

I took this to the Admiral, who was back on the poop,

with men and spars dropping all round him. He took no notice of me: all he said was, "I think their fire slackens, Mr. Vassall," addressing one of our lieutenants.

"I am sure of it, sir: many of the crew have deserted their guns."

He was not, it must be observed, talking of the *Aquilon*, the ship which had dealt us such awful mischief, but of the *Spartiate*, which we were engaging. He took no notice of the *Aquilon*: we hardly returned a gun to her.

"Louis will see to that," he said (Captain Louis was of the *Minotaur*, the next in our line): "I am engaging the *Spartiate* till she strikes."

Down came the tricoloured flag, and "Cease firing" resounded all along our decks.

Our Captain himself had but half a cocked hat, the other half having been carried off by a round shot that entered his cabin when he had gone to serve out something to a couple of seamen, and drenched it with their blood. Mr. Galwey, our First, and a party of marines, were sent to take possession.

Before this the fire of the *Aquilon* had slackened off, for the *Minotaur*, which had engaged her, gave her such a terrible yard-to-yard gruelling that the heart was taken out of her fighting. This was fortunate, for we had to send for her captain to receive a dying message from the Admiral, who wished to thank him for the way he had saved our ship by laying himself alongside of the *Aquilon*. We could not have stood that raking many minutes longer.

I have not described the mighty exploits of our captains who conquered the French centre as such should be chronicled, for we of the flagship were confronted with an event before which any other incident of the battle seemed but of small importance, for the Admiral was struck down, as we feared, mortally wounded.

He was walking on the deck, exposing himself like the

commonest sailor, as was his wont, when a flying piece of iron from a charge of langridge struck him upon the upper part of the forehead, and cut a great piece of skin at right angles. This hung down over his face, covering his seeing eye, and further blinding him with the terrific stream of blood. He was at the time, though it may scarcely be credited in the midst of such a terrible cannonade, calmly examining the rough sketch map of the Bay which had been found in a French ship by Captain Hallowell; and he afterwards made a jest of the French taking a mean advantage of him, and hitting him when he was not looking. But he did not jest at the time; he just reeled and fell into the arms of the Captain. I was by him, of course, for I was still on this duty, and distinctly heard him say, "I am killed! Remember me to my wife!"—a circumstance which I always did remember, contrasting it with what he said at Trafalgar about Lady Hamilton.

I will not pretend to judge Lady Nelson: indeed, I have not seen her above once or twice, when she seemed to me the ordinary Admiral's wife, whom one would meet in such a place as this in which I live, in times of peace. What faults she had were just the faults such a woman would have, and they included the fault of being totally unable to satisfy such an intense, imaginative, romantic temperament as the Admiral's. I was in service under that great man for years, and I think that the whole episode of his unhappy marriage, and his much reprobated relation with Lady Hamilton, may be summed up in the fact that his was a nature that demanded to be monopolised by a woman. How to monopolise, Lady Nelson neither knew nor cared, and there was ready to step into her place one of the most remarkable and companionable women of history.

"I am killed! Remember me to my wife," cried our beloved Admiral; and instantly Will and I and two or three others—the hard, cold Will, with tears streaming down his

face—ran to Captain Berry's assistance, and carried him down to the cockpit.

The surgeon, hearing who it was, flew to him; but he cried out, "No, I will take my turn with my brave fellows," and immediately afterwards he added—"Do not waste your time over me. I am a dying man. Tend those who can be saved, and call me the chaplain." And when the chaplain came he told him twice over to carry his dying remembrance to Lady Nelson, and to summon Captain Louis from the *Minotaur*, which was just ahead of us, and had saved us from the tremendous raking of the *Aquilon*. Captain Louis came very quickly, and the Admiral thanked him as the saviour of his ship. The captain could only hold out his hand in silent sorrow. The Admiral bade him an affectionate farewell. "And now," said he, "whatever may become of me, my mind is at peace."

The surgeon then insisted on examining his wound, which he found, except for the concussion, to be of a trifling nature, though it was some time before he could convince the Admiral of this. But as soon as he had done so, the Admiral sought for some means to allay the tremendous excitement under which he was naturally labouring, while winning so glorious a victory, so he began to write a despatch to the Admiralty. The secretary, who was himself wounded, was so affected by the Admiral's condition that he was unable to guide his pen, so the Admiral sent for the chaplain, and though he came almost immediately he grew so impatient of waiting for him that he commenced to write himself, with his trembling left hand :—

"My Lord,—Almighty God has blest His Majesty's arms——." He had written but little when Captain Berry came down to report that the French Admiral's flagship, the tremendous *Orient* of 120 guns, was on fire; and, severely wounded as he was, the Admiral instantly staggered up on

deck, where the first consideration that struck his mind was concern for the danger of so many lives.

But now I must return to the progress of the battle. And here I may remark that in only one instance did a British ship fail to get a signal advantage of the Frenchman engaged, and that, oddly enough, was the *Bellerophon*, which afterwards became so historical. And she paid for her temerity in engaging a ship so tremendously her superior in number of guns as the *Orient*, which mounted 120 to her 74, the disparity in weight of metal being almost double as great. But she held on to the *Orient* like the British bull-dog that she was, till her masts and cables having been entirely shot away, she drifted out of line to the lee side of the Bay, and was saved in spite of herself.

The five ships which engaged the French on the outside, where they had concentrated their force, should naturally have suffered the most severely, as indeed the *Bellerophon*, the *Majestic*, our ship, and the *Minotaur* did ; but the *Defence*, like the *Zealous*, bore charmed lives. She had but four men killed and eleven men wounded, though she laid herself alongside of the *Peuple Souverain*, almost as close as we lay to the *Spartiate*. Her immunity illustrated the value of the Admiral's theory of concentrating your force on part of the enemy and risking the rest. Instead of having the fire of a second Frenchman raking her bows, as we had, she was engaged with the Frenchman which had a second English ship, the *Orion*, pouring broadsides into her almost undefended larboard side. The *Majestic*, too, which was the only ship that lost her captain, owed her great loss to fouling the *Heureux* as she passed on to her duel with the *Mercure*, which resulted in the latter's capture.

The *Zealous* was wonderful. She had but one man killed and seven wounded, and preserved even her rigging so uninjured that she alone of all the fleet was in a position to chase the two unengaged French ships of the line, and

the two frigates which made their escape the next morning, and yet she had been in the first of the fight.

The battle was practically won in the first few minutes. The action did not begin till forty minutes past six, and by fifty minutes past the *Guerrier* had been dismasted and captured, and ten minutes after that the *Spartiate* and the *Conquérant* were almost dismasted and ready to be taken possession of, while the *Aquilon* and the *Peuple Souverain* were taken possession of at half-past eight.

By the overpowering of the first three ships the fleets were ten to ten when night closed in at seven o'clock. This was partly neutralised by the *Bellerophon's* drifting out of action, shortly before the *Orient* blew up, a good deal owing to her fire, though she was blown out of action herself.

But this in turn was neutralised by a fortunate accident. As I have mentioned, the *Culloden*, *Alexander* and *Swiftsure* were some miles from the rest of the fleet when the action commenced, but the former saw and at once abandoned her prize, and the latter, too, were signalled to return. The *Culloden*, running down the wind, naturally had the advantage of the others, which were beating up, but it was dark before any of them could approach. Now, there was not a man in all our fleet, saving the Admiral, with such a stomach for fighting as Captain Troubridge; and in his anxiety to support his chief, he did not proceed with quite the coolness of Captain Foley, of the *Goliath*, who led our van in rounding the shoal, and shared with the Admiral the credit of keeping such a steady and seamanlike course when every minute reduced our chance of taking up our anchorage by daylight. Captain Foley of course had daylight, and Captain Troubridge had not; but Troubridge was essentially a fighter, willing to take any number of risks in the face of an enemy. The result was that the *Culloden* stuck on the tail of the shoal, and lay there bumping heavily. The loss of such a formidable fighter as Captain Troubridge probably saved

the *Généreux* and the *Guillaume Tell*, the two French ships of the line which got away on the following day; but he himself generously said that he believed it helped to win the battle, by letting such good men as Captain Ball and Captain Hallowell, who were certainly two of the finest captains in the fleet, sail straight on into the battle without having to feel their way—which they did, for the *Culloden*, hanging on the edge of the shoal and exhibiting lanterns and other signals, served as a kind of lighthouse.

It must not be supposed that men like Captain Ball and Captain Hallowell passed their stranded consort without the endeavour to tow her off, on which the little *Leander* of fifty guns had already been engaged for some time; but Captain Troubridge was soon convinced of the hopelessness of the task, and rightly judged that the instant arrival of three ships in the battle was of more consequence than trying to deliver his own ship. They therefore, though very unwillingly, cast off and proceeded to take their places in the line.

As I have said, the fortunate accident of their deferred arrival crushed the French centre. For when the *Orient*, although she had blown the *Bellerophon* out of action, discovered that her poop was on fire, up came two of the best ships and the stoutest captains of our Navy, not to mention the little *Leander*, which did yeoman's service on that day. The *Swiftsure*, Captain Hallowell, at once anchored on the *Orient's* starboard bow, while the *Alexander*, taking advantage of the defective ordering of Admiral Brueys which left five hundred yards between each pair of ships, passed under the stern of the *Orient*, and raking her with a terrific broadside, reserved after the English fashion till she was within a few feet, took up her position on the great ship's inner quarter. Both English captains noted the fire on the French flagship, and training their upper guns on the spot where it was raging, effectually

prevented any attempt to save the ship. With their flagship as helpless as a bee in the meshes of a couple of spiders, the misfortunes of the French did not cease, for the cables of the *Peuple Souverain* being shot away, she drifted from her position to the quarter of the *Franklin*, where she was raked by the *Orion*. Her drifting also left a gap of a thousand feet in front of the *Franklin*, of which the fifty-gun *Leander* took advantage with the utmost coolness, calmly anchoring across the bows of the French eighty-gun ship, and raking her with broadside after broadside. And thus the battle raged till just about ten o'clock, when the *Orient*, which like the *Heureux* and *Tonnant* had been completely in our power for some time, blew up.

The French ships who were on her lee had slipped their cables and drifted some minutes before this, but Captain Ball resolutely refused to budge before the destruction of the *Orient* was made inevitable, as a result of which portions of the burning ship fell upon the *Alexander*, and indeed ignited one of her 'tops,' which was happily extinguished.

The crew of the *Orient* themselves, except such as were engaged in trying to extinguish it, had not noticed it until a dense volume of black smoke suddenly burst up from below, and with it a great flare of flame, which rose from the quarter-deck, giving the ship the appearance of a volcano, and reached the mainsail. Those who were on the *Alexander*, which hung on to the *Orient* up to that minute, say they never saw anything more awful than the aces of the doomed hundreds on which the glare was reflected.

"What boats have we, Berry?" inquired the Admiral, when he staggered up in the midst of his own agony. Now that his execrated French were helpless, the prey of the fire or the deep, he had only one thought and that was to save them.

"We have only a cutter, sir."

“Lower away, first Lieutenant in charge; and you, Trinder, go with him and steer.”

Oh God! it was a sickening sight. The sea was covered with struggling sailors; our boats under a tremendous fire, which the guns, that had been left loaded as the men scrambled up for their lives, sent forth, were full to sinking. At length we came to the point when we could not take one more; and it was all we could do, by putting on a racing stroke, with the sharp fall of the oars rendering it unsafe to approach, to keep ourselves from being pulled under.

Under the stern of the burning ship, to get away from the shot of the 120 guns, were to be seen hundreds of men swimming and floating on spars: the other French ships had all gone too far off to help, giving a wide berth to the expected explosion of the magazines; but as fast as they could come, the boats from the English ships, regardless of all danger, loading with the swimmers, dashed into the very mouth of destruction to receive those who were unable to swim, and hung on to the blazing ship to the last. The flames now shot high above the masthead, reminding me of the picture of Vesuvio worked in silk by one of the foretopmen, which hung in the Admiral's stateroom. It was very terrible, joined to the cries of the young, the groans of the wounded, and the shouts and yelling of the burning. I think the shrieks will ring in my ears for ever; and the darting of the forked flames from yard to yard and mast to mast, until they soared above the clouds and illuminated the most minute object, making all as distinct as the meridian sun, and the numberless sinking and struggling sailors, made up a veritable pandemonium.

About ten o'clock the great ship, that gave an idea of a world in conflagration, blew up. There was an awful pause and deathlike silence for about three minutes, when the wreck of the masts, yards, and so on, which had been

carried to a vast height, fell down into the water and on board the surrounding ships. A port-fire fell into the main-royal of the *Alexander*, but the fire occasioned by it was extinguished in about two minutes by the active exertions of Captain Ball, who, meaning all along to stand by, had been sluicing his decks and rigging. After this awful scene the firing was recommenced with the ships to leeward of the centre till twenty minutes past ten, when there was a total cessation of firing for about ten minutes; after which it was revived till about three in the morning, when it again ceased. After the victory had been secured in the van, such British ships as were in a condition to move had gone down upon the fresh ships of the enemy, which occasioned these renewals of the fight, all of which terminated with the same happy success in favour of our flag.

At five minutes past five in the morning the two rear ships of the enemy, *Le Guillaume Tell* and *Le Généreux*, were the only French ships of the line that had their colours flying. At fifty-four minutes past five a French frigate, *L'Artemise*, fired a broadside and struck her colours; but such was the unwarrantable and infamous conduct of the French captain that, after having thus surrendered, he set fire to his ship, and with part of his crew made his escape on shore. Another of the French frigates, *La Sérieuse*, had been sunk by the fire from some of our ships; but as her poop remained above water, her men were saved upon it, and were taken off by our boats in the morning. The *Bellerophon*, whose masts and cables had been entirely shot away, could not retain her situation abreast of the *Orient*, but had drifted out of the line to the leeside of the bay a little before that ship blew up. The *Audacious* was in the morning detached to her assistance. At eleven o'clock *Le Généreux* and *Le Guillaume Tell*, with the two frigates *La Justice* and *La Diane*, cut their cables and stood out to sea, pursued by

the *Zealous*, Captain Hood, who, as the Admiral himself has stated, handsomely endeavoured to prevent their escape; but as there was no other ship in a condition to support the *Zealous* she was recalled. The whole day of the 2nd was employed in securing the French ships that had struck, and which were now all completely in our possession, *Le Tonnant* and *Le Timoléon* excepted; as these were both dismasted, and consequently could not escape, they were naturally the last of which we thought of taking possession.

On the morning of the 2nd, although the time and attention of the Admiral and all the officers of his squadron were very fully employed in repairing the damages sustained by their own ships and in securing those of the enemy which their valour had subdued, yet the mind of that great and good man felt the strongest emotion of the most pious gratitude to the Supreme Being for the signal success which by His Divine favour had crowned his endeavours in the cause of his country; and, in consequence, he issued the following memorandum to the respective captains of the squadron:—

*“ Vanguard, off the Mouth of the Nile,
“ 2nd August, 1798.*

“ Almighty God, having blessed His Majesty's arms with victory, the Admiral intends returning public thanksgiving for the same at two o'clock this day; and he recommends every ship doing the same as soon as convenient.”

Horatio Nelson

At two o'clock accordingly on that day, public service was performed on the quarter-deck of the *Vanguard* by the Rev. Mr. Comyn, the other ships following the example

of the Admiral, though perhaps not all at the same time. This solemn act of gratitude to heaven seemed to make a very deep impression upon several prisoners, both officers and men; some of the former of whom remarked, "that it was no wonder we could preserve such order and discipline, when we could impress the minds of our men with such sentiments after a victory so great, and at a moment of such seeming confusion." On the same day the following memorandum was issued to all the ships, expressive of the Admiral's sentiments of the noble exertions of the different officers and men of his squadron:—

" *Vanguard*, off the Mouth of the Nile,
" 2nd August, 1798.

" The Admiral most heartily congratulates the Captains, Officers, Seamen, and Marines of the Squadron he has the honour to command, on the event of the late Action; and he desires they will accept his most sincere and cordial Thanks for their very gallant behaviour in this glorious Battle. It must strike forcibly every British Seaman, how superior their conduct is, when in discipline and good order, to the riotous behaviour of lawless Frenchmen.

" The Squadron may be assured the Admiral will not fail, with his Dispatches, to represent their truly meritorious conduct in the strongest terms to the Commander-in-Chief.

"HORATIO NELSON."

On the morning of the 3rd, the *Timoléon* was set fire to, and *Le Tonnant* had cut her cable, and drifted on shore; but that active officer, Captain Miller, of the *Theseus*, soon got her off again, and secured her in the British line. The British force engaged consisted of twelve ships of seventy-four guns, and the *Leander* of fifty.

I have often wondered if Buonaparte, who was with the army landed from that fleet, witnessed the battle from the shore. I cannot recall that he makes mention anywhere

The Admiral

of having done so; but I cannot conceive a general who took such minute note of every little incident in his own battles resting content without seeing a battle which he knew to be in progress, and certain to affect his fortunes in such a wonderful way. If he did, he must have been impressed by the knowledge that there was one element which he could not command, and which might always mar his fondest schemes.

CHAPTER IX.—How the Admiral began his friendship with Lady Hamilton.

A LETTER FROM LADY HAMILTON TO THE ADMIRAL.

“ Naples, September 8th, 1798.

“ My dear, dear Sir,—How shall I begin? What shall I say to you? 'Tis impossible I can write, for since last Monday I am delirious with joy, and assure you I have a fever caused by agitation and pleasure! Good God! what a victory! Never, never has there been anything half so glorious, so complete! I fainted when I heard the news, and fell on my side, and am hurt. But what of that? I should feel it a glory to die in such a cause. No, I would not like to die till I see and embrace the victor of the NILE. How shall I describe to you the transports of Maria Caroline? 'Tis not possible. She fainted, and cried, kissed her husband, her children, walked frantic with pleasure about the room, cried, 'kissed and embraced every person near her, exclaiming—' Oh, brave Nelson! Oh, God bless and protect our brave deliverer! Oh! Nelson! Nelson! what do we owe to you! Oh, victor, saviour of Italy! Oh, that my swollen heart could now tell him personally what we owe to him!'

“ You may judge, my dear sir, of the rest; but my head will not permit me to tell you half of the rejoicing. The Neapolitans are mad, and if you was here now you would be killed with kindness. Sonnets on sonnets, illuminations, rejoicing. Not a French dog dare show his face. How I glory in the honour of my country and my countryman! I walk and tread in the air with pride,

The Admiral

feeling that I was born on the same land with the victor Nelson and his gallant band. But no more. I cannot, dare not, trust myself, for I am not well.

"Little dear Captain Hoste will tell you the rest. He lives with us in the day, for he will not sleep out of his ship, and we love him dearly.

"He is a fine good lad. Sir William is delighted with him, and says he will be a second Nelson. If he is only half a Nelson he will be superior to all others.

"I send you two letters from my adorable Queen. One was written to me the day we received this glorious news; the other yesterday. Keep them, as they are her own handwriting. I have kept copies only; but I feel that you ought to have them. If you had seen our meeting after the battle—but I will keep it all for your arrival; I could not do justice to her feelings or my own, with writing it. We are preparing your apartment against you come. I hope it will not be long, for Sir William and I are so impatient to see and embrace you.

"I wish you could have seen our house the three nights of the illuminations: it was covered with your glorious name; there were three thousand lamps, and there should have been three millions if we had had time. All the English vied with each other in celebrating this most gallant and ever-remarkable victory. Sir William is ten years younger since the happy news, and he now only wishes to see his friend to be completely happy. How he glories in you when your name is mentioned! He cannot contain his joy. For God's sake come to Naples soon!

"We receive so many sonnets and letters of congratulation. I send you some of them, to show you how your success is felt here. How I felt for poor Troubridge! He must have been so angry on the sandbank—so brave an officer! In short, I pity all those who were not in the battle. I would have been rather an English powder-monkey or a swab in that great victory than an emperor out of it. But you will be tired of all this. Write or come soon, to rejoice your ever sincere and obliged friend,

Emma Hamilton

The man we brought up from the albergo near the Castel Nuovo to the Ambassador's palace in an Embassy coach, softened with a mountain of cushions, did not, to the ordinary onlooker, give much idea of the man who, as darkness was falling, hesitated not a moment to sail without a pilot or a chart between the French line of battle and a shoaling shore. But we, who were privileged to see that extraordinary man during every hour of his daily life, were well accustomed to the spectacle of him prostrated with sickness—from which, however, the chance of a battle would rouse him, like the sound of a trumpet, into the martial, alert little figure that seemed to the men who were to follow his orders to death, like the angel who came down to smite the hosts of Sennacherib.

In spite of his prostration from fever and wounds, he had insisted on donning his full Admiral's uniform—he was going to visit the Representative of his Sovereign, and to the day of his death he never spoke of King George III. save as Our Good and Great King.

Will and I were of his party—Will was in his own coach: his touch soothed the Admiral more than any in the ship, though it was not to be in requisition so much thereafter. I was to do kind of orderly's work, which would in ordinary cases be performed by some one before the mast; but the Admiral, with the kindness which never failed, judged that Will, being away from the ship, would like to have a mate, and that I should serve best.

The palace was hardly like the generality of palaces of that date, for the great state staircase of red marble which conducted to the principal rooms—they, as is the wont in Italy, being on the first floor and not level with the ground as in England—was inside the palace instead of winding round the courtyard outside the inner face of the quadrangle. Perhaps I should hardly call the palace a quadrangle, for on the bottom, or sea-side, the buildings were

The Admiral

only the height of a garden wall, and used, I think, for horses. The stables were certainly under the palace on this and the adjoining side towards the town.

The Ambassador's palace, I should have said, was on the outskirts of the town, at the bottom end of the Strada S. Caterina and just against the King's Villa, which was not a house as it would sound to our English ears, but a garden with palm trees, and avenues of the ilex, and with many statues of white marble, running along the sea-shore between the city and Mergellina.

We were on a little hill, which I could see pleased the Admiral greatly, for a faint smile came over his face. This was one of his worst days.

No sooner had the carriage pulled up at the great door, than there flew out the most beautiful woman I ever saw, gracefully dressed in a cool muslin robe of the Turkish fashion, and with a jewelled chaplet bearing the inscription "Nelson and Victory" in the curly hair, so full of auburn lights that at times it looked of the gold colour Mr. Romney was so fond of painting. I needed not to remark the perfect oval of the dimpled face, nor its fairness and rosiness, so marvellously blent that people refused to believe it genuine till her fondness for sea-bathing parties set it beyond doubt, nor the most exquisite smile ever preserved on canvas, to know that it was My Lady Hamilton ; for no sooner had she seen the Admiral than her laughing eyes grew moist and tender, and the corners of her mouth began to droop pitifully, and in a moment she had her arm round the Admiral's back and under his right shoulder, with such a gentle, sympathetic touch that he moved from the carriage into the door almost without pain. Behind My Lady was a tall, somewhat bent, elderly gentleman, wearing his Order of the Bath and sundry Neapolitan decorations, like the Admiral, in full Court dress. This was, of course, Sir William

Hamilton, K.C.B., his Britannic Majesty's Ambassador and Plenipotentiary at the Court of the Two Sicilies. It has often seemed to me, since, mighty significant that the reception of the Admiral into the palace of the Hamiltons should have been conducted with so much ceremony. You can hardly imagine the procession of coaches and servants sent to bring us up from the albergo, and the army of servants drawn up by the gate and courtyard and grand staircase of the palace; for seldom has the entry of a conqueror into a fallen city been attended with results that have led to more writing. I must say that, as she supported the Admiral from his coach to the suite prepared for him on that day she might have been a goddess: she was so far beyond any woman that I had seen in beauty and graciousness and tenderness, and soft, floating movement.

As he moved down from his coach, I saw the spirit of action coming over the Admiral. He had caught sight of his hostess, and was straightening himself up—there never was a body so dominated by its spirit. But before he could finish My Lady had flown to him, and quelled him with a woman's tender solicitude for sickness. She saw in an instant through his little artifice of leaving his hair unbrushed off his forehead. It was there the plaster yet lay on the wound which had struck him down in the battle. But though he yielded to her tenderness, and moved up the broad, low stairs with the imperceptible advance of the sick unto death—he took two or more steps on each stair—his spirit was perceptibly rising, and to us who knew him this was eloquent. She would have him not to talk; but he said thrice, "Thank God! thank God! thank God!" And the spirit of woman's curiosity overcoming her, she said, "Tell me for what, Admiral, and talk no more." He said, "As I lay in my albergo, in that cursed low ground round the port, with its air like the breath of human beings, I lifted up mine eyes to the

hills, and I know that from this little hill cometh my help."

I pondered on these words, for they had a ring about them that was not natural to the Admiral's simple and direct way of speaking. It was not extraordinary for him to wax sentimental, or to embellish his speech with allusions to classics, such as I have recorded about the Fountain of Arethusa; but "cometh" and "mine" were not in his style. But recalling that the Admiral was a parson's son and deeply religious after his own fashion, I made inquiry of the chaplain, Mr. Comyn, who told me that it came from a favourite Psalm of the Admiral's—the cxxi., I think—which he was in the habit of calling "the Traveller's Psalm."

Sir William had made all preparations, with a sedan and specially chosen bearers, for having him carried from his coach to his chamber; but Lady Hamilton, with finer tact, perceived that if he could mount on her arm, though it might take an hour, it would be good to give him the feeling of recovery. And so it proved, for I do not think that he received injury from this fatigue.

The palace was so vast that it took us many minutes passing down the west wing to the chamber chosen for his sleeping-room, which lay at the very end of the suite set apart for him. When we were arrived, he insisted on moving up to his bed, which lay only a yard or two in from the far or south-west corner. He steadied himself against one of the left-hand posts at the foot of the bed, exclaiming, "I shall get well here—I shall get well here."

And, indeed, if aspect affects the health, he might get well, for the prospect from the bed was one which beggars my poor powers of description; though I suppose that the view from the hill of Pausilippo is even finer, for from it one can see the rifted hill, the great fire-mountain Vesuvius,

whose eruptions form one of our links of sympathy with the ancient world. It was slumbering that day peacefully amid the lately-dug-out ruins of Forum Pompeji, and the flat-topped hillocks which yet cover two other ancient cities, and half a dozen thriving modern towns swarming with people, as well as the magnificent castle of St. Elmo, which completely dominates the city. These, and the Castle of Nuovo, were shut off by the towering rock which was the Acropolis of the ancient Parthenope, round which the new city—Neapolis—grew up.

But the windows of the Admiral's chamber commanded view enough for any mortal man to desire. In the distance were the long line of mountains culminating in the snow-topped St. Angelo, twice as high as Vesuvius, which divides the Bay of Naples from the Gulf of Salerno, and, in the jaws of the Bay, Capri; while nearer in were the Castel dell' Uovo rising up sheer from the drawbridge running out from Santa Lucia; the hill of Pausilippo, with its white villas peeping out from dark trees; and between them the royal garden with its feathery palms and ilex avenues.

Above all there was the Bay of Naples, surely the bluest piece of water under heaven, with its calm clear waters almost reflecting, far out as they were, the stately ships which had just anchored, after winning the greatest sea victory the world ever saw. The tall spars and black and white hulls were thrown into relief by the swarm of Mediterranean craft with their high-peaked noses, tall lateen sails of glowing reds and yellows, and red-capped crews. From his very bed the Admiral had his fleet, and every atmospheric change in the Bay, under his own eye. I could see how he appreciated the thought which prompted his being put where he need have no worry about what was happening to his beloved fleet. And when he had feasted his eyes for a minute or two on the glassy blue water under the shining sky, he cried, "Thank you, dear

friend—a thousand times, thank you!” And he repeated, “I shall get well here.”

I must tell you that the whole ship’s company had been most seriously concerned about the health of the Admiral. The wound he had in the head in the battle, though it was only from a heavy splinter, produced a sort of concussion of the brain; and this, with the business of so great an affair, even after our glorious victory was gained, combined with his natural proneness to sickness, produced a most dangerous fever, which was like to have carried him off in any one of the fifteen hours immediately before we cast anchor in the Bay of Naples, though in the two or three weeks we were sailing up the Mediterranean by way of Candia he was more than once seemingly full recovered.

After we had brought him to the Ambassador’s palace I felt confident that he would mend. A spell on shore always did much for his general health, and we could see that under Lady Hamilton’s direction he was like to have the best of attention. As it turned out it was marvellous what she did for him. The very next day he was fit to crack a jest about the diet of asses’ milk, which was judged to be the only nourishment light enough for a digestion so disordered by fever. “What would the French say?” he cried: “I can picture the Paris lampooner drawing me with asses’ ears in a lion’s skin, imagining myself to be the nobler animal. Yes, to the French I shall always be the ass nourished on asses’ milk who thought himself a lion!” And then he went off into one of his peals of laughter—rather a shaky peal it must be confessed—but then a straw will serve to show which way the wind blows.

What set him up above all (and set us up too, you may be sure—the Admiral’s secretary, Will and myself, and generally one or two of the captains) was the pains My Lady took to keep his mind from troubling about his

condition. The ship surgeon, had he been a landsman, might have been expected to be flat against it, after the manner of most doctors, and to have prescribed rest, complete rest, seeing no one, darkened rooms, and so on ; but Michael Jefferson was a man of a different stamp. It was his business to make men fit for duty again with as little rest as possible. And then he knew the Admiral. What would that eager, never-resting, planning mind have done in a darkened room, where he could see nothing, cut off from all friends who could give him any news of his fleet ? He would have imagined, to say the least of it, a French fleet entering the Bay, and he not being on his ship to have the honour of beating them. In short, he would have harassed himself into his grave.

My Lady went to the root of the matter at once : “ It is not rest he wants,” she maintained ; “ it is not physic he needs, but dieting carefully and treating like a spoiled child. I must do the spoiling,” she said, with that smile which lit up her whole face and made her eyes so soft ; and I could vow that when she used those words she had not a thought of their ever being any more than friends.

I have read somewhere a fairy tale in which people were waited on by invisible servants, so that the dishes took and left their places on the table as it were of their own accord, and in perfect silence. It was, in a sort, after this manner that the Admiral’s wants and pleasures were supplied.

The room being at the end of a wing had windows upon three sides—west and south and east ; and each window, of course, had heavy close lattices of a dark green colour, as well as projecting awnings of a striped canvas, which could be raised or lowered at pleasure. By aid of these the Admiral could have as much tempered sun as he desired almost from sunrise to sunset ; and it seemed as if he never could have his fill of sun. He often said in after years with regret, that *living* meant living on the Mediterranean.

The Admiral

The windows opening on three sides, and the nearness of the sea also, gave always a pleasant current of air; and in this great airy chamber, always kept cool, and always full of gracious sunshine, with noiseless hands and feet a succession of diversions were provided in the same unobtrusive way by the hostess herself. For though it was the Admiral's bed-chamber, after he had had his light breakfast served in the morning, it was really more of a reception-room, where, as he felt well enough, he transacted the business which was so near his heart, where a great man and son of Anak like Captain Troubridge might be seen waiting and watching with the affection of a woman.

My Lady was famous for her deep, soft voice. She would be singing and singing a room or two away for the Admiral to hear her, as it were by accident; and he would lie and listen, and she would sing until the dream was broken by some mischance. At another time she floated into the room unobserved, carrying in her hands a long Indian scarf or shawl, and went through the "Attitudes," a species of tableaux vivants for which she was so celebrated.

The Admiral was resting, and did not see her for some time after she had begun; and we, not feeling sure that he did not sleep, though I think she had made sure, stood trying to express by dumb show our astonishment and applause. The Admiral gave no sign beyond opening his eyes dreamily; but he told her afterwards that he had never seen illusions so perfect, grace so absolute, beauty so divine. But I think he was most moved when she stole in to his side to bring him flowers or grapes, or a healing ptisane, and stayed smoothing his pillow, laying cool bandages on his wounded head, taking his hands in those magnetic hands, which were so smooth and yet so strong, and in a rich, low voice—not asking how he *felt*, but telling him of all the pleasant things prepared for him to do in a

day or two, when the surgeon had pronounced that he should be ready—telling him what king and people alike were saying about their liberator, telling him this good jest, and that, with a woman's reverence for a hero.

It pleased him to have her sit by him, for her "magnetism" was marvellous; and she would sit by the hour as patiently as though she had been his mother—amusing him if he would be amused, listening to him if he would talk, or writing his letters, if he desired it, to his wife; and I, who witnessed it all, think that at that time there was nothing in her mind but pure woman's hero-worship, and I could not help crying to myself, "What a man, and what a woman!" This man had re-writ the history of Europe with his famous sea-fight, in which he had taken risks such as no man ever took before in the world, and was withal as sympathetic as a woman; and this woman led even the chaplain to exclaim that she had, what the ancients prized above all things, that mysterious quality of VENUSTAS, which he endeavoured to explain to us as sheer loveliness—the possession of all the graces which went to form their conception of Venus, the goddess of love and beauty.

And so within a few days the Admiral was about and able to attend, in some fashion, the *fêtes* given day and night in his honour (and much to his inconvenience), the principal of which were the grand ball given by Count Esterhazy, and the ball of the British Ambassador on the 29th, which was the Admiral's birthday, and of which more anon.

CHAPTER X.—What happened at the Ball given by Lady Hamilton in honour of the Admiral.

NO one is ever likely to forget the entertainment given by the Ambassador and Lady Hamilton in honour of the Admiral's birthday. Eighty sat down to dinner, mind you, in a private house ; but I will not attempt to describe by hearsay what happened there—the toasts that were given, the *furore* with which they were received ; for, naturally, I was not present, being only a midshipman at the time. But at the ball which followed I was present from the opening to the end, and it was a truly wonderful affair. There were about seventeen hundred present, and eight hundred of us sat down to supper, and the supper was rich enough to have been a dinner.

There was more dancing here and at Count Esterhazy's ball than there had been at Syracuse ; for many English of consideration went to Naples in those days, and the ladies of high Neapolitan society had made it a fashion to learn the English dances ; but the midshipmen and the younger lieutenants, fresh from the sea-fare of a long cruise, supped more than danced. You can be sure that there was no lack of toasting, for which the Admiral's stepson, Josiah Nisbet, whom he always treated as his own son, was a fair mark. Some one coupled a toast with his name, and the jest took, and after that he had no respite ; and before the night was over Josiah had taken a good deal more than his

share of the Ambassador's very excellent wine, and had become well accustomed to the sound of his own voice.

But even boys cannot sup all night, and slowly we found our way back towards the ball-room. I passed in with Josiah, for I had not Will with me, he being in attendance on the Admiral, and indeed at no time disposed for drinking parties: they would not allow of the barrier of reserve which it was his intention to maintain.

Well, as we passed on our way into the ball-room, we saw Will standing alone in an ante-chamber and made for him, only to find him posted at a gentlemanly distance from the Admiral, who was sitting on a couch with his left arm stretched over the end, and My Lady with her right hand on his empty sleeve pouring out a woman's hero-worship with soft speech and glistening eye and gentle attitude. Right-down hero-worship I felt convinced it was. Every one in Naples was intoxicated with Nelson, and she above all, who from the time his fleet was come into the Mediterranean, had wrestled with all her might and main to second his efforts to find and finish the French. Indeed, we have it in the Admiral's writing that it was owing to her aid in the matter of getting the ships watered that we ever got to the Nile in time.

I do not doubt that she was asking him for the fiftieth time how he felt when he took the risk of sailing between the French and the shore—between the French and their anchors, or how he felt when the *Orient* blew up, or was telling him he was the greatest hero that ever lived. But Josiah thought otherwise, and swashing up to the Admiral in the most offensive style, struck an attitude before him, and began another of the speeches which had been affording us such excellent entertainment while we were supping, as he grew braver and braver with his wine. The language he used I shall not repeat. It was the request of the gallant Captain, whose conduct crushed out the spark which

threatened such a blaze, that the officers who were present should not repeat what they had heard. But as there have been many allusions to the incident since, I do not think that I shall be betraying confidence if I give a general outline of it as I had the pain of seeing it. The general tenor of it was that he called upon the Admiral in the name of "my mother and your wife" to tear himself from the embraces of that —, and here he applied to My Lady the epithets for which silence was desired, as I have mentioned.

I do not say but that at a later period some sort of remonstrance might have come with fair grace and proper spirit from Josiah in the name of his mother, the Admiral's wife, anent Lady Hamilton; but at this period I feel certain that it was wholly unjust and uncalled for, and that it was so is proved by the very cordial relations existing a few months later between Josiah and that remarkable woman, who added to her other magnificent qualities a fine forgivingness.

For the moment all Naples might have gone ablaze with the British Admiral and the British Ambassador set by the ears over an alleged intrigue of this kind, and the work of the Battle of the Nile might almost have been undone so far as the Two Sicilies were concerned. I looked to see what Will would do. It was one of the few occasions in his life upon which I have ever seen him waver. The position was certainly difficult. The Admiral's stepson was his senior in rank, and the outrage being offered to the Admiral was, in a way, a family affair, in which a stranger might be considered to have no right to interfere. On the other hand, the Admiral being but one-armed and lately recovered of a fever, could not turn Josiah out of the room, and Will had for some months been treated by the Admiral as if he were his own son. Indeed, the Admiral's relations with Will were of a more unbroken and cordial

nature than his relations with Josiah ; but as Josiah went on raising his voice and crying out more and more outrageous things, Will quitted his hesitation and was advancing with set face to do—I tremble to think what—when he found himself pushed aside by a big, burly form in a post-captain's uniform ; and, to our intense relief, we saw Captain Troubridge and Captain Ball rush into the room. Troubridge, the Admiral's brother-in-arms for a quarter of a century, took in the situation at a glance, and, affecting to consider the whole matter a drunkard's folly, caught Josiah up in his herculean embrace, and carried him off kicking like a naughty child. To his own ship, I think, for the Captain did not appear again, although his not appearing may have been due to the idea that he could thus escape the discussion of so difficult a matter, which would have been almost inevitable if he had been near the Admiral again that night.

The most affecting part, for us of the fleet, was the feeling that it was our duty to stand by until the matter with Josiah was settled. The Admiral hated shirking an ordeal above everything in the world. It was to him a form of cowardice, which he called the root of all evil. He himself was absolutely undeterred by risk or responsibility.

“Madam,” said the Admiral, “I fear that I must leave this hospitable home to-night.” This we heard with our own ears before we left to follow the two Captains and the struggling Josiah to the grand stairway, where a look from Captain Troubridge's eye told us that we should go no further.

What happened after this was, of course, known only to the Admiral and Lady Hamilton, seeing that ordinary manners prompted the withdrawal of all spectators from the ante-room in which this deplorable incident took place. For occasions like this I shall quote from the Admiral's Journal, which came into Will's hands under such extra-

ordinary circumstances. I cannot vouch for its authenticity, coming through such hands; but Mrs. Hunter certainly seemed to us three witnesses to be giving a truthful account. And as I have said, to us who knew the Admiral so well—his temperament, his habits, his mode of expressing himself, and the turns of his handwriting—the Journal presented every outward evidence of being genuine, though to Will it seemed well-nigh impossible that the Admiral should have filled three such bulky volumes without his ever having occasion to suspect their existence.

EXTRACT FROM THE ADMIRAL'S JOURNAL, DATED SEPT. 30TH,
1798.

“I take up my pen as the only object to which I can make confession. Heretofore my confidante has been Lady Nelson. Since our marriage I have written to her in the fullest and freest manner upon all matters personal to me; but something prompts me not to vex her with the matter. She is the best creature in the world; but her mind is of the slower kind which does not, at a glance, distinguish between what is essential or merely accidental. She would have made no commander, though she could have been trusted to defend her post till Death.

“A most unfortunate occurrence happened last night. My stepson, Josiah Nisbet, of whom I had written to his mother when we were in Naples before, to say that Lady Hamilton had been so wonderfully kind and fond of him, introducing him to all manner of exalted people, and taking him everywhere as her escort in her carriage, chose to make an extraordinary exhibition of himself last night. The young man had been supping with his messmates at a ball Sir William and Lady Hamilton had given in my honour; and he had, I doubt not, partaken too freely of the potent South Italian wines. He was decidedly

unsteady, when perceiving me, as he returned from the supper-room, sitting by Lady H., in the presence of others, he reeled up to us, applying the grossest epithets to her Ladyship, and insinuating that relations existed between us incompatible with my character as a gentleman.

“I have no reason for stifling the truth to you, my pen, and you will be content with my plain asseveration that all which he insinuated was gross falsehood. Unfortunately to you only, or to Sir William, who persists in ignoring handsomely the whole incident, can I discuss the matter. I could not write of it to Lady Nelson without raising the very suspicions which justice demands should be allayed; and my rank makes it impossible for me to consult my oldest friends, like Troubridge, who occupy positions under my command.

“I hope I am not a bad man to have passages in my behaviour which it is not expedient to discuss with my wife. I have now lived thirty-nine years, and I have ever, I think, been eminently amenable to the gentle influence of women. But, not even excepting the young lady at Quebec whom I should have left the service to marry, becoming a fellow-settler with the United Empire loyalists in Upper Canada, if it had not been for the wise persuasions of my valued friend Alexander Davison, I have never known but two of them in the intimate fashion which is open to landsmen. I am telling the strict truth when I say that I never kissed a lady until I married Lady Nelson, nor after till within this few days; though what harm there be in it I know not, if it be conducted in decent and not outrageous fashion. It seems to me a natural mode of expression of sympathy between a man and a woman who are friends sufficient, and I feel confident that I never did it before solely from the fact that my seafaring life, up to the time I was married, prevented my forming a friendship close enough to require such

expression. And in the years that I was on shore before St. Vincent, my life was filled with the friendship and companionship of my wife and father.

“It is now a day above a week since I landed in Naples more' dead than alive; and that I am now alive, though very unwell, and weary of this country of fiddlers and poets, and —, and scoundrels, is due, I may say, solely to my Lady Hamilton, who took me into the Embassy and by giving me the best chamber in Naples for an ailing man, and the best-chosen nourishment, and her own unremitting attention, gave me life and strength for this very trying week.

“It has ever been my belief that in making and keeping men well—I am speaking now of ships' crews exposed to the ailments that come of prolonged cruises, such as scurvy and the rest—the keeping them entertained plays the most important part; and for this reason I have promoted all manner of diversions and educational exercises among them. And this is the treatment my Lady applied to me.

“The fever with which I was prostrate at my landing is now intermittent; and though I wake every morning with a headache raging, and shaking fits, and a most disordered tongue, with proper care, as the day wears on, I regain my strength, and am passably fit to be taken to this and the other banquet and festa in the evening—things which I hate, but cannot refuse for fear of giving offence and damaging His Majesty's Service. There is not only Their Majesties to consider, but the Ambassadors of the friendly Powers, and the leading nobles. These last are very important; for it cannot be denied that though the *lazzaroni* and the humbler class generally are devoted to the good Queen and her husband, there is among the younger members of the noble families a wicked and pernicious tendency to welcome the new and infernal

doctrines begotten in France. I do not myself believe that they are with the French at heart, but there is in the mind of the educated Italian a certain levity which makes him scoff at anything established, be it religion or the laws of his country, and disposed to trifle with the last new toy in theories.

“I am writing at too great length that which is only written for the writing, and never to be seen of the public eye; but I feel that I must defend myself to myself, since it is the first time that my conscience has doubted me.

“It was necessary that I should attend these assemblages, whose miserable conduct maddens my irritable temper. But I could not have done it were it not for the goodness, the overpowering goodness, of Lady Hamilton. Not only has she given me this chamber and nourished me with this extreme care, but every morning she would do something to take me out of my poor wretched self, to stop the thumping my head gives from the hurt I had at the Nile. One morning, after light refreshment had been brought in and I had eaten what I could, and lay back on my pillow trying, by closing my eyes, to hide myself from the pain and feeling of sickness, while Comyn and Campbell and Will and the boy [myself—T. T.], and perhaps Troubridge, were standing or sitting round in affectionate and respectful silence, waiting for me to be able to raise my head and give directions for the ordering of the squadron, I heard Lady Hamilton’s glorious rich voice singing in some part of the palace at the distance to be soothing; and as a morning or two later, I mended, I opened my eyes to see her, before an enraptured audience expressing their applause with silent admiration, in those Attitudes all Europe has heard of for their wonderful grace and fidelity to what they represent.

“Then as the day advanced, and I had back strength enough to be dressed, and had got through the business of

The Admiral

the fleet, she would have me come into her own salon, the pleasantest room in the house after my chamber, to rest upon a couch until it should be time for the midday meal, which they take here in Naples very early. While I was on the couch she would pull one of the long Italian stools by my side, and, half sitting, half kneeling on it in the most graceful attitude in the world, leaning her elbow at times on my couch for the balance, read or talk or be silent, as my mood was, and if my head troubled me, press it gently but firmly with her hands, which were very full of restoring energy. She would do this, which is very fatiguing when done from below, until she had charmed away the pain by some hand-healing powers well known to the Italians. And when it was over, and I was dozing off, she would rest her own head against me. At first this was to snatch a moment of needed rest, but it soothed me. The contact with her, I think, carried on that current of energy or sympathy which I found so curative.

“I wonder,—no, I cannot think it was wicked of me to caress with my fingers that beautiful head which was so kind to me; to train back the auburn curls running over it, when they strayed in front of her little pink ears; to press it lightly with my lips in the hope that she would just perceive and the hope that she would just not perceive this suggestion of gratitude and appreciation. Only yesterday morning, after a week of this tender nursing, her head was a little nearer to me; and feeling that this was the last of such mornings, I being now sufficiently the better to be able to resume my ordinary day, I ventured to press my lips firmly upon the bright hair just above the noble forehead,—so intellectual, so exquisite, in the contour of its brows,—intending to signify gratitude for her care, and the end of my pleasant ailing. But she would not have it, and, in its place, turned up to

me her face, the very type of rosy beauty, and radiant with tenderness for my infirmity. My infirmity, alas! of another sort was not proof, and I kissed her tenderly, gratefully and respectfully, and taking her hand in mine held it for I know not how long, pouring out my thanks for her goodness.

“Those were the beginnings, the foundations for what happened last night in consequence of Josiah’s really outrageous behaviour. It might be supposed that something of this had come to Josiah’s ears and caused the outbreak. But I have no shadow of reason for believing so. Having free access to me in my chamber and elsewhere, he knew that Lady Hamilton was nursing me, but that there had been any kind of tenderness between us he was not aware. He is, however, of a violent and jealous disposition, and being now a man, and inflamed by her gracious beauty, he cannot but remember how she caressed him and never had him out of her company when he was a boy and we were last in Naples; and he is maddened by her countenance being totally withdrawn from him now, not from any fault she has against him, but because she has turned herself into a nurse for my recovery.

“He has, I suppose, learned of her betrayal when she was little more than a child; though I hardly know it myself, not being disposed to listen to tales bringing the impeachment of an unfortunate past against the present position of those I respect, especially if they be my benefactors. The gross epithets he applied to Lady Hamilton last night must allude to this buried past, and the insinuations against my conduct must have been based upon the same. He was robbed of his reason by wine until he was incapable of distinguishing; and then gave vent, by making coarse and impossible suggestions, to his irritation at her previous kindness to him being lost in the devotion she has shown to my nursing.

The Admiral

“I felt inexpressibly pained and outraged, and was quite at a loss what to do in keeping with the respect due to her Ladyship and my position in His Majesty’s service, when trusty Troubridge, hearing the heated voice, flew in and literally carried him off. I think I may say that my pain and shame were shared by all present, for almost before I could notice, the anteroom was empty but for our two selves, and the doors gently closed.

“I was sitting on a kind of couch, with Lady Hamilton at my right side, when J. flung himself before us. She rose with womanly dignity to stand up, as it were, for her good and virtuous name. I had already sprung to my feet to confront the young ruffian, and until he had been carried off, and we were left, she maintained her courage wonderfully. But when the occasion had passed, and we were alone, she almost fainted; she could hardly stagger back to the couch. I never saw such womanly emotion. I flung myself on my knees in front of her and entreated her not to lose her courage now that the storm was past, but the tears poured from her eyes and she was the very picture of womanly weakness. In vain I tried to persuade her.

“A strange fire had been running through my veins all day since that meeting in the morning. I felt as elated as if I were a god. There was enough indeed to elate me without that: it was my fortieth birthday, and I could remind myself that before my fortieth birthday I had won the Battle of the Nile. In honour of my birthday the Ambassador and Lady H. had given a party of unprecedented magnificence. Above eighty sat down to dinner; above seventeen hundred not only accepted, but came to the ball which followed. Supper was laid for eight hundred. In the ball-room there was a rostral column erected in my honour under a magnificent canopy, never to come down while we remain at Naples, and the Ambassador whispered to me that he had it on good authority that I

should have a peerage at least, if not a viscounty. In the middle of the entertainment, 'God Save the King' was sung, without foreknowledge on my part, by the crew of my barge, with an additional verse in my honour writ by Miss Knight.

"All this until that boy's conduct threatened to pull down the house about my ears! The King and all his court were there, too, lavishing compliments upon me which I felt to be extravagant, though I was sensible that I had probably saved his kingdom for him. The whole room buzzed with my name. 'H. N.' or 'Nelson and Victory,' met my eye everywhere, and the room was full of the heroes who had won my victory for me, and yet offered me its whole honour. It was a marvellous night, and if it had been in London and not in Naples, with my own nation round me, surely no mortal man could have known a more intoxicating moment.

"All this until that boy! . . . And yet I can confess to you, Pen, that in the midst of all this justifiable elation, I did not forget what had happened in the morning when that glorious beauty had been held up for the moment for my kiss of friendship. I could not help reminding myself that a new friendship had begun for me of an intoxicating sweetness, not known to me in my earlier friendships: a friendship in which sympathy of the mind and tastes was accompanied by the light touch which I had previously associated with the beginnings of first love, and not with the more solid sympathies of friendship. All this until that boy

"I found myself on my knees before Lady H., endeavouring to persuade her from her tears, and I was startled to find that the sense of elation which I had ascribed to the unparalleled honour showered on me through the evening, and now abruptly broken off by the unfortunate incident, continued hardly diminished. And

then the mad spirit of temptation entered into me to try and kiss the lovely, tearful face, willingly surrendered to me for that moment in the morning, into forgetfulness of the humiliation. I kissed the eyes and cheeks, and then the unresisting lips, and made I don't know what hot protestations of sympathy to win her from her shame. And at the last I succeeded; for, kissing me back, she rose from her tears radiant like Venus rising from the foam of the sea, and said, 'Let us forget it, Admiral: to-morrow he will be all penitence.'

"This is to-morrow, and *I* am all penitence. I wonder if I am very wicked? I know that I am intoxicated with the companionship of Lady H., but I know too that I have no feelings which are not of the purest. Is it wrong, under these circumstances, to appreciate the affectionate companionship of such a woman among women? Or were we intended to be happy, and in a world in which so much of happiness depends upon the affectionate companionship of women, to enjoy whatever such companionships come in our way without impurity?

"To-day or to-morrow I shall sail away to Malta. It needs my presence, and I shall be away from this miserable court, which is still more distasteful to me now that I no longer feel myself to have the right of despising my neighbours for their views.

"I do not feel that I can stay in this house longer."

* * * * *

I remember the emotion with which I first read this portion of the Admiral's Journal: it cleared things up for me a little. For I had often wondered how such a man as the Admiral with his lofty soul had first become entangled with My Lady. I have often spoken with her, and she was uniformly kind to me as a boy. She called me her good Tubby, and I liked her so well as to like it. She

was indeed the best-hearted woman in the world, infinitely good to us midshipmen and the younger lieutenants, or I don't know how we could have stood the spectacle of our beloved Admiral at the feet of a woman, however distractingly lovely.

She was at this time distractingly lovely. She was indeed no longer quite slender; but being of a good height, and her throat and arms being of an exquisite colour and form, her *embonpoint* had only the effect of superb softness and roundness—though her movements were said to be a little stiff when she was off her guard. She had such an unwearying spirit, such a fine actress's gift for remembering the part she was playing, that I never at this period of her life remember seeing her off her guard in this matter, though I have seen her at balls and revelling suppers, and in the most awful storm at sea which it was ever my lot to witness in all my years of service. That any woman in all the long reign of his late Majesty, the longest in our English history, had a face of such intoxicating beauty I hardly believe; its shape and moulding were perfect. In particular the arching of the brows and the way her lips parted as she smiled were miracles, and such teeth I never saw both for their colour and the way they were set. And when she was smiling, with these teeth glittering like snow, and soft dimples in her lovely cheeks, and kindness rising from her eyes like the fragrant smoke of incense, she was the most graciously beautiful piece of womanhood in the wide world. She had, too, the habit of lightly laying her hand on you as she spoke, or if you were walking, slipping it a little way through your arm and taking a few paces with you. And she had a fascinating sense of delight in her own beauty, without any trace of the arrogance and spoiled child's pettishness which so frequently accompany it. Indeed, she craved to have the warm liking of all who came into contact with her. Knowing

The Admiral

now the temptations to which she had been exposed in her bringing up, and her habit of blindly obeying merely her own instincts in the matter of right and wrong, I cannot but give her the highest credit for the constancy and exclusiveness with which she bestowed her heart. Though she was gracious and had a manner to all, she never loved—she never showed herself in love with but three men: Mr. Greville (whom I never saw—but I hear that she gave him all the best of her heart), Sir William, and the Admiral.

While he was on shore now, she was courier as well as hostess to the still ailing Admiral. With that immense establishment of the British Embassy on her hands, no matter what the time of day, or what the function was that required to be attended, all he had to do was to take his place beside the smiling beauty, and find himself at the point where his duties began. She was the centre of life, the ear and tongue of royal favour at Naples.

A man like the Admiral, so inexhaustible in emergencies, but so prone to sink back into a low state of vitality between whiles, was more than ordinarily likely to slip into such an arrangement easily. Attending state banquets and galas was always peculiarly exhausting to him, except where he had some diplomatic problem that roused his energy, or companionship in which he delighted.

By what I knew of the Admiral I do not see that there is anything in the portion of the Journal above quoted which might not have been written by him. The sole difficulty is to account for the existence of such a journal without his trusted Will ever having seen a trace of it, in his constant personal attendance.

CHAPTER XI.—How the Admiral entered the maze of Neapolitan Politics.

MARIA CAROLINA, Queen of Naples, was more of a man than her husband, though he was of great stature and much addicted to the chase. The daughter of Maria Theresa, the sister of Marie Antoinette, it was not surprising that she should have beauty and capacity in no common degree. History has it that she was of coarser fibre than her mother and sister; it was perhaps necessary for the part she had to play. Marie Antoinette could be reckless, Maria Carolina is said to have stopped at nothing which stood in the way of her desires, except that she was loyal in her friendships and her hatreds.

After a lengthy period of a kind of social purgatory, Lady Hamilton had been admitted into the truly Oriental paradise of the Neapolitan Court. The Queen did not do things by halves. When once her Ladyship had been admitted to the court, she was rapidly admitted to the Queen's intimacy. My Lady's beauty and high spirits, her usefulness in the *al fresco* entertainments in which the King and Queen delighted, and for which she had a perfect genius, and her extreme popularity, made her desirable to a dissolute court which lived in the frankest way for pleasure. And every one knows now that she served the Queen in another capacity, unsuspected by any except those in her confidence and that of the British leaders at Naples.

The kingdom of Naples, or the Two Sicilies, was on the point of being swallowed up by France. The British fleet apart, it was practically at the mercy of the French, for though it had a certain number of men capable of offering a bloody resistance in guerilla warfare or street fighting, we now know that it had no army or navy capable of contending with the veteran and splendidly-led forces of France. The nobles and the wealthier portion of the population, to a large extent, believed in the honesty of the French intentions, and, as I have said, had a good deal of sympathy with the new ideas spread on the air by the French Revolution. The King did not see the danger in which his kingdom lay from the French. But the Queen's wits were sharpened by her hatred : she never forgot for an instant the murder of her sister or the sympathies of her family—the Imperial House of Austria. Being on the *qui vive*, she saw the sword which was hanging over the kingdom, and with characteristic energy determined to dash it away.

But there were difficulties, and she saw that she must lean upon the English and their brilliant naval commander. The island part of her kingdom could hardly be seriously invaded until the British sea power in the Mediterranean was broken ; but the Continental part was in a very different position. There were French forces no farther off than Rome, and until our sweeping victory at the Nile had shut the great French expeditionary force under General Buonaparte up in Egypt it was more than half likely that it would have been employed for a descent on Naples. The English, on the other hand, had no land forces in Italy, and we had not indeed shown that we had either commanders or regiments of a character to maintain the prestige won under the great Duke of Marlborough. Any formal defiance of the French, therefore, involved a grave risk of losing the Continental part of the Neapolitan kingdom, until an Austrian army marched down the

Peninsula. And to bring about a French invasion it was only necessary for the Queen to show herself in open alliance with the English. No one doubted her wishes in this direction. She was simply overborne by the sympathy or fear for the French entertained by those who had the power to override her.

Maria Carolina had more than ordinary courage; but she had cunning also, and quietly developed her plans in connection with the English, and contrived to do so, as history has proved, and certain of us knew all along, through her intimacy with Lady Hamilton.

Lady Hamilton, it is true, was the wife of the British Ambassador; but, partly from her antecedents, no doubt, people did not regard her as capable of having any political weight, and she was much identified with the frivolities which took up the time of the Royal Family to such an extent as to be a scandal.

Maria Carolina was supposed to be concealing her chagrin and drowning her cares in a turmoil of pleasure, with a questionable entourage made more questionable by the prominence of My Lady. But all this elaborate frivolity, besides serving the immediate purpose of passing the time agreeably, left My Lady in constant attendance on the Queen. They might be for hours together on a water picnic to eat the fine oysters fattened in the Lucrine Lake of the ancients, and the making up of the party might involve My Lady driving up to the Palace twice or thrice in the course of a few hours to consult with the Queen for a few minutes.

Never for an instant did the French party suspect that My Lady was the go-between from the Queen to the British Ambassador or British naval officers; but we know now that this was in progress for many months. And the assumed intimacy led to a real and deep friendship, for the Queen was astonished with My Lady's masculine capacity and still more masculine courage in this difficult

business, and touched by her devotion to the Royal House of Naples. Accordingly she lost no opportunity of showing her attachment to her friend by lending her presence to My Lady's entertainments, especially when the Admiral's victory allowed her to throw off the mask and display openly her sympathies for the English against the French.

At this birthday ball given in honour of the Admiral, she was present for the greater part of the evening, surrounded by a glittering bevy of courtiers ; and her presence gave My Lady the opportunity of showing her brilliant courage and resourcefulness. I learn from the Journals, in a passage full of admiration for the well-bred serenity with which she met such a terrible ordeal, that no sooner had she left the Admiral after she had recovered from her emotion at the outrageous accusations of Lieutenant Nisbet, than he received a summons from the Queen graciously commanding his attendance.

Not having any sufficient excuse to decline, he went, and found My Lady tattling with Her Majesty as if nothing had happened.

“ Shall I interpret for your Majesty and his Excellency ? ” she inquired in the most ordinary way ; and when the Queen replied in the affirmative, informed the Admiral that this was Her Majesty's wish, and added that she had prompted Her Majesty to send for him, and that it would not be usual for him to take his leave until Her Majesty gave the signal, thus securing him from doing anything hastily in connection with the incident. At the door the Admiral found Will waiting for orders, and, with characteristic command, showing a face devoid of any expression but the smiling respect with which he invariably greeted his chief when he met him or was sent for. Telling him to attend, the Admiral waited on Her Majesty, when, finding that they were to converse privately, My Lady interpreting, Will fell back among the less important

members of the royal party, and seeing at a glance that there were no English among them to whom courtesy demanded that he should pass a few remarks, he retired within his shell, as it were, and stood with unseeing eyes. He was glad to keep silence, for the events which had just happened had shocked him even more than the Admiral himself. Impressionable and emotional as the Admiral was, an attack was in itself calculated to make his spirits rise, though the nature of this attack, from the fact that it was levelled chiefly against a lady for whom he felt such an attachment and respect, stood in the way of his natural tendency on this occasion. Neither had Will the Admiral's philosophy, deeply tinged with a religiousness on the one hand and lightened with an intermittent gaiety on the other. Will, except in action, had a slow-moving mind, which many things failed to reach, but when they did reach it, or were of a serious nature, he could not easily shake them off. As he stood giving the rein to his thoughts, he took little note of those among whom he was standing until he heard himself addressed, and found that he was next the Prince of Favara and his sister. There was a genuine ring in the Prince's voice, as if by-gones were really by-gones, and the salutations were not merely a piece of duellists' etiquette when the combatants happened to meet again. Donna Rusidda, too, greeted him as if she were glad to see him.

Under ordinary circumstances Will would, as likely as not, have found some well-bred way of escaping from a position which threatened to be awkward for both of them; but he was so agitated about the affair with Lieutenant Nisbet that he had not his usual collectedness, nor was it easy for him, being in attendance upon the Admiral, to place a distance between himself and the Favaras who were in attendance upon the Queen.

The topic of conversation started by the Prince was,

naturally, the battle, in which it was already bruited about Naples how Will had distinguished himself. After repeated congratulations, in which Donna Rusidda joined very prettily, they talked to him for a long time about the battle, Donna Rusidda asking most particularly about the Admiral, and how he was now, and about his wound, and how he looked in the action, and so on, in infinite detail. The topic was a fortunate one; for Will so warmed up on the subject of his beloved Admiral that they left off quite kindled into friendship.

It was against Will's notions of good breeding to question them very particularly about themselves; but in reply to his query whether they would be in Naples long, the Prince volunteered the information that a certain number of the Queen's ladies had always to be from the island, and that his sister had lately been chosen to fill a vacancy. He himself had long been attached to Ferdinand I.'s household. He further showed his disposition to be friendly by making a jest of his poverty. "If one cannot afford to live in one's own palace, the next best thing is to live in the King's."

A FURTHER EXTRACT FROM THE JOURNAL.

[*Note.*—The letter herein referred to as having been written by the Admiral to her Ladyship on October 3rd, 1798, was duly sent, and is preserved in autograph among the Nelson papers.]

"Our time here is actively employed, and between business and what is called pleasure I am not my own master for five minutes.

"Fortunately a good deal of the business of the last few days has been transacted with her charming Ladyship, who came to me from the Queen to put me in possession of a mass of information, which Her Majesty did not consider it safe to entrust to paper. The spies of the

French party are so many and so active, even in the Queen's own apartments.

“I am easier in my mind now about Emma. I am convinced that when a man and a woman of an age to be mutually attractive to one another are fast friends and frequently in each other's company, as those French would say, *tête-à-tête*, that it is opposed to the laws of human nature—I would almost go further, and say that it is opposed to the laws of gravitation—that they should not drift into close proximity with each other. And being in close proximity, it is as much a law of nature that they should from time to time lay sympathetic hands the one upon the other. Whether they also kiss is upon a different footing; for kissing has so long been employed as the formula to express a certain state of things, though I believe its particularisation to this to be purely arbitrary. But the formula having been accepted will deter many, especially women, from what would naturally seem a harmless and proper mode of expressing the completeness of their companionship and understanding of each other, though now it seems a dreadful fault and sort of crime. I am thankful that Lady Hamilton and I are not hidebound by any such superstitions. This is not to say that I have not had grave misgivings with my conscience, for it does not seem right that any man should enjoy such perfect happiness as I feel in the companionship of dear Lady H. It is the happiness that I mistrust, not the holding of friendly hands and meeting of friendly lips. And yet why should one mistrust happiness? The patriarch Jacob, at the end of his long life and reign as chief of his household, exclaimed, ‘Few and evil have been the days of my pilgrimage,’ and he had lived then a hundred and forty years. I have lived but forty, crowned at the end by the goodness of God with a victory than which no mortal man could pray for greater. But if the patriarch could describe

his hundred and forty years in which he had founded a prosperous family and, as God promised him, a great nation, may I not rather apply these words to my forty years, spent, three parts of them, on the sea, which I cannot, in spite of so long a time, face without constant sickness? I have fought in a hundred pitched battles, been wounded—I know not how often—and lost an eye and an arm in the service of my country. I have spent months together out at sea, in a battered ship, badly provisioned. Have I not earned whatever happiness Providence suffers to be put in my way?

“But there is Lady Nelson. She is a good wife: would she not be glad that I should have the kindness—I put the plain truth to myself—the caressingness of a good woman, to coax back for me that coy and uncertain goddess of health? Of course she would. Why do I not write to her, then? Because, not being in the full possession of the facts, she might misunderstand, and I might raise the very suspicions which I should be writing to allay.

“Beautiful Emma! how diffident and girlish she was when she came to me to-day, dreading lest she should be disturbing me, dreading lest she should be intruding, dreading lest she was trespassing on my friendship! And the woman, who came to me with a frank kiss, brought with her the secrets of a nation, which she set forth better than Acton would have done, or her husband the Ambassador.

“I have now, I think, before me the whole history leading up to the present situation in the Neapolitan kingdom. I have the attitude and treacherous designs of the French, the policy of the Emperor, the state of the kingdom. I think the presence of these French at Castellana in the Roman state—thirteen thousand of them, better troops, I should judge, than any the Queen can put in the field—a most serious menace, not only for their power in

the field, which she ought to be able to balance if she gets a good general : there is one, I hear, to come from Austria—Neapolitan commanders cannot be relied on. But the principal danger lies not so much in their power in the field as in the danger of their pernicious ideas, spreading among the disaffected in the Neapolitan kingdom with a knowledge of there being such a strong basis to rally on.

“It seems that their Majesties can put into the field an army of thirty or forty thousand fine troops, who will follow their leaders anywhere, and not only out of the battle-field, as they would certainly have to, if led by their own commanders. With these one might dispose of the French thirteen thousand in the Roman state, especially if one could land a few thousand men at Leghorn to cut them off from their base, and get the Emperor to march his armies. But this is exactly what the Emperor is determined not to do unless we force him, because he says that we must wait for the French attack. Now this is what I never have done in any of my principal actions. It has ever been my custom to seek the enemy and deliver my attack at the earliest possible moment, and I have found this answer above expectation with the French, who always credit the attacker with having the superior force.

“I should like to write to the Queen or the Ambassador, but am restrained by the fact that they have not asked me formally to give any opinion, and it would be like pushing myself into the command of their forces. But there is no corresponding reason why I should not place a summary of my views in the hands of Lady H., to be by her communicated to the Ambassador and Her Majesty. I shall write to her as follows :—

“‘ Naples, Oct. 3rd, 1798.

“‘ MY DEAR MADAM,—

“‘ The anxiety which you and Sir William Hamilton have always had for the happiness of their Sicilian Majesties, was also

planted in me five years past, and I can truly say, that on every occasion which has offered (which have been numerous) I have never failed to manifest my sincere regard for the felicity of these kingdoms. Under this attachment, I cannot be an indifferent spectator to what has (been) and is passing in the Two Sicilies, nor to the misery (without being a politician), which I cannot but see plainly is ready to fall on those kingdoms, now so loyal, by the worst of all policy—that of procrastination. Since my arrival in these seas in June last, I have seen in the Sicilians the most loyal people to their Sovereign, with the utmost detestation of the French and their principles. Since my arrival at Naples I have found all ranks, from the very highest to the lowest, eager for war with the French, who, all know, are preparing an army of robbers to plunder these kingdoms and destroy the Monarchy. I have seen the Minister of the insolent French pass over in silence the manifest breach of the third article of the treaty between his Sicilian Majesty and the French Republic. Ought not this extraordinary conduct to be seriously noticed? Has not the uniform conduct of the French been to lull governments into a false security, and then to destroy them? As I have before stated, is it not known to every person that Naples is the next marked object for plunder? With this knowledge, and that his Sicilian Majesty has an army ready (I am told) to march into a country anxious to receive them, with the advantage of carrying the war from, instead of waiting for it at home, I am all astonished that the army has not marched a month ago.

“I trust that the arrival of General Mack will induce the Government not to lose any more of the favourable time which Providence has put in their hands; for if they do, and wait for an attack in this country, instead of carrying the war out of it, it requires no gift of prophecy to pronounce that these kingdoms will be ruined and the monarchy destroyed. But should, unfortunately, this miserable ruinous system of procrastination be persisted in, I would recommend that all your property and persons are ready to embark at a very short notice. It will be my duty to look and provide for your safety, and with it (I am sorry to think it will be necessary) that of the amiable Queen of these kingdoms and her family. I have read with admiration her dignified and incomparable letters of September 1796. May the councils of these kingdoms ever be guided by such sentiments of dignity, honour, and justice; and may the words of the great

William Pitt, Earl of Chatham, be instilled into the ministry of this country—"The boldest measures are the safest"—is the sincere wish of your Ladyship's, etc.,

"HORATIO NELSON.

"P.S.—Your Ladyship will, I beg, receive this letter as a preparative for Sir William Hamilton, to whom I am writing, with all respect, the firm and unalterable opinion of a British Admiral, anxious to approve himself a faithful servant to his Sovereign by doing everything in his power for the happiness and security of their Sicilian Majesties and their kingdoms."

"I have just made a copy of the letter to Lady H., sealed it, and sent it to her by Will's hands."

[This is really most extraordinary if the journals be not genuine, for Will well remembers taking a letter to her Ladyship on the date mentioned, which was afterwards made public, and from the nature of its contents fits in exactly with the extract from the Journal. And if one says that the Journal may have been written up from the published letter, how is one to account for Will's being mentioned with the circumstances correct? For Will was of no consequence then, being one of the younger lieutenants only. This certainly is a most extraordinary coincidence.—T. T.]

"I am not sure that I have made matters clear to a woman, though of masculine intelligence. I trust that she will come to me before she acts upon it; indeed, I shall send for her. But shall I? I must ask myself, is it for this that I desire her presence, or is it for the overpowering joy of having her with me again? To be honest to myself, I fear it is but an excuse, and yet the salvation of Naples lies in the communications she carries between the Palace and my fleet. I wish I knew . . .

"I only know that in this last week the whole tenor of

my life seems to have changed. I am tasting for the first time of the larger, fuller life in which men and women enjoy perfect companionship of each other. I hope there is nothing wicked in it! I hope there is nothing wicked in it! God knows I do it with a pure heart. He has said that 'to the pure all things are pure.'"

CHAPTER XII.*—Of a Visit to Pompeji in 1798, in which there were Lovers, and of the Supper in the Inn at Resina.

THE Admiral “found more to detain him in Naples than he had anticipated.” I write these words with a smile: they were his own. We did not sail for Malta till October 15th, and then we had to go all round Sicily. My Lady, partly, I suppose, for reasons to which I have already alluded, was never satisfied without the Admiral went somewhere by *barca* or carriage. She loved open-air parties, and I firmly believe loved the getting-up of them as much as any part of the expedition. The Admiral said, with the very best grace, that he was under his hostess’s orders, and she was so infinitely charming and full of entertainment that it did not cost a man much to be at her orders. In good truth, she tried to anticipate every wish of his, except it might be that of leaving him to rest in some pleasant corner of her palace within hail of her voice. She certainly did not at this time plan for secret meetings with him, though her manner was more caressing to him in public than a prudent woman would have allowed herself. For one kind of expedition he was always ready: he was much interested in the monuments of Roman and Greek history—especially Roman, for the Admiral had in his heart a profound respect for the Romans as lords of the world,

* Much of this chapter is taken from an account of a visit to “Pompeii” written in 1802.

and as anticipating the place that he meant England should have; and he had a sneaking contempt for the Greeks, holding that they never fought like men save when they had a bridge broken down behind them, or mere Asiatics opposed to them.

The city of Naples is not rich in such monuments, although the whole half of the bay, from Naples to the ancient Misenum at the end of one of the enclosing horns, is full of the villas and what not of the most famous people of the court of Cæsar Augustus. And there are at the foot of Mount Vesuvius cities of late years begun to be excavated. At Forum Pompeji especially there is almost a whole city to be seen, and the ancients have told us so much about the eruption which caused its destruction that every traveller of intelligence who proceeds to Naples dare scarcely leave it without having made an examination of these ruins.

“Pompeji first, Nelson!” cried her Ladyship, coming upon us while Will and I were taking our orders about some matter. She had a most easy way of addressing men on the shortest acquaintance. “And we must go in *calesses*, for our coaches would never get back alive from such a road. I know not which are worst, the lava rocks you rise over, or the lava sands you sink in.”

The Admiral was much gratified, and My Lady rattled on merrily. “We must have the Queen. The King does not signify; he would make some reason to get off a-hunting, if we had him with us. But the Queen we must have; for they always dig up a new house or temple, or at least a skeleton or two in a mould of lava, for royalty. We will send for an army of workmen, and the Director. I suppose we must have the Director, though we get to work much the faster if we have not him to say ‘Gently, gently,’ all the while, and ‘Use the sounding rod before the spade.’ Yes, we must have the Queen, and she will bring so many

of her gentlemen and ladies ; and we shall take how many ? You, Nelson, of course, and these boys, and——”

“ Mr. Comyn, your Ladyship, my chaplain.” He had not yet commenced Emma, or dearest Emma, as he afterwards used, in public. “ Mr. Comyn is my library,” he added in his gracious way, “ upon such matters.”

“ Yes ; Comyn must come,” said her Ladyship, “ but I don’t think we’ll have Troubridge : he turns so glum sometimes. I’ll go off and see the Queen for her to fix a day, and whom she will have with her ; and I must see who are to be with me, and count how many *calesses* : we can only put two into each if we drive ourselves or put the driver out on the shaft ; but they are fine, they give you a tossing like a boat, with their high loose springs, but they will weather any rock, and I assure you we shall have plenty.”

“ I fear I shall cut a very sorry figure,” said the Admiral ; “ sea-sick on land is shameful, and I am a very poor sailor, your Ladyship.”

“ *A fico*, Nelson ; you shall drive me.”

“ Then I shall be wrecked at last, and I came near enough in the *Vanguard* when we were reconnoitring off Toulon before the race for the Nile. But I’ll drive your Ladyship ; I never stayed in port for fear of shipwreck, and never will.”

It was fixed for the next day. The heat signified but little, for these *calesses* have large hoods, and the streets of Pompeji are so narrow as to give some shade. I do not know how many *calesses* there were—more than we could easily count, as they met outside the palace over against the church of S. Ferdinando. As the Admiral was fulfilling his promise of driving her Ladyship, Will and I had a *caless* to ourselves, and you may be sure that we enjoyed it. Coming last, as being the least present, we had all the fun of the fair ; and every one was making much splutter, because, though some were well used to driving, they were mostly new to the handling of these see-sawing *calesses*. I

The Admiral

never in my whole life had the driving of anything but an old pony and a shay: no more up to this time had Will, though he afterwards prided himself on his horseflesh. But the mere whipping up of a horse was fun enough for boys like us; and if we had not had to keep our place in the rear of the line, I think that we should have needed a deal of picking up on that road.

I shall not describe how we made our royal progress—we had the Queen with us, mind—out of the Capuan Gate and past Portici, where their Majesties have a palace and keep all the best of the things that are found in Pompeji, even shaving the frescoes off the walls with a fine kind of saw. Indeed, I was not able to observe much, for Will, contrary to his usual wont, cried, “You drive, Tubby!”—which I was at a loss to understand, until I espied that in the *caless* in front of us, of which the hood would not stay up, were seated the Prince of Favara and his sister.

Once or twice, when we halted perforce, for this or the other reason of My Lady, ever a creature of impulses, I was able to take my eye off my horse, which in the general order, being the whip, I could not afford to do. When I did so look up, I was not surprised that Will bade me drive, for in all my life I never saw a woman with her head so beautifully poised on her shoulders as Donna Rusidda, and the heat brought the red into the clear cheeks of that delicate face. Her hair, too, which was brushed up after the fashion of the day into something very like the mode used on the Greek coins, had the most enchanting little curls at the top of her slender neck.

When we arrived at our destination, we all drove into a spacious courtyard, on a level with and a few yards distant from the high road, from which it is separated by a large lattice gate, adjoining to the abode of the only real inhabitant of the once magnificent and populous town of Pompeji—the invalid soldier who acted as guardian and

guide to its remains, and who looked scared at the wholesale invasion of his peaceful realm.

Her Ladyship had been true to her word in getting a royal order for excavators, who turned up to an innumerable extent, and their director. And there was, of course, our escort: we had rendezvoused at the Palace because of the necessity of taking a patrol of cavalry to protect us from annoyance by the sympathisers of the French party.

No sooner were we dismounted, than Mr. Comyn felt it his duty to improve the occasion. He began on the vicissitudes of earthly grandeur: this very dwelling of the Neapolitan veteran was once tenanted by a maniple of those legionaries whose irresistible valour had subdued all our hemisphere from the Tyne to the swampy banks of the Nile, from the pillars of Hercules to the shores of India.

"Bravo, Comyn!" roared the Admiral, whom the Queen encouraged to treat her as a friend rather than a sovereign: "what a rare *auspex*, is it you call it? No, *augur*, you make. Why, since the fortunate event of the 1st of August every one of these four points at this moment acknowledges British sway; and not only the sea between them, but every accessible corner, and the liquid part of the whole globe, from Nootka Sound to Bass's Straits, is directed from half a dozen valves in Charing Cross. But a truce to national bragging, which I detest as much as individual self-praise! It will only do by way of a claptrap at the end of a dry stage-speech, well and significantly bawled up to the forum or the galleries. No more of it in this place: let us begin the sober narrative of facts."

"Oh Lud!" said her Ladyship, "is it so bad as that? Your Majesty, may the excavators cast about and find a good place to begin, that we may have something to see while our ears are being tickled? A golden statue let it be; not the same gold as the statue of Minerva, whose head the peasant split open with a hoe."

In the face of her Ladyship's protests the excavators were marched off to a place out of sight; the plain reason being that the part all round where we were was already excavated down to its original level.

The quadrangular court which we first entered into might be as large as the railed part of Leicester Square. It was surrounded on all sides by a colonnade supporting the roof of a gallery, and from the gallery you entered a number of small apartments not unlike the cells of a prison, or, to use an affirmative comparison, greatly resembling the galleries round some of our old inns, with the rooms adjoining. Only in the present instance the corridor was on the ground floor, there being no upper storey.

"This building, sir," said Mr. Comyn, after a lame parley with the one-armed soldier, "was first taken for a gymnasium, afterwards for a prison, and by some for a school of gladiators; at present it is declared to have been a barrack for soldiers, because various pieces of armour were found in some of the cells. The little apartments are highly interesting. Many have their walls covered with inscriptions and curious drawings."

"Very curious," said the Admiral dryly, pointing to a pencil sketch such as one notices on the dead walls in the London streets which happen to have a national school near them—the master or beadle or other obnoxious person being represented by an outlined figure with straight lines for the legs and arms, and some sort of an irregular circle for head and body. This one had a nose added as well as an eye, and his feet were represented by pothooks, and his hands by toasting-forks, one of which held a straight weapon, looking, it must be confessed, more like a rod than any sort of sword. The letters of the inscription were all capitals, and although not absolutely like our present Roman alphabet, might easily be read, particularly by one who from Herculanean MSS. had become a little familiar with antique penmanship.

This was Mr. Comyn's dictum, not mine, and the name of the figure was Nonius Maximus.

The Queen bade Miss Cornelia Knight, who was one of the party, and had a pretty talent for making poor sketches, to do a drawing of the figure for Her Majesty ; which produced much merriment, for the one-armed guardian was such a recluse in his charge out here that he did not know his company. He at once rebuked Her Majesty, informing her that he had strict orders from the Queen not to allow the use of pencil, paper, or any writing or drawing materials within the town of Forum Pompeji. My Lady, after first exchanging confidential glances with the faithful servant, slyly winked at the Queen with her left eye, while a repeated gliding motion of her right thumb across the finger nearest it made a certain telegraphic signal, and the Queen made one who desired to serve her honestly a rogue, by giving him some *carlins*, to be allowed to break the rules, which she had made herself.

I could see that the Admiral was gravely shocked : the idea of professional duty never left him in the most incongruous situations.

On a sight-seeing expedition like this, it was in the habit of my Lady, and, I was told, of the Queen, to do that which might be least expected of them. If there were but little to see, they would fly through it and back again, in so short a space of time that all the elaborate preparations should seem wasted ; and if there was more to be seen than a strong man could walk through on a long summer's day, they would trifle by the hour at the very outset, as they seemed like to do now. But the Admiral was of a different mind. He had come to see the ruins so wondrously preserved for nigh twenty centuries by the mummifying ashes,—how these mighty Romans lived whose ensample he was never weary of studying. His acquaintance with their history was not indeed profound,

and in the studies of their antiquities he was even less versed. But he had in his chaplain, Mr. Comyn, a ripe scholar, with whom it was ever his wont to make all possible inquiry about a place before he should visit it.

And My Lady, ever quick to feel the pulse of his desires, and having the Queen accustomed to follow her impulses, with a laugh, in one minute directed a forward movement.

The Admiral was much amazed at the smallness, nay, meanness of the houses; and made inquiry if only the dwellings of the shop-keepers and other baser sort of persons had been in the town, the rich resorting to villas in the outskirts.

“By no means,” said the Director: “this is a Roman senator’s house you have before you, and that which you have but now examined belonged to one of the most famous proconsuls—a class which of all others had the best opportunity of enriching themselves.”

The Admiral was profoundly impressed.

“What a people!” he said. “A man who had ruled half Asia came to end his days in a house which had no windows and no door, but such as we give our servants at the kitchen-back; which covered no more ground than a cottage, and had, like a cottage, only the one floor, and had in the whole of it but one room large enough for company. How the great Romans, for whom the world was too little, could bear to be cooped up in those little cells, no larger than a cabin, in a climate like this passes my comprehension.”

All present agreed with him—as like as not their code of manners demanded that they should appear to—all, except the Prince Caracciolo, who was of the Neapolitan Navy, and of the party. He was a man cut on the cross-grain, and said, with a licence very unusual among Italians, except when they are looking for a quarrel: “If I could persuade myself that these pig-styes were actually the

work of Roman architecture I should feel no difficulty in solving the doubts of my credulous English friend. It was these very confined cells which made them so eager to get abroad, and enlarge by conquest their elbow-room. And the same reason induces us modern Italians who live in comfortable, lofty, and spacious dwellings to remain where we are, convinced, as we feel, that any change of abode would only be for the worse."

The Prince, it must be known, had a good estate in Naples, at the corner of the Chiaja, where the road goes off to Pausilippo, and bounding on that side the fine new gardens of the Thuilleries, which the King had made with pleached walks and a fair open space in the midst, to display that wonder of antiquity, the Farnese Bull, which came to him by inheritance a little since. Mr. Comyn did not render his speech, knowing the Admiral's temper, and the avoidance of quarrels commending itself to him as a clerk in holy orders. It was a happy chance that he, not Will, was interpreting for the Admiral at the moment. Not that Will would have rendered his impertinence to the Admiral, but that he would have felt it incumbent upon himself to force the stout, ill-conditioned Prince to swallow an insult direct, or fight.

But Master Will was more profitably engaged. The Prince of Favara, as is so honourably often the case with Sicilian nobles, was a great amateur in the antiquities of his country, and the ruins lately laid bare at Forum Pompeji and Herculaneum were of special interest to him, for he had, among the beggarly remnants of a patrimony which had come down to him, a hill some ten miles from Palermo and two from the court suburb of Bagheria, a bluff barren hill which had been the site of the ancient city of Soluntum founded by the Phœnicians, where the men who tended the vines and olives were for ever turning up some fragment of ancient-world temples or dwellings. He was

too poor to have the hill excavated as he desired ; indeed, the very vineyards and olive-gardens were leased to a creditor, strictly bound down to do no digging above what was necessary for trenching the trees. The Prince had dreams of laying bare a Sicilian Pompeji when he should have made his fortune, which he was not like to do except by marriage with an heiress, a commodity not too plentiful at the Neapolitan Court. But he was not a Royal favourite, though attached to the Court ; and further, any money which Ferdinand I. of the Two Sicilies bestowed upon his favourites was expected to be duly wasted in riotous living.

Well, the Prince of Favara was for showing the city as it should be shown to his late enemy, Will ; and his sister—who had come under his protection—was as attached to their buried city on the hill, and therefore to buried cities generally, as himself ; and I was, as ever, with Will. And looking up to Will as I did, it seemed his plain right that he should walk with the beautiful Donna Rusidda and I with the Prince, lagging bravely. I had, moreover, I think I may say without vanity, more book-brains than Will, who was a man of action and perhaps a little narrow—which the Prince was not long in learning. For Will was not of the kind who can simulate by a fire of small questions interest in a matter which does not come into his thoughts. So the Prince had perforce to address all his information to me. He had, since we were away fighting at the Nile, picked up a very little English from My Lady, who had been interested in him on account of the story of his *duello*. But it was so little that his entire attention was necessary for explaining the smallest point to me. But the exercise gave him much pleasure. Unlike the Englishman, the Italian loves to adventure in a foreign language.

We wandered down to a fine house near the ancient burial ground, which was, according to the Roman wont, outside the city gate upon the road which led to Rome.

This the Prince told me, pointing it as an instance of the imperial sentiment of his ancestors. "And this dwelling," he said, "was the Villa of no less a personage than Cicero."

Before a small but neat house a garden was laid out, in the middle of which a pond was sunk. The empty receptacle of water was in good preservation. The stone borders of the compartments of the garden were likewise plainly discernible. The statues, however, with which the whole was decorated at the first discovery, had of course been removed to the Queen's Museum at Portici. But there were two short spans, on opposite sides of the garden, of a covered walk which had once been carried round it. We were commencing to look about, when the Prince called out—"Come and see the wine-cellar: 'tis the best in the city!"

"No, thanks—not for me," said Will. I do not know whether he pictured to himself long rows of *amphoræ*—I think that's the name—of Falernian or Chian or whatever it was called, we used to learn about in Horace—ready to our choice and only awaiting the breaking of a seal. I myself could have endured any wine that was not rank vinegar; for October mornings in Naples are warmer than our English summer, and we had had a long dusty drive.

"Nay, I am afraid that I have nothing to offer you but the sight of a number of fine jars," said the Prince, putting aside Will's refusal. "I will not call them empty, for they do contain a residuary crust—the coke of a burnt resinous substance. The people of this city were for the most part Greeks, and the Greeks, as you know, still resin their wine."

Now, I was but a boy then, and I was all for having a piece of this petrified wine lees to keep in my sea-chest as what the Italians call a *curio*, and I hung behind the Prince

for that purpose. But he had eyes, like the Queen's picture of Argus, in the back of his head, so I was compelled to take him into my confidence. At first he was very severe, and talked of Vandals and the Queen's orders; but I said,—“A loose piece, a very little loose piece: surely that would not matter.” He gave a good-natured laugh, as if to say, “You are only a boy,” and stooped to bury his arm in one of the great jars, almost the shape of an egg (just such, save for the lid, as those you may see as signs of the sellers of sugars and spices in London). But as his hand was about to touch the crust there was a sudden hollow rolling resembling that of thunder. It seemed to roll round and round the curved ceiling of the dismal vault in which we stood in almost total darkness.

“*Il monte! il monte!*” cried poor Donna Rusidda, in a paroxysm of fright, and fled incontinently, closely followed by Will. But the Prince stopped to secure me my *curio*, quoting, with a gaiety that had a ring of forcedness to me, the Neapolitan proverb, *Heaven has its eye upon us still*, which they use when some circumstance unforeseen prevents the completion of an evil deed. But if he was scared for the second, he recovered himself forthwith, for it was the tradition of his house to fly in the face of fortune and fate and omens, and all that sort of seaman's gospel. And I am sure I liked the prospect a good deal less than he did. For both he and his sister and his uncle were accustomed to consider the approaching extinction of their house—it was almost their religion; but I, although it was part of my profession to be killed, had only signed the contract to die for my country, and expected to die with at least plenty of sea and sky room; and that awful sound began to operate upon my nerves. I must own that the unfortunate catastrophe of the poor Pompejans presented itself in most horrid colours before my mind's eye. I expected an instantaneous eruption of the *volcano*—as they call it—

Pompeji overwhelmed a second time and me with it ; to be excavated perhaps some thousand years hence, and by an excusable anachronism to be taken for a Roman skeleton, and hung up and handled by every curious Miss in the museum of one of our descendants. But as the Prince was determined to grope until he found me my *specimen*, a loose piece which he could take without the qualms of conscience, I could not as a British officer—though I was but a mid—display any desire for haste before a mere Italian. And this though a terrific rattle on the vaulted roof told me that the new eruption had begun and we were right under the deadly shower of ashes.

After what seemed an eternity, but was, likely, less than a minute, he found a fragment that satisfied him, and we made our way out, where I may swear that my spirits rose more speedily than his, for my shower of ashes was only rain of the cataract kind which comes down in the tropics, mingled with hail, to which our battle of the Nile seemed child's play ; and it was no eruption at all, but that splitting, not very loud thunder, which will accompany a storm of lightning right overhead, almost without intermission, and which is even more terrifying than the loudest disconnected claps. But he saw that which was to a Sicilian of a more disturbing nature than bullet-stones of hail—his sister under one of the spans of covered walk alone with Will. It was true that they were in full view of us ; but no Sicilian woman is ever allowed to stand out of earshot with a man who is not her brother or father, and in this instance there was the aggravating circumstance of that mock wooing. But it was as much as one's life was worth to venture out into that hail, even across so small a matter as a Pompejan garden court ; and in the Queen's circle at Naples the freer English habits had crept in much, owing to the familiarity of the Queen with the English who came there, and notably Sir William and My Lady. And therefore, with an Italian's

humour, he made a jest of necessity. He had on a fine court dress, orange and purple silk. "It is my holiday suit," he said, "and beggars cannot be wastrels."

The Prince needed all the comforts of philosophy, for the thunder and lightning were awful. You expected the mountain itself to have been swallowed up as well as its disgorged city of Pompeji ; and each time that the storm was at its worst, Donna Rusidda would clutch hold of Will and cling to him convulsively. I looked on my neighbour's face for a fury to which the storm would be as nothing ; but he said : "'Tis her way—I would I were by her. She needs to be held ; I have fears for her mind in a storm like this."

I think most officers in our fleet would have held her in Will's place, brother or no brother ; but Will would do no more than take her hands in his and endeavour by strong pressure to inspire her with some of his own invincible composure, which presently she began to feel. Her brother, with Italian quickness of perception, grasped the significance of Will's action.

I, looking at the two of them, imagined that the girl, with her lovely eloquent face blanched with fear, and showing a whole range of feelings from terror to gratitude, with her figure now shrinking, now clinging to that splendid image of intrepid youth, must be silently pouring out her heart to him ; while all I could gather from Will's attitude was that he was striving to do his duty under circumstances the most difficult and delicate, and that he was for changing places with either of us.

The storm lasted long—I cannot say how long ; but it had not been over more than a very few minutes when the tension on our minds was broken in an unexpected way ; and, mind you, there was tension, for during that storm his late adversary had conceived for Will a warmth of friendship to which for the time even mine could offer no parallel. Will seemed to the Prince the most splendid

gentleman he had ever seen, and wild thoughts were surging through the Italian's brain at the idea of the old tree of the Favara, which had seemed to have borne its last fruit, being brought back to its ancient strength by having this superb Northern stock grafted on to it. The Prince was registering a vow that Will should marry his sister—not by compulsion at the sword's point, as he had once thought, but as the crown of friendship; not in fulfilment of the ancient prophecy which predicted the end of their house, but in final justification of the courage with which they had always defied Fate.

Only some such dream could account for the extraordinary behaviour of the Prince when the thunder and lightning and hail had ceased, and were succeeded by a cataract of rain; unless it were that the Sicilians, with those strange marriage customs of theirs, considered that a man and a woman who had once been plighted to each other, even in a one-sided troth, of whose existence one of the parties was ignorant, were absolved from the almost monastic restrictions placed between unmarried people of opposite sexes.

What passed between them I have had more than once from Will over our Madeira in his mansion-house at Eastry, when he had for years been married to Katherine. It may have gained a little in the telling, but Will was not like most men—he was too proud to embellish, to himself or others—and I must confess that what he told me afterwards tallied with what I gathered from their mien.

For when physical fear departed with the thunder it is certain—as certain as I could make through rain so heavy—that Donna Rusidda began to regard Will more after the manner of the daughters of Eve.

“Signor Hardres,” she began, “it is strange that I should be prisoned here with you, who have offered me the gravest insult which any man can offer a Sicilian woman.”

“’Tis.”

"I took your word as a gentleman, by the code of your own country, that you were ignorant how you were insulting me."

"No man shall ever make me break my word."

"I believe that," she replied, with a charming expression on her face which he did not then understand, but which in reality marked the struggle between a pure high soul and an impulse inherited from generations of ancestresses for whom intrigue was the one interest open to a woman. Men had their wars, their politics, their painting, many things—and woman nothing; though there was once upon a time a Sicilian poetess. But then what is poetry but the breath of intrigue?

She had something on her mind which she could best gain through Will, and being only a woman, and a woman of the South at that, she was well content to make him burn his fingers for the slight he had put upon her, no matter how unwitting he had been.

"Tell me," she said, "why did you come under my window?"

"I was a young fool."

"Perhaps. But that does not explain everything."

"I wanted an escapade. I am no better than other sailors. But their usual escapades of horseplay are not to my taste—I prefer fighting to that. Indeed, I did fight a few times as the alternative, till they grew tired of such serious jests."

"Granted; but why was I honoured with supplying the victim?"

"You were the only unmarried lady with whom I had had the honour of conversation."

"Yes. But if you meant nothing by your serenading, any window would have done—some window in one of the palaces over the Marina, for instance. You were not, I think, staying at an inn, but on your ship?"

"Yes."

"And the Mont' alti Palace is far from the landing steps and not above-easy to find for a stranger."

"Where there's a will there's a way."

He was of course speaking in Italian to her, so that the appropriate play on his own name did not appear, nor had she sufficient English to understand it if he had given the proverb in English; but the truth of it struck home to me when he put it into English for me.

"Assuredly, signor," she replied; "but why should there have been the will?"

"Oh, I don't know."

"You don't know? Can young English officers leave their ship at all times without question?"

He shook his head.

"You had leave?"

"No."

"You would then have had serious trouble had you been discovered by your captain?"

"I suppose so."

"You were not rowed ashore, I suppose, in that fine barge with the guard of honour assigned to you, as when you came to threaten our poor old Governor in the name of His Britannic Majesty?"

"No, I was not."

"Nor even in the very smallest of the ship's boats—officially?"

"No."

"And a watch is kept on English ships."

"Certainly."

"So that you could not take a speaking horn and halloo for a *barca*?"

"No."

"You took, then, the trouble to prearrange that a *barca* should come alongside of your ship at such a time; it is

not necessary that the watch should know this, for a *barca* man can move in silence when directed, and on such an occasion would not use lights. The spot where he should lie under the ship therefore would have been indicated with some care, and most secret signals concerted. Also there was a guard at the landing stage even at Syracuse, when your great fleet seemed like to blow us out of memory; also there was the sentry to be bribed at the town gates, or a rope ladder to be at a certain place for scaling the walls; also without a trusty guide you would have searched all night for the Mont' alti Palace, which you had never seen; also the lute which you played was native Sicilian, and like to be especially procured for the purpose. If your Admiral had meant to take the city by a night surprise, he could not have laid his plans more carefully; and you did all this without any definite object?"

"Madam, if you must have it, I thought you very pretty and proud."

"More desirable than some ladies in Syracuse?"

"More desirable than any lady in Syracuse."

"At the same time, a woman upon whom you could play a scurvy jest?"

"A pure jest, without any *arrière pensee*."

"And you thought a high-born lady was the proper food for such a jest?"

"Madam, I do not think so. I behaved like a young blackguard, and I am utterly ashamed of myself."

"Well, you fought like a young lion to atone for it." Then, as if she had said too much, or used too soft a tone, she added quickly: "But how is a woman going to forgive you, when you thought it a mere jest to woo her, and were so deadly serious about not marrying her that you were ready to die for it?"

"I don't know," gasped the bewildered Will. "Perhaps—perhaps—you can tell me?"

"Oh, I . . . Well, a woman is always flattered by a man being willing to die for her, even if he is only dying to be rid of her."

"I deserve your sarcasm; but I had your good will the night the Admiral came to the Mont' alti Palace, or I might not be here now."

"A woman can forgive anything to a brave—boy!"

"Say cub, madam."

"No, I will not," she said, with a pretty toss of her head, which I noted. "You began like a Neapolitan, but you ended like a hero. And it would have been a very sorry affair to have had blood, or death, or anything unforgettable marring so fair a performance; and there was more besides, which I would fain not tell you."

"I pray you." (This was the time at which I, Thomas Trinder, noted what seemed a struggle between hesitancy and archness.) "I *pray* you," reiterated Will.

"Must I tell you?" she asked, in the prettiest confusion.

A look of mastery passed over Will's face. There was no smile of triumph, as there might have been on most young officers' faces at such a moment; but he showed sufficient to the quick eye of a fencing woman.

"Because I knew, just ere it was too late, that I did not love you, and nothing would have induced me to marry you, and nothing would induce me now," she added, looking maddeningly lovely, and with a certain softness on her face which might or might not be taken to modify her words.

Will gathered a little hope from this look; for, strange to say, this cartel of defiance and renunciation obliterated the image of Katherine, and made him determine, with all the calm resolution and fierce temper in his nature, that marry her he would.

"But though I cannot, and never would, and could not bring myself to marry you, I desire you to be my dearest friend, as Englishmen can be the friends of women. True,

in Sicily there can be no friendship between men and women, because our men are what they are. Therefore a man is never suffered to be alone with a woman until he is irrevocably pledged to marry her—a pledge that can only be revoked by death.”

“And yet you marry such men?”

“Such is our fate. Besides, what is marriage but a licence between a man and a woman?”

“But after marriage it is like England: you have no restrictions between the friendships of men and women.”

“We have no restrictions as to friendship; but it is not like England, if what the English, who are at the Court—and there are many—say is true.”

Delicacy prompted Will not to question her, and there was a little silence, during which she tried to lift the mosaics out of the broken pattern under their feet with the point of her dainty shoe. Then she looked up and said, “Those friendships are not friendships—they are love affairs. But I wish our friendship to be like your English friendships.”

Will bit his lip, and there was another silence, during which the white horse in the chariot underneath them lost the little black cube which had been his eye for twenty centuries. Seemingly satisfied with her success in this direction, she reiterated, “You will give me your friendship, Signor Vill?”

He gave her his hand.

At that moment we heard My Lady's voice—“There they are, Cesare: give them their donkeys.”

It had, it appeared, occurred to her fertile mind that the Court of Naples should ride round the excavations on the fine asses which they breed in this part of Italy. The Admiral wished to see everything—no light task in the heat of a Neapolitan October day; and driving was an impossibility in the narrow streets, even if the chariot ruts,

a couple of inches deep in the lava paving of the roads, had been the proper space apart for the wheels of the *calesses* in which we had come from Naples. What then but ride on asses? The Court would take it as a jest, and the Admiral should see all he desired.

The idea, like so many of My Lady's ideas, proved to be an inspiration. The managing—the difficulty of managing—the strange asses hastily impressed, entertained the empty heads to whom the very antiquities were interesting seen in this lazy manner, and afforded pleasant food for jest. To those who were minded to see, everything Pompejan presented itself now with an added interest. For once the impluvia—the shallow marble ponds set in the centre of the sloping courts—had their complement of water, and all the ingenious devices for conveying the coveted moisture from every surface of the house to the pond in the centre, were at work.

We clattered a little along a street, when we heard My Lady's clear full voice call out to stop, and those who would to dismount. The Admiral, for all his one arm, was off his ass before any one else, and helping My Lady to dismount, and enter a house of a better kind, which by the traces of mould still left could not have been so long unearthed.

The statues of little Amoretti were still on a little marble island in the centre of the pool, and there were a pair of marble shafts with the heads and shoulders of satyrs standing in the court. My Lady hurried us into a sequence of small chambers, no larger than the chambers made in the thickness of the walls of ancient English castles, which were painted in bright colours with borders of flowers, and had groups of animals masking as human beings for their centres. A grasshopper driving a kind of buggy with a parrot for his steed was very quaint: I had not thought that the Romans knew of parrots.

When My Lady had called Pepino to throw a bucket of

water over the designs and freshen them up, their brilliance was startling. Nor were they true frescoes, as we now know the art in England, for I rubbed my finger against them whilst they were wet, but could get no stain.

“You will soon be able to see them better,” said the Queen—who went round the excavations with the eye of a purchaser, who had had a residue thrown in—“for I am going to have those pictures of the ancients sawn off the walls and carried to my palace.”

“They were better here,” said the Admiral boldly, when My Lady interpreted.

She repeated his remark to Her Majesty, who said,—

“Tut! tut! A few storms such as we have had to-day, and a summer or two of the sandy breath of the sirocco, and where would they be?”

Then occurred a lively little dialogue, interpreted, with improvements, no doubt, by her Ladyship.

“If it were in England I make bold to think that we should roof them in with glass.”

“You English are made of money.”

“A nation need not be made of money to have this whole city roofed in with glass, as it is given back to the daylight; and these would be the finest museums in the world. The Romans were the chief race worth considering in the ancient world, and here we have the actual houses in which they lived, with the ashes still in the braziers and the bread in the bins.”

“I think we must give you Pompeji as your dowry when the King has that patent of nobility drawn out which he wishes to have the honour of conferring upon you; and then you can put it all under one hall roof, Admiral.”

“You are too good, Your Majesty, but I should feel like a fish out of water with an estate on a continent. I am an islander, and islands are in the keeping of fleets.”

“You are running away, Admiral, for the first time,” said

the Queen, laughing good-naturedly ; “ but if you won't take the city, the city must come to Portici. One cannot make these expeditions out here every day—why, it has been at the peril of our lives,” she added, suddenly remembering the hail—“ but in the palace one can be surrounded all day long with these oldest paintings in the world. And sawing them off does not hurt them : why, the ancients did it themselves ! When Herculaneum was dug out we found in one chamber the pictures ready sawn off for a removal. It was put off by the eruption for a couple of thousand years, but we carried out the wishes of the former owners.”

“ Oh, Your Majesty ! ” said the Admiral.

And this is how we cavalcaded round Pompeji. Nor did we confine ourselves to the streets : we rode into the temples, up to the very altars ; and in one of them—the temple, I think, of some Egyptian god—speaking through the interpretation of My Lady, the Director called the Admiral's attention to a secret passage perforated in two places, observing that it was in that passage, and through its openings, that the concealed priests of the goddess were wont to pronounce the oracles to be delivered to a credulous multitude. He was going to add to this valuable piece of information other particulars, perhaps equally interesting, when the Prince Caracciolo stopped his progress sourly by telling him he need be at no further trouble, since he was sure that the milord Inglese would not believe one word of the story : the gentleman was too great an admirer of antiquity to be persuaded that his friends, the ancients, would be capable of upholding fraud in their worship. “ I, for my part,” he added, “ am convinced that all the oracles we read of in history were contrived by similar tricks of imposition.” And then this strange man, who in his own religion was profoundly superstitious, changed of a sudden, and would have us believe that these oracles were by

direct inspiration of Satan, the arch-fiend of mankind, who, before the establishment of the Catholic faith, was absolute lord and master of the human race.

Once again the Prince's conversation had to be left uninterpreted to the Admiral. This was a warning to My Lady, who, with the adroitness for which she was famous, immediately contrived to fill the Queen with a fresh desire, which was that the Court should sup at a well-known wayside house, a mere *trattoria*, which there was at Resina, on the way back to Naples. So back the donkeys clattered along the rutted lava street to the courtyard outside which we had left our *calesses*.

On the road to Resina they were not all blessings which the party in their hearts showered upon My Lady. The courtiers were tired of their *al fresco* day, and wishful to be back and banqueting in Naples in the least possible time; for they had had their breakfast, which corresponds to our midday meal in England, portentously early, and though they eat but two regular meals a day, the Neapolitans, who were accustomed to being in attendance on the Queen and My Lady, were for the most part *gourmands*, who looked to making up at their dinner for what they had scamped at their breakfast. But a little before Resina their opinions underwent a change, for it came on a smart shower, and a *caless* gives but little shelter. There had, moreover, been not the slightest sign of rain when we left Naples. The ladies were for the most part provided with cloaks. The Italian lady is both precious of her clothes and fond of wrapping, though indifferent to the most icy draughts. But some of the men were ill provided, notably the Prince Caracciolo, who was just two in front of us, and in spite of his reputed wealth, of a frugal turn.

Hastily stopping his *caless*, and handing the reins to the lady he was driving, the wife of a friend to whom he paid much attention, he requested her to stand up, and

in an incredibly brief space of time had whipped his cocked beaver into the seat, and with the utmost sang-froid replaced it with a bandeau formed of his handkerchief, which unequivocally betrayed his attachment to the narcotic comfort of Virginia dust. With a wonderful celerity for him, his upper garment, which was of pale blue silk, and buttoned with unbecoming tightness over his unwieldy figure, was turned inside out, and a pleasing contrast formed between the milky hue of the sleeves and the purple bombazine lining of the rest of his habit.

You can hardly imagine what a figure of fun he made to us boys, who had already taken a violent dislike to the man, with his spleen and his shifting, inscrutable eyes. But he came out in a rather more welcome light shortly; for when we reached the inn at Resina, and had stampeded from the *calesses* for shelter into the huge sort of kitchen, lighted only by the great coach doorway, which served for the eating house as well as for the cooking place, there was such a confusion that we had doubts of getting even a *cena*, which, as every one knows, is a much inferior thing to a *pranzo*. But then the dour Prince, unmindful of his ridiculous attire, put on an air of smiling self-sufficiency, and saying, "*Lascia far a me*," went out, and presently reappeared with the Padrone, who, with the help of his women, had been pushing the abandoned *calesses* out of the rain under a kind of pent-house. The Padrone, with whom the Prince seemed to be strangely familiar, made his appearance in the *negligé* of a nightcap and a calico short jacket, and having understood our present wants, though he had no idea of the Italians of our company being anything more than well-to-do gentry, disappeared with the truly Neapolitan promise, "*Avrà un buon pranzo in un momento*."

"That's a very short time," said the Queen.

“Indeed, you will get it in a very few minutes,” said Caracciolo.

The Queen turned on him with the haughtiness that came so naturally to the daughter of Maria Theresa: “The Prince seems to know Resina better than I should have expected.”

“Yes, your Majesty. The fact is, that there is an estate in the neighbourhood to which I go for hunting.”*

“Indeed!” said the Queen; “and do you get good sport?”

“Oh, excellent, your Majesty—excellent.”

“The King will be glad to hear of it. He is always glad of fresh country to hunt so near Naples.”

“I should be most honoured,” said the Prince, turning round to scowl at the innkeeper, who had returned. We caught the scowl, and wondered if it conveyed more than that the Prince’s temper was ruffled. Our patience had been put to no great trial. The innkeeper had come to announce the *buon pranzo*, which consisted of a tolerable vermicelli soup, a pork fry, and a dish of delicate little fish unfortunately fried in oil. The Italian ladies turned up their noses at the fish: to cook in oil was the sign of a very poor eating-house. To us boys, however, all was manna in the desert, and Prince Caracciolo fell to with such energy and rapacity that before I had despatched four or five of the little transparent fish, which almost fell to pieces, he had emptied the dish in front of him altogether. The little creatures glided down his fauces unchewed, much more quickly than they move in their native element.

Noticing the dismay on the faces of the men in the company, he mentioned that the supply was unlimited, and that more would be brought in hot from the pan as required. The Queen called for *lacrime Christi*, saying, “To dine at the foot of Vesuvio and not drink *lacrime*

* More what we should call shooting in England.

Christi, would be worse than being at Rome and not seeing St. Peter's."

"*Vulite roba buona?*"* asked mine host, not in the least knowing who she was, but gathering from her appearance that she was rich enough to like his best.

"*Si, signor,*" she replied, with a little smile at the fellow's naïve ignorance. Never before had a royal party dined more economically: including the "capital stuff," the bill did not come up to seven carlins a head—half a crown perhaps of our money. And when the bill was brought, or rather the amount named—for in these humble *trattorie* they save the expense of bill-paper—she ordered an equal amount to be added to it, with the good wishes of their Majesties of the Two Sicilies.

The man was aghast, until he had a nudge from Caracciolo: "Don't you see that it is Her Majesty, *Pasquale?*" And then we had the civility and obeisances which would have spoiled the whole fun of the feast if our incognito had been betrayed earlier. And My Lady, in particular, had enjoyed herself mightily: she loved new dishes, and vowed that she would have pork fry and those little sand-fish done in oil at her next supper at the Embassy.

We did well in stopping. A heavenly evening had succeeded the storm and shower; the latter had precipitated every azotic impurity in the atmosphere, and imparted to it a fresh supply of oxygen; a luxuriant vernal vegetation exhaled its perfumes more freely—it was a treat to breathe! A brilliant moon assisted to conduct us safely and pleasantly through Portici to the Castel del Carmine; and, skirting the shore past the Immacolata, we rounded the Castel Nuovo to the Royal Palace, where we drew up in a kind of salute while the Queen entered, and then dispersed to our several destinations.

* "Would you like good stuff?"

CHAPTER XIII.—Of the Supper
at the Palace that followed

MY Lady's feasting on the little fish, which had almost rivalled the Prince Caracciolo's miraculous draught, did not seem to interfere with her appetite at the State dinner, or perhaps I should say supper, which took place at the Queen's Palace in Naples as soon as the guests could conveniently reassemble after repairing the ravages of so hot and wet a day. She ate with her accustomed heartiness, as I was in a position to see, for she had me to sit next to her. Will was there officially as the Admiral's interpreter—an office which later was more often filled by My Lady herself, during the Admiral's long spell ashore in the Two Sicilies. She had said to Her Majesty, in her good-natured way, "Let Tubby and Josiah come; they can't babble away any secrets, for they will not understand one word we say." She had quite forgiven Josiah for his brutal and at that time undeserved assault on her friendship with his step-father, and he was her devoted slave again: indeed, there was nothing small about My Lady,—even her vanity was too great to charge with pettiness. I may say here that Josiah was mighty careful that night; and I do think it was from fear of forgetting himself again, although such a very young officer was not likely to exceed before the company in which he found himself. For Her Majesty had invited all the captains that could be spared

both for the expedition to Pompeji and for the banquet ; and all around us, mingled with the beauties and most trusted nobles of the Neapolitan Court were such men as Troubridge and Alexander Ball, the pick of Nelson's captains, men whom any other Power would have been glad to welcome as commanders-in-chief at that moment—such was their martial fame for the handling of their ships, and stomach for fighting.

I don't know which was the finer sight, the scene in the ante-room under the huge rock-crystal chandeliers with their hundreds of wax tapers, or the scene at the crescent-shaped dining-table groaning beneath its rich services of the precious metals, fashioned by such gold-and-silversmiths as the Florentine, Cellini. In the former, the modest but self-reliant carriage of the men, who had made all Europe ring with the fame of their deeds, contrasted finely with the noble figures and carriage of the young Italian beauties with whom Her Majesty loved to surround herself—women who held themselves as upright as though they had borne on their heads the Greek water-pitchers of antique mould which their peasant women carry to the wells. They had, too, the strength and health on which the daughters of our country squires pride themselves, and, yet, more grace than ever we saw in the great French ladies when Will and I were with the Allies at the occupation of Paris fifteen years or more later, gone there to see the great sight, like so many of the gentry round Dover. And just as for carriage there are no women to be matched with these Southern Italians, so in many cases it was with their skins, which were exquisitely velvety and clear, and showed the rich crimson of their blood through the transparent brown. I noted, and I think Will noted particularly, the difference between Donna Rusidda and them ; for her skin, while just as transparent and beautiful in texture, was more of an olive hue, and showed the blood but rarely and at moments

of great agitation—though her cheeks then, to use the words of the old song, were “as ruddy as a peach” for all their brownness. But I thought, and I could swear that Will thought, that this very circumstance conferred upon her visage a kind of distinction.

Most of the ladies could by now speak a little, a very little English—a gift of tongues which was not shared by many of the officers, much as they had served in Italian waters. However, between them they could make words enough to serve while they were assembling for the banquet, and each keeping an eye on the door by which Her Majesty was to enter.

At the dinner the grace of the women was not shown to the full, nor were the attitudes of the officers so characteristic; but to make up for this came the rolls of hearty laughter. For the Queen on these occasions by no means maintained a royal reserve, for all the haughtiness in her nature. Maria Carolina loved fine men, and loved above all things to see them *themselves*, and I judge that she was not averse to seeing them *themselves* for the further reason that it enabled her to gauge their value as instruments.

Those who had known him long, like Captain Troubridge, could not help noting, even now, the change that was coming over the Admiral. Formerly he was extremely reserved when dining in the presence of ladies, saying but little and drinking no wine until the King’s health should be proposed, and always drinking such healths in bumpers. Now he took a little wine during dinner, not wishing, I think, to appear peculiar; and talked very much to My Lady, although he was sitting between her and the Queen. It was, as I have writ, My Lady’s whim that I should sit upon her other hand that night, and so I had good opportunity for observing. Will sat on the other side of Captain Troubridge to interpret between him and Her Majesty, while My Lady interpreted for the Admiral. She spoke Italian,

and also the Neapolitan dialect, like English ; though she could not write her native tongue better than a clever child.

Having so often heard the tradition of his taciturnity at the table, I own I was most astonished at his flow of table talk ; for, though he paid My Lady compliments not a few, they were no more than any other officer in his fleet would have paid—certainly no more than such men as Captain Troubridge and Captain Hallowell, who had not his flow of other conversation.

That the Admiral could express himself well, any one who has read his letters published from time to time could not fail to see. He was no maker of epigrams, but he said things so briefly, and so to the point, that one could remember them like epigrams ; and, for a seaman, he had a remarkably well-stored mind. A full knowledge of history he considered essential to every commander who would understand his business ; and I think that during those years on shore before the battle of St. Vincent, when he was living a sort of farmer's life in his father's parsonage, he must have had the run of a fairly-stocked library and mastered its contents, as it was his wont to master anything he put his mind to. He was likely talking his best, for was he not next to one of the world's most famous beauties in the first days of the friendship to which she had shown herself so well disposed ? What I overheard of their conversation I cannot, as one of the Admiral's officers, bring myself to write ; not that there was anything that I should blush to repeat on paper, but indeed I could rather write down a man's coarseness than his tenderness, for his tenderness is sacred to the person to whom it is addressed, and his coarseness is mere anathema. But I think I may say something of their appearance, which any one at the table, and servants, could see as well as I. The Admiral had on his battle look. As is well known, when battle was

imminent, until the moment for deeds came, after making his dispositions, he would retire and write his last letters and his last wishes, and think of those he loved best, and pray for his country and them. He prayed till the last moment before his actual service as a commander was required ; and in after years, when My Lady was wife to him in all but name, the lack of a conventional marriage-tie between them did not prevent that great heart from mingling the woman he loved best with the last prayers which ascended to his Creator. But when the moment came for the round shot to be tearing the decks, and sowing death, the Admiral would be on his quarter-deck all alert, but smiling like a boy playing a game in which he is the best player.

It was that light-hearted boy's look he wore while he sat by My Lady that first night on which I saw them much together.

And as for her, she had just that gracious look of the woman, who has been the unconquered Amazon all her life, when she has found the man for whom she will surrender. Not that My Lady had ever been the unconquered Amazon, but she had every womanly graciousness in her repertoire, and could use them with a generousness, which made them genuine, as the occasion demanded. And this was the finest and best of them. That My Lady was capable of a passionate devotion had been shown by her fidelity to Mr. Greville. The Admiral was exactly qualified to take her whole heart. To her imagination, her pride in her country, her pride of vanity, he appealed more highly than was possible for any other man living, and to her generous affectionate woman's heart, which must have been bruised by Mr. Greville's desertion and weary of Sir William's weakness, his chivalrousness, and the affectionate *esprit de corps* which made every man who ever served with him his slave, came as a balm and a cordial.

These two were all in all to each other that night. The Admiral, as I have said, alert and smiling, was rarely brilliant for him; My Lady, with beautiful eager face, and every now and then a sort of happy sob heaving in that exquisite white bosom, was hanging on his words.

Though I said they were all in all, the Admiral had perforce to address himself to Her Majesty sufficiently, and from time to time to call out some toast or make some rally to his captains.

It seemed to me, who was only a boy then, that Her Majesty was of a purpose devoting her whole attention to Captain Troubridge, to whom she had given the second place of honour on her left hand—he being the most distinguished of the captains present. I did not think then all I am about to say, for I knew less of life, and I had not the light of what has happened since to guide me; but, testing the proceedings with these acids, I should say that the daughter of Maria Theresa was desirous on the one hand of giving Lady Hamilton full play in subjugating the Admiral, and that on the other hand she was desirous of bringing all the influences of her beauty, her womanly charm, her splendid birth, and her queenhood, to bear upon the bluff British sailor, who was of all the least amenable to women's wiles, and who was in the future always to be in the balance against the influence of herself and Lady Hamilton with the Admiral. Speaking from memory and experience, I picture Captain Troubridge as a little uneasy in this bower of Armida. But there was one thing which made him to some extent the willing servant to the Queen of Naples,—Captain Troubridge was a fighting man, and he had the highest admiration for the courage, resourcefulness and patriotism of the woman who, married to a *roi fainéant*, made such a good fight to maintain her kingdom's place among the nations.

As for myself, the dinner was rather mortifying, for My

Lady, after placing me next to her, forgot my existence, until a lackey, breaking a crystal goblet on her right hand between her and me, in the attempt to fill it without disturbing her colloquy with the Admiral, made a portentous crash which attracted the attention of the whole company, including even My Lady; who, suddenly becoming aware of my existence, and feeling that she had treated me rather badly, put her arm round me and kissed me, with everybody looking. The blood rushed to my head until I must have looked like the merchant ensign; and, to add to my confusion, the lady on the other side, who was the wife of an Italian prince and could not speak a word of English, seized the cue, and almost took me on her knee in her attempt to make up for her deficiency as a linguist.

At last that terrible banquet ended, and the company scattered about the reception-rooms and the terrace overlooking the sea. The Admiral and My Lady went out on the terrace. Her Majesty remained in the great room, which she had recently had decorated with frescoes in the style discovered in the excavations at Pompeji. She made rather an ostentation of talking to Neapolitans, and principally to the ladies among them; the subject of their conversation, from their looks, being the manly beauty of the English officers gathered under the centre chandelier—a splendid group. In true English style the captains stood together talking—no doubt of Service matters, just as they would when they met almost daily on the flagship or in the Admiral's anterooms at My Lady's palace.

Will, his services not being required by the Admiral, was standing a little way from them. He was English, and therefore wished to do what the English did, and yet had too much pride and too good manners to go nearer to his superior officers; and I humbly took up my position by him, not expecting him to talk to me upon such an occasion, but from sheer not knowing what else to do.

In a very few minutes My Lady and the Admiral returned, My Lady leading the way straight up to the captains. She had by this become so intimate with Her Majesty that there was no need for her to observe Court etiquette on entering the presence of the Sovereign. With the captains she was so natural and unaffected that even Captain Troubridge was melted.

Hardly had she taken up her position when Donna Rusidda, having spoken with Her Majesty, upon whom she was attending, and having made her courtesy with the grace of a Neapolitan girl and a daughter of generations of courtiers, glided across the room to bring, as it seemed, a message to her Ladyship, though she lingered afterwards. I cannot say whether My Lady had an instinct against her. She was all smiles, as was her wont at such a gathering. But she did not lay her hand on the girl to detain her, or improvise any of the excuses for which she had such a happy invention; and after a few minutes of awkwardness Donna Rusidda was departing, a little crest-fallen, when her eye fell upon Will, almost in her path, just off the edge of the group. She motioned him to her.

"Ah, Signor Vill," she said in her own language, her face lighting up with a smile even more beautiful than My Lady's, for it was rarer: "why do not all your English officers speak Italian, as you do? They spend their lives in guarding the coasts of our country, and yet do not understand any of her children."

Will was quite gallant in his reply: I know what he said. I think we must have discussed every incident of our life in the Two Sicilies during the long years in which we have been neighbours and brothers-in-law on the bleak coast of Kent. He said, "Because they have no charming lady to take them in hand. I had a beautiful young mother, who was brought up in Mediterranean ports, and has never ceased to pine for the sunshine."

What a devoted woman Donna Rusidda was we were to know only too well afterwards; but she was not above a woman's curiosity or caprice, and, the Admiral being as usual the feature of the evening, it was not long before she had manœuvred to get the weather side of Will, where, while she was talking to him, she could see the Admiral, and where the great man's eye might occasionally light on her.

She answered his polite little speech with a charming smile, but said nothing. So he continued,—

“But you must try harder to learn my language too. You must not say Signor Vill, but Signor Will.”

“Vill.”

“No, no; not Vill, but Will.”

“Oh yes: Ou-ill—Signor Ou-ill.”

“No, not Signor Ou-ill, but Signor Will.”

“Signor W-W-Will.”

“Yes, that is it: Will.”

“Well, Signor W-Will,” she said coquettishly—“I have to prepare my mouth for it, or I cannot say it—I cannot stay with you. I have given my message, and must go back to Her Majesty.”

“Oh, Donna Rusidda!” he began reproachfully.

“Oh, what, Signor W-Will?”

“Are you not waiting for some answer from My Lady?”

“Perhaps. Have you a message which you wish the Signora Hamilton to give to me?”

“None that I would not rather give myself.”

“But I cannot take messages from a midshipman.”

“I am not a midshipman,” he said, with injured dignity.

“You have risen very quickly.”

“I was always a lieutenant, from the very first time you saw me.”

“You were never a lieutenant when you inflicted that insult on me: that was a midshipman's trick.”

“Will you never forget or forgive?”

“I have forgiven it, or how would the affair have ended?”

“Yes, indeed you did, Signorina,” said Will, with warm gratitude in his voice. “Will you forget it?”

“I am not sure that I can promise that; but I have offered you my friendship.”

“That is the same thing,” he said, giving her such a look as I should not have thought any woman could resist. In all that assemblage there was no one with high breeding and high courage writ so plainly on his face; and he was so young, so beautiful, so fair in colouring. Even his eyes, his proud blue eyes, had for once lost their hardness.

“No, it is not the same thing; I do not want to forget it.”

“Then I am not completely forgiven?”

“Oh yes, you are, Signor W-Will. You are already almost my best friend.”

“Who is *the* fortunate person?”

“You forget that I have a brother and an uncle,” she said, with a touch of dignity.

Will was relieved a little, and his relief was completed when she broke into a sweet soft smile, which he poetically compared to me (after his second glass of Madeira) to the moon on the Bay of Naples.

“Tell me, Donna Rusidda, what are to be the privileges of friendship?”

She looked at him with a concern which was to me more engaging than her archness. “Oh, Signor W-Will, you are not speaking as an Italian would speak, are you?”

“I would rather die,” he replied, with a respectfulness which must have gone straight to her heart, for she was so grateful, so frank.

“I mean the right of coming to me and speaking to me as you would to an English girl; of staying by me if we

are left, instead of instantly quitting; of walking with me as you would with an English girl."

"But your brother?"

"I will speak to my brother. Besides, having once accepted you as my lover—even the Sicilian custom would give me the right. There is no jilting by men in Sicily, so that is not provided for in our customs."

"Princess," said Will, "there is nothing in all the Two Sicilies I value like this permission of yours. But I am strangely sensitive about codes, and your brother and I have fought—and he has generously taken me back into his friendship."

"You gave him his life."

"That is true; but that only wiped out the debt I had already incurred. All that he has done since is a free gift, which leaves me much again in his debt."

"What do you wish me to do, then?" she asked almost petulantly.

"I wish your brother to repeat your offer to me."

She made a charming figure as she stepped lightly and quickly across the dark polished floor, gleaming with the reflection of the countless wax-lights, to where, at the far end of the room from the Queen and her ladies, her brother was talking to a group of noblemen and State functionaries. The light shining above and the dark shining below made just the right foils for the soft white satin of the gown that hung in graceful folds from her shoulders, which, like her small well-shaped head, were thrown slightly back. She went up to her brother with a look which bespoke sisterly confidence and affection, mingled with respect for the head of the house, but quite unembarrassed. And she had not spoken with him above a minute or two when they came to where Will was standing.

"I shall leave you to Ruggiero," she said, preparing to trip away.

"Please don't," he said. "I mean, please don't leave us. We are not quarrelling, are we, your Highness?"

"Hardly quarrelling," replied the Prince: "I have come to repeat what my sister said. As you have been engaged, our Sicilian customs permit of it, and I would trust your honour before my own. You are already my friend, and you can be my sister's friend, as you would be the friend of an Englishwoman. She has told me what you both take that to mean, and, if any one chooses to misinterpret it, I have a sword."

Will was explaining, with genuine feeling, his sense of the honour thus paid him, when the Admiral spied the Prince and his sister in their friendly colloquy with him, and stepped forward to speak to the former. It fired the Admiral's generous soul to see the handsome terms upon which the combatants of the duel he had frustrated were with each other.

"Your Highness," he said, "will you and the Princess do me the honour of taking breakfast on the flagship, when I return from Caserta, and meeting the General? A small affair—not a reception of Her Majesty by the British Admiral. My Lady here will receive the ladies; we have a raree to show you—the little bird which flew on board just before my late battle, stayed with us all through the action, and is now free of my cabin. She cats in the prettiest way from my table, and is, I take it, the most potent and companionable familiar in the whole history of magic."

The Prince expressed his thanks with elaborate Italian politeness and Southern warmth. It was the first time he had spoken with the Admiral since that memorable night in the Palazzo Mont'alti; and being a man of high courage, and the last of a martial Norman race, the glory of the Admiral's great deeds appealed with unusual strength to his imagination.

As the Prince of Favara advanced to meet the Admiral, his sister's face was full of mischievous laughter. She had in truth created rather a difficult position for herself, and the best way out of it was to consider Will discomfited, which in truth he was, though events jumped so well with his wishes.

"Well, Signor W-Will, did I not tell you?"

"No, I don't think you did."

"Well, I meant to tell you, and you knew I knew, and do not look so frightened. I do not expect you to propose marriage to me this very minute, or even to carry me off for a midnight walk; but I am tired—yes, tired of our desperate Sicilian custom of all the ladies standing round that dais at one end of the room, as there, with Her Majesty and all the gentlemen round the dais at the other end, as there—where you see the Duke, the Prince, the three Counts, and the Ministers. You English take the centre of the floor. You do not have customs like we do, which can only be cheated by intrigues."

"Is it very dreadful of you to be standing here?"

"Yes, very dreadful; but not so dreadful as it would be if my brother, who is my only protector, were not here. And I am going to rebel, and take English leave."

"But if you were English you would go to places with a married lady friend; and when you arrived you would leave her, and never find her again until you wished to escape from somebody or to go home. Perhaps the Ambassador's wife?"

"No, no," she said quickly.

"Oh, I see," he said: "you know her story."

"It is not that. All Naples knows her story, and many married ladies in Naples have the same story about themselves. It does not affect her position in society. People would only laugh and think one mad if one attacked her for that. No, it is not that: it is simply—well, I do not

wish to be beholden to her. My brother has always been my protector, and he has a sharp sword. And there is Donna Marziani. You English know what is meant by a *duenna*, do you not?" she rattled on in her voluble Italian. She and Will spoke Italian because it was as easy to him as English, and English was so difficult to her.

"Need we stand here, then? Why should we not go and sit on one of those stiff-backed couches with the gilt lions' legs which line the room?"

"Let us: it will be my declaration of independence."

When she and Will moved off in their silent revolution—a revolution almost as shocking to Sicilian ideas as the late horrible Revolution in France—My Lady, seeing me stranded like a fish on the rocks at low water, called to me, "Tubby!" which I resented on so formal an occasion; nor had I yet forgiven her for having kissed me at the dinner-table, though there were plenty—the Admiral himself, as I knew after, and was not too young then to suspect—who would have taken a kiss from Lady Hamilton under even more arduous conditions. Nor was I best pleased to find that she had only called me to lay her hand upon my shoulder in a caressing way while she pursued her conversation with the Admiral.

He was saying: "This confounded fellow cannot move without five carriages. I have formed my opinion; I heartily pray I may be mistaken." And then they went on talking about five-and-thirty thousand of the finest troops in the world; forty thousand levies; sending a legion of five thousand by sea; and General Championnet and the spread of pernicious opinions, till I should have yawned if I had not had, as I thought, Captain Troubridge's eye on me. I suppose I must have yawned, for the Queen sent one of her ladies to fetch me. I stole a glance at Will, but he had no eyes save for Donna Rusidda, who was, as I thought, merely angling with him. Then I looked

at the captains, but they were far too occupied with great matters to think of a midshipman, unless he was rampantly misbehaving himself. I did not, somehow or other, look at the Admiral: I felt I did not mind him; and then I let myself be spoiled by the beautiful Court ladies—I, who am now a plain half-pay captain, living on a very modest income in a cottage at Walmer.

CHAPTER XIV.—What the Admiral wrote of My Lady in his Journal

I WAS the less inclined to write what I heard between the Admiral and My Lady at the banquet both because it was a delicate matter to write upon such a subject from memory, and the more so because in the Journal the Admiral (if he wrote it) has committed his own meditations to paper.

EXTRACT FROM THE JOURNAL.

“And so good-night! A wonderful woman! We have been together hours—I do not know how many—to-day, but for the most part with very much company till the very end, when we drove home from the Queen’s party and found Sir William retired with a touch of fever, which concerned the dear creature very much. She would not wait one second to pull off her wrap, but flew to him, only to find him sufficiently recovered to have sunk into the profound sleep which precedes health. Sir William was ailing when we left, I do not know how early in the morning, to see the ruins lately excavated of an ancient Roman city buried by an eruption of the volcano about the time of St. Paul—a circumstance to be noted, because it enables us to judge somewhat the manner of men those Romans were, whom the founders of our wonderful religion were called on in a way to defy. I am inclined to think favourably of

them. Pompeji, that was the name of the city, was a favourite haunt of the leading Romans, who founded and administered an empire which our own is only just now beginning to rival in extent, its riches being out of the question. The richest men in Pompeji were content with houses which no farmer in England would tolerate. You could put any house in Pompeji into the big barn at Burnham Thorpe, and they had no marble in them except for fountains and the like; the walls of the rooms and the pillars of the courts both being covered with a hard stucco, simply but elegantly painted. I could have wished that all the relics which the Queen has so carefully collected at her palace at Portici had been left rooted to the spot where they had been found. I wanted to see the brazier full of coals, which were half burnt when the eruption came down, standing where it was when Roman hands filled it with those coals; I wanted to see the charred bread on the table where it was waiting to be eaten; I wanted to see the skeleton of the sentry guarding the place where its owner had looked death in the face. At Portici they are only the playthings of an idle court, which might destroy them if it thought about them. Indeed, I have great fears for them; I must speak to Emma, who takes a scholar's interest in them, and a more human intelligent interest in them than Sir William, who of course taught her, and is the first *sçavant* in Italy. The Queen would, I doubt not, give them to her if she asked for them; and if they are not to be at Pompeji, and this country is in a shockingly disturbed condition just now, they had better be put on board the first of my ships that has to go home, and be taken to the Royal Museum in London.

“Marvellously interesting I found it, and the good Queen had a fresh house excavated on purpose for me to see how the things looked when they were found. It was a fine house—one of the best in the city. The frescoes on

the walls were equal to most which they have peeled off and carried to Portici. There was a very handsome white marble fountain ; there were some fair statuettes and stelæ (whatever are these last for ? I had the name from Emma); but the very things I most wished to see were absent—the ruins of a meal on a table, and skeletons in the position in which they were overtaken in the storm. Any articles of household furniture, which Emma says were mostly of bronze, and therefore would not have been consumed, I should have desired to see in the places where they were being used when the end came. But this house might have been the ruins of part of the Pope's Museum at Rome !

“However, I must confess that the chief interest of the day to me was watching that wonderful woman as she led the way through all these marvels of antiquity, her beautiful face beaming with intelligence and consideration for us ; and she was no dry-as-dust, for, in the midst of a disquisition, she would find time to say to me—‘Nelson, I had this shepherdess hat out from England : tell me, am I not too old for it ?’ she all the while looking like a girl in the freshness of her teens. All through the day she heaped delicious favours upon unworthy me. It was only perhaps a hand caressingly laid on my shoulder when I was to look at something ; or thrust through my arm and let to rest on it when there was an unusually trying walk from excavation to excavation ; or a drawing in of skirts to make room for me at her side when a party of us, headed by Emma and the Queen, sat down to the second breakfast with our legs in the deepest fountain we could find. It was dry, and perhaps two feet deep ; and I daresay we cut a comical figure enough, looking as if the table and our legs had gone through the floor and left us squatting round a hole. It was Emma's idea.

“Then there was a storm, which drove us for refuge into the custode's quarters. Emma was sorely frightened. We

were alone, huddled up in a narrow passage. She was so prostrated, and near fainting, that I had to strive to win her with the gentlest caresses to prevent her from succumbing ; but when she came to, the storm beginning to abate, she was not angry, but suffered me most graciously. Then we had the drive to Resina. I was driving her *caless*, and she let herself rest against me in sheer weariness after the agitation of the afternoon, but very trustful.

“Then came that mad supper in the tavern-kitchen, in which Emma, revived by her resting, was a queen of the revels again. What a scene it was ! these uncouth beings made to provide a feast, such as one sees in a buffo-comedy, for their Queen, with Emma spurring them on to fresh extravagances, and the Neapolitan Commodore Caracciolo, as I judged, airing a sardonic wit which I missed, being no Italian. And when I could not partake of the dishes of the country, which were mightily rich with their pork and their oil, Emma flew away from the table herself, and catching one of her lackeys made him bring a basket from which she gave me biscuits and fruit, of which I partook sparingly, really that it might not be a fool’s errand for her. Mine host’s wine was very fair. Emma is a splendid creature, with superb health, about which she takes not a thought. She ate their oily dainties with the greatest gusto, because, as she said, their simplicity and plainness were refreshing after the artificial feasts to which she was bound as Ambassador’s wife.

“Refreshed in this simple, plain and hearty fashion, she was all *esprit* on the remainder of the drive into Naples through the dusk. She was wonderfully animated ; and I had from her, in her own natural words, for my benefit, all that she had had from the learned Sir William about the flourishing ports and bathing places, served mostly by Greeks, which had clustered round the vine-clad slopes of Vesuvio before the eruption. I could almost

see their destruction, so eloquent were her gestures. And very frequently she would break off suddenly, saying—‘But I am wearying you—I am letting my enthusiasm run away with me. Forgive me, Nelson,’ and this so penitently, with a timid little touch.

“In our *caless* we drove post haste, so soon as we had left the Queen, to Sir William’s palace on the Chiaja. For we had to dress for dinner with Her Majesty, and a beautiful woman needs time for her toilet; though in this respect Emma is so speedy that ’tis plain that she relies on Nature first, and but little on Art. I had not got into my state uniform above a few minutes, when I beheld her a vision of loveliness.

“We had hoped to have Sir William with us. Common prudence had indeed bade him forego the expedition to Pompeji, from which, with the drenchings we had, he would certainly have come back in a raging fever, even if he could have borne the long hot drive in the morning and the chance of a cold wind coming up as the hours began to throw their shadows. The ruined city is noted for its draughtiness: the wind comes very keenly round the mountain; and I doubt not there is an aguishness in the newly turned soil.

“I cannot well describe my feelings as I sat beside her in the Ambassador’s coach. All day long in her shepherdess hat, she had been half tomboy, half affectionate daughter, always like a fresh young girl. And now, after bare leisure to cool down as I should have thought, she was sitting by my side in a most superb costume—the great lady all over—a veritable queen in condescension. In the short drive from the Embassy to the Royal Palace she was all solicitude for me, fearing a return of the fever after the drenching of the afternoon; but, praise God, I felt no ill result. It is truly wonderful what effect my spirits have upon my health. When I have the enemy within cannon-shot, or the society of those I love, nothing mortal seems able to hurt me.

“I have wrote ‘love,’ and must confess to you, my Pen, that it startles me when I see it in black upon the white paper ; and yet I suppose it is so. And why should I not love ? It is the purest, I am sure, of human feelings, such love as mine : God knows I would die for Emma, as I would die for my country. I pray that I may never be the villain to her. There has been love, I know, perfectly pure between a man and woman, which has yet been most disastrous for the man, if not for his country also. But, thank Heaven, this is not so with Emma. It has been entirely for the advancement of our country, of which I have been permitted to be the instrument. Without that wonderful woman we should never have got to my battle at all : it was she who secured us our supplies at Syracuse ; a very little malevolence might have turned the sea into the drinking water, and sent the provisions out of reach into the interior. And now it is she who is working upon the innate slothfulness, I might say cowardice, and irresponsibility of those who administer this unhappy kingdom, to support its noble Queen in that active policy against the French which will lead to so much glory and send that lying and apostate race, the enemies of mankind, packing out of the Peninsula. In after days no one shall say that Nelson was dragged down by his friendship for Emma, or wiled from his duty into hanging attendance, but rather that it was she who inspired him to fresh exertions and had no thought but for his country.

“All this passed through my mind in that short coach-drive, as she laid her cool hand anxiously upon my lately-heated head, and reassured herself that there was no fever in my pulse.

“At the dinner, she was on my right hand, I on Her Majesty’s right hand. Her Majesty is a noble woman, a true daughter of the great Empress. A masculine intelligence ; a man’s courage, vigour and decision ; of which

by all accounts there is much need, for the King, though a man of great stature and bodily strength, and with plenty of mere bravery, has no thought for the morrow, nor indeed for his kingdom except as an institution to supply him with plenty of wild beasts for the chase and a sufficiency of money, which he never finds sufficient, to keep his friends, if one may call them such, round him. He is not even faithful to that noble woman; and she, with a fine scorn, akin to pity, condones his infidelity in return for his refraining from injuring his kingdom, as he would if he interfered with her wise counsels. For Ferdinand would treat politics as he treats his ducats—squander them for the gratification of the unworthy whim of the moment. He is indeed a despicable man.

“The Queen has her softer moments, too; she is beautiful, and can be very tender. The first time that we were alone, when I looked for a grateful Queen condescending to the Admiral who had led the allies of her country to conquest, I found a weeping girl. I do not mean that she is young—she is by this past forty—but at that moment she was a girl back in her Austrian home with her unfortunate sister, the lovely martyr Marie Antoinette, whom those fiends insensately murdered. I could see that they were, as it were, girls together again in their childhood’s home. Then, all in a moment, Marie Antoinette had been for years Queen of France, and murdered! I knew all this, though I could not translate the burning words which she poured into my ear in a passion of grief that turned into a passion of triumph—for suddenly tears and grief were swept from that inspired face, and she hailed me avenger of the martyr.

“From that moment she was my intimate and affectionate friend; she would have me not treat her as a Queen, but rather as a well-loved lady of my acquaintance to whom I had rendered great service, and who had therefore admitted me to the footing of a relation.

“She has divined, I feel certain, the respect that I feel for Emma, and my admiration for her rare graces of mind—and I may say to you, Pen, of person—for during the banquet she said to me, ‘You look after dear Lady Hamilton: my kingdom owes everything to her after you.’ And she herself was most condescending to Tom Troubridge, who stood the fire. He is the finest sailor in His Majesty’s Service, and not to be swayed either by royal condescension or considerations of personal friendship, when—to give his expression, which means more to him than any officer engaged in the late battle—he is sounded.

“I could not say exactly what our conversation tended to at the banquet; I believe I talked better than I ever talked before. A good listener can inspire conversation. I do not know if an extraordinary desire to please fosters or chills it; I found myself talking on about myself. Perhaps the general tendency of our conversation was at first directed to the models in history upon which I had based my strategy and endeavoured to mould my conduct.

“From this the conversation must have wandered to an interchange—a recognition, almost an enumeration of signs of sympathy between us. I never found a woman so sympathetic, so completely the ideal of the feminine influence which should inspire a man. In this part of the conversation I do not remember that we actually used many words—it was more as if atoms were flying between us; and all the time there were those eyes looking like a Madonna’s from that saintly head, and that wonderful smile with half-parted lips.

“After the banquet, when we were in the reception-room with Her Majesty and the rest of the company, she went to the window, and flinging open the shutters, painted in the new Pompejan way, let in a flood of moonlight, and stepped out on to the broad terrace, looking in her white robes (Emma is fond of white) like a statue of a goddess

against the glittering amethyst of the sky. I followed her, and gazed where she pointed over the black shining mirror of sea on which the moonlight lay in a great silver shaft ; but I had barely time to note the little red glow in the rifted head of Vesuvio, and the great cone of Monte St. Angelo, when she said—‘ Not now, Nelson, with all these magnetic human hearts so near us. I could walk for ever with you in a scene like this, but I feel the Mesmer attraction broken by those disturbing currents.’ Then she tripped quickly back into the presence-chamber, with the girlishness which is so much part of her. And then we joined my officers, who, in spite of the very marked friendliness of Her Majesty, were all collected in the exact centre of the room, at the point farthest from the Queen and her ladies, at one end, and the politicians, who ruin the country, at the other. They were better at the French than at court : they did not take naturally to this hobby-nobbing with Royalty. They were not like Emma, who up to this had never—except when we were for a brief visit to Naples—had any great acquaintance with His Majesty’s officers, but now it seemed as if she were talking privately to every single man of them at the same time. She is a host in herself.

We stayed on late ; for, going up to the Queen to pay our respects before leaving, we were by her detained, though my officers took their leave earlier, and when we entered My Lady’s coach to drive back to the Embassy the moon was down.

“ We regretted the more our detention, because when we arrived at home we were met at the door by the news that Sir William was almost in a high fever.

“ As I have wrote, Emma was distracted : she . . .
Postscript written over leaf.

“ 2 a.m.—As I was throwing the sand upon these words, in order to turn the page, I heard a timid knock at my

door ; and going to it quickly, for I had not get begun to undress, I beheld Emma, looking more heavenly beautiful than I had ever seen her before, in her white dressing-robe made in the simple antique fashion, fastened only with a girdle under the bosom, and with her glorious hair pouring over her shoulders and almost to her knees, as I perceived when she glided back the minute afterwards, lest her husband should have opened his eyes and missed her healing presence.

“‘Dear friend,’ she said, ‘I came to tell you that my dear husband has taken the turn, and will now sleep. I cannot forgive myself for having left him to-day : I had not anticipated any increase in the fever so long as he stayed at home, or wild horses should not have dragged me. Forgive me, Nelson, for leaving you so abruptly.’ With that she gave me her hands ; and, looking at her tender face, I perceived that it was stained with weeping. I folded her to my heart ; and presently she gently disengaged herself, and fled back to sit by Sir William’s bedside through the night, to make sure of having Sir William fit on the morrow for the twenty-mile drive to Caserta, where the Queen is to join the King in the morning, in order to bring about a meeting between me and the Austrian General Mack, whom the Emperor has sent down to command the Neapolitan forces in the contemplated movement against the French in the Papal States.”

CHAPTER XV.—Of the Voyage to Malta, with the Account of what happened at Caserta

I N writing this history of the Admiral, I had it in my mind to have written each portion as it seemed to me at the time, and not by the light of after experience ; but in practice I have not always found this possible. I cannot, for instance, refrain from analysing his behaviour during our short expedition to Malta by my knowledge of how he was likely to behave under the circumstances derived from a personal study of the hero during the last seven years of his life.

Now, this voyage to Malta suggests to me that he had not so completely convinced his conscience as the Journal would lead us to suppose. When the Admiral was sick at heart his indisposition was generally reflected in his bodily health ; but during this expedition to Malta, which only lasted from the 15th of October to the 5th of November, including the voyage there and back, which took nine days going and five returning (our outward voyage, it must be remembered, being round the Island of Sicily instead of through the Strait of Messina), his spirits were as high as I ever knew them except on the eve of battle—as witness his treatment of the Marquis of Niza, who commanded the Portuguese squadron. This was in his very finest manner, both as a diplomatist and as a bluff British sailor. The Marquis' squadron was doing

sentry's work for us outside the harbour of Valetta, which impregnable place the treachery or incapacity of the Grand Master had surrendered to the French without a blow being struck. This was the place which the Admiral said that you could not get into, if it was undefended, because you would want somebody inside to unlock the gates. The situation was that the French had Valetta; but that there were so few of them that the Maltese, who have only the heart of a rabbit, retained the rest of the island, and talked in a large way of the French surrendering. They talked in such a large way, in fact, that every one in Naples believed the French ready to surrender whenever the islanders were supplied with arms and stores and money.

When our Admiral arrived, his instinct for grasping the heart of a situation told him that, even against his audacity and genius for attack, and his powerful ships, there was not the likelihood of an early surrender. He observed that the garrison had not begun to touch their bullocks; and decided, after making arrangements for the proper conduct of the blockade, to return to Naples, where he felt that his presence could be of effect in putting the forces of the kingdom into motion against the French.

Now, I will not say that he was not a vain man; but no one can deny that his vanity took the form of recognising the value of what he had achieved, and of almost boyish pleasure in it, not of considering himself equal to doing what was patently above his powers. If he had a high opinion of what he could do, he bore it out with high actions. Any vanity he had before the event was the outcome of invincible courage, invincible confidence in his officers and men, and a sense of duty to his country which would not be satisfied without the completest results.

The kind of vanity of which the Admiral was guilty before the event is shown by his behaviour at the late battle, in which, with darkness coming on and without a

chart, he took his fleet in to fight a squadron supported by batteries and land forces, which had enjoyed all the time they needed to make a position impregnable, actually sending half his ships into the shallow water between the French and the shore, to which they had anchored as close as they thought safe.

Our Admiral's vanity before the event was of the do-and-die sort ; he was ready to face destruction at any instant in order to take an advantage of an enemy who, not being equally ready, left certain risks at his mercy. He recalls to my mind the old story of the king who threw his daughter's glove into a lion's den, and told her two suitors that the first who brought it out should have her hand. The Golden Knight asked the Silver Knight if they should fight or draw lots to see who should have the privilege of making the first attempt. The Silver Knight said that no wife was worth such a risk, whereupon the Golden Knight leaped into the midst of the lions and picked up the glove without one of them offering to touch him. Our Admiral was always ready to leap into a lion's den.

It was his vanity at this minute to consider that the conduct of affairs in Naples depended on his presence ; but none the less, if he had believed that his presence could have captured Malta, he would have stayed there until he had captured it or died in the attempt. He was the last man to leave a thing undone which he believed he could do, and his idea of what might be achieved by desperate valour the affair of Teneriffe had shown.

I had forgotten the Marquis of Niza, who had shown considerable energy and good-will in blockading Valetta—for which purpose, there being no likelihood of any French line-of-battle ships appearing, Portuguese *of the line* did as well as any other.

I cannot remember whether or no the Marquis was an admiral in his own service, but he was at all events

The Admiral

superior in rank to any of the English officers left at Naples, and conceived it to be essential to his dignity that he should be recognised as being in command of the station while he was there. The Admiral, in his character of bluff British sailor dealing with a pretentious foreigner of whose capacity he had had no sufficient proof, and whom he could not believe to be comparable to Captain Troubridge, the English senior officer on the station, who was only a post-captain, wrote :—

“ *Vanguard*, October 24th, 1798.

“ MY LORD,—I am honoured with your Excellency’s letter of this evening, and in my public situation I have the honour to acquaint you that I consider your Excellency as an officer serving under my command, and standing precisely in the same situation as an English Rear-admiral, junior to me ; which is, having no power or authority to give the smallest order to any Ship or Vessel but those who I may think right to place, by order, under your command.

“ I have the honour to be, etc.,

“ HORATIO NELSON.”

But the same day, being grateful to him for favours past and to come, in his character of diplomatist he wrote to him as follows :—

“ Off Malta, October 24th, 1798.

“ MY LORD,—Having answered your public letter as my duty called me to do, I beg leave to assure you of my very great respect for your character, and that I shall not ever forget your zeal in the blockade of this place. If your Excellency had recollected, I am confident your knowledge of service would not have occasioned you the trouble of writing me a letter. On service with us it is necessary for the Commander-in-Chief, or the Officer Commanding by order from the Commander-in-Chief, to give the Superior Officer, when thought right to detach, orders to take such Ships, and Captains of such Ships to obey their superior Officer serving under the Commander-in-Chief or detached Commander. In the

present orders to your Excellency, no ships are placed under your orders but those of Her Most Faithful Majesty.

“I am, etc.,

“HORATIO NELSON.”

“Her Most Faithful Majesty” was of course the Queen of Portugal.

At Malta he did nothing beyond sending a *cartel* to the French General and Admiral summoning them to surrender Valetta, which they were within an ace of doing, although our Admiral knew perfectly well the place was impregnable to a force much superior to anything he had to bring against it. But the Frenchmen plucked up their courage at the last moment, so there was nothing for us to do except to sail back to Naples, leaving a blockading force.

We had comparatively little intercourse with the people on shore, for the Admiral found it hard to get over his contempt for their braggadocio and feebleness in attack, though there is a surprising amount of persistence in the Maltese character. I, and I suppose other officers in the *Vanguard* (I was now promoted lieutenant), were more interested in rumours of love than rumours of war. My Lady's undisguised admiration for the Admiral was naturally a fruitful topic of conversation. It was still only a laughing matter: not that any one ever laughed at our beloved Commander—the jest was at her.

I knew more even on that matter than did most of them, and I had also on my conscience Will's confidences. It is strange how love breaks down pride. It had never struck me that it was possible for Will Hardres to condescend to confidences; but he had not been in love with this slip of a girl above a week or two before he had to cry *Peccavi* to me, just to have the pleasure of pronouncing her name.

It had not, of course, escaped his shipmates that he was paying her attention; but seeing that he was the only

officer on the three ships who could speak Italian (except the *Vanguard's* chaplain, who did not count), they thought it natural that he should devote himself to the most beautiful girl at the Court. They of course knew nothing of the obstacles in the way of such a proceeding in Sicily, which were broken down in such an extraordinary manner, and regarded his duel with her brother simply in the light of an introduction.

Will was full of an afternoon which he had spent in her company the day after our expedition to Pompeji and the banquet at the Queen's Palace, at Caserta, whither the Admiral had driven some twenty miles to dine and spend the night. General Mack had arrived two days before, and it was the desire of the Queen that these two should know one another better, as the campaign seemed to depend upon their concerted action.

The Admiral, who, as I have mentioned, had alluded to the General in no very complimentary terms the night before, at the Queen's banquet, was more favourably impressed after a personal meeting: in fact, I have heard him say afterwards, with a bitterness unusual in him, that Mack owed his advancement in life to the power of giving an impression of a capacity he did not possess. At the time he said to Will, who was in attendance on him in his private suite, taking certain orders from him before he retired to bed—"He is active and has an intelligent eye, and will do well, I have no doubt. He assures us that the Emperor has desired the King of Naples to begin, and he will support him. Mack says he will march in ten days; their Majesties have given him their confidence, and I feel I am in full possession of it. The Queen was so impressed with him that she could not help saying—'General, be to us by land what my hero Nelson has been by sea.' I have endeavoured to impress the General with a favourable impression of me, and I think I have succeeded."

The Court was at Caserta, to which it paid frequent visits in the summer and autumn—mainly, no doubt, at this moment to be able to dispense with the unwelcome presence of the French Ambassador while it was receiving the General who had come from the Emperor to lead the Neapolitan forces against the French. The Court could go to Caserta without attracting much notice, because there was a large portion still remaining of the old feudal forest, among whose ilexes the King loved to hunt; and Her Majesty, who was very wasteful, loved throwing away money on the collection, under her personal superintendence, of all the water in the neighbouring mountains for her artificial waterfall, fifty feet high, and vast systems of fountains. The Hamiltons generally went with them, and her adroit Ladyship was at the pains to have about her persons of position skilled in all the musical and theatrical diversions in which the dissipated Court delighted.

There was a great deal of method in Her Majesty's mad extravagances. Her waterworks employing so much labour as they did, and being personally superintended by herself, gave her the opportunity of conversing with all manner of persons without exciting suspicion, and her enthusiasm for dragging visitors round to see her operations gave her the opportunity of taking people like the Admiral and General Mack, whom she wished to consult, out of reach of eavesdroppers. If they had been closeted together for a great while in the Palace, all Naples would have discussed what they had said or were supposed to have said; but if they were being dragged to see the waterfall-tunnel, or the casino of S. Leucio, which was quite three miles from the Palace, it was nothing.

My Lady did not accompany them: walking exercise fatigued her, though she would dance or stand about at a reception for a number of hours.

The Queen commanded the attendance of one of her

ladies, and Donna Rusidda volunteered. The Admiral was attended by Will. The General, for reasons of his own, preferred not to have any of his staff with him. As he promised a good deal more than he was justified in doing, perhaps witnesses would have been inconvenient. My Lady kept General Acton, the Prime Minister, who was tottering for the moment, and therefore not to be trusted with secrets till his position should be decided at least one way or another. But I doubt not that the excuse on which she kept him was that she had important confidences for him from Her Majesty, which the others could not be allowed to suspect.

Sir William was like the King. At really important moments people were apt to forget him. And indeed he was by no means well of the fever yet, though the drive over the hills had invigorated him.

At a point the Queen bade Donna Rusidda show Will the ancient trout which she had reared to such gigantic proportions by hand-feeding with frogs, saying that she would call when she needed her. And Donna Rusidda, understanding this only for a polite dismissal while affairs of state were being discussed, and having her brother's permission to take with Will the liberty of an English-woman, kept at a decent distance for the rest of the afternoon.

Pretty soon the Queen sat down on a bandstand, that stood in the midst of the principal fountains, with open sides, but roofed in the Chinese style, of which she was so fond. Here, with the roof to protect them from the sun, they could be sure of no one approaching them unseen; and as fountains of almost every variety were playing with extreme beauty, it was quite natural to sit for a long hour to watch them. At a little distance off there was an arbour to protect Will and Donna Rusidda from the sun.

“W-Will,” said she, as they sat down, “is our friendship a success?”

“That is for you to say. How could it be otherwise for me, when it gives me the companionship of so charming a lady?”

“That does not follow: people can be too good friends as well as not good enough.”

“I hope that I have not presumed?”

“Oh no,” she replied: “you have been what I knew I could trust you to be—a model of honourable behaviour.”

“Have I been a dolt—a fool—in not recognising feelings for which I did not dare to hope?”

“On the contrary,” she said, with a touch of *hauteur*, “if you had flattered yourself that such feelings existed, and had presumed upon them, our friendship would have ended.”

(I could hardly believe my ears when Will described himself as having submitted tamely to such talk.)

“I am glad,” he replied, meaning it truly, and meaning yet more truly that he was sorry; and he must have had an expression which told the subtler truth, for she broke into one of her rare smiles and said:

“I did not mean to hurt you, Signor Vill”; and he recovered himself, and corrected her—“Will.”

“W-W-W-Will.” And then she burst out into a merry little laugh.

(Lovers treasure up the smallest trifles of memory.)

Thus emboldened, he asked her in turn—“And has our friendship been a success?”

“Beyond a doubt,” she said, “for it lasts, and people have accepted it. My brother has been out about it very early this morning, but *he* was not hurt.”

“Is that all you have to say about it?”

“By no means. This morning was the first of our friendship, and I have hardly ever enjoyed a morning so much.”

The Admiral

"This morning?" he said, with surprise mixed with coldness. "After we had arrived?"

"Certainly: how could I enjoy our friendship before?"

"Why, we did nothing this morning except sit about the theatre watching My Lady arrange the scenery for her Attitudes, and rehearsing a few mountebanks in their parts."

"You are very severe, Signor W-Will. The Admiral and I were in fits of laughter."

"I thought it very dull. My Lady's attitudes are certainly wonderful; but I don't think that I care for them so much that I want to see her in the morning arranging the backgrounds for her performance at night."

"Nor I," she said, with considerable warmth and spirit. "In fact, I think we have too much *attitudes* altogether. What does a man like your Admiral, a great hero who is directing the destinies of the world, want with this perpetual round of *attitudes*, *buffos*, *bals masqués*, and *fêtes*? They are all very well for us of the Two Sicilies, who have to eat and drink and be merry until the flood comes and swamps us into one of the great Powers; but a man like your Admiral does not need them—he needs rest."

"I think you are sweeping, Donna Rusidda. After all, when the stress of a severe campaign is over, what the fighter requires is change more than rest. Men can go to sleep while they are fighting at a battle, if they are only weary enough. What the hard fighter and the hard worker need is recreation."

"And is this recreation?"

"There is no recreation for me like the society of beautiful and gracious ladies such as yourself."

She bowed with mock gravity, and said, with a touch of bitterness in her voice, "You mean like the Ambassador's wife."

"No," he answered: "she is very beautiful, wonderfully and uniformly gracious, and very clever; but I do not like

seeing the Admiral blind to her play-actress side. He takes everything in her seriously, while I, who am a mere boy——”

“Not always a boy, W-Will. You are sometimes a boy with the wiseness of a man, and sometimes a man with the foolishness of a boy.”

He felt the blood rushing to his face : her criticism was rather franker than he liked, but she had addressed him with greater familiarity than she had yet allowed herself.

“You do not like her,” she said. “Well, I will tell you : your Admiral, who has a weasel’s eye for the French, may be caught napping by a woman ; and she is very much in love with him—as any woman might be,” she added, with a little tragedy sigh ; for *men* are so scarce, though you will be one some day, Signor W-Will. And so you see she plays to him, with her beauty and her engagingness, and her wisdom and her foolishness ; for the last card you play to the person, whose love you wish very much, is your foolishness, which is the greatest sacrifice you can offer.” Then she continued : “But it was so comical her bringing us all—the Admiral and you and General Mack and the whole Court—to see her arranging her backgrounds, which you will all see made real by lamplight this evening, as if it was a matter of such great moment to us all to see a carpenter nail canvas to a post, or a gardener bringing in a poor palm tree sawn off at the roots to fit into a hole in the stage. Shall I tell you what I think ?”

“I wish I knew all your thoughts.”

“Well, you shall know one of them.”

“What is that ?”

“That it is sometimes quite a fortunate thing to lose your arm. For if the Admiral had not lost his arm he might have had to nail up the canvas, or screw the palm tree into the hole.”

Will gave a kind of groan, which she pretended not to note.

"It was much more entertaining for him to sit by—I mean to sit in a box and watch a servant dancing attendance on her ideas, which changed like a chameleon's."

Will hoped so, but kept silence.

"I never enjoyed myself so much, Signor W-Will. Your Admiral is so kind to ladies. Perhaps many of his smiles were conversation, for he speaks so little Italian, and I not much more English: you must teach me English, Signor W-Will, that I may talk to him without giving him trouble. Yes, our friendship is a great success."

Suddenly the Admiral joined them. The Queen and General Mack had left off speaking French, and begun to talk Austrian-German—most likely because they were very interested about some point which they could not properly explain to each other except in their native language. The Admiral, however, who was very sensitive, took it as a hint, and fell back to join Will and Donna Rusidda.

"Well, you two happy people,' he began—"with nothing to talk about but yourselves?"

"It was sad for Sicilians," she replied. By this time she could understand English readily, though she spoke it with difficulty.

"Well, how have you been entertaining yourselves?"

"We was not; we was on duty, as you say."

"Yes, duty—excellent, as all our countries expect of us, and generally give us precious little help in doing it, though my Lord St. Vincent did give me the best ships afloat."

"We was waiting for you for the pleasure."

The Admiral made his best bow, and he put on that expression of his which reminded me of a dog pricking its ears. General Mack had doubtless been a little prosy, and occupied much of the conversation with what he was going to do with the French when he had beaten them.

"Well, what pleasure are we going to begin with?"

"We shall show to you the fountains."

"Capital," said the Admiral. "I have been looking at them, you know, on the sly, while the General was composing the proclamation which he is going to make to the cities of the Peninsula."

"Oh, but you shall not have seen them—all."

"Madam," said the Admiral, pretending to be offended, "I have, as you please to notice, only one eye; but I think that the French at any rate will allow that I am a pretty good hand at taking in the whole situation."

"Sit-oo-ation," she repeated, laughing; "that is a good word. No, I do not think that you have—how can I say—caught—yes, caught the whole sit-oo-ation."

"Madam, I hope I shall never contradict a lady."

"Then you shall see a fine sit-oo-ation. First we shall go in the *barca*," she cried, jumping into a light boat, which was moored to the marble steps of the artificial lake. She made Will row, while she sat in the stern with the Admiral, pointing out the exquisite little temples and marble nymphs and couches and bridges with which the lake, which was really more like a little river running between and round a number of little islands full of the rarest and most picturesque exotics, was studded. Will rowed with alacrity. The Admiral was clearly enjoying himself, and anything that gave him the least gratification was the sincerest pleasure to Will: he did not note that he was being left out of the conversation. Presently Donna Rusidda demanded to be landed in a beautiful *rosetum*, in which the roses were trained round a framework into a huge green crown, a model of that worn by Her Majesty's mother, the great Empress Maria Theresa. There were quite a number of hoops to it, and the rose flowers made the gems; while the leaves changing with the autumn—the season in which it was intended to be seen—gave a golden colour to the

ribs. In the centre of it, underneath the boss which contained the great gem of the real crown, was a vase of immense value—ancient Grecian of the best period—lying on the ground, which looked as if it had fallen but recently from the slender marble “stele” of a satyr with four faces, brought from the excavations at Pompeji.

“Oh, Signor W-Will, the wind has blow over Her Majesty’s favourite vase!” Naturally, Will sprang forward to replace it; and, balancing it with great care, started to rejoin them where they were standing on a beautiful tessellated pavement, adorned with the signs of the Zodiac. All of a sudden, from dozens of little jets, a great shower of water met him full in the face. He dashed back to get out at the other side, only to meet another shower, which, coming into play on him from a greater distance, was more like spray. He tried a third path, and again met the spray; but, grasping that all the paths were similarly commanded, dashed through it and the heavier shower which greeted him nearer, and flew to the pavement where they were standing, looking like a seal. Something in the pavement caught his eye, and, looking more closely, he perceived that each Zodiacal sign had for its centre mosaic a little bronze cube, raised slightly above the rest. Donna Rusidda shrieked with laughter as he put his foot on the whole twelve in succession, starting the shower on each of the corresponding twelve paths of the leafy crown of Austria; and the Admiral, though he would have been sorry for Will if he had reflected, gave the great roar of laughter in which he indulged whenever he was extravagantly tickled. He was a boy all his life, in the intervals of anxiety caused by the blindness of the Government, on whom he depended for ships and supplies to strike at the French, and irritation and depression caused by his wretched health. He had, as his whole behaviour during the sojourn in the Two Sicilies showed, a thorough appreciation of the masqueradings and buffoon-

eries and practical jests which are to the Neapolitan part of his everyday life, and to the grave Sicilian an occasional recreation. These water-mazes are very popular with the rich ; and in some instances, like the present, immense sums are spent on their construction : indeed, they form the staple of amusement at an excursion to an unfamiliar palace or villa, where only one or two are in possession of the knowledge where the traps lie. You are safe nowhere : the shower may be lying in wait for lovers in a retired walk, or for a whole company on the most frequented lawn. But the water is laid on more lightly for the most part than Donna Rusidda laid it on for Will.

Will was in high dudgeon ; he had no liking for practical jests at any time, and this being put into a ridiculous and humiliating light before the woman he loved, maddened him. If it had been a man who had played the jest upon him he would have thrashed him first, and fought a duel to the death afterwards—if the thrashed person wished to carry the matter further. And though the Admiral had taken no part in the jest, his very presence, had he been any other man, would have been sufficient for hot-headed Will. But the Admiral was to him hardly a human being,—he revered him so, and owed him such a debt of gratitude ; and so there was nothing for it but to walk behind them with his laced hat and blue coat, and the nankeen breeches whose fit had been his pride, for they could hardly have been closer if they had been carved in marble, looking like shrunk grapes.

The Admiral, by this, was woefully sorry for him ; for that great man did not forget small things, and it was in his mind that only in the few days that they had been back in Naples had Will possessed a lieutenant's uniform of his own, and that the English tailor to the Sicilian court charged as exiles will who leave their homes not to save their lives but to fill their purses. It brought to his mind a boyish

figure which he had seen only six months since standing outside his state-room door getting well dripped in his new midshipman's rig, because he would not come in under the lee of his mother till he had received the command of his officer. He remembered also that the little fair slip of a mother was none too well clad to come aboard a ship tossing at her anchors in a stiff cold gale off St. Helen's, and that that same little mother had said to him, "You will take care of him, Sir Horatio . . . I do not mean in the face of the enemy, but I have only a slender purse ; his father was killed when he was a lieutenant."

The Admiral's money was always burning holes in his pockets, and he made up his mind *instantly* to present Will with a new outfit, so that what he had on might dry for his second best.

Just for the present Will was too hurt and too humiliated to think of his poverty, as he stalked a few paces behind Donna Rusidda and the Admiral, who, having made up his charitable resolve, soon melted again under the smiles of the beautiful girl.

"It would be much better if you had not seen the all sit-oo-ation," said Donna Rusidda.

"Oh, I can easily make that all right," answered the Admiral cheerily.

"Is it so? I think the Signor W-Will he look like the thunder."

"Well, I think he looks more like the rain ; but he can thunder, I assure you, and lighten too."

"Perhaps I oughted not to do it, but in Naples it is very droll."

"Well, of course I had rather you had done it to me, or to my captain. I always make a point of considering a boy's pride more than a man's. I was a very little chap when I first went to sea, Princess. The first thing the boatswain said when he saw me, was that I was not long

for this world. But I have cheated him," he continued, cutting a comical little caper.

"Do not speak it too soon, Eccellenza: you are not so old."

"Not old!—why, I am forty."

"The Ambassador's wife she gave the ball on your native day, is it not?"

He nodded pleasantly, with a smile at her English.

"You had the earth under your feet before you were of forty years."

"Mostly sea, Princess, I can assure you."

"I ought to have spoken *world* instead of *earth*, is it so?"

"Dear Princess, I was but jesting to turn off your flattery. I understood you perfectly."

"Please not to jest against my English, Eccellenza," she begged, with a rich rush of colour to her dusky cheeks: "I feel the *mauvaise honte* at speaking it, but strive to defeat myself."

"My dear young lady! you make me feel more ashamed of myself than the whole French fleet could. If I were to wrestle with your language, as you do with mine, you would keep in such a fit of laughing that you could not understand a single word."

Will noted the look of unutterable gratitude on the girl's face, and put down the whole Sicilian nation as more theatrical than My Lady.

"Will you take it unhappily, if I speak something, Eccellenza?"

"No, I am sure I shall not: you may say anything you like to me," he replied gallantly.

"The Ambassador's wife she is very beautiful."

"She is the loveliest woman on earth," he said warmly, "and the best. There never was a woman so good-hearted, and so thoroughly good."

"She loves you."

"Only for the sake of our country, Princess. Her

patriotism takes the form of gratitude to me, who have been fortunate enough to be intimately connected with the salvation of her country before her eyes. I am not to her a mere man, but the saviour of England, and the Sicilies, from the wicked murderous French. Nelson the man is nothing to her. He is, as you see, a little one-eyed, one-armed being, obliged to brush his hair over his forehead to hide an untidy scar. If she thought of the man at all she would think of a big fine man like Captain Troubridge; and if she is a bit motherly to me, why, so she is to my mids, and it's all because I'm such a poor little thing playing hide-and-seek with fever."

"Yes; Miladi has the mother's heart," she said slowly, as if the words were extorted from her; "but the mother's heart it is a woman's heart, and what woman, not of the enemy, would not find her heart—graz-ee-us is it you say?"

"Certainly, gracious—that is what she is, a woman of women. There is no one like her—so generous, so enthusiastic, so truly noble."

"She is very *lov-ly*; and how are other women to show that they have such hearts to the liberator of their country?"

"By attending to the comforts of my officers and sailors. We brought many badly wounded with us, who need the attention of women to give them back their full manhood."

"*Hélas!* it is not possible. Our women have not such hearts; they could not give tenderness without also their love. But the English, they are not so. To us friendship between man and woman is like fire: we may warm the tips of our fingers at a—I do not know your word—*scaldino*, but we cannot have your English open fires, for we have not the chimneys."

"Eccellenza!" called the Queen.

"Coming, Your Majesty," answered the Admiral, hopping off. They were very great friends, the Queen and the Admiral, and mingled playfulness with the most solemn and important business. Very likely Her Majesty had diplomatic reasons. It is quite easy to give the numbers of an army to a man who is playing ball with you, or trying to take off a *pulcinello*.

Donna Rusidda turned round to Will, who was still very grim and hurt, and looked as though he would give his whole prospects to hide himself in the little Saracen building which the Queen had erected as a kind of summer-house, and which was the last piece of shelter before the Palace, that rose with the splendour and solitariness of a temple half a mile away.

"Oh W-Will," she said, returning with great relief to Italian, "I am sorry. Go in there, and I will tell you what I will do for you."

The house stood in a little thicket of laurels, from which only its flat terraced roof and turret were visible at the Palace.

He did not move.

"Come, W-Will," she said kindly. "There is no one here to see you, and it is very comfortable. You can quite well stay here until I have a change sent to you. I do not love the Ambassador's wife, but she is generous-hearted, and if I tell her what I have done, and how sorry I am, I know she will see that you get your change without any one knowing it, except your servant."

He was a little mollified, but stood irresolute. She laid her hand on his arm to draw him in; her touch thrilled him, and he could resist no longer, especially when, with a sudden impulse, she bent low and kissed his hand, saying: "I have a confession to make—will you forgive me?"

"Of course I will: how can I help it?" he replied, but

still with a touch of something—anger or hurt—in his voice.

“Do not speak till you have heard,” she said anxiously, and not far from weeping.

“Oh! but I cannot help forgiving you anything.”

“I hope it is so,” she said gently, “for it needs much forgiveness what I am about to tell you. I did it because you are so handsome—such a *grand seigneur*: I could not bear to think that that little homely-looking man with his plainly-fitting clothes, the greatest man in all the world, should look nothing—one of the people—if it were not for the leadership written in his face, beside one of his officers—a mere boy. Yes, you are a mere boy, W-Will, or I would not have done it to you; and I did it to make him laugh at you, and to humiliate you before him, that he might be exalted in my imagination and look like a conqueror. Now strike me or kill me: I have told you the whole truth.”

“Rusidda,” said Will, addressing her thus for the first time, and taking her hands to hold her, while he looked into her burning face as if he were going to see through into her soul, “you have hurt me on my tenderest point; but I have forgiven you, because no one saw it but yourself and my Admiral, and him I so worship and reverence that I would go through not only death but humiliation for his sake. And you I love.”

Her great grey Sicilian eyes, which could look black or blue in certain lights, and which had been fixed nervously on his, fell before his gaze, and he thought that she was won. She let him kiss her without resisting, and it was a good many seconds before she could find words to stem the impetuous torrent of love in which he half besought her, half claimed her for his wife after all. At last she managed to say:

“W-Will—yes, I can call you dear W-Will—I can never marry you.”

“Why?” he broke in: “you cannot have become betrothed to another, or you would not have spoken as you have about friendship. I know how strict is the etiquette of your Sicilian betrothals.”

“Oh no, I am not betrothed,” she sighed, “nor ever can be.”

“You are not under a monastic vow?” he asked. He knew nothing of such vows, but felt that now, when all Europe was a battle-field, the sword might find a way to cut many knots.

“None of my family have ever taken the vow,” she said proudly; “it has been part of the code handed down from our Norman ancestor, who won his principality by bearding the Pope. If we had had a few cardinals in the family, we should not have been as poor as we are now.”

“Poor?” he said, the word arresting him. “I shall not always be poor in these fighting days. Each of our captains will have a thousand pounds out of the three prizes we burnt at the Nile, not to mention the prizes we saved; and even I shall have——”

“Oh no,” she said sadly, “I was not thinking of that. I would marry you if I could love you, W-Will, if you had not a *carlin* but your pay, and had to live when you were on shore in the tower, which is about all of the Favara we inhabit. You would have to live on oranges and polenta and Indian figs, and perhaps we could buy a little macaroni sometimes,” she added, forcing a smile. “We are so poor, we two, the last of the House of Favara, that we have to let our domain to a farmer for orange and lemon growing, and let him use part of our palace for his business. We could not live if we were not in the household of the Queen. It is not poverty that prevents.”

“Then what is it, dear?” asked Will. She still let him kiss her.

"Oh, just that I cannot ever marry you, because I cannot ever love you, as I know Englishwomen love their husbands."

"I will marry you, and gladly, even thus."

"No, W-Will, I could not marry you—I cannot even think of it. It is quite impossible. All I can be to you is your very dearest friend."

"May I not try to win you from your decision?"

"Oh yes," she said, "if you have any mercy on me, try, and I will pray the Mother of God that you may prevail: but alas! it is not, is not, possible."

"May I kiss you when we are like this?"

A ghost of a smile flitted across his face as he caught sight of himself in a mirror which had a Chinese landscape painted on it. His smile bore fruit: it brought her back to herself. She laughed—"Yes, dear W-Will; kiss me, woo me your very best way, and win me—do!"

Will was very thankful for that laugh, that sudden return to her self-possession and everyday voice. To a man of his sensitive temperament it is not easy to act on such a permission from a woman highly strung; he feels that he is taking advantage of her weakness—that he is acting on a submission she would not have made in calmer moments. But if she gives the same permission when she is calmed down, and with a little laugh, he feels that he is playing fair.

CHAPTER XVI.—What the Admiral wrote in his Journal about Love.

WHILE these two were acting in this strange love scene, the three personages upon whom they were nominally in attendance were planning measures which were to overturn, in a few days, all that the halting diplomacy of the Emperor had built up in many months. The Queen, who had contrived to make of our Admiral her faithful Minister, urged the matter forward to force the head of her house, the Emperor, to make a decided movement and march his armies down into the Peninsula against the French. By his sending her a general she took it for granted that he meant to support her with his soldiers as soon as she began fighting, which seems to have been very far from his thoughts—a fact, of course, known to General Mack. But the latter had neither the honesty nor the capacity to give such a message to the beautiful and eager Queen, and allowed her to deceive herself. He trusted (now that Buonaparte was away in Egypt and without a fleet) to a French scuttle before the numbers of the Neapolitans, and the English ships, which threatened their land communications by the Riviera Road.

Sir William might have taken a severer view, if indeed he was capable of taking any view at this time. Sir William was not a strong man. Having the good fortune

to be the foster-brother of King George III., he was appointed to the Court of Naples, probably as a kind of sinecure, when the prospect of Naples becoming the key to the European situation seemed as remote as any earthly contingency. Possibly he had qualifications then; but, at all events, as he grew older, they disappeared, and he became, by the agency of his able and ambitious wife, a mere appendage to the Court of Naples. And now he was having one of his periodical visitations of the bilious fever, which had kept him from the Pompeian expedition (where his antiquarian knowledge would have been highly interesting to the Admiral) and the Queen's banquet. Being somewhat recovered, and the air of Caserta having so often proved beneficial during similar attacks, he had driven up in the morning, and, indeed, was so far recovered by night that he determined with the Queen and the Admiral to return to Naples on the following day.

His improvement was maintained there. But as he grew older his attacks became longer and more difficult to shake off, and he was both averse to work and incapable of energy at the moment when opposition would have counted.

By eight o'clock on the morning of the 12th the Court and all the guests had flitted, and they were in Naples in time for a very early midday meal, ordered by a courier sent overnight. For what follows I am indebted to the Admiral's own Journal, which is again borne out by facts within the personal knowledge and perfect memory of Will.

"Oct. 12th.—Sir William has borne the journey pretty well, but knowing how anxious Emma must be about him, I determined to accept the Queen's very pressing invitation to luncheon at the Palace, and immediately afterwards to excuse myself and go down to the dockyard. It has been my invariable custom, when ships under my command have been refitting, to go down and inspect them personally,

although I have never found the ships' officers less careful than myself, or less capable of judging efficiency.

"Indeed, I attribute the successes, with which the Lord has been pleased to grace my battles, to the efficiency of of my officers and men, coupled with my unalterable principle to seek my enemy as fast and as near as ever I can get to him.

"I did not lunch at the Queen's table after all, for I found that the very early lunch resolved itself into light refreshment directly we arrived, and the usual interminable meal an hour or two afterwards, which is Her Majesty's foundation for the siesta. So I determined to go off to the dockyard on a biscuit and a glass of *lachrime Christi*, which was served to us as a fillip.

"But one of the Queen's ladies, a certain Princess of Favara, to whom I once had the honour of doing a small service in a delicate matter, insisting that it was the height of imprudence for a man but lately recovered from the fever to spend a long day in the sun on no better preparation, with her own hands brought me the breast of a fowl and some champagne, which she obtained from one of the servants. She is a lady of marked beauty, and has, if I mistake not, a feeling for my scapegrace Will. Her deference to me, as an elderly man and the commander of the good Allies of her Sovereign, is very graceful, and does her good taste great credit; for it is not necessary for a maid of honour, especially of her high birth, to take any notice of one whom only the accident of politics has introduced at the Court.

"Oct. 12th. At night.—Matters at the dockyard on the whole satisfactory, though for war-ships to take three weeks to re-fit—oh Lord! But then their appliances are miserable, and there are hardly any stores to speak of, and in this country nothing is ever ready or well done, except a *bal masqué*.

“I hardly saw dear Emma all day. Sir William, though he has borne the journey pretty well, has these bilious fevers so very seriously now, that he needs the closest watching. I saw her, for a minute, when I came back from the dockyard for dinner with the Queen, but I had cut the time so fine that it was the barest minute. I found the dinner very long. I had matters of the first moment to discuss with nearly every one around me, but had to be mum. This cursed place is so full of spies. One never knows that the fellow who takes away your broken victuals may not be a French diplomatist, equal in rank to a Secretary of Legation, playing the spy! So we had to fall back on the usual table talk,—scandal, almost the only topic in which it is safe to indulge, and one which includes every one in Naples, except those who are present, who will have their turn on their first absence.

“Dinner over—and the gentlemen did not stay at their wine—after a short conversation with the Princess, who is the only one of Her Majesty’s ladies who takes much pains to speak English, at which she is becoming quite intelligible, we went off to a consultation, which was to be followed by what Her Majesty has christened a Session, not a Council, in order that she may not have to summon the whole of her Ministers. This, of course, is aimed at the Marquis de Gallo, the War Minister, who is tottering and to be replaced. I am glad of this, for I detest him. He is as ignorant a fellow of common civility as he is of his duties. Sir William, whose health is better to-day, drove up for the consultation, at which De Gallo was also present; and I was led to believe that promises of protection, with supplies of arms, ammunition, and provisions (as I understood from the Governors of Syracuse and Messina), had been given to the inhabitants of Malta.

“I returned with Sir William in his coach to the Embassy, when he at once retired for the night, under care of Emma,

who was waiting anxiously to receive him. I also retired. I was, indeed, glad, for more than one reason, to be in the quiet of my chamber. Here in Naples one lives in one's bedchamber when one is alone; for it is furnished for receptions, and its own reception-rooms, attached to it, are mere ante-chambers, where one receives tradesmen, or those who would weary one of their business, instead of admitting them into one's privacy. The operations in the dockyard had kept me a good deal on my legs and much in the sun; and I remembered the moonlight scene of which I had been deprived on the night of the Queen's banquet, so, after dinner, when My Lady retired to Sir William, who was dining in his own apartment—not caring to be present when there were dishes that he favoured, but of which he dare not partake, for he is a great connoisseur—I went up to my chamber and bade my man, Tom Allen, fling open windows and shutters in the corner which commanded the Bay. When he had done this, 'Begging your pardon, sir,' he said, saluting me, 'shall you be needing me any more to-night?' It is my habit, when I am alone, to give him leave off when I do not require his services. He is a good fellow, Tom, though the queerest-looking fish, and, indeed, the queerest fish who was ever allowed to appear as the servant of a public man. He is a good fellow, but he irritates me with his over-care for my health, so I am glad to be rid of him till midnight.

"There is, it seems, to be some kind of a gala for the men of the fleet at Virgil's tomb, on the face of the Hill of Pausilippo, which is to be decorated with many lamps and 'N.V.' in roses, the V. representing Victory and not Virgil—who is, however, esteemed a great witch among the *lazzaroni*. I was glad to be rid of the good Tom, for in a minute he would have been busying in to close the windows. Naples and the *mal' aria* spell the same thing to him; and it was so heavenly to see the large open squares of dark-blue

starlit sky as I was sitting at my table intending to confess to you, Pen. But no confessions would come, so I rose and walked to the windows, from the right hand of which I could distinctly see the glare of the lamps, with which they were decorating Virgil in my honour, in his vineyard on the hill of Pausilippo, and the crescent of flickering lights from the Cape to the end of the Thuilleries. But the other interested me more, for from it I could see the calm, gently-heaving sea, with the lanterns of the fisher-boats bobbing round the rocks, and the flashing port-holes of my squadron, and a broad shaft of moonlight on the water, which made Capri just visible at the far end, and seemed to bring out every stone in the lofty walls of the strong Castle of Uovo and the long narrow drawbridge from the Castle to the gate-tower, and the gate-tower to the shore. And, much as in my heart I despise Naples for the lightness with which she gives herself over to fiddling and illuminations the moment the darkness, which the Neapolitans love as other people love the light, supervenes, I must confess that it added greatly to the gaiety of the scene upon which I looked.

“As I stood by the window, half angry, half adoring the Naples which has made me so happy with the first perfect companionship my life has known, I felt a hand upon my shoulder, a woman’s face against my neck.

“‘My Nelson,’ she said, ‘the room where I had crooned Sir William asleep was dark, and the moonbeams came in, and I remember how I deprived you two nights ago, and I came to this room, which is the only one that sweeps the Bay, to share the moonlight with you. Say that you would not have cared for it so much without me.’

“I did not speak—my heart was too full for words ; but one can say without words the deepest things in one’s nature, and as I stood with my hand round her side, she continued :

“‘My mother has taken my place for two hours, to let me

get some rest now that my dear husband is recovering.' And then, suddenly turning round, she looked at me with all her soul in her eyes, that were wont to be so full of laughter, though with her mouth she ever smiled more than laughed, and even now those exquisite lips were parting in a tender smile. I do not know to what I can compare them, except crimson rose-leaves laid lightly on the whitest and most perfect teeth in the world. And the little straight nose, which gives the face its merry, mischievous air when she is laughing, gave it now, with its delicate nostrils, a touching air of femininity. I could see every little womanly perfection in the dazzling white moonlight which poured into the window. She stood a little like this, and then she inclined her gracious head to whisper: 'And what rest is there for me like a quiet hour with you—the saviour of our countries, the hero of my heart! Everything here breathes to me of you. If I look out on to the Bay, the serried lines of lights show me ships which fought in your victory, the greatest the sea has ever seen. If I look on the land, wherever I see a flare of light, or hear a band of music, I know that they are celebrating you. The Queen, in her palace, has your heroic name hardly ever off her lips; and here, in my palace, every soul is thinking and talking of you; and *I* worship you.'

"We stood for a short time almost in silence, taking in, with dreaming eyes, the gentle lights, the soft Southern moonlight, the crowning stars; and then I led her to the door, and kissing her reverently on the threshold, bade her go and take her much-needed rest. She hesitated for a few moments; then, flinging her arms round me, she kissed me with oh, such tenderness, and looked into my eyes. Then she released me, and saying—'My Lord's first command!' glid swiftly away, without so much as looking round.

"*Oct. 13th. Later.*—I have played at being a coward, and

run away, the first time in my life except from the storm at Teneriffe,—I protest that it was the storm and not the Spaniards.

“When Emma went, I began to recognise the full extent of my peril. Suppose I had not been strong, and had tried to rob her of her rest by detaining her instead of prescribing as her physician. Incidental caresses are beautiful, tender, endearing things. But to abandon yourself to a banquet of them on a Neapolitan autumn night, in the darkness and silence of a great house, hushed for a fever patient—a banquet of caresses with the loveliest woman in the world—and not a human soul to save you from falling in love! No, already I love Emma as much as an English gentleman may love a friend’s wife. She is to me the most beautiful, affectionate, loyal, respectable woman alive; and she has such a perfect freedom from *mauvaise honte*, as we used to say when I was studying that vile language at St. Omer, that she permits herself to grant me all the innocent caresses she would grant a brother. And she trusts herself with me too much. Pray God I may not mean these words ‘too much.’ I hope I am a gentleman. But I mean that she is too trustful, if I were a villain.

* * * * *

“Why did I let her go? There was no hurry; we were doing no harm,—nothing. It was restful for both of us, that standing side by side and pressure of friendly hands. I do not believe I ever felt so perfectly at peace with the world.

“No; the point remains, *quo vadis?* One cannot be perfectly certain, as certain as I should like to be, of anything stopping at a given point. And this soft air, this soft scene take away the powers of resistance. To yield to the temptation to love or kill seems natural here—to kill, not in the fierce rough-and-tumble of the North, but with the

stab in the back, the poisoned bowl, or the measured duello of the South.

“I must leave this. Nay, I will leave it this very night. I cannot sail for Malta, let me see, for one—two days; but I can take up my quarters on my ship, and the same healthy breath of the ocean blows on every sea. Even in this beautiful Circean Bay I shall be myself there—and fling away soft imaginations and soft longings, and think of the French!

* * * * *

“‘*Vanguard*,’ 12 *p.m.*—Since I wrote the above, I have had a cocked hat full of strange adventures. I made up my mind to leave the Embassy there and then, lest dear Emma should come back after her sleep to bid me good-night before she returned to Sir William, and I should be weak and try to detain her. Buckling on my sword, I went down to the *portiere*, and asked him if a coach were procurable to take me to the Santa Lucia landing. I had not my pistols with me at the Embassy, because there could be no chance of my needing them, so I thought I would take a coach; for Naples has none too savoury a reputation at night. Unfortunately there was no coach to be had—Emma and Sir William having many horses and every variety of vehicle, and the Embassy standing a little outside the city gate. Besides, all the coaches in the near part of the city were gone to my fête at Virgil’s. The *portiere* was for knocking the men up and giving me one of Sir William’s coaches, which he said would take but a very few minutes, the men sleeping in their clothes, except their livery coats, which I consider an unhealthy habit. But of this I would not hear, fearing lest Emma should get the wind. I doubted my strength to go in the face of her hospitable entreaties.

“‘Nay,’ I said, ‘try for a *vettura*.’ As he prophesied, no *vettura* was forthcoming, so I determined to walk down

The Admiral

to the landing—a very little way. I stepped out at a brisk pace; but when I was under the shadow of the hill which Sir William tells me is Palæpolis, the original citadel of the Greek city, now called Pizzofalcone, under which are clustered some cabins of the lowest class, I was set upon by three or four fellows. Luckily, contrary to my usual custom, I had buckled my sword upon my right-hand side, where I could draw it; and so I whipped it out to defend myself; and spitting the first of them in the stomach, which I knew to be more effective at a pinch than a slash from a man of my small stature, set my back against a wall of the kind which they use for poor buildings in these parts, and which I knew to be there. As they came on, in my excitement, I forgot about the spitting, and splashed for my life. And it saved my life: for a fellow to whom I gave a pretty cut, knew by the shoulder that he was fighting a left-handed man, and called out in the Neapolitan lingo words among which were ‘The Admiral! the Liberator of our country!’ Instantly the onslaught ceased, and all of them, including he whom I had spitted and the man whose shoulder I had slashed, knelt before me; and though I cannot understand the Neapolitan lingo, I felt sure that they were craving my forgiveness, which I was well ready to grant them, for the rascals had such a respect for their skins that, though there were four of them against a one-armed man, they had not come to quarters close enough to use their dangerous knives.

“Certain strange noises in the nature of signals then followed; and in a very few minutes I was surrounded by above a hundred of the *lazzaroni*, one of whom, speaking a few words of English, as is not uncommon in this port, explained that they were going to form a kind of bodyguard for me, to prevent any similar mishap from French sympathisers. This I was glad to accept, both in acknowledgment of the spirit that offered it, and because I knew that

evil-disposed persons, favouring the French, had given some trouble by lurking near the landing to pay off national scores on my seamen straggling home in liquor. I gave each of the men I had bled a guinea, and I dare swear that, as soon as they are healed, they will be ready for more blood-letting on the same terms.

“ We came near more letting of blood at the landing steps, for who should be there but Will! and there was a magnificent illumination of three oil lamps, by which he recognised me, surrounded by my evil-looking guard. Without pausing to reckon that they were more than a hundred to his one, he drew his sword, and was for cutting his way to me, but at the same time called to the sleepy drab of a Neapolitan watchman to fire his piece and give the alarm, which he promptly did, it being astonishing how soon these fellows are waked when they scent danger. Fortunately I stopped Will* before he cut down any of my protectors, and almost immediately a well-armed boat from the *Vanguard* came racing in to the steps. Warned by a few mischances, the Captain had ordered a patrol to lie off nightly, from darkness to daylight.

“ Turning for a minute to speak to the officer in command of the boat, to my astonishment, on facing about again, I found every man of my *lazzaroni* melted into thick darkness. They were conscious, I suppose, of being the worst rogues in Naples, and fancied that their relations to me, which had taken such a sudden and favourable change, might be misinterpreted. And volleys are quicker than explanations. The officer wished to know if he should take me off to the

* Will has a perfect memory of the incident, and every detail is given as he remembers it. He describes the situation as being almost the most extraordinary in which he ever saw the Admiral. They had a few torches, such as the fishermen use when they are harpooning the great cuttle-fish which form such a favourite article of diet at Naples, and the Admiral was in their centre, it seemed to him at first, as a prisoner.

flagship, which, on learning the nature of his duty, I would not allow, for it was easy for some poor seaman, half seas over, to be in the same fix as I had been, and not to get off so handsomely. There was a boat, too, coming off for Will, so he said, and I fancied that I could hear the rowlocks even then.

“I had been at sea pretty well all my life, and at Naples but two or three weeks, and yet I own I hardly expected to find the machine working so perfectly when I stepped back into it. For those three weeks had been three weeks of such topsy-turvy—more like the Italian opera than life. Yet here was the well-appointed boat, with no one taking any notice of me beyond saluting : even Will, who sat by me, not speaking until I addressed him. When I reached the ship’s side and ascended the gangway, the few men who were about at that hour, with the sentries and officers of the watch, were all at the salute, and seemed to have been waiting for my return every minute, since I had landed. My state-room and cabin were lighted, the sentry stood at the door, and everything was arranged to my hand as it would be if I had never left the ship, though my man Tom is ashore, and, by the time, I should judge, still with Virgil.

* * * * *

“I have been on the poop for I know not how long, pacing up and down and feeling a better man. The sea breeze has blown away all doubts. I must put to sea in two days and get rid of all this. It is not often that I am glad to go to sea, when there is no more to be done than I have hopes of at Malta. I would I could go to Alexandria, and finish those French transports, so that not a man of the Grand Army should ever come back to Europe. I have asked the Grand Signor for a few bombs and fireships, which he should, by this time, have sent. With that not one of them will escape. This is much more to my mind than lying at anchor off Naples ; and about this Malta

business, too, I fear that His Majesty is misinformed. It is represented that the French are on the point of surrender to the Islanders, and that the grant of so much arms, ammunition, and money, which the Governor of Syracuse is considered to have sent, will make Valetta ready to fall as soon as they sight our topsails. This I do not expect. The Maltese are liars and braggarts, though they can fight pretty well when it comes to a choice between fighting and being butchered like sheep. Unless Valetta has reached the starvation point—and I think it has not—even my fleet could not reduce it by bombardment or assault; and the Maltese might be allowed to attack it from now till the crack of doom, without the defenders needing to fire a single gun.

“Still the French have more than once lost heart when their communications have been cut off; and if I go to Malta and summon them from my ships,—‘who knows?’ as the Spaniards say.

“I am not able to go to Egypt to serve my country, because of this affair of Naples and the French in the Papal States, of which, since I have seen Mack, I have no great hopes, unless I can see to it myself, and for the fact that it will set the Emperor in motion again. His sending, and the Queen’s acceptance of Mack, should be a pledge of this. The Queen’s army cannot move till November, which will give me time and plenty to summon Valetta.

“Between it all I may get some action to clear my atmosphere. If I stayed long in Naples, I feel as if I should not be able to leave it. I have never lived till now, but I must struggle against it, though goodness knows why. Surely the Power which sent us into the world meant us to make the best of our lives. Not the best in a shore-parson’s sense, but the best in the sense of extracting the utmost cause for thankfulness out of life—the utmost gratitude for it.

“I think I am a religious man, as men go. I do not believe that there are many men who have a more active sense of their duty to their country. I have never feared to die for her in any of my hundred fights, and I always lean upon my Maker before I go into them, and have ever given Him the praise when I came safe out of them. But I do not know how much I believe that what we do in this life is to influence our happiness in a future life in a different place, over going to which we have no control. I hope to do my duty for the sake of what is my duty in this life, and not as a bribe to secure happiness in the next. My present position is that I tear myself away from that which will give me the greatest happiness of which a man is capable, and I do this out of submission to a code of whose validity I am not sure. The code is of the West—Western; but the traditions upon which it is founded are of the East—Eastern. Those who made and keep the code regard those who made and keep the traditions as barbarians. The peoples upon whose traditions the convention is founded have no such convention! Why, then, am I so concerned, not about breaking the convention, of which I should never dream, but about the misinterpretations of the Pharisees, who have arrogated to themselves the maintenance of the convention? I cannot tell. There is but one remedy for it—the sea—which I have always proposed to myself as my bride. I wonder if it was because I did not know what the possibilities of life were?”

CHAPTER XVII.—Which the Idle Reader may skip, as Politics. It sets forth the Cowardice and unravels the Intrigues which led to the Fall of Naples.

THE situation of affairs can best be inferred from certain brief entries in the Admiral's Journal:—

“*5th Nov.*—Back at Naples. I pray God I may be right about this matter. One cannot be certain of things where one has not Englishmen to carry them out. But I love Italy so dearly, that I feel that surgical remedies must be used to cut out that ulcer in the place from which Rome, the mother of practical civilisation, once sent forth her humanising influences all over the known world.

“What a place is Italy! Every spot, almost every building left as it was when its great deeds were done in it, hundreds and thousands of years ago. Nothing but the earthquake, the volcano, and the Popes forestall time in obliterating the footsteps of history here. I am told that they still have the gate at Rome in which Camillus, going forth to exile, paused to wish that Rome might never have need to recall him. That was the spirit of the men whose monuments surround us; but the spirit of the vile brood of Frenchmen, whose presence is a hornet's nest to Italy, is to burn away, to wash away in blood, to trample away with coarse feet, every trace that any man had a father.

“*7th Nov.*—I am, I fear, drawn into a promise that Naples Bay shall never be left without an English man-of-

war. I never intended leaving *the coast* of Naples without one. If I had, who could withstand the request of such a Queen? Leghorn must be speedily attended to. The Grand Duke, I fancy, begins to see *fear*: the King goes to the army to-morrow. In three days he hopes to march. His Majesty is determined to conquer or die at the head of his army, which is composed of thirty thousand healthy, good-looking troops.

“Have had a letter from Louis, enclosing a petition from the ship’s company of the *Minotaur*, and endorsing their request. Hang every mutineer! say I; and hanging’s too good for ’em. A mutineer is a traitor, and the whole lot are poison. The man who lets his mercy get the better of his judgment in such a matter is disloyal to his country, and I hope I shall always have the faithfulness to string them up with a short shrift. But I cannot well refuse Louis, for I can never forget his noble and effectual support to my flag on the most glorious 1st of August. A friend in need is a friend indeed: never was it better applied than to the *Minotaur*. I must write this to Louis, and also write him a letter to read to his ship’s company, saying that it is in remembrance of his support, and of the gallant conduct of the *Minotaur’s* ship’s company, etc.

“13th Nov.—*Camp, St. Germaines*. A desire from His Majesty called me here yesterday to concert with General Acton the commencement of the war. Thirty thousand of Mack’s *la plus belle armée d’Europe* was drawn out for me to see; and, as far as my judgment goes in these matters, I agree that a finer army cannot be. In the evening we had a Council, and it was settled that four thousand infantry and six hundred cavalry should take possession of Leghorn. Their destination they are to believe is Malta, and it is entrusted to me to undeceive them when we are out at sea. Mack is to march, I repeat it with pleasure, with thirty thousand of the finest troops in Europe, on Saturday

the 17th to Rome, and keep advancing, trusting to the support of the Emperor. Every hour the French are increasing their Italian army, and two new generals are arrived at Rome.

“ Thus I went to bed last night, and at six this morning came to take leave of their Majesties. I found them in great distress. The courier who left London on the 4th has not brought any assurance of support from the Emperor. M. Thugut is evasive, and wishes, he says, the French to be the aggressors. Is it not aggression, if this Court knows, all the world knows, that the French are collecting an army to overrun Naples; in a week destroy the monarchy, plunder and make it a Republic? As this is fully known, surely it is aggression of the most serious nature. The Emperor’s troops have not yet been in the habit of retaking kingdoms, and it is easier to destroy than to restore. I ventured to tell their Majesties that one of the following things must happen to the King, and he had his choice—‘ either to advance, trusting to God for His blessing on a just Cause, to die with *l’épée à la main*, or remain quiet and be kicked out of your kingdoms.’ The King replied he would go on, and trust in God, and desired me to stay till noon to consult with Mack on this new face of affairs.

“ 15th Nov.—Their Majesties have now informed me that things stand precisely as they did before the receipt of despatches from London and Vienna; but it is evidently a blow their not getting money from England. The Ministers do not know how to get it: their paper money is at 40 per cent. discount. I long ago told the Queen I did not think Mr. Pitt would go to Parliament and ask money of the country; that if England saw every exertion made in this country to save themselves, John Bull was never backward in supporting friends in distress. Good God! my Lord, can the Emperor submit to this?

“16th Nov.—I must tell De Niza to have his squadron ready by Saturday, and if all cannot be got ready I must be informed by Thursday evening how many can be ready.

“17th Nov.—Even the Grand Signor has condescended to notice my earnest endeavours to serve the cause of humanity against a set of impious men. I must write and tell his Admiral how anxious I am for the success of the Ottoman arms, and how happy he can make me by telling me how I can be most useful to him. Must also embrace the opportunity of paying my respects to the Russian Admiral, and assuring him how happy I feel that we are so near each other, and working together for the good cause of our sovereigns. If this continues so, I shall indeed be happy, because I have suspected the Russians, whose distance relieves them from the fear of French aggression, of playing for their own hand.

“Memo.—Have ordered his Sicilian Majesty’s ships *Lion* and *Aretusa* to proceed to Malta and put themselves under Captain Ball. For this blockade numbers will do. Of all the fleets in my command only the English can be relied on *when the game is afoot*. Every Portuguese and Sicilian ship has some if not every fault.

“18th November.—Last evening dear Emma came in, looking inexpressibly engaging: she evidently had something on her mind which gave her a girlish diffidence. With her little straight nose and delicately cut chin, I don’t see how she is ever to look anything but girlish; and last night she had simple white flowers—real flowers twined in a sort of chaplet in her beautiful hair; and her exquisite neck and bosom, without a single jewel, were shown up by a bodice of soft primrose-coloured lawn, as simple as a thrown-back mantilla. She came up to me with an air of pretty coaxing, made the prettier by a conviction that it would fail.

““Don’t be cross with me, Nelson,” she begged. ‘I

know you will be vexed, but I'm sure the Queen meant you to see it.' And then she showed me a letter from the Queen, full of the idea that money was indispensable, which was evidently intended for my eyes. I was to tell Mr. Pitt, I suppose, what I saw. That I can do very soon.

"I see the finest country in the world full of resources, yet not enough to supply the public wants; all are plundering who can get at public money or stores. In my own line I can speak. A Neapolitan ship of the line would cost more than ten English ships fitting out. Five sail of the line must ruin the country. Everything else is, I have no doubt, going on in the same system of thieving. I could give Mr. Pitt so many instances of the greatest mal-content of persons in office, and of those very people being rewarded. If money could be placed in the Public Chest at this moment, I believe it would be well used; for the sad thing in this country is, that, although much is raised, yet very little reaches the Public Chest. I will give you a fact: when the Order of Jesuits was suppressed in this country and Sicily, they possessed very large estates. Although these, with every other part of their property, were seized by the Crown, yet, to this moment, not one farthing has reached the Public Chest. On the contrary, some years the pretended expense of management was more than the produce. Taxes have been sold for sums of money, which now are five times more than when sold.

"I told all this to Emma; to which she replied that she knew it better than I, but as it had been in the beginning in Italy, so it was now, and ever should be. To which I replied, like a great brute—though I could see she was not far from crying, and scolded myself half the night for my roughness to her—'That it would all have to end, and that it would be fortunate if the Kingdom did not end first.'

"*21st November.*—Have wrote to my brother, the Reverend Mr. Nelson, of Hillborough, to tell him how

earnestly I pray that the victory of which it has pleased God to make me a principal may be useful to my family. As to myself, the probability is that I shall never take my seat in the House of Peers. My health has declined very much, and nothing keeps me on service but the thought that I am doing good.

“‘*Vanguard*,’ 22nd November.—Ordered Commodore Stone, of Her Faithful Majesty’s ship *Rainha*, to remain at this place, and to keep his ship complete with provisions and water, to put to sea at a moment’s warning; and, in case of any unforeseen accident, to follow the direction of Sir William Hamilton, and embark the families and effects of the English and Portuguese, if necessary.

“‘*Vanguard*’ at Sea, Nov. 27th.—I don’t know when I have been so low; though, thank God, I have not felt the sea-sickness much, in spite of the gale, which has been very bad. The hope of action keeps me up. The General will, I trust, have news of the Emperor which will make him act firmly. War once declared, I shall destroy all the privateers which have been gathering in Leghorn as a neutral port—I daresay as many as a hundred of them. The British ships are, I think, all right, though the weather is so thick that we cannot make any out; but I have no hope of the Portuguese having followed us in such weather. I do hope there will be some action, for the past five days here have been very heavy on my spirits: the weather has been so infernal that we shall be six days making Leghorn from Naples; and the contrast between my beautiful chamber in Sir William’s palace, overlooking the Bay of Naples, and my cabin with a gale of wind blowing, cannot be described. It is not the cabin, it is not the gale—I do not mind them: I have been through it all, and worse, before—but it is the loneliness. Instead of the very finest of society, the witty, well-informed Sir William, most admirable of hosts, and my beautiful Lady with her laughing

eyes and caressing smile, there being no English of my rank on board, I have only my own company or the General's—Naselli's. We can, fortunately, neither of us talk the other's language, or I fear I should have more of his company, and I have an instinctive aversion to him. He was intended for a Chamberlain and to die of apoplexy. I shall write to Emma.

“*Later.*—I have written to dear Emma.

“MY DEAR LADY HAMILTON,—How I miss you and the good Sir William, who, with my father and my good wife, are my only comforts in life, now that I cannot have the ships I want, or even the authority from their Majesties, to finish with these French! How shall I ever thank you and Sir W. for all your goodness to me? You have been so wonderfully hospitable; and for you yourself, you kept me alive. You gave me health, and such a friendship as I had not dreamed was possible in the world. How I miss that gentle voice; the soothing touch of those hands; the friendly glance of those clear eyes; the laughter lurking about the corners of that mouth, which it is difficult for any man to take his eyes off! But dear Sir William will be jealous, if that good man were capable of misunderstanding an upright man's esteem for his Lady, and were not aware that—

‘To see her is to love her,
And love but her for ever,’

as the new Scotch poet that Campbell (my secretary), has been reading, says.

“Your affectionate

“NELSON.”

“‘*Vanguard,*’ *Leghorn, 28th Nov.*—Came on board the British and Neapolitan Ministers, who were saluted. Summoned the town of Leghorn in concert with the Neapolitan General Naselli. At 3 p.m. the Governor consented to give up the place. Landed the troops, cannon, baggage, etc., with all expedition, and took possession. It blew a strong gale on the night of the 22nd, when we sailed from Naples, and the next day. None but the British ships kept me company.

“There seems to be some tangle with the Grand Duke. Have begged our Minister Wyndham to say that I would willingly adopt the mode of procedure most agreeable to him ; but the Neapolitan general—d—n his impudence!—only looks upon me as an agent for transporting him. He sends *his* Summons as he pleases. I shall rejoice to see Wyndham, who reports the capture of Port Mahon by my friend Stuart, and Commodore Duckworth afloat. Leghorn does not, at this moment, receive me on shore. I am anxious to get to the support of the King of Naples.

“29th Nov., ‘*Vanguard*,’ *Leghorn Roads*.—Is it war or is it not war? These confounded Sicilians and Tuscans think themselves at liberty to create an artificial state of *not-war*, which they can plead to the French when they get beaten, as they certainly will be, if they attempt to make war in such a way. Much good it will do them, though! If the French had common gratitude, it might, for all their precautions are in the direction of disobliging us, and we are the only enemy the French have to reckon with in the world, it seems to me. Have signified to the King of the Two Sicilies and the Grand Duke of Tuscany, that the Ports of Genoa (the Ligurian Republic forsooth!) are in a state of blockade, and that should any vessel of either of these nations presume after this notice to attempt entering this port, I have ordered Troubridge, whom I have put in charge, to sink or burn them with their cargoes. Either of them would carry ammunition for the French to fight against their own country.

“Have writ to Lord Spencer to-day—I fear too hastily. It would certainly break things up here if I did not feel confident in his lordship not to expose me if I occasionally write too freely of what I see and know. I am so much in the habit of writing my mind freely, that I cannot say what I wish in a stiff formal letter. Under this impression I have said that the Portuguese squadron are totally

useless. The Marquis de Niza has certainly every good disposition to act well ; but he is completely ignorant of *Sea* affairs. I expect to hear they have had all disasters, and that they are returned to Naples. All their Commanders are Commodores, *and it is ridiculous to hear them talk of their rank*, and of the impossibility of serving under any of my brave and good Captains. Yet these men are English. I say Niza is by far the best among them, and I shall keep up a good harmony with him. As to the port being neutral, that is impossible ; and if the Neapolitan General does not consider it as I do, I will directly have orders sent him to that effect. General Acton and the Queen will instantly see the propriety of the measure. To-morrow I return in the *Vanguard* to Naples. I will be active as long as I can, but my strength fails me daily.

“I was very low to-day till I had, through Wyndham, a surprise so delightful that it was difficult to preserve the diplomatic calm which was already pretty well tried by that weathercock Naselli—no less than a letter from Emma, passed overland with incredible rapidity from shepherd to shepherd. I am not ashamed to say that I kissed it when I had read it. It was like her dear hands pressing on my forehead when I have one of my vile headaches. Why should there be such things as headaches, to incapacitate a man from work ? Though, thank Heaven, when there is real work to be done like fighting, the excitement breeds a rush of vigour which carries everything before it. I have copied every word of that dear letter.

‘ NAPLES, *Nov. 22nd*, 1798.

MY DEAR GOOD ADMIRAL,—

‘As this goes overland and through not over-safe hands, I can but send you by it expressions of our esteem and of the wilderness you have left in our little family. Sir William he do miss you terribly, being accustomed to your gayety and also to lean on your superior judgement. For a woman it is

worse by much, for no good woman but is sensible of a kind of support, a kind of holy joy in the presence of the man that she feels to be the greatest man there is, as I feel about you, dearest Nelson, greatest hero of the ancient and modern world. I would I was with you now, for I know how ill and distressed you must be.

“The gale has been awfull. The Portuguese is not out yet, nor like to be. They are not like my Nelson, but fine-weather sailors that must be protected by a port, and a fort if there is any enemy near. And you have all the anxiety, which I know you detest, of waiting for others to move, as the good Emperor must, when he hears of the sacrifice we have been making to send so fine an army, from which, by this, I believe, the French will be in full flight. I know how your head will be splitting from the wound you got in the service of your country in your glorious victory; and Emma would like to be with you, laying her hands, which you say are so smooth and full of vittality, on the poor wounded forehead and also on the topp of your head, when the blood is throbbing there. It gives her such joy to think that you like her to be with you, even when you are too ill to raise your head; she can be quiet, indeed she can, and wait until her presence can save you the slightest effort which would make fresh pains in your head. But what pleases me most is that when the badd pains is gone and you suffer from a nervousness that they should return, Emma is able, with scarce observed kisses and gentle wiles, to draw you out of yourself, so that you forgett you are playing hide and seek with the head-ache. I have what is worse, the heart-ache. There is no cure for that but time. You know how I was sick for Greville, that I had lived with as his wife, in the first months that I was at Napoli with dear Sir William. Often have I thought that I was dying of a broken heart; only hearts don't break, dear Nelson, though you believe that they do, if I may say Nay to so great a man. Every night I wept myself to sleep when I slept at all, and if it had not been for Sir William's goodness—he was like a father to a dying child, and cheated me out of the death for which I so longed by humouring me. I tell you I was a good wife to Greville, Nelson, though I was never married to him as I have been to Sir William. I had not another earthly thought except to be with him and be his slave to do his slightest wish. Had he beaten me I would have stayed

to be beaten, not even trying to escape the blows. I think even they would have been dear to me, because he had given them to me. I was but a girl, and loved a man to be master of me.

"I should be wrong if I told you that I feel your absence as I felt my absence from Greville then. But that is the kind of way I feel it, though I have never known your love, I am a fool, Nelson, I know I am; but I am also a loving woman, that can see all the goodnesses there is in the man her eyes are following, and fall down and worship each of them. It is the second commandment that I should break: "Thou shalt not make to thyself any graven image"—for this, I suppose, means that you shall not make an idol of anything, and that is what I cannot but do. Come back to Napoli soon, to your loving EMMA."

"And immediately below this was added, in the Ambassador's easily recognisable hand :

"For God's sake come back soon. My hero-worshipping Emma has the moping-sickness, and I cannot afford to have her *hors de combat* at this anxious time.—W. H."

"And to this dear Emma added a second post-scriptum :

"Here in Naples we are very busy making preparations to celebrate the King's glorious return. The great idea for illuminations is the asphodel flower with three heads of flowers made of little lights, and hanging from them the letters F. M. N.—Ferdinand, Nelson, Mack. They are also making a figure of France with a red cap, rolling in the dust by the cut-down tree of Anarchy, for the King to put his foot on her neck at the grand gala."

"Nov. 30th, 'Vanguard.'—I have been thinking all night of the General and Duke of Sangro's saying, that the King of Naples had not declared War against the French. Now, I assert that he has, and in a much stronger manner than the ablest Minister in Europe could write a Declaration of War. Has not the King received, as a conquest made by him, the Republican flag taken at Gozo? Is not the King's flag flying there and at Malta—and at Malta not only by the King's absolute permission, but by his orders? Is not

the flag shot at every day by the French, and returned from batteries bearing the King's flag? And are not two frigates and a corvette placed under my orders? and they would fight the French, meet them where they may. Has not the King sent publicly from Naples guns, mortars, &c., with officers and artillery, to fight against the French in Malta? If those acts are not tantamount to any written paper, I give up all knowledge of what is War. So far, then, I assert that the General is authorised to seize all French and Ligurian vessels. But that is a small matter to what will happen, if he permits the many hundreds of French which are now in the Mole, to be neutral till they have a fair opportunity of being active. Even the interest of the Great Duke calls loudly that the Neapolitan General should act with vigour, for if all other schemes fail, they have one sure—viz., set one vessel on fire, and the Port of Leghorn is ruined for twenty years.

“‘*Vanguard*,’ 1st Dec.—These French and Genoese privateers laying in the Mole are the very mischief. Some of the former are of such force as to be practically war-vessels, and there are above seventy of the latter ready to sail loaded with corn for Genoa and France. The Neapolitan General refuses to seize them, under this same sickening pretence. Have written to Sir William, to demand that orders should instantly be sent to the General for the seizure of every French vessel. The old fool! Still that playing to the French at the expense of British commerce—a ladder of the weak sitting on the wall between two minds, which the strong will kick away, when the minute arrives. Genoa is equally at war with Great Britain as the French, for I consider the self-named Ligurian Republic as at present only a Province of France. Even the Neapolitan Government should see that to permit the departure of this corn from Leghorn must expedite the entrance into Italy of more French troops. I have got the

old fool to lay an embargo on all vessels, till he receives the orders of his Court. He sees, I believe, the permitting these vessels to depart in the same light as myself; but there is this difference between us,—the General prudently, and certainly safely, awaits the orders of his Court, taking no responsibility on himself; I act, from the circumstance of the moment, as I feel it may be most advantageous for the honour of the Cause which I serve, taking all responsibility on myself.

“*Naples, 5th Dec.*—Met the Portuguese on my way back. I expect dear Hood every moment from Egypt. His provisions must be very short. He deserves great credit for his perseverance. I hope the good Turk will have relieved him; but the Russians seem to me more intent on taking ports in the Mediterranean than on destroying Buonaparte in Egypt.

“Am still worried over that *Culloden* matter. I received yesterday a private letter from Lord Spencer, of October 7th, saying that the First Lieutenants of all the ships engaged would be promoted. I sincerely hope this is not intended to exclude the first of the *Culloden*: I must write to Lord S. for Heaven’s sake, for my sake, if it is so, to get it altered. Our dear friend, Troubridge, has suffered enough; and no one knows from me but that the *Culloden* was as much engaged as any ship in the Squadron. His sufferings were in every respect more than any of us. He deserves every reward which a grateful country can bestow on the most meritorious sea-officer of his standing in the Service. I have felt his worth every hour of my command.

“*December 5th (later).*—Am back in Naples in my home. I cannot but regard it as my home; for here I have met with the most complete rest and happiness which I have known in my lifetime, spent in loneliness on the sea for the best part of thirty years. Her Majesty and Sir William and dear Emma met me on the steps of the little port they

call the Arsenal. They seemed mightily glad to have me returned: Her Majesty saying that she should now feel safe whatever fortune befel her arms; and Sir William, that his house had been like a monastery since I sailed to Leghorn. While Emma said nothing, but laughed and cried a little, and poured out the gladness of her heart in looks and smiles, till we got to the palace, where Sir William said kindly: 'Kiss her mopes away, and see if you cannot get me back my merry Emma,—she has been sick for the sight of you. Only I know what an affectionate heart it is, that feels as if something had been torn out of it by the roots, when it is deprived of the sight of one it loves.' And, thus adjured, she came to me and wept silently on my shoulder; and then, giving me a happy kiss, went back to her husband and got into his arm, and said in the prettiest way in the world, 'I am sorry to have been such a moper, and you are the best husband alive, and I will be good now.' Adding, with a flash of mischief from the laughing eyes—'Now that I have the moon back that I cried for.' And he held his arm around her with the affection, as it seemed to me, of a father rather than a husband, and looked down on her with the fondest pride. But he did not kiss her; he treated her rather as a favourite child.

“Dec. 6th.—The state of this country is briefly this: the army is at Rome, Civita Vecchia taken, but in the Castle of St. Angelo are 500 French troops. The French have 13,000 troops at a strong post in the Roman State, called Castellana. General Mack is gone against them with 20,000; the event in my opinion is doubtful, and on it hangs the immediate fate of Naples. If Mack is defeated, this country, in fourteen days, is lost; for the Emperor has not yet moved his army, and if the Emperor will not march, this country has not the power of resisting the French. But it was not a case of choice, but necessity, which forced the King of Naples to march out of his country, and not to wait till the French

had collected a force sufficient to drive him, in a week, out of his kingdom.

“Have wrote to Commander Duckworth to congratulate him on the conquest of Minorca—an acquisition invaluable to Great Britain, and completely in future prevents any movements from Toulon to the westward. My situation in this country has had doubtless *one* rose plucked from a bed of thorns. Nor is my present state that of ease; and my health, at best but indifferent, has not mended lately.

“Of the new war in which Naples has just embarked, the event God only knows; but, without the assistance of the Emperor, which is not yet given, this country cannot resist the power of France. Leghorn is in possession with the King of Naples’ troops, as is Civita Vecchia. I have Troubridge, *Minataur*, *Terpsichore*, and *Bon Citoyenne* on the north coast of Italy, three sail of the line under Ball off Malta; and Hood with three sail of the line and two frigates is in Egypt, but I expect his return every moment, and that the Turks and Russian ships and flotilla have relieved him. I am here *solus*, for I reckon the Portuguese as nothing. They are all flag officers, and cannot serve under any of my brave friends. I wish I could get letters to St. Vincent: it is important to him to know our state here. The new war commenced here is yet impossible to say how it may turn—whether it really hastens the ruin, or saves the monarchy. At all events, if the King had not begun the war he would soon have been kicked out of his kingdom. Mack has with him twenty thousand fine young men, but with some few exceptions wretchedly officered. If the French are not soon driven from their post, which is very strong by nature, Mack must fall back to the frontier on the side of Ancona. The French have drove back, to say no worse, the right wing of the King’s army, and taken all their baggage and artillery. The Emperor has not yet

moved, and his Minister, Thugut, is not very anxious to begin a new war; but if he does not, Naples and Tuscany will fall in two months.

“*Dec. 7th.*—On my arrival here from Leghorn I received a letter from Lord Spencer, communicating to me the title His Majesty had been generously pleased to confer on me. An honour, his lordship was pleased to add, the highest that has ever been conferred on an officer of my standing, who is not a Commander-in-chief. It should have been a Viscount at the least. I am not, I hope, a vain man, but this is due to the fine fellows who won my victory. It goes to show that the granting of honours is geographical: now, if it had been at the mouth of the Thames and not at the Nile, I should be by this a Duke, judging by the scale of recent rewards. The suspense of men’s minds would have been so awful until the thing was settled that ministers would have been carried away by the pressure. It would be good for the Service if ministers were carried away sometimes. Greater recognition could not be given to the victory of my fleet, *because I was not a Commander-in-chief.* As if this made things easier. They cannot be insensible to the difficulties I have to encounter in not being a Commander-in-chief; indeed, with any other Commander-in-chief except my dear old friend, Lord St. Vincent, I should never have got to the Nile at all, much less conquered the French. Himself what is called a Conservative officer, there never was a more generous chief to officers detailed for particular duties. He not only gave me ten more ships, but his ten best ships; and so he does for all. God knows the strain it all was, and the bitter moment of my return to Syracuse! The only happy moment I felt was in the view of the French. Then I knew that all my sufferings would soon be at an end.

“And concerning this matter of the *Culloden*, I hope and believe the word ‘engaged’ is not intended to exclude

her. I hope that the merit of that ship and her gallant Captain are too well known to benefit by anything I could say. Her misfortune was great in getting aground, while her more fortunate companions were in the full tide of happiness. No; I am confident that my good Lord Spencer will never add misery to misfortune. Indeed, no person has a right to know that the *Culloden* was not as warmly engaged as any ship in the Squadron. Captain Troubridge on shore is superior to other captains afloat. In the midst of his great misfortunes he made those signals which prevented certainly the *Alexander* and *Swiftsure* from running on the Shoal.

“Have written to Lord Spencer about it—I begged his pardon for writing on the subject, because I verily believe that it has never entered his Lordship’s head; but my heart, as it ought to be, is warmed to my gallant friends.

“*Naples, Dec. 8th.*—We are quit of *La Combe de St. Michel*, the Minister of the French Republic at the Court of the Two Sicilies, suite and baggage. I had the greatest pleasure in the world in giving the Genoese Pink *La Madonna di Porto Salvo*, Argita Ferraii, Master, which had him aboard, a pass from the Bay of Naples to the Port of Genoa, which desired His Majesty’s Ships, and any private vessel belonging to the English nation, to afford him every assistance and facilitate his passage.

“*Naples, Dec. 9th.*—It is tails, not heads. It is reported, and indeed is certain, that the Neapolitan officers are run away even at the sight of the enemy. As must ever be the case, several brave officers have fallen. I know not the extent of the disaster, but I believe it is very bad. Have written to Troubridge to keep something very often at Leghorn, for I think it very probable that I may be forced to send for him in a hurry; and I have warned him that everything he sends here must anchor cautiously if

my Flag is not here. What orders have been sent to General Naselli I know not. It was determined to order him to seize all French and Ligurian vessels in the Mole. This Emma got from Her Majesty, who is the only man in her kingdom.

“What an extraordinary thing it is that nothing is to be done here save through a beautiful young woman, and her of another nation!

“I am sure, whenever I enter My Lady’s boudoir, of intelligent sympathy and co-operation. Those clear eyes see deeper than most into the tangles of politics (which mean intrigues here), and that graceful head has a woman’s wit in divining the course of things. But it is the courage of the noble creature that overwhelms me. Neither army nor mob could daunt her from fighting for a friend as a tigress will fight for her cubs; and, what is finer, she is equally dauntless of responsibility. Had Emma been a sea-captain, she would have been as daring as Foley at the Nile. Heaven meant her to be a queen, but stayed its hand and sent her to a country where there was a Queen after her own heart, and to be the ambassador of a greater country, for she is the ambassador of Great Britain. Sir William is too much taken up with the set of his eyeglass and the handling of his snuff-box. Sir William is a Lord of the Admiralty spoiled. He would have set them the finest example of allowing no national peril or disaster to betray him into a loss of manner.

“Here, too—I write this only because I know that what I write thus shall never be seen of the public eye—he has his great use, for his enemies look upon him as a fool with whom the forms of respect have to be preserved, and his wife as a beautiful adventuress—how I blush to write these words!—whose lowly origin prevents her having to be reckoned with. In this are they much mistaken, for she can twist the Queen, who is in effect the King, round

her little finger, and she has the wisdom as well as the courage to save a kingdom.

“Her clear sight showed her at a glance that the vessels in the Mole must be seized if we were to cut the French off from their base, and she soon had the required order from the Queen. But this sad history of the army may have driven everything out of their heads.

“Wyndham writes that it is settled that all the cargoes of the Genoese ships should be landed, and all the French privateers disarmed, and their crews sent away. So far I am content. Money is not our object, but to distress the common Enemy. I hope, if Troubridge liked it, he visited the Grand Duke in my stead; I could not have been better represented. The Copy is a d—d deal better than the Original.

“*Naples, 10th December.*—His Royal Highness, the Great Duke, paid me the high honour of desiring to see me at Pisa; but I was under a sacred promise to return here as expeditiously as possible, and not to quit the Queen and Royal Family of Naples without Her Majesty’s approbation.

“On the whole, I rejoiced to hear that the cargoes in the Mole of Leghorn will be landed—though I fear that some of it will find its way to the French—and the privateers disarmed, and the scoundrels belonging to them sent away. The Enemy will be distressed, and, thank God, I shall get no money. The world, I know, thinks that money is our God, and now they will be undeceived as far as relates to us. ‘Down, down with the French!’ is my constant prayer. I hope that the Emperor is marched to support this country; for, unused to war, *its officers seem alarmed at a drawn sword, or a gun, if loaded with shot.* Many of them, peaceable heroes, are said to have run away when brought near the Enemy.

“Have just got a hundred and fifty-nine of the *Leander’s*

from Corfu. It was dog's luck for Berry her falling in with the *Généreux*, but I trust the King will confer the same honours on him as if he had not been in the *Leander*; indeed, his sufferings in her entitle him to more honours, and the City of London has at any rate given him its freedom. Her defence was glorious, and does Thompson and Berry the highest credit. A French 50 would have struck to one of our 74's without firing a gun. I shall have that *Généreux* yet, and that precious captain of hers, unless he is by this time a prisoner to the Turks. I daresay they will cut off his head, the scoundrel: the treatment the officers received on board the *Généreux* was infamous. They were plundered of everything they possessed. Captain Thompson was even robbed of the miniature of his mother, and at the very moment the surgeon of the *Leander* was performing an operation he was robbed of his instruments, and Captain Thompson nearly lost his life by the attendance of his surgeon being forcibly withheld. To the remonstrances of my officers this Captain Lejoille coolly replied: '*J'en suis fâché, mais le fait est que les François ne sont bons qu'au pillage.*' Berry has asked me if Josiah is yet made Post. I do not see any probability of that event. He asks Campbell to get him a fan-mount. I shall see to it myself, and wish he had a thought of anything else. He shall have the sword which he brought me off the *Spartiate* when she struck. I shall never forget his support for my mind on the 1st of August.

"I hear that Malta will fall in due time. I think the Order will never be restored: the inhabitants hate them. The delayed war on the part of the Emperor will be the destruction of this Monarchy, and, of course, to the new-acquired dominions of the Emperor in Italy. Had the war commenced in September or October, all Italy would at this moment have been liberated. This month is worse

than the last ; the next will render the contest doubtful, and in six months, when the Neapolitan Republic will be organised, armed, and with its numerous resources called forth, I will suffer to have my head cut off if the Emperor is not only defeated in Italy, but that he totters on his throne at Vienna. Have wrote to the Empress that notwithstanding the councils which have shook the throne of her father and mother, I shall remain here, ready to save the sacred persons of the King and Queen, and of her brothers and sisters ; and that I have also left ships at Leghorn, to save the lives of the Great Duke and Her Imperial Majesty's sister ; for all must be a Republic, if the Emperor does not act with expedition and vigour. '*Down, down with the French!*' ought to be placed in the Council-room of every country in the world, and may Almighty God give right thoughts to every Sovereign, is the constant prayer of one who only lives to defeat the infamous machinations of these infidels.

"*Naples, 11th December.*—Not a line from England since the 1st of October. Lord St. Vincent is in no hurry to oblige me now ; in short, I am the envied man, but better that than to be the pitied one. Never mind ; it is my present intention to leave this country in May. The poor Queen has again made me promise not to quit her or her family until brighter prospects appear than do at present. The King is with the Army, and she is sole Regent ; she is, in fact, a great King.

"Lady Hamilton's goodness forces me out at noon for an hour. What can I say of hers and Sir William's attention to me ? They are, in fact, with the exception of my wife and my good father, the dearest friends I have in this world. I live as Sir William's son in the house, and my glory is as dear to them as their own ; in short, I am under such obligations as I can never repay but with my eternal gratitude. The improvement made in

Josiah by Lady Hamilton is wonderful; *Lady Nelson's obligations and mine are infinite on that score; not but Josiah's heart is as good and humane as ever was covered by a human breast. God bless him!—I love him dearly with all his roughness.*

“The Queen has again made me promise not to quit her and her family till brighter prospects open upon her. She is miserable, we know. None from this house have seen her these three days, but her letters to Emma paint the anguish of her soul. However, on inquiry, matters are not so bad as I expected. *The Neapolitan officers have not lost much honour, for God knows they had but little to lose;* but they lost all they had. Mack has supplicated the King to sabre every man who ran from Civita Castellana to Rome. He has, we hear, torn off the epaulets of some of these scoundrels, and placed them on good sergeants. I will, as briefly as I can, state the position of the Army, and its lost honour, *for defeat they have had none.* The right wing, of nineteen thousand men, under General St. Philip and Michaux (who ran away at Toulon), were to take post between Ancona and Rome, to cut off all supplies and communication. Near Fermi they fell in with the enemy, about three thousand. After a little distant firing, St. Philip advanced to the French General, and returning to his men said, ‘I no longer command you,’ and was going off to the Enemy. A sergeant said, ‘You are a traitor: what! have you been talking to the Enemy?’ St. Philip replied, ‘I no longer command you.’ ‘Then you are an enemy!’ and, levelling his musket, shot St. Philip through the right arm. However, the Enemy advanced; he was amongst them. Michaux ran away, as did all the Infantry, and had it not been for the good conduct of two regiments of Cavalry, would have been destroyed. So great was their panic, that cannon, tents, baggage and military chest—all were left to the French.

Could one credit, but it is true, that this loss has been sustained with the death of only forty men? The French lost many men by the Cavalry, and having got the good things, did not run after an army three times their number. Some ran thirty miles to Pesaro. The peasantry took up arms—even the women—to defend their country. However, the runaways are not only collected, but advanced to Arcoti, which they took from the French, cutting open the gates with hatchets. It is said they have got a good General—Cetto, a Neapolitan Prince—and I hope will be ashamed of their former conduct. General Michaux is bringing a prisoner to Naples.

“This failure has thrown Mack backwards. It is the intention of the General to surround Civita Castellana. Chevalier de Saxe advanced to Viterbi, General Metch to Fermi, and Mack with the main body, finding his communication not open with Fermi, retreated towards Civita Castellana. In his route he was attacked from an intrenchment of the Enemy, which it was necessary to carry. Finding his troops backward, he dismounted, and attempted to rally them, but they left their General and basely fled. The natural consequence was, he was sorely wounded, but saved by some gallant Cavalry, and carried off by the bravery of a coachman, and is safe, poor fellow, at Rome, and hopes are entertained of his recovery. The fugitives fled to Rome, fancying the French at their heels, who never moved from their intrenchment, which was carried by another part of the troops under General Dumas. It is reported that the King has stripped the Prince di Taranto, Duc di Trani, of his uniform, and disgraced him. He commanded under Saxe, and fled amongst the first to Rome. 'Tis for the traitorous and cowardly conduct of these scoundrels that the great Queen is miserable, knowing not who to trust. The French Minister and his Legation went off by sea yesterday.

“*Naples, 12th December.*—No squadron up to the 26th of November arrived to relieve Captain Hood, who has long been in want of being re-victualled and re-fitted; a frigate and two or three gunboats are all that have arrived, when certainly not less than three sail of the line, four frigates with gun and mortar vessels, should have been sent. Egypt is the first object—and Corfu the second.

“The Neapolitan officers do not like fighting, and some are traitors, so says report.

“The oddest thing in the midst of wars and alarms, when a kingdom is tottering to its base. I was sitting in my chamber—the one I had before, overlooking the Bay—writing a despatch to Ball, whom I mistook so at first, and have found to be a wonderful man since he has been at Malta, when Emma, who is the best-hearted creature alive, came in, more the coquette than I had ever known her. It may have been only my imagination that she was dressed with unwonted elegance. Certain I am that her clothes sat on her uncommon well, and she was arching her brows—excelled by no statue of antiquity in their perfect moulding. Her eyes were brimful of mischief, and little smiles of amusement were chasing each other round the lovely mouth, that was doing its best to be grave.

“‘Despatches,’ I said warningly.

“‘Let me write them for you, Lord Left-hand,’ she cried, leaning on my shoulder caressingly to capture my pen and read what I had written. This was all flat disobedience of orders, and she was trying to coax me into forgetting it. ‘My dear Ball * * * With every kind wish to Foley, Gould and Waller, believe me ever your affectionate Nelson.’ ‘Capital,’ she cried: ‘is this Captain Gould of the *Audacious*?’

“‘The same.’

“‘Well, then you have to be the Ambassador—or the

Ambassador's wife—and I am only going to be the Admiral giving orders. You know our good Miss Knight ?

“ ‘Her that wrote the new verse about me on to “God save the King” at my birthday ball ?’

“ ‘The same.’

“ ‘What of her ?’

“ ‘The very drollest thing has happened. It seems that her father, who, as you know, was a most respectable man—he died a Rear-Admiral and a Knight of the Bath, I think—had a cousin living at Taunton, who was a chimney-sweep or something of the kind. Well, he is dead too.’

“ ‘A good thing, I should think.’

“ ‘Uncommon better than you think.’

“ ‘Dear Emma,’ I said, lifting my head to the rosy face at my shoulder, in doing which I touched her soft cheek, ‘I think I never before heard you say an unkind thing, except when your temper is blazing, which I do not count against you. I had rather, I think, have kept my ideal.’

“ ‘Was there ever such an unreasonable man, to begrudge poor Miss Knight her good fortune ?’

“ ‘What good fortune ?’

“ ‘Five thousand golden guineas. The sweep has left her his fortune, which, with what she has, will make her between seven and eight thousand pounds.’

“ ‘I see.’

“ ‘And she has, I understand, for some time been receiving advances from Captain Gould, of the *Audacious*, which she is now in a position to gratify.’

“ ‘Miss Knight must be over fifty,’ I said, half to myself.

“ ‘Who is unkind now ?’ asked Emma.

“ ‘I unkind ? I was only thinking Gould is a young man.’

“ Emma was a diplomatist. She said nothing, so I had to say something, and asked : ‘And I am to be the Ambassador who conveys—— ?’

“‘The match-maker,’ she said softly, and then she tripped away.

“I am sure I hope poor Miss Knight will get her husband, but I fear I made a mess of it in striving to be diplomatic, for I just wrote the news about the chimney-sweep, adding: ‘Lady Hamilton and Sir William desire to be kindly remembered to all their good friends with you; and Lady Hamilton and Miss Knight are not indifferent to the welfare of those off Malta, particularly to an *Audacious* and good friend of ours.’

“Emma would have done better than this, but I tried to be diplomatic.

“*Naples, Dec. 14th.*—This kingdom is invaded by a formidable French army. Have sent word to Sir William, for the information of the English merchants and others residing at Naples, that the three English transports in this Bay have my directions to receive such effects of the English as they can stow, and that the whole squadron will be ready to receive their persons should such an event be found necessary for them to embark. Having had some experience of this kind of thing, I have dropped him a hint that I mean valuable effects, and not household furniture; and that anything sent on board ship should be done with as little bustle and as much secrecy as possible.

“Must tell De Niza to lend the King a number of Portuguese seamen and officers to assist in fitting some of his ships for sea, or the French will have them. I think it has come to that.

“*Naples, Dec. 15th.*—The situation of this country is very critical—nearly all in it are traitors or cowards. Have sent for the *Goliath*, and ordered Foley to come through the Faro of Messina, that he may get information. Have cautioned him not to approach Naples but with great caution. More bad luck: the *Flora* cutter is lost. Have asked Ball if he can spare the *Incendiary*. I cannot use the

Neapolitan ships : they are traitors in the *marine*. In short, all is corrupt.

“ 15th Dec. (*later*).—Have sent for Troubridge, leaving the *Terpsichore* in Leghorn Roads to bring off the Great Duke should such a measure be necessary. I hope to God he will make haste and approach the place with caution. The King has returned here, and everything is as bad as possible. If he does not come quickly he will find me at Messina or even Palermo.

“ Dec. 16th.—In the midst of all this, it is like a returning ray of victory to receive from the powerful, formidable and most magnificent Grand Signor his present in acknowledgment of my success of 1st August—the *chelengk*, a kind of diamond aigrette, and a sable fur with broad sleeves, with two thousand sequins to be distributed among the wounded of my crew. Have sent my dear son-in-law, Captain Nisbet, to carry Kelim Effendi to Constantinople with my thanks. The glory of the Ottoman arms is as dear to me as those of my own country, and I always pray the God of heaven and earth for His blessing on the Grand Signor and all his faithful subjects. But I was in hopes that part of the United Ottoman and Russian Squadron would have gone to Egypt—the first object of the Ottoman arms—Corfu is a secondary consideration. A squadron should be sent, too, on the coast of St. Jean d’Acre, which, if any event drives us from the coast of Egypt, will be attacked by sea. I have Buonaparte’s letter before me.

“When I first saw the French fleet, which for near three months I had in vain sought, I prayed that if our cause was just, I might be the happy instrument of His punishment against unbelievers of the Supreme only True God—that if it was unjust, I might be killed. The Almighty took the battle into His own hand, and with His power marked the victory as the most astonishing that ever was gained at sea. All glory be to God. Amen! Amen!

“Had a long and friendly conference with Kelim Effendi on the conduct likely to be pursued by the Russian Court towards the unsuspecting (I fear) and upright Turk. Our ideas have exactly been the same about the Russians. A strong squadron should have been sent to Egypt, to have relieved my dear friend Captain Hood, but Corfu suited Russia better. Enough ships were under the Admiral’s command for both.

“I am now collecting a squadron to blockade Toulon, where troops are embarked for Egypt. I had a right to expect that the Turks and Russians would have taken care of things east of Kandia. I could have seen to Corfu. Troubridge was actually under sail when I heard that the Russians were there. I have had the charge of the Two Sicilies entrusted to me, and things have come to that pitch that I do not know that the whole Royal Family, with three thousand Neapolitan *émigrés*, will not be under the protection of the King’s flag this night. Notwithstanding the squadron I am sending to Egypt, at least two sail of the line and four frigates should assemble at St. Jean d’Acre; for I know that is the place where Buonaparte has ordered part of his fleet to go to if any accident should happen to our squadron.

“*Naples, December 18th.*—There is an old saying that ‘when things are at the worst, they must mend.’ Now, the mind of man cannot fancy things worse than they are here. But, thank God, my health is better, my mind was never firmer, and my heart is in the right trim to comfort, relieve, and protect those who it is my duty to afford assistance to. Whilst I live I will support the glory of our Gracious Sovereign and that of our country, and if I fall it shall be in a manner worthy of them.

“*Naples, December 19th.*—General Fortiguerra came here yesterday, and said that he had been with the King, and was desired by the King to fit out all his Navy in the port,

and requested that I would allow some of the Portuguese seamen to be lent, in order to fit them out, as they understood Italian, and I understood that he was to prepare for the King's departure; and to the last my reply was, that I could receive no orders from any but the King, but that His Majesty had not a more faithful subject than myself in his dominions.

"Dec. 19th (*later*).—Have had sail-makers making cots for the Royal Family, and painters painting the ward-room and offices under the poop. Have been getting ready for sea, and in the night time getting off the valuable effects of Her Sicilian Majesty.

"I see no help for it but Palermo, and shall make my dispositions. Dear Emma, who has the heart of a lion and the instinct of an admiral, was in here just now (I have judged to make my quarters at the Embassy as usual: any personal risk is far outbalanced by the confidence it inspires), and sees nothing else for it. She knows the Neapolitans, and does not value them but for hole-and-corner defence. When it comes to artillery they are nowhere, and Championnet brings guns! What a woman! She has been laying her preparations for a week, or two weeks past, and whenever it is necessary we shall take the Royal Family and treasure, I hear to the extent of two millions and a half, without ado. It only remains to save the ships, which it is doubtful if the Neapolitan marine wishes to save from the French. Naples will look after itself: it has quite enough traitors in it to make peace with any enemy. With the Court faction (some three thousand, including foreigners) embarked, no one would be hurt if the *lazzaroni* could keep quiet. But they hate the French, and they have a turbulence and adventurousness of spirit which comes very near great bravery; though they are hardly brave, for in the open with fair play they would not stand. Small bodies of Frenchmen will be cut off until

the *lazzaroni* have been slaughtered in sufficient numbers for a lesson, and if I know anything of the French the lesson will be a severe one.

“Dear Emma, in the midst of all this turmoil and labour—for it is the labour of Hercules to do so much and not appear to be doing—she contrives to be just as affectionate and thoughtful as when we landed three months ago and there was not a cloud upon the horizon. Whenever I am disengaged, she contrives to be with me: she has so great a fear of being inhospitable to one who on any reasoning must soon sail. I do not find myself so afraid of her now . . . No! I was never afraid of Emma—I was afraid of myself. Needlessly, I think. I should have known that such a steady flame of friendship will not set fire or consume. She has been like a mother to Josiah, and she has been like a mother to me, though so much younger. She says that all sailors are children—God’s children: not meaning by this that they are godly, though the roughest sailor is by nature of his calling apt to keep some notion of a Deity in his heart; but because God keeps them in some respects in a state of childhood, being so much cut off from the world in which others are offered the fruit of the tree of knowledge. She says to me, ‘You are a great conqueror, and yet you are a child, and I must take care of you.’ She says that she wrote to when I first came to Naples, to take care of me from the ladies, which indeed she has done; so that, though there are some very beautiful young women among the English residents as well as at the Court, I am not in the train of any of them, but have been a stay-at-home when there were not public ceremonies. I am not afraid of myself now,—I know the quality of her affection. And if sometimes she is carried away by enthusiasm, I know that it is but the homage of a generous heart to a wounded man—who has won a victory. And I take it in the spirit in which it is offered.”

CHAPTER XVIII. — How the Neapolitans declared War, and how they waged it.

SOME Roman remarked of something, *Fuit*, which means "it has been," and that correctly described the Kingdom of Naples at the time of which I am writing. The Admiral was grievously disappointed; the mischief came of the fact, so I have heard him say, that none of the people principally responsible for the movement were natives of the kingdom with whose forces they were acting. This does not, as he remarked, signify so much when the war is being carried on with money and mercenaries; but when a kingdom has to rely on an army which is no army in a Great Power's sense of the word, and has no money to pay it, the result is deplorable. For carrying out the operations in which the Admiral delighted, such as his celebrated movement inside the French line at our great battle—an advantage snatched by discipline and daring from the teeth of destruction—Neapolitans are worse than useless, for they are braggarts and traitors, as well as cowards, and therefore one makes a mistake in employing them. Qualities of enduring fatigue and hardship, and managing to subsist upon a minimum of food and money, they have in a high degree, as they afterwards showed when they had no army to speak of, and no general, and no campaign, but were a nation in arms resisting an invader whose presence was always marked by rapine.

The persons principally responsible for the ill-starred campaign to extirpate the French from Papal territory were a pair of Austrians—the Queen and her fine general, Mack ; and three English—the Admiral, my Lady, and Sir John Acton. The root of it all was the Queen, who was in reality the King of the Two Sicilies. She, as the physicians say, had diagnosed the evil correctly ; and because her diagnosis agreed with the Admiral's, he had thrown his great influence into the scale to impress her very sensible views upon the Emperor, who was her nephew and son-in-law.

The Admiral, who was almost as far-seeing in politics as he was in sea-strategy, had recognised that Buonaparte was France, and that the policy of Buonaparte was to swallow the weak nations in order to use their resources against the Great Powers. Undoubtedly he had his eye on Naples, and undoubtedly Naples had resources as well as a position which would render her a very dangerous tool in his capable hands. The Queen did not think so much about Naples being a tool in his hands as about the prior evil of losing her kingdom ; but she had a presentiment of this ; and, besides, she hated the French worse than hell for the murder of her beautiful, innocent sister, Marie Antoinette. She was a masterful woman, of not a little capacity, and saw as clearly as the Admiral that France was only biding a favourable opportunity to seize her kingdom. The Admiral also believed it suicidal for Naples to leave the declaration of war to the French ; but he had at the outset more correct views as to entering upon the contest. Before our Battle of the Nile it would have removed our principal difficulties to have the freedom of the Sicilian ports and the co-operation of the Sicilian Navy. Not that their ships counted in the fighting line. In the Admiral's opinion neither the Sicilians, nor the Venetians, nor the Portuguese—hardly even the Spanish—signified in

an action between two fleets. But we were obliged to waste a good deal of time owing to their fear of supplying us, and their treaty with the French that only two or four of our ships should enter a Sicilian port at one time. And had we had frigates, which they could have supplied us, for spying out the movements of the enemy, we should never have missed the French on our first voyage to Alexandria, and should in consequence have destroyed their transports, and their army, and Buonaparte, as well as their fleet. His first view, therefore, was that the Two Sicilies should wage their quarrel with the French by forming a base for the British, the only one of the great Powers left uncrippled in the war with the all-devouring Republic. He was right, moreover, in judging that the only immediate danger to be apprehended from the presence of the French force in the Papal States was the spread of their pernicious doctrines, and the formation of a base for the insurrection of the numerous disaffected persons in the Two Sicilies. The only person who had the power of driving the French out of Italy was the Emperor, who feared retaliation by a blow nearer home.

Now, the Admiral was strongly of the opinion that with Buonaparte locked up in Egypt the time had come for the resisters of French aggression to act, and therefore he listened to a plot the Queen had for forcing the hand of the Emperor, which was forwarded and frustrated by the indecision of the Emperor and his minister—Thugut. The Admiral's part of the work was to volunteer, as coming from himself, the advice carefully concocted by the Queen, to the effect that her forces must drive out the French forces in the Papal States. Fortified with her advice to herself, she overcame the timidity of her Prime Minister, General Acton; though her War Minister, the Marquis de Gallo, proved either too timid, too full of moral courage, too treacherous, or too honest. Thus further fortified, she

The Admiral

wrote to her nephew the Emperor, telling him just so much of her plans as might induce him to move, and asking for a general to command her forces. The Empire had enjoyed a great name as a school for strategy, but the sending her a general was intended to commit him. He sent her the evil star of his reign, General Mack, who brought with him certain highly sensible advice which he had not the courage to deliver, either because he quailed before the eagerness of the Queen, or because he sought the opportunity for distinguishing himself. The advice he brought in reality was that, until the Allies were ready to strike together, the Two Sicilies should only wage war upon the French in Malta and Gozo, of which the King was suzerain, but which had been seized by the French. Here there was clearly no aggression : he was only attempting to repossess his own. It suited Mack better, however, to march on Rome with a flourish of trumpets, and to play at preserving the peace only where it concerned the withholding of facilities from our fleet.

Well, to cut a long story short, Mack and the King marched on Rome with thirty thousand of what he flattered Neapolitan susceptibilities by declaring the finest troops in the world, and forty thousand recruits ; while we, for our part, transported another five thousand of these " veterans " to Leghorn to cut off the French base.

Everything, as the Admiral said, was as bad as possible from the first. Half the troops had to be carried in the Marquis de Niza's Portuguese squadron. The Portuguese ships, which were incapable of fighting, were all commanded by flag-officers who could only accept orders from the Admiral himself. And the legion was commanded by the pretentious General Naselli, who persisted in regarding the Admiral as merely an agent for transporting his troops ; and sent his Summons as he pleased, without even consulting the British officers ; and neglected to act until Captain Troubridge

saw that a catastrophe threatened, and gave him to understand that the mole would be destroyed by a fire, and probably the town—of course by nobody's fault.

General Naselli was apparently only arrogant and incapable. The King and Mack were not so fortunate as we; for half their officers were traitors, one general going over to the enemy in action and being shot by one of his own men in so doing. The French were not in force in Rome, though five hundred of them contrived to throw themselves into the strong castle of St. Angelo, which the Neapolitan army was quite incapable of taking. So there was more blowing of trumpets while the King made his triumphal entry, and Mack, flushed with his bloodless victory, went off after the main body of the French, thirteen thousand strong, who were in the fortress of Castellana. Whatever *morale* his army had he ruined by his ignorance of the first principles of war. He made them march double the distance over heavy roads in wet weather which, good marchers as they were, they should have been asked to do in fine weather; and, thus demoralised, he brought them face to face with an army who were veteran soldiers, while they were mere citizens in uniform. They hardly made any show of fighting. The Admiral has placed it on record in one of his letters that the Neapolitan soldier never contemplates fighting, and begins to think of severing his connection with the army whenever the guns are loaded. Still Mack's force did all the fighting there was in the campaign. Out of twenty thousand, a thousand were killed, and nine hundred wounded, not to mention ten thousand prisoners. The Admiral wrote to Captain Troubridge: "It is reported that the Neapolitan officers and many of their men are run away even at sight of the enemy." Another body of nineteen thousand were put to flight by a French corps of three thousand after they had lost but forty men; and the French, proclaiming them

The Admiral

beneath pursuit, contented themselves with taking possession of their camp and cannon and treasure chest. The fugitives poured back to Naples, and the Royal Family prepared for the worst.

Now, with its army and artillery intact, Naples might have defied the French, for it had vast numbers of fierce *lazzaroni*—the rough people of the street—passionately attached to their King, capable in their steep narrow alleys, and in the extremely rugged districts round Naples, of maintaining a most formidable guerilla warfare. It should have been the Queen's policy to tempt the French to invade, and to have kept her regular army in reserve while the enemy were harassed by irregulars. But without a regular army to keep the French at bay while the guerillas were doing their work, even a fearless commander like the Admiral saw that nothing could prevent the capital falling, in spite of the English ships in the harbour.

The King behaved better than usual. That he had a certain manliness in him was proved by his fondness for hunting; and he now declared that, if his kingdom and his capital were to fall, he would fall fighting at the head of his faithful *lazzaroni*. And I think he meant it: life in exile without means for debauchery had no attraction for him, though his great-souled wife would have gone through anything for ultimate triumph.

But some one—possibly Sir William, who was of a philosophical turn of mind—put it before him that there was no necessity for his kingdom to fall. There were two Sicilies; and though one of them must instantly be conquered by the French, the other, now that their fleet had been destroyed by the English, was as safe from the French as England itself.

Ferdinand still demurred; he did not pay a great deal of attention to business, but he knew how small an income he derived from the island. The same voice reminded

him that he had a vast amount of treasure readily transportable, and that there was plenty of hunting in Sicily if there was nothing else.

Ferdinand would go, if his money went. He was as willing to have his last of eating, drinking, and merriment, before he died, at Palermo as at Naples. Only he suggested that the *lazzaroni* must be kept in the dark, or they might turn and rend, and the guillotine remove royal heads in Naples as it had in Paris. Having taken this unusual amount of interest in his kingdom, the King fell back into his wonted habits, and the business passed into more capable hands.

Of what followed, Will and I, even more than our other officers, had pretty close personal cognisance. It was of course of the first importance that suspicions should not be aroused; and when, about December 13th, it became known that the armies of the Queen were irretrievably beaten, and that General Championnet must be at the gates in a week or ten days, any increased intercourse between the Queen and the Ambassador and the Admiral must have excited the gravest suspicion.

At this moment certain things counted in the Queen's favour. She had lived in such close and reprobated intimacy, for example, with My Lady, that a breaking off of their intercourse would have provoked rather than allayed comment. Then again, as the Admiral had lived at the Embassy ever since he had come to Naples, his continued presence there, instead of on board his flagship, went rather to reassure people, by showing that he had no fears of personal injury from a sudden outbreak or incursion. And Will and I, being in a way his personal attendants, had enjoyed the run of the Palace so much, that our constant presence there went rather to show that nothing particular was happening. Even Will's attachment to Donna Rusidda, and the unparalleled liberty she allowed

herself for an unmarried Sicilian lady of her rank, had its use, though I do not think that Will was aware of the extent to which he played catspaw. I am sure that I was completely in the dark for some days ; and it was not until we were lying in the Bay, out of reach of the fort guns, giving fugitives from the wrath to come two days' grace that I came near knowing the whole of the truth.

CHAPTER XIX.—How Two Millions and a half of Treasure were smuggled from the Palace to the British Ambassador's.

I MUST confess that in these ten days between the 13th and the 23rd of December, 1798, when the French were coming as quick as they could march to Naples, the wearing of my lieutenant's uniform gave me a vast deal of satisfaction. I only had it the night we sailed to Leghorn, with General Naselli, about whom the Admiral and Captain Troubridge expressed themselves so frankly, and his five thousand Neapolitan braves in the fleet. And at Leghorn we had not been allowed ashore. The Admiral was sick of the wretched business, for Naselli did not do anything, and his whole army would have run away from one of our ship's companies.

So this visit to Naples was my first opportunity for flaunting my uniform before the female eye. I walked up from the landing-steps to the Queen's Palace arm-in-arm with Will, as fine as you please. That is to say, Will took my arm in a slightly patronising way, when it pleased him. He was not quite so self-reliant since he had been angling for the graces of a lady. We had the liberty of the Palace—at any rate its ante-chambers and more public parts—and I had suggested this jaunt as the most impressive I could devise for the airing of my uniform. In the old days it would have been sufficient that I had ventured on a suggestion, for Will to snuff

it out. But on this occasion he was graciously pleased to accede.

We were standing about the great room next the Audience Chamber entertaining, or rather the centre of interest to, a circle of officials and young nobles who wished to hear of the glory that was attending the Neapolitan arms at Leghorn, when Donna Rusidda crossed the other end of the chamber. Seeing Will she stopped, and with the defiance of all Sicilian precedent which had now become habitual to her, beckoned him, and smiled a lovely welcome as he came up. After a word he went back with her through the side door by which she had entered.

You may be sure that I had it all from him before we got back to the ship, for his reticence had given way to a desire to talk of her, which was only bounded by the limits of my patience.

“W-Will,” she said, “what a long time you have been away! The Queen was here asking for you.” Whereupon she tripped away, he following her as he supposed into the Presence! But when the door had closed behind them she gave a merry little laugh, and was, I have no doubt, duly punished for her ruse. But while she was standing with her right wrist in Will’s left hand, and her waist against the hollow of his right, very submissively, she opened fire on him.

“You wish to serve me, Signor W-Will?”

“Not if you address me like that, Princess.”

“Well, W-Will—dear W-Will.”

“You know I would risk my life, Rusidda.”

“Oh, I don’t think it is so bad as that. Ruggiero sends my cartels.”

“Tell me what it is, dear—quickly. You know I will do anything consistent with my duty as a British officer.”

“It is of your duty as one of the Admiral’s fine officers

that I am speaking: it is for Her Majesty; and I have heard your Admiral confess unqualified allegiance to her."

"What is it, tease?"

"I'm not teasing, W-Will. It is really rather a serious question."

"What is it?"

"Well, you know I can't tell you."

"Well, what am I to do, Rusidda?"

She disengaged herself gently, submitting with good grace to a caress in the process, and left the room for about a minute. When she came back she gave him his answer.

"You are to tell me whose writing this is."

At a glance Will saw whose the upright characters, written left-handed, were.

"The Admiral's," he answered, with an air of respect to the writing.

"Take it."

"What am I to do with it? may I read it?"

"Oh yes, you may read it, if you can, and give it to the captain of your ship."

Will read it out in a slow puzzled way: "'Give the rogue a month for cutting laces.'"

"Why, what jest is this, Rusidda?"

"I asked you, dear, and you told me, whose writing this is; or am I speaking to a fool, Signor W-Will?"

It occurred to Will's practical mind that this was some jest of the feather-brained court, and that the captain of our ship was not a good mark for jests. But he felt the pressure of her hand, and could not resist the eager, lovely face, and promised to deliver it. "Am I to go now?" he asked, rather ruefully.

"You need not; but you must be back on shore by night-fall."

"Will anybody tell me anything? You seem determined to keep me in the dark, Rusidda."

“Oh, I will tell you something when your captain gives you *what* he gives you. Wait until nightfall and then come on shore. Do you know near the Immacolata a little old church with a green and yellow dome? You will go in there, taking with you what you bring from the ship; there you will have something fresh given you—and with it you will come to the Church of S. Ferdinando, opposite one of the Palace gates. There you will wait until a priest comes out bearing a cross jewelled with purple stones. You will follow him, and do what he tells you. Will you do this for me, W-Will?” she asked, with a soft personal pleading which went straight to his heart; and she liked him none the less for the steady reservation with which he insisted on making the promise.

We took our time about making the circuit of the Castel Nuovo, and on to the steps where our boats lay, though this may not have been wise in the rather disturbed state of the city consequent on the rumours about His Sicilian Majesty's army at Castellana and Fermi. But in truth Will was in no hurry to present the paper which he had sworn to put in the hands of the captain. Naval discipline was no light matter in our day. I believe he would sooner have presented it to General Championnet, and much sooner to the devil. But disagreeable things come to what they call in *logick* a climax, just as good things come to an end; and, finding the captain on deck, and in a good humour over the futile attempts of our Portuguese allies to warp one of the jury-rigged Neapolitan ships of the line out of the Mole, he made bold to salute him and present the paper.

“Your men will be ready, Mr. Hardres. And, before you leave, inspect them, and see that there are no pistols in the party. A stray pistol-shot might bring down the Guard,” and he added with a laugh—“though Heaven knows why it should, considering what goes on in the city every night.”

The Captain did not volunteer any explanation, and Will was far too strict a disciplinarian to ask questions. But he did ask, "May Trinder go, sir?"

"Mr. Trinder may volunteer."

It was still quite early in the afternoon when Will presented the momentous document, but we could not go on shore again, for we had had our leave. Now, the Bay of Naples is admittedly one of the most beautiful in the world; but lieutenants of less than a year's standing are not the most devoted admirers of scenery at the best of times, and I do not think that I have ever felt so weary of anything as I did that afternoon of the Bay of Naples, Capri, St. Angelo, Vesuvio, St. Elmo, and the other two castles, the Thuilleries and Pausilippo. I have heard people descant on their beauties by the hour, but I would willingly have seen an earthquake swallow them all that afternoon if it had not interfered with our expedition. As we paced up and down the deck, they stared at us and stared at us till they almost seemed to be moving towards us. I can now quite appreciate the feeling of Vesuvio, if mountains have feelings. We were of course dying to know how many men we were going to have and what we were going to have them for; and Will loved the chance of a brush with anything—and I—I felt that we had had a precious slow time lately. The men who had conquered a whole French fleet on the 1st of August, had been compelled not four months afterwards to watch, with arms folded, a lot of wretched Neapolitans playing skittles with war at Leghorn.

Well, when night did at last fall, thirty picked men stepped up to us on the middle deck; and going round them with a lantern, Will questioned each man if he had a pistol. None had. They were as fine men as any we had in the ship, and looked forward to cutlass work, which was always popular with our sailors. A boat was ready to take us ashore. The Captain had satisfied himself as to Will's

instructions, and so far everything was plain sailing. When we opened the church door, it was a fortunate thing that Will went first. For a terrible sight rose up before him—two huge ghostly black figures, which seemed, by the light of a dim little oil lamp in front of a saint in a side chapel, to have eyes and mouth, but no nose. Fortunately Will had, from childhood, schooled himself to intrepidity, to prefer death to fear, and so never learnt what fear meant. His hand did not even seek his sword; he stood up square and fearless to await the development.

Now, if one of the men had gone first instead of Will, it might have gone ill with our enterprise from the beginning; for the odds are that he would have made a furious assault with his cutlass, if he had not rushed out with a maniac's shriek.

Will's doubts were set at rest at once, for one of the figures whispered to him to bring in his men quickly and quietly, and Will passed the word. Once in there, every man was provided with a long black robe from the neck to the heels, a short black mantle and a black hood, with piercings for the eyes and mouth like the two who had met Will on the threshold. On the backs of the mantles there was certain colouring, which we could not distinguish in the dim light. These were, Will was informed, the dresses of one of the burial guilds common in Naples; and the Church of S. Ferdinando, to which we were going, was a favourite one for such processions to stop at while prayers were read over the corpse. The men were ordered to draw their cutlasses and carry them closely concealed under the short cloaks or mantles, and to hold themselves at Will's command. He would get the signal from the taller of the two who met us.

Each man was given a long unlit taper to carry in his right hand, the cutlass being held in the left ready to grasp. Our two leaders carried crosses.

Arrived at the portico of S. Ferdinando, we halted. Another figure in black was standing just inside the door, with the heavy leather curtain drawn back a chink to watch. He came out bearing a huge silver cross studded with purple jewels, and, placing himself at our head, marched us across to the Palace, which we entered.

There a strange scene awaited us, for in front of a side door was a large coffin with a pall spread over it, surrounded by six bearers carrying tapers like ourselves, but lighted. But the strange thing was that the rest of the courtyard was quite full of wine carters with enormously long two-wheeled carts drawn each by three beasts, in the selection of which there was the strangest medley. I cannot remember that any one of them had all its three beasts of burden of the same sort: there were a great many bulls; and a bull and a horse and an ass, or a bull, a horse, and a mule, made perhaps the favourite combination. The horses had scarlet tassels and nets on their heads, and a great deal of scarlet about their reins, and huge collars surmounted by a brass erection sometimes two or three feet high, hung with charms against the evil eye. I do not think the bulls were decorated. It was a wonderful sight, all these great tumbrils piled high with wine casks, and the scarlet of their trappings and the brass of the horse collars glittering in the brilliantly lit courtyard.

They were all ready and awaiting the signal to depart. The King, it appeared, was sending a large present of wine—an entire vintage, which he thought well of, or had confiscated—to the Ambassador's wife, whose hospitalities were famous; and in the midst of it lay the body of some poor fellow in the King's household, as likely as not killed in faithful service.

He was to be buried at Pausilippo, and nothing was more in keeping with the practice of the vitiated Neapolitan of that day than that the processions should start side by side.

“The French faction are growing very daring,” said the priest to the officer of the household who was going to superintend the transportation of the wine to the Ambassador’s palace; for, though drink was plentiful in Naples, nothing was too trifling for a Neapolitan to steal. “We shall be blest by your company, my father,” replied the officer; and the priest raising his cross and beginning to intone, the bearers took up the coffin, and Will and I and our thirty, having lighted our tapers, fell in, two and two, behind. We then marched out and waited for the carters to start; and a mighty lot of shouting and beating of bulls, horses and asses with billets of wood almost as thick as fire-logs took place to put the tumbrils into motion,—which at last, with a tinkling of brass and a nodding of scarlet plumes, and much jingling of harness-bells, was effected. We passed down Santa Lucia with watchful eyes; for the alleys leading off this had an evil repute, as containing some of the most desperate of the population, and I must say that there was a very uneasy stir, and a great many more cloaked gentlemen half concealed than I should have cared about if I had been alone. But we passed along Santa Lucia without adventure, and round the foot of the great rock of Pizzofalcone, and so up past the end of the Thuilleries towards the British Embassy, intending to part company at the corner of the road which leads to the Grotta and Pausilippo. But when we came into a line with the Grotta we could see in the distance a flare hung from a certain house, and our leader at once became very uneasy.

“That is my preconcerted signal,” he said, “of a French marauding party. If you will let us, we will accompany you to the Ambassador’s house, and my party shall remain there while I go forward and reconnoitre.”

This was agreed, and presently we found ourselves safely in the courtyard of the Ambassador’s great palace, when the household officer having sent up the letter which announced

the King's present, My Lady presently came down, and with great sweetness thanked him, and then turned round to the priest to inquire respectfully of the reason of the funeral pageant having entered.

On learning, she would not hear of the body being left in the courtyard, but motioned the bearers to take it into a large kind of hall, and then sent them off to have supper with her servants while they were waiting. But we two and our thirty made excuse through Will that we were related to the dead, and were consequently unable to enter a house until he should be solemnly buried.

"As you will," she said; and there we stood drawn up, solemnly guarding the door through which our new comrade's body had been carried, and watching in an interested way the unloading of the present of wine which the King had sent to My Lady. By-and-by, when it was all finished, the priest went out, and, finding the flare signal removed, gave the order for us to proceed on our way to the little graveyard at Pausilippo, where we buried our comrade with the usual rites; after which we marched down to our church with the green and yellow dome, every one of us, I believe, thoroughly disappointed that some alarm had not arisen to make the priest-fellow with his big purple-studded cross give us the signal to whip out our cutlasses from under our cloaks in the Black-eyed Susan style. However, no such incident happened, and we stepped into the little church, and resigned our positions in the guild, and stepped out again without attracting particular notice; and we went on board our boat, which I remarked was the launch, with a carronade in the bows, and so to the ship.

The next day Will and I received a hint that our presence at the Palace was not desirable; My Lady, who was a born plotter, very probably conceiving that something might leak out from our conversation. At any rate she

The Admiral

bade us come up to the Embassy in the afternoon and dine with her—a mark of graciousness which suggested to our disappointed minds that she had had two fingers in the pie. I was glad enough. It outraged my dignity when she kissed me once at the banquet after our day at Pompeji ; and at other times she had made me look foolish in public ; but in her own palace it was indeed a privilege to be near this woman whose beauty and engagingness I have never seen equalled. Her whole attitude was so frankly caressing—I do not mean in the matter of actual embraces, but in the gracious warmth and unrestrained naturalness of the bearing with which she treated all around her, as if they had been the members of her actual family. But Will could barely be civil to her. Donna Rusidda's dislike may have been reflected in him, though I suspect that it was more his resenting My Lady's influence over the Admiral. Not, I believe, that at this time he had the smallest suspicion of any improprieties between them, or even that her attitude to the Admiral was more familiar than it was to any of us, whom she might at the moment be patronising in her airy way. It was more an innocent air of patronage to him, the familiarity of addressing him as "Nelson," the dragging him in her train to this or that rout, as if he were an ordinary gentleman about town proud to have the escorting of a beautiful woman. Will would have liked to have seen the same distance between the Admiral and her as there was between the Admiral and his officers—a distance which, even in one so genial, the discipline of the Service made very marked. Not even Captain Troubridge, who had been his shipmate for five-and-twenty years, would now address him as "Nelson," and Will saw no reason why My Lady should be even as familiar as Captain Troubridge. There was a streak of hardness in Will's nature, which made him seem, in that one instance, sensible of, but not to be moved by, auburn hair and upturned eyes and

laughing mouth, no matter how oval the face or how faultless the arching of the brows.

And he could see that the Admiral had not this immovability. He had, further, more active grudges. He regarded My Lady as being responsible for the Admiral's accepting the mass of absurd compliments in the shape of deputations, processions, masquerades, and what not. Celebrations, in his opinion, should have been confined to military parades and the like. But at the bottom of everything I believe his deepest grudge against My Lady was that, when talking to Englishmen, she had not the guardedness of an English lady. What she might do with Italians was different. Extravagance was a national trait, and it is not surprising that one so prejudiced should have considered that what was good enough for an Italian was not good enough for an Englishman. I know now that she truly was more of a lady in Italian than she was in English; for in England the people among whom she had formed her ideas and learnt her mode of speech were dissipated, or of humble birth; while in Naples she had spent her time amongst the highest in the land and the most erudite. Sir William was best as a *scavant*.

I should have wondered why My Lady did not attempt to subjugate Will in place of the Admiral, were it not that I knew it was her pride to reflect herself in the Admiral's glory. I think she was at this time intoxicated with that, and had yet no ulterior idea of, through him, having as great a place in England as she had at Naples. Of one thing I am quite certain, that she was the most passionate hero-worshipper, and capable of a passionate affection for a lovable nature; and no man ever doubted that the Admiral was the most lovable man in the fleet as well as the most heroic. But the Admiral, though a well-born man, a great-nephew of the greatest Norfolk man before him—the great Sir Robert Walpole—was a plain man, small, and with no

more high birth than beauty written on his face ; whereas Will's proud beauty was more than enough for a prince. He had, I should have thought, just the beauty and breeding which she should have found irresistible. There was generally between them, therefore, no better than an armed truce, which My Lady's goodness of heart made her constantly forget and do him as generous a turn as she would to any of her favourites.

Possession of the Journal has supplied me the clue to what I did not quite understand at the time. Here, for instance, is an entry I see :—

Extract from the Admiral's Journal, Naples, Dec. 16th.

“A most extraordinary thing has happened within the last hour, which I pray may turn out well. I was sitting writing at my table by the light of a couple of wax-candles, placed one on each side of my writing, and with my face towards the door—a trick a man, who has been fighting all his life, cannot get out of when he is going to give such close attention to a matter as to absorb his sense of hearing. I heard a faint noise, but took no note of it. On its repetition, and when I looked up, I saw in front of me a lady with her hood drawn and enveloped in a large cloak. These she flung off, exclaiming that she was heated with running, of which there were evident traces, for the flounces of her dress were torn and full of dust, and her slippers, which, like her dress, were of satin, were slashed. She had come quite close up to the table, not wishing to be overheard. It was the Princess of Favara, a lady of the Queen's household, and often with her ; whom I have noticed besides as being the most beautiful of the maids of honour, who in this country are selected for their beauty.

“Beside a woman like Emma she is, in the ordinary, somewhat colourless, though the clear olive of her face is very fine ; but on this occasion it was flushed with a

rich crimson which made her rival even Emma ; and her eyes, which I have noticed as being of a quiet dark grey, shone blue ; and her lips were red as blood against the small white teeth as she stood for a few seconds open-mouthed before me.

“ ‘Princess!’ I cried. She put her finger to her mouth as the words died away on my lips, then beckoned to me. I went to her ; and, putting her hand on my left shoulder, she whispered into my left ear to know if we were safe from overhearing.

“ ‘If I lock that door,’ I said, pointing to the one which she had entered, ‘no one can approach without passing through the room of my watchdog, Tom Allen. And Tom makes a noise like a bull when he moves, and can be trusted like the grave.’

“Then she told me, in broken English, which I shall not be able to write down in her words, news of astounding importance, which she had risked her life to bring to me. Even a man alone, however well armed, is not safe in the present disturbed state of the city. But to avoid the risk of passing the news through even one more person, she hastily flung her maid’s long hooded-cloak over her ball-dress (they are going through the mockery of dancing at the Palace, and this is how she was able to slip out unobserved), and ran all the way here, chased twice or thrice by drunken or impudent fellows, but saved by the special Providence which guards the ignorant and helpless. She had left the dancing, and gone in search of the Queen, whom she knew to have been packing the famous Bourbon diamonds to send here ; and not being able to find Her Majesty, and the dancing being weighed down by the spirit of depression which it was intended to remove, she had retired to her room, which has a room off it for her maid. She had taken off her slippers, and was about to disrobe, for which she needed her maid ; but there was no response

to her call, so she went to the woman's room, where to her surprise she found the cloak in which she came to me, with a message pinned on it—'Be sure to wear this and no one will challenge you.' She removed it to her own room, intending to question the woman as to what breach of duty she was contemplating, when she heard voices in the adjoining corridor, which had a window hereabouts, some six or seven feet from the ground, to give light, but no door. With her stockinged feet she could creep to it noiselessly, and then she overheard a conversation between her maid and one of the Mergellina family.

"'Have you found out?' he asked.

"'Yes: the Queen is packing them even now.'

"'How are they to go?'

"'In a chair, as if it were a guest returning from the dancing.'

"'How many are to go with it?'

"'To escape attention, only the two chairmen, and an officer of the household inside, and another disguised as a link-boy, but all of them well armed.'

"'What route are they to take?'

"'Along the Strada di Chiaja and by S. Caterina.'

"'Good,' he said. 'You are sure that there are only four of them? I shall have twenty in case of accident. We can assemble by twos and threes, and none of them must get away alive.'

"'Can you find as many whom you could trust?'

"'I shall not trust them except to murder. Anybody can be trusted to murder. Only my brother, Don Pancrazio, and I will know. I should not trust him, if I could do it alone. You are sure that they will make as much as that? Perhaps I could do without Pancrazio.'

"'No; it will take two to remove them.'

"'Even with a mule?'

"'Yes, I am sure. The mule must have panniers.'

“Pancrazio will lead it. I shall lead the men. We will hide by the steps of the Ponte di Chiaja. There is a guard stationed there whom I can bribe to let himself be drugged.’

“But how will you get rid of them?’

“The mule will be out of sight.’

“And what then?’

“When the four men are dead or past fighting, I shall raise the alarm?’

“And then?’

“My men will run away, and I shall cut the throats of the others to make certain, and there you are.’

“And where am I to meet you?’

“At the little harbour of Mergellina. I shall have swift rowers who will take us to a safe point away from those cursed English. I have sent you a cloak which will pass you out,’ he replied. And then the Princess stole back to her room, put on the slippers she had just taken off, muffled herself up in the cloak, and passed out without so much as one of the sentries challenging her.’

“Could you not have warned the Queen?’ I asked the Princess.

“Yes; but that would have stayed the departure of the diamonds, and all the arrangements would have been to make afresh, and that in the face of the secret being out.’

“You are a better general than I,’ I said to that lovely eager face. ‘Now tell me what I am to do.’

“Send sailors, as many as are necessary to drive the cut-throats off, and see the chair safely to where the gentleman inside wishes to go, which will be here.’

“There was a knock at the door, but so absorbing was the topic that neither of us heard; then came a louder knock, and the gravity of a situation, graver even than the loss of the Queen’s diamonds, dawned upon me.

“What shall I do?’ I asked: ‘will you——?’

“ ‘Conceal myself?—no,’ she answered proudly; adding quickly, ‘No one but a friend of Her Majesty would come to your room at this hour.’

“ ‘No one but one of my officers,’ I said; and I felt myself blushing, for I remembered those two visits from Emma, and the Princess might not understand the spirit in which dear Emma comes. Heavens! if it were Emma, in *deshabille!* to tell me of a relapse of Sir William and call my aid! All these thoughts flashed through my mind in a few seconds. There was a still louder knock at the door.

“ ‘What am I to do, Princess?’ I asked.

“ ‘Open it,’ she said, simply.

“ I opened it, with her standing by this table, with one hand resting on the corner, a picture of pride and innocence. But the blood flew to her cheeks as Will entered with an expression of utter astonishment on his face, which I could see would have turned into something stronger, but for his filial respect and affection. Disciplined as he was, he could not keep the question out of his eyes. A lesser man than Will would have beat a retreat—most likely have held his tongue, perhaps for the honour of the fleet, perhaps in gratitude for future favours. But Will stood plainly—as she had said plainly—‘Open the door.’ It was a picture: these two fine young creatures, so full of pride and breeding; and, placed in a false position, one whose rank prevented ordinary explanations, and who, as it seemed, was party to an injurious situation to which he should have been superior.”

* * * * *

That moment came near changing the whole current of Will's life—not in the direction of ill-will to our beloved Admiral, though he had wondered how he was to believe in spite of his senses, but in the direction of winning that which lay nearest his heart in despite of Katherine—the love of Donna Rusidda. Our Katherine can never hear of

it now without blushing for pleasure. She loves it best of anything in Will's whole life. For, walking up to Donna Rusidda, he knelt before her and kissed her hand. As he rose his eyes fell instinctively upon her feet, which were beautiful even for a Sicilian aristocrat. The slender slippers were all dusty and cut, and the ruined white satin of one of them had a tell-tale stain of blood; and then the swift intuition of love told him that his trust was justified—that she must have run herself from the Palace to bring the cry for help—and he knelt once more before her, and covered her hands with tears as well as kisses. And tears rained down the cheeks of the conqueror of the Nile, as he called out in a broken voice: "Brave Will! I would rather have done that than win a battle!"

Such a flush of gratitude swept over Donna Rusidda that she was tongue-tied, and could only thank him with her eyes, and the glory of beauty at its highest tension. And Will, dreading the words of gratitude which were struggling to come, cried: "The news, Rusidda? The Palace has not fallen?"

"Not that—but the Queen's diamonds——"

"Lost?"

"Not yet, but in two hours' time those who are bringing them hither will be murdered and robbed." She repeated what she had told the Admiral.

The Admiral sat down and hastily wrote an order.

"To the Commander of the Boat Division, Naples Bay.

"Dec. 20th.

"Give the rogue twelve days to cut the laces."

"I see you have your sword, Will? Have you pistols?"

"No, my Lord."

"Take mine. I have had to bring them ashore since I came down from Leghorn. You are not afraid to make

your way to the boats single-handed? The place is full of cut-throats now, of a night. I could send some of Sir William's men with you."

"That would attract attention, my Lord; besides——"

"Besides what, Will?" asked the Admiral affectionately, with his hand on Will's arm.

"You may need them to save the Queen's diamonds. If I am not back within the hour, you will know."

"I know, my boy!" he answered, choking; "and I'm d—d if I think all the diamonds in the world worth such a life."

"It is not only for the diamonds, my Lord."

"I know, my boy. Honour! Duty! It is to win the right to ask for a post of honour. Remember, if you are hard pressed, to fire your pistols. If one of our boats hears, it will dash in and land a party. My orders are, 'Follow up a shot.'—And Will?"

"My Lord."

"Stay five minutes, while I send Tom Allen to summon My Lady. Her honour," he whispered, glancing towards Donna Rusidda, after the good Tom had gone, "is in our joint keeping; and," he added aloud, "you love her—that I have seen."

"I love her, and worship her, my Lord."

"And Princess, I may take it that you love him?"

"Alas, no, my Lord; though I owe him the greatest debt of gratitude which a woman can owe a man."

The Admiral seemed dumbfounded. "You will learn to love him, Princess: he has excellent prospects."

"I do love him, my Lord; but I do not and cannot ever love him as a husband or a lover. I love him," she continued, with a sweet light of gratitude shining from her eyes, "as the finest gentleman I have ever met."

The conversation was broken into by the apparition of

My Lady, lovely with rosy cheeks and sleepy eyes. It was evident that she had been roused from her slumber, but she was angelically good-tempered over it.

“You want me, Nelson? Why, Donna Rusidda!”

“Princess Lion-Heart has brought us grave news from the Palace. She ran, and by herself; and I am just sending Will here to the boats for help.”

Will left as the Admiral was going over the ground for the third time. Donna Rusidda crossed over to the door, and the Admiral and My Lady were looking out to sea, as she poured out her gratitude to Will in one long kiss, and commended his dear life to the care of Santa Rosalia, whose kindly little lead image she took off her own neck and hung round his.

For what happened after Will's departure I must depend once more upon the Admiral's Journal; and the way in which it fills up the gaps is nothing short of marvellous, if it were not the work of the Admiral's own hand.

Extract from the Admiral's Journal, Dec. 20th, 1798.

“What a delicately adjusted machine is woman, sensitive to every breath! Having great hopes of the Princess of Favara and Will making a match of it—for she clearly is very well disposed to him, though she refused to admit that she loved him—I had withdrawn to the far end of the apartment when my young lover was about to take his adieux before departing on his perilous mission. I was about to call dear Emma, but she anticipated me by running in front of me to the window. As I went I was curious enough to steal a glance at the Princess, to see what hope there was for Will. From which I augured well. She was more than gracious, she was tender and solicitous, as gentle a piece of girlhood as one could picture. But, when Will went, she came back into the room with trailing robes and haughtily carried chin, as self-possessed as Her Majesty herself, who is most royal.

“Dear Emma—though, I am sure, there is something like a feud between them, and it was in her power, as mistress of the house, to increase the discomfort of the situation—went to meet her with a winning smile of hospitality, and frank eyes that asked no question. The Princess, standing back, looked at her searchingly, then suffered her haughtiness to be disarmed; but she was ill at ease, and sat wild-eyed, like a captive who has been assured of good treatment, but deprived of his weapons, while Emma was outspoken in her generous admiration of the Princess’s heroic deed.”

* * * * * *

Will drew his sword as soon as the door of the Ambassador’s palace closed on him, and sped down the hill towards the sea. He made sure that he should have to use it ere he passed the end of the Thuilleries—the fine garden or park which the King had had planted between Pizzofalcone and Mergellina. But no one leapt on him out of the darkness. As he came to the low dwellings at the foot of the rock near the sea, he felt to see that his pistols were loose. More than once he was sure he heard whispers, and the shuffling of feet bound round with rags. Sometimes his left hand clenched the pistol-butt, as he fancied he saw figures rise up before him—though they always melted into the gloom. But, though his brave heart was thumping, he saw no one for sure, till he came to the lamps at the landing, and our own sentry.

And yet, as we afterwards learned, his presentiments were correct. His whole path had been swarming with unseen sentries and patrols of the *lazzaroni*, with whom our Service stood in the highest popularity at the moment. Their hearing, and indeed most of their senses, are preternaturally sharpened; and, though it was pitch dark, they knew that an English officer was passing through them—an Englishman by the firmness of his footsteps, and an

officer, not a sailor, by the lighter tread. Had any one assailed him, he would have had scores of helpers.

What a world of anxiety mankind might be spared, if it knew!

You may judge my feelings of disappointment when I learned the next day of the services upon which Will had been engaged. I had heard that he was retained by the Admiral, and after the dinner returned to the ship to report myself. He was going to the Admiral for orders, at the hour directed, when he came upon him with Donna Rusidda, the extraordinary nature of whose visit had made the Admiral's appointment to Will slip his memory. He could not, within a day or two, time the arrival of General Championnet and the French army at his first signalling point; and besides the secretary, Mr. Campbell, whom he used little for this special correspondence, he needed one of his officers.

It had been settled that the landing party, whom Will was fetching, should call at the Embassy for orders as to where they should post themselves. Rough disguises would be waiting for them in a room by the little wicket on the lower side of the palace, which was guarded by a confidential servant of Sir William, an Englishman, the grand gates of a palace like the Embassy not admitting of business of a very private nature. The Admiral would be at the wicket himself to give orders.

Great was the astonishment of the men, when they were admitted, to see not only the Admiral but My Lady, and another strange lady hooded from observation.

The upshot of it all was that the men, hastily disguised, marched by a detour to a house belonging to Sir William's cook, who kept up too great an establishment to admit of his living on the premises. This worthy had a garden gate opening into a back street, whose road was almost as high as the top of his house, the slope being very steep.

Through this gate the men were admitted, and posted in the house to watch results.

Time passed very slowly indeed. It seemed as if they had all been fooled by a serving-woman's tattle, when suddenly the quick clash of steel, followed by agonised cries for help, sent them flying out, headed by Will. The dozen sailors made short work of the cowardly assassins, who were hired to murder without even knowing the why, or the names of their victims.

The Mergellina Count and his brother had no occasion to raise the cry of "Wolf" to disperse their followers. Half a dozen or more of them had already received the long dispatch, and the remainder would be out of Naples as far as their legs would carry them. Both chairmen were slain, being struck before they could set down their load to defend themselves. They were brave fellows, and would not drop their burden incontinently. The counterfeit link-boy had more than one wound, but he was a good swordsman, and, being on the watch for assault, he had been able to save himself. The officer in the chair had escaped the daggers, and had come off with nothing worse than a concussion as the chair grounded.

There was no time to be lost, so making the whole man change places with the wounded, and substituting four of our sailors for the two slain chairmen, they went at the double to the Embassy, and were soon safe inside its quadrangle. None of the packages were missing.

How they brought the King's pictures, a vast number by the greatest masters of Italy, and his sculptures, the most famous of antiquity and some of them of enormous weight, is a yet more wonderful story; but it is very long, and I should diminish credence in what I have written above if I attempted to tell it here. And the account of how on the Tuesday and Wednesday nights, the 18th and 19th, we moved them all on board the

Vanguard would pass belief. There were above five hundred barrels of money and plate and such; and of the great cases of paintings and sculptures I can give no idea of the number or the bulk.

All these we had on board as stores, cleverly collected by Sir William in the case of the Royal dockyard falling into the hands of traitors. The *lazzaroni* had no such dread of our taking stores as they had of our taking their King. Indeed, since they looked to us as their best friends, they were glad to see us getting into trim; and all classes in Naples, even the overt or skulking sympathisers of the French, expected no less than that we should be taking in all manner of supplies. The gold, and the diamonds, and the works of art, therefore, which had been introduced into the Embassy with much laboured secrecy, were carted down to our boats with such a strong force of sailors and marines as precluded anything like complete concealment, though it was managed at night, so that the nature of the packages might pass as alleged. The presence of the Admiral, too, at such a time, was so natural, that he shifted from the Embassy on board his flagship without awaking distrust in the large number of people, who could not outstay the departure of the British ships. Matters were now fast approaching the crisis.

CHAPTER XX.—How the *Vanguard* took the Royal Family to Palermo in the greatest Storm The Admiral ever knew.

“*M*OST Secret.

“Three barges and the small cutter of the *Alcmena*, armed with cutlasses only, to be at the *Victoria* at half-past seven o'clock precisely. Only one barge to be at the wharf, the others to lay on their oars at the outside of the rocks—the small barge of the *Vanguard* to be at the wharf. The above boats to be on board the *Alcmena* before seven o'clock, under the direction of Captain Hope. *Grappnels to be in the boats.*

“All the other boats of the *Vanguard* and *Alcmena* to be armed with cutlasses, and the launches with carronades to assemble on board the *Vanguard*, under the direction of Captain Hardy, and to put off from her at half-past eight o'clock precisely, to *row half-way* towards the *Mola Figlio*. These boats to have four or *six soldiers in them.*

“*In case assistance is wanted by me, false fires will be burnt.*

“NELSON.

“*The Alcmena to be ready to slip in the night, if necessary.*”

At half-past eight three barges, with the Admiral and Captain Hope of the *Alcmena*, landed at a corner of the Arsenal at the point where the opening of the secret passage debouched. The Admiral himself went into the Palace, brought out the whole Royal Family, put them into the

boats, and at half-past nine they were all safely on board the *Vanguard*. Immediate notice was then given to all British merchants that their persons would be received on board every and any ship of the squadron. Their effects of value had before been embarked in the three English transports which were partly unloaded, all the condemned provisions having been thrown overboard to make room for their effects. Sir William Hamilton had also hired two vessels for the accommodation of the French emigrants, which had been provisioned by our victuallers.

They came out of the underground passage from the Palace to the little port of the Arsenal almost unnoticed—which, as it turned out, was most fortunate, for very large assemblies of people were in commotion, and several persons were killed, and the body of one, an Austrian of General Mack's, dragged by the legs to the Palace. The mob by the 20th even, were very unruly, and plainly had suspicions ; for they gathered in front of the Palace insisting that the Royal Family should not leave Naples. However, they were pacified by the King and Queen appearing from time to time on the balcony and speaking to them. Mack had sent word on the 18th that he saw no prospect of stopping the progress of the French, and entreating “their Majesties to think of retiring from Naples with their august families as expeditiously as possible.” It was the leaking out of this which had so enraged the mob and lost the poor fellow his life.

I saw Donna Rusidda steal an approving glance at Will, who stood under the lamps, commanding a guard of more than honour, drawn up on the quay, and as fine as you please in his cocked hat and silk stockings and white breeches, that fitted like skin, lace ruffles, and smart blue frock coat turned back with white, and gold buttons. Will did not see her : he never saw any one when he was on duty except the force under his command and the enemy.

The Admiral

He stood there the very picture of English firmness. He was assisting at a flight, and in his heart he despised the Neapolitan Court, and everything that appertained to it, except a certain dark-eyed damsel who was perfectly ready to coquet with him in the midst of this very trying scene. And a very trying scene it was; and I was hoping that he had on the dress he had worn with her at Caserta, for there was quite enough sea on to give the boats a good shaking and splashing, though nothing for ships such as the *Vanguard*.

The Royal party were for the most part most woe-begone. Like true Southerners, the ladies of them at any rate were mighty poor sailors, and counted on being ill before they reached the ship's side. And probably nothing would have persuaded them to trust themselves on boats on such a day, though the wind was no more than fresh, except that they looked every instant for the French or a rebel army to loom out of the darkness—a consummation which I dare swear the most of our men devoutly hoped, for retreats were not to their taste, but if a better appearance could be put on it by its being effected in the teeth of a hostile force, it would be a victory of a sort.

But there was no such luck, and the utmost they had to dread was a wetting.

Donna Rusidda, being a Sicilian, and accustomed to sail from Palermo on visits to her uncle or the Court, was, as it proved, a first-rate sailor. I think Will had an inkling of this, for he took mighty good care that she should not go in the barge with him; and, had she been as the other ladies, she would have been at once prostrate and a proper object for his attentions.

The Admiral was dressed with extreme care in full Court rig, in order to bring off the Royal Family with even more punctilio than had been observed at their State visit after our victory at the Nile. Although it was dark, the Royal

standard was up at the main, as the illustrious exiles to the other part of their own kingdom mounted the broad gangway which had been let down for them. I should have said that My Lady was in attendance on Her Majesty, and Sir William talking to the King upon the only two subjects which at that moment for Ferdinand the First of the Two Sicilies and Fourth of something else possessed the smallest interest—some treasure which he had suddenly recollected, without which he positively refused to quit the Bay of Naples, and the prospects of sport at a hunting box in the interior, a little south of Palermo. As the lamps at the top of the gangway shone on them, Sir William's tall spare figure and snow-white hair contrasted strongly with the King's big powerful frame, heavy jaws and grizzled whiskers. It tickled my boyish fancy that this worthy and complacent pair of husbands should both have such very large noses—though Ferdinand's was more of the Roman, and Sir William's of the door-knocker type.

Their beautiful wives were talking busily as they came on board. Her Majesty proved not a very good sailor, if it is fair to say that anything could be proved in the weather which we were about to encounter. The Admiral was violently sick during its continuance. But I thought Her Majesty not above the ordinary as a sailor, though her courage and dignity made her hold out long after other women would have given in. I judge that My Lady was pressing the conversation, it being well known how potent an antidote for the sea-sickness it is to divert the attention.

They came on board the evening of the 21st. For two days afterwards we had a fresh north-easterly wind, which disturbed the sea very little, and would have carried us straight into Palermo. But the King would not be budged, because of the treasure which had been left behind, and the Admiral had reasons of his own for humouring him. Once on board the *Vanguard*, the Royal persons and

The Admiral

treasure were perfectly safe, the few French of the line in the Mediterranean all being blockaded in this or the other port. But there were others who were not safe, whose peril was the outcome of the secrecy with which the Royal Family and the Court and the English in Naples had been shipped. They were as marked for destruction, when the French should enter Naples, as those now on the *Vanguard*; and the transports and ourselves, lying in the roads for two days more, gave them all the opportunity of coming on board us, or the Portuguese vessels, which were always willing enough if there was no fighting in the wind.

Finally the missing treasure came on board, and the rest of the fugitives, who had been aided by the boats of the fleet and the landing of bodies of our sailors. The King displayed no concern about these unhappy persons who had to fly because they or their Governments were his sympathisers. He divided his time between play, and invocation to the Saints for weather which should at once be dead calm and have a very fine sailing breeze. To give him exactly what he desired would have needed much prayer to the saints.

I must own that sometimes in the year which followed, as for instance in these two days, I was a little oppressed by the Admiral's unforgetting kindness. Having it in his head that I was such a friend of Will, he had impressed on the Captain a feeling that he desired us to be employed together as much as the ship's needs permitted. The consequence was that while other *Vanguards*, during these two days, were ashore, having plenty of rough-and-tumble excitement over rescuing would-be fugitives from a populace which desired that they should stay and face the music, I was kept on the ship.

For Will it was well. With the ship crowded with Italians of rank, the Italian-speaking officer was a person of importance, and constantly in attendance on the Admiral,

whose state-room had been given up for the Royal party, with whom were My Lady and Sir William. And there was really nothing left to be done. Proper parties were ashore guarding the embarkation of fugitives and securing that treasure. The duty of warping out the Neapolitan men-of-war laid up in the Mole, and jury-rigging them, and taking them to Messina, had been entrusted to the Portuguese, many of whom could hold sufficient conversation with Italians. It was impossible to trust the Neapolitans themselves to remove the ships. It was by no means certain that they would not prevent it, their Marine especially being disaffected and honeycombed with treason. From two of their line-of-battle ships—they were three of the line and three frigates—every man deserted and went on shore. But we sent a party of our seamen with officers from the *Vanguard*, who assisted in navigating them to a place of safety, which was found, almost against our expectation, at Messina.

The Admiral having made all possible dispositions—such as taking the ships to new berths out of cannon-shot of the forts, giving orders for the reception of the fugitives on to any of the fleet, getting the Neapolitan men-of-war out of the Mole, or burning them rather than let them fall into the hands of the French, leaving one or two ships to cruise between Capri and Ischia, in order to prevent the entrance of any English ship into the Bay of Naples—remained with the ladies, feeling that they were in a sense his guests. At the same time he was visibly desirous of making the delay, which was mightily irksome to one of his temperaments, speed in the society of My Lady.

Will was, as I have said, in attendance on him, in which capacity he saw much of the lively Donna Rusidda, who was the Queen's favourite lady-in-waiting, for her beauty and her graciousness, as well as for her high rank. Insensibly at intervals the Admiral and My Lady would

draw a little apart. Whenever they did so, Donna Rusidda would assail Will.

"W-Will," she began in rapid Italian, interspersed here and there with a word of English: "you want an explanation from me"—he hoped that she was going to say something about his suit to her, but she went on—"of that little *billet doux* I gave you for your captain. I will give it to you. That was a cipher agreed upon between the Admiral and him to give the number of men and how they should be armed."

"Well, dear lady, I have guessed that already."

"And the very fine fluid in those wine casks, so generously presented by the King to the Ambassador's wife, was drawn from the river Pactolus," and she added, seeing Will a little mystified by the allusion, "whose sands were of gold."

"And I had guessed that."

"And the carters were not ordinary carters."

"I had guessed that."

"But, though they were the King's most trusted servants, we did not know if we could trust them."

"I can understand that."

"And you were there, not only to protect them from attack, but to protect them from thinking. When a Neapolitan thinks, he thinks treason. If they had stopped, or not taken the right road, you would have helped them to guide their unruly animals."

"Of course," he said; "but I did not know what we were doing, or where we were going, or——"

"You were under the orders of the priest. He was a real priest."

"Oh, I had guessed that. No one else could have remembered all there was to do with the candles, chanting and halting for this or that. But, I say, Rusidda?"

"What?"

“How did it come that the priest was trusted more than any one else?”

“Hush—that is he. He is the Queen’s confessor, an Austrian.”

“Oh, a foreigner,” said Will. “I understand.”

“And the coffin you took from the Palace did not contain a body at all, but the silver-gilt candlesticks of the Queen’s chapel, and other objects too long to be packed in barrels.”

“I had guessed that.”

“But you did bury a body, and it was for him that they chanted all the way from the Palace.”

“Something was changed at the Embassy. I had guessed that; but I thought that they were burying iron or stones.”

“No,—you were burying a spy.”

Will, who had been in a great battle, and seen a hundred men knocked over by round shot in a few minutes, got up and staggered out into the fresh air: the crisp winter night had just closed round them. To Donna Rusidda, gentle as she was, the execution was not shocking,—the man was of low birth, and swift retribution was no novelty at the courts of Italian princes. But with a woman’s quick wit she noted its effect on Will, and followed him out into the darkness.

“I am cruel, W-Will, is it not?” she said, laying a hand on him and whispering in broken English. Then relapsing into Italian she added: “These things are not the same to us as they are to you English—it is fighting we dread, not death. A Neapolitan does not expect to fight, he expects to kill. The other man will be taken at a disadvantage, and sometimes defend himself desperately; but he will have a disabling blow, and when the Neapolitan’s own turn comes, he would rather be killed with one blow than have the agony of defending himself, though he is very desperate.”

"How thankful I am that you are a Sicilian, Rusidda!"

"The Sicilians are worse; they are more bitter, more revengeful. There is always the vendetta in Sicily. If you had been a Sicilian, and treated me as you did, even my brother would have sent a man to kill you. He would not have fought you: a Sicilian when he is injured does not wish to risk himself or give his enemy a chance—he wishes to be revenged."

"And what should you have done?"

"Perhaps have killed myself; for I loved you—then!"

"Then why cannot you love me now?"

"I cannot say; but it is not possible. But I do love you much, W-Will, in another way. Come here, W-Will," she resumed suddenly; "it is dark, and we are engaged, you know."

"Oh, Rus——"

"In the eyes of the Sicilian custom, I mean; and you are trying, and I am trying for the other also."

"But if you are trying, Rusidda——"

"And I pray to my Saint also, who is very powerful—Santa Rosalia herself, whose blessed image I gave you. And W-Will, dear," she continued, divining his disappointment by contact—it was too dark to see even the outline of his face—"if you had asked me on Monday night I should have promised you, and been miserable for ever afterwards, for I could not have been unfaithful to an English husband: the English are not like us."

Will said nothing, but again she divined, and continued:

"You hate to hear a woman talk like that; but women think like that here, and I could not have done it with you."

"Oh, why didn't I ask you?" he said desperately.

She answered, "Because you were too noble a gentleman. You thought that I should construe your offer into pity, and pity into a belief in my guilt. But when you

knelt before me and just believed in my innocence, I would have given my soul to be tortured in hell for you ; and I would die now for you any minute of my life. If my living makes you unhappy for your promised spouse, and my death will help you to forget me, I will walk through that porthole there, and the dark water will tell no tales, and it will only be cold for a little minute !”

“I would leap after you ; I should not care to live without you, and I am not allowed to go back to the city and be one of those who have to die fighting the French. Whether the city resists or not, those black villains’ thirst for slaughter will not very easily be appeased.”

“Oh, W-Will,” the girl said, nestling close to him (I remember his description of all this time so well), “the Sicilians hate the French for ever—we have a vendetta with them until the end of the world, which was begun at the Vespers of Santo Spirito, hundreds of years ago.”

She was very grateful, very sympathetic, and made no effort to disengage herself from the man she would have been so glad to love if she only could have forced herself.

It was pitch dark, and, except for the watch, they had the quarter-deck to themselves. Large parties of the *Vanguards* were on boat-duty, helping the fugitives ; and the *Neapolitans*, on board a ship in which they had to make a voyage, hated even to hear the sea, and remained below crowded together. They might have waited longer had not they heard the cheery voice of the Admiral, who was in excellent spirits, as *My Lady* was exerting her charm and power of entertaining to the utmost in order to divert people from the situation, which was miserable enough. It seemed as if the whole Court had crowded themselves into the Admiral’s state-room.

Will saw no more of *Rusidda* in private that night, though she was in pretty constant conversation with him. And her whole nature seemed to have suffered some subtle

change, but so deep that even he in time found himself transferring his attention to My Lady, and almost fascinated with the wonderful mastery over hearts, woman's as well as man's, which she possessed when she chose to exert her powers of fascination. She must in truth have been the most engaging woman who ever lived. Her sympathy was so flexible, and at the same time I might almost say audacious, and she added to it such a royal generosity of feeling, such a perfect command over her charm of personality. There is a serpent in the East, which the Admiral had seen in his Indian days, and described to us. This creature has a kind of hood of skin, which it can erect at pleasure. My Lady had a power of enhancing the effect of her beauty which was as extraordinary. I think the power of her sympathy was due to the vividness of her imagination. She could put herself in any man's place, and build his castles in the air. Added to all this, she had a great passion for being admired and being loved. When I say loved, I mean deep liking and affection, not grosser love. That she wished to inspire a passion of affection I am sure; that she cared for the love, in the sense we often use the word, of any man except Mr. Greville and the Admiral, I do not believe, for I know how indignantly she resisted the advances of the Prince Regent, to whom a few years later Sir William, with unutterable baseness, did his best to bring her. It struck me often that this kind of love did not exist between the Hamiltons, but that she was deeply affectionate to Sir William.

Well, to cut a long story short, we lay kicking about the Bay, kicking about on the ripple of the north-east breeze, for three days and two nights, waiting for the word to weigh. I could not, except in the light of future events, say that we were wasting time, for I believe that in it we received into the fleet every person who had both the will and the power to fly. And the Portuguese, under our Admiral's

eye, bestirred themselves in making ready the unfitted Neapolitan ships. But in the two days that followed we often bitterly regretted the delay, for hardly were we outside the jaws which the Island of Capri makes with the horns of the Bay, when there arose the great storm of which the Admiral wrote, "It blew harder than I ever experienced since I have been at sea," and the wind had chopped round to the sou'-west.

It was about half-past one of the morning when a sudden hurricane split the *Vanguard's* topsails, and then an indescribable scene ensued. An extraordinary tribute was paid to the greatness of the Admiral. The shivering Neapolitans expected even the elements to bow down to the man who, never quite proof against sea-sickness, was at this moment assailed by it in its most violent form. They all crowded into his state-room—I cannot think how many—and the air was filled with shrieks of terror; but none, I am proud to say, from the Royal Family, or Sir William and My Lady, or Donna Rusidda. Indeed, these two ladies were as valiant, and had their sea-legs as firmly, as any in the ship on that awful night.

The Admiral had done all in his power for the comfort of the Royal exiles. Not only had the whole ship been smartened up with paint, and every one of the officers given up his berth, but cots had been specially built for them. However, at the last, there had been such haste that no bed-linen had been provided. For the Queen herself, there was help in the shape of My Lady's own bed. With her usual energy and foresight My Lady had disposed her arrangements very well, and had shipped everything of consequence, except such things as were necessarily left for maintaining the usual appearances, at the moment of flight, the value of which I have heard variously estimated from £3000 to £30,000—including, for instance, the splendid State carriage, in which she and Sir William went to the

reception of the Turkish Minister, where they stayed until the moment of embarkation, leaving their coach and men peacefully waiting until all the guests had gone; they themselves having walked out at a side door and so down to the landing-place in the Arsenal and the barge of the *Alcmena*.

My Lady gave up her bed to the Queen, and betook herself to nursing the Queen's children, poor little creatures, whose olive-complexioned faces turned a frightful colour, and whose little hearts were frightened worse than death. It was on the next day after that, that one little fellow—Prince Albert—having bravely followed the urging that, if he would but eat a hearty meal, he should be cured, was taken violently ill immediately thereon, and after lingering on all day in agony, died in My Lady's arms, with his little arms round her neck, and her trying to keep him in life with the fondest and gentlest and most motherly kisses that ever man saw; thinking, I doubt not, of her own babe somewhere in England, which she had never been allowed to see since they took it away from her younger much than this. Of all that knew, there was not a dry eye in the ship. Even the Queen's proud courage broke, which danger at embarking, sickness, and the prospect of death more imminent from the sea than it had been from the knives of the rebels or the guillotine of the French, had been unable to shake.

As the tall, slender form of the daughter of Maria Theresa walked in proud uprightness on to the barge, and up the gangway of the *Vanguard*, she looked the great Queen that she was. Her Majesty had her faults and plenty, but it was not in the face of peril that you saw them.

The only one of all the Queen's household that had both the will and the power to help was Donna Rusidda, and she helped My Lady in mercy to the children. Indeed, she had the whole care of them whenever My Lady was

waiting on the Queen, which was often, she doing the work of half a dozen servants, lest the Queen should ever lose the appearance of being a queen, at the moment when her dynasty seemed to be in the balance.

There was much difference in the way they handled their charges. My Lady gathered them in a large motherly way, showing how strong in her lay the mother's instinct, which was never to have its full expression. They swarmed over her, little sick things, but bravely obeying their mother's behest not to cry or speak their fear. She fondled them, and crooned to them, and her great sympathetic nature was like a fire to warm their marrowless bones.

Donna Rusidda, on the other hand, knew little of children, had no instinct for them ; but even at such a moment they could not be indifferent to the prettiness of her slender person, undisordered in the least by the storm. She was beautiful, and undismayed, and full of tender smiles, and making jest of everything that flew from side to side, as the ship lurched over and stayed so long down that it looked as if it would never rise again. And then it did rise, and slowly climbing over the hill of its own centre, went down even deeper on the other side, with a crash of everything that could move. She knew of no more to amuse them than to bid them watch for the biggest lurch ; and yet the picture of her unruffled courage and beauty, and the ring of her laugh, and her outstretched arms, won their childish hearts, more especially when, with two clinging to her, she called to Will, whom the Admiral had kept among the fugitives so close-packed in his state-room, to make the ladies of a better heart. And better, indeed, he could not have chosen for the purpose. As far as sickness went, I was as good a sailor as Will ; and, as my fellows in the gun-room had often cheerfully pointed out, it was our profession to die an early and violent death. Which I was perfectly ready to do—much readier, indeed, when life was full of life, and

The Admiral

I had a long life before me, than now when I am shelved. But Will, with his tall bolt-upright figure, his proud fair face, and his stern blue eyes, had as much effect as any of the saints they were beseeching could have had by appearing in the midst of them. Here was one beyond the reach, as it were, of human weaknesses. Indians have worshipped lesser white men as gods. The children, too, were glad of Will: he had often been about the Palace talking to them—indeed, he was the only officer in the fleet who could talk to them—and the poor little pallid wretches expected this grand sailor, whom they thought a much finer man than the Admiral, to do something. All he did was to hover back to Donna Rusidda, whenever none of the other ladies were shrieking for him, and help to hold the children from being flung about. He showed them all the respectful kindness that was in his nature. For the Queen (except her courage) and the Court (except Donna Rusidda) he had, as has been shown, a feeling something like loathing and contempt; but he had been brought up with High Tory ideas, and for Royalty in the abstract he had a courtly respect, and to these poor bits of Royalty, half dead with sea-sickness and fear, his heart opened beyond its wont.

There was another difference between the Sicilian Princess and My Lady. My Lady let all the children cling to her together, even when they were sick, thinking it cruel to them to flinch and that she could change her dress if need were. The Sicilian Princess, on the other hand, would have no more than two of them at once; and holding them tenderly, but adroitly, helped them through their troubles, always contriving to shrink her pretty person out of the danger. Even Will performed the office quite creditably; and, being in his oil-skins, had no fear. Two minutes on deck in such a sea would put that right.

His eyes were much on Donna Rusidda. It gratified

his fastidious soul to see a woman keep her daintiness in such a stye, and her courage, and her laughter, when the high-sounding officers of the Sicilian army and navy were a wallowing mass of Saints and sickness. But I, looking in to see where I could be of any use, was not blinded by my love for Will from seeing that neither he standing so god-like, nor the Princess playfully caring for the children, and thereby showing her stout heart, were comparable to My Lady, whose loveliness must have been dimmed, if such loveliness could have been dimmed, while she wandered with her hair and her clothing pulled awry by the children—aye, and by the grown-up men and women of the Court too—performing the offices of an angel and many servants.

I do not know if at the moment she was enhancing her beauty in the manner I have described,—she had the gift at will of intensifying it,—but certainly it seemed as if no human countenance could have before held so much serene loveliness, yearning sympathy, tender pity, and blithe courage. She was the angel of all and the servant of all. She was never in her bed through all the three days of the storm. The moment at which she was lovelier than ever I saw her in her life, was when poor little Prince Albert, who had eaten the good breakfast that she bade him and been in violent pain and sickness ever since, at seven o'clock of the evening threw his little arms convulsively round her neck and vomited out his life, his mother the while being prostrated with the sea-sickness, as she was after to be with his death.

The approach of the child's death roused the Admiral from his own sickness. The approach of battle or death was always like a trumpet-blast to that commanding spirit, and he was present when the little child died, calmly but convulsively, in the arms of the good woman. For in moments like this My Lady was a woman as good as

ever breathed. The Admiral was completely overcome. When we were taking up our station at the Nile, the broadside of the *Aquilon* crashing into our bows laid a hundred of our men on the deck wounded and dying, but his cheek never turned, as it turned at the passing of this seven-year-old slip of exiled Royalty. All through the 24th from the hour after midnight, and all through the 25th, and all through the long dark hours of the early morning of the 26th, till we were under the lee of the port of Palermo, this tempest raged. It seemed, as Sir William, who palmed himself on his *mots*, observed, as if the fiends of the lightning and tempest were stretching out their hands for those snatched from battle, murder, and sudden death. And the cruelty of it was that for a full four hours before the child died we were in sight of Palermo, lying between Zaffarano and Monte Pellegrino on our larboard hand. But the storm was such that there was no hope of our making the port, which lies as it were in the arm of Pellegrino. There were we, with the King's own child dying of sea-sickness in sight of his island-capital, and the greatest Admiral in all the world powerless to take the ship into the harbour. But in the night the wind changed again, and at 2 a.m. we were safe at anchor within a stone's throw of the Villa of the Marquess de Gregorio, where it was the custom of the old Viceroys to repair on landing.

What a contrast to My Lady's heroic energy, mingled with the utmost womanly tenderness, was the behaviour of Sir William in these awful days and nights!—though, indeed, he showed in a high degree the philosophical temperament which had won for him the title of Pliny, much used by My Lady before their marriage.

Whilst she was animating with her exertions and sympathy the miserable flock of refugees huddled in the Admiral's state-room, Sir William sat in his wife's cabin,

with a loaded pistol in each hand. When she first came upon him in this extraordinary attitude, she gave such a wild shriek of alarm as the fiercest of the storm could not draw from her. But Sir William, in a cold voice and with an impassioned face, bade her not be alarmed. He had no designs upon any other life than his own, and not even on that until it should be certain that they were going down without hope of rescue. He was merely resolved not to die with the guggle-guggle-guggle of such an unpleasant fluid as sea-water in his throat, and was therefore prepared to shoot himself as soon as he felt the ship to be sinking. It is not certain whether he sat on like a statue, in the same position for the whole two days; but in the laughing time after the retaking of Naples, when all the dreadful memories of the storm were lost in one long *festa*, My Lady used to vow that, often as she went into the cabin, she never found him to have moved a muscle from the original position.

I should mention that, from the moment we were in sight of Palermo, His Sicilian Majesty's royal standard was hoisted at the maintop-gallant masthead of the *Vanguard*, and was kept flying from that until His Majesty got into the *Vanguard's* barge, when it was struck in the ship and hoisted in the barge, and every proper honour paid to it by the ship. As soon as His Majesty set foot on the shore it was struck from the barge. The King did not leave the ship till 9 a.m., thinking a proper reception of importance.

It is not often that men whose trade is war are impressed with the beauties of peace, as I was on that December morning, the 26th, of 1798. The day before had been a tempest so awful, that not only had the little Prince died of sea-sickness, but among all those hundreds of people, for the most part without ceasing praying or shrieking out their religion, not one that I heard recalled that it was the day on which the little Christ was born to be the Saviour

of the world. Agonised appeals to His Virgin Mother I heard in plenty ; but so frightened were all these shriekers, that they did not remember to invoke her aid for the sake of the man-child, which it was the hope of every Jewish woman to bring into the world, in case he should be the prophesied Messiah, whose advent was the comfort of the long captivity by the waters of Babylon.

When daylight dawned on the 26th all traces of the storm had passed within the harbour ; and indeed there was very little sign outside, for as the storm had been from the south-west, the sea had dropped when the wind veered. With the iron discipline which prevails on a man-of-war, all traces of disorder on the deck had been removed in the two or three hours which intervened between the dropping of the anchor and dawn, and Palermo itself was just rising from the mists of sleep. Of the main part of the city we could see but little from the port, which is on the outskirts. We could only see the tops of palaces, each with its moresco-looking loggia in some part or other of it, for taking the air in the heat of summer. The Palermitans do not leave their city in summer, deeming it proof against the *mal' aria*, but rather in spring and autumn.

Right and left, too, we saw the two fortress-like mountains which terminate the horns of the Bay—Pellegrino to the north-west, and Zaffarano to the east.

In front of the de Gregorio Villa there is a broad paved quay, and the silence of the city was accentuated by the faint prolonged bleat of flocks of white goats, led by one with a bell, which stalked along this quay, and turned up at the street which leads into the upper city. There were often no herds or dogs with them. These goats will go of their own instinct to where they are milked. The impressions I gathered as I stood on the deck, in charge of the men who were making the preparations for the Queen to

leave, was one of white palaces and green lattices and decaying moresco ornament. As the mists rose I could see that the city was in an amphitheatre of mountains. In Palermo, I noticed afterwards, there is a mountain at the end of every street.

At five o'clock the Queen, in the profoundest grief—heightened by the fact that she had no black to wear, as she accompanied the body of her child—and with the pride and grace at last shrunk from her tall figure, was rowed ashore in the plainest manner in the Admiral's barge, the Admiral himself escorting her, and none but Sir William and My Lady and body servants being permitted to accompany. Plain coaches lumbered round the corner, summoned in some mysterious way at the moment they were wanted, as the chariot of Pluto rose from the plains of Enna. So, I am told, Sir William observed, in his cold classical manner.

Well, the upshot of it all was that the poor Queen was taken ashore in the quietest possible fashion, the moment that daylight permitted; Sir William and My Lady accompanying her for the nonce to the Palace, which is above the Cathedral by the Monreale Gate.

The Admiral was to have a villa here of his own, that belonging to the Marquess de Gregorio, at the Pellegrino end; whilst Sir William and My Lady were to have theirs by the Flora, at the other end of the sea front. This was the word, though every one surmised that if the Hamiltons were not found with Her Majesty, the Admiral would be with them.

At 9 a.m. the King, who was not so affected by the death of the Prince Albert that he could not bear to go on shore in a public manner,—after a hearty breakfast, amid the thunder of artillery, which broke most of the windows of such of his faithful subjects as lived in the neighbourhood of the port,—stepped on board the Admiral's

barge, which instantly flew the Sicilian standard, and was rowed to the steps, where he was received with the loudest acclamation and apparent joy. And in the life that they led during those months at Palermo, I often thought that the King's manner of landing was more seemly than the Queen's.

CHAPTER XXI.—How Will was entertained by the Princess at her Palace of the Favara.*

ONE of the earliest and most impressive things which happened to us in Palermo, was our visit to the Favara, the ancient Arabo-Norman palace of Donna Rusidda's brother. She invited me to go with Will, and sent her rumbling old coach to fetch us, for it was a little way out of Palermo. The horses were sorry nags, and the coach had been painted so often (by the coachman) that it had almost lost its shape; but the men had on gorgeous liveries, much decayed, and apparently handed down from former servants, whom they had fitted better.

We two boys, almost lost in this huge conveyance, abandoned ourselves to the novelty of the situation, until we came to a great saddle-back bridge, with nothing but dry land underneath it, and apparently crossing nothing. This the coachman, who could speak a little Italian, informed Will was the bridge of the Admiral: he did not know who the Admiral was, though he was sometimes spoken of as the Greek Admiral, and the bridge was built long, long ago, even before the time of the great Emperor Frederick, who had built the Favara, and was the ancestor of the present Prince—"in a particular way, of course," added Will to me as he translated his words. The river Oreta had in those days run under it, and was so fierce a torrent, and had drowned so many people when the storms came,

* Pronounced Fáváhrá.

that the Admiral had been canonised by the villagers of S. Giovanni of the Lepers, to which we presently came, and peered with curiosity at its ancient church, the most ancient above ground in all Sicily.

The road now became very bad, lying for the most part between high walls of rough plaster, enclosing orange groves or lemon gardens. We passed, too, many clumps of the Indian fig, an extraordinary thorny cactus which bears a delicious crimson fruit; and the lean Sicilian bamboos, more like whipping-canes than the solid jointed trunks brought from the East.

At length we came to a place where there must have been a park gate, though it had now been removed, and replaced by doors of a common character. These were opened on our arrival by an old man with his head tied round in a red handkerchief, and we found ourselves in the midst of a very large grove of lemons, incomparably beautiful, I thought, with their dark green foliage studded with the pale gold globes of the lemons, and the ground at their roots covered with a crop of weed with a leaf like the trefoil, and a brilliant yellow flower somewhat like the musk.

From this at length we emerged in front of an enormous palace, built of a yellowy brown stone, with a turret in the centre, and very fine Arab or Norman windows: I am not architect enough to say to which these splendid mouldings belonged. But the palace, which seemed as great or greater than the King's, was sadly decaying, some parts being no longer inhabitable, and the windows of such rooms as were used being filled in till they held modern panes.

A more picturesque object it is not easy to imagine, than this huge mellow pile, with its weather-softened turret in the centre, standing under the shadow of the grim brown rock of Monte Griffone, and almost buried in a prodigal wealth of lemon trees.

Our coach lumbered in through an old gate into a huge sort of castleyard, from whence we were taken by a dark and very narrow stair into the part inhabited by the family. Between our leaving the miserable old coach, which had brought us, and reaching the salon, where the Prince and his sister were awaiting us, we were handed on by a dozen broken-down servitors, who looked as if they had been taken out of the fields, and thrust into the liveries of other days. But we were mistaken perhaps about the fields, because Donna Rusidda, with a mixture of frankness and pride and shame characteristic of her, soon informed us that the ground up to their very doors was let to a farmer, who also occupied the parts of the palace which had the barred windows, he being more fearful for thieves of his lemons, than they for thieves of the heirlooms which had come down in the family, some of them from the days of the Hohenstaufen Emperor—and the precious tapestries woven on Sicilian silk looms in the fifteenth century which were hanging round the chamber where we were received.

This at any rate was princely, for it was of great size and had a vaulted ceiling, with moulded ornaments in the peculiar inverted Arabic style, which looks not so much the design itself as the mould in which the design was executed; while at intervals round the chamber were pairs of columns with marvellously carved capitals, supporting large vaults filled with wonderful mosaics representing hunting scenes. The walls in between these columns consisted of large slabs of porphyry divided by slenderer columns; or the rich mosaic borders known as the Cosmato work. This we saw when Donna Rusidda drew aside the famous silk tapestries. The chairs, too, and the couches, which ran all round the walls, were ancient and magnificent; though the brocade, with which they were covered, was in many places threadbare or even split. The floor was covered in the Sicilian fashion with tiles, a hundred or more of which went to

form each of the great arabesque patterns, which looked like vast love-knots tied with orange and blue ribbons. There were no carpets, and there was a general appearance of decay, even of mould, in the room, in spite of its princely proportions and priceless tapestries. But the youthful pair who were there to receive us, for all the decay of their house and the rustiness of the faithful servants who surrounded them, looked princes every inch, worthy descendants of the mighty Frederick.

For one thing they were but recently back from long attendance at the Court, and were dressed accordingly. For another it was at the Court that Will and I, though we were but junior lieutenants in His Britannic Majesty's ship the *Vanguard*, and not long since midshipmen, had met them. The flavour of royalty therefore was strong, and there was in them both an innate princeliness. I am sure that Donna Rusidda, as she came forward to welcome us to the poor house, in which she had been born, and her ancestors before her, for five hundred years, looked as fit to be a queen as any woman in Europe : she was so beautiful, her nostrils, her mouth and chin were so delicately cut. I have seen no cameo of antiquity equal in beauty of outline to that which she had executed and presented to Will the time we sailed away to the reconquest of Naples—the cameo which every day is pinned on black velvet upon Katherine's wrist, for she is a gentler memory to Katherine than even to Will. And her slight figure had the self-reliant elegance of the women of her country.

"Welcome to the Favara, W-Will!" she cried gaily, "and you, Signor—Tubbie"; and then she broke off into a little peal of laughter, while the Prince frowned at the liberty she was taking with His Britannic Majesty's Lieutenant Trinder of the *Vanguard*. But seeing that I took it as a good jest, he laughed too, a charming Italian laugh.

"The Palace of the Favara," said Donna Rusidda, "has

a great many doors and windows, but only one chamber that you can call a room. Ruggiero has his little sleeping closet, and I mine, and our faithful servants have a roof over their heads—some of them ; but the palace consists not of rooms, but of rats and passages. There is a place in which we have our frugal meals, but the plaster has worn off the walls until you lose the decorations ; and there is the chapel. Yes, there is the chapel, with relics of I know not what value—the palate of one of the Apostles, and even a little piece of St. Veronica's handkerchief, as thick and strong as the sacks with which our good farmer loads his ass. But these one could never sell, and indeed, though they are of the highest value, no one would give anything for them. And so they remain in the chapel, and serve no purpose but to frighten thieves from the gold in which they are enclosed. Are we to chase the rats until it is time for the *colazione* ? ”

This meant, of course, my following with the Prince, while she tripped lightly about the enormous old palace, calling to Will to see that and the other feature, which had played its part in her childhood, such as the carved figures on each side of the great fireplace in the banqueting hall, which had been real giants in her fairy tales, but now had the daylight from the hole in the roof exposing them. There were, I suppose, a hundred or two rooms in the palace, connected by stairways innumerable, and galleries hung with portraits of no great value, representing the Admirals and Condottieri, and Statesmen of the house, but no Cardinals with diplomatic faces and purple mantles—no Cardinals.

I daresay Will found the *colazione* unmercifully long, though it was none too long for me, for I could appreciate all the good things—the best to be had in Palermo—which the pride of the Prince had compelled him to provide for us, with incomparable wines which had been maturing in his cellars for half a century. The price of that “collation ”

would I daresay have kept their larder going on its ordinary terms for more than a month. To be at once a boy and a sailor gives one a proper appetite for such things. And I ever had as keen an appreciation of a beautiful woman as most men ; and these Italian and Sicilian women, when they choose, can be so infinitely alluring, with their little laughter and their merry wit, and their open pleasure in their beauty. Donna Rusidda was in the highest spirits, and since all talked English, as being my only language, her broken English made her flashes of wit irresistible.

When at last the *colazione* was over, and I had refused to take another drop of the mellow generous wine, grown on the neighbouring slope of Misilmeri, we wandered out into the pleasure garden which was the saddest-looking thing, for I believe that every joint in the masonry of the terraces and fountains and colonnades, and marble couches overlooking the city and the bay, was gaping and ready at a touch to pour out its mortar in powder. We sat down on the terrace which had the marble couches I have mentioned, commanding the view as far as the great dark mass of Monte Pellegrino, where the Carthaginian General maintained his army for three whole years against the Romans in Palermo, supporting life on the wheat grown on the broad top of the mountain, and the wild fennel and wild onions. At one end was a little mound, such as I think they would call a calvary, save that at the top of the path which wound round it there was no crucifix, but a little shrine to Santa Rosalia, the patroness of the city and of Donna Rusidda herself, Rusidda being one of the abbreviations, in which Sicilians delight, of this name.

In this there was a seat concealed from view, even from the terrace, where I sat with the Prince while they went up for Will to be shown her saint. The Prince, desiring nothing so much as his sister's marriage with Will, and being at this time, like many of the Sicilians, a violent

adherent of English customs, was content to throw opportunity in their way. He and I smoked. What passed between Will and Rusidda I had from Will afterwards, rehearsed with growing excitement, but I dare swear without any embellishment from the imagination, of which Will possessed little.

"Well, W-Will," she began, "now you have seen my home, and you know that it is not because you are poor that I fear to marry you. We live on maccaroni in order to have horses for the old coaches in our stable, and men to take us out. Were it not for the little salaries which we have from the Court, we could not buy ourselves a change of clothes, and even the Queen is not very good at paying. She would rather buy things, and give them to you when she is tired of them. And this, though the Ambassador's wife is not too proud, a Princess of Favara—with an unconscious little access of *hauteur*—could not tolerate. Besides, picture me in a train of Her Majesty, who would make two of me!"

Then, suddenly springing up from her seat, she led him to another side of the belvedere—for such practically the shrine was—and pointed to a beautiful little lake. "That," she said, "is the Mardolce, from which our family derives its name. Its founder was known in the Norman fashion as Tancredus de Mari Dulci; and that is where we shall have to come to, if we get much worse off."

"Don't, Rusidda!" he said, putting his arm round her to draw her back to their seat. A little shiver passed through him. True love can picture any far-fetched ill reaching the loved one.

"Oh, it is not very likely," she said. "I am the only maid of honour the Queen has in Sicily: the others preferred facing the French to the sea-passage."

At that moment, glancing through the balustrade of the belvedere, she caught sight of a well fed but badly shaved

priest riding on a stout ass, which carried panniers piled up with various kinds of garden produce, as well as himself.

"That is the priest of S. Giovanni," she said, with a curious look at the stout red-faced form in its stained, rusty black. "What a shock he would have if he saw you! It was he first told me the tradition of our house, that it would end with the love of a woman for a fair-haired stranger. But W-Will, dear," she said, with a caressing look and remorseful voice—she was really fond of him, and it was the first time she had welcomed him as hostess in her own home—"I am safe, because I have tried so hard to love you, and cannot."

"Why do you take such pleasure in torturing me, Rusidda? It is right that you should feel safe, but not for that reason. I am not a prince, and I cannot offer you a palace."

"A palace!" she said: "a ruined village! *My house is not large, but at any rate it is not in ruins*, you were going to say."

"Indeed, dear, I hope I shall never say anything to hurt you."

"You can never tell."

"What I was going to say was," he protested rather hotly, "that I have saved quite a good bit of prize-money already, and that under the Admiral I shall make enough to retire on in a few years."

At the mention of the Admiral's name her face changed a little.

"And so, Rusidda——"

Under ordinary circumstances he would have caught the tempting rebellious creature in his arms, and trusted to beating down her defiance with the vehemence of his embrace; but, having been accorded the freedom of embracing her, he took no such extreme measure. When once a woman has accorded a man this freedom, it is not

the vehement but the gentle embrace which steals her heart or her judgment ; and therefore it was only with lips laid softly on her neck that he asked, "Oh, why will you not marry me, Rusidda ?"

"I have told you I cannot love you ; besides, I have told you about the fair-haired stranger. I look so like being the last woman of my race that it would not be safe for me to marry you."

"Fancy believing in an old wife's tale like that !" he said bitterly.

"Indeed, I do not," she said ; "or perhaps I do. But do not scoff at that, for it is your best friend. It has been the tradition of our race to fly in the face of prophecy. Besides, my people are not your people, and it is a long way—I do not know how far, perhaps thousands of miles—from Sicily to England ; and we are a people who live in a summer land, where one can even gather figs of thistles, but where everything one gathers turns into the lotus before it reaches the mouth, and robs the mind and limbs of all desire saving to eat and drink and be merry. And we of Sicily, called of the ancients the 'laughing land,' cannot even be merry, for every race which has conquered Sicily knows that it must itself be conquered afterwards. And the land of the vanquished of many races sits with dry eyes and sun-burned limbs, the Andromeda of the ages."

Will was not scholar enough to plead that he was of course the Perseus, but she did it for him. She continued : "And we can have no Perseus, or your northern land might well be it, for the curse of the gods is upon us ; and," she added sceptically, but not so sceptically as superstitiously, "in the centre of the island is the entrance to the lower world, with *solfataras* for miles round."

"Rusidda, you cannot be serious !"

"Dear W-Will, I am serious, so far as that I cannot love you."

"Perhaps there is some one else?" he said, a sudden light breaking upon him.

"No; I can give you my word I have never even thought of marrying some one else."

"Then you are trifling with me," he said to her fiercely. "Can you not see that I love you with all my heart and soul; that it is a matter of life and death; that I could kill the man who should come between us?" and then he struck his fist on the marble table of the belvedere. "There must be some one trifling with your feelings."

"Indeed there is not, W-Will," pleaded Rusidda, a little scared by his vehemence.

"I am sorry," he said, kissing her tenderly; "but oh, Rusidda, you do not know how your refusal maddens me—how it dries my life-blood!"

"Oh, W-Will!" she said, with a sad smile, while surveying the sinewy figure, the bronzed face, the clear proud eyes.

"Don't mock me, little one."

"I mock you!" she said, her arms round him in an instant: "have I not told you I pray the good Santa Rosalia, night and morning, to change my heart towards you?"

"Will you swear not to love any one better than me?" he added desperately.

"I cannot swear; but I shall never marry."

"God in Heaven!" was all he said; and, snatching her hand to his lips, he came down from the belvedere with bowed head, and walking straight past us without raising his eyes, rushed through the lemon grove and out of the gate and down between the high walls of the groves.

The Prince divined what had happened, and for the nonce said nothing.

Soon Donna Rusidda came down—beautiful, tender, and repentant; and when I sought to make my *adieux* to such

a painful situation, inquired if I would take a note to Will. Thinking it might be to give him the news he so courted, I joyfully assented, and we all three walked up to the palace and into the salon with the silk hangings where she had first received us, and off the end of which there was a little room, into which she retired.

The Prince, taking me by the arm, walked me to the other end. He was much agitated. "My sister," he said, "is changeable. That she has refused to marry your friend, the match upon which I have set my heart, is certain; and yet I am equally certain that she loves him, for she cannot conceal her joy when she is going with Her Majesty on board his ship, or to any party where your Admiral and his suite will be. I can see that there is much tenderness between them. She allows him the liberty which neither she nor I would tolerate in any other man; and yet she must have refused him, and I think roughly. It cannot be," he resumed presently, "that she fears and forgets the tradition of our house, lest the prophecy should be fulfilled."

"Ah," he continued with evident relief, as she came into the room again, carrying a letter, and with her face glowing with tenderness: "she has repented. Go, my friend, and take it from her. The word which accompanies a letter is often a key to it."

Seeing me advance, she halted, and, when I came up, I looked in her dark shining eyes.

"'Tis a letter to Signor Hardres," she said, "bidding him to come again soon, and be sure to bring the Admiral with him. There is no one to whom the immortal Nelson listens as he listens to Signor Hardres; and it is the desire of my heart that the hero should pass one night underneath this fast-decaying roof."

Her brother, who had been watching for her expression to tell him when she had finished what she most desired

to say, then joined us ; and she told him that she had been writing to Will to use his influence to win the Admiral to honour their roof by sleeping under it.

“ You should have asked my Lady Hamilton,” he rejoined : “ ’tis the Ambassador’s wife who orders where the Admiral goes.”

The Princess shrugged her shoulders.

“ There is no disgrace ; it is common courtesy, if you wish to invite a guest who is staying with others, to do it through his hostess.”

“ I will not,” she said briefly. “ It makes my blood boil even to see him with her.”

“ Rusidda ! ” he cried protestingly.

“ Oh, have you no eyes ? ” she asked, in a voice that was strangely, and it seemed to me unnecessarily, touched with emotion.

“ Oh yes, of course I have,” he continued impatiently. And neither saw that their words were double-edged.

And I, as I rumbled back in the heavy old coach past the bridge of the Admiral George, thought myself mighty clever, for I did not believe there was one word about the Admiral in the letter ; and the time sped even behind those horses, as I thought how Will’s stern face would light up when he read what I took to be the real news in that letter.

CHAPTER XXII.—How all Europe was at Sixes and Sevens.

IT seems to me, who spent so important a part of my life in those waters, that it would be difficult to find a greater contrast under the same skies than that presented by King Ferdinand's two kingdoms and two capitals. Naples, as the Admiral said, is a city of fiddlers and light-o'-loves, utterly irresponsible ; willing to begin a war with a nation like France, without counting the cost ; marching to battle with the intention of turning her back the moment the enemy stopped retreating and faced her ; willing to squander money that was needed for the very existence of the kingdom on pasteboard decorations and mythological *fêtes* ; willing to accept any strong master, as Delilah accepted Samson, and from the very first thinking how she might betray him.

But Naples is a lovely city, reposing serenely on one of the world's most beautiful bays, surrounded by the most perfect ruins of the everyday life of the ancient world, but far enough off from the fiery mountain which first wrought their ruin and then preserved them, (hermetically sealed in lava, for the delight of people born two thousand years later,) to regard it as a mere incident in the landscape, or a curio for the amusement of the citizens and the attraction of strangers.

Marvellous is the atmosphere in which Naples lives her

The Admiral

lotus life : the blueness of the sky and sea are proverbial ; there are hills for breezy villas, and mountains for sanatoriums all round ; soft warm sea to bathe in, medicinal springs to drink ; and a soil that would grow anything, to provide wine and oil and corn and fruit. While from the other side of the lofty range of mountains, which guards her health from the malaria, stretches the vast meadow between the Apennines and the sea, where countless flocks and herds wander round the eternal Temples of Paestum.

Yes, Naples is a Delilah—a beautiful creature without morals, without chasteness, without honour, but capable of forgetting herself in soft love—a creature that loves banqueting and excitement and lights and music and flowers—a creature, in fact, typified by the merry music which her light-hearted beggars play in her streets. And as Naples is, so is her territory, except the grim Calabria, which saved her in her hour of need.

But very different is Sicily, the beautiful slave, darkest of the daughters of Europe, who has worn the fetters of one master after another, sometimes after desperate resistance, sometimes with calm submission to the inevitable, but always with deep black hatred in her heart.

You can hardly be an hour in Sicily without feeling that you are among a nation suffering from ancient and incurable wrongs. There is something in the very physiognomy of the Sicilians which suggests a spirit brooding over the national curse.

The Sicilians are not courageous, but they are desperate. The regiment of Highlanders which carried the day on the Heights of Abraham, and so won Quebec and won Canada, could defeat the whole population of Sicily on a level plain. But the knowledge that they have this power, and that their vengeance would come like an act of God on the following day, would not deter a Sicilian from slaughtering stragglers.

An army of Sicilians would not stand for a moment against the vehement bayonets and claymores; but the Sicilian will always strike when he has the power, undeterred by consequences.

And no less contrasted than kingdom with kingdom and people with people, is capital with capital. There is no light-hearted music in Palermo streets, save that which comes from Naples. And the Sicilian is too grave and dignified to chaffer or to make himself cheap or dear. And with the Sicilian Delilah the story is not one of banqueting and music, but one of wild passion and desperate to-morrows.

It is not often that I find myself thinking such fine thoughts as these; but I own that I was amazingly impressed by the difference that the short sail between Naples and Palermo made in the atmosphere of the Court and the temperament of the Admiral. In fact, his whole nature seemed to be changed from the time that he set foot on what the chaplain says was called by the ancients "the Laughing Land."

He wrote himself to Lady Parker, when they had been but a day or two over the month at Palermo :—

"I am worse than ever; my spirits have received such a shock that I think they cannot recover it. You who remember me always laughing and gay would hardly believe the change. But who can see what I have and be well in health?—kingdoms lost and a Royal Family in distress. But they are pleased to place confidence in me; and whilst I live, and my services can be useful to them, I shall never leave this country, although I know that nothing but the air of England, and peace and quietness, can perfectly restore me."

We certainly landed under most distressing circumstances. The Queen, who had the heart of a lion, and loved life as a lovely woman should, was crushed by the death of her little child, slain with the sea-sickness when within sight of

land, which we could not make by reason of the wind. And the Admiral was overcome by the casting down of all hopes of concerted success against the hated French by the cowardice of the Neapolitan counsels and army, and the incompetence, if it were nothing worse, of General Mack. The attitude, too, of My Lady but added to the situation. This extraordinary woman, I verily believe, found something fascinating in the universal air of gloom and tragedy. To think that the Admiral was the centre of so much peril and anxiety, and yet could be won from his woes by the magic of her companionship, gratified her vanity, which was one of the elements that counted much in her character.

Not that she was either daunted, or willing to see great issues lost while she consoled herself and him in a theatrical Paradise. She had a profound faith in the man she loved—her hero; and she felt sure that in the darkest hour his genius would flash forth and strike the enemy with lightning. Nor had she lost her gay, indomitable heart. If she had thought that the right medicine for the moment was to force cheerfulness, she would have used the whole strength of her beauty and accomplishments and brightness to try and inspire the Court. But she felt, I am convinced, that tragedy was the keynote for the moment. So tragedy it was.

To their Majesties was brought every day the news of some fresh fragment of their kingdom having fallen away from them, yielding like rotten wood to the touch of the French. To the Admiral most days was brought some fresh confirmation of his worst fears. The two points, for instance, in which he was most interested, after the fate of the Kingdom of Naples, were the capture of Malta and the destruction of the transports at Alexandria, which had taken the French to Egypt, and might bring them back again when their fleet, preparing at Brest, should enter the

Mediterranean, form a junction with the Spaniards, and engage ours.

At this distance of time, I remember well one morning, when My Lady came on board with that radiant smile, tempered to tender solicitude, at a moment when the Admiral was almost fit to jump overboard under the accumulation of unfavourable dispatches. Not one of the Allies was doing what had been expected of them. One even of his commanders was failing him.

I watched her cross the deck, full of grace and womanly graciousness. I did not mind her calling me Tubby that day: there was an air of affectionateness in her frank greeting. I only conducted her to the Admiral's state-room door, and there left her; but what passed I had from his secretary, with whom he was too busily engaged to dismiss him, as he was wont to dismiss any one when My Lady came to him. For which, indeed, there was good enough reason, for she seldom came to him alone in this fashion except on a matter of import.

When she entered, the Admiral flew to her agitatedly: "Oh, my dear lady, my dear lady!"

"Why, goodness me, what is the matter, Nelson?"

He was so excited, that she was for the moment quite oblivious of the secretary.

"Matter!" said the Admiral—"matter! The matter is England—their Majesties—the Emperor—Russia—the Bey—Malta—and that infernal jumping monkey, Sir Sidney Smith."

"The French are all right, then?" said My Lady, in good-humoured sarcasm.

"The French!" said the Admiral: "they are robbers and murderers—a band of thieves; and wars should cease, and all the world should join in endeavouring to extirpate from off the face of the earth this race of murderers, oppressors, and unbelievers. Divine Provi-

dence never will permit these infidels to God to go unpunished."

"They have had thirty thousand pounds' worth of palaces and villas and goods of mine," observed My Lady philosophically, and also perhaps to divert the Admiral's thoughts into a new channel. "But what of the rest of the world, from which you seem to have been hearing to-day?"

"Bad—bad—bad!" he said, with his intense eye fixed on some trifling object in his state-room, of whose very outline he would be unconscious. "Worst of all, perhaps, the Emperor and these kingdoms,—though I cannot get England to do what she might do. Ministers at home will not see the importance of things here. They will not see the importance of sending money; and it is as impossible to squeeze money out of Sicily as it is to grow corn upon a rock. Without money their Majesties cannot move, and with money they would do nothing."

"Oh, Nelson—the Queen!" said My Lady.

"Her Majesty," said the Admiral, "is a great king; she is beautiful, she is adorable, she is royal-hearted. If it were only Her Majesty, we should never have been where we are now; but the King will act with Acton, or Acton with the King, I don't know which, and the d—d one of them will try and hunt with the hounds and run with the hare, while the French are in the very act of hanging him. What did they do at Leghorn?—treated me as the master of a merchantman whose business it was to transport the *brave* Neapolitan troops, and whose business was then to kick up my heels till the *brave* Neapolitan general had made up his mind to run away again! The bonds of neutrality were to be drawn tight round the English, who could and would save Naples, and to be stretched in every direction the French, who meant to swallow up Naples as soon as they were ready, should

choose ; the King or Acton thinking that, by burying its head in the sand, the ostrich would escape being kicked."

"But, Nelson," said My Lady, "in common fairness to the King, you must remember that neutrality with the French had to be observed ; and the Emperor was most particular upon the point, that there must be nothing in the nature of operations against them, except at Malta, where they had dispossessed His Majesty of part of his dominions."

"The Emperor," said the Admiral, with withering contempt : "was there ever such a fool in a Paradise ? How is it that none of Her Majesty's wisdom and courage has descended to her brother's son ? While he is playing with his precious scruples Naples will go, and the Great Duchy will go, and all the Emperor's fine new Italian dominions will go ; and the day will come, mark my words, Emma, when Buonaparte—should he ever get back from Egypt—will enter Vienna in triumph and trample on him in his own palace !"

"He is waiting for the Concert."

"The Concert, forsooth !—there is no Concert, except the Concert of the French themselves to take all Europe. While the others are waiting for each other, the policy of these robbers is to take the small States, which cannot resist without the aid of the larger, and every one of them will supply its quota of armies and resources to be used against the larger, one by one, until they are all swallowed by the Beast with the Ten Horns. Cannot the Emperor see that the very life of his empire depends on his marching the best army he can put in the field to Italy, and clearing out the French ? And as for the King and his blessed neutrality—why, his neutrality was only an alliance against England which prevented us destroying the whole of the privateers in North Italy at one sweep ; for they all lay in the Mole at Leghorn, besides the corn-ships

which were waiting to carry the French supplies, without which they could not maintain themselves a month in Italy. And yet we could not touch one of them, because the King was not at war with the French—the King who at that moment was marching at the head of his army against the French, in Rome, and who had already captured from them the Island fortress of Gozo!”

“Surely you see what a difficult position he is placed in——”

“And what about me, Madam? Am I not placed in a difficult position? Well, pass by the King—there is Malta. Over and over again have I been assured that Malta was just falling, and I do believe that if we could land a few thousand regular troops the place would not hold out long. The islanders are dead against the French; but the islanders have no money or food, and hardly any arms, but what we have given them. I have entreated Acton to send if it is only ten thousand pounds worth of food. He answers that the Treasury is empty, but the Queen herself has given up seven thousand ounces, and this will do something. A hundred thousand pounds spent in food now would save the kingdom. And as for all those stories about the French being on the eve of surrendering, they are sheer imagination. The French know that, unless something is done, of the two, Sicily is a great deal more likely to fall than Malta, and it is their policy to wait and see what becomes of Sicily. They know that Naples has fallen, long ago, and that there is every chance of Messina following unless we can get some British troops. And Mr. Duckworth will see that we don't do that. One would imagine that Minorca was all Europe; whereas Minorca is not fortified, and whoever has the stronger fleet can always have it. The Maltese adore Ball; they have made him a kind of Chief and President of their Parliament.”

“Then Malta, at any rate, is right?”

“No ; what can he do ? He can only blockade the harbour to prevent provisions getting in, and that not very successfully. Besides, the smallest French squadron could make him draw off—he has so few English ships.”

“ You will see to that, dear Nelson ! ”

“ I, Madam ? I should not have sufficient ships to await an action if the Brest fleet gets in the Mediterranean. Some of my ships are at Alexandria, some at Malta, others at Naples, Leghorn and Palermo. Alexandria ought to be off my hands ; the Russian and Turkish Admiral should have been there some months ago. I ought not to need a ship east of Kandia. These Russians mean no good ; I don't trust them. They are far more anxious to seize ports in the Mediterranean for their own future use than to fight the French. They have got Corfu, and they have their eye on Malta, their excuse being that their Emperor is Grand Master of St. John, elected by those rascally Knights, who unlocked the gates of Valetta for the French—a place the French could never have unlocked from the outside, even if it had been empty. The Ottoman Admiral is sailing about with the Russian, helping him to seize points, which will afterwards be used against the Grand Signor. The good Turk must look out, or he will find it cheaper to come to terms with his enemy the French, rather than be sucked dry by his ally the Russian. The Russian will never be content until he has Constantinople, and as for the French in this present war they may go hang. Russia is too far off to have anything to fear for itself ; and its Emperor is only moving so as to fish in the troubled waters. Otherwise they would have gone to Alexandria as I have written, and entreated, over and over. They could have what bombs and gun-vessels they want ; and I fear by this it is too late to destroy the shipping in Alexandria, which the French have been steadily fortifying, while the day after the Nile, with a handful of bombs and small

craft, I could have destroyed the whole in a couple of hours."

"Captain Sir Sidney Smith may do something. He is a good officer, isn't he?"

"He's a coxcomb and an impertinent rascal, though he could be trusted to fight if he found himself in an action. But he's cursed with an idea that he is a diplomatist, in which he has unfortunately been encouraged by our foolish Government, who have joined him in a commission with his brother, the Minister at Constantinople, because he knows a little of the Turk and his lingo."

"But surely that is an advantage?"

"No advantage, Madam, when the jumping Jack has not the sense or manners to keep his commission as a diplomatist, and his commission as a captain under my orders apart, but mixes them up in every dispatch, so much that I ought not to read them, but tear them up for the most insubordinate language ever addressed by a Captain to an Admiral. You know that if there is one thing upon which I have set my mind in the whole Mediterranean, it is this."

"I don't know what you refer to—this is the very first mention."

"That not one ship or soldier in that expedition should ever be allowed to return to France. We have them boxed up in Egypt, and we must keep them there. Well, this jackanapes writes to me that he thinks it would be a good thing to secure the evacuation of Egypt by granting them passports back to France, if they promise to go at once—which takes away the whole work of my victory of the Nile. I have wrote him that I will not accept one of his passports, and strictly forbidden him to enter into any convention with the French. I have wrote to Lord St. Vincent and Lord Spenser about him too. I shall go home if I am not to be trusted."

"I am sure," says My Lady, "that it is not because you

are not trusted, but because Sir Sidney knows the language, and may therefore be expected to hear more of what is going on than if he had to depend on others for his hearsay."

"Languages are all right, but in a service like ours discipline is first, and we are surrounded by treachery and undermining on every side."

"The Court knows whom it can trust."

"Oh, all the traitors in Europe, Asia, and Africa, are not in Naples; though one might well be excused for thinking so, seeing the numbers of these gentry."

"What do you mean, then?"

"The most double-dyed villain of them all is the Bey of Tunis. For all these months I have kept the large fleet of our only faithful ally, the Portuguese, from prosecuting the war which is between Her Most Faithful Majesty and the Bey; and he has repaid me by seizing ships carrying my passports, and by sending ships with supplies to our enemies, the French, shut up in Malta. He has, I hear too, been entering into negotiations with the homicide, Buonaparte, for helping him back to France."

"What shall you do with him?"

"I have wrote to Magra that I *will* have my passports respected, and that, as I will do no wrong, I will suffer none, and that I will sink every ship I find conveying supplies to the enemy. But he is a double-dyed villain; for when I sent the *Vanguard* there, he seized every Frenchman and French vessel in the place, saying that it was his part to do that. The which he released so soon as the *Vanguard* departed."

"I should make short work with the Bey. One can only trust these Orientals when one does not need them."

"Indeed, that would not do. It is my duty to protect the Mussulmen from the infidel French. Besides, there are traitors much nearer home than that."

"What do you mean?"

“I mean either the Minister, or the Governors of Syracuse and Messina. Malta might be further on by this, if the corn, so often ordered to keep the Maltese from starvation, had ever been sent. It has taken months to get a cargo of corn from Sicily to Malta, which is almost within sight, and——”

“Have you any more ‘ands’? You are as gloomy as a raven in a mist.” This with her sweetest smile.

“And worst of all, I hear rumours of the good St. Vincent, our father, under whose fostering care we have been led to fame, going home for ill-health at the moment when the French are coming into the Mediterranean again.”

“A pretty morning’s work! And what shall you do about it all?”

“I can only pray to God that the faults of others may press as heavily on the enemy as they press on me.”

“Come out with me, Nelson, to-night,” she said, laying her hand gently on his arm. “All this can be grappled with, but not by one in this anguish of mind. You must brace yourself up to face things in your old light-hearted way. You shall dine with me to-night, and bring Will and the other; and we will drive on the Marina, and have the new iced cream, and see the night service in the Palace chapel.”

“I believe it will do me good. After I have wrote my dispatches, there is nothing of all this that I can do, but wait until my orders are obeyed. And I believe you that I should go to work with a clearer mind and a better spirit. I believe I have kept too much on my flagship during this busy time. To tell you how dreary and uncomfortable the *Vanguard* appears, is only to tell you what it is to go from the pleasantest society to a solitary cell, or from the dearest friends to no friends: I have been so perfectly the *great* man—not a creature near me. From my heart

I wish myself the little man again! You and good Sir William have spoiled me for any place but with you."

My Lady was much gratified, but made nothing of it.

"Any society will serve after a ship, Nelson."

"Nay, but I love you all—Mrs. Cadogan too. You cannot conceive what I feel when I call you all to my remembrance, as I stump up and down this room in solitary grandeur, or with my secretary waiting to catch my eye."

"Quit it, then, naughty man ; and be sure and dine with us to-night, and bring the boys."

CHAPTER XXIII.—Of the Love
of the Admiral and My Lady.

YOU can rely that I, at any rate, was uncommonly glad when the Admiral gave his orders that we were to accompany him to My Lady's hospitable table, for it had been mighty dull on board ship for a long while past.

We had been kept very close—ready to move. Of course we had none of the anxieties of the Admiral, but when things are going ill the atmosphere of a whole ship will get affected. And we could see that things had been going mightily ill; and the talk was not of a merry fight, such as we had had at the Nile, but of our being squeezed out of the Mediterranean by the slowness and treachery and cowardice and folly of one ally after another, and the coming of a French fleet into the Mediterranean, and the Admiral being unable to wait and fight it, because Commodore Duckworth would not come down from Minorca. And the Admiral had been miserably fretful and out of spirits, and more sea-sick than we had ever known him. And Will, poor fellow, had been ill at ease too, because of the non-furtherance of his suit to Donna Rusidda, the meaning of whose continued deafness he could not understand, because she ever seemed well disposed to him, and glad to see him, and gentle to his caresses. But of their marriage, which he and her brother the Prince desired so earnestly, she would hear

nothing, though she was pleased to have him urge it with the best force he could.

My Lady had a palace on the Marina, some way beyond the palace of the Prince of Butera, the Sicilian noble who had most influence with the Queen, and nearer to the Flora, as they call the extraordinarily fine public garden, full of various kinds of palms, and of fountains of white marble shaded with the papyrus.

After we had dined, and the beautiful Sicilian summer night had fallen, with the heavens so starlit that you could make out the sapphire blueness of the sky, and with the air soft as silk, we drove in the Embassy coaches up and down the Marina, where it is the custom of the modish in Palermo to assemble on warm nights. After a little we got down, and went with the Admiral and My Lady to the kiosk, where there was music, and all the *beau monde* eating what they call in this part "ices"—a kind of cream iced and flavoured with fruit, so shaped and coloured as to almost exactly resemble the fruit from which it is flavoured.

Will was mightily offended by the *padrone*, who, perceiving that he understood Italian, cautioned him not to be taken in in the same way as some English sailor who had patronised the kiosk, and, taking an ice orange for a veritable orange, had bitten off half of it with the result of an outrageous toothache, and a knock-down for the waiter.

Will did not say whether the cause of his dudgeon was that he conceived the landlord to have confused him with a common sailor, or because the landlord did not perceive at a glance that he was one of those to whom it is an instinct not to make a social mistake.

We found the confection, which was new to Englishmen, very good; and I should be ashamed to say how many I ate, for as the Admiral was enjoying the music and the fluttering in of gay people to whom he had no need of being presented, My Lady plied us with the iced cream,

as a kind of sop to our good-nature, for keeping us there without consulting us. She had, as I suppose, some private reason of her own.

Will had not the like appetite, but he kept an "ice" in front of him and trifled with it; expecting momentarily, though I know not why, to see the graceful form of Donna Rusidda enter, with her brother the Prince. But she did not come; and last of all our carriages were called, and we drove up to the ten o'clock service in the Palace chapel. Since the death of the poor little prince in the passage from Naples, Her Majesty had had services every morning and evening at ten, and I know not how much oftener, celebrated in her chapel, most of which she at first attended. But she had too masterful a mind to continue thus for long, when the air was so full of events; and consequently, though the services were celebrated, the attendance grew slender.

The Queen's mourning had also prevented us from becoming familiar with the Palace, as we were at Naples. Indeed, we had hardly been into it, except with messages from the Admiral, which were generally received in a large shabby chamber, hung with poor portraits of former Viceroys, near the head of the red marble staircase which wound round and round, three stories up, I think.

The Palace chapel is on the story below; and as it possesses no exterior, but is merely as it were a hall in the present Palace, whatever it may have been in the time of that Norman Prince who built it; and as young naval officers do not speak much of such matters, I was altogether unprepared for the glory which burst upon us when we pushed the leather-covered folding doors open and stepped into a little *basilica*, I think they call it, full of the smell of the sweetest incense, and very softly but perfectly lit with huge silver lamps hung from the Arabic ceiling, and fed with aromatic oil, which displayed to me what looked like a scene

from the "Arabian Nights." The chapel had tall Moorish-looking arches and walls covered with golden mosaics, and a wondrously carved white marble candlestick as tall as two or three men, and its floors and altar-parapet and lower walls were made up of huge panels and pieces of rich crimson porphyry divided with white marble, and the inlaid mosaic borders they call the Cosmato. The quaint shapes, the rich scents and colours almost stunned my senses; and gorgeously robed priests, who seemed all white and jewels, passed to and fro performing some solemn and beautiful service, of which I could make nothing, but of which even I, an irreverent young Protestant sailor, felt the holiness. The music, too, was sweet and rich and pervading. I could imagine any one who was stricken to the heart, as the poor Queen had been in those first days, coming here for comfort. It was so above the ordinary human, as to suggest ideas of the presence of the Divine.

As soon as I could get over my astonishment, I noted that there was nothing corresponding to our pews,—there were but a few loose chairs, which those of the Palace, high or low, who came in to worship, picked up and carried where they would.

The Admiral motioned us to place some of these in the shadow near the door, that, not being of the religion, we might sit as unobtrusive as possible. The service which had just begun was to last some half-hour, and My Lady had told him that he should wait through it for the music.

When I got over my feeling of awe, I was a little disturbed by what seemed to me the antics of the service: the small boys dressed, as it seemed to my ignorant mind, like so many small priests, who were for ever bringing some book or robe or other article from the opposite point of the chapel to where the priest was performing; the tinkling of the little silver bells, which directed sometimes the movements of the boys, sometimes of the

worshippers (they seemed to know which without being told); the swinging of censers; the changing of the robes of the performing priest; and the breaking out of a sweet clear intonation from some unsuspected corner.

But Will, as I have said, was not imaginative; and I think in his soul, having been very well brought up by his mother, he hated the whole thing as Popish. He would not even be amused as I was at a confession that was going on at the other side of the door from us, where a lady, evidently of high rank, dressed in the hooded kind of mantle of black silk not unlike a domino, common in Sicily, was pouring out her heart, as we could tell by the sobs which shook her slender figure, through the perforated panel of the confessional, to a comfortable old priest, who was paying the very slightest heed to her, and most of the time carrying on with another priest a conversation which produced more than one smile.

The lady, as she knelt on the broad steps of the confessional, with her arms flung upwards, like the Magdalene embracing the Cross, and the graceful line of her straight young back carried along the fall of the rich mantle to the floor at the foot of the steps, made a most charming picture. I heard the Admiral tell My Lady that he had quite lost his heart to the pretty sinner—a term by which I feel sure he meant no irreverence, for it was not in the nature of the Admiral to be irreverent to a woman; and, least of all, to a woman in distress.

Presently the fair incognita rose; and casting, as even the recently confessed will, an eye on the little group of bright uniforms and My Lady's rich dress, gave such a start that she almost fell. Perhaps it was faintness; at any rate it displaced her hood, and we recognised Donna Rusidda.

She made a step towards us, then suddenly turned, and passed swiftly through the door. My Lady, knowing of

Will's attachment, which she believed to be reciprocated, with the generous warmth characteristic of her, at once got up, and made signs to Will that we were all going, and that he should hasten and overtake the Princess.

Will was out in almost one bound over the polished marble floor, but all trace of her had disappeared. She had slipped into some door leading to the private apartments.

My Lady's good-nature did not end here; for deeming that Will would like to stay on the chance of the lady returning, as ladies will who have a lover loitering, she spoke to the officer who was for the night in command of the central quadrangle and galleries, from which the rooms of the Palace open off. He understood the situation perfectly, and made Will free of the guard-room if he grew tired of pacing.

Will generously invited me to remain with him, to which of course I assented. But as I did it with a clear understanding that I should have to betake myself to the guard-room if he was successful, and not caring to keep a watch in the Palace when I had so many to keep on board ship, I retired into the guard-room at once. And as the officer and I had no common language, I accepted the offer, which he made me by signs, of his cloak, and lying upon the couch pretended to go to sleep, which I very soon did, but not before I had seen Will peep in and ascertain if I was signalling patience.

What follows is of course from the Admiral's Journal, and it is curious how well the entry fits in, in every respect, with our remembrance of that remarkable night, which carries us exactly to the point where it begins.

After leaving us, it seems from his Journal that he and My Lady drove down to the palace Sir William had taken outside the southern end of the city, near the Flora. Here, as at Naples, My Lady had given the Admiral the

room which commanded the best view of the sea, knowing how anxiously he scanned it with his glass.

Extract from the Admiral's Journal, March the —th, 1799.

“ I was never more struck with the difference between this place and Naples than to-night. While I was there I had such a feeling of elation ; I could not open my windows at night without hearing merry music, or looking out on some illumination, and the twinkling lights of the moving throng. It was one long hailing of my victory, until those last few days when we were making preparations to save Their Majesties. Everything was gay and bright, and there was no taking of thought but for a happy morrow. And when the moon shone down, as it is shining to-night, it brought out such a varied scene, so full of life ; while here we have the same moon, only shining even more intensely, bringing out not a point of life. There is no one driving so far up the Marina ; there is hardly a house near us ; there are no fishers in the Bay ; my very ships, as well as the town, are out of sight ; and all the moon shows are the low black arms of the Bay, and the melancholy mass of Monte Pellegrino looming up like the coffin Ben Hallowell brought me a few days since, made of the mainmast of the *Orient*. They even grudge me dear Emma ! Bluff Ben gave me the coffin, as if it were to remind me that I was mortal, and that all happiness was sinful, and suggest that I sometimes dared to be happy for an hour ; and Troubridge is always urging me to be away from this.

“ They don't know, these captains, they don't know what a life I have been leading, waiting here—the only central point of the Mediterranean, where it is safe to have Their Majesties—for one contrary and disheartening report after another to reach me. If I were Commander-in-chief, with plenty of ships to send where they were wanted, it would be another thing ; but it is only the bad seamanship of the

French which saves them from annihilating us. With a force too great for us if we had all our fleet together, they let us be scattered in threes and fours without falling on us. But think of the anxiety of me, who am responsible!

“And yet they would have it that I am doing nothing, trifling away my time with Emma, because they knew what hosts Sir William and she were at Naples, what *fêtes* and water-*fêtes* and banquets and balls and expeditions to see antiquities they provided for us in one unending stream. They should understand that there is nothing of this here; that the Hamiltons are themselves but strangers in the place, and that I am a prisoner to my secretary, while the whole fate of the Mediterranean hangs on me. I cannot tell how I should get through it all if it were not for my good Emma, who is always equable, always cheerful, and has such a soothing touch when I am worn out, body and mind. Though, if I had had such a wife . . . but what if I had?—it would have been ‘the uxorious Admiral Nelson.’ With the fault-finding Troubridge, my *friend* Troubridge, it would have been, ‘What does Lord Nelson want with his wife out here, when every minute may mean action?’ There is no pleasing these people.

“The dear good Emma is invaluable to me: she and dear Sir William make a home for me, to which I can creep and hide when I am done to death with worries. She will deny me to people when they come to tell me the same tale—it is always the same tale—that the Emperor, Acton, the Russians, Sir Sidney Smith, the Bey, the Grand Signor, they are all of them doing nothing or worse than nothing, and Ball is helpless without even food from Sicily for the Maltese. Why should I have to listen to them every hour of the day? The Grand Signor is the best of them, and he is a mule ridden by those crafty Russians, who are playing the deep game.

“Is it to be wondered at that I sometimes try and escape

from all this? My ships are ready to sail at an hour's notice, and I have written and written to Mr. Duckworth to get him to quit Minorca, which leads to nothing, and come to me, where there is a kingdom and the fate of our fleet hanging in the balance. And yet they chide me because I try and keep from breaking down by letting Emma nurse my strength.

"I am miserably ill; we have none of us been well since we came here. Perhaps the drainage washes back to the Marina, for Palermo has a good repute. It would do me good if I could see my ship from this window. I could see it from the de Gregorio Palace, which I have taken and use for a fleet office; but I am so lonely there—two miles from my good friends. However, I think I must go there in times like these. I am miserable without I see my ship.

* * * * *

"I broke off because I felt a hand upon my shoulder, the hand that sends new blood through my wasted body, which puts new heart into me; and, as I felt it, the very Bay took on a new spirit. It was no longer a waste, but had collected within its arms the deep peace of the Southern night; and the moon shining down on Pellegrino changed it till it looked like a crown, the crown on whose summit the father of Hannibal defied the might of Rome those three long years.

"'What, Nelson,' said that clear voice, 'are you too going to leave me? It is I who shall be lonely, for there is word from Sir William that he must be at the Palace to tell Acton nothing. The great Queen will not herself see Acton, or suffer me to see him: he is all for the King.'

"With that she began to weep very quietly—so quietly that I did not know till a tear dropped on my hand. I sought to comfort her, and we stood there I do not know how long.

“‘I would to God,’ I cried, ‘that the French would come upon us: none of my ships would surrender, and if they destroyed us all with their three to one, we should so wing them that St. Vincent would catch them and finish them, and then it would be all over for me, this worry.’

“Her arms wound round me; I could feel her soothing lips; but she said nothing.

“‘The Admiralty do not trust me. They send this coxcomb Smith to show that they do not think I have done my best in the matter of destroying those transports at Alexandria. The nation will do nothing for me—£100,000 means so little for England, and £100,000 worth of food-stuff’s would save a kingdom here. I have to bear the brunt of it all.’

“Still she said nothing, but drew me closer to her, and let me feel how her generous heart was beating for my troubles.

“‘And now my own captains think I might do more. Troubridge, who is hipped, does not hesitate to tell me so, as if I or any other man could do more anywhere. They say you——’

“Then she cried out, ‘This moon blinds me: let us move a little further into the room, and rest our eyes with darkness.’

“And then, I know not how long afterwards, I was overcome by the magic of soft lips and the fragrance of a woman’s throat, and she had given me her whole heart.

“I was a villain.

* * * * *

“But yet, now that I come to look back on it, with the steady gaze of matured love, I cannot but think that this villainy is a villainy invented of man—if it were not ordained for his eternal punishment when he was driven out of the Garden. It can have been no part of the original plan that the holy consummation of love should only have been

intended for everyday use, like eating and drinking. Or if it were, then surely, like eating and drinking, it should have been freed from all conditions except immoderate use. The one is as natural to the weak human body as the other. Man cannot do without sleep, when he has known the need for it. My brave fellows on the *Theseus* went to sleep at the capstan-bars in my battle, at the moment that they were trying to move the ship down to conquer new enemies. They went to sleep in the act of battle. I suppose if a man were starved of sleep he would die, as if he were starved of food and drink. And as with a man who has felt the imperious call of sleep, so it is with a man who has felt the imperious call of love. To some men it comes late: I have lived forty years without it, but now that it has come, though I know I must be a villain, I feel as if love were as much part of my human nature as sleep, and I feel that life is a great, lovely, glorious thing, and that life with love is like winning a victory in which you do not let one ship escape."

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More follows, under various dates, in the same strain: in each one the note of fretfulness and ailing health being in greater prominence. In the severe attacks of bodily depression to which our beloved Admiral, in spite of his great spirit, was so peculiarly liable, he could even doubt Lord St. Vincent, and call Heaven to witness the ingratitude of Captain Troubridge, though he was the best friend he ever had except in the matter of regarding this great love of the Admiral's from a somewhat narrow, uncharitable view. And in this matter some allowance is to be made for the Captain, who was one of the finest seamen who ever entered the British Navy, though he had not the imagination which made our Admiral the greatest of all naval commanders. It was not having imagination which

made him judge the Admiral hardly in this matter now, though he regarded it much more gently afterwards. To Captain Troubridge, then, My Lady was an adventuress. He never thought that the love which ennobled her connection with Mr. Greville might also ennoble her passion for the Admiral; and he made no allowance for the rich colours of the imagination with which the Admiral painted My Lady's companionship and love, till it seemed to him like the sunshine which makes the difference between the winters of Naples and England.

I, for one, who was so much with our Admiral, would stake my life on it that My Lady's companionship, her lightly caressing hand on his arm or shoulder, the kiss of good-fellowship which a daughter would give to a father, meant much more to him than the passion for which their lives have been branded. The Admiral's very physique was one which craved for gentleness rather than passion. That what the world reprobates did occur between them I take to be the result of two things: firstly, that his delicate, highly-strung constitution could not be in constant proximity with the rich vitality of hers without gaining in vigour; and secondly, that even with the best of men, as Shakespear said, "The sight of means to do ill deeds oft maketh ill deeds done."

CHAPTER XXIV. — How the Admiral went to the Favara, and the Prophecy began its Fulfilment.

FOR days past the Favara had been in a state of ferment unknown for many years. The greatest hero of the age, the man who was duelling with Buonaparte for the safety or extinction of the world, and had pinned the destroyer in Egypt, was to visit, to sleep a night, at the ancient and decaying palace of the ancient and decaying Norman House of the Princes of Favara. The Admiral, with the considerateness which he extended to the humblest sailor in his fleet, having ascertained from Will the straitened fortunes of the House, had announced his intention of coming in the most friendly way alone—an announcement which, but for a certain circumstance, might have given dire offence; for in Sicily you must not notice poverty, you must allow yourself to be deceived.

Well, to cut a long story short, the Admiral, attended only by Will and myself, drove out in the afternoon to the Favara, somewhat later than we had expected, because of a most stormy interview, I should say desperate interview, with my beautiful Lady, who, before us, hung round the Admiral's neck, overwhelming him with the embraces of a loving and solicitous woman, as she entreated him not to go. She had heard, she said, rumours that certain sympathisers of the French, disguised as brigands, would

take advantage of the loneliness of the Favara, and its neighbourhood to the wild mountains, to assassinate him. Yes, she had it on the best authority that they would not even attempt to carry him off, conceiving that only by his death could the French interests be served.

The risk to himself the Admiral, as ever, made light of; indeed, he did not believe it, considering it but the subterfuge of a woman who loved him, he knew how well, to keep him at her beloved side during his last days at Palermo. And since he loved her with all the strength of his mighty soul, he was so far conquered by her tears and her caresses that he pretended to be convinced and promised to consider the matter, and if he should hear further, to make his excuse to the Prince of Favara.

Great preparations were made for his arrival. I could not count the servants in the Prince's magnificent but tarnished liveries. They swarmed at the entrance, and lined every stairway and gallery; and there were preparations for a brilliant fête and illumination of the whole of the vast and ancient fabric.

As we approached, a fine band, also in the livery of the House, played English airs like "Rule Britannia," then new to the Sicilies; and the Prince and Donna Rusidda, in splendid Court dress, met us at the very entrance of the grand salon, from which I noticed the famous silken hangings had been stripped, leaving the polished porphyry and the Cosmato work exposed, which at once struck the Admiral's attention. He had hardly got through the formal greetings before he commented on the splendour of the apartment. Will and I exchanged glances, and knowing by this time something of the country and of the straits of the Prince, were not surprised when we found the bedroom set apart for the Admiral in another part of the palace, which we had not yet visited, decorated with these same silken hangings, which had heretofore hung over the somewhat

cold porphyry walls of the grand salon. We recognised further, in this chamber and the galleries approaching to it, nearly every beautiful object which we had seen scattered through the palace when we were chasing round it with Donna Rusidda. We were much struck, at the same time, with the fortress-like character of the place ; for the lower windows were all strongly enough barred to resist a military assault, and entrance into the dwelling part there was none except by the two great Arabic doorways set close together on the inner side of the palace, one of which led only to the uninhabited lower rooms rented as a storehouse by the farmer, and the other opened directly into the small portion used by the Prince and his sister, to which the only access was by a narrow stairway walled-in to the ceiling.

“Princess,” the Admiral began, when the Prince and his sister had conducted him to his bed-chamber, for he was by this sick with longing for the beloved society of My Lady, “I fear that I must leave when the other guests bid their adieux this evening, as this is one of my last days in Palermo. There are so many things that might demand my attention.”

“Oh, my Lord Nelson,” she replied, “I entreat you no. You have experienced officers who will have carried out all your commands [which indeed was the case—T.T.], and to us Sicilians there is a world of difference between the guest who comes and goes, and the guest who lays his head for only one night. Our poor house of the Favara is indeed unworthy of such an honour from you, so much desired by even the Queen herself ; but we are an ancient race of the same Norman blood as your own kings and nobles. We are the oldest and purest Norman family in Sicily. We have ever maintained the independent traditions of our race towards the Church, and sorely suffered for it in estate. Soon we shall have perished from off the face of the earth, and there will be nothing left of the Princes of the

Favara but a name ; and we yearn to have it handed down in Sicily, the land of traditions, as the last tradition of the dead old race, that the great hero of the other Norman kingdom so far away slept under our roof in token of friendship and amity."

Now the Admiral, as is well known, had the kindest heart in the world, and he was touched by the anxiety and race-pride of the beautiful young Princess. He would not tell her My Lady's real reason for desiring him to return to Palermo, conceiving, no doubt, that there would be no gain-saying this. Indeed, he did not take the trouble either to believe it or to care : he was always reckless of his personal safety, and so no more was said of it. And the long sunny afternoon and the evening with its brilliant *fête* passed away, the guests leaving early, as they were of Palermo, and the road had an evil repute at night. And with them melted away the great army of servants, to return close after dawn so that their absence should not be discovered by the guest. They were not, as may be divined, servants of the Prince, nor, many of them, servants at all, but from the vineyards and lemon groves. In the houses of Sicilian nobles, liveries are kept sometimes for centuries for occasions like these.

Poor Will had been mightily crest-fallen all the afternoon and evening, for his hostess had been so unremitting in her attentions to the Admiral, who was by no means insensible to her beauty and graciousness, and who was enjoying the Sicilian dignity and repose, after the somewhat foreign and noisy entertainments of the Queen in Naples. And Will's mortification was increased when, at the time of the departure of the other guests (when at last he had expected to have a few words with Rusidda), the Admiral bade us take word to My Lady about his spending the night at the Favara. He intimated at the same time that we had no need to return till the morning.

Now the chambers prepared for us, by the Admiral's, were of the plainest description : there was little save a truckle-bed standing on a tiled floor ; but never in all his life had any chamber seemed so beautiful to Will. He could only remember that he was to sleep under the roof of his beloved.

"Tubby," he said to me as soon as we were clear of the house, "do you mind coming back here with me when we have delivered our message ? I would give a year of my life to sleep under this roof."

Of course I agreed ; and off we went to the city, to My Lady's palace by the Flora, as hard as we could post, not meeting any adventures by the way. Nor indeed were we like to, except by reason of a horse bolting or a coach losing its wheel ; for there was a stream of guests returning to Palermo.

But when we arrived at My Lady's, she put a very different look upon the matter. Indeed, her lovely face was streaming with tears in the agony of apprehension for the man to whom she had given the whole of her passionate heart. "He will be killed!" she cried—"Nelson will be killed! Oh! why did you leave him?"

Then she broke forth into a fresh passionate utterance : "What am I doing here, doing nothing, while he, with his one arm, is fighting his last gasp for life ? To the ship, Will—off to the ship with you, and tell them that the Admiral is being murdered out in the lonely house of the Favara. No!" she cried, suddenly rushing to the window and screaming out something at the top of her rich voice : "spring into that coach which I have just stopped, and drive to the Albergo La Fortuna. It is always full of your officers later than this, and there will be coaches there. Get them all into coaches, and stop here for a moment on your way back, and I will have the pistols in the Embassy ready for you, for your officers will only have their swords."

Her behaviour carried even Will away. He could not

force from his lips the question if she thought there was any foundation for the report: her earnestness was so terrible. We flew to the inn, and there we found a room full of rollicking British officers, smoking and tossing off the generous Sicilian wine, and most of them describing some adventure or other, for the indulgence of which Sicily offered great opportunities.

When Will burst in with the news every man leapt to his feet and gripped his sword. As they dashed out of the house one of them sang out to the landlord to put down the reckoning to him—they used the house as a kind of club, and were therefore well known by sight. Coaches were hailed, and within a few minutes we were at the Ambassador's house, and had pistols served to us. There was, moreover, another coach waiting to join us, with the English servants of the Embassy.

Out we raced to the Favara, escaping by some special providence the perils of the road, which like most Sicilian roads was of the very worst description, with its huge ruts filled with loose stones, and the road itself barely wide enough for a coach, and bordered by deep ditches. But desperate men travel safely, and we were soon there.

And here I must go to the Journal for an account of the wonderful events which had been happening even during our brief absence.

Extract from the Journal, June the —th, 1799.

“After my Battles this has been the most extraordinary twenty-four hours of my life. Yesterday I drove out with Will and Trinder to a *fête* given in my honour by the Prince of Favara, now much impoverished, but the head of the chief Norman family in the Island, and therefore very well disposed to the English. When I say Norman, he was of course thoroughly Sicilian, as his family had

been for centuries; but they are one of the few families of undoubted Norman descent, and therefore, when all the Two Sicilies are raving over their English protectors, feel that they have a sort of claim of kinship. I went out there, purposely, with no one from the ship beyond these two young officers, wishing to spare them the expense of entertaining the large company which goes when the fleet accepts an invitation. Indeed, I did not think seriously about staying overnight with them, having promised the dear faithful Emma to return if it could be managed, though she made it difficult for me by drawing pictures of intended assaults by brigands, without remembering how obstinate I am about flying from the face of an enemy. However, my hostess made such a point of it that I yielded; and when the guests left the *fête*, somewhat early in the night, I packed Will and Trinder with them to warn Emma that I should not be back. She took my warning in a different way, fortunately for me.

“In the interval I was like to have been kidnapped, or to have lost my life: the latter, I hear, for Buonaparte has been good enough to say that there is no safety for France while I am alive, and people about whom he says such things do not live long, when there are Frenchmen about.

“The plan was for a body of Frenchisers, disguised as brigands, to seize me while I was at the Favara, and carry me off to the mountains, or kill me in event of resistance. Which meant death. They had information that I should spend the night there, and they knew that the attendants at the *fête* were, save a mere handful, not servants of the Prince, but hired men, who would, with two exceptions (one of whom was in their pay), put off their liveries and depart with the guests. They were therefore few enough to be overpowered, even if they were all roused; and it might be possible to get to me unobserved by the rest of

the household, when the accomplice opened the door—for my room lay in a distant part of the house. Information reached them also that Will and Trinder, who were to have slept in the ante-chamber of my suite, had been dispatched by me back to Palermo.

“But they had reckoned literally without their host, for when they arrived, the Prince of Favara, who was a very expert swordsman, had not retired. He was, it appears, hunting through his heirlooms for an ancient Norman seal with the arms of Tancredo di Mardolce, Prince of Favara, to present to me in honour of my visit to him; for the enormous iron chest, in which he kept such things, was open, and with the seal was found a letter which he had evidently just been writing in the most honouring terms, begging my acceptance of ‘this trifle,’ and giving its history. The accomplice must have been a stupid fellow, for instead of assuring himself that the Prince had retired, he merely waited until he should have retired by his usual habits. He then went down and opened the wicket in the great oak door. But he had neglected to see that the locks and hinges of this were oiled. The great gates had been open all day, and when they were closed, swung and locked easily. As, however, he opened the wicket, either the lock or the hinges gave a great rusty jar and startled the keen-eared Prince, who, hastening down to learn the cause, met the brigands mounting the stairs.

“He had time to draw his sword, and posting himself on the half-way landing, where a turn protected him from pistol shots till his assailants were within a sword’s length, received their onset. One or two were quickly slain, and the rest came on more cautiously. The Princess, who behaved with extraordinary courage, hearing the clash of steel, flew to him with his pistols, but seeing him engaged, knew that to take off his attention by handing them to him meant certain death. So with true Norman courage she

stood at the head of the stair, waiting to do her part. The stair was so narrow that she could not fire past him without the danger of hitting him, though she did fire one of them over his head to show him that she was there, and in the hope of frightening the villains and rousing the servants. But the servants, sleeping in the basement, were divided from them by the brigands, and either did not hear or were too cowardly to move—most likely the latter.

“So she retreated up the stairs again, to stand at the head and watch her brother killed unless some miracle should save him.

“To rouse me was her first impulse. But here a woman’s devotion and instinct interfered. She had heard the men shouting to her brother: ‘Give up the Admiral and you shall go unharmed—our quarrel is not with you. We want his ransom.’ With a woman’s swift wit she divined that to call me was to play into their hands. I had only one arm, and she knew that I should not have brought pistols. She knew, too, that if she roused me I could not be so cowardly as to make my escape while my host was being killed for me; and she had hopes that, even if they killed her and her brother, they might either not find me, or that I might hear them tramping about for me and be able to barricade myself, until assistance arrived, summoned by the cowardly servants, who could be relied on to creep out and run to the city gate, though they would not fight.

“The Prince fought so well that her hopes rose for the moment, and she almost trusted that he might beat the assailants off for ever such a little time, when she could have given him his pistols, and indeed the pair of them have barricaded themselves behind the stout door at the head of the staircase. But the villains were crafty, and two of them charging up the stairs at once, one received her brother’s point, while the other fired his pistol right against the Prince’s heart, killing him on the spot. They then

prepared to risk the remaining stairs; but the brave Princess called out to them from her post round the corner, that she had a pistol and would apply it to the first, in the way in which they killed her brother. This checked their ardour. They had been encouraged in their attack on the Prince by having firearms, whilst he had none. But now the case was changed: the first man up the steps would certainly be killed, and none would be the first. And there they stood, huddled on the stair, with beads of sweat dropping off their foreheads as they wavered between fear of a desperate woman and greed for the reward offered for me—alive or dead.

“Presently they determined to make a united rush, to leave it uncertain who should be killed. And perhaps only with the idea of daunting her, but I believe in cowardly fiendishness, they swore with horrible imprecations to revenge the death of the one who should fall with murder and the worst outrages that could be perpetrated on a woman. But the Princess did not waver, and up the stairs they came, one paying the penalty of his life to her courage, while the others flung themselves on her and tied her hands, lest she should have another weapon. Then they gagged her; and then, with the cruelty which is almost an instinct with the lower-class Sicilians, they tied her feet together, and forcing her on her knees, from which she could not in her bonds rise, stood round her, waiting for her fears to torture her, and forgetting me for a few moments, while they gloated on a woman’s terror and agony, and disputed as to the outrages which should be inflicted on her.

“While they stood thus, helter skelter up the marble steps flew Will Hardres, followed by a dozen or more English officers; and those who had taken counsel before they would face a woman felt at their backs the vengeance of the terrible English, who would have dashed into them had they been ten to one. Their shrieks, the most appalling

cries of terror that any of my officers present had ever heard, rent the vaulted chamber of the ancient palace. The next instant Will's eye fell on the Princess kneeling in her bonds, and there was not another thought of mercy in his soul, as with a fierce thrust through the back he reached the heart of the captain of the band, and slashed off the ear of the next as he dealt the deadly cut between the neck and the shoulder.

"In a few seconds but one of the gang was alive, and he was saved by Hardy knocking up the sword that should have ended his villainous career, in the hopes of extracting information. At the same time Will jabbed him in the thigh with the point of his sword, and bade him be quick with all he knew if he wished to save his miserable life. In a surprisingly short time he blabbed out the whole plot, which the Princess, who had been freed by Will, had sufficient self-control to translate, the Sicilian country dialect being beyond Will's powers.

"It was, briefly, that they were to carry me off, for a huge reward that was offered for me alive or dead. But the significant part was that the reward for my dead body was twice as much as that for the capture of my person.

"I, all the while, was sleeping soundly in my distant chamber, and the first intimation I had of it was when Donna Rusidda fled to rouse me, closely followed by Will and a fellow in the livery of the Ambassador, one of the coachful who had come with my officers. When I opened my door to their call and they came in, to my astonishment the fellow in Sir William's liveries rushed in between, and fell on my neck crying, 'Oh Nelson, Nelson, my hero! my hero!' and therewith fainted away.

"It was Emma, my incomparable Emma, who, knowing of my danger, could not rest without accompanying my rescuers; and doubtless, if there had been any such halting among them as there had been among the murderers, her lofty spirit would have leaped o'er the delay.

“Meanwhile most of the party, finding that the danger was no more, and leaving one or two to secure the prisoner, flew to the Prince’s side to see what could be done to save his life; but in vain, for the villain had given him no chance. The great heavily charged horse-pistol placed so close to his body had actually blown away the clothes and the flesh off his side, and laid bare the heart, in which the slugs had buried themselves. Death had been instantaneous. I must say that when I heard of it I was never so moved; for there lay the last Prince of the ancient House of the Favara, sword in hand, slain on his own threshold, in defending a guest from the Island over the seas, of whose Norman connection with himself he was so greatly proud.

“The self-possession of the Princess was marvellous. Mastering her grief and horror, though they were so terribly wrote upon her countenance, she summoned the cowardly rascals, who could have saved their master’s noble life, and made them bring all the couches and bedding and cushions in the palace to the rooms surrounding mine, also the remains of the lordly feast that her brother had given in my honour, and the richest of their wines; and then, bidding my officers feast and rest, excused herself.

“Dear Emma had the Prince’s room assigned her, with her own men guarding at the doors of herself and the Princess.”

* * * * *

Here follows an entry in the Journal which explains an episode in the Admiral’s life which we had never been able wholly to understand until we read these lines, and which went far to convince us, in spite of ourselves, of the genuineness of these entries.

We both of us remember that morning well; indeed, it would hardly be possible for the lapse of a lifetime to efface the memory of that visit to the Favara.

The Admiral had sent the prisoner into Palermo, and with him all the officers excepting Will and myself, who were in personal attendance upon him. They were needed for their ships, and now that the whole band was captured or destroyed there was no necessity for their presence in the house of sorrow.

We had just seen them off and mounted the steps; and, as the Admiral told us that he did not require us, we went out into the garden, where Will soon led the way into the little shrine or belvedere where he had been with his beloved Donna Rusidda. It gave him a pleasure to sit there and, bidding me hold my tongue, revel in the scene of that happy time. I, who had no associations to feed on, after a little rose and went to the window, from whose lattice one could command a view of the whole terracc, at the end of which the belvedere stood. At the same end of the terrace, only a few feet below the level of the window, was a marble seat, shaped almost like a couch, of the sort common in gardens of these parts. Presently up the broad steps, which led to this terrace from the ilex grove below, came the Admiral, walking thoughtfully, and seated himself right below me. I thought it would be vastly more entertaining to watch him than Will in his present state, especially since I could see, and, very naturally, what a prey to emotion he was. He could not sit still, but walked swiftly backwards and forwards from the seat to the balustrade a few feet in front of it, over which one looked to the city and Pellegrino. While he was pacing thus, a lady came up the steps enveloped in one of the hooded black silk mantles common in so many parts of Sicily. As she came near the Admiral she let her hood fall back. It was Donna Rusidda; and I was astonished to behold on her countenance not grief but rapture. She came right up to the Admiral; and something told me that what was about to happen was

of so momentous a nature as to all but justify eavesdropping—and eavesdropping it was, my continuing to stand by that lattice.

“Princess, you have saved my life,” he cried, advancing to her with his arm outstretched in a way that suggested the ghost of his lost arm stretched beside it.

“Dear Lord,” she said (and I must not at this distance of years attempt to reproduce her broken English), “there is no life to me so precious as yours.”

The Admiral was a simple man, and evidently took her declaration for the exquisite courtesy of the South, and no more.

“Princess, it is not right to speak thus.”

“Oh, why, my Lord?”

“With your murdered brother’s blood hardly yet dried upon the threshold, I cannot bear to hear you: even a compliment like that is treason to his memory.”

“Alas, my Lord, it is no treason, for it is no compliment.”

The Admiral looked at her earnestly with his large searching eye, which raked one like a broadside.

“You do not understand me. I am not speaking in the flowery way of which you accuse us, but truth.”

“Princess, the women of your country have overwhelmed me with their gratitude for the small services I have been able to render it. I thank you—I thank you. It is nothing, what I have been able to do for you. But how am I ever to thank *you* for what you have done for me? It is not twelve hours since you saved my life with your bravery. I have none braver in my whole fleet. Princess, do not talk of gratitude to me, me who have robbed you of a brother; tell me rather how I can atone.”

“Are you blind?” she asked, in a low voice I could scarcely catch.

“I almost wish I were, that I might forget last night’s work.”

"Oh, why are you blind?"

He waited for her to explain.

"You do not see yet?"

"See?"

"See that it is all because I love you!—not gratitude, but love. I love you with my whole heart, my whole soul, and every fibre of my body!"

I could see tears glistening in the Admiral's eyes as he said, "Princess, this is madness!"

"No, it is not madness," she said, coming forward and kneeling at his feet, with her hands clasped round his arm, and her great clear eyes and her flowerlike face turned upwards, radiating love and beauty. In this attitude of supplication she poured forth her love; speaking, not the worship of the women of a people for the liberator of their country, but a girl's passion for her first love.

I was so riveted by the tumult of emotions which struggled in the Admiral's open face that I did not notice that I was no longer alone at the lattice. My attitude had betrayed that something extraordinary was in progress, and Will was looking over my shoulder. I noticed the pressure, but did not give him a thought while that wonderful tragedy was being enacted below. The Admiral was strangely moved, and could find no words except, "But your brother, Princess?"

"I cannot think of him; I cannot think of anything except my love for you."

The Admiral gave a little gesture as if he would shake her off; but, looking down on the lovely enraptured face, he had not the heart. Instead, I could see the tears rolling down his cheeks as he said, "And your brother is hardly dead."

"He is dead! he is dead!" she cried. "Ruggiero who was dearer to me than anything in life, except you. Did I not wait for it? Did I not spare him? This has

been upon my lips for months past, and I thought of Ruggiero.'

"Princess, Princess, do not speak it!"

"I must, my dear Lord; more than anything should I have been glad to die in Ruggiero's place if you had known that I had died for you: nay, whether you knew it or no. We Sicilians are afraid of pain, but not of death; and if I had died for you, and you had known it, perhaps you would have kissed my dead lips."

"I have kissed Ruggiero," said the Admiral, almost involuntarily.

Whereat she fell to kissing his hand—a fountain of passionate kisses. Then she rose and laid her hands upon his shoulders and looked into his soul; and he, knowing that his soul was as crystal to her, did not flinch, but rather stood up, and she said to him:—

"My Lord, hear the prayer of a woman, a prayer she has often prayed to Heaven, a prayer for which she had absolution the day that you were in the Queen's chapel. . . ."

He made a slight movement.

"Nay, stay and hear me out: hear of a woman's will, oft challenged by herself, but steadfast. Desperate have I been to give myself to you. I have thought and fought and prayed how to find a way to conquer myself."

"Dear Princess, why not marry? Marry Will: you can see how the boy is eating his heart out for you."

"No," she answered, quite simply; "I love him much; I could not be untrue to him."

The Admiral hung his head as if *he* had said the shameful thing. But she was not ashamed. She continued: "But now, since poor Ruggiero is dead, there is no need. I am the last of my House. There is no one to be hurt by me." Something seemed to flash across her as she added: "My uncle is very old, and at Syracuse they hear

nothing. So you see," she said, mistaking his silence, "there is nothing to part us."

He disengaged himself from her gently.

"Rusidda," he said, letting those large sensitive lips meet reverently on her forehead, "this is the haven of those who have made mistakes—not for the young with all their life before them. I have enough to blame myself for——"

Even as he spoke, My Lady, who had sent to the city for her proper habiliments, passed up the steps and stood before them.

"Poor child!" she said. She was full of womanly sympathy: no woman I ever knew could rise to such a glory of sympathy and imagination and generosity at such a moment. She led her away. It was My Lady who wept over the death of the knightly Ruggiero and the hopelessness of Rusidda's passion.

We watched them pass down the steps, and out of sight among the ilexes, and the Admiral, very sorrowful, pass by the steps from the far end of the terrace; and then I, too, crept from the belvedere, in which I had been an imprisoned spectator, and left Will with his head buried in his arms.

The Admiral went to the body of the Prince, who was, by this, laid out reverently on a bier in the small dark hall at the top of the steps, where he had so valiantly met his death for his guest. There he lay, as it were, still on guard, where all who entered the palace must pass him. His sword was at his side, and the old priest of S. Giovanni of the Lepers, the priest who had brought him up from his childhood, and so often repeated to him the prophecy of the Favara, was praying over him. The Admiral made a reverence to him as he entered, and taking the dead man's right hand, held it as if he were taking a vow, with tears splashing down on it. This the priest told us; and as we

passed up we saw for ourselves how the hero knelt by the dead hero's body, praying—as all who knew the Admiral would know—for the dead, though it is not permitted of our Church. And the attendants told Will how the aged servant of the Lord laid his hands and his blessing on the heads of both.

The Admiral was still kneeling when I passed—kneeling as I saw him kneel on the day of Trafalgar, when the *Victory* was sailing so grandly into action.

My Lady, too, saw him from the door, and reverence forbade her entering the chamber. And presently came to her Will, inquiring for Donna Rusidda. She led him to the porphyry chamber, where, dry-eyed and wild-eyed, Donna Rusidda stood gazing out seawards, and there left him.

“Rusidda! Rusidda!” called Will, waiting to see if she would have him advance.

She came to him.

“You must marry me now, dear one.”

She turned her clear gaze on him. His face was burning.

Then she knew that it could not be her loneliness, her orphaned state, that made him press his suit at such a time, and said, “How could any man wish to marry me?”

“Dear, I heard all, and I wish.”

“Oh, W-Will,” she cried, letting herself be taken into his arms, and weeping at last—“how noble you are!”

“And you will marry me now?” he said hopefully, after the long silent embrace.

“Ah, no,” she sobbed, “I cannot. I love you too well.”

“But, Rusidda, it cannot be true——”

“True it is, alas! I can never give my heart to any one but him, and to him I have given it and shall

give it. I shall be his slave, to do what he lists. He *shall* take me with him," she cried, with passionate earnestness.

And then pitifulness smote her, for she knew well how Will loved her, and what it was to love with such a love. And she held her peace, for she could give Will no hope. And so presently she passed into her own chamber.

CHAPTER XXV.—How the Admiral took Naples, and of the Hanging of Caracciolo.

RIGHT glad were we when on June 24th, 1799, we bore up to Naples and anchored in the Bay with a noble fleet of eighteen sail of the line, which were joined on the next day by two-and-twenty gun-and-mortar vessels, that had been lying at the Islands. These sail of the line for the most part had assembled off Maritimo, the little island at the west point of Sicily, where the fate of a Punic War was settled in the battle of the Ægatian Islands, so fatal to Carthage. Maritimo, the chaplain was careful to impress upon us, was one of them. We left Palermo for Naples the first time on June 13th, with the Hereditary Prince on board to accompany the Admiral, and represent his father at the imminent occupation of Naples. But that evening of the 13th, at nine o'clock, a lieutenant arrived who had been landed westward of Palermo by the sloop of war *Petrel*, which had not been able to beat up to the city against the stiff easterly breeze, any more than we had been able to get away from it. So that there was nothing for it but to put back to Palermo on the 15th, land the Prince and all the troops we had taken on board, and on to Maritimo, whither the Admiral bade Captain Ball from Malta and Captain Troubridge from Naples to join him with all their ships. I believe the *Petrel* carried the orders to Captain Ball to raise the Malta blockade; and to Naples, there

being no fear of the enemy, there was a constant run of small craft. Our news was that the French had passed the Straits, and been seen off Minorca—nineteen of the line. On the 20th we had a despatch from Admiral Lord St. Vincent that twelve British ships of the line had entered the Straits from the Channel, and were standing for Mahon, whence they would at once start off in search of Bruix, who had disappeared. We learnt also that Lord Keith was the new Commander-in-chief, Lord St. Vincent having resigned.

The Admiral was convinced that Naples was the destination of the French, and at once started to throw himself upon them. He was equally convinced that no harm would come to Sicily, with Keith's fine fleet in hot pursuit of the French, and wrote to Sir William that he should be back in eight days and to calm Her Majesty's distress. He was his old self again, almost back to health, and full of spirits at the prospect of meeting the French fleet. With Admiral Lord Keith behind him to look after the future of the two Kingdoms, he was ready to fight the French till every ship he had was sunk.

We were off Palermo on the 21st, but did not enter the harbour; we only lay to for a couple of hours, while the Admiral went ashore to see Her Majesty and afterwards brought Sir William and Lady Hamilton on board, the latter with baggage. Nor could the Admiral's expectation of finding the French fleet at Naples bring a shadow of anxiety to her rosy, laughing face.

"If the French are there, Nelson," she said, "there will be another Nile, and we shall be there to see it this time."

I do not know if such a prospect had any particular attraction for Sir William, but he did not show the white feather. Possibly he thought that the French fleet would be in no hurry to put themselves in a trap at Naples,

but that there might be need of a diplomatist who understood the value of conflicting Neapolitan promises. However, My Lady was all for a battle: a battle she longed for, with her dear Admiral distributing thunderbolts. Then we resumed our voyage, making Naples on the 24th.

Off Ischia we had the news that put the Admiral into a fury we were glad to see him in again. He did not make the innocent suffer in his furies, and he had not had the health for the like for months past. There was no French fleet at Naples; and Cardinal Ruffo, who commanded the Army of Vagabonds, the only people who were worth anything in the Kingdom of Naples, had made a most unintelligible treaty with the rebels, allowing them Heaven knows what.

It was a strange voyage that. Here were we, eighteen of the line, just outside the Bay, where we were in full expectation of finding five-and-twenty of the French line. We had not had a bulkhead in the ship for many weeks past. Even the cabin occupied by Sir William and My Lady was made of canvas screens; and yet when the boat came aboard us off Ischia, here was this beautiful woman, in the costly and delicate costume which befitted her as a Court lady, standing beside the Admiral, who had gone forward to receive the messenger. She certainly did say, "I will interpret for you," as a sort of explanation or excuse for her presence. I, of course, was only in attendance to take orders.

The Admiral first smiled, and was then very much perturbed as she translated the message to him from the Cardinal, which informed him that there were no French or rebels, except in the castles and the citadel and one or two unimportant fortified points. So far so good. But the Cardinal went on to say that he had concluded a treaty by which the patriots——

"Patriots!" cried the Admiral. "May he be d—d with these vile homicidal rebels!"

"——by which the *rebels*," her Ladyship corrected herself, "were to evacuate the castles within twenty-one days unless previously relieved by the French fleet; they marching out with all the honours of war, and the British Admiral providing vessels to take them to Toulon free of all charge, and giving hostages to the French in the citadel for the safe deliverance of the same."

"A pretty treaty!" shouted the Admiral: "what's Foote doing?"

"And no news," continued My Lady, not heeding the interruption, "of the French fleet, so evacuation now only waits the providing of suitable vessels."

"Ruffo hadn't the power," said the Admiral; "it was expressly reserved from him. I shall see to this; but I suppose it's only another of their d—d scheming tricks. Foote will have something to say to it. Troubridge has wrote that the Governor of Procida is an honest man, etc. I hope he may be. If he is, he is the only one in the two kingdoms. Trinder, ask the captain to crowd on all sail, and tell Mr. Vassall to signal it on to the fleet."

Presently we swept once more between the Islands into that glorious Bay which we had left under such inauspicious circumstances. What a difference now! Then we were, with a few Portugals and transports, helping the hapless Court to fly for their lives; now we were eighteen of the line, standing proudly in, the tack as we passed the Islands giving us the favour of the breeze. Soon we were near enough to hear from Captain Foote, who, on His Majesty's frigate the *Sea-Horse*, had been commanding the gallant little squadron of bombs and small craft which had been maintaining the blockade since Captain Troubridge joined us off Maritimo, to give us every available ship against the overpowering force of the French.

Captain Foote confirmed the Cardinal, and added that though the evacuation had not yet begun he had vessels nearly sufficient to take the evacuating force to Toulon.

“Evacuating force!” shouted the Admiral. “By G—d, they shall never evacuate, except as the unconditional prisoners of His Sicilian Majesty!” And Captain Troubridge, who had come on board, and never concealed his opinion for any man—indeed, we had seen but lately how he had upbraided the Admiral himself—was quite agreed.

“Trinder,” said the Admiral, “tell Mr. Vassall to signal that the truce is at an end, and no one will be allowed to leave the castles.”

“Begging your pardon, my Lord, the Cardinal considers it a treaty, not a truce.”

“The Cardinal may consider it what he chooses. Neither he nor any man here had the power to make a treaty; and the armistice, I take for granted, is, that if the French and rebels are not relieved by their friends in twenty-one days from the signing of the armistice, they shall evacuate Naples, in this manner infamous to His Sicilian Majesty and triumphant to them, as stated in the Article.”

“Those in the castles, my Lord, are preparing to evacuate in a day or two at the latest. They look upon it as a treaty, not as an armistice.”

“He could not make but an armistice, sir,” said the Admiral; “and all armistices signify that either party may renew hostilities, giving a certain notice fixed upon by the contracting parties. In the present instance, I suppose the Cardinal thought that in twenty-one days he had not the power of driving the French from the Castle of St. Elmo, or the rebels from the lower Castles of Uovo and Nuovo. The French and rebels thought that if they could not be relieved in twenty-one days they could, when unable to remain any longer, covenant to be removed to a place where they may be in a situation to renew their diabolical

schemes against His Sicilian Majesty and the peace and happiness of his faithful subjects. And their removal was to be at the expense of His Majesty, and those enemies and rebels were to be protected by the fleet of His Sicilian Majesty's faithful ally—the King of Great Britain. Therefore, evidently, this agreement implies that both parties are supposed to remain *in statu quo*; but if either party receive relief from their situation, then the compact of course falls to the ground, and is of no effect; for if one party can be liberated from the agreement, it naturally implies that the other is in the same state. And I fancy the question need not be asked whether, if the French fleet arrives this day in the Bay of Naples, the French and rebels would adhere one moment to the armistice? 'No!' the French Admiral would say, 'I am not here to look on, but to act.' And so says the British Admiral; and declares on his honour that the arrival of either fleet, British or French, destroys the compact, for neither can lay idle."

"And what am I to tell Captain Foote, my Lord? He has to communicate with the Cardinal."

"Tell him that the British Admiral proposes to the Cardinal to send, in their joint names, to the French and rebels, that the arrival of the British fleet has completely destroyed the compact, as would that of the French if they had had the power (which, thank God, they have not!) to come to Naples."

"And what measures is Captain Foote to take, my Lord?—or I should say, What proclamation is he to deliver in pursuance of your Lordship's orders?"

"Tell him to send to the French in the citadel that they shall give possession of the same citadel or Castle of St. Elmo to His Sicilian Majesty's faithful subjects, and the troops of his allies; on which condition alone they shall be sent to France without the stipulation of their being prisoners of war. That as to rebels and traitors, no power

on earth has a right to stand between their gracious King and them ; they must instantly throw themselves on the clemency of their Sovereign, for no other terms will be allowed them ; nor will the French be allowed even to name them in any capitulation. If these terms are not complied with, in the time above mentioned—namely, two hours for the French, and instant submission on the part of the rebels—such very favourable conditions will never again be offered.”

That evening word came back that these orders had been read and explained at great length to the Cardinal, and had been rejected by him. Accordingly, the next morning we ran right into the Bay, and anchored in close line-of-battle before the city, at the same time calling up the two-and-twenty gun-and-mortar vessels from the Islands to rest on our flanks. After which the Admiral sent two summonses to the Cardinal, to be by him delivered to the French in the citadel and the rebels in the castles. From the first, who had not treated in any way yet, he demanded an unconditional surrender. His summons to the rebels ran :—

“ His Britannic Majesty’s Ship *Foudroyant*,
“ Naples Bay, 25th June, 1799.

“ Rear-Admiral Lord Nelson, K.B., Commander of His Britannic Majesty’s Fleet in the Bay of Naples, acquaints the rebellious subjects of His Sicilian Majesty in the Castles of Uovo and Nuovo, that he will not permit them to embark or quit those places. They must surrender themselves to His Majesty’s royal mercy.”

These summonses the Cardinal refused flat out to deliver. “ If,” he said, “ the Admiral chose to break the armistice between the signing and fulfilment of the capitulation, he must do it by himself. The Calabrian army would assist neither with guns nor with men. For himself, the Cardinal

was sick of the whole matter, and he should be pleased for the Admiral to do what he liked."

There never was any doubt of the Admiral's doing what he liked; for, unless he provided transports, there was no means of evacuating the castles. To leave them on the land side, when the *lazzaroni* had the countenance of the English fleet, would mean being torn to pieces. As for transports, no one could provide them but with the Admiral's leave; and even then they would be under the guns of the fleet.

The motives of the Cardinal have never been quite fathomed. He had done the King good service by clearing the rebels out of the places south of Naples, and out of Naples itself save the castles, and up to this he had acted like a straightforward, honest man; but what was his thought now? "Did he," as the Admiral said so bitterly, "think one house in Naples more to be prized than his Sovereign's honour? Was he now engaged in the act of collusion or treachery, to which every native subject of the King seemed to come sooner or later? Or was he now remembering his office in the Church, and anxious, even to the manifest detriment of the Kingdom, to avert the cruelties which the exasperated Loyalists of Naples would be sure to wreak upon their beaten foes?"

It was difficult not to feel sorry for these scoundrels. The worst of them were, like the Prince Caracciolo, of the principal nobility, and they had had to put up with treatment from the French as bad as if they had been their enemies, and not their friends. Men of the highest rank were ordered to the long hours and exposure of the work of common sentries, to save private soldiers in the army of the French. They had also been stripped of their property to keep the French going till they should have time to capture the property of the Loyalists.

One thing is certain: that, of the Neapolitan Loyalists,

the Cardinal alone was for the carrying out of the arrangements with the rebels which had been interrupted by the arrival of our fleet. What the Admiral urged, that Buonaparte would have considered such a treaty abrogated by the arrival of an overwhelming force, is beyond dispute. It is also beyond dispute that the Cardinal had not a man of his own army with him in this matter. Only he, and the commander of some Russian forces, who was none too anxious to play into the hands of the British, and Captain Foote, who had been cajoled into giving his signature to that of which he did not approve, stood for the treaty.

The next morning the Cardinal came on board himself, and was received with proper ceremony and a salute of thirteen guns. The interview, at which Sir William and My Lady were present to interpret, lasted for hours; and I have it from the Journal, which we have found so correct wherever we had the opportunity of testing it by our own private knowledge, that “. . . the Cardinal and myself have begun our career by a complete difference of opinion. *He* will send the rebels to Toulon. *I* say they shall not go.” “We came very near high words,” writes the Admiral. “I used every argument in my power to convince him that the treaty and armistice was at an end by the arrival of the fleet; and this the Cardinal had come with the determination not to see.”

The Cardinal went as he came. “On the 27th,” says the Journal, “the rebels came out of the castles as they ought, and as, I hope, all those who are false to their King and their country will, *to be hanged*, or otherwise disposed of, as their Sovereign thought proper.”

They were placed in transports and brought under the sterns of the men-of-war, where we could see the leaders—as they were discovered by information—having irons put on them to be brought for safe custody to one of the

men-of-war. They were embarked altogether in fourteen *polacres*, a kind of craft much used on the Italian coast.

In the matter of the capitulation the rebels clearly protracted the negotiation for twenty-one days with the idea that the French fleet would arrive and *ipso facto* cancel the treaty. This provision was perfectly natural, for unless the English fleet arrived, Captain Foote, with his weak squadron, and the Cardinal, with his rough levies, had hardly the means of reducing such strong places as the Citadel and the Castles. Therefore, unless the English fleet arrived, Captain Foote did well enough in getting such strong places on terms. When the English fleet did arrive, I have no doubt that what did actually happen was what both French and rebels expected to happen. And if it had not happened, they would have laughed at the simplicity of the English in feeling bound by an arrangement which no French commander would have entertained under the circumstances. And neither Captain Foote nor the Cardinal had any more power to conclude a treaty than a serjeant commanding a picket of a regiment would have to make arrangements binding on his Colonel. Moreover, as the capitulation was not to take effect until the forts were evacuated, and evacuation of the forts had not commenced when the Admiral proclaimed the treaty at an end, it never came into effect at all.

The same day the Admiral landed thirteen hundred men from his own ships and those of Her Most Faithful Majesty to besiege the French in St. Elmo, giving the command to Captain Troubridge, and appointing second in command Captain Ball of His Majesty's ship *Alexander*, the same that had had the command at Malta. With them went Will, of which going I shall have much to say anon; but here I shall go a little out of the order to describe an event which has had far more importance conferred on it than it deserved, by a malignant Opposition having made it their

dagger to stab our great and good Admiral in the back. I refer of course to the affair of Prince Caracciolo.

It was not more than nine o'clock on the morning of the 29th, when a *barca* full of villainous-looking Calabrians—"the Christian Army" they were called—pulled alongside. In their midst was a short, thickset man, with his hands bound behind him, in such rags, so emaciated, so smothered in dirt, with his hair and beard so clotted, that I did not at first recognise our old enemy of the Trattoria at Resina.

These Christian Calabrians had found him hidden in a cave. He had been one of the chief in authority in the Castle of Uovo, until it became certain that the English fleet was approaching and not the French, whereupon he fled incontinently, knowing that our Admiral, though he was in every other respect the most kind-hearted of men, had only one recipe for mutineers—the yard-arm. But he had reckoned without his host in thinking to get away. The Calabrians, led by innumerable local chiefs, had really fought very well in their advance up the Peninsula, though it is true that they had not met many "regulars"; and now that the approach of our fleet had paralysed the enemy, they were engaged on a duty for which their training thoroughly fitted them—the hunting-out of fugitives skulking in the mountains, which is the whole history of brigandage.

As soon as Captain Hardy was informed who the prisoner was, he was at once released from his bonds and conducted to an officer's cabin, where he was given every means of freshening his appearance, and had a proper meal, of which he seemed in great want, placed before him. But of this he refused to partake, showing a spirit in his last hours which might have saved him and brought him great honour if he had shown only a part of it at the beginning.

The Admiral at once issued the following order to Count

The Admiral

Thurn, Commodore and Commander of His Sicilian Majesty's frigate *Minerva* :—

“ By Horatio Lord Nelson, etc., etc., etc.

“ Whereas Francisco Caracciolo, a Commodore in the service of His Sicilian Majesty, has been taken, and stands accused of rebellion against his lawful Sovereign, and for firing at his colours hoisted on board his Frigate *The Minerva*, under your command : You are, therefore, hereby required and directed to assemble five of the senior officers under your command, yourself presiding, and proceed to inquire whether the crime with which the said Francisco Caracciolo stands charged, can be proved against him ; and if the charge is proved, you are to report to me what punishment he ought to suffer.

“ Given on board the *Foudroyant*, Naples Bay, the 29th June, 1799.

“ NELSON.”

And the Court, assembling at once, sat from 10 a.m. till noon. The charge was found proved, and the Admiral then issued this second order to Count Thurn :—

“ By Horatio, Lord Nelson, etc., etc., etc.

“ Whereas a Board of Naval Officers of His Sicilian Majesty hath been assembled to try Francisco Caracciolo for rebellion against his lawful Sovereign, and for firing at His Sicilian Majesty's Frigate *La Minerva* ;

“ And whereas the said Board of Naval Officers have found the charge of rebellion fully proved against him, and have sentenced the said Caracciolo to suffer death ;

“ You are hereby required and directed to cause the said sentence of death to be carried into execution upon the said Francisco Caracciolo accordingly, by hanging him at the fore yard-arm of His Sicilian Majesty's Frigate *La Minerva*, under your command, at five o'clock this evening ; and to cause him to hang there until sunset, when you will have his body cut down, and thrown into the sea.

“ Given on board the *Foudroyant*, Naples Bay, the 29th of June, 1799.

“ NELSON.”

During all this time from the reception of the prisoner to the carrying out of his sentence, which took roughly from nine of the morning till five of the afternoon, the Admiral remained in his state-room, closeted with certain of his captains, and denying himself to all save those who came to him on important military business, as when the officers composing the Court Martial came to bring him their report. My Lady was on the poop, as I have occasion to know, for I was in attendance on her. Sir William remained in his cabin. He had, I fancy, been thrown a good deal into contact with the Prince, and was inexpressibly pained; though, knowing him to be a double-dyed villain, it did not seem possible for him to interfere.

My Lady too was very much affected: not that I think she had any great liking for the Prince, for he was of a dour disposition, but because she had a generous, sympathetic woman's heart. Twice she attempted the Admiral's state-room, but was denied by the sentry; and when Captain Hardy came on the poop to give some order, she had a long and earnest conversation with him, which I took to be entreaty that he should carry her intercession to the Admiral—and this though Caracciolo was the worst enemy of the great Queen, for whom My Lady had such a passionate attachment. Perhaps I am wrong in imagining that she was interceding; but this I know, that she could not have influenced the Admiral in the pronouncing of the sentence, because she never saw him from the time that Caracciolo was brought on board, which was before she had left her cabin in the morning, until after the execution had been carried out.

The Admiral has been much blamed for this same execution of Caracciolo; though we who were present on the fleet and, above all, those who were on the flag-ship, do not see how, with the rules he had laid down for the Service, he could have acted otherwise.

It is most instructive and convincing to read what the Journal says upon this much debated point. The Admiral seems to have had either an instinct that the virulent enemies to whom his success was such a disappointment would fasten on this execution for what is called a "cry"; or perhaps, and more probably, he is only recording the struggle which he had with his own humane spirit.

After recounting the circumstances of his having been brought on board, and of the ordering of his trial, and his sentencing, and the carrying out of the sentence, with the brevity of a ship's journal, he continues:—

Extract from the Admiral's Journal, June 29th.

"I am much exercised over this matter of Caracciolo, but I have done my duty.

"If an English officer had behaved like Caracciolo—if, for instance, Captain Foote, when left behind by Captain Troubridge, on the latter's departure to Maritimo, had acted as Caracciolo did and fired upon the English flag, or even upon the flag of the Two Sicilies, could any one doubt that I should have court-martialled him, and hung him on the spot? Well, I am Commander-in-chief of the Two Sicilies as well as the English here; and Caracciolo being a Sicilian subject made this difference only: that I had him tried by a Court Martial composed of Sicilians alone, not using my authority as Commander-in-chief, except to declare the verdict of the Court. So Caracciolo had in effect a further chance to what an English officer would have had.

"And this Caracciolo was a most double-dyed villain. Ever one of the most disaffected nobles, he did accompany the Royal Family in their flight from Naples to Palermo, as I firmly believe, to see if he could carry the seeds of treason from Naples to Sicily. Finding that the Sicilians, from their hereditary hatred of the French, and because of the continued presence of an English squadron, were not to be

involved in the infamous Parthenopean Republic, he applied to their Majesties for leave to return to Naples 'because his property was in danger.' As soon as he got there the French relieved him of all his property, save his land (which would have remained to him in any case had he continued loyal), and subjected him to all the indignities of mounting sentry and the like, which in their scorn and perfidy they imposed upon the other traitors; and this they did out of consideration for his being their ally and a good Republican, instead of worse things, such as death or torture, which they reserved for the Royalists.

"In spite of these indignities he became an out-and-out Frenchman, which men found so difficult to believe of a Commodore in His Sicilian Majesty's Navy. Troubridge himself wrote to me on April 18th: 'I enclose your Lordship one of Caracciolo's letters as head of the Marine. I hope he has been forced into this measure. . . . Caracciolo, I am assured by all the sailors, *is not a Jacobin*, but forced to act as he does. . . They sign his name to printed papers without his authority, as they have, in my opinion, the Archbishop's.' That was on April 18th; but on May 1st Troubridge wrote again: 'I am now satisfied that Caracciolo is a Jacobin. I enclose you one of his letters. He came in the gunboats to Castel-a-mare, himself, and spirited up the Jacobins; though he seems to have had so much conscience left that he saved Sorrento and Castel-a-mare from being burnt, after they had been taken and plundered.

"This is all bad enough, but there was worse to follow. For on the 28th of May Capt. Foote wrote to me: 'Caracciolo threatens the second attack, and on the 13th his gunboats annoyed the Royalist forces attacking the fort of Villema and the bridge of Madelena a good deal.' Caracciolo had thus fired repeatedly upon his Sovereign's flag, and was by everybody recognised as the Commander of the Rebel Navy. His condemnation therefore was inevitable.

“ I should not be surprised if some one were put up by an enemy to ask why I ordered the sentence to be carried into immediate execution. It may be said that there is no parallel to be drawn between this and Admiral Lord St. Vincent's instant execution of two seamen taken in the act of mutiny. There was more than a parallel—there was necessity. The situation, which has been blinked at by some, is that there are in the Neapolitan State a vast number of persons neither actively loyal nor actually indisposed to the Crown, whose main idea is to save their skins and their own goods, and if they can, get as much as possible of other people's. So far, the lesson before these jackals has been that to be loyal means exposing yourself to every kind of danger and ignominy, and the almost certainty of being abandoned to your enemies without a finger raised to save you or punish evil doers ; while if you are disloyal, though you may be plundered and ill-treated by your new allies, you are not in danger of death or torture, nor precluded from robbing, maiming or slaying your private enemies. Every coward, therefore, and that means a large proportion of the population of Naples, feels bound to be a rebel ; and the little risk there might have been attached to rebellion is removed by the treachery of the Royal commanders, who, having no foreigners at their elbows, are indulging in the other Neapolitan weakness of selling their country. All the way along it is ‘ Heads, I win ; Tails, you lose,’ against the loyal, until the belief begins to grow that nothing serious can happen to a rebel. It is to combat this feeling that I dealt sharp swift justice to Caracciolo. I wish the rebels to know that those who are caught red-handed will be executed before they have time to buy their escapes ; and this effect I hope it will have, coupled with the proclamation I have drawn up :—

“ ‘ Foudroyant,’ NAPLES BAY, 29th June, 1799.

“ ‘ Horatio, Lord Nelson, Admiral of the British Fleet in the

Bay of Naples, gives notice to all those who have served as officers, Civil or Military, in the service of the infamous Neapolitan Republic, that if, in the space of twenty-four hours for those who are in the City of Naples, and forty-eight hours for those who are within five miles of it, they do not give themselves up to the clemency of the King, to the Officer commanding the Castles of Uovo and Nuovo, that Lord Nelson will consider them still as in rebellion, and enemies of His Sicilian Majesty.'

"I was glad to see that the Prince had the honour not to claim to be included in that infamous capitulation; for I hear, by all accounts, that he was out of the Castle before Foote signed at all. In his plea for mercy to the Duke of Calviranno he rested his plea entirely on his former services, without allusion to the capitulation; and though he showed a brave man's firmness during his actual examination, gaining thereby the esteem of such of my officers as were present—the ward-room, as customary, being open to whoso chose to enter—he made at least three attempts to throw himself upon my mercy, which shows that he would willingly have saved his life if he could.

"In the period between the passing of the sentence and its carrying out, he was in the charge of Lieut. Parkinson and a guard; and at his request Lieut. Parkinson came to me first to demand a second trial, and afterwards that he might be shot. I was much moved by the wording of his second application: 'I am an old man, Sir,' he said to Lieut. Parkinson; 'I leave no family to lament my death—I therefore cannot be supposed to be very anxious about prolonging my life, but the disgrace of being hanged is dreadful to me.' Fortunately I remembered that the excuse upon which he had obtained leave from the King to return to Naples was that his property might not be confiscated *and his family ruined*. I was therefore able to do my duty and reply—'Caracciolo has been fairly tried by the officers of his own country; I cannot interfere.' But he

had so worked upon Lieut. Parkinson that, with a disregard of etiquette for which I forgave him, he repeated Caracciolo's request. I had some difficulty in doing my own duty and bidding him—'Go, Sir, and attend to your duty.'

"Caracciolo then, I am told, as a last hope, asked Lieut. Parkinson whether he thought an application to Lady Hamilton would be beneficial; upon which that officer went to the quarter-deck, but I am thankful was not able to meet with her. For this is what I dreaded. Dear Emma has such a soft heart that, having known the Prince as a friend, even his perfidy and wickedness to her beloved monarch might not have been able to shut up her bowels of compassion. For this reason I sat in my state-room with the door guarded by a sentry, and would see none but my officers until the sentence had been carried out. And I allowed time for Caracciolo to be stone dead before I would see Emma. From the hour that he was brought on board in the morning, I could not trust myself with her tender heart.

"Knowing well the objection of a British Government to its officers being mixed up with foreign executions, I nevertheless gave orders for a Court Martial of Sicilian officers to be assembled on this ship for the trial of Caracciolo, for several reasons. In the first place, the good King had made me his Commander-in-chief of the whole expedition or campaign for the reconquest of Naples; and it therefore fell on me to take the steps to show the rebels that leading against their King would be visited with condign and summary punishment. It was necessary that the trial should take place, if anywhere, on a British ship, both for the prisoner and for his King. For the prisoner, because he had already been nigh torn to pieces by the Royalists, maddened by their wrongs; and for the King, because no Neapolitan, when left to himself, can be relied on not to sell his country. As to the other reason advanced, for its not being held on *La Minerva*—that it would have been

dangerous to have ordered a Court Martial to assemble on her, from the love which Sicilian seamen bore to Caracciolo, and the fear of mutiny—it is not to be entertained, when *La Minerva* was under the guns of a British ship. I am convinced we had nothing but treachery to fear. Besides, though the *Foudroyant* is a ship belonging to His Britannic Majesty, it is also, for the time being, the seat of the Neapolitan Government. To the prisoner, at all events, trial on a British ship was an advantage, for where there were a number of British officers with free access to the trial, there could be no question of unfairness or violence.

“The prisoner, I am told, objected that Count Thurn, the senior Sicilian officer, who presided over the trial, was his personal enemy; which Count Thurn, as Commander of the Sicilian Navy, could not fail to be to a rebel. And as Commander of the Sicilian Navy it was impossible for him not to preside at the Court Martial. None of my officers who could speak Italian considered that Thurn showed the slightest unfairness; they were all agreed that Caracciolo bore himself well from the point of courage, but that his answers were vague, and supported by no evidence whatever—the last efforts of a man striving to save his life.

“He claimed that he had been forced into the Republican service, had been compelled to perform the duty of a common soldier for a considerable time, when he was offered the command of the Republican Neapolitan Navy, *which necessity alone had at length compelled him to accept*. But it was clearly demonstrated that he had enjoyed opportunities of escaping, and on frequently being asked why he had not embraced these opportunities, no satisfactory reply was made. His silence on the point when his life was at stake can only be attributed to his conviction that he had no right whatever to claim protection from the capitulation. In all circumstances men are likely to be competent judges of what may best conduce to their

own safety; and it is perfectly incredible that, if Caracciolo thought himself entitled to the benefit of the capitulation, he would not have referred to it.

“The prisoner was charged with rebellion against his lawful Sovereign, and for firing at his colours, hoisted on board his frigate *The Minerva*. He stood further guilty of killing and wounding the subjects, both of his own Sovereign and His Britannic Majesty. When the court was cleared and sentence of death passed on the prisoner, it was duly transmitted to me by the President. I issued the order for its being carried into execution on the same evening at five, at which time he was removed from the *Foudroyant* and hanged at the fore yard-arm of the Neapolitan frigate *La Minerva*.

“I was shocked for Caracciolo, not sorry, for he was a traitor, and, as such, died the death. But that any man, after living for seventy years and serving his country faithfully (which here means only until temptation arises) for forty of them, should from fear of death, or as he confessed, from fear of the loss of property, turn traitor, seems to me so terrible that I own that his being hanged for it is less shocking to me than his offence.”

One more brief extract I must give from the Journal—the last, I think, which will enter into this narrative from these remarkable volumes. I give it because it was written on the same night as the foregoing, and therefore goes to prove that the Admiral regarded the execution of Caracciolo as a plain ordinary duty upon which his mind was perfectly made up. Which being over, he turned for relief to her he loved best in the world, whose gracious sympathy had so often been his haven of refuge when he was overwrought.

“*June 29th.*—Since I wrote the above I have been

walking the deck under the beautiful Neapolitan night with dear Emma. It makes one sad to think what these nights—as beautiful as anything under Heaven—have seen. To-night I would not think: I gave myself up to the soothingness of her light hand within my arm; I have no doubts now of the innocence and beneficence of this friendship. Innocence does not signify abstinence, but the absence of that which is bad for one. And how could such a friendship be bad? The affection and sympathy of a good woman are the best gifts that God bestows upon man. To man it is appointed to go forth into the vineyard to work, and to fight if need be, and woman is given to him to make him a home. For a home lies not in the four walls of a palace, or a cottage, but in the woman's heart who makes of mere wood and stone an abode of rest and happiness."

CHAPTER XXVI.—Of the strange Plight in which Will found Katherine.

WILL had the good fortune to be among the seamen and marine forces landed under Captain Troubridge to reduce the strong Citadel of St. Elmo, which dominates all the city of Naples, and which, though it had only five hundred French within it, rendered the occupation of the said city, and the return of the King, impracticable until it should be reduced.

The day after the execution of that long-time traitor Caracciolo, we began operations in good earnest by mounting the two heavy pieces on the landward side of the Castle of Uovo, for the reduction of a battery and small fort which stood on the summit of the highest rock on the sea face of Naples, known as the Pizzofalcone—that being necessary both for the safe occupation of the Castle of Uovo, and because it was the best point for playing on the Citadel. This was our first advance, and from that we won our way a few yards at a time up the tremendous hill on which the Castle of St. Elmo stands, as it were, right on the top of the monastery of S. Martino.

The last position we carried was a little *fortalice* or outwork on the brow of the hill; and we had not fired above a few shots when they signalled to parley, and in due time a Neapolitan officer appeared, for it was in the hands of the Jacobins, and not of the French, who were all

within the Citadel. His message put Captain Troubridge in rather a dilemma. He would have nothing but unconditional surrender from rebels.

“That’s mighty fine,” said the Neapolitan, through Will ; “but as we neither desire to take away our cannon nor our ammunition, and should be well content to leave our small arms with them, if it were not for the ‘Christian army’ who are scouring the country, hunting us down like wild beasts, and not above torturing us when they find us, you are hardly in a position to prevent us slipping away. The only question is whether we are to have time to pack the poor possessions which are all we have left between us and starvation in these stormy times ? ”

Our commander assured him once more that it was not in his power to accept anything but unconditional surrender.

“May I make a suggestion, Signor Capitano ?” asked the officer, who was a gentleman and of good family.

“I cannot prevent that,” said Captain Troubridge, rather roughly, for he had an inborn mistrust of Neapolitans, whom he hated nearly as badly as the French, I verily believe for the change that had come over the Admiral at Naples. Also he suspected the messenger of being, like most of them, a wily coward who wished to come round him with an oily tongue. He was one of the bravest men that ever lived ; and when it came to dealing with French and Jacobins, who had been guilty of so many excesses in cold blood, he wanted no parleying or treaties, but to lead storming parties that asked and received no quarter. The chicanery of the South Italians maddened and disgusted him.

“I have your permission, sir ?” said the officer, with studied courtesy ; and when our commander growled assent, he simply said, “On my honour as a gentleman, I would advise you to fire past the fort from the moment the white flag goes down until it is hoisted again, and then to send a

party of occupation as fast as their legs can carry them ; and also to observe the little window to the left of the passage leading up from the gate, which shall have a handkerchief showing at it."

Captain Troubridge had an eye for a true man, and recognised that he was talking to one ; so he replied : " I do not think that we shall be firing at your fort for the next hour or so."

" And I for my part," rejoined the Neapolitan, " can assure you that if we perceive that, deeming us unworthy of your newly mounted heavy ordnance, which could reduce us to ashes in a few minutes, you are finding the range for St. Elmo, no guns will be fired by us to provoke you."

With that he took his leave ; and though the grim captain could not bring himself to pay the same marks of respect to a rebel as he would to a proper enemy come on such an errand, I could see his face soften when the other's back was turned.

It was not an hour—though it seemed several—before the white flag, which had been hauled down as soon as the messenger regained the fort, ran up again ; and instantly the boarding party—for such in fact it was—dashed across a kind of garden, which had at its end zigzag paths and steps carved in the rock ; the officer having as he went out volunteered to show Will, who had acted as interpreter, this short cut, telling him that it would be mighty important for the occupying party not to lose a minute of time in taking possession.

" I would willingly have told you more, sir," he added ; " but I have some pride left in my misfortunes, and your commander's attitude makes it impossible for me to mention that which was the chief part of our terms."

By Captain Troubridge's leave, Will, who had no fear, accompanied him alone, it being undesirable to draw

attention ; nor was he in any great danger so long as he was with the officer who had borne the flag of truce, or afterwards, but from a chance musket-shot fired by some rebel too insubordinate to obey his officers.

Even in the short while that Will was away the occupying party had been formed, headed by Captain Troubridge himself, who had divined from the brave officer's manner that there was an affair of grave importance in the air. The garrison kept their word about doing nothing to draw our fire. Presently Will returned, and led the party to the appointed place, where they were sheltered from observation of the sentries by a little grove of orange trees, and could yet see the flagstaff. As soon as the white flag ran up, they dashed through one of the ornamental gardens which the Italians fashion so quaintly out of the sides of rocks, paying little heed, you may be sure, to shrubs or statues, but with their eyes bent on the breastwork at the top of the zigzag paths they had to climb, from which they as good as expected a sharp fusillade or a volley of boulders. But the officer had kept his word, and they gained the breastwork uninjured, finding its gate open. It was a very few yards from this to the fort, where likewise they found the gate open and no guards ; but from which they could hear the sounds of an angry tumult and one or two shots. Drawing pistols, and gripping swords and cutlasses, they were led at a rush up the steep slippery stone incline from the gate into the interior of the fort ; and there they came upon a mob of Jacobins of the lower class who were battering at a door and firing from time to time at a little window, fortunately high up, from which was waving a handkerchief. In an instant Captain Troubridge and Vassall and Will, who were leading our column, were slashing among them, driving straight for such as were armed with muskets or pistols.

The white flag, it will be remembered, was not in sign of surrender, but in sign that the fort had been abandoned; Captain Troubridge having refused to make any kind of terms beyond the announcement that for such a space of time he should not be firing in that direction; and the officer having hinted plainly that he should not be able to enforce the withdrawal of certain of his men.

In a very short space these men were all slain or had laid down their arms; and then the sailors commenced battering in the doors with a light brass gun which they took off its carriage and slung in cords—an expedient which had fortunately not occurred to the rebels, who, disarmed and under guard, watched the operations sullenly.

No sooner had they delivered a batter or two, and a third would have done the business, than they heard an English voice from within—a gruff voice, which called—

“Hi there! An English storming party?”

“Yes,” shouted a dozen voices.

“Heads, then! the key is coming out of the window;” and out came a great rusty key above a foot long, which looked as if it had been made for centuries; but the lock was too battered for the key to turn, and the cry went back—

“Stand clear while we stove the door in!”

But the Captain stopped them, and called out—

“You there, inside, is there room to stand clear?”

“Aye, aye,” said the gruff voice; and they thought it must be a sailor, though they had no note of any captured ones.

“Are you ready?” rang out the Captain’s voice.

“Aye, aye.”

“All together!” The gun swung well back, and coming against the door like a Roman battering-ram, carried away the staple of the lock.

“Now then, my man, come out,” said the Captain; but his face suddenly changed in blank astonishment, and he

drew himself up and saluted, as stump, stump, on the stone flags came into view His Majesty's Admiral the Lord Eastry; and even blanker was his astonishment when the old Lord was followed by Katherine.

Her beautiful face was certainly anxious, but her healthy cheeks were not blanched, and fear had not robbed her of the uprightness of her carriage.

To her father death was a commonplace. He had faced it times countless, when he had all his life before him; and now it was near its end, and he had his dearest possession to defend. He had, I noticed, a sword, and a pistol of foreign make.

Captain Troubridge, having sent round search parties and satisfied himself that there were no ambuscades, was cheerily making his excuses for not recognising his lordship, when the old Admiral called out—

“God bless my soul, there's Will! Come here, my boy.”

Will had been very much “on duty,” for he was crushed with shamefacedness before Katherine. He looked for leave to the Captain, who with one of his great laughs said that the Admiral was the senior officer present.

Will came forward, and the old man in his heartiness did not note the ashamedness of Will's handshake. Will's respectful silence was rather what you would have looked for in him.

“What d'ye think I have here, Will?—here's Kitty!”

Katherine came forward, perfectly self-possessed, and with a gentle welcome.

“Oh, Will, I am glad to see you. How thankful I shall always be that you were one of our preservers!”

“I wish I could have died for you,” he cried, with passionate earnestness.

“She'd rather you lived for her,” grunted her father.

Will felt that he had no right to be so sure of this.

“My Lord,” began Captain Troubridge, “since you know

Lieutenant Hardres, I shall with your permission detail him for attendance on you. I shall shortly, when my main body arrives by the carriage road with the stores, have a meal to offer you ; and, judging by the dungeon in which you have been confined, I expect you need it."

The chamber they had lately quitted was certainly poor accommodation for an old lord and a young lady ; for it was not a dozen feet long or much over half a dozen feet wide, and was lighted only by a very small barred window near the vaulted roof, and paved with dirty flagstones. It was indeed a sort of strong store-room, generally used for provisions of a less perishable kind, and a few barrels were still about, on one of which Katherine had stood while she was waving her handkerchief—the prearranged signal.

"Kitty is as good as a boy, after all, Will," said his Lordship, with the greatest pride, and to Will's pride too, though he was so disconcerted. "First she stood the fire of the great guns lately mounted on your works down there, and they knocked our feeble walls about to some tune ; and then she first held her handkerchief, and then bound it to the bars under a dropping fire of musketry from those gallant gentry you have out there. With my legs you know I could no more reach the top of a barrel than a mast-head."

Will's eyes were full of pride and admiration.

"Do you mind telling me how you got here, my Lord ?" asked Captain Troubridge.

"I'm d—d if I quite know, except how we got into this last hole. We were put there as a favour."

"A curious sort of favour," said Captain Troubridge.

"Oh, we haven't been locked up here for a month on the bread and water of affliction," retorted Katherine gaily. "The fact is, Captain Troubridge," she said, suddenly growing serious, "that our lives have been saved, and we have been spared not only outrages but discomforts by the

chivalrousness of the gentleman who brought the flag of truce to you ; and I was hoping that you would have come to terms with him, so that we could have informed you in his presence of all he has done for us."

The Captain was moved, but silent. He had obeyed his orders ; and it was not his way to throw the blame on them.

"You tell him the rest, father," said Katherine, a little nettled, perhaps : "people always suspect a woman of putting a better or worse complexion on everything."

"Well, d—n it," he said, "there isn't much to say, except that at first every one hoped to be at war with the French without the French knowing it, and then found the French at war with him without his knowing it. And that's how we were in for it. That miserable shilly-dallying Emperor thought he could avoid war with the the French, but he was only letting them choose their own time ; and when they chose it we were at Vienna, for the doctors had recommended a change for Kitty. How we were to get out of it was the puzzle, for the French seemed to be everywhere between us and England. We stayed on for weeks to find out ; and last of all there seemed no better way than to make our way to Trieste—that was all through territory at present unoccupied by the enemy—and take ship there for Naples (which we were told had been recovered and was under the guns of the British fleet) ; and from thence make our way to England by the first of His Majesty's ships which was going home. We did not attempt the Strait of Messina, because there was no sea room to cut and run if we met an enemy, and we gave Sicily a wide berth for the same reason ; and finally we made the Bay of Naples at the very time when you had called the blockading squadron off to Maritimo from the intelligence of the French fleet having passed the Straits. There were a few small English

craft patrolling, but in the thick weather we missed them, and ran into the midst of Commodore Caracciolo's gunboats. Fortunately we fell into the hands of the Count of Tanagra, who came to see you this morning, a very brave and chivalrous man reduced to a great state of hopelessness from having been induced to embrace the pernicious revolutionary doctrines of the wicked French by the frightful abuses which have been going on in these kingdoms unknown to their Majesties. But he has found that no country in the world could be in so vile a state, under the worst of kings, as under these robbers and murderers; and he and the best of those with him would gladly have left the French and rejoined their Majesties if they could have come to terms."

"The Admiral's orders, my Lord, were most positive, not to make any terms with the rebels but unconditional surrender; and I think that anything but hanging is too good for a man who fires upon his own flag."

"Agreed, agreed," cried his Lordship. "Agreed: I am not the one to advance that when a king leaves his country the inhabitants should ally themselves with the invaders, though I am convinced that this Count of Tanagra, who is a brave gentleman, honestly thought so. And as most of these d—d little Italian states are for ever being taken by a new master, there is something in his view of the case."

"I can't see it," said Troubridge. "Why don't they fight like men, and maintain their independence against all comers, instead of for ever betraying the weakening power?"

"With you there; but it's just what they can't do. These fellows have no fight in them, but when they have a strong foreigner at their back. They are mere camp-followers. The army has to be supplied from elsewhere."

"They aren't worth thinking about, my Lord: the only

thing to do is to catch the traitors who have led them and string them up; and I should like to tie every one of them up to the gratings before I hung them."

"But I wish something could be done for this Count of Tanagra. He was a brave man, though misguided, and could have brought the best of those who were with him back to be faithful servants of the King; they have seen too much of the French ever to want any more of them. The first thing the French did was to strip their own friends of nearly everything they possessed to satisfy the greed of their soldiers, till they should have time to conquer their enemies."

"You can't trust them, my Lord; you can't trust any of them."

"I have pretty good reason for trusting this one. I suspect we owe our lives to him; and he certainly saved my daughter from the insults of the French."

"Indeed, the kindness of this gentleman knew no bounds," burst in Katherine, "for he kept us prisoners for our own safety in his palace. He was living in his own palace until the city was invested by the fleet; and then, for our greater safety, he bore us first to one of the castles, and, when they were bombarded, up to this fortress—for the French would not have anything but French in the Citadel itself."

"Quite right too," snorted out our Captain; "a Neapolitan would sell his own home to the enemy."

"Well, when he came down to you this morning he was hoping to have made terms with you, by which he, and those of his mind, could have returned to the service of their Majesties, and kept us in safety until they were strengthened by the forces from the ships. But since you would grant no terms, and he had no mercy to hope from those of the King's party to whom he was well known as the most daring of the gunboat officers, he had to save

himself and his comrades by marching out before you came in."

"My dear young lady, in the time of war we can only deal with general rules, and not particular instances. I am convinced that our great Admiral is right in proclaiming no terms for the Jacobins, or in this land of liars there would not be a rebel to hang in all Naples."

"*He* is no Jacobin," she said hotly. "I have had many conversations with him since I have been his prisoner." (She had her Italian from Will's mother, which accounted partly for another circumstance.)

"In any case," said her father, "he treated us with the utmost consideration. We were his guests rather than his prisoners, though indeed we were safer as the latter. He even concealed from his men my rank in His Majesty's service, which he had had from my daughter in conversation, fearing that he might not be able to protect a British Admiral, though it came near to being worse that I was an English lord. For on the approach of Admiral Lord Nelson and his fleet, when it became certain that the city must fall, the common sort among his men, who are pure brigands, announced their intention of carrying us off to the mountains, and on the pain of death to me (which would doubtless have been suggested by a present of my ears) and selling my daughter to the French, extracting a great ransom. To cut a long story short, and knowing the unbending character of yourself and Nelson, we had many conversations through my daughter, and the best that could be done for us seemed to be that he should come to you as he came, and in the event of failure should, after warning you to take possession in the shortest possible time, lock us up in the store-room where you found us, pass the key in through the window, and endeavour to frighten the baser sort of his men into flying with him, without thought of us. But he warned us, in case of

accidents, not to attempt to let ourselves out until we heard the voices of the English force, and then to show a white handkerchief and parley."

"So ho!" ejaculated the Captain.

"Our precautions nearly cost us our liberty. The Count had become extremely attached to my daughter, and she was in such peril when these heavy guns of yours began to play on this old cockleshell—though I must say she stood fire like a man while it was being knocked to pieces over our heads—that he begged you not to fire while he was evacuating. This encouraged the brigands to steal back again as soon as they had evacuated, and search the fort. Fortunately for us they were some time in finding us, and the door was very strong."

"You have forgotten, father, that he gave you back your sword and one of his two pistols before he locked us up."

"Yes, that he did: a pistol for Kitty to use on them or herself, and my sword that I might end as most of us Fleets have ended; and, egad! I am glad that we were captured to know what a daughter I have, for it has been a bitter thing to me that the last of the Fleets should be a woman. But the way she stood the cannonade, even that did not come up to her conduct in the store-room. As soon as they found us out and began their assault on the door, leaping on a barrel she flew her white flag at the window. They yelled out their '*Buono! buono!*' and bade us open. We took no notice, and they became furious; and then first one and then another fired at the flag she was holding. None of the balls hit her, though she had some nasty cuts from stone splinters; but the fire became so hot that she had to tie the handkerchief to the bars, which she did without further hurt, though they fired at her all the time she was tying it. And then you came."

"Madam," said our famous Captain Troubridge, unbuckling his sword-belt, "I hope I may be permitted";

and with that he advanced to her and presented his sword.

Katherine blushed with pleasure, and found a happy way out of her embarrassment by passing the belt twice round her own waist and getting the buckle to meet; while Captain Troubridge put on the cutlass of one of our men, the only one who had been hurt in the short *mêlée*.

Then an escort was sent under Lieutenant Vassall's command—for Will was in attendance on Admiral the Lord Eastry—to conduct the rescued prisoners to the Castel dell' Uovo until word could be got off to the flagship about them. They got there without mishap, though Will would have been mighty glad to have changed places with Vassall. He had no desire for conversation yet; and for guarding Katherine, Vassall was quite sufficiently near.

Arrived at the Castle, Lord Eastry and his daughter were conducted to the Governor's apartments, which had a flat roof, where there was mounted a powerful glass beside our lately added heavy ordnance.

What happened thereafter I had from Will, and have heard with much more humour, since their happy marriage, from Katherine. I don't know by what chance or design his lordship stumped up to the roof alone—a difficult matter for him; but certain it is that very soon after their arrival Will found himself subjected to the severest fire of the whole campaign in a *tête-à-tête* with Katherine.

Katherine came straight to him with both hands outstretched. He took them, and held her at arms' length.

"Well, Will, aren't you going to kiss me? Is this what the dying away of letters meant?"

He hung his head, and did not speak for a little, while Katherine in all the glory of her fairness regarded him in a rather mystified, rather hurt, but wholly affectionate way, instead of with offended pride, as he had hoped in his self-degradation. Now that he saw his betrothed before him,

in her superb health, and with the pride natural to the daughter and heir of a wealthy peer, tempered by honest affection—now, while he had still burning in his brain the remembrance, only an hour or two old, of the slim young beauty showing under fire the courage of her sea-dog forefathers—the image of poor Rusidda faded away. But as the sweet Indian fruit leaves behind it an evil taste, the infidelity to Katherine in having loved Rusidda left a memory as bitter as wormwood.

At last he spoke. "I am not fit to kiss you, Kitty Fleet: I have been living for the love of another woman."

"What do you mean, Will?" she asked, with burning cheeks. As he did not answer she continued, "I suppose all men are alike when they are long away, though I thought you would have been disdainful of that. I think I can forgive, though I am foolish enough to be disappointed. But you will not see her again?"

"She is dead, poor soul."

"Death wipes out all debts, even of a life like hers."

"I pray so," he said, and then, in his turn, fired up to the roots of his hair. "Kitty, is it possible that you could have thought that of me?" he asked, as a new light broke upon him.

"I forgave you; but oh, Will, I am glad it was not that."

"Nay, I think it was worse—I forgot you, and loved her with all my heart and soul."

Katherine, as she has often told Cecilia, looked at Will, and felt her heart soften. Will's mother had told her how lightly their vows lay on Italian wives; and she felt how Will's fair English face, with its beauty and its haughtiness and its courageousness, must have appealed to such women. She could imagine a tender, lovely wife, who in England would have been beyond the reach of temptation—some woman perhaps supremely lovable—yearning to youth so

godlike, and she forgave her the wrong done to his betrothed.

“Did you bring her trouble, Will?”

“But once—with a sorry jest of proposing for her hand.” He told her of his escapade at Syracuse.

“And then she married some man she did not love?”

“She never married.”

“And yet——?”

“Never—never, Kitty. But afterwards I longed for her as my wife, and begged and prayed her, and tried with my whole heart and strength to will her into marrying me. For weeks and weeks I have lived for nothing else.”

“And you failed because she was the Princess of Favara and you only a lieutenant in His Majesty’s Navy?”

“Nay, not that, Kitty. Rusidda loved me more than a brother, and loved that I should love her; let me be with her and caress her as much as I would; prayed that I might make her love me enough to marry me,—to marry me would have been to conquer herself.”

“Why, then, did she not marry you? All the love in life would have come afterwards.”

“Can you not see, Kitty, that there was another, whom she could not marry, and that it was from this passion that she sought to save herself?”

“And could you not save her, Will?” asked Katherine, with a lump in her throat, and wondering how a passionate woman could have resisted his suit.

He shook his head.

“And did she die of shame?”

“There was no shame—except my shame in having lived for her pure caresses. She killed herself for love.”

“What manner of man was he, this man, who took away her eyes for you, Will? Was he of mighty stature, or born to the mastery of women?”

“He was a little plain man, with one eye and one arm,

who was born to the mastery of every man or woman who ever came under his magic influence."

"A little man no bigger than Admiral Nelson?"

"A little man no bigger than the Admiral."

"It was he?"

He nodded.

"And did he know of it?"

Will told her of the interview we had involuntarily witnessed.

"And you say she is dead?"

"That is the saddest of all. The Princes of Favara were of the ancient family of Mardolce, so called from the little lake of good water which was the most valued possession of the Norman founder of their family—a mere pond now. There was a prophecy that the last of the race should perish through the love of a fair-haired stranger from the North; and the sweetest woman of Sicily, the last of her race, drowned herself in the Mardolce for love of the Admiral."

"Did every one know it?—had it become a scandal?"

"No; only he and My Lady, and Trinder, who sent me up word, knew of the cause, when the news was brought to the flagship by the *Sirena* from Palermo yesterday. She had, it seems, begged the Admiral to bring her in the *Foudroyant* with the Hamiltons, when he left Palermo for Naples two or three weeks since; and, when he refused, she humbled her pride and begged my Lady Hamilton, whom she hated, as her worst enemy, and despised, to intercede for her. My Lady is generous, and used her utmost entreaties—though she knew the reason—but in vain; and the next day after we sailed poor Rusidda was found in the Mardolce," replied Will, very white.

Presently, when he had recovered himself a little, Katherine, who had heard no rumours, asked, "And Lady Hamilton—what of her?"

To which Will replied stoutly, "The Admiral loves her," and from that he would not be budged.

While Katherine had been questioning him of Donna Rusidda and the Admiral, Will had forgotten his ashamedness a little, and no longer held her at arms' length, but by the hands loosely.

By the slightest movement, she was holding his hands, instead of he hers. But the movement was full of consciousness.

"Will," she said, forcing him to raise responding eyes, "do you love me now?"

"With all the strength of shame, Kitty, and before everything in the world. But can you forgive?"

"You haven't kissed me yet, Will!"

"I will not write down what Katherine said when, loverlike, he insisted upon going over all his iniquities again, to be forgiven in detail. For all her life was a forgiveness. And how wisely the wench did, for with whom could she have known such proud happiness as with Will? He has had eyes for no other woman since—not even for their lovely daughter, who is by just a look of her father the more regal of the two women.

And she—she has had the greatest pride that life can give a woman: the double knowledge that she does not fear the proud, grim, masterful man whom one can hardly meet without being daunted, she who has to face him in all his moods, and to stand between him and his wrath; and that though they have been married these twenty years, her favour is of such moment to him that he will pause in his anger to win a gracious look.

I could fill another book with the stories of the neighbours about the noble fashion in which Katherine comforted herself during Will's long absences at sea for years after this; of the gaiety of heart and graciousness which she

maintained with a spotless reputation. It was in those years, through ten of their dozen, that she was in London, one of the rulers of society, and the most courted of women, keeping house with Will's mother for her father. But when her father died she went down to Eastry to mourn him, nor ever came to London again without her husband.

In the year 1817 his own dear mother, who in the midst of her daughter-in-law's triumphs had remained as simple and quietly beautiful as a Kentish primrose, died in Will's arms, a week or so after he had homed from one of his cruises; and Will, having compassion on Katherine's widowed state, and having himself made a goodly fortune out of prize money, in addition to the great fortune they had of her father, retired to their mansion-house of Eastry, where we were sitting that morning when we were brought that wonderful Journal of the Admiral.

CHAPTER XXVII.—Of the Death of Donna Rusidda, the Resurrection of Caracciolo, and the Happy Ending.

THE 12th of July, 1799, is a day I can never forget, for on it happened two events, one shocking and one surprising, to the last degree.

The Admiral had gone to bed the night before more dejected than I ever knew him ; for though he had had the honour to receive His Majesty on board, and the executive officers of the Government, to take up their official residence there, until such time as St. Elmo should have fallen and Naples be safe again for the Royal presence, he was terribly cast down by a piece of news which came by the same frigate that had brought His Majesty, and which I found the means to send on to Will. The Queen had not been suffered to accompany the King. That great Sovereign was left to eat her heart out in disgrace, nominally for the misfortunes into which her headlong recourse to arms in the November before had plunged her kingdom, really because General Acton, who accompanied His Majesty, found that by using the King as a tool against her he himself had the ruling of the kingdom instead of taking his orders from her.

It was thought very strange that one of the Queen's ladies—the Princess of Favara, Donna Rusidda—should make urgent and repeated applications to accompany the Court to Naples, though Her Majesty was not suffered to go. Her applications were consequently refused, and the

convoy, guarded by His Majesty's frigate the *Sea-Horse*, Captain Foote ; and His Sicilian Majesty's frigate the *Sirena*, which had the King on board, started without her. But since convoys sail very slowly, they were overtaken by a light vessel, with some despatches for His Majesty ; and with the despatches came the melancholy news that the Princess had been found dead in the Mardolce lake. The business of receiving the Court on board was over, and I was standing in attendance on the Admiral, when up comes My Lady, evidently with something grave on her mind. I was about to take my leave when the Admiral motioned me to stay. Indeed, privacy on the flagship there was none to be had, except by turning the King out of the Admiral's state-room. What with the Court and its hangers-on, and officers from the squadron with various business, the ship had about double her complement on board, though at bedtime they grew a little less from the sheer want of room to lie down. It was evening, but we were close to a lantern, whose light fell on the faces of My Lady and the Admiral, though so little on mine that perhaps they forgot me.

"Nelson," began My Lady, with blunt words but the gentlest and most engaging manner, "were you in love with little Rusidda, that I came upon with you that day at the Favara ?"

"Dearest Emma, I never loved any but you—not even, as I know now, Lady Nelson. I never knew what perfect friendship and sympathy was until I met your noble heart, which has filled up all my heart, leaving no space for anything unless it were a child of yours—flesh of your flesh—if you had one."

"I believe it," cried My Lady, with generous quickness, "though I saw your lips upon her forehead, and though she poured her whole heart out to me, poor little thing, when she was begging to be brought."

"I can swear it," he said, "by all that is most holy to me: by my hopes for my country—by anything."

"I am not jealous," she said; "you can be a better lover than I saw then?"

"I do not love her," he said; "though I think she is a sweet, beautiful, gracious, noble woman."

"But I know how she loved you," said My Lady, "for she confessed, and that is why I entreated her to be brought."

I could see that she was in a way jealous, for every look as it were, every little gesture while she was questioning him, had been in the nature of a caress.

"I think it was the purest kind of hero-worship, though she besought me to receive her love—that is to say if I am a hero, and I am sure I doubt it now."

Oblivious of my very existence, My Lady flung her arms round him, and wooed him with those lovely lips, crying "My king of heroes!"

Then she murmured again—"Poor little Rusidda! what a brave, true woman, and the best I think in Sicily!" Then she added aloud, "You are not afraid of death?"

He looked at her inquiringly.

"I am not afraid of my own death," he said, and truly.

"You have seen it in a hundred forms; you have seen your most faithful friends and servants—a handful at a time, perhaps . . .?"

I could see his hand tighten round hers.

"I am a sad coward at that, dearest Emma: I have wept in the midst of victory at a comrade's falling beside me."

"Then, Nelson," she said, "you have need of all your courage now, for the woman who broke her heart for you is dead."

"Dead?" he gasped, almost falling.

"Dead," she repeated. "Do you not remember her saying, 'We Sicilians fear pain, but not death'?"

I do not think I ever saw such a well of silent grief, even in a woman, as there was then in the Admiral for Donna Rusidda. Certain I am that if the spirits of the late departed hover round those they love best on earth, the spirit of Donna Rusidda craved no other monument than those great tears which splashed down on the quarter-deck of the old *Foudroyant*.

And here I may be permitted to digress to say what I saw when, years and years later, Will and Katherine, and my wife—Will's veritable sister, a more imperious but sweeter Will—journeyed to Sicily, a trip on I forget what excuse, the reality being that my wife had a trouble, happily passed, with her lungs, which made Will carry us all off travelling *en prince*, to the serene skies of Palermo. The first thing we did—it was Katherine suggested it, thinking it must be uppermost in Will's heart, and that he, who was still so madly her lover, might hesitate to speak about the other woman—was to ask where we could find Donna Rusidda's grave.

Can it be believed? The landlord of the Prince of Wales's Hotel,* the best in Palermo, was unable to identify the Princess with herself. But on the Sunday a band was playing in the Flora, and we, who had been visiting the palace in which our beloved Admiral had spent so much of his time with the Hamiltons, were drawn to the music in a listless way, and found the crowd collected between the cupola from which the music proceeded and a fountain of white marble in the present Sicilian taste, which is not to be commended, though its parts may be beautiful. It consisted of an oval basin, perhaps a dozen feet across, with various aquatic plants growing in it; and in their midst, with only the head and part of the shoulders out of the water, a carving of a drowned woman with an exquisitely lovely face. And at

* Now the Hotel de France.

one end of the fountain was a column with a broken lyre hanging to it, also of white marble, on which was carved in gold letters :—

“ Rosalia di Mardolce, Princess of Favara. The last fruit of a dry tree.”

Will questioned the people who were about the fountain, such of them as understood Italian. None of them knew much of her, and one and all were under the belief that she was called Rosalia of the Mardolce because she was found drowned in it, and not because it was her name. The Favara, he learned, had fallen hopelessly into decay, and was now merely a storehouse of the farmer who rented the land. And though every woman and child in Palermo knew that the beautiful lady had drowned herself for love, not one of them remembered the name of the lover who had gone away and left her.

My Lady's most solicitous attendance was unable to cheer the Admiral. He retired to bed in the most absolute dejection. He seemed to be almost haunted by an idea that his luck must have died with the death of the loving Rusidda, and with him bodily infirmities always crept in after ailings of the spirit. I was therefore almost terrified by a most untoward event which happened in the morning.

His Majesty had risen very early, and as I noted that he was gazing with intense anxiety at some distant object, I hurried up to the chart-house and procured a glass for him. The moment he put the spy-glass to his eye he turned ghastly pale, and with an exclamation of horror let it fall, clattering on the deck. It was fortunately not injured, and I hastily picked it up and looked in the same direction ; and lo ! away on our starboard quarter, with his face full upon us, much swollen and discoloured by the water, and his eyes started from their sockets by strangulation, floated the

ill-fated Caracciolo! All the superstition of the Italians was called into play by this extraordinary and fearful apparition. His hair—which, though it was dark when we saw him that day at Pompeji, was turned quite grey with the apprehensions of his last few days—streamed in the light breeze that rippled the placid waters. I could see how alarmed the King was: no one but an Italian or Portuguese could have turned so deathly pale.

We had many priests on board; they had swarmed round the King like flies round a pot of honey. I hunted them up now, one after another; but none was of the smallest consolation, till one, more adroit than his brothers, told the King that the spirit of his unfortunate Admiral could not rest without his forgiveness, which he had risen to implore.

This the King was graciously pleased to accord, but without a corresponding effect on the corpse, which was head and shoulders above the water and was swimming (or drifting before the wind) to Naples.

The occasion was a serious one. It would probably have been small loss to his kingdom if Ferdinand the First of the Two Sicilies had in a fit of horror plunged overboard to seek relief in a watery grave; but he was much more like to lose his kingdom over it than his kingdom was to lose him, for if ever Caracciolo reached Naples in that terrible position, which gave one the idea of a swimming man, all our eighteen ships of the line might not have been able to restrain the feelings of the populace.

There was therefore nothing for it but for me to waken the Admiral, whom I had seen to bed in such sickness and dejection, from his uneasy slumbers. In supreme moments any man in the world who was near him must have turned to that commanding spirit for strength.

But now I was more alarmed for the Admiral than for the King. What would, I wondered, be the effect on his

The Admiral

mind, already overwrought by the terrible news of the preceding evening, of this apparition of one upon whom he had pronounced the death sentence found by the Sicilian court-martial. However, there was nothing for it but to fetch him.

He was so ill that he could hardly walk, and I was in a cold sweat as to what would happen. I handed him my glass to look at that upon which all eyes were riveted, and to my joy I saw the blood and animation rush back to his face, and that curious smile spread over it that was there as we rode into the Nile.

“What, he—that scoundrel?” he cried. “Mr. Trinder, ask the Captain to have her unmoored and to hoist sail, and head the ship for him. We’ll soon put him right.”

I think every Italian in the ship expected him to be struck dead, or a thunderbolt to fall from the clear sky, and not a few of our chaps felt a bit queer over it; but up went the anchors and aloft went the men, and we shook out our sails and bent them, and very soon we were bounding along towards the apparition.

How great a man I felt the Admiral to be at that moment! as great as I felt him when we were running into the Nile and Trafalgar, with the French blazing away at us, and us reserving our guns double-shotted until we were near enough for them to tear the whole length of the ships we raked. To head the ship for it, our great *Foudroyant*, of which we were so proud, made every man feel his courage; while if the Admiral had ordered a boat to be lowered it would have taken some stiff-backed men to go in her—though he would, I have not the least doubt, have gone himself. When we did get up to it, and backed our topsails, no Englishman in the ship need have been put out by it, for it was plain to every one that the body had risen because it was so distended with gases, bred by some horrible internal disease. And then we read the Sicilians

a lesson of British courage and discipline. For when the Admiral gave his orders, without the smallest unusual bustle or excitement a boat was lowered, and the men took the evil-looking and horrible-smelling thing on board—still, as it proved, with those double-headed thirty-two pound shot fastened to the feet—and rowed it a couple of miles, it might have been, to a point on the shore, where they buried it at their leisure.

And I do think that this should have laid the ghost of Caracciolo as effectively among the Admiral's enemies in England as it did among the superstitious Neapolitans, who were veritably more impressed with this than by any of his victories over the French.

Hardly had the *Foudroyant* returned to her moorings, when we beheld the standards of England and the Sicilies run up on the lofty Citadel of St. Elmo, and had it saluted by one-and-twenty guns repeated from every vessel in the fleet, as they noted the proud signal. And as soon as might be after that, a barge dashed out from the Arsenal with Captain Troubridge on board, to announce the surrender of the Citadel, the last point in Naples to hold out against the Sovereign, at a loss to us of only two killed and five wounded, though the Swiss and Russians and Albanians and Calabrians suffered somewhat more severely, owing to a sortie which they had successfully countered.

So interested was every one in the new hero of the hour—the splendid British seaman who had no equal, but the Admiral, where tough fighting was to be done—that nobody noticed a second barge which pulled alongside shortly after the other, starting from the Castel dell' Uovo, and which, as it proved, contained, besides Will and its crew, a lady and a lame old gentleman. But that was the first time that Katherine saw the Admiral, to whom her gracious presence was to be the one bright star during the wearisome weeks that he had to be at Deal, to watch some new move of the

flotilla which Napoleon had assembled at Boulogne for the invasion of England; and the first time that my Lord Eastry, the greatest of all the frigate captains before Cochrane, and the great Lord Nelson were face to face.

This brings me back to the Admiral—the Admiral about whom I sat down to write this chronicle, but whom I had almost forgotten for the moment, for Will is so much the nearer to me.

Well, the Admiral lived for more than six years after this. And though his friends made moan over his ill-health and ill-spirits, and that great love of his for which alone he had the wish and the spirit to live, whatever the sin or the shame of it might have been; and, though his enemies at home found him neglectful, and insubordinate, and what-not, he went from strength to strength, and as the necessity became the greater, he put forth fresh powers of his genius. It was his very name which preserved England from invasion during the long months that Napoleon lay at Boulogne. He had the Danish Navy at Copenhagen, and would have had the Russian into the bargain if his block-heads of superiors had let him. And, as all the world knows, at the sad and glorious day of Trafalgar he swept the seas.

And so to rest, in the heart of the Cathedral, which is the heart of the City, which is the heart of the Empire, which was the creation of him, who made all the seas the high-ways of the King of England.

“MORE OR LESS MARRIED.

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(GRANT ALLEN in “*The Westminster Gazette*.”)

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