

CHAPTER LXXV.

"SINK, BURN, AND DESTROY."

Printed Admiralty orders in time of war.

Among innumerable "yarns and twisters" reeled off in our main-top during our pleasant run to the North, none could match those of Jack Chase, our captain.

Never was there better company than ever-glorious Jack. The things which most men only read of, or dream about, he had seen and experienced. He had been a dashing smuggler in his day, and could tell of a long nine-pounder rammed home with wads of French silks; of cartridges stuffed with the finest gunpowder tea; of cannister-shot full of West India sweetmeats; of sailor frocks and trowsers, quilted inside with costly laces; and table legs, hollow as musket barrels, compactly stowed with rare drugs and spices. He could tell of a wicked widow, too--a beautiful receiver of smuggled goods upon the English coast--who smiled so sweetly upon the smugglers when they sold her silks and laces, cheap as tape and gingham. She called them gallant fellows, hearts of game; and bade them bring her more.

He could tell of desperate fights with his British majesty's cutters, in midnight coves upon a stormy coast; of the capture of a reckless

band, and their being drafted on board a man-of-war; of their swearing that their chief was slain; of a writ of habeas corpus sent on board for one of them for a debt--a reserved and handsome man--and his going ashore, strongly suspected of being the slaughtered captain, and this a successful scheme for his escape.

But more than all, Jack could tell of the battle of Navarino, for he had been a captain of one of the main-deck guns on board Admiral Codrington's flag-ship, the Asia. Were mine the style of stout old Chapman's Homer, even then I would scarce venture to give noble Jack's own version of this fight, wherein, on the 20th of October, A. D. 1827, thirty-two sail of Englishmen, Frenchmen, and Russians, attacked and vanquished in the Levant an Ottoman fleet of three ships-of-the line, twenty-five frigates, and a swarm of fire ships and hornet craft.

"We bayed to be at them," said Jack; "and when we did open fire, we were like dolphin among the flying-fish. 'Every man take his bird' was the cry, when we trained our guns. And those guns all smoked like rows of Dutch pipe-bowls, my hearties! My gun's crew carried small flags in their bosoms, to nail to the mast in case the ship's colours were shot away. Stripped to the waistbands, we fought like skinned tigers, and bowled down the Turkish frigates like nine-pins. Among their shrouds--swarming thick with small-arm men, like flights of pigeons lighted on pine-trees--our marines sent their leaden pease and goose-berries, like a shower of hail-stones in Labrador. It was a stormy time, my hearties! The blasted Turks pitched into the old Asia's

hull a whole quarry of marble shot, each ball one hundred and fifty pounds. They knocked three port-holes into one. But we gave them better than they sent. 'Up and at them, my bull-dog!' said I, patting my gun on the breech; 'tear open hatchways in their Moslem sides! White-Jacket, my lad, you ought to have been there. The bay was covered with masts and yards, as I have seen a raft of snags in the Arkansas River. Showers of burned rice and olives from the exploding foe fell upon us like manna in the wilderness. 'Allah! Allah! Mohammed! Mohammed!' split the air; some cried it out from the Turkish port-holes; others shrieked it forth from the drowning waters, their top-knots floating on their shaven skulls, like black snakes on half-tide rocks. By those top-knots they believed that their Prophet would drag them up to Paradise, but they sank fifty fathoms, my hearties, to the bottom of the bay. 'Ain't the bloody 'Hometons going to strike yet?' cried my first loader, a Guernsey man, thrusting his neck out of the port-hole, and looking at the Turkish line-of-battle-ship near by. That instant his head blew by me like a bursting Paixhan shot, and the flag of Neb Knowles himself was hauled down for ever. We dragged his hull to one side, and avenged him with the cooper's anvil, which, endways, we rammed home; a mess-mate shoved in the dead man's bloody Scotch cap for the wad, and sent it flying into the line-of-battle ship. By the god of war! boys, we hardly left enough of that craft to boil a pot of water with. It was a hard day's work--a sad day's work, my hearties. That night, when all was over, I slept sound enough, with a box of cannister shot for my pillow! But you ought to have seen the boat-load of Turkish flags one of our captains

carried home; he swore to dress his father's orchard in colours with them, just as our spars are dressed for a gala day."

"Though you tormented the Turks at Navarino, noble Jack, yet you came off yourself with only the loss of a splinter, it seems," said a top-man, glancing at our captain's maimed hand.

"Yes; but I and one of the Lieutenants had a narrower escape than that. A shot struck the side of my port-hole, and sent the splinters right and left. One took off my hat rim clean to my brow; another razed the Lieutenant's left boot, by slicing off the heel; a third shot killed my powder-monkey without touching him."

"How, Jack?"

"It whizzed the poor babe dead. He was seated on a cheese of wads at the time, and after the dust of the powdered bulwarks had blown away, I noticed he yet sat still, his eyes wide open. 'My little hero!' cried I, and I clapped him on the back; but he fell on his face at my feet. I touched his heart, and found he was dead. There was not a little finger mark on him."

Silence now fell upon the listeners for a time, broken at last by the Second Captain of the Top.

"Noble Jack, I know you never brag, but tell us what you did yourself

that day?"

"Why, my hearties, I did not do quite as much as my gun. But I flatter myself it was that gun that brought clown the Turkish Admiral's main-mast; and the stump left wasn't long enough to make a wooden leg for Lord Nelson."

"How? but I thought, by the way you pull a lock-string on board here, and look along the sight, that you can steer a shot about right--hey, Jack?"

"It was the Admiral of the fleet--God Almighty--who directed the shot that dismasted the Turkish Admiral," said Jack; "I only pointed the gun."

"But how did you feel, Jack, when the musket-ball carried away one of your hooks there?"

"Feel! only a finger the lighter. I have seven more left, besides thumbs; and they did good service, too, in the torn rigging the day after the fight; for you must know, my hearties, that the hardest work comes after the guns are run in. Three days I helped work, with one hand, in the rigging, in the same trowsers that I wore in the action; the blood had dried and stiffened; they looked like glazed red morocco."

Now, this Jack Chase had a heart in him like a mastodon's. I have seen

him weep when a man has been flogged at the gangway; yet, in relating the story of the Battle of Navarino, he plainly showed that he held the God of the blessed Bible to have been the British Commodore in the Levant, on the bloody 20th of October, A. D. 1827. And thus it would seem that war almost makes blasphemers of the best of men, and brings them all down to the Feejee standard of humanity. Some man-of-war's-men have confessed to me, that as a battle has raged more and more, their hearts have hardened in infernal harmony; and, like their own guns, they have fought without a thought.

Soldier or sailor, the fighting man is but a fiend; and the staff and body-guard of the Devil musters many a baton. But war at times is inevitable. Must the national honour be trampled under foot by an insolent foe?

Say on, say on; but know you this, and lay it to heart, war-voting Bench of Bishops, that He on whom we believe himself has enjoined us to turn the left cheek if the right be smitten. Never mind what follows. That passage you can not expunge from the Bible; that passage is as binding upon us as any other; that passage embodies the soul and substance of the Christian faith; without it, Christianity were like any other faith. And that passage will yet, by the blessing of God, turn the world. But in some things we must turn Quakers first.

But though unlike most scenes of carnage, which have proved useless murders of men, Admiral Codrington's victory undoubtedly achieved the

emancipation of Greece, and terminated the Turkish atrocities in that tomahawked state, yet who shall lift his hand and swear that a Divine Providence led the van of the combined fleets of England, France, and Russia at the battle of Navarino? For if this be so, then it led the van against the Church's own elect--the persecuted Waldenses in Switzerland--and kindled the Smithfield fires in bloody Mary's time.

But all events are mixed in a fusion indistinguishable. What we call Fate is even, heartless, and impartial; not a fiend to kindle bigot flames, nor a philanthropist to espouse the cause of Greece. We may fret, fume, and fight; but the thing called Fate everlastingly sustains an armed neutrality.

Yet though all this be so, nevertheless, in our own hearts, we mould the whole world's hereafters; and in our own hearts we fashion our own gods. Each mortal casts his vote for whom he will to rule the worlds; I have a voice that helps to shape eternity; and my volitions stir the orbits of the furthest suns. In two senses, we are precisely what we worship. Ourselves are Fate.