

NAVAL HISTORY OF GREAT BRITAIN.

SIR RICHARD STRACHAN'S ACTION.

VICE-ADMIRAL LORD COLLINGWOOD, now the commander-in-chief of the Mediterranean fleet, continued throughout the greater part of the remainder of the year at his station off Cadiz, watching the 10 or 11 shattered enemy's ships that lay at anchor within it. Four days after the action Vice-admiral François-Etienne Rosily arrived at the port direct from Paris, to supersede Vice-admiral Villeneuve in the command. Instead of 18 fine fresh ships, the new admiral found five disabled ones, or rather four, the *Héros* having considerably kept herself in so efficient a state, that she was able at once to hoist the flag of Admiral Rosily, and even to carry him to sea, had such been his intention, and no blockading force been cruising off the harbour. There were still four ships of the combined fleet present at the battle of Trafalgar, whose movements require to be traced. These, it will be recollected, were the four French ships that escaped to the southward, under the command of Rear-admiral Dumanoir, in the 80-gun ship *Formidable*.

Having by dark on the day of the battle gained a safe offing, M. Dumanoir commenced repairing the few damages which his squadron had sustained; few, indeed, for his ships, in making off, carried royals upon a wind, and to the British, who were attentively observing them, exhibited no signs of injury. One or two of the ships, however, were certainly struck in the hull by some of the British ships, most probably by the *Minotaur* and *Spartiate*; for the *Formidable* made a good deal of water, and had three of her guns dismounted, and the *Duguay-Trouin* had one petty officer mortally and four others slightly wounded. Upon looking into the rôles d'équipage of the four ships, we

cannot discover that they sustained any other loss in the battle of Trafalgar.

With the wind as it blew, the French admiral would have steered towards Toulon, had he not received intelligence that Rear-admiral Louis, with a squadron of four or five sail of the line, was cruising in the neighbourhood of the Straits. Nothing now remained but to proceed on a cruise, or to endeavour to make a home port to the northward. Fortunately for British interests, M. Dumanoir chose the latter alternative, and, having stood to the westward until the squadron doubled Cape St. Vincent, which it did not do until the 29th, he steered north, intending to enter the road of the isle of Aix.

The celebrated Rochefort squadron of five sail of the line, three frigates, and two brigs, under Rear-admiral Allemand, had escaped from their anchorage since the preceding July, and was now at sea, playing sad havoc with British commerce. Two or three squadrons were seeking M. Allemand, and every British cruiser was on the alert, in the hope of hearing some tidings of him. In the latter part of October the British 18-pounder 36-gun frigate *Phoenix*, Captain Thomas Baker, steering, with sealed orders, to a prescribed spot, a short distance to the westward of Scilly, received intelligence from two or three neutrals, that the Rochefort squadron had recently been seen in the bay of Biscay. Considering that the importance of this communication would justify him in prematurely breaking open his despatches, Captain Baker did so, and found they merely contained an order to proceed to what was likely to prove to the *Phoenix* and those on board of her a profitable cruising-ground.

Without a moment's hesitation in the choice between private interest and public duty, Captain Baker made all sail towards the bay of Biscay; and, having crossed it, had just reached the latitude of Cape Finisterre, when, on the 2nd of November, at 11 A.M. standing on the starboard tack, with the wind at north-north-west, the *Phoenix* discovered and chased four large sail, bearing west-north-west. Soon after noon the strangers bore up, under all sail, in chase of the *Phoenix*; who thereupon bore up also, and steered south, Captain Baker being aware that a British squadron under Sir Richard Strachan was cruising off Ferrol; and into whose hands he hoped to be able to lead, what he believed to be, a part of the Rochefort squadron.

At 3 P.M. the *Phoenix* discovered four additional sail of large ships bearing south. In a quarter of an hour more the four sail first seen, having made the same discovery, hauled to the wind

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on the starboard tack. Immediately the Phoenix, then steering south-south-east, hauled up to south by west, the better to keep sight of the ships first seen. These, which were, as it will be conjectured, the French 80-gun ship *Formidable*, and 74s *Mont-Blanc*, *Scipion*, and *Duguay-Trouin*, under Rear-admiral *Dumanoir*,¹ subsequently wore and stood to the eastward; and the Phoenix, firing guns and covering herself with signals, stood again to the south-south-east, to join the four large sail seen in that direction, and judged, but not yet ascertained, to be friends.

Much about the time that the Phoenix gained a sight of the four ships of *M. Dumanoir*, bearing from her west-north-west, the British 38-gun frigate *Boadicea*, Captain *John Maitland*, and 18-pounder 36-gun frigate *Dryad*, Captain *Adam Drummond*, discovered and chased them in the east by south. At about 8 h. 45 m. P.M. the Phoenix saw the *Boadicea* and *Dryad*; but, as the latter were between herself and the supposed *Rochefort* squadron, the rockets they threw up failed to produce the desired effect, and the Phoenix continued to stand from them. At about 9 h. 30 m. the *Boadicea* and *Dryad* discovered to leeward the same four ships, towards which the Phoenix was hastening, together with three others at no great distance from them, making seven sail in all. These were a British squadron under *Sir Richard Strachan*, which had been detached from the Channel fleet since the 29th of October, in search of the *Rochefort* squadron, and consisted of the

Gun-ship.

80	<i>Cæsar</i>	. . . .	Captain <i>Sir Richard John Strachan, Bart.</i>
73	<i>Héro</i>	. . . .	,, <i>Hon. Alan Hyde Gardner.</i>
	<i>Namur</i>	. . . .	,, <i>Lawrence William Halsted.</i>
	<i>Courageux</i>	. . . .	,, <i>Richard Lee.</i>
	<i>Bellona</i>	. . . .	,, <i>Charles Dudley Pater.</i>

Gun-frig.

36	<i>Santa-Margarita</i>	. . . .	,, <i>Wilson Rathborne.</i>
32	<i>Æolus</i>	. . . .	,, <i>Lord William Fitz-Roy</i>

Having, without getting any answer to their signals, arrived within two miles of the *Cæsar*, which was the weathermost ship of this squadron, and then standing close hauled on the larboard tack, the *Boadicea* and *Dryad*, at about 10 h. 30 m. P.M., tacked to the north-east and soon lost sight of friends and foes. At 11 P.M. the Phoenix passed under the stern of the *Cæsar*, steering as before about north by east; and, after the receipt of a shot and the interchange of a few hails, discovering the ship

¹ For the names of the captains see vol. iii., p. 386.

to be what she was, Captain Baker informed Sir Richard Strachan that the Rochefort squadron, or four ships at least of it, were then not far distant upon his lee bow.

Sir Richard's squadron being at this time very much scattered, the commodore directed Captain Baker to make sail to the south-south-east, and hasten forward the ships astern. The *Cæsar* then bore away under all sail, with the wind at west-north-west, followed at a great distance by the *Hero*, *Courageux*, and *Æolus*. Scarcely had the *Phoenix* stood away from the *Cæsar* before the light of the moon discovered to Sir Richard the objects of his chase, then in the east-north-east, under a press of canvas, in the act of bearing away, closely formed in a sort of bow and quarter line. The *Cæsar* and her three nearest consorts continued the pursuit until the setting of the moon, at about 1 h. 30 m. A.M. on the 3rd, accompanied by hazy blowing weather, concealed the enemy from view; they then shortened sail, to await the coming up of their friends astern.

At daylight on the 3rd, by which time the wind had veered to west-south-west, the *Santa-Margarita* joined the *Cæsar* and her three companions; and at 7 h. 30 m. A.M. Cape Ortugal appeared in sight, bearing south-east half-east distant 36 miles. At 9 A.M. the French ships again showed themselves in the north-north-east; and the British ships, spreading everything they could set, immediately chased in that direction. At 11 A.M. the *Namur*, preceded by the *Phoenix*, and followed at some distance by a frigate which afterwards proved to be the *Révolutionnaire* 38, Captain the Honourable Henry Hotham, appeared far astern, using every effort to get up. At noon the French ships were about 14 miles distant, and in the same line of bearing as when first seen, the wind south-south-west, blowing strong. Towards 3 P.M. the *Santa-Margarita*, by her superior sailing, became the leading ship in the chase; and the *Phoenix*, upon joining in the evening, was despatched ahead, to assist the former in harassing the enemy's rear. To the great mortification of her officers and crew, the *Bellona* had by this time parted company.

On the 4th, at daylight, owing to the indifferent sailing of the *Formidable*, aided by the partial influence of the wind in its fluctuations throughout the night, and which now blew moderately from the south-east, the British ships had gained so far in the chase, that scarcely six miles intervened between the *Cæsar*, still the leading line-of-battle ship of her squadron, and the *Scipion*, the rearmost ship in the French line. Such also, during the preceding night's chase, had been the zeal and acti-

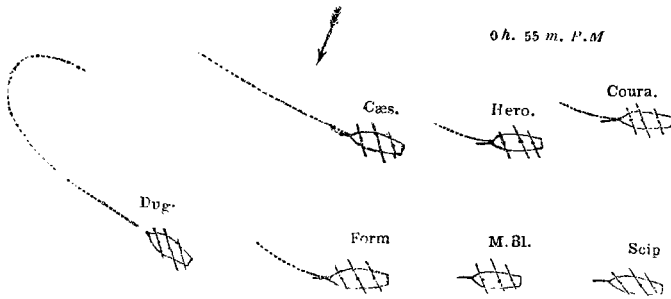
vity on board the *Santa-Margarita*, that, by 5 h. 45 m. A.M. this frigate got near enough to fire her starboard foremost guns at the *Scipion*; who, in a quarter of an hour afterwards brought her stern-chasers to bear, and presently killed the boatswain, and badly struck the hull, of the *Santa-Margarita*. At 9 h. 30 m. A.M. the *Phoenix* got up, and opened a fire from her larboard guns into the *Scipion*'s starboard quarter. In this way the two British frigates, practising every feasible manœuvre to keep clear of the broadsides of their formidable opponents, continued to harass the French rear. Meanwhile the *Cæsar*, *Hero*, and *Courageux*, now formed in line ahead, and just favoured by a shift of wind to south-south-east, were rapidly approaching, to give a more decided feature to the combat.

At about 11 h. 45 m. A.M., finding an action unavoidable, the French admiral threw out the signal for his ships to take in their small sails, and haul up together on the starboard tack, with their heads to the north-east by east. This they presently did, and then fell into a line ahead in the following order: *Duguay-Trouin*, *Formidable*, *Mont-Blanc*, *Scipion*. From the last-named ship the *Cæsar* at this time bore about south by west rather more than a mile distant: consequently she was well on the weather-quarter of the French rear. The *Namur* and *Révolutionnaire* had been great gainers by the slight change in the wind. They were now running with it upon the quarter, and bore from the commodore and his line, the one south-west, or nearly astern, distant about 14 miles, the other west-south-west, or a little upon the lee-quarter, distant about seven miles. A trifle to the westward of the *Révolutionnaire*'s line of bearing, and just out of gun-shot from the enemy, lay the *Æolus*; and, much nearer, the *Santa-Margarita* and *Phoenix*, who had already performed so well, and who were still doing their utmost to cripple the rearmost French ship.

Having announced to Captains Gardner and Lee, by hailing, that he should attack the centre and rear of the enemy, Sir Richard edged away for the French admiral; as did the two former, in like manner, for M. Dumanoir's two seconds astern. At about 15 minutes past noon the *Cæsar* opened her larboard guns upon the *Formidable*, then, as well as her three companions, carrying topsails and topgallantsails with courses clewed up, and having the wind, as before, about a point abaft the starboard beam. In a minute or two after the *Cæsar* had begun firing, the *Hero* and *Courageux*, in quick succession, discharged their broadsides into the *Mont-Blanc* and *Scipion*. The

three French ships instantly returned the fire, and a spirited action ensued. At this time the *Namur* was about 10 miles astern, using every effort to get up.

At about 50 minutes past noon the *Cæsar* hoisted the signal for close action. At 10 h. 55 m. P.M. the *Duguay-Trouin* gallantly luffed up, with the intention of raking the *Cæsar* ahead; but the latter, luffing up also, avoided the salute. This period of the action we have endeavoured to illustrate by the following diagram:—



Either by accident or design, the *Duguay-Trouin* went in stays, and, while rapidly passing, on the larboard tack, under the lee, successively, of the *Cæsar* and *Hero*, received from each of them, particularly from the latter, which ship she almost touched, a heavy and destructive fire.

The French admiral, in the mean time, having made a signal to that effect, tacked to support his gallant second ahead, and was followed in the manœuvre by the two ships in his wake; but, having had her rigging much disabled by the *Cæsar*'s fire, and being at best a bad-working ship, the *Formidable* could not get round quick enough to regain her station in the line. The latter thereupon became third instead of second, the French ships, when on the larboard tack, ranging as follows: *Duguay-Trouin*, *Mont-Blanc*, *Formidable*, *Scipion*; having the wind about half a point before the beam.

At about 1 h. 20 m. P.M. the *Cæsar*, being too much disabled in her rigging to tack, wore; but the *Hero*, and, we believe, the *Courageux* succeeded in tacking. Finding that the *Cæsar*, after she had got round, was making but slow progress in the chase, *Sir Richard*, at 1 h. 40 m. P.M., signalled the *Namur*, then on the weather-bow of the French ships, to attack the enemy's van,

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and at the same time made the Hero's signal to lead on the larboard tack. The Hero, followed at some distance by the Courageux, and at a much greater distance by the Cæsar, edged away towards the French squadron.

About this time, observing that the Namur was lying to, as it appeared, out of gun-shot of the enemy, the Cæsar, by way of enforcing attention to the signal she had previously made, fired at the former ship "two guns shotted." Of this fact we were fully aware when drawing up the account for our first edition; but, observing among the official papers in the Gazette a "General Memorandum," communicating Sir Richard Strachan's thanks to his captains for their "zealous and gallant conduct," we considered that there might have been some mistake in the log-entry, and refrained, upon a principle which we still feel to be just, from making the slightest allusion to it. We have since learnt that the Namur was fired at in the manner stated; but that Sir Richard, whose impatience, we believe, is not always of the most discriminative kind, subsequently acknowledged that he had been unnecessarily harsh. Even in this view of the case we should perhaps have withheld the statement, had not our previous omission been attributed to motives incompatible with the impartiality which gives to these pages their principal value.

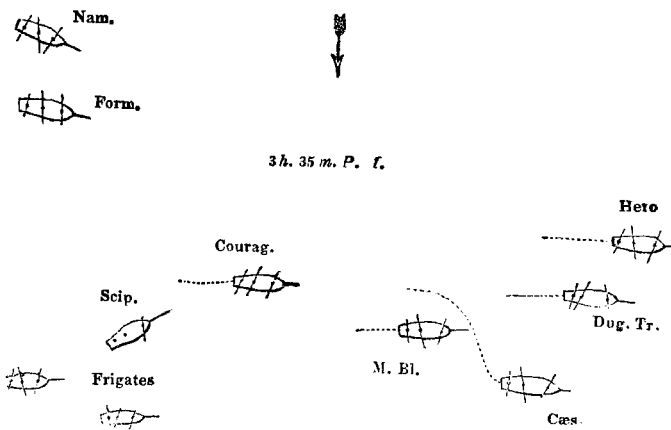
At a few minutes before 2 P.M., while running down to close the Formidable, the Hero recommenced the action by firing her starboard guns at the Scipion; who, losing in consequence her maintopmast, fell to leeward. Here the Scipion was engaged by the Courageux to windward, and by the Phoenix and Révolutionnaire (which latter had just joined) to leeward. The Hero, in the mean time, had got upon the weather-beam of the Formidable, and kept gradually forereaching until she gained a station upon the latter ship's larboard bow. At about 2 h. 45 m. P.M. the Namur arrived up astern of the Hero, and began engaging the Formidable. The Hero then made sail to close the Mont-Blanc; which ship, as well as the Duguay-Trouin, had occasionally raked the former while engaging the Formidable.

At 3 h. 5 m. P.M., having had her mizentopmast shot away and her foretopmast and mainmast left in a tottering state, and observing the Cæsar, who had since refitted her damaged rigging, in the act of opening her fire, the Formidable hauled down her colours, and was taken possession of by the Namur; who,

¹ Log of Hero.

having had her main-yard cut in two by the French 80-gun ship's fire, was incapacitated from making sail. At 3 h. 10 m. P.M., just as the Duguay-Trouin and Mont-Blanc had bore up, to form a fresh line ahead of the Scipion, the latter ship, having, by the united fire of the Courageux and frigates, had her fore-topmast and main and mizen masts shot away, struck her colours, and was taken possession of by the Phœnix and Révolutionnaire.

Seeing the fate of the Scipion and Formidable, the Duguay-Trouin and Mont-Blanc endeavoured to make off; but they were soon overtaken by the Hero and Cæsar. After a close and well-maintained carronade of about 20 minutes' duration, in which the British 80-gun ship's heavy broadsides were most sensibly felt, the two French 74s, being reduced to a shattered and defenceless state, and observing the Courageux ready to open her fire, hauled down their colours, the Duguay-Trouin to the Hero, and the Mont-Blanc to the Cæsar. This occurrence took place at about 3 h. 35 m. P.M.; when the ships of both squadrons were nearly in the positions represented in the following diagram :—



The Cæsar lost four men killed and 25 wounded; the Hero, as a proof of the conspicuous part she took in the action, one second-lieutenant of marines (Robert Morrison) and nine men killed, one lieutenant (John Shekel), one second-lieutenant of

marines (Cornelius James Stevenson), one purser, (Thomas Titterton), and 48 men wounded; the *Courageux*, one man killed, her first-lieutenant (Robert Clephane), one master's mate (Thomas Daws), one midshipman (John Gibbs Bird), her gunner (John Austin), and nine men wounded; the *Namur*, four men killed, one captain of marines (William Clements), one lieutenant (Thomas Osborne), one midshipman (Frederick Beasley), and five men wounded; the *Santa-Margarita*, her boatswain (Thomas Edwards), killed and one man wounded; the *Révolutionnaire*, two men killed and six wounded; the *Phoenix*, two killed and four wounded; and the *Æolus*, three wounded: making a total of 24 killed and 111 wounded. None of the British ships had any spars shot away, except the *Cæsar* her maintopgallantmast, the *Hero* her foretopsail-yard, and the *Namur* her main yard; but the *Cæsar* and *Hero* had received considerable damage in their masts generally, as well as in their rigging and sails.

The loss sustained by the French ships was extremely severe. The *Formidable* had 200 killed and wounded, including among the latter Rear-admiral Dumanoir in two places; the *Scipion*, the same number, including among the wounded her captain; the *Mont-Blanc* 180, and the *Duguay-Trouin* 150, including among the latter's killed her captain: making a total of 730 in killed and wounded.¹ All four French ships had been so struck in their masts, that, soon after the action ended, the foremasts of the *Formidable* and *Mont-Blanc* were the only sticks left standing. This, coupled with the heavy loss just enumerated, affords a decisive proof that the French ships did not surrender until they were compelled to do so: it proves, also, that the British ships fired their guns, which is not invariably the case, with both quickness and precision.

The force of the four French ships has already appeared (see vol. iii., p. 460); but it must in justice be stated, that in this action the *Formidable* mounted 65 guns only, three having been dismantled in the battle of Trafalgar (see p. 1), and 12 of her quarter-deck 12-pounders having been thrown overboard during the chase of the squadron by Sir Richard Strachan. This fact is stated on oath in the written depositions of the *Formidable's* late officers, lodged in the admiralty prize-court, and is confirmed by the official return of the prize-broker, it there appearing that no more than 68 guns were found on board the ship.

In the battle of Trafalgar, neither the French nor the British

¹ *Victoires et Conquêtes*, tome xvi., p. 195.

frigates fired a shot: in this battle all four British frigates, three of them especially, contributed their full share towards achieving the victory. It is true that the official letter, the extraordinary brevity of which has been so admired by some and blamed by others, states that, when the French ships tacked, "the frigates were to leeward of the enemy." But Sir Richard surely never intended to have it thence inferred, that they took no further part in the action. An officer of one of the line-of-battle ships, apparently the *Namur*, in a letter published on the same day as the official account, considers that the tacking of the French ships "gave the frigates in the rear the credit of taking a good share in the action." The French indeed represent, that every one of the ships, when the squadron got on the larboard tack, found herself assailed by a ship of the line to windward and a frigate to leeward, the latter placing herself in a comparatively safe but harassing position on the quarter. This is saying too much. What the frigates really did may be thus stated: The *Phoenix*, by her skilful manœuvres, decoyed the French squadron within sight of the British squadron. This frigate, then, accompanied by the *Santa-Margarita*, gallantly fought, and considerably annoyed, the rearmost French ship; so much so, doubtless, as to have checked the way of all the French ships, and thereby enabled Sir Richard the more quickly to overtake them. When the French squadron tacked, the *Santa-Margarita* got thrown out, because she had received a dangerous shot in the magazine, besides several other shot in her starboard side; to stop the holes of which the ship was obliged to be kept on the heel for two hours. But the *Santa-Margarita's* place was ably supplied by the *Révolutionnaire*, who, with the *Phoenix*, gave the finishing blow to the *Scipion*. The *Æolus* exchanged a few distant shot with the French ships as they passed to windward, and made herself useful in taking possession of the *Mont-Blanc* after that ship had struck to the *Cæsar*.

The capture of M. Dumanoir's squadron may fairly be considered as an emanation from the battle of Trafalgar. So that, out of the 18 sail of the line which France possessed on the morning of the 21st of October, in a fortnight afterwards she could count only five, and those five shut up in a Spanish port, helpless to themselves and useless to their country. The news of these sad reverses reached the French emperor in Austria, in the midst of his brilliant triumphs. Napoleon is said to have flown into the most violent rage, and to have declared, in allusion to Byng's fate, that he would "teach French admirals how