

"Ready!, aye, ready!"

B162

(5) Admirals all, for England's sake,
Honour be yours and fame!

1st And honour, as long as waves shall break,
To Nelson's peerless name."

1922 To every patriotic boy and girl of today the name of Nelson is an inspiration; it reminds us of duty nobly done, at a time when our Empire's fate trembled in the balance; our armies were being overwhelmed on land by the all-conquering Napoleon, it was only on the sea that we held our own.

He was a native of Norfolk, his father being a clergyman there. From his earliest years, he showed glimpses of that impulsive and indomitable spirit so well known in after years. "Fear, grandmamma! I never saw fear; what is it?" he once asked while quite a little child.

Nelson had an acute sense of honour, many episodes in his crowded life proving this. On one occasion, he and his brother William were riding to school in a fierce snow storm, when William, suggesting a return, was answered, "No, we must get there if we possibly can. Remember we are on our honour."

At the tender age of twelve, he joined the Navy, under his uncle Captain Suckling. He passed from ship to ship, obtaining fresh knowledge

and growing most enthusiastic as he got over the first hardships that come to every boy who joins the Navy.

He saw service in many parts of the world. He sailed to the West Indies as a common seaman to gain experience; then, after some time in the Medway, joined an expedition to the North Pole. The extreme cold of the Polar regions was exchanged for the equatorial heat of the East Indies. His next destination was Gibraltar, where he was on convoy duty.

Nelson's rise, though rapid, was due to merit alone. He brought enthusiasm to his profession, and mastered its details with a thoroughness which served him well in after years. In 1777, he passed his examination for a lieutenancy, his uncle being one of the examiners.

After the examination, Captain Suckling told his colleagues that the candidate was his nephew. On their enquiring why he had not told them before, Captain Suckling, with pride, answered, that he knew the "younker" could win on his own merits, and he was not disappointed.

His uncle's was not the only good opinion young Nelson had won. The captain of the "Worcester" said of him, "I feel as easy when Nelson is on deck, as any officer of the ship."

Sir Peter Parker took a great liking to him, and another young officer, afterwards to be famous as Lord Collingwood.

Lord Hood declared Nelson knew as much about naval tactics as any officer in the Fleet. When the future William IV added to these remarks of appreciation, Nelson was delighted.

When the "Albemarle" was paid off, Nelson visited France to learn the language. In a letter home he wrote, "I hate their country and their manners." He never changed this view to the day of his death. He realized the continued rivalry between England and France. Did he dream that he himself would be one of the chief to thwart her dream of world empire?.

On his return, through the influence of Lord Hood, he was given command of the "Boreas". He sailed for the West Indies, where his duty was to prevent smuggling between the colonists and the new American States. This he carried out with great skill and thoroughness, in spite of great opposition and unpopularity.

Nelson in the Mediterranean.

In 1793, war was declared upon the French Republic. Nelson was given the command of a battle ship attached to the Mediterranean fleet. Men flocked from his native county to his flag, while other captains looked on with envy, they having to depend upon the press-gang for their crews.

After a dull time spent in the blockade of Toulon and Marseilles, he was sent to help the Corsicans against the French. In spite of great difficulties he captured Bastia, and later Calvi fell to him, though it was at the cost of one of his eyes. With Corsica as a place of shelter for her ships, the influence of Britain in the Mediterranean greatly increased.

Spain now joined France; the Dutch also had a well equipped fleet with which to help the allies. Nelson sailed under the command of Jervis, who was told to attack the Spanish fleet before it could join the French. They came up near Cape St Vincent, and there the great battle was fought. Through his daring and quick judgment, Nelson on the "Captain" made a double capture, the "San Nicolas", and the "San Josef". All England rejoiced in the splendid victory; Nelson was made a K. B. and afterwards a Rear Admiral.

India saved!

Soon afterwards he was sent against the Spanish isle of Tenerife. Here he suffered his one defeat, and unfortunately his right arm was shot off.

Great preparations in Toulon were now noticed by our vigilant Navy. The British could only make vague guesses as to what it meant. Nelson was given a fleet, and told to stop Napoleon, who, it was conjectured, wished to make his first determined assault on our colonies, by attacking India.

After cruising for over two months up and down the Mediterranean, Nelson at last sighted the French in Aboukir Bay. He had discussed his plans with his officers, so the battle started immediately.

The French Admiral had anchored his ships in a strong position near the shore. By skilful manœuvring, Nelson steered his ships between the enemy and the beach. Having a few ships on the other side, he threw the French into confusion, because they found themselves totally unprepared, between two sets of guns.

The battle started at dusk and raged furiously all night. At 9.45 the flagship "L'Orient" blew up, illuminating the scene with a lurid glare. A great victory was won, only two French ships escaping. When the news reached

England there was much rejoicing, Nelson being raised to the peerage, given £2,000 a year by the Government, and a present of £10,000 by the East India Company.

The effects of this victory were tremendous; distant India was saved by a fight thousands of miles away. Egypt was soon afterwards recovered, Sicily was safe, and although Napoleon escaped, his army was left abandoned in a strange, savage land, without any hope of seeing France again. So ended Napoleon's dream of conquering India.

Nelson then spent two years in the Mediterranean, helping the "King of the two Sicilies". Here he proved himself not only a daring sailor and fighter, but also a bold and skilful politician.

Copenhagen. - Sea Power maintained.

At this period the British claimed the right to search neutral ships, confiscating goods of French origin. The Danes and other Baltic States specially suffered and formed a confederacy among themselves.

After all attempts at reconciliation had failed, a fleet under Sir Hyde Parker, with Nelson second in command, was sent to Copenhagen. The city was well defended by ships and batteries, and, to add to the difficulties of the

invaders, the way up to it was by narrow, tortuous channels, of the depth of which they were quite ignorant. Nelson's early lessons on the Medway came in useful once more. In a small boat, at midnight, he silently took soundings of the depths of the principal channels.

The next morning, the city was attacked under a hot fire. Nelson led the English, Sir Hyde Parker being some distance away with reserves. Nelson found the Danes formidable antagonists, but, as everyone knows, refused to see the signal for retreat. A glorious victory was followed by a definite peace.

When Nelson returned, he was appointed to defend the coast, for it was thought that an invasion of England was being planned. In 1802, however, the Treaty of Amiens was signed. In 1803, hostilities broke out afresh. Nelson was given command of the Mediterranean fleet, and, in July, began his long, monotonous watch outside Toulon.

Trafalgar - Home defended - Empire gained.

England had long baulked Napoleon's plans, until at last, he determined to crush her once and for all by an invasion. He collected an enormous army at Boulogne. All he needed to ensure success was command of the Channel for a few days. As he was afraid of attacking the

British fleet, his only chance was to lure it away.

Villeneuve, now being blockaded in Toulon, was ordered to make a dash for the West Indies, shake Nelson off by cruising among the islands, and then return to join another fleet at Brest.

The plan was successful to a certain extent. Nelson pursued Villeneuve, lost him among the islands, scented the ruse, and returned hurriedly. In spite of this early success however, Villeneuve never reached Brest, for he accidentally met Sir Robert Calder who gave fight and defeated him; instead of making for Brest and the channel he sought shelter in Spain. Napoleon's plan was shattered.

On his return, Nelson was hailed as the saviour of the great fleet of sugar ships, of the West Indies, of England herself.

It now became necessary to watch Cadiz, in whose harbour the combined French and Spanish fleets lay. England felt that Nelson was the one for the task.

Every effort was made to tempt the enemy out, but the dreaded name of Nelson deterred them. On October 19th, Nelson received the welcome message, "The enemy are coming out of Port." There were thirty three French and Spanish ships

against twenty seven English, yet Nelson was confident of victory.

The famous signal, "England expects every man to do his duty," was greeted with cheers by the whole fleet. Nelson could be seen, pacing the deck, giving orders; and, being a conspicuous figure, was an easy target for the French sharp shooters; one of whom shot him through the spine. He was carried below, but, knowing his wound mortal, forbade the surgeon to do anything for him. "Thank God, I have done my duty," he repeated at intervals.

Before he died however, Nelson was informed that the victory was won, that England's position as "Mistress of the Seas," was no longer imperilled, and that the shadow of invasion was dispelled.

So passed the soul of the World's greatest sailor to the Great Beyond.

Nelson did much for England. It was he who paved the way to those successful battles on land, which finally broke the power of Napoleon, and sent him a prisoner to the lone isle of St. Helena.

The Battle of Trafalgar did more than that. It so destroyed the naval power of France and her allies, that their foreign empires, being unprotected, fell into British hands, so our greatest sailor was also an Empire

builder. Beylon, the Cape, Malta, Tobago, Mauritius, Trinidad, part of Guiana, and Honduras, were all ceded to us.

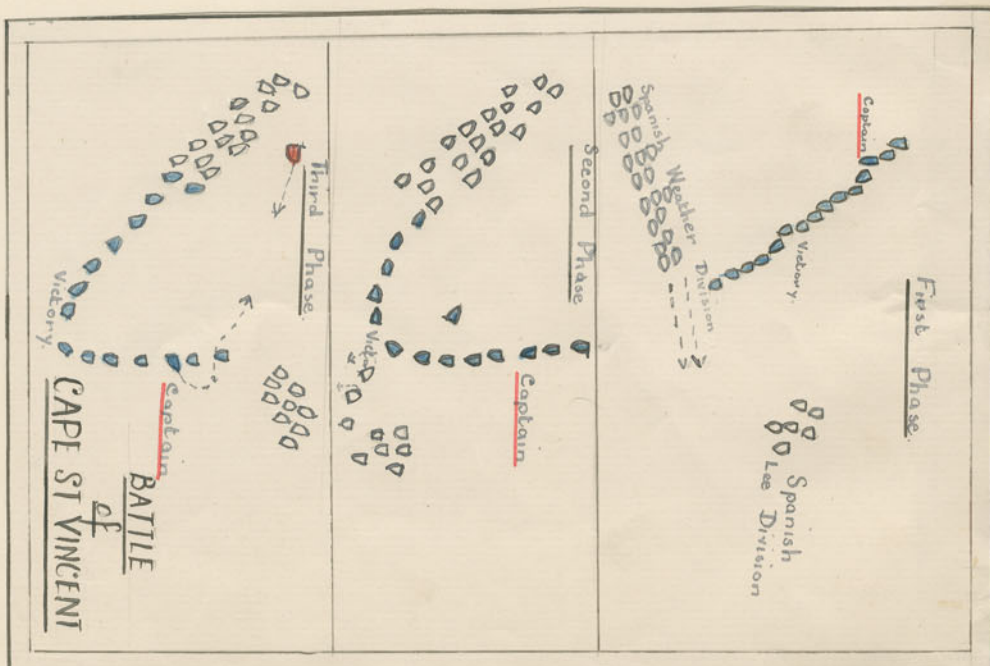
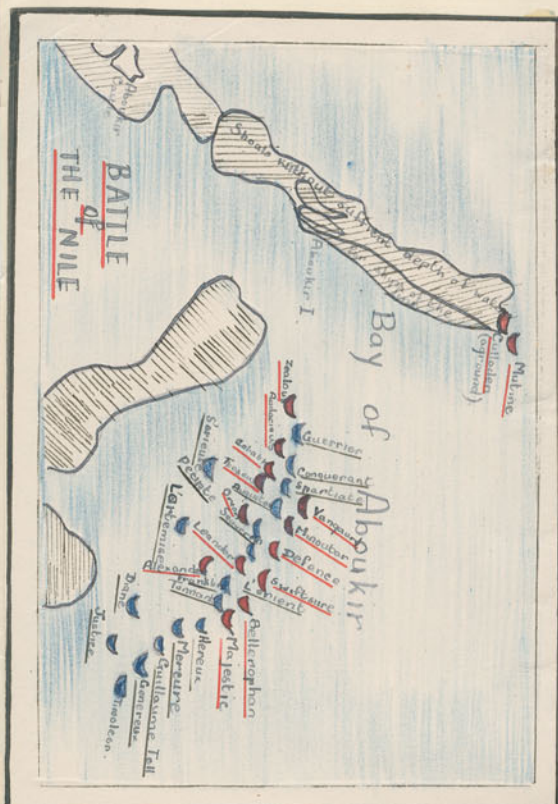
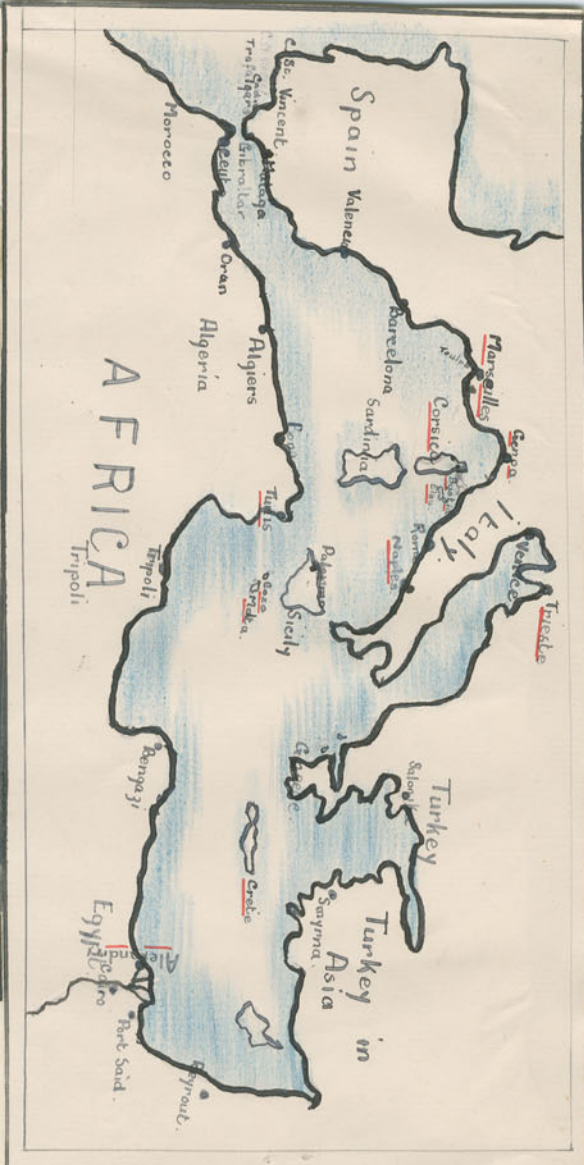
The Nelson Touch.

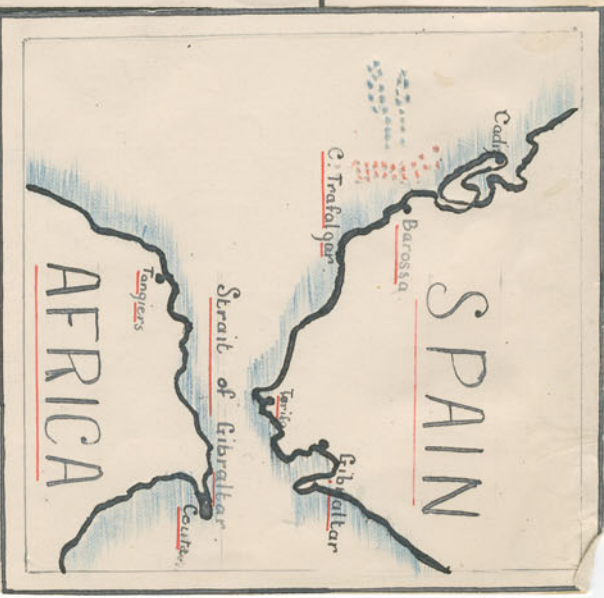
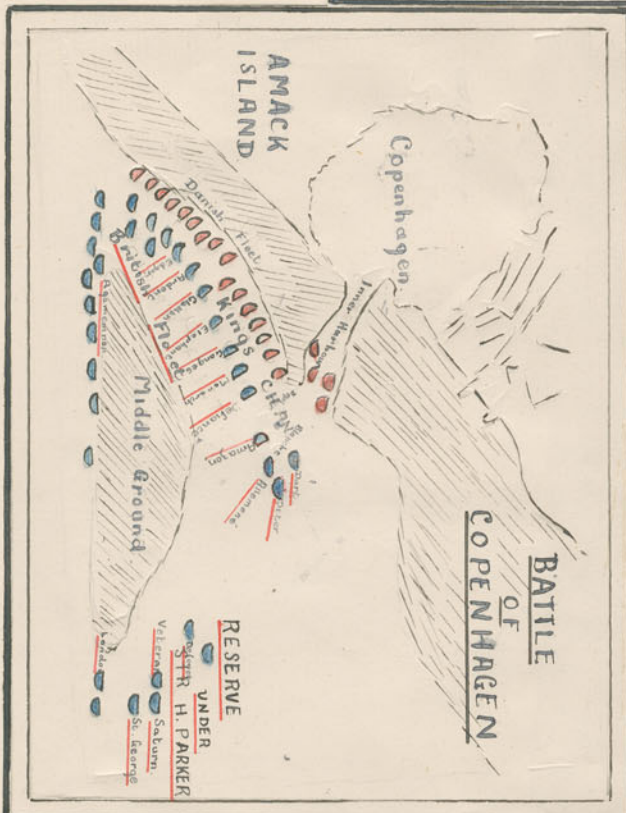
It is impossible to make too much of Nelson's influence on our history. He could kindle enthusiasm in the breast of the humblest seaman under his command; his courage and good spirits were infectious, and this "Nelson Touch" lives in the seaman of today. It has contributed in no small measure to the continued 'grip' on the sea, which Nelson died to win, and which British seamen today would die to retain.

Sea power, thou art a mighty key,
Guarding the high roads of the sea;
Without thee, Britain's Empire vast,
Would feeble grow, and fall at last.

And thou, great Nelson, thou art he,
Who made our power supreme on sea;
Thy mighty deeds shall ever stand,
Among the noblest of our land.

For, from the annals of our race,
Nought can thy mighty deeds efface;
As Empire builder on the sea,
Thy name shines out in history.
(Original poem.)





 Spanish
 French
 English

TRAFALGAR

