

GEORGE III—ENGLAND EXPECTS THAT
EVERY MAN WILL DO HIS DUTY

“This island loves thee well, thou famous man,
The greatest sailor since our world began.”

In 1789 A.D. a revolution broke out in France. The French people rose against their King and Queen and killed them and many of the nobles as well. Then they declared the country to be a Commonwealth or Republic as the English had done in the time of Cromwell.

At this time William Pitt the younger, son of the great William Pitt, Lord Chatham, was Prime Minister. He, unlike his father, was a peace minister. Britain with her new factories and new trade was growing wealthy, and Pitt tried hard to keep the country at peace. But he tried in vain, for France declared war. Once more, for nearly twenty years, Britain was fighting by land and by sea.

The French were led by Napoleon Bonaparte. He was one of the most wonderful men who have ever lived. Beginning life as a poor unknown soldier, he soon rose to be leader of the French army. He rose and rose until the people made him Emperor of France. His one desire was to be great and powerful, and he did not care how others suffered or how many people were killed so long as he had what he wanted. He made war all over Europe. He conquered kings and gave away their thrones and crowns to his own friends and relatives, and only the British were strong enough to stand against him.

Napoleon made up his mind to conquer Britain. He raised an army which he called the Army of England, and he made a medal in honour of the conquest of Britain which never took place, and engraved upon the medal, “Struck at London,” Original Copyright 1905 by H. E. Marshall Distributed by Heritage History 2009203 although he never reached there. It was like Caligula and his army gathering shells on the shore, for Napoleon and his men came no nearer conquering Britain than those old Romans did. Many of the Irish hated the English and would have been glad to help the French. Napoleon knew this, and he decided that Ireland was the best place at which to begin the attack. He fitted out a great fleet with the intention of landing in Ireland. But his ships were shattered by the winds as the ships of the Armada had been, and nothing came of this invasion. A little later the French really did land in Ireland, but the King’s army was ready for them and they were forced to go away again.

Meanwhile British ships under the great sailor Nelson were victorious by sea, and on land British soldiers hindered and spoiled Napoleon's plans. At last, as every one was tired of the war, peace was signed.

But peace did not last long. The following year war broke out again and Napoleon threatened once more to invade Britain. But the British built watch-towers and beacons along the coast so that warning could be sent from town to town if the dreaded tyrant should come. The young men drilled as volunteers to guard their homes. Every one was ready for the ogre Napoleon who never came.

While these preparations were being made at home, Nelson swept the seas searching for the French and Spanish navies, and at last they met in Trafalgar Bay, off the coast of Spain.

A few days before they met, Nelson wrote to a friend, “Here I am watching for the French and the Spaniards like a cat after the mice. If they come out, I know I shall catch them; but I am also almost

sure that I shall be killed in doing it.” On the 21st October 1805 A.D., the battle began. Every captain in the fleet had received his orders and knew exactly what to do. But Nelson felt there was still something wanting, and, from the top-gallant mast of his own ship the Victory, a message was signalled through all the fleet, “England expects that every man will do his duty.” The message was greeted with cheer upon cheer from every ship along the line, and every sailor felt his courage rise.

The battle soon became fierce—shot and shell flew thick and fast. Once as Nelson and Hardy, the captain of the Victory, stood on deck together, a shot fell between them tearing off one of Captain Hardy's shoe buckles. Each looked at the other fearing he was wounded. Then seeing neither of them were hurt, Nelson smiled and said calmly, “This is too warm work, Hardy, to last long.”

Everything went well with the British. Already it seemed as if the victory was sure, when a chance shot struck Nelson and he fell forward on the deck.

“They have done for me at last, Hardy,” he said, as some sailors, seeing their dear admiral fall, ran forward to carry him to a safe place. As Nelson was being carried past those who were fighting, he covered his face and the stars and medals on his coat in case they should see that he was wounded and feel discouraged, for his sailors loved him dearly.

The great admiral was dying fast, but before he died Hardy was able to bring him the news that victory was theirs and that fourteen or fifteen of the enemies’ ships had surrendered. “I hope,” said Nelson, “that none of our ships have struck their colours.”

“No my Lord, there is no fear of that.” “That’s well! that’s well!” he answered. “Kiss me, Hardy,” he said, a little later. Hardy knelt and kissed him. “I am satisfied now,” he said. “Thank God I have done my duty.” These were his last words.

With the battle of Trafalgar, which was fought on 21st October 1805 A.D., Napoleon's power by sea was utterly shattered and Britain was saved from all fear of invasion. The little ribbon of water between France and England was enough to keep her safe from the threats of the master of half Europe.