

"Level your guns! Take good aim! Fire!"

A brilliant series of sheets of flame through the spouting jets of thick smoke burst forth from the corvette's battery, lighting up the water and jet black wales, and away aloft to the great towering maze of rigging and sails to the trucks—with the topmen clustering to windward, and their very eyes and teeth lit up in the glare; then, too, the crews of the guns, in their trim frocks and trousers; the marines on the topgallant fore-castle, with their firelocks and white cross-belts; and then abaft a knot of officers on the poop, with night-glasses to their eyes—all standing out as clear as day in the sudden flashes from the cannon. Then followed the convulsive roar, and the next instant you could hear the huriling rush of the iron hail, as it flew singly or in bunches through the air, or skipped in its deadly flight from wave to wave, until it went crashing into the pirate's boat, slapping with heavy thumps against the schooner's side, or furrowing along her decks; while a shower of white splinters flew high over her lee rail, and told how well the iron had done its bidding. Then were heard dying groans and imprecations, rapid orders, the shattered and sinking boat cut adrift, and a moment after the sails of the vessel spread as flat as a wall, the sheets flat aft; and, taking the breeze, she heeled over till her lee rail was all awash, and away she walked, close hauled, right up to windward.

But again came the clear, commanding tones on board the cruiser, mingled with the jumping of the crew and ramming home the charges in the guns—
"Load! Round shot! Run out! One point abaft the beam! Fire as you bring the schooner to bear!"

Out belched the red flames, the heavy globes of iron—like so many black pens in daylight—sung their deadly note as they darted on their way, and the corvette gave a little heel to leeward as the shock of the explosion was felt. One shot dropped within fifty yards of the low hull of the schooner, bounded just clear of her after deck, knocked off the head and shoulder of a man at the tiller, and then went skipping away over the water like a black football. Another messenger cut off the schooner's delicate fore-topmast as clean as a bit of glass, bringing down the gaff-topsail, and, what was equally pleasant, the fellow who was setting it—pitching him over and over like a wheel, until he fell, a bruised and lifeless lump of jelly, on the oak bits at the foremast. Before, however, they were treated to another of these metallic doses, the pirates had got their craft in splendid trim; and with every stitch of her canvas spread, and tugging and straining, she rushed on with the heels of a racehorse, within three points of the wind. The Scourge, too, was now close hauled, her yards braced as fine as needles, and crowded with every inch of sail that would draw; and every ten minutes or so she would let slip two or more guns from a division at the chase. But the uncertain gloom of starlight, the darkening effect of the passing trade clouds, made the little vessel a very difficult object to see; and though one of the last balls struck her on the narrow deck, and passing through that and the water-ways, and out to windward, spoiled two of her timbers, and no end of planking, yet this was the last damage she received. Her crew, also, had got as well as could be out of harm's way—both the sound and wounded—and were lying, quietly as possible, deep down in the vessel's run. When daylight broke the breeze began to slacken, but she was by this time hull down from the corvette, a long way beyond the reach of her long eighteen in the bow-ports, and eating her way to windward, with no chance of being taken.

"It's no use," said the captain of the corvette to his first lieutenant, as they stood watching the receding chase. "We may as well give it up; she has the heels of us in this light wind, and will soon be out of sight. I think, however," continued the captain, with a smile, "that he'll remember the Scourge when he meets her again. This is the second time we've chased that fellow; and this heat, by the way the splinters flew, we must have peppered the skin off his back."

Shutting up the joints of the spy-glass which he held in his hand, he took hold of the man-ropes of the poop-ladder, and as he put his foot on the steps, he said—

"You can go about, Mr. Cleveland, and run down to the brig."

CHAPTER VII.

THE MEETING AND MOURNING.

The afternoon following the night when the foregoing events transpired, the Martha Blunt sailed

slowly along the sandy tongue of land which separates Port Royal from Kingston, and dropped anchor in the harbour. As the cable rumbled out with a grating sound through the hawse-hole, and the crew aloft were furling the sails, a large, gaily-painted barge, pulled by a dozen blacks shaded by a striped awning, shot swiftly alongside. Jabbering were those darlings, and clapping their hands, and shouting joyously. A rope was immediately thrown from the gangway of the brig, and a tall, handsome man, with a broad Panama hat, loose white jacket and trousers, sprang with a bound up the side, and leaped on deck.

Captain Blunt stood there to receive him. A broad white bandage was passed around his head, and the tears trickled slowly down his bronzed and honest cheeks. Just beyond him, under the shade of the awning, lay Banou, stretched out at full length on a mattress; while Ben, the helmsman, was kneeling beside him, fanning his hot and fevered face with his tarpaulin. A yard or two beyond, on a broad plank resting on trestles, lay the mate, Mr. Binks, cold and rigid in the grasp of Death, with the union-jack folded modestly over his corpse. The black breathed heavily, and in pain; but when he caught sight of the gentleman as he stepped on deck, a deathly blue pallor came over his countenance, and, closing his eyes, the hot salt tears started in great drops from the lids.

"Heavens! captain," said the gentleman, with a bewildering stare, "what's all this? What has happened?"

The old skipper merely made a motion with his hand towards the cabin, and leaning painfully against the rail wept like a child. The gentleman's blood forsook his cheeks, and, with his knees knocking together, he staggered like a drunken man towards the cabin-door. A few minutes later he emerged, bearing in his arms the drooping, sobbing form of his wife. Starting from his close embrace for a moment as he bore her to the gangway, she gave one shuddering, terrified, searching gaze over the blue water, to seaward, and then, with a wailing cry that would have shook the hardest heart, she fell sobbing again into her husband's arms.

The voices and joyous shrieks of the negroes in the barge alongside subsided into low moaning groans; four or five came up and carefully lowered Banou down; then all got into the boat, and she moved mournfully away towards the shore.

(To be continued.)

SHIPS OF WAR.

One of the chief sources of the greatness and glory of the British empire, is the insular position of our country. That a small island should maintain its independence amid the convulsions which have disturbed all neighbouring nations, that it should extend its influence all over the world, that it should send its language, its literature, and its laws to the ends of the earth, that it should establish, on an imperishable basis, the fame of a great and a free people, is something unparalleled in the history of nations. But for all that has been accomplished we are indebted—under Heaven—to our maritime supremacy, our wooden walls, our bulwarks of the deep.

Nothing is more striking to the visitor who sees London for the first time, than the forest of masts which he observes below bridge—the long tiers of shipping, the gigantic docks and building yards which extend on every side—ships of all nations, of all builds and rigs, ships of all tonnage and description, from the collier with its freight of black diamond to the fully-manned ship of war ready to pour forth a flood of fiery destruction from every port-hole.

To our ships of war, especially, our attention is now directed—they have long been regarded as the mainstay of English power—and the progress of science has contributed to render them more and more efficient for the purposes for which they are designed. We are a nation of shipbuilders, and the dominion over the sea claimed by our forefathers has been established by a long succession of naval victories, achieved by the heroic spirits of the past. The zeal by which they were animated still burns brightly in every British heart; and while we deprecate any line of policy which might unnecessarily induce hostility, we cannot doubt that, should the hour arrive when the naval prowess of England should be again called into action, the gallant sons of England would outrival their heroic fathers.

It is curious to trace the progress of the royal navy from its rise, in the time of Henry VII., to

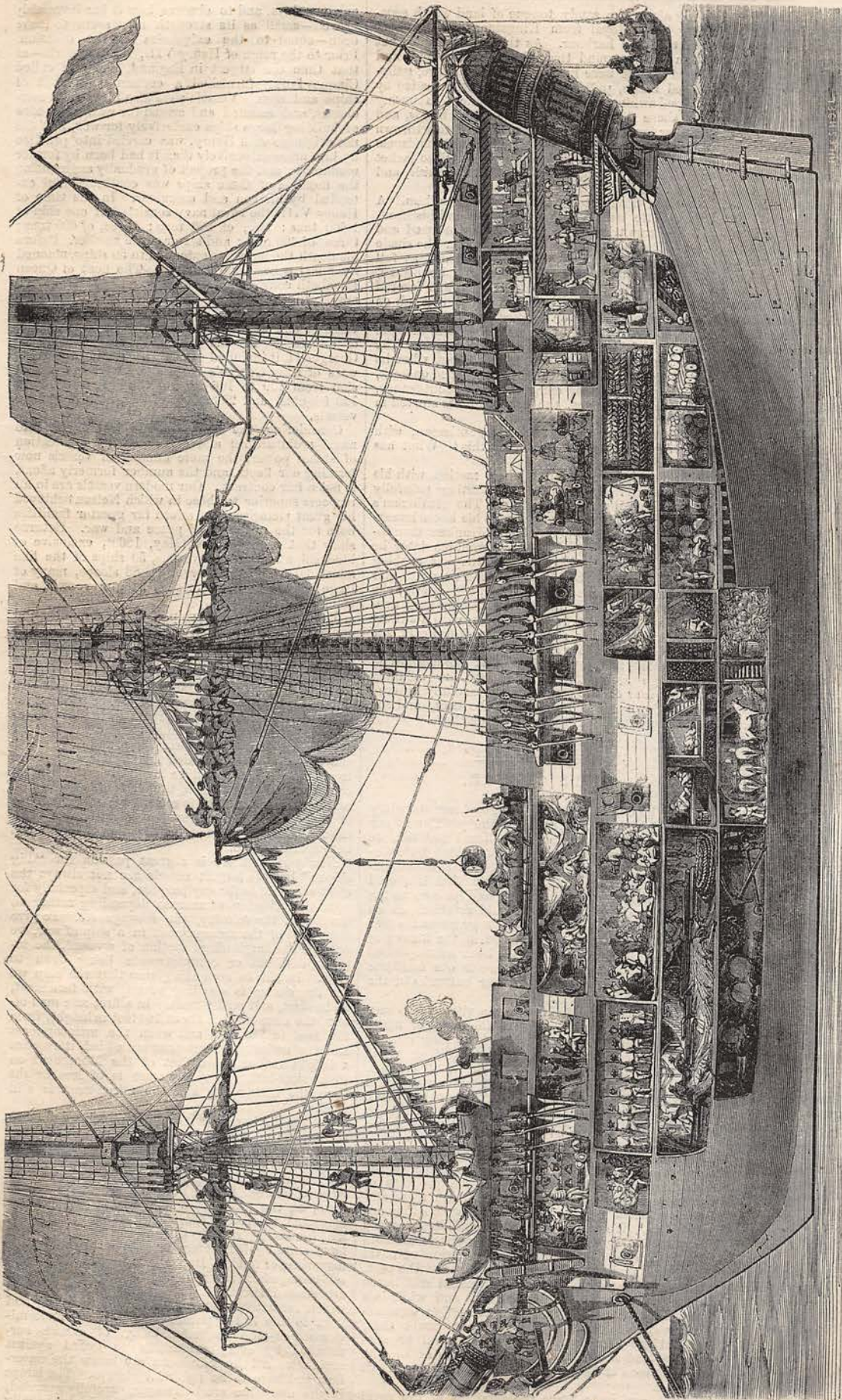
our own days, and to observe how it has invariably proved—small as its strength may seem to have been—equal to the exigencies of the occasion. Prior to the reign of Henry VII., the five ports—at that time the largest in England, and still called Cinque Ports—furnished a certain equipment of ships and men. Vessels were also hired from merchants, and manned and armed for war. The idea of building large ships exclusively for war, if it did not originate with Henry, was carried into practice by him more extensively than it had been by former monarchs; and the project of gradually augmenting the number of these ships was continued and extended by his son and successor. In the time of Henry VIII. the royal navy consisted of one ship of 1,500 tons; two, of 800 tons; three, of 600 tons; three, of 400 tons; and six or seven smaller. Before his death the navy was extended to 50 ships, manned by 8,000 sailors and soldiers. The fleet of Queen Elizabeth consisted of 176 ships, manned by 15,000 men. In the time of Charles II. the fleets consisted of 76 ships of the line, and some smaller vessels; and at the revolution (1688), of 173 ships, of all sizes. At the beginning of the reign of George III. it included 412 ships. During the great wars of King George's reign there were in commission from 100 to 106 ships of the line, from 130 to 160 frigates, and 200 sloops of war, besides smaller vessels.

Considering the improvements introduced into naval architecture, and especially the application of steam power, the mere number of vessels now forming our fleets, and the number formerly afloat, is not a fair contrast. Our modern vessels are in all respects superior to those in which Nelson achieved his great victories, and afford far greater facilities both for the purposes of peace and war. Returns show that we have now (May, 1860), exclusive of blockships and sailing vessels, 50 ships of the line afloat, 30 frigates, 17 corvettes, 88 sloops, many of large power; 26 small vessels, 24 gun vessels, and 350 gun boats.

The construction of a ship of war is a mighty and comprehensive problem. The massive and stupendous fabric "has to cross wide and immeasurable seas, agitated at times by the unbridled fury of the winds, subjecting it to strains of the most formidable kind; it must possess mechanical strength to resist these, and, at the same time, be adapted for stowage and velocity; it is expected, in all cases, to overtake the enemy, yet must contain within itself the material for a long cruise. These and many other complicated inquiries which the naval architect has to contemplate, must all be involved in the general conditions of his problem, the elements of which he must estimate while he is rearing his mighty fabric in the dock, and be prepared to anticipate their effects before he launches his vessel on the turbulent bosom of the deep."

Now-a-days, there is a great passion for "big ships;" but the largest vessels are not always the most serviceable for any purpose, and especially for war, the criterion of success depending rather on the build, the velocity, the stowage, &c. To give some idea of the arrangement in a ship of war, we present the longitudinal section of a vessel, the interior divisions or compartments being open to view. It will be seen at a glance that the ship we are describing is a sailing vessel, with fore-mast, main-mast, and mizen-mast. In a first-rate man-of-war, the main-mast is about 160 feet in height, from the keel to the cap, and when the maintop-mast and the maintop-gallant-mast are added, it reaches a height rather above that of the Monument on Fish-street-hill. The fore-mast is of less height than the main-mast, and the mizen-mast is still smaller.

Taking the lowest point of our vessel, we observe the outline of the keel—that long range of timber at the bottom of the ship, from which spring the ribs, just as the ribs spring from the breast-bone of the human skeleton. The lowest part of the ship that is nearest to the keel is the hold. Here we have, at the fore-part of the vessel, the general magazine, where the provisions, tanks, water-casks, &c., are kept. Next to this, on the same range, we have stabling for horses or cattle, together with magazines of fodder. Immediately above these is the sail-room, where canvas, spare rigging, cordage, &c., are stowed away. Adjoining this is the hold, in which refractory seamen are lodged in irons; and next to this is the powder-magazine and ammunition-stores—the magazine being, of course, surrounded by every precaution to guard against accident. All these divisions are below the water-line, and have to be lighted by lamps. The lamps in the magazine are bull's-eyes, carefully guarded, and fixed in the wall; the precaution is also usually



LONGITUDINAL SECTION OF A MAN-OF-WAR.

taken of having pipes arranged, by means of which the magazine might, in case of necessity, be inundated in a few moments.

Immediately below the foremast, on the next range to that last described, we have a cabin used by the surgeon; next to this, a ward-room, used for practice by the crew; adjoining to this is the mess-room of the crew; close to which is a room used for sailmaking, the purser's stores, and the infirmary.

On the next range we have, at the fore part of the vessel, the galley or cook's room, and hammocks for the seamen, which extend along almost the whole length of the fore part of the ship. Aft, sailors are seen at gun practice, beyond which are the officers' rooms—the captain's, or state cabin, being situated immediately above those of the inferior officers.

These different ranges, or decks, as they are called, are distinguished as, 1st, the main deck; 2nd, the middle deck; 3rd, the lower deck; 4th, the orlop deck; 5th, the hold. The arrangements are somewhat different in all vessels, and our illustration is only intended to furnish a general idea of the plan adopted. The upper portion of the engraving shows the sailors spreading the ship's canvas, and conveys a very correct notion of the animated scene exhibited on such occasions.

The sectional view does not permit of showing, except at occasional points, the arrangement of the ship's guns, which, of course, extend along each side of the vessel, ready to pour forth from the port-holes those raking broadsides, which have carried destruction into the ships of our enemies, and brought so much naval glory to our flag in days gone by.

But it is not only ships that make our wooden walls secure: we want efficient crews to man them. Other nations are increasing their naval strength, and it is incumbent upon us to be up and doing. At present, however, the coast-guard numbers 6,862 men; the naval coast volunteers number 7,000. In the royal naval reserve 1,000 men have been enrolled; and the actual reserve of men whose services are available at any moment is 14,850. Still, there is a demand for more men. The demand is urgent; and the youth of our nation must be drilled to serve afloat as well as ashore. Why should we not have naval as well as rifle volunteers?