

So Nellie said her little prayer,
Believing God would hear ;
And may He grant her simple faith
To Christians far and near !

“ O God, Thou knowest what they mean
To do to me to-morrow ;
I cannot help it. Grant me strength
To bear my pain and sorrow.

“ As Thou didst send Thine angel down
To Abr’am and his son—
Please may I have an angel too?
But let Thy will be done!

“ I’ll stretch my arms and clasp my hands,
And raise them o’er my head,
So let him guard the little child
Whose hands are out of bed.”

And when the nurse next morning came,
Her hands were out of bed ;
And God had answered Nellie’s prayer.
For Nellie’s soul had fled !

And peacefully she must have died,
A smile was on her face ;
And of the pain so long endured
There was not left a trace.

R. T. W.

A CHAT ABOUT FLAGS.



THE ROYAL STANDARD.

IN St. Paul’s Cathedral, as in many other public buildings, may be seen the remnants of what once were magnificent flags of fine silk, embroidered with appropriate designs, spotless and beautiful. Now they are torn and dirty, pierced by many a gunshot, and bearing

unmistakable marks of having passed through fierce struggles before they were placed in the position of honour they at present occupy. As we notice the words “Seringapatam, Badajoz, Alma, Inkermann, Peninsula,” on the tattered shreds of a certain flag, we feel sure that in India, Spain, and the Crimea, it has formed the rallying-point of our troops; and though its bearer may have been changed again and again, as shot after shot has laid each successive one low, ready hands have seized the ensign and borne it proudly against the retreating foe.

The use of flags as a means of uniting men together for some specific purpose is of very early date. The standards of ancient Greece embraced, amongst others, for Athens, an owl; for Corinth, a pegasus, or flying horse; for Thebes, a sphinx. Ancient Egypt was represented on its ensigns by a bull, a crocodile, or a vulture. Persia in olden times selected a golden eagle with outstretched wings as its banner-emblem. The Jews were marshalled under their various banners; and the Romans, after selecting a variety of animals for their standards, at length adopted the eagle, and placed the king of birds on their ensigns, which also often bore at the top of the staff a repre-

sentation of Mars, Victory, or of the reigning emperor.

The Roman eagles were in course of time superseded on the military banners by the celebrated cross of Constantine, which owes its existence, as you know, to the device in that shape which Constantine is said to have seen in the sky while marching with his army to Rome, accompanied by the words *Vincis in hoc* (“By this conquer”). Obedient to the vision which followed the miraculous sign, Constantine inscribed the cross on the shields of his soldiers, and gained the battle of Saxa Rubra, in which he overthrew his powerful adversary, Maxentino.

Among the early banners may be mentioned the one taken by Alfred from the Danes, which bore on it a raven. Tradition mentions that whenever the Danes carried that banner, a live crow was seen flying above the flag if they were to gain the victory, while when they were to be defeated the banner hung down motionless. The banners of our ancestors, the Saxons, have a trotting horse, whilst the ancient Welsh displayed a dragon, upon their national ensigns.

From the celebrated Bayeux Tapestry we know that at the battle of Hastings both Normans and Anglo-Saxons bore on their shields and banners various figures and devices, showing incidentally that the use of flags was considered by these nations of importance in the battle-field.

The *Oriflamme*, first used in 1119 as the French national banner, has, like the cross of Constantine, supernatural powers attributed to it. It bore representations of tongues of fire, and when used at Rosbecq the fog which had enveloped the rival armies is said to have cleared off from the French troops, while their enemies were still left enveloped in the mist. Similar miraculous

powers are also said to have been manifested when the banner was used elsewhere.

One of the most notable occasions on which the value of military flags has been shown was at the Battle of the Standard, which was fought between the English and Scotch in 1138. David I. of Scotland having sworn to defend the right of Matilda to the English crown, invaded England, and a battle took place between the opposing armies at Northallerton. The Scotch army was by far the more numerous, and was several times near gaining the day; but before going into battle a ship's mast had been erected by the English, at the top of which were the consecrated elements, surrounded by English banners of three Saxon saints. Round the waggon in which this was erected the combat was tremendous; again and again the English were defeated in other parts of the field, but here they stood shoulder to shoulder, with unflinching courage, and no efforts on the part of the Scottish host could drive them from this position. In the end the Scotch were entirely defeated, with the loss of no less than 12,000 men.

In early days, when hand-to-hand combats were the rule in the battle, the ensign to whom the care of the flag was committed bound himself by the most solemn promises before the assembled regiment to defend it with his life-blood, and seldom did he fail in his vow, but died in the manful discharge of his duty. The rate of wages which such an officer received was sometimes as much as six times the ordinary pay, showing plainly how perilous was the office he undertook. At the present day, although there is often fighting at close quarters, the regimental colours are not in so much danger of being captured, as they are not generally placed in so exposed a position as formerly.

Our national flag at the present day is the



NAVAL FLAG.

Union Jack—a combination of the flags of St. George, St. Andrew, and St. Patrick, the patron saints of England, Scotland, and Ireland.

It is only since the union of Ireland, which took place in 1801, that this banner has been in use. Indeed, the first Union Jack we possessed, dates no further back than 1606, after the union of the crowns of England and Scotland by James I. This flag consisted of a combination of the crosses of St. George and St. Andrew, and was in 1707 constituted by royal proclamation the national flag after the union of the parliaments of the two countries.

To unite the three crosses into a harmonious whole has been now satisfactorily accomplished, and if you look at the Union Jack in the corner of the naval flag you will see how it has been done. The cross of St. George is red on a white ground, that of St. Andrew a white cross in this form X (called a saltire) on an azure ground, that of St. Patrick a red saltire on a white ground, and you will find each of these crosses distinctly visible on our present national banner. On our bronze money you will also find upon the shield of Britannia a tolerably accurate representation of the Union Jack.

There are three different kinds of flags now used by British vessels—the white flag with the red St. George's cross, which is known as the British Admiral, and is used by the navy; the blue flag, which is employed by the Royal Naval Reserve; and the red flag, which is set apart for the use of commercial vessels. Each of these ensigns of course bears in the corner the Union Jack, the only difference being in the colour of the remainder of the flag. The presence of an admiral, a vice-admiral, or a rear-admiral with the fleet, is denoted by flying the admiral's flag from a particular mast, varying for each of the three degrees.

With regard to the name by which our national flag is known, while "union" seems appropriate enough, the reason why it is called a Jack, is not at first apparent. It is said, however, by some to derive its name from James I. (*Jacques*), who united the kingdoms of England and Scotland; but this is not probable. The most likely derivation is from the word *jacque*, applied to the jacket or overcoat formerly worn by the British soldier, which bore the representation of a cross.

The Royal Standard of Great Britain is the flag of first importance, and is only hoisted by the fleet when the Sovereign is present. It is also kept flying at Windsor Castle and other royal abodes when the Queen is in residence, and is employed generally to denote the presence of royalty.

The Royal Standard consists, as you know, of four divisions, two of which are occupied by three lions representing England; in one a single lion in a different position which stands for Scotland; while Ireland is represented by a harp.

The English lions are what are known in heraldry as *passant gardant*—i.e., walking and showing the full face. In the time of William the Conqueror there were only two lions on the standard, one being for Rollo, Duke of Normandy, and the other for the country of Maine, which was added to Normandy. Henry II., however, added a third, to represent the Duchy of Aquitaine, which he received with his wife Eleanor.