

## A NAVAL HERO.



**S**IR FRANCIS DRAKE was one of the men who are necessary to the foundation of a country's greatness, and who would probably find their energy leading them into unheroic positions in years when a nation has become settled and respectable. Let us hope that we may never become so respectable as to be ashamed of Sir Francis Drake. He was emphatically a man of his time, a time unlike ours. International law was not in a satisfactory condition, and the theory of "natural enemies" was frankly avowed and acted upon. A struggle had begun between England and Spain, like the old struggle between Rome and Carthage. In ancient days, one or other of these two great cities was inevitably to become the mistress of the Mediterranean and of the world. They waged their war to the knife, and both sides were probably justified in accusing their opponents of ill faith. On the whole it was infinitely for the good of the world that Rome was the winner.

It may be national prejudice, but we cannot avoid thinking that the victory of England, in the strife for America, for the Atlantic, and for the Pacific, was also a fortunate event. Our ancestors in Elizabeth's reign were not squeamish persons. Hawkins had no sort of remorse about his trade in negroes, whom he regarded much as the Boers are said by their enemies to regard the Swazis, and their neighbours. Probably we might shrink now from such a "murder grim and great" as Lord Grey de Wilton made of the Spanish allies of Irish rebellion at Smerwick. But this is not quite certain, as we did some remarkable things of that sort in suppressing the Indian Mutiny. In our constant un-

official warfare with Spain, a struggle carried on by adventurers when the two countries were nominally at peace, men like Drake thought themselves influenced by the noblest motives. The Spanish they regarded as dogs and fiends. "Let us hang these dogs of Seville," as Sir Richard Grenville has it, was the first commandment of a sturdy privateer.

International hatred was increased by stories of Spanish cruelty. English evidence alone is not all that is forthcoming, and Las Casas' writings prove that his countrymen were as ruthless, as wasteful in their fury in the western seas as they were in the Netherlands. They established the Inquisition in countries which had previously known no religion more cruel than that of the Mexican war-god, and no altars more bloody than those on which his priests cut out human victims' hearts with the knife of obsidian. Differences of religion increased the tendency of English and Spaniards to regard each other as devils incarnate. Luckless English mariners, wrecked in the Spanish Main, fell into the hands of the Inquisition, and their blood called for revenge. Lastly, there was, as in the strife between Carthage and Rome, the question of commerce. Who was to have the looting of the rich Western Empires? who was to have the monopoly of the mines, and lands, and forests? These were prizes worth fighting for, and Drake fought like a man. But, in thinking of his earlier exploits, before he became the defender of his country, we must certainly make allowances for the natural hostility between Spain and England, and for the very lax ideas of the time. Otherwise it may not prove very easy to draw the line between Captain Drake and Captain Kidd.

Drake's origin was so obscure that no



one seems to have thought it worth while to leave on record the precise date of his birth. He entered life, like so many famous Admirals, as a cabin boy. In the old seafaring ballads we find the cabin-boy a hero who performs precocious exploits. Drake, like other lads in his humble station, was lucky enough to win the regard of his skipper, who died, and bequeathed his vessel to the young apprentice. Drake prospered in commerce, and in 1567 sailed with Captain Hawkins to Mexico. The venture was a failure, and everything that Drake had fell into the hands of the Spaniards. He returned to Europe, and was so sanguine as to expect the Spanish Court to repay him for what Spanish subjects had plundered. Failing in this hopeful enterprise, he made a vow, as well kept as that of Hannibal, to recoup himself at the expense of a nation at once cruel and "Papist." In 1570 Queen Elizabeth gave him some sort of commission, which he appears to have interpreted as a sanction of what severe thinkers would now call piracy. In 1572 he sailed with the *Pacha*, the *Swan*, and another small vessel, and plundered the Spanish town of Nombre de Dios. He crossed the Isthmus of Panama, burned much Spanish shipping, got his first view of the Pacific, and determined to sail an English ship in these seas.

Drake was now a rich man. He equipped three frigates at his own expense, and served as a volunteer in the Irish troubles. He could not have made much booty out of the "Irish kernes," so he returned to England, was well received by Elizabeth, and raised a force to sail through the recently discovered Straits of Magellan and explore the Pacific. With but five little vessels and a hundred and sixty-six men he set forth into unknown seas infested by innumerable enemies. By the time he reached the Straits of Magellan he had none but his own ship to depend upon. Winter, his second in command, had

returned to England. The solitary English vessel, with her indomitable commander, sailed up the Chilian and Peruvian coast, burning, plundering, and destroying. Drake was alone with his handful of men in a whole world of foes. When he reached the Cape of Good Hope, on his homeward way, he had but fifty-seven men in his crew and three casks of water in his hold. When his ship, the *Golden Hind*, entered Plymouth Harbour, the first English vessel that ever sailed round the world, he had been absent two years and ten months. This voyage of Drake's is scarcely to be rivalled as an example of what audacity can do.

By this time relations between England and Spain were extremely "strained," and Drake was employed in the recognised war which his individual exertions and energetic private enterprise had done so much to fan. In 1585 he took certain cities in the West Indies. Two years later, when the Great Armada was being collected in Cadiz Harbour, Drake sailed in, and burned ten thousand tons of shipping. When the invasion was attempted, Drake was appointed vice-admiral. The famous legend says that he was playing bowls when the news of the approach of the fleet was brought to him, and that he insisted on finishing his game. In the struggle with the Armada, his individual courage and generalship, aided by the elements, scattered the vast fleet, and left Catholic Europe ruefully to ask, "Where are the Galleons of Spain?"

Drake's last years were somewhat clouded by failure and disappointment. He was one of the first of the great English admirals; of the Blakes, Benbows, Duncans, Collingwoods, Nelsons, whose history is the most inspiring that an Englishman can read. These were heroes who revelled in accomplishing the impossible, whose delight was the delight of battle. It will be an evil day for England when she forgets them.