

**NELSON'S WORDS AND DEEDS. A
SELECTION FROM THE
DISPATCHES AND
CORRESPONDENCE OF HORATIO
NELSON**

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Nelson's words and deeds. A selection from the dispatches and correspondence of Horatio Nelson by Horatio Nelson Nelson & W. Clark Russell

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HORATIO NELSON NELSON & W. CLARK RUSSELL

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NELSON'S WORDS AND DEEDS

A SELECTION

*From the Dispatches and Correspondence
of Horatio Nelson*

EDITED BY

W. CLARK RUSSELL

"An ambitious love of distinction, a thirst for the acquisition of honours, or a glorious death, was the ruling passion, and his destiny led him to experience them all. Conqueror of 'a hundred fights,' he died at last, as all true heroes could wish to do, in the arms of victory."—*Sir John Barrow.*

"Others may be great in many points; nay, admit but another like himself might appear again amongst the disciples he has formed, there would yet be wanting *all he had done* and all the *circumstances* of the times in which he *did* those wondrous deeds. Every victory was greater than the last."—*Lord Malmesbury.*

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P R E F A C E .

THE design of this little book is to submit the character and the more conspicuous of the features of the career of Horatio Nelson as they are described by his own pen. The slender dimensions of the volume rendered choice difficult by restriction. The Nelson literature is extraordinarily voluminous ; yet it is believed that most of the best of the plums which enrich it will be found in the following pages.

It would have been hopeless to attempt to connect the extracts into any sort of form of historic sequence. The best and most familiar of the narratives of the Battles of the Nile and of the Baltic are not Nelson's : *his* relations of them must be sought in dry and colourless dispatches ; yet the scheme of this little work would not admit of the inclusion of the accounts by other hands. The story, however, of the death of Nelson at Trafalgar must prove an exception. During his last hours he spoke often to those who were about him, and portions of Beatty's narrative contain so much of the hero's own words that the description could scarcely be more Nelson's had he himself dictated it.

There is very much that is tiresome in the seven

stout volumes of dispatches and letters. Sir Harris Nicolas's veneration for Nelson knew no bounds. Every scrap of the great Admiral's writing that was to be come at he printed. Insipid orders, uninteresting opinions, every commonplace of the service—instructions for victuals—requests for nightcaps and jumpers : all these things the deeply-admiring Sir Harris Nicolas published ; and the eye reading through page after page of dull, formal, official communications, grows exhausted in the search for something good.

But Nelson's unofficial letters—particularly those to his friend Davison, to his wife, and to Lady Hamilton—are full of clever, of exhilarating, of high, and of noble thought. Most of the following extracts are made from this side of his correspondence ; so that in this little book the reader will find Nelson not only as Patriot and Sailor, not only as Politician and plain dealer in Marine Philosophy, but as Husband, Son, Brother, Lover, and Friend. He was before all things a Seaman ; and his was pre-eminently the nautical characteristic of "whipping out" with what was in his mind when untrammelled by official form. He is never so engaging, so inspiriting, and, it may be added, so lovable, as when he is in earnest and writing with quarter-deck candour. Most of the thoughts collected here flowed from his heart, and they were chosen for that reason.

The memory of his tactics, the inspiration of his professional opinions, the example of his seamanship, in a word, can no longer serve the country who owed her security and her continuance as a nation to his genius and valour as a sea-captain. The steam-engine has extinguished the topsail ; and it is now long ago since there came an end to wearing and tacking, to weather-gauges, and to lee manœuvrings. It may interest but it cannot edify living and future generations to learn that Rodney cut the enemy's line in one place, and Nelson in two ; that the battle of Trafalgar was fought and won without reference to the tactics of Clerk ; and that the most signal of the St. Vincent achievements was the result of a disregard of the flagship's signals. But the ironclad is manned by a breed of men surely not less heroic in ardour, not less magnanimous in patriotic sentiment, not less chivalrous in spirit, than those whose cannon thundered at Copenhagen and off Cadiz. So long as the English sailor preserves his qualities, the name of Nelson must prove a note of magic, animating to a degree not to be matched by the inspiration of the greatest of the military memories of these kingdoms.

W. C. R.

December, 1889.

