

Following is a talk on Trafalgar Day by Admiral Harold Stark, Commander, United States Naval Forces in Europe, to be broadcast at 9.25 p.m. tonight. Admiral Stark will be introduced by Admiral Sir William James, Chief of Naval Information, who will recall that before America came into the war Admiral Stark put through one of the very large lend-lease programmes for our Navy involving over a thousand million pounds. He was also in charge of the transfer of the fifty destroyers which were such a help to us when the tide of war was running against us. The huge Naval expansion that was approved by Congress and which is now bearing fruit was also initiated by Admiral Stark.

Today is Trafalgar Day.

One hundred and thirty eight years ago, a little man, in an Admiral's uniform, sat at his cabin desk in H.M.S. VICTORY and brought his diary up to date.

He wrote:-

"Monday, October 21st, 1805. At daylight, saw the Enemy's Combined Fleet; made the signal for Order of Sailing and to prepare for battle."

Battle was no new thing for the Admiral. He had lost an eye in Corsica, an arm at Teneriffe, been wounded at Cape St. Vincent, and again at the Battle of the Nile. A man of 47, he had served in the Royal Navy since he was a boy of 12.

Now, with twenty-seven ships of the line he faced a combined force of thirty-three. The outcome might well decide whether British sea power could save England from the tyrant, who then dominated the continent of Europe.

During the long morning the two Fleets manœvered. Shortly before noon they met. My late afternoon the British forces were victorious. But in the moment of victory, the little Admiral had received a fifth and fatal wound.

Admiral Lord Nelson was dead.

England was saved.

I know that no one in these islands can look back on the day of Trafalgar, without a quickening of the pulse.

It may seem strange to you that an American should be speaking on an occasion which is so essentially British, but the memory of Lord Nelson lives in every Navy in the world; and after all, about seventy million of our population are of British stock, or over half again as many as you have in the British Isles.

We, too, can be proud of Nelson.

His memory lives as a symbol of that intangible element that you will not find in lists of ships, or estimates of fire power: that intangible element which enabled Nelson to carry twenty-seven ships to victory over thirty-three: the element which means the difference between victory and defeat: - the fighting spirit - the will to win.

Attack - love of battle - were over the key notes of Nelson's actions. Although he attacked against odds, it was not in a vain spirit of rashness, but in the calm confidence that the superior training and morale of his men would more than offset the odds - bold and daring - yes - but also an infinite capacity for taking pains.

He studied French tactics and how best to beat them. The clearness of his Trafalgar memorandum is perhaps best illustrated by the remark of Admiral Collingwood, his Second in Command. When Collingwood saw the flags of Nelson's famous signal begin to flutter, he said - "I wish Nelson would stop making signals, we all know what to do". That was a great tribute to the thoroughness with which Nelson had indoctrinated his command.

Nelson, himself, never made it clear just what he meant by "The Nelson Touch". But to those who have come after him, the Nelson Touch stands for that combination of fighting spirit, and long and efficient preparation, which are the keys to victory.

/ Nelson

Nelson lived in an age of great Admirals :

Hawke, Howe, Hood, St. Vincent - their very names evoke the Golden Age of Naval warfare under sail. Yet compared with Nelson all of them remain to the average man, but portraits, hanging on the walls of history.

Some have called Nelson a genius - Perhaps - but the genius in his case, can be summed up in one word - LEADERSHIP. -

It was no accident that Nelson described his captains as a band of Brothers. His warm, human traits, combined with a fervent devotion to his country and a great offensive spirit, won for him the respect and affection of the men with whom he served.

He inspired them with that same offensive spirit which was part and parcel of himself, establishing more firmly than ever that offensive tradition which has been the crowning glory of the British Navy to the present day.

Although Nelson died almost a century and a half ago, his spirit, in a very real and true sense has survived, and lives in the present. I can say this with some assurance because during the two great wars which our generation has witnessed, I have been in position where I could observe not only the work of the Royal Navy, but also the heart and soul of this country.

I have seen, both in the past war and in this present struggle, the spirit of Nelson continually animating the British people and leading them once again, just as it did off Cape Trafalgar, to final victory.

The world will ever marvel at the fortitude of a people who fought on after Dunkirk. Gone were most of your weapons of war: guns, tanks, vehicles. Little else was left but pitchforks, broomsticks, and the will to fight. Food was scarce. The U-boat roamed the Atlantic, gravely threatening your life line. The Luftwaffe swept over your skies devastating your cities.

Yet you fought on. In those perilous days Nelson's famous signal, "England expects every man this day to do his duty", did not go unheeded.

Men and women worked by day, and fought fires by night.

Your Air Force fought constantly against vastly superior numbers.

Your Navy was hard put to it to protect the sea lanes where your merchant ships struggled through against heavy odds to bring in the supplies that enabled you to continue the fight.

Your new First Sea Lord, Admiral Sir Andrew Cunningham, speaking of the war at sea in the Mediterranean in those early days, said :-

"We started very weak at sea, and even more so in the air. However, because of the very fact of our weakness, our policy had obviously to be one of aggressiveness, and it paid handsome dividends."

Admiral Cunningham also said :-

"It may be said with some truth that Greece and Crete were reverses - perhaps - but I count it my greatest pride to have been privileged to command those men in that time of adversity."

These words might have been spoken by Nelson himself.

Nelson's spirit is roaming the seas today just as truly as it did over a hundred years ago.

It was the Nelson spirit, which inspired that immortal trio, the EXETER, AJAX and ACHILLES to hang on to the GRIPPE like grim death.

It was the Nelson spirit, that has repeatedly disregarded heavy odds in the Mediterranean where notable victories have been won, and of which Matapan is a shining example.

It was the Nelson spirit, which sent those nidget submarines through the intricate defences of the Alten Fjord, to put their deadly torpedoes into the TIRPITZ.

It is the Nelson spirit, which night after night sends your coastal forces out across the Channel to attack the enemy convoys which creep stealthily along the coast of France.

The Nelson spirit transcends the Royal Navy and the Merchant Navy. And above all, it is the spirit of the British people, themselves, who stood unfalteringly, alone, in the greatest crisis of British history, resolute, firm, and completely ignoring the possibility of defeat, thereby making defeat impossible.

It may be a far cry, from Nelson's old wooden ships of the line, to the tremendous battleships and deadly aircraft, which make up the striking power of modern navies. Yet today, as on that first Trafalgar Day, one element retains its supreme and basic importance - the fighting man.

This is the great lesson from Trafalgar. This is the lesson which all who seek to survive must learn; for if the average man in the street should ever lose the fighting edge, and become soft. - GREATNESS will pass.

I began this talk with a quotation from Nelson's diary. I did not finish the quotation. I should like to do so now, because his words would be fitting for any Commander, before battle, - anywhere - any time.

The last entry in his diary concludes in this way:-

"May the great God, Whom I worship, grant to my country, and for the benefit of Europe in general, a great and glorious victory; and may no misconduct in anyone tarnish it; and may humanity, after Victory, be the predominant feature in the British Fleet.

For myself, individually, I commit my life to Him who made me, and may His blessing light upon my endeavours for serving my Country faithfully.

To Him I resign myself and the just cause which is entrusted to me to defend.

AMEN"

Pigeons feed quietly in Trafalgar Square. Sailors, soldiers and airmen of many nations, sit there under the shadow of Nelson. High overhead his statue looks up Whitehall to that famous grey old building, housing the Admiralty.

A great naval officer lived there for the past five years, working day and night, quietly, effectively, - undaunted and determined. He faced naval problems, perhaps more difficult and complex than any First Sea Lord ever faced before him. By clear and straight thinking, and by tireless devotion to duty he successfully met the multitude of tasks which confronted him.

Truly it may be said of Admiral Sir Dudley Pound:- "WELL DONE".

Truly he typifies Nelson's saying that "Duty is the great business of an Officer. All private considerations must give way to it, however painful it may be."

And now Admiral Sir Andrew Cunningham takes up these tasks.

You may rest assured, Nelson's spirit lives, and will carry on.

It must carry on, and must not falter for one minute, because the toughest times are still ahead.

It is no time to slow up when things start a favourable trend. Rather should we redouble every effort in production on the home front ----- and in fighting on the enemy front ----- to the end that we wind up this war at the earliest possible moment.

Any letting down, or taking early victory for granted, may cost us untold treasures in blood and in material.

It must be full out - every minute - everybody - until the enemy is completely broken - completely down and out.