

## CHAPTER VII.

### *THE INVINCIBLE ARMADA.*

1. IN 1588 the "Invincible Armada" sailed from Spain into the high seas. To understand the nature of this formidable naval armament and the reasons for its sailing, we must take a brief survey of the condition of Europe at this period of the world's history.

#### SPAIN BEFORE THE ARMADA.

2. At this time Spain was the most powerful of the monarchies of Europe. Many causes had conspired to give her this pre-eminence. About one hundred years before, the two principal provinces, Castile and Aragon, were united by the marriage of their sovereigns, Isabella and Ferdinand. In 1492 the Moors were subjugated, uniting the whole peninsula under one government. In the same year, under the auspices of the Spanish sovereigns, Columbus discovered the New World, giving additional luster to the Spanish name and a new impulse to Spanish adventure.

3. Thirty years later, Mexico and Peru had been overrun and plundered by Cortes and Pizarro, and the treasures of millions of people, accumulated through many centuries, became a possession of the Spanish people; raising them to a degree of opulence unknown since the

time of the most illustrious of the Roman emperors. In consequence of this wealth, commerce expanded, large cities grew up along the courses of the navigable rivers, and all branches of industry were aroused to a state of great activity.

4. In 1516 Spain and Austria were united under the Emperor Charles V, grandson of Ferdinand and Isabella; and, during his reign, the united kingdoms arose to a height of power almost equal to that of the empire of Charlemagne. The dominion of Charles extended from the Atlantic to the steppes of Poland, and from the Mediterranean to the Baltic. It included all of Western Continental Europe, except France and Southern Italy. In 1556 Charles abdicated his throne, and divided his empire, giving Austria and Germany to his brother Ferdinand, and Spain and the Low Countries of Holland and Belgium to his son Philip II.

5. Spain was now rich and powerful. Her armies were large, and were commanded by the most experienced military officers of Europe. Material progress showed itself on every side. The richest commerce of the world poured its wealth into her ports. A new intellectual life was aroused, which found expression in literature and schools. All the conditions seemed to indicate that the Spanish people were about to lead Europe in the direction of a higher civilization.

#### CHARACTER AND POLICY OF PHILIP II

6. But soon all this changed. Philip was vain, bigoted, and ambitious. In his administration of public affairs he seemed to have but two objects in view, to augment Spanish power, and to cause his own religious creed to be universally accepted. To promote these objects he had

no scruples in regard to means. His own people were tortured and executed by the thousand. By this savage policy he stamped out heresy, placed freedom of thought under a ban, and put an end to the intellectual progress of the country. In his dealings with other nations his diplomacy included all the arts of chicanery and deceit.

7. Two formidable obstacles stood in the way of the realization of his plans. Heretical England had become a strong naval power, and English ships captured his treasure-vessels laden with the spoils of the countries he had plundered. The eagles of the sea despoiled the wolves of the main of their ill-got gains. The second trouble was nearer home. The people of the Low Countries revolted alike from his government and his creed. To remove these obstacles was the first step toward the attainment of his larger ambitions.

8. In regard to England, Philip ventured upon a master-stroke of policy. He sought the hand of Mary, the newly crowned Queen of England, and married her. By this step he hoped and expected to extinguish dissent in England as he had done in his own dominions, to gradually usurp the government, and to make English naval supremacy subserve the interests of Spain.

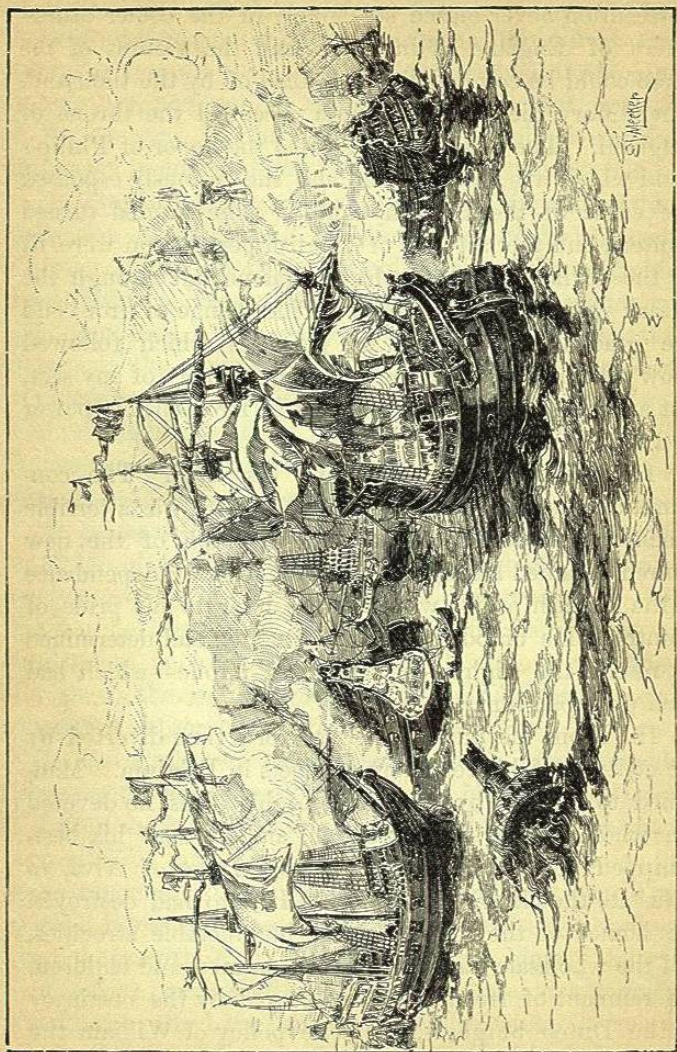
9. But Philip was sorely disappointed. Mary, though narrow and bigoted, and at one with him in creed, had still English blood in her; and English independence had been sturdily maintained through too many centuries to be surrendered to any power or on any pretext. The English Parliament also interfered and refused to crown him jointly with Mary. So Philip found himself united to a sickly, peevish wife of twice his age, and entirely powerless to effect the purposes he had in view.

10. Three or four years passed in fruitless intrigue. Punishments for heresy were frequent, but the fires of

persecution never blazed so fiercely in the cooler atmosphere of England as in Spain, and the victims of the stake could be counted singly instead of by the thousand. Then Mary died, and Elizabeth ascended the throne of England. The new queen declined the honor of Philip's hand which was tendered her, and she zealously espoused the cause of the English church. The hunted turned hunters, and the last fires of English persecution were lit by those whom the stake had threatened all through the dreary years of Mary's reign. This change of front and the gradual amelioration of penalties which followed show that persecutions are not the monopoly of any sect, but are rather the manifestations of an irresponsible power in a semi-barbarous age.

11. Philip retired angry and disgusted. The contemptuous refusal of his hand by Elizabeth was a terrible shock to his personal pride; the triumph of the new church inflamed his bigotry; and the sturdy independence of the English people was a severe blow to his pride of country. He brooded over the situation and determined to resent the slights—personal and public—which had been put upon him.

12. From his purpose he was for a time diverted by the attitude of his rebellious subjects in Belgium. Madened to ferocity by the failure of his plans, he devoted the whole people to destruction, and he sent his best-equipped armies, under the terrible Duke of Alva, to devastate the cities of the dikes as Pizarro had destroyed the homes of the Incas. After innumerable atrocities, and the wholesale slaughter of men, women, and children, the remnant of freedom was preserved by the obstinacy of the Dutch burghers, the wise policy of William the Silent, the aid of the sea, and the succor furnished by Elizabeth.



The Spanish Armada.

13. Here, again, was practical defeat. His cherished purposes were thwarted, and the high hope of his life was gone. Nothing was left but despair and revenge. At this time Philip began to exhibit in a marked degree the madness which overshadowed the last years of his life. His hatred of England grew from day to day, and at last took shape in a determination to make one supreme effort to conquer his rival, and to check the rising free thought of the English people. For years the preparations went on for the great conflict, and in 1588, twenty years after the accession of Elizabeth to the throne, everything was ready.

## ENGLAND'S POWER TO RESIST THE ARMADA.

14. And what of England and of her ability to resist this formidable attack? For a hundred years before the beginning of the sixteenth century, the civil wars of the Roses had desolated the country and put an end to national growth. For the next fifty years, and until the commencement of the reign of Elizabeth, violence and bloodshed were so common that the population barely maintained its own. In 1588 the whole number of people in England and Wales was estimated at four millions, about one third of the population of Spain.

15. But England possessed two elements of strength—her people, although differing in creed and often warring with one another, were intensely patriotic, and were united as one man against a foreign foe; and the ships of England, manned by English crews and commanded by her great captains—the legitimate successors of the old Vikings—dominated the seas. No enterprise was too hazardous for these hardy mariners to undertake, and no disparity of force ever induced them to pause. Philip

was often wrought to frenzy as he saw these bold corsairs capture his treasure-ships and ravage his coasts in sight of his invincible but impotent armies.

16. The mode of attack which Philip determined upon consisted of two distinct but co-operative movements. A formidable army of invasion, under the Duke of Parma, the most experienced and skillful commander in Europe, was stationed at the several ports of the Low Countries, opposite the British coast, from Dunkirk east. Innumerable transports were provided to convey this host across the Channel, and, once on English ground, an easy and triumphant march to London was expected. The second part of the grand expedition consisted of an immense fleet of the largest vessels ever built, under the command of the Duke of Medina Sidonia, which was to drive away the English ships and convoy the army of Parma to the English shore. This fleet was christened by the Spaniards "The Invincible Armada."

17. "Philip hastened his preparations with all the energy he could command. In every port resounded the axe and hammer of the ship-builder; in every arsenal blazed the flames of busy forges. All Spanish Europe echoed with the din of arms. Provisions were amassed in a thousand granaries; soldiers were daily mustered on the parade-grounds, drilled, and accustomed to the use of arquebus and cannon. Carts and wagons were built in hundreds for the conveyance of stores; spades, mattocks, and baskets were got ready for the pioneers; iron and brass ordnance were cast, and leaden shot melted in enormous quantities; nor were the instruments of torture—the thumb-screw and the 'jailer's daughter'—forgotten."

18. In 1587 the preparations were nearly completed, and the Armada was about ready to sail, when a knowledge of its destination became known to Sir Francis

Drake, the great English commander. Without considering the disparity of force, the old sea-king, with a fleet of swift-sailing vessels, made a sudden descent upon the port of Cadiz, where the ships of the Armada were at anchor. Many of the larger vessels escaped by taking refuge under the guns of the forts, but the city was lit up by the blaze of one hundred and fifty burning ships, and the great enterprise was delayed for another year.

#### SAILING OF THE ARMADA.

19. But this disaster only called forth greater exertions. The maimed vessels were repaired, new ones were built, and at length one hundred and thirty-two ships, many of them the largest ever known at the time, were ready to sail. They carried three thousand guns and thirty thousand men. On May 3d the Armada sailed from the mouth of the Tagus, but a great gale dispersed the ships, and obliged them to put back into port to repair. Surely God did not smile upon the beginning of a warfare carried on in his name! It was not until July 12th that the fleet finally sailed from Corunna on its mission of destruction, and to meet its fate.

20. To cope with this formidable force, the whole British navy could muster only thirty-six vessels, all much smaller than the largest of the Spanish ships. But, in consideration of the great danger, merchants and private gentlemen fitted out vessels at their own expense, and by mid-summer a fleet of one hundred and ninety-seven ships was placed at the disposal of the British admiral. In tonnage, number of guns, and number of men, the strength of the whole fleet was about one half that of the Armada.

21. But all England was aroused. For more than five centuries this was the first foreign invasion that had threat-

ened her shores. The years of preparation had given time for the avowed purposes of Philip to become known throughout the kingdom. There was anxiety everywhere, for no one knew where and when the blow was to be struck; but there was no thought of submission, and all England stood alert, eagerly watching and waiting. Much to Philip's disappointment and chagrin, the great Catholic families of England rallied to their country's defense as readily as their Protestant neighbors, and all Englishmen stood shoulder to shoulder in this supreme moment of the nation's peril. Vessels patrolled the shores, to give notice of the coming ships; soldiers drilled in every hamlet; and on the hill-tops piles of fagots were placed so that signal-fires might speedily send the news to the remotest parts of the kingdom.

WAITING FOR THE ARMADA.

22. Canon Kingsley has given a graphic picture of England's great naval commanders, when the news was received that the Armada was off the coast. He supposes them assembled at Plymouth on the 19th of July, engaged in the then favorite game of bowls.

23. "Those soft, long eyes and pointed chin you recognize already. They are Sir Walter Raleigh's. The fair young man in the flame-colored suit at his side is Lord Sheffield; opposite them stand Lord Sheffield's uncle, Sir Richard Grenville, and the stately Lord Charles Howard of Effingham, Lord High Admiral of England; next to him is his son-in-law, Sir Robert Southwell, captain in her Majesty's service.

24. "But who is that short, sturdy, plainly dressed man, who stands with legs a little apart, and hands behind his back, looking up with keen gray eyes into the face of

each speaker? His cap is in his hand, so you can see the bullet-head of crisp brown hair and the wrinkled forehead as well as the high cheek-bones, the short square face, the broad temples, the thick lips, which are yet as firm as granite. A coarse, plebeian stump of a man; yet the whole figure and attitude are those of boundless determination, self-possession, energy; and, when at last he speaks a few blunt words, all eyes are turned respectfully on him, for his name is Francis Drake.

25. "A burly, grizzled elder, in greasy, sea-stained garments, contrasting oddly with the huge gold chain about his neck, waddles up, as if he had been born, and had lived ever since, in a gale of wind at sea. The upper half of his sharp, dogged visage seems of a brick-red leather, the brow of badger's fur, and, as he claps Drake on the back, with a broad Devon accent he shouts, 'Be you a-coming to drink your wine, Francis Drake, or be you not? saving your presence my lord.' The lord high admiral only laughs, and bids Drake go and drink his wine, for John Hawkins, admiral of the fleet, is the patriarch of Plymouth seamen, if Drake is the hero.

26. "So they push through the crowd, wherein is many another man whom we would gladly have spoken with face to face on earth. Martin Frobisher and John Davis are sitting on that bench, smoking tobacco from long silver pipes; and by them are Fenton and Wishington, who have both tried to follow Drake's path around the world, and failed, though by no fault of their own. The short, prim man, in the huge yellow ruff, is Richard Hawkins, the admiral's hereafter famous son.

27. "But hark! the boom of a single gun seaward directs the attention of every one to a small armed vessel staggering up the sound under a press of canvas. A boat puts off; its oars flash quickly in the sun; the cap-

tain lands, and, inquiring for the lord high admiral, is quickly brought into his presence. He has discovered the formidable array of the Spaniards bearing down with the wind like so many floating castles, the ocean seeming to groan under the weight of their heavy burdens. The lord high admiral proposes to hold counsel with his principal officers; but, says Drake, with a hearty laugh: 'Let us play out our play; there will be plenty of time to win the game and beat the Spaniards, too.'

28. "The game was played out steadily, and, the last cast having been thrown, Drake and his comrades leaped into their boats and rowed swiftly to their respective ships. With so much skill did Howard and his lieutenants direct the movements of their squadrons that, before morning, sixty of the best English ships had warped out of Plymouth Harbor."

#### HOW THE NEWS SPREAD THROUGH ENGLAND.

29. While preparations had been made to meet the Armada, there seems to have been a half expectation on the part of the government that something would occur to prevent its sailing. Until the very last, Elizabeth and her counselors appeared to place more confidence in diplomacy and political combinations than in the powers of Sir Francis Drake and his coadjutors. So, when the Armada was seen off the coast, the signal-fires were kindled, and the whole kingdom was soon ablaze. The stirring verse of Macaulay best describes the spread of the news, the alarm, the anxiety, and the grand uprising of the whole people:

30. Attend, all ye who list to hear  
Our noble England's praise;  
I tell of the thrice-famous deeds  
She wrought in ancient days,

When that great fleet invincible  
Against her bore in vain  
The richest spoils of Mexico,  
The stoutest hearts of Spain.

31. It was about the lovely close  
Of a warm summer day,  
There came a gallant merchant-ship  
Full sail to Plymouth Bay;  
Her crew hath seen Castile's black fleet,  
Beyond Aurigny's isle,  
At earliest twilight, on the waves,  
Lie heaving many a mile.
32. At sunrise she escaped their van,  
By God's especial grace;  
And the tall Pinta, till the noon,  
Had held her close in chase.
33. Forthwith a guard at every gun  
Was placed along the wall;  
The beacon blazed upon the roof  
Of Edgecumbe's lofty hall;  
Many a light fishing-bark put out  
To ply along the coast,  
And with loose rein and bloody spur  
Rode inland many a post.
34. With his white hair unbonneted,  
The stout old sheriff comes;  
Before him march the halberdiers;  
Behind him sound the drums;  
His yeomen round the market cross  
Make clear an ample space;  
For there behooves him to set up  
The standard of her Grace.

35. And haughtily the trumpets peal,  
 And gayly dance the bells,  
 As slow upon the laboring wind  
 The royal blazon swells.  
 Look how the Lion of the sea  
 Lifts up his ancient crown,  
 And underneath his deadly paw  
 Treads the gay lilies down.
36. So stalked he when he turned to flight,  
 On that famed Picard field,\*  
 Bohemia's plume, and Genoa's bow,  
 And Cæsar's eagle shield.  
 So glared he when at Agincourt  
 In wrath he turned to bay,  
 And crushed and torn beneath his claws  
 The princely hunters lay.
37. Ho! Strike the flag-staff deep, Sir Knight:  
 Ho! scatter flowers, fair maids:  
 Ho! gunners, fire a loud salute:  
 Ho! gallants, draw your blades:  
 Thou sun, shine on her joyously;  
 Ye breezes, waft her wide;  
 Our glorious SEMPER EADEM,  
 The banner of our pride.
38. The freshening breeze of eve unfurled  
 That banner's massy fold;  
 The parting gleam of sunshine kissed  
 That haughty scroll of gold;  
 Night sank upon the dusky beach,  
 And on the purple sea,  
 Such night in England ne'er hath been  
 Nor e'er again shall be.

\* The battle of Crécy, won by the Black Prince.

39. From Eddystone to Berwick bounds,  
 From Lynn to Milford Bay,  
 That time of slumber was as bright  
 And busy as the day;  
 For swift to east and swift to west  
 The ghastly war-flame spread,  
 High on St. Michael's Mount it shone:  
 It shone on Beachy Head.
40. Far on the deep the Spaniard saw,  
 Along each southern shire,  
 Cape beyond cape, in endless range,  
 Those twinkling points of fire.  
 The fisher left his skiff to rock  
 On Tamar's glittering waves:  
 The rugged miners poured to war  
 From Mendip's sunless caves:
41. O'er Longleat's towers, o'er Cranbourne's oaks,  
 The fiery herald flew:  
 And roused the shepherds of Stonehenge,  
 The rangers of Beaulieu.  
 Right sharp and quick the bells all night  
 Rang out from Bristol town,  
 And e'er the day three hundred horse  
 Had met on Clifton down;
42. The sentinel on Whitehall gate  
 Looked forth into the night,  
 And saw o'erhanging Richmond Hill  
 The streak of blood-red light.  
 Then bugle's note and cannon's roar  
 The death-like silence broke,  
 And with one start, and with one cry,  
 The royal city woke.

43. At once on all her stately gates  
 Arose the answering fires ;  
 At once the wild alarum clashed  
 From all her reeling spires ;  
 From all the batteries of the Tower  
 Pealed loud the voice of fear ;  
 And all the thousand masts of Thames  
 Sent back a louder cheer :
44. And from the farthest wards was heard  
 The rush of hurrying feet,  
 And the broad streams of pikes and flags  
 Rushed down each roaring street ;  
 And broader still became the blaze,  
 And louder still the din,  
 As if from every village round  
 The horse came spurring in :
45. And eastward straight from wild Blackheath  
 The warlike errand went,  
 And roused in many an ancient hall  
 The gallant squires of Kent.  
 Southward from Surrey's pleasant hills  
 Flew those bright couriers forth ;  
 High on bleak Hampstead's swarthy moor  
 They started for the north ;
46. And on, and on, without a pause  
 Untired they bounded still ;  
 All night from tower to tower they sprang :  
 They sprang from hill to hill :  
 Till the proud peak unfurled the flag  
 O'er Darwin's rocky dales,  
 Till like volcanoes flared to heaven  
 The stormy hills of Wales ;

47. Till twelve fair counties saw the blaze  
 On Malvern's lonely height,  
 Till streamed in crimson on the wind  
 The Wrekin's crest of light,  
 Till broad and fierce the star came forth  
 On Ely's stately fane,  
 And tower and hamlet rose in arms  
 O'er all the boundless plain ;
48. Till Belvoir's lordly terraces  
 The sign to Lincoln sent,  
 And Lincoln sped the message on  
 O'er the wide vale of Trent ;  
 Till Skiddaw saw the fire that burned  
 On Gaunt's embattled pile,  
 And the red glare on Skiddaw roused  
 The burghers of Carlisle.

## THE PRELIMINARY SKIRMISH.

49. It was on Saturday, July 20th, a dull, misty day, that the two great fleets, which represented the cause of freedom on the one side and the longing after universal empire on the other, came in sight of each other. The great Armada, with its huge galleons in battle array extending over a space of many miles, was suffered to sail up the Channel, past Plymouth Harbor, without molestation. This was in accordance with the general plan of attack which had been agreed upon.

50. The superior force of the Spaniards caused no fear, but rather a grim determination to overwhelm and destroy. The universal sentiment that seemed to prevail among all classes of Englishmen concerning their country finds fitting expression in the words which Shakespeare puts into the mouth of John of Gaunt :