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BY A SOCIETY OF GENTLEMEN.

VOLUME I.

L O N D O N :

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swers, that they presented him a medal, with an inscription full of honour and respect. He died at Bishops-Nymmet, on the 5th of June, 1690, and was buried in his own church.

BALCHEN (Sir JOHN) an English admiral of approved valour and great experience, was born on the 2d of February, 1669, and during his youth properly instructed in the several arts necessary to form a complete seaman. At this early time of life he gave many indications of a tenacious memory, sound judgment, and the most intrepid courage. He was alarmed by no dangers, intimidated by no difficulties. He pursued his purposes with the greatest perseverance, steadiness, and resolution, and rarely failed of seeing them succeed according to his wishes. But though he was thus resolute and intrepid, he was far from being petulant, nor ever willingly affronted any. When he had attained the knowledge of the arts and sciences requisite in a seaman, he was placed on-board the royal navy, where he served several years in very inferior stations. On the 25th of July, 1697, he was appointed captain of the *Virgin* prize, and from that time was always considered as one of the most active commanders in the **British** navy. He never sacrificed the honour of his country to the designs of a party, or his own private interest, nor sought stations that might be attended with greater advantage than those where his superiors thought proper to place him. The true interest of his country, and the honour of the British flag, were the grand motives that influenced his conduct, and to promote these was the greatest pleasure of his life. The merchants were highly sensible of the advantages which the commerce of the nation derived from his care and vigilance; and the privateers of the enemy felt so often the effects of his courage and intrepidity, that they dreaded even the name of the ship which Balchen commanded.

In 1718, he commanded the *Shrewsbury* in that memorable action near Sicily, in which the Spanish fleet was almost totally destroyed by that of Great Britain, under the command of Sir George Byng. In this engagement captain Balchen behaved, as he did in all others, with the greatest intrepidity. In 1728, he was made rear-admiral of the Blue; and, in 1731, commanded under Sir Charles Wager, when Don Carlos was placed in possession of the duchies of Parma and Placentia. In 1734, he was appointed rear-admiral of the White, and commanded a large squadron at Plymouth, which was intended to join the grand fleet under Sir John Norris; and, in 1739, he was raised to the rank of vice-admiral of the Red.

The Spaniards had for some years made it their practice to take the English merchant ships in the West-Indies, under pretence that they carried on a contraband trade. Representations were often made to the court of Spain on this subject, but to no purpose; the depredations were still continued: in consequence of which, war was declared against Spain on the 23d of October, 1739, and admiral Vernon dispatched with a strong fleet to the West-Indies. In the spring of the succeeding year, the ministry received intelligence, that the *assogue* ships were soon expected in Old Spain, under the convoy of admiral Pizarro; this determined them to send a squadron under the command of an officer that could be depended upon, to intercept them. Accordingly Balchen was named, and dispatched with four ships of the line, to cruize for them off Cape Finisterre. He punctually obeyed his orders, and reached his station on the 20th of April, where he was joined by two other men of war. But his vigilance was rendered abortive by an advice-boat sent from Old Spain, which had the good fortune to meet Pizarro, and acquainted him of the danger. On receiving this intelligence, the Spanish admiral altered his course, and instead of standing for Cape Finisterre, steered to the northward till he made the Lizard point, and from thence directed his course to St. Andero,

Andero, a Spanish port in the Bay of Biscay, where he safely arrived with an immense treasure.

On the 9th of August, 1743, Mr. Balchen was appointed admiral of the White, and soon after knighted by his majesty, and made governor of Greenwich hospital; a station very proper to a person of his advanced age, and where he expected to spend the remainder of his days in tranquility, free from the dangers and fatigues of a seafaring life. But these pleasing expectations soon vanished; his country once more demanded his service, and he with alacrity obeyed the summons. Sir Charles Hardy had been sent with a large convoy of store-ships to admiral Rowley in the Mediterranean, who was in the utmost distress, his ships being almost destitute of provisions, and their rigging in a very wretched condition; nor were the French either ignorant of this circumstance, or careless to profit by it. They sent out a fleet, consisting of fourteen ships of the line, and six frigates, under the command of M. de Rochambault, to intercept the fleet, or at least to prevent Sir Charles from joining admiral Rowley, well knowing that the latter could attempt nothing without these stores. Sir Charles, however, arrived safe at Lisbon, where the French discovered him, and blocked up his fleet in the Tagus. There was now an absolute necessity of relieving Sir Charles, and consequently of sending an admiral, whose courage and conduct could be relied on. In this extremity the ministry cast their eyes upon admiral Balchen, who accordingly repaired to Portsmouth, and took the command of a large fleet, rendezvoused at Spithead, consisting of fourteen ships of the line, and six Dutch, besides two fire-ships, and a sloop. On his arrival he hoisted his flag on board the Victory, one of the largest and finest ships in the royal navy; and, on the 7th of August, 1744, sailed from Spithead to relieve Sir Charles Hardy. He arrived in safety at Lisbon on the 9th of September, and being joined by the squadron of Sir Charles, proceeded to Gibraltar; the French at his approach retiring into Cadiz, and leaving the sea open to the British flag. This important service being performed, Sir John was desirous of shewing the French what they had to expect from a powerful English fleet, and accordingly cruised for some time on the coast of Portugal, in hopes of meeting with some of the Brest fleet; but in this he was disappointed, the French commander taking care to prevent his design, by keeping his whole fleet in the harbour of Cadiz.

Sir John Balchen finding it in vain to wait any longer for the enemy, left the coast of Galicia on the 28th of September, steering for England; but on the 3d of October he was overtaken by a violent storm, which dispersed the whole fleet. The Exeter lost her main and mizen masts, and was obliged to throw twelve of her guns over-board to prevent her foundering: the Duke, on board of which vice-admiral Stuart had hoisted his flag, had all her sails and rigging blown away, and ten feet water in her hold; the rest of the fleet also received considerable damage, though all, except the Victory, arrived safe at St. Helens on the 10th of October: but that unfortunate ship had a very different fate; she was separated from the fleet on the 4th of October, and driven on the rocky coast of Alderney, where she struck on the Caskets. The inhabitants of Alderney heard the guns which the admiral fired as signals of distress; but the tempest raged with such uncommon violence, that no assistance could be given. The signal guns were continued during the whole night, but early in the morning the ship sunk, and every person on board perished. She was manned with eleven hundred of the most expert seamen in the royal navy, exclusive of fifty gentlemen of family and fortune, who went as volunteers. Thus one of the most experienced admirals, with eleven hundred and fifty men, were lost in a moment, and passed together through the gloomy valley that separates time from eternity.

How uncertain are the expectations of mortals! on what tottering foundations do they build their hopes! The gallant Balchen had performed the important service which called him from his retirement, and had entered the British channel in his return. He was retreating for ever from the rage of the ocean, and from the dangers, difficulties, and hardships, attendant on a seafaring life. But when every danger was in appearance past, and every difficulty surmounted; when he was almost in sight of the harbour of repose, and the end of all his toils; a raging tempest blasted his pleasing hopes, and put a period at once to his life and worldly expectations. The whole nation expressed a deep and generous concern for this terrible misfortune; and his late majesty settled a pension of 500*l.* per annum on the admiral's lady during her life; and to perpetuate the memory of this brave commander, a small, but elegant monument was erected for him in Westminster-abbey, in which his bust is well executed in the finest marble: the enrichments, arms, and trophies, are admirably wrought, and in the front is a fine basso-relievo of a ship in a storm, below which is the following inscription: "To the memory of SIR JOHN BALCHEN, knight, admiral of the white squadron of his majesty's fleet, who, in the year 1744, being sent out commander in chief of the combined fleets of England and Holland, to cruise on the enemy, was, on his return home, in his majesty's ship the *Victory*, lost in the Channel by a violent storm; from which sad circumstance of his death we may learn, that neither the greatest skill, judgment, or experience, joined to the most firm unshaken resolution, can resist the fury of the winds and waves; and we are taught from the passages of his life, which were filled with great and gallant actions, but accompanied with adverse gales of fortune, that the brave, the worthy, and the good man, meets not always his reward in this world. Fifty-eight years of faithful and painful service he had passed, when being just retired to the government of Greenwich hospital, to wear out the remainder of his days, he was once more, and for the last time, called out by his king and country, whose interest he ever preferred to his own, and his unwearied zeal for their service ended only with his death; which weighty misfortune to his afflicted family, became heightened by many aggravating circumstances attending it; yet amidst their grief they had the mournful consolation to find his gracious and royal master mixing his concern with the generous lamentations of the public, for the calamitous fate of so zealous, so valiant, and so able a commander; and, as a lasting memorial of the sincere love and esteem borne by his widow to a most affectionate and worthy husband, this honorary monument was erected by her."

Admiral Balchen married Susannah, daughter of colonel Apreece of Washingly, in the county of Huntingdon. He left one son and one daughter; the former of whom, George Balchen, survived him but a short time; for being sent to the West Indies in 1745, commander of his majesty's ship the *Pembroke*, he died at Barbadoes in December the same year, aged twenty-eight.

BALE (JOHN) in Latin Baleus, or Balæus, bishop of Ossory in Ireland, was born at Cove, a small village in Suffolk, in November 1495. His parents being in poor circumstances, and encumbered with a large family, he was entered at twelve years of age in the monastery of Carmelites at Norwich, and from thence removed to Jesus college, Cambridge. He was educated in the Romish religion, but afterwards became a protestant. He himself tells us, "that he was involved in the utmost ignorance and darkness of mind both at Norwich and Cambridge, till the word of God shining forth, the churches began to return to the true fountains of divinity. That the instrument of his conversion was not a priest or a monk, but the most noble earl of Wentworth." His conversion, however, greatly exposed him to the persecution of the Romish clergy, and he must have felt their resentment, had he not been protected by lord Cromwell, a nobleman