

heavily upon the defences of Acre. In the midst of this cannonade, the final result of which could not be doubtful, an accident decided the fall of the town; this was the explosion of the great powder magazine on shore, by which a large portion of Acre and its batteries, and 1200 of its defenders, were blown into the air, or crushed beneath the ruins. After this, all resistance was unavailing: Acre surrendered, and Syria was set free. But why had Napier disobeyed orders, and taken up a different position? This was a subject of such disagreeable altercation between the commander-in-chief and the commodore, that the latter demanded a court-martial, which was refused, and on Sir Robert Stopford expressing himself satisfied with Napier's explanations, the affair terminated. It was still thought, however, throughout the fleet, that Napier's plan was by much the better of the two, and that without it the capture of Acre would neither have been so speedily nor successfully effected. The whole affair, which lasted only a few hours, and was of such immense importance, cost the victors a loss of not more than fourteen or fifteen killed and twenty four wounded.

After the fall of Acre, the commodore, now regarded as the hero of the exploit, was sent to assume the command of the squadron off Alexandria, employed in the blockade of that port. But on his arrival he found his commission anything but an enviable one. With his naval force he might have successfully attacked the city; but without a considerable body of troops the attack would be nothing more than a mischievous demonstration. The season also was at hand when severe gales might be expected from almost every quarter, which would drive his ships ashore or blow them out to sea. Finding that the blockade would soon be broken up, he adopted, on the spur of the moment, such an expedient as only necessity could excuse and wisdom justify: it was to open a negotiation with Mehemet Ali on his own authority, and conclude a convention with him in the name of the allied powers, regardless of all personal consequences. He instantly followed up the resolution; in the interviews which succeeded the viceroy of Egypt and the British commodore were inspired with such a mutual esteem, as simplified the whole proceedings without the formalities and delays of diplomacy; and Mehemet agreed that on being reinstated in the hereditary government of Egypt, he would recal his son Ibrahim Pacha from Syria, and restore the Ottoman fleet to Turkey. This treaty was signed and sealed; and great was the indignation of the British ambassador at Constantinople, of Sir Robert Stopford, and our home government, so that at first the convention was repudiated. But better thoughts at last prevailed; and while the treaty was confirmed by all parties, Napier was lauded as a wise, skilful, and prompt negotiator. Napier on his part offers the following justification of his proceeding, in which every judicious person will acquiesce: "Venturing on so important a measure as the convention without authority would only be justified by the result; but it is not without precedent. Sir Sydney Smith had entered into a convention with the French for the evacuation of Egypt; and Captain Foote had also, when serving under Lord Nelson, entered into one for the evacuation of Naples. Both were rejected by their superior officers. The rejection of the first led to the expedition to Egypt, which cost some millions and the loss of much life; the rejection of the last, to scenes that are better buried in oblivion."

While Napier was thus scandalizing the whole diplomatic world by the rapidity of his proceedings, and astounding European statesmen by their sagacity,

but compelling both classes at last to confess that he had done the right thing, however he had gone about it, a picture of the commodore at this time, from the journal of one of his lieutenants, gives us a pretty correct idea of the hero of such various and important achievements:—"He is by no means a great weight [for a steeple-chase]; perhaps fourteen stone, about my own weight, but stouter and broader built; stoops from a wound in his neck, walks lame from another in his leg, turns out one of his feet, and has a most slouching, slovenly gait, a large round face, with black, bushy eyebrows, a double chin, scraggy gray, uncurled whiskers and thin hair; wears a superfluity of shirt-collar, and small neck-handkerchief, always bedaubed with snuff, which he takes in immense quantities; usually has his trowsers far too short, and wears the ugliest pair of shoes he can find; and altogether takes so little pride in his dress, that I believe you might substitute a green or black coat for his uniform one, without his being a bit the wiser: still he makes all of us conform to strict uniform. This is a correct portrait of him, but, mind, you are not to laugh at him, for I do think he is one of the greatest characters of the day, and many is the person that has come on board just to have a sight of such a rum old fellow. He is by no means a pleasant officer to serve under, but one must forgive much for the honour of being commanded by such a character. His high honourable principles and gentlemanly feelings are beyond dispute; yet he is snappish and irritable at times; but shines particularly at the head of his own table, which is always well found, and no want of wine. . . . He cares not a straw for any superior as long as he conceives he is doing the best for his country—and no one knows better than himself when he is right or wrong. He is a fine fellow, and I will stick up for him against all the world."

On his return home Napier was rewarded with the distinctions which his services had merited. He was created a knight-commander of the Bath, and appointed one of the queen's naval aides-de-camp; he had also the order of Maria Theresa conferred upon him by the Emperor of Austria. On arriving in England his old desire to enter parliament was awakened anew by a general election, and on this occasion, in 1841, he presented himself as candidate for Marylebone, and was successful. Still as active in peace as in war, he was employed all day in his *History of the Syrian War*, and all the evening with the affairs of the House of Commons. The latter was a new kind of warfare, in which he had everything to learn; but he dashed into it with his usual boldness and success, and his account of his first attempt, in a letter to his wife, is both amusing and characteristic. "I have made my maiden speech," he writes; "not either so good or so long as I wished, but still it was very well received. I had it all prepared in my mind, but when I got up I forgot the second part of it, and was, as you may suppose, in a funk, and I passed over to the second sentence, which threw out the best part of it; and the thread gone, I was discouraged, and left out a great part I intended to say; but still it went off very well, and I was very much cheered." But the ice was broken, the terror of the first plunge extinguished, and ever afterwards Sir Charles Napier was a fearless speaker, more especially as the subjects which he treated were those professional matters on which no member in the house was better qualified to speak. While he was thus employed as a parliamentarian in the improvement of the navy, Sir Charles, in 1846, was promoted to the rank of rear-admiral, and in the spring following was appointed commander-in-chief of the Channel Fleet. In this command he made