

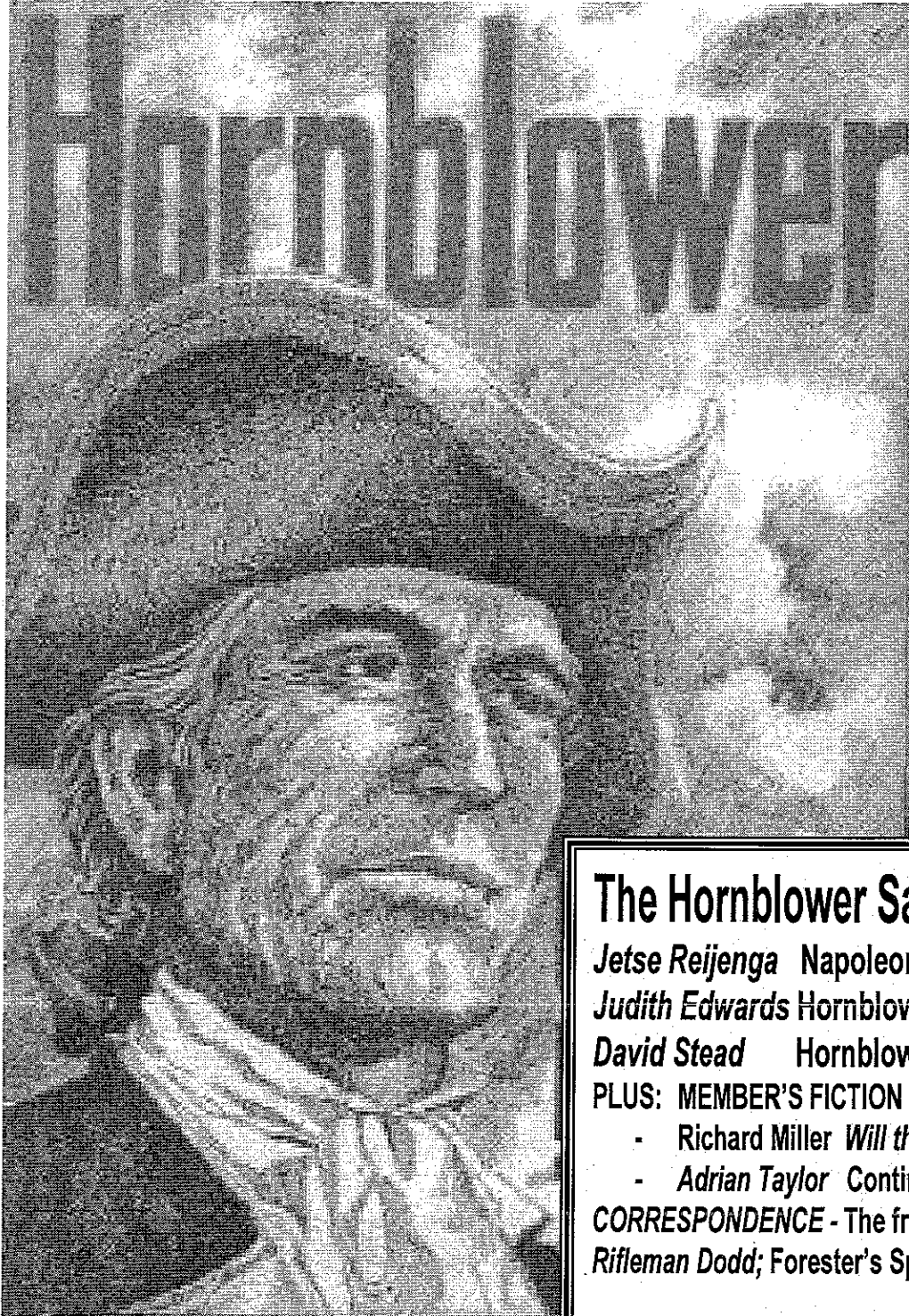


Reflections

A Literary Supplement to the Newsletter of the **CS Forester Society**

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The Waters are indeed Deep

Another instalment of Adrian Taylor's continuation of *Hornblower and the Crisis*

"Ah, Barrow," said Marsden, looking up from the desk where he was presumably perusing yet more papers of state. The Second Secretary nodded at Hornblower as he entered, to take his usual chair in the well-carpeted office. "Captain Hornblower has brought two letters that are not without interest. I wonder what you make of them. The captain also has an exciting tale to tell about his nocturnal explorations of The Saracen's Head."

Barrow read the two letters from Maria – one of them a forgery, as now seemed indisputable. Then he turned to Hornblower, who proceeded to give a brief summary of last night's adventures and of his suspicions regarding the first "Maria" letter.

When he had finished his exposition, Marsden said, "I wonder whether we should consult Dr Claudius about this." He rubbed his clean-shaven chin thoughtfully. "Yes, I believe we ought to."

Barrow handed the letters back to Hornblower and left the office, stepping gently as though there were a sleeping figure nearby. Hornblower watched him go. He was intrigued at the smooth workings of this Admiralty set-up; an ignorant observer might never have guessed that there was a bloody war, on the verge of escalation. It seemed that Barrow was going to summon Claudius. Then Hornblower realised - with an insight that had served him well at times of crisis at sea - that there might be matters of much greater importance for the Admiralty than the nocturnal wanderings of one insignificant captain, or his heady speculations over some offhand letter, which may - or may not - have come from his equally lowly spouse.

Now Marsden was speaking to him again, in the precise unambiguous terms which had presumably enabled him to rise to such heights. "We shall arrange a meeting here with Dr Claudius, which you will attend if you are able, Captain." It may have sounded like a mere suggestion, but from the First Secretary it was, in fact, a peremptory order. "We shall discover his opinion regarding the possible forgery of your wife's letter."

Then Marsden turned once more to his task in hand and, after a brief minute, Hornblower realised that he was being dismissed. He quit the office with as little noise as possible. He closed the door with the merest click.

That evening, Hornblower sat in the well-beamed dining room of The Saracen's Head having his supper. There were one or two other diners enjoying the substantial fare, and at a nearby table there sat a young man, perhaps in his mid-twenties, who was tucking into his meal with a ferocious appetite. Every so often the landlord, a tea towel

over his arm, would enter the room and enquire as to whether all was to the diners' satisfaction. He approached Hornblower with a smile of familiarity on his well-fed face.

"I trust all is just as it should be, Captain." It was evidently a feather in his cap to have a Royal Navy officer staying at his establishment, and particularly so, perhaps, at this time of national crisis.

"Very good, thank you," replied Hornblower. And so it was, if one disregarded the positively elephantine portions which were served, though had the fare not been passable he fancied that it would have been hardly diplomatic to say so. For a moment he toyed with the idea of mentioning to the landlord last night's exploration of his hostelry, but then that seemed to be the action of a thoughtless man, and so he opted for reticence.

With a nod at his favoured guest, the landlord continued his journey about the dining room. "Is everything to your satisfaction, Mr Shaver?"

Hornblower pricked up his ears at the words, much as one who had overheard Guy Fawkes and his fellow-plotters might have done. From the corner of his eye, he attempted to study this Shaver. He seemed a most unremarkable gentleman, not to say actually bland, except for the lengthy scar that ran from his left ear to his top lip. These were indeed deep waters, reflected Hornblower, as he made a valiant effort to eat the mound of cabbage which still remained on his plate.

It was not long before he returned to the privacy of his room. Once more, he was feeling distinctly bloated by the cuisine at The Saracen's Head, and he lay down on his bed with a deep post-prandial sigh, if not a groan, provoked by over-indulgence rather than contentment. The late summer evening was drawing to its close and through the open window there came the whistling of swifts, swallows and martins, and the single bark of a dog, followed by an admonitory shout. Once again, Hornblower thought of Dr Claudius, and wondered what he would make of the "Maria" letters. And now he had seen this Shaver fellow, who seemed inextricably involved in the whole affair.

It was almost inevitable, perhaps, that in a few minutes the fully-clothed Hornblower dropped off to sleep. There seems little doubt that his tiredness was due in large part to the previous night's peregrinations. His last thought before he fell into the welcoming arms of Morpheus related to a certain scar, which ran from the left ear to the mouth of a particular personage.

TO BE CONTINUED.



Technical Innovations in the Hornblower series

Hard work enabled Forester to supply authentic detail on Napoleonic age technology

Jetse Reijenga

Introduction

In addition to having a feel for historic detail, CS Forester was a man with a wide interest in things technological, in spite of the reservations of John Forester about his father's "limited knowledge of technology".¹ But the author was fully aware of his own limitations, as set down in the "Personal Notes":-

*I myself was constitutionally unable to make the leap from the binomial theorem to calculus and it would be pleasant to have a hero to whom it was easy... Yet, of course, in making Hornblower a mathematician I was indulging in shameless wish fulfillment, but it is only today, while writing these lines, that I realise it.*²

According to John Forester, "CSF didn't know beans about celestial navigation, not even what had been known for two hundred years (or more) before HH's time".³

The description of the "perfect landfall" of the Lydia in the South Sea, as just being lucky, indicates that CSF was as self-critical as his alter ego on the limitations of mathematics in this respect:-

It was quite possible that he had made a perfect landfall, after eleven weeks out of sight of land... but Hornblower was painfully aware that no very great error in his

*navigation would have brought him anything up to two hundred miles from where he thought he was.*⁴

So much for mathematics. In the present essay I will illustrate and analyse a few examples where the author and his alter ego show interest in technical innovations. CSF's purpose of course was to increase the authenticity of the historic setting. The analyses will focus on the timing in history of those innovations, in the context of Hornblower's career and circumstances.

Canned food

I had always thought Louis Pasteur (1822-1895) invented food conserving by pasteurization or sterilization (apparently not the same). I was therefore mystified when in *Hornblower in the West Indies*, set in 1821, Ramsbottom informed Hornblower:-

"Food sealed in a tinned box (glass serves equally well, but not so conveniently on shipboard), sealed at high temperature. I venture to suggest that this new method will make a noticeable difference to the food supply on shipboard. The beef can be eaten cold or hashed up as you have it here."

*It was like nothing Hornblower had ever tasted before.*⁵ But I was wrong! Canned food was developed much earlier. In 1795, the French Directory offered a prize of

¹ John Forester, *Novelist & Storyteller, the life of C.S. Forester*, (2000), pages 248-249.

² CS Forester, *Some Personal Notes, The Hornblower Companion*, Chatham Publishing (1998), page 89; *Long before Forty*, Michael Joseph (1967), page 196.

³ John Forester, personal communication, November 2003.

⁴ CS Forester, *The Happy Return*, Penguin Books (1959), pages 17-21.

⁵ CS Forester, *Hornblower in the West Indies*, Pan Books (1960), page 160.

12,000 francs to anyone who could devise a new, effective means of preserving food. Nicolas Appert (1749-1841), an obscure Parisian who had worked as a candy maker, chef, brewer, pickle maker and vintner had an idea: Why not pack food in bottles like wine? For the next 15 years he worked on his idea. Finally, after partially cooking food, sealing it in bottles with cork stoppers, and immersing the bottles in boiling water, he arrived at his principle: If food is sealed in an airtight container and the air inside is expelled, and if it is sufficiently heated, the food will keep.⁶

Appert's principle was demonstrated by the samples he submitted. Whether or not Napoleon actually said that an army travels on its stomach, he had learned through hard experience that it does. Scurvy and hunger had disabled more of Napoleon's soldiers than combat itself. Appert's samples were sent to sea for four months and ten days — partridges, some vegetables, and gravy — "When opened, eighteen different kinds of preserved foods were tasted," Appert wrote, "Every one of which had retained its freshness, and not a single substance had undergone the least change at sea." Appert was awarded the 12,000 francs by the Emperor himself.

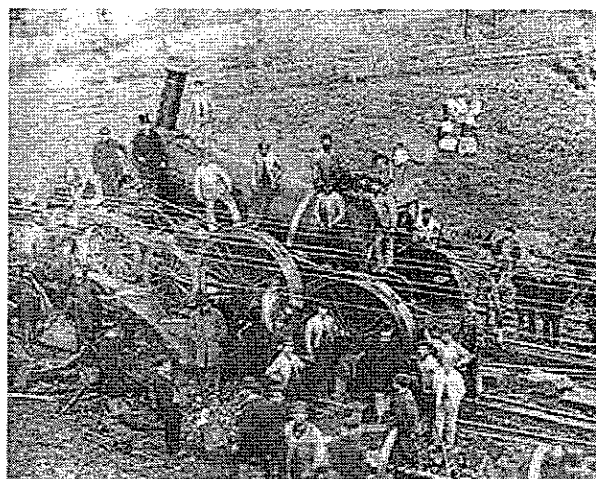
The British responded directly to this development. In 1810 Peter Durand was granted a patent by King George III for his idea of preserving food in "vessels of glass, pottery, tin, or other metals or fit materials." The process was perfected by Bryan Dorkin and John Hall, who set up the first commercial canning factory in England in 1813. They had the advantage over glass bottles of being lighter, easier to seal and less prone to damage during transportation and storage - and so the food can was born. The iron was coated with a fine layer of tin to stop it from rusting.⁷ In 1818 Peter Durand introduced the tin-plated can in America.

Strangely enough, however, in *Hornblower and the Hotspur* (which is set in 1803-1804), we read that Hornblower's "captain's stores" only contained six dozen (not so fresh...) eggs and six pounds of heavily salted butter donated by his mother-in-law, but "no potted meat".⁸ The latter must refer to high-temperature preserved canned food as described above. Given Hornblower's financial situation of at that time, one must conclude from his disappointment that canned food was not an unusual item, although 1803 would be a trifle early in view of Durand's 1810 patent. Now why would Hornblower, be impressed by a novelty such as canned food in the West Indies in 1821? A minor anachronism!

⁶ <http://www.cancentral.com/history.htm>

⁷ http://www.chesswood.com/canning_process.pdf

⁸ C.S. Forester, *Hornblower and the Hotspur*, Michael Joseph (1962), page 53.



Rain, steam and speed

In the short story of *The Last Encounter* (published with *Hornblower and the Crisis*), Napoleon Bonaparte (soon to be known as Prince Louis Napoleon or Napoleon III) knocks on the door of the Hornblower residence in Smallbridge, in early November 1848, wishing to be taken to Maidstone by coach in order catch the train to Dover and the packet boat to Calais. The residents were bewildered by the appearance, professed identity and intentions of the visitor - but not in the least by the fact that Maidstone was not on the London-Dover railway!⁹

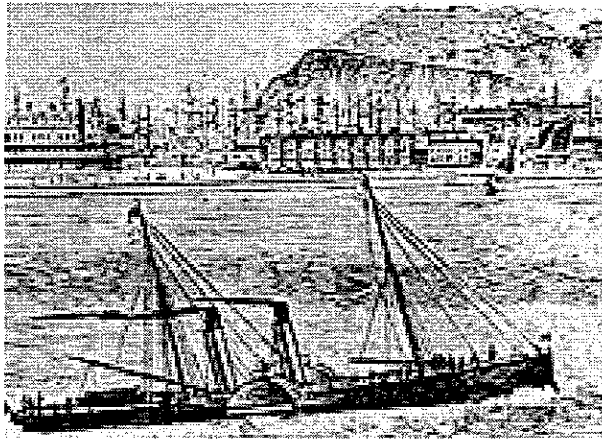
The South Eastern Railway had *planned* to take its main line from London to Dover via Maidstone but landowners objected, so when the line opened in 1842, the nearest station (Maidstone Road, now Paddock Wood) was 10 miles from the county town. A branch line to Maidstone was sanctioned in 1843, and on 25 September 1844, the first train ran along the single track. The engine was called *Kentish Man* and the passengers were carried free of charge. Accidents on the South Eastern Railway, like that described in *The Last Encounter* (a land slide due to heavy rainfall) were not uncommon. In 1865, Charles Dickens had described a similar accident on the South Eastern Railway in a letter to Thomas Mitton¹⁰

Northcote Parkinson's fictional biography provides an explanation of sorts: Brown and the coachman would have decided to take the Frenchman to Paddock Wood instead of Maidstone, without informing their employer.¹¹ A very unsatisfactory explanation if ever there was one! Clearly CSF made a (minor) error over the route of the railway line.

⁹ CS Forester, *The Last Encounter, Hornblower and the Crisis*, Michael Joseph (1967), pages 161-175.

¹⁰ Hilary Watson, *The Book of Maidstone*, Barracuda Books (1981; personal communication: Danielle Mothes, Tourism & Marketing Officer, Maidstone B Council; <http://learningcurve.pro.gov.uk/snapshots/snapshot18/snapshot18.htm#Links>.

¹¹ C Northcote Parkinson, *The Life and Times of Horatio Hornblower*, Sutton Publishing (1998), pages 250-254.



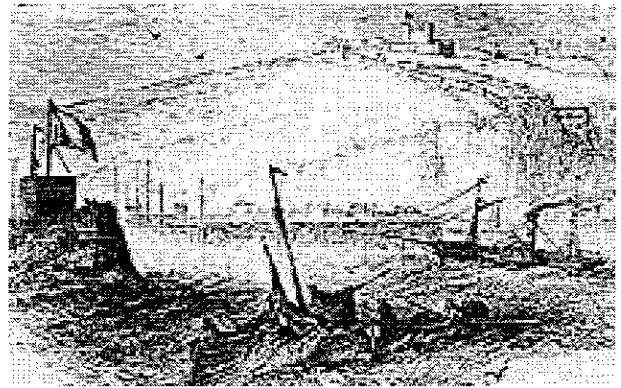
Forester referred to the impact of steam power on society, and in particular on the navy, in several places. In *The Last Encounter*, the fact that the Calais steam packet, which Mr Napoleon Bonaparte needed Hornblower's assistance to catch, ran according to a timetable caused some bemusement to an old sea dog: *It was eight miles of fairly easy road – not an impossibly extravagant request from a stranger in distress. But the wind was south-westerly – Hornblower pulled himself up with a jerk. These steam packets paid not attention to wind or tide, although it was hard for a man who had all his life commanded sailing vessels to remember it. The madman had a sane enough plan up to a point – as far as Paris. There he would presumably be put away in an asylum where he would be harmless and unharmed. Not even the excitable French would do anything to injure so entertaining an eccentric.*¹²

But wind and tide were still important. Ferries still had to wait for high tide to enter and leave harbour, so could not keep to regular timetables. And navigating the harbour entrance was tricky in rough seas. In the 1850' most ships were still powered by sail - paddle steamers also kept masts and sails in case the engine broke down. Small steam ferries could make a fast crossing whatever the wind direction - but were tossed around on the waves. During the second half of the 19th century, better deep-water harbours began to be built on both sides of the channel. The Admiralty Pier was Dover's first deep-water berth. From 1850, ferries could land their passengers at any state of the tide, without having to pass the shallow inner harbour entrance.¹³ A technological revolution, indeed! But one still not fully completed by the dramatic date of *The Last Encounter*.

There is a striking metaphor about steam power in *Hornblower and the Hotspur*. Hornblower has to render passing honours to a French frigate, for the first time in his life. It is 1803, and the brief interval of the Peace of

Amiens is about to end, but Cornwallis' orders are clear: do not start hostilities.

*"We must render passing honours, Mr. Bush", said Hornblower. There was something madly stimulating in forcing himself to be coldly formal when internally he was boiling with excitement. That must be what went on inside one of Mr. Watt's steam engines when the safety valve did not function.*¹⁴



One might ask if this figure of speech had penetrated into daily language by 1803. I would think not, although the safety valve is older than the steam engine. It was developed in the 17th century by the German Glauber and the Frenchman Papin. In his treatise on furnaces, translated into English in 1651, Papin describes the modes by which he prevents retorts and stills from bursting from an excessive pressure.¹⁵ And on the other hand, the safety valve is a typical Forester metaphor: *Presumably for years the canny half of me and my family as well had been sitting on the safety valve of my desire for artistic self expression. The pressure accumulated had become enormous, and now that it had found a vent it blew itself off with a terrific crash.*¹⁶

The steam tug in *[Admiral] Hornblower in the West Indies* is another example of Forester's interest in steam navigation. A recent article by Donald Hines has highlighted the tug in New Orleans in 1821.¹⁷ Evidently steam power had advanced further into daily life on the rivers and coastal waters of the New World than it had in England, at least in the Navy.¹⁸

¹⁴ *Hornblower and the Hotspur*, pages 64-65.

¹⁵ <http://www.valve-world.net/srv/types.asp>

¹⁶ *Long before Forty*, page 119.

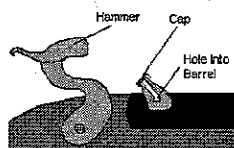
¹⁷ Donald Hines, *Hornblower, Turner and the Fighting Téméraire*, *Reflections* 5, September 2003.

¹⁸ The Navy obviously waited until screw propulsion proved its worth. Paddle wheel propulsion wouldn't do in a battleship because it would not survive the first broadside. The sixth HMS Echo was one of the first few steam paddle ships built for the Admiralty, and was launched at Woolwich Dockyard in May 1827. She was built to an altered version of the 'Cherokee' Class design – the 'coffin' brigs, so-called for their less-than-lovely lines – and measured 109 ft. 8 in. length on deck, 293 ½ tons burthen. Her two cylinder, side-lever

¹² *The Last Encounter*, page 171.

¹³ theotherside.co.uk/tm-heritage/background/ferries.htm

By the time Mr Bonaparte was calling himself Emperor, Hornblower could have noticed Britain's first ship-rigged steam battleship. Laid down in 1849, launched in 1852, and commissioned the following year, the latest HMS *Agamemnon* was the first warship built with screw propulsion, though other sailing vessels had been fitted with engines after commissioning. *Agamemnon*'s success was such that she remained the basic model for the first decade of Britain's steam battle fleet. As flagship of Rear Admiral Sir Edmund Lyons's Black Sea fleet (Captain William Mends commanding) during the Crimean War, she took part in the bombardment of Sevastopol on October 17, 1854. She also took part in the shelling of Fort Kinburn, at the mouth of the Dnieper one year later. In 1857 the government fitted out *Agamemnon* to carry 1,250 tons of telegraphic cable for the Atlantic Telegraph Company's first attempt to lay a transatlantic cable. Although the first attempt was unsuccessful, the following year the project was accomplished. *Agamemnon* was paid off in 1862 and sold in 1870.¹⁹



Pistol and ball

The Commodore begins in the year 1811, with Hornblower getting ready to sail for the Baltic. *I'll put the pistols in the locker, said Brown, completing the unpacking. Pistols?, said Hornblower. He looked down to examine the pistols. They were beautiful weapons, of bright steel inlaid with silver, double-barreled, the butts of ebony, giving them a perfect balance in the hand. There were two copper tubes in the case to open next; they merely contained pistol bullets, each cast flawlessly, a perfect sphere... Inside the barrels were bright spiral lanes; they were rifled pistols then. The next copper box in the case contained a number of discs of thin lather impregnated with oil; these would be for wrapping up the bullet before inserting it*

engines, built by Watt, developed 100 NHP (nominal horsepower) giving her a theoretical 7.6 knots speed. As well as being a pioneer naval steamship, she began the tradition of HMS *Echo* as a survey ship name. Based at Woolwich, her first commission involved surveys of the Thames and its estuary. As an experimental vessel, she was then variously employed as dispatch vessel, survey ship and occasional tug in the Thames and at the home naval bases. In 1830 she was in the Mediterranean and Adriatic as a dispatch vessel, then off the coasts of Portugal and Spain (1831-1836). In late 1836, with improved reliability, she went to the West Indies, to serve as mail packet and dispatch vessel until late 1839. From 1840 she served as a tug at Portsmouth, until she was sold to the ship breakers Castle & Co. in 1885.

See:

¹⁹http://college.hmco.com/history/readerscomp/ships/html/sh_001900_hmsagamemno2.htm

into the barrel, so as to ensure a perfect fit... With these pistols he could rely on himself to hit a small bull's-eye at fifty yards, as long as he held true... But there was one more copper box to open. It was full of little square bits of copper sheet, very thin indeed. He was puzzled by the sight of them; each bit of copper had a bulge in the centre, where the metal was especially thin, making the black contents just visible through it. It dawned slowly upon Hornblower that these must be the percussion caps he had heard vaguely about recently.²⁰

The Percussion Cap Ignition System (left) was devised in 1805 by the Reverend John Forsyth of Aberdeenshire. This firing mechanism was a great advance upon its predecessors because it did not start with an exposed flash pan. Instead, it had a simple tube leading straight into the gun barrel. The explosive cap was placed on top of this tube. The cap contained fulminate of mercury, a chemical compound which explodes when struck. This is what is used in the paper or plastic caps in a toy gun. When the hammer strikes the cap, the flames from the exploding fulminate of mercury go down the tube into the barrel, and ignite the powder there to propel the bullet.

This mechanism provided a major advance in reliability, since the cap was almost certain to explode when struck. The mechanism was almost damp proof, though one still had to be careful to avoid getting water in the barrel or the ignition system when loading in the rain. The percussion cap was essential in developing reliable rotating-block guns (revolvers), and in the early 1800s several manufacturers began mass production of these multiple-shot side arms. The percussion cap system gave an individual soldier a weapon of precision and reliability which was used to devastating effect in the U.S. Civil War (1861-1865). Manufacturing processes were now developing fast, and it soon became possible to integrate the cap, powder and projectile into a single low cost metal package - the bullets we use today.²¹

A premature semaphore

Overland communication by semaphore plays a role in several of the Hornblower novels. *Hornblower and the Hotspur* has a telegraph station near Brest completely demolished (and an ammunition depot blown up).²² From the relevant literature, it appears that the French indeed possessed a viable semaphore system, mainly intended for communication between the coastal regions and Paris.

Continued on page 12

²⁰ CS Forester, *The Commodore*, Penguin (1962), page 38.

²¹ <http://www.angelfire.com/nm/shalom/hf.htm>

<http://inventors.about.com/gi/dynamic/offsite.htm?site>

=<http://www.silcom.com/%257Evikman/isles/scriptorium/firearm/percussion.html>; www.howstuffworks.com/flintlock5.htm

²² *Hornblower and the Hotspur*, pages 132-155.



Will the Coachman and the Portsmouth Road

Richard Miller

The feeble glimmer from the lurching coach lamps served only to add to the dismal break of dawn. Leather creaked, wheels trundled, uncomfortable inside passengers twisted in the stuffy, airless coach whilst benumbed outside ones stoically endured this journey down the Portsmouth Road. Will Newcomb, heavily wrapped in layers of thick rugs, pulled his hat low as a cutting early morning sleet bit into his weatherworn face. The countryside, lonely, barely awake, and bleak, ignored the early travellers. Scattered cottages and the walls of large estates mingled with low, damp fields.

Such a morning in such depressing surroundings brought Simon Hawker, who sat on the roof of the coach, into deep despair. His sea chest, full of exciting uniforms and a fascinating dirk, was strapped securely in the boot, and all the glitter and attendant glamour had slowly evaporated as the journey progressed. The Reverend Lee had long since snuggled back into his warm bed in the London inn where farewells had been

said and now, feeling completely alone, the boy gazed forlornly across the dripping shoulders of Will Newcomb as the coach lurched and creaked into breaking daylight.

Simon was to join the brig *Bittern* at Spithead, and this once-thrilling news had now become only a feared inevitability, much as the once-anticipated Greek lessons with their attendant canings. The coachman at last seemed to realise the presence of the boy who, after the first hour of excited chatter, had subsided into a silent, cowed and numbed figure. Will was well used to the whims and tantrums of his passengers. Grey braggarts, solemn self-important nonentities and the regular run-of-the-mill public who found that their business required them to journey down this historic road.

If his mind dwelt on the road, Will certainly never thought of it as romantic, for he was one of those bluff, reliable characters who lived each moment to the full and never cast a backward glance repining the past, or a longing one into the future. Coaches were his life and the

lumbering vehicle was his pride. Secluded cottagers knew his erect figure on the box as surely as local gentry hailed him as a thoroughly good sort which, in their language of understatement, meant a great deal.

A sidelong glance convinced him that the boy who sat huddled in his obviously brand new naval coat was lonely, and his understanding, gleaned from many such journeys, told him that he was also a little afraid.

"Grand morning to be going to Portsmouth – great goings-on down there. Spithead's full of ships, the town full of rumours. Why, young fellow, once we get there you won't know what to think! Only last week I took two officers down there, Lieutenants they were, young fellows full of fun, full of sauce. Why, boy, once you get alongside shipmates like those you will scarcely know yourself!"

On talked Will, his simple, honest kindness slowly thawing the loneliness from Simon's heart. The sleet turned to a heavy rain that trickled down his neck and turned his new woollen scarf into a soaking rag. The other outside passengers had long since relapsed into a gloomy silence, two sharing a heavy tarpaulin sheet, which protected them from the worst of the weather. Will spoke again. Plainly, his young companion was in need of reassurance, and if nothing else his words would help to pass the time.

"Great road for characters, this one. Famous one for highwaymen years gone by. Ever heard of Maclean, young fellow? Now there was a man to talk of! Hounslow Heath his most famous robbery – robbed Lord Eglinton he did. Must say, I never met one – don't suppose I ever will, but you never know, anything can happen on the Portsmouth Road!"

Will rambled on. Simon listened, at first fitfully but by degrees with increasing interest as the stories of peculiar happenings in the coachman's life unfolded. Suddenly he felt a surge of rekindled interest and excitement at what the future held in store – was he not about to set out in a King's ship and follow the path down which countless ancestors and innumerable Englishmen had strode?

The morning advanced, and with it came the promise of food. Travelling on a coach roof was a cold pastime, particularly for a boy of thirteen in November. The Talbot Inn, Ripley was a blaze of light, the mullioned windows casting a welcome glow out into the cold, driving rain. As if anticipating their rest, the horses surged forward into the yard, the guard tooting his horn. Swinging down from the roof of the coach, Will threw reins and whip to a waiting ostler, clumped stiffly to the inn door, and

clapping his half-frozen hands strolled to the blazing log fire.

Another coach stood in the yard, the Portsmouth "up" coach, its passengers still inside the inn enjoying a hasty breakfast before their arrival in London. Two harassed waiters bustled to satisfy the demands of impatient passengers who, tempted by the variety of dishes displayed on the long mahogany sideboard, ordered beef, kidneys, or bacon and eggs, any of which to Simon's eyes, long accustomed to the frugal diet of Reverend Lee's school, was a delicacy fit for a King.

Loud conversation echoed around the dark panelled room, smoke from a down draught gushed fitfully from the fireplace, and the stuffy dining room, to the casual observer, was a less desirable resting place than the coach roof, which at least provided fresh, untainted, albeit bitterly cold air.

Simon was directed to a seat at the end of a long table. His neighbour was a soberly clad, dark-complexioned gentleman, presumably a lawyer from his stern countenance and stilted conversation. On his left, a scarlet-coated Royal Marine officer did full justice to a second plateful of beef, obviously satisfying a palate long deprived of such quality and quantity. The small, overworked waiter placed porridge and a jug of cream by Simon's place and suggested eggs, bacon and coffee, to which menu the boy readily agreed.

The room now seemed a very desirable place indeed and the other diners the most pleasant company, although their conversation, fitfully directed to him, was of the most unexciting order. Hunting prints hung from the walls, and the mounted heads of several unfortunate animals which had chanced to cross the path of local sportsmen gazed contemptuously down on this early morning scene of gluttony.

Simon, who had become well used to discipline and the unfathomable whims of the masters of his Hampshire school, devoted full attention to his meal, knowing full well that it was wisest to draw no attention whatsoever to himself, for on the numerous occasions on which he had been the centre of attraction in that establishment the outcome had been extremely painful. However, the stiff, high collar of his midshipman's coat reminded him that he was no longer a mere schoolboy and was now, although untried, considered fit to wear the King's uniform.

His neighbour the Marine, by now well nourished and enjoying a cup of cream-topped coffee, seemed at last to become aware of his existence, and in his most friendly manner started a conversation, which by its trend stated clearly that, although this resplendent figure

was worthy of respect, he was also a most kindly and far-seeing officer.

"The days ahead, my boy, are sure to open your eyes very wide. Even I, now on my way to London just returned from command of the Marine detachment in the frigate *Naiad*, often wonder at the scope and tenacity of the Navy. You will fear, enjoy, command, obey, perhaps even reap rewards, but you must always remember that the principal, the highest thing, that you can ever do is to serve. I wear an officer's coat; I command men. It is in my power to do many things, but it is also my duty, no whit less than that of the little eleven year-old powder monkeys, to obey the orders of my superiors. Remember, there is always someone a rung or so higher up the ladder, but that never excuses you from doing your duty; that is what has made our Navy supreme."

Simon listened intently to this humane and perceptive officer, who had for some time, unbeknown to him, watched his retiring and shy manner.

At last the plates were cleared away and the coachman, well satisfied by a hearty meal with the coachman of the "up" coach in the taproom, announced it was time to leave. The Marine shook Simon's hand and wished him well, saying that he knew the brig of war *Bittern* well, and felt sure that he would soon feel at home amongst her crew. In fact, he assured the boy that when next in Portsmouth he would seek him out and renew their acquaintance.

Rain still poured down, driven now by a rising wind which, even to Simon's mind, conjured up visions of plunging ships which strained at their cables even in the lee of the Isle of Wight. It was much brighter; still biting cold, but the food and warmth of the inn had succeeded in turning the dismal early morning drive into something even tolerably enjoyable. Securely seated by Will, Simon settled down to enjoy the remainder of the journey down the Portsmouth Road. Fresh horses, smartly guided, dragged the vehicle from the inn yard where a small crowd of early morning loungers watched, as on every other morning, its punctual departure. Will Newcomb hummed softly, the odd snatch blown by the wind, the strangely appropriate words of his muttered song pleasant in Simon's ears.

*"Crack, crack goes my whip,
I whistle and I sing.
I ride upon my wagon,
I'm as happy as a King,
Says Joe, the carrier lad."*

The old Cotswold song, sung in early morning by this capable coachman, sounded sweet.

"England, boy – something worth fighting for. I know, for at one time I wore a King's coat; yes indeed, I was a Mounted Messenger. Rode this road with messages from the Admiralty. A good outdoor life; love horses you see, must be with them. Strange, I wager you think, working for the Navy riding a horse. Exciting, too. Orders for the Fleet, not that I ever knew what they said. I was just told "Newcomb – Portsmouth – make haste, man!" The clerks in Whitehall are impatient; the wind waits for no man. So always it was early morning, dark as night, hoofbeats on the roadway, the lonely rushing wind. I suppose in my own way I helped to make the Frenchmen wince."

Simon had a vivid imagination; his mind's eye saw it all – the dark-coated, superbly-mounted messenger, the urgent orders, the waiting Fleet, the secret orders waxed and secured in their leather pouch which joggled against Newcomb's waist as his galloping mount headed down the Portsmouth Road.

The coach lumbered on. On the skyline the odd shapes of the telegraph system dotted widely-spaced hilltops and Will, noting the boy's interest, told of how their introduction had brought about his change of occupation, for the tall masts with their rectangular shutter frames had been the cause of Will donning coachman's finery and casting off the high boots and glittering spurs of an Admiralty Mounted Messenger.

"I could have stayed as a messenger riding about London, riding to Deptford, Greenwich and such places, but somehow I had got a taste for the open road and the long headlong gallops could never be compensated for by routine, short rides to a dockyard with returns and suchlike."

Coaches were now Will's life and, knowing the road as well as he did, the conversation rattled on. Simon, as well as having a vivid imagination, was a good listener and Will, knowing his words fell on attentive ears, told of the many interesting sights and tales of the neighbourhood through which they passed.

By now, it was well into the forenoon and the empty road had become inhabited. Large cumbersome wagons piled high with vetches trundled slowly towards town. Sleepy-eyed waggoners flicked their whips and tried to keep awake as their long journey through the night drew towards an end. A peddler or two, saddlebags brimful with their tawdry stock-in-trade, ambled by, their tired horses purposefully plodding from one lonely cottage customer to the next. The elegant chaises and private coaches, superbly appointed and occupied by dapper dandy or wealthy landowner, cut deep tracks as their speeding wheels threw wet mud into either ditch. The busy arteries of the land in pulsing life forced the rich

blood of commerce to course up and down this, one of the most important of the King's Highways.

Will sung well and the words of the old Cotswold song were well attuned to his mood; indeed, he savoured them as much for their lilting melody as for their matter of fact statement. The coachman was assuredly a far superior being to the lowly Gloucestershire carrier who swished the reins and cracked his whip through Stowe and Slaughter, but he was none the less one of the noble company who in their own peculiar, individualistic way ruled the road.

The journey was almost ended; a few miles only remained until the turbulent waters of the Solent put a final ending to the long road from London. Houses surrounded by tall, massive walls, the branches of apple trees peeping over their tops, marked the estates of the many high-ranking naval and dockyard officers who lived in the neighbourhood of Portsmouth. Scattered country churches stood proclaiming the large part they played in the life of the countryside, their weather-beaten walls and rambling churchyards a very real factor in the everyday life of the community. This part of Hampshire strangely enough did not provide the resting-place one would imagine for its heroes; only a very few of them rested beneath the swaying elms. It was engraved tablets above the box-like family pews which perpetuated their memories – the soil of their native county did not receive back its sons. The blue foam-flecked seas of southern battlefields and the grey heaving waters of the Atlantic provided that rest, brought about by gunfire at Quiberon Bay, Gibraltar, and a host of others. The end of the Portsmouth Road was, in a very real sense, a beginning, and to that beginning many of Hampshire's sons were destined never to return.

Neither Will the coachman nor Simon Hawker the midshipman dwelt upon these things, however. Simon saw the country churches as a small, private kingdom where clerics often as loathsome as his recent master, the Reverend Percival Lee, ruled their charges by a rod of iron, enforced by the erroneous belief that it is extremely good for the young to do those things which their nature least desires. The future, however, was left to show that in some degree the schoolmasters were right, for the boys had in the great majority of cases grown into men well fitted to take their place in society and the service of their country, and to endure stoically and uncomplainingly the demands of honour and loyalty.

The sun came out as the coach crossed to Portsea Island, and the last stage of the journey was accompanied by that bright, cold freshness which is peculiar to some November days. Bustling crowds thronged the streets and Will, as if by some Royal prerogative, barely slackened speed as he came within

sight of journey's end. The civilian passengers alighted in the High Street and the last few hundred yards were a ride of almost lone splendour, for now only Will, Simon and the guard occupied the coach roof as they drove to the *Blue Posts*.

A small crowd stood outside. A noticeable figure was a midshipman scarcely a year older than Simon, but vastly different in every other way. His uniform seemed perfectly natural rather than stiffly correct, his manner was self-confident, his face deeply tanned and his left cheek scarred. A seaman stood beside him, a man of at least thirty but obviously very conscious of his subordinate position, for he touched his forelock to Simon in a most submissive gesture and made light work of the heavy sea-chest which the guard lowered from the boot.

Suddenly, a gun boomed loudly, and Simon shamefacedly realised that he had jumped at this unexpected discharge. The midshipman grinned and, clapping Simon on the shoulder, uttered the remark which seemed to epitomise the hard, unrelenting Navy way,

"Never mind, it's only the execution gun; a seaman in the *Arethusa* is being hanged. Come on in; Jenkins will take care of your chest."

Simon felt suddenly afraid. What had he entered upon? What sort of comrades would he meet with? Surely this was not a fair way to welcome him? The midshipman walked arrogantly to the *Blue Posts*, followed by a boy who had yet to learn that the struggling, writhing figure at the frigate's fore yardarm was after all a mere pawn in the game, and that he was considered equally expendable. The difference was the desirable distinction that a French broadside was considered a fitting requiem for a gentleman.

The *Blue Posts* was cosy. Inside, a small group of midshipmen seated around a corner table were hungrily consuming tea and toast, a welcome change from shipboard fare. As Simon entered, his mentor proclaimed

"This is Simon Hawker, His Revered Majesty King George's latest bad bargain!"

"Ah!" a boy, scarcely more than fifteen," exclaimed one of the group. "Come to be a shellback, sir?"

Tongue-tied, Simon gazed around him. He was a novice; these boys were assuredly professionals, albeit barely two years older than himself.

"I will do my best," he stammered.

"Just remember," the other replied, "sometimes your best is just not good enough."

"We'll make the best of life ashore while we can," his guide remarked. "Hey there, potman, bring us tea and toast!"

Simon ate hungrily, the lavish fare at the Talbot Inn merely a memory. Having satisfied their hunger, his mentor announced, "Best get going."

They walked to the Sally Port, where a ship's cutter surged against the stonework, snagging her mooring rope which sagged and drew taut with the ship's motion. Jenkins, who had borne Simon's sea chest, leaped nimbly on board. Simon gulped. There was broken water between boat and stonework and her crew were eyeing him keenly. He must do the same – but dare he? It had to be done. He bit his lip and jumped. A grizzled seaman seized him by the coat collar and remarked, "Safe and sound, sir! Never do to go on board dripping wet, you know!"

"Thank you," Simon replied.

"Cast off!" the midshipman ordered.

Plunging wildly, the boat left the shelter of the land and her crew set her lugsail. The wind was strong at sea and Simon, looking astern, saw that the land was already falling behind. The boat heeled alarmingly, the sea lapping her lee gunwale. Ahead lay a mass of ships. Towering line-of-battle ships with tier upon tier of guns, graceful frigates and tough, stocky little brigs. The ships' black-tarred rigging glistened in the bright, cold air.

"Yonder lies the *Bittern*," remarked the midshipman.

Suddenly, a hail pealed across the water. The cutter came up into the wind and ran alongside.

"This is your home from now on," said the midshipman.

So this was the *Bittern* – but how to get on board? What was the boy to do? The crew eyed him wonderingly. The little brig fretted at her cable and there, as the cutter drew alongside, was the answer – slippery wooden battens nailed to the brig's side. What a welcome!

"Up you go!" his mentor ordered.

Grimacing, Simon jumped for the battens and grimly hauled himself on deck. As he stepped forward, another young man snapped,

"And who, sir, might you be?"

"Simon Hawker, sir, Midshipman."

"The Commander will be more than pleased to have such an illustrious seaman on board. Where's your chest?"

"In the boat, sir."

"I will see that it is brought on board. Come with me to report to the Commander."

Thus Simon made his entry into the life of a sailor. By now, the coach was well across Portsea Island. Will Newcomb was humming to himself while remembering the frightened, lonely midshipman who had been his companion down the Portsmouth road. Would he, he mused, leave his mark on naval history and have articles about him appearing in the prestigious *Naval Chronicle*? Or indeed would the poor young lad come ashore blinded, crippled or a raving lunatic? Or perhaps, as a solace to his family, he would end his days fighting on a warship's deck, his requiem being the blaze and crack of gunfire.

Technical innovations (continued)

But what about the British? The year 1805 sees Hornblower in the office of Mr Barrow and Mr Marsden at the Admiralty, after his capture of important documents from the French, as a stream of orders is given to the Secretary's assistant Mr Dorsey:-

*"That's for His Majesty at Windsor. See that the Courier leaves within fifteen minutes. That's for the telegraph to Plymouth. So is that. That's for Portsmouth. Have the copying begun immediately."*²³

This passage presumes that an optical telegraph connection existed between Plymouth and the Admiralty in Whitehall. The historical record makes interesting comparison.²⁴ In September 1795 the Admiralty accepted the design of Lord George Murray (1761-1803) for a six shutter system and began the first line of 15 stations from London to Deal, completed on 27 January 1796. In the same year, this original line was supplemented by 10 further stations on a line going south over Beacon Hill to Portsmouth. In 1806 there was a further extension, with 22 stations stretching south-west from Beacon Hill to Plymouth. This means that, at the dramatic date of Hornblower and the Crisis, Plymouth was not yet on the telegraph system!

Thomas Holmes sets out the full facts:-

*"On 23rd October 1805 estimates for a direct line to Plymouth were called for, but on 31st George Roebuck was asked to survey ground to Plymouth, with a branch from the Portsmouth line, and in two months the survey was completed and his line approved by Their Lordships, who ordered him to erect the stations. There were to be 22 new stations throughout Hants, Dorset and Devon to Mount Wise in Plymouth Dockyard, which were completed with all Roebuck's despatch. It was said that on the 4th July 1806 he was able to make a report that "at the Admiralty-Telegraph a reply from Plymouth began to be spelled out, only 20 minutes from the time that same telegraph had made 'message ended'." But it is known that Roebuck on this date was at Portsmouth and the message was actually transmitted from there via Beacon Hill and Chalton to Plymouth and return. It was on the previous 4th May that he had carried out his test message from London to Plymouth - 'the Preparative Call taking 17-minutes'. Before long, the one o'clock time signal could be made and acknowledged in three minutes, at a distance of 200-odd miles each way."*²⁵ Impressive, indeed, - but not enough to forestall another minor anachronism in the Hornblower series.

²³ Hornblower and the Crisis, page 90.

²⁴ GJ Holzmann and Bjorn Pehrson, *The early history of data networks*, IEEE Computer Society Press, Los Alamitos (1995); http://www.acmi.net.au/AC/MURRAY_BIO.html

²⁵ TW Holmes, *The semaphore*, Arthur H Stockwell Ltd. (1983), page 39.



Conclusions

Forester successfully incorporated numerous technical innovations in the Hornblower series, thereby creating a marked degree of authenticity for the historical setting. He obviously took pains to ensure the correct details. There are only a few instances of minor anachronism. Web data and sources available today were of course unavailable to Forester, whose background research must therefore have been comprehensive. The need to provide an authentic background for historical novels may be self-evident. But the fact remains that CS Forester succeeded in doing it with *Flying Colours*.

Acknowledgements

Thanks to Daniëlle Mothes of Maidstone for information on the South-Eastern Railway, Richard Clarke of Guildford for information and valuable discussion about the semaphore, John Forester for comments on a preliminary version, <http://dse.nl> for providing webspace and the people at <http://google.com> for their magnificent search engine.

• Robin Jacques - can readers help?

I'm preparing a contribution about Robin Jacques' illustrations for CSF's novels. So, I would like to have a good photo copy (preferably a scan) of following CSF novel covers, with illustrations by Robin Jacques:

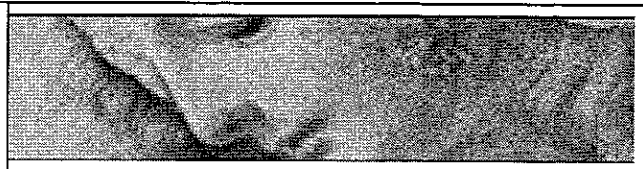
- A Ship of the line (Penguin, 1956)
- The Earthly Paradise (Penguin, 1962)
- Beat to Quarters (Bantam, 1958)

Please respond to Jetse Reijenga, jetse@dse.nl

Thank you very much.

Hornblower's *amusia*

Judith Edwards



Whenever I hear *See the conquering hero comes* (from Handel's *Judas Maccabaeus*) I'm taken to Chapter 1 of *The Commodore* (*Commodore Hornblower* in the US): ... the ostler at the Coach and Horses stuck a fiddle under his chin and played a note; the parson waved a hand and the children burst into shrill piping:-
"See-ee the conk-ring he-ee-ee-ero comes,
Sow-ow-ow-ound the trum-pets, bee-ee-ee-eat the drums!"

Obviously this was meant for Hornblower, and he took off his hat and stood awkwardly; the tune meant nothing to his tone-deaf ear, but he could distinguish some of the words.

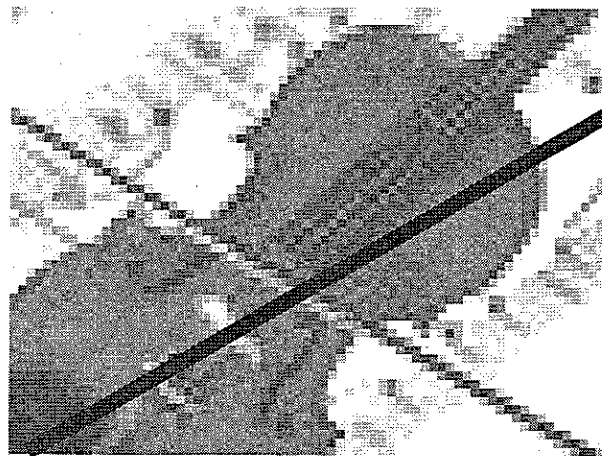
I suspect that the rendition was not of the finest, but nevertheless most of us would have recognised that tune. So what is tone-deafness, and did Hornblower really suffer from it?

Tone-deafness is these days properly called congenital amusia. The first reference to it in the scientific literature seems to be in 1878.²⁶ Since then there has been little interest from researchers until a few years ago. Basically, sufferers cannot detect pitch differences between musical notes, although they can within speech.

Research, especially on people who have suffered brain accidents, suggests that the components in the brain which process language and music are not shared, but are quite separate.²⁷ Perception of music uses brain mechanisms that are not used in the recognition of speech or of other sounds. Amusia is therefore specific to music, and it is unrelated to intelligence or to the ability to learn language. People tested in experiments had normal hearing – as, we presume, did Hornblower.

Forester makes a convincing case for Hornblower's amusia in the several places he mentions it (see the list of some references in Hornblower novels, below). There is a little evidence that some sufferers find music painful to the ear, as Hornblower does in *The Happy Return*.²⁸

The connection – or lack of it – with language is an interesting one in the Hornblower context. Because of his inability to distinguish musical notes, his tutor concentrated on teaching him French (see *Mr Midshipman Hornblower*, below). This was to prove very useful in later life. Hornblower also spent his time wisely when a prisoner of war, by learning Spanish. He appears to have had no particular difficulty in learning these languages, in line with the research evidence that tone-deaf subjects were of normal intelligence and could distinguish pitch changes in speech where they could not in music.²⁹



Was Hornblower's poor French accent, mentioned in *Flying Colours*, attributable to his tone-deafness? A longstanding theory has been that there is an optimum age for learning a second language, and that the earlier one learns it the better it will be pronounced.³⁰ Unfortunately we do not know how old Hornblower was when he learned French; Parkinson tells us that it was in 1791-2, when Hornblower would have been 15 or 16 – possibly a little late ever to speak the language like a native.³¹ Musical ability, or lack of it, has not as yet been shown to affect the degree of accent in a second language.³² However, research on amusic subjects did show that pitch recognition was impaired for speech.³³ As pitch recognition is important in recognising a foreign

²⁶ Grant Allen, *Note-deafness*, *Mind*, Vol. 3, No. 10 (1878), pages 157-167.

²⁷ Isabelle Peretz, *Brain specialization for music: new evidence from congenital amusia*, *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*, vol. 930 (2001), pages 153-165.

²⁸ Julie Ayotte, Isabelle Peretz, and Krista Hyde, *Congenital Amusia: a group study of adults afflicted with a music-specific disorder*, *Brain* vol. 125, No. 2 (2002), pages 238-251.

²⁹ *ibid*.

³⁰ Thorsten Piske, and Ian R A MacKay, *Factors affecting degree of foreign accent in an L2: a review*, *Journal of Phonetics*, volume 29 (2001), pages 191-215.

³¹ C Northcote Parkinson, *The life and times of Horatio Hornblower*, Sutton Publishing (1998), page 32.

³² Piske and MacKay (2001), pages 191-215.

³³ Ayotte *et al* (2002), pages 238-251.



Si yo tarareo – ¿puedes cantarlo? If I hum, can you sing it? Besides Hornblower, famous people known to be congenitally tone-deaf include “Che” Guevara, Ulysses S Grant (US President 1869-1877) King Alfonso XIII of Spain and former Tory cabinet minister Virginia Bottomley, MP.³⁴ accent, its impairment presumably adversely affects acquisition of a good accent in a second language.³⁵

Of course, Hornblower saw the condition as a weakness, despite the fact that it was obviously not his fault, he could do nothing about it, and it didn't affect the performance of his duties.

Is Hornblower's tone-deafness, then, in any way autobiographical? The answer must be no. John Forester mentions his father learning to play the tin whistle in 1943. He then took up the recorder and played folk tunes and the like on it for the rest of his life.³⁶ But given the lack of scientific evidence on the subject at the time Forester wrote the novels, his descriptions of Hornblower's amusia are strikingly accurate.

³⁴Alfonso XIII of Spain (1886-1931) supposedly had an attendant briefed to warn him when the National Anthem was about to be played; Virginia Bottomley, www.invectis.co.uk/iow/people.htm; Grant, see Thomas F Münthe, *Brains out of tune*, <http://www.psy.umontreal.ca/GRPLABS/Inmcg/website/downloads/DynaPage.pdf>; Guevara, see Isabelle Peretz, *The Nature of Music*, International Society for Music Education (2003): online at <http://www.isme.org/article/articleprint/189/-1/26>; photo - <http://www.companeroche.com/index.php?id=84>

³⁵ Piske and MacKay (2001), pages 191-215.

³⁶ John Forester, *Novelist and storyteller: the life of C.S. Forester*, (2000), vol. 2, page 452.

Some mentions of Hornblower's amusia:

The Commodore (*Commodore Hornblower* in the US)
Chapter 1: see first paragraph above.

Flying Colours

Chapter 9: “For Hornblower's French was improving rapidly, thanks to the need for continual use of the language. His defective ear would never allow him to catch the trick of the accent – he would always speak with the tonelessness of the foreigner ...”

The Happy Return (*Beat to Quarters* in the US)

Chapter 12: Lady Barbara is on the deck of the *Lydia*, singing and playing her guitar to the crew – “Hornblower cursed his own tone deafness which made Lady Barbara's singing not merely indifferent to him but almost painful.”

Hornblower and the Atropos

Chapter 4: “High and clear from the Hospital came the notes of a trumpet. Tone-deaf as he was, the notes meant nothing to him.”

Chapter 21: Hornblower is irritated by the sound of the church bells of Palermo.

Hornblower and the Hotspur

Chapter 5: Hornblower is unable to recognise *God Save the King* being played on the *Loire* –

“... that incomprehensible blend of noises which Hornblower could never appreciate.

‘What tune?’ asked Hornblower unguardedly, and was instantly furious with himself for this revelation of his weakness.”

Mr Midshipman Hornblower

Chapter 2: “During the year before he joined the Navy Hornblower had attended classes given by a penniless French émigré in French, music and dancing. Early enough the wretched émigré had found that Hornblower had no ear for music whatever, which made it almost impossible to teach him to dance, and so he had endeavoured to earn his fee by concentrating on French.”

A Ship of the Line

Chapter 7: During hymn singing at Sunday service on the *Sutherland* – “It all meant nothing to Hornblower – one tune was the same as another to his tone-deaf ear, and the most beautiful music was to him no more than comparable with the noise of a cart along a gravel road. ... he found himself wondering as usual whether or not there was any basis of fact in this legend of music – whether other people actually heard something more than mere noise ...”

Contrary Imaginations: Hornblower and Literature

David Stead

1: The Prelude - *Elegy and Even Chance*

The story which opens *Mr Midshipman Hornblower* sets Hornblower on his first ship, the *Justinian* (74), with her aloof, depressive, terminally ill, sardonic Captain Keene.

"How far did your education go?"

"I was a Grecian at school, sir."

"So you can construe Xenophon as well as Cicero?"

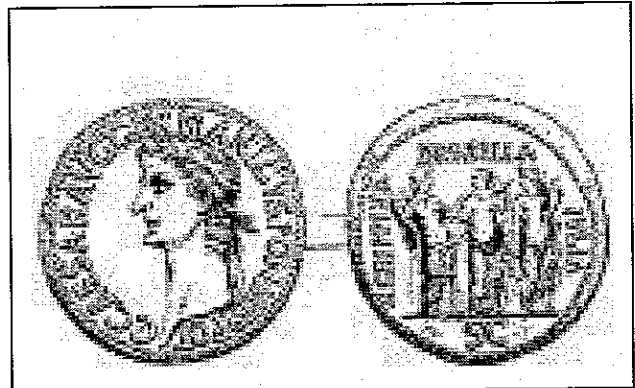
"Yes, sir. But not very well, sir."

"... We have no use for ablative absolutes in the Navy", an ablative absolute being a participle phrase (like this one) in apposition to the main clause, common in Latin, archaic and inevitably awkward in English.

We should not take all this at face value, like Parkinson, thereby turning Hornblower into a youth with little Latin and less Greek, the product of an uninspired master in a failing school.

Being "a Grecian" did not mean the same in the 18th century as in the 20th, when Forester himself opted for the science rather than the classical 6th form in his last years at Dulwich. At either date, the curriculum would certainly include Cicero (106-43 BCE) whose technical treatises, dozens of speeches and hundreds of surviving letters ensured that it was he who set the standard for post-Renaissance Latin prose composition. It would also include Xenophon – whose *Anabasis* (an early 4th-century BCE account of an invasion of Mesopotamia) went through innumerable editions because it was useful to generations of schoolmasters as a text in easy authentic Greek. Keene's remark is an entirely typical put-down! For in Hornblower's day "a Grecian" was the most accomplished scholar in the upper form of a grammar school (meaning, of course, a school dedicated to the teaching of Latin and Greek grammar, scientific or modern studies being unknown) – a boy who would be that school's candidate for the competitive examinations for scholarships to Oxford or Cambridge. The future poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge was "Grecian" at Christ's Hospital in 1788, winning two scholarships to cover most of his costs at Cambridge.³⁷ Both he and Hornblower would have envisaged a grounding in classics, followed by study of the Christian Fathers in Greek and Latin – and ordination, for which both were utterly unsuitable!

³⁷C Northcote Parkinson, *The life and times of Horatio Hornblower*, Sutton Publishing (1998), pages 28-30; John Forester, *Novelist and storyteller: the life of CS Forester* (2000), pages 41-45; Ken McGoohan, *Ancient Mariner: the amazing adventures of Samuel Hearne, the Englishman who walked to the Arctic Ocean*, Bantam Press (2004), page 273.



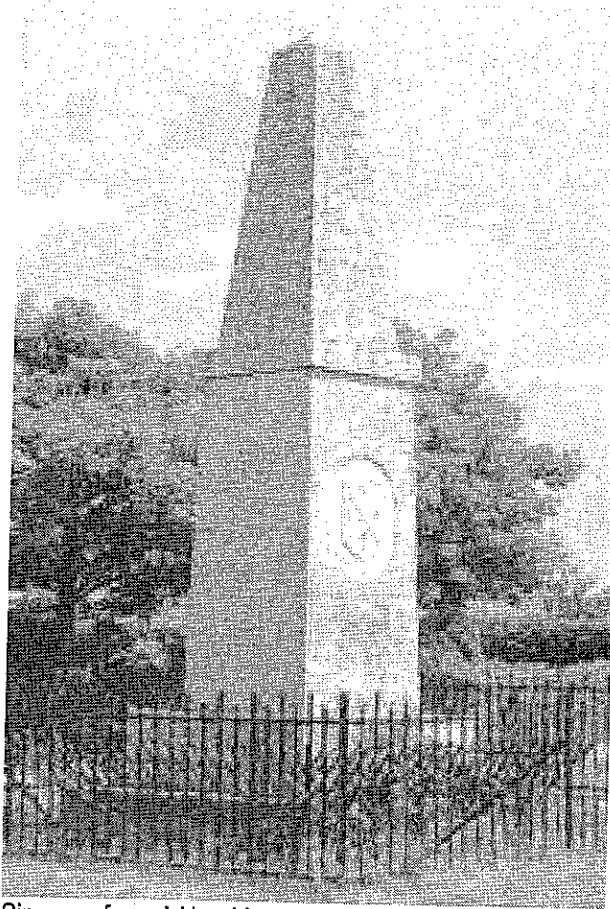
Obverse: C[aius] CAESAR AVG[ustus] Reverse: his sisters, Agrippina, Drusilla and Julia depicted as Security, Concord and Fortune. Caius was the emperor's real name, Caligula ("little boots") a

Coin of Caligula.³⁸

On board the *Justinian*, trouble soon appeared, with the advent of the bully John Simpson, who *displayed a whimsical arbitrariness which reminded Hornblower, with his classical education, of the freaks of the Roman emperors*. By his own account, Forester had taken refuge from his own unhappy childhood in the Camberwell library, ascending to dizzy heights at an early age, with Gibbon and Suetonius, whose accounts of the maddest freaks of the Caesars aroused neither horror nor surprise, but envy. He names Caligula (37-41CE), Nero (54-68) and Vitellius (69).³⁹ We can be fairly certain that the first was foremost in the novelist's mind, and he had already alluded to him in *Flying Colours*, with Hornblower translating the motto on the *Caligula's* figurehead for Bolton. Suetonius's account of Caligula's brief reign is the most significant of all twelve Lives, longest and centrally placed. "Let them hate [me] as long as they fear [me]": Caligula's follies had recently inspired Robert Graves (whose two-part "autobiography" of Caligula's uncle and successor Claudius achieved great success). *Oderint dum metuant* could well have been Simpson's own watchword, had he heard of the prematurely bald emperor who forced men to shave their heads, and devised a torture called death by a thousand cuts.

³⁸cc-art.com/sampler/Lineart/html/rulersr2.HTM#anchorPic1; cf. Suetonius, *The Twelve Caesars* (translated by Robert Graves), Penguin; AA Barrett, *Caligula: the corruption of power*, Routledge (2000).

³⁹ CS Forester, *Long before Forty*, Michael Joseph (1967), pages 15-17.



Simpson forced Hornblower to recite Gray's *Elegy*. The poem will repay closer examination, in the context of the development of the story line of *The Even Chance*. Simpson's bullying drives Hornblower to contemplate suicide, which becomes a real possibility after the quarrel at the card table, with a remote alternative possibility of Simpson being the one to die. Hornblower then devises a way of offsetting Simpson's likely advantage and making the chances exactly even in the forthcoming duel. Ground having been taken, however, he decides he cannot kill Simpson after all, but will merely inflict a slight wound to the shoulder.

Paths of Glory

The whole thrust of the *Elegy*, of course, is the contemplation of a graveyard, and the consequent reflection upon death and mortality, which could well induce a sensitive and troubled youth to contemplate compassing his own death. But the literary relationship between *The Even Chance* and the *Elegy* is best illustrated by stanza 15, which may well be replete with dramatic irony:-

*Some village-Hampden, that with dauntless breast
The little tyrant of his fields withstood...
Some Cromwell guiltless of his country's blood.*

A guiltless Cromwell? The young man who (we all know) will also go down in history one day, but who now (unbeknown to himself) collaborates with the Keene-Masters scheme to save a young life for the king's service.

A village Hampden? The son of a village doctor, whose calculated defiance of the petty tyrant Simpson is mollified by the last-minute decision to just shoot him in the shoulder. Cromwell's cousin John Hampden (1594-1643) was imprisoned for his opposition to Charles I's illegal forced loans (1627-28). He achieved fame by his resistance, before the Court of Exchequer (1637), to the King's levies for Ship Money. He was one of the Five Members of Parliament whom Charles tried to arrest in January 1642. Then in June 1643, as a colonel in the parliamentary army, he was fatally wounded in a skirmish at Chalgrove, near Thame, where his memorial (left) now stands.⁴⁰ His shoulder was shattered by the accidental discharge of his own pistol.

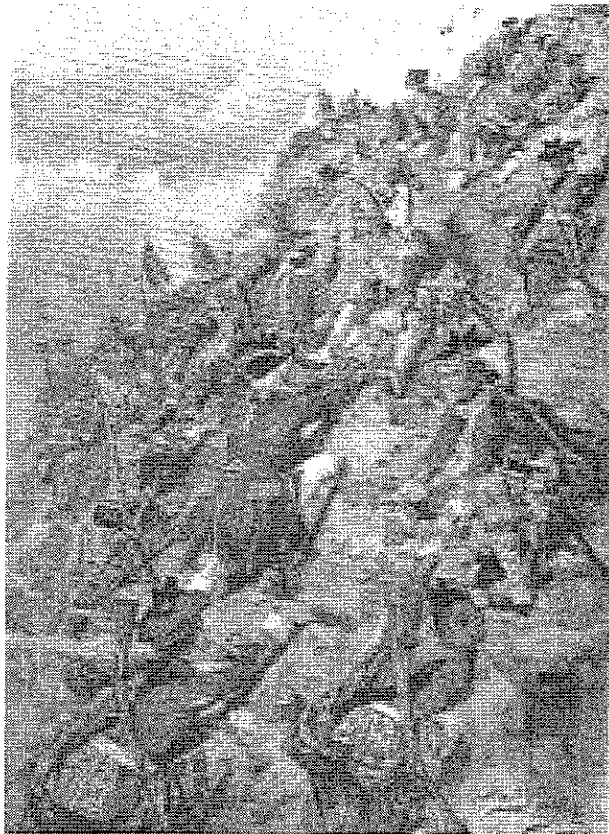
If Hornblower was, thus, an undoubted village Hampden, the last words of stanza 9 of the *Elegy* might also strike a chord. *The paths of glory lead but to the grave*, as Hornblower might well have reflected, contemplating a premature end to his career in a duel. But the words might also shed light on sources of *The Even Chance*.

There is a famous anecdote about General Wolfe, reading the *Elegy* aloud to his officers as they rowed towards the Heights of Abraham to attack Quebec in 1759. The *Elegy* was also selected by the organisers of a 1915 scheme to supply pocket literature to British troops in the Great War, launched by Geoffrey Dawson, editor of the *Times*. Material was chosen by Sir Walter Raleigh, Professor of English at Oxford, and Bruce Richmond, editor of the *Times Literary Supplement*, each item being printed on a page of thin paper easily slipped into a letter or a pocket. Sets of six were sold with envelopes for a penny, such agencies as the YMCA and the Church of England Temperance Association buying in bulk. A million such "broadsheets" were sold in the first week of the scheme.⁴¹

Now it may well be that another incident in *Mr Midshipman Hornblower* reflects justified scepticism over the Wolfe anecdote. Hornblower would have given the irate Lieutenant Eccles an explanation of the fit of his crewman Hales, *The Man who felt queer*, had he not appreciated that raiders in open boats required absolute silence under the guns of Blaye. What applied on the Gironde surely also applied on the Saint Lawrence! But the story was very much current during Forester's most impressionable years, with Raphaël Tuck and Sons going upmarket, again in 1915, with a *Glorious Battles* series of chromolithograph plates featuring the work of the prolific contemporary military artist Harry Payne, which included the scaling of the Heights of Abraham by Wolfe's Highland troops (right).

⁴⁰ <http://www.johnhampden.org>

⁴¹ John Mullan, *The appeal of uniform editions*, *The Guardian*, 12.04.2003.



2: Guards and Gothic innovators

Quis custodiet ipsos custodes? quipped Lady Barbara: "Who will guard the very guards?" The tag (we are soon told) was from the Roman satirist Juvenal – writing, like Suetonius, about 125CE.⁴² But Barbara's meaning is as clear as Forester's purpose: round one of the Captain's futile struggle to maintain ascendancy over the Lady.

The tag had long been cliché. Kipling puts it into *Stalky and Co.* (1899), a story probably familiar to Forester as a child. The same page quoted from *Mr Midshipman Easy* (1836), certainly an inspiration for a latter-day Marryat.⁴³ But he may have acquired the tag from his own schoolroom. Barbara was not even the first character in whose mouth he put it. A French general roused from bed to plan a strategy against the *guerrilleros* in Chapter 25 of *The Gun* heeds his mistress's divided loyalties. *He held to his determination of posting a sentry at the door with orders to allow no one in or out. It was a shame that his motive should be misconstrued... General Darphin had forgotten any Latin he ever knew, and quite missed the point of the sotto voce remark of one of his aides-de-camp: "Quis custodiet ipsos custodes?"*

⁴² Juvenal, *Satires*, VI, 347-8

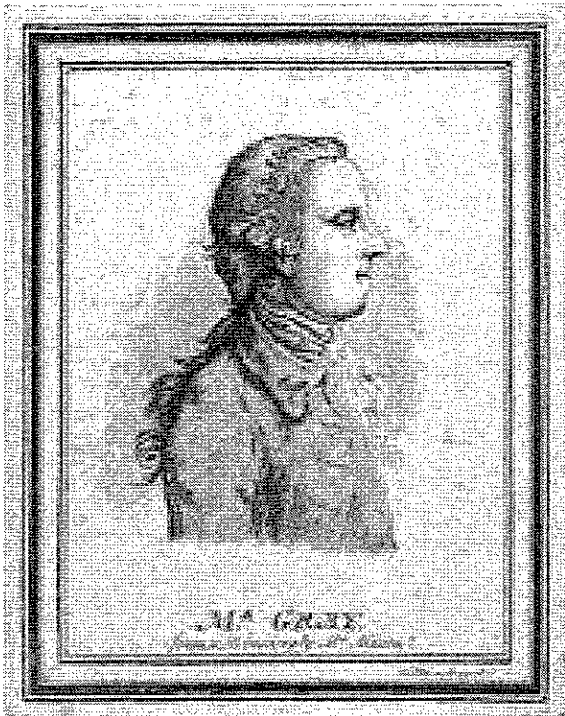
⁴³ Rudyard Kipling, *Stalky & Co.*, Macmillan (1899), page 24. See notes by Elizabeth Quigly for the *Oxford World's Classics* edition of *The Complete Stalky & Co.* (1987): www.kipling.org.uk/rg_ambush_notes.htm

Hornblower does not miss the point. He can but look on as Barbara stoops to conquer further, entrancing Galbraith by displaying a close knowledge of a remarkable poem called 'The Lay of the Last Minstrel' by an Edinburgh lawyer... He was surprised that a woman who could quote Juvenal with ease should be so interested in a barbaric romantic poem with no polish about it whatever.

If Hornblower thought Barbara's education should have inclined her sympathies towards him, not Galbraith, he had a case. Satire, modelled upon Roman precedents, was very much in vogue. Of Hornblower's favourite authors, Alexander Pope (1688-1744) imitated the restrained mockery of Horace (65-8BCE): the *Dunciad* (1728), a satiric answer to the critics of the *Miscellanies* (1727-1732), in which he and Jonathan Swift mocked the literary establishment; Pope then wrote his *Essay on Man* (1733) and *Imitations of Horace* (1733-1738). Samuel Johnson (1709-1784) strove to match the virulent invective of Juvenal: *The Vanity of Human Wishes* (1749), based upon Juvenal's Satire X, predated the *Dictionary*, the meeting with Boswell, and the other works for which Johnson is best known: the *Shakespeare* (1765), *Journey to the Western Isles of Scotland* (1775), *Lives of the Poets* (1779-1781).

Barbara and Galbraith opted for living poets and modern Scotland. *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* by Walter Scott was published in 1805. Its topic is a 16th-century Border feud, ostensibly told several generations later by an old minstrel. Thoroughly Homeric, perhaps! Where *The Lay* broke with precedent was by drawing on Scottish legends for its content, and in the 4-beat lines, derived from Scott's knowledge of Coleridge's *Christabel*, that create a distinctive galloping rhythm. It was an immediate sensation. Fans included William Pitt; critics were generally positive. The *Critical Review* praised Scott's skill with the "rich but unpolished ore" of ballad poetry. The *Annual Review* thought it "elegant, spirited, and striking" and welcomed the move away from formal classical poetics. The *Edinburgh Review* put many passages "in the very first rank of poetical excellence". Although the *Literary Journal* and *Monthly Review* disliked the poetry, deeming the plot impenetrable and outlandish, the *Lay* ensured that Scott was able to abandon the law for literature, and almost single-handedly create the Highland tourist industry! He had "created a modern, anticlassical idiom based on medieval forms". It was timely, and in many ways a pioneering work. With Burns dead, Byron as yet unpublished and the Lakeland poets well nigh unknown, Scott found a ready audience.⁴⁴

⁴⁴ www.walterscott.lib.ed.ac.uk/works/poetry/minstrel.html; Arthur Herman, *The Scottish Enlightenment*, Fourth Estate (2001), pages 285-286.



© NPG D5163

Thomas Gray (above), by William Henshaw (1760);
Alexander Pope (right) by William Hoare (c 1739-1743).⁴⁵

3. Hornblower meets his match

The decisive round of the debate, or more probably a series of conversations in which Barbara and Hornblower are finally brought together, seems very clearly explained, but will again repay scrutiny.

1. *Hornblower championed the cause of the classical school who looked back to the days of Queen Anne against the barbarous leaders of the revolt who seemed to delight in setting every established rule at defiance. She heard him with patience, even with approval, as he talked of Gibbon... and Johnson and Swift, when he quoted from Pope and Gray, but she could approve of the barbarians as well. There was a madman called Wordsworth of whose revolutionary opinions in literature Hornblower had heard with vague horror; Lady Barbara thought there was something to be said for him.*

2. *She turned the tables neatly on Hornblower by claiming Gray as a precursor of the same school; she quoted Campbell and that Gothic innovator, Scott, and she won Hornblower's grudging approval of an ungainly poem called "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner", although he maintained sturdily, in the last ditch, that its only merit lay in its content, and that it would have been infinitely better had Pope dealt with the theme in heroic couplets – especially if Pope had been assisted by someone who knew more about navigation and seamanship than did this Coleridge fellow.*

⁴⁵ National Portrait Gallery NPG D5163; NPG 873.

Jonathan Swift (1667-1745), the archetypal Anglo-Irish satirist might well evoke Hornblower's own melancholia. *Life is not a farce; it is a ridiculous tragedy, which is the worst kind of composition.* Consider not just *Gulliver's Travels* (1726) with its searing indictment of human nature, but *The Battle of the Books* (1697), which defends the "Ancients" against the "Moderns", the former including John Dryden, whose translation of *The Works of Homer* into heroic couplets had just appeared.⁴⁶



© NPG 873

This may seem cruel to Hornblower, but he does come over as a bit of a bore, and out of his depth. It seems credible that Forester is sending him up! He makes mistakes: of his favourite authors, only Swift and Pope partly overlap the reign of Queen Anne (1702-14).⁴⁷ Of his other heroes, Edward Gibbon (1737-1794) is famous for the *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1776-1788), but he was a literary critic first. His *Essai sur l'étude de la littérature* (1761) is a vindication of the entire corpus of classical literature: "the ancient authors have left models for those who dare to follow in their footsteps". "All this was commonplace" in the 18th century.⁴⁸ It was certainly the view of Gray.

⁴⁶ Jonathan Swift, *A Modest Proposal and other satirical works*, Dover Publications, New York (1996), pages 1-24.

⁴⁷ Pope came to public notice with *Pastorals* (1709) and the *Essay on Criticism* (1711), and gained much notoriety and acclaim for *The Rape of the Lock* (1712). But it was his translation of the *Iliad* (1715-1720) and the *Odyssey* (1725-1726) that earned him fortune as well as fame.

⁴⁸ Roy Porter, *Gibbon: making history*, Phoenix (1988), pages 54-55



Romans and romantics

The *Elegy written in a country churchyard* by Thomas Gray (1717-1761) was the 18th-century's favourite poem. One of its best-known stanzas is a paraphrase of Latin:

*For them no more the blazing hearth shall burn,
Nor busy housewife ply her evening care,
No children run to lisp their sire's return,
Nor climb his knees the envied kiss to share...*

Ancient Epicureanism and the prevalent deism of the 18th century seem to have had much in common.⁴⁹

Gray was arguably the last *Roman* poet to write in English! Obligated to write Latin verse for special occasions as a Cambridge student, he carried on for the rest of his life, annotating Linnaeus in Latin hexameters and planning for Newton's *Principia Mathematica* what Lucretius had done for the atomism of Epicurus and his predecessors. The *Elegy* owed as much to ancient models as to Stoke Poges, near Slough, in 1751!⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Lucretius (c55 BCE), *On the Nature of Things* III, 894-896:
iam iam non domus accipiet te laeta neque uxor
optima nec dulces occurrent oscula nati
praeripere et tacita pectus dulcedine tangent
*Now, now, no house will welcome you happily home, nor a
consort/Excellent. No winsome children will run out to greet
you, to snatch your/First kisses from her, and touch with silent
affection your bosom.*

My version seeks to show the problem of putting the Greco-Roman hexameter into English while retaining structure and meter. The hexameter consists of 13-17 syllables in 6 feet, each _ _ or _ v v. The main determinant of meaning in English is word order, but it is word ending in Latin, which lacks the range of articles and auxiliary verbs so essential in English. Modern verse translators fall back on a 6-stress line, often supported by Anglo-Saxon kennings and alliteration. Those like Dryden or Pope favoured the heroic couplet. The usual unit of post-Renaissance English verse is the 10-syllable iambic pentameter, familiar as blank verse in Shakespeare or Marlowe and rhymed in the conventional way by Gray. The heroic couplet is a pair of rhyming lines:

*The curfew tolls the knell of parting day/the ploughman
homeward plods his weary way, the lowing herd winds slowly
o'er the lea/and leaves the world to darkness and to me.*

⁵⁰ John Mullan, *Unpranked Lyre*, *London Review of Books*, 13.12.2001; Robert Mack *Thomas Gray: A Life*, Yale (2000).

Current critical scholarship suggests that the pendulum is swinging away from the view (held by Barbara) of Gray as a precursor of the romantics, towards that of Hornblower, who saw them as wholly different.

Hornblower would also have been vindicated in his criticisms of Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834). The *Rime of the Ancient Mariner* appeared in the first edition of *Lyrical Ballads* (1798), by Coleridge and William Wordsworth (1770-1850). This version was entitled *The Rime of the Ancyent Marinere*, with equally ostentatiously archaic spelling throughout the text. In 1800 the second edition of the *Lyrical Ballads* carried a text in which Coleridge, at Wordsworth's suggestion, had amended the spelling and substituted the familiar title.

Hornblower's disdain for Coleridge's ignorance of the sea and ships also appears justified. For the subject matter had been suggested to Coleridge by Wordsworth, and it was he that had read George Shelvocke's *A Voyage round the World by the Way of the Great South Sea* (1726), in which a sailor shoots a persistent albatross, the ship thereafter being wrecked on Crusoe's Juan Fernandes island! Shelvocke's privateer was called *Speedwell*, as was the merchant brig upon which Coleridge took passage in the spring of 1804, seeking to remedy a profound psychosomatic, intellectual and emotional crisis with a cramped and opium-ridden passage to Malta. Coleridge's journal for 30 April 1804 records gossip with the real-life mariners, upon which Teresa Hayter comments as follows:-

*His ignorance of nautical terms and his craving curiosity seem to have amused the crew of the Speedwell, who tried to teach him the names of the sails and rigging and how they worked, the meaning of various signals, how the ship's position was calculated, and practical tips about not emptying ashes or scalding water over the windward side.*⁵¹

Hornblower's point was well-made! If it is from Forester's own reading of the *Mariner*, it is also prophetic: the full significance of Coleridge's voyage was not realised until Kathleen Coburn's pioneering edition of Coleridge's notebooks appeared a generation after *The Happy*

Mullan is the main source for the view of Gray taken here. For further information see the Stoke Poges pages (<http://www.stoke-poges.com/HTML/elegy.html>; [gray.html](http://www.gray.html)); the *Thomas Gray archive* in Oxford, edited by Alexander Huber (www.thomasgray.org.uk/materials/links.shtml), including the 1853 Harpers commemorative edition from which the picture comes (<http://harpers.org/ElegyWrittenInACountryChurchYard.html>).
⁵¹ Teresa Hayter, *A voyage in vain: Coleridge's journey to Malta in 1804*, Faber & Faber (1973), pages 134-135; cf. Kenneth Poolman, *The Speedwell voyage: a tale of piracy and mutiny in the 18th century*, New York (2000).

Return. And it now appears that impressions of the voyage informed the 1815-16 revision of *The Mariner*, resulting in corrections and additions to the revised edition of 1817, which is the one in most common use.⁵² The one Barbara showed Hornblower, which he now read for the first time and which he justifiably found "ungainly", was that of 1798! It did not contain Wordsworth's revolutionary poetics, which first appeared in the preface to the 1800 edition of the *Lyrical Ballads*, and which included an all-out attack on Thomas Gray.

Wordsworth here ridiculed Gray for a poetic language that created distance between the reader and the poet's own feelings. Gray would have wholeheartedly agreed! 'The language of the age is never the language of poetry,' he said. 'Our poetry . . . has a language peculiar to itself'. The language of poetry was a treasury for future writers, demanding study and appreciation before additions could be made. Mullan concedes that "Gray's later experiments with bardic odes and self-conscious 'fragments' may have qualified him to be considered a proto-Romantic in some sketches of poetical history", - just as Barbara argued! "But Wordsworth was right to think of him at 'the head' of an alien poetical culture."⁵³

Wordsworth's *Preface* would have reduced Hornblower to apoplexy! But Barbara neither owned nor agreed with it. She finally wins the argument with Hornblower with a move which shows considerable finesse, not only in her own intellectual strategy but in that of Forester himself.

Game and rubber

With one exception, all of those named in the ongoing literary discussions in *The Happy Return* are well known. The exception has almost completely faded from public cognisance, despite a huge contribution to Scottish letters and a long career as a public figure, culminating in the rectorship of Glasgow University.

Thomas Campbell (1777-1844) enjoyed great success with *The Pleasures of Hope* (1799), a long poem in traditional heroic couplets, which prompted his friend Telford (the engineer) to hail him as a poet who would surpass Pindar (5th-century BCE, imitated in Gray's *Odes* of 1757), Dryden or Gray himself.

Campbell was thus well within the 18th-century tradition, and so could well have well appealed to Hornblower. Where he broke with precedent was by drawing material from current affairs. In 1800-1801 he visited Eastern Europe, finding materials on first Copenhagen and other battles, which he worked up into *Ye Mariners of England*, *Hohenlinden* and *The Battle of the Baltic*.

⁵² Hayter, p 11; *The poet as passenger*, TLS page 1351, 2.11.1973.

⁵³ Mullan, *Unpranked Lyre*, LRB, 13.12.2001



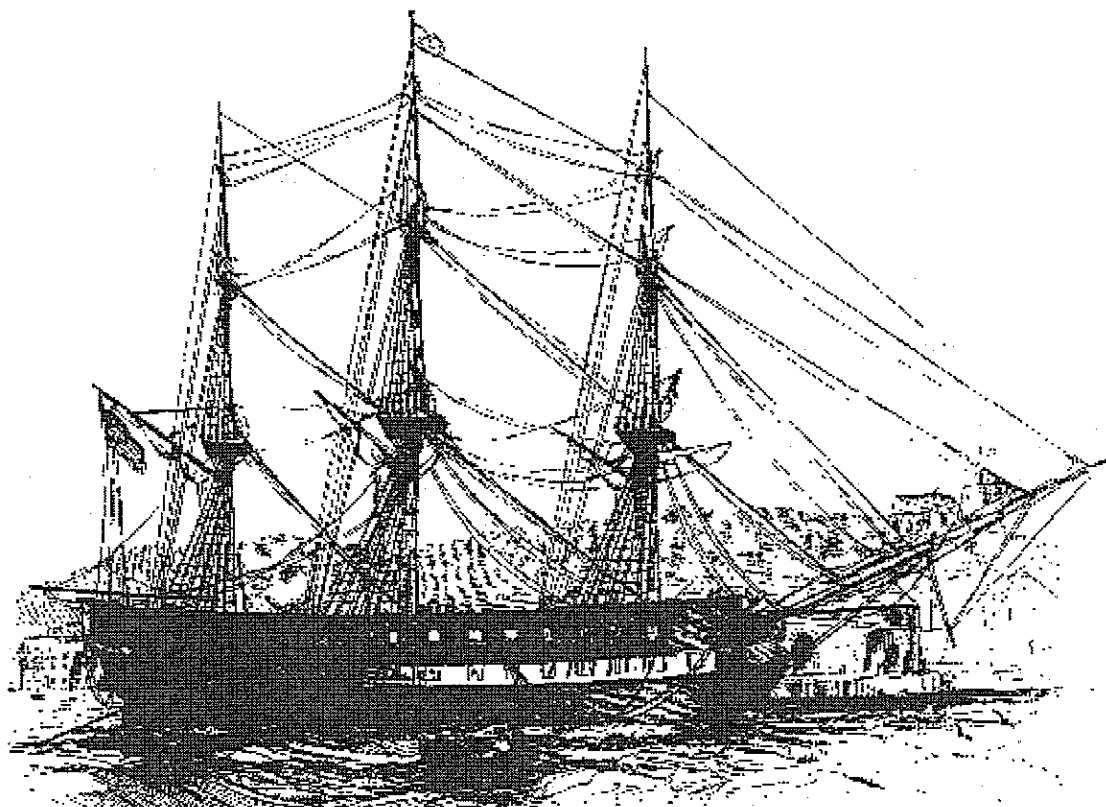
These brought recognition and a government pension – no mean achievement for a poet who denounced the British regime in India as well as the slave trade and the 1795 partition of Poland by Prussia and Russia. But if Campbell's poetics looked to traditional models rather than the contemporary iconoclasm of the Lake poets, he was no revolutionary in politics either. His views were consistently liberal – like Hornblower's - and "particularly welcome to those in sympathy with political reform who were at their most despondent over the bloodshed of the French Revolution".⁵⁴

By the dramatic date of *The Happy Return*, Campbell was established as a popular and patriotic poet. Forester has inserted a little-known but utterly authentic detail to enable Barbara to prevail. How did he come to be so well informed? We must go back a century for a proper biography or critical appreciation or a complete edition of Campbell.⁵⁵ But these works would have been accessible to a schoolmaster or to a studious adolescent at Christ's Hospital, or to a would-be popular historian researching every detail of *Nelson and the North*. Another of Campbell's best-known poems was *The River of Life*, possibly formative upon the future author of *Randall and the River of Time*. *Mariners of England* was reprinted by the National Gallery in 1839, to accompany the hanging of Turner's *Fighting Téméraire*; if Forester knew this, it could equally explain how Campbell came to his notice, and why Bush was put on board *Téméraire* at Trafalgar! What it does not explain is why Hornblower disliked Campbell, if indeed he did. The sea poems share the tone and sentiments of *Heart of Oak*, actually taken from a pantomime – *Harlequin's Invasion* (1759)! Music was painful to Hornblower, but he might have been expected to approve of an author as self-effacing as Campbell, who Scott said was "afraid of the shadow that his own fame casts before him". But Campbell is introduced into the discussion by Barbara, to show how Hornblower has painted himself into a corner! As *The Happy Return* is narrated from Hornblower's point of view, we shall never know if he acknowledged himself defeated!

⁵⁴ Geoffrey Carnill, *Thomas Campbell*, in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (2004), volume 9, pages 863-864; <http://www.slainte.org.uk/Scotauth/campbdsw.htm>

⁵⁵ JC Hadden, *Thomas Campbell*, Oliphant, Anderson & Ferrier (1900); JL Robertson, ed., *Poems* Cambridge (1907).

CORRESPONDENCE



Arrival of the US Frigate, "Macedonian," at Cork, with Provisions for the Distressed Irish, Illustrated London News, 7 August, 1847

The frigate Macedonian II

One of many merits of the Hornblower novels is that historical facts serve to reinforce Forester's fiction. This is illustrated in Reflections 8, where Christopher Smith discusses the book *Chronicles of the frigate Macedonian* by James Tertius de Kay.⁵⁶ Kay's subtitle 1809-1922 reflects the fact that the focus is less on personalities than on the ship herself, or rather the timber she was made of. Both Forester and Hornblower are mentioned in de Kay's book. Frigate captains of bold initiative on independent command are referred to as "Hornblower-prototypes", while Forester is quoted for characterizing Carden as "stupid" for surrendering the *Macedonian*, an action for which a court-martial judged him "brave".⁵⁷ More on that later.

Christopher Smith's contribution deals mainly with the first *Macedonian*, built by the British, captured by the Americans in 1812 and broken up in the 1830's. Despite its reputation, the Danzig oak was apparently good enough to be recycled for a new warship, also bearing the name *Macedonian*. It is about this second *Macedonian* that some interesting facts can be found.

⁵⁶ Christopher Smith, *A Frigate's story*, Reflections 8 (2004), pages 3-4; James Tertius de Kay, *Chronicles of the frigate Macedonian, 1809-1922* (W.W. Norton, New York, 1995).

⁵⁷ C.S. Forester, *The age of fighting sail*, New English Library nr. 2216, edition 1968, pages 86-87.

The article in the *Illustrated London News* reads:-

This noble vessel arrived in the Cove on the 16th ult., after a fair voyage of twenty-seven days; and anchored at Hawlbowlane. The Macedonian is a very large and beautiful frigate, carrying forty-four guns, when in commission, and upwards of 1700 tons; she is commanded by Commodore De Kay, Argentine Navy. The cargo, which consisted of corn-meal, Indian meal, rice, beans, and a quantity of clothing, has been generously contributed by the Middle States and Relief Committees of the inhabitants of Boston...

It was through the interest and solicitation of Commodore De Kay, that Congress granted the use of the Macedonian for her present mission of peace and charity; the gallant and philanthropic gentleman bearing all the expense of victualling, manning, loading, &c., amounting to something over £3000...

*The Macedonian is a fine specimen of the naval architecture of the United States: she worked beautifully during her voyage, although six feet deeper than if she had in her armament. The white flag of the Jamestown, with a wreath of shamrock, and the rose and thistle in the centre, floated from the mainmast of the Macedonian, whilst the "star-spangled banner" waved from her mizen. Nothing can exceed the gratitude of the citizens of Cork to the American people, for their practical and generous sympathy.*⁵⁸

⁵⁸ The *Illustrated London News*, 7 August, 1847;

Several questions arise:-

- Why was an Argentine commodore on a US frigate?
- Was he in any way related to the author?

1. Let us look at the Argentinian angle first:-

In 1825 war between Argentina and Brazil flared again over the Cisplatine Province, this time with Buenos Aires determined to annex the East Bank. The empire could little afford the troops or the warships needed to blockade the Río de la Plata. A loan from London bankers was expended by 1826. The Argentine forces were able to defeat the Brazilians on the plains of Uruguay, but the Brazilian navy blockaded the Río de la Plata thus crippling Argentine commerce. The blockade raised objections from the United States and Britain, and reverses on land in 1827 made it necessary to negotiate an end to the US\$30 million Cisplatine War. The war at least left Uruguay independent..⁵⁹

"Leading world powers" interfering in local conflicts was clearly as usual in the 19th century as it is today. This time, the ingredients were not only US dollars and British troops recruited in Ireland and Germany. The conflict also attracted adventurous individuals, such as George Coleman de Kay. Here is what his biographer Fitz-Greene Halleck (1790-1867), has to say:-

George Coleman De Kay, naval officer, born in New York City in 1802, died in Washington, D. C., 31 January 1849. He was prepared for College, but ran away to sea. He became a skilful navigator, and took vessels built by Henry Eckford to South America. He volunteered in the navy of the Argentine republic, then at war with Brazil, and was given command of a brig in June 1827. After taking several prizes, he accepted a captain's commission, which he had declined on entering the service, preferring to win it by promotion. In an engagement with the brig "Cacique," commanded by Captain Manson, that vessel was captured, though twice the size of De Kay's, and much more heavily armed. When returning to Buenos Aires in June 1828, his brig, the "Brandtzen," was driven inshore in the River Plata by a Brazilian squadron. He scuttled the vessel to prevent her capture, swam ashore with his crew, and on reaching Buenos Aires was made commodore. After the peace, he delivered a corvette to Henry Eckford. Returning to New York, De Kay in 1833 married Janet, only child of the poet Joseph Rodman Drake. In 1847, he took the U. S. frigate "Macedonian" to Ireland with supplies for the sufferers from the famine, having exerted himself to secure the passage of an act of congress permitting a government vessel to be so employed.⁶⁰

<http://www.theshipslist.com/1847/macedonian.html>

⁵⁹ <http://www.onwar.com/aced/data/cite/cisplatine1825.htm>

⁶⁰ Fitz-Greene Halleck *Outline of the Life of Com. George C. De Kay*, New York, (1847).

2. Another question would be: Had the *Illustrated London News* forgotten about the turbulent history of the timber that the second Macedonian was made of? The first Macedonian had served the British only a few years. The loss of the first Macedonian in 1812 was probably best forgotten. Only few retired naval eyebrows may have been raised. But there's more to it than that:

- The US Macedonian at Cork was hired to de Kay explicitly as a civilian, in order to prevent diplomatic complications with the British.
- The event also induced Rear Admiral Carden, on his retirement in 1848 to write his Memoirs to tell his side of the story, one that virtually ended his career in 1812.

While we are not to know whether Forester actually read Fitz-Greene Halleck's biography of George Coleman de Kay, I am sure he would have found inspiration in the *Chronicles of the Frigate Macedonian*, written by de Kay's great-grandson.

Jetse Reijenga, Eindhoven, NL.

- *This story of a US-Argentine naval officer active in the nationalist struggles of 19th-century Latin America offers a very interesting contrast with the historical cases of British or European expatriates joining in the Wars of Independence, and Forester's fictional adaptations of them.*
- *The best-known historical cases are those of Home Riggs Popham and Cochrane, both of which influenced the Hornblower saga.*
- *Fictional examples must include Ramsbottom, the byronic civilian-turned-revolutionary in The Guns of Carabobo, and of course Hornblower himself, there and in The Happy Return.*
- *There is also a hybrid – Francisco de Miranda. In Hornblower and the Crisis, he is cast as a potential British agent for the scheme to deliver false orders to Villeneuve. But he was actually an important historical figure, over several decades, in the quest for Venezuelan independence – and someone whose real movements in 1805 are well documented.*
- *It would have been interesting, perhaps, to see how Forester resolved, or ignored, this last difficulty!*

On the *Macedonian* - and *Rifleman Dodd*

Follow-up to Christopher Smith's very interesting article. When *Macedonian* met the *United States*, Captain Carden had not heard of the fate of the *Guerrière*, nor had he received intelligence of the size and effectiveness of the US frigates. He was in for a surprise. For me, the four original US "super frigates" fighting British frigates were the equivalent of a WWII German pocket battleship, such as *Graf Spee*, taking on a British cruiser such as *Exeter* - outgunning, out-ranging, faster and with a much bigger crew. *United States* had more and heavier guns (24 pounders versus *Macedonian's* 18s, with longer range), and twice the crew of the undermanned *Macedonian*, and she was a better sailer, despite her nickname "The Wagon". Speed is a function of waterline length, and *United States* had been laid down as a third rate ship of the line - a 74. Of the four original US super frigates, *United States* and *Constitution* were both originally 74s, with a deck not completed, and *President* and *Philadelphia* were both far bigger than any other frigates. The "frigate" *Constitution* is only slightly shorter than the first rate HMS *Victory*. A 30 metre-waterline ship might do 10 knots, in the same conditions a 45-metre ship would do 12 knots.

The "super frigates" had the advantages of size, good timber, and picked men - it is possible that up to a quarter of their crews were ex-British topmen, that is expert seamen, some of whom would have left the Royal Navy after the Peace of Amiens, when up to 70,000 men left, or were likely to be made redundant. The problems were that the ex-British sailors knew that if captured, they would be hung as traitors - which would encourage them to fight harder, and that the American guns were not always well founded. This propensity to explode was mentioned in Forester's *The Captain from Connecticut*.

After the initial exchange of fire, the undermanned *Macedonian* lost her mizzen topmast and her gaff, and thus her steerage. Without enough topmen, she could not practise good damage control. *United States* sat relatively undisturbed off her starboard bow and reduced her to a wreck, particularly after her big close range quarterdeck carronades had been silenced: with their exposed chocks destroyed, the carronades were useless. Decatur then took his wrecked prize back to port, although it was a fortnight before *Macedonian* could sail under jury rig.

Macedonian's defeat was not entirely a disaster - her action forced the *United States* to return to New York, and leave her chase of the very valuable East Indies convoy, although that was almost certainly not on Captain Carden's mind when he took on *United States*.

After the battle, a young powder monkey in *Macedonian*, Samuel Leech, did so well in showing Americans round his ship that he cheerfully transferred to the US Navy.

The Captain from Connecticut is possibly my favourite Forester book. Forester's research for his *Naval War of 1812* is used to excellent effect, and Peabody is a good hero - but that's another story. As history, I particularly recommend *The Naval War of 1812*, not the one by CSF, but the much later book edited by Robert Gardiner, published by Caxton Pictorial Histories.⁶¹

On *Rifleman Dodd* as recommended reading for the US Marine Corps, my friend Jack Ashman, ex RM Colonel (and Supt of Police in Newcastle) has burst into action. Jack sends me things like RM anniversary e-mails and congratulations on the Battle of Agincourt (he had an ancestor on the winning side, us Scots were on the other - French - side). And some very bad jokes. This time. Jeff has forwarded a reply from a correspondent in the United States, as follows:-

The Commandant's Reading List does recommend "*Rifleman Dodd*" by Forester. I read it several years ago, and it was a great read. It's the story of a rifleman - a Richmond Green, I believe - who gets cut off from his unit. He kills a lot of Frenchmen as he e and e's it back to his unit. Here is a link to the complete list. <http://www.mcu.usmc.mil/mcu/Reading/CompleteListBySubject.htm> I wonder if *Death to the French is a British title designed to sell more copies? Semper Fi[delis]*, Jeff

Well there we are - *Death to the French/Rifleman Dodd* is on the Commandant USMC's reading list at Quantico.

Ken Napier, Chazarem, France.

Reflections on *Tales of War...*

Thank you for the erudite article *From the Pen of a Storyteller* by Mark Corrison (*Reflections* 8 (2004), pages 5-9). It is an excellent review of CSF's writing, and it brings us nicely up to date with its mention of the A&E mini-series. It was grand to see it published in full in *Reflections*. I think Mark was right to pick on the theme of 'the man alone' and the sheer readability of the *Tales* as the two principal qualities of CSF's writing. The many facets of the man alone theme seem to be explored in virtually every story, possibly since CSF rarely had much more than one finely-drawn character per book.

Colin Blogg, Oxford.

⁶¹ Robert Gardiner (ed.), *The Naval War of 1812*, Caxton Pictorial Histories (2001). Part of a series including Gardiner (ed.), *Fleet, battle and blockade: the French Revolutionary War, 1793-1797*; *Nelson against Napoleon: from the Nile to Copenhagen, 1797-1801*; *The campaign of Trafalgar, 1803-1805*; and Richard Woodman (ed.), *The victory of seapower: winning the Napoleonic War, 1806-1814*.

The General, the Duke – and Forester's Spanish

The Bedchamber Mystery is Colin Blogg's favourite Forester book.⁶² I remember my father telling me that it was published by a publisher who had some of his paper ration left, and wanted to use it up to avoid having a smaller ration next year. The Bedchamber Mystery was about the right size to use up the paper ration. As to the discussion around Adrian Taylor's account of Philip Guedalla, I also remember reading Philip Guedalla's The Duke, taken from the family bookshelves.⁶³

Did [CSF] – like Captain Hornblower – speak good Spanish? So you ask, at the end of the discussion of Flying Colours and A Ship of the Line.⁶⁴ That is a question that I have never before considered: Did CSF speak Spanish? My conclusion is that he did not. There are several lines of evidence.

I have listened to him discuss the differences in pronunciation between various Spanish dialects, and how different Mexican Spanish is from Castilian Spanish. However, while I listened to a few examples of the pronunciations, I never heard him speak Spanish. On the few times that he went to Mexico (careless Mexican road repairers caused him to run his '49 Cadillac off the road, then pushed it back onto the road for him, but it needed three days of work at the next GM dealer to fix it), he managed much as I expect (I never accompanied him) most tourists would, with a smattering of Spanish and much use of bilingual Mexicans. He traveled with Dorothy, who had no foreign language. He also toured Spain in springtime, about 1960 (again with Dorothy), going over the Wellington battle sites.

In the early 1940s, he ensured that I had private lessons in French, and, when the refugee Max lived with us, he gave George and me some lessons in German (of which I had acquired a small smattering during my two summers in Berlin). CSF never suggested Spanish, but, then, that was not in the American air to the same extent that it is now, at least in the American border regions.

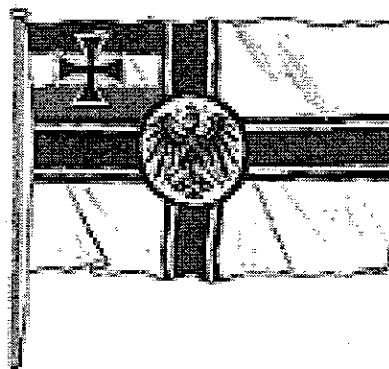
I studied Latin in Berkeley High School, before going off Saint George's. CSF assisted me in translating Caesar and Virgil. However, my brother, George (with whom I have just talked on the telephone), when he resumed attendance at the Berkeley schools after one year at Saint George's, studied Spanish. CSF did not assist him, although the housekeeper, Marjorie Manus (who knew several languages, though not much Spanish, if any) did to a small extent. George's conclusion is that CSF did not speak Spanish. Furthermore, George was told, by

those who knew, that CSF's French accent was atrocious.

I do not have a copy of the 1947 Little, Brown edition of *The General*. That is the edition discussed by Mark Corrison, with the introduction in which CSF tells of Hitler giving copies to his generals.⁶⁵ I know what CSF told me, but I do not know what he wrote. Would it be possible for someone to copy the introduction and send it to me?

John Forester, Lemon Grove, California.

- *John Forester's memory of having Guedalla's The Duke at home adds weight to Christopher Smith's argument, on stylistic grounds, that Guedalla influenced CSF's biographical works.*⁶⁶
- *The question of CSF's Spanish impinged upon the making of A Ship of the Line – and upon the author's alleged visit to Spain in the Civil War. New evidence on that topic is now emerging, indicating that the visit was not – as I had supposed – another of CSF's tall stories, but that it actually did take place.*
- *Was Hitler's admiration for The General real, or simply anecdotal? This is another important question as yet unresolved. The editor, too, would be very interested in reading – and reproducing – exactly what Forester claimed in the introduction to the postwar American edition of The General.*



Reflections 10

Coming soon. Contents will include:

A submariner looks at U97.

Further contributions, correspondence, and suggestions will be welcomed. Articles over 500 words (and others if possible) should be emailed as Word attachments to: david-stead@lineone.net.

Contributions may be posted to: **Reflections**,
151 Walkley Crescent Road, Sheffield S6 5BA, UK

⁶² Reflections 8 (2004), page 2.

⁶³ Reflections 8, pages 11-12.

⁶⁴ Reflections 8, pages 12-14

⁶⁵ Mark Corrison, *Tales of war from the pen of a storyteller*, Reflections 8 (2004), pages 5-9.

⁶⁶ Christopher Smith, *Louis XIV revisited*, Reflections 7 (2004), pages 2-4.