

**CHALLENGE:**

*Hornblower and the Crisis* - an unfinished novel  
The following is one person's view, does it inspire you  
to submit your entry?

**A CRISIS OF INDECISION**

by Adrian Taylor

Horatio Hornblower awoke with a start in his bed at The Saracen's Head. What a quite horrible dream he had had. He had been with Lieutenant Bush, both of whose legs had been amputated and there were some most gory details. He had awoken with a nightmare vision of the blade of a guillotine descending. He put his shaking hand to his forehead to feel the cold perspiration there.

Hornblower then remembered where he was. He re-traced in his fevered mind the last hectic twenty-four hours. After his dreadful dream he felt that he could empathise most strongly with the forger Claudius. Now it seemed that he was destined to be a spy in the service of His Britannic Majesty. But, as satisfactory as his interview with Marsden had seemed to be at the time, he was not so certain about it now. He turned over in his bed and closed his eyes once more. His final thought before he nodded off again, was to wonder what whether further adventures he would encounter in this seemingly endless war against the Corsican tyrant.

But Hornblower's quest for sleep until a beneficent dawn should welcome him, was to be in vain. In no more than ten minutes, perhaps, he had woken up again. Never before in his naval service had he been so encumbered with insomnia, for he was assailed by doubts most unbecoming to a naval officer – surely no Royal Navy quarter-deck had ever borne witness to such lily-livered qualms. But a spy! It was the sort of underhand profession that one may have expected amongst garlic-eating Frenchmen or olive-skinned Latins, but it ill became any self-respecting servant of the King. Surely it was not too late to withdraw from the scheme. He hadn't actually committed himself to such madness, had he? He turned over onto his other side, his racing mind continuing to plague him with his doubts. This was indeed a crisis of confidence.

Hornblower lay in bed thinking. Eventually he began to compose himself: he began to dwell upon various possibilities, applying as much ingenuity to possible solutions as he had so often before in his confrontations with his French adversaries. It seemed to him that two basic questions could be posed: should he withdraw from this seemingly madcap venture? And, supposing that he did, how was he to do so without losing too much face in the eyes of his Admiralty superiors? If he were not careful he may well end up as a half-pay naval officer, unwanted at this time of England's greatest need. If only he could call on the services of Bush – the stolid and dependable Bush. With Bush's assistance he may be able to consider this spying mission with more confidence. Absurdly he now imagined Bush in unlikely disguise – in a mob cap and dressed like a serving wench. Hornblower yielded to a smile as he lay there, but he was no nearer a solution to his dilemma.

Of a sudden there came a quiet knock at the door. Hornblower was alert now, if he had not been before, on the *qui vive* as if he were about to set out on a cutting-out expedition. He climbed out of bed and went to the door. He slid back the bolt.

An unseen hand thrust a letter into his and then there was a soft padding of feet and the emissary was gone. Hornblower scratched his head. These were mysterious happenings indeed. He lighted the candle on his bedside table and perused the unopened letter with unbounded curiosity. The superscription upon the envelope mere stated 'Horatio Hornblower'. In a fever of anticipation he broke the seal and withdrew the single sheet of paper.

'My dearest Horatio', (he read, wondering, inconsequentially, who were the other two Horatios whom the writer knew).

'I'm sorry to have to approach my darling Horry in such a fashion, but some bad news has befallen us. Last night my poor mother, Mrs Mason, passed away. I am beside myself with grief and I need my Horry to comfort me. I am so lonely now and I feel that I need my loved one's support at this awful time.

Please come soon,  
Your ever loving  
Maria'

Hornblower placed the letter back into its envelope. Here were complications indeed. And yet, perhaps in some ways the situation had been clarified: the scales were now weighted a little further on the side of common-sense – he could now find some excuse for his returning to his wife's side. It was odd, though, that the missive had been delivered by the mysterious night-time messenger. It was a puzzle certainly. If only he could now find sleep and

awake in the morning with a clear head, refreshed for the duties of the day. And yes, there were duties. He should know by now where those duties lay. The letter from Maria had decided him at last. Mrs Mason was dead, but Napoleon Bonaparte, the scourge of the free, was most definitely alive and he was leading him and many others a merry dance. There seemed to be nothing dishonourable in his being a spy in such circumstances after all. Hornblower extinguished the flickering candle and lay down to compose himself to sleep. In a few seconds blissful oblivion had been achieved.

THE END

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### AUGUST WITH ELIZA!

David Stead, September 2001

Eliza is my irreverent shorthand for Saint Elizabeth of Hungary, whose story opens Forester's *Hornblower in the West Indies*, and whose theme of conjugal honesty also closes the book. On 30 July, Colin E-mails me, to ask if I know anything about her. Did CSF invent her? Why he asks *me*, I don't know. Perhaps he's realised I won't have the sense to simply duck the question! I reply:-

I really don't know. I think I know a lot about Mary Magdalene, and more recently about Saint Alban - if he ever existed. If *The Golden Legend* is still on the bookshop shelf next time I'm in town, I'll have a sneak look, and if I find anything, let you know.

Instead, next day I go to Sheffield University library to discover the following, from F.L. Cross and E.A. Livingstone (eds), *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* (1974) :-

"Saint Elizabeth of Hungary" (1207-1231), also known as "Elizabeth of Thuringia", was the daughter of King Andrew of Hungary. Sent to Thuringia (Germany) aged 4, with a view to a suitable dynastic marriage, she was married off to Louis IV, *Landgrave* of Thuringia in 1221. Around the same time, she became influenced by the Franciscans. When her husband died on Crusade in 1227, she seems to have become the ward of her brother-in-law, who objected to her good works and soon expelled her from court. She then came into the tutelage of Conrad of Marburg, a ruthless papal Inquisitor originally appointed by Innocent III, who treated her harshly, but was involved in the process leading to her canonisation in 1235. The last years of her life involved forced separation from her children, and were devoted to poverty and charitable works. Early Lives of the Saint were written by: Caesarius of Heisterbach (c.1180-1240); Conrad of Marburg (c. 1180-1233); Theodoric of Apolda (born 1228).

I then add, sensibly:-

None of the above is available in Sheffield. I would imagine that they are more likely to be available, and in any case research would be far easier, in Oxford.

But loquacity inevitably prevails:-

If I was writing a Bluffer's Guide, I would declare that the story reflects the situation of the 13<sup>th</sup>-century church, on the geographical and chronological watershed between paganism and Christianity, when central authority was repeatedly challenged by ambitious rulers, and from below by monasticism, popular religion and women's spirituality! I might speculate on whether, and if so how, the story was revived or modified as a result of the rise of Protestantism!

I find all of the above interesting, but really know no more than is here, the result of an hour's work this afternoon. I remember that when I was doing my own research on Christianity before Constantine, I came across an anecdote about a woman whom I noted as a prototype of St Elizabeth of Hungary. I can't now remember who it was, and haven't indexed my notes properly. But at that time, I was simply assuming that the CSF story was reasonably authentic.

It would be fantastic if CSF's journals (if he kept any) were available to researchers, so they could see what were the specific sources of his stories, rather than trying to second-guess him...

Colin duly replies:-

I have no evidence of CSF keeping any journals like that - it was all in his memory, much as Patrick O'B. and his reference library was either the public library or sold to junk merchants or burnt in house fire. As usual, he covered his tracks.

That should have been the end of the matter. We don't know how CSF found out about her. We *do* know he *didn't* invent her. QED!

I wake up next day thinking about Elizabeth of Hungary!. She'll stay with me now till I've either cracked it, or reached a point at which nothing more can be usefully done in the immediate future. But for starters, I just watch what's surfacing in my head. It surprises me that ecclesiastical authority had Eliza canonised almost before she was cold, like Thomas Becket, and after obviously trying to control her in life. She must have been a real hot potato, but why? And how could HH have heard about her? Were her medieval lives synthesised into some dreary book for the edification of the young, like the one given at Christmas to an appalled William Brown by his naive aunt? Did the young CSF have a similar experience? Or could the answer be found by reading [between the lines] of his letters, or of *Annie Marble in Germany*? I've never even seen that book! But would John Forester know, or mind being asked?

I decide to go to the uni, chase up another project for a couple of hours, then have another look for Liza. I start with the indexes to books on Innocent. No joy, surprisingly! I find just two references elsewhere. Elizabeth of Thuringia perfectly combined the virtues of both Martha and Mary of Bethany, according to Caesarius, and to Giles Constable *Three studies in medieval religious and social Thought*, Cambridge (1995), page 107. But the 15th-century polymath Denys of Rykel, Holland, aka Denys the Carthusian commended those who put perfection before partnership, "who have wives as not having them, and who use the world as not using it" (I Corinthians 1, 29-31). Such as David, Hezekiah and Joshua - and Elizabeth of Thuringia! "*Denys the Carthusian and the invention of preaching materials*", in Kent Emery Jr., *Monastic scholarship and mystical theologies from the late medieval era*, Variorum (1996), no. X, page 405. No more in either of them, not even a comment that, if Denys mentioned the ET in the same breath as long-gone Hebrew patriarchs, she must have been really controversial. I realise of course that *coniuges* (the word probably translated as "wives") means "partners". But I've made a far worse mistake.

I go to browse in the shuni bookshop, find from J.N.D. Kelly, *The Oxford Dictionary of Popes* (1996), pages 189-191, that Innocent really was (this time!). He predeceased Eliza by a dozen years. Her story really got interesting at the beginning of the reign of Leo IX, next-pope-but-one. I'd stupidly assumed that, because Conrad overlapped with both Innocent and Eliza, *she and Innocent* had coincided with each other! But there's something else that looks very promising. The death of the *Landgrave* coincides with the crusade of the Emperor Frederick II - an excommunicate who really blights Leo's opening years!

I walk on into town, as there's just time for the other big bookshop. Donald Attwater and C.L. John (eds.), *The Penguin Dictionary of Saints*, Penguin (1995), pages 115-116 adds just a source: J. Anzelet Hustache, *Saint Elizabeth of Hungary*, (1964). Definitely not in the shuni library, but it must be in Bodley's. I'll leave that to you, I tell Colin. But more from D.H. Farmer (ed.), *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints*, Oxford (1997), pages 159-160. His article implies that Eliza's bane was not her husband but Conrad, or some underling of his set over her. And two links to England: a screen (c.1500) at Tor Brian, Devon; and "20th century" stained glass at Eversley, Hants. Did CSF see either of them?

Real progress at last. But now the last breakthrough of the day! I could have found W.G. Ryan, *Jacobus de Voragine, The Golden Legend: readings in the saints*, Princeton (1993), in the library, had it not been buried in a heap of books awaiting the annual re-shelving. It had been in the shop when I was chasing MaryMag some time ago. But I now find another edition: Christopher Stace and Richard Hamer (eds.), *Jacobus de Voragine, The Golden Legend: selections*, Penguin (1998). I read till the curfew tolls, then take it with me.

The Life of Saint Elizabeth of Hungary is rather long (pages 305-316): Jacob (1229-1298) seems to have been quite taken with her, if the work is really his, about which there are some doubts, though Hamer thinks it was more likely a belated addition by the man himself than an interpolation by someone else (xi-xii). Maybe young Jacob wanted to make sure his work was bang-up-to-date by including every last addition to the canon, which would account for his generous handful of 13<sup>th</sup>-century lives. Or had a pious aunt once given him the life of the latest saint still wet from the scriptorium? The Stace and Hamer text is slightly abridged, but it's very unlikely that the bread-and-roses story could have been cut. No lacuna is marked, and the story is obviously much better than most of the anecdotes that are included. Besides, CSF's picture of the *Landgrave* is very different from that of Jacob, who says that he applauded her good works, that he would have joined in himself but for fear of what the servants might say, and that he didn't even mind the time he was away and she redistributed the whole of his harvest to the poor! He also reveals that the *Landgrave* was a client of Frederick, but says nothing of Frederick's problems with the Pope, and reduces the Grand Inquisitor Conrad to a poor and humble monk; severe, certainly, but severity was a positive virtue conspicuously practised by Eliza herself. Hamer says young Jacob may have simply plundered the official justification of Eliza's canonisation for his own "facts". If so, it looks like damage-limitation on a considerable scale. However...

There you have my case-notes on Elizabeth of Hungary. Inconclusive, but highly indicative, I think. Have uncovered a lot of useful information, and identified some potentially-promising leads. We could show that CSF did not invent the bread-and-roses story if we could show that he could have got it from elsewhere. The leads I've marked might reveal repositories of information in this country, or might be dead ends. But if none of the three medieval Lives that I noted before contains the story, we could be reasonably certain that CSF either adapted some other anecdote about a virtuous/Christian wife + wicked/pagan husband, or made the whole thing up. So if I was in Oxford, I would see about accessing them, in long-forgotten editions listed by Kelly (above) which may be in the Bodleian. And maybe the name of the CSF Society, or the novelty of the approach, might stimulate interest or generate a response. Alternatively, or additionally, it might be worth contacting Richard Hamer, who was Tutor in medieval English lang-and-lit at Christ Church when Stace's translation of The Golden Legend came out with his introduction and notes in 1998, and may be there still.

But I'm not satisfied with this negative conclusion. I locate Eversley and Tor Bryan via the Internet, decide I can visit Eversley, but Tor Bryan's a bit far. So I write to the Catholic History Society. They say they are "post-Reformation", but the Tor Bryan screen is nearly Reformation date, and it can't do any harm. In fact, this one really turns up trumps! Overnight, I get a very informative reply from Fr Anselm Cramer, Librarian at Ampleforth Abbey:-  
"At Pentecost (28 May) of the year 1235, the canonisation of the 'greatest woman of the German Middle Ages' was celebrated by Gregory IX at Perugia... [Despite Protestant suppression of her cult] the entire German people still honour the 'dear St Elizabeth'; in 1907, a new impulse was given .... by the celebration of the 700<sup>th</sup> anniversary of her birth. St Elizabeth is generally represented as a princess graciously giving alms to the wretched poor or as holding roses in her lap; in the latter case she is portrayed either alone or as surprised by her husband, who, according to a legend, which is, however, related of other saints as well, met her unexpectedly as she went secretly on an errand of mercy, and, so the story runs, the bread she was trying to conceal was suddenly turned into roses... [T]he hagiography of St Elizabeth was greatly influenced by Dietrich of Apolda."

This information comes from the online *Catholic Encyclopedia* [www.newadvent.org/cathen](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen) Fr Anselm tells me that medievalists who can answer my supplementary questions lurk at Sheffield University, which is a good job, because I've got about 12 more pages of notes and questions to satisfy my own curiosity! I'm aware of several possible narratives of Elizabeth of Hungary. The medieval Lives of a Catholic Saint. A post-1871 Figure of German History, on a par with figures like Arminius, who defeated the Roman Empire at the Teutoberger Wald. And my own tongue-in-cheek approach, which is now giving way to a new perception of a tragic woman, exploited for all she was worth by an army of relatives, blackmailed, robbed and harassed, cast aside the moment she asserted her own independence, and after death used to patch up a temporary truce in a long power-struggle between the Emperor Frederick II and the Papacy.

All that can wait. For now, I decide to put my final stake on this Dietrich or Theodor of Apolda having devised the motif which CSF used with such telling effect, and CSF having discovered it on his travels. I write to the Elisabeth Kirche at Marburg with my last enquiry.

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## CSF DURING MUNICH CRISIS

John Forester, September 2001

CSF always told me that he had been in Prague during the Munich Crisis (Sep 1938), and that Marjorie Manus had been his interpreter. He told me that he had been sent unofficially to the Czech general staff to tell them that Britain and France would back them up. Then, when the Munich agreement was announced, by which England and France agreed to Hitler's demand that important parts of Czechoslovakia would be ceded to Germany, he had to leave own in shame, "like a dog with his tail between his legs," without saying goodbye to anyone.

Is this true, or is it just another of CSF's stories? I first heard this story some time after 1941, and maybe only after 1945. Marjorie Manus in the 1920s, at that time divorced from a Dutch husband, had been the proprietor of the bridge parlor in London in which CSF played bridge for money (Who else do we remember doing that?). About the end of 1945, CSF brought Marjorie to California to be his housekeeper, a position she held until CSF's second wife arrived from England in 1949. That is the only period in which I knew Marjorie, but I may have heard about her before meeting her.

I have just been reading Ian Kershaw's biography of Hitler. That is a great biography; Kershaw introduces many small facts not generally known before that enable him to provide a credible account of why events occurred as they did. Previous biographers and observers gave facts, Kershaw places these in a context of motivation.

Throughout the summer of 1938, the German press had been publishing nasty propaganda about the bad treatment that the Czechs had been giving to the German minority along the border area, the Sudetenland, and how this area inhabited by people of German race should become part of Germany. Czechoslovakia had treaties of support with France and Russia, and Britain was allied with France. Only the French had a common frontier with Germany, and Czechoslovakia had no common frontiers with any of its allies. Any military support by Czechoslovakia's allies had to be applied through an attack by France. The existing German-Czech frontier was along the mountaintops that the Czechs had fortified. They had a good army and an excellent armaments industry. Ceding the Sudetenland to Germany would put German tanks on the Czech plain.

The British government under Chamberlain was inclined to let the Sudeten Czechs be acquired by Germany, as both self-determination and as a final satisfaction of Hitler's pan-Germanic policy. On September 15, Chamberlain met with Hitler at Hitler's mountain palace, and returned to London satisfied that the transfer of the Sudetenland would be done without military action, to a reasonable schedule. Chamberlain said that Hitler had impressed him as a man of his word. Britain pressed the Czechs to agree to this plan. Hitler then made more demands and Chamberlain met with him on September 22 at Bad Godesberg. The turnover schedule was revised, and Chamberlain returned to London. That experience hardened the British Cabinet, which sent Chamberlain's closed advisor, Sir Horace Wilson, to Berlin to tell Hitler, on 26 September, that if he undertook military action against the Czechs, the French would fight and Britain would also. That warning did not tell the Czechs that they should resist dismemberment according to the plan, only that if Hitler forced the issue by invading, the Allies would support Czechoslovakia. Hitler was furious, and told Wilson that he gave the Czechs until 28 September to agree to the second schedule. Hitler gave one of his national speeches on the evening of 26 September, "in the worst state of excitement I have ever seen him in." (Shirer) On 27 September, Wilson met with Hitler again, with a letter from Chamberlain saying that Britain would guarantee ceding the Sudetenland to Germany as long as Germany did not use force. But if Hitler used force, then both France and England would enter the war against Germany. Hitler replied that in that case they would all be at war next Monday. However, on 28 September, Mussolini offered to mediate the quarrel. This gave Hitler a chance to back down from the war that he wanted, but his advisors feared. Hitler, Mussolini, Chamberlain, and the French premier, Daladier (notice, no Czechs present), met in Munich and by 30 September had an agreement to publish to the world that gave the Sudetenland to Germany, along with other arrangements. Chamberlain flew back to London, carrying another small piece paper signed by Hitler, a non-aggression agreement, and speaking the words "Peace in our time."

Now consider. At no time did the British government contemplate resisting Hitler's demand for the Sudetenland. The only military promise that Britain made was to support the Czechs if Germany invaded. The British government didn't make up its mind about that until 26 September, when it sent Wilson to Hitler with that message. Presumably, the British ambassador to Prague was told of the contents of that message, to tell the Czechs what had been told to Hitler. What would have been the point of sending CSF to talk unofficially? Before that date, who could have sent CSF unofficially? With what accreditation? Churchill was the center of the opposition to Hitler, but out of government. Churchill's comment in Parliament after Munich included: "The utmost he [Chamberlain] has been able to gain for Czechoslovakia and in the matters which were in dispute has been that the German dictator, instead of snatching his victuals from the table, has been content to have them served to him course by course." Whatever Churchill's thoughts about Chamberlain's government, he was in no position to send CSF to Prague to stiffen Czech courage.

CSF may have been in Prague in September, 1938. Most of his stories have some grain of truth behind them, recognition of which gave credibility to the rest of the story. It was possible to know that he had been in Prague then, but it was impossible to discover whether or not he had gone there on a secret mission. I suggest that it is most likely that he went as a newspaper correspondent, as he had done for a few weeks in the Spanish Civil War.

CSF and Kitty took a cruise in the West Indies in the winter of 1938-9, saying that they wanted to have the last enjoyment of peace that would come in a long time. Like them, and like Churchill, many others saw Munich as laying the foundation for the next World War. And yet, I, my mother, and my father spent the summer of 1939 in Germany and Austria. CSF stayed in luxury in a Vienna Ringstrasse hotel, spending his blocked marks in the way that would do Hitler the least good, my mother went canoeing on the Danube, and I stayed with a friend of my mother's in Zehlendorf, a suburb of Berlin. Then one day, CSF arrived unexpectedly where I was staying, with the words: "The international situation is very tense. Pack your clothes." We got out a week before the war started. Sounds a bit risky, for one who thought that war would come soon?

## STORY OF THE ANCHOR

Harold Boyd, October 2001

I am quite well versed in the War of 1812, which here in Ontario (Upper Canada) consisted of an invasion mainly across Niagara. After several bloody battles with British Regulars, Canadian Militia and Natives the US Army had to retreat.

The main naval battle was on Lake Erie, we lost.

"Go through Holland Landing, watch for Doane Road and turn Anchor Park and in the middle of it there is, as the name anchor. An odd artefact, you might say, to be here in the not a ship in sight.

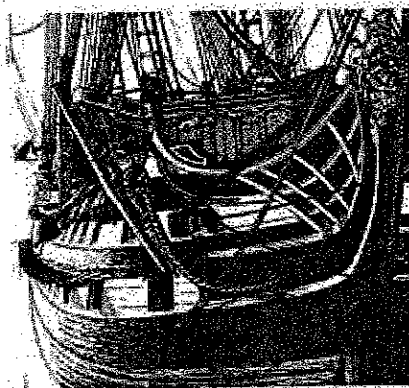
The story, once more, bring us back to the War of 1812. either side, of the Great Lakes was always important. This pound anchor was cast in Britain and dragged from York by oxen to equip a warship to be built on Georgian Bay. When anchor was still on its way. Since the pressure to build warships was over, it was abandoned on its incomplete journey, at the side of Yonge Street, later it was moved here



right. On your left is indicates, a really big middle of a park with

Domination, by massive 4,000 sixteen yoke of the war ended the

HMS Victory anchor



## IF HITLER HAD INVADED ENGLAND AND FORESTER'S ART OF FICTION

Christopher Smith, September 2001

*If Hitler had Invaded England* is one of nine stories in a collection that, taking its title from the first of them, is called *Gold from Crete* and was originally published in London in 1917 by Michael Joseph, with copyright reserved by Dorothy E Forester. A paperback edition was brought out by Pan in 1973. Though *An Egg for the Major* and *The Dumb Dutchman* will attract attention simply as two 'unpublished' stories about which information is being sought, *If Hitler had Invaded England* is of especial interest because it reveals a good deal about the way Forester writes historical fiction. This is an issue particularly meriting consideration because of quite frequent assertions that Horatio Hornblower's character and career may be seen as a reflection of the life and experiences of this or that Nelsonic seaman.

A 61-page work of some 23,000 words, *If Hitler had Invaded England* is by far the longest story in *Gold from Crete*. Unusually it also has an introduction of around 500 words. In it the author adopts the tone and manner of a sober

historian to set his narrative in context and to argue – quite persuasively – that Hitler's best chance of success lay in mounting an invasion in 1940 as soon after Dunkirk as possible. Forester then writes a story to show how German forces might well have landed, only to have been, in his view, inevitably defeated before too long.

There is, of course, ample precedent for employing fiction for the exploration of historical issues. GM Trevelyan, for instance, revealed his early brilliance in 1907 by winning a Westminster Gazette Competition with his essay *If Napoleon had Won the Battle of Waterloo* (reprinted in *Clio, a Muse, and Other Essays*). No less common is the use of fiction prospectively, to show what might happen in the future. As Randolph S Churchill relates in Chapter 15 of the *Young Statesman*, the second volume of the massive biography of his father, how the Great War, Churchill as First Lord of the Admiralty used the method in April 1913 in order to stir his Cabinet colleagues. His *Diary of a Nightmare* borrows techniques from William Le Queux's sensational *Invasion of 1910*, one of the most successful of a host of similar novels that had sought to show that Britain was vulnerable, while Erskine Childers had argued in *The Riddle of the Sands* that Imperial Germany was poised to strike.

Forester shows his habitual deftness in creating an absorbing narrative of a supposed invasion of England in 1940. Hitler and the High Command are given characters that correspond with generally accepted stereotypes. For good measure, calling on memories that go back to *Annie Marble* days, Forester gives us too the 'fat captain' of the *Fritz Reuter*. This self-propelled canal barge that is pressed into service to carry troops across the Channel, though it is soon made clear that vessels designed for inland waters are not suitable for sea crossings. The British side is likewise represented by historical figures and imagined characters. Churchill, who is not named, and Montgomery, who did indeed command the 3rd Division in the Brighton area, remain background figures. But there are vivid vignettes, for instance, of a sergeant who sends to have the church bell tolled, and of the long retired colonel quietly determined to 'take one with him'. Newspaper headlines are used to structure the swiftly moving action, and some perspective is created – no less aptly, given the period – by quotations from commentaries broadcast to the United States.

Forester's fictional account of the invasion rests on three basic military assumptions. They are quite plausible, but do not all really command equal conviction. Some resources could no doubt have been diverted to England immediately after Dunkirk without giving France much chance to recover and organise resistance south of the Loire. Given the outstanding tactical success of the Luftwaffe on the continent, it is, however, a decidedly facile assumption to suppose that the Wehrmacht's air-support would be vitiated by those blunders in strategic bombing policy that were, in historical fact, to lead to the German failure to win the Battle of Britain. Forester's conclusion that any invasion would, however, fail because of the impossibility of maintaining cross-Channel communications has the support of the consensus of informed opinion.

Unable to predict with any confidence where German invasion forces might make an initial landing, the British military authorities demanded large-scale defensive preparations on the east coast as well as the south. It is now known that the Wehrmacht never contemplated anything but the shortest feasible Channel crossing (Churchill, *The Second World War*, II, Chapters XIV and XV). Forester, not without the benefit of hindsight, is therefore well-advised to have the Germans come ashore near Rye. Place names and references to well-known landmarks and famous buildings contribute, just as in Le Queux's novel, to a sense of authenticity. If you have to turn to a road atlas – and it is hard to resist the temptation – the confirmation of topographical detail sets a firm foundation under events.

Not unexpectedly, an even better example of Forester's capacity for engaging his readers is to be found in his account of the Battle of the North Foreland, the crucial naval encounter following the beach landings.

"It was on the afternoon of July 1, 1940, that the British navy made visual contact with the German navy, and the Battle of the North Foreland began ... On the German side there were only three (capital ships), even including the pocket battleship *Lützow*... fighting today in line with the battle cruisers *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau*. On the British side there were six, *Rodney* and *Hood*, *Repulse* and *Nelson*, *Royal Sovereign* and *Ramillies*. ... Lütjen's fate was sealed; his destruction was certain before the battle began, unless some extraordinary factor altered the balance.

For a moment early in the battle it seemed as if some such factor might indeed be present, when the *Hood* blew up while the first salvos were being exchanged. To this day there is a certain body of opinion which attributes the loss of the *Hood* to a chance contact with a mine, and not – as is usually held – an eleven-inch shell from the *Scharnhorst* which found its way to the magazines through a structural defect. The appalling loss might have daunted a man of less tough fibre than the British admiral, but as it was, the sixteen-inch guns of the *Rodney*, admirably served, were already winning the battle... The *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau* displayed the remarkable capacity to take punishment which had distinguished German ships since they were first constructed... The *Scharnhorst*, it is believed, took no less than seven torpedoes before she sank."

What is most remarkable about this passage is the intricate interweaving of naval fact with nautical fiction. Every reader who recalls the sinking of *Bismarck*, a saga vividly related by Forester in *Hunting the Bismarck* of 1959 as well as by many others, will immediately recognise many a detail here. Forester, it is true, cannot resist the temptation of drawing up what was, by the standards of World War II, a surprisingly long British line of battle, and the pairing of the first ships in it does not appear to make much sense either. *Lützow*'s presence, however, though serving a function ill-assorted to her role as a commerce raider (cf. Bernard Ireland *Cruisers* (1918), p88), can be accounted for by the exceptional circumstances.

The sinking of the *Hood* is, however, a master stroke in the narrative, recalling, as it does, the tragedy of the battle cruisers at Jutland and Beatty's intrepid response as well as the initial disaster in the *Bismarck* episode. Capitalising on the admitted weaknesses of what Churchill (in *The Second World War*, II, Chapter XVII) called our 'somewhat slightly constructed' battle cruiser, Forester does not just make the destruction of the *Hood* a dramatic highlight early in a hard-fought battle. He also invites his readers to join him in thinking about her fate. Memory of what really happened in May 1941 serves both to distance us from the tale and to draw us in to it. Forester feigns doubt in his fiction while we are certain we know better, though our convictions are based on fact. Historical perspective also makes it seemly that *Rodney* should be credited with scoring hits with her sixteen-inch guns, that the German admiral should be Lütjens (later to command the force made up of *Bismarck* and *Prinz Eugen*) and that the strength of the German vessels should mean that, after being battered by shellfire, she, like *Bismarck*, could only finally be sunk by torpedoes.

It is not, we may be sure, any lack of creative imagination that impels Forester to permit the emergence of parallels between the Battle of the North Foreland and the sinking of *Bismarck*. By the same token, the not in that Forester imagined or hoped that they would escape notice and attention may be summarily dismissed. He always respects the intelligence of his readers; more specifically, he relies to a marked degree on their historical knowledge and nautical expertise. In *If Hitler had Invaded England* Forester writes for a public that is well-informed about the Second World War; in fact, the story would scarcely appeal to readers who were not already well acquainted with the events of 1940 and indeed of 1941. The mainspring of Forester's fictional technique is the interplay between, on the one hand, historical fact buttressed by realistic detail, and, on the other, the sweep of romantic imagination constrained by plausibility in human nature and historical events. Readers are invited to explore what is undeniably fantasy, but to do so within frameworks of familiar fact, no less gauging Forester's fictional developments than savouring his expertise in the light of their own, often extensive knowledge of period, situation, event and technical details. What is strikingly clear, albeit on a relatively small scale, in *If Hitler had Invaded England*, is no less the basis in the grander sweep of the Hornblower novels.