gunner ſhould be particularly attentive that all the artillery is ſufficiently ſupplied with powder, and that the cartridges are carefully conveyed along the decks in covered boxes. The havock produced by a continuation of this mutual asſault may be readily conjectured by the reader’s imagination : battering, penetrating, and ſplintering the ſides and decks ; ſhattering or diſmounting the cannon ; mangling and destroying the rigging ; cutting aſunder or carrying away the masts and yards ; piercing and tearing the sails ſo as to ren­der them uſeleſs ; and wounding, diſabling, or killing the ſhip’s company ! The comparative vigour and reſolution of the aſſailants to effect these pernicious conſequences in each other, generally determine their ſucceſs or defeat : we ſay generally, becauſe the fate of the combat may ſometimes be decided by an unforeſeen incident, equally fortunate for the one and fatal to the other. The defeated ſhip having acknowledged the victory by ſtriking her colours, is im­mediately taken poſſeſſion of by the conqueror, who ſecures her officers and crew as priſoners in his own ſhip; and in­verts his principal officer with the command of the prize un­til a captain is appointed by the commander in chief.

The engagement being concluded, they begin to repair : the cannon are ſecured by their breechings and tackles with all convenient expedition. Whatever sails have been render­ed unserviceable are unbent ; and the wounded masts and yards ſtruck upon deck, and fiſhed or replaced by others. The ſtanding rigging is knotted, and the running-rigging ſpliced wherever neceſſary. Proper sails are bent in the room of thoſe which have been diſplaced as uſeleſs. The carpenter and his mates are employed in repairing the breach­es made in the ſhip’s hull, by ſhot-plugs, pieces of plank, and ſheet-lead. The gunner and his assiſtants are buſied in repleniſhing the allotted number of charged cartridges, to ſupply the place of thoſe which have been expended, and in refitting whatever furniture of the cannon may have been damaged by the action.

Such is the usual proceſs and conſequence of an engage­ment between two ſhips of war, which may be conſidered as an epitome of a general battle between fleets or ſquadrons. The latter , however, involves a greater variety of incidents, and neceſſarily requires more comprehensive ſkill and judge­ment in the commanding officer. A ſhort account of which alſo we ſhall next proceed to lay before our leaders.

When the admiral or commander in chief of a naval ar­mament has diſcovered an enemy’s fleet, his principal con­cern is usually to approach it, and endeavour to come to action as ſoon as poſſible. Every inferior conſideration muſt be ſacrificed to this important object, and every rule of ac­tion ſhould tend to hasten and prepare for ſo material an event. The ſtate of the wind, and the ſituation of his adversary, will in ſome meaſure dictate the conduct neceſſary to be purſued with regard to the dispoſition of his ſhips on this occaſion. To facilitate the execution of the admiral’s orders, the whole fleet is ranged into three ſquadrons, each of which is claſſed into three diviſions, under the command of different officers. Before the action begins, the adverſe fleets are drawn up in two lines, as formerly deſcribed. As soon as the admiral diſplays the ſignal for the line of battle, the ſeveral diviſions ſeparate from the columns, in which they were dispoſed in the uſual order of sailing, and every ſhip crowds ſail to get into its ſtation in the wake of the next ahead ; and a proper diſtance from each other is regu­larly obſerved from the van to the rear. The admiral, how­ever, will occaſionally contract or extend his line, ſo as to conform to the length of that of his adverſary, whoſe ne­glect or inferior ſkill on this occaſion he will naturally con­vert to his own advantage, as well as to prevent his own line from being doubled; a circumſtance which might throw his van and rear into confuſion.

When the adverſe fleets approach each other, the courſes are commonly hauled up in the brails, and the topgallant- ſails and ſtay-ſails furled. The movement of each ſhip is chiefly regulated by the main and foretop ſails and the jib ; the mizen topſail being reſerved to haſten or retard the courſe of the ſhip; and, in fine, by filling or backing, hoiſting or lowering it, to determine her velocity.

The ſignal for a general engagement is uſually diſplayed when the oppoſite fleets are ſuſſiciently within the range of point blank ſhot, ſo that they may level the artillery with certainty of execution, which is near enough for a line of battle. The action is begun and carried on throughout the fleet in the manner we have already deſcribed between single ſhips. The various exigencies of the combat call forth the ſkill and reſources of the admiral to keep his line as com­plete as poſſible when it has been unequally attacked ; by ordering ſhips from those in reserve to ſupply the place of others which have ſuffered greatly by the action ; by di­recting his fire-ſhips at a convenient time to fall aboard the enemy ; by detaching ſhips from one part of the line or wing which is ſtronger to another which is greatly pressed by ſuperior force, and requires assiſtance. His vigilance is ever neceſſary to review the ſituation of the enemy from van to rear ; every motion of whom he ſhould, if poſſible, anti­cipate and fruſtrate. He ſhould ſeize the favourable mo­ments of occaſion, which are rapid in their progreſs, and never return. Far from being diſconcerted by any unfore­ſeen incident, he ſhould endeavour, if poſſible, to make it ſubſervient to his deſign. His experience and reflection will naturally furniſh him with every method of intelligence to diſcover the ſtate of his different ſquadrons and diviſions. Signals of inquiry and anſwers, of requeſt and aſſent, of command and obedience, will be diſplayed and repeated on this occaſion. Tenders and boats will also continually be detached between the admiral and the commanders of the ſeveral ſquadrons or diviſions.

As the danger presſes on him, he ought to be fortified by reſolution and preſence of mind ; becauſe the whole fleet is committed to his charge, and the conduct of his officers may in a great degree be influenced by his intrepidity and perſeverance. In ſhort, his renown or infamy may depend on the fate of the day.

Chaγ. IX. *Manœuvres performed by adverſe Fleets when in sight of each other.*

To diſpute the weather-gage with the enemy.—When the enemy is to windward, and it is wiſhed to gain the weather-gage of him, the fleet to leeward ſhould avoid ex­tending itſelf the length of the enemy’s line, in order to oblige them to edge down upon theirs, if they intend to at­tack them ; which will be a mean, if they ſtill perſiſt in doing ſo, of loſing the advantage of the wind.

It is impossible for a fleet to leeward to gain to windward ſo long as the enemy keep their wind, unleſs a change hap­pens in their favour : therefore all that a fleet to leeward can do, muſt be to wait with patience for ſuch a change ; which they will undoubtedly avail themſelves of, as well as any miſtake or inadvertency the enemy may commit in the mean time. And as long as the fleet to leeward does not extend its line the length of the enemy’s, it will be impoſsible for the latter to bring them to action without run­ning the hazard, by bearing down, of loſing the advantage of the wind, which both fleets will be ſo deſirous of preſerving.