SIR ANDREW WOOD OF LARGO,

Captain of the Yellow Frigate and Admiral to James III.

Sir Andrew Wood, our brave captain,
Was thanked graciouslie,
Reward and honour, too, he got
From his king and countrie.
The battle fiercelie it was fought
Beside the Craig o' Bass,
And when the Southrons next we fight,
May worse ne'er come to pass.

Old Ballad.

THOUGH distinguished as the Scots have been for their skill and bravery in the field, it is a curious fact that they are almost unknown in the annals of naval warfare.

By a people so strictly pastoral and military shipping was too long neglected and commerce despised. In ancient times the monks were generally the chief ship owners, and under a banner of peace their little barques ploughed the waves, bringing the luxuries of life from the more favoured shores of France or Lusitania, and its

necessaries from the opulent cities of the fertile and industrious Netherlands.

The formation of a Scottish navy was among the last thoughts of King Robert Bruce, when dying in the castle of Cardross; but it was not, however, until the beginning of the fifteenth century that Scotland possessed regular shipping for exclusively warlike purposes. Thus we can glean but little concerning her marine, until the era of James III., when commerce began to flourish, notwithstanding the restraint laid upon maritime enterprise by the restriction from sailing between St. Jude's Day and Candlemas, under a penalty from "ilk person fraughting ony schip in the contrair herof."* In 1476 we read of the *great ship* of James Kennedy, which Buchanan states "to have been the largest that ever sailed the ocean;" unfortunately, it was wrecked on the English coast and destroyed by the peasantry.

James IV. and his successor, princes equally great in soul and gallant in heart, and fond of splendour and warlike enterprise, were both earnestly bent upon the formation of a navy; and the remnants of their fleets were destroyed by the Earl of Hertford during the savage and wanton invasion of 1544, when he captured or burnt (among several merchantmen) two vessels of war lying in the harbour of Leith, the *Salamander*

* Acta Parl. Jacobi III.

and the *Unicorn*. The former (probably named from the heraldic cognizance of Francis I.) had been presented to James V. with another "fair ship," the *Morischer*, on his marriage with the beautiful Magdalene of Valois. Two other royal vessels, the *Great Lion* and the *Marvelibe* (*Mary Willoughbie*, an English prize), escaped the ferocious Hertford by being at sea; but we hear of them no more.

In the accounts of the Lord High Treasurer there are various curious entries respecting the Scottish ships of war in those days. In 1539 we have "ane siluer quhissel with ane lang chenze, quhilk wes given be the kingis command to the Patroune of the schippis." It weighed eleven ounces and three quarters. A whistle was then the badge of the captain and admiral, from whom it has descended to the boatswain in modern times. In 1540, payments were made for wood taken from Hawthornden, for building the king's ships; and also for sixteen ells of red and yellow taffeta for naval standards, six of which were delivered to Captain John Barton, and a sum was paid to Murdoch Stirling for making ovens for the royal vessels.

In the following year, Florence Carntoune was keeper of the king's vessels "and yair gear;" and we read of the *Salamander*, *Unicorne*, and *Little Bark*. John Keir, master of the former, had yearly "xv li."

"Item; to John Broune, master of the *Great Lyonne*, while at Bordeaux on the kingis service, lxxx li." The *fee* of Archibald Penicuke, master of the *Unicorne*, was "xl li."

In the naval affairs of the sixteenth century, no man occupied a more prominent place than Sir Andrew Wood, Knight of Largo, an eminent and distinguished commander under James III., who bore the terror of his name through the English, Dutch, and Flemish seas, and twice in pitched battles laid the pride and boasted prowess of the former in the deep.

He was the first of his race who became eminent, consequently nothing is known of his family; and much of his personal history is buried in obscurity. By Abercrombie he is supposed to have been a cadet of the ancient family of Bonnington in Angus,* and is generally stated to have been born about the middle of the fifteenth century, at the old kirktoun of Largo, a pretty little village of Fifeshire, situated upon the margin of the beautiful bay of the same name, so famed in Scottish song. Andrew Wood was originally a merchant-trader; but his genius for naval warfare and his longings for gallant enterprise had been fostered and strengthened by his encounters with French, English, and Portuguese pirates in defence of his property; and his proving

* Mart. Achiev.

signally victorious in many of these engagements first brought his talents and courage under the notice of the king, who gave him employment in several warlike and diplomatic missions, which he executed with fidelity and honour. In short, he soon became distinguished above all the mariners of his time for his skill in seamanship, his knightly bravery and mercantile ability. The Scottish Nelson of the age, he was at once the guardian of the northern seas, the scourge of pirates, the terror of the English merchants and warlike skippers, and no man better deserves an honourable place in the annals of his country.

Though dangerous at all times, in his days a seafaring life was fraught with innumerable terrors, of which the modern mariner, though deeply imbued with superstition, knows nothing. Lack of proper charts and soundings, of log-lines, telescopes, and chronometers, made all navigation dangerous, and reckoning equally doubtful and obscure; while the storms raised by sorceries and mermaids, magic islands and burning shores, dangerous shoals, spirits, and wondrous monsters of the "vasty deep," with *downhill currents* that ran to awful regions from whence there was no return, rendered a life on the great ocean one of unusual excitement, mystery, and horror.

During the early part of the reign of James III., Wood appears to have been a wealthy merchant in Leith, a town then almost in its

infancy; but no doubt, as the most opulent speculator of his time, he would be as well known on the quays of Sluys as on the Timber Holfe, and as welcome a guest in the houses of Hamburg and Lübeck as in those of the Burgess-close and Broadwynd at home. He possessed and commanded two armed vessels, of about three hundred tons burden each, the *Flower* and *Yellow Caravel*, both good and strong ships, superior to any that had ever been seen in Scotland, and admirably equipped with experienced mariners, cannon, armour, and other warlike munition of the age. With these he made voyages to the Dutch and Hanse towns, whither in those days the Scots sent wool and hides, bringing "therefrom small mercery and haberdashery-ware in great quantities; moreover half the Scottish ships come generally laden from Flanders with cart-wheels and wheelbarrows." *

From the circumstance of the English vessels encountered by Sir Andrew Wood being termed *pirates* in his Crown charter, Tytler conjectures that the famous Stephen Bull, and all those English commanders whom this ancient Nelson vanquished, were also ocean-robbers, whose flags were unrecognized by the English king; but *pirate* was a common term in those days for enemies and strangers, when the worthy skippers

* Process of Eng. Policie. 1430. Hackluyt.

who then traversed the seas in their high-pooped and top-hampered caravels were not over scrupulous in distinguishing friends from foes.

Wood, as we have stated, appears early to have distinguished himself, and obtained the favourable notice of James III., who granted to him, as master of the *Yellow Kerval* (Alexander Duke of Albany being then Lord High Admiral), *a tack* of the lands of Largo to keep his ship in repair; and, "being skilful in pyloting, that he should be ready upon the king's call to pylot and convey him and the queen, in visits to St. Adrian's chappell" on the Isle of May, where there was a holy shrine and well of wondrous efficacy, especially to ladies in want of heirs, kept by certain stout Augustines of Pittenween.

James III. afterwards granted to him and his heirs, hereditarily and in fee, the lands and fishing-town of Largo in Fifeshire, the place of his birth, the donor considering "Gratuita et fidelia servicia sibi per familiarem servitorem suum ANDREAM WOD, commorante in Leith, tam per terram quam per mare, in pace et guerra, gratuiter impensa, in Regno Scotiæ et extra idem, et signanter contra inimicos suos Anglia, et dampnum per ipsum ANDREAM inde sustenta, suum personam gravibus vitæ exponendo periculus. 18 die Martii, 1482.*" This document, which

* Cart. Mag. Sigilli.

recites his good service by sea and land, but chiefly in the English war, was confirmed in 1497, with the addition that the most eminent deed of arms had been his defence of the royal castle of Dumbarton, when besieged by the English navy. The whole particulars of this exploit are buried in obscurity. Pinkerton conjectures the siege to have taken place in 1481, but adds that it is "unknown in history;" and there is one authority which states that the Admiral's eldest *son* was the defender of Dumbarton.*

Prior to 1487 the captain of the *Yellow Caravel* appears to have obtained the dignity of knighthood, to have entirely relinquished trading as a merchant for the service of the king, and to have married a lady named Elizabeth Lundie (probably one of the Lundies of Strathairlie or Balgonie, an ancient Fifeshire name), by whom he had several sons.† Two of them became men of eminence in after years. Thus, from being an opulent and enterprising trader, by his own talents and the force of circumstances, the humble skipper of Leith became the founder of a baronial family, "a brave warrior and skilful naval commander, an able financialist, intimately acquainted with the management of commercial transactions, and a stalwart feudal baron, who, without abating anything of his pride and his prerogative, refused not

* Beatson's Index. † MSS. in Mag. Sigilli.

to adopt in the management of his estates some of those improvements whose good effects he had observed in his travels over various parts of the Continent." (Tytler.) These qualities, though somewhat inconsistent, when combined, made him an able, affectionate, and confidential subject to the good king, his master, who loved and admired his bold and manly bearing, his openness of heart, and blunt honesty of purpose.

Wood is said to have been of a stately presence, of noble features and commanding figure; so much so that, on one occasion, the young Prince of Scotland mistook him for the king, his father, whom the admiral strongly resembled.

In those intestine broils, which had so melancholy a close on the field of Sauchie-burn, Sir Andrew Wood remained staunch to his royal patron, who, by a long series of futile and impolitic attempts to humble a proud and fierce nobility, brought his unhappy reign to an end so tragical and disastrous. Viewing them as persons only to be hated and feared, he kept his nobles at an unusual distance, conferring honours and favours on several men of mean or inferior professions, which, in that age of iron hearts and sharp lances, were despised by the noble and scorned by the warlike. Secret intrigues were soon the result; armed confederation followed; and it was decreed, by the sword or the gibbet, to free the Court of those obnoxious minions who, in

the splendour of their attire and equipage, affected to vie with a long-descended *noblesse*, whose pride of birth was equalled only by their determination and ferocity.

Aware of the hostile spirit of his Lowland peers, the king resolved to look for succour in the country of the clans. Providing the castles of Edinburgh and Stirling with all things necessary for enduring a siege, he embarked in one of Sir Andrew Wood's ships, then anchored in the Roads of Leith, and, crossing the Forth, landed on a part of the Fifeshire coast. The ships of the admiral had been lying there for some time, previous to sailing for Flanders; and, on their weighing anchor, a report was spread by the disaffected that James had fled to the low countries. Upon this the vassals of the malcontents "seized on his luggage and furniture in their passage to the Forth, surprised his castle of Dunbar, furnished themselves with arms and ammunitions out of the royal stores, and overran the three Lothians and the Merse, rifling and plundering all honest men."*

Recrossing the Forth in Sir Andrew Wood's ship, in April, 1488, the king marched past Stirling, and pitched his standard (which was borne by Sir Thomas Turnbull, of Greenwood) near the ancient castle of Blackness. David,

* Martial Achievements.

third Lord Lindesay of the Byres, led 1,000 horse, says Pitscottie; and Lord Ruthven 1,000 lances on horseback, sheathed in complete armour, 1,000 bowmen, and 1,000 armed with swords and coats of mail. Some authorities reckon this army at forty, and others at thirty thousand;* but, after an indecisive skirmish at Blackness, it was disbanded; and the Earl of Crawford was created Duke of Montrose, and Lord Kilmaurs Earl of Glencairn, for their valour, while Sir Andrew Wood and other loyalists were rewarded by grants of the Crown land.

Fresh intrigues soon ensued, and the hapless James, who, in his castle of Edinburgh, had resigned himself to the study of music, poetry, painting, architecture, and other gentle arts which the Stuarts loved so well, was again roused to arms; for another army of Scotland's rebel peers and servile vassalage was in the field against him. Led by George Earl of Angus, and carrying with them the young Prince of Scotland, the Lords of this new and daring confederation advanced to the famous plains of Bannockburn with the royal standard displayed. Beneath it were the flower of the border archers, the Lothian spearmen, and the vassals of Drummond, Errol, Marischal, Lysle, and Glammis. Fearful of the issue of battle, James wrote to several foreign princes for succour,

* See Pitscottie, &c, &c.

and to the Pope, Eugenius VII., praying that in his fatherly care of the Scottish people he would pour forth upon the insurgent lords the dreaded thunders of the Vatican. His prayer was not heard in vain by the representative of St. Peter, who desired his Nuncio, Adriano di Castello, to set out for Scotland; but the impatient nobles had resolved to decide the matter by the sword ere succour could arrive from the Continent. Denied entrance to Stirling by its traitor governor, James had now no alternative but to seek safety by flight in the fleet of Sir Andrew Wood, which cruized in the adjacent Forth, or by putting his crown and fate to the bolder issue of battle. By a Scottish king, the latter alternative was the only one for adoption; and both armies drew up in order of battle on the festival of St. Barnabas, the 11th June, 1488.

On the army of the unfortunate king taking up its position at Little Conglan, near the Burn of Sauchie, Sir Andrew Wood, attending to the fortune of the war, sailed up the silver windings of the beautiful river with the *Flower* and *Yellow Caravel;* and continued during the whole of that cloudless day to cruise between dusky Alloa and the rich carse of Stirling, then clothed in all the fertility, the greenness, and the glory of summer. On the right bank of the river he kept several of his boats close by the shore, to receive the king if the tide of battle turned against him; and he

often landed with his brothers, John and Robert, and "a competent number of men, hoping to share in the dangers of the day; but no such opportunity occurred."*

It matters not to describe here how that disastrous field was fought and lost by James, whose utter want of military skill was not supplied by any of the nobles of his host. Ere the conflict began, David Lord Lindesay—a brave warrior who had earned renown in France—presented the king with a magnificent charger of unmatched strength and speed, saying that, "Hap what might, if he kept his seat, it would bear him through everything to the boats of Andrew Wood." Fatal was the gift! for this spirited steed ultimately caused the destruction of him it was meant to preserve.

The king, oppressed by the weight of his rich armour and the heat of a broiling summer sun, confused by the cloud of arrows that darkened the air and whistled like hailstones about his helmet, and by the clangour and turmoil of the great battle that rang around him, lost all presence of mind; and on beholding his *own* royal banner displayed against him, he remembered some ancient and ominous prophecy that struck anguish into his soul. He saw the brave Glencairn, the loyal Ruthven, the gallant Erskine, and other distin-

* Abercrombie.

guished knights, unhorsed and slain; he saw his banner struck down, his lines borne back and all giving way, as the spearmen of Lothian and the Merse swept over the field like an angry sea. He then saw that the time was come to fly; and dashing spurs into his swift horse, fled alone and unattended from that fatal field he had never hoped to gain. On, on he spurred, though still encumbered by his heavy armour, and crossed at full speed the fertile carse of Stirling in hopes to reach the friendly ships of Wood, which then lay only five miles off; and their white sails, shining in the summer sun above the waving corn-fields, must have been visible to the anxious eyes of the fugitive king, as he rode on his lonely way. Unhappy James! though he knew it not, the pursuers were close behind; and, tracking him like bloodhounds, Patrick Lord Gray, Stirling of Keir, and Andrew Borthwick, a friar, were spurring in the distance, and striving in vain to come up with the noble charger which the loyal Lindesay had resigned to his sovereign.

At Beaton's Mill, a hamlet on the Bannock, a miller's wife was filling a pitcher with water as the king leaped his horse across the burn. Alarmed on beholding an armed man dashing past with such fury, the woman screamed and threw away her pitcher, the clatter of which so startled James's charger that it reared and threw him from the saddle. Stunned by his violent fall on the hard,

dusty road, and bruised by the weight of his armour, the king remained insensible until recovered by the efforts of the miller, who carried him into his dwelling, and inquired who he was. James replied to the terrified peasants, "*I was your king this morning,*" and required them to procure him a priest to hear his confession, as he feared he was dying. Wringing her hands in great anguish and alarm, the poor miller's wife rushed out upon the road in search of a confessor; and one of the pursuers, said (but without proof) to be Friar Borthwick, rode up at that moment, and declaring himself a priest, though arrayed in armour, requested to be led to the king.

On his knees he reverently approached the faint and exhausted James, who then lay on a miserable flock-bed in a corner of the humble cottage, and having heard his confession, asked him if he "expected to recover." The king faintly replied:—

"If I had the attendance of a physician; but, father, first administer unto me absolution and the sacrament."

"That will I readily!" exclaimed the ruffian, and thrice buried a dagger in the heart of his victim, who immediately expired. The horse of the murderer was at the door, he mounted, fled, and was never discovered.

For many days the body lay in this obscure place; none knew where the king had gone. The

army thought he was with the admiral; the latter thought he was with the army. His fate was enveloped in mystery. Meanwhile his forces retreated to Stirling and the Torwood, while those of the victor nobles advanced to Linlithgow, where rumours of the regicide began to be murmured abroad—rumours which the young and gallant prince is said to have heard with the deepest anguish, and "the brave Sir Andrew Wood," says Abercrombie, "was the first who resented the death of his generous and beloved master." The rumours still gained credence, though many asserted that the king was still alive and in safety; and a person came to the insurgent camp at Linlithgow with tidings that "as Sir Andrew Wood was still cruizing in the Forth, and that, as his boats had been rowing to and fro all day with wounded men, there was good reason to believe that James had reached the *Yellow Caravel.*"

"Upon this a suspicion arose among them that the king was gone on shipboard, which occasioned them to remove their camp to Leith."* From thence a cartel was dispatched to Sir Andrew in the name of James, Duke of Rothesay, Prince of Scotland, and desiring immediate information as to whether or not the king was on board his vessels. The admiral solemnly declared that he was *not*, and gave the messengers leave to search

* Buchanan's Hist.

his ships. A second message was sent requesting an interview; but the author above quoted says that "Sir Andrew was a knight, and being mindful of the king's kindness, remained constant in his affection to him even after death, and refused to come without hostages for his safe return."

Accordingly, John Lord Fleming, of Cumbernauld, and George Lord Seaton, of Seaton, were sent to the fleet as hostages, and committed to the care of his brothers by the admiral, who landed at Leith, probably at the ancient wooden pier, which was then overlooked by the ancient tower that terminates those picturesque houses on the quay. The site of the latter was then occupied by gardens and kailyards extending to the muddy banks of the river. A gothic chapel dedicated to St. Nicholas crowned the eminence of the citadel, another to St. Ninian terminated the ancient bridge.

The young Prince was then in his sixteenth year, and when Sir Andrew Wood was introduced he was surrounded by a circle of the rebel peers. So dignified and noble was the aspect of the admiral, who was arrayed in magnificent armour, and so striking was his resemblance to James III., that the Prince, who had not seen much of his unhappy sire, wept as he approached, and said timidly:—

"Sir, are *you* my father?"

Touched to the heart by the tone and the

question, the veteran mariner burst into tears, and replied:—

"I am not your father, but his faithful servant; and the enemy of those who have occasioned his downfall!"

"Know you where the king is?" asked several of the lords, "or who those were you took on board after the battle?"

"As for the king," replied Wood, "I know nothing of him. My brothers and I, who were ready to have risked our lives in his defence, landed in our boats opposite Alloa; but, finding our efforts to fight or to save him vain, we returned to the fleet." He added, says Buchanan, "that if the king were alive, he was resolved to obey none but him; and if he were slain, he was ready to *revenge him!*"

Again he was asked by the doubtful, "If the king was not really on board either of his ships?"

"He is not!" replied the admiral, sternly "Oh, I would to God he was, for then he would be in safety! *Then* I could defend him from those vile traitors who, I fear, have slain him, and whom I hope to see, one day, rewarded as they deserve."

Upon this he withdrew, and returned on board, just in time to save the two noble hostages, whom his brothers, impatient of his protracted absence, and fearful of his safety, were deliberately preparing to hang up at the yard-arm.

Ashamed of themselves, from the very contrast the loyalty and high spirit of this blunt sailor formed to their own misconduct, the insurgent nobles, on the return of Seaton and Fleming, resolved to leave no scheme untried to have him punished for the insults and inuendos he had so boldly hurled against them. Summoning all the skippers of Leith before them in council, they commanded them "to rig and man their ships to subdue Andrew Wood," offering them artillery and munition at the young king's expense, and holding forth noble rewards in the event of success; but they all declined, and replied by the mouth of one—afterwards the famous Sir Andrew Barton, who fought the English fleet in the Downs—that the *Flower* and *Yellow Caravel* "were so well equipped with all things for fighting, so well furnished with able and valiant seamen, and withal that Captain Wood was so skilful in naval affairs, so practised in war, and had such notable artillery, that ten of the best ships in Scotland would not be able to cope with his *two*." This plain statement compelled the angry nobles to relinquish their hopes of seizing this stubborn mariner, who, in defiance of them, continued for months to cruize in the Forth, with his knight's pennon and the old king's standard displayed.

James III. was interred by the side of his queen, Margaret, Princess of Denmark, Sweden,

and Norway, in the splendid abbey of Cambus-Kenneth; and after the destruction of that edifice at the Reformation, the site of their graves was forgotten until 1865, when the marble slab, bearing the marks of iron bands and sockets, was discovered by an exploring party. Some of the royal remains were found beneath, and were again interred on the same spot, over which her present Majesty has erected a handsome memorial with the following inscription:—

"In this place, near to the High Altar of the Abbey of Cambus-Kenneth, were deposited the remains of James III. King of Scots, who died 11th June, 1488, and of his Queen the Princess Margaret of Denmark. This restoration of the tomb of her ancestors was executed by command of her Majesty Queen Victoria, A.D. 1865."

The new tomb bears the royal arms of Scotland and of Denmark, with the national motto, "Nemo me impune lacessit," the thistle and other carvings.

But to resume the story of King James's sturdy admiral:—

Towards the close of this year (1488) he became involved in a serious quarrel with the citizens of Aberdeen. Stating that he had received from James III. a grant of the forest of Sockett and the castle-hill of Aberdeen, he attempted to take possession of them. But the council of the city and the stout burgesses thereof resisted the claim, declaring that the hill and forest were their patri-

monial and inalienable possessions, and that they were resolved, under harness, to oppose force to force. Exasperated by this, the testy admiral threatened to proceed to extremities, and perhaps might have treated the Aberdonians to a bombardment, had not the King and Privy Council interfered by setting his claim aside, and sustaining the right of the citizens, as defined by a charter of Robert Bruce.

In the beginning of the following year Henry, the English king, resolving to profit by the still distracted state of Scotland, sent "five tall ships," the largest of his navy, to the Firths of Forth and Clyde, ostensibly (say some authorities) to aid James IV. against Lord Forbes and the old loyalists. These ships, which Tytler avers were pirates, as they came in time of truce, plundered, sank, or burned the Scots and Flemish traders in all the harbours of these estuaries, chased a king's ship under the ramparts of Dumbarton, totally obstructed all commerce, and made many destructive descents upon the little villages and fishing-towns of Fife and Lothian. Enraged at this wanton aggression, the young king, who had now been crowned as James IV., hoping to find Sir Andrew Wood more tractable, pledged his royal word and the public faith for his safety, and requested him to appear before the Lords of the Privy Council to consider means for curbing the outrages of the English; but this cartel was not sent him until

every effort, threat, and bribe had failed to induce the boldest skippers of Leith to undertake the enterprise. On their meeting, James represented to Sir Andrew "what a shame, dishonour, and loss it was, that a few English ships should ride under their eyes with impunity, committing every outrage and excess," and by inflaming the patriotism of Wood, "who had a true Scottish heart," soon succeeded in bending him to his purpose. He undertook to attack the enemy, but the King, remembering that they outnumbered him by three vessels, advised him to equip a stronger fleet.

"No," he replied, "I will have only my own two, the *Flower* and *Yellow Caravel;*"* and with the first fair wind, one day in February, 1489, he dropped down the river to attack the English, who were then cruizing off the Duke of Albany's castle and village of Dunbar, near the mouth of the Firth.

He immediately engaged them, and an obstinate and sanguinary battle ensued, of which, unfortunately, no particulars are preserved. He succeeded, however, in making the whole fleet prizes to the Scottish flag, and bringing them triumphantly into the roads of Leith, presented their commanders to the young king and his council, by whom he was nobly rewarded. His skill and

* Buchanan.

valour, and the courage of his seamen and soldiers, were extolled and magnified until his name became a byword and a terror to all the skippers and mariners of England. He received from James charters confirming all former grants, and bestowing upon him the lands of Balbegnoth, the cotelands of Largo, 11th March, 1490, all of which were ratified by Parliament in the following year.

He obtained the lands of Northerfawfields, "terris dominicalibus de Rossy et Pettarni," Frostylies, and other possessions. He acquired the superiority of Inch Keith, the lands of "easter Dron cum Molendino de le Cottoun," and was infeft in the Lordship of Newbyrne.* And by a charter under the Great Seal, 18th May, 1491, the king "grants to Sir Andrew Wood licence to build a castle at Largo with gates of iron, as a reward for the great services done and losses sustained by the said Andrew, and for those services which there was no doubt he would yet render."

This house or castle he appears to have built by the hands of English pirates whom he retained in durance as bondsmen; and he erected various houses by the same unwilling workmen whom he had captured on the high seas. His new mansion was engrafted on an ancient edifice which had formerly been a jointure-house of the Scottish

* MSS. in Great Seal.

queens. A fragment of it is yet remaining.* His coat armorial was augmented in heraldic honours. In "Lindesaye's Blasons," Wood of Largo bears *argent* an oak-tree growing out of a mount in base, *or;* but two ships under sail were added in memory of his defeating the English fleet.†

The Scottish Admiral was now in the zenith of his fame, and in the highest favour with his sovereign; but Henry of England, who had not forgotten the naval battle of Dunbar, was resolved on vengeance for the prostration of his flag by a nation almost unknown in the annals of the sea; for Scottish history is peculiarly barren of naval transactions, and therefore the brilliant achievements of this ancient mariner acquire additional value and interest.

About this time Sir Andrew, with the *Flower* and *Yellow Caravel,* sailed on a voyage to Holland, to the shores of which he convoyed a fleet of Scottish merchantmen.

Concerned at the humiliation of his defeat, Henry is said (though it was in time of truce) to have summoned the most able naval men of England, "and after exhorting them to purge away this stain cast on the English name," in the usual style assumed by the despotic Tudors, offered the then splendid pension of £1,000 yearly, and other noble rewards, to any man who would undertake

* Statist. Account. † Nisbet.

to capture Sir Andrew Wood, "dead or alive;" but his skill and valour were now so celebrated, that dread repressed the avarice or ambition of those who might have been disposed to make the attempt.

At length Sir Stephen Bull, an English naval commander of great skill and well-tried courage, originally a merchant of London, offered, if properly equipped, to capture or destroy the Scottish Admiral on his return from Holland. Three vessels, the greatest and the strongest of those built by Henry for warlike purposes, were placed at his disposal, and manned by picked crews, well furnished with cannon, armour, and warlike munition of every kind. He had a strong company of crossbowmen, and another of pikemen, on board, led by several knights of high valour and noble birth, who volunteered their services on this auspicious occasion. His armament sailed from the Thames in the month of July, 1490, and running along the Scottish coast, entered the Firth of Forth, and came to anchor on the leeward side of the Isle of May. There, sheltered by cliffs of stately basaltic columns, where the scart and the gull build their nests undisturbed, Sir Stephen lay secure, for the double purpose of being screened from the cold bleak wind and rough waves of the German Ocean. On this beautiful island, which is about a mile in length, they obtained a constant

supply of fresh water. It contained a lake, and in those days a small village, which had sprung up near the Augustinian Priory founded in honour of St. Adrian, who was slain in his hermitage there by the Danes in 870. To prevent the Scottish fishermen from giving Wood any intimation of his vicinity, the English Admiral seized all the boats belonging to Crail, Pittenweem, Largo, Elie, and other fishing villages, and kept certain fishermen prisoners on board his ship, that they, being well acquainted with the appearance and rig of Sir Andrew's vessels, might inform him when they came in sight. In addition to these precautions, he kept several of his own sailors cruizing in large boats out in the German sea to give him early notice of every sail that appeared on the far horizon.

Meanwhile, supposing that a firm peace had succeeded the truce with England, and not in the least anticipating the preparations made by the Londoners for his reception at the mouth of the Scottish sea, honest Sir Andrew set sail from the port of Sluice for that of Leith.

After-circumstances will show that the ships of Sir Stephen were much larger than those of his antagonist.

In aspect the vessels of those days were very different from those of the present. They were low in the waist, with gigantic poops and forecastles towering up from the water, and through

the gaudy portholes of which the brass-mounted culverins, sakers, and falconets, grinned forth, tier above tier.* The balls of these were usually stone; and there is extant an order of Henry the Fifth to the clerk of his ordnance for making 7,000 stone shot for cannon from the quarries of Maidstone, in Kent.† The hulls were covered with elaborate carving and gilding, the poops had turrets and enormous lanterns, and aloft there flaunted innumerable streamers and banneroles. Their masts were composed of two spars, fidded at the top-castles, which were large round castellated enclosures, reached by the *foothook* (*i.e.*, futtock) shrouds, where the cross-bowmen and pages of the officers sat during an engagement, and galled the foe in security. On a very upright bowsprit they carried a great square spritsail; below it was an iron beak. The yard-*arms* were iron hooks for grappling the enemy's rigging, and from them often hung blocks of stone, which descended with a crash on their decks below. The buckler-ports were those places where hung the shields and blazons of gentlemen serving on board. The compass was in common use, but quadrants and sextants were unknown. In lieu of these, observations were made by means of the balestræ of the Venetians, the astrolabe of the Portu-

* Churchill's Collect. Voy.

† Rymer's Fœdera.

guese, and the cross-staff,* an astronomical instrument by which a close observer might discover the latitude within eight or *ten* miles. Telescopes they had none; the *fahr keeker* being the useful invention of a Dutch optician in 1609.

On the morning of the 10th August the return of the English scouts caused an alarm to be given on board their fleet that two sails were visible at the horizon. Their appearance was communicated by one of the captains to Sir Stephen Bull, who immediately ordered his Scottish prisoners into the tops, requiring their opinion as to whether or not these were the vessels of Sir Andrew Wood. They were then standing south towards the black rocky bluff of St. Abb, and the sun of the summer morning shone full on their snow-white canvass. Cunning and reluctant, the Fife fishermen pretended that they were unable to say if the approaching vessels (now nearing them on the other tack) were those of their boasted Admiral; but being offered freedom on one hand, and threatened with death on the other, they acknowledged that these were the *Yellow Caravel* and *Flower*, with Sir Andrew's pennon displayed, an announcement which was received by the gallant Bull and his crew with an exulting shout. He ordered several runlets of claret to be set abroach, and after every man had partaken freely, gave the word to unmoor and clear away for battle.

* Voyage to San Thome, A.D. 1520, in Ramusio.

Unconscious of all these dire preparations, Sir Andrew Wood now lay up the Forth, and first perceived the English on their rounding from the leeward of the isle and standing towards him with all their sails set. He immediately gave the order to prepare for battle, and buckled on his armour. Quaint old Lindesay of Pitscottie gives us a graphic account of this battle, and the Scottish Admiral's address to his men. Distributing wine to the crews, he harangued them in the boisterous but brief manner of a true mariner.

"My lads," he exclaimed, "these are the foes who would convey us in bonds to the foot of an English king; but, by your courage and the help of God, they shall fail! Set yourselves in order—repair every man to his station—charge home, gunners—crossbowmen to the tops—two-handed swords to the fore-rooms! Be stout men and true for the honour of Scotland and your own sakes. Hurrah!" A shout followed, and wine was served round on all sides.*

The yeomen of the sheets and powder-room, the pikemen, crossbowmen, cannoneers, and fire-caster, repaired to their stations; and all in order of battle, with their canvass bellying in the northern breeze, the Scottish ships bore on.

Sir Andrew's second in command was Sir David Falconer, a native of Borrowstouness, a brave cavalier and skilful mariner.

* Scot. Chron., Pink. Hist., Dalzel, Pitcairn, &c.

The sun was now high in the summer sky, and its morning glory shone full on the great English war-ships, displaying their white canvass and waving streamers, their crowded decks bristling with arms, and their brass cannon that peered through the portholes over the seething ocean, "displaying their magnitude and force to the eyes of the Scots with a dazzling and enlarged appearance."

"The sailors spy
From every mast the purple streamers fly;
Rich figured tapestry supplies the sail,
The gold and scarlet tremble in the gale;
The standard broad its brilliant hue bewrays,
And, floating on the wind, wide billowing plays;
Shrill through the air the quivering trumpet sounds,
And the rough drum the rousing march rebounds."*

On their nearing each other, the broadsides of the English burst like an iron storm from their towering castles, but luckily swept *over* the Scottish decks, from the too great elevation at which Bull's cannon were discharged. The superior skill of Andrew Wood soon enabled him to get the weather-gauge of the enemy's fleet, on which the carthouns, culverins, and "pestilent serpentines" of the *Flower* and *Yellow Caravel* poured their successive broadsides of iron and stone bullets, and immediately shortening sail, fearless of the tre-

* The Lusiad.

mendous odds, the superior size, men and cannon, of the English, the brave old Laird of Largo engaged them in a close and deadly conflict, which for *twelve* hours was maintained with culverin, bow, and arblast, without a moment's intermission, and without one party gaining the least advantage over the other. The gear and care of the ships were abandoned; and, as they drifted shoreward, the smoke and report of the cannon caused the people of Easter Anstruther, the old burgh of Crail, and the Castle of Randerstoun, to assemble in crowds on the neighbouring hills and rocky headlands, where they expressed by shouts and gestures their hopes and fears while the battle raged. But the sun verged westward and sank behind Largo Law. The day went past, and still St. Andrew's silver saltire and St. George's red cross waved over the battle-smoke and corpse-strewn decks of the adverse ships; and still the victory was undecided. The starry August night came on; the din of the cannon died over the waters of St. Andrew's Bay, and the hostile ships, parted by the darkness, lay off a little to refit and clear their wrecked rigging, torn hamper, and shattered hulls.

By dawn next morning, the "blair" of the trumpet and the admiral's "silver quhissel" sounded the call to arms. Refitted and ready for battle, the indomitable Wood stood once more before the English, and running right on board of them,

threw out his grapnels from the decks, the hooks from the yard-arms, and locked the ships together "by lashing them with cables to his own," that all might sink together, but none might flee; and "again did these two valiant commanders engage, as if they had the courage of two mighty armies." The decks became another scene of hand-to-hand strife, blood, and carnage, as if it had been a land-battle. Everything was forgotten but honour and glory. Inspired by these and the bitterest national animosity, neglecting the ships and the course of the wind, waves, and ebb-tide, the conflict continued till evening, when the currents drifted the grappled fleets into the beautiful estuary of the Tay, where the English ships, being of great burden, grounded on the sand-banks. Then Sir Stephen Bull, finding all over, crest-fallen and conquered, surrendered to the victorious Wood, who carried the English prizes into the harbour of Dundee. There the dead were buried, and the wounded committed to the care of surgeons; and so ended the sanguinary battle of the 11th of August, which spread still more Sir Andrew's fame through all the maritime towns of Northern Europe. The old minstrel, who sings of it in his ballad, says exultingly—

"The Scotsmen fought like lyons bold,
And mony English slew;
The slaughter that they made that day
The English folk sall rue.

This battle fiercely it was fought,
Near to the craig of Basse;
When *next* we fight the English loons
May ne'er worse come to pass."

A few days afterwards, Sir Andrew Wood introduced Sir Stephen Bull to King James IV., presenting to him particularly "the commanders of the ships and most distinguished soldiers." With that true regal spirit which ever distinguished the Stuarts, the courtly James, after complimenting equally the victor and the vanquished, dismissed the latter unransomed; and, because they had fought for *glory* and not for *gain*, sent them and their ships as presents to Henry their king, with a message that "Scotland could boast of warlike sons by sea as well as land, and that he trusted England's piratical shipmen would trouble the Scottish seas no more, otherwise a different fate would await them." Henry dissembled his rage and mortification by returning James thanks, and saying, "he gratefully accepted his kindness, and could not but applaud the greatness of his mind." *

The fruits of this naval victory were of great and immediate consequence to the young monarch. The northern clans, who had still remained turbulent, and in arms to avenge the fall of the late king, dispersed to their native glens, while the

* Buch., Pink., &c.

English, mortified and dispirited, displayed their banners on the Scottish coasts no more; and measures were instituted which ended in a solid peace, and that marriage ultimately so important in its effects to Britain. Fresh honours and possessions were heaped upon the fortunate Admiral, who obtained the sea-town and nethertoun of Largo, a fishing village one mile distant from his new castle.* In the list of "Lordis ordained to bring in the kingis propertie and caswelte," we have "the Lord Gray for the reste of fethircarne t Andro Wod in tyme tecum."

This able officer appears at an early period to have seen the capabilities of the now well-known Bay of Gourock, which lies on the left bank of the Clyde, and possesses every advantage for shipping, being totally unobstructed by bank or shoal. In the year 1494, when Greenock was a small fishing village, and Port Glasgow had not even a name, we find among the "Acts of the Lords of Council in Civil Causes, 1478-1495," the record of a remarkable indenture entered into between Admiral Wood and two other persons, on behalf of James IV., on one part, and "Nicholas of Bour, maister, under God, of the schip called the *Verdour*," on the other part, whereby it is stipulated that "the said Nicholas shall, God willing, bring the said *Verdour*, with mariners and stuff for her,

* MS. Mag. Sig.

as effeirs to THE GORAIK, on the west bordour and sey (sea) aucht mylls fra Dunbertoun or tharby be the 1st day of the moneth of May nixt to cum; and there the said Nicholas sall, with the grace of God, ressave within the said schip three hundreth men boden for weir (war), furnist with their vitales, harnes, and artilzery, effeirand to sa mony men, to pass with the kingis heines at his pleasure, and his lieutennentes and deputis for the space of two months nixt, and immediat followand the said first day of May, and put them on land and ressave them again." For which Nicholas of Bour was to receive £300 Scots, or £1 Scots for each soldier. From the terms of this indenture, which is dated at Edinburgh, 27th December, 1494, and from the place of rendezvous being THE GORAIK, it is evident that the *Verdour* was fitted out for the use of our gallant James IV. in one of those hostile voyages which he so frequently undertook against the turbulent tribes of the Western Isles.

In 1503 Wood was employed with a fleet against the insurgent chieftains in the isles. By this time the Scottish shipping had been greatly increased, and various passages in the treasurer's books prove that the King probably acted by the advice and instructions of Wood, when he increased the naval strength of the kingdom, "and studied the principles of navigation and gunnery."* A large

* Tytler.

dockyard had been established to the northward of Newhaven, then named Our-Lady's-Port-of-Grace, from a solitary chapel of the Virgin and St. James, which, with the ancient fortalice on the desolate muir of Wardie, were the principal objects in its vicinity. The *vestigia* of the royal ropery at the east end of the village were visible so late as 1750; but the sites of the docks and the links have long since been covered by the encroaching sea.

In the accounts of the High Treasurer we have several entries concerning Wood's expedition to the Isles.

"1503, May 18. *Item:* in Dunbartone to Sr. Andro Wod that he laid down for vj twne of wyne mair to ye vittales of ye shippis in ye Islis, xlij li.

"May 19th. To ye maister Cuke for brede, checkinis, caponis, &c., quhilk were sent to the Erl of Aranis schip, iij li, xj s, j d.

"June 22nd. *Item:* in Hammiltoune to Sir Andro Wod to the marinieris yat wes in the Islis, yair xv dayis wage yat yai wantit, xxxviij£., xiij s."

In this expedition he was, as usual, eminently successful, and defeated the insurgents by firth and islet wherever his flotilla steered. He laid siege to the strong insular fortress of Kernburg, and assisted by his lieutenant, Robert Barton, after an obstinate defence by the Macians of Glencoe and the warriors of Torquil Macleod, succeeded in reducing it and making prisoner Sir Donald Dhu, who claimed as his independent and

hereditary right the principality of the Isles as heir of Rosse and Innisgail. Sailing up the sound of Jura, the Admiral sent Sir Donald to the ancient castle of Innis-connel, in Lochawe, long a residence of the Argyle family, from which, however, he escaped three years afterwards.

In 1505 John Spens of Lathallan obtained a *remission* for ravaging and harrying the estate of Baward, belonging to Sir Andrew Wood—an outrage probably committed during his absence in the Isles of Holland; and in 1507 the worthy Admiral himself obtained a remission under the Great Seal for "ye *rief* of an anker and cabyell taken frae vmq^le^ John of Bonkle, on ye sea—*apud* Edinburghe;" from which it would appear that he scrupled not to help himself to the goods and gear of others when required for the king's service.

Meanwhile the Scottish navy still continued to flourish, and James was soon able to send a noble squadron to the Baltic, to the assistance of his ally, John of Denmark. Louis XII. sent ship-builders from France, and two large vessels as models. In 1511 Jacques Tarette built the *Great Michael* in the royal docks of Newhaven. It was the desire of James to possess the greatest and most magnificent ship in the world. He had already built three of great size and many of middle rate, but, like the mighty bark of Hiero, the *Michael* was the greatest that ever traversed

the ocean. Charnock, quoting Pitscottie, says this enormous vessel "was of so great a stature and took so much timber that (except Falkland) she wasted all the oak-woods in Fife, with *all* the timber that came out of Norway; for she was so strong and of such great length and breadth, all the wrights of Scotland, yea and many other strangers, were at her device by the king's command." She was 240 feet long by 36 feet inside, and 10 feet thick in the walls. Sir Andrew Wood was appointed captain, and Robert Barton lieutenant of "this great ship, which cumbered all Scotland to get her to sea. From the time that she was afloat, her masts and sails complete, with anchors effeiring thereto, she was counted to be to the king £30,000 expense. She bore many great cannon, sixteen on every side, with three great bassils, two behind in her dock (stern), and one before; 300 shot of small artillery, that is to say, myand and battered falcon and quarter falcon, slings, pestilent serpentins, and double dags with hactor, culverins, crossbows, and handbows."* She had 300 mariners, 120 cannoneers, and 1,000 soldiers, with their captains, skippers, and quartermasters. Thus, with all her guns on the main deck, she had 500 more men than a first-rate of the present day. At Tullybardine her dimensions were long to be seen, planted in

Charnock.

"hawthorn by (Jacques Tarette), the wright that helped to mak her."* The fame of this great ship spread over Europe, and, emulous of the Scottish king, Francis I. and Henry VIII. endeavoured to outvie each other in building two enormous arks, which were so unwieldy that they floated in the water like islands, useless and immoveable.†

Though in command of this great galleon, and having under him the gallant Robert Barton, of Leith, and a chosen crew, the peace with England unluckily prevented Sir Andrew Wood from trying his prowess with her splendid equipment; but he was now becoming old in years, and was succeeded as captain of the *Michael* in 1512 by Henry Lord Sinclair of Ravenscraig, who fell at Flodden in the following year. Henry VIII., with his usual modesty, is said to have asked James for the *Michael;* and the latter replied, he might freely command every ship on the Scottish seas, provided he made peace with France.

On the 26th July, 1513, the *Michael*, the *James*, the *Margaret*, the ship of Lynne (an English prize), a thirty-oared galley, and fourteen other ships of war, commanded by Gordon, of Letterfourie, and having on board the Earl of Arran and 3,000 soldiers, sailed from Leith as a present to Anne of Bretagne, consort of France; a piece

* Annals of Comm., Pitscot., &c.

† Buch.

of ill-timed chivalry and useless generosity on the part of James, who accompanied this splendid armament to the Isle of May. Finding themselves at the head of these forces, Arran and Gordon could not resist the temptation of annoying the English; and, landing in their province of Ireland, sacked Carrickfergus, after which they returned to Scotland and anchored off the coast of Kyle. "Why James should not have appointed Wood, Barton, or Falconer to conduct a navy of which he was so proud," says Mr. Tytler, "is not easily discoverable, but probably it arose out of some hereditary feudal right, which entailed upon rank the command due only to skill." Exasperated on hearing of this wanton aggression, James summoned Gordon and Arran, under pain of treason, to appear before him, and sent Archibald, Earl of Angus, to assume the leading of the soldiers, and Sir Andrew Wood, with a herald-at-arms, to become admiral of the fleet. They arrived at Ayr, but found it had sailed; the leaders preferring to commit their fate to the wide sea rather than the king's wrath. This little armada, the most complete that Scotland ever sent forth, was scattered by tempests to various seas and shores, and, wrecked and dismantled, the magnificent *Michael* was suffered to rot in the harbour of Brest.

This was the year of Flodden, a name to Scotsmen, even after the lapse of three centuries,

associated with sadness and regret; for there fell the flower of the land and the bravest king that ever drew a sword. After this event, on the succession of James V., then an infant of two years, Sir Andrew Wood was sent ambassador to France, for the purpose of inviting John, Duke of Albany (nephew of James III.) to assume the regency; and he probably returned with him in that squadron, which consisted of eight of Arran's and Gordon's Scottish fleet, and which came to anchor at Dumbarton on the 18th of May, 1515.* In 1526 Sir Andrew was present at the battle of Linlithgow Bridge, where he had been sent specially by James V. to protect the Earl of Lennox from his feudal enemies; but he failed, and arrived only in time to behold the unhappy Earl expiring under the sword of Hamilton, and when life was extinct he wrapped the body in his scarlet mantle to protect it. In 1538 there was a remission granted to Andrew Wod, of Largo; John and Robert, his brothers; Andrew and Thomas, sons of Andrew Wod, in Pittenweem; Andrew Wod, his servant; Andro Spens, of Lathallan; John Lundy, of Strathairlie; James, his brother; and twelve others, for all crimes excepting treason, in the usual formula, *dat apud Striulen*, 23rd July.

From this time we hear no more of Sir Andrew Wood, who, finding age and infirmity increasing

* Lesly.

upon him, retired to his barony of Largo, where, like old Hawser Trunnion, he indulged on the shore his early predilection for the ocean. There is still pointed out the track of a canal formed by him from his castle to the venerable kirk of Upper Largo, on which he was sailed or rowed in a barge to mass every Sunday by his old crew, who were all located around him. Of his lieutenants, Robert Barton and Sir David Falconer, we can say little more. The former served under James IV. with distinction, once capturing thirteen English ships, and is believed to have been knighted and become Comptroller of the Household. The latter became Captain of the Royal Guard, and was slain at their head in 1532, when fighting for King James V. against the Douglasses at Tantallan Castle.

From the destruction of the Chancery records in the English war of 1547, it is impossible to say when the Admiral died, but it was probably about the year 1540, when he must have been in extreme old age.

He was buried in the family aisle of Largo Kirk, an ancient Gothic edifice, where the tomb of his race is yet to be seen.

He left several children. Andrew, his heir, the second Laird of Largo, was high in favour with James V., and stood by his bedside when he expired at Falkland in 1542.*

* Pitscottie.

He was much trusted by James, who employed him on several occasions to purchase lands for him. He married a lady named Alison Hume. John Wood, of Tillydavie (second son of the Admiral), was educated for the Church, but became a senator of the College of Justice, 9th December, 1562. Alexander (a third son) became progenitor of the Woods of Grange, in Fifeshire; and a son of his obtained a charter of legitimation in 1575.

Sir Andrew, third of the house of Largo (grandson of the Admiral), married Egidia Gourlay, and was one of the Barons in the Parliament of 1560, and seven years afterwards signed the famous bond of adherence to James VI. His daughter Jean was married to James Drummond, first Lord Maddertie, who, according to Douglas, died A.D. 1623.

Sir Andrew was Comptroller of Scotland in 1585, and four years after was succeeded by the Laird of Parbroath. Various MS. papers of his exist in the Great Seal. He died about 1592, and was succeeded by his son Andrew, fourth Laird of Largo, who married Janet Balfour. Their son, James, received a charter of the lands of Lamblethame and Cairngour, in Fifeshire. The last notice we have of the family is a charter under the Great Seal, "Confirmatione Joanni Wod, filio et filiabus filiæ, Isabellæ et Cristinæ, filio et filiabus, Andræ Wod de Largo, de annuis

reddetibus de Baroniæ de Largo. Julii, 1611." John Wood in 1659 founded an hospital in his native town for thirteen old men of the surname of Wood, each of whom has two apartments and £17 per annum. His bequest was £68,418 Scots. The edifice cost 9,000 merks. "He also built the schole house of Remeldrie."* But notwithstanding these legacies he died under great pecuniary embarrassments at London in 1661. His body was brought by sea to Elie, and was interred on the 22nd of July in the aisle of Largo Kirk, where yet a mural monument remains to his memory; and with him ceased the direct line of the old race of Largo. The estate passed into other hands, and was purchased by Sir Alexander Durham, Lord Lyon King-at-Arms.

There is still remaining a circular tower of the castellated dwelling erected by the brave old admiral. A tablet, bearing an inscription to his memory, and an extract from his charter, was inserted in the mouldering wall by the late General Durham; and on the summit of the ruin stood one of the iron twenty-four pounders recovered from the wreck of the *Royal George*, which pointed towards the sandy shore and

* Authorities:—Treasurer's Accounts; MS. Charters in Great Seal Office; Officers of State; Statistical Accounts; and the Chronicles of Fife, &c., &c.

beautiful bay of Largo, forming a characteristic monument to the stout old captain of the *Yellow Caravel.*

Of this monument a full description will be found in the notes appended to the novel entitled "The Yellow Frigate."