

Chapter 29 - Le Jour de Gloire Arrives For Napoleon And France

Time: December 4, 1804

Napoleon Crowns Himself Emperor And Resumes War With Britain



Napoleon Bonaparte (1769-1821)

On December 2, 1804, Napoleon Bonaparte establishes hereditary power over France for his family, as he crowns himself Emperor at Notre Dame Cathedral.

The service is designed to mimic the standards set for royal successions across Europe.

To insure that Napoleon will reign “in the eyes of God,” Pope Pius VII attends the ceremony in person. The 62 year old pontiff has been in office for four years, and is intent on restoring the Church’s standing in France after seeing papal authority stripped away during the people’s revolution. His first step here is the Concordat of 1801, negotiated with Napoleon as First Counsul, which recognizes Catholicism as the “religion of the great majority” in France, while dropping claims to church lands seized during the overthrow of the old order.

Napoleon enters Notre Dame after Pius is already seated. He arrives with his wife, Josephine, in a carriage drawn by eight horses. He is gowned up in an eighty pound coronation mantle, supported by four manservants, and embroidered with “golden bees,” which he favors over the traditional fleur-de-lis symbol for France.

When the moment comes for the Pope to crown him, Napoleon intercedes by placing the laurel wreath on his own head and repeating the act for Josephine as Queen. Pius then intones his blessing:

May God confirm you on this throne and may Christ give you to rule with him in his eternal kingdom.

The action is completed with Napoleon placing his hands on the Bible and declaring his civil oath of office.

I swear to maintain the integrity of the territory of the Republic, to respect and enforce respect for the Concordat and freedom of religion, equality of rights, political and civil liberty, the irrevocability of the sale of national lands; not to raise any tax except in virtue of the law; to maintain the institution of Legion of Honor and to govern in the sole interest, happiness and glory of the French people.

As absolute monarch he is now eager to turn his energy against fulfilling the “glory of the French people.”

His sights, as always, are on the British, and reversing the losses suffered four decades ago in the Seven Year’s War. He will attack them on land and sea, along with any confederates who join them.

The days of French ascendance have arrived.

La Marseillaise (1792)	
French lyrics	English translation
<i>Allons enfants de la Patrie,</i>	Arise, children of the Fatherland,
<i>Le jour de gloire est arrivé!</i>	The day of glory has arrived!
<i>Contre nous de la tyrannie,</i>	Against us tyranny's
<i>L'étendard sanglant est levé, (bis)</i>	Bloody banner is raised,(repeat)
<i>Entendez-vous dans les campagnes</i>	Do you hear, in the countryside,
<i>Mugir ces féroces soldats?</i>	The roar of those ferocious soldiers?
<i>Ils viennent jusque dans nos bras</i>	They're coming right into our arms
<i>Égorger nos fils, nos compagnes!</i>	To cut the throats of our sons, our women!
<i>Aux armes, citoyens,</i>	To arms, citizens,
<i>Formez vos bataillons,</i>	Form your battalions,
<i>Marchons, marchons!</i>	Let's march, let's march!
<i>Qu'un sang impur</i>	Let an impure blood
<i>Abreuve nos sillons! (bis)</i>	Water our furrows! (Repeat)

Time: 1715-1855

Sidebar: Roll Call Of Key 18-19th Century Foreign Monarchs

France	Begins Reign	Ends Reign
Louis XV	Sept 1, 1715	May 10, 1774
Louis XVI	May 10, 1774	Sept 21, 1792
First Republic	1792	1804
Napoleon I	May 18, 1804	April 11, 1814
Louis XVIII	April 11, 1814	March 20, 1815
Napoleon I	March 20, 1815	June 22, 1815
Napoleon II	June 22, 1815	July 7, 1815
Louis XVIII	July 7, 1815	Sept 16, 1824
Charles X	Sept 16, 1824	Aug 2, 1830
Louis-Phillipe I	August 9, 1830	Feb 24, 1848
Second Republic	1848	1852
Napoleon III	Dec 2, 1852	Sept 4, 1870
England		
George II	June 11, 1727	Oct 25, 1760
George III	Oct 25, 1760	Jan 29, 1820
George IV	Jan 29, 1820	June 26, 1830
William IV	June 26, 1830	June 20, 1837
Victoria	June 20, 1837	Jan 22, 1901
Spain		
Charles III	Aug 10, 1759	Dec 14, 1788
Charles IV	Dec 14, 1788	March 19, 1808
Ferdinand VII	March 19, 1808	May 6, 1808
Joseph I	May 6, 1808	Dec 11, 1813
Ferdinand VII	Dec 11, 1813	Sept 29, 1833
Isabella II	Sept 29, 1833	Sept 30, 1868
Prussia		
Frederick I	January 18, 1701	February 25, 1713
Frederick William I	February 25, 1713	May 31, 1740
Frederick II (Great)	May 31, 1740	Aug 17, 1786
Frederick-William II	Aug 17, 1786	Nov. 16, 1797
Frederick William III	Nov. 16, 1797	June 7, 1840
Federick William IV	June 7, 1840	Jan 2, 1861
Russia		
Catherine The Great	July 9, 1762	Nov 17, 1796

	Paul I	Nov 17, 1796	Mar 23, 1801
	Alexander I	Mar 23, 1801	Dec 1, 1825
	Nicholas I	Dec 1, 1825	Mar 2, 1855
	Alexander II	Mar 2, 1855	Mar 13, 1881

Time: October 21, 1805

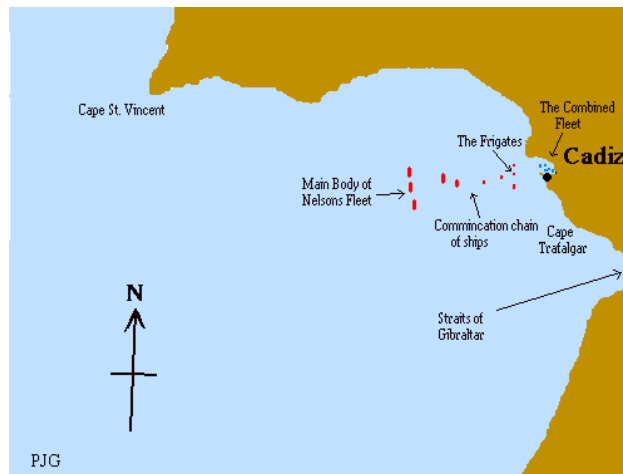
Napoleon's Momentum Is Hindered Momentarily By Lord Nelson At Trafalgar



Viscount Horatio Nelson (1758-1805)

By the late summer of 1805, Napoleon has completed his plan to invade the British Isles, and has assembled a naval armada of French and Spanish ships to support the attack. But the invasion is delayed after Austria and Russia enter the war. Still, Napoleon is displeased by the lack of aggression he sees in the commanding officer of his fleet, Admiral Pierre-Charles de Villaneuve, who learns that he is about to be relieved.

On October 20, 1805, before his replacement can arrive, Villaneuve departs the port of Cadiz on the southwest coast of Spain, intending to sail south past Cape Trafalgar and the Straits of Gibraltar, into the Mediterranean and the French port of Toulon.



Cape Trafalgar off the Coast of Cadiz above Gibraltar

Villaneuve's fleet is formidable, comprising 33 heavy duty warships, with some 30,000 sailors and 2,568 guns.

At 11AM on October 21, they encounter the British navy, under the command of Captain Horatio Nelson, aboard his HMS Victory.



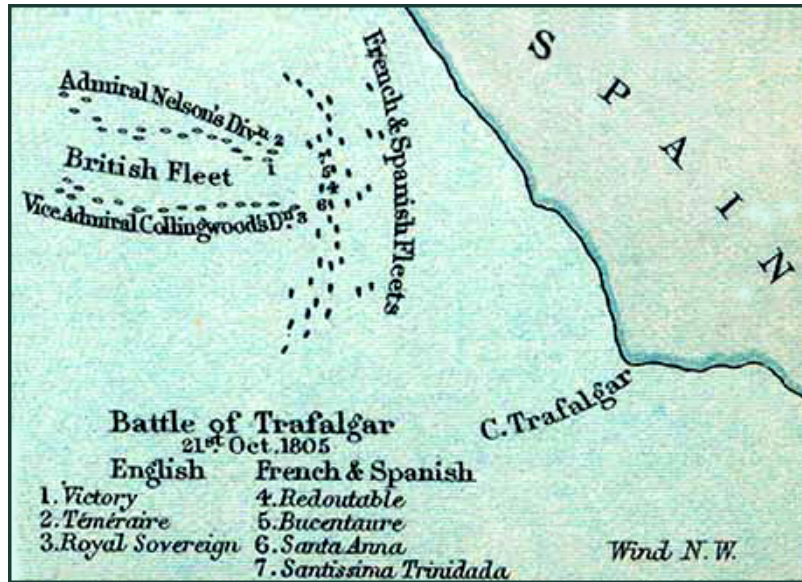
Nelson's Ship HMS Victory

Nelson is already a legend within the Royal Navy. He enlists as an Ordinary Seaman at age twelve, serving under his uncle, Captain Maurice Suckling, who turns him into a first rate sailor, despite his lifelong bouts of seasickness. By December 1778, age twenty, he is Master and Commander of the sloop *HMS Badger*. He is engaged briefly around Boston and New York during America's Revolutionary War, then becomes a national hero in February 1797, after capturing two Spanish warships at the Battle of St. Vincent.

He is almost killed on multiple occasions. In 1794 enemy shot leaves him blinded in his right eye. On July 24, 1797, his left arm is shattered by a musket ball while leading a failed landing party assault on the Canary Island city of Santa Cruz de Tenerife. Amputation follows. In 1798 Nelson is knocked unconscious by shrapnel during the victorious Battle of the Nile. Afterwards he is awarded the honorary titles of Baron and Viscount.

On October 21, 1805, Nelson has been battling the British and French off and on for some twelve years. He is 47 years old and Vice Admiral of the White (ensign) Fleet, second highest command in the Royal Navy. He has 27 warships at his disposal, with 17,000 men and 2,148 guns.

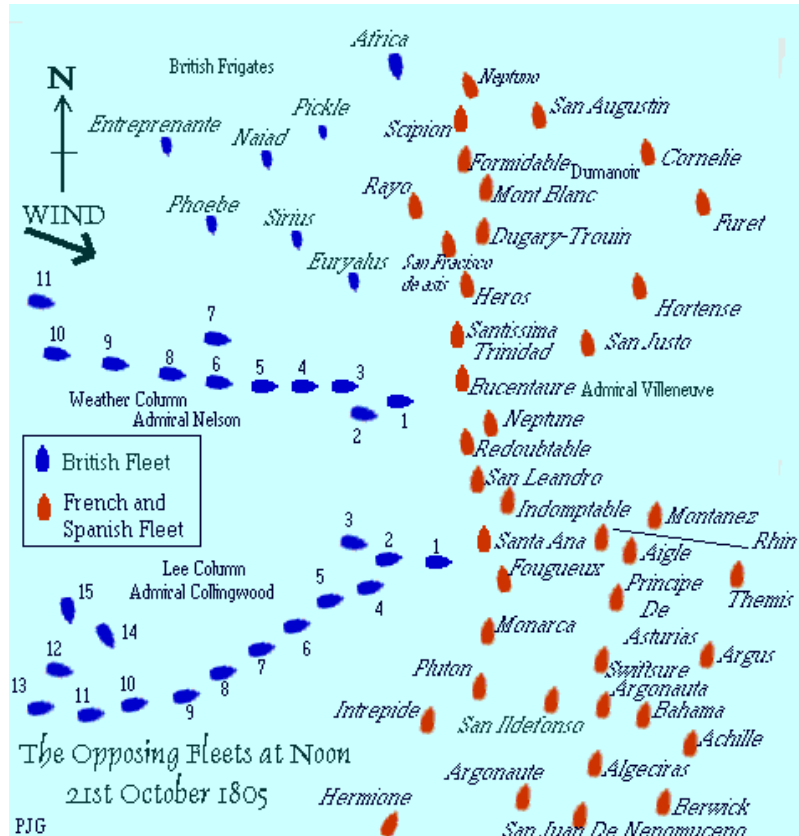
At 8AM the two fleets spot each other from a distance, the French still heading south toward Gibraltar, the English coming at them from the west. Villaneuve order his four-masters "to wear" (or jibe), reversing course to head back to Cadiz. But Nelson keeps coming onto him. The famous command -- "England expects that every man will do his duty"—is flagged up.



Nelson's Very Unconventional Maneuver against the French Fleet at Trafalgar

Around noon, the ships close on one another, with traditional naval strategy calling for Nelson to turn and “form lines of battle” stations parallel to the enemy. Instead, he plows straight ahead, striking the French in perpendicular fashion, and bringing on a “pell-mell” series of ship against ship action favorable to his more skilled seaman. This move, executed at no small risk of receiving initial broadside fire, also allows him to shoot into the sterns of many French ships, with the fire traveling through the entire length of the ship, to the bow.

Nelson himself commands the lead ship, HMS *Victory*, into the fray.



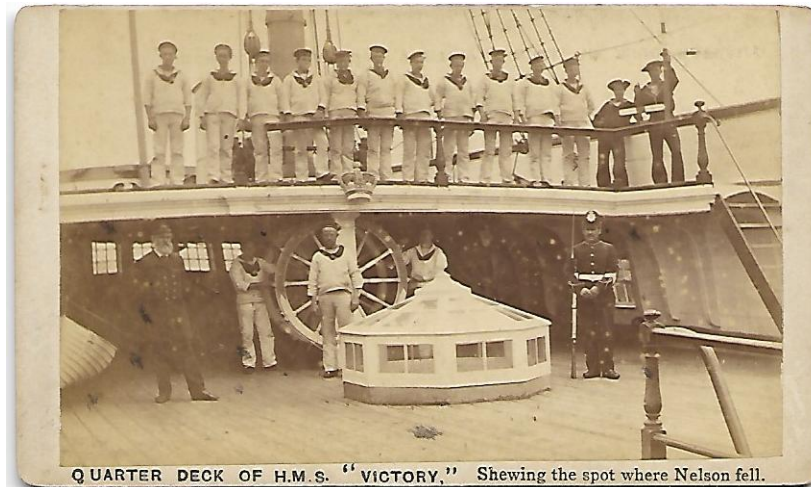
Greater Detail on Nelson's Straight on Line of Attack

British Line Of Battle	
Weather Column	Lee Column
1. <i>Victory</i>	1. <i>Royal Sovereign</i>
2. <i>Temeraire</i>	2. <i>Bellisle</i>
3. <i>Neptune</i>	3. <i>Colossus</i>
4. <i>Leviathan</i>	4. <i>Mars</i>
5. <i>Conqueror</i>	5. <i>Tonnant</i>
6. <i>Agamemnon</i>	6. <i>Bellerophon</i>
7. <i>Britannia</i>	7. <i>Achille</i>
8. <i>Ajax</i>	8. <i>Polyphemus</i>
9. <i>Orion</i>	9. <i>Revenge</i>
10. <i>Minotaur</i>	10. <i>Swiftsure</i>
11. <i>Spartiate</i>	11. <i>Defence</i>
	12. <i>Thunderer</i>
	13. <i>Defiance</i>
	14. <i>Prince</i>
	15. <i>Dreadnought</i>

As *Victory* locks with the French *Redoubtable*, a musket ball takes Nelson in the left shoulder, slices through his seventh cervical vertebrae and lodges in his right shoulder. He knows immediately that the wound is fatal, and says so to his surgeon.

You can do nothing for me. I have but a short time to live. My back is shot through.

He lingers below decks for another 3½ hours, still issuing orders, before succumbing to his wound. His last words are recorded as “Thank God I have done my duty.”



Quarter Deck of H.M.S. “Victory”

And his victory at Trafalgar is striking. Villaneuve’s fleet has suffered one ship sunk, seventeen ships captured, another eleven partially damaged and only four escaping unscathed. Some 4,500 of their seamen are killed, with another 2,400 wounded and 7,000 taken prisoner. On the British side, no ships are lost for good and total dead and wounded total 1,450.

The Royal Navy has again demonstrated its supremacy on the high seas, and Napoleon casts aside all thoughts of an invasion of the English Isles.

Despite this, Britain mourns the loss of its most famous admiral. His body is packed inside a cask of brandy and other agents for preservation. This is towed home along with his wounded ship, Victory. On January 9, 1806, England’s most famous naval figure is interred at St. Paul’s Cathedral.

December 2, 1805 – October 14, 1806

On Land, The French Win One Major Battle After Another



French Soldiers on the March

Napoleon is characteristically undaunted by the loss at Trafalgar.

On December 2, 1805, in the nine hour “Battle of The Three Kings” – near Austerlitz (now in the Czech Republic) -- his undermanned force (73,000 vs. 86,000) pulls a stunning victory against Alexander I of Russia and the Holy Roman Emperor Francis II. Casualties for the day total a staggering 36,000 men. In response to the loss, Francis gives up his Holy Roman title and becomes simply King of Austria.

Less than a year later, on October 14, 1806, Napoleon soundly defeats the 110,000 man Prussian army, in the two-part battle of Jena-Auerstadt, winning control over territory in what is now central Germany and Poland. Casualties here are even greater than at Austerlitz, totaling 50,000 soldiers.



France Extends its Borders as Napoleon Emerges Victorious

With these two pivotal triumphs, he now effectively controls all of Europe, except for Portugal, and he again moves against the British by imposing a Continental Blockade halting all trade with England in his Berlin Decree, issued on November 21, 1806.

Napoleon's Early Campaigns

1792	1 st Coalition War vs. Austria and Prussia (end 1797)
1793	Siege of Toulon (southern France) – Napoleon wins first fame
1795	N quells pro-monarchy insurrection in Paris
1797	First Italian campaign (victories at Lodi and Arcola)
1798	Expedition to Egypt and Syria
1799	N seizes power in Paris as First Consul of the Republic
	2 nd Coalition vs. Russia, UK, Austria, Naples, Vatican, etc (end 1802)
1800	Second Italian campaign (victory at Marengo (nw Italy) over Austria)
	Spain trades Louisiana Territory back to France for Tuscan land
	France ends its Quasi-War with the US
1802	Treaty of Amiens ends war with Britain (for one year)
	N expanding his power over France
1803	Britain declares war on France
1804	3 rd Coalition vs. Britain, Austria, Prussia
1805	Napoleon crowns himself Emperor of France
1805	British defeat French invasion fleet at Trafalgar
	Battle of the Three Kings at Austerlitz – N beats Austria and Russia
1806	4 th Coalition vs. Prussia and Russia
	Battle of Jena-Auerstedt – N beats Prussia