

HARWICH AND THE SIEGE OF COLCHESTER.

By J. HORACE ROUND, M.A.

NEITHER general nor local historians have alluded, so far as I can find, to the fact that Harwich played some part in the struggle of 1648.

While Fairfax, having crushed the Kentish rising, was about to march into Essex, the fleet, which had embraced the King's cause, was still to his foes a source of great anxiety. The 'Greyhound' frigate, commanded by Capt. John Coppin, heard at Yarmouth that the ships in the Downs had joined the Loyalist movement, and her crew "being Deal men" for the most part, insisted on their captain taking her to the Downs. There he feigned to embrace the King's cause till, most of his Deal men being ashore, he suddenly set sail, intending to "run away for Harwich." Pursued by the 'Pelican' and the 'Warwick,' and fired upon, he nevertheless made good his escape, and was able on the evening of the 3rd June, to write to Lenthall, the Speaker, that he was "arrived safe in Harwich," where he found "three ships more for the Parliament, the 'Providence,' the 'Tiger,' and the 'Adventure' frigates."

Meanwhile, however, the crews of these ships also were looked on with suspicion by the Government. On the 7th of June the Derby House Committee wrote to the Lord Admiral (Robert Rich, Earl of Warwick), that "the common men in the *Tiger* and *Providence*, now at Harwich² are in some distemper," and urged him to sail thither and "take order for securing of these ships." Next day, however, they wrote informing him that they had instructed Alexander

¹ Portland MSS. (Historical MSS.) Vol. I., p. 458.

² I find nothing to shew how the *Adventure* frigate came to be there. The *Dolphin*, formerly the *Angel* frigate, had been captured from the "Irish rebels."

Bence, a Navy Commissioner to proceed to Harwich in the 'Nicodemus' and secure the 'Tiger' and the 'Providence' there "against any distemper of their crews." He was desired to effect this by paying off the disaffected men,¹ or by any other means that seemed good for him. And he was directed, at the same time, to convoy as far as Harwich the ship laden with arms and ammunition for Hull. On the following day he was ordered not to wait for her, but to make his way to Harwich as speedily as he could.²

Our next glimpse of the squadron assembled there is afforded by a tract issued on June 21st, a copy of which was presented to our Museum by the late Mr. Charles Cray Round. It is noteworthy that I cannot find it among the King's Pamphlets at the British Museum. The manifesto of the ships' captains is not dated, nor are their names given; but Norwich ('Goring') and his forces reached Colchester, on June 12th, and the captains must have met in council as soon as the news reached them.

Gentlemen, and others of the Town of Harwich.

We whose names are hereunto subscribed, send greeting and shew unto you, that whereas the Forces of the Lord Goring are in Colchester, and probably may attempt the Towne of Harwich; we therefore declare, and resolve, that if you will stand joyntly together, and keep out the enemy aforesaid, and preserve towne for King and Parliament, we will stand firm with you using our utmost diligence to assist: but if you shall, through treachery or cowardise admit, or suffer the enemy to enter in, or possess themselves of the towne, know you, that we are resolved to force the enemy forth againe, and in so doing shall beat downe, or fire your Town eaven with the ground; we desire to act rather as friends than enemies, and doe subscribe according to your behaviours, to be your *friends and servants*.

The results of a consultation held on board the *Providence*, by us, whose names are hereunto subscribed, for the service of the Parliament, occasioned by the enemies being in possession of Colchester with Goring's whole army.

Resolved upon—

First, that forthwith we write to the Mayor, and the rest of the Town of Harwich, that if they will stand firme to preserve and defend

¹ This device was adopted at Southampton also, and shews that disaffection prevailed more widely than Mr. Oppenheim is willing to admit (*English Hist. Review*, VIII., 488).

² *Calendar of State Papers : Domestic.*

against the common enemy, viz., the King's party', that then we will stand and act with them with all diligence, but if they comply, or give give way to the enemy to enter and possess the town, we will use our uttermost endeavours to beat the enemies forth of the towne againe, though in so doing we beat down, or fire the towne.

Secondly, in order to the service, it is agreed, that if the Fort shall stand in need of ammunition, or otherwise, we will supply them.

Thirdly, for the better advantage of service, it is thought fit that the ships shall be thus disposed of, viz., the *Adventure* and *Tiger* shall birth (*sic*) upon the South-west of the town as neare as with safety, to flank the passage to the town upon that side ; the *Providence* lie neare, within Pistoll shot of the Rode (*sic*) of the town, upon the North side, to sway that part, the *Recovery* to birth as near to Langer Fort as with convenience, that the *Dolphin* ride upon the West side, Musket shot off the Fort of Harwich ; the *Greyhound* to be upon the North East side of the town, to flank that side.

Fourthly, that care be taken to draw off all the boats from the shore upon Harwich side, save only such necessary boats as may be especially usefull. To the premises aforesaid, we joyntly consent and subscribe.

[Reply from Harwich.]

Gentlemen, and our worthe good Friends,

We have received by Captain Mildmay the result of your consultation, for the good and defence of this town, in answer whereunto we thought good to send these few lines, to intimate our thankfulness, and withall our resolutions faithfully to adhere and joyne with you, for the preservation of this town for King and Parliament; and in pursuance of interest of the Parliament for the prosperity of this Kingdome against the forces now under the command of the Lord Goring or Sir Charles Lucas, now in or about Colchester ; and upon this resolution we are ready to adventure both our lives and estates, desiring that upon any emergent occasion you will be pleased to furnish us with such men and ammunition as may with convenience be spared by you, and so we rest

Your very loving friends,

Roger Pascall,¹ Jo. Hunter,²

Roger Coleman,³ Richard Hankin.⁴

The next gleam of light is afforded by a passage in one of the King's Pamphlets, implying that a detachment of the

¹ Mayor of Harwich 1647-8.

² Mayor of Harwich 1656, 1667.

³ Mayor of Harwich 1639 ; d. 6th July, 1659. There was a monument to him in Harwich Church.

⁴ Mayor of Harwich 1638, 1644, 1649, 1655.

Loyalist forces had, as anticipated, occupied the town, from which they were dislodged, as is here described, on June 17th.

Sir Thomas Barnadiston desired to send 500 men to secure Harwich. Our men scoured the streets, but the main guard of at least one hundred Foot commanded by an old souldier remained still not to be attempted by our men, it being in the Church and Churchyard, who were guarded by such narrow passages that it could not be forced without the apparent hazard of the loss of many men. Upon Summons those in the Church entered into a treaty and agreed that the countrey men should go to their own homes leaving their arms behind them and ingaging not to bear arms against the Parliament. Many horses are taken, but few prisoners, we not being able to surround the town and effect the surprise too. There were taken for the publick store 100 foot-arms, and neer as many more which our men have amongst them, 2 colours of foot, 4 drums, and 2 barrells of powder. This was the seventeenth day, (*An exact narrative, June 20th, 1648.*)

Sir Thomas Barnadiston, here spoken of, commanded a regiment of Suffolk militia at the Siege of Colchester, but the chief object of the Suffolk men was to guard the border of their own county, and it was not till June 24th that they were induced to cross the Stour. I can find no other reference to this occupation of Harwich by the Loyalists, which is exceedingly strange in view of the detailed information given in the pamphlets of the day on both sides. Nor is it clear how the ships allowed the town to be occupied, or what part, if any, they took in this fighting.

Morant states that on June 18th (the following day) "the Parliament ships at Harwich took 'two frigates, one of 11, the other of 10 guns,' that lay there to assist the King's party" in Colchester. But this is a mistake. What really happened was that these frigates were lying in Colne, and that Capt. Peacock (of the *Tiger*) sent word to Fairfax he would come and attack them, if Fairfax had secured the blockhouse at Mersea Stone. This had been done on the 14th, and the Harwich squadron accordingly sailed into Colne on the 18th and captured the two ships.

After this it was ordered by the Derby House Committee that the ships at Harwich should remain there till the Siege of Colchester was over ; and a week later it was believed in London that the ' revolted ' ships were coming

over from Holland, bound for Harwich, clearly to relieve the besieged. But they never came, and on July 22nd, the Lord Admiral, on board the St. George, "in Leigh Road," wrote, of the ships at Harwich, "I am this day certified their mariners are so ill tempered that there is as yet no trusting them forth to sea." He took steps, therefore, to remove many of them, and to procure fresh sailors.