

REWARD FOR WARRIORS

How Much For Our National Leaders?

AT the end of the war in Europe, some thought must be given by those in authority to the question of the suitable recognition by the country of the services of our naval, military, and air leaders. There is, in point of fact, a custom in such matters.

There are two points to be made here. It is, in the first place, only right and proper that such recognition should be made. Secondly, it is good that there should be fairly clear custom and precedent to follow in these things.

It is a poor society that has not the spirit to reward its leaders properly. Of course, we may take the high line of republican virtue, like Ancient Rome and the United States, and say that the service of the State is its own reward. That is too noble a line for average human nature; what is liable to happen in such societies is that graft takes the place of public recognition. It is far better that the State should reward its faithful servants properly. And human nature being what it is, men value distinctions and honours. If you try to do without them, they go and worship false gods, a Hitler or a Lindbergh. What could be worse? It is, therefore, much better to have a well-recognised system of honours and rewards, to canalise the whole thing. It is good for people to recognise outstanding and meritorious work; it encourages good and faithful service and gives people standards to look up to.

No Honours After the Armada

In earlier centuries there was no due order. The whole thing was haphazard and depended on luck or favouritism. In such circumstances, military leaders in the field were apt to take what they could get. Loot was the regular thing in medieval warfare.

In Elizabeth's reign, the Queen waged a long struggle against the habit of the men of war having their hands in the public purse. Of course, she could not stop it, but she kept it within bounds. One of the most striking things about the Elizabethan Age is how little that wonderful old woman rewarded her servants. She certainly expected her service to be its own reward. It is a remarkable fact that no honours and rewards were distributed to the men who defeated the Spanish Armada. It was not until nine years later that Lord Howard of Effingham was made an earl; and then his services against the Armada were specifically mentioned. But he was already a peer, and she would never have made him an earl if he had not been a Howard. Elizabeth had a marked principle against raising new men to the peerage; the regular routine reward for everybody, Hawkins, Drake, Raleigh, the Gilberts, the Norrises, Grenville, was no more than knighthood. And there were very few rewards of monetary character, grants or estates, except to her own personal favourites.

How right the old Queen had been was shown in the reigns of her successors. The Stuarts were so lavish of

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rewards that the Crown became practically bankrupt; the peerage swarmed with new creations. It was an age of graft and corruption.

But the great age for rewards and honours was, as you would expect, the 18th century; the period when a small aristocratic society of great families ruled the country and handed things out to themselves—for services which were, after all, considerable. That is to say, the period from the Revolution to Waterloo; from the Duke of Marlborough to the Duke of Wellington.

Most Rewarded Warriors

No two British subjects have ever been so splendidly rewarded as these two. Very appropriately in one way, for they were the greatest soldiers we have ever produced. But isn't it curious that a people with a dominantly naval tradition should not have rewarded its great sailors to anything like the extent of these two? Nelson was rewarded, but insignificantly compared with Wellington. (Perhaps he has his reward in the hearts of all English people, like no one else). And Nelson would have got more, if he had not been killed in the hour of his greatest victory. Drake got no more than a knighthood and a magnificent jewel from Elizabeth; the rest he made for himself, and brought home a fortune for her from his capture of the Spanish treasure-galleon. It must have been several hundred thousand pounds. The Queen graciously allowed him to keep £10,000. Perhaps he kept a bit more.

The rewards of Marlborough were fabulous. His and his wife Sarah's fortunes were made by their attachment to the Princess Anne; they both enjoyed pensions from her. When the great war with France broke out, Marlborough became Commander-in-Chief with £10,000 a year; but his perquisites were far larger: his percentage on the contracts for the supply of bread for the army brought him £63,000 in three years alone. After his first year's successful campaign in the Netherlands, he was made a Duke with another pension of £5,000 a year. What more could be given him to signalise his great victory of Blenheim two years later? Evidently something unprecedented was indicated. The Queen gave him the royal manor of Woodstock; Parliament granted £100,000 to build Blenheim Palace there. Eventually it cost £300,000, of which the Marlboroughs contributed £60,000, which they had not intended. The Emperor made him Prince of Mindelheim, without any principality, which much annoyed Marlborough, who preferred hard cash to empty honours. Altogether, the Duke and the Duchess, at the peak of their prosperity, made over £60,000 a year out of the State—at a time when the pound was worth ten times what it is now; and there was no income tax. No wonder he died the richest subject in Europe, a millionaire when millionaires were few and far between.

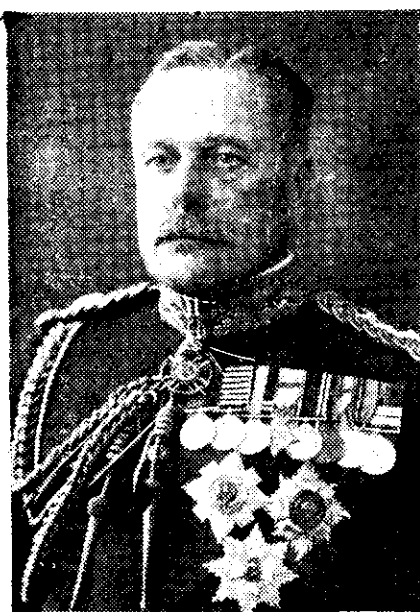
Marlborough formed a precedent for the treatment of Wellington, his only compeer as a soldier. We cannot trace Wellington's progress up the peerage at successive stages of the Peninsular War. Suffice it to say that for his great victories of 1812 he was made a Marquis, with a grant of £100,000. The Manor of Wellington had been acquired for him; Wellington Park was now added. At the triumphant conclusion of the Peninsular War he was made a Duke and given the choice of an annuity of £13,000 or £400,000 in lieu of it for the purchase of estates. There were all sorts of foreign honours showered upon him: we leave them out. But Spain made him a duke and a grandee and granted him a large estate. What was to be done for him after Waterloo? One would have thought his plate was already full.

Nelson: Why So Little?

Five days after Waterloo, Parliament voted him a grant of £200,000. The estate of Strathfieldsaye was bought for him for the fantastic price of £263,000. Wellington said in his common-sense way that it was a bad investment and would have ruined any man but himself. For years he put back all his income from it into the estate, improving it in every way. Even the Radical, Cobbet, admitted that "he is no miser at any rate." Apsley House was bought for him for his town house. The King of the Netherlands made him Prince of Waterloo with an estate which made him one of the largest landowners in Belgium.

Nelson's rewards were very small compared with these princely endowments. For his overwhelming and decisive victory of the Nile he was made a baron with a pension of £2,000 a year for three lines. The Irish Parliament voted him £1,000 a year; the East India Company £10,000. The Tsar and the Sultan gave him diamonds. For his Baltic campaign in 1801 he was made a Viscount. The King of Naples made him Duke of Bronte, with a fine estate in Southern Italy. If Nelson had survived Trafalgar, he would have received much greater rewards and honours; as it was, Lady Nelson was given a pension of £2,000 a year. The Government, rather meanly and hypocritically, made no provision for his daughter by Lady Hamilton.

All this is small beer compared with Wellington and Marlborough. But, in fact, throughout the eighteenth century naval commanders in general did much better for themselves than the military by making so much out of prize-money. This was a matter of chance: some of the very greatest admirals, like Hawke, Hood, and Nelson himself, made little enough. Others, like Anson, Rodney, Bridport, made considerable fortunes. By this period, something like a regular rate of honours and rewards had grown up. The commander of the fleet at a front-rank victory at sea was made a baron and given a pension of £2,000 a year to support his title. Later, after serving as commander-in-chief, he was made a viscount. That is merely a general pattern; of course, each case was decided separately, on its own particular circumstances. Hawke, one of the greatest



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