

## **HORNBLOWER'S UNLUCKY PROTEGES**

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A milestone in the young Hornblower's career came with his presentation at Court in January 1806, following his supervision of Nelson's funeral procession. On that occasion, Lord St. Vincent introduced the twenty-nine-year-old Hornblower as his *protege*, leaving Hornblower "wondering how much was implied by that word".<sup>1</sup> On returning to the Admiralty, St. Vincent expressed hope that Hornblower himself might some day present another young officer at the Palace.

Hornblower was fortunate enough to have not one, but two patrons during his early career. Before St. Vincent, Admiral Cornwallis aided Hornblower's advancement, exercising his prerogative as retiring Commander-in-Chief by promoting Hornblower to post rank.<sup>2</sup>

Alas, Hornblower himself never fulfilled St. Vincent's prediction, and except for Bush, never saw any of his subordinates succeed. To the contrary, virtually every promising young officer serving under Hornblower came to grief.

The first of these of whom we know was young Henry Wellard, the volunteer aboard the *Renown* who suffered so cruelly at the hands of the mad Captain Sawyer.<sup>3</sup> Though Wellard continued to serve well aboard the *Renown*, and may well have played a role in Sawyer's death<sup>4</sup>, he was drowned two years later in the capsizing of H.M. Cutter *Rapid*.<sup>5</sup>

Hornblower next saw promise in Midshipman Longley, the nephew of Lt. Gerard, who was serving in the *Sutherland*. "Something might be made of that boy," Hornblower thought.<sup>6</sup> Longley showed courage and skill helping Hornblower escape from a French attack, but he was killed in the battle of Rosas Bay.

Later in his career, Hornblower showed a fatherly fondness for the likable Lt. Perceval Mound, commander of the bomb ketch *Harvey* during the Baltic campaign. Mound performed many valuable services, including bombarding the *Blanchefleur* and spiriting the villainous ship's clerk

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<sup>1</sup> *Hornblower and the Atropos*, ch. VI.

<sup>2</sup> *Hornblower and the Hotspur*, ch. XXV.

<sup>3</sup> *Lieutenant Hornblower*, ch. II.

<sup>4</sup> C. Northcote Parkinson, *The Life and Times of Horatio Hornblower*, Appendix 2.

<sup>5</sup> *Lieutenant Hornblower*, ch. XVIII.

<sup>6</sup> *Ship of the Line*, ch. V.

Braun away from the Peterhof after his attempt on the life of the Czar.<sup>7</sup> Hornblower developed a genuine affection for the twenty-year-old Mound, thinking that his own first son, had he lived, might have grown up to be like him. Mound was killed soon after, during the siege of Daugavgriva.

Hornblower's most faithful follower, of course, was Bush, who at long last achieved promotion after his escape from France. Post rank was the height of Bush's ambitions, and he was the only one of Hornblower's followers to attain it. But even Bush met his end obeying Hornblower's orders, in the attack on Caudebec. Bush's loyalty to Hornblower cost him first his foot, then his life.<sup>8</sup>

At the end of his active career, Hornblower acted paternally towards his young assistants Gerard (who advanced from midshipman to flag lieutenant) and Spendlove.<sup>9</sup> But it was too late in Hornblower's career for him to see them attain high rank, especially in peacetime. Hornblower was destined never to fulfill Lord St. Vincent's hope.

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<sup>7</sup> *Commodore Hornblower*, ch. IX and XII.

<sup>8</sup> *Lord Hornblower*, ch. XV.

<sup>9</sup> *Admiral Hornblower in the West Indies*, *passim*.