

✕ TRAFALGAR. ✕

By F. W. COOMBES.



THE twenty-first of next month will be the hundredth anniversary of England's great victory over the combined fleets of France and Spain off Cape Trafalgar. Just at this time when our relations with the two countries mentioned are of the most amicable nature possible,

the recalling of this great sea fight may by some be thought to be hardly generous, but surely this is not so. British subjects are not ashamed when the citizens of the United States celebrate the Fourth of July. We admit that we were decisively beaten in the war which it commemorates, and we are also ready to admit that we are glad of it for the American's victory meant the victory of English liberties and the dearly won rights of loyal Englishmen. Why, then, should our friends, be they Frenchmen or Spaniards, feel hurt at the commemoration of the greatest of all our triumphs on the main? We do not for a moment think they would be so, any more than we should begrudge them the right to recall any of the great deeds achieved by the armies of the two countries.

Next month, therefore, we may be sure that the hundredth anniversary of Trafalgar will be celebrated in a style befitting the great occasion. The scene at the famous square in London, where England's tribute to her greatest admiral stands, should be a very striking one. Out here, in New Zealand something is to be done to show that we have not forgotten the great day, and it is to be hoped that this may also be found worthy of the event. No doubt that patriotic institution, the Navy League, will see to this, while the Education

Department is moving in the matter of having special lessons at the schools given on the battle and its after results. Wreaths frozen in blocks of ice are to be sent to be placed on Nelson's monument in London. Although the story has been often told it will be of interest at this time to recall the chief incidents in this great sea fight of a century ago. I have in my possession an ancient naval chronologist of the war published in 1806, and this gives the following fine description of Nelson's victory. Written as it must have been immediately after the ships of war had returned from the action it possesses a greater interest than many of the much-touched-up accounts of later days:—

In the middle of the year 1805, Vice-Admiral Lord Viscount Nelson, after a long and unprecedented, but unavailing, chase after the combined fleet from the Straits of Gibraltar to the West Indies, and back again, returned to his native country; but, always active, when his country required his services, he re-assumed the chief command of the British fleet, stationed off the harbour of Cadiz, on the 4th of October. Towards the middle of the month his Lordship learned, that Admiral Villeneuve, the French commander-in-chief, had orders to sail from that port before the 21st, in order to accomplish some favourite object of the French government; supposed to be, to collect in his passage the Carthagena squadron and that of Toulon; by which he would probably have increased his force to between forty and fifty sail of the line; with which it was their design to prevent, if possible, the sailing of any expedition with British troops from Malta, or with Russian troops from Corfu, to the assistance of the allies on the