

their success, and both in seamanship and in splendour they began almost to surpass their old rivals. The fall of Acre (1291), and the total expulsion of the Franks from Syria, in great measure barred the southern routes of Indian trade, whilst the predominance of Genoa in the Euxine more or less obstructed the free access of her rival to the northern routes by Trebizond and Tana.

32. Truces were made and renewed, but the old fire still smouldered. In the spring of 1294 it broke into flame, in consequence of the seizure in the Grecian seas of three Genoese vessels by a Venetian fleet. This led to an action with a Genoese convoy which sought redress.

Battle in
Bay of Ayas
in 1294.

The fight took place off Ayas in the Gulf of Scanderoon,* and though the Genoese were inferior in strength by one-third they gained a signal victory, capturing all but three of the Venetian galleys, with rich cargoes, including that of Marco Basilio (or Basegio), the commodore.

This victory over their haughty foe was in its completeness evidently a surprise to the Genoese, as well as a source of immense exultation, which is vigorously expressed in a ballad of the day, written in a stirring salt-water rhythm.† It represents the Venetians, as they enter the bay, in arrogant mirth reviling the Genoese with very unsavoury epithets as having deserted their ships to skulk on shore. They are described as saying:—

“ ‘Off they’ve slunk ! and left us nothing ;
We shall get nor prize nor praise ;
Nothing save those crazy timbers
Only fit to make a blaze.’ ”

So they advance carelessly—

“ On they come ! But lo their blunder !
When our lads start up anon,
Breaking out like unchained lions,
With a roar, ‘ Fall on ! Fall on ! ’ ” ‡

* See pp. 16, 41, and Plan of Ayas at beginning of Bk. I.

† See *Archivio Storico Italiano*, Appendice, tom. iv.

‡ *Niente ne resta a prender*
Se no li corpi de li legni :
Preixi som senza difender ;
De bruxar som tute degni !
* * *

Como li fom aproximai
Queli si levan lantor
Como leon descaenai
Tuti criando “ Alor ! Alor ! ”

This *Alor ! Alor !* (“ Up, Boys, and at ’em ”), or something similar, appears to have been the usual war-cry of both parties. So a trumpet-like poem of the