

A

NEW LIFE OF LORD NELSON.

For Notices see the Times, August 17th and 22nd,

SECOND EDITION, JUST PUBLISHED,

In two volumes 8vo. with Illustrative Engravings and Fac-similes,

MEMOIRS OF THE LIFE

OF

VICE-ADMIRAL

LORD VISCOUNT NELSON,

K. B.

DUKE OF BRONTÉ, ETC. ETC. ETC.

AND THE

PERSONAL HISTORY OF LADY HAMILTON.

**DERIVED PRINCIPALLY FROM PRIVATE CORRESPONDENCE,
HITHERTO UNPUBLISHED,**

BY

THOMAS JOSEPH PETTIGREW, ESQ., F.R.S., F.S.A.

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF GÖTTINGEN,
ETC. ETC. ETC.

CONSIDERING the number of Lives* that have been written of the Vice-Admiral Lord Viscount Nelson, and the voluminous Collection of his Dispatches and Letters published by the late Sir Nicholas Harris Nicolas, it may be reasonably inferred, that there remains nothing further in connexion with Nelson and his varied exploits to be said—that, in fact, the subject is completely exhausted; yet, upon examination it will be found that there exists a variety of interesting particulars unconfirmed—unexplained—and even mysterious. The full development of these, it must be obvious, is only to be obtained from the PRIVATE CORRESPONDENCE of the celebrated hero.

It is well known that a very intimate, indeed, an almost daily correspondence was maintained between Lord Nelson and Lady Hamilton; and in the Letters and Documents, now to be presented to the public, a Diary will literally be found containing his thoughts and reflections upon the passing events, public and private, during the course of his distinguished career. But the materials from which this new Life of Nelson is composed are not confined to the Letters which passed between Lord Nelson and Lady Hamilton—they embrace also those of the King and Queen of Naples, the Emperor of Russia, the King of Sardinia, Prince Charles Felix of Savoy, many distinguished Naval Commanders and celebrated Diplomats of the time. Among these may be mentioned:—H.R.H. the Duke of Clarence, Earl St. Vincent, Earl Spencer, Earl of Bristol, Lord Elgin, Lord St. Helens,

* By Clarke and M'Arthur, Charnock, White, Churchill, Harrison, Southey, &c.

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Lord Hobart, Lord Sidmouth, Lord Collingwood, Lord Melville, Lord Eldon, Lord Grenville, Lord Hood, Lord William Gordon; the Hon. Nicholas Vansittart, the Hon. H. Addington, the Hon. Hugh Elliott, the Hon. General Sir W. Stewart, Sir Thomas Troubridge, Sir T. M. Hardy, Sir Richard Keats, Sir J. T. Duckworth, Sir John Orde, Sir Hercules Ross, Sir Brooke Boothby, Sir Sidney Smith, Sir Alexander Ball, Sir Evan Nepean, Sir Edward Berry, Sir George Rose, Sir A. S. Hamond, Sir William Hoste, Sir Henry Blackwood, Sir Pulteney Malcolm, Sir James Crawford, Sir Thomas Louis, Sir Benjamin Hallowell, Sir J. Sutton, Sir Manley Dixon, Sir J. Hillyar, Sir Thos. Staines, General Sir John Acton, General Dumouriez, Admiral Tchitchagoff, Count Bernstorff, Count Panin, Adjutant-General Lindholm, Governor Balaschoff, Captain Lloyd, Captain Parker, Captain Langford, Rev. A. J. Scott (Chaplain to Lord Nelson), John Scott, Esq. (Secretary), William Beckford, Esq., R. Payne Knight, Esq., Richard Bulkeley, Esq., William Hayley, Esq., Alexander Davison, Esq., John Tyson, Esq., Perkins Magra, Esq. (Consul-General at Tunis), Lambton Este, Esq., Rev. C. Este, Abbé Campbell, Dr. Baird, &c. Rev. Edmund Nelson (the father of Lord Nelson), Lady Nelson, Josiah Nisbet (her son), Rev. William afterwards Earl Nelson, Mrs. Matcham, (Lord Nelson's sister), Maurice Nelson, Esq. (his brother), &c. &c.

The light thrown upon the transactions which took place from the battle of the Nile, August 1, 1798, to that of Trafalgar, October 21, 1805, in the course of this extensive correspondence will be found most interesting; so also will the minute particulars relating to the conduct and flight of the Neapolitan Royal Family, the surrender of the Castles of Uovo and Nuovo, the Blockade of La Valetta, the Convention of El Arish, &c. &c.

UPWARDS OF SIX HUNDRED LETTERS AND DOCUMENTS, WHICH HAVE NEVER BEFORE BEEN PRINTED, and the existence of which were scarcely known, will appear in these Memoirs, which have been written with the view of completing the History of one of the bravest and most patriotic Admirals that ever adorned the British Navy. It was originally the intention of the author simply to have edited the Correspondence, and published it as Supplementary volumes to those which have already appeared; but upon examination the documents were found to be too numerous and too interesting to be disposed of in that manner. They embrace such a variety of topics, private and public—correct so many errors and misconceptions that have gone forth and been very generally believed—enter so unreservedly into the subjects to which they refer—and altogether render such a complete picture of Lord Nelson's mind and character—that it has been adjudged most proper to arrange them as a distinct publication, in the form of a *New Memoir*, illustrative of the career of the Hero. Although it has been necessary in this view to describe the various actions and incidents in which Nelson was concerned, it has been thought proper not to enter upon minute details which have already appeared, and which by those who may be professionally interested in such a matter will readily be found in the previously published Lives; but rather to endeavour to combine, in the form of a *Narrative*, the Correspondence alluded to with the particular events to which they apply, and which form so interesting a portion of our Naval History.

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From the *TIMES*, August 17th & 22nd, 1849.

“Much as we have heard of the nation’s darling hero, there still remained something to be told.

“According to our notions, Nelson realized the ideal of a hero as completely as any worshipped at any time in any land. His piety was of the simplest; his love of country was fervent and self-subjugating; his gentleness was equalled only by his valour; and his energy, which has never been rivalled, corresponded with the genius that inspired it.

“Romance has been beaten in its own domain by the surpassingly romantic history of Lady Hamilton. Before no other woman, perhaps, could Nelson have so completely fallen; upon no other woman of her time were fascinations of every kind so lavishly bestowed. Her life reads like a fable.

“The character assumed by Lady Hamilton at the period of her introduction to Lord Nelson, was one that could not fail to call forth the admiration of Nelson, and to win his regard. . . . The sailors write to the lady upon matters of business, just as Romney wrote of her when he informed his friend that ‘the greatest part of the summer’ he would be engaged ‘in painting pictures from the divine lady,’ to whom he could give no other epithet, ‘for I think her superior to all womankind.’ The letters of bluff admirals and weather-beaten captains addressed to the divinity reveal an appreciation of her merits about which there can be no mistake. . . . If ever woman was mistress of the arts of bringing all men to her feet, Lady Hamilton is she. The valiant old tars who swept the seas, that England might sail empress of them, all were helpless children in her hands.

“Five years elapsed between the first and second meeting of Nelson and Lady Hamilton; but the former had passed a whole life in the interim. We saw him quitting Naples in 1793, after delivering his despatches to Sir William Hamilton, plain Captain Nelson of the *Agamemnon*. He returned to the Neapolitan shores in 1798, with a title to the peerage, a famous commander, a proud conqueror, and followed in his course by loud and grateful acclamations. At Calvi, in 1794, he had conducted the siege, and lost an eye. In 1797, crying to his men, whom he led to as desperate an assault as ever tempted bravery to the jaws of death, ‘Westminster Abbey or glorious victory,’ he captured, as it were, with his own hand, the San Josef and San Nicolas at the immortal battle of St. Vincent. Two months afterwards he parted with his right arm at Teneriffe, and within a twelvemonth again he received a wound in the head almost at the moment of achieving the splendid and decisive victory of the Nile. At this crisis of his career, we say, overflowing with honours, worshipped by his fellow-countrymen, laden with presents conferred upon him by every potentate interested in the peace of Europe, from the Russian Emperor to the Grand Signor, Nelson for the second time set foot in Naples, and saw his future mistress. His reception was a triumph. King and Queen gave way to him, and the people received him as they are apt to receive those whom their rulers deem worthy of enthusiastic welcome.

“Lady Hamilton in the meanwhile had not been idle. In her peculiar sphere she had laboured, so to speak, hand-in-hand with the hero, and contributed not a little to the success of his movements, and the consequent splendour of his renown. From the moment she undertook the cause of the British Navy she gave her whole soul to the work. Her nature did not permit her to leave one stone unturned in order to reach her end, and what her will suggested she had art enough to compass. She had been but a short time at Naples before it was asserted that she had contrived to ‘de-Bourbonize the whole royal family and to make them all English.’ This was but clearing the field for subsequent operations. A single instance of her unremitting zeal and daring patriotism speaks for a thousand. One morning Lady Hamilton received intelligence that a courier had brought to the King of Naples a private letter from the King of Spain. What were its contents? Lady Hamilton could not guess, but she was resolved to ascertain. By the aid of the Queen, the document was stolen from the King, transcribed by the ambassador’s wife, and then quietly deposited again in the King’s cabinet or waistcoat pocket. The letter had been worth the stealing. It announced the King of Spain’s determination ‘to withdraw from the coalition into which he had entered,’ and to join the French against England. The vigilant woman lost not a moment. Sir William Hamilton lay dangerously ill; but, taking counsel of herself, she at once despatched a copy of the declaration to Lord Grenville, the minister in England, and, from her own private purse, paid £400, in order to insure the delivery of the letter into his lordship’s hands.

“In June, 1798, Nelson, as all acquainted with the history of those times will vividly remember, was in search of the French fleet. How he discovered it at Alexandria

towards the end of July, and what havoc in the course of twelve hours he played with it on the 1st of August, no Englishman is likely soon to forget. But there are incidents connected with this wonderful pursuit and this noble victory with which our readers are perhaps not so familiar. They belong rather to the history of Lady Hamilton than to that of Nelson, yet how potently do they affect the character and fate of both !

“ Sir William and Lady Hamilton were aroused from their slumbers one morning in the aforesaid June by the arrival of Captain Troubridge, with letters from Sir Horatio Nelson, ‘ requesting that the ambassador would procure him permission to enter with his fleet into Naples, or any of the Sicilian ports, to provision, water, &c., as otherwise he must run for Gibraltar, being in urgent want, and that consequently he would be obliged to give over all further pursuit of the French fleet, which he had missed at Egypt, on account of their having put into Malta.’ It was much easier for Sir Horatio to make the request than for the ambassador to comply with it. At that very time Naples was at peace with France, a French ambassador was resident at the Neapolitan capital, and Ferdinand had stipulated with France that no more than two English ships of war should enter into any of the Neapolitan or Sicilian ports. What was to be done ? Sir William Hamilton did the best he could. He jumped out of bed, hastened to Sir John Acton, Ferdinand’s prime minister, who convened a council immediately, at which the King himself was present. The council sat down to consider Sir Horatio’s demand at half-past six o’clock, and took one hour and a-half exactly to come to a determination, for they did not rise until eight. Captain Troubridge accompanied Sir William Hamilton to his residence after the council broke up, but Lady Hamilton had already gathered from the countenances of the King and Sir John Acton the dismal confession that Naples could not break with France, that the fleet of Nelson could receive no help. We are reaching a point in the narrative at which the craft of a penman fails him, and the superiority of the painter becomes strikingly manifest. Imagine the vexation of the disappointed ambassador, picture to yourself the bitter regret and downcast looks of the faithful Troubridge, and then behold, close to them, a form lovely as an angel’s, a face beaming with the animation of triumph, and the ecstasy of an irrepressible delight—observe her hand trembling with the anxiousness of the precious treasure it grasps, and then see her waving high up exultingly in the air the order which the council had refused, and the King himself could not obtain. Dr. Budd’s nurserymaid had positively in her possession the permission for which Nelson had petitioned in vain, and without which it was impossible satisfactorily to carry on the war. Oh, how the sorceress must have chuckled when she saw kings, ministers, and councillors, all issuing from their solemn consultation with their lugubrious visages indicating helplessness, inability, and unutterable disgust !

“ Not a moment was to be lost, and Lady Hamilton came at once to the catastrophe. In the most passionate manner she threw herself upon her knees, and told the Queen that the fate of the Two Sicilies now depended upon her resolution ; the council were sitting ; let them decide upon negative or half measures, and the family of Ferdinand was doomed. The great French force must be followed ; it could not be pursued unless the English fleet found refreshment in the Sicilian ports ; and if allowed to go free the peril, not to England, but to Naples could not be overrated. The terrified Queen became alive to the danger of the situation, but she had faith in the King then in council, and was sure he would provide for the emergency. He might, replied the petitioner, or he might not ; and if not, who could reflect with patience upon the fate that threatened Naples and the royal family ? Her Majesty, with the stroke of the pen, could be her own deliverer.—Why hesitate ? Her sign-manual was respected throughout the King’s dominions ; a line, and her country, her husband, and his crown were rescued from destruction. No doubt the word was suited to the action, and the action to the word : pen, ink, and paper were in the room ; Lady Hamilton dictated, and the Queen, with her right hand, directed ‘ all governors of the Two Sicilies to receive with hospitality the British fleet, to water, victual, and aid them.’ Lady Hamilton enclosed that order to Nelson, and bade him commit the Queen no further than the glory and service of England required. Nelson answered, that if he gained a battle it should be called hers and the Queen’s, for to them alone would his country be indebted for the victory. He did gain a battle, and it was that of the memorable Nile. Had his fleet not been furnished with the necessaries of life at Syracuse, the battle would not have been fought.

“ We content ourselves with this statement. No impartial reader of the whole case will fail to conclude that Lady Hamilton employed the rare gifts that nature and education had conferred upon her to bring one of the greatest of his time to her feet, and to complete the history of the conquest by linking her name and life with those of a man who will never be forgotten whilst the history of his country endures.”



LORD NELSON, K.B.

&c. &c. &c.

FROM THE ORIGINAL PICTURE IN THE BOARD ROOM OF THE ADMIRALTY, & PRESENTED BY THE

HON^{BLE} ROBERT FULKE GREVILLE (1848) TO THE LORDS COMMISSIONERS OF THE ADMIRALTY