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Right Honourable Earl Nelson

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NELSON RELICS.

By the Right Honourable the EARL NELSON.

THE desire to preserve the relics of our ancestors or of the great men of any tribe or nation seems to be inherent in the human race. This desire is not only found among the Red Indians and other untutored tribes, but among those nations who have become most highly civilised, and among Christian Churches, which are eager to preserve the relics of their saints.

It is therefore apparent that the thief or thieves who stole and damaged the Nelson relics at Greenwich have not only disgraced themselves as Britons in robbing a national collection, in which they as a part of the nation have a share, but have grossly transgressed the primal laws of the whole human race. The cruelty of the act can best be understood when we consider that these relics were the direct gifts of individuals to the nation; and the spirit in which they were given can best be illustrated by an extract from a letter written by *Mr. J. A. Mullens*, of *Firgrove*, Weybridge, in answer to my thanks to him for his noble gift.

"I am much gratified that my action as regards the *Nelson relics* meets with your approval, but you must permit me to say that the terms in which you speak of it are altogether too flattering. Purchase gave me possession of these treasures, but in my opinion a mere transfer of money (it was about £3,000) gave me no right either on public or private grounds to treat them as my private property. In handing to the Museum at Greenwich the *box* in which the Freedom of the City of London was presented to Lord Nelson, and the *sword hilt* given to him by the captains who fought at the Nile; and to the United Service Institution the *Copenhagen wine coolers* and his *fork and knife*, I have only done what every Englishman in my place would have been eager to do."

These sentiments are worthy of an old Etonian and a true Briton, and it is indeed hard that his noble presents to the Museum at Greenwich should have met with so base a reward.

To all who are seeking for Nelson relics, I would recommend their referring to the ably drawn up catalogue for the Naval Exhibition at Chelsea, in 1891; the Committed professed to receive no relics that were not proved to their satisfaction to be authentic, and a list of their possessors was given. This would embrace a large number of relics, including personal presents from the Admiral in his life-time or by special bequest. But besides this there are four distinct sources, to one of which everything possessed by the Admiral at the time of his death should be clearly traced.

Everything at Merton that was not an heirloom went to *Lady Hamilton*; and most of these subsequently came into the possession of *Alderman Smith*, who advanced money to enable Lady Hamilton to escape from the King's Bench and to leave for Calais. The rest were divided into three parts, following the line of succession laid down at the Admiral's desire in the Patent as Viscount:—

1. To *William, the first Earl*, with the heirlooms.
2. To the Admiral's *eldest sister, Mrs. Bolton*.
3. To his *youngest sister, Mrs. Matcham*.

The portion that went to Earl William was left by him to his daughter, Lady Bridport, and was subsequently brought to the hammer under the dire necessity of the present Viscount.

These precious relics were mostly preserved to the country. The late Government purchased the *jewelled orders* for the Museum at Greenwich; and the valuable *volumes with his original public letters* were secured by the British Museum. To Mr. Mullens' purchases I have already referred. The *diamond aigrette* presented to the Admiral by the Sultan after the Battle of the Nile—a Bronté heirloom—was purchased by the wife of Mr. George Eyre Matcham, great-grandson of *Catherine*, the Admiral's favourite sister, and thus added to their portion of the relics originally distributed. The *coat*, so wantonly damaged by the thieves, was lent by the first Earl to Lady Hamilton for her life, and not having been returned came into the possession of Alderman Smith's family; a letter thus tracing the coat is now in the Museum at Greenwich.

I inherited a very small portion of my grandmother's share, but during the 65 years since I succeeded to the title, I have, by the kindness of friends, got together a few relics for *my Nelson Room*, and I fancy that, however few they may be, a catalogue *raisonné* of them may be of some national interest.

1. A SEPIA DRAWING.

My first relic was a sepia drawing by the Admiral's beloved *sister Katie*, a sketch from memory of *Burnham-Thorpe Rectory*, where the Admiral was born. This sister went with her husband to see him off from Portsmouth when he went to fight the French and Spanish Fleet then gathered in Trafalgar Bay. On wishing her good-bye his last words were—"Oh, Katie, that

gipsy!" referring to a prophecy from a gipsy fortune-teller in the West Indies, more than twenty years before, to the effect that by the time he was forty he would have reached the top of his profession; after this she could say no more, as the book was closed.

2. A TREATISE ON SHIPBUILDING AND NAVIGATION.

By Mungo Murray.

London. MCCLIV.

This has an original autograph:—

"Horatio Nelson. Lowestoft, A.D. 1777."

And he writes to his brother William, April 14th of that year, stating that he had passed as lieutenant on the 9th April and had received his commission on the following day to the "Lowestoft"—32-gun frigate, *Captain Wm. Locker*.

3. OIL PAINTING BY RIGAUD, R.A.

Captain Locker and Nelson became great friends, and I was enabled shortly after coming of age to purchase this painting of Edward Hawke Locker, Esq., F.R.S., his son, then Governor of Greenwich Hospital.

In this picture, Fort St. Juan in Central America, which Nelson took in 1780, is given in the background. He was then a captain at the age of 22. This picture was given by Nelson to Captain Locker and was placed by him between two portraits of captains—*Sir George Montague* and *Sir Charles Maurice Pole*. He writes of this picture:—

"I hope when I come to town to see a fine trio in your room."

Again:—

"If Rigaud has done the picture let me know when you next write, and I will send an order upon Mr. Paynter for it."

Again on 21st February, 1781, he writes:—

"As to my picture, it will not be the least like what I am now, that is certain; tell Rigaud to add beauty to it and it will be much mended."

4. WATCH—A SILVER TURNIP.

Captain Wm. Locker left the Admiral his watch—a silver turnip—which he much valued as a remembrance of his old friend, but which he never wore.

5. A BRACE OF SILVER-MOUNTED PISTOLS with "Horatio Nelson" engraved on them.

Given to Viscount Trafalgar on his marriage. This introduces the great fighting period with the "Agamemnon" from 1794 to 1796.

6. A LOCKET, with the following inscription: "From Horatio Nelson to Lady Hamilton, A.D. 1796," was sent me by Captain Molyneux, who bought it at a pawnbroker's in Brussels, 1865. He offered to erase the inscription, which is its chief value. There had been hair at the back.

The Admiral's first introduction to Lady Hamilton is mentioned in a letter to the Viscountess, September 12th, 1793.

"Lady Hamilton has been wonderfully good and kind to Josiah [his stepson]. She is a young woman of amiable manners, who does honour to the station to which she is raised."

The more intimate relationship between them certainly never occurred till after the Battle of the Nile. I therefore think this present must have had direct reference to the incident he refers to in his codicil.

"She obtained the King of Spain's letter in 1796 to his brother the King of Naples, acquainting him with his intention of declaring war against England."

Negotiations were going on between France and Spain as far back as April, 1795, yet in September, 1796, the Admiral knew nothing of it, and therefore dared not take a Spanish frigate.

The treaty of peace was signed on August 19th, 1796, and war was not publicly declared till October. Nevertheless, the Admiral believed Lady Hamilton's statement, and this *locket* seems to bear testimony to that belief.

7. THE "SAN JOSEPH" TABLE AND BOOK-CASES.

When this ship, which used to be the Guard Ship at Devonport, was broken up, in 1849, the Admiralty gave me some of the wood.

This is the ship he took with the "San Nicholas" on the 14th February, 1797.

"On the quarter-deck of a Spanish first-rate did I receive, extravagant as it may seem, the swords of the vanquished Spaniards, which as I received I gave to Francis Fearney, my bargeman, who with the greatest *sang-froid* placed them under his arm."

The *box* given to Greenwich by Mr. Mullens, above referred to, had enamelled on it the little Captain with the two great Spaniards as captives. The Spanish Admiral's sword, returned to him by Lord St. Vincent, was presented by Nelson to the Corporation of Norwich.

For this action Nelson was made a Knight of the Bath.

8. A SEAL, with his arms and supporters, and the motto "Faith and Works." The stern of the "San Joseph" was his crest. I purchased this of the granddaughter of the Viscountess.

9. A MINIATURE OF THE ADMIRAL.

Purchased from the same source. It is recorded that up to the time of her death the Viscountess has been seen looking at and kissing this miniature.

10. THE SOFA BED FROM THE CABIN OF THE "THESEUS."

Left me by Admiral Hockin. It is covered with satin for their drawing-room, but underneath is the old black leather, and I was told that blood from the wounded arm is still visible upon it.

When he first joined the "Theseus," in 1797, he tells his wife that the following was found on the quarter-deck:—

"Success attend Admiral Nelson; God bless Captain Miller; we thank them for the officers they have placed over us; we are happy and comfortable and will shed every drop of the blood in our veins to support them, and the name of 'Theseus' shall be immortalised as high as the 'Captain.'"

We now come to the relics in reference to the Battle of the Nile, August 1st, 1798, H.M.S. "Vanguard."

Honor est a Nilo is an anagram forming *Horatio Nelson*. The Admiral heard of this and tells Lady Hamilton about it. How he would have gloried had he known, before his last battle, that Trafalgar meant "The Cape of Laurel"!

11. PICTURE BY GUZZARDI.

Purchased for me of Joseph Franklin, Esq., of Albemarle Street, in 1859. It is a full-length portrait, 36 inches by 24 inches, cabinet size. It is in a gilt frame, with carved pomegranates upon it. It was purchased at Naples, and had on its back the words "Il Maestro il Re." It is a signed picture. A larger full-length by the same artist was presented by the Admiral to an hotel at Milford Haven, from which it was purchased for the Admiralty, and now hangs over the mantle-piece of the Board Room.

It is not a pleasing picture, as he is looking very ill, and is wearing his cocked hat, with the diamond aigrette upon it, at the back of his head in consequence of the wound received at the Nile; but it is distinctly historic, not only having the battle of the Nile with the "L'Orient" in flames for a background and other trophies, but as witnessing to the state of his health after that great battle. He had been continuously on service for four years, had lost an eye and an arm, and had received other wounds; he had been the hero of a hundred fights; and as to the Nile wound, *Captain Mahan* writes:—"The distress from his head continued for some time with little abatement, and naturally affected his tone of mind."

12. THE SILVER VASE.

Given to the Admiral by the Company of English merchants trading in the Levant.

This was bequeathed to my grandmother in his will, "to my sister *Susannah Bolton* the silver cup presented to me by the Turkish Company." This cup is particularly artistic: two sphinxes form the handles; on the top of the lid, which is surrounded by crocodiles and lotus (the symbols of Egypt), is Neptune with his trident; round the bowl of the cup are the names of the French ships with the number of men and guns, and what became of them, and below a noble inscription.

13. THE GOLD MEDAL OF THE NILE.

Worn by the Admiral at the time of his death. His first medal was given by him to the widow of Captain Westcott, who fell at the Nile. Hearing she lived at Honiton, he slept there, asked her to dinner, and, finding she had no medal, presented her with his own.

14. MARBLE BUST ON PEDESTAL.

By Franz Thaller and Matthias Ranson. "Vienna, MDCCI." carved at back of bust, making it by the mistaken omission of one C 1701 instead of 1801.

This was purchased for me of Miss Pettigrew, daughter of Dr. Pettigrew, F.R.S., who purchased the private correspondence between Nelson and Lady Hamilton.

The Admiral must have sat for it when staying at Vienna on his way home from Naples in 1800. Dr. Pettigrew received the *Bust and pedestal* from Mrs. Alderman Smith in recognition of long medical attendance upon her.

This *Bust* was exhibited by me at the *Guelph* Exhibition, 1891. Sir Wm. Fraser, Bart., wrote me:—

"I am well pleased with the *Bust*, it is the only portrait that gives one a real idea of the great Admiral; full of character, combining gentleness with inflexible determination—the ideal of a hero."

15. A MAHOGANY CHIPPENDALE TRAY with the Nelson arms and a Baron's coronet inlaid in wood.

16. A LARGE IVORY-HANDLED SILVER SEAL, with the Nelson arms and a Baron's coronet.

This, I believe, was the seal used at Copenhagen, 2nd April, 1801, when he discarded the wafer and *sealed* the offer of an armistice to the Crown Prince of Denmark:—

"Danes, we are brothers."

In a letter to Lady Hamilton, 23rd May, 1803, the Admiral refers to this seal:—

"I have left my silver seal."

THE NELSON PORTRAITS.

There were two portraits by Abbot taken after his return home from Teneriffe—a *kit-cat*, of which the Viscountess writes, and one for Captain Locker, from which many replicas were taken; this was in the possession of his son when I bought the Rigaud picture.

It is noteworthy that up to, and including, the Guzzardi picture, the hair was brushed off the forehead; afterwards, including the Vienna bust, a lock of hair was brushed forward to conceal the scar of the Nile wound, which must have caused a great disfigurement. This change in wearing the hair makes it difficult to trace a general likeness through all the portraits.

I have a good full-length copy by Morton (1835) of *Hopner's* picture, now in St. James's Palace.

A pencil sketch by T. E. Downman (1802), his own proof, with "*bizona una carta biangha di dietro al Pietrallo*" written upon it in pencil with the Admiral's left hand. It was drawn on remarkably thin paper, and is now mounted on white cardboard.

A *Powerful Pencil Medallion*, by Simon de Kester, taken two days before he sailed for Copenhagen.

A *Miniature on Ivory*, after Hopner.

A *Miniature*, by Cosway.

A *Medallion*, in wedgewood, after Flaxman.

I have also a *water-colour sketch of Lady Hamilton*, by Romney, and a good *medallion* on an engraved jewel, both very beautiful.

A *water-colour sketch of Merton*, and a *print* worked over in needlework, supposed by some to be "*Sterne and Maria*," but the man in black dittoes is like the Admiral, and has an empty right-arm sleeve, while the face and figure and the dog are exactly like the figures represented in the sketch of Merton.

17. THE REVEREND EDMUND NELSON.

By Sir William Beechey.

Taken in March, 1800, shortly before his death. The Viscountess was with him at Bath, and called on Sir William to ask him to take a portrait. At first he declined, as he was on holiday, but when he heard who it was, he said:—

"By God! I would go to York to do it. Yes, ma'am, directly."

The Admiral refers to this picture from the "*Amazon*," October 19th, 1801:—

"I want a half-length of Sir William Hamilton the same size as my father's, by Beechey."

18. TWO PLATES (OF A WORCESTER DESSERT SERVICE).

Specially made for him with Viscount and Ducal Coronet over his arms with the names of different battles on each plate, and with a border of oak leaves. These are fastened to the wall

by two curtain holders with a miniature of the Admiral in Battersea enamel—part of the fittings of a room at Fonthill which Mr. Becford fitted up for his visit there in 1801.

19 to 26. We now come to the contents of the "Victory" cabin, 1803-5.

A Large Sofa in black leather on which he slept.

His Chair also in black leather, with a stuffing of hay on the right arm for his stump to rest upon. This was left me by will by G. H. Thompson, Esq., of Andover, and had on it the following inscription:—

"This chair is the last chair the great Lord Nelson ever sat on, and is to be given at my decease to the present Earl Nelson and his heirs."

It was given by the then Captain Thomas Hardy to my aunt, Isabella Thompson, and was landed out of the "Victory" after her return from Trafalgar and taken to my grandfather's house at Portsea, where she was then living.

My aunt used to twit Captain Hardy that he had kept the Admiral's chair and given her the one he used himself, upon which he declared "that he would be d—— if that was not the Admiral's chair, and the fellow in which he himself sat was broken in clearing the ship for action." This chair and its fellow met again side by side at the Naval Exhibition at Chelsea 1891.

A mahogany tripod table, weighted, and with scoops for holding plates and saucers, was also from the cabin, and was given me by Lord Addington.

A square dressing-room looking glass, from the cabin.

A telescope given by the Admiral to Thomas Atkinson, Esq., master of the "Victory," in remembrance of his godson, Captain Horatio Nelson Atkinson.

His Neapolitan cane, given me in 1884, by Chancellor Burton, of Carlisle; he was then ninety-three, and could remember the news coming of the battle of the Nile, and subscribing towards the Patriotic Fund of that day at a service in commemoration of the battle of Trafalgar. ♥

I have had the pleasure of shaking hands with Sir Thomas Hardy, Sir Charles Bullen, Admiral Pasco, Tom Allen, his servant, who lamented that he missed the "Victory" when starting for Trafalgar, and Dr. Beattie, the surgeon on board the "Victory," who has often shown me the bullet which slew the Admiral. He also published a book, "The Death of Nelson," with a beautiful engraving of a picture by Devis, who was assistant surgeon on board the "Victory." Devis painted one for Admiral Page, of which I have a copy. There is a miniature of the same, which was exhibited last year by Lord Rosebery at the United Service Institution at Whitehall. There is a great shade to protect his eye, which was getting very weak. I consider it, next to the Vienna bust, the best likeness extant.

The Admiralty sent me some *muskets, pistols, boarding pikes, and cutlasses*, returned as worn out in 1806, and, therefore, most likely used in

LORD NELSON.

**Bust by the Austrian Sculptor, Franz Thaller, Vienna, 1801.
In the possession of Earl Nelson.**

J. J. K. & Co., Ltd., London.

the great battle. They are now placed to decorate three niches in the Hall at Trafalgar.

I have also *a part of his private log* in which he made entries every day during his 2½ years' patient watching of the French fleet and caring for the health and comfort of those under his command.

I consider this period, culminating as it did in his greatest victory, the noblest period of his life, far from those he loved best, with great self-denial he gave himself up to the service of his King and country, and was thus enabled to say in the hour of victory :—

“Thank God, I have done my duty.”

No man has done more to add to the prestige of the British name or to lay more surely the foundations of the British Empire. If half-an-hour spent over the “Nelson Relics” encourages others in like manner to do their duty, I shall indeed be satisfied.

NELSON.