



ELSON'S LAST DIARY

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NELSON'S LAST DIARY

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and Admiralty Division.

~~1805~~

NELSON'S LAST DIARY

SEPTEMBER 13—OCTOBER 21, 1805

With an Introduction and Notes by
Gilbert Hudson



15/12/73
— 9/7/19

LONDON
ELKIN MATHEWS, CORK STREET
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*The vignette portrait on the title-page is after a drawing
by GEORGE CRUIKSHANK*

NOTE

The transcription of the Diary was undertaken at the suggestion of Mr. F. W. X. Fincham, Superintendent of the Literary Department, Principal Probate Registry, to whom and all other helpers the writer desires to express his acknowledgments.

INTRODUCTION

THE Private Journal or Diary kept by Nelson from the time of his leaving Merton until the morning of Trafalgar, was afterwards brought to England by Captain Hardy. The Codicil which occupies its final pages, being proved as the eighth and last to the Will, the whole book was duly filed at Doctors' Commons, and transferred, in accordance with the "Probate Court Act" of 1857, to the Probate Registry at Somerset House, where it and the other testamentary documents, like the Will of Shakespeare, are now preserved in a specially constructed box or case.

Dr. Beatty, in his 'Authentic Narrative of the Death of Nelson' (1807), calls the Diary the Memorandum Book; and as far as looks go it is nothing else. It measures about seven inches by four-and-a-half, and contains twenty leaves—now numbered as forty pages—all of them except the first, and the last five, being

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written on both sides entirely by Nelson's own left hand, interleaved with blotting-paper, and bound in limp leather covers of a deep red shade. Nothing but a slight crinkling of these covers remains to show that the book lay during many years rolled up with the Will and other papers, without distinction of place or treatment. The fact that they have been protected, like thousands of other interesting records, from the deleterious handling of idle curiosity, speaks well for those official regulations which the general public is always ready enough to condemn as arbitrary and unreasonable.

Had the Diary been lodged in scrupulous custody at an earlier date, it might have retained its original number of leaves, whereof two, unfortunately, have long been missing. But the mutilation is not visible except on careful scrutiny, and the book now appears only a little more soiled and worn than when it lay in Nelson's escritoire, unhurt amid the perilous tumult of Trafalgar.

The time-mellowed pages have a peculiar odour of a much more agreeable pungency than the usual mustiness of ancient records, and more than faintly suggestive of spicy exhalations from tar and hemp and timber. Whether this arises indeed from some old permeation of nautical atmosphere and circumstance, or merely from certain fragrant qualities of the paper and

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binding, or by chance from any process of fumigation or embalmment, or from what other cause soever, it deserves at least brief mention if only for the sake of sentiment.

Another curious detail is, that the writing nicely fills the paper, with the exception of the sides left blank, as noted above, at the beginning and the end of the book. Had the length of the entries been foreseen, and adapted to the space (which is impossible), they could not have fitted much better.

The contents of the Diary have never been printed word for word either as they exist to-day or as before they were diminished by the theft of two whole leaves; nor has this injury to the precious manuscript been pointed out till now. The Affidavit, moreover, upon which the Codicil was proved, and which, by the way, was never registered, appears now, probably for the first time, in its proper context.

The transcription has been collated with the extracts given, as from the Private Diary, in the seventh volume of the 'Despatches and Letters of Lord Nelson' (1846)—hereafter referred to simply as the 'Despatches'—edited by Sir Nicholas Harris Nicolas; from which work all subsequent biographers seem to have drawn their quotations. No extracts occur in Clarke and M'Arthur's 'Life of Nelson' (1840) which do not afterwards appear in the 'Des-

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patches,' and all the extracts printed in the latter work are described by the editor as taken either from the former, or from Dr. Beatty's 'Narrative of the Death, etc.,' or from "autographs or facsimiles." Was Dr. Beatty, then, the only editor who copied from the Diary itself? If he had the original before him, the fact that he heads his extract for October 20, as taken from an "autograph or facsimile," proves that the leaf containing this entry—and also, therefore, the corresponding leaf—must have been abstracted before the date of his writing.*

Nelson's handwriting is in some places by no means easy to decipher, and would often baffle an unaccustomed reader; but the consistency of the formations soon makes them clearer upon acquaintance. The lines run remarkably straight, and like the words are freely and evenly spaced. He very frequently wrote capital or enlarged small letters instead of ordinary initials, and less frequently small letters, or what look like them, at the beginning of entries and in other positions where modern usage would have expected capitals. Punctuation he almost eschews. An attempt to represent all these peculiarities in type would

* See the notes under October 3 and 20 in the text of the Diary and at the end.

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not have served any useful purpose. By printing capitals where custom now demands them, or may at least allow them, and also by supplying necessary stops, the transcriber hopes he has followed a satisfactory course between a thorough modernisation and a facsimile reproduction.

G. H.

LORD NELSON'S LAST PRIVATE DIARY

(KNOWN ALSO AS THE PRIVATE JOURNAL AND
AS THE MEMORANDUM BOOK)

FRIDAY Night at half-past Ten drove from dear, dear Merton, where I left all which I hold dear in this World, to go to serve my King & Country. May the Great God Whom I adore enable me to fullfill the expectations of my Country, and if it is His good pleasure that I should return, my thanks will never cease being offered up to the Throne of His Mercy. If it is His good providence to cut short my days upon Earth, I bow with the greatest submission, relying that He will protect those so dear to me that I may leave behind.

His Will be done.

Amen. Amen. Amen.

Saturday, Sept. 14th, 1805.—At six o'clock arrived at Portsmouth, and having arraigned all my business embarked at the Bathing Machines

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with Mr. Rose and Mr. Canning. At 2 got on board the *Victory* at St. Helen's, who dined with me ; preparing for sea.

Sunday, Sept. 15th, 1805.—At day weighed with light airs Northerly. At 6 was obliged to anchor. At 8 weighed. All day light breezes. At sun sett off Christ Church. All night light Breezes & very foggy. *Euryalus* in company.

Wrote Ly. Hn.

Monday, Sept. 16th.—First part light Breezes & very foggy. At noon fresh Breezes Westerly. In the evening off the Berry head 4 miles. All night fresh Breezes Westerly.

Wrote Ly. H.

Tuesday, Sept. 17th.—Fresh Breezes WSW. At 9 abreast of Plyh. Sent in *Euryalus* to call out the *Ajax* and *Thunderer*. All night standg. to the Westward. Wind from SW to SSW.

Wrote Ly. H.

Wednesday, Sept. 18.—First part light Breezes & heavy western swell. Wind South. Lay too for the *Ajax* and *Thunderer*. Lizard North. At noon they joined. Made all possible sail. All night Breezes Vble from SE to SSW Swell from the Westward.

Thursday, Sept. 19th.—First part fresh gales & heavy sea. At noon hard gales at SW. At

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6 P.M. hard Rain, wind at NW. All night heavy sea & fresh breezes.

Wrote Ly. Hn.

Friday, Sept. 20th.—Modte Breezes WSW & heavy sea. At 9 saw a Squadron of Ships of War. At 11 passed the Squadron of Rear-Adl. Stirling, consisting of 5 Sail of the Line and one Frigate. At noon wind WSW. Saw a Frigate to windward which made the private signal. At 2 spoke the *Decade* carrying the Flag of Rear-Adl. Sir Richard Bickerton. Capt. Stuart came on board. Gave him orders for his farther proceedings. Fresh gales. At 3 reefed the Courses. All night very fresh gales from the NW which came on with heavy rain at 7 o'clock.

Saturday, Sept. 21st, 1805.—Fresh gales all day at NNW. At night wind at North & NE. Heavy swell.

Sunday, Sept. 22nd.—Modte Breezes at NE & heavy swell from NW. At 1 o'clock saw a Convoy of 7 sail under a vessel of war in the SE. quarter. At 6 o'clock *Euryalus* made the signal that a vessel was reconnoitering in the East quarter. All night fresh gales at East to ESE.

Monday, Sept. 23rd.—Fresh gales E b S. At 6 o'clock abreast of Cape Finisterre 17 Lgs. At

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noon modte W : in Latd $42^{\circ} : 2'5$ [sic.] N. All night fine weather. Wind Easterly.

Tuesday, Sept. 24th.—Modte Breezes SE. At noon in Latd. $40 : 05$ N : 3 P.M. light airs South. In the evening wind Northerly. Light Breezes all night at NE and a swell from the NW.

Wrote Ly. H.

Wednesday, Sept. 25th, 1805.—Light airs Southerly. Saw the Rock of Lisbon SSE 10 Leagues. At sun sett the Capt. of the *Constance* came on board. Sent my letters for England by him to Lisbon, and wrote to Capt. Sutton & the Consul. The Enemy's Fleet had not left Cadiz the 18th of this month, therefore I yet hope they will wait my arrival.

Thursday, Sept. 26th.—Light airs at NW all day. Rock of Lisbon in sight to the NNE 13-14 Lgs. At 4 o'clock sent *Euryalus* to join Vice Adl. Collingwood with my orders to put himself under my Command, considering myself as within the limits of my Command. All night light Breezes at NW.

Friday, Sept. 27th, 1805.—At daylight Cape St. Vincent SE b S by compass 6 Leagues. Saw a Sloop of war or small Frigate East 5 or 6 miles. Called her in. She proved to be the

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Nautilus Sloop from Vice Adl. Collingwood bound to England with dispatches. At noon abreast of Lagos Bay. Fresh Breezes NW. At 1 A.M. brought too. Fresh Breezes NW b N.

Saturday, Sept. 28th, 1805.—Fresh Breezes at NNW. At daylight bore up & made sail. At 9 saw the *Aetna* cruizing. At noon saw nine sail of ships of war bearing East Lat : 36 : 32 N. At one saw eighteen Sail. Nearly calm. In the evening joined the Fleet under Vice Admiral Collingwd. Saw the Enemy's Fleet in Cadiz, amounting to 35 or 36 Sail of the Line.

Sunday, Sept. 29th.—Fine weather. Gave out the necessary orders for the Fleet. Sent *Euryalus* to watch the Enemy with the *Hydra* off Cadiz.

Monday, Sept. 30th.—Fine weather. Wind Easterly.

Tuesday, Octr. 1st.—Fine Wr. Adl. Louis, 1 squadron, joined with *Thunder* [sic.] and *Endymion* with sprung masts. Sent *Aetna* to cruize under Cape St. Mary's. *Pickle* joined from Plymouth.

Wrote Ly. Hn.

Wednesday, Octr. 2nd.—Fine Wr. Westerly. Sent *Thunder* to Gibr., Sarda., Palermo & Naples. Sent *Canopus, Tigre, Spencer, Queen,*

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Zealous to Gibr. & Tetuan for water & provns. Sent the *Nimble* to England. All night fine weather.

Monday, Octr. 3rd, 1805.—Fine weather. Sent *Eurydice* to cruize under Cape St. Mary's.

[*Note.*—This entry is the last on the page now numbered 16. Page 17 begins with the words about the *Eurydice*. Then follows the entry dated October 9th. With the exception therefore of the *Eurydice* note (which must have been the last under October 8th), the entries for the 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th, and 8th days are wanting. The leaf which contained them was the half-sheet corresponding to the half-sheet—also missing—which contained most of the entry for October 20th. The latter deficiency can be made good from the "Despatches," but the former seems beyond remedy, unless, indeed, the present possessor of the stolen half-sheet can be found.]

(*Tuesday, Octr. 8th.*)—Off Cadiz *Eurydice* captured a Spanish Privateer.

Wednesday, Octr. 9th.—Fresh Breezes Easterly. Receiv'd an account from Capt. Blackwood that the French ships had all bent their Topgt. sails. Sent the *Pickle* to him with orders to keep a good look out. Sent Adl. Collingwood the Nelson Touch. At night wind Westerly.

Thursday Octr. 10th, 1805.—Fine Wr. Wind Westerly. Received an account that the Enemy are ready for Sea and at the very harbours

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Since the date of this publication a full transcript of the Diary has been consulted at the British Museum. It is mostly written in what appears to be Earl Nelson's handwriting, but the first few pages are in another hand, and the codicil in a third. The entries under the hitherto missing dates run in this transcript as follows :—

Friday, Octr. 4th.—Fine Weather, Wind Easterly, several Ships of War in sight to the Southward, which proved to be Adml. Louis's Squadron.

Saturday, Octr. 5th.—Fine weather, *Bittern* joined with 2 transports from Gibrar., laying too, clearing transports.

Sunday, Octr. 6th.—Mode. Breezes ESE, clearing transports in the night, fresh breezes, Easterly.

Wrote Ly. H.

Monday, Octr. 7th, 1805.—Fresh breezes & a hasty sea—joined the *Amphion* with a transport from Lisbon—*Naid* [*sic*] & *Niger* with transports from Gibraltr.—sent the *Bittern* to Lisbon with the Gibrr. mail—at noon mode. Breezes & a swell from ye Eastward—all night fresh Gales, Easterly.

Tuesday, Octr. 8th.—Fresh breezes, Easterly. *Royal Sovereign* in sight to Leeward at 4 P.M. she joined, sent the *Naid* [*sic*] off Cadiz. *Eurydice* captured a Spanish Privateer.

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Mouth. *Bellisle* made her number at noon. *Bellisle* joined from Plyh. In the evening the *Renommee* Frigate & *Confounder* G Brig. Sent the *Aetna* & *Confounder* to Gibraltar. All night very fresh Breezes NW & Rain.

Friday, Octr. 11th.—Fresh Breezes NW.

Saturday, Octr. 12th.—Fresh Breezes N Werly
—Keeping to the Westward.*

Wrote Ly. Hn.

Sunday, Octr. 13th, 1805.—Fine weather. *Agamemnon* joined from England having fallen in with the French Squadron off Cape Finistr. consisting of 1 Three decker and 5 Two deck'd ships, and had a narrow escape from capture.

L'Aimable also joined who had likewise been chased. *Prince of Wales* sailed for England.

Monday, Octr. 14th.—Fine weather. Westerly wind. Sent *Amphion* to Gibraltar & Algiers. Enemy at the Harbours Mouth. Placed *Defence* & *Agamemnon* from seven to ten leagues West of Cadiz and *Mars* & *Colossus* five leagues East from the Fleet, whose station will be from 15 lgs. to twenty West of Cadiz, and by this chain I hope to have a constant communication with the Frigates off Cadiz.

* The words *Renomee* joined which follow here are struck out.

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Tuesday, Oct. 15th.—Fine Wr. Westerly. Sent *Renommee* & *L'Aimable* to Gibraltar & Malta and the *Warspt.* to Gibr. Adl. Louis is order'd to see the Convoy above Carthagea & the Frigates to escort them to Malta. All night modte. Breezes Westerly.

Wednesday, Oct. 16th.—Modte Breezes Westerly. All the forenoon employd forming the Fleet into the order of sailing. At noon fresh Breezes WSW & squally. In the evening fresh gales. Enemy as before, by Sign. from *Weazel*.

Thursday, Oct. 17th, 1805.—Modte Brezs. N Werly. Sent *Donegal* to Gibraltar to get a ground tier of casks. Receivd accounts by the *Diligent* Store ship that Sir Richd. Strachan was supposed in sight of the French Rochford Squadron, which I hope is true. At midnight the wind came to the Eastward.

Friday, Oct. 18th.—Fine weather. Wind Easterly. The Combined Fleets cannot have finer Wr. to put to sea.

Saturday, Oct. 19th.—Fine weather. Wind Easterly. At $\frac{1}{2}$ pt. 9 the *Mars* being one of the Look out ships made the signal that the Enemy were coming out of Port. Made the signal for a general chase SE. Wind at South,

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Cadiz bearing ESE by compass distance 16 leagues. At three the *Colossus* made the signal that the Enemy's Fleet was at sea. In the evening made signals to observe my motions during the night, for the *Britannia*, *Prince* & *Dreadnought*, they being heavy sailers, to take Stations as convenient, and for *Mars*, *Orion*, *Bellisle*, *Leviathan*, *Bellerophon* & *Polyphemus* to go ahead during the night and to carry a light, standing for the Straights Mouth.

[*Note*.—Here is wanting the leaf spoken of in the note to October 3. In its place the following extract is taken from the "Despatches."]

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(Autograph in the possession of J. WILD, ESQ.)

Sunday, Octr. 20th, 1805.—Fresh Breezes SSW and rainy. Communicated with *Phoebe*, *Defence* and *Colossus*, who saw near forty sail of ships of War outside of Cadiz yesterday evening, but the wind being Southerly they could not get to the Mouth of the Straits. We were between Trafalgar and Cape Spartel. The Frigates made the signal that they saw 9 sail outside the Harbour; gave the Frigates instructions for their guidance, and placed *Defence*, *Colossus* and *Mars* between me and the Frigates. At noon fresh gales and heavy rain, Cadiz NE 9 Leagues. In the afternoon

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Captain Blackwood telegraphed that the Enemy seemed determined to go to the Westward ; and that they shall not do if in the power of Nelson and Bronte to prevent them.

[*Note.*—The Diary then continues, from the top of the next page.]

At 5 telegraph'd Capt. Bd. that I rely'd upon his keeping sight of the Enemy. At 5 o'clock *Naiad* made the signal for 31 sail of the Enemy NNE. The Frigates and Look out ships kept sight of the Enemy most admirably all night, and told me by signals which tack they were upon. At 8 we wore & stood to the SW, and at 4 a.m. wore and stood to the NE.

[*Note.*—This continuation is quoted in the “Despatches” as from “a Facsimile Copy in the possession of Philip Toker, Esq.,—Clarke and M'Arthur, Vol. II, p. 441.”]

Monday, Octr. 21st, 1805,—At day light saw the Enemy's Combined Fleet from East to ESE. Bore away, made the signal for order of sailing and to prepare for Battle, the Enemy with their heads to the Southward. At 7 the Enemy wearing in succession. May the Great God whom I worship Grant to my Country and for the benefit of Europe in General a great and Glorious Victory, and may no misconduct in anyone tarnish it, and may humanity after Victory be the predominant feature in the

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British Fleet. For myself individually I commit my life to Him Who made me, and may his blessing light upon my endeavours for serving my Country faithfully. To Him I resign myself and the just cause which is entrusted me to Defend.

Amen, Amen, Amen.

[THE CODICIL FOLLOWS, AS TRANSCRIBED IN THE "DESPATCHES" AND OTHER WORKS.]

October the Twenty first, one thousand Eight hundred and five, then in sight of the Combined Fleets of France and Spain, distant about Ten Miles.

Whereas the Eminent Services of Emma Hamilton, Widow of the Right Honourable Sir William Hamilton, have been of the very greatest service to our King and Country, to my knowledge, without her receiving any reward from either our King or Country, first, that she obtained the King of Spain's letter in 1796 to his brother the King of Naples acquainting him of his intention to declare war against England, from which letter the Ministry sent out orders to then Sir John Jervis to strike a stroke, if opportunity offered against either the Arsenals of Spain or her Fleets; that neither of these was done is not the fault of Lady Hamilton, the opportunity might have been offered. Secondly,

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the British Fleet under my command could never have returned the second time to Egypt had not Lady Hamilton's influence with the Queen of Naples caused Letters to be wrote to the Governor of Syracuse, that he was to encourage the Fleet being supplied with everything should they put into any Port in Sicily. We put into Syracuse and received every supply, went to Egypt, and destroy'd the French Fleet. Could I have rewarded these services I would not now call upon my Country, but as that has not been in my power, I leave Emma Lady Hamilton therefore a Legacy to my King and Country, that they will give her ample provision to maintain her Rank in Life. I also leave to the beneficence of my Country my adopted daughter Horatia Nelson Thompson and I desire she will use in future the name of Nelson only. These are the only favours I ask of my King and Country at this moment, when I am going to fight their Battle. May God bless my King and Country, and all those who I hold dear. My Relations it is needless to mention; they will of course be amply provided for.

(Witness) NELSON AND BRONTE
HENRY BLACKWOOD
T. M. HARDY

THE AFFIDAVIT

*Extracted from the Principal Registry of the Probate
Divorce and Admiralty Division of the High Court
of Justice.*

IN THE PREROGATIVE COURT OF CANTERBURY.

The following is a copy Affidavit annexed to the Will of the Right Honourable Horatio Lord Viscount Nelson deceased proved 11th July, 1806, but forming no part of the Probate.

30TH JUNE, 1806.

APPEARED PERSONALLY the Reverend ALEXANDER JOHN SCOTT of St. John's College in the University of Cambridge & Vicar of South Minster in the county of Essex Doctor in Divinity and made Oath that he the Deponent on the 21st day of October in the year 1805 & for sometime preceding was Chaplain on board his Majestys Ship *Victory* one of the Squadron under the Command of the late Right Honorable Horatio Lord Viscount Nelson deceased

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and this Deponent says that during an Action on the day aforesaid between His said Majesty's Squadron & the Combined Fleets of France & Spain off Trafalgar the said Lord Viscount Nelson having been mortally wounded in the said Action soon after the same happened addressed himself to this Deponent and said "I am dying Doctor remember me to Lady Hamilton remember me to Horatia tell Lady * [Ham]ilton I have made a will and left her & Horatia a legacy * [to my] Country" And this Deponent says that the said Deceased * [sever]al times in the course of the same Day made declaration in the hearing of and to this Deponent to the same effect and having on the same day departed this life he the Deponent was present on board the said Ship with Sir Thomas Masterman Hardy Baronet then Thomas Masterman Hardy Esquire Captain of the said Ship when they found in the escutoire of the said Deceased a Book wherein amongst other things are the words following to wit October the Twenty first one thousand eight hundred and five then in sight of the Combined Fleets of France and Spain distant about ten miles also the words "I leave Emma Lady Hamilton therefore a legacy to my King and Country that they will give her an ample provision to maintain her Rank in life I also leave to the beneficence of my country my adopted daughter Horatia Nelson Thompson" and ending "my relations it is needless to mention they will of course be amply provided for" and thus subscribed "Nelson & Bronte" and this Deponent says that having carefully viewed the Book hereto annexed marked A wherein the

* Here a fragment of the paper is missing.

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several words before recited appear the same is the identical Book found in the escrutoire aforesaid in the hand writing of the said deceased and that * believes meant & referred to by the deceased and his aforesaid declarations.

Same day the said ALEXANDER JOHN SCOTT Doctor in Divinity aforesaid was duly sworn to the truth hereof. A. J. SCOTT.

Before me.

GEORGE OGILVIE

Surrogate

Pre^t GEO. SILK.

Not. Pub.

* Here a few words have been worn out.

NOTES

1. Nelson begins at the top of the second side of the first leaf: the first side being blank except for the Doctors' Commons note—"Not to be registered to the words October the twenty first one thousand eight hundred and five. Geo. Silk. Proctor." Which means that the contents thus determined were not officially copied, like the will and other papers.

2. *Friday night at half past ten.*—In the 'Despatches' headed as follows:

'AUTOGRAPH OR FACSIMILE COPY IN THE POSSESSION
OF P. TOKER, ESQ.

FRIDAY NIGHT 13th *September.*'

3. *Fullfill.*—In the 'Despatches,' fulfil. Either the facsimile was none, or was inaccurately printed. The Diary itself is of course the only autograph.

4. *Bathing machines,* instead of from the usual landing place, "to elude the populace," says Southey, "but a crowd collected," etc.—'Despatches.'

5. *Sept. 14th.*—In the 'Despatches' the previous heading includes this extract, which is the last one given until Sept. 25th.

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6. *Wrote Ly. Hn.*—This jotting and its repetitions may be illustrated by 'Lord Nelson's Letters to Lady Hamilton,' Vol ii., or by the excerpts therefrom given in the 'Despatches.'

7. *Vble* = Variable.

8. *Sept. 25th.*—This entry is headed in the 'Despatches' as copied from Dr. Beatty's 'Authentic Narrative of the Death, etc.' 2nd edn., the words *Wrote Ly. H.* and *from him* being omitted. After this date the 'Despatches' volume contains no extract until the 28th.

9. *Sept. 28th.*—In the 'Despatches' this entry, taken from Dr. Beatty's 'Narrative,' etc., runs thus: "At noon saw eighteen sail. Nearly calm. In the evening joined the Fleet," etc., the portion from *saw nine sail* to *at one* being omitted. And the day is named Sunday 28th September.

10. *Sept. 29th.*—His forty-seventh birthday. No further entries in the 'Despatches' until Oct. 9th.

11. *Oct. 1st.*—In a letter of this date to Lady Hamilton, Nelson tells her how about four in the morning he had one of his dreadful spasms, "which has almost enervated me. It is very odd; I was hardly ever better than yesterday. . . . I slept uncommonly well, but was awake with the disorder. . . . However, it is entirely gone off, and I am only weak. . . . Perhaps this spasm may not come on again these six months. I had been writing seven hours yesterday; perhaps that had some hand in bringing it upon me." 'Lord Nelson's Letters, etc.'

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12. *Octr. 3rd.*—See the note in the text under this date.

13. *Octr. 9th*, “*the Nelson Touch.*”—According to a note in the ‘Despatches,’ Dr. Beatty’s ‘Narrative’ has “the Nelson *truth*,” and Beatty says that it is to be presumed his Lordship meant the Instructions. . . . But in the above letter to Lady Hamilton Nelson writes: “I joined the Fleet late on the evening of the 28th of September. . . . I believe my arrival was most welcome, not only to the Commander of the Fleet, but also to every individual in it; and when I came to explain to them the Nelson touch, it was like an electric shock. Some shed tears, all approved—It was new—it was singular—it was simple!! and, from Admirals downwards it was repeated—It must succeed, if ever they will allow us to get at them” etc.

Captain A. T. Mahan in his ‘Life of Nelson’ (1899) says of the Nelson Touch: “The expression . . . probably originated in the family circle at Merton. It occurs chiefly, if not wholly, in his letters to Lady Hamilton, to whom, some days before joining the Fleet he wrote: ‘I am anxious to join, for it would add to my grief if any other man was to give them the Nelson touch, which We say is warranted never to fail’; but there may be a quaint allusion to it in the motto he told Rose he had adopted, Touch and Take.”

Nelson had written, “I will try to have a Motto—at least it shall be my watchword—Touch and Take.”

The word in the Diary is *touch*, beyond doubt. Sir Henry Newbolt has something to say about the

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touch in his Introduction to Southey's 'Life of Nelson.'

No entry now occurs in the 'Despatches' until the 14th.

14. *Oct. 10th.*—G Brig i.e. Gun Brig.

15. *Oct. 15th.*—No entry in the 'Despatches.'

16. *Oct. 17th.*—*Which I hope is true.* The last word is roughly underlined in the Diary, but no one well acquainted with the handwriting would dare attach intention of emphasis to the mark ; for similar, though smaller, strokes of the pen occur in one or two other places where no such intention could have directed them.

17. *Oct. 19th.* *Made sigl.*—"Directed the fleet," in the extract as quoted in the 'Despatches' from Clarke and M'Arthur's 'Life of Nelson' (ii. 441).

18. On the 19th Nelson wrote to Lady Hamilton :

MY DEAREST BELOVED EMMA, the dear friend of my bosom, the signal has been made that the enemies' combined fleet is coming out of port. We have very little wind, so that I have no hopes of seeing them before to-morrow. May the God of Battles crown my endeavours with success. At all events I will take care that my name shall be always most dear to you and to Horatia, both of whom I love as much as my own life ; and as my last writing before the battle will be to you, so I hope to God that I shall live to finish the letter after the battle. May Heaven bless you, prays your

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The words, "as my last writing will be to you," are doubtless the cause, aided by sentiment, that this letter has sometimes been taken for the last writing of any kind from Nelson's pen.

In 'Nelson's Legacy,' by Frank Danby (1915), the letter is introduced with the statement, "He spent the last moments before going on deck to engage in battle, in writing to the love of his life." But the authors omits the important passage, "We have very little wind, so that I have no hopes of seeing them before to-morrow."

Continuation of letter dated Octr. 19th :—

Oct. 20th.—In the morning we were close to the Mouth of the Straits, but the wind had not come far enough to the Westward to allow the Combined Fleets to weather the Shoals off Trafalgar; but they were counted as far as forty Sail of Ships of War, which I suppose to be thirty four of the Line and six Frigates. A group of them was seen off the Lighthouse of Cadiz this morning, but it blows so very fresh and thick weather, that I rather believe they will go into Harbour before night. May God Almighty give us success over these fellows, and enable us to get a Peace.

[This letter was found open on Lord Nelson's desk, and was brought to Lady Hamilton by Captain Hardy, on his return to England.—'Despatches.']

The letter to Horatia runs as follows :

MY DEAREST ANGEL,—I was made happy by the pleasure of receiving your letter of 19th of September,

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and I rejoice to hear you are so very good a girl, and love dear Lady Hamilton, who most dearly loves you. Give her a Kiss for me. The combined fleets of the enemy are now reported to be coming out of Cadiz; and therefore, I answer your letter, my dearest Horatia, to mark to you that you are ever uppermost in my thoughts. I shall be sure of your prayers for my safety, conquest and speedy return to dear Merton, and our dearest good Lady Hamilton. Be a good girl, mind what Miss Connor [her governess] says to you. Receive, my dearest Horatia, the affectionate parental blessing of your father

NELSON & BRONTÉ.

“ His last act, a few minutes before leaving Merton, was to visit and pray over his child.”—‘ Despatches.’

19. *Oct. 20th.*—Who first abstracted this half sheet and its fellow? How did the former come into the possession of J. Wild, Esq., and who annexed the latter? How did Philip Toker, Esq., obtain his “autographs or facsimiles”? The book passed of necessity through the hands of lawyers and officials: but can any of these responsible gentlemen have been the culprit? Other eyes and fingers were probably busy, by divers sorts of permission, with the precious pages, and the thief doubtless excused himself either by affectionate desire for a relic or by that hankering after romantic objects which sometimes stirs the most prosaic mind. Had a leaf been torn from the Codicil itself, the mutilation would inevitably have been noticed and brought home to the offender. But the cautious removal of two

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corresponding half sheets from the purely nautical portion would be likely to elude observation. It is possible, too, that the theft would not in those days have been taken over seriously by any narrowly official mind, seeing that the nautical pages did not of themselves constitute a legal document.

20. *Oct. 21st.*—The 'Despatches' Volume gives this entry as from Dr. Beatty, who heads it: Autograph or facsimile copy in the possession of Philip Toker, Esq.

21. In illustration of the entry under Oct. 21st a few extracts are appended from various biographical sources:—

(a) His Lordship had ascended the poop, to have a better view of both Lines of the British Fleet, and while there, gave particular directions for taking down from his cabin the different fixtures, and for being very careful in removing the portrait of Lady Hamilton. "Take care of my guardian angel," said he, addressing himself to the persons to be employed in this business. Immediately after this he quitted the poop and retired to his cabin for a few minutes, where he wrote the following Prayer and Codicil to his Will . . ." (i.e. the last prayer, etc.)—Beatty's 'Narrative.'

(b) Shortly after this—at about eleven o'clock in the morning—he quitted the poop to withdraw to his cabin for a few minutes. Whilst he was below, Lieutenant Pasco, who, though senior lieutenant, acted as signal lieutenant on board the *Victory*, went to Nelson's cabin to make a report, and also to

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prefer a complaint, namely, that at the moment of so glorious an opportunity he despite his seniority, should be doing duty in an inferior station. On entering the cabin the Lieutenant found Nelson on his knees, writing. . . . He was then penning that beautiful prayer, said the Lieutenant. . . . I waited until he rose and communicated what I had to report, but could not at such a moment disturb his mind with any grievances of mine. Either before or immediately after Pasco's visit Nelson added that famous Codicil to his will.—'Horatio Nelson.' W. Clark Russell.

(c) At eleven o'clock Nelson went below to his cabin, or rather—since the bulkheads which formed his cabin had been removed—to the hanging screens which temporarily formed a cabin for him. His signal lieutenant followed him with some message, and lifted the screen. Nelson was on his knees. He was writing that memorable prayer, the last lines he ever penned.—'How England Saved Europe.' W. H. Fitchett, Vol. 2.

(d) At seven o'clock Nelson had returned from the poop to the cabin, for at that hour was made in his private journal the last entry of occurrences—At seven the combined fleets wearing in succession. Here it seems likely that he laid down the pen, for, when he was found writing again, some hours later, it was to complete the long record of experiences and of duties, with words that summed up, in fit and most touching expression, the self-devotion of a life already entering the shadow of death. . . .

Towards eleven o'clock Nelson went below to the

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cabin. . . . Entering the cabin the officer (i.e. Pasco) paused at the threshold, for Nelson was on his knees writing. The words, the last that he ever penned were written in the private diary he habitually kept. . . . They followed now, without break or space, or paragraph, upon the last incident recorded—At seven the enemy wearing in succession—and they run thus—May the Great God, etc.—‘Life of Nelson,’ Capt. A. T. Mahan.

[There is nothing in the manuscript to support Captain Mahan’s idea that the entry was penned at intervals, and it may have been written at one spell, as the other biographers seem to think.

It was on returning to the poop that Nelson “amused the Fleet” with his famous signal.]

The discrepancies among these narratives are obvious, and perhaps hardly important enough to dwell on.

22. *The Queen of Naples.* See ‘The Queen of Naples and Lord Nelson,’ by John Cordy Jeaffreson (1889).

The conduct of the Government in refusing to fulfil Nelson’s wishes with regard to Lady Hamilton has been much criticised, and the result, alas! is not on the whole to the advantage of that hapless lovely creature. Popular sentiment in her favour dies hard. And who of erring mortals shall dare give sentence?

23. *The Codicil.* By her friends Nelson’s brother is accused of having withheld the document itself from Lady Hamilton until Parliament had secured to

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him and his family its liberal provision, and then only to have thrown it across at her at an interview, with the expression, "Do what you like with this . . ." If the information given by one of the latest contributors to Nelsonian literature is trustworthy, the Earl, as soon as he received the document from Captain Hardy, took it with him to Doctors' Commons, and was advised by him that, as it spoke freely of the exertions of the Queen of Naples it should not be published, and that as it did not deal with Lord Nelson's estate it need not be proved by Nelson's executor. The Earl, therefore, left the paper with Sir William from the 23rd of December, 1805, to the 15th of February, 1806, and then took it to Lord Grenville and read it to him.

There was really no secret about the codicil; it was well known to Mr. Rose, Lady Hamilton's friend, to Hardy and Dr. Scott.—'Nelson, the Public and Private Life of.' G. Lathom Browne (1891).

[Mr. G. Lathom Browne speaks of the Codicil as the ninth. This is inaccurate: it is entered in the Prerogative Court Calendar as the eighth in order proved.]

24. The concluding words of Southey's 'Life of Nelson' are as true to-day as when they were first published:—

"He has left us, not, indeed, his mantle of inspiration, but a name and an example which are at this hour inspiring thousands of the youth of England—a name which is our pride, and an example which will continue to be our shield and our strength. Thus it

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is that the spirits of the great and the wise continue to live and act after them, verifying, in this sense, the language of the old mythologist :—

*Τοὶ μὲν δαίμονες εἰσὶ, Διὸς μεγάλου διὰ βουλὰς,
'Ἐσθλοὶ, ἐπιχθόνιοι, φύλακες, θνητῶν ἀνθρώπων.*

[For gods they are, through high Jove's counsel good,
Haunting the earth, the guardians of mankind.]”

ADDITIONAL LETTERS

MENTIONED IN THE DIARY AS WRITTEN TO
LADY HAMILTON

‘Memoirs of the Life of Vice-Admiral Lord Viscount
Nelson, K.B., Duke of Bronté, &c., &c., &c.’
By Thomas Joseph Pettigrew, F.R.S., F.S.A.

VOL. II., p. 498

MY BELOVED EMMA,—I cannot even read your
letter. We have fair wind, and God will, I hope,
soon grant us a happy meeting. The wind is quite
fair and fresh. We go too swift for the boat. May
heaven bless you and Horatia with all those who
hold us dear to them. For a short time, farewell.

Ever yours,

NELSON AND BRONTÉ.

OFF DUNMORE, *Sept. 16th*, 1805, 11 a.m.

VOL. II., p. 499

“VICTORY,” OFF PORTLAND,
September 16th, 1805.

At noon, Wind West—foul.

I have read, my dearest Emma, your kind and
affectionate letters of Saturday. With God’s blessing

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we shall soon meet again. Kiss dear Horatia a thousand times for me. I write this letter, and I fear I shall too soon have an opportunity of sending it, for we are standing near Weymouth, the place of all others I should wish to avoid; but if it continues moderate I hope to escape without anchoring; but should I be forced, I shall act as a man, and your Nelson, neither courting nor ashamed to hold up my head before the greatest monarch in the world. I have, thank God, nothing to be ashamed of.

I have wrote a line to the Duke ——, he will shew it you, and I shall do it occasionally. I prepare this to be ready in case opportunity offers, and I am working very hard with Mr. Scott. If you see Sir William Scott, say how very sorry I am not to have seen him, but it was impossible. God bless you, and believe me, ever most faithfully,

Yours,

NELSON AND BRONTÉ.

“VICTORY,” OFF PLYMOUTH, *September 17th*,
Nine o'clock in the Morning,
Blowing fresh at W.S.W., dead foul wind.

I sent, my own dearest Emma, a letter for you last night, in a Torbay Boat, and gave the man a guinea to put it in the Post-Office. We have had a nasty blowing night, and it looks very dirty. I am now signalling the ships at Plymouth to join me; but I rather doubt their ability to get to sea. However, I have got clear of Portland, and have Cawsand Bay and Torbay under the lee. I intreat, my dear Emma, that you will cheer up; and we will look forward to many many happy years, and be surrounded by our

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children. God Almighty can, when he pleases, remove the impediment. My heart and soul is with you and Horatia. I got this line ready in case a Boat should get alongside. For ever, ever, I am yours, most devotedly,

NELSON AND BRONTE.

Mr. Rose said he would write to Mr. Bolton, if I was sailed; but I have forgot to give him the direction, but I will send it to-day. I think I shall succeed very soon, if not at this moment.

Wednesday, September 18th.

OFF THE LIZARD.

I had no opportunity of sending your letter yesterday, nor do I see any prospect at present. The *Ajax* and *Thunderer* are joining; but it is nearly calm, with a swell from the Westward. Perseverance has got us thus far; and the same will, I dare say, get us on. Thomas seems to do very well and content. Tell Mr. Lancaster that I have no doubt that his son will do very well. God bless you, my own Emma! I am giving my letters to Blackwood, to put on board the first Vessel he meets going to England or Ireland. Once more, heavens bless you! Ever, for ever, your

NELSON AND BRONTE.

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COLLECTION OF AUTOGRAPH LETTERS, &c., FORMED BY ALFRED MORRISON.

'THE HAMILTON & NELSON PAPERS.' VOL. II.

839. A. L. S. from Lord Nelson to Lady Hamilton
Dated "*Victory*, Sep. 20, 1805, 30 Leg^s. S.W. from
Scilly." 1 page 4to with Superscription.

A frigate is coming down, which we take to be the
Decade, from the Fleet off Cadiz. If the battle has
been fought, I shall be sadly vexed but I cannot
help myself. We have had very indifferent weather,
and it is still very dirty. Perseverance has got us
thus far, and I trust will accomplish all our wishes.
I write this line to put on board her, for if she has
news, I have to write to the Admiralty. May heavens
bless you. Kiss dear Horatia. For ever yours, &c.*

VOL II., p. 500.

"VICTORY," OFF LISBON,
September 25th, 1805.

MY DEAREST EMMA,—We are now in sight of the
Rock of Lisbon, and although we have very little
wind, I hope to get round Cape St. Vincent to-
morrow. We had only one day's real fair wind, but
by perseverance we have done much. I am anxious

* Pettigrew's 'Life of Nelson' begins the letter:—

"My dearest Emma," and ends:—

"Kiss dear Horatia for

"Yours faithfully

"NELSON AND BRONTÉ."

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to join the fleet, for it would add to my grief if any other man was to give them the Nelson touch, which we say is warranted never to fail.

I have read with much interest your letters, which I got at Merton, but I must have many others afloat. I do feel by myself what you must have felt at not hearing from me from January 29th to after May 18th. At first I fancied that they had been stopt by the Admiralty, as the account of Sir John Orde's joining the Channel fleet got to the Admiralty on the 3rd or 4th of May; but I now trace that my despatches with Layman went home in the *Avenger* sloop, with a convoy, and that they had a very long passage; I mention all these circumstances that you should never think that Nelson neglects or forgets. I have this letter ready in case I should fall in with anything from Lisbon homewards steering. May God bless you, and with my warmest affections to Horatia, be assured I am,

Yours,

NELSON AND BRONTÉ.

VOL. II., p. 509

To a letter apparently written on October 1st he adds on the 2nd October :—

And when Louis's squadron goes I shall have twenty-three sail-of-the-line to meet them, but we shall do very well. I am sensible that the Ministry are sending me all the force they can, and I hope to use it.

October 2nd.—Last night I got your dear letters, September 18th, 19th, by Admiral Sutton. You

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must not complain of my short letters. I have had, as you will believe, a very distressing scene with poor Sir Robert Calder. He has wrote home to beg an inquiry, feeling confident that he can fully justify himself. I sincerely hope he may, but—I have given him the advice as to my dearest friend. He is in adversity, and if he ever has been my enemy, he now feels the pang of it, and finds me one of his best friends.

Louis, Hallowell, Hoste, are all inquiring about you, and desire their kind regards. I am pressed beyond measure for time, for I cannot keep the vessel, as Vice-Admiral Collingwood's and Sir Robert Calder's despatches were stopt by me off Cape St. Vincent on the 26th. May God bless you. Kiss Horatia for me a thousand times. I shall write to her very soon; in eight or ten days another vessel will be sent.

Your most faithful,

NELSON AND BRONTÉ.

October 13th.—Search has been made for the letter of this date to Lady Hamilton, but without success.

LONDON :

PRINTED BY WILLIAM CLOWES AND SONS, LIMITED,
DUKE STREET, STAMFORD STREET, S.E., AND GREAT WINDMILL STREET, W.



DA

Nelson, Horatio Nelson,

87

Viscount

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Nelson's last diary

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