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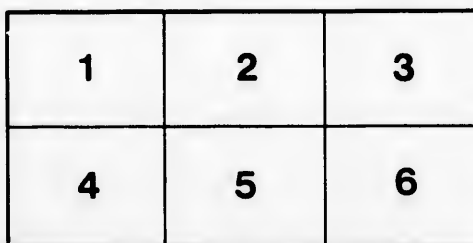
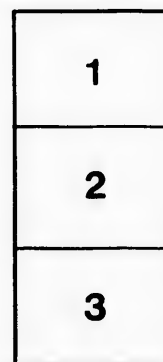
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ROSE-BELFORD'S  
CANADIAN MONTHLY  
AND NATIONAL REVIEW.

MARCH, 1879.

NELSON AT QUEBEC.

AN EPISODE IN THE LIFE OF THE GREAT BRITISH ADMIRAL.

BY DR. HENRY H. MILES.

IT is worthy of observation that the local history of the Capital of Canada furnishes not even an allusion to the visits of England's most renowned sea-captain, which occurred in the year 1782. Already noted for distinguished services, regarded, both by superiors and inferiors in rank, as the most promising young officer of the British Navy, and idolized by the lieutenants, middies and tars who served under him, it might have been expected that his advent to Quebec, and his stay there of several weeks' duration, would have attracted considerable notice in colonial society, and that the printed records of the time would have presented some interesting particulars of that period of the career of the illustrious Admiral.

But such was not the case. We search in vain the columns of the *Quebec Gazette*—then the only newspaper printed in Canada—for a mention of this wonderful man's visit. Not a line do we find announcing the arrival or the departure of 'H. M.

frigate *Albemarle*, 28, Captain Horatio Nelson; nor, later, when the minds of men throughout the civilized world were stirred by the news of his glorious conquests at *Aboukir* and *Copenhagen*, and of his crowning victory of *Trafalgar*, where, by the sacrifice of his valuable life, he put an end, for ever, to the menace of an invasion of the British Isles by the disciplined hordes of Napoleon I., can we discover, in the numerous and voluminous accounts of his early career, which were then published, a single allusion to the fact of his having once, perhaps often, visited our Canadian old city.

The omission is all the more remarkable because the coming and going of many military and naval officers, who have long since been forgotten, were duly chronicled, during the interval between the breaking out of the American revolutionary war and the arrival of Prince William Henry, in 1787. We have all the particulars of that Prince's arrival and sojourn in the colony—himself a naval officer who served un-

der Nelson in the West Indies—but not a word about the coming, the stay, or the departure of the greatest British Naval hero.

It is well known that the news of Trafalgar was received in Canada with profound emotion, and that the victory was celebrated—even by the inhabitants descended from the people of old France—with rejoicings and boisterous manifestations of loyalty to the Crown of England. In gratitude for the eminent services rendered by Nelson to the commercial interests of Great Britain and her Colonies, the citizens of Montreal erected to his memory the fine monument which stands at the top of Jacques Cartier Square; but so far as we have observed, the then published accounts of his life, and the statements which were made prior to, and on the occasion of, the inauguration of the monument, contained no allusion whatever to the fact that the hero had ever navigated the St. Lawrence, or honoured by his presence the wharves and streets of the ancient capital of North America.

We leave it to the curious in such matters to find out the causes of the omission now adverted to, and to explain why Nelson's visit to and stay in Canada were suffered to pass by in silence and neglect.

To the industrious researches of a highly esteemed writer,\* and to his fertile pen, employed by him with equal facility in both languages, we are indebted for the record of a great many historical incidents and local traditions, which are all of an extremely interesting nature, and which he has happily rescued from oblivion. This gentleman has, somewhere in his popular works, given us a list of British military and naval officers who, during their sojourn in Canada, succumbed to the attractions of Canadian belles whom they espoused and carried off to preside over and adorn distant

homes in Britain. He does not furnish, or even allude to, sundry particulars of which we should be delighted to be informed, but enough is intimated to satisfy us that the young matrons, thus transported from the Anglo-French colony, when brought face to face with their new mothers and sisters, were invariably received with open arms and the most cordial welcome, because the charming influence of personal beauty, graceful manners, and unrestrained warm-heartedness, was found to be irresistible. But we venture to express regret that Mr. Lemoine did not see fit to extend his list a good deal further, and so as to include the names of not a few *would-be* benedicts who are known to have fallen victims at the shrine of Canadian loveliness, but who were hindered by unpropitious circumstances from adding to the interesting record. Had he done so, we should have found *Horatio Nelson's* name there, probably with explanatory notes, and then the writer of the present article would have had no excuse for intruding upon the attention of the readers of this magazine. In fact some very romantic incidents are associated with the visit of the Captain of the *Albemarle* to Quebec, in 1782, which it is the object of this paper to elucidate. To these, it must be confessed, tradition has done justice, but in a manner too ample, since there is a lack of the essential element of truth in respect of some of the principal particulars.

Immediately after the conquest, while Murray was Governor, as well as during the time of his successors, Sir Guy Carleton and General Haldimand, there lived at Quebec a family named *Prentice*, consisting of *Miles Prentice*, formerly a sergeant of Wolfe's army, and his wife. They were childless, and by permission of the Commandant of the garrison, kept a small hostelry, or house of entertainment, on the premises known as 'The Chien d'Or,' situated opposite to the Government quarters on Mountain Hill,

\*J. M. Lemoine, Esq., author of 'Maple Leaves.'

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which were on the present site of the Local Parliamentary buildings, previously the residence of the Bishop of Quebec under the French regime. This Miles Prentice had been appointed to the office of Town Provost Marshal, in which capacity it was his duty to ascertain and to punish infractions of the somewhat strict regulations concerning the abuse of intoxicating liquors by the troops and citizens. Not only the soldiers who partook, but the parties who were proved to have supplied the material, were liable to severe penalties, which Prentice was reputed to be too officiously disposed to enforce. On one occasion, a woman, attached to a Highland regiment, then in garrison, had surreptitiously procured and conveyed drink to the thirsty soldiers, and being detected was subjected by him to a merciless flogging. The consequence was that this unfortunate person, who was a soldier's wife, and, at the time, in a condition of health which made it impossible for her to survive the cruelty and ignominy of her punishment, died within a few days. The Highlanders, who had instigated her offence were excited to madness by what had occurred, and rushed in a body to Prentice's abode to wreak vengeance upon him with their dirks and claymores. He, however, effected his escape from their clutches, and left the Province for New York, where he remained until the departure of that regiment allowed him to return in safety to Quebec.

In the meantime his better half, to mitigate the loneliness of her position, sent for two nieces from the old country, who, having joined her, became useful aids in the business of her well-frequented establishment, which she continued to carry on till her decease in the year 1792. These young ladies, although their names were different, were usually styled the '*Mesdemoiselles Prentice*.' They were noted for their personal attractions, and, at the same time, for intelligence and their correct

exemplary conduct. One of them, *in the year 1780*, was married to Mr. James Thompson, so well known at Quebec as a veteran of the army of General Wolfe, and its last survivor in Canada.\* Madame Prentice's other niece became the wife of Mr. Lachlan Smith, the owner of a seignior, situated below Quebec. Both lived to a good old age, and died in the Province without ever having revisited their native country.

We are thus particular in stating these facts for reasons which will appear presently.

It has been asserted that Captain Nelson, of the *Albemarle*, during his sojourn at Quebec, in 1782, was a frequenter of Madame Prentice's hostelry, and that he became so violently smitten with the charms of one of her nieces that he proposed for her hand in marriage, intending to abandon the nautical profession, along with all his prospects of future promotion in the service of his country. Some colour is given to the statement by what is known of Nelson's temperament and disposition, especially as exhibited in the course of his earlier career in life. That he *did* spend some weeks in Quebec, in 1782, that he *did* fall in love with some young lady there, for whose sake he desired to discontinue a sea-faring life, and that he was with difficulty dissuaded from his purpose, are facts of which good evidence is extant. But, as we hope to show conclusively in this paper, it was another local beauty and not one of the two already mentioned, by whose charms the hero was led captive. We need scarcely remark that every incident in the life of a man gifted as Nelson was, whose services to his country and to mankind at large were so great and valuable, and who is so celebrated in the annals of history, cannot but be a matter of

\* Mr. James Thompson was a volunteer, attached to the Highland corps employed at the siege of Quebec, in 1759. After the conquest he remained in the Province in the service of the Government, during the ensuing 70 years, when he died at the age of 98.



interest, even in cases when the facts are of a nature to merely illustrate his foibles. No apology, therefore, is required to excuse our discussing the particulars at present concerned with all the minuteness which may be necessary to cast a clear light upon the affair under consideration.

The chief authority for the assertion that the lady was Miss Prentice, was the Hon. Wm. Smith, Clerk of the Executive Council, a resident of Quebec at the time when the *Albemarle* lay at anchor in the harbour. He imparted the information to the late Colonel John Sewell, recently deceased at a good old age, with the additional statement that the intended singular marriage was prevented by Mr. Matthew Lymburner, the famous Quebec merchant, and brother of the delegate from Canada to the British House of Commons on the occasion when the Constitutional Act of 1774 was under discussion in the Imperial Legislature. Regarded as a matter of gossip and hearsay, it will not be pretended that Mr. Smith's authority is decisive of the question at issue; nor is it probable that his evidence, on such a topic, was more reliable than that of any other contemporary resident who chose to listen to rumours circulating in the city. If we recollect rightly, Mr. Smith presented, in his history of Canada, several statements unworthy of credit, based upon mere hearsay, which were disproved by their very nature and by subsequent evidence. There was, as will be seen, a Quebec merchant who was Nelson's familiar acquaintance, and enjoyed his friendship to the last day of his life, to whom, and not to Lymburner, on better testimony than Mr. Smith's, is to be ascribed the merit of having proved an efficient counsellor on the occasion referred to. Lamartine, in his *Life of Nelson*, gives an account of the circumstances, without mentioning the name of the heroine, and it was to supply this deficiency that Col. Sewell, citing the authority

of Smith, gave that of Miss Prentice. Lamartine's account, however, is full of mistakes. He does not give the year correctly, stating it to have been 1786, whereas Nelson, in that as well as the two preceding years, and in the year following, was serving in the West Indies. He also styles the *Albemarle* a *brig*, instead of a frigate, and erroneously says that Nelson passed *several months* at Quebec. In short, as to accuracy, no importance can be attached to this writer's statements concerning Nelson's visit.

Before proceeding further, we shall now cite from unquestionable authorities\* a few particulars of Nelson's career *prior to the time of his advent to Canada*, and of his disposition, habits and character, as displayed when he was a very young man.

When Nelson came to Quebec he was just 24 years of age, having been born in September 1758. He had already been in the naval employment of his country 11 years, for he entered it at the early age of 13; but during that comparatively short time had seen more varied service, and afforded more proofs of courage, nautical skill, sagacity and fitness for command, than the great majority of his seniors in the profession. He had served in almost every part of the world frequented by British cruisers—the Arctic Ocean, the East and West Indies, the coasts of North and South America, the Baltic, North Atlantic and Mediterranean Seas. Although in those days promotion was very slow, except in rare cases, such were young Nelson's zeal, enthusiastic attention to all his professional duties, and extraordinary promise, that he attained the rank of

\* The chief of these, here alluded to, is 'The Life and Services of Horatio Viscount Nelson,' (from his own manuscripts and very extensive collections of letters, official and other documents, and communications contributed by the Duke of Clarence, Admiral Earl St. Vincent, Lord and Lady Nelson, Lieut.-Governor Locker, Admiral Lord Hood, Lord Keith, Sir T. M. Hardy, Mrs. Alexander Davidson, and by many other officers and gentlemen)—edited by the Rev. I. S. Clarke, F.R.S., Librarian and Chaplain to George Prince of Wales, and John McArthur, Esq., LL.D., Secretary to Admiral Lord Hood.

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Post Captain when only 21, and was soon afterwards employed on very arduous, important and responsible services. For example, when, on the arrival of Admiral Count d'Estaing in the West Indies with a large fleet and army, there was reason to apprehend the annihilation of British interests in that quarter, and especially the capture of Jamaica, the English Admiral and General, who were then in command on that station, selected Captain Nelson to conduct the defence of Port Royal—this post being justly considered the most important on the whole island, as being the key to the whole British naval force, the City of Kingston and Spanish Town. Soon after the successful termination of that service, another, of a much more difficult nature, and especially hazardous on account of the extreme insalubrity of the climate, was imposed on him by General Dalling, then Governor of the British West Indian Colonies, who acted with the approval of Lord George Germain, Secretary of State for the American Department. Its object was to acquire possession of Fort San Juan, on the Rio San Juan, which runs from Lake Nicaragua into the Atlantic, and thus after occupying the cities of Granada and Leon, to cut the communications of the Spaniards between their Northern and Southern transatlantic dominions. Nelson was charged with the command of the considerable naval force employed in this expedition; and, as but comparatively few troops were attached to it, the brunt of the danger and fatigue fell upon the British seamen and marines, whom their young leader conducted towards the intended points of attack with so much skill, and with such astonishing displays of personal courage and audacity, that thus encouraged, they easily stormed all the Spanish outposts, and soon forced the panic-struck defenders of the Castle and Town of San Juan to surrender. But, owing to defects in the original plans of the expedition, the arrival at

San Juan occurred several months later than it should have done, and at the most unhealthy season of the year, so that fever set in amongst the seamen and troops, by which, out of a total of 1,800 people, not more than 380 survived. The complement of Nelson's own ship—the *Hinchinbrook*—was 200 men, of whom 145 found graves there, and, in the end, not more than 10 survived to return home. Dr. Moseley, the chief medical officer at Jamaica, placed on record the following remarks: 'It was on our San Juan expedition that Nelson commenced his career of glory. He did more than his duty: where anything was to be done, he saw no difficulties; not contented with having carried the armament safe to the harbour of San Juan, he accompanied and assisted the troops in all their difficulties. He was first on shore at the attack of (the Spanish outpost) St. Bartholomew, followed by a few brave seamen and soldiers, in the face of a severe fire. The audacity of the act intimidated the Spaniards, who, from the nature of the ground, might have destroyed the assailants; but they abandoned the battery and ran away. By his example and perseverance, the Indians and seamen were animated through their toil in forcing the boats, against the current, up the river; otherwise not a man would have reached San Juan. When they arrived there, as prompt in thought as bold in action, Nelson advised the carrying it instantly by assault; for he knew that the bad season was at hand and that there was no time to be lost. . . . Like Hannibal, before he attained to supreme command in the palmy days of Carthaginian conquest—like Wolfe (whom Nelson resembled in respect of many traits of character), when a brigadier at the siege of Louisbourg, this extraordinary twenty-one-year-old British Captain endeared himself to every body about him that witnessed his courage, heroism and skill, as exhibited in the course of the San Juan ex-

pedition. The Indians who accompanied it regarded him with wonder, and as a superior being under especial protection, seeing that he survived all dangers unharmed—whether those arising from the fire of the enemy to which he so fearlessly exposed himself, from the poisoned water of springs occasionally met with and inadvertently imbibed by the thirsty traveller in those regions, or from the innumerable venomous reptiles with which they abound.

But it is more than probable that, but for an unforeseen event, Nelson's career would have ended at San Juan, soon after its capture, in consequence of the fever which set in and consigned to the grave so many of those who participated in that expedition. As it was, his health had experienced a severe and lasting injury, when most opportunely despatches arrived from Jamaica informing him that Admiral Sir Peter Parker had appointed him to the command of the *Janus* of 44 guns. This necessitated his immediate return to join the West Indian fleet; and thus was Nelson providentially withdrawn from a scene of death when his health was in a most precarious state.

We cannot leave this part of our reference to Nelson's antecedents without citing a passage from the official despatches of Major Polson to Governor Dalling, announcing the surrender of Fort San Juan:—‘I want words to express the obligations I owe that gentleman (Captain Nelson, of the *Hinchinbrook*). He was the first on every service, whether by day or night. There was not a gun fired but was pointed by him. . . .’ On his return to Jamaica, Nelson sent his congratulations to Governor Dalling, who said, in reply, ‘Thanks to you, my friend, for your kind congratulations: to you, without compliment, do I attribute in a great measure the cause.’

Dalling also adverted to Captain Nelson's services in a private letter

addressed to Lord George Germain, and dated at Jamaica, June 29th, 1780. In this letter occur the following words: ‘Unfortunately for the service, he was obliged to return, being appointed to another ship at this island. I most humbly entreat that His Majesty will be graciously pleased, through your lordship, to manifest a satisfaction of Captain Nelson's conduct; and, in case that a squadron should have been determined on for the Southern ocean, that he may be employed on that service. Captain Nelson's constitution is rather too delicate for the service, under my direction, on this Northern one; as such minds, my lord, are most devoutly to be wished, for Government's sake, I once more venture to urge this suit.’

Eventually the condition of his health enforced his removal from the West India Station and his return to Europe.

In the month of August, 1781, he was appointed to commission the *Albemarle* frigate, 28 guns. His instructions were to proceed in this ship to the Baltic, taking under his command two other war-ships, the *Argo* and *Enterprise*, and such others as might be sent to reinforce him.

Of this service, Nelson, in his own memoirs, remarks:

‘It would almost be supposed that it was on purpose to try my constitution that I was kept the whole winter in the North Sea.’

His biographers refer to the fact as a species of ‘cruelty practised by the Lords of the Admiralty, and as an example of bad policy often pursued toward convalescent officers whose professional worth and merit have been publicly acknowledged. ‘It would be difficult,’ they observe, ‘to fix on any station more fatally adapted to destroy the feeble constitution of an officer worn out by the sultry heats of San Juan, and the climate of the West Indies, than the cold and aguish atmosphere of the North Sea.’

This service terminated in February, 1782, Nelson's squadron having conveyed home a fleet of 260 sail of merchantmen, laden with cargoes 'of the utmost national importance' from the different ports of the Baltic Sea.

His next employment was that which brought him to the shores of our noble St. Lawrence, and which, in the course of his visit to the old capital of Canada, led to a repetition of the danger—though, it must be confessed, under quite a different aspect, and one more acceptable to himself—which had occurred in the San Juan expedition—the danger of the loss to his country of the services of the future most renowned British admiral. It must be borne in mind that, at this time, the American revolutionary war was in progress, and that, as the ally of the revolted British colonies, France was participating actively, with her fleets and troops, in the now gigantic contest. In consequence, the ships and property of British merchants were constantly liable to capture on the high seas by the French cruisers, so that, for the protection of trade between Great Britain and America, it was necessary for the merchantmen to be navigated across the Atlantic in fleets under the convoy of one or more men-of-war. Line-of-battle ships, frigates, and armed schooners were employed on both sides in chasing and capturing merchantmen, and the value of the vessels and cargoes taken was divided amongst the captors under the name of 'prize-money.' Thus the passion of avarice and the love of gain imparted to the contest between the hostile nations an inglorious feature, unworthy of the ambition and character of officers and men, who, to excel in their profession, must needs make it their chief aim to surpass their enemies in nautical skill, courage, fortitude, and inhumanity to the conquered. Nelson, from his earliest days, had shown himself singularly free from the influence of mercenary motives; nor can there

be any doubt but that, while he was always ready to devote his energies and professional abilities to the defence of his country's commercial interests, he had no taste for merely predatory warfare. Higher motives animated him, as was proved by his conduct on many occasions, and as he himself observes more than once in his own memoirs.

His employment to and from the Baltic in the *Albemarle* had been far from congenial. Soon after his return to Portsmouth harbour he learned that he was to be ordered to Cork, to join the *Dardalus*, Captain Pringle, and to go with a convoy to Newfoundland and the River St. Lawrence. He wrote a letter, dated April 2nd, 1782, to his friend Captain Locker, in which he said, 'I am now ordered to get the old *Albemarle* out of harbour and proceed to Cork, to go with the *Dardalus* and a convoy to *Quebec*, where, worse than all to tell, I understand I am to winter. I want much to get off from this confounded voyage, and believe that if I had time to look a little about me, I could get another ship. Mr. Adair, who attends on Mr. Keppel, might tell him, that in such a country I shall be laid up. He has informed me, that if I were sent to a cold, damp climate, it would make me worse than ever. Many of my naval friends have advised me to represent my situation to Admiral Keppel, and they have no doubt he would give me other orders, or remove me; but as I received my orders from Lord Sandwich, I cannot help thinking it wrong to ask Mr. Keppel to alter them.'

On April 6th, in another letter to the same, he says, 'I am very much obliged to you for the great trouble you have given yourself, in trying to alter my destination. . . . If I can get home in the autumn, I hope I shall get a better ship and a better station.'

When the gallant captain penned these comments, not very flattering to Quebec as a station during the winter.

or to the Canadian climate generally, he little thought what a change in his sentiments would be wrought by the subsequent experience of the social attractions of his dreaded place of exile.

Parting from Captain Pringle at Newfoundland, Nelson sailed on a short cruise along the American coast, in the course of which he took possession of an American fishing schooner, the *Harmony*, Nathaniel Carver, Master, whom he ordered to come on board the *Albemarle* and act as pilot. The American obeyed, believing that his little vessel, in which all he had in the world was invested, was irrecoverably lost. He discharged, without a murmur, all the duties exacted from him. Nelson, noticing the faithful manner in which he conducted himself, and having learned that Carver had a large family anxiously expecting his return home to New Plymouth, summoned him to his presence and thus addressed him: 'You have rendered us, sir, a very essential service (in piloting the *Albemarle* safely among the shoals and shallows of this coast), and it is not the custom of British seamen to be ungrateful. In the name, therefore, and with the approbation of the officers of this ship, I return your schooner, and give you, at the same time, a certificate (to serve as a pass and safeguard against subsequent capture), testifying to your faithful conduct. Farewell! and may God bless you!' The American, full of astonishment and gratitude, returned to his little vessel and proceeded on his way homeward.

After this incident, it happened that the *Albemarle* being near the harbour of New Plymouth, Carver recognized it, and forthwith came off, at the risk of his life in a boat, with a present of sheep, poultry, and vegetables, for Captain Nelson; and most opportune and valuable the present proved, for the scurvy was then raging among the ship's crew. Nelson compelled the donor, much against his will, to receive payment, and immediately caused the fresh meat and vegetables

to be equally shared among the sick on board.

In a letter from Bic, in the St. Lawrence, to Captain Locker, dated the 19th October, 1782, Nelson states that the *Albemarle* arrived 'here' on July 1st; that he sailed on a cruise, and returned to Quebec on the 17th of September, 'knocked up with the scurvy.' From these statements it would appear that Nelson paid at least two visits to Quebec between July and September of the year named. Again, his biographers Clarke and McArthur, in page 76, vol. i., of their 'Life of Nelson,' make use of the expression, 'In the course of these repeated visits to Quebec,' which seems to corroborate the inference just drawn from Nelson's own language. However this may be, we have, on the same authority, a circumstantial account of his arrival in the harbour of Quebec on September 17th, 1782, when he landed the sick of his crew and sent them to hospital, and of his departure on October 14th of the same year. On this occasion, therefore, his visit was one of about a month's duration, long enough, we presume, to have furnished the opportunity of forming acquaintance with some of the then reigning *belles* of Quebec Society, and of losing a susceptible heart.

Having reviewed, as far as is requisite for our present purpose, the professional career of Horatio Nelson antecedent to his visiting Quebec in 1782, we must next briefly refer to his personal attributes at that period of his life, and to certain peculiarities of his character and disposition.

The portraits and statues of Nelson which were executed at later periods of his eventful life, or after his death, fail to convey correct ideas of the physical peculiarities which his personal appearance presented when he was quite a young man. The aspect of his countenance was even girlish, and singularly attractive, while, in respect of stature and bulk, like his subsequent great foe, Napoleon Bonaparte,

he was diminutive. In fact, his appearance was that of a mere boy, contrasting remarkably with the full-laced uniform of a British Naval Captain. 'He wore his hair unpowdered, and tied up behind in a stiff Hessian tail of extraordinary length,\* after the custom not unusual in those days; and the old-fashioned flaps of his waistcoat added to the general quaintness of his figure.' His gait, and manner of wearing his dress imparted to him somewhat of an air of negligence. Nevertheless, there rested on his countenance a grave and thoughtful expression, anything but youthful or girlish, and quite in character with the fact that he had already seen much active and even dangerous service at sea, and that he thoroughly understood every branch of his profession.

In his leisure moments he was always thinking of matters appertaining to his vocation, and was accustomed to remark that 'a captain of a man-of-war, if he does his duty, will always find sufficient to occupy his mind, and to render service to his country, on any station, either in peace or war.'

He was particularly attentive to the interests of young people with whom he came into contact, and although at first his personal peculiarities and the great professional reputation he had already acquired, inspired them with shyness, this soon melted away under the genial influence of his kindness of heart and his tact in dealing with them. Both in the *Albemarle* and his next vessel the *Boreas*, he had always under him from one to two score of middies and youngsters who positively adored him, amongst whom the more timid spirits were ever objects of special notice and attention, and whom he encouraged by example

to dare whatever was calculated to confirm courage, though apparently dangerous, and to feel that the attainment of nautical experience was a pleasure instead of a wearisome task. 'Well, sir,' he said to a youth who shewed signs of hesitation when ordered to climb the shrouds, 'I am going a race to the mast-head, and beg I may meet you there,'—a request to which no denial could be given—and when they met in the top, he spoke in the most cheerful terms to the midshipman, observing how much a young officer was to be pitied who could fancy there was any danger, or even anything disagreeable, in the attempt. As an excuse for his practice of always taking with him some of his young people when invited to dine on shore with high officials and persons of distinction, he was accustomed to say, 'I have taken the liberty of carrying with me some of my *aides-de-camp*. I will be excused, for I make it a rule to introduce them to all the good company I can, as they have few to look up to, besides myself, during the time they are at sea.' He knew and practised all that was due from himself towards his juniors, as well as his equals and superiors; and, during the whole course of his early career, before he attained the rank of captain, he never ceased to remember, or to follow, the precepts which had been drawn up for his guidance, relative to his conduct and naval duties by his uncle, Captain Maurice Suckling, with whom he first went to sea, and which commenced with the instruction, 'My dear Horatio, pay every respect to your superior officers, as you shall wish to receive respect yourself.'

It is, therefore, easy to apprehend the grounds upon which were based the extraordinary esteem in which young Captain Nelson was held by all who had anything to do with him; and although it is true that, at that period of his life, he was frequently taciturn—seeming to retire within

\* These words are cited from a description given by Prince William Henry, Duke of Clarence, afterwards King William IV., who first met Nelson in the year of the latter's visit to Quebec.

Nelson himself refers to that meeting, and to the Prince's sentiments, as expressed later on in this article, in the letter to Captain Locker, dated New York, November 17th, 1782.



himself when the energies of his mind were not called into exercise by some object of duty or professional interest—and that he often seemed to care but little for the refined courtesies of polished life, yet, 'when he wished to please, his address and conversation possessed a charm that was irresistible.' By his excellent father, the Rev. Edmund Nelson, a deep sense of an over-ruling Providence and of the sublime principles of Christianity, as well as the most strict practice of truth and honourable habits, had been carefully inculcated from his earliest youth. Hence, by the time that Nelson made his appearance at Quebec, the foundations of his character and fame had already been securely laid on a solid basis, notwithstanding that, as already remarked, the local records fail to notice his coming and going.

We shall add only a few more remarks illustrative of his disposition and peculiarities. The traditions which have been alluded to in the first part of this paper, and especially the article headed '*Mademoiselle Prentice et Lord Nelson*,' suggests an entire misapprehension of the character and habits of this wonderful man. What is said there relative to the 'Chien d'Or' and its frequenters, including the Duke of Clarence a few years later, would lead one to infer that Nelson himself was not much superior to the common run of officers, sometimes when on shore forgetful of their rank in their sovereign's service, and willing, occasionally, to play the part of mere pleasure-seekers, idlers and loafers. Such an inference, however, is irreconcilable with the information derived from various better and wholly reliable sources. His biographers, Clarke and McArthur, in reference to that epoch of Nelson's life, state that, while his delicate health and diminutive figure were 'far from giving expression to his intellectual powers, from his earliest years, like *Cleomenes*, the hero of Sparta, he had been enamoured of glory, and

had possessed a greatness of mind; he preserved, also, a similar temperance and simplicity of manners.\*

Prince William Henry, in his account of his first interview with Nelson, says, 'I was then (1782) a midshipman on board the *Borlase*, and had the watch on deck when Captain Nelson of the *Albemarle* came in his barge alongside. He had on a full-laced uniform, but was the merest boy of a captain I had ever beheld. . . . His lank, unpowdered hair, and the general quaintness of his figure, produced an appearance which particularly attracted my notice, for I had never seen anything like it before, nor could I imagine who he was or what he came about. My doubts were, however, removed when Lord Hood introduced me to him.

'There was something irresistibly pleasing in his address and conversation; and an enthusiasm, when speaking on professional subjects, that showed he was no common being. After this he went with us to the West Indies. . . . Throughout the whole of the American War the height of Nelson's ambition was to command a line-of-battle ship; as for prize-money, it never entered his thoughts. . . .

\* Some collateral testimony bearing on the question whether Nelson was or was not in the habit of frequenting the Chien d'Or while sojourning at Quebec, has been furnished by Mr. Alex. Urquhart, an aged citizen of Quebec (now about 80 years old), formerly a merchant. His mother was a contemporary of Mrs. Prentice and lived (to the age of about 90 years) until about the year 1840, retaining her faculties to the last. His mother frequently talked to him and her other children about the Prentices and the occurrences at Quebec during the last 30 years of the last century—mentioning the firm 'Alex. Davison & Lees' as being noted for the exercise of hospitality toward British naval officers whom the affairs of the period of the American revolutionary war, between 1775 and 1783, brought to Quebec Harbour as a place of rendezvous for ships of war and transports conveying troops and supplies. He states that, although the younger officers, both of the army and navy, were constant visitors at the Chien d'Or, those of the rank of post-captain, colonel, &c., were not among them, as this would have been *infra dig.* in those times of strict naval and military discipline. On being asked whether and why such officers of higher rank should pay visits to the Upper Town, he replied that their business at the Government Offices, at the top of Mountain Hill, was the occasion—not to frequent taverns; and that probably the Chien d'Or was never visited by Nelson in 1782, or by the Prince, in 1787, excepting perhaps once or more, in their official capacities, at some public entertainment.



I found him warmly attached to my father, and singularly humane; he had the honour of the king's service, and the independence of the British navy particularly at heart: and his mind glowed with this idea as much when he was simply captain of the *Albemarle*, as when he was afterwards decorated with so much well-earned distinction.\*

A little later, a lady friend of Nelson's future wife, in writing to her, expressed herself in these terms: 'We have at last seen the little captain of whom so much has been said. He came up just before dinner, and was very silent, yet seemed to *think* the more. He declined drinking any wine, but after dinner, when, as usual, the toasts of the King, Queen, and Royal family, and of Lord Hood were given, this strange man regularly filled his glass, and observed that those were always *bumper toasts* with him, and then relapsed into his former taciturnity. During this visit it was impossible for any of us to make out his real character. There was such a sternness and reserve in his behaviour, with occasional sallies, though transient, of a superior mind. I endeavoured, being placed near him, to rouse his attention, showing him all the civilities in my power; but I drew out little more than yes and no. We think, Fanny, that if you had been there, some thing might have been made of him, since

you have been in the habit of *attending these odd sort of people*.'

At the risk of being somewhat tedious in our recapitulation of the personal attributes of Captain Nelson, as exhibited while he was serving on the American naval stations, our remarks on the subject must be a little further extended in order that the reader may be in a position to fully realize the nature of the facts which we are about to state. It is clear, from what has been advanced in this paper, that he was not one of the ordinary run of military and naval officers whom duty brought to Quebec, with their regiments and ships, in the course of the American revolutionary struggle, and of whom very considerable numbers were always present during and after the close of the ill-starred expedition of General Burgoyne from Canada into the revolted territories. If many of these gentlemen were regular visitors at the Chien d'Or, there is no evidence that the captain of the *Albemarle* was one—even an occasional visitor, much less a frequenter of that hostelry. We say this without the least idea of insinuating that it was not a respectable house of entertainment, or that merely visiting it implied, on the part of officers any deficiency of self-respect or disregard of their own character. But the gossip traditions already mentioned, and which have been embodied in print connecting him, as well as the Duke of Clarence, with the Chien d'Or in the article entitled '*Mademoiselle Prentice et Lord Nelson*,' are manifestly unworthy of credit, more especially as respects the captain of the *Albemarle*.

The only circumstance calculated to give the least colour to the suggestions and inferences alluded to and which have culminated in the assertion that Nelson fell desperately in love with, and endeavoured to espouse, one of Mrs. Prentice's nieces, and of which we have been careful to take cognizance in our researches on this subject, is the fact that the young lady, of

\* It is worthy of mention that the close friendship which began while serving together in the American waters continued to subsist between Nelson and the Duke of Clarence, ending only with the death of the former in the Battle of Trafalgar.

In Nelson's correspondence with his other personal friends, he often makes mention of the Prince, expressing himself very decidedly, and warmly, in his favour, as being an excellent naval officer, extremely attentive to all his professional duties, and, after he became captain of the *Penguin*, as manifesting great abilities for command at sea. Nelson said of the future 'Sailor-King,' 'he's a *seaman*, which you could hardly suppose; ever, other qualification you may expect of him, he will be a judicious disciplinarian, and, I am certain, an ornament to our service.'

The Admiral, Lord Hood, had especially recommended the Prince to seek advice and information from Nelson if he desired to ask questions relative to naval tactics, adding that he (Nelson) 'could impart as much information as any officer in the fleet.'

When Nelson was subsequently married to a lady in the West Indies, the Prince, at his own special request, acted as father in giving away the bride.

whom Nelson became violently enamoured during his stay at Quebec, was a distant connection of Mrs. Miles Prentice—by the marriage of a relation,\* a man of great worth and exemplary character, to one of the two nieces of the mistress of the Chien d'Or.

Nearly all Nelson's biographers notice a peculiarity of which we have not yet made mention. While the very soul of honour and integrity, he had a very susceptible heart. Quebec has always been noted for the brilliant personal attractions possessed by its daughters of both nationalities—for equally fair girls of British origin have divided with their French Canadian sisters, the attention of innumerable officers of the naval and military service, from the time of conquest down to the present day. Elsewhere, therefore, than at the Chien d'Or, Nelson, in availing himself of freely offered hospitality, had ample opportunity of manifesting his appreciation of female beauty.

But we must here again quote from the testimony of his most reliable biographers. In page 76 of *Life and Services*, by Clarke and Arthur, there is this record: "During these repeated visits to Quebec, Captain Nelson became acquainted with Mr. Alexander Davison, at whose house he experienced the utmost hospitality, and from whom, both at this time and long afterwards, he received innumerable acts of kindness. The

sanguine mind of Nelson often required the cool and steady reason of a friend in the regulation of the common occurrences of private life; his extraordinary character sometimes displayed no inconsiderable portion of *Knight-errantry*, and, like the most celebrated warriors in the annals of chivalry (noticed in "*l'Histoire littéraire des troubadours*") while devoting himself to the affairs of war, was by no means insensible to the influence of the passion of love. With this disposition, whilst remaining at Quebec, he became violently attached to an amiable *American lady, who was afterwards married, and resided in London.*"

That Nelson's attachment, conceived for this lady, was quite serious in its nature and that, in consequence of it, the services of the future hero of the Nile and Trafalgar, *might* have been withdrawn from the navy, and that other results, most important in respect of the future annals of the world, *might* have ensued, appear from the sequel of the narrative from which we quote.

"When the *Albemarle*, on the 14th of October, was ready for sea, Captain Nelson had taken his leave, and had gone down the river to the place where the men-of-war usually anchored; but the next morning, as Mr. Davison was walking on the beach, he saw Nelson coming back in his boat. On his reaching the landing-place, the former anxiously demanded the cause that occasioned his friend's return; "Walk up to your house," replied Nelson, "and you shall be made acquainted with the cause." He then said, "I find it utterly impossible to leave this place without again waiting on her whose society has so much added to its charms, and laying myself and my fortunes at her feet." Mr. Davison earnestly remonstrated with him on the consequences of so rash a step: "your utter ruin," said he, "situated as you are at present, must inevitably follow." "Then let it follow," ex-

\* James Thompson, Esq., who married the elder niece, a Miss Cooper, in 1780, as already alluded to. This gentleman, and the father of the young lady in question were first cousins. The date of this marriage preceded by nearly two years that of the advent of Nelson to Quebec. We give the following extracts from the diary kept by Mr. Thompson, senior:—

"Quebec, Dec. 6th, 1780.—At 6 in the afternoon went to Mrs. Prentice's, where I was met by my good friends, Capt. Twiss and Mr. John Collins, of whom I had begged their presence. Dr. Montmolin was just come, and that ceremony was soon over.

"Dec. 7th, 1780.—Brought home my wife at dusk, accompanied by Mr. Simpson and Mr. and Mrs. Prentice."

At this time the younger niece of Mrs. Prentice was a little girl of 11 or 12 years of age—placed by her aunt for education at a convent in Pointe-aux-Trembles, a few miles above Quebec. This young lady afterwards became the wife of Mr. Lachlan Smith, already alluded to.

claimed Nelson! "for I am resolved to do it." The account goes on to state that a severe altercation ensued, but that Mr. Davison's firmness at length prevailed with Nelson, who, though with no very good grace, relinquished his purpose and suffered himself to be led back to his boat.

From the Island of Bic, in the *St. Lawrence*, Nelson took charge of a large convoy for New York. During the rest of the American War the active operations of the fleet, under Admiral Lord Hood, in the West Indies, kept Nelson's mind constantly employed. New connections and new scenes of enterprise, if they did not efface those tender impressions, undoubtedly mitigated and weakened them. After the peace he was ordered home, but was again soon despatched on active service to the West Indies. On the occasion of this visit to Europe, he spent some time in London, and after having been presented at Court, where the King honoured him with particular notice, Nelson went to seek out his old friend Mr. Alex. Davison, of Quebec, who had now removed\* from Canada and established himself in the metropolis as a Navy agent. Their former intercourse had initiated a warm friendship and intimate correspondence between the two, which endured throughout the remaining 23 years of Nelson's life. He found Davison resident at Lincoln's Inn, and went to dine with him. In page 84 of the *Biography* already cited, this visit is recorded in the following words: "On his arrival he immediately threw off what he called "his iron-bound coat," and, having procured a dressing-gown, spent the evening in talking over the various occurrences that had taken place since they last parted on the beach of the River St.

Lawrence.' Innumerable letters of Nelson to Mr. Davison are extant. Davison was his agent in charge of his official pay and prize money, his counsellor and the manager of his estate, and various private affairs, and finally one of the principal executors of his last will and testament. On whatever service employed, Nelson was in the habit of opening his heart to him in his letters. Down to nearly his last hours, when about to shed his blood for his king and country in the sanguinary battle of Trafalgar, Nelson found occasion to address a few affectionate lines, interspersed with references to business, to his life-long friend, Alexander Davison. Doubtless, not so much the remembrance of former hospitalities at Quebec as the prudent and determined stand whereby he successfully opposed Nelson's following a course of conduct which he considered ruinous at that time, had operated permanently on the gallant sailor's mind, affording what he could never cease to regard as a guarantee of sincere and unimpaired personal friendship. This Mr. Alexander Davison, while resident at Quebec, had been the head of a mercantile firm, 'Messrs. Davison & Lees,' carrying on business in the Lower Town. Even before Nelson's visit to the city these gentlemen had made arrangements for dissolving partnership, as Mr. Davison had decided on a removal to London; and in the *Quebec Gazette* of Aug. 25th, 1782, there was published an advertisement by one Wm. Lang, intimating that he had become purchaser of 'the lot and house wherein Messrs. Davison & Lees lately lived, situate in Notre Dame St., and bounded on one end by Thomas Aylwin, Esq., on the other by Mr. Lewis Lizot, and behind by Mr. Lewis Drisiens,' and giving notice 'to all persons having claims thereon to notify the same in writing before the 10th of October next, when he is to complete the payment of the purchase money.' Some of the names here

\* In the *Quebec Gazette* of October 31st, 1782, mention is made of a ship named the *Trade*, as having fallen down the river to Bic, to join the convoy assembled there, and bound for London. The list of passengers given contains the name of Mr. Alex. Davison.

mentioned are still not unfamiliar at Quebec.

We have already stated in a footnote that Mr. Davison departed for England, with a convoy from Bic, prior to October 31st, 1782—about a fortnight after his memorable interview with Nelson on the beach at Quebec.

Reverting to Davison's own account of that interview, as recorded by Clarke and McArthur, it is noticeable that no mention is made of the name of the lady concerned. But it would have been in bad taste to have furnished it—unacceptable to herself and friends, and probably wounding to her feelings. The only good purpose which would have been served by so doing, that occurs to us, might have been to prevent the false suggestions and inferences already alluded to.

There is nothing in the account, which, fairly considered, would justify a belief that the object of Nelson's passionate admiration was not a person of the highest respectability in Quebec Society.

The expression used 'an amiable American lady,' signifies simply one belonging to this side of the Atlantic, although, if employed at present it would denote a citizen of the United States.

The more significant points in the narrative, in view of her identification, are those which refer to Mr. Davison's having bestowed on Nelson, at this time 'and long afterwards, innumerable acts of kindness;' also, the statement that the lady was 'afterwards married and resided in London.' These, as we hope to make clear, furnish us with the clue.

That she was not one of Mrs. Prentice's nieces, celebrated for personal attractions at Quebec in those days, is apparent from what has been already given in this paper. These young ladies could not have been justly styled 'American,' since both had been imported not long before from Ireland by their aunt, who had no children of

her own. Moreover, they both married and settled down in this country previously to Nelson's visit—one the wife of Mr. Lachlan Smith, the other of Mr. James Thompson; nor did either of them, as is well known, ever cross the Atlantic again, as must have been the case to accord with the intimation 'who was afterwards married and resided in London.'

We now proceed to the actual identification of the lady.

At the sieges of Louisbourg, in 1758 and Quebec in 1759, there were with Wolfe, two volunteers—*Mr. James Thompson and Mr. James Simpson*—attached to the celebrated corps of Fraser Highlanders. They had joined it for service in America with the hope, which they had been encouraged to entertain, of being advanced to a commission on the occurrence of vacancies. They were first cousins, and during the whole period of their subsequent lives maintained a close intimacy. Both remained at Quebec after the conquest, when the troops were disbanded, and both were married; but Mr. Thompson having become a widower, he selected as his second wife the elder of Mrs. Prentice's nieces. This marriage, which took place in the year 1780, was celebrated by the Rev. Mr. Dumoulin, chaplain of the troops, in the presence of a small but select company, amongst whom were Thompson's particular friends, *Captain Twiss*, of the Royal Engineers, *Mr. John Collins*, Deputy Surveyor-General; his cousin, Mr. James Simpson, and the Prentices. It is recorded in Mr. Thompson's journal of that date that the wife of his cousin Simpson disapproved of the match. She was therefore not present on the occasion, the alleged reason being 'a coolness' which subsisted between her and Mrs. Prentice.

Previously to his marriage, Mr. Thompson, whose business quarters were in the Bishop's Palace, on the site where the Local Parliament Buildings now stand, had resided, or

boarded, at his cousin's house, and was intimately conversant with all the affairs of the Simpson family. His cousin and wife consulted him on all occasions, and their children looked up to him with entire confidence and filial affection. Later, when Mr. Thompson's numerous children began to grow up, the most affectionate intercourse subsisted between them and the young Simpsons. These facts are here stated because, though commonplace in themselves, they have an important bearing upon the question under consideration.

It should be observed, further, that Mr. Thompson's youngest son was born in 1788; he was named George, and, at about the age of sixteen, was sent to the Royal Academy at Woolwich as a cadet.

Mr. James Thompson was a man of great worth, and extremely respected on account of his sterling integrity of character and his sagacity. He lived to be 98 years old, and during his protracted life was the recipient of many favours and of much particular attention from every successive Governor that ruled in Canada, from the times of General Murray down to the days of Earls Dalhousie and Aylmer. One of his brothers was an officer (adjutant) in the 1st Regiment, or Royal Scots, and afterwards held a commission in the 41st Regiment. Of Mr. Thompson's sons, one was Judge of the District of Gaspé, and two others, Deputy Commissary-Generals.

His great age, and the fact that he lived to be (in Canada) the last surviving veteran of Wolfe's army, made him always a conspicuous object of attention at Quebec down to the last day of his life.

Reverting to his cousin, Mr. James Simpson, who did not attain to nearly the same great age as Mr. Thompson, it happened that one of his daughters—*Miss Mary Simpson*, born in 1766 or 1767—was a girl of marvellous beauty. She was scarcely sixteen years old at the date of Captain Nel-

son's visit to Quebec, in September, 1782. One of Mr. Thompson's daughters\* was in the habit of remarking, in the hearing of her children, that, 'if Mary Simpson was not the most beautiful girl in Quebec, she was, at any rate, the most handsome she had ever beheld.' She looked older than she really was. Her parents had secured for her the best education that was obtainable at Quebec. Mr. James Thompson, Junr., who died in the year 1869, makes mention of her in his diary as 'Miss Mary Simpson, the highly accomplished daughter of my father's first cousin, Mr. James Simpson.'

This was the young lady with whose personal and mental charms Captain Nelson, of the *Albemarle*, became infatuated, in 1782. They met in Quebec society, more particularly under the hospitable roof of Nelson's mercantile friend, Mr. Alexander Davison, and probably, before his departure, at the house of her father. Whether or not Nelson's attentions were favoured by her parents nowhere appears on record; but it is certain that he made an impression on her heart and feelings, as will be shown presently. It is not likely, from all that is now known concerning this lady, that Davison had opposed Nelson's intentions, with respect to her, owing, as has been rashly suggested, to apprehensions on the part of Davison that the marriage with her would be a *mesalliance*—a derogatory connection of a superior with an inferior. It is far more probable that the motive was to hinder Nelson from assuming responsibilities which, at that time, he was wholly unprepared for—which would have entailed the abandonment of his professional pursuits and prospects, then so fair, and, in his own words, would have pro-

\* *Mrs. Harrower*, mother of Mr. James T. Harrower, now employed in the Local Treasury Department, the owner of the celebrated *Sword of Montgomery* and custodian of the Thompson family records, diaries, and correspondence.

duced his 'utter ruin in his present situation.' Had Nelson, on landing from his boat, on that occasion, accomplished his ardent wishes, married the lady, and settled down in Quebec, his conduct would have amounted to desertion from the service, which, should his passion for nautical life have subsequently revived, would have placed an almost insurmountable obstacle between him and future employment in the British navy.

That Nelson had made a deep impression upon her heart may be inferred from several particulars. At that time Sir Frederick Haldimand was Governor at Quebec. His secretary and aid-de-camp, Major Matthews, was also a suitor for this lady's hand. After Nelson's departure, this officer renewed his attentions and pressed her to marry him. But she refused. Having been sought by a Post-Captain of the Royal Navy, she could not, she said, '*think of accepting any one belonging to the army whose rank was lower than that of Colonel.*'

Shortly afterwards Governor Haldimand went home, accompanied by Major Matthews. In process of time the latter became a colonel, and was appointed Governor of Chelsea Hospital. Some years had elapsed, and Miss Simpson had attained the age of 26 or 27 years, remaining still unmarried. This fact being ascertained by Colonel Matthews, he again renewed his suit, and was finally accepted: and they became engaged.

Mr. James Thompson, Jun., furnishes the following particulars:— 'Colonel Matthews' appointment in the Horse Guards not admitting of his return to Canada, to fulfil his engagements to Miss Simpson, she went to join him, and they were married in London, from whence she, as well as the colonel, maintained a close correspondence: the former, indeed, looked upon my father (Mr. James Thompson, Sen.) in the light of a parent.'

This then—Miss Mary Simpson—

so far as we have yet proceeded with our evidence—was the young lady whose description tallies with the words of Nelson's biographers in connection with the incident that occurred on the beach at Quebec, 'an amiable American lady, who was afterwards married and resided in London.'

We have before us a number of letters,\* written by Col. and Mrs. Matthews. Her letters manifest the utmost kindness of heart, good sense, and mental cultivation. When Mr. Thompson's youngest son George was of age to profit by an admission into the Royal Academy of Woolwich, and knowing that it had always been the old man's earnest hope to procure it for one of his family, the Colonel made personal application to the great minister Pitt in his behalf. We have by us his original letter of application, in which he says under date Horse Guards, Nov. 26th, 1803, 'My Lord—Having no claim on your Lordship's attention, I feel much diffidence in taking this liberty, and have long hesitated to do it, yet my motives, I confidently hope, will excuse me. Consideration for and attachment to a very old and worthy servant of the Crown in your Lordship's department at Quebec, and who, at a very advanced period of life, is encumbered with a numerous family, one of whom, in his fifteenth year, has discovered a strong disposition for military science, in which he has received as much instruction as that country can afford, and his father's greatest ambition is that he should be admitted as a cadet at Woolwich. . . . I should not think myself at liberty to obtrude this solicitation, were I not to add that Mr. Thompson is a relation of my wife, and as a mark of attachment to her,

\*We cite from the correspondence of the Thompson family, kindly placed in the writer's hands by Mr. Jas. T. Harrower, grandson of Mr. Thompson, sen. It affords information concerning the Colonel and his estimable lady and his family covering the period of from 1796 or 1797 to 1831, when Mrs. Matthews was still alive, although the Colonel had died some years before.

were I so fortunate as to obtain this favour, I would lose no time in getting his son over to this country and fitting him for the Academy . . . .

The application was transmitted to its destination through Mr. Thompson's old friend, Captain (now Colonel) Twiss, of the Quebec Royal Engineering department, and was successful, the willing compliance of the minister being couched '*in very handsome terms.*' In his letter enclosing copies of his application, and of the Earl of Chatham's reply, the Colonel writes :

. . . . . All therefore that remains to be done, is to embrace the first favourable opportunity of sending your dear boy to the arms of your affectionately attached friend, Mrs. Matthews, who will open them wide to receive him, and be his adopted mother on this side of the Atlantic so long as he may have occasion for one ; and for her sake, my dear sir, you must not deprive me of the willing share I am anxious to take in this interesting charge. . . . . I am desirous of leaving room for my dearest Mary to say something of herself, and I know that from your early and parental attachment to her, it will give you sincere pleasure to hear what she will *not* say. I have the happiness to tell you that she is as amiable as ever, and every day renders herself more dear to me. Much more I could say on this subject. . . . .

Accompanying the Colonel's letter, in fact, written on the same sheet, was one from Mrs. Matthews, which began :

'My dear friend, I would not deprive my Matthews of the pleasure of making the above communication to you himself, and as he has so fully expressed the sentiments of my heart towards our dear George, all I would repeat in this postscript is, that your dear boy shall be my adopted son on this side of the Atlantic, and that you and dear Mrs. Thompson may depend upon every affectionate attention paid him by my warm-hearted Matthews and myself, who are anxious to give

him an hearty welcome to Chelsea. . . .

We cannot forbear from remarking here that the foregoing letters—in-  
deed every one of the whole set of letters—present a picture of genuine domestic felicity, which could not have left in the mind of Mrs. Matthews any trace of regret that it had been her lot to wed Colonel Matthews instead of Captain Nelson, notwithstanding the vast renown acquired by the latter in after years. At the date when those two letters were penned, all London—we may say all England—was cognizant of the fact that Mrs. Nelson's marriage with Mrs. Nesbit, of the West Indies, had proved an unhappy one, in spite of the favourable circumstances under which it had been contracted a few years after his meeting with Miss Simpson at Quebec. All the world knows of the chief causes of that unhappiness, and that Lady Nelson, who was also warmly attached to her renowned husband, was not the occasion of their domestic misery. In fact, Nelson's naval fame, and his having become the idol of his countrymen, afforded her but small compensation for the lack of what every true woman cherishes most in her heart—happiness in her home and family.

As before remarked, a most affectionate correspondence was maintained during many years between the Thompson family at Quebec and the Matthews at London, and the set includes not a few letters from young George Thompson while under the protection of the Colonel and his wife. In one, dated Nov. 5th, 1804, soon after his arrival in London, young Thompson, writing to his father, observes : 'Mrs. Matthews is truly a very amiable lady . . . . ' adding further on, '*I have not the least recollection of Mrs. Matthews.*' The apparent forgetfulness arose, no doubt, from the circumstance that nine or ten years had elapsed between the time of Miss Simpson's departure from Que-



bec, to join Colonel Matthews in England, and that of young George when he was about 15 years old.

The length to which this article has already extended precludes our adverting to many incidents noticed in the course of the correspondence, and tending to remove from the sphere of mere hypothesis the identification of Mrs. Matthews as being the very person who, in early life, had made so strong an impression on the heart of Nelson. We therefore pass on to what is, perhaps, the most important link in the chain of evidence—we ought, perhaps, rather to say the crowning testimony.

The decisive battle of Trafalgar, fought by the Spanish and French fleets on one side, and that commanded by Admiral Nelson on the other, occurred on the 20th of October, 1805. It was a bloody conflict, which cost England dear in the loss of thousands of brave officers and men, killed and wounded; and, above all, it gave occasion for all England to mourn the death, at the age of 47, of her greatest and most loved naval hero. To Nelson himself the time and manner of his end were just what he had frequently in his conversation and letters professed to court. He had often before expressed the desire to be in a position in which he could have full direction of the might and purse of England at sea, and to then show the world what he could do when not, as heretofore, acting under another admiral placed in supreme command over him. That the result justified his own anticipations and those of the friends who knew him best, is now matter of history. His body, carefully preserved, was brought home, and after the remains had received every honour and proof of affection and gratitude which it was possible for his countrymen to bestow, the funeral took place at St. Paul's Cathedral, London, on January 9th, 1806. The City was crowded with people, occupying the streets, windows and housetops, anxious to

view the passing by of the funeral cortege.

But there was one in whom the solemn occasion revived tender recollections of early life concerning the departed; one whose mind, reverting to her early acquaintance with him at Quebec, in 1782, was unable to look forth upon the pageant. *This was Mrs. Matthews, formerly Miss Mary Simpson.*

Instead of narrating the particulars we must allow herself, as it were, to speak. Her letter on the subject is dated January 9th, 1806, and we give the following extract from it verbatim: ' . . . He (George Thompson) has gone to witness the mournful spectacle of our deeply lamented hero, Lord Nelson's funeral. My M. (Matthews) procured a place for him in the window of a house at Charing Cross. The press of danger will be great, and the crowd and bustle of today will exceed everything that has occurred in this Isle before. Such a scene would be *too much for my feelings, who mourns his immortal character not only as an irreparable national loss but as a friend of my early life*, which renders it the more affecting to *Matthews (who was also well acquainted with him)* and me, and neither of us had fortitude enough to witness the melancholy sight—the most awful and dismal that ever caused the British heart to ache or tears to flow, and torrents, I am sure, are shedding at this instant. Human invention has been on the rack ever since our country's pride and favourite fell to suggest suitable honours and homage for this solemn occasion. The pomp and magnificence of the preparations can hardly be described, and will be a grand sight to those who can look at it . . . though the price so sadly grieves our hearts and makes us reflect upon the state of apprehension this country would be in at this dreadful period had it not been for the wonderful and glorious naval action in which our ever-to-be-regretted hero

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was shewn! This interesting subject has led me on further than I thought.

On the evening of the same day—Jan. 9th, 1806, the day of Nelson's funeral—George Thompson, writing to his father, says: 'I have just returned from seeing the funeral of Lord Nelson, which was too magnificent to be described in this small space; but Mr. Matthews desired me to make a note of it in my journal, which I shall do to the best advantage. . . . Col. and Mrs. Matthews are in very low spirits for Lord Nelson's death.'

We consider what is set forth in the foregoing extracts conclusive, and that, viewed in conjunction with the other facts, noticed in this letter, the question of identity is now fairly settled. We are conscious that a much more pretentious piece, replete with more extended particulars of information, might have been prepared on the interesting topic, of which we must now take our leave.

In conclusion, we shall only add a few words more relative to the amiable lady, the question of whose identity has afforded the pleasure of preparing the foregoing article. She survived the great man, who had been the passionate admirer of her beauty in early life, many years; for her correspondence with her connections in Canada was kept up till nearly the time of old Mr. Thompson's decease in 1831. She received frequent visits from Quebecers, sojourning a while in England, and it would appear that all who held intercourse with her entertained for her the greatest respect and esteem. On one or two occasions, between 1810 and 1819, the Duke of Kent called upon her—the first time, to console with her on the occasion of Colonel Matthews' death. Officers of distinction, also, who had formerly served in Quebec, were in the habit of calling to pay their respects to her; and amongst

these, Sir A. Blyce, General Twiss and others, who had been attached to the Royal Engineer corps, with which her dear friend, James Thompson, had been so long connected. On all such occasions she was accustomed to make particular inquiries relating to old friends and old scenes in her native city. We regret that we have been unable to establish the date and place of her decease; but we have some reason for conjecturing that her death occurred in London not long after she had attained her seventieth year.

NOTE.—The subject of the great Admiral's love affair at Quebec, when he visited it in the capacity of Captain of a British frigate in 1782, naturally interests naval officers whom duty even in the-o days brings to the harbour, whenever it is broached as a topic of conversation. We have a notable illustration of this in what occurred the other day. Just before the departure of our late popular Governor-General, the British war vessels *Bellerophon* and *Sirius* being in port, the Captains and some other officers of these vessels were entertained at breakfast by His Excellency, at the Citadel. The conversation turned on former visits of commanders of ships of war, when, Nelson's name being brought up, the Earl remarked that Mr. LeMoine, author of the 'Maple Leaves,' *Alain du Touriste*, &c., was able to afford them some information about him, as he had published something on the subject. Mr. LeMoine's request, rehearsed the whole of what he had related in the works cited above, much to the satisfaction of his hearers—Mr. LeMoine's account of the affair, however, as it is based on the now exploded doctrine that the heroine was one of the nieces of Mrs. Miles Prentice, not, as has been shown in the foregoing article, the correct one, however gratifying to the distinguished listeners to its recital on that occasion.

CONCLUDING NOTE BY THE AUTHOR.—The foregoing article contains the substance of what was at first intended to be presented as a Paper for reading and discussion before the Quebec Literary and Historical Society, of which the author is an Associate Member. On reflection, however, he is of opinion that the narrative is, upon the whole, and especially with reference to the romantic complexion of some of the incidents adverted to, more suitable for publication in the columns of a magazine, which, besides being a national review in relation to Canadian history and literature, embraces the consideration of topics of general interest to classes of readers not wholly, or chiefly, concerned in the contemplation of grave historical subjects. The world-wide fame of the illustrious British naval hero, which will never die out so long as the profession of arms at sea continues to be required and practised, and the foundations of signal success in its exercise to be studied, will, it is believed, commend to the perusal of the general reader of *ROSE-BELFORD'S MAGAZINE* the biographical sketch now presented of a certain period of Nelson's early career, and to Canadian readers in particular, who are apt to derive satisfaction from the recollection that the streets of their ancient capital have, in past times, been trodden by numerous visitors from Europe, of the highest eminence and reputation.—H. H. M.

