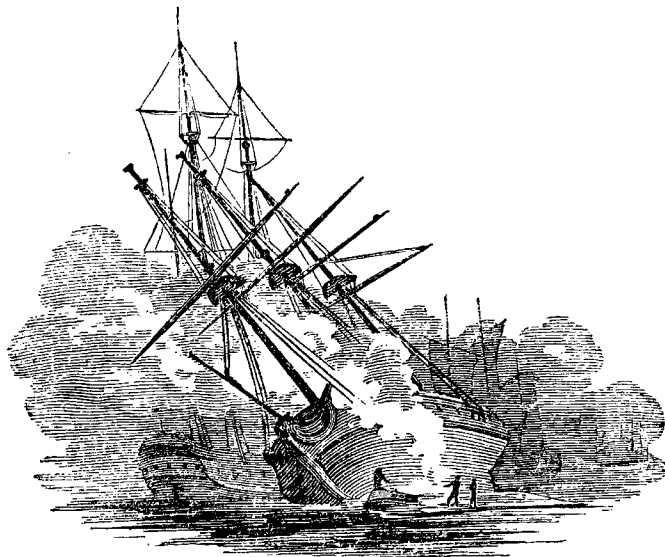


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To careen a vessel is to lay her completely on her side, for the purpose of re-caulking and paying her bottom, as well as repairing all the parts of a vessel under the water-line. In careening a ship fire must not be spared, and the fuel generally employed consists in bundles of reeds. Fire is necessary for perfectly closing the seams, and discovering the imperfect parts. To finish the work, the bottom is suffered to cool, and then tallowed.

*BIOGRAPHICAL MEMOIRS OF*  
**SIR EDWARD HAMILTON, KNIGHT.**

“ Let us be renowned when we may, and leave our fame behind us, like the last beams of the sun, when he hides his red face in the west.” OSSIAN.

THE distinguished subject of these Sketches, is the second son and youngest child of the late worthy Sir John Hamilton, Bart. of Marlborough-house, Hampshire, a Captain in his Majesty’s navy \*, and brother to Sir Charles Hamilton, Bart. Captain of his Majesty’s ship *Melpomene*, at present commanding on the coast of Africa. He was born on the 12th of March 1772, and may be truly called a son of Neptune, since at the age of seven (in the year 1779), he first went to sea, with his father, who then commanded his Majesty’s ship *Hector*, of 74 guns, and served on board that ship in the West Indies till the year

\* Sir John Hamilton served under Sir Hugh Palliser on the Newfoundland station during five years, when he commanded the *Zephyr* and *Merlin* sloops, from the year 1764 to the year 1769. He was continued in employment at home until the year 1775, when he was sent to Quebec in the *Lizard* frigate, with money and cloathing for the troops in America, which place on his arrival finding besieged, he held a council of war, and formed a battalion of seamen of his

Vol. V.

E

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[More information](#)

1781, during which time he was in one general action with the French fleet, and experienced the dreadful hurricane of 1780. On the return of peace, our young mariner was sent to complete his classical education at the Royal Grammar School at Guildford, where he continued during three years. In 1787, he went again to sea to complete his time as a midshipman, and served until the year 1790, in the West Indies. In the Russian armament he served on board the *Victory* under the auspices of Lord Hood, appointed commander in chief of a squadron destined for the Baltic. When this armament was dismantled, Mr. Hamilton went over to the University of Caen in Lower Normandy, and afterwards travelled through part of France, visiting all the sea-ports along the coast. Soon after his return to England, he went to Portugal, and visited all the ports in that kingdom. While he was thus acquiring a competent knowledge of foreign languages, he did not omit making such nautical observations, as might on a future emergency be of essential benefit to himself and his country. The present war breaking out prevented our young midshipman from prosecuting his intention of travelling through Spain and other countries, with the same views as he had travelled through France and Portugal. We therefore find him, soon after the commencement of hostilities, serving on board the *Queen Charlotte*, under that great Officer Earl Howe; and in a short time thereafter (early in 1793), he was appointed one of the Lieutenants of his Majesty's ship *Dido*, commanded by his brother Sir Charles Hamilton, Bart.

own ship's company and those of his Majesty's sloop *Hound*, and conjunctly with the military defended and protected the place. In the spring of the year 1776, he returned to England, received the thanks of the House of Commons for his services, and on the 6th of July in the same year, was created by his Majesty a Baronet of Great Britain. The Admiralty at the same time appointed him to the command of a guardship, which he held at Portsmouth, until the breaking out of the French war in 1778; he was then ordered to the West Indies (Jamaica station, where he continued two years), but the climate so much impaired his health, that he survived but two years after; leaving two sons, ornaments of the service—the present Sir Charles Hamilton, Captain of the *Melpomene*; and the subject of this Memoir, who now commands his Majesty's ship *Trent*, cruising of Havre de Grace.

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Excerpt

[More information](#)

OF SIR EDWARD HAMILTON, KNT.

3

In the year 1793, the *Dido* being ordered to cruise in the North Sea, while off the coast of Norway she fell in with a French brig privateer, mounting thirteen guns, and carrying forty-five men. To elude the *Dido*'s pursuit, the privateer ran on shore beyond the reach of her guns. Sir Charles Hamilton, confiding in that arduous spirit of enterprise which his brother had on every occasion manifested, sent him with a boat and crew, consisting only of eight men, to take possession of the privateer. After a trivial opposition Lieutenant Hamilton boarded the enemy's brig, and took possession of her, just in time to prevent her taking fire from the combustibles placed by the enemy as they quitted her. At this moment he could not resist giving way to that manly impulse of vengeance which the base attempt of burning a vessel subdued, had excited in his mind. He therefore instantly landed on a strange and rugged coast, followed by his brave boat's crew, and after some resistance and struggle, made thirteen men belonging to the French privateer, prisoners of war, and brought them on board the *Dido*. In this stage of his services, it is unnecessary for us to make any comments on those dawnings of undaunted spirit and enterprise, which gave indication of what his mind, when enlightened by more mature and practical knowledge, might one day judiciously plan and successfully put in execution.

The *Dido* being afterwards attached as one of the frigates to the fleet under Lord Hood's orders in the Mediterranean, Lieut. Hamilton consequently served at the siege of Bastia, and afterwards commanded in person on shore at the siege of Giralata (a strong post held by the French near Calvi), having one hundred British and three hundred Corsican troops under his orders. With this force, he constructed batteries on a commanding height, and having mounted some of the ship's guns within point-blank shot of the enemy's batteries, by keeping up an incessant fire for thirteen days, he obliged the garrison to capitulate, having suffered very little loss in men on this harassing duty.

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[More information](#)

After performing this service, Lord Hood, the commander in chief in the Mediterranean, with his usual just discrimination of merit, appointed Lieutenant Hamilton (10th July 1794) ninth Lieutenant of his flag ship the *Victory*, and in consequence of the rapid routine of promotion of the other Lieutenants, he became first of the *Victory* on the 7th of October in the same year.

Lieutenant Hamilton's advancement to the rank of Commander did not, however, take place so soon as he had reason to expect, on account of Lord Hood's being obliged soon after to return to England in the *Victory*, for the re-establishment of his health. On the contrary, after the unexpected event of Lord Hood's being ordered to strike his flag in May 1795, Lieutenant Hamilton had the mortification to find himself reduced to be junior Lieutenant of the *Victory* \*, she having sailed to the Mediterranean as a private ship; and thus all his hopes of promotion for a time vanished.

In the Mediterranean he continued serving in the *Victory* as a junior Lieutenant, first under Admiral Linzee, and afterwards under Admiral Man in the action with the French fleet on the 14th of July 1795; where that ship and a few others of the van-division bore the brunt of three hours action, as the centre and rear could not get up, owing to vexatious calms and baffling winds. Soon after Sir John Jervis (now Earl St. Vincent), took the command of his Majesty's fleet in the Mediterranean, Lieutenant Hamilton was promoted (January 1796), to the rank of Commander into the *Comet* fireship. In this vessel he was sent to the West Indies, where he served upwards of twelve months, without any opportunity to signalize himself. Having returned to England with dispatches, he was in June 1797, advanced to the rank of Post Captain, and being appointed to

\* Commanders in chief may give rank to junior Lieutenants in their own flag ships without the distinctions of seniority; but in other ships Lieutenants must take rank according to the seniority of their commissions.

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Excerpt

[More information](#)

OF SIR EDWARD HAMILTON, KNT.

5

the Surprise frigate, of 24 guns, soon after sailed with a convoy to Newfoundland, from whence he returned in the fall of the year with another convoy under his protection.

In July 1798, Captain Hamilton was ordered to proceed with a convoy to the West Indies, and on the 3d day of October arrived in safety at Jamaica. From that period until the 20th of January 1800, when he quitted the station, being constantly employed in the most active and hazardous services, he captured, burnt, sunk, or destroyed more than eighty of the enemy's armed vessels and merchant ships. At one time he chased with his ship a privateer and her prize into the port of Laguna on the north side of Cuba, and after having effected their destruction, baffling winds and light airs prevented his getting out; he was therefore in that situation, *malgré lui*, in constant action two days and two nights with the batteries before he could clear his ship of the port.

His achievement in boarding and cutting out with the boats of his ship, and a chosen band of 100 men, the *Hermione* from the harbour of Porto Cavallo, though surrounded with 200 pieces of cannon mounted on the batteries, stands unparalleled in our naval annals, as combining the most judicious disposition of attack with the most daring gallantry.

The honour of his country and the glory of the British navy were (as he himself emphatically expresses), great inducements for him to make an attempt to cut out by the boats of the ship under his command, his Majesty's late ship *Hermione* from the harbour of Porto Cavallo; and as we cannot be too minute in transmitting to posterity every particular relative to such glorious deeds of enterprise, we think it will be gratifying to our readers to blend in our narrative of this exploit many authentic and interesting facts, that do not appear in any official accounts that were published\*.

\* In a future number we may, in all probability, be able to gratify our readers, through the medium of an Officer actually present, with further circum-

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[More information](#)

“ They bent forward to his voice, as if a spirit of their fathers spoke from a cloud of night.”—OSSIAN.

On the morning of the 25th of October 1799, at half past twelve, the boats of the Surprise, containing one hundred men, including Officers, boarded the Hermione on the bow and quarter, amidst the tremendous firing of great guns and volleys of small arms. Captain Hamilton with his gallant boat's crew got first on board, and took possession of the fore-castle without much resistance; but in attempting to push aft on the quarter-deck, the Spaniards made a furious stand on the gang-way, and drove our small party back to the fore-castle, where a dreadful conflict ensued, as all the Spaniards who followed the rallying party, were either killed or wounded. It was here Captain Hamilton received several wounds by a sabre and pike to be hereafter noticed, while he was gallantly supported by his Officers and boat's crew. The enemy in this quarter of the ship being at length mostly killed or wounded, another effort was made to get possession of the quarter-deck, and which Captain Hamilton and his brave followers effected after some struggle again on the gangway, where several more of the enemy were killed and wounded. The quarter-deck was now most obstinately disputed (principally by the Spanish officers), for upwards of a quarter of an hour, and where a dreadful carnage took place. The main-deck held out for three quarters of an hour, and with equal slaughter; nor was it before both cables were cut, sail made on the ship, and boats ahead to tow her out, that the main-deck could have been deemed as conquered. The enemy last of all retreated between decks, and continued firing till their ammunition was expended, *then, and not until then, did they cry for quarter.* At two o'clock the Hermione was completely in possession of the boarding party, after having had 119 of her officers and crew killed, and upwards of 100 wounded, in a conflict

stantial particulars respecting the plan of attack, mode of execution, and names of the gallant Officers and men employed in the boats allotted to board and cut out the Hermione.

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Excerpt

[More information](#)

## OF SIR EDWARD HAMILTON, KNT.

7

which from beginning to end did not last longer than an hour and a quarter. The future historian might doubt the credibility of the fact to be told, were it not so well authenticated, that on this gallant occasion the assailants had no more than one Officer killed, and twelve Officers and seamen wounded. Amongst the latter number Captain Hamilton stands first on the list. He was wounded in six places, and bruised all over the body, the principal wound being on the left temple, with the butt-end of a musket, which broke over his head, and knocked him down senseless on deck; he received also a severe wound by the cut of a sabre on the left thigh, one also in the right thigh by a pike, another on the right shin bone by a grape shot, one finger was much cut, and his loins and kidneys so much bruised, as at times to require the highest medical advice and assistance; it is also to be lamented that he still occasionally suffers by these last bruises considerable pain.

As generosity and humanity are generally allied to true courage and magnanimity, we cannot resist in this brief sketch giving a trait of our gallant Commander's character in that respect. He rewarded the seamen who so much distinguished themselves on the above occasion, by dividing amongst them no less a sum than 500*l.* of his own particular share of prize money. Thus setting a noble example of valour and generosity, which has ever its due influence on the minds and hearts of British seamen.

Soon after the exploit of the *Hermione*, one of the seamen belonging to Captain Hamilton's own boat, who distinguished himself in boarding, was taken up as a deserter from the *Swallow* sloop of war, and tried by a Court-Martial. At his trial it appeared in evidence that he had saved Captain Hamilton's life, when he had been knocked down on the quarter-deck, and was without arms! The Court, in considering the mitigating circumstances in favour of his character, thought proper to recommend him, and to get the sentence of 300 lashes ordered to be inflicted, remitted.



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Excerpt

[More information](#)

On the 7th November 1799, Captain Hamilton was voted by the House of Assembly at Spanish Town, Jamaica, a sword, value three hundred guineas, “in testimony of the high sense that House entertained of the extraordinary gallantry and ability displayed by him in attacking and cutting out of Porto Cavallo, his Majesty’s late ship *Hermione*, an enterprise surpassed by none in this glorious war.”

His Majesty was graciously pleased to confer upon him Knighthood by letters patent, and honoured him with the Naval Gold Medal in reward of his gallant conduct.

On the 6th of March 1800, the Court of Common Council of London, voted Sir Edward Hamilton the freedom of the city in a gold box, value fifty guineas.

In the month of April 1800, Sir Edward returning home in the Jamaica packet, for the re-establishment of his health and the cure of his wounds, was captured by a French privateer and carried into France. He was sent to Paris, where he was taken notice of by Bonaparte, and after remaining there six weeks, was exchanged for four Midshipmen.

On the 25th of October 1800, being the anniversary day of the exploit on which the *Hermione* was cut out by the boats of his Majesty’s ship *Surprise*, Sir Edward, by special invitation, dined at the Mansion-House, and the Chamberlain of the city having delivered to him the freedom of the city in the gold box voted, communicated to him in a very appropriate speech, the thanks of the Corporation for his conduct in an action, which, in the emphatic language of his commander in chief, Admiral Sir Hyde Parker, “*must ever rank among the foremost of the gallant actions executed by our Navy this war.*”

In summing up with brevity the impressions made on the public mind by such glorious deeds of enterprise, we have only to add, and apply to Sir Edward Hamilton, the words of an ancient Bard:—“**THOU HAST BEEN MIGHTY IN BATTLE, AND THY FAME SHALL NEVER FADE.**”—OSSIAN.

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