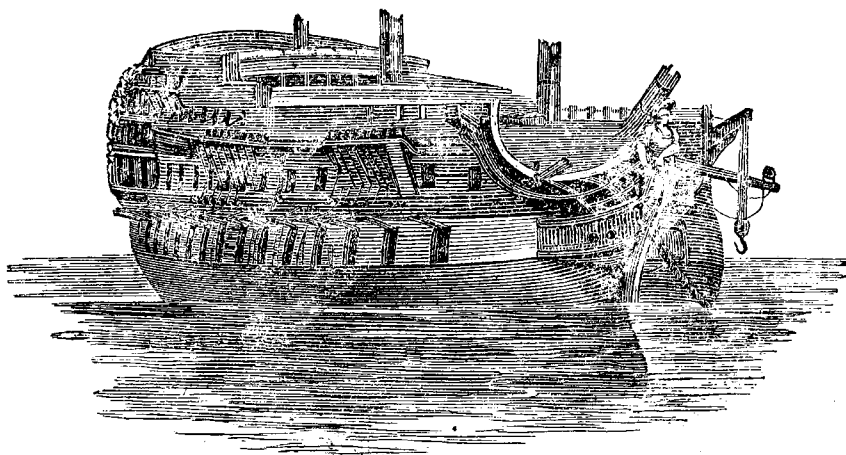


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The above Vignette is engraved by Nesbit, from a Drawing which Mr. Pocock favoured us with; and is a portrait of the Mars, of 74 guns, commanded by the late Captain George Duff,* in the battle of Trafalgar, who was killed in the action. By the Engraver not having reversed the drawing, the sword improperly appears in the *left*, instead of the *right* hand of the figure.

BIOGRAPHICAL MEMOIR

OF

CAPTAIN JOSEPH ELLISON,

OF THE ROYAL NAVY.

“ Yet still I am enabled,
To bring up, in life's rear,
Although I'm quite disabled,
And lie in Greenwich tier.”

DIBDIN.

CAPTAIN JOSEPH ELLISON, the worthy officer whose services to his country we have now the satisfaction of commencing our NINETEENTH volume with, was born at Newcastle-upon-Tyne, in the year 1753. He was the only son of Joseph Ellison, Esq. a descendant of a very respectable family in that part of the country.† Unfortunately, he lost his father when he was only six months old; in consequence of which he was adopted by

* A portrait, and very interesting memoir of this gallant officer were inserted in our fifteenth volume.

† Many families have branched off from the original stock of the Ellisons; as is evident from the following letter, addressed to the subject of this memoir, by Richard Ellison, Esq. the present member of parliament for the city of Lincoln. We insert it with the more satisfaction, as it affords

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an aunt, who had no children of her own, and was removed by her into the neighbourhood of Portsmouth.

We must trace, with a rapid hand, his early professional progress. In his ninth year, he went to sea with Admiral Sir Edward Hawke,* in the *Royal George*, which was at that time commanded by Captain Kennett. In the year 1763, he was removed into the *Rippon*, of 60 guns, Captain (now Admiral) Thompson; from which he went on board the *Arrogant*, commanded by the late Admiral M'Kenzie. In 1767, he joined the *Glory*, Captain Chad; in which he remained till 1769, when he was removed into the *Aldbrough*, Captain Hawke; in 1770, he served in the *Boyne*, Captain Bennet; in 1773, he went into the *Ocean*, Captain Oury; and, in 1776, into the *Somerset*, Captain Le Cras. From the last mentioned ship, he was sent, for a few months, into the *Albion*, commanded by the Honourable Levison Gower.

a gratifying testimony of the general estimation in which both the public and private character of Captain Ellison are holden:—

“SIR,

22, *Dover Street*, July 6, 1797.

“I have this day received, on my return to London, the honour of a letter from you, but which I am persuaded is intended for some other gentleman of our common name; and I presume for Mr. Ellison, of Park House, near Newcastle, who has been some time dead. Allow me to say, that I consider the circumstance of this letter coming into my hands, as fortunate to myself.—It gives me the opportunity of becoming known to you, and of expressing a wish for the increase of that acquaintance. If circumstances should at any time bring me into the vicinity where you may be, I shall with pleasure avail myself of the occasion, personally to pay my respects to you; and I will flatter myself, that when you visit London I may hope for that favour from you. My country residence is Sudbrooke Hall, near Lincoln; and if you should visit the north, I beg to extend my wish for the pleasure of waiting upon you there. The late Mr. Ellison, of whom I have spoken, was of the same family, as are also all the Ellisons in the counties of Lancaster, Durham, and Northumberland, although the relationship is now very distant. I have little doubt but in conversation on the subject, we shall be found in some degree related: in the mean time, permit me to congratulate you on your honourable appointment,† and to offer every wish for your health and happiness. I have the honour to be, with every respect, &c. &c.

“RICHARD ELLISON.”

* A memoir of this officer appears in the seventh volume of the *NAVAL CHRONICLE*, page 453.

† To the Marlborough.

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On his return to the Somerset, that ship was ordered to Boston, in America. Soon after her arrival there, the American war broke out; on which occasion, Captain Le Cras gave Mr. Ellison the command of three gundaloes, for the purpose of preventing the rebels from forming a junction. This was a service of great fatigue, and of no slight danger; as the persons engaged in it were deprived of their natural rest, and of every other comfort, and were fired at, and harassed continually, by the enemy. One of Mr. Ellison's "lucky escapes," at this time, is deserving of notice. While asleep, at night, an eighteen-pounder came into the larboard quarter, killed two men who were lying close to him, and cut the clews of his hammock!

When these gundaloes were found to be no longer serviceable, they were discharged, and Mr. Ellison went back to the Somerset.

Immediately on his arrival from England, Sir William (now Lord Viscount) Howe obtained information, that the enemy had advanced as far as the heights of Charlestown, had thrown up redoubts, and were straining every nerve to oppose a vigorous resistance against the British army. Sir William having landed at Boston, Mr. Ellison was ordered to convey him, in the Somerset's barge, from that port to Charlestown.* They accordingly proceeded thither, accompanied by the army, in flat-bottomed boats, and Mr. Ellison assisted in setting fire to the town. On making good their landing, he also volunteered his services to the army; but it was deemed of more consequence that he should remain in the barge, in case a retreat should be requisite. On the following morning, however, Sir William Howe, having gained a complete victory over the rebels at Bunker's Hill, re-embarked in the Somerset's barge; and Mr. Ellison conducted him to General Gage, at Boston.

When Mr. Ellison took his leave of Sir William Howe, that officer, as a handsome compliment to his merit, offered him a military commission; which, it is scarcely necessary to say, he declined, as he felt a much stronger attachment to the naval service.

The Somerset returned to England in March, 1776; soon after

* For a View of Charlestown see Vol. XVIII.

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which Mr. Ellison was removed into the Rippon, at that time commanded by Captain the Hon. Wm. Waldegrave (now Admiral Lord Radstock*) and bearing the pendant of Commodore Sir Edward Vernon. In the Rippon, he proceeded to the East Indies; and, while on that station, the war broke out between England and France. In the month of August, 1778, Sir Edward Vernon's squadron, consisting of the Rippon, Coventry, Seahorse, and Cormorant sloop, and the Valentine and Besborough East Indiamen, fell in with a French squadron, of three sail of the line, and two frigates, under the command of M. Tranjolly, off Pondicherry; and, after a spirited action of two hours, in which the Rippon had four killed and fifteen wounded, the opponents parted, as it were, by consent; the enemy retreating into Pondicherry, and the English into Madras.†

In the month of October following, Mr. Ellison was present at the reduction of Pondicherry, as acting lieutenant of the Cormorant, by order of Commodore Vernon.

In this sloop he subsequently went up the Red Sea. At Suez, some of the crew deserted, and turned Mahometans; and Lieutenant Ellison, having been sent to recover them, was seized by the Turks, and taken before one of their tribunals, to be punished. On receipt of this intelligence, Captain Owen sent on shore, to demand Lieutenant Ellison and the men; and to say that, unless they were immediately delivered up, he would warp the sloop alongside the town, and level it with the dust; which threat he was actually proceeding to put into execution, when Lieutenant Ellison was sent on board.

On the arrival of the Cormorant at Madras, Captain Owen died; in consequence of which Lieutenant Ellison was despatched

* A biographical memoir of his lordship is given in the tenth volume of the NAVAL CHRONICLE, page 265.

† Sir Edward Vernon's official account of this engagement is inserted in our memoir of the late Sir Andrew Mitchell; *vide* NAVAL CHRONICLE, Vol. XVI. page 91. Sir Andrew Mitchell was at that time one of the lieutenants of the Rippon; and was, immediately after, made post in the Coventry. A short sketch of the professional services of Sir Edward Vernon also appears in our sixteenth volume, page 90.—Shortly after the above mentioned action, Captain Marlow, in the Coventry, captured the Saringe, French frigate, of 28 guns, which mistook the British for the French squadron.

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to Trincomalee, by Commodore Vernon, with a commission for Lieutenant (now Admiral Sir Charles) Pole, to take the vacant command.

At Trincomalee, Captain (now Sir George) Young, of the navy, and Captain Rumbold, of the army (the former charged with despatches from Sir Edward Vernon, relating to the capture of Pondicherry, and the latter with the colours of the garrison) embarked for England in the *Cormorant*; and, after a passage of four months,* and thirteen days, arrived safely at Portsmouth.

After his arrival, Captain Pole was appointed to the *Britannia*; and Lieutenant Ellison, who had accompanied him to England, was ordered to take the *Cormorant* round to Sheerness. He was then, in the course of the year 1779, appointed to the *Queen*, Captain (afterwards Admiral) Innis. Lieutenant Ellison was in this ship when the fleet under Sir Charles Hardy was chased by the combined French and Spanish fleets off Plymouth.†

On leaving the *Queen*, Lieutenant Ellison married Miss Collis, the only daughter of Thomas Collis, Esq. of Gosport; soon after which, he was appointed to the *La Prudente*, Captain Waldegrave, then fitting at Deptford. Her first voyage was up the Baltic; and, after returning to Sheerness, she was ordered to Spithead, to join the grand fleet, under the command of Admiral Darby. *La Prudente* found the fleet lying at single anchor, and sailed with them on the following day.

On the 4th of July, 1780, as we have stated in our memoir of Lord Radstock, *la Prudente*, having been detached upon a cruise off Cape Ortegal, in company with the *Licorne*, discovered a large ship bearing down to them, which proved to be the French frigate *la Capricieuse*, pierced for 44 guns. *La Prudente* engaged her for four hours and a half, before the *Licorne* came near to afford her any assistance. The action commenced at half-past eleven at

* At the time this passage was made, it was conceived to be a very quick run; but so much have we improved in navigating our vessels since that period, that we cannot help here noticing the comparatively short space of time which the *Medusa* (commanded by Captain Sir John Gore) performed it in, as she was only *eighty-two* days, in sailing from the Ganges to the Lizard. For the particulars of this passage we refer our readers to JOHNSON'S "*Oriental Voyager*," published by ASPERNE, in Cornhill.

† *Vide* NAVAL CHRONICLE, Vol. XVIII. page 353.

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night, and continued till half-past four in the morning, when the *Capricieuse* struck her colours. Lieutenant Ellison, who lost his arm upon this occasion, greatly distinguished himself. Captain Waldegrave, in concluding his official account of the engagement, says:—

“It is with infinite concern that I acquaint their lordships, that Lieutenant Ellison stands foremost on the list of the wounded, having been very severely bruised in the back, and his right arm carried off by a shot. I must beg leave to recommend his misfortune, and the great intrepidity he shewed during the action, to their lordships’ most particular attention.”*

Lieutenant Ellison, we have been informed, received four wounds in his back, before his arm was struck, but could not be induced to go below, to have them dressed, although they occasioned a great loss of blood. At length an eighteen-pound shot, striking his elbow, shattered the bones, and left his arm hanging by the skin only. He was then under the necessity of going down to the surgeon, who ordered him to be laid on his mattress, in the gun-room; where, having staunched the blood, and having many wounded men to attend, he left him till the close of the action.

Whilst lying in this painful situation, a shot came in through the side of *la Prudente*, and took off the cook of the gun-room’s head; which actually fell close to Lieutenant Ellison, as he was handing him a glass of water.—Unmindful of pain, or danger, and anxious only for the honourable termination of the action, he desired the seaman who was employed at the relieving tackles, to give him immediate information of the enemy’s surrender, promising him a glass of grog for his trouble. Scarcely more than a quarter of an hour had elapsed, when the man came to him, waving his hat, with the joyful news; on which he ordered him the promised grog, and also took a glass himself, which, fortunately, was not productive of any ill effect. At seven o’clock in the morning (two hours and a half after the close of the engagement) his arm was amputated by the French surgeon.

On the 19th of July, *la Prudente* arrived at Spithead. Sir Charles Pole (Lieutenant Ellison’s former captain, in the *Cormo-*

* For the whole of this letter, and several other interesting particulars on the subject, the reader is referred to the tenth volume of the *NAVAL CHRONICLE*, page 269, *et seq.*

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rant) then commanded the Hussar, which was lying at that place; and, as soon as he had ascertained the arrival of his friend, he went in his barge to la Prudente, with the intention of conducting him on shore. Lieutenant Ellison, however, though highly gratified by this mark of attention, went on shore in la Prudente's boat, attended by the surgeon. He landed at Gosport, where the inhabitants congratulated him on his narrow escape, and sympathised with him for the loss which he had sustained. Weak and emaciated, from the loss of blood, this had such an effect on his spirits, that he was under the necessity of stopping in one of the houses to recover himself. In a very short time after he had reached his home, Captain Waldegrave paid him a visit; thus enhancing the value of the very great kindness and attention which he had paid to him, whilst confined to his cot on board, by offering him every consolation in his power.

On the day after the arrival of la Prudente, the French officers were sent on shore, on parole; but they would not be persuaded to leave Gosport, without making their personal inquiries after Lieutenant Ellison, and taking a last farewell. Indeed, the attention which they shewed to him, during the whole time that they were on board, reflected great credit on their feelings.

Shortly afterwards, the grand fleet arrived; when Lieutenant Ellison was visited by a number of officers (several of superior rank to himself) with whom he had no personal acquaintance whatever. Amongst others, the late Lord Hugh Seymour was particular in his attention towards him; and, in every instance during his life, gave proofs of the high estimation in which he held his professional abilities. The death of his lordship has ever been deeply lamented by Lieutenant Ellison, to whom he had proved himself a most cordial and sincere friend.*

The general and flattering approval which Mr. Ellison experienced had nearly proved fatal to him; as, in consequence of the exertion which it occasioned, the arteries of his arm burst; and it was supposed that they had been bleeding upwards of three hours, before the accident was discovered. The surgeons, from Haslar hospital, with the greatest difficulty, secured them, after they had

* A biographical memoir of Lord Hugh Seymour is in the second volume of the NAVAL CHRONICLE, page 357.

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put on the bandages three times, the blood having repeatedly penetrated through them. He was thus so much reduced, as to be under the necessity of confining himself to his chamber, and was not allowed to see any body but his captain.—Captain Waldegrave was by this time presented to his Majesty; and, consequently, had the satisfaction of informing the lieutenant, that his sovereign had condescended, in a most particular manner, to inquire after him; and that, on Captain Waldegrave's saying, that "he was recovering fast, and hoped very soon to serve his Majesty again," the King replied, with evident satisfaction, "Is it possible!"

The exalted opinion which Captain Waldegrave, and other persons of consideration, entertained of Mr. Ellison, will now be farther seen, by certain original letters, and extracts from others, which we shall lay before our readers. The first of these is from General Ellison, an old, and much respected officer.

"DEAR SIR,

St. James's Square, 26th July, 1780.

"It was not till yesterday, that your favour from Gosport, though dated the 20th of this month, came to my hands, occasioned, as I imagine, from the post-mark, of its having travelled first to Newcastle, and from thence transmitted to me here, in London. It is now some days since, that I had the honour of receiving a most polite and obliging letter from your gallant captain, which gave me the first information, of your having had the terrible misfortune of being severely wounded, and having lost your right arm in engaging a French frigate. You may be assured, the very melancholy account gave me great and most sincere concern, which is alleviated with the thoughts of your being, in the opinion of your physician and surgeon, out of danger; a confirmation of which will, believe me, afford me real pleasure. Captain Waldegrave, in his letter to me (a copy of which I have sent to Sir Thomas Clavering) speaks in the highest terms of your conduct and most spirited behaviour during the action, which does himself, as well as you, very great honour. Captain Waldegrave also gives me reason to believe he will exert his interest to serve you; I wish I had any, that could contribute to your promotion, which you have so well merited. But I am not in parliament, and consequently my recommendations can have no weight."

The subjoined is from an aunt of the lieutenant, to Mrs. Ellison, his wife:—

"MY DEAR MRS. ELLISON,

"With the most feeling sensibility and real concern, I take up the pen to sympathise with you, on the melancholy news I was yesterday made acquainted with from Mr. Clavering; who, himself, came from Greencroft to Lintgreen, with the copy of a letter from Captain Waldegrave,

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transcribed, by General Ellison, to Sir Thomas Clavering; informing him of the unhappy accident which had befallen our dear relation, the worthy partner of your heart. My son and self, who were so lately made acquainted with our amiable cousin's good nature and merit, felt the shock more sensibly; yet we hope and trust in the Almighty, that the event which appears to us in so afflictive a light, may in the end, be not so great an evil as we at present see it. If the good lad recovers, though with the loss of a limb, 'tis what many a brave man like himself has suffered in the horrid rage of war. He must, and will, I doubt not, get preferment; for his captain speaks of him, not only with all the warmth of friendship, but as a spirited, brave, and gallant officer; and, to use his own words, in his letter, "his intention is to exert his interest for that promotion which our friend so truly merits." He likewise adds, "he is persuaded that he shall meet the general's assistance, not only from his being a relation, but from that natural impulse which every brave man feels in assisting those of a similar character with his own." This much, my dear, of the captain's letter I have transcribed; knowing it must give you both pleasure to hear our dear cousin's conduct is so highly approved."

The next which we shall present, is a letter from Sir Thomas Clavering, Bart. to Lieutenant Ellison:—

" SIR,

Arwell Park, July 21, 1786.

"Your letter by the last post found me at this place, and though I must lament, with the rest of your friends and acquaintances, and with the public at large, what has personally fallen to your lot in the late gallant action; yet I must congratulate your family and every Englishman, on the noble spirit and good conduct you have given an instance of. Captain Waldegrave, in his letter to General Ellison, has done you justice, and given you much honour. I have no doubt but he has given it in the like simple manner to the Lords of the Admiralty; and that from thence will flow the reward due to your merit. If not, the service and the public will be injured. In my own opinion, any private application would be hurtful. I believe you may remember, I presumed to no interest with the Admiralty Board; that any trifling service I was inclined to, was by means of an individual, no longer at the Board; but, if he had been there at this instant of time, I should have been unwilling to have suggested a doubt of the injustice of the Board, respecting the reward due to your merit on this occasion. However, well inclined to add every means in my power to obtain the reward justly due to your merit, I have, by this post, written to government my opinion, and my wish that your service may not be overlooked.

" I am, sir, with the greatest esteem,

" and earnest wish for your perfect recovery,

" your most obedient, and very humble servant,

" THOMAS CLAVERING."

It appears, by the following friendly epistle from Captain Waldegrave, that, notwithstanding the universal approbation

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which Lieutenant Ellison's conduct experienced, there were particular obstacles in the way of his immediate promotion:—

“ MY DEAR ELLISON, *Falmouth, October 19.*

“ I make no doubt but your anxiety on account of your being so long separated from your old shipmates and friends, is great; but take my word, for the present, that you are much better with your good little woman.

“ We have met with nothing but gales of wind, I think, since we left Spithead, and at this instant it blows a perfect hurricane. We were driven into this port a few days ago, and I much doubt whether we shall be able to get to sea again before the 23d, which is the time fixed for our return to the fleet.

“ If I do not find you at my return in as high beauty, and in as good case as when we sailed from the Nore, I shall attribute it all to your wife, and lecture her accordingly.

“ I am very much concerned that my last visit to Portsmouth was so short as not to admit of leisure to shake you by the hand, especially as I wish to talk to you about your pension, and some other matters. I had a letter from the Duke of Dorset some time ago, in which he assures me he shall take the earliest opportunity of laying your case before the ministers. Therefore a pension (and I hope a handsome one) you will be sure to have; but as to rank, I fear it is out of the question, as even poor Auchenleck seems entirely forgotten. We must therefore wait patiently for better times; and if it be true that merit in the end is ever rewarded, I am sure you have every thing to expect.

“ As soon as I hear from the Duke of Dorset, I will again write to you; in the mean time you must comfort yourself with the good opinion and wishes of your friends for the reward of your merit. Of this number be assured there is none who can think more highly of you than I do, or who would be more happy to see you rewarded.

“ Believe me to be,

“ my dear friend,

“ most sincerely yours,



“ Make my best compliments to your good little woman. I hope that she will not be offended with me for using this epithet.

“ When you write to me, Maxwell will forward your letter. Pray return him my thanks for the trouble he has had in collecting my other letters. All your old shipmates desire to be kindly remembered to you.”

Lieutenant Ellison's hopes of promotion, however, were not extinguished; and, soon after leaving his room, he found himself sufficiently recovered to wait upon Lord Sandwich, at the