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Edited by James Stanier Clarke and John McArthur

Excerpt

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BIOGRAPHICAL MEMOIR
OF
SIR FRANCIS DRAKE, KNT,
VICE-ADMIRAL OF ENGLAND,
IN THE YEAR 1588.*

*Drace, pererrati quem novit terminus orbis,
Quemque simul mundi vidit uterque polus;
Si taceant homines, facient te sidera notum,
Sol nescit comitiis non memor esse sui.*

Exposed to thee have earth's last limits been,
Thou at like distance both the poles hast seen;
Were mankind mute, the stars thy fame would blaze,
And Phœbus sing his old companion's praise,

FOR his bravery, perseverance, and general talent, Sir Francis Drake will ever be remembered amongst the distinguished names which have immortalized the reign of Elizabeth—the Augustan age of Britain. We have been long anxious to inscribe a brief memorial of his achievements on our *columna rostrata*; and the fortunate acquisition of an original portrait of the hero,† has tended to accelerate the accomplishment of our desires.

Dr. Johnson, whose labours in biography may justly be regarded as so many models in that branch of literary composition, wrote the lives of only two naval characters—Sir Francis Drake,

* In the XVIIth Volume of the NAVAL CHRONICLE, page 89, will be found a portrait, and a comprehensive biographical memoir, of Charles Howard, Earl of Nottingham, Lord High Admiral of England, at the time of the Spanish armada. In the memoir are inserted several highly important official documents, relating to the armada, which have never appeared in any other life of the admiral.—A portrait of Sir John Hawkins, Knt. Rear-admiral of England, under the Earl of Nottingham and Sir Francis Drake, with an accompanying biography, will be given in a future volume of the NAVAL CHRONICLE.

† In the painting of Sir Francis Drake, here alluded to, his name is spelled *Dracc*. This circumstance affords a strong presumptive proof of the originality of the picture; and also, as it is in the style of Hans Holbein, that it is the production of a German pupil of that artist; the orthography being precisely that which a German would have adopted, as corresponding with the English pronunciation of the word Drake.

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and Admiral Blake.* The former contains so admirable a display of character, seems so completely to develop the views and motives of its subject, and exhibits so many moral beauties, that we shall make no apology for transferring it to the pages of the NAVAL CHRONICLE; as, without experiencing the slightest self-degradation, we pronounce it to be eminently superior to any original memoir of Sir Francis Drake, that we might be enabled to offer. From *The Biographia Britannica*, however—a work too voluminous, and of a nature too *recherché* for the general reader—we shall extract, and append to Dr. Johnson's narrative, in the form of notes, such corrections, and additional information, as may render the present account of Sir Francis Drake, at once the most interesting, and the most correct, that has hitherto appeared.†

Dr. Johnson commences, and proceeds, as follows:—

FRANCIS DRAKE was the son of a clergyman in Devonshire, who being inclined to the doctrine of the protestants, at that time much opposed by Henry VIII. was obliged to fly from his place of residence into Kent for refuge from the persecution raised against him, and those of the same opinion, by the law of the Six Articles.‡ How long he lived there, or how he was supported, was not known; nor have we any account of the first years of Sir Francis Drake's life; of any disposition to hazards and adventures which might have been discovered in his childhood; or of the education which qualified him for such wonderful attempts: § we are only

* They first appeared in *The Gentleman's Magazine*; afterwards, they were published in DAVIES'S *Miscellanies*; and, of late years, they have been inserted in the complete editions of Dr. Johnson's works.

† Other sources will, of course, be applied to, for information relating to such of Sir Francis Drake's descendants as have served in the royal navy; amongst whom, in particular, was Rear-admiral Francis Samuel Drake, created a baronet in the year 1782, for his distinguished services in Rodney's memorable action of the 12th of April.

‡ This account is given on the credit of Camden, who professed to have received it from Sir Francis Drake himself. The same authority mentions Francis Earl of Bedford, as his god-father. As the result of their researches, however, the editors of the *Biographia Britannica* consider, that Sir Francis Drake was the son of Edmund Drake, a sailor; that he was the eldest of a family of twelve children; and that he was born near Tavistock, in Devonshire, in the year 1545.

§ According to the authority already mentioned, and on which we chiefly rely, he was brought up at the expense of Sir John Hawkins, who was his kinsman; and by him, at the age of eighteen, he was introduced to a maritime life, as the purser of a ship which traded to Biscay. From the circumstances of his birth, and family, however, it seems extremely probable, that he first went to sea at an earlier period.

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informed, that he was put apprentice by his father to the master of a small vessel that traded to France and the Low Countries, under whom he probably learned the rudiments of navigation, and familiarised himself to the dangers and hardships of the sea. But how few opportunities soever he might have in this part of his life for the exercise of his courage, he gave so many proofs of his diligence and fidelity, that his master dying unmarried, left him his little vessel in reward of his service; a circumstance that deserves to be remembered, not only as it may illustrate the private character of this brave man, but as it may hint to all those who may hereafter propose his conduct for their imitation, that *Virtue is the surest foundation both of reputation and fortune, and that the first step to greatness is, to be honest.* If it were not improper to dwell longer on an incident at the first view so inconsiderable, it might be added, that it deserves the reflection of those, who, when they are engaged in affairs not adequate to their abilities, pass them over with a contemptuous neglect, and while they amuse themselves with chimerical schemes, and plans of future undertakings, suffer every opportunity of smaller advantage to slip away, as unworthy their regard. They may learn from the example of Drake, that diligence in employments of less consequence is the most successful introduction to greater enterprises.

After having followed for some time his master's profession, he grew weary of so narrow a province, and having sold his little vessel, ventured his effects in the new trade to the West Indies,* which, having not been long discovered, and very little frequented by the English till that time, were conceived so much to abound in wealth, that no voyage thither could fail of being recompensed by great advantages. Nothing was talked of among the mercantile or adventurous part of mankind, but the beauty and riches of this New World. Fresh discoveries were frequently made, new countries and nations never heard of before were daily described; and it may easily be concluded that the relaters did not diminish the merit of their attempts, by suppressing or diminishing any circumstance that might produce wonder, or excite curiosity. Nor was their vanity only engaged in raising admirers, but their interest likewise in procuring adventurers, who were indeed easily gained, by the hopes which naturally arise from new prospects, though through ignorance of the American Seas, and by the malice of the Spaniards, who, from the first discovery of those countries, considered every other nation that attempted to follow them, as

* He is stated, in other accounts, and with an appearance of probability, to have gone as purser to the bay of Biscay, when he sold his own vessel. On his return, it is added, he made a voyage to the coast of Guinea; in 1565, he sailed with a Captain Lovel, to the West Indies, where he experienced some indifferent treatment from the Spaniards; and, in 1567, he joined Sir John Hawkins, in his expedition to the coast of Guinea,

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invaders of their rights; the best concerted designs often miscarried. Among those who suffered most from the Spanish injustice, was Captain John Hawkins, who having been admitted by the viceroy to traffic in the bay of Mexico, was, contrary to the stipulation then made between them, and in violation of the peace between Spain and England, attacked without any declaration of hostilities, and obliged, after an obstinate resistance, to retire with the loss of four ships, and a great number of his men, who were either destroyed or carried into slavery. In this voyage Drake had adventured almost all his fortune, which he in vain endeavoured to recover, both by his own private interest, and by obtaining letters from Queen Elizabeth; for the Spaniards, deaf to all remonstrances, either vindicated the injustice of the viceroy, or at least forbore to redress it.* Drake, thus oppressed and impoverished, retained at least his courage and his industry; that ardent spirit that prompted him to adventures, and that indefatigable patience that enabled him to surmount difficulties.† He did not sit down idly to lament misfortunes which Heaven had put it in his power to remedy, or to repine at poverty, while the wealth of his enemies was to be gained: but having made two voyages to America,‡ for the sake of gaining intelligence of the state of the Spanish settlements, and acquainted himself with the seas and coasts, he determined on a third expedition of more importance; by which the Spaniards should find how imprudently they always act, who injure and insult a brave man.

On the 24th of May, 1572, Francis Drake set sail from Plymouth, in the *Pascha*, of seventy tons, accompanied by the *Swan*, of twenty-five tons, commanded by his brother, John Drake, having in both the vessels seventy three men and boys, with a year's provision, and such artillery and ammunition as was necessary for his undertaking; which, however incredible it may appear to such as consider rather his force, than his fortitude, was no less than to make reprisals upon the most powerful nation in the world. The wind continuing favourable, they entered, June the 29th, between Guadaloupe and Dominica; and, on July 6th, saw the high land of Santa Martha, then continuing their course, after having been becalmed

* In this unfortunate expedition, which sailed from Plymouth on the 2d of October, 1567, Drake commanded a ship called the *Judith*; and, in the respective actions with the Spaniards, he acquitted himself with great gallantry. "If," says Sr John Hawkins, alluding to the stress of weather, the cruelties of the Spaniards, the want of provisions, &c. which had been sustained, "all the miseries and troublesome affairs of this sorrowful voyage should be perfectly and thoroughly written, there should need a painful man with his pen, and as great a time as he that wrote the lives and deaths of the martyrs."

† After his return to England, he is said to have served for some time on board one of the Queen's ships.

‡ The first, in 1570, with the *Dragon*, and the *Swan*; the second, in 1571, with the *Swan* only.

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For some time, they arrived at Port Pheasant, so named by Drake in a former voyage, to the east of Nombre de Dios. Here he proposed to build his pinnaces, which he had brought in pieces ready framed from Plymouth; and was going ashore with a few men unarmed, but discovering a smoke at a distance, ordered the other boat to follow him with a greater force. Then marching towards the fire, which was in the top of a high tree, he found a plate of lead nailed to another tree, with an inscription engraved upon it by one Garret, an Englishman, who had left that place but five days before; and had taken this method of informing him, that the Spaniards had been advertised of his intention to anchor at that place, and that it therefore would be prudent to make a very short stay there. But Drake, knowing how convenient this place was for his designs, and considering that the hazard and waste of time, which could not be avoided in seeking another station, was equivalent to any other danger which was to be apprehended from the Spaniards, determined to follow his first resolution; only, for his greater security, he ordered a kind of palisade, or fortification, to be made, by felling large trees, and laying the trunks and branches one upon another by the side of the river.

On July 20, having built their pinnaces, and being joined by one Captain Rause, who happened to touch at the same place, with a bark, of 50 men, they set sail towards Nombre de Dios, and taking two frigates at the island of Pines, were informed by the negroes, which they found in them, that the inhabitants of that place were in expectation of some soldiers, which the governor of Panama had promised, to defend them from the Symerons, or fugitive negroes, who, having escaped from the tyranny of their masters in great numbers, had settled themselves under two kings, or leaders on each side of the way between Nombre de Dios, and Panama; and not only deserted their natural attachment to liberty and independence, but endeavoured to revenge the cruelties they had suffered, and had lately put the inhabitants of Nombre de Dios into the utmost consternation. These negroes, the captain set on shore on the main land, so that they might, by joining the Symerons, recover their liberty, or at least might not have it in their power to give the people of Nombre de Dios any speedy information of his intention to invade them. Then selecting fifty-three men from his own company, and twenty from the crew of his new associate, Captain Rause, he embarked with them in his pinnaces, and set sail for Nombre de Dios. On July the 28th, at night, he approached the town undiscovered, and dropped his anchors under the shore, intending after his men were refreshed, to begin the attack; but finding they were terrifying each other with formidable accounts of the strength of the place, and the multitude of the inhabitants, he determined to hinder the panic from spreading farther, by leading them immediately to action: and therefore ordering them to their oars, he landed without any opposition, there

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being only one gunner upon the bay, though it was secured with six brass cannons of the largest size ready mounted. But the gunner, while they were throwing their cannons from their carriages, alarmed the town, as they soon discovered by the bell, the drums, and the noise of the people. Drake, leaving twelve men to guard the pinnaces, marched round the town with no great opposition, the men being more hurt by treading on the weapons left on the ground by the flying enemy, than by the resistance which they encountered. At length, having taken some of the Spaniards, Drake commanded them to shew him the governor's house, where the mules that bring the silver from Panama were unloaded; there they found the door open, and entering the room where the silver was repositied, found it heaped up in bars, in such quantities as almost exceed belief; the pile being, they conjectured, seventy feet in length, ten in breadth, and twelve in height: each bar weighing between thirty and forty-five pounds. It is easy to imagine, that at the sight of this treasure, nothing was thought on by the English, but by what means they might best convey it to their boats; and doubtless it was not easy for Drake, who, considering their distance from the shore, and the numbers of their enemies, was afraid of being intercepted in his retreat, to hinder his men from encumbering themselves with so much silver, as might have retarded their march, and obstructed the use of their weapons: however, by promising to lead them to the king's treasure-house, where there was gold, and jewels, to a far greater value, and where the treasure was not only more portable, but nearer the coast, he persuaded them to follow him, and to rejoin the main body of his men, then drawn up under the command of his brother in the market-place.

Here he found his little troop much discouraged by the imagination, that if they stayed any longer, the enemy would gain possession of their pinnaces, and that they should then, without any means of safety, be left to stand alone against the whole power of that country. Drake, not indeed easily terrified, but sufficiently cautious, sent to the coast to inquire the truth, and see if the same terror had taken possession of the men, whom he sent to guard his boats; but finding no foundation for these dreadful apprehensions, he persisted in his first design, and led the troop forward to the treasure-house. In their way there fell a violent shower of rain, which wet some of their bow-strings, and extinguished many of their matches; a misfortune which might soon have been repaired, and which perhaps the enemy might suffer in common with them, but which however on this occasion very much embarrassed them, as the delay produced by it repressed that ardour which sometimes is only to be kept by continued action, and gave time to the timorous and slothful to spread their insinuations, and propagate their cowardice. Some, whose fear was their predominant passion, were continually magnifying the numbers and courage of

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their enemies, and represented whole nations as ready to rush upon them; others, whose avarice mingled with their concern for their own safety, were more solicitous to preserve what they had already gained, than to acquire more; others, brave in themselves, and resolute, began to doubt of success in an undertaking, in which they were associated with such cowardly companions; so that scarcely any man appeared to proceed in their enterprise with that spirit, and alacrity, which could give Drake a prospect of success. This he perceived; and with some emotion told them, that if, after having had the chief treasure of the world within their reach, they should go home and languish in poverty, they could blame nothing but their own cowardice, that he had performed his part, and was still desirous to lead them on to riches and to honour. Then finding, that either shame or conviction made them willing to follow him, he ordered the treasure-house to be forced, and commanding his brother, and Oxenham, of Plymouth, a man known afterwards for his bold adventures in the same parts, to take charge of the treasure; he commanded the other body to follow him to the market-place, that he might be ready to oppose any scattered troops of the Spaniards, and hinder them from uniting into one body. But as he stepped forward, his strength failed him on a sudden, and he fell down speechless: then it was that his companions perceived a wound in his leg, which he had received in the first encounter, but hitherto concealed, lest his men, easily discouraged, should make their concern for his life a pretence for returning to their boats. Such had been his loss of blood, as was discovered upon nearer observation, that it had filled the prints of his footsteps; and it appeared scarce credible, that after such effusion of blood, life should remain.

The bravest were now willing to retire; neither the desire of honour, nor of riches, was thought enough to prevail in any man over his regard for his leader. Drake, whom cordials had now restored to his speech, was the only man who could not be prevailed on to leave the enterprise unfinished. It was to no purpose that they advised him to submit to go on board to have his wound dressed, and promised to return with him and complete their design: he well knew how impracticable it was to regain the opportunity when it was once lost, and could easily foresee that a respite, of but a few hours, would enable the Spaniards to recover from their consternation, to assemble their forces, refit their batteries, and remove their treasure. What he had undergone so much danger to obtain was now in his hands; and the thoughts of leaving it untouched was too mortifying to be patiently borne. However, as there was little time for consultation, and the same danger attended their stay in that perplexity and confusion, as their return, they bound up his wound with his scarf; and partly by force, partly by entreaty, carried him to the boats, in which they all embarked by break of day. Then taking with them, out of the

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harbour, a ship loaded with wines, they went to the Bastimentes; an island about a league from the town, where they stayed two days to repose the wounded men, and to regale themselves with the fruits which grew in great plenty in the gardens of that island. During their stay here, there came over from the main land a Spanish gentleman, sent by the governor, with instructions to inquire whether the captain was that Drake who had been before on their coast; whether the arrows with which many of their men were wounded were not poisoned; and whether they wanted provisions or other necessaries: the messenger likewise extolled their courage with the highest encomiums, and expressed his admiration of their daring undertaking. Drake, though he knew the civilities of an enemy are always to be suspected; and that the messenger, amidst all his professions of regard, was no other than a spy: yet, knowing that he had nothing to apprehend, treated him with the highest honours that his condition admitted of; in answer to his inquiries, he assured him that he was the same Drake with whose character they were before acquainted; that he was a rigid observer of the laws of war, and never permitted his arrows to be poisoned; he then dismissed him with considerable presents; and told him that, though he had unfortunately failed in this attempt, he would never desist from his design, till he had shared with Spain the treasures of America.

(To be continued.)

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AMERICAN NAVAL REWARDS.

IN the House of Representatives, on the 5th of November last, Mr. Dawson rose, and thus expressed himself:—

“ I take this early moment to present to you a resolution which I feel pleasure and pride in believing will meet the general approbation, not only of this house, but of the nation.—The president of the United States, in his message, which was read yesterday, has, in terms eloquent and appropriate, made mention of an engagement which has taken place between an American frigate and one of his Britannic Majesty's; an engagement in which American tars have proved to the world, that when commanded by officers of skill, valour, and fidelity, they are capable of contending with, and vanquishing those of any nation on the earth upon any element, even on that element where British skill has acquired so much celebrity; and that the American flag, when authorized by the constitutional authorities of our country, will command respect on the high road of nations. Far, very far, be it from me to boast; it ill becomes an individual or a nation, and is never the concomitant of true courage; but on the present occasion,

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it seems to me proper that we should express our sentiments, our feelings, and thereby the feelings of the nation. I shall, therefore, without farther comment, offer to you the following resolution, observing that the facts therein stated have been ascertained at the proper department, and the proofs are on the table:

“ ‘ Resolved, by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America, in Congress assembled, That the president of the United States be, and is hereby requested to present, in the name of Congress, to Captain Isaac Hull, a gold medal; with suitable emblems and devices; and that the sum of thousand dollars be, and the same is hereby appropriated to be distributed as prize-money to the officers and crew of the United States frigate Constitution, of 44 guns, according to the provisions of the act for the better government of the navy of the United States, in testimony of the high sense entertained by Congress of the gallantry, good conduct, and services of Captain Hull, the officers and crew of the frigate Constitution, in attacking, vanquishing, and capturing the British frigate Guerriere, mounting 54 carriage-guns, thereby exhibiting an example highly honourable to the American character, and instructive to our rising navy.’ ”

The *candour* of the above resolution, it is presumed, will not escape the notice of the reader. The force of the Constitution, as to her number of guns, is described as that at which she is rated (44), though it is understood that she actually mounted 58; saying nothing of her superior size, weight of metal, number of men, &c. On the other hand, the force of the Guerriere, as to her number of guns, is described—not as in the case of the Constitution, at what she was rated (38) but—as mounting 54. We believe it would puzzle most naval men, to know in what manner such a number of guns, had they been actually on board, could have been worked in a ship of the size of the Guerriere.

Some conversation passed on the proper mode of disposing of this subject, in the course of which, a Mr. Seybert suggested the propriety of also giving some distinction or medals to the crew of the Constitution, who, he thought, were too generally overlooked in such cases.—Mr. Wright approved the spirit of the resolution, but hoped the other officers would receive swords, and the men suitable rewards; and he confidently hoped a gold medal would be voted to the nearest relation of Lieutenant Wm. Bush, of the marines, who fell, gallantly fighting in that action, covered with wounds and glory: he, therefore, for that purpose, moved that the resolution be referred to a select committee.—The resolution was eventually ordered to lie on the table, till a committee be appointed, to whom it should be referred.

RUSSIAN PRAISE OF BRITISH SEAMEN.

THE following is the liberal testimony of the Russian commander, at Riga, in honour of our seamen:—

“ I cannot conclude without bearing testimony to the conduct of the English naval officers and seamen, our brave allies: they have performed the most essential services to his Imperial Majesty in this quarter. Their

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courage prompts them to undertake the most hazardous enterprises, which their skill and foresight enable them to execute with success. In every danger they are foremost, and in every difficulty capable of counselling. I have derived great assistance from them.

“ *Riga*, Sept. 6, 1812.

“ VON ESSEN.”

FATE OF THE LOYAL LONDON.

MARCH 30, 1665. The City of London built a man of war, called the *Loyal London*, at their own charge; a frigate of that name having unfortunately been burnt. On the 11th of June, 1667, the Dutch sailed up the Medway, as far as Chatham, and burnt the *Royal Oak*, the *Loyal London*, and the *Great James*, with several other English men of war, and retired with the loss of only two of their ships, which ran aground and were burnt by themselves.

VALOUR REWARDED.

A MALTA newspaper, of the 18th of November last, presents the following statement :—

“ The polacca *Eliza*, commanded by Captain Siccoli, laden with merchandise, from Malta direct for Constantinople, was attacked off Candia by a French privateer. Though the latter was of superior force, the polacca did not decline the combat, but after engaging her for several hours, and making a most honourable resistance, was obliged to surrender. The merchants of Malta, sensible of the brilliant though unsuccessful defence made by Captain Siccoli and his crew, made a subscription to reward the valour of both.—In that subscription the British Company contributed 1,000 crowns; the Anglo-Maltese Company 500; the Company of Insurance of Malta 400; the Company of the Union 250; the Company Villoriosa 200; the Company Singlea 200. The whole subscription amounted to 2,550 Maltese crowns, which were distributed in the following manner:—To 10 mariners of the crew 90 crowns each; to three mariners wounded 150 crowns each; to the family of Nostrocomo, who was killed in the action, 270; to the second captain, Gracomo Tabeno, who was wounded, 350; to Captain Angelo Siccoli, 500 crowns, and a sword of the value of 80 crowns, accompanied by the following letter, from the office of the British Company at Malta, November 6, 1812 :—

“ ‘ CAPTAIN ANGELO SICCOLI—The brilliant defence made by you, of the polacca *Eliza*, under your command, when, in the last voyage from hence to Constantinople, she was attacked by a French privateer, of considerably superior force, though ineffectual, has not failed to acquire you the esteem and consideration of this company, as also of the companies named the Anglo-Maltese; the Union Insurance of Malta; the Singlea; and the Villoriosa: in testimony of this, and with a view to encourage other captains to follow so brave an example, the said companies have respectively contributed proportionate sums of the reward to your officers and crew. In obedience to the orders I have received for the distribution of these sums, I, with this letter, present you with 500 crowns, and a sword, which, though not of great value, I trust, will be acceptable to you,