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Edited by James Stanier Clarke and John McArthur

Excerpt

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BIOGRAPHICAL MEMOIR  
OF  
ADMIRAL SIR JOHN HAWKINS.

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Reign ever thus, unconquer'd Britain, reign ;  
 Whilst thy free sons in firm battalions stand,  
 And guard with lion-ramp their native land :  
 Thus fix thy throne, thus rule the subject main !  
 So shall bright Victory o'er thy laurel'd head  
 Her eagle-pennons spread ;  
 Whilst soft-ey'd Peace, quitting at thy command  
 Her radiant orb in yon empyreal plain,  
 Waves o'er the willing world her myrtle wand.

POTTER.

**I**T requires but a glance through the pages of British History to convince us, that England has hitherto had no just reason to regret the non-existence of a Salic Law to save her from the domination of female sovereignty. With the exception of Mary, surnamed the Bloody, this nation never was, comparatively as to the general circumstances of the world, exalted to a greater height, either in literature, or martial prowess, than under our queens, Elizabeth and Anne. The exception of Mary is indeed so peculiar, that it scarcely admits of a relative consideration. Her sceptre swayed by the impulse of a bigotted, sanguinary, and vindictive priesthood, would have been equally degraded and disgraced under as weak a *man* thus influenced by the persuasions of superstition and malice.

With respect to martial exploits, whether in receiving the commands of a sovereign *Mistress*, the influence of knightly sentiments more powerfully prevail, and an emulation of sexual gallantry more effectually pervade the execution of them, we certainly find, especially in the reign of Elizabeth, the reign more immediately under our present contemplation, an ardency of character in the admirals and generals of her day, perhaps never excelled, even in our own. Elizabeth herself was a heroine, her

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mind was high, and her heart warm ; and she seems to have infused an ardency of spirit in all around her, except the cool and prudent Burleigh, who directed both her foreign and domestic policy with the most sedate wisdom.

In the number of those illustrious men by whom the dignity of the Queen and the honour of the Nation were at that period so gloriously supported, was the distinguished subject of this memoir, Sir John Hawkins, a native of Devonshire, and the son of William Hawkins, Esq. by Joan, daughter of William Trelawney, of the county of Cornwall, Esq.

Mr. Hawkins was the second son, and born at Plymouth, it is supposed, about the year 1520. His early attachment to a maritime life was probably the result of paternal example, his father being an excellent seaman, and the first Englishman who made a voyage to Brazil.

The age of Elizabeth is remarkable for voyages of adventurous discovery, and Mr. Hawkins was one of her first adventurers. Having previously qualified himself, by the study of navigation, and those branches of mathematical science necessarily connected with it, he, in the spring of the year 1562, projected his first voyage to the Canary Islands, with advantageous results to himself, his proprietors, and his country.

Inconsistency in the human character is so hourly evident, that it needs not excite our wonder to find Mr. Hawkins, a man who, we are told, was beloved abroad and at home for his characteristic tenderness and humanity, the very identical Englishman that first introduced the British *Slave Trade* ! It was in his repeated voyages to the Canaries, that he acquired a knowledge of the great gains made by the sale of African Negroes in the West India Islands—humanity yielded to the speculation of pecuniary profit, and, in company with Sir Lionel Ducket, Sir Thomas Lodge, Sir William Winter, Mr. Bromfield, and Mr. Gunson, his father-in-law, he opened a trade for the purchase of Negroes at Guinea, whom he afterwards bartered at Hispaniola and other Spanish Islands, for sugar, hides, silver, &c.

For the commencement of this disgraceful traffic, the Solomon, of 120 tons, in which Mr. Hawkins himself sailed, the Swallow, of 100 tons, commanded by Captain Thomas Hampton, and a bark of 20 tons, called the Jonas, were equipped, having about

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100 men, and sailed in the month of October 1562, first to Teneriffe, and thence to Guinea, where he obtained 300 Negroe slaves, which he sold at a large profit at Hispaniola, and returned to England in September, the following year.

On the 18th of October, 1564, Mr. Hawkins again sailed from Plymouth, having been encouraged by the gains of his former voyage, to augment his force, which now consisted of the *Jesus*, of Lubeck, a ship of 700 tons, the *Solomon*, and two barks, the *Tiger* and *Swallow*. His course was in this voyage, to the coast of Guinea, for his wretched cargo! thence to the Spanish West Indies—and having touched at the port of the *Havannah*, he sailed through the gulph of Florida, and arrived at *Padstowe*, in Cornwall, on the 20th September, 1565, with a rich cargo, and such high reputation, that he was honoured, by patent, with a crest—“A Demi Moor in his proper colour, bound with a cord”!—an honour that might easily be mistaken, or, more properly, construed, for a badge of infamy.

But let us not be too severe in our application of censure to Mr. Hawkins. He does not appear to have been the first promoter of this inhuman traffic, although the first *British* Slave-trader. And when we consider the numbers that have followed him in this abominable commerce; that in the *Assiento* Treaty a monopoly of it was formally and coolly stipulated for by the enlightened statesmen of Queen Anne's Council\*—we should rather consider it as an additional corroboration of the truth contained in the general remark, that avarice hardens the heart, and dims the intellect to all views but those of a selfish and sordid interest.

In the year 1567, the cause of the persecuted Protestants in France having excited the interest of Elizabeth, Captain Hawkins was sent to *Rochelle* to relieve them; and on his return prepared for a third voyage to the Spanish West Indies, in pursuance of

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\* According to the purport of this contract, the Company of English Merchants were allowed for the term of thirty years, that is, from the first day of May, 1713, to the first day of May, 1743, to transport annually for sale to the Spanish dominions in the West Indies, four thousand eight hundred Negroes, amounting in the whole of the term specified to one hundred and forty-four thousand Negroes; the contract farther stipulated, that the Company should pay as duties in full to the Crown of Spain, thirty-three pieces of eight for each Negro transported, pursuant to the terms of the said contract.—(SMOLLETT.)

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his gainful trade in human flesh. The *Jesus*, of Lubeck, was again equipped for his conveyance, to which were added the *Minion*, and four other ships; and on the 2d of October, 1567, he sailed from Plymouth.

The weather was so unfavourable in the outset of this voyage, that he had at one time determined to return; but a change having taken place, he proceeded to the Canaries, and afterwards to Guinea, where having shipped his cargo, he sailed to the West Indies: there circumstances of a somewhat mysterious nature took place; for at Rio de la Hacha, the governor having refused to trade, Captain Hawkins chose to consider it as a warrant for his landing and taking the town; the trade then went on in a friendly manner, and the governor has been suspected of collusion. As the whole of the Negroes were not sold here, the Captain afterwards proceeded to Carthagena, where he completed the sale. In his return, however, he was destined to encounter many difficulties. Off the coast of Florida he was driven by storms to seek shelter in the port of St. John de Ulloa, in the bay of Mexico. On entering that port, he was visited by the Spaniards, under the idea of his having come from Spain, a mistake, of which they were no sooner sensible, than they were seized with alarm; the Captain assured them that he only wanted provisions, and evinced the sincerity of his professions by forbearing an attack on twelve merchantmen then in the port, the cargoes of which were worth 200,000*l.* and having seized two persons of distinction as hostages, sent to Mexico a statement of his demands.

It would seem, from a general view and consideration of the naval expeditions of this period, that as private gain was their object, the means contemplated, and in many instances practised, gave to them rather a character of piratical adventure, than of fair trade, or fortunate discovery. It appears that there was no war declared against Spain, no warrant for hostilities, and yet credit is assumed for our English adventurers not attacking twelve merchant-ships in the port, of considerable value, and contenting themselves with seizing two persons of distinction as hostages.

On the next day, the appearance of a Spanish fleet alarmed the English Captain, who immediately revolved as a question, whether he should keep the fleet out, with nearly two millions ster-

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ing on board, with a certainty of its being lost, or admit it. Captain Hawkins was, however, apprehensive (and we think with sufficient reason), that his sovereign, Elizabeth, would never pardon such an act, and therefore admitted the fleet, previously stipulating with the new Viceroy of Mexico, who was on board it, that the English should be furnished with provisions for their money, and that the island, with its cannon, should be put into his hands while he stayed. This certainly does appear a very strange demand, and we are therefore not surprised to find that the Viceroy was highly displeased at it. He, however, pretended to yield (for it proved but a pretence, though he promised subsequently to perform it).

Three days after the Spanish fleet entered, the officers and crews of the respective fleets exchanged civilities, and professed friendship; but how was friendship to be expected on stipulations of enmity—it was a mere *profession*, for in the meanwhile 1000 men had been assembled on shore, and a treacherous attack upon the English at their dinner-time was resolved upon.

On the morning of the day appointed, a more than ordinary hustle was observed on board the Spanish ships, and their ordnance was pointed towards them. It is certainly an uncandid mode of estimation, to stamp the character of a nation from the conduct of individuals, although in execution of the national business; with what justice the vice of treachery has been assigned to Spain, let the events of the past and present times determine; we are aware, that in the concerns of a whole country, it assumes other designations, such as *ruse de guerre*, *state policy*, &c. but as a violation of confidence, which is the great bond of society, however necessary, it must be considered as at least a necessary *evil*.

The apprehensions of the English being thus excited, Captain Hawkins demanded of the Viceroy an explanation of these extraordinary movements, and the Viceroy gave immediate orders for the removal of every apparent cause of alarm, and promised him protection from any attack. The English Captain having still reason to suspect a treacherous muster of men on board a ship of 900 tons, moored next the *Minion*, sent again to the Viceroy to know if it were so; when the Viceroy's villany not being proof

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against a second appeal, unmasked, ordered the messenger to be detained, the signal-trumpet to be sounded, and the English were attacked in all quarters. Those on shore endeavoured to escape to the ships; but a few only effected it, and got on board the *Jesus*, the rest were all intercepted by debarkations from the Spanish ships, and instantly put to death.

The suspected ship fell on board the *Minion*, but the latter having previously weighed her anchors, in the short space between the period of their suspicion and attack, she cleared her enemy. The Spanish ship then laid the *Jesus* a-board, attacked by two other ships at the same time, but she also succeeded, after an arduous contest, and the loss of many men, in cutting her cable, and getting clear.

Having attained the distance of two ships' length from the Spanish fleet, the *Jesus* and the *Minion* commenced a regular action; and in one hour, it was supposed, the Spanish Admiral's, and another ship, were sunk, and the Vice-admiral burned, but by the ordnance on shore the small ships of the English were sunk, and the masts and rigging of the *Jesus* so cut up, that there were no hopes of saving her. They accordingly determined to take out of her all they could, and relinquish her to the enemy; but this intention was prevented, by the approach of two large ships on fire, which bore down so rapidly and directly on the *Minion*, that without waiting for orders, she made off from the *Jesus*, and it was with difficulty that Captain Hawkins could reach her. Some of the men followed in a boat, and the rest were left to the mercy of the Spaniards, of which they had already had a sample.

The only two English ships that escaped were the *Minion* and the *Judith*, the latter of which separated in the night. After enduring great distress from a scarcity of provisions, the navigation of unknown seas, and many of his men wounded, he entered a creek in the Bay of Mexico, where one half of his men were by their own desire put on shore, and with the rest he resolved to endeavour to reach England. He accordingly stood through the gulph of Florida, and in his passage, being forced into *Ponte Vedra*, in Spain, he again narrowly escaped the consequences of Spanish treachery, his timely suspicion of it enabled him to set sail, and put into *Vigo*; there being relieved by some English

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ships, he made his departure for England, on the 20th January, 1568, and arrived at Mount's Bay, in Cornwall, on the 25th.\*

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\* As the events of this voyage constitute a very interesting period in the life of Sir John Hawkins, we give the following account of them in his own words :—

“ At the end of three days the treaty was concluded, and the fleet (*viz.* the Spanish) entered the port, the two fleets saluting one another according to custom. We then laboured two days to place the English by themselves, and the Spanish by themselves—the captains and seamen on each side promising all friendly offices to each other; which, as faithfully as it was meant on our parts, was as treacherously designed on theirs; for they had furnished themselves from the Continent with a supply of 1000 men, and had formed a design of falling upon us, on all sides at once, on the 23d of September, at noon.

“ The same morning, the time fixed for the execution of their villany being then near at hand, we began to discover some appearances of it, such as shifting of arms from one ship to the other, planting and levelling of their cannon from their ships towards the island where our men had the guard, companies of men moving to and fro, more than their common occupations required, and many other circumstances, which gave us a vehement suspicion. We therefore sent to the viceroy (the same who had signed the agreement) to enquire what this meant. He immediately sent strict orders to remove all cause of suspicion, and assured us, that he, on the faith of a viceroy, would be our defence against all treachery. This answer not being, however, satisfactory, and we suspecting a great number of men to be hid in a large ship of 900 tons, which was moored next to the *Minion*, we sent the master of the *Jesus*, who could speak Spanish, again to the viceroy, and desired to be informed of the truth. The viceroy, seeing he could now conceal his treachery no longer, detained our master; and causing the trumpet to be sounded, the Spaniards set upon us on all sides at once. Our men on shore being dismayed at the unexpected onset fled, and endeavoured to recover their ships; but the Spaniards landed their men in such numbers on all sides, that but very few of them got on board of the *Jesus*, the rest being slain without quarter. The great ship which had about 300 men privately put on board, fell immediately on board the *Minion*; but in the time we had the suspicion of the treachery, which was not above half an hour, she had loosened her fastenings to the shore, and so, escaping the first brunt, got out of the harbour. Upon this the great ship, with two others, set upon the *Jesus*; but she, likewise, with great difficulty, and the loss of many of her men, got out to sea.

“ No sooner were the *Jesus* and the *Minion* got about two ships' length from the Spanish fleet, than the fight began to be so warm on all sides, that, in less than an hour, the Spanish admiral was supposed to be sunk, the vice-admiral burnt; and another of their chief ships believed to sink, so that they, from their vessels, could not do us much harm.

“ The cannon on the island was, in the mean time, fallen into the hands of the Spaniards; and it was with them they now chiefly gauled us. The masts, yards, and rigging of the *Jesus* were so shattered, that we had now no hopes left of carrying her off. With this cannon, likewise, they sunk our small ships. We therefore resolved to place the *Minion* in such manner, that the *Jesus* might lie between her and the shore, and be, as it were, a fence, to secure her from the enemy's cannon till night, when we determined to take what provisions and necessaries we could out of the *Jesus*, and then to leave her.

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His ill success in this expedition seems to have given him a dis-relish of maritime enterprisc. But his abilities were not over-

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“ While we were thus consulting and endeavouring to place the *Minion* out of danger of the shot from the shore, the Spaniards set fire to two great ships, and let them drive down towards us. Upon this the men on board the *Minion*, without either the captain's or master's consent, set sail in such hurry and confusion, that it was not without great difficulty that I was received on board.

“ Most of the men, which were left alive in the *Jesus*, made shift to follow the *Minion* in a small boat: but the rest who could not get into the boat, were left to the mercy of the Spaniards. Thus the *Minion*, with only one small bark of fifty tons, the *Judith*, escaped the treachery of the Spaniards; but the same night, the *Judith* likewise forsook us. We were now left alone with only two anchors and two cables, our ship so damaged, that it was as much as we could do to keep her above water, and a great number of us with very little provisions. We were besides divided in opinion what to do. Some were for yielding to the Spaniards; others chose rather to submit to the mercy of the Savages; and again others thought it more eligible to keep the sea, though with so scanty an allowance of victuals, as would hardly suffice to keep us alive.

“ In this miserable plight we ranged an unknown sea for fourteen days, till extreme famine obliged us to seek for land. So great was our misery, that hides were reckoned good food. Rats, cats, mice, and dogs, none escaped us, that we could lay our hands on; parrots and monkies were our dainties. In this condition we came to land, on the eighth of October, at the bottom of the bay of Mexico, in twenty three degrees and a half, where we hoped to have found inhabitants of the Spaniards, relief of victuals, and a proper place to repair our ship: but we found every thing just contrary to our expectation. Neither inhabitants, nor provisions, nor a haven for the relief of our ship. Many of our men, nevertheless, being worn out with hunger, desired to be set on shore, to which I consented.

“ Of about two hundred souls, which we then were, one hundred chose to seek their fortune on land, on which they were set with great difficulty; and with the remainder, after having watered, I again submitted to the mercy of the seas, and set sail on the sixteenth of October,

“ Of the men who were put on shore, says Purchas, one boat not being able to get on shore, two of the men were drowned, and the rest got a mile through the sea to the shore, as well as they could. Some died in two hours space, with abundant drinking of fresh water: others were swoln exceedingly with salt water, and fruits they found; a shower of rain also leaving them not one thread dry; as if Heaven had pursued the sea's challenge without; and partly hunger, and partly the water and fruits of the earth, within their bowels, had conspired against this unhappy crew.

“ The Chchemici Indian Savages added their inhumanity, killing eight of their company in the first onset; but they yielding (having neither weapon nor heart to resist) the savages perceiving them not to be their Spanish enemies, pointed them to the port of Panuco. They divided themselves into two companies, one going westward, among whom was one Miles Philips, and the other northward, among whom was David Ingram, who both came afterwards to England, and the former gave Purchas a good part of this relation.

After the stinging of flies, deaths by Indians, and manifold miseries, the



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looked by his sagacious Sovereign, who, in the year 1573, appointed him Treasurer of the Navy, a post at that time by no

western company got to Panuco, where the governor stripped them of the little they had, and deprived them of their liberty, calling them *English Dogs and Lutheran Heretics*. When they desired the assistance of the Surgeons, for such as the Indians had wounded by the way, he answered, *they should have no other surgeon but the hangman*. After four days he sent for them out of the prison, and with many new halters (with which they were in expectation of suffering) bound and sent them to Mexico, ninety leagues distant, with a great guard of Indians. If some of their keepers used them mercifully, the others would knock them down, and cry *march, march English Dogs, Lutherans, Enemies of God*. After their coming to Mexico many died; but the rest had kind usage in the hospital. Thence they were carried to Tescuco, to be used as slaves, where by the means of one Robert Sweeting (son of an Englishman by a Spanish woman) they met with great assistance from the Indians, or else had all perished.

“After this, they were put to the Spaniards, as servants, and were allowed the means to get something for themselves, till they became a prey to the hellish Inquisition, which seized their goods and persons, and shut them asunder in dungeons for a year and a half. By frequent examinations, they endeavoured to pump something out of them, in matters of faith, and not being able, they yielding to their assertions in that kind, craving mercy, as men who came into that country by stress of weather; nevertheless they put them to the rack, to extort confession that way, which made some betray their own lives. After solemn proclamation that all might come to this sight, they were brought in fool’s coats, with ropes about their necks, and candles in their hands, to the scaffold. George Rively, Peter Monfrie, and Cornelius an Irishman, were burnt, others condemned to two hundred or three hundred blows on horseback with long whips, and to serve in the galleys six, eight, or ten years; others to serve in monasteries in the S. Benito (or fool’s coats) divers years, of which Philips was one. The whipping was cruelly executed on Good Friday, two criers going before and proclaiming, *Behold these English Lutherans, Dogs, Enemies of God*; the Inquisitors themselves, and their familiars crying, *Strike, lay on those English Heretics, Lutherans, God’s Enemies*. They were remanded to prison, all bloody and swoln, in order to be sent to Spain, to perform the rest of their martyrdom. Philips and the rest having served their times, had their fool’s coats hung up in the chief church. The rest married there; but Philip escaped a second imprisonment, and, after many travels in the country, and dangers in Spain, returned to England in 1582.

“Job Hortob, another of this company, with some others, were sent prisoners into Spain, by the viceroy, with Don Juan de Velasco de Varre, admiral and general of the Spanish fleet. Offering to make their escape they were discovered, and severely stocked; then imprisoned a year in the contraction house in Seville; but breaking prison, were taken, and by the Inquisition sentenced, Robert Barret and John Gilbert, to be burnt; Job Hortob and John Bone to the galleys for ten years, and after that to perpetual imprisonment. Others were adjudged to the galleys, some eight, some five years. Hortob served twelve years in hunger, thirst, cold, and stripes: and after four years imprisonment in his fool’s coat, was redeemed to the service of Hernando de Soria, from whom, after three years service more, he stole away, and landed at Portsmouth in December 1590, after twenty-three years miserable bondage.”

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means a *sinecure*, for it usually comprised the command of the squadron appointed to protect the Narrow Seas, and the superintendance of the building, repairing, equipping, victualling, and manning the royal navy.

Having thus escaped with life from the treacherous enmity of the Spaniards, and obtained the distinguished favour of his Sovereign, at a time when no suspicion of danger could arise from external circumstances, an accident happened that had nearly proved fatal to him. A gentleman of the Middle Temple, of the name of Birchot, in a deranged state of mind, had resolved to kill the Vice-chancellor Hatton; and as Captain Hawkins was passing through the Strand, he was mistaken for that gentleman, and stabbed by the insane assassin; he was, however, disarmed and secured by Captain Hawkins, and afterwards sent to the Tower.

In course of service, Captain Hawkins, with a squadron, was riding in Catwater, when the Spanish fleet was sent to Flanders to convey thence Anne of Austria, the second wife of Philip the Second. The Spanish Admiral, either inadvertently or insultingly, endeavoured to run between the island and the English squadron, without paying the usual salute. The gunner was immediately ordered by the Captain to fire at the rigging of the Spanish Admiral; the Spaniard was still silent, and the gunner fired a shot through and through the hull, which induced him to take in flags and topsails, and run to anchor. An officer of distinction was then sent to Captain Hawkins, who, standing upon deck, refused admission to the messenger; but bid him tell his Admiral, that having neglected the respect due to the Queen of England, in her seas and port, and having so large a fleet under his command, he must not expect to lie there; but, in twelve hours, weigh anchor and be gone, otherwise he should regard him as a declared enemy, his conduct having already rendered him suspected.

In consequence of this message, the Spanish Admiral came off in his boat to the Jesus of Lubeck, and desired to speak with the English Admiral; a request which, although at first refused, was afterwards granted. Great surprise was expressed on the part of the Spanish Admiral, that the two nations being at peace, he should have received such treatment. To which remonstrance the English Commander replied, that his own arrogance had brought it upon him; that he could not but know what respect was due