

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-06721-8 - The Life of Richard Earl Howe: Admiral of the Fleet,  
and General of Marines

John Barrow

Excerpt

[More information](#)

THE LIFE  
OF  
ADMIRAL EARL HOWE.

---

## CHAPTER I.

## ADVANCEMENT IN THE NAVY.

Genealogy of the Howe family—Richard Howe sent to Eton—thence to sea—Destined for the South Seas with Commodore Anson—Goes to the West Indies under Sir Charles Knowles—Action of the Burford—Appointed to the Comet, bomb—to the Baltimore in the North Seas—Admiral Vernon—Engaged with two French frigates—Receives the rank of Captain, and appointed to command the Triton—Joins Sir C. Knowles in the West Indies—Commands the Glory and goes on the African station—Appointed to the Mary yacht.

WITHOUT considering it necessary, for the present purpose, to trace the pedigree of a family to a remote origin, it may not be deemed irrelevant on the part of the biographer to point out, when such is the fact, how a succession of eminent and noble characters in the same family, so far from diminishing the exertions of their descendants to follow them in the paths of honor and glory, have contributed, as in the case of the family of Howe, to render their names worthy of those of their ancestors.

In the reign of Charles II., the eldest son of *this*

B

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-06721-8 - The Life of Richard Earl Howe: Admiral of the Fleet,  
and General of Marines

John Barrow

Excerpt

[More information](#)

house (John Howe and of his wife Jane Grubham) was created a baronet, and his brother, George Howe, a knight, as due recompenses for their respective services, both being gentlemen eminent in the county of Notts. Sir John Howe, the second son of the first Sir Richard Grubham Howe, having married Annabella, the youngest of the three natural daughters of Emanuel Scrope, Earl of Sunderland, became possessed of that portion of the Scrope estate situated in Notts; this lady was legitimized by Act of Parliament, and became the Lady Annabella Howe. They left four sons, the eldest of whom, John Howe, was Member of Parliament for Cirencester, inherited the family estates in Gloucestershire, held high offices under King William and Queen Anne, and was the immediate ancestor of the Lords Chedworth, a title now extinct.

Charles, the *third* son, left only one daughter; and Emanuel, the fourth son, did the same, having married Ruperta, the natural daughter of Prince Rupert, third son of Frederick, called King of Bohemia, by Elizabeth, daughter of James I. He was a General in the army and Envoy Extraordinary to the Elector of Hanover, afterwards George I.; and from this circumstance probably originated that intimacy with the Royal House of Hanover, which subsists to the present day.

Reverting now to Scrope, the *second* of the four sons of Sir John Grubham Howe and Lady Anna-

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-06721-8 - The Life of Richard Earl Howe: Admiral of the Fleet,  
and General of Marines

John Barrow

Excerpt

[More information](#)

## I.]                    ADVANCEMENT IN THE NAVY.                    3

bella: he was born in 1648, and inherited from his mother the Nottingham portion of the Scrope estates, was Member of Parliament for Nottingham in the reigns of Charles II., William III., and Queen Anne, and joined the Earl of Nottingham in 1668, in his adhesion to King William on his landing, was created Baron Clenawley and Viscount Howe in 1701, and was also made a Groom of the Bedchamber. In the chapel, in the south aisle of the church of Langar, is a monumental bust of this Lord Howe, on a marble pedestal, bearing this inscription: "Erected to the memory of the Right Honorable Scrope, Lord Viscount Howe, who departed this life the 16th day of January, 1712, aged 64 years. At the revolution in the year 1688, he remarkably distinguished himself in the preservation of the religion and liberties of his country, when popery and arbitrary power threatened the subversion of both. He married Anne, the daughter of John, Earl of Rutland, by whom he had issue one son, who died young, and two daughters. Also Juliana, the daughter of William, Lord Allington, by whom he left issue two sons and three daughters."

Emanuel Scrope Howe, the eldest son, succeeded his father in 1712, and was Member of Parliament for Nottingham. In 1732 he was appointed Governor of Barbados, where he is said to have died by drinking the milk of cocoa nuts, when heated, in March 1734. He married Mary Sophia Charlotte, daughter

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-06721-8 - The Life of Richard Earl Howe: Admiral of the Fleet,  
and General of Marines

John Barrow

Excerpt

[More information](#)

of Baron Kielmansegge, Master of the Horse to George I. when Elector of Hanover, by Sophia Charlotte, daughter of Count Platen, of the Empire; she was afterwards created by George I. Countess of Darlington. They left four sons and four daughters, the eldest of whom, George Augustus, of great promise, fell universally lamented in America, and the title and estate devolved on the second son, Richard, the subject of the present memoir.

It is remarkable enough, and can only be explained by the circumstance of the fire at Westport, that no family records have been discovered which throw any light on the early life, the education, genius, and disposition, of any of the four brothers, sons of the Viscount Howe of Langar. All that is known of RICHARD HOWE is, that he was born in 1725, and is supposed to have been sent to Eton about the usual age, though it is not certain whether he had not previously been at Westminster. His name does not appear on the lists of Eton, which, however, seem to have been very imperfectly kept about the year 1735, after which there is a gap of twenty years. On reference to the Provost, he states, "In my boyhood I understood that he left Eton in the second or third form." It was in the year last mentioned, being then ten years of age, that Richard had the misfortune to lose his father, who, as already stated, died at Barbados, after having exercised the functions of Governor of that colony between two and three years. In a

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-06721-8 - The Life of Richard Earl Howe: Admiral of the Fleet,  
and General of Marines

John Barrow

Excerpt

[More information](#)

## I.]                    ADVANCEMENT IN THE NAVY.                    5

tablet in the church of Langar, is the following inscription near the Howe vault : “ This monument was erected by his sorrowful mother to the memory of the Right Honorable Scrope, Lord Viscount Howe, who, in the year 1732, was, by his Majesty George II., appointed Governor of Barbados. Being adorned with all those great and amiable qualifications which render a man truly noble, by his conduct in that high station he gained the respect and esteem that was justly due to a generous, wise, impartial and disinterested Governor. He departed this life there March 28th 1734, in the thirty-fifth year of his age. He was married in 1719 to Mademoiselle Keilmansegge, and left issue by her four sons and four daughters.”

On leaving Eton, when about the age of fourteen, young Richard was entered as midshipman on board the *Severn* of fifty guns, commanded by the Honorable Edward Legge, son of William, the first Earl of Dartmouth. This ship was one of the squadron placed under the orders of Commodore Anson, and destined for a secret expedition to a part of the world which, at that time, was vaguely designated by the name of the South Seas, though it included the Northern as well as the Southern Pacific. This squadron consisted of the *Centurion* (the Commodore's ship), the *Argyle*, *Severn*, *Pearl*, *Wager*, and *Tryal* sloop. The objects were to make war upon the whole western coasts of Spanish America, to take possession

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-06721-8 - The Life of Richard Earl Howe: Admiral of the Fleet,  
and General of Marines

John Barrow

Excerpt

[More information](#)

of some convenient port, to intercept the Galleons with treasure from Acapulco to Manilla; and, in short, to annoy the Spanish colonies and trade in every possible way.

Having passed the Strait le Mair, rounded Cape Horn, and reached Cape Noir on the western side of Terra del Fuego, they encountered a most violent tempest, which dispersed the ships, drove them back to the eastward, and reduced them to the greatest distress, by the violence of the storm, the tremendous sea, and the extreme cold from the snow and sleet, which continued to fall for several days together. "The distresses," says Mr. Walter, the historiographer of this interesting voyage, "with which we struggled, during the three successive months, will not easily be paralleled in the relation of any former naval expedition." The *Severn* and the *Pearl* suffered so much that they could not attempt to pass Cape Horn a second time, and were obliged to bear up for Rio de Janeiro. From hence, after having refitted the ships, and refreshed the crews, they returned to England, and thus escaped those perilous disasters detailed with such painful interest in the account of that voyage above alluded to.

Such is not unfrequently the severe and trying introduction of young men into the sea service; but whatever their feelings may be, regarding the dangers, the hardships, and the many inconveniences of a seafaring life thus early experienced, the example of

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-06721-8 - The Life of Richard Earl Howe: Admiral of the Fleet,  
and General of Marines

John Barrow

Excerpt

[More information](#)

## I.]                    ADVANCEMENT IN THE NAVY.                    7

others, little more advanced than themselves in the same profession, is generally found quite sufficient to prevent them from showing symptoms of dislike, on the contrary, rather to encourage them in a determination to persevere. Young Howe was obviously nothing daunted by this experimental trial, as we find him, immediately after his return, on board the *Burford*, commanded by Captain Franklin Lushington, one of a fleet destined for the West Indies under Admiral Sir Chaloner Ogle; a squadron of which, detached from this fleet, was under the immediate orders of Sir Charles Knowles, who left Spithead in the month of February, 1742. The first operation of this squadron was an attack on *La Guayra* on the coast of the Caraccas, in which the *Burford* was so roughly handled, the Captain being mortally wounded, that the first lieutenant found it necessary to withdraw her from under the fire, and carry her into Curaçoa, where the Captain died two hours after he was landed. The lieutenant was tried by court-martial for having so withdrawn her, and acquitted chiefly on the evidence of the carpenter, confirmed by the testimony of the surviving officers of the ship, as to the danger of her keeping the sea, in consequence of the damages she had received in her hull.

In what manner young Howe conducted himself on this first occasion of being under fire, there are no records to refer to. The death of the Captain and the court-martial on the first lieutenant seem to have

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-06721-8 - The Life of Richard Earl Howe: Admiral of the Fleet,  
and General of Marines

John Barrow

Excerpt

[More information](#)

prevented any special report being made on the conduct of the *Burford*, at least none can be traced beyond the minutes of the court. In this respect, Mr. Howe would appear to have been less lucky than young heroes generally are found to be in their biographical memoirs, wherein that celebrity is not unusually anticipated and predicted, which they are in after-times to obtain, and wherein they are mostly described as giving an earnest of future deeds of valour, from the moment they throw off their juvenile clothing. Howe was not fortunate enough to have his youthful deeds thus recorded; he was now in his eighteenth year, without his name having once been entered on the annals of fame, except, indeed, once or twice where it is exhibited in fictitious characters; as for instance, in the following circumstantial narrative which has passed current through various chronicles, lives, and registers, without a shadow of foundation for any one incident detailed therein. It relates to the action just mentioned, in which the *Burford* was concerned:—

“The tender and grateful attachment which our young officer [Mr. Howe] entertained for his Captain, is pleasing to recollect, and must not be passed unnoticed. Being required to give evidence relative to the conduct of the *Burford*, at a court-martial held subsequent to the action, he proceeded in a clear and collected manner, until he came to relate the melancholy death of his beloved and gallant friend. Though possessing the strongest nerves, which he has since



Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-06721-8 - The Life of Richard Earl Howe: Admiral of the Fleet,  
and General of Marines

John Barrow

Excerpt

[More information](#)

## I.]                    ADVANCEMENT IN THE NAVY.                    9

proved are not liable to be affected by those passions which often distract the minds of even the bravest men, the keen emotions of his youthful heart so overcame his hitherto firm recital, that, unable to proceed, he requested the indulgence of the court, until he could sufficiently collect himself. He then related that Captain Lushington, having his thigh shot off, continued giving directions to his first lieutenant, until he sunk down fainting from loss of blood. He was then conveyed to the cockpit. ‘I was soon sent,’ said the young officer, ‘by the first lieutenant for orders. ‘My dear Howe,’ said the noble Lushington, on seeing him approach, ‘since I have been brought down (*since?*) I have received a mortal wound; tell the lieutenant to use his own judgment.’ He was proceeding to relate the death of his brave commander, when he again burst into a flood of tears, and retired.”

It will appear scarcely credible, but so it is, that the whole and every part of this circumstantial piece of pathos is purely romance, without one word of truth in it,—in short, that it is a complete fiction. Mr. Howe was not examined at all at the court-martial—he was not even called on to give evidence—neither his name nor that of Captain Lushington appears on the minutes of the court, which related solely to the supposed sinking state of the ship when she withdrew from the action:—“And this is history!” as the old king of Prussia said, when two eye-witnesses to the

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-06721-8 - The Life of Richard Earl Howe: Admiral of the Fleet,  
and General of Marines

John Barrow

Excerpt

[More information](#)

same fact related it in a sense directly opposite to each other. The conduct of Howe, however, must be presumed to have met with the approval of the Commander-in-Chief, as immediately after this he gave him an order to act as lieutenant in one of the ships about to proceed to England. But whether this appointment was the result of his gallantry and good conduct, or merely a mark of the Commodore's favour, it did not in the least avail him; whatever interest or influence his rank in life might be supposed to give him, it had not sufficient weight at home to obtain a confirmation of his commission. He at once, therefore, took the determination of returning to the West Indies to rejoin his patron. Here he was not suffered to remain long before an opportunity occurred of placing him in a vacancy, as lieutenant of the Comet bomb. This was given to him by Commodore Knowles, on the 25th May, 1744, and was confirmed on the 8th August, 1745; shortly after which his ship was paid off.

This year, 1745, which furnishes a memorable epoch in the annals of Great Britain, was favourable to the prospects of Mr. Howe. The mistaken loyalty of the Scots to the family of an unfortunate sovereign having burst out in that year into open rebellion, the French, never backward when any opportunity affords to add to the embarrassments of England, availed themselves of this favourable event, by not only encouraging, but materially assisting, the Pre-