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PREFACE

These letters are part of a large collection which I recently inherited from my aunt, the widow of Sir Francis Lloyd, to whose grandmother, Mrs. Lloyd, the letters had been written. The letters number well over one thousand and date from 1804 to the 1850s and nearly all are of interest, but owing to the many distractions of war-time it has been possible for me to go through but few of the bundles and these are by no means the most interesting.

Mrs. Lloyd of Aston was the eldest daughter and co-heiress of Admiral Sir Eliab and Lady Louisa Harvey of Rolls Park, Essex, and she must have been a woman of considerable beauty and charm, as her portrait by Sir George Hayter shows. I have a copy of the portrait but the original had to be sold in 1923. Fortunately it was bought by Lady Pigott-Browne, a great-granddaughter of Mrs. Lloyd.

Mrs. Lloyd had a wide circle of friends who wrote frequently to her, giving her the London news and gossip. Unfortunately before her death in 1866, she destroyed a number of these letters, including those from the great Duke of Wellington who was one of her admirers - indeed as his guest she was at Brussels and present at the Duchess of Richmond's famous ball held before the Battle of Waterloo. It was always thought that these letters were of a rather familiar nature and there is no doubt that the Iron Duke was attracted by the beauty of Mrs. Lloyd. Soon after the Battle of Waterloo he took her for a ride across the Battlefield, explaining it to her, and himself cut off and presented to Mrs. Lloyd a branch of the tree under which he had met Marshal Blucher. Nor was this Wellington's only present to Mrs. Lloyd - he gave her among other things one of his Field Marshal's cloaks and part of the tail of his charger, Copenhagen, and various other mementoes.

There were also more than one hundred letters from the "Ladies of Llangollen" written in the beautiful clear script of either Lady Eleanor Butler or Miss Ponsonby. The majority of these letters were left by my uncle to follow the entailed estates and relatively few are in my possession. Mrs. Lloyd was on the friendliest terms with the "Ladies" and I well remember as a child at Aston the enchanting portrait of them in their beaver chimney-pot hats, their riding habits and their short powdered hair, and it was from Aston that the Duke of Wellington rode to visit them at Plas Newydd.

Mrs. Lloyd's father's family had long been settled in Essex although the only member of the Harveys of any real distinction was the immortal Doctor Harvey, whose body rests in

Hempstead Church in North Essex.

There was a curious "curse" connected with the Harvey family. A young Harvey joined one of Drake's expeditions and was present at the sack of some Spanish city or other which was captured by a surprise attack. Harvey and his men rushed into the city in search of loot and soon spied a large house, the residence of a wealthy Spanish merchant. Brushing aside all resistance they dashed into the house and in the great hall found a wedding was being solemnized. Without a moment's hesitation Harvey killed the bridegroom, mortally wounded the bride's father and tore away the wretched girl, at the same time ordering his men to bring along the large painted iron chest in which was the bride's dowry. The old father with his dying breath cursed the English pirate, warning him that his deed would bring him nothing but ill-luck and that the dower chest for which he had committed murder would prove a curse to him and his heirs. Whatever the truth of this lurid story may be, the fact remains that early in the 17th century there was a large iron Spanish chest at Rolls and the family tradition was that if it was ever opened the luck of the Harveys would fall through. I remember the chest well. It was about seven feet long and two and a half feet high and full of papers, and I remember how once, when it had to be moved, one could hear the sound of documents sliding and slithering about inside. Two great keys hung on it and my uncle was so convinced of the truth of the "curse" that he was adamant that it must never be opened again, for he would often tell me how he remembered hearing from his grandmother, Mrs. Lloyd, that her mother <u>had</u> opened it. The story that he used to tell me was as follows: "Lady Louisa, as a young bride, was left alone at Rolls, whilst her husband, then a junior naval officer, was at sea. Bored with the neighbours and having nothing better to do, she decided to open the chest and this she did; but what she had seen she never would tell - never would she say what she had found inside, nor, indeed, could she be induced to speak on the subject again. All that was known, was that she was found by the servants fainting by the chest." And my uncle would add "The curse came true for though Lady Louisa had two sons both died as young men, and her eldest daughter married my grandfather and brought Rolls and the Essex property into the Lloyd family and the Harveys for lack of male heirs, died out. Lady Louisa, to the day of her death, was convinced that it was her fatal curiosity which caused the extinction of the family of Harvey." I need hardly say that as a child THE CHEST was an object of deep and rather frightened interest and I remember how once, as a little boy, I felt very bold when, climbing up on it, I say and drummed with my heels against its painted sides.

The chest in Lady Louisa's day was kept in an attic on the top floor at Rolls, but on the Admiral's death it was brought with the other Harvey heirlooms to Aston in Shropshire where

it is to this day, so far as I am aware, still unopened.

Admiral Sir Eliab Harvey, Mrs. Lloyd's father, was, it would seem from his wife's letters, a difficult old gentleman, and this is to put it mildly. He died in 1830 and in my boyhood many stories still lingered in Essex of the "Old Admiral". The ancient gardener at Rolls used to point out to me a long gravel walk in the garden which was still known as "the quarter-deck" and up and down which the Admiral used to stump when in one of his only too frequent rages. The hedge bordering one side of this walk was planted in a most curious zig-zag fashion, the reason being, so the gardener assured me, that the Admiral had had it planted in this odd, unusual way so that it might remind him of the waves of his beloved sea.

My uncle used to tell me, too, an enchanting tale of how, when in 1830 the Admiral died, the long funeral procession wound its tortuous way from Rolls right across Essex to Hempstead which was the family burying place. The funeral was on a grand scale for not only had the Admiral's family lived for two-hundred and fifty years in Essex, but he was also M.P. for the county and a distinguished naval hero. During the journey the Essex hounds crossed the procession which was at once halted. Mourners jumped from their coaches and carriages and "View halloed" the hounds on. One of the most excited and cheering the loudest being Mr. Lloyd, the Admiral's son-in-law and chief mourner! As the huntsmen and hounds disappeared into the distance the mourners climbed back into their carriages and the procession resumed its stately way to Hempstead where the coffin, covered in dark blue velvet, was lowered into the family vault.

I have often seen the Harvey vault - a curious macabre-place. All the earlier leadened coffins are shaped like mummy-cases and have rude and rough attempts to depict the human face on the lead in which the body was lapped. The Admiral's coffin rests near a Harvey who died as Ambassador in Constantinople in the middle of the eighteenth century and whose body was sent back to Hempstead. The huge coffin is covered in the most beautiful rose-pink Brusa velvet which seems almost as good as the day it was nailed on in Turkey. A scandalous, and I trust untrue, piece of Hempstead gossip has it that in the nineteenth century the verger would go down into the vault, and taking off some of the velvet would take it back to his wife who would make it into a waistcoat! I should, I must admit, dearly have liked to have seen the verger showing parishioners into their seats, Sunday after Sunday, resplendent in a waistcoat of rose-pink velvet. It must have had a stately and rather startling effect, for vergers in the days of Victoria, were dressed in black broadcloth. Perhaps only on the very special church festivals he startled

the people of Hempstead with his robin-like attire.

Such are some of the stories which still remain in my memory about the Admiral. He was born in 1758, joined the Navy whilst still a boy in 17 and on the death of his elder brother William succeeded to a fine property and became M.P. for Maldon in Essex, but Eliab Harvey was a wild plunger and a man about town, and this sudden gift of fortune went to his head and he began to gamble away his inheritance in every kind of reckless indulgence. According to Walpole he lost £100,000 one evening at Hazard to a Mr. O'Byrne who said, "You can never pay this debt." With a superb gesture Harvey answered "Rolls"(his place in Essex) "shall pay for it." O'Byrne was so struck by this that he said, "No. I will keep £10,000 of the money; you shall throw for the other ninety." Thye did, and Harvey won, and I was always told that he never touched a card again.

In 1783 he married Lady Louisa, younger daughter of Robert, Earl Nugent and seems to have settled down and held various posts in the Navy. The crowning point in his career was in 1805 when he commanded the Temeraire at Trafalgar and his share in this glorious battle was particularly brilliant. The Temeraire formed one of the thirty-three sail of the line under Nelson's command when at daybreak he discovered the enemy and commenced the Battle of Trafalgar. Few played their part more gallantly on that memorable day than Captain Harvey. The Temeraire was the next ship astern of the Victory; and during the terrible conflict she was lashed to two of the enemy, the Redoubtable and the Fougneux. At one time it was thought she had actually been boarded by both and a Spanish ship on the other side but the spirit of H.arvey and his crew triumphed against these tremendous odds, though at great sacrifice of life; he took his opponents, and with his two prizes he had the satisfaction of bringing in as captive the ship from whose main-top the death shot was fired at Nelson. This noble conduct did not escape instant notice and reward. Collingwood, who had commenced the battle, and succeeded Nelson even before the losses were fully known, sent of despatches to him, in which he said: "I congratulate you most sincerely on the victory His Majesty's fleet has obtained over the enemy, and on the battle; nothing could be finer. I have not words in which I can sufficiently express my admiration of it." In less than a month after Harvey was made a Rear-Admiral; and having returned to England he was one of those who bore the pall of his dead chief.

Harvey became a public hero, but unfortunately his temper was his undoing and when, in 1809, he was second-in-command of the Channel Fleet under Lord Gambier he felt himself aggrieved by the appointment of Lord Cochrane to a special command which had been promised to him, and expressed his anger and his opinion of Lord Gambier on the quarter-deck of

the flag ship in so public and violent a manner that Lord Gambier had no option but to bring him to a Court Martial at Portsmouth. One cannot but feel slightly for Lord Gambier, bad sailor though he was. He was not of the stuff of which sailors are usually supposed to be made. He had not only strong religious, but held some novel ideas as to the manner in which British tars ought to be treated. A satirist has said :-

> "Oh, if awak'ning from eternal sleep,
> The shade of Gambier walked the howling deep,
> How British tars would sweep the subject sea,
> Inspired by milk and water and lokea,
> And when the war fiends came in threatening shape
> They'd give the rascals psalms instead of grape."

It was notorious how little time Gambier had spent at sea, and his rapid promotion was almost entirely due to his relationship to Pitt, but one hardly feels that excuses Harvey's language, for according to my uncle the mildest remark Harvey used on this famous occasion of his chief was that "He was the - psalm-singing son of a - hypocritical sea-cook's - ." Harvey was dismissed the service but was reinstated in 1810, in 1815 he was appointed K.C.B. and in 1825 received the Grand Cross of the Bath. During most of his life he held the family seat in Parliament, and was to the day of his death, a figure of considerable importance in Essex, feared, perhaps, more than loved, by his family, neighbours and servants.

Lady Louisa Harvey was the younger daughter of that not very attractive figure, Robert, Earl Nugent - now chiefly remembered not so much for his political life or his witty sayings as for his habit of marrying rich widows, a talent so marked that Horace Walpole invented the word 'Negentize' to describe those adventurers who attempted to imitate his good fortune, for good fortune it certainly brought him. Mr.Nugent's (for he was not raised to the peerage till 1766) first marriage was to a daughter of the Earl of Fingall, his second to Anne, daughter of James Craggs, who had already been twice married, and by his marriage to this "fat and ugly dame" he acquired Gosfield in Essex, a seat in Parliament and £100,000 in cash, besides which by his third marriage to Elizabeth Drax, widow of the fourth Earl of Berkeley, he also acquired a large fortune. This last marriage, like his previous ones, brought him no happiness, and he was separated from Elizabeth before his death. By her he had two children, Mary, afterwards Marchioness of Buckingham and Louisa, wife of Admiral Harvey. Lord Nugent made Lady Buckingham his Heiress, (Lord Buckingham took the surname of Nugent) and would have nothing to do with Louisa because she had followed her mother when the latter had left Nugent's house, owing to his treatment of her.

Such were the parents of Lady Louisa. Her letters to her daughter reveal her as an amusing and witty writer, devoted to her eldest daughter more than to the rest of the family, (for she by no menas turns a blind eye to the faults and foibles of her other children) fond of gossip, putting up with a good deal from her husband, anxious to marry off her six daughters, not inclined to be patronized by her sister, Lady Buckingham, with her background of Stowe - in fact a very delightful, human woman. That she had good taste I doubt - my uncle always told me that when Turner offered her his famous painting of the Temeraire, which her husband had so nobly commanded at Trafalgar, Lady Louisa drew herself up with a magnificent gesture and said "What!! Pay £200 for a work by a living artist? Certainly not." So the Harveys' loss was the National Gallery's gain!

Think this will be of use to you for the weekend.
Original in Rolls Park papers in Record Office.

Dorothy X.