

marked by a mulberry-tree, which Nelson desired to be planted there. Over the mantelpiece of his little dwelling is a mirror in a gilt frame, which once formed part of the ornaments of Nelson's room in Sir William Hamilton's house, and this he and his wife treasure as their only relic of the admiral.

Merton Place itself, he told me as I sat in his room and chatted, was occupied before the Hamiltons by a family named Graves, who were in business in London; he just remembered their going and the Hamiltons' coming, so that their tenancy must have commenced about 1800. Nelson's association with the place, as may be seen by a reference to his "Life" by Southey or Pettigrew, did not begin till October, 1801, when he had just returned to England, after his magnificent exploit at the battle of Copenhagen. He continued to make Merton his head-quarters down to May, 1803, when he was ordered again to sea, but he again visited it from time to time, whenever he could be spared ashore. Hudson told me that when Nelson was away Lady Hamilton was always busily engaged in furnishing the house and improving the grounds, and that he well remembered the little streamlet which was made artificially to flow through the grounds, and which, in compliment to Nelson, she called "The Nile." It has long been filled up, and its site turned into gardens for the rows of cottages which have been built on all four sides of the estate.

Sir William Hamilton, on returning home after his first interview with Nelson, told Lady Hamilton that he was about to introduce to her a little man who could not boast of being very handsome, but who would become the greatest man England ever produced. "I know it," he said, "from the very few words of conversation I have already had with him. I pronounce that he will one day astonish the world. I have never entertained any officer at my house, but I am determined to bring him here; let him be put in the room prepared for Prince Augustus." Nelson is stated to have been equally impressed with Sir William Hamilton's merits. "You are," he said, "a man after my own heart; you do business in my own way. I am now only a captain, but, if I live, I will be at the top of the tree."

We have no space for the many stories and anecdotes that might be told concerning Nelson's life at Merton; but I may be pardoned for repeating the following:—Dr. Burney, who wrote the celebrated anagram on Lord Nelson, after his victory of the Nile, "Honor est a Nilo" (Horatio Nelson), was shortly after on a visit to his lordship

at his beautiful villa at Merton. From his usual absence of mind, he forgot to put a nightcap into his portmanteau, and consequently borrowed one from his lordship. Previously to his retiring to rest, he sat down to study, as was his common practice, and was shortly after alarmed by finding the cap in flames; he immediately collected the burnt remains, and returned them to his lordship with the following lines:—

"Take your nightcap again, my good lord, I desire,
I would not detain it a minute;
What belongs to a Nelson, wherever there's fire,
Is sure to be instantly in it."

Nelson, it seems, first became acquainted with Lady Hamilton at Naples, and here the great naval hero used to visit her. It has been remarked by a writer in *Blackwood* that "of her virtues, unhappily, prudence was not one. After the death of Nelson, and the disgraceful disregard of her claims by the Government, her affairs became greatly embarrassed. Those who owed wealth and honours to Nelson, and who had sunned themselves in her prosperity, shrank away from her. In her distress, she wrote a most touching letter to one who had courted her smiles in other days, the Duke of Queensberry, imploring him to buy the little estate at Merton, which had been left to her by Nelson, and thus to relieve her from the most pressing embarrassments. The cold-hearted old profligate turned a deaf ear to the request. In 1813 Emma Hamilton was a prisoner for debt in the King's Bench. Deserted by the great, the noble, and the wealthy, abandoned by the heir of his title and the recipient of his hard-earned rewards, she, whom Nelson had left as a legacy to the country, might have died in a gaol. From this fate she was saved by one whose name is not to be found in the brilliant circle who surrounded her but a few short years before. Alderman Joshua Jonathan Smith (let all honour be paid to his most plebeian name) redeemed his share of his country's debt, and obtained her release."

After Nelson's death, the "disconsolate Emma," as she so often styled herself, lived on at Merton in her doubly-widowed condition, for her husband had died two years before. She was, however, but a bad woman of business, and this, coupled with her profuse generosity and hospitality, brought her into pecuniary difficulties, from which the ungrateful country to whose care Nelson had confided both her and her infant Horatia, did not care to extricate her, though she had helped Nelson, by her readiness of resource, when in Italy, to win one sea-fight, at all events. Even his brother, who owned him a canonry in Canterbury Cathedral, an earldom,