

**HISTORY OF THE
FAMILIES OF LARCOM,
HOLLIS, AND MCKINLEY**

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History of the Families of Larcom, Hollis, and McKinley by Montagu Burrows

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MONTAGU BURROWS

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HOLLIS, AND MCKINLEY**

*Hilda Elizabeth Larcum Burrows.
Sept. 2. 1892.*

HISTORY

OF

THE FAMILIES OF

LARCOM, HOLLIS, AND M^CKINLEY

BY

MONTAGU BURROWS, R.N., M.A.

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INTRODUCTION.

BORN about the middle of the last century, four naval officers, of nearly the same age, and so united by inter-marriage that they were practically brothers in every respect, nobly performed their part in the mighty wars between Great Britain and the rest of the world which issued in the firm establishment of the modern British Empire created by Chatham, Hawke, Anson, Wolfe, Clive, and Boscawen. Such brief notices of these gallant seamen as can now be recovered may not be unacceptable to those of their descendants whose blood kindles with the memory of a glorious past.

The names of these four officers were Captain Thomas Larcom, Commissioner Joseph Larcom, Admiral Aiskew Paffard Hollis, and Admiral George M^cKinley. The first two were brothers; Joseph Larcom and George M^cKinley married, as young lieutenants, the two pretty sisters of Aiskew Paffard Hollis. The harmony between the four, cemented by these domestic ties, was uninterrupted through life, and has been continued in their families to the present day. Seldom has brotherhood in blood marched more gracefully along with brotherhood in arms. The first-named of the four was, it will be seen, the least intimately connected with the rest of the band; he was by a few years the oldest, and died much the earliest; but he was unmarried, and his brother's ties were his own.

They were all connected with one common place of residence, Gosport, in those days a small fortified town, the interests of which were as closely connected with the Royal

Navy as those of Portsmouth itself, but the country surrounding which was still the country, exhibiting the rural features of the county of Hants in a manner very different from anything which could be found in the immediate neighbourhood of busy Portsmouth. That place was far more than at present the one great dockyard and arsenal of England, occupying much the same position as Brest, before Louis XIV called into existence, as its coadjutors, Toulon and Rochefort. Gosport was the favourite residence of retired admirals, captains, and lieutenants, men generally of humble means, but full of noble traditions, who rejoiced in spending the evening of their days in close proximity to the old wooden hulks of which they themselves had once been the pride, and amidst the incessant going and coming of the fleets in which their sons and grandsons were embarked. Who shall say how much of the spirit which has made England what it is, was generated and perpetuated in such a focus of honest patriotism, just as it was in the Middle Ages at the Cinque Ports, in Elizabethan times at the ports of Devon, and in the days of the Stuarts at Lowestoft and Harwich! How well I remember as a child walking on the Gosport ramparts—the 'Lines' as they were called—with the ancient ladies of the Larcom kin, and listening with delighted ears to their simple stories of the naval members of the family whose lives still formed the chief subject of their affectionate recollections. It was but a type of what those 'Lines' had often witnessed in many previous generations,—Britannia, as the elaborate illustrations of the old naval histories loved to represent her, pointing out with expressive gesture the pictured deeds of heroes to the glistening eye of youth.

There is a special interest in the career of our family heroes independent of their blood and their connection. They all came into the world either just before, or just after, the great Peace of Paris in 1763, by which, after the struggles of twenty-four years with France and Spain, the right of Great Britain to her Modern Empire was signed and sealed.

They were thus born into a glorious inheritance. The great Earl of Chatham, to whom, under Providence, the acquisition of that Empire was chiefly due, was still the most conspicuous man, the most renowned statesman in Europe; the great Lord Hawke was the visible representative of the Navy. He was still First Lord of the Admiralty while some of them were of an age to be well aware of the fact, and the revered name of the 'father of the British navy' was in every mouth while they were advancing to manhood. The memory of Anson and Boscawen had not yet passed away; Keppel's famous Trial must have been the staple of their conversation as midshipmen and lieutenants; Rodney and Howe were the great chiefs under whom they were actually led to glorious victory. What must have been their feelings when, just as they were budding into efficient naval life, they found themselves called upon, along with their compeers, to bear their part in saving their country once more from the grasp of those 'twice-battered' enemies, France and Spain!

These Powers calculated that Great Britain, overweighted and depressed in the struggle with her own rebellious colonies, would at once succumb when those colonies were reinforced, at the critical moment, by the naval Powers which had formerly given her so much trouble to overcome, and which had been studiously and stealthily replacing their forces during the Peace. How nearly did the newly-acquired Empire seem to be doomed to a premature collapse! How grandly did the British fleet under Rodney rise to the occasion! How finely did Lord Howe, when the new war of the French Revolution broke out, read his foe the old lesson on the First of June! Young Hollis, still a child, had served in Keppel's action of 1778; young M^cKinley, still a boy, bore his part on Rodney's glorious Twelfth of April in 1782; the two Larooms and Hollis, by that time three of the most experienced lieutenants in the service, were no small contributors to Howe's glorious victory in 1794. But these were only portions out of many valuable services performed by each; and will find mention under their separate records.

The question may naturally occur—Why did no one of these prime seamen and gallant officers rise to the higher places in the profession, to the command of fleets, and titles of distinction? It might be enough to say that there is a great deal of what men call 'fortune' in these matters. Some must fill the first and some the second posts. As a matter of fact, the eldest of the brotherhood had a very near chance of becoming one of the leaders of the naval service. Captain Thomas Larcom, by his conduct as first lieutenant of Lord Howe's flag-ship on the First of June, at once emerged into high rank, and as 'Acting-Captain' commanded the *Russell*, a line-of-battle ship, in Lord Bridport's action. He was soon afterwards Flag-Captain to Sir Charles Cotton and (Lord) Collingwood in quick succession, and would perhaps have made a name; but his career was suddenly cut short by death. The other three, who had no such sudden lift at a critical moment, spent too long a time in the ranks of lieutenant, commander, and captain, to obtain as high a place as was required to reap the full benefit of the services they had performed before the conclusion of the war; and the reason of that long delay is to be found in the aristocratic condition of the navy in those days. Men of family were pushed on early in life, or some species of back-stairs interest supplied the place of birth and position. The origin of the four brothers was good, worthy, and respectable,—a better inheritance than much that goes by the name of nobility,—but it was not of a nature, under such a state of things, to absolve our ancestors from the necessity of making their own way in the world; and this meant a long apprenticeship in the lower grades of the service.

Judged indeed by the standard of modern days, the great amount of good war-service performed by some of these men would command very liberal rewards; but we must remember the enormous dimensions of the forces called out in the war, and the severe rivalry of so many candidates for distinction. Nor, it must be admitted, were any of the brotherhood, as far as one can judge, men of the superlative

type of the Nelsons, Howes, Jervises, Collingwoods, Hoods, or Pellews. But they were decidedly above the average, as we shall see when we get farther. They may still more favourably compare with their contemporaries in their virtuous and blameless lives. Respected, loved, admired, they did something to elevate their generation; and some of them were men of a solid, but undemonstrative, religious character which their gallant deeds rendered the more exemplary. They may be reckoned as witnesses to later times of the better traditions of a period which has been too indiscriminately condemned, but which no doubt did require the impetus of new religious movements to render its excellent principles earnest and practical. 'To honour all men, love the brotherhood, fear God, and honour the king,' was with our ancestors 'the whole duty of man;' and in their case it must be allowed that their actions did on the whole correspond with their belief.

We now turn to the birth and parentage of the brotherhood, and begin with the Larcoms,