

The Papers of the Viscounts Melville

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THE Melville manuscripts in the William L. Clements Library of the University of Michigan are as significant—and little known—as the man who gave them his name. Henry Dundas, first Viscount Melville (1742-1811), was one of the most important statesmen of his time. The Melvilles, father and son, were principal figures during the period 1775-1830, one of the most vigorous and constructive eras in England's long history. The era opened with the revolt of the American colonies and the end of Britain's first empire; saw the long Napoleonic Wars, the rise of the second empire abroad, and achievement of industrial leadership at home; and reached its climax in the supremacy of the seas, an empire on which the sun never set, and the beginning of the century-long *pax Britannica*. The period is the chronological bridge between the island kingdom of "old" England and the world power of "new" England.

Before its dispersal the collection consisted chiefly of the private and public papers of Henry Dundas, first Viscount Melville. Dundas was the intimate friend and colleague of the younger Pitt, and was in turn Home Secretary, president of the Board of Control for India, Secretary of State for War, and First Lord of the Admiralty, besides being for many years treasurer of the Navy and virtually Secretary for Scotland. The second Viscount was private secretary (1794-1801) to his father, president of the Board of Control from 1807 as well as Irish Secretary during most of 1809, and First Lord of the Admiralty for the unprecedented span of 15 years, 1812-27; he refused to serve under Canning but returned to the Admiralty under the Duke of Wellington and retired with him in 1830. Since Henry Dundas had been appointed Solicitor General for Scotland in 1766, the combined political careers of father and son extended over 64 years.

There are two known major collections of the Melville papers.

*The author surveyed the Melville papers in the William L. Clements Library in 1962 and then extended his investigation to include complementary collections deposited elsewhere. The present article reports his findings.

The National Library of Scotland in Edinburgh has some 14,000 pages of the manuscripts. These are described in the National Library's *Catalogue of Manuscripts Acquired Since 1925*.¹ Dundas correspondence is also included in other general-political papers—those of Sir Robert Liston, a diplomat of Dundas' time. The brief descriptions given, usually two or three lines at most for several hundred manuscript pages and many items, only suggest what may be in the collection. The other major collection is in the William L. Clements Library at the University of Michigan and consists of some 10,000 pages or 3,000 items. This collection was acquired in 1937 and was first described a few years later by Howard H. Peckham.² Mr. Peckham describes the manuscripts as consisting principally of the writings of the first and second Viscounts Melville, letters from George Canning and the younger Pitt, and separate volumes concerning the Royal Navy. His guide gives a complete list of names of writers of letters and authors of documents³ but does not indicate the number of letters or documents of the several persons. A more recent edition, compiled by William S. Ewing,⁴ contributes no amplification to the description. Both compilers, however, give cross-references to Melville correspondence in other manuscript collections at Clements Library: the Clinton, George III, Shelburne, Sidney, and Vaux papers.

Besides the major collections at the National Library of Scotland and at Clements Library, there are several smaller collections in the United States. The Huntington Library has 42 items, and the Library of Congress recently acquired about 100 Melville papers.⁵ Harvard College Library has some Melville papers in the Abercromby, Stuart, and Collins collections. There are also a few other collections, small ones, in Great Britain.⁶

The papers described in this article were acquired from the estate of William L. Clements of Bay City, Mich. The collection

¹ Vol. 1, MSS. 1-67, 351-354, 640-642, 1041-1079, and vol. 2, MSS. 3385-3388 (Edinburgh, 1938).

² *Guide to the Manuscript Collections in the William L. Clements Library* (Ann Arbor and London, 1942).

³ P. 180-184.

⁴ Ann Arbor, 1953.

⁵ These are noted respectively in Philip M. Hamer, ed., *A Guide to Archives and Manuscripts in the United States*, p. 30 (New Haven, 1961); and in the Library of Congress, *Quarterly Journal of Current Acquisitions*, 17:186 (May 1960).

⁶ Described in B. R. Crick and M. Alman, eds., *A Guide to Manuscripts Relating to America in Great Britain and Ireland* (New York, 1962). The standard guides—those of C. M. Andrews, F. G. Davenport, and Charles O. Paullin and Frederick L. Paxson—were all published before 1915 and do not show the later migrations of the Melville papers.

at that time consisted of some 2,200 items. The only major addition to the collection came in 1955, when 735 additional items were purchased.

Although the manuscripts span almost a century, from Henry Dundas' admission to the Faculty of Advocates in 1763 to the death of the second Viscount in 1847, most of them center around the career of Henry Dundas, known as Lord Melville, from 1801 to 1811. The papers are in 39 volumes. The first volume contains some late seventeenth-century material, the only significant item of which is a 38-page document relating to the subject of impressment and search of vessels during the reign of William III. The last volume consists of miscellaneous papers covering the entire period; it exists in that form because the papers were at some time bound in such a way that they cannot be separated. Of the intervening volumes, 26 cover the period 1783-1812 and the career of Henry Dundas, and the remaining 11 volumes contain documents and papers pertaining to the second Viscount, 1812-47.

As source material, the collection appears to be of the greatest value in three rather broad areas:

1. The Napoleonic Wars—including both military and political aspects.
2. The Royal Navy—including both tactics and administration.
3. Anglo-American Relations—including Jay's Treaty, loyalists, and the problem of American debts to English merchants.

In addition, a number of special topics are documented:

1. Naval hospitals and their methods of treatment.
2. The beginning of modern police organization in the form of the Metropolitan Police.
3. The Danish East India Company.
4. Lord Cornwallis' first India Administration.
5. Naval warfare on the Great Lakes, 1812-14.

THE NAPOLEONIC WARS

For almost a quarter of a century, the Napoleonic Wars consumed the blood and treasure of Great Britain and were all-important to both the nation and the individual. This paramount interest is faithfully reflected in the correspondence of Henry Dundas, both as Secretary of State for War and as First Lord of the Admiralty. The politico-military documents are both extensive and diverse.

Sir Gilbert Elliot (1751-1814), later Lord Minto and Governor General of India, was a frequent correspondent while Viceroy of

Corsica (1794-96). He wrote a number of extremely interesting letters on general affairs in Europe, particularly in the Mediterranean. After the fall of Toulon Sir Gilbert suggested establishing the Protectorate of Corsica, and he became its first viceroy. It was his proposal to use Corsica as a naval and military base to threaten French operations in southern Europe. Thomas Clarke drew up a statistical chart of all the continental powers in 1791 that justifies Sir Gilbert's proposal, as does an anonymous manuscript report on those powers' colonial possessions in the same year.

Secret reports on internal affairs in France abound. The earliest ones, 1791-95, are from Melville's nephew, George Buchan. Walter Boyd, a financier, frequently reported secret and inside information in 1796, as did J. Bedinfield in 1798. Lady Eglantine Wallace gives an interesting sidelight regarding the French royal family's attempts to escape, which she assisted in 1791.

British prisoners of war in France are the subject of much correspondence. To pick one of many, there is the case of Capt. John Wesley Wright, who was captured at Quiberon Bay in 1804 and was imprisoned and later died in the Temple in Paris. There is a three-way correspondence: Wright to Sir Sidney Smith, who had been in Temple Prison with Wright earlier, to Lord Melville. It concerns treatment of prisoners, intelligence circulated within the prison walls, and the reactions of the common people of Paris to the war. Wright was suspected of being a spy and a Royalist agent, and it was his close association with Sir Sidney Smith, an admiral in the Royal Navy, that attracted the personal attention of the French Government. The final letter in the extensive correspondence is from Captain Page of H.M.S. *Puissant*, September 1815, to Lord Melville. He encloses a copy of Wright's last letter (September 1805) and a statement by a fellow prisoner giving ghastly and graphic details of Wright's trials by torture and his death by strangulation.

Melville appears to have had correspondents, if not agents, in every country on the Continent. Lord Elgin, Gen. William Erskine, Col. Hay Ferrier, and Col. William Nicholson all report to him on the internal affairs of the Netherlands from 1792 to 1794. Sir Charles Flint (of the Irish Office) forwards William Sweetland's report on the Barbary Coast; Captain Robertson reports extensively on Cyprus; Col. Hay Ferrier and Col. Colin Lindsay send intelligence on Gibraltar; Sir Charles Stuart reports on Minorca and urges establishing a Court of Admiralty there; Anthony Maitland, later the tenth Earl Lauderdale, sends detailed information

on affairs in Corfu, Trieste, and Malta. Sicily is discussed at great length by James Skene, the litterateur and friend of Walter Scott. John Mitchell investigates the state of affairs in Norway and the unpopularity of the Prince of Hesse and of the Prince Royal and reviews the conduct of Denmark towards England during the American War (the War of 1812).

When Napoleon turns the attack toward Russia, there is an immediate deluge of reports on the country of the Tsar. George Baldwin, a mystical writer and traveler, forwards intelligence from St. Petersburg on "the alarming congregation of powers in the North and East of Europe." John Mitchell interrupts his stream of Norwegian reports to write on the situation in the Baltic. Not least among many others, Sir John Sinclair (the Scottish M.P. for Caithness and author of the monumental 22-volume *Statistical Report of Scotland*, published in Edinburgh, 1791-92), writes a long political memorandum on the Russian War.

Spain becomes increasingly important to England in the first decade of the nineteenth century. Adm. Sir Home Riggs Popham (1762-1820) writes voluminous letters from Santander in 1812, forwarding and commenting on letters from Colonel Tapia's couriers and giving intelligence of affairs in Spain and about relations with General Mendezabal. John Dalrymple estimates the probable success of a French attempt to march an army through Spain against Portugal; the Conde de Funchal in November 1813 forwards a report regarding Portuguese officers and men; Gordon pens a portrait of the Spanish Admiral Bustamente; and Col. Alan MacLean, in a letter to Sir William Pultney, points out the extreme danger to England of a rift with Spain. Jacob Ebenezer sends excellent reports of the Spanish colonies in the West Indies; and William Fullarton in a series of letters gives the details of a proposed expedition against French interests in South America.

England exhibits an increasing interest in South America during this period. Of the considerable correspondence, most of it concerns Francisco Miranda (1754-1816), a Spanish-American general who served with the French in the American War of Independence and later began a plot for the independence of South America. The plot was discovered; he fled to the United States and then to England. The papers include Miranda's statement of his plans for South America, Thomas Pownall's request and justification for a passport for Miranda to England, and Melville's letter to Miranda diverting him to the West Indies campaign.

Simón Bolívar (1783-1830), the Libertador, also figures promi-

nently in the papers. Bolívar left Venezuela after his defeat at La Puerta on June 15, 1814. After several years of exile in Jamaica and Haiti, he returned to Venezuela with the aid and support of the Haitian President, Pétion, landing in Venezuela on January 1, 1817. On the day of his landing in 1817, he wrote to Robert Sutherland at Port-au-Prince, giving details of his military preparation. Sutherland, the following day, wrote a ten-page letter to Melville, forwarding Bolívar's letter and discussing at length the state of the country. It was with British aid and arms that Bolívar's Army of Liberation, which included many British and Irish veterans, effectively broke the Spanish hold on Nueva Granada the following year.

Austrian affairs receive the attention of Gen. Sir Alexander Hope (1769-1837) in a number of long and private letters to Melville. He describes the turmoil of affairs in Europe, the disgraceful peace between Austria and France, and intended plans and movements of the various European powers and gives his suggestions for assisting or frustrating them. Nor are German affairs neglected. One of the most interesting letters is from an anonymous correspondent of Göttingen in July 1799. He appears to be a British secret agent and gives his plan for communicating information to Lord Melville; his letter is replete with cloak-and-dagger implications. On the lighter but no less interesting side are the letters of two female agents, Lady Caroline Irvine and Mrs. Mary Scott, who send intelligence about young Army officers.

The entire spectrum of the French War is covered. Adm. Sir Richard Bickerton's correspondence with Melville is lightened by enclosures from Captains Carteret and Bremen, regarding the proposed attack on Boulogne and Dieppe in January 1813, and from Adm. Sir David Milne, suggesting the taking of St. Pelée and Cherbourg; and there is a large body of correspondence regarding the plans of the Duke of Orléans to escape to England in March of 1815. Eight letters from Adm. Sir William Cornwallis, son of the Cornwallis of American fame, concern the attack on Brest, enclose secret information (such as Captain Pigot's plan for burning the French fleet at Brest, information received from four French deserters, and Capt. Charles Brisbane's offer to enter Brest Harbour with only five ships), and include an excellent pen drawing of Brest Harbour showing the disposition of French and English ships.

Last but by no means least is the correspondence of and relating to Lord Horatio Nelson. One brief but brilliant action in Nelson's

naval career is particularly well documented. In 1804 he urgently requested troops for the rescue of Sicily and Sardinia from the French, and in the winter of 1804-5 Russia and England prepared to send Mediterranean expeditions for the liberation of Italy. Early in 1805 Napoleon's thoughts swung away from the center to the circumference of the war, and in his mind Martinique and Guadeloupe rose high in the scale of values. He planned to have his Toulon and Cádiz fleets ravage the British West Indies. Great numbers of troops would be sent in hopes of luring the British fleet there; his force, gaining in efficiency by the voyage, would secretly return to the Channel and convoy the flotilla to the coast of England for the great stroke on which hung the destinies of the world. To gain time to establish a dummy force in the Indies, he started a campaign in Egypt to lure Nelson to the East. Nelson's thoughts paralleled Napoleon's, however, and he refused to take the lure. His dash in pursuit of Villeneuve to save the West Indies completely forestalled any chances of invading England that survived the Emperor's protean strategy. The papers include the letters from Nelson; the secret dispatches from Hugh Elliot, British Minister in Naples, giving information of Nelson's movements and ships, and two lengthy Admiralty memoranda regarding Nelson's movements in the Mediterranean and his pursuit of the French to the West Indies.

THE ROYAL NAVY

The Navy was both the bulwark of British defense and the chief means of attack in the Napoleonic Wars. During this troubled period Melville served as both Secretary of State for War and First Lord of the Admiralty. "Secret" and "Most Secret" Admiralty memoranda in the collection cover distribution and lists of ships, strength of forces, information on fleets, movements of ships, actions, instructions to admirals, and so forth. The official correspondence of the admirals and captains with the head of their department runs to hundreds of folios. Bickerton, Beauclerk, Collier, Nepean, Paisley, and others all corresponded on subjects ranging from the mutiny at the Nore in 1797, to actions on the Bidasoa River, to the enemy's defense of the Scheldt. The naval officers were busy men and appear to have taken time to write letters only when there was information of importance to convey. The mass of this material is confined to the war years, especially from 1800 to 1815.

The miscellaneous naval documents and reports cover a much longer span of years, 1787-1831. As a brief sampling will show,

they include diverse and apparently unrelated material. In 1787, among many items, there are a Cabinet minute regarding transports for troops for the Netherlands, a copy of secret instructions to Admiral Hotham, and a letter from William Pultney on the prevailing mode of promotion in the Navy and its unfairness. The 1804 items include information of Dutch ships in Plymouth Harbour; a paper relating to the state and distribution of the Navy; observations by Captain Manderson on erecting a naval establishment in Falmouth Harbour; notes on the consequences of Antwerp's remaining in French possession, on the port of Bordeaux, on French seamen, on floating batteries, and on fireships and "frog-men." Captain Bromley's report on the enemy's flotilla off Gravelines, and Adm. Donald Campbell's 90-page "Plan for Naval Reform." Melville (second viscount) wrote a "Memorandum on the Seaman's Vote" in 1817, Lord Auckland is the author of a long document on prize laws in 1825, and the use of steam-powered ships is considered in 1830. These miscellaneous naval documents and papers cover many aspects of the Navy and represent an important and extensive body of source material, but they are so scattered throughout the collection as to be difficult to find.

The fleet lists are also extensive. There are manuscript lists of the British fleet, from 1800 on: in the Channel; at Portsmouth, Plymouth, Jersey, and Cork; off the East Indies, West Indies, and Leeward Islands; in the Mediterranean; and in other areas. There is also a list of British vessels lost, taken, or destroyed from May 1804 to April 1805.

In addition, there is a class of documents that can best be described as the "memorials" of individuals. These contain valuable and interesting contemporary information. As an example, there is the memorial of Adm. Sir Henry Blackwood (1770-1832), who commanded an inshore squadron at Trafalgar in 1805. The memorial gives the details of his 30-year service, from 1781 to 1811, and contains descriptions of actions and battles during that period, with copies of letters from Lord Nelson, Lord Collingwood, Lord Spencer, and many others.

The most valuable single naval documents are the efficiently compiled manuscript lists of the second Viscount Melville, entitled "List of His Majesty's Royal Navy," 1812 and 1817. These years are of particular importance. The war not only became more intensive as a naval war in 1812, but this was also the year when England entered what was to be primarily a naval war with the United States. As a war machine the Navy was at its greatest

during this period, and it was deployed all over the world. In the year 1817, some two years after the end of the war, Britain had the world's greatest peacetime navy—a navy being converted to commercial pursuits. All the resemblances and contrasts of a war-time to a peacetime navy are discernible in the two volumes comprising these lists.

Also, for comparison, there is a great deal of material on the fleets of other nations. The earliest list, sent from France by Lord Stormont, is the French list of naval ships in 1775. In 1804 Adm. Sir John Gore sent extensive information from Gibraltar on the French and Spanish fleets, 1803-4. Sir Evan Nepean wrote an exhaustive memorandum on the same fleets for the years 1797-98, and Adm. George Tate in October 1813 sent in a complete list of Russian ships and their equipment. There is also a voluminous correspondence, November 1816-January 1817, between Melville and Sir Mathew Wood, Lord Mayor of London, on the subject of foreign seamen and plans for their relief and accommodation.

Repair and replacement of the Navy, in the day of the wooden ship, was a constant problem to England since it had no native timber supply. The war both hampered the search for timber and increased the need for it. John Fordyce, the Land Revenue Officer, wrote often and at length on shipbuilding and the timber trade with Russia, the West Indies, India, and North America in 1804 and 1805. Lord St. Vincent corresponded with Nepean regarding timber from Russia. Sir Home Riggs Popham in June 1804 reported on timber from India and the urgent need of it, particularly teak. J. J. Oddy in 1805 discussed in several letters the qualities of fir timber from different parts of Russia; and Adm. Donald Campbell, in reporting on India teak, pointed out the superiority of Brazilian timber and gave interesting comparisons in methods of shipbuilding and various types of timber used.

ANGLO-AMERICAN RELATIONS

The Anglo-American papers begin in 1784, the year in which Dundas was appointed to the Committee of the Privy Council for Trade and Foreign Plantations. There are, however, three significant documents dated earlier in the eighteenth century. Both the commercial and defense problems concerning the American colonies are treated at length in a 40-page report made by Westmoreland and Pelham as commissioners of the Board of Trade in 1734-35. The period from 1728 onward is considered in the report, including the reorganization of the Carolinas after the Yamassee War and the founding of Georgia. Oglethorpe may have been

impelled to found Georgia for humanitarian reasons, but the Government gave the charter only because Georgia would form a buffer area against French and Spanish influence in Florida and Louisiana. The report fully discusses fortifications, commerce, and the development of the bounty system. The dates of two other reports—May 4 and July 14, 1763—of Egremont, Principal Secretary of State for Trade and Plantations, make their contents also of special interest. They total 17 pages and are concerned with what to do with America in the spheres of defense and commerce. Egremont proposes establishment of a "frontier military force" and the restriction of colonial settlement—both new and almost alien ideas in British colonial policy. Commerce should be developed and controlled to a greater degree in order to yield a base for increased taxation that would partially defray the newly increased military expenditures. The proclamation of 1763, issued on October 5, less than three months after Egremont's July report, forbade colonial expansion westward. Also between 1763 and 1765 the Ministry decided to enforce the Navigation Acts more rigidly, tax the colonies directly, and use the revenue to maintain an army in America. All these measures were in accord with Egremont's reports, and all were contributing causes of the Revolutionary War.

The post-revolutionary years were a period of conflict, negotiation, and adjustment. American claims occupy a major portion of the Melville correspondence in the 1780's and 1790's. These are of two types: claims of the American loyalists to England for compensation and claims of the English merchants against Americans for colonial debts.

Dr. John Halliburton, one of the Rhode Island emigrés to Halifax, is represented by two long letters, written in 1784, that give an unofficial but contemporary picture of their life in Canada. John Hamilton, British Consul at Norfolk in 1793 and 1794, devotes considerable correspondence to the distress of loyalists remaining in the new American states. The loyalist claims continued to irritate Anglo-American relations throughout the period. Two of the many examples in the Melville papers are the report of a select committee under Henry Glassford to the second Viscount on April 27, 1812, and a long memorial, May 1820, from R. W. Powell, Lee Thornton, and Mathew White concerning the uncompensated loyalists. But the loyalists were not the only ones claiming payment; there were the merchants as well.

Colonial debts are a frequent subject of correspondence in the Melville papers, and with just cause. The pre-revolutionary claims

of British merchants against American debtors aggregated five million pounds sterling, most of the debt being charged against residents of the South. James Dunlop, Sir Ilay Campbell, D. Owen, and others all deal with the question of American claims. Such papers in the Melville manuscripts are most numerous in 1791-94, when Melville was Home Secretary. John Hamilton and William Molleson include in their correspondence memorials, enclosures from both debtors and creditors, "balance sheets" showing the total indebtedness and giving the names of merchant factors in every area, amounts due the individual commercial houses, and a full listing of the debtors with the ability or willingness to pay. The most complete and earliest treatment of the whole problem is given in an exchange of letters between Melville and Grenville, January-April 1792. This correspondence not only surveys the material mentioned above but includes the range of the understood although unwritten agreements between Britain and America at the end of the war as well as the British attempts to obtain American fulfillment of the agreements. A summary, *The Case of the British Merchants Trading to America Before the War*, is given in an included pamphlet printed in 1803.

Anglo-American relations in the two post-revolutionary decades have been a much neglected subject. The Melville manuscripts are particularly rich in this area; probably over half of the papers concern one aspect or another of the subject. It is difficult to single out some documents as more important than others. But in addition to the sampling already given, there are two exceptional items. The first was written in April 1791, by Col. William Stephens Smith (1755-1816), who had been "Secretary of Legation from America to London," and who discussed the difficulties preventing a closer connection between Great Britain and the United States. For the year 1794 there is the 81-page draft of the American Treaty of Commerce (Jay's Treaty) as signed by Lord Grenville and John Jay, with a copy of Thomas Jefferson's seven-page accompanying letter. There are also the official copies of letters from Members of Congress and the resolutions of a special meeting of the New York Chamber of Commerce regarding the Jay Treaty.

SPECIAL TOPICS

As noted much earlier in this article, the Melville manuscripts contain extensive documentation on five specialized topics: naval hospitals, modern police organization, the Danish East India Company, Lord Cornwallis' first administration in India, and the naval warfare on the Great Lakes during the War of 1812. In the first

two fields the materials are comparatively negligible in quantity though of great interest. The extensive correspondence, 1791-99, about the Danish East India Company covers the history of the Danish settlements, contains copies of correspondence between Madras and the Danish colonies as well as instructions from the King of Denmark regarding the administration of his colonies relative to the British position, and documents the lengthy paper war resulting from the fact that the Rajah of Tanjore mortgaged a number of his villages to both the Danish and the British Governments. There are papers on the normal commercial matters too, such as protestations regarding the Bengal Government's prohibiting export of saltpeter and opium by foreigners.

There is a very remarkable series of 75 letters from the Marquis of Cornwallis, Governor General of India, to Henry Dundas of the India Board. They are all dated from India, between August 24, 1786 (the beginning of the dual control of India), and May 10, 1793, and they amount to about 400 pages. The first letter announces Cornwallis' arrival in Madras to assume his office and the last reports his arrival in Torbay, February 3, 1794, on the completion of his great task. Cornwallis' first action was to examine into the corruption of the civil servants, which he "found a stench." The campaign against Tipu Sultan, which he commanded after the failure of General Meadows, is very fully described. Cornwallis discusses also the affairs of the East India Company and comments frankly on his colleagues. There are copies of most, and possibly all, of Dundas' letters to Cornwallis: we thus have what appears to be the complete correspondence of the two men most concerned with instituting the new dual rule and the beginning of the British *raj* in India.

The final special topic covered by the Melville manuscripts is the War of 1812. The documents include James Campbell's detailed plan for a war vessel designed for the Great Lakes; Admiral Lord Keith's memorandum of "Observations upon the Coast of America"; and copies of 18 intercepted letters, 1813-14, from John Quincy Adams to James Monroe. Even when the war was officially over the correspondence continued. Sir George Murray, Lieutenant General and Governor of Canada, wrote numerous letters immediately after the war regarding the American preparations for the next campaign on the Great Lakes as well as a long and highly important letter concerning the need for British immigrants to Canada to counteract the American influence.

The most decisive battle of the war was the Battle of Lake Erie; and the most important single document in the War of 1812 papers is Sir Samuel Bentham's report as Commissioner of the Navy, February 1814. This 25-page report relates to the disastrous action between the British and American Squadrons on Lake Erie, with suggestions on the means of securing British naval armaments from such signal discomfitures in the future. Long known to historians are the reports on the battle made by the British commander, Barclay, and Oliver Hazard Perry. In addition, there has been available a letter by Lieutenant Yarnall, second in command to Perry on the *Lawrence*, written September 15 and published in the Ohio newspapers about two weeks later. It is upon these materials that the three standard accounts⁷ are based. Yet there is this fourth report—complete, exhaustive, and reliable—which does not appear to have been considered. It differs from the aforementioned reports in that it is an analysis as well, and its conclusions differ significantly from those of the standard works.

EVALUATION

The Melville manuscripts represent a little known and unpublished mine of historical source material. But much of the material is fragmentary; this is especially true in the area of domestic or internal affairs and politics. There are many letters from Canning, Pitt, Portland, Liverpool, and others, but even though running into hundreds of pages they can be considered as only fragments. If the Melville papers, however, are used in conjunction with printed documentary materials,⁸ their importance as primary source materials can be seen.

The dispersal of the Dundas or Melville papers began in 1921 and was completed in 1930. There developed an almost immediate trans-Atlantic controversy with far-reaching effects. J. P. Gilsom, Keeper of Manuscripts at the British Museum, launched the attack, directly inspired by the Melville sales, on the "migration of historical MSS." Numerous articles and letters appeared in the *Times* throughout the 1920's. The Institute for Historical Research established in 1926 a permanent subcommittee, under Mr. Gilsom, composed of eminent historians, representatives of the principal dealers, and private individuals. The subcommittee's

⁷ O. H. Lyman, *Commodore O. H. Perry and the War on the Lakes* (1905); James Cook Mills, *Oliver Hazard Perry and the Battle of Lake Erie* (1913); and Charles Oscar Paullin, *The Battle of Lake Erie* (1923).

⁸ The reports of the Historical Manuscripts Commission; *Journals and Correspondence of Lord Auckland* (4 vols.; London, 1861); 1st Earl Granville's *Correspondence* (2 vols.; London, 1916); and *The Grenville Papers* (London, 1853).

purpose was "to consider and report on the best methods for registering the sale and tracing the migration of important manuscripts or collections of manuscripts." This group effectively enlarged the activities of the Historical Manuscripts Commission, immediately activated a program to survey England and Scotland to determine the existence of as many collections as possible, and established, through the principal dealers, a reporting system for all manuscript sales. The subcommittee eventually obtained parliamentary support and legislation and then grants for the public purchase of manuscripts. It is now impossible to sell manuscripts without government approval and the Government may exercise, in all cases, a first-purchase option.

All through the 1920's and the 1930's the criticism became stronger. In 1930 "the pitiable story of the dispersal of the Melville papers" again drew public attention in the columns of the *Times*. A. F. Pollard, the historian, lamented "the havoc wrought by their dispersal." On March 3, 1932, an article in the *Times* pointed out that there was hardly a topic dealt with in that collection for which the relevant papers had not been scattered in a dozen or more undiscoverable directions. Earlier, on November 13, 1929, in an article headed "Official Appeals," the *Times* had reported a "serious obstacle to the work of historians and others engaged in research" in the "migration of mss." and "the difficulties that arise in tracing or attempting to trace them."

One of the most remarkable and unfortunate examples of the distribution of a valuable collection of historical documents [the *Times* stated] was that of the Dundas papers. These were the papers of the first and second Viscounts Melville. The first Lord Melville was "the intimate friend and trusted lieutenant of Pitt"; even a short survey of his political career is enough to suggest how valuable a chapter in English history must be written in his correspondence and official papers. The sale of the papers began in 1921 and has been going on intermittently ever since. The papers have been dispersed in lots of varying size, and the only details at present available relating to their contents are to be found in the sales catalogues. Parts have gone to the Dominions, parts are abroad, and parts are in private collections here.

The resulting controversy has achieved two lasting effects of value. It made the nation aware of the heritage it was losing and, by reporting the sales in detail, it has given us a picture, though faint, of what the collection must have been like before it was dismembered.