

The Life of  
James Hamilton Stanhope  
(1788-1825)



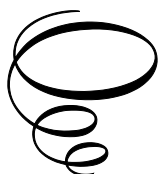
# The Life of James Hamilton Stanhope (1788-1825):

*Love, War and Tragedy*

By

Mark Guscin

**Cambridge  
Scholars  
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Love, War and Tragedy

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This book is dedicated with fond memories to Julia Mosquera Froix  
(Tana), who left us just before I completed it.



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## FOREWORD

It is recorded that on the night of 16th January 1809 the body of Major the Hon. Charles Stanhope, still wearing the new epaulettes he had put on earlier that day, was buried on the field of Corunna. It must therefore be the old pair he set aside that morning that now rests, together with his sash and shoe buckles, in a tin in the library of Chevening House in Kent. The small change from his pocket is also at Chevening, wrapped in hand-written scraps of paper that commend the coins firstly to Charles's sister Hester, and then later to the children of their youngest brother. Together the tin and the coins form an eloquent testament to grief and with it a tangible link to a long-dead generation of the Stanhope family.

It was that youngest brother, James Hamilton Stanhope, himself present at the Battle of Corunna, who brought Charles's effects home and it is he who is the subject, and as will soon become apparent to some extent the co-author, of this fascinating book. The memoirs of the great can be illuminating about the past but the memoirs of bystanders to greatness, observant flies on famous walls, can add authenticity and immediacy to long-familiar people and events. Lieutenant Colonel the Hon. James Stanhope MP had access to a remarkable range of famous walls. He was nephew to William Pitt the Younger, brother to Lady Hester Stanhope, heir to the botanist Sir Joseph Banks, aide-de-camp to Sir John Moore and later to Prince Frederick, "the Grand Old Duke of York". He witnessed, and describes with a keen eye, action in the Peninsular War and at the battles of Quatre Bras and Waterloo. His account of the death of Pitt the Younger, written within three days of the event, is regarded as authoritative. He was witness to the death and burial of Sir John Moore at Corunna. His recollections of the Duke of Wellington's views on the tactical decisions taken by Napoleon and Marshal Grouchy at Waterloo, expressed soon after the battle to a French officer following dinner in a restaurant during the occupation of Paris, form a valuable contribution to a subject of enduring historical interest.

Born and brought up at Chevening House in Kent, the youngest child of the intellectually brilliant "tyrannical freedom-lover" Charles, 3rd Earl Stanhope and his "stiff and frigid" second wife, James did not go to school. His eccentric father, an inventor of genius and, as "Citizen" Stanhope or "The Minority of One" a considerably less successful radical politician, was

a product of the Enlightenment who among many more valuable and enduring inventions created a wooden “Demonstrator” to illustrate the mechanical basis of logical thought. He took charge of his children’s education through a succession of hand-picked tutors, one of whom, a devoted republican, was arrested at Chevening and taken to the Tower of London on a charge of high treason when James was about six. His five elder siblings left home as soon as they were able and he met them quite rarely thereafter. In the absence of practical, pecuniary, or emotional support from their parents they all relied heavily on William Pitt, described by James following the prime minister’s death in 1806 as “our only protector, who had reared us with more than parental care”.

From these pages emerges a more nuanced and interesting figure than a mere observer of his times. James Hamilton Stanhope, in contrast to his father, is a figure of the Romantic era, a soldier, artist, and poet. His love for Lady Frederica Murray, his wife of only 30 months, is immortalised in her tomb in St Botolph’s Church, Chevening (he lies in it too, but at his insistence it remains outwardly hers). The simple white marble sarcophagus is said to have been considered by its sculptor, the prolific Francis Chantrey, to be his best work. With “Freddy”, and with her family at Kenwood and at Scone, he seems to have found all too briefly the love, stability and family life missing in his upbringing. While James’s verse, with its tramping columns of sometimes relentless couplets, never scaled the heights of Parnassus (as he might have phrased it), his watercolours suggest a strong and romantically coloured imagination.

In company he could shine. As one acquaintance saw it

“What an extraordinary person is Stanhope! If you happen to be in a frivolous mood, he will say foolish things, and will inspire folly in others. If you are in a serious vein, his conversation becomes interesting, and in the highest degree instructive. If you feel sentimental, his wonderful memory will supply poetical images from the finest passages in poetry.”

But there was at the same time a brooding side to his character, noted from childhood by his sister Hester.

For the last third of his life he suffered recurring physical torment from a war-wound, a ball of grape-shot lodged deep in his upper back which no surgeon was ever able to remove, probe for it as they regularly did. His early death, plausibly attributed to the mental anguish engendered by a terrible promise made in a moment of grief, is a Romantic trope. His sister Hester’s

reaction to it, bricking herself up for the rest of her life in a remote hilltop monastery in Lebanon, is another.

In the immediate aftermath of his wife's death in 1823, Colonel Stanhope set down the structure and sources for a book to be published at some period after his own death. It was to be a compendium of his historical and military memoirs and an anthology of his poetry, culminating in a panegyric to the great love of his life and their blissful but tragically short Christian marriage. Dr Mark Guscini, already the biographer of Lady Hester Stanhope, has adopted that structure for the book that follows and augmented the sources through his own scholarship. In his sympathetic hands James Hamilton Stanhope has at last found a worthy literary collaborator, editor, and amanuensis to tell his story.

Alastair Mathewson  
Chevening, November 2020



# INTRODUCTION

Just two months after his wife's death in 1823, James Stanhope expressed in writing his desire to write the story of his own life, a wish he conceived when making copies of his deceased spouse's correspondence. The document<sup>1</sup> is dated 9 March 1823, and was written at Kenwood<sup>2</sup>, his parents-in-law's home where he now spent most of his time. Stanhope himself entitled it "My wishes about my papers and Freddy's letters, journal etc. etc. 1823"

Kenwood, 9 March 1823

On writing out extracts of my beloved wife's letters, I am come to a determination that some day or other this benefit shall not be confined to myself or my family, but that my country shall see what it ought to regard with equal pride and advantage.

I bequeath these inimitable emanations of the purest and best of mortals to every child, that they may learn and appreciate their duties to a parent; that they may see how a mother should be loved; to every wife that they may imitate her devoted attachment, her utter want of self, her fidelity and her virtues! To every Christian that they may see the blessed fruits of the religion they profess, and in following her steps may learn to live and die like her!

To my executors and to my son if he survives me, I leave the charge of executing this subject to their judgement and to my son's wishes as to the time, certainly not for many years – if he wishes it not till after his death.

To connect it I mean to write a short memoir of my early life and I wish the arrangement to be as follows:

My early life up to 1810, with an account of Mr. Pitt's death, already written.

---

<sup>1</sup> Kent History and Library Centre, Maidstone, U1590 C262/4.

<sup>2</sup> The name is sometimes spelt Caen Wood, but as Earl Mansfield, James' father-in-law, who lived there, used the spelling Kenwood, I too have adopted this spelling, except of course when quoting others who prefer the alternative spelling.

2 volumes of military journal, from 1810 to 1815, now in South Audley Street<sup>3</sup>, to be illustrated, with extracts from the speeches in the Cortes taken by myself and by miscellaneous correspondence of that time.

Freddy's acquirements – discovery of cubes – her letters/if it is wished illustrated by extracts from my own.

My account of her last illness.

Her last letter.

In an appendix any parts of my poetry and translations and all or part of Freddy's journal now in the possession of Lady Mansfield<sup>4</sup>.

Neither James himself nor his son James Banks ever fulfilled this wish, and apart from his military diary<sup>5</sup> the rest of these documents have remained unpublished until now. My intention in this biography, almost two hundred years later, is to bring James' wishes for his written work to fruition. All the documents he mentions are included<sup>6</sup>, not in the same order he expressed (e.g. excerpts from Lady Frederica's diary are included in their chronological order, not in an appendix<sup>7</sup>) and of course with much more information taken from other sources.

James Hamilton Stanhope, however, was contradictory in numerous episodes in his life, and this document expressing his wishes for his biography is no exception. Immediately after his wish to see his life in print he adds the following words, written two weeks later:

On reflection, I think they should not be published, but only collected and arranged in the order I have mentioned. If my son has children I wish them to descend in his family. If my direct line is extinct I leave it to the eldest branch of Lord Mansfield's family to be kept at Scone or Kenwood.

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<sup>3</sup> James' address in London; he had evidently not given up the lease on the house.

<sup>4</sup> The journal was from the Grand Tour of the family in 1819 and 1820; James made an exceedingly fair copy for his mother-in-law, although the originals are also preserved.

<sup>5</sup> Edited and published by Gareth Glover, Gareth Glover, *Eyewitness to the Peninsular War and the Battle of Waterloo – The Letters and Journals of Lieutenant Colonel the Honourable James Hamilton Stanhope, 1803 to 1825, recording his service with Sir John Moore, Sir Thomas Graham and the Duke of Wellington* (Barnsley, 2010).

<sup>6</sup> Although given its length and the fact that it has already been published, the military diary is not included in its entirety.

<sup>7</sup> I am currently working on an illustrated edition of Frederica's diary as written on her Grand Tour of 1819 and 1820.



James Hamilton Stanhope, March 24th 1823

I wish all Freddy's letters to me in Ireland (which are put up in several parcels and numbered) to be burnt without being opened and I wish also all Hester's letters to be burnt unopened and I leave this in trust to my executors to fulfil.

This declaration is something of a mystery. In all the surviving documentation related to the lives of James, Hester and Frederica, there are no letters from Frederica to James in Ireland, and none of Hester's letters to James either, so maybe they were indeed burned or otherwise destroyed. Hester indeed had not written to James for some years, but we may assume that her letters sent and received before this date in 1823 had been opened and read; maybe James still expected to hear from his eccentric half-sister and his instructions were to burn any letters that might yet come. This in turn would imply that he knew, or suspected, that he would die before Hester did.

Another unusual point is the reference to Frederica's letters to James when he was in Ireland; any such letters must of course have been written after the two started corresponding. The earliest correspondence still surviving is from Frederica's Grand Tour in 1819-1820, although this in itself does not mean that there was nothing before this (the argumentum ex silentio has always been fallacious). There is only one reference to James having been in Ireland (so at least we know that he was there), but the reference itself is problematic.

James was planning to go to Ireland with his sister Hester in 1809, but Hester at least never got past Wales, and it is unsure whether James crossed the sea. In any case, Frederica at the time would have been nine years old. The reference in question is a letter from James to his mother, dated just 15 January, and written from Dublin. No year is given on the letter, which in itself is unusual. The letter is included in a file<sup>8</sup> which is entitled "Letters to Louisa Dowager Countess Stanhope from her son James"; Louisa became the dowager countess when her husband died in 1816, but this is no clue as to the dates of the letters in the file as they contain correspondence from as early as 1806, ten years before the death of the third Earl. The letters are ordered immediately after others sent in April 1816, which could suggest they date from this year, as all the dated letters are filed in chronological order except for the very first one; this, however, would not in itself constitute proof as the letters might have been rearranged, and whoever put them in the order they are now in might have been mistaken.

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<sup>8</sup> U1590 C 270.

There are two ways in which the year of the letter could be deducted, and hence the time when James was in Ireland (which must have been more than a few days if there was time for Frederica to write to him several times and for the letters to get there). The first is by eliminating years when we know where James was on 15 January, or thereabouts. The second is from the internal content of the letter itself.

The first method becomes unnecessary when the second is applied, as in the letter James says:

Freddy is recovering very well, has had no pain or fever and writes in good spirits – our little boy is heavier and bigger on dit<sup>9</sup> visibly and is now a great man for he can show a tooth though he cannot bite. Freddy desires me to thank you for your kind message.

Their little boy was their son James Banks Stanhope, born on 13 May 1821. In January 1823 James was at home while Frederica was in labour again, which means that the letter from Dublin was necessarily written on 15 January 1822, which also makes perfect sense of the reference to the baby's teething.

Whatever letters Frederica sent him while he was in Ireland, he would surely have opened and read them himself; what he probably means by his instructions to have them burnt unopened is that the parcels he had made with them should not be opened again but rather destroyed. Either way, his wishes in this aspect seem to have been fulfilled. The letters were no doubt very personal, written so soon after the birth of the couple's first child, although as tends to happen, James' exclusion of these letters from what he initially wished to be published (and the apparently successful destruction of the letters) only arouses all the more our curiosity as to why he saw them as so different from the rest.

In writing this biography I have of course paid heed to James' first wish, and not his afterthought. This is because I wholeheartedly agree with him that there is plenty to learn from both his own life and that of his wife; plenty to learn about war, the tragedy that can unexpectedly afflict us at any time, and the pure and carefree love they felt for each other and which shines out above any other part of their short lives.

As with any life, there are inevitably references to other people that need to be put in context in order to understand them. Other people in James' family lived fascinating lives; his father, his brothers, and above all his half-

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<sup>9</sup> James often included in his letters phrases, sentences and even complete paragraphs in French and Spanish; "on dit" was one of his favourite expressions.

sister Lady Hester. I have given certain details about all these people and not simply assumed that everyone knows who they are and what they did. The documentary research involved in this book has been considerable, and rather than summarize or rephrase what James, his parents, brothers and sisters and wife wrote, I have preferred to quote from their original writings whenever possible<sup>10</sup>. The characters in this biography tell their own story much better than I could ever hope to do.

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<sup>10</sup> James was an assiduous writer, like so many other people of the time. The amount of time he spent writing letters, journals and poetry must have been so much longer than the time we tend to spend writing e-mails and WhatsApps nowadays; cf. a letter from his sister Hester in 1813, “I received above one hundred pages from dearest James”, and Mark Guscini, *A Very Good Sort of Man* (Brighton, 2017), p. 66, quoting from the diary of Charles Lewis Meryon, Lady Hester’s physician, on 16 March 1818: “I wrote to Lady Hester from 9 in the morning until 12 at night”.



# CHAPTER ONE

## EARLY LIFE

According to the history of the Stanhope family<sup>1</sup>, the name was derived from the “township of Stanhope in County Durham” and the Stanhopes “were prominent in the north as early as the thirteenth century”. It was the first Earl Stanhope (James Stanhope, 1673 – 1721) who bought Chevening as the family residence (see Figure 1.1), after taking part in the War of the Spanish Succession. The second Earl, Philip, was James’ grandfather; he married Grizel Hamilton<sup>2</sup> (see Figure 1.2), the origin of James’ middle name<sup>3</sup>. Philip had only two children; Philip, known in his lifetime as Lord Mahon<sup>4</sup>, a title used for all the heirs to the earldom until they actually became Earls, and Charles. Philip was the elder of the two sons, and always of a weak constitution. His parents took him to Switzerland in 1763 to see a well-known chest physician, Dr Tronchin. All their efforts were in vain and Philip died on 6 July, leaving his younger brother Charles as Lord Mahon and heir to the earldom.

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<sup>1</sup> Aubrey Newman, *The Stanhopes of Chevening* (London, 1969), p. 15.

<sup>2</sup> The daughter of Charles Lord Binning and granddaughter of the Sixth Earl of Haddington. Cf. Newman, *Stanhopes*, p. 107: Grizel’s grandmother “Lady Grizel Baillie was a formidable character, many of whose traits were inherited by Grizel Hamilton herself and thus transmitted to the Stanhopes”, and p. 128, in reference to Grizel, James’ grandmother: “She stands out prominently among the women at Chevening, and her influence has been enormous, not merely on her own immediate generation and descendants, but on all those who subsequently bore the name of Stanhope and on those who have known and loved Chevening; her portraits still dominate, pleasantly but unmistakably, all the others in the family collections there”.

<sup>3</sup> The habit of using one of the parent’s surnames as a middle name was common in the nineteenth century; cf. the famous engineer Isambard Kingdom Brunel, whose mother’s maiden name was “Kingdom”.

<sup>4</sup> Mahon is a town on the island of Menorca, captured by the first Earl in 1708 during the War of the Spanish Succession. On 3 July 1717, James Stanhope was created Baron Stanhope of Elvaston and Viscount Stanhope of Mahon, and on 14 April 1718, Earl Stanhope.



Figure 1.1 – Chevening, the Stanhope family house where where James grew up



Figure 1.2 – Grizel Stanhope, née Hamilton, James' grandmother

Much has been written about the third Earl (see Figure 1.3); he is one of the best known figures in the Stanhope family history. Charles “Citizen” Stanhope<sup>5</sup> was an eccentric inventor who believed so much in the principles of the French Revolution that he reportedly slept on the floor with the windows open in winter and sent his children to do manual work in an attempt to make himself (and his family) equal to the majority of his countrymen<sup>6</sup>. He exercised a great interest in science; he invented a printing press which remained in use until the early twentieth century, a system for fireproofing houses (which he tried out once on his unsuspecting guests by herding them into a wooden hut and setting fire to it) and also worked on trying to produce a steamship, although he never managed to convince the Navy<sup>7</sup>. He married William Pitt the Younger’s sister, Hester, and had three daughters by her; Hester in 1776 (see Figure 1.4), Griselda in 1778 and Lucy in 1780. Lucy was born in February, but her mother never really recovered from the birth and after lingering in poor health for some months, died in July.

As often happened at the time, Mahon, the future third Earl, married again soon after being widowed, in the following March, just nine months after the death of his first wife. The bride this time was his first wife’s

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<sup>5</sup> Stanhope himself at this time signed his letters “fellow citizen” and even took down the coronets from the gates at Chevening; these ideas did not last long but the nickname stuck.

<sup>6</sup> Hester apparently had to look after geese on the common, while James was apprenticed to a cobbler, cf. Charles Lewis Meryon, *The Additional Memoirs of Lady Hester Stanhope* (ed. Mark Guscini, Brighton, 2017), p. 44: “...she who had cherished the tenderest affection for her two brothers, Charles, the eldest, and James, now in question. She had always prided herself on the success of her scheme in removing these two, and I think Lord Mahon also from their paternal home, at a time when her father’s extreme radical principles and the cry of equality, to which she alludes in making James a cobbler, rendered him as it was supposed an unfit guide for his children”.

<sup>7</sup> The Duchess of Cleveland, the third Earl’s granddaughter, wrote about Charles in *The Life and Letters of Lady Hester Stanhope* (London, 1914) (p. 4): “We, his descendants, are justly and I may say exceedingly proud of his genius and achievements, and yet humbly grateful that we were not called upon to live under his roof, for, ardently as he advocated liberty and enfranchisement abroad, he was the sternest of autocrats at home”. Wilhelmina was born a few years after the third Earl died, so she could never have been called upon to live under the same roof.

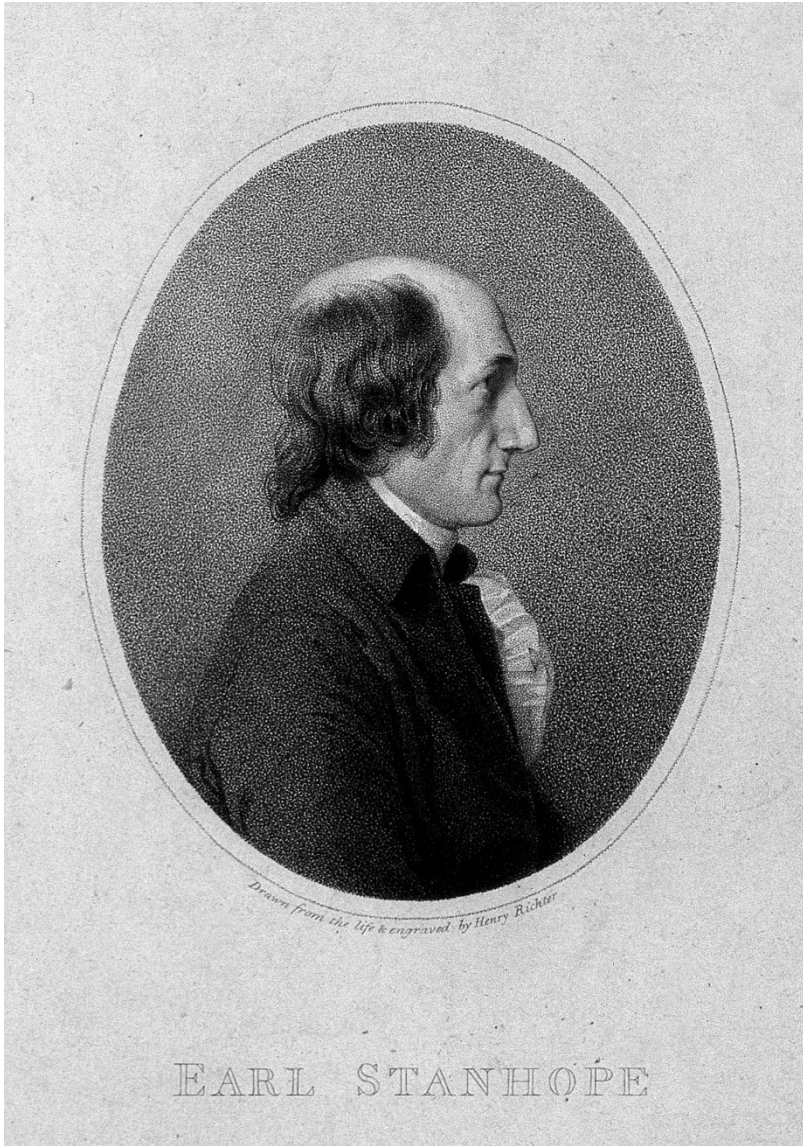


Figure 1.3 – The 3<sup>rd</sup> Earl Stanhope, James' father





Figure 1.4 – A miniature of Lady Hester Stanhope, James' half-sister

cousin Louisa, the daughter of Lady Chatham's<sup>8</sup> younger brother, James Grenville. Louisa bore Mahon four sons; Philip Henry in 1781 (who eventually became the fourth Earl), Banks (who was born and died in 1784), Charles Banks in 1785 and James Hamilton on 7 September 1788. James Hamilton Stanhope was thus the youngest child of the family, and had two full brothers and three half-sisters.

The third Earl's granddaughter, Catherine Wilhelmina, who on her marriage became the Duchess of Cleveland, later wrote a book about her aunt Lady Hester Stanhope. The book was as close as could be at the time to what would nowadays be called an official biography; she was a member of the family and focused, as was only to be expected, on the positive aspects of her subject. When she makes any kind of negative comment, therefore, we can only accept it as true. This is what she has to say about the third Earl's second wife and her relationship with her three stepdaughters<sup>9</sup>:

... the new lady Mahon did not commend herself to her stepdaughters. She was a worthy and well-meaning woman; but, as I remember her, stiff and frigid, with a chilling, conventional manner. They never became fond of her, and she never seems to have gained any influence over them – least of all over Lady Hester. As for their father, he did not even attempt to do so; he merely gave his orders and took care they were obeyed. They saw very little of him, for he was the busiest of men.<sup>10</sup>

It is never an easy task to find details and stories about the childhood of most people in history; and even when such details are available, they tend to be of little interest as what makes most lives interesting is what people did in adulthood. Biographers are often forced to have recourse to generalities about the times, or describing what happened to other people (often adults) in the subject's life, to provide a feeling for the atmosphere the subject grew up in, and I am no exception to this rule. There is, however, in this case, a very touching picture of James Hamilton Stanhope as a young

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<sup>8</sup> Chatham was the honorary title of William Pitt the Elder, inherited by his eldest son, after whose death the title fell into disuse.

<sup>9</sup> Cleveland, *Life and Letters*, pp. 1-2.

<sup>10</sup> For a more neutral view of the situation cf. Newman, *Stanhopes*, p. 187: "Louisa Stanhope ... did her duty by her stepdaughters, doing her best to bring them up properly, and writing frequently to Lady Chatham with details of the girls designed to delight their grandmother".

child, written in a letter many years later by his grandmother Grizel<sup>11</sup>. Grizel was ninety-one years old when she wrote the letter; the handwriting is spidery and there are many words missing and sentences which ramble on without concluding the idea they started with (although the general meaning is always clear). In addition to a grandmother's fond reminiscences the letter also complains about the lack of contact from James over what would seem to be a long period of time, and when she did receive news it was never good.

I thought I saw my little strunty<sup>12</sup> boy, hopping like a sparrow on one leg (for you rarely went upon two), and climbing the damson trees, devouring the plumbs [sic] like a little pig, and many more such like events come to my mind of those happy days, and which only a fond grandmother could recollect about you, my dear Slyboots (as I used to call you), my dear grandson who often used to own over and dine with me; one Sunday happened to meet and went away sooner than usual after a cordial and affection (at least in appearance to one), we parted as usual. From that hour for years we not only never met, but I never heard where you were nor about you, and when I did, nothing but what gave me concern, and too often heart-breaking sorrow.

...

I used to dream seeing my little Hopper the same height as when hopping (and to this hour no other idea have I formed of your present figure).

A note included at the end of the letter tells us yet more about James when he was a child, and what he liked to do in his free time:

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<sup>11</sup> The letter is preserved in the Stanhope Collection at the Kent History and Library Centre in Maidstone under the general catalogue number U1590. The reference number for this letter is U1590 C262/1. The letter is dated 16 May 1809, and was thus written and sent after James had returned from Corunna and the battle there on 16 January 1809. Somebody penciled the following words on the paper the letter is wrapped in, "Preserved at Revesby Abbey until February 1918, when it was sent to Chevening at the general dispersion". On the envelope (still in pre-postage stamp dates) it says "Colonel J. Stanhope from his grandmother Grizel Dowager Countess Stanhope, written in 1809, she died in 1811, in her 93rd year".

<sup>12</sup> Cf. John Jamieson, *An Etymological Dictionary of the Scottish Language* (Edinburgh, 1818), pages unnumbered; "strunty" means "short or contracted". Given Grizel's Scottish roots, this is no doubt the explanation for her use of the word, but cf. also John Greaves Nall, *Glossary of East Anglian Dialect, reprinted from the 2<sup>nd</sup> volume of 'Chapters on the East Anglian Coast'*, Norfolk 2006 (first published 1866), p. 188: "strunty" is a version of "stunty", i.e. short or dwarfish.

I forgot to tell you that in packing your poor Aunt's gold tooth pick case, which she left you, I found along with the precious box, it was packed into another but you, valise<sup>13</sup>. I found a little clipboard made by the same hand, and also a little box made at the same time by you, made of cards, about 2 inches square, the door of card hinge and fastening of strong thread, covered all over with black wax, and tho' you often burnt your fingers you would finish it to your taste, and then made some chopmen of cards coloured red and blue and put into it. These are most carefully kept by me in remembrance of the makers, whose ingenuity and handiness I used to admire.

The letter thus gives us the picture of a typical little boy; enjoying himself hopping, climbing trees and eating the damson plums directly from the branches. He also seems to have been something of a craftsman, making little boxes that his grandmother fondly kept over the years.

None of the third Earl's children ever went to school; they had private tutors at Chevening<sup>14</sup>. One of the documents in the Stanhope manuscript collection is Lady Hester's mathematics exercise book<sup>15</sup> (see Figure 1.5); it is safe to assume that James had to do similar exercises to the ones contained therein. This makes it all the more difficult to understand what Charles Lewis Meryon, Lady Hester's future physician, says about James<sup>16</sup>. Meryon has described how one of Lady Hester's servants had only one eye, and adds the following information:

Hannah had but one eye, and Lady Hester always shewed commiseration for one-eyed persons: for before this time there had been in her service Yusef, a boy with one eye, and now there was

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<sup>13</sup> This sentence is a good example of the above-mentioned anacoluthon of James' elderly grandmother.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Cleveland, *Life and Letters*, p. 11: "They [Philip, Charles and James] were never sent either to school or to college, but brought up with their sisters at home and taught by their father's secretary". This private secretary and the children's tutor was Jeremiah Joyce, who was arrested on charges of high treason for "revolutionary principles" but released without trial in 1794. According to Frank Hamel, *Hester Lucy Stanhope: A New Light on Her Life and Love Affairs* (London, 1913), p. 20, he taught the children "in desultory fashion". In 1820, when James was considering entering Parliament, his fiancée Frederica Murray says in a letter dated 20 January "It is true no education was more neglected than yours was (perhaps I am speaking ignorantly)".

<sup>15</sup> U1590 C 231.

<sup>16</sup> Meryon, *Additional Memoirs*, p. 297, note 469.

this cook. I conceived it to arise from a recollection of her brother James's misfortune, who had lost the sight of one eye from an arrow shot by a schoolfellow.

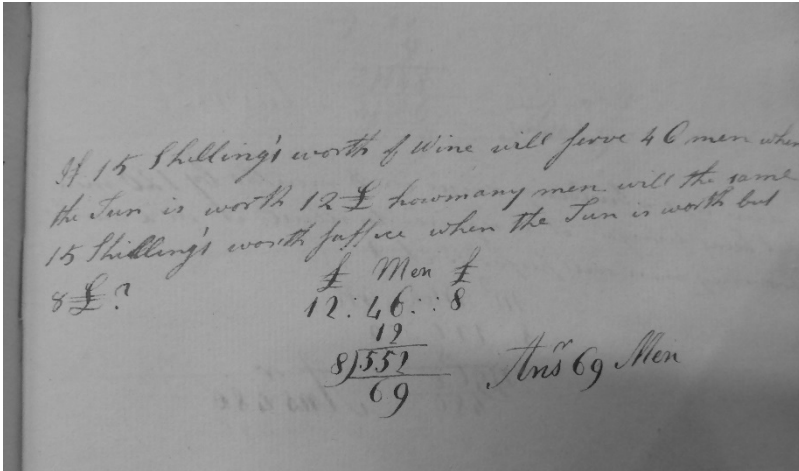


Figure 1.5 – An exercise from Hester's mathematics book

Apart from the fact that James never went to school, there are no references anywhere else to his having lost the sight of an eye. We should not forget that Meryon was over ninety years old when he wrote the Additional Memoirs, and his memory was not what it had once been. He must surely have confused James with another acquaintance, possibly also called James; if James Hamilton Stanhope had lost the vision in one eye it would surely be mentioned in the vast documentation that remains about his life.

Life at Chevening under the tyrannical freedom-lover Earl Charles soon became unbearable for all six children. Lucy was the first to leave; in January 1796, when James was just seven years old, Lucy, not yet sixteen years old herself, eloped with a local apothecary called Thomas Taylor, who had probably been an employee of the Stanhope household. This was the perfect opportunity for the third Earl to put his revolutionary principles into practice; he seems to have done so in the following letter written to a friend shortly after the event (on 25 January), although it could be possible to read the Earl's words as somewhat forced, and even then trying to raise the social standing of the man in question by calling him a surgeon, who despite having studied under the eminent Henry Cline (as did Lady Hester's

physician in later years, Charles Lewis Meryon), was not a surgeon. The letter reads as follows<sup>17</sup>:

My youngest daughter Lucy is soon going to be married to a most worthy man of her own chusing [sic]. Her Mind is liberal, and she despises Rank and Aristocracy as much as I do. I have seen much both here and abroad of the middling classes; and I have observed, by far, more happiness there, as well as virtue, than amongst those Ranks of Men who insolently term themselves their betters. Her Object is Felicity, and I trust that she will find it. She has behaved with the greatest propriety, and with a becoming Confidence due to an affectionate Father. The Person she has chosen is young Thomas Taylor, the surgeon at Sevenoaks.

Lucy's uncle, Prime Minister William Pitt, obtained Taylor a position as Controller-General of the Customs Office and despite his seemingly good intentions, the Earl's relationship with his daughter and son-in-law soon deteriorated, and just as with the rest of his children, dissolved into nothingness. Hester later narrated the affair to her physician Charles Lewis Meryon as follows<sup>18</sup>:

But there were other events which occurred previous to Lady Hester's quitting home, and which the author must be excused for introducing, in justice to three other daughters<sup>19</sup> of Lord Stanhope who were compelled to leave the paternal roof.

Mr. Taylor was an apothecary near Chevening, Lord Stanhope's seat, and was in the habit of attending his Lordship's family. Lady Hester told me the history of his marriage with her sister, Lady Lucy, in the following words.

"Mr. Taylor was a smart-dressed man, and as my father at that time had nothing but dirty democrats around him, he wore a very respectful appearance among them. One day my father said to Lucy 'What do you think of Tom Taylor? I fancy he is in love with you. You know my sentiments on equality: so that, if you like him, don't mind saying so. Observe, the next time he enters the room where you are, if he doesn't blush'. Lucy did observe; and prepared by her father to receive the man favourably, they soon came to an understanding.

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<sup>17</sup> Quoted in Newman, *Stanhopes*, pp. 188-189.

<sup>18</sup> Meryon, *Additional Memoirs*, p. 225.

<sup>19</sup> A lapsus by Meryon, as there were three daughters altogether, including Hester. The word "other" is a later addition to the manuscript, and if Meryon realized his mistake, was possibly meant to replace "three".